



APPENDIX A - TECHNICAL MEMOS

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Agriculture Technical Memo

Agriculture Guiding Principle

Maintain farming as a pillar of Whately's economy, culture, and landscape now and for future generations. Promote the viability of agricultural businesses and innovation, promote agricultural stewardship of open space and healthy soils, and support strategies for increased resilience to policy, economic, and climate stressors.

Introduction

Located along the Connecticut River, Whately contains floodplain soils considered to be among the richest soils in the world. Large-scale farming has been a fixture on the landscape and an important economic driver since the 1700s. In 2025, Whately was home to 38 farms and nearly 2,000 acres of farmland.^{1,2} Because of the importance of farming to both farmers and Whately residents—for the economy, culture, and environment—the topic of agriculture was given its own section in the Comprehensive Plan.

This technical memo builds on previous land use and related plans for Whately, including:

- [2025 Assessment of Zoning & Permitting for Housing](#)
- [2021 Open Space and Recreation Plan](#)
- [2018 Creating an Economic Development Vision for Whately](#)
- [2015 Community Food Assessment](#)

Survey Responses

The results of the 2024 Whately Visioning Survey make it clear that Whately residents have a deep connection to the town's agricultural history and character and a commitment to the continuation of the farming economy and tradition. Respondents identified "rural feel" as one of the best things about Whately and agricultural tourism as the number one desirable type of economic development. When selecting among seven different natural and cultural priorities, protecting additional farmland and forestland was the first ranked priority. It appeared again as the first priority when asked what actions the Town should be taking to

¹ Whately Agricultural Commission, "Whately Farms Database," updated March, 2025

² MassGIS 2016 Land Use/Land Cover

support community services. Related, a decrease in agricultural activity showed up as the number one concern about potential impacts from climate change.

The Importance of Farming in Whately

History of Farming

Norwottuck and Pocumtuck Indians were likely the first people to practice agriculture in Whately, having major settlements south and north of Whately, respectively. Starting in the 17th century, European settlers in Whately grew livestock, grains, and fibers, making agriculture the base of the colonial economy.

By 1850, there were 140 farms in Whately.³ These family-based farms grew a range of products for subsistence and/or export, including wheat, rye, barley, corn, oats, potatoes, tobacco, wool, garden produce, and hay. Livestock, dairy products, and maple sugar were also important. Whately found a niche market in broom corn production, which was added to broom handles crafted in the Hilltown communities for export.

Tobacco has been grown in Whately since the late 1700s and as a cash crop since the mid-1800s. While tobacco production has shrunk since the mid-20th century, Whately farmers continue to grow field tobacco. Dozens of tobacco barns still dot the Whately landscape and are considered a significant element of Whately's landscape heritage.

Agriculture-supporting industries once thrived in Whately. Fertilizer dealers, feed stores, cattle dealers, and tractor dealers were once very accessible compared to today. Farmers now state that it can be difficult to talk to a sales representative. However, the town still has the Northampton Co-Op Auction, which is a farmer-owned auction specializing in the buying and selling of livestock and farm machinery.

The number of individual farms in Whately continued to drop throughout the 1900s, as technology, policies, and markets favored larger farm operations over small family farms. Farmland has often been sold for housing, particularly in the 1970s through 1990s. Much of this housing development has occurred along existing roads, sparing Whately farmland from becoming overly fragmented.

Farms Today

Today, broad-acre and greenhouse-based farming is prevalent in East Whately, where the flattest floodplain and richest soils are located. These farms still produce a large diversity of

³ 1850 Census of Agriculture, as described in the Whately Historical Society's "Whately's Farming History" presentation by Dereka Smith.

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products. Cash crops such as sweet corn, cattle corn, potatoes, pumpkins, and cabbage dominate production by acreage. Farms also produce a very wide range of fruit, vegetables, herbs, and nursery stock. A diversity of livestock operations includes horse boarding, beef, goat, and occasionally other types of meat. The Mill River/North Street corridor, closer to the forested uplands in central Whately, is also still extensively used for hay and pasture-based agriculture, along with forest-based agricultural products.

The town is also home to innovative farm models, including value-added products, marijuana operations, an Asian produce operation, a renowned fruit stock nursery, a nursery for plants native to Massachusetts, and a historical orchard and event space, all of which further diversify the Whately farm landscape.

Economic Significance

Farms in Whately account for a large portion of the town's labor market and economic base. According to an estimate by the Commonwealth, which was confirmed by the Whately Agricultural Commission, Whately farms employ around 300 people in the summer.⁴ This accounts for 34% of the total jobs in Whately (total of approximately 880).⁵ The Agricultural Commission estimates that over 100 people are employed on farms year-round, with an estimated 26 of those being Whately residents, according to the American Communities Survey.⁶ An estimated 30 or so of the seasonal farmworkers on Whately farms are residents of foreign countries working on H2A visas. These are primarily Jamaican citizens.

Whately farmers use a diversity of market outlets, including regional and national distributors, stores, restaurants, export markets, and processors. A Community Food Assessment report produced in 2015 by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) for the Town of Whately found that at that time, \$20 million in revenue was grossed by farms annually, creating \$32 million in economic impact annually. That is the equivalent of \$27 million and \$43 million in 2025 dollars, when adjusted for inflation.

Whately is home to many larger-than-average Massachusetts farms. According to the 2022 USDA Census of Agriculture, 69% of farms in the state are under 50 acres and 91% are under 180 acres.⁷ Whately is home to half a dozen or so farms in the 100 – 350 acre range.

⁴ Massachusetts Department of Economic Research Employment and Wages Report for the Third Quarter, 2024.

⁵ American Communities Survey 5-Year Estimates 2019 – 2023; this assumes that all Whately residents employed in the farming industry work in Whately

⁶ American Communities Survey 5-Year Estimates 2019 – 2023

⁷ United States Department of Agriculture, *2022 Census of Agriculture* (Washington, DC: USDA, 2022) <https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/>

Farmland

Farmland accounts for an estimated 15% (1,989 acres) of the total land area in Whately. According to 2016 data from the Commonwealth, about two-thirds of this farmland is cultivated for crops (10% of total land area) and one-third is used for pasture or hay (5% of total land area).⁸ Although it is not all farmed, Whately contains a total of 2,748 acres of soils considered to be Prime Farmland, or soil containing the best combination of physical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops. It contains an additional 2,939 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance. In total, this is 5,687 acres, or 43% of town. Analysis was conducted for this plan to understand how much of Whately's farmland is unprotected from development or subject to flooding, as discussed below and illustrated by Table A1 and Maps A1 – A3.⁹

Farmland is an essential resource for food production. It also has the power to support local economies, maintain biodiversity, preserve water quality, and enhance climate resilience. As a whole, the Connecticut River Valley is the bread basket of Massachusetts. Franklin County has the greatest number of farms per capita, and the highest percentage of its land in agriculture.¹⁰ Whately, with its rich floodplain soils, is a significant part of this picture.

Threats to Farmland

At the state level, we are inarguably in a period of intensified farmland loss. The 2022 American Farmland Trust report "Farms Under Threat: 2040" cites that between 1985 and 2016, 31% of available farmland was lost to development or reforestation. It warns that without additional investment and policy changes, Massachusetts is projected to lose 1,200 farms and 50,000 to 89,000 acres of farmland by 2040.¹¹ The report ranks Massachusetts sixth in the country in farmland loss from 2001 to 2016, and ninth most at risk of future farmland loss.

The factors contributing to this potential loss are many. Primary among them is that the average age of farmers in Massachusetts is in the 60s, with many farmers having to retire without clear succession plans. The average age of the principal farm operator in Massachusetts is around 60 years old, having steadily increased from 53.6 years in 1964 to

⁸ MassGIS 2016 Land Use/Land Cover: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massgis-data-2016-land-coverland-use>

⁹ All data comes from MassGIS data layers. See related maps for specific data sources.

¹⁰ United States Department of Agriculture, *2022 Census of Agriculture* (Washington, DC: USDA, 2022) <https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/>

¹¹ American Farmland Trust. *Farms Under Threat: A New England Perspective*, 2020 : <https://farmlandinfo.org/publications/farms-under-threat-a-new-england-perspective/>

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59.7 years in 2017.¹² Beginning farmers face steep challenges in acquiring land due to its high cost and limited tools for financing. Operational costs are mounting due to labor costs, inflation, new regulations, damage and loss from climate change, and other factors.

Farmers in Whately generally have succession plans for their farms and are not concerned with losing them, but have also noticed that competition over farmland is not what it used to be, signaling that the demand for acreage is shrinking. Many in the agricultural sector consider this decade a critical moment for the protection of farmland and for connecting new farmers to farmland to ensure that too much acreage is not lost to development. While farms staying viable is the most important guarantee of the future of farms and farmland, conservation of farmland is the only legal protection.

While solar energy production and housing are important for reaching clean energy goals, part of the ongoing loss of farmland at the state level is attributed to solar development, the economics of which favor flat and workable agricultural soils. As of 2023, nearly 1,600 acres of Massachusetts prime farmland had been converted to use by ground-mounted solar arrays. As of 2021, around 85 acres of agricultural land in Whately had been developed as ground-mounted photovoltaic solar.¹³ Housing and commercial/industrial development are also contributing to farmland loss statewide, but their impacts are not felt as strongly in the western part of the state.

Farmland Analysis

Of the total estimated acreage mapped as farmland in Whately, 50% is temporarily protected and 27% is permanently protected, for a total of 97% protection. Temporary protection is afforded through the state's Chapter 61A program, which gives protection to farmland on a year-by-year basis. Permanent protection is granted to farmland through either a Conservation Restriction (CR) or an Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR). Because Chapter 61A enrollment only affords temporary protection, an estimated 73% of farmland in Whately is still vulnerable to development.

Land cover data allows us to see what types of land are permanently protected. Of all agricultural land, 25% of all farmland is permanently protected cropland and 2% is permanently protected pasture/hay land, totaling 27% of agricultural land protected (see Table A1 and Map A1). Broken out by category, an estimated 37% of Whately's cropland is protected and 6% of pasture/hay land is protected.

¹² Fitzsimmons, J. 2019. Massachusetts Agricultural Census Data, 2017. Retrieved from <https://ag.umass.edu/resources/massachusetts-agricultural-data>

¹³ Whately Assessor, 2021

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The degree of protection of Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance helps paint the picture of farmland preservation. Overall, 22% of these important agricultural soils are protected (see Table A1 and Map A2). However, for Prime Farmland specifically, only 18% of these soils are protected. As of 2025, Whately had not gone through the process of identifying Farmland of Local Importance.¹⁴

With increasing heavy rainstorms and greater frequency of damaging floods over the last two decades associated with climate change, it is important to consider the threat of flooding to Whately’s farmland. Two rivers run alongside farmland in Whately: the Connecticut River along the eastern border and the Mill River through central Whately. About 5% of farmland in Whately is located within the FEMA-mapped 100-year floodplain (see Table A1 and Map A3). This acreage is more often pasture/hay (3% compared to 2% cultivated land). Looked at another way, approximately 11% of the pasture/hay acreage in Whately is in the 100-year floodplain.

This is actually a low proportion of land vulnerable to flooding compared to neighboring Hatfield, which has approximately 35% of its farmland in the FEMA-mapped 100-year floodplain.¹⁵ Yet, while the FEMA 100-year flood map tells us about where flooding has been likely to occur historically, these maps have not been updated since 1980 and do not reflect the flood data of the last 45 years. With projected future rainfall increasing, many more acres of farmland are likely vulnerable to flooding.

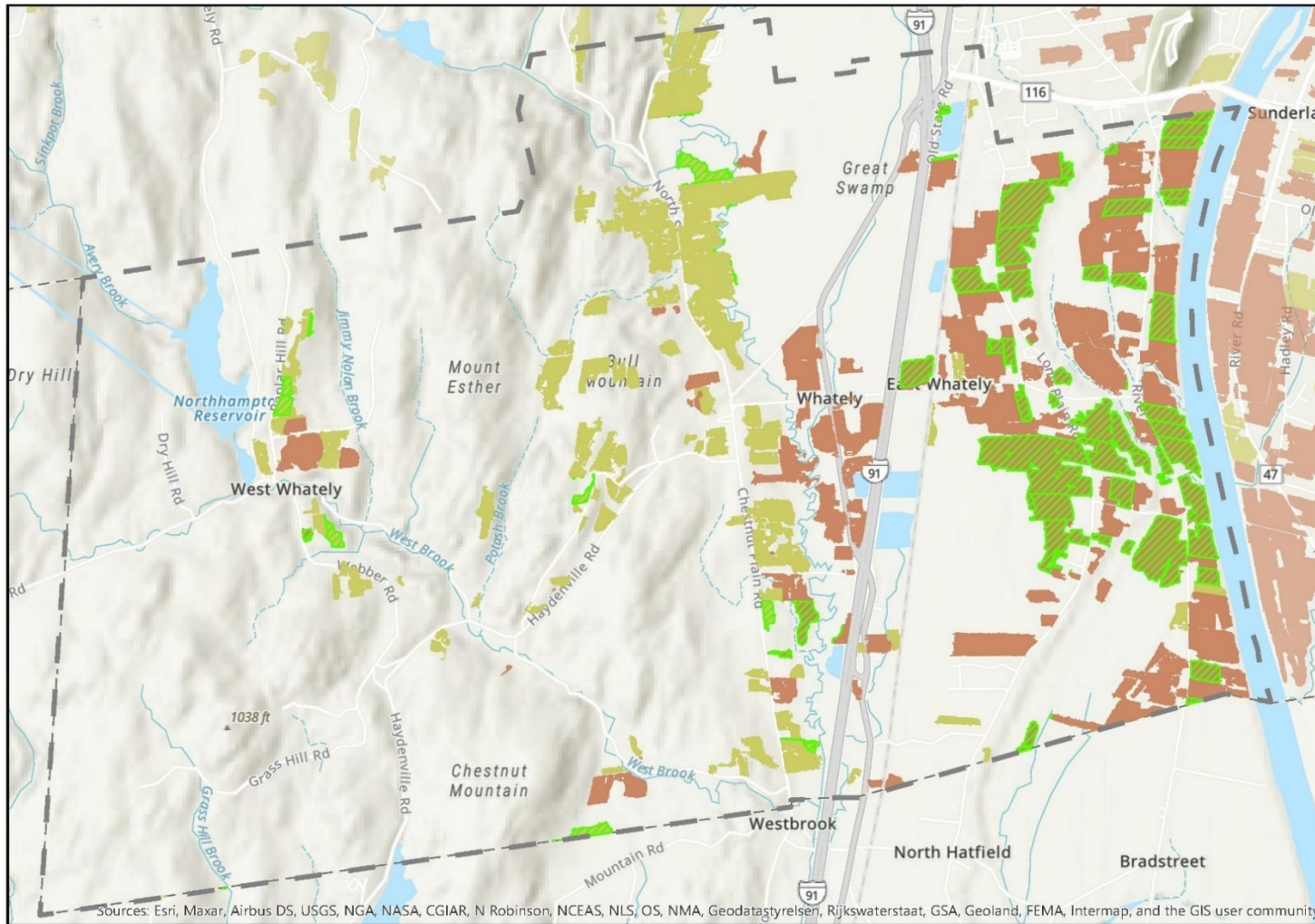
Table A1. Agricultural Land and Soils, Overall Protected and in Floodplain

	Acres	Acres Permanently Protected	Percent of Agricultural Land Area	Acres in 100-Year Floodplain	Percent of Agricultural Land Area
Cropland	1,355	496	25%	41	2%
Pasture/Hay land	634	38	2%	67	3%
Total	1,989	534	27%	108	5%
Prime Farmland	2,748	484	9%	Not calculated	
Farmland of Statewide Importance	2,939	793	14%		
Total	5,687	1,277	23%		

Source: MassGIS (see corresponding maps for specific data sources)

¹⁴ American Farmland Trust, Massachusetts Farmland of Local Importance Screening Tool: <https://farmlandinfo.org/tools/ma-farmland-local-importance-screening-tool/>

¹⁵ Hatfield 2040 Comprehensive Plan, Appendix B – Farming (p.5)



Whately Comprehensive Plan Protected Agricultural Land

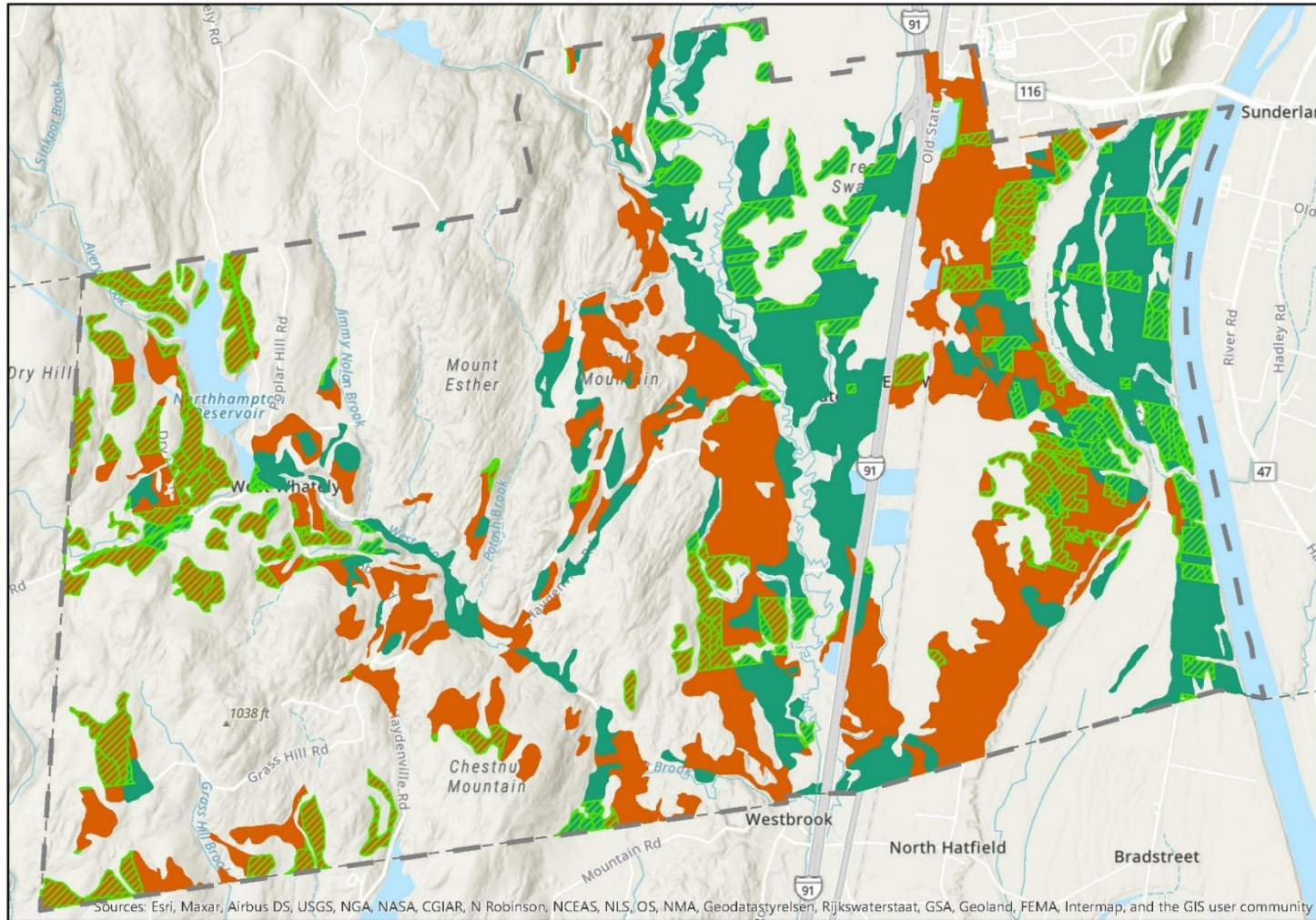
Data sources: MassGIS 2016 Land Cover Land Use; MassGIS 2024 Protected and Recreational Open Space

0 0.5 1 Miles



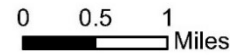
- Town Boundary
- Permanently Protected
- Cultivated
- Pasture/Hay

Map A1. Permanently Protected Agricultural Land



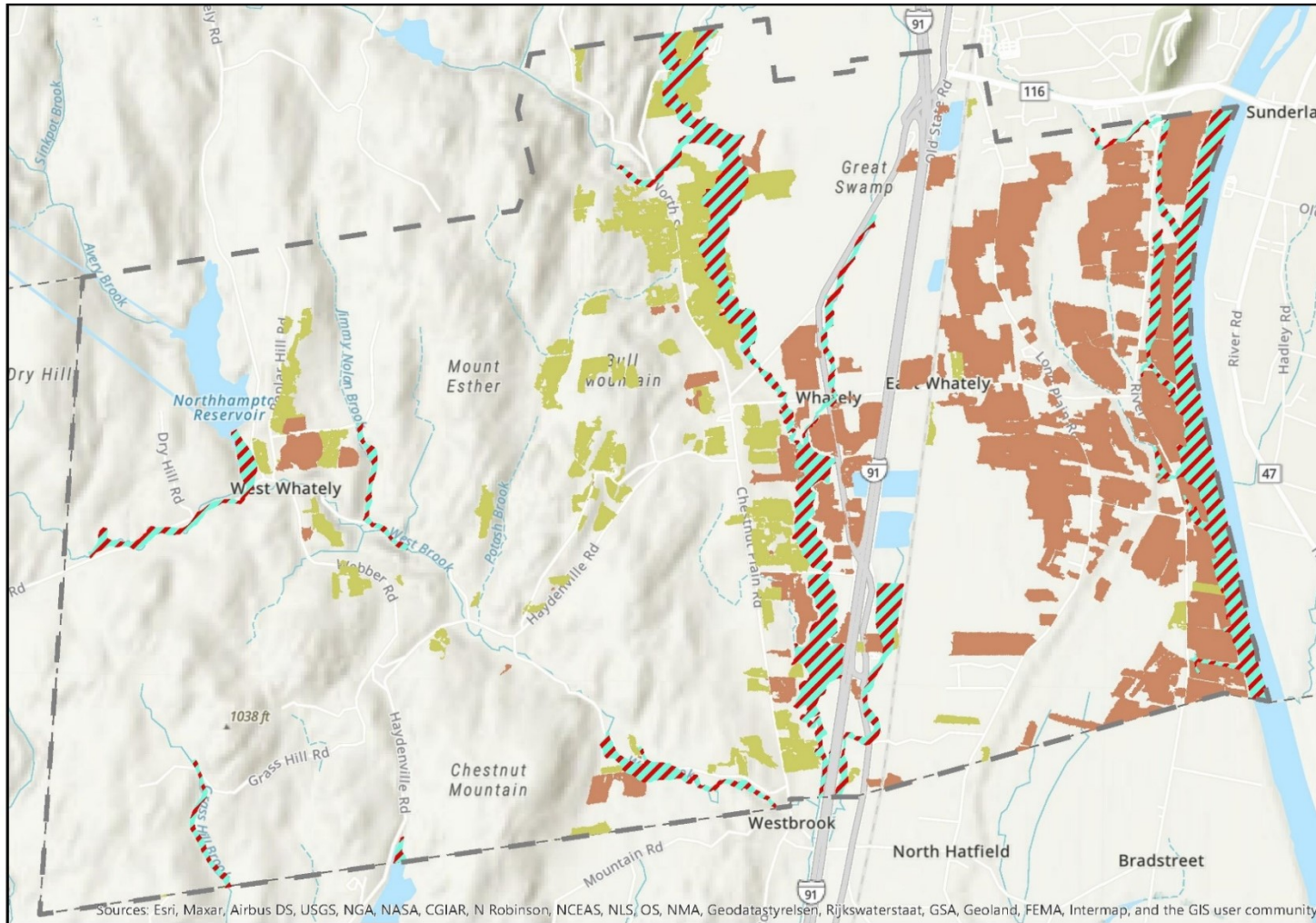
Whately Comprehensive Plan Protected Farmland Soils

Data sources: MassGIS 2016 Land Cover Land Use; MassGIS 2021 Soils SSURGO-certified NRCS



- Permanently Protected
- Town Boundary
- Prime Farmland Soils
- Farmland Soils of Statewide Imp.

Map A2. Permanently Protected Farmland Soils



Sources: Esri, Maxar, Airbus DS, USGS, NGA, NASA, CGIAR, N Robinson, NCEAS, NLS, OS, NMA, Geodatastyrelsen, Rijkswaterstaat, GSA, Geoland, FEMA, Intermap, and the GIS user community

Whately Comprehensive Plan
Floodplains & Farmland

Data sources: MassGIS 2016 Land Cover Land Use; FEMA 100-Year Floodplain digitized by FRCOG

0 0.5 1 Miles

Legend:

- Town Boundary
- 100-Year Floodplain
- Cultivated
- Pasture/Hay

Map A3. Floodplains

Municipal Support for Farming in Whately

In addition to the support agriculture has had from the public, there has also long been municipal support for agriculture in Whately. The Town has an active Agricultural Commission that meets during the off-season (late fall through early spring). The Commission is charged with engaging in projects and activities to promote the business of farming, farming traditions, and farmland protection. The Commission has been an active advisor to Town boards and committees and to farmers who want to protect their land with Chapter 61A or APR and also plays an important role in educating the public about the community's Right-to-Farm bylaw. The Town currently supports the Agricultural Commission with a part-time clerk and budget requests of up to \$2,500.

Town of Whately's bylaws also support farming. Whately is a right-to-farm community, protecting the right of residents to common agricultural practices and their impacts on people, as the benefits of farming to the neighborhood, community, and society in general offset any potential harm. The majority of the Town's zoning districts allow agriculture. Commercial and industrial development is restricted to areas around the I-91 corridor and along the border with Deerfield's industrial development zone. And while Whately's Solar Electric Generating Facilities bylaw allows solar electric installations by special permit in the Agricultural/Residential (A/R 2) District, the bylaw stipulates that "the facility shall be designed to minimize impacts to agricultural and environmentally sensitive land and to be compatible with continued agricultural use of the land whenever possible."¹⁶

Opportunities & Challenges Analysis

Public Attitudes Toward Local Food

Whately farmers are noticing a decreasing understanding and interest among the public in seasonality and the value of local food. The perception among farmers is that people value farms for the open vistas they create, but do not understand what farming requires. The public expects to be able to purchase any food they want from farmers regardless of the season. A reduced interest in seasonal local food and a market for organic that is no longer growing means a shrinking local or direct-to-consumer market for farmers, traditionally a place where farmers can better set their own prices and struggle less to make a profit.

¹⁶ <https://ecode360.com/31283977#31283977>

Cost of Operations

A complex set of stressors is driving up the cost of operations on Whately farms. Massachusetts farmers work in a high-cost environment—land is expensive, growing seasons are shorter than in many other regions, and Massachusetts is one of the most highly regulated states for farmers. A new state report found that two out of every three farmers in Massachusetts operated at a loss in the 2024 – 2025 period.¹⁷ Input costs, like supplies and infrastructure, are also higher. Farmers often experience the market systems and regulations as too big and bureaucratic to work with. Market access can be a challenge when there is limited access to reliable market intelligence or wholesalers apply their own standards or require year-round contracts. And as market consolidation continues to occur regionally or nationally, farmers in Whately fear they might not be big enough to compete. Water quality regulations coming into effect in the next several years are likely to have impacts, such as adding expense or limiting crop rotation. The labor supply and cost of labor also tend to be unstable and in some cases expensive. Some Whately farmers have lost workers due to local housing shortages. Finally, farmers in Whately struggle with good access to financing. Knowing that the cost of operation is pushing many farmers to the brink, it is important to be very careful when implementing local policies that could have a detrimental effect on the agricultural sector's bottom line.

Soil Health

Whately's farmland consists of fine silt and sandy loam soils, much of which can still flood either occasionally or frequently. Whately's best agricultural parcels have been farmed continuously for over 350 years. Since the advent of broad-acre mechanical cultivation and chemical use in the 1900s, the speed of degradation of soil structure, biology, and carbon content has increased. No equivalent study exists for Whately, but according to analysis done for Hatfield's 2024 Comprehensive Plan, the soil organic carbon (SOC) stocks in neighboring Hatfield are estimated to be medium or low in most areas of town, indicating unstable soils that are highly erodible and unable to effectively infiltrate rain and floodwaters. However, much of this acreage of degraded soils examined in the analysis have high regeneration potential, and much of those degraded soils can be prioritized for initiatives that restore and regenerate the productive capacity of the land. It is possible that the same is generally true for Whately soils.

¹⁷ "Report of the Special Legislative Commission on Agriculture in the Commonwealth in the 21st Century": <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/194/SD3460.pdf>

Climate Change

Increasing variability in temperature and precipitation are putting stress on agricultural operations throughout Massachusetts. Heat, drought, variable winters and frost dates, excessive moisture, erosion, floodwater contamination, and damaging storms make planning more difficult and the impacts of weather more costly. Climate change has also improved some conditions for farming, such as extending the growing season later into the fall.

Farmers are at the forefront of adapting to changing weather patterns. Climate-related best practices and technologies are continuously being developed to help manage these changes. In some cases, farmers are adapting by moving their operations “indoors.” Despite the clear climatic stressors on farming, the Connecticut River Valley region may be one of the better places to farm in future decades due to the loss of water for irrigation in other parts of the country.

Farmland Protection and the Continuation of Farm Operations

Some Whately farmers could age out of their operations in the next decade. Not long ago, Whately farmers had to fight to access more land, but now the demand for land is not as high. While the community has made it clear that it highly values the preservation of farmland and farm operations, today’s economic realities may lead many farmland owners to sell their land to a non-farmer. Losing arable land could not only impact local and regional food systems today but take away critical area for farming in the future if agricultural land is lost in other parts of the country.

A trend that has been occurring across the county is the corporate acquisition and consolidation of farms. Farmland provides a stable, long-term asset for investor portfolios particularly in times of high inflation. With current economic conditions coupled with aging farmers, this trend is one that could become more prevalent in the Franklin County region. One of the largest farm businesses in Whately, Nourse Farms, was recently purchased by an investment company. The owner has invested millions of dollars in the facility and land, which is a benefit to Whately’s economy and keeps the land agriculturally based. However, there can be drawbacks with corporate ownership.

The Housing Chapter and Land Use & Zoning Technical Memo/Chapter show that the town and region are all in desperate need of more housing in order to have a sustainable and thriving community. In the coming years, Whately will have to closely examine its zoning to balance the need to protect vital farmland while also allowing for the production of additional housing. Zoning is the most effective tool that a municipality has to direct the development of homes and protect farmland while still allowing residents to have choices in where they live.

Recommendations

Support the Work of the Agricultural Commission

- Continue to provide budget and staff support to the Whately Agricultural Commission.
- Encourage the Agricultural Commission to take advantage of professional development opportunities and information sharing with other commissions by participating in statewide efforts to engage Agricultural Commissions. If it is revived, participate in Massachusetts Association of Agricultural Commissions (MAAC) events.

Improve the Financial Viability of Farming in Whately

- Remove the excise tax on farm animals and farm equipment.
- Refer farmers to local and regional technical assistance, trainings, and loans for farmers and food production, such as the Farm Bureau, Massachusetts Fruit Growers Association, Massachusetts Association of Dairy Farmers, CISA, Land for Good, American Farmland Trust, the Franklin County CDC, and NOFA/Mass. Consider advertising these resources in a guide shared with Whately farmers.
- Explore all municipal tools to support the viability of farm businesses help them weather the stressors of climate change, market changes, and changes in regulations.

Support the Preservation of Working Farmland

- Work with American Farmland Trust or equivalent consultants to designate farmland soils of local importance to qualify more parcels for the APR and ACEP program (i.e., productive farmland parcels that are not mapped by the state as Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance).
- Map farmland in town and identify farmland susceptible to conversion to development.
- Prepare a policy and plan for the Selectboard to respond to Chapter 61A withdrawals.
- Create a comprehensive Local Farmland Action Plan.
- Consider creating an Agricultural Preservation Fund with CPA money that can be used for the purchase of farmland to be held by the Agricultural Commission.
- Consider zoning options that can support farmland protection:
 - See the Housing and Land Use & Zoning Technical Memos for ways to promote the increased production of housing in ways that use the land more efficiently through strategies such as reduced minimum lot size and frontage requirements so that more homes can be placed on less land.

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Support Farmland Succession

- Conduct farmland owner surveys to gauge succession plans, needs, and concerns.

Improve Soil Health

- Work with consultants to map and analyze soil quality and potential for soil regeneration, as has been done in Deerfield and Hatfield.

DRAFT

Climate & Energy Technical Memo

Climate & Energy Guiding Principle

Prepare for social, economic, and environmental trends driven by climate change, build resilience to environmental change at the municipal and community level, and support the transition to a net zero energy system.

Introduction

Changing climate conditions are bringing more weather variability and extremes that impact municipal budgets and operations and the health and welfare of community members. The changing weather brought by climate change is beyond the town's control. However, the Commonwealth has called on municipalities statewide to join the effort to mitigate climate change by achieving net zero energy by 2050. And the people of Whately are interested in taking measures to adapt and build community resilience to climate change for the long-term wellbeing of the community, economy, and environment.

Net zero energy goals are strongly tied to both climate mitigation and adaptation. Energy use reduction and clean energy are necessary to slow down the pace of climate change. And adapting to climate change will require the creation of decentralized and more resilient energy infrastructure that can withstand extreme weather and other major disruptions.

This technical memo builds on previous climate, hazard, natural resource, and energy related plans and reports for Whately, including:

- [2024 Whately Green Communities Annual Report](#)
- [2023 Water Wise Whately](#)
- [2021 Whately MVP Resiliency Plan](#)
- [2021 Whately Open Space & Recreation Plan](#)
- [2020 Whately Hazard Mitigation Plan](#)

Climate change mitigation is the reduction of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere to slow the rate of climate change.

Climate change adaptation refers to activities that help reduce vulnerability to current and projected impacts of climate change.

Community resilience to climate change is the capacity to survive, adapt, and thrive in the face of chronic or acute stresses from climate change.

Survey Responses

Responses to the 2024 Whately Comprehensive Plan Survey showed that any decrease in agricultural activity linked to climate change is a number one community concern, followed by threats to water quality and supply, and health impacts from extreme storms and power outages. When asked to rank six actions the Town should take to address climate change, investing in energy efficiency, renewable energy, and climate resilience for all facilities owned by the Town was ranked second after agricultural and open space land protection. This chapter focuses on the impacts of climate on water quality and supply, the impacts of extreme storms and heat, and energy efficiency and renewable energy needs and opportunities in Whately. Climate impacts to agriculture are also discussed in the Agriculture Technical Memo.

Climate Change Projections

Heat-absorbing greenhouse gases (GHGs) released into the atmosphere since the mid-1800s are leading to more heat retention and an increase in land and water surface average temperatures around the globe. This warming pattern is disrupting typical climate patterns and causing more extreme weather events. In Whately, this is evident primarily as increasing temperatures, changes in precipitation patterns, and increasingly variable and extreme weather events such as droughts, freezes and heavy rains.

Projections developed by the Commonwealth's ResilientMA initiative show what temperatures could look like by 2050 and 2100. Based on downscaled climate projections of a high-emissions scenario (red band in Figures A1 and A2), the average temperatures for the Connecticut River watershed are expected to increase by 4 – 8°F by 2050 and by 7 – 13°F by 2090 (Figure A1).^{18,19}

¹⁸ Downscaled climate projections are arrived at by using various statistics-based techniques to determine relationships between large-scale climate patterns/models and observed local climate patterns to provide projections on smaller scales.

¹⁹ [Resilientma.mass.gov](https://resilientma.mass.gov)

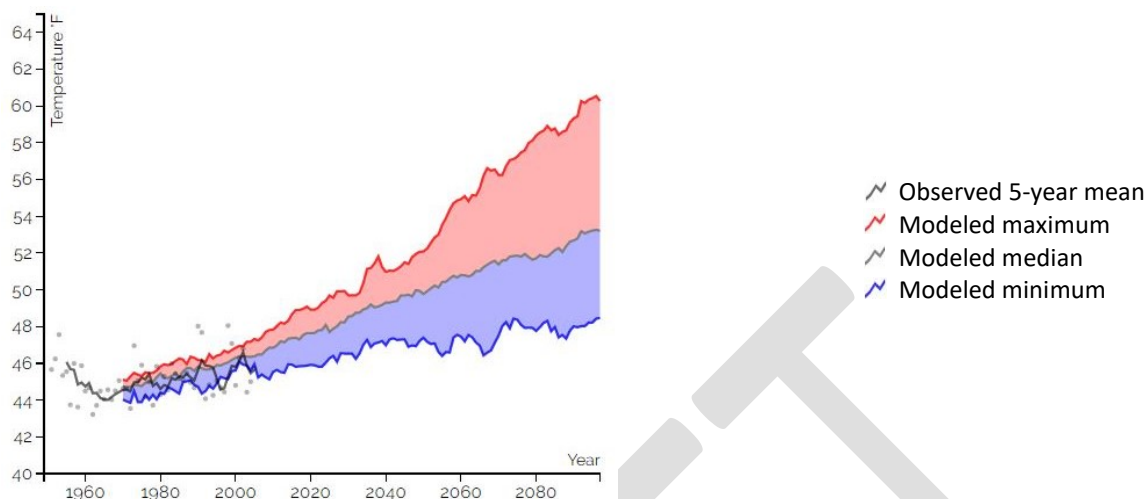


Figure A1. Annual Average Temperature Observed and Projected, Franklin County, 2050s – 2090s
Source: ResilientMA

These warmer temperatures will be punctuated by an estimated median of 29 days above 90°F by 2050 and by 46 days above 90°F by 2090 (Figure A2).²⁰ As average temperatures get warmer, the median projected number of days below freezing (32°F) are projected to decrease by 28 days by 2050 and 44 days by 2090.

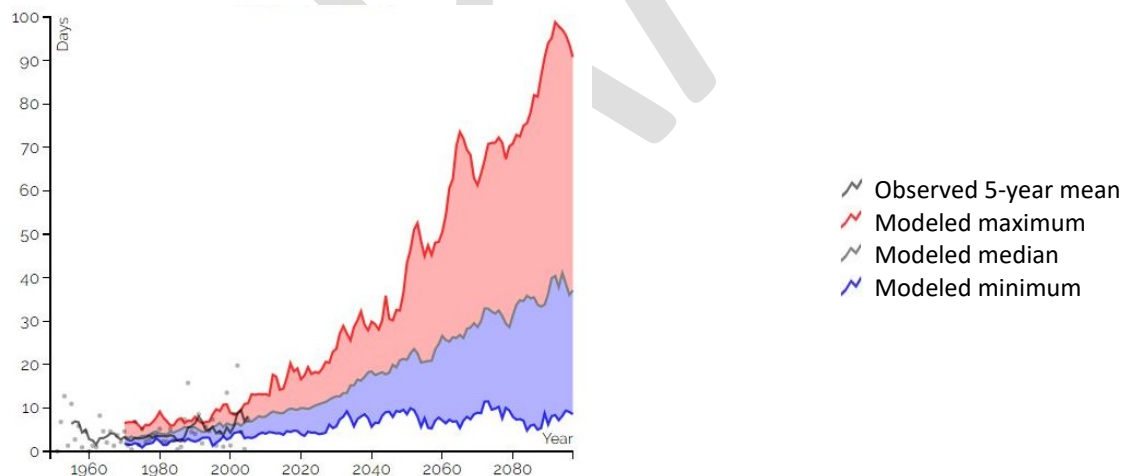


Figure A2. Annual Days with Maximum Temperature Above 90°F Observed and Projected, Franklin County, 2050s – 2090s
Source: ResilientMA

²⁰ The ResilientMA graphs present a range of modeled projections with a *median*, or middle value. When a median is given, it means that half of the climate models predict that numbers will be higher than the median, and half of the models predict that numbers will be lower.

Municipal planning efforts undertaken in Whately in the last decade have identified the community's strengths, vulnerabilities, and needs in the face of climate and non-climate hazards.

Summary of the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan

Whately's 2021 Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Plan reflects the findings of two community workshops held virtually in early 2021. The plan identifies the top climate-related hazards impacting Whately: flooding, drought, severe storms, and extreme temperatures.

The plan explores the potential impact of these hazards and the town's vulnerability to those impacts, including:

- The vulnerability of water supply and water infrastructure in the face of drought and flooding (see also Planning for Water Needs section below);
- The impacts of drought, heavy precipitation, extreme temperatures, and severe wind on farmland and businesses;
- The vulnerability of road and drainage infrastructure to flooding and erosion;
- The risk of wildfire in forested neighborhoods due to drought and the vulnerabilities in firefighting infrastructure;
- The impact to health from wildfire smoke;
- The impacts of extreme cold, heat, or storms on outdoor workers, elderly residents, isolated residents, and residents dependent on medical supplies;
- The impact of temperature change, drought, and invasive species on forests, particularly northern tree species and related industries;
- The impact of invasive species on native habitats and infrastructure; and
- The risk to all residents of vector-borne disease from ticks and mosquitoes.

Priority Populations

The impacts of climate change are not felt equally. **Priority populations** in the context of climate change planning encompasses the people or communities who may be disproportionately impacted by climate change due to life circumstances that systematically increase their exposure to climate hazards or make it harder to respond.¹ In Whately, priority populations may include low-income households, households that speak a language other than English, people of color, older residents, youth, and residents with a disability.

¹ResilientMass, Environmental Justice and Equity, <https://resilientma.mass.gov/mvp/content.html?toolkit=justice>

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Current strengths the town has in adapting to climate change include its commitment to road and road drainage improvements, interconnection of the water system to neighboring municipal systems as back up, a principal emergency shelter at the elementary school with a backup generator, and established social networks such as neighborhood listservs and Valley Neighbors. The MVP Plan's recommendations for addressing climate vulnerability in Whately are organized by sector and by priority. With an up-to-date MVP Plan, the Town is eligible for MVP Action Grants offered through the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA).

Summary of the Hazard Mitigation Plan

Whately's 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) identifies all hazards that do currently or could potentially impact Whately and rates the likely extent, probability, and severity of impact, and the town's overall hazard vulnerability. The plan also provides description and summaries of past occurrences, probability of occurrence, impact, and the town's vulnerability to each of the following hazards: flooding, severe snow/ice storms, hurricanes/tropical storms, severe thunderstorm/wind/microbursts, tornadoes, wildfire, earthquakes, dam failure, drought, landslides, extreme temperatures, invasive species, manmade hazards, and vector-borne diseases.

The plan includes an extensive recommendation table with suggestions for which parties can take responsibility for actions, potential funding sources, estimated timeframes, and priority. High priority recommendations that came out of this plan touch on:

- Bolstering critical facilities and infrastructure, such as equipping the Dickinson Memorial Library and South County Senior Center with backup power so they can be reliable cooling stations;
- Conducting public education and outreach, such as recruiting more residents to the Blackboard Connect system for emergency communications; and
- Completing an assessment of vulnerable population needs for communication, evacuation, and sheltering during hazard events and reviewing local plans and regulations for how they can improve hazard mitigation.

With an approved HMP, the Town is eligible to apply to the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) for hazard mitigation grants administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Planning for Heat

Extreme heat is becoming more common as annual and peak temperatures continue to break records. Earth's temperature has risen about 2°F since 1850. According to the U.S.

National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the eleven warmest years on record all occurred in the eleven years prior to the writing of this plan: 2025, 2024, 2023, 2016, 2020, 2019, 2017, 2015, 2022, 2018, and 2021.²¹ To illustrate how this warming trend is accelerating, when the new century started in 2000, the first year to set a new global high-temperature record was 2005. Now, 2005 is only the 13th warmest year on record.²²

Extreme heat and air quality issues from distant wildfires are negatively impacting outdoor work and play, forcing changes in how people spend time outdoors. Heat is starting to impact people's ability to get places. Here or in other parts of the country, heat is causing issues with power, internet, road, and rail infrastructure that was not designed to handle extremely high temperatures.

Priority populations in Whately will likely be the most impacted by heat. Older residents are more susceptible to heat stress, stroke, or other heat-related conditions, particularly those who cannot adequately cool their homes. Low-income residents who do not have good weatherization in their home or cannot afford air conditioning are also vulnerable to heat, which can exacerbate existing health conditions. Whately is also home to dozens of farms that depend on people working outdoors for long hours in the summer. While cases are rare in Massachusetts, farmworkers nationwide are more likely to die of heat-related illness than workers in any other industry, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Their death rate is 35 times higher than the cross-industry average, and nearly three times higher than construction workers, the next most affected industry.²³

The Town has designated cooling shelters at the Dickinson Memorial Library and at the South County Senior Center, which can support non-working and remote-work residents during the day. Schools are careful to monitor heat and air quality to keep students inside during dangerous conditions.

Planning for Water Variability

Water is both a key asset to the Whately community—providing drinking water, habitat, irrigation, and community enjoyment—and the source of multiple vulnerabilities. Floods and droughts can disrupt both daily life and economic stability. In wet years, swollen streams

²¹ NASA Earth Observatory, <https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/153806/2024-was-the-warmest-year-on-record>, accessed 2/11/2025; National Centers for Environmental Information, <https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/news/global-climate-202513>, accessed 3/27/26

²² Lindsey, Rebecca and Luann Dahlman. "Climate change: global temperature", published January 2024, accessed May 2025: <https://www.climate.gov/news-features/understanding-climate/climate-change-global-temperature>

²³ <https://www.gazettenet.com/Climate-change-and-farming-How-extreme-heat-affects-farming-57097558>

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and rivers have caused flooding and erosion along roads and in farm fields. Untreated stormwater runoff carries pollutants into streams and rivers, compromising habitat, fishing, and swimming. In dry years, farmers spend more time and money irrigating crops, private wells run low or dry, and the water supply for firefighting is diminished. Impervious surface, such as roads, driveways, and parking lots exacerbate drought conditions because less rain and snowmelt can soak into the ground, instead running off into waterways and rapidly leaving the watershed. Rising temperatures are increasing evaporation of water from land, which also reduces the amount of water available to replenish groundwater.

The following sections explore the potential impacts of climate change on Whately's major water resources.

Summary of the Watershed Resilience Plan

The 2023 Water-Wise Whately: A Watershed-Scale Climate Resilience Plan provides a comprehensive look at the ecological and physical conditions that contain and impair Whately's water resources.²⁴ The plan details the public reservoirs and dam systems, drinking water supply and quality, and industrial and agricultural water use. It notes that the low level of impervious surface and high level of forest coverage in the watershed's uplands positively contributes to groundwater quality and quantity. The plan presents three main recommendations for building a water-resilient Whately, summarized as:

1. Pair conservation with water-wise development: consider the condition and capacity of water infrastructure in the town's efforts to meet housing needs and maintain a healthy economy.
2. Manage and restore landscapes across scales: actively manage and restore habitats and infrastructure like riparian buffers, agricultural fields, forests, and stream crossings.
3. Analyze and manage the health of Whately's waters at the watershed scale: accurately identify issues, promote a holistic and interdisciplinary approach, and facilitate inter-town collaboration that makes efficient use of limited time and funding.

Public Drinking Water for Whately

Whately depends on both public and private wells for drinking water. Residents, farms, and businesses in east and central Whately have access to a municipal water supply system run by the Whately Water Department, though some of these residents opt to use private wells.

²⁴ Ervin, B, Sara Smmo Ozawa, Tyson Neukirch, a publication of the Conway School. *Water-Wise Whately: A Watershed-Scale Climate Resilience Plan, 2023*:
https://issuu.com/conwaydesign/docs/2023_whately_winterfinalset_reduced_issue

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Residents and farms in West Whately are at a higher elevation than the public water supply and therefore must rely on private wells.

Figure A4 shows a cross-section of the town from west (left) to east (right), illustrating how precipitation reaches the various water supply areas. Not pictured in the graphic is the South Deerfield Water District reservoir, which is also located in the uplands in the northwest corner of town.

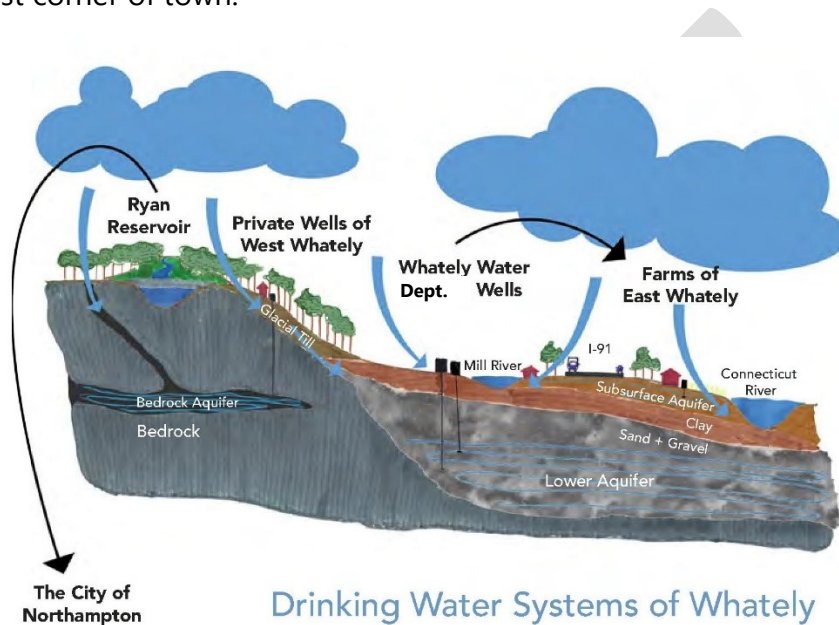


Figure A4. Drinking Water Systems of Whately

Source: Whately Watershed Resilience Plan

The Whately Water Department has been operating a municipal drinking water supply from two public wells since the 1980s. These wells were drilled on the western edge of the Mill River after the shallow aquifer supplying private wells in East Whately became contaminated by pesticides in 1984. In 2020, a second public water system that had served a small number of properties in Whately Center was folded into the Whately Water Department. The combined system serves residents in East Whately and Whately Center, as well as five municipal properties, the Congregational Church, and the Whately Inn. There is a concrete water storage facility with a half-million-gallon capacity.

The Whately Water Department serves 459 connections (about 900 people) using 21 miles of water main.²⁵ Residential use is the highest consumer of the water supply (46%). This is followed by commercial (19%), industrial (11%), municipal (11%), agricultural (8%), unaccounted for/other (5%), and institutional (<1%) uses. Average daily metered water use

²⁵ Comprehensive Environmental, Inc. for the FRCOG. *Drought Resiliency Needs Assessment*, 2025. <https://frcog.org/publications/drought-resiliency-needs-assessment-for-franklin-county-massachusetts/>

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(this excludes municipal and unaccounted water) was 0.119 million gallons in 2025. Total capacity for both systems is 0.250 million gallons daily. Annual water use fluctuates, but a net increase of an annual usage of ten million gallons since 2019 indicates that water use is trending upward, and not proportionately tied to development.

The Town's MVP and Hazard Mitigation Plans documented concern that the public water supply is vulnerable to supply issues in the case of a prolonged drought. Agricultural operations in Whately will become more dependent on the public water supply for irrigation during periods of drought. Private wells that tap groundwater or a shallow aquifer may be even more susceptible to running dry during drought.

Both plans also highlight concerns about potential flood impacts from the Mill River to the public water system. In 2015, with funding from FEMA, the Town redirected the flow of the Mill River to a former meander channel to reduce the risk of flood damage and contamination to the two source wells. However, there remains concern among Town officials that the wells are still susceptible to impacts from flooding as flood risk increases with climate change. The 2022 *Franklin County Water and Wastewater Systems Study* recommends conducting a groundwater exploration program to identify a new source well for the Whately Water Department near their storage tank to mitigate flood risk and improve the resiliency of the system.^{26, 27}

The *Franklin County Water and Wastewater Systems Study* and the *Drought Resiliency Needs Assessment for Franklin County Massachusetts* include additional recommendations for improving infrastructure and practices for climate resilience and creating redundancy in the system in case of a contamination event or infrastructure failure. These are presented in the Recommendations section of this plan.

Public Drinking Water Reservoirs in Whately

Whately is also home to part of the public drinking water supply for both the City of Northampton and the South Deerfield Water District. The West Whately Reservoir is a back-up reservoir for the Northampton public water supply located below the active Ryan Reservoir. South Deerfield Water Supply District sources its water from the Roaring Brook and Whately Glen Reservoirs, located in Conway and Whately, respectively. The water treatment facility is located at the end of Glen Road in Whately.

²⁶ Tighe & Bond for the FRCOG. *Franklin County Water and Wastewater Study*, 2022: <https://frcog.org/project/franklin-county-water-and-wastewater-study/>

²⁷ This recommendation was notably not included in the 2023 Water System Capital Improvements Plan for the Whately Water Department (Resilient Civil Engineering, P.C. Report on Water Systems Capital Improvements Plan. Whately Water Department, 16 Feb. 2023.)

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The Whately portion of the Northampton public water supply watershed is undeveloped, majority protected (by the Commonwealth, City of Northampton, and Smith College), and almost entirely forested. The Whately portion of the South Deerfield Water Supply District watershed is undeveloped and heavily forested. Half of it is protected and the other half is owned by a single private landowner. Land use in Whately does not appear to pose a major threat to either water supply at this time.

Dams

The dams associated with the two public drinking water reservoirs impact downstream water quality and habitat in the brooks that flow out of them, both key coldwater fisheries. The controlled release of water from the reservoirs causes low- to no-flow scenarios during dry periods that disrupt seasonal flow variations, limit the natural aquatic habitat, and dysregulate seasonal triggers that support aquatic species. According to the 2021 Whately Open Space and Recreation Plan, the West Brook can experience no-flow conditions during dry periods due to water management in the Ryan/Whately Reservoirs. The Whately Conservation Commission has had concerns about the ecological impacts on diminished baseflow on this brook and has requested that the City of Northampton consider changing their dam management protocols to increase baseflow. At this time, the Northampton Water Division states that it is not able to increase baseflow in the West Brook and maintain safe reservoir levels for drinking water quality.²⁸

While the dams are currently maintained in good condition, the failure of either of the reservoir dams poses a significant hazard in Whately. The Ryan/Whately Reservoir dams are rated as High Hazard by the Massachusetts Office of Dam Safety, meaning that it is located where failure will likely cause loss of life and serious damage. The Whately Glen Reservoir is rated as Significant Hazard.

Rivers and streams

In addition to contamination of the Town's public drinking water wells, Whately residents are concerned with excessive flooding in the Mill River impacting agricultural operations along North Street and damage to road infrastructure. The Connecticut River poses less flood risk to Whately residents, farms, and infrastructure thanks to the elevation of the town above the river. However, contaminated flood waters and drought in the Connecticut River both negatively impact farms that rely on the river for irrigation.

²⁸ Ervin, B, Sara Smmo Ozawa, Tyson Neukirch, a publication of the Conway School. *Water Water-Wise Whately: A Watershed-Scale Climate Resilience Plan*, 2023: https://issuu.com/conwaydesign/docs/2023_whately_winterfinalset_reduced_issue

Climate Opportunities & Challenges Analysis

Heat

As extreme heat becomes more common, the Town can play a role in reducing heat impacts in public buildings, fostering public awareness of cooling centers, and working to integrate other supportive services to reach those most in need. Protections for outdoor workers are more difficult to establish, although some municipalities around the country are adopting heat safety ordinances.

Drinking Water

The majority of Whately residents and farms get their drinking and irrigation water from the public water system. The public water supply is vulnerable to reduced supply from prolonged drought, contamination from groundwater infiltration, or flood damage to the system's two wells located along the Mill River. Without knowing exactly how susceptible Whately's public water system is to extreme flooding and drought, there are actions the Town can take—many in the \$5,000 range—that will increase climate resilience and improve redundancy in the system.

Stormwater

In Whately, stormwater is causing localized flooding in some neighborhoods and both paved and unpaved roads are becoming increasingly vulnerable to stormwater erosion. Proactive stormwater management in the form of structural and non-structural stormwater best management practices will help mitigate more serious stormwater impacts over time. Infiltrating stormwater will reduce impacts of drought on private wells and the public drinking water system.

Vulnerable populations

Whately seniors, residents dependent on medical devices, and migrant or low-English-proficiency farmworkers may have difficulty accessing information, transportation, shelters, and cooling centers during emergencies. West Whately has limited broadband, cell coverage, and fire hydrants, leaving those residents more vulnerable to the impacts of power outages, emergencies, and fires.

Emergency management

Municipalities are likely to see their financial and management burden increase as disasters become more frequent and there is a slowdown in Federal aid for hazard mitigation planning, emergency management, and disaster recovery. Whately can prepare ahead of time for improved emergency management, adequate emergency shelters and supplies, functioning emergency communication systems, and disaster expense tracking.

Energy Overview

Today, Massachusetts produces about one-fifth of the energy it uses. Natural gas fueled 63% of in-state electricity generation in 2023, followed by solar power at 25%.²⁹ Slowing climate change will require both a reduction in energy use and the decarbonization of energy consumption. Reducing energy consumption, weatherizing, improving efficiency, transitioning to electricity as an energy source, and transitioning to renewable energy sources such as solar and wind all contribute to these goals. Like other towns in the region, Whately officials and residents also see long term financial benefits to energy reduction and decarbonization. This section looks at efforts and opportunities to improve energy systems and transition to more renewable sources.

Municipal Energy

Municipal energy consumption is the Town's greatest lever for changing Whately's overall energy consumption. The Town has already taken advantage of opportunities to retrofit, weatherize, electrify, and solarize municipal buildings, and has identified a number of needed energy projects.

Municipal Energy Work Completed

Whately attained Massachusetts Green Community designation in 2012 after it met the following criteria:

- Passed zoning in designated locations for the as-of-right siting of renewable or alternative energy generating facilities, research and development facilities, or manufacturing facilities;
- Adopted expedited application and permitting for renewable energy development;
- Adopted an Energy Reduction Plan (ERP) outlining a path to 20% of energy use reduction after five years of implementation;
- Adopted a Fuel-Efficient Vehicle Policy; and
- Adopted the Stretch Code—building energy requirements that are more stringent than the state's base building code.

Becoming a Green Community is advantageous for small communities with limited budgets, as the program provides grant funding for energy efficiency projects with no match

²⁹ U.S. Energy Information Administration, State Profile and Energy Estimates, Massachusetts Profile Analysis, December 2024: <https://www.eia.gov/state/analysis.php?sid=MA>

requirements.³⁰ As of 2024, Whately had received \$394,163 in Green Communities grant funds to complete energy conservation and energy efficiency measures in municipally owned buildings, particularly the Whately Elementary School.

Municipal Energy Use and Opportunities

According to the 2024 Annual Green Communities Report, Whately has not yet reached its targets for municipal energy reduction established in 2012.³¹ In fiscal year (FY) 2024, total energy use, measured in BTUs, had actually increased by 13% over the baseline. Some of this increase can be attributed to the water and sewer plants, which have been experiencing 50% – 75% energy use increases over the baseline. The increase is also due to the fact that the Town Offices were added in 2015 to the municipal building portfolio and air conditioning has been added to the Town Hall. The highest energy use buildings are the Whately Elementary School, the Highway Garage, and the Town Offices.

The Whately Elementary School accounts for 42% of municipal energy use and 39% of municipal emissions. It is common for schools to be the highest energy users because of size and frequency of use. The school has completed a number of weatherization projects in recent years and planned capital improvements will contribute to further energy conservation.

The Town Highway Garage uses less than half of the total energy used by the elementary school, but it has almost three and a half times higher energy use intensity compared to the school and nearly five times that of highway garages in comparably sized towns. The Highway Department building is slated to be renovated or replaced, with energy investments as part of the redevelopment plan.

The Town Offices at Sandy Lane were originally built as a library storage building and were not built with highly insulative windows. Plans for the future use of the Town Offices are in

³⁰ The Green Communities program is now accepting applicants to the Climate Leader Communities certification program, which creates a new voluntary framework for meeting greenhouse gas reduction goals. This program provides a significant funding opportunity to take on larger-scale decarbonization projects. To become eligible for the Climate Leader certification, the Town would have to work toward the following goals:

- Have a local body (Sustainability Committee, Energy Committee, etc.) that advises the municipality on clean energy/climate initiatives;
- Commit to eliminate on-site fossil fuel use by 2050 (municipal buildings/operations);
- Create a municipal decarbonization roadmap;
- Adopt a Zero-Emission Vehicle first policy; and
- Adopt the Specialized Opt-In building code.

³¹ Email correspondence with Community Development Planner Erica Roper, 2/24/2025

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flux, so no major electrification projects are lined up at this time. Construction of rooftop solar (133kW) and a generator are close to complete.

Vehicle use, by contrast, decreased by almost 45% in FY24 as the Town has replaced fossil-fuel vehicles with two electric vehicles (2023 and 2024). Plans to put Level 2 Ultra EV chargers at the Library and Town Offices to serve municipally owned vehicles and the public are being pursued as incentives are available.

Residential, Commercial and Industrial Energy

Whately adopted a municipal aggregation program in 2020. The Whately Community Choice Power Supply Program purchases electricity in bulk from a competitive supplier on behalf of the residents and businesses within the community. As a green municipal aggregation program, consumers can purchase up to 100% of their electricity from New England sources. Municipal aggregation is one of the most significant leverage points a municipality can use to increase their consumption of renewable energy in the town overall.

Several years ago, the state-sponsored SolarizeWhately program helped residents get solar arrays on their property at a discounted rate. Although there is no readily available data on solar distribution by town, residential and commercial solar continues to slowly grow in Whately. Some farm businesses have converted a portion of their farmland to ground-mounted solar, which is considered helpful for offsetting energy costs and diversifying farm-based income.

Many property owners are interested in energy efficiency and renewable energy resources but may lack knowledge about how to pursue it. The Town does not have capacity to do outreach to property owners on their own, but is interested in taking advantage of programs to support community-based volunteer outreach.

Electric Vehicles

An increasing number of residents drive electric vehicles (EVs) or plug-in hybrids (PHEVs). There are two public-use EV chargers in Whately at the Whately Park and Ride.

The Town currently owns two electric hybrid vehicles and is interested in growing the electric fleet as the right vehicles become available. If the Town were to seek Climate Leader Community designation, it would be required to adopt a Zero-Emission Vehicle First policy.

Solar and Battery Storage Siting

The flat, open areas that cover much of east and central Whately that are ideal for farming and housing are also ideal for siting ground-mounted solar and battery storage systems. The solar and electric storage development sector continues to grow at a fast rate. While Whately residents are very supportive of renewable energy to help mitigate climate change

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and foster energy independence, they want this kind of development to occur with limited environmental and community impacts. In Whately, balancing the need to provide clean energy, housing, and protect its world-class farmland is particularly important.

Whately's municipal Solar Electric Generating Facilities zoning bylaw sets standards for the placement, design, construction, operation, monitoring, modification, and removal of solar photovoltaic installations that try to optimize public safety and minimize impacts to agricultural, environmental, scenic, natural, and historic resources, but have not had major updates for several years.

In 2024, an ad-hoc Energy Storage Systems Study Committee formed to look at various tools that could assist the community in helping to ensure proper and safe development of battery storage systems. Given the Commonwealth's goals for renewable energy and current market conditions, Whately will likely continue to experience solar and battery storage development pressure, leaving the community to navigate potential conflicts between climate mitigation goals, environmental protection, and agriculture preservation.

Energy Opportunities & Challenges Analysis

Energy planning

Whately has successfully managed energy planning and regular implementation of projects, including a solar project at the Town Offices slated to wrap up in 2026. However, there is currently a lot of funding and technical assistance available from state and private sources that the Town could further take advantage of.

The Town of Whately completed an investment-grade energy audit across all municipally owned buildings in 2010 for lighting, sensors, and building envelope. The audit could be updated and more energy efficiency and electrification recommendations added. Having a comprehensive understanding of building energy sources and a multi-year plan in place with potential replacements can help the Town use capital funds and grant opportunities more effectively.

With general support from the community, the Town should be considering energy efficiency and decarbonization in the planning stages of any retrofits or new building projects. For example, if the Town Offices were ever to be repurposed to another use, it would be advisable to plan for energy retrofits.

Whately Elementary School

As the largest energy user in town, the Whately Elementary School presents many opportunities for energy reduction and renewable generation. The HVAC system at the school is becoming unreliable and needs to be replaced. The building's roof was not built to

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bear the load of solar panels, but the school grounds could accommodate ground-mounted solar panels, so long as playing fields are not compromised. Financing has historically been a challenge, but the cost-benefit of such a project may have improved since mini-splits were installed in the building.

Electric vehicles

While the future of funding for EV charging is uncertain, the Town can look to public-private partnerships to leverage efficiency and renewable opportunities such as EV charging infrastructure at commercial locations like the Whately Diner and Whately Inn.

Solar and battery storage

To ensure that solar and battery storage development stays in line with community preferences and priorities, the Town will need to continue to be proactive about making sure zoning is steering solar and battery storage installations toward appropriate locations and responsible installation.

Recommendations

Increase the redundancy and resilience of the public water supply system

- From the 2022 Franklin County Water and Wastewater Systems Study:
 - Conduct a groundwater exploration program to identify a new source well near the Whately Water Department storage tank or another alternative source to mitigate flood risk, create redundancy in the system in the event of source contamination, drought conditions, or infrastructure failures.
 - Install additional distribution pipes in case of failure of the main pipe.
 - Install a back-up power source for the wellhouse and treatment processes to ensure continuous operations in the event of a power outage.
 - Install a permanent source of power at the water storage tank for continuous monitoring ability.
- From the 2025 Drought Resiliency Needs Assessment for Franklin County Massachusetts:
 - Develop a drought management plan (highest priority recommendation). This can be combined with a water conservation plan that outlines strategies for reducing system-wide water consumption and/or water loss control plan that minimizes non-revenue water losses for potential savings.
 - Implement a leak detection program to identify and repair leaks in the water system to prevent long-term losses.
 - Calibrate source meters on an annual basis.
 - Implement 100% customer metering (1% missing). Perform regular testing and replacement of customer meters.
 - Maintain an increasing block-rate billing structure where the unit cost of water increases with higher usage to deter customers from high, non-essential consumption.

Reduce the impacts of climate change townwide

- Work with the FRCOG to identify and design solutions for roads that are most vulnerable to stormwater and fluvial erosion. Refer to the FRCOG's *Unpaved Roads Stormwater Management Toolkit* for helpful analysis tools and a library of stormwater best management practices, including green infrastructure.
- Strengthen the resilience of the Town's cooling shelters.
- Promote the use of the Towns' cooling shelters.
- Explore municipal tools for protecting vulnerable workers to heat exposure.
- Apply for the MVP 2.0 planning grant to create opportunities for exploring social resilience to climate change.

Bolster resilience of critical facilities and emergency management

- Support the new emergency management director to manage a town-level emergency management team that meets, trains, and conducts exercises regularly.
- Update the Whately Hazard Mitigation Plan, when funding can be identified.
- Promote basic emergency management trainings for all Town staff and elected officials. Trainings are available through the Northeast Emergency Management Training & Education (part of the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency) and the Western Regional Homeland Security Advisory Council (coordinated by the FRCOG).
- Complete a Threat and Hazard Identification Analysis (THIRA) for the town.
- Continue to routinely update resource inventories (vehicles, equipment, shelters, generators, fuel, medical supplies) and agreements with neighboring jurisdictions and key partners.
- Establish clear financial and documentation procedures during incidents to support reimbursement from state and federal disaster programs and to track costs accurately.

Increase capacity to do energy related projects

- Hold regular Energy Committee meetings and encourage members to participate in free education and peer-exchange opportunities to support municipal energy management projects.
- Consider joining the next round of FRCOG's Regional Energy Planning Assistance (REPA) or Municipal Energy Manager (MEM) grants for support with energy project planning and grant assistance.
- Continue to participate in the FRCOG's Regional Energy Committees Coalition meetings.
- Consider joining the Commonwealth's Property Assessment Clean Energy (PACE) program, a municipal opt-in program that enables commercial and industrial property owners to more easily finance comprehensive energy upgrades.
- Apply for state grants or programs to support outreach to homeowners.

Take advantage of energy funding opportunities

- Update energy assessments and plans using no-cost opportunities such as Mass Save studies and META grant technical assistance.
- Apply for Green Communities grants, Mass Save incentives, and other grants as they become available to explore energy efficiency, recommissioning, and electrification of the Town Offices and other buildings.

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- Consider attaining a Climate Leader Communities certification to access more funding for decarbonization.

Enable renewable energy opportunities while keeping ecosystems and farmland intact

- Continue municipal planning and zoning revisions for solar and battery storage siting and permitting. Take advantage of the new Renewable Energy Siting Regional Coordinator and the UMass Clean Energy Extension's Community Planning for Solar Toolkit for help.

DRAFT

Community Facilities & Services

Technical Memo

Community Facilities & Services Guiding Principle

Responsibly improve and expand community spaces, recreation options, sidewalk networks, and services to encourage community participation and support the needs of residents, while investing in energy efficiency and resilience of town facilities.

Introduction

Whately's public facilities and municipal services form the backbone of the community's quality of life, ensuring that residents, businesses, and visitors benefit from safe, reliable, and efficient operations. Well-maintained public buildings and facilities—like the town offices, public library, and elementary school – are critical to the civic function and identity of a town. Police, fire, and highway services provide for a safe, clean, and healthy environment. From maintaining public infrastructure to providing accessible community spaces, these functions support every aspect of daily life. Understanding the current capacity, condition, and reach of these services becomes essential for planning equitable and sustainable improvements that meet the community's long-term needs.

To continue to meet the needs of the community in the present and future, the Town must be actively engaged in capital planning, asset management, and implementation of needed projects. Prioritizing short- and long-term investment allows the Town to continue to provide the services and public spaces community members expect. This section provides an overview of the current municipal infrastructure and public services and identifies opportunities and challenges for the Town to continue providing robust municipal services.

This technical memo builds on previous planning that the Town of Whately has conducted, including the following plans:

- [2025 Center School Re-Use Feasibility Study](#)
- [2025 Town of Whately Community Preservation Committee Plan](#)
- [2024 Digital Equity Plan](#)
- [2024 S. White Dickinson Memorial Library Strategic Plan](#)
- [2021 Whately MVP Resiliency Plan](#)
- [2021 Open Space and Recreation Plan](#)
- 2018 Complete Streets Prioritization Plan

Survey Results

Community Facilities and Services was a small section of the 2023 Comprehensive Visioning Survey, however, a few priorities stood out. Respondents stated that providing a tennis or pickleball court was a high priority, as well as an improved swimming area or a pool. Regarding internet connection, cost of a service plan was a top issue for households, followed by internet speed and cybersecurity. When asked to rank particular actions that Whately could take, protecting agricultural land and open space from development was the top choice, followed by investing in energy efficiency, renewable energy, and climate resilience for municipal facilities.

Inventory & Existing Conditions

This section provides an overview of existing conditions of Whately’s facilities and services, including a building inventory (Table A2 and Map A4), current departments (Table A3), boards and committees (Table A4), and municipal services provided by regional agencies (Table A5). Further details on certain services can be found in other Technical Memos within this Comprehensive Plan.

Table A2. Municipal Building Inventory

Building	Address
Center School	218 Chestnut Plain Rd
Cemetery Barn	(213) Chestnut Plain Rd
S. White Dickinson Memorial Library	202 Chestnut Plain Rd
Old Town Hall	194 Chestnut Plain Rd
Highway Garage & Salt Shed	71 Christian Lane
Town Offices	4 Sandy Lane
Fire Station	63 Christian Lane
Police Station	77 Christian Lane
Whately Elementary School	273 Long Plain Rd
Transfer Station	73 Christian Lane
Water Storage Tank (500,000 gal)	Dickinson Hill Rd
Pump & Filter Building	Chestnut Plain Rd
Pump Station	Westbrook Rd
Herlihy Park Pavilion, Concession, Restrooms & Shed	River Rd

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Table A3. Town Departments

Department	Address
Administration	Town Offices, 4 Sandy Lane
Assessing	Town Offices, 4 Sandy Lane
Cemeteries	Town Offices, 4 Sandy Lane
Community Development	Town Offices, 4 Sandy Lane
Emergency Management	Town Offices, 4 Sandy Lane
Fire Department	63 Christian Lane
Highway Department	71 Christian Lane
Library	202 Chestnut Plain Road
Police Department	77 Christian Lane
Town Accountant	Town Offices, 4 Sandy Lane
Town Clerk	Town Offices, 4 Sandy Lane
Transfer Station	73 Christian Lane
Treasurer - Collector	Town Offices, 4 Sandy Lane
Water Department	Town Offices, 4 Sandy Lane

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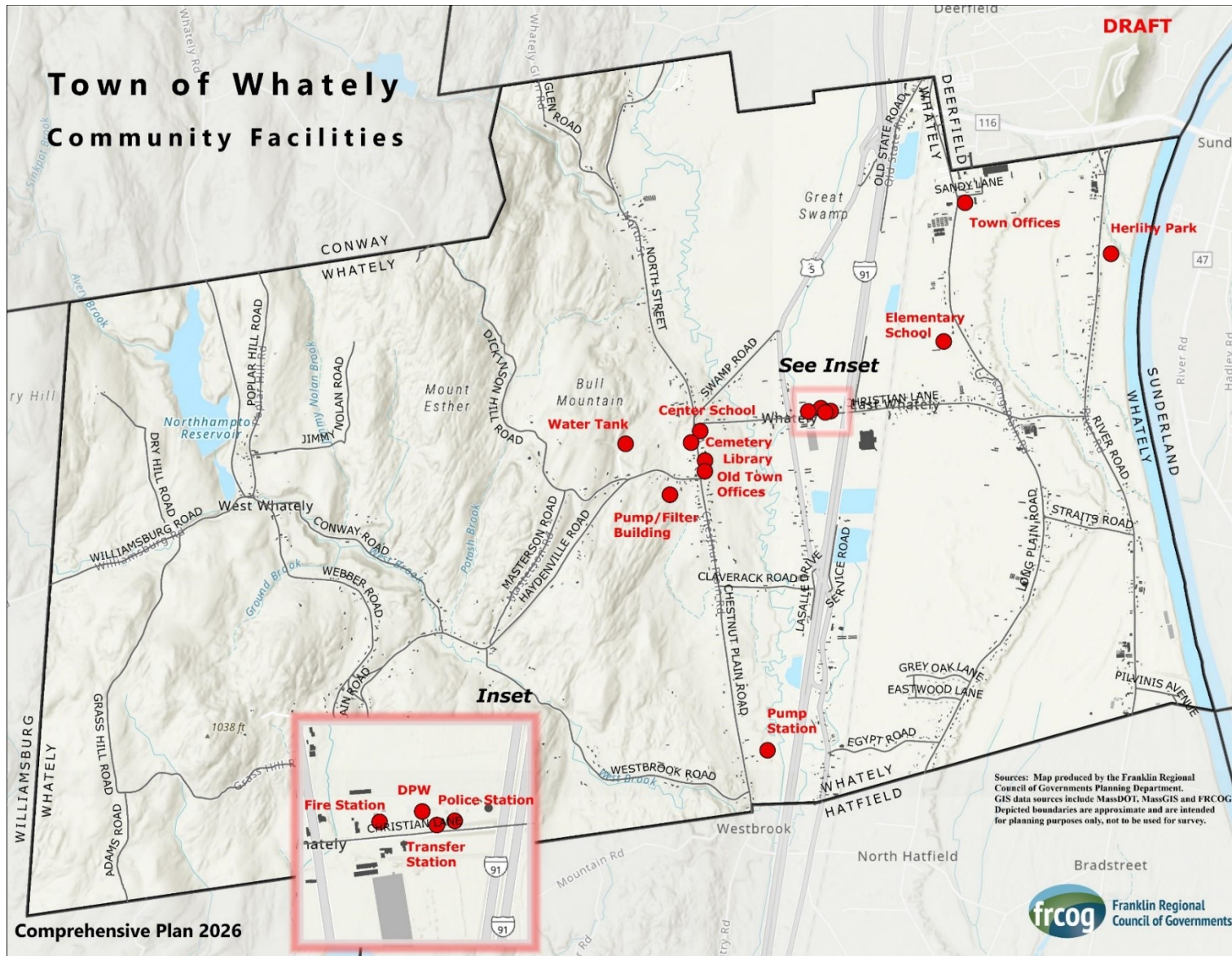
Table A4. Boards and Committees

Agriculture Commission	Franklin Regional Transit Authority
Board of Assessors	Frontier Regional School Committee
Board of Health	Giving Garden Committee
Board of Registrars	Historical Commission
Capital Improvement Planning Committee	Housing Committee
Cemetery Commission	Housing Trust
Center School Committee II	Library Board of Trustees
Community Preservation Committee	Municipal Building Committee
Conservation Commission	Open Space Committee
Council on Aging	Personnel Committee
Cultural Council	Planning Board
Electric Vehicle Committee	Recreation Commission
Energy Committee	Selectboard
Energy Storage Systems Study Committee	South County EMS Board of Oversight
Exit 35 Study Group	South County Senior Center Board of Oversight
FCAT Board of Directors	Tri-Town Beach Commission
Finance Committee	Water Commission
Franklin County Solid Waste Management District	Whately School Committee
Franklin Regional Council of Governments Council	Zoning Board of Appeals

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Table A5. Municipal Services Provided by Regional Agency

Service	Agency & Address
Animal Control	FCSO Regional Animal Control 10 Sandy Lane Turners Falls, MA 01376
Building Inspector	FCCIP/FRCOG 12 Olive Street, Suite 2 Greenfield, MA 01301
Emergency Medical Services	South County EMS 88 Greenfield Road South Deerfield, MA 01373
Foothills Health District	45B Main St PO Box 775 Williamsburg, MA 01096
Schools	Frontier Regional & Union #38 District Offices 113 North Main Street South Deerfield, MA 01373
Senior Services	South County Senior Center 22 Amherst Rd Sunderland, MA 01375
Upper Pioneer Valley Veterans' Services District	Department of Veteran Services 294 Main Street Greenfield, MA 01301



Map A4. Community Facilities

Town Office Building

The Town Office Building is located at 4 Sandy Lane and is the main administrative building for the Town of Whately. It is home to majority of the Town's departments and boards. The building is a 14,000 square foot steel framed metal building consisting of administrative offices, meeting rooms, amenities, storage space, and a three-bay garage. The building was constructed in 2004 and purchased by the Town in 2015. The most recent updates include installation of an emergency backup generator (2025), completed HVAC repairs (2019), and installation of roof-mounted solar photovoltaic panels (2026).

Old Town Hall

The Town Hall building is located at 194 Chestnut Plain Road. It is a historic two-story, 4,700-square-foot wooden framed building. It includes a 175-seat meeting hall on the second floor and a meeting room, historical museum, and amenities on the first floor. The building was constructed in 1844. In 2016, the Town invested \$1.5 million to make the building and site fully accessible and to improve the energy efficiency of the building. The Town Hall is used by the Town and other community groups as a meeting and activity space. The most recent investments and updates include repainting the building exterior and storm window installation (funded FY26 and currently in process).

Highway Department

The Highway Garage is a 3,300-square-foot cinderblock building consisting of six garage bays, a small office, storage areas and a toilet room. The single-level building was constructed in 1960 and has not been significantly renovated since its initial construction. The building houses the operations of the Town's Highway Department. The department is responsible for maintenance, repair, and construction of Town-owned infrastructure, public buildings, parks, streetscapes, and Town-owned roadway. The Town is currently in the design phase for a new highway garage (see the Challenges & Opportunities section). Beyond the need for a new garage, the Highway Department is also in need of replacing several pieces of equipment that are either past their serviceable lifespan, are unsafe to use, or are no longer operable. This includes a loader, dump truck, trailer, and pickup truck.

Center School

The Center School is located at 218 Chestnut Street. The school was constructed in 1910 and was used as an elementary school from 1910 to 1991 when Whately built a new elementary school on Long Plain Road. The Town police, administrative offices, and Board of Health used Center School as offices until 2018, when town offices were relocated to the new Town Offices building on Sandy Lane. Since 2018, the Center School building has remained vacant and unused. The Center School is a contributing building in the National

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Register of Historic Places listed Whately Center Historic District (2003). A feasibility study on potential uses for the building was completed in 2025, with possible scenarios including affordable housing, senior housing, and mixed-use. While there are potential reuse options for the Center School building, recent attempts at redevelopment through the public procurement process have yielded no results. The feasibility study notes there is water damage to the building and recommends immediate repair of the roof to prevent further damage. The Center School Committee II, with approval from the Selectboard, is currently working to develop plans based on the feasibility study for a mixed-use structure to be owned by the Town and rented out. The community desires a co-working space as well as commercial kitchen in this building.

S. White Dickinson Memorial Library

The S. White Dickinson Library is a historic two-story, 4,000-square-foot brick building consisting of book stacks, offices, computer space, storage space, conference room, kitchenette, and toilet rooms. The building was constructed in 1950 and has not been significantly renovated since that time. The most recent updates to the building include repainting of the lower-level interior (funded in FY26 but not yet completed) and sealing of brick surfaces (funded in FY25). Previously, in 2022 the library renovated and installed an elevator and a handicap-accessible bathroom, making the entire library available to all patrons. This was completed with funding from the Robert M. Duda Trust and the Community Preservation Act.

The library completed a Strategic Plan in 2024 that included community input through a town-wide survey and an in-person event. The physical space was noted as a strength, particularly the building's location in the center of town, and the comforting and inviting nature of the space. The staff were highlighted as a strength, providing a welcoming environment for patrons, as well as the variety and quality of programming. Opportunity areas included expanding hours of operation, increasing the diversity of the book collection and "Library of Things," expanded programming, and increased communication and collaboration.

Fire Department

The Fire Station is a 4,000-square-foot concrete/metal building consisting of three garage bays, a small office, storage areas and amenities. The single-level building was constructed in 1968 and has not been significantly renovated since initial construction. The building houses the municipal Fire Department. No recent upgrades or projects for the building were included in the most recent Capital Improvement Plan. The Department is looking at replacing their pumper truck in FY30. Most recent equipment purchases included Airpack replacements (funded in FY26).

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The Fire Department has a force of 17 on-call volunteer firefighters and a part-time Fire Chief. The Fire Department's report in the 2024 Annual Town Report indicated there were 131 calls for assistance. The Department covered every emergency call and relied on mutual aid for major fires. Whately firefighters participate in trainings that include the Massachusetts Fire Academy, evening seminars, multi-agency drills, and in-house training. One firefighter graduated from the Massachusetts Call/Volunteer Academy in Springfield, and a second firefighter participated in the most recent academy.

Police Department

The Police Station is located at 77 Christian Lane. It is a 2,200-square-foot cinderblock building with a small lobby, several offices, a booking room, storage room, conference room, amenities, and a small attached garage. The building was constructed in 1976 as a community youth center and was renovated in 2009. Most recent equipment purchases include a new cruiser (funded in FY25) and new tasers, body cameras and software (funded in FY24). A roof replacement for the police station is being considered for the FY27 budget.

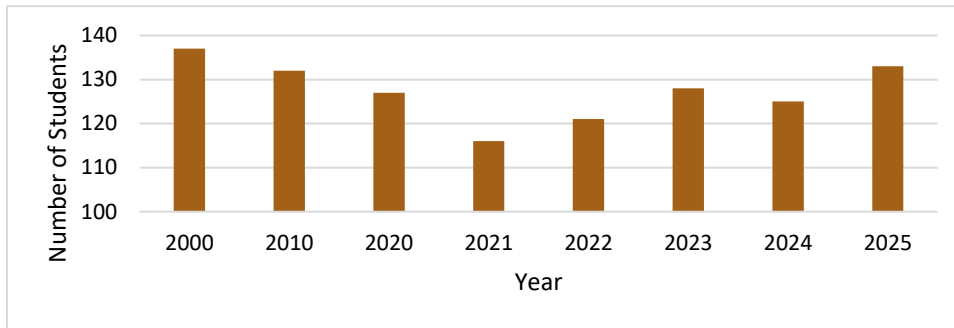
The Police Department has a staff of three full-time offices, including a Chief, and six part-time officers. According to the 2024 Town Annual Report, the department responded to almost 6,000 calls including 911 calls, house/building/location checks, alarm calls, motor vehicle violations, crashes, and assistance to fire/EMS.

Whately Elementary School

The Whately Elementary School is a single-level 29,500-square-foot wood-framed brick building consisting of offices, classrooms, a cafeteria/kitchen, storage areas, a library, toilet rooms and a gymnasium. The building houses the town's only elementary school. The school is part of the Frontier Regional School and Union 38 Districts that includes the towns of Conway, Deerfield, Sunderland, and Whately. The district office is located at 113 North Main Street, South Deerfield. There are approximately 1,550 total students enrolled in the district PreK through Grade 12.

The Whately Elementary School building was constructed in 1990. The building was constructed in compliance with the accessibility requirements in effect at the time. The school was designed to have one of each grade from pre-k through grade 6. Twenty-five students can fit comfortably in a classroom (although that would be a larger number than the school has ever had in any given class), so it is reasonable to conclude that the building was designed to hold 200 students. The current enrollment at the school is 133 in grades PreK thru 6 (see Table A6).

Table A6. Whately Elementary School Enrollment 2000, 2010, 2020 – 2025



Sources: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)

Whately Elementary has seen ongoing maintenance and incremental improvements over the past several years, focused primarily on maintaining safety, functionality, and high-quality learning environments rather than any large-scale renovation or expansion. This work has included routine building upkeep, technology upgrades, and targeted improvements. The most recent upgrades include a multi-phased project installing mini-split heat pumps (FY25 and FY26), installation of electrical subpanels, restroom flooring replacement, and exterior door replacement (all FY25).

The elementary school acts as the town’s designated emergency shelter. It is equipped with a backup generator. The school’s limited capacity, however, makes it reliant on the regional shelter plan for Franklin County developed by the Regional Emergency Planning Committee.

Transfer Station

The Transfer Station is located next to the Highway Garage. Solid waste and recycling can be disposed of at the facility. Trash is accepted at a cost per bag and recycling is free. The Town does not offer municipal trash pickup, although private trash pickup is available to residents. The Town encourages composting through the transfer station collection program and compost bins for backyard composting can be purchased at the Franklin County Solid Waste District office at a subsidized price. Whately residents may bring bulky items to the Greenfield Transfer Station year-round or to the Solid Waste Management District’s Clean Sweep events in May and October. Whately has two closed landfills, capped in 1982 and 1998. Solid waste is now transported out of town. Most recent capital projects include funding for environmental monitoring and wells for the old landfill (FY26).

Cemeteries

Whately has three active cemetery parcels and one future cemetery parcel, totaling 6.5 acres (see Table A7). The public cemeteries are managed by the Whately Cemetery Commission. There is also a privately owned cemetery parcel on Long Plain Road (north of Rt 116) belonging to the South Deerfield Cemetery Association, and another on Long Plain Road (south of 116) owned by the Descent of the Holy Spirit Ukrainian Catholic Church.

Table A7. Cemeteries

Name	Manager	Location
Center Cemetery	Whately Cemetery Commission	Chestnut Plain Rd
East Cemetery	Whately Cemetery Commission	Christian Lane
West Cemetery	Whately Cemetery Commission	Webber Rd
Future Cemetery	Whately Cemetery Commission	Chestnut Plain Rd

In the 2024 Annual Report, the Whately Cemetery Commission indicated interest in future projects including digitizing cemetery records and maps, obtaining digital software for mapping and receiving training on the software, and recording burials and plot sales. The Commission also noted the need to address the issues of tipping or fracture of headstones from weather, winter ground heaving, and/or grave settlement. They also noted the need to address high water table in the center of the northern side of the Center Cemetery.

Recreation

The Town of Whately manages seven recreational facilities, overseen by the Recreation Commission: the gymnasium, playground, and ballfields at the Whately Elementary School; Herlihy Park, including the baseball field and ice rink; and the tot lot at the Center School. Tri-Town Beach is owned and managed by a public, non-municipal entity called the Tri-Town Beach District Commission. Previous community outreach through the development of the Whately Open Space and Recreation Plan indicated that Herlihy Park and the playground at the elementary school were in excellent or okay condition. Even though the public generally approved the quality of these facilities, Town officials have been actively discussing opportunities to improve the ADA accessibility at both facilities, as well as various ideas for expansion at Herlihy Park and creating Connecticut River access. Tri-Town Beach and the Center School tot lot ranked as the two poorest quality facilities in Whately.

Recent improvements and upgrades include funding for installation of batting cages at the Athletic Fields (FY25), purchase of a swimming dock at Tri-Town Beach (FY25), and an accessibility project at Herlihy Park (FY23).

Senior Center and Council on Aging

Whately is part of the South County Senior Center, along with the towns of Deerfield and Sunderland. The Senior Center provides social, health, educational, and recreation activities to the older population in the three communities. The Senior Center is currently located at 22 Amherst Road, Sunderland, Massachusetts. The Center is run by four staff, including a Director. Oversight is through the Board of Oversight with one representative from each of the three town's selectboards. Each town has its own Council on Aging. The Center is currently looking for a new home that will better meet its needs, as the older adult

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population continues to grow in the three communities. This was a recommendation from the 2022 "Aging in South County: A Needs Assessment."

Town Water

The municipal Whately Water Department serves over 400 households, as well as various commercial businesses, industrial operations, and agricultural operations. Previously, the privately operated Whately Water District, incorporated in 1970, served about 40 private residences as well as five municipal properties, the Congregational Church, and the Whately Inn. In 2019, the Town voted to connect the Whately Water District to the water system operated by the Whately Water Department. That connection was completed and the Whately Water District was formally dissolved. The Whately Water Department operates two wells near Interstate 91 adjacent to the Mill River. A third, non-community drinking water supply source is operated by Smith College for the Bechtel Environmental Classroom at the college's MacLeish Field Station on Poplar Hill Road in West Whately. This well was installed around 2012. For more information, including vulnerability of the water systems, see the Climate & Energy Technical Memo of this report.

In addition to the Water Department, about half of Whately households rely on private groundwater wells or springs. The Town is part of the Foothills Health District (along with the towns of Goshen, Westhampton and Williamsburg). The Health District permits all private and semi-private wells and water supplies that are used for drinking or irrigation.

Sewer

The Town does not have a public sewer system. Residential and commercial uses are entirely served by private septic systems. There are no tight-tank septic systems in Whately; tanks lead directly to leaching fields on the property. The lack of a large-scale municipal sewer system may be considered by some businesses as a disadvantage for expanding their operations or moving their company to Whately. South Deerfield has a public sewer system that abuts Whately to the north, but there is currently no access to it.

According to the Board of Health, there is little to no history of septic systems failing in Whately; problems that do occur are site specific. The Town has a septic loan account available for residents that is seldom used. The Foothills Health District is responsible for permitting septic systems for new construction and repairs of existing systems serving residential dwellings and commercial uses.

Broadband

Comcast/Xfinity (a cable provider) is the only major wireline broadband service provider in Whately. Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) is also an option for residents but does not qualify as broadband and does not meet the needs of most residents. Through funding from the state

(Gap Networks Grant Program), Comcast is working to build out Broadband connection to 18 previously unserved properties in Whately. While the broadband infrastructure is fairly robust in Whately, affordability remains an issue for many residents, particularly with limited-to-no assistance from the federal or state government.

Opportunities & Challenges Analysis

Sustaining existing infrastructure and investing in needed improvements is necessary to ensure the town will be able to continue to provide quality services to the residents of Whately. Based on previous plans, discussions with Town staff, and the results of the community survey, the following challenges and opportunities were identified.

Limited staffing, funding predictability, and implementation capacity

The Town relies heavily on a small number of staff and volunteers to provide services and maintain facilities, which constrains the pace of upgrading facilities and implementing resilience projects.

Several key buildings (Town Hall, library, fire station, police station, Center School) need accessibility, energy, and major maintenance upgrades, and some projects are repeatedly deferred in the Capital Improvement Plan.

Funding for large municipal building projects is currently a challenge that will likely only grow due to rising construction costs. A current example is the Town's Highway Garage facility. The Town is reviewing the scope and looking at phasing the construction process due to high construction costs, while also considering alternatives.

Water system vulnerability and potential for sewer

The public water system relies on two closely spaced wells and a single aquifer near the Mill River, leaving it exposed to drought, contamination, and flood or erosion damage despite recent filtration investments. There is also concern about lack of connections to the water supply for firefighting in West Whately.

The Town has no municipal sewer, so all development depends on on-site septic systems, which can limit commercial expansion, encourage sprawl, and complicate siting of new municipal facilities. Both Deerfield and Hatfield have municipal sewer systems with enough capacity that they could potentially be expanded to service Whately. The Towns of Deerfield and Whately, along with the Deerfield Economic Development Industrial Corporation, are exploring the feasibility of expanding the South Deerfield sewer system to the Whately Industrial Park, which would include the Town Offices. Working with both Towns to determine the feasibility and its implications to the towns could lay the foundation for

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commercial and residential development. See the Land Use and Zoning Technical Memo to learn more about potential expansion scenarios.

Climate change and hazard-exposed infrastructure

Increasing heavy rain, drought, and other severe weather events are stressing roads, culverts, water infrastructure, and emergency facilities, with repeated concerns about washouts on town roads and backup power for essential services.

Many facilities and homes predate modern building and energy codes, heightening vulnerability to storms, heat, and flooding.

Possible service gaps for vulnerable and remote populations

West Whately has limited broadband, cell coverage, and fewer hydrants, increasing vulnerability to the impacts of fire emergencies, drought, and power outages.

Seniors, residents dependent on medical devices, and migrant or low-English-proficiency farmworkers may have difficulty accessing shelters, cooling centers, information, and transportation during emergencies.

Elementary School

Whately Elementary is faced with two challenges. The first challenge the school faces is that as a small school serving students with an increasingly diverse range of academic, social-emotional, and special education needs, there are limitations to what the school can provide regarding specialized programming. Due to its limited physical space and staff capacity, the school does not always have the space or staffing flexibility that larger schools may have to provide the growing need for Individualized Education Program (IEP) services, specialized instructional spaces, or 1 on 1 support. This is a growing challenge for all small, rural schools, like Whately Elementary.

Additionally, adapting existing space to meet evolving instructional and therapeutic needs—such as small-group intervention areas, counseling space, or specialized service delivery—can be difficult within the constraints of the current building footprint. The Elementary School anticipates these challenges to grow, including increased demand for individualized supports and specialized services, which could place additional strain on both space and staffing. Ensuring that the facility can remain flexible and responsive to these needs will be an ongoing concern.

The second challenge Whately Elementary faces is continuing lower enrollment numbers. Residential development in town could increase enrollment and help the school. Because the school is under-enrolled, adding more students would not necessarily increase costs of educational services, but would spread the existing fixed costs of schooling over a larger

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number of students. This is particularly helpful to consider as the school building is roughly at the midpoint of its expected lifecycle before a major renovation would typically be required. As such, larger capital needs—such as roof replacement and boiler system upgrades—are anticipated in the not-too-distant future. Upgrades for these capital expenditures may present an opportunity for an improved facility through programs like Green Communities.

Opportunities to enhance resilience and efficiency of facilities

Energy-efficiency and electrification measures (e.g., mini-split heat pumps, envelope improvements, and solar with battery storage at key buildings) could reduce operating costs and improve emergency performance of municipal facilities.

The town is a designated Green Community and has received three rounds of Green Communities funding (in 2012, 2017, and 2022). There are additional funding sources available now that cover a wide range of energy project types and that can be stacked with Green Communities. Upgrades to the Town Offices have been identified as an area for upcoming Green Communities investment and updated studies could identify additional projects.

Capital Improvement Plan as an implementation tool

The multi-year CIP inventories facility projects (roof replacements, accessibility upgrades, parking and circulation improvements, new highway garage, fire station expansion, water-system upgrades) and can be used to phase and coordinate investments across departments. Further, dedicated stabilization funds, CPA, enterprise funds, and free cash give Whately multiple mechanisms to match grants and prioritize critical municipal facility projects.

Strengthening walkable, multi-use civic hubs

The “Walkable Whately” and Complete Streets work in Whately Center create a chance to concentrate civic services, parking, and public space improvements into a more accessible, welcoming municipal campus.

Leveraging partnerships and community capacity

Existing collaboration with regional agencies and neighboring towns (water interconnections, regional sheltering, Tri-Town Beach, EMS, Senior Center) provides a platform for shared facilities, regional services, and joint grant applications. Active boards, commissions, and community groups can help co-design facility projects that meet social, cultural, and emergency needs, increasing public support and use of municipal services.

Recommendations

Modernize and make climate-ready critical municipal buildings

- Prioritize a phased package of upgrades for municipal facilities using the Capital Improvement Plan as the implementation roadmap.
- Integrate energy-efficiency and resilience measures (envelope improvements, right-sized HVAC including mini-splits, and on-site emergency power where feasible) into every major building project.

Building consolidation

- Look for opportunities to consolidate operations into current municipal buildings. For example, the Town is considering moving the Police Department to the Town Offices as more than half of the building is currently unoccupied. By freeing up the Police Station building, the Town could then move the Highway Department offices into the current Police Department, allowing for the need to construct only a single new building to house and maintain the equipment, saving the Town considerable money.

Strengthen the municipal water system and plan comprehensively for wastewater

- Finalize a water system resilience program that addresses drought management, aquifer protection, manganese treatment lifecycle costs, interconnections with neighboring systems, and backup power and controls at pump stations.
- Commission a high-level wastewater and decentralized treatment strategy study (e.g., village-scale or cluster solutions for key growth nodes) so that future commercial, housing, and civic projects are not constrained solely by on-site septic.
- Work with the Towns of Deerfield and Hatfield to explore long term municipal sewer expansion into Whately.

Expand and coordinate walkable civic hubs and safe access to services

- Build on the Complete Streets plan and walkability study to complete priority sidewalks, crossings, and traffic-calming around the town center, the library, Town Hall, school, and Herlihy Park, emphasizing ADA compliance and safe routes to civic destinations.
- Identify and implement small-scale projects (lighting, wayfinding, bike parking, benches) that make municipal facilities easier to reach without a car and increase their use for community gathering, responding to survey feedback about limited gathering places and walk/bike safety.

Enhance and expand recreation opportunities

- Consider rehabilitation of existing fields at Herlihy Park to include irrigation, power, and dugouts.
- Explore the development of a multi-purpose trail network that provides hiking and other outdoor recreational possibilities such as snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, mountain biking, horseback riding, and the like, and provide links to trails of adjacent towns.
- Review opportunities for expanded recreational facilities and services, including a pickleball and/or tennis court and a playground at Herlihy Park.

Strengthen and expand the municipal services and current uses of municipal facilities

- The Town is currently part of multiple regional service providers (including the Senior Center, EMS, and the Regional School District). Explore other opportunities to regionalize or share services to save money and improve efficiency, including regionalizing services such as Assessing (which the town currently contracts out to a third-party provider).
- Support implementation of the 2024–2029 Library Strategic Plan and coordinate Town investments (parking, paths, signage, technology, outdoor space improvements) so the library can fully function as a “community center for lifelong learning.”
- Explore shared programming and space use across the library, Senior Center, and other departments to deliver digital equity, climate, health, and civic education programs in existing facilities.

Adapt the Elementary School to Changing Population

- Ensure the facility remains flexible and responsive to ongoing and anticipated future needs of students.
- Explore opportunities for upgrades and capital improvements through Green Communities and other energy grant programs focused on schools.

Transportation Technical Memo

Transportation Guiding Principle

Encourage a multimodal transportation network that prioritizes safety and accessibility to connect residents to natural areas, public amenities, schools, and surrounding neighborhoods. Support viable alternative options, such as walking, biking, and public transit to promote resident health, climate-resilience, and foster a greater sense of community.

Introduction

Many modes of transportation pass through Whately via interstates, passenger rail, freight rail, state highways, regional bus routes, and regional bikeways. Whately's local transportation options include both paved and unpaved roadways. Formal pedestrian options are currently limited to Whately Center. The Town has been working diligently to ensure that its roadways are Complete Streets that accommodate all modes of transportation safely, including vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles.

Like many Franklin County towns, Whately's roads, culverts, and bridges are aging and in need of rehabilitation or replacement. The increasing frequency and intensity of severe storms is testing the resilience of the town's infrastructure. The following sections provide a brief overview of the current transportation resources and needs in town.

The information from this memo builds on previous planning that the Town of Whately has already conducted, including the following plans, as well as responses from the 2023 Comprehensive Visioning survey.

- [2020 Town of Whately Hazard Mitigation Plan](#)
- 2018 Complete Streets Prioritization Plan
- 2016 A More Welcoming Walkable Whately

Survey Responses

In the 2023 Comprehensive Visioning Survey, the topic of transportation was a clear priority for residents. Respondents provided suggestions for additional transportation options in town as well as ways to increase safety for all modes of travel. The most commonly reoccurring theme in the survey responses was the need for increased public transit, for both older adults and the general population. Residents strongly desire ways to travel outside of Whately without having to rely on driving or having friends/family drive them. This was particularly true for older adults in town.

Other frequently mentioned transportation-related needs included promoting slower, safer traffic and the creation of more sidewalks.

Road Network

Roadways

The Town of Whately has a total of 29 miles of roadway, eight miles of which are under the jurisdiction of MassDOT, including Interstate 91, Route 5/10, and Route 116. Of the total mileage in town, almost seven of the miles are unpaved. These unpaved gravel roads are predominately located in West Whately.

By far, the busiest roadways in town are the interstate and state highways, followed by River Road, Haydenville Road, and Mountain Street, respectively. There are two exit interchanges from Interstate 91 in Whately onto Route 5/10. Many commuters travel from Whately and neighboring towns to access these interchanges as they drive to farther destinations.

A major upcoming roadway project is the rehabilitation of Haydenville Road, which will include a new drainage system to improve stormwater management near the Northampton Reservoir. This project is currently scheduled to begin in 2028 and last through two construction seasons.

Road Safety

There are several locations in Whately in which speeds decrease significantly on roadways as they pass through more densely populated areas. Drivers may be unaware of the speed limit changes and continue speeding, potentially causing unsafe conditions for walkers and bicyclists. The Town has recently applied to acquire two-speed feedback signs to be used at these transitions to remind drivers of the changing speed limit and to improve safety.

The intersection of Christian Lane, Depot Road, and Route 5/10 was listed as the 7th most hazardous intersection in Franklin County with two severe crashes between 2018-2022. MassDOT conducted a road safety audit at the intersection in 2011 with Whately Highway staff and police, State Police, as well as FRCOG transportation planners, to determine possible solutions to the safety issue. The audit recommended a number of small and large safety improvements. Many of the smaller, low-cost measures have been implemented. These include improving signage, relocating signage, and repainting lines. A larger recommendation to fix sight distances has not yet been implemented. To do this, the roadway would need to be extensively re-graded to remove dips on Route 5/10. Due to adjoining wetlands and the Great Swamp Brook, this would be very expensive and difficult to implement.

Culverts and Bridges

Whately has sixteen roadway structures that are classified as bridges.³² Of these, one on Christian Lane over the Mill River was deemed as structurally deficient in 2021 and has had weight limits posted and been reduced to one lane. The Town is working to identify funding for design, engineering, and construction for the replacement of this structure.

To better understand the condition of its smaller culverts, the Town will be conducting a complete inventory and assessment of all culverts during the summer of 2026. This will allow Whately to prioritize, budget, and plan for needed improvements. Generally, the town's culverts are undersized for the amount of rainfall that has been occurring in storms over the last several years. To mitigate this issue, the Highway Department has been replacing culverts with much larger sizes whenever possible to accommodate the increased stormwater flows.

Transit and Rail

The Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA) currently provides one fixed bus route in Whately, the Route 31, which runs from Greenfield to Northampton via Route 5/10. The bus runs every hour with 14 round trips throughout the day from 5:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. during the weekdays. The Route 31 also runs on Saturday and Sundays with a reduced service when it operates three times a day from 10:00 A.M. to 3:30 P.M. The buses are timed to connect with the neighboring transit authority, the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA), in Northampton for interregional travel.

For older adults and people with disabilities, the FRTA provides a Demand Response Program that operates on weekdays from 5:30 A.M. to 7:30 P.M. and on the weekends from 9:30 A.M. to 5:30 P.M. This service provides curb to curb rides either in town or to other Franklin County towns.

Using the same vehicles as the Demand Response program, FRTA also offers a microtransit service, called the Access Program, for members of the general public. This service uses real-time technology, similar to how companies like Uber and Lyft conduct ridesharing, to fill the empty seats on the Demand Response vehicles. Through the Access program, the general public can book rides on the smaller transit vehicles when there are available spaces. Older adults and people with disabilities receive priority booking as part of the Demand Response program. Users can book rides using an app on their mobile phones on the same day or up to one week in advance.

³² In Massachusetts, a bridge must have a span longer than 10 feet.

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A rail line, the Connecticut River Main Line, passes north-south through Whately parallel to Interstate 91. Both passenger and freight trains use this rail line. Amtrak operates both the Valley Flyer and Vermonter passenger services with three round trips during the weekday and two on the weekends with stops in nearby Greenfield and Northampton. Currently, feasibility studies into east-west passenger rail service are underway connecting Boston and North Adams with a stop in Greenfield. This would greatly increase the ability of Whately residents to travel and potentially attract more people to move to the region and commute to Boston.

Many freight trains use the Connecticut River Main Line on a daily basis. The FRCOG conducted a survey of the trains in 2018 to understand the types of materials being transported through Franklin County communities. The study found that a total of 97% of all rail cars observed during the study period were carrying hazardous material on the Connecticut River Main Line. A majority of the hazardous material being transported at the time was liquefied petroleum and is extremely flammable. An evacuation area of at least a half-mile downwind of an accident is recommended for this type of material. The FRCOG will be updating this study in 2026, so that towns like Whately can better prepare for potential emergencies.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Networks

Due to Whately's rural nature, formal pedestrian infrastructure of sidewalks and crosswalks are primarily limited to Chestnut Plain Road in the village center. The Town's 2018 Complete Streets Prioritization Plan highlights the need for pedestrian improvements on the following roadways:³³

- Chestnut Plain Road (southern section)
- Long Plain Road (from Christian Lane to Elementary School)
- River Road (connecting Herlihy Park)
- Christian Lane

Safe Routes to Schools

The Massachusetts Safe Routes to School Program works to increase safe biking and walking among elementary, middle, and high school students by using a collaborative, community-focused approach that bridges the gap between health and transportation. This approach is completed through infrastructure improvements, enforcement, tools, safety education, and incentives to encourage walking and bicycling to school.

³³ There are a total of 19 pedestrian and bicycling improvements listed in the Whately Complete Streets Prioritization Plan.

The low volume and picturesque roadways of Whately make it very popular for bicycling. There are two official routes of the Franklin County Bikeway that pass through Whately, totaling 15.5 bikeway miles. They are the River Road Connector and the Whately-Conway Loop. Recent improvements in Whately to create a safer biking experience include the addition of a buffered bike lane on Route 5/10. Avid bicyclists come to the region from all over to bike on the rural and scenic roadways.

Opportunities & Challenges Analysis

Public transit

A continuing challenge for Whately is a limited bus service. While there is a fixed public transit route that connects Whately with the larger region and runs on an hourly basis, it requires residents to travel to Route 5/10 in order to access this service. This geographic limitation prevents public transit from being a viable and reliable alternative to driving. To expand fixed route service, the FRTA will need support and funding from both Whately and state sources.

Whately also participates in the FRTA's Demand Response program for older adults and its microtransit Access Program, which is available to the general public. These programs provide transportation options for many in town that is much easier to use than the fixed route system. However, it seems that few residents are aware of these options and better education and marketing of these opportunities is needed.

Aging infrastructure and funding

Another ongoing challenge facing Whately is its aging roadway and drainage infrastructure. Upgrading this infrastructure is essential and may require a considerable amount of money and effort. Fortunately, the state has been increasing the amount of funding available recently for small municipal infrastructure improvements. The state's Fair Share Act has created new grants and increased grant funding for the following programs: Chapter 90 funds, Small Bridge Program, Community Culvert Grant Program, and the Unpaved Roads Grant Program. To access these and other transportation-related grant funds, municipal staff will need to be ready with an ongoing prioritized list of projects and the necessary cost estimates and design plans as applicable for the various programs. This preparation can require an outlay of Town funds to complete the necessary pre-project work, such as environmental surveying, preliminary design, and permitting. However, completing this work will help Whately be able to better leverage other sources of funds.

While the State has recently increased funding for transportation infrastructure, it is still quite limited compared to the need. As the Town prioritizes capital improvement projects, it

will need to properly maintain its pavement and gravel road surfaces so that they are able to last longer.

Recommendations

Support public transportation

- Increase public transportation frequency and services in Whately through provision of more local match funding and additional advocacy at the state level. Work with the FRTA to explore phased expansions.
- Advocate to increase services for older adults and people with disabilities.
- Make sure that municipal employees are aware of the transit services that exist in town so that they can connect residents when needed.

Continue to improve pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure throughout town

- Continue to take a Complete Streets approach to all road improvements and maintenance.
- Implement traffic calming measures on appropriate residential roadways.
- Update the 2018 Complete Streets Prioritization Plan and incorporate design concepts for pedestrian infrastructure from the 2016 Conway School's "A More Welcoming Walkable Whately – A Master Plan for the Whately Center Historic District".
- Provide more visible and safer accommodation for bicycles on Town roadways.
- Install additional bike racks, as needed, particularly near public facilities and parks.

Work with MassDOT to improve the safety of state-maintained roads

- Continue to improve the intersection of Route 5/10 and Christian Lane as well as the I-91 interchanges.
- Improve safety of bus stops along Route 5/10.

Proactively plan for transportation infrastructure improvements

- Continue to plan and budget for the rehabilitation and replacement of bridges and culverts as they age and face deterioration.
- Implement a pavement management program and planned management of sidewalks and culverts.
- Conduct assessments of unpaved roads to determine improvements that will decrease maintenance needed and erosion of gravel.
- Improve flood resiliency by increasing culvert size where needed to deal with increase of severe storms.

Economic Development & Cultural Resources Technical Memo

Economic Development & Cultural Resources Guiding Principle

Encourage economic development projects that maintain and enhance Whately's historic, rural, and agricultural community, while promoting local businesses to increase the tax base, provide job opportunities, and improve quality of life.

Introduction

Economic development is the sustained, concerted actions of policy makers and communities that promote the standard of living and economic health of a specific area. A strong economy provides economic opportunities to all citizens through the creation of quality jobs and business opportunities and by creating a tax base that adequately funds municipal services like schools, police, fire protection, parks, and other community facilities.

The Economic Development & Cultural Resources section of Whately's Comprehensive Plan assesses the town's existing economic and cultural resources conditions and provides analysis and possible strategies to take advantage of opportunities that support Whately's vision for responsible and sustainable economic development.

Themes that emerged from a town-wide visioning survey, previously completed plans, and outreach to key stakeholders generally align with the four goals developed in 2011-2012 for the previous comprehensive plan update:

- Encourage economic, industrial, and commercial growth to occur in an orderly manner consistent with the best interests of the community as a whole; discourage uncoordinated and incompatible development that may overburden public investment or damage the Town's natural resources and rural character.
- Promote the use of the Town's existing historic architectural styles in the development of new economic development initiatives.
- Encourage the Town to recognize and promote its historical character as an existing economic asset, which is coordinated with regional tourism activities.
- Support and maintain economic development that strengthens the municipal tax base.

This chapter builds on previous economic development and related plans for Whately, including:

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- [2025 Community Preservation Committee Plan](#)
- [2024 Whately Digital Equity Plan](#)
- [2018 Creating an Economic Development Vision for Whately](#)
- 2024 Interchange 35 Market Analysis
- [2009 Whately Reconnaissance Report: Massachusetts Heritage Landscape Inventory Program](#)

Economic Profile & Existing Conditions

Whately is a rural residential community located between larger employment bases like Greenfield to the north and Northampton to the south. Whately maintains a strong agriculture base, although many Whately residents work outside the town.

Population

According to the 2023 U.S. Census estimates, there are 1,521 residents in Whately.³⁴ The population was growing by about 100 to 200 residents each decade from 1950 through 2020, but has plateaued and is showing signs of slight decline. Population projections provided by the UMass Donahue Institute anticipate that Whately's total population will decline 4% by 2040.³⁵ At the same time, the proportion of older residents is growing. People 65 and older now represent 22% of the population. If current trends continue, this age group will increase to 46% by 2040. On the reverse end, the percentage of residents 24 and younger is projected to decline to 15% of the population by 2040.

Labor Force Participation Rate and Age

To assess the overall strength or weakness of the Whately labor force and employment, this section looks at the age of the workforce, labor force participation rate, and unemployment rates. The labor force participation rate measures the percentage of the population age 16 or over who are already employed or actively looking for employment. A lower participation rate suggests there is flexibility in the labor market for potential workers, while a higher participation rate indicates lower flexibility and fewer options for employers who might be looking to hire. A low unemployment rate suggests a strong labor market and is positive for employees, although it may make it more difficult for employers looking for workers.

³⁴ U.S. Census American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates 2019 – 2023

³⁵ UMass Donahue Institute, 2024 Population Projections: <https://donahue.umass.edu/business-groups/economic-public-policy-research/massachusetts-population-estimates-program/population-estimates-by-massachusetts-geography/by-city-and-town>.

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Whately has a strong labor force participation rate at over 65%. This is higher than Franklin County, although lower than the state. At the same time, the unemployment rate is higher than both the state and the county at over 5%. Following a strong recovery in the labor force and employment after the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, both the numbers of residents in the labor force and those employed have dropped back to below pre-pandemic levels (see Figure A5 and Table A8).

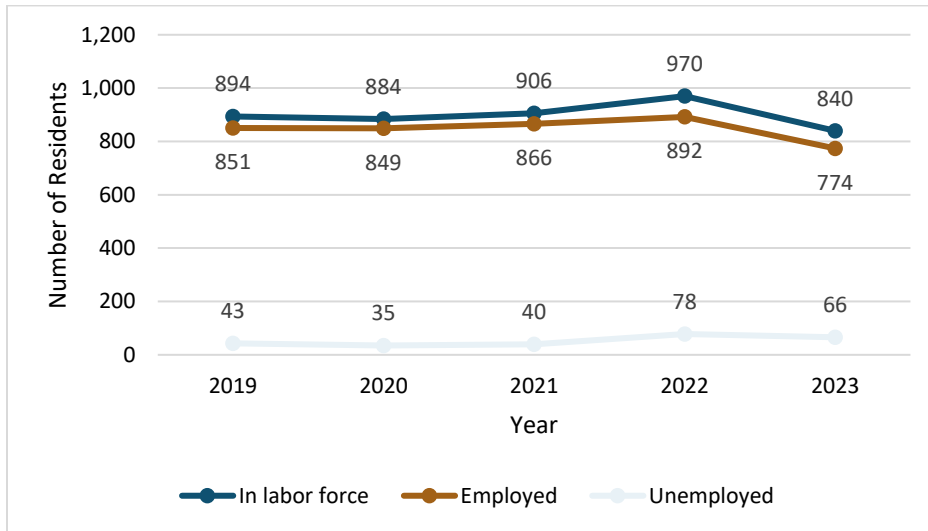


Figure A5. Labor Force and Employment, 2023
Source: MA Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development

Table A8. Labor Force and Unemployment Rate, 2023

Location	Labor Force Participation Rate	Unemployment Rate
Whately	65.3%	5.1%
Franklin County	62.7%	3.9%
Massachusetts	67.2%	3.5%

Source: MA Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (2023 data)

Although the median age in Whately (51.6) is higher than both the county (47.3) and the state (40.0), there is a higher labor percentage in Whately among younger residents (16 – 29) than either the county or the state. There is also a higher labor participation rate among those 75 and older in Whately (see Figure A6).

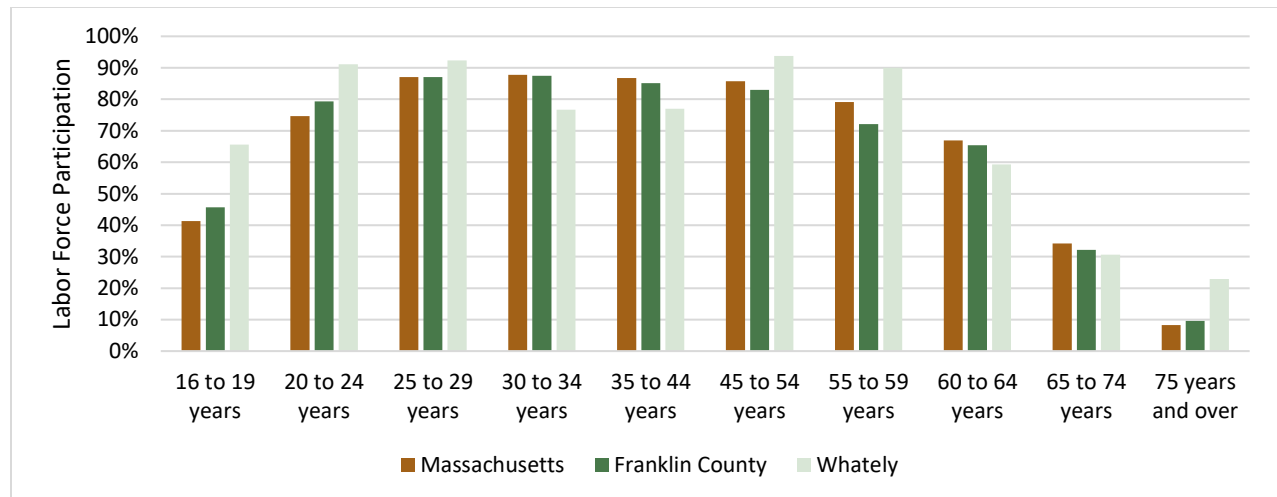


Figure A6. Labor Force Participation Rate by Age Group, 2023
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Median Household Income and Poverty Rate

One of the most common ways to measure an area’s wealth is the median household income, which is the midpoint of all household or family incomes.³⁶ In Whately, the median household income is slightly higher than the state and significantly higher than the county (see Table A9).

The federal government sets income thresholds by family size to determine poverty. The percentage of families and individuals who live below these income thresholds is called the poverty rate. The poverty rate in Whately is lower than both the county and the state (see Table A9).

Table A9. Income and Poverty Rate, 2023

Region	Median Household Income	Poverty Rate
Whately	\$102,734	8.2%
Franklin County	\$72,584	12.2%
Massachusetts	\$101,341	10.0%

Source: MA Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development

³⁶ The definition of households includes people living alone, living with roommates, or families of related people. The median income Includes earned and unearned income (government benefits, retirement payments, etc.)

Inflow/Outflow of Jobs

Most working residents of Whately are employed outside the town. According to 2022 commuter trends data, of the 1,418 jobs in town, only 28 are held by residents of Whately. The remaining jobs are held by people commuting into town.

The presence of jobs in Whately draws people to work in town during the day. More than twice the number of people commute to work in Whately each day (1,390 employees) than leave town to work (507 employees) (see Figure A7). Greenfield is the most common location employees commute from, followed closely by Northampton and Springfield (see Figure A8).³⁷ This could mean that there is an untapped population of workers looking to get food or drink at lunch or at the end of a shift.

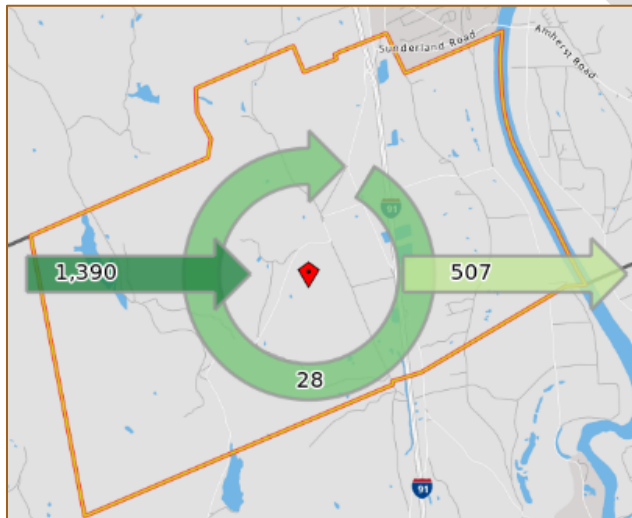


Figure A7. Commuter Trends in Whately, 2022
Source: 2022 US Census, "On the Map". Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics

	2022	
	Count	Share
All Places (Cities, CDPs, etc.)	1,418	100.0%
Greenfield city, MA	98	6.9%
Springfield city, MA	78	5.5%
Northampton city, MA	73	5.1%
Chicopee city, MA	48	3.4%
Easthampton Town city, MA	45	3.2%
Turners Falls CDP, MA	41	2.9%
Holyoke city, MA	37	2.6%
West Springfield Town city, MA	36	2.5%
Amherst Town city, MA	35	2.5%
Westfield city, MA	34	2.4%
All Other Locations	893	63.0%

Figure A8. Top Origin Locations for Workers Commuting to Whately, 2022
Source: 2022 US Census, "On the Map". Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics

Employment Base

Whately has a high percentage of self-employed residents. Whately also has a lower percentage of residents employed with a private company than the state, although it is on-par with Franklin County overall (see Table A10). Having a high percentage of any sector can negatively impact how resilient the population is to disruptions in the economy.

³⁷ Note: this data is over 5 years old and does not reflect any significant changes that may have occurred, specifically in-regards to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Table A10. Employee Major Sectors, 2023

Region	Employee of private company (not self-employed)	Employee of private not-for-profit	Government Worker	Self-employed
Whately	53.4%	12.0%	17.2%	15.2%
Franklin County	53.2%	14.2%	18.1%	11.5%
Massachusetts	64.7%	13.7%	12.6%	5.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Industry Sectors and Employers

The industry sector *Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting* (as defined by the state) is the largest economic sector in Whately in terms of both Total Wages and Average Monthly Employment (see Table A11). This has stayed consistent over the past ten years. While the number of establishments stayed the same over this period, the average monthly employment grew by approximately 50%. At the same time, the total wages more than doubled and the average weekly wages almost doubled. This could be attributed to the growth of cannabis cultivation in town as well as investments being made at Nourse Farms with the recent transfer of ownership to a corporate owner. For a small town like Whately, small changes in one or two areas can sometimes appear as much larger changes in the aggregate data.

Table A11. Whately Employment Sectors, 2013 and 2023

NAICS	Description	No. of Establishments	Total Wages	Average Monthly Employment	Average Weekly Wages
2023					
	Total, All Industries	58	\$45,621,295	930	\$943
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	9	\$13,957,476	280	\$957
23	Construction	12	\$2,645,737	58	\$884
44-45	Retail Trade	7	\$2,831,961	56	\$973
48-49	Transportation and Warehousing	3	\$370,226	5	\$1,424
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	5	\$145,843	4	\$635
2013					
	Total, All Industries	45	\$23,140,683	988	\$450
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	9	\$5,259,133	196	\$516
23	Construction	8	\$2,007,208	41	\$941
44-45	Retail Trade	10	\$1,846,627	71	\$500
48-49	Transportation and Warehousing	3	\$370,226	5	\$1,424

Source: Massachusetts Department of Economic Research³⁸

³⁸ North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) <https://www.census.gov/naics/>. NAICS is the standard used by Federal statistical agencies in classifying business establishments for the purpose of collecting, analyzing, and publishing statistical data related to the U.S. business economy. Although manufacturing is a significant part of the Whately economy (the Yankee Candle manufacturing plant is physically located in Whately), that data is not included in this data set. This is because either there are not enough manufacturing companies in the town and the data is therefore suppressed, or because the zip code indicates the plant is located in South Deerfield.

2023 data includes two NAICS categories not included in 2013, 'Health Care and Social Assistance' and 'Transportation and Warehousing'

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Like many small communities in Franklin County, Whately once had numerous small mills and manufacturing operations. Currently, most employers in Whately are relatively small and there is limited commercial activity in the town. Table A12 shows the largest employers in Whately.

Table A12. Major Employers

Company name	Address	Number of employees
Covestro	8 Fairview Way	100-200
Yankee Candle (manufacturing plant)	102 Christian Ln.	50-99
Nourse Farms	41 River Rd.	20-49
Whately Diner	State Rd	20-49
Whately Inn	Chestnut Plain Rd	20-49
Town of Whately	Christian Ln	20-49
Nupro	23 Merrigan Way	20-49
Underground Supply	82 State Rd	20-49
Orchard Trailers	78 State Rd.	20-49
Chang Farm Inc	River Rd	10-19
EJ Prescott Inc	State Rd	10-19
Northampton Co-Op Auction	Long Plain Rd	10-19
Wassmann Audio Video, Inc.	92 State Road	10-19
The Fire Place	100 State Rd.	5-9
Klondike Sound	110 Christian Ln	5-9
Quonquont Farm	9 North St.	5-9
Circle K	Sunderland Rd	5-9
Fairview Farms Inc	Long Plain Rd	5-9
Muffin's General Market	State Rd	5-9
Tom's Hot Dog & Grill	State Rd	5-9

Source: Massachusetts Department of Economic Research and the Franklin Regional Council of Governments

Industries

The major employment sectors in Whately have remained generally stable, including the agricultural sector, as well as construction and retail. Manufacturing continues to be a strong employment provider in Whately, centered at the Yankee Candle plant.

Agriculture

The most comprehensive data we can access for agriculture is from the United States Department of Agriculture's Census of Agriculture. The census is conducted every 5 years

and is only available for state and county.³⁹ It helps show how agriculture in the region is changing.

Between 2017 and 2022, Massachusetts and Franklin County saw a decrease in both the number of farms and amount of farmland (see Figures A9 and A10). Anecdotally, this trend continues to the present.

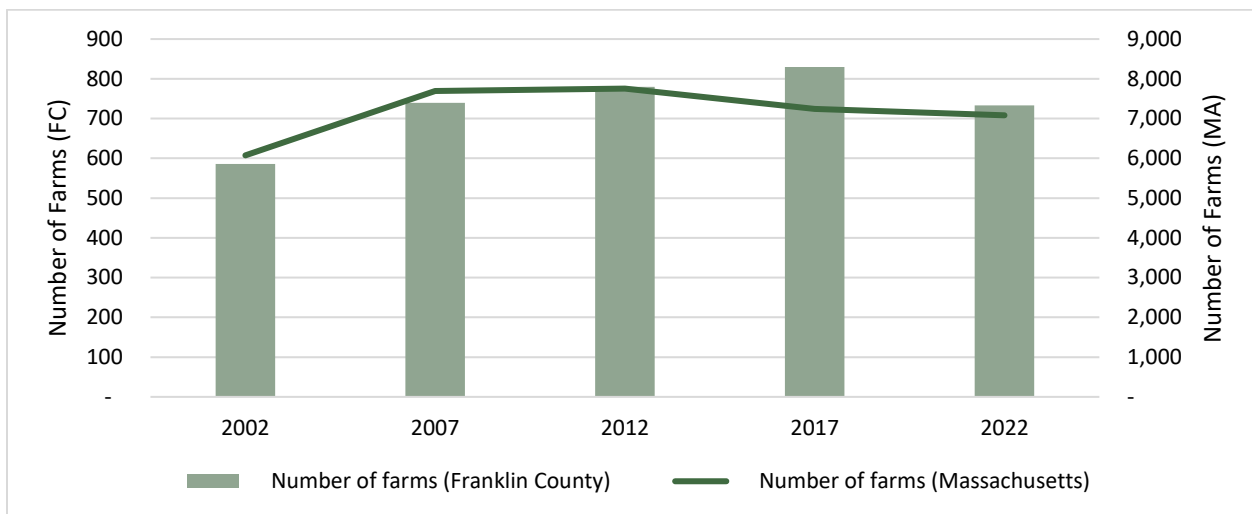


Figure A9. Number of Farms in Franklin County and Massachusetts

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2002-2022 Census of Agriculture

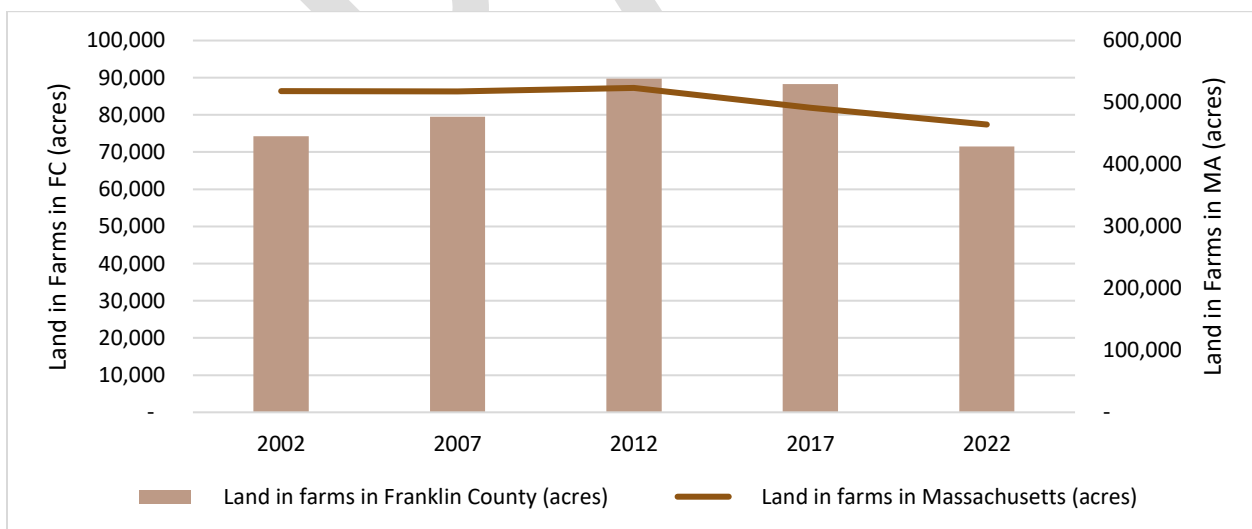


Figure A10. Land in Farms (acres) in Franklin County and Massachusetts

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2002-2022 Census of Agriculture

³⁹ Published 2024. Data is released two years after the year it was collected.

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While the total amount of agricultural products sold in 2022 (\$76.4 million) was higher than in 2017 (\$68.9 million), accounting for inflation, the *monetary* amount is less. The number of farms participating in sales from different markets (such as direct-to-consumer or through valued-added-product) decreased. The amount earned (when considering inflation) also decreased between 2017 and 2022. There were more farms participating in selling wholesale direct in 2022 than previously.⁴⁰ Based on outreach responses and conversations with local farmers, wholesale operations are an important component of the agricultural economy in Whately. These farms provide food for grocery stores and other markets (rather than the more niche pick-your-own or farmers markets). Because they are local, these farms also provide an opportunity for local distribution and can also potentially be nimbler during emergencies.

There are many factors making farming in Massachusetts challenging today. A new state report found that two out of every three farmers in Massachusetts operated at a loss in the 2024 – 2025 period.⁴¹ For more details on farm viability challenges, see the Agricultural Technical Memo.

Construction

The construction industry is one of the largest industries in the region in terms of employment numbers. The most recent data shows there were 12 establishments, with an average monthly employment of 58 employees. During the pandemic there was considerable construction activity. This industry also includes trades involved in the growing clean energy economy. As workers in this industry are retiring, the need for new skilled workers has been identified. There is also a specific need for more workers skilled in the clean energy sector both in Whately and in the region.

While the average monthly employment for construction workers has grown slightly over the past decade in Whately, total wages have only grown modestly, and average weekly wages have actually shrunk.

Outdoor Recreation and Tourism

The region has a strong history of providing outdoor recreational opportunities, and there is growing recognition locally and at the state level that western Massachusetts, and Franklin County in particular, is a destination area. The region includes abundant natural resources and preserved land, and much of it supports outdoor activities like hiking, biking, rafting,

⁴⁰ "Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold Including Food Marketing Practices and Value-Added Products: 2022 and 2017" from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2002-2022 Census of Agriculture

⁴¹ <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/194/SD3460.pdf>

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and skiing. The region also boasts must-see cultural and historical resources and events such as the Bridge of Flowers, Historic Deerfield, the Yankee Candle Store, and the Green River Festival. The Franklin County Chamber of Commerce supports the business community, conducting marketing of the region and its assets, including outdoor recreation and other tourism opportunities. The Chamber's "More to Franklin County" campaign highlights attractions and local businesses that may be of interest to both residents and visitors.⁴²

While there are many opportunities in the region, there are also challenges, including lack of hotels and reliable transportation. Further, while knowledge of what the region has to offer is growing, it is still often overshadowed by the more well-known Berkshires to the west and the Boston region to the east.

Whately has a few important outdoor recreation assets, which may not compare to the abundance found in some neighboring towns, but are important to the regional fabric. The most significant of these is Whately's bikability. There are many well-loved long-distance cycling routes through Whately, particularly River Road, Chestnut Plain Road/North Street, and Mountain Street/Webber Road/Conway Road Conway. Places like Simmers Creamery, Quontquont Farm, and the MacLeish Field Station are popular stopovers on these routes.

In the 2018 Economic Development Visioning process, with acknowledgement of the Town's history and character, it was identified that the community has assets to encourage outdoor recreation tourism. Support for more infrastructure and amenities, such as a public bathroom for cyclist touring through town, could be encouraged. Subsequently, this could provide the opportunity for the growth of small businesses provide goods and services to these tourists.

Whately Industrial Park

There are six planned industrial parks in five municipalities in Franklin County, one of which is in Whately. An industrial park is a defined area designed to accommodate industrial and manufacturing uses. Industrial park development generally occurs on level land that is not significantly hampered by environmental constraints, and which has been improved through infrastructure investment. Parcels must have sufficient acreage for the industrial facility itself, employee and visitor parking, and allow for trucking activity. Industrial parks often have minimum lot sizes specified in their regulations. It is assumed that parcels of less than two acres are not suitable for most types of manufacturing and industrial uses. Across the

⁴² More to Franklin County is available here: <https://www.moretofranklincounty.com/>

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county, almost 80% of the acreage in these six industrial parks was categorized as either Developed or Not for Development. Of the acres remaining, most consist of parcels with a constraint that would restrict development on all or part of the parcel.⁴³

The Whately Industrial Park was established in 1995 (see Table A13 for park details). The greatest growth in terms of building square footage was during the 1990s. Whately has a single parcel that is Undeveloped-Ready (see Table A14). Supply of existing, developable industrial park land will likely be fully exhausted in Franklin County before the end of the decade. To ensure there is variety of spaces available to meet future demand for manufacturing, light industry, research and development, and distribution space, the expansion of existing industrial parks or development of new industrial parks in the region is needed in Franklin County.

The Whately Industrial Park is located adjacent to the Deerfield Industrial Park. The two are separated by a few hundred feet of undeveloped land between Industrial Drive West in Deerfield and Fairview Way in Whately. There is currently no access across this undeveloped strip of land, which means access to the Whately Industrial Park from I-91 and Route 116, is through a residential neighborhood on Pine Street. However, the Town of Deerfield, in consultation with the Town of Whately and under the approval of the Deerfield EDIC, is currently looking into the feasibility of creating a road connection between the two parks as well as expanding the South Deerfield sewer system to the Whately Industrial Park.

⁴³ Information in this section is from the Planned Industrial Park Inventory Update for Franklin County, MA, prepared by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (2024)

Table A13. Whately Industrial Park Details

Location	The Whately Industrial Park is located on the northeastern border of Whately, abutting the Deerfield Industrial Park to the north.
Owner/Developer	Private developer
Park History	The Park was established in 1995 from a site plan submitted to the Planning Board by private landowners in the community. The 1994 Whately Master Plan identified this location as a priority for planned industrial development. In accordance, the Whately Zoning Bylaw was amended by Town Meeting to zone this area for industrial purposes.
Total Acreage	41 acres
Total Parcels	8
Total Property Assessment Value	\$10,236,118
Buildings	7 buildings, totaling 195,677 square feet
# of Businesses	6
Highway Access	Within one mile of I-91 Exit 24, Routes 10 & 5, and Route 116. Park is accessed off of Long Plain Road, which requires a 90 degree and use of a residential street (Pine Street) to get to Route 116.
Water System	Town of Whately, Water Commission
Sewer System	No
Electricity	Eversource
Natural Gas System	No
Broadband Access	MassBroadband 123 fiber network; Comcast cable internet

Source: Planned Industrial Park Inventory Update for Franklin County, MA (FRCOG, 2024)

Table A14. Status of Parcels

Category	Parcels		Acreage		Assessed Value	
Developed	7	88%	30.1	73%	\$8,960,068	94%
Undeveloped - Ready	1	13%	10.9	27%	\$599,900	6%
Undeveloped - Constraints	0	0%	0.0	0%	\$0	0%
Not for Development	0	0%	0.0	0%	\$0	0%
TOTAL	8	100%	41.0	100%	\$10,236,118	100%

Source: Assessor's Records from Whately for 2024; categorized by FRCOG.

Tax Structure

Whately's tax revenues are primarily derived from residential properties (79%), while commercial and industrial properties contribute about 15% of the town's tax revenues (see Figure A11).

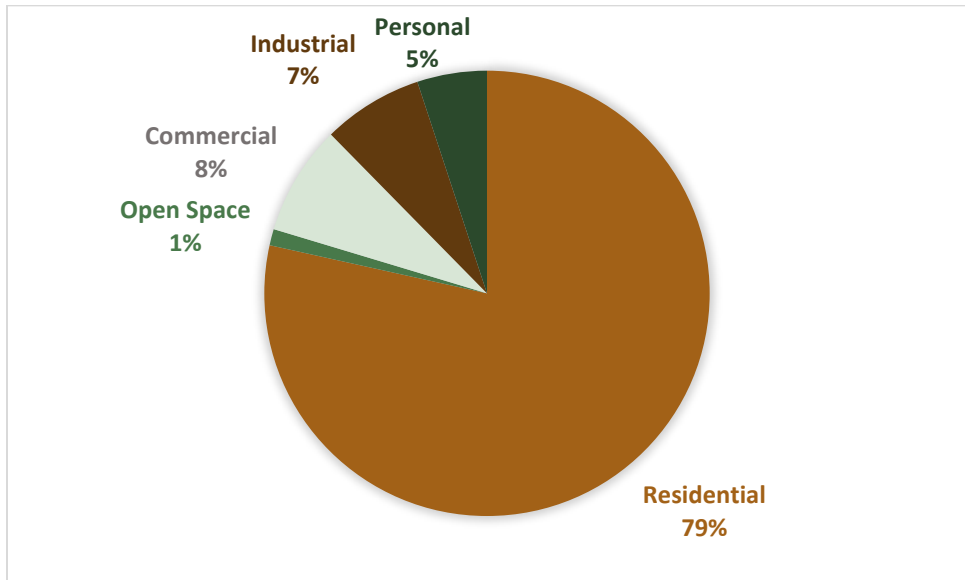


Figure A11. Whately Tax Level by Class
Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue

Like neighboring towns, Whately uses the same tax rate for all classes. Compared with surrounding communities, Whately had the lowest tax rate in 2024, at 13.69% (see Table A15).

Table A15. Whately Tax Rates Compared to Similar Towns in the Region, FY2024

Municipality	Residential	Open Space	Commercial	Industrial	Personal Property
Ashfield	14.61	0	14.61	14.61	14.61
Conway	16.4	0	16.4	16.4	16.4
Deerfield	13.85	0	13.85	13.85	13.85
Hatfield	15.31	0	15.31	15.31	15.31
Whately	13.69	13.69	13.69	13.69	13.69
Williamsburg	18.1	0	18.1	18.1	18.1

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue

The tax rate has fluctuated over the past fifteen years between a high of 16.17 and the 2024 rate of 13.69 (see Figure A12).

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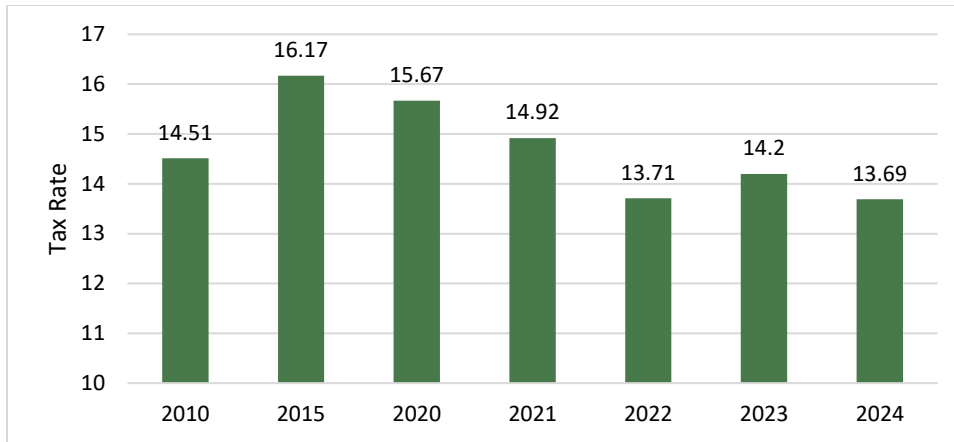


Figure A12. Whately Tax Rates, FY2010, 2015, 2020 – 2024

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue

In Whately, 20% of the property tax levy comes from commercial, industrial, and personal property (CIP) tax levy. This is higher than similar surrounding communities like Ashfield, Conway, and Williamsburg (these towns were chosen for comparison due to their close proximity and relatively similar size) and reduces the tax burden on residential and open space (RO) (see Table A16).

Table A16. Tax Levies in Nearby Towns with Similar Development Patterns, FY2024

Town	Ashfield	Conway	Deerfield	Hatfield	Whately	Williamsburg
Residential Levy (\$)	4,535,401	4,984,264	10,626,106	8,313,877	3,843,826	6,383,029
Open Space Levy (\$)	0	0	0	0	57,954	0
Commercial Levy (\$)	161,953	127,649	1,152,330	1,616,861	391,250	432,649
Industrial Levy (\$)	20,972	187,584	1,298,811	342,992	357,360	98,759
Personal Property Levy (\$)	566,720	506,587	858,176	481,243	248,057	394,930
Total Levy (\$)	5,285,046	5,806,084	13,935,424	10,754,973	4,898,446	7,309,367
RO Levy as a % of Total	85.52	85.85	76.25	77.3	79.65	87.33
CIP Levy as a % of Total	14.18	14.15	23.75	22.7	20.35	12.67

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue

Broadband

Whately is served by Comcast Cable for residential and most business users. Whately also has access to MassBroadband 123, which is an open access, fiber-optic, “middle mile” network that connects municipalities in western and northcentral Massachusetts to the global telecom network and allows for very high-speed transmissions and the use of next-generation applications. The MassBroadband 123 fiber network runs east-west along Route 116 and Christian Lane in Whately and connects north-south along I-91.

Having reliable and affordable broadband is vital for economic development and growth. With a large population who work from home, it is important for the Town to continue to focus on robust, affordable, and reliable broadband access. This is evident in the Whately’s recently completed Digital Equity Plan, in which three broad goals are articulated: having fast reliable connectivity to ensure residents’ have access to the internet connectivity they need and can afford; selection of service work to increase Internet Service Provider (ISP) competition so that residents have more choice in their internet plan and are better informed about their options (Comcast is currently the only broadband option in Whately); and digital resource navigation to support Whately residents’ access to public digital equity assets, resources, and skills training, especially those who need more support navigating digital systems.⁴⁴

Interchange 35 Area

There are two exits from I-91 in Whately: Interchange 32 and 35. Interchange 35 connects to both Route 5/10 and Route 116. The Interchange 35 area in Whately is one of three areas zoned Commercial in the town. A recent market analysis was conducted for this area, as the town is interested in assessing future growth options and development around the interchange.⁴⁵ The market analysis examined the economic potential of the area and options for supporting increased economic development, including rezoning or modifying existing zoning to promote development. There are a number of small businesses located in this area, including an Irving gas station and the associated Circle K convenience store, the Whately Truck Stop and Whately Diner (operated by Nouria), the Cheech Chong Dispensoria, Robert Jeffway, and Consulting Engineer (a toy industry developer). The Tri-Town Beach is also located within the study area and is a seasonal recreational spot and picnic area for residents of Whately, Deerfield, and Sunderland. A large number of truckers and shift workers pass through the Interchange 35 Area, a possibly untapped market.

⁴⁴ *Town of Whately Digital Equity Plan*, prepared by Franklin Regional Council of Governments, 2024

⁴⁵ *Interchange 35 Market Analysis*. Prepared by McCabe Enterprises for Berkshire Design Group, 2024

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The market analysis provided multiple recommendations, including:

- Branding with a new name and identity, example: "Gateway 35";
- Review of zoning regulations for the area to make new commercial development easier;
- Rezoning the properties north of Sunderland Road and east of State Road as Commercial; and
- Developing a new zoning district limited to the Interchange 35 area, covering the area east of I-91 and north of Pine Street extended.

The viability of businesses in that area relies on the customer base in the ten- and fifteen-minute commute zone. The market analysis shows potential viability for businesses within only a few economic sectors, such as general merchandise and clothing and accessories. The study noted many development constraints and also found that the primary trade area can possibly only support 500-square-foot retail or a 5,000-square-foot "dollar store". The study also shows that there are limited existing buildings that could be adapted to retail stores in the Interchange 35 area, so construction would be required for new businesses to move in. See the Land Use & Technical Memo for more analysis and possible zoning changes to explore.

One development that may have a positive impact on the Exit 35 area, and economic development in Whately, is a potential shared-use path. Currently still in the planning stage, the concept is to create a 10-foot-wide path would travel from the Whately Park and Ride off I-91 along Route 116 through South Deerfield passing DCR's Sugarloaf, over the Connecticut River, and through Sunderland ending just south of Meadow Street in Amherst. The trail would provide commuters with a safe, separated multimodal option for travel and recreation access.

Historic Preservation and Cultural Resources

Historic and Cultural Preservation

Public input gathered through the Whately Visioning Survey and the 2018 Economic Development Visioning made clear that preserving the town's historic and cultural heritage is a high priority. With strong advocacy from the Whately Historical Commission and the Whately Historical Society, the community has worked diligently to support and preserve its historic and cultural landmarks.

The Whately Historical Commission oversees the preservation, protection, and development of the town's historical and archeological assets. The Commission works with the Massachusetts Historical Commission and the FRCOG, as well as historic preservation experts, to identify historically significant areas and structures and to recommend methods

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for preserving them. The Commission helps maintain the inventory of Whately's historically significant neighborhoods, landscapes and structures that are on file with the Massachusetts Historical Commission. It also reviews historic preservation and rehabilitation projects that seek Community Preservation Act funding and has a representative on the Community Preservation Committee.

The Whately Historical Society is a private non-profit organization dedicated to preserving objects from Whately's history and bringing that history alive. It maintains a museum displaying objects from its collection, with a special exhibition each year. It sponsors lectures, architectural tours and collects oral histories. Its website features a bibliography of publications about Whately, a genealogy, a Whately gazetteer, videos of its presentations, and old photographs.

Whately has two National Register Districts: the Whately Center Historic District (Conway, Dry Hill, Haydenville, Poplar Hill, Webber, Williamsburg Roads) and the West Whately Historic District (155 – 215 Chestnut Plain Road and 330 – 348 Haydenville Road). Both were approved in 2003. This designation honors the historic agricultural, architectural, commercial, educational, political, and religious significance of the various buildings in Whately Center. The National Register of Historic Places designation is mostly honorary in nature and does not provide any protective measures for the heritage landscapes and historic buildings within the districts.

Whately adopted the Community Preservation Act in 2008, forming the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) in 2009. The CPC is appointed by the Selectboard, and includes representatives from the Conservation Commission, Historical Commission, Planning Board, Recreation Commission, Housing Committee, and two at-large citizen members, one of whom has typically represented the Agricultural Commission. The Community Preservation Committee's historic preservation goal is to protect and preserve the Town's historic character, structures and landscapes.

The Town adopted the Massachusetts Scenic Roads Act in 1973 by designating three scenic roads: Chestnut Plain Road (which, at the time, included present-day North Street), Haydenville Road, and Conway Road. The Town passed a Scenic Roads Bylaw in 2020. The Town has since added Poplar Hill, Strippe, and Webber Roads. Roads that are officially designated as local scenic roads may afford some protection to the historic and scenic resources along its route.

Historic Preservation CPA Project Priorities

The most recent Community Preservation Plan includes five historic preservation priorities:

- Preserve and rehabilitate historically significant buildings, structures and archaeological resources and landscapes in Whately.
- Preserve, rehabilitate and document gravestones and landscapes in the town cemeteries.
- Preserve the town's historic records and artifacts and provide storage to ensure their preservation.
- Preserve the Whately Historical Society's collection of Whately artifacts, photographs, and documents.
- Update the existing inventory of historic structures, buildings, and houses, including tobacco barns, mill sites, and stone walls and survey and document archaeological resources.

In the 2009 Whately Reconnaissance Report, the Town identified five heritage landscapes it believes most worthy of preservation. Heritage landscapes are areas within a town or city created by human interaction with the natural environment that help define the character of a community while also reflecting its past. The five heritage landscapes in Whately are:

- Whately Center
- Whately Cemeteries
- North Street Corridor
- Tobacco Barns
- West Brook Mill Corridor

Opportunities & Challenges Analysis

Agriculture and food businesses

Whately has at least 31 farms producing high-value crops on some of the best agricultural soils in Massachusetts, with prior estimates of roughly 4,250 cultivated acres, over 425 workers, and more than 20 million in annual farm revenues generating about 32 million in economic impact.

Plans and past studies highlight strong community support for farm viability, farmstands, value-added processing (e.g., sauces, jams, prepared vegetables), and farm-based tourism, which can add higher-margin local jobs while reinforcing rural character. Farming has become more difficult in past years for a number of reasons. The Town of Whately has some tools at its disposal to help Whately farms stay financially strong and farmland stay in

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production to weather changing conditions (see the Agricultural Technical Memo recommendations).

Access to broadband and the tech economy

Growth in the tech economy and across sectors can be bolstered by several key conditions present in the region: high levels of educational attainment and proximity to higher educational institutions, and access to broadband networks. With proximity to higher education and access to high-speed broadband, Whately is primed to take advantage of growth in the tech economy. As noted previously, Whately has access to the MassBroadband 123 (fiber-optic, “middle mile” network) which allows for very high-speed transmissions and the use of next-generation applications.

Tourism and Outdoor Recreation

While Whately does not have any major outdoor recreation destinations, it is regionally situated along popular regional bike-touring routes and near popular destinations like Yankee Candle (about 1 million visitors annually) or Mount Sugarloaf, giving the town an opportunity to capture more spending on food and services, hospitality, small events, and guided recreation.

Construction Trades

Construction remains an important component of the Whately economy. With changes in workforce demographics and the growth of renewable energy and energy efficiency, there is a growing need for investment in the local construction industry. Workforce development programs in the region through Greenfield Community College (GCC) and the Franklin-Hampshire Workforce Board are targeting green construction training programs and job placement, seeking to support the growth of construction businesses to meet market needs.

Commercial, village, and mixed use development

Only a small share of Whately’s land is zoned Commercial, Commercial-Industrial, or Industrial, and most land area is Agricultural-Residential; much of the remaining commercial frontage, especially along Route 5/10, is constrained by wetlands, existing homes, or prior development.

Community visioning identified strong support for mixed-use buildings and apartments added to existing homes, which could help add small businesses, create local jobs, and broaden the tax base while reinforcing historic character.

Residents also showed strong support for a café/coffee shop, co-working or incubator space, and mixed-use (ground-floor commercial with upper-story housing) in Whately Center and at the former Center School and DiMaio sites.

Interchange 35 / “Gateway 35”

The I-91 Interchange 35 area has high traffic (about 9,900 daily movements on and off the interchange and 38,000 ADT on I-91), multiple vacant or underutilized parcels, and is one of only a few commercial zones in town. Market analysis identifies roughly 55.6 million in unmet retail demand within a 5-minute drive. Worker spending and tourism flows linked to Yankee Candle suggest potential for a small full-service restaurant, convenience retail, and niche services if zoning is adjusted. However, just 5 of 14 vacant parcels meet current minimum lot size and frontage rules; many existing commercial parcels are nonconforming for expansion, and most new commercial uses require special permits with high parking and lot-coverage ratios, which the Interchange 35 study identifies as a barrier to feasible retail and mixed-use projects. See the Land Use & Zoning Technical Memo for more discussion of potential zoning solutions.

Infrastructure, services, and equity gaps that limit inclusive growth

Without sewer, future restaurants, multifamily housing, and some industrial uses will have to rely on on-site septic or package wastewater systems, if they can build them. While there is public water serving some of Whately, the public drinking water wells share a single aquifer with no true backup. Both the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan (MVP) and Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) flag these infrastructure challenges as a vulnerability for both residents and businesses.

The Digital Equity Plan and ACS data show that while many households are well-connected and well-educated, there are still residents with lower incomes, limited broadband access, or transportation barriers. Without intentional attention to transit, sidewalks, broadband upgrades, and affordable housing, new economic activity could bypass or burden these households instead of broadening opportunity.

Community priorities to preserve rural and historic character

Vision statements and survey responses consistently emphasize protecting farmland, forests, scenic roads, and historic buildings, and maintaining small-town feel and safety as top values. Residents express skepticism toward large-scale solar, luxury housing, and high-intensity commercial development, meaning any economic initiative should be small-scale and context-sensitive.

Recommendations

Zoning Updates (see the Zoning Chapter for further recommendations)

- Conduct a thorough zoning review, specifically around Interchange 35 and expand where commercial or mixed-use is allowed to attract year-round tax paying

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businesses. One option might be to create a new Interchange 35 Gateway zoning district that allows a mix of small-scale retail, services, and restaurants, with more flexible lot size, frontage, and parking requirements than current Commercial/AR-1 Districts

- Reduce minimum parking ratios and adjust maximum lot coverage in this district so that 10,000–12,000 square-foot commercial or mixed-use buildings and small restaurants can be built by right or with streamlined permitting, rather than being made infeasible by current dimensional standards.

Farm and Food System

- Advocate for the continued funding of the state's Disaster Relief and Resiliency Trust Fund to support farms and agricultural workers during and after natural disasters. This would help minimize potentially devastating effects of disasters on the local farm and food economy.
- Create local events to promote the assets and strengths of the town. One example that was highlighted in discussion with residents was creating a "Flower crawl" to promote the unique flower farms in Whately.
- Expand zoning support for on-farm value-added processing (e.g., farm breweries, commercial kitchens, food processing, agritourism events) and accessory retail so farmers can capture more of the food dollar and diversify income.

Infrastructure

- Continue to work with the Town of Deerfield and the Deerfield EDIC to determine the feasibility of a road and sewer connection between the Deerfield and Whately industrial parks.
- Commission a high-level wastewater and decentralized treatment strategy study (e.g., village-scale or cluster solutions for key growth nodes) to explore options for future commercial, housing, and civic projects to not be constrained solely by on-site septic.
- Coordinate economic development siting with aquifer protection, floodplain bylaws, and climate-resilient design so new investment does not undercut drinking water or increase flood risk.

Outdoor Recreation and Tourism (from 2021 OSRP)

- Create a Town Trail Plan, including an assessment of existing trail conditions and potential trail routes.
- Coordinate with the Town of Deerfield and the Tri-Town Beach District Commission to determine how Tri-Town Beach can meet the needs of a greater number of residents and present as more welcoming.

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- Investigate potential for environmentally responsible means of access to the Connecticut River in Whately and in surrounding towns.
- Create guide to recreation resources in Whately to be posted to Town website and social media.

Support digital inclusion to enhance business and workforce development

- Implement key Digital Equity Plan actions—public Wi-Fi, device lending, digital-skills programs, cybersecurity education—to ensure residents and small businesses can fully participate in remote work, e-commerce, and online services.
- Partner with Frontier schools and the South County Senior Center to create intergenerational digital-literacy and telehealth training initiatives that also build pathways into tech-enabled jobs and local entrepreneurship.

Improve coordination, branding, and business support

- Establish or designate an economic development working group to track implementation of these actions, pursue grants (Mass Downtown Initiative, MassDOT Complete Streets, PARC, BEAD, digital equity, etc.), and serve as a liaison to FRCOG and state partners.
- Create a simple Whately “business and visitor” web hub that promotes farms, recreation, historic assets, Interchange 35 opportunities, and support resources for entrepreneurs, reinforcing the shared economic vision articulated in recent plans.

Historic and Cultural (from Community Preservation Committee Plan)

- Preserve and rehabilitate historically significant buildings, structures and archaeological resources and landscapes in Whately.
- Preserve, rehabilitate and document gravestones and landscapes in the Town cemeteries.
- Preserve the Town's historic records and artifacts and provide storage to ensure their preservation.
- Preserve the Whately Historical Society's collection of Whately artifacts, photographs, and documents.
- Update the existing inventory of historic structures, buildings, and houses, including tobacco barns, mill sites, and stone walls, and survey and document archaeological resources.

Land Use & Zoning Technical Memo

Land Use & Zoning Guiding Principle

Recognize and embrace the unique nature of Whately's rural character by balancing agricultural and open space land preservation with climate-resilient economic development and attainable housing choices to enhance Whately's environmental assets, fiscal health, and community equity.

Introduction

The Town of Whately seeks to preserve important environmental and cultural resources while guiding development that will support the town's tax base and keep Whately a vibrant and resilient town. Meeting that challenge involves understanding Whately's current land use patterns and how the Town's bylaws encourage either development or protection.

Land use refers to the physical arrangement of a community's residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, and recreational development, along with its transportation network, infrastructure, agricultural activity, and open space. Understanding historical and contemporary land use change in Whately is a key aspect of the Comprehensive Plan and of the future direction of the town. Land use change is shaped by the shifting needs of residents for places to live, work, play, and get around, as well as the emergence of new economic enterprise and technologies and the need to preserve a natural environment that sustains life and helps buffer the impacts of climate change.

Zoning is a part of land use but not synonymous with it. In the early 1900s, local governments began to create zoning laws as a way to regulate the type, amount, and location of development. Zoning controls what activities, or "uses" of the land, are allowed on any given parcel. It also controls what dimensions of development are allowed, such as the maximum size and bulk of buildings, the minimum required front, side, and back yards, and the minimum required off-street parking. Zoning is one tool that local officials use to balance private property rights with the public interest in trying to encourage orderly growth and balance property uses for residential, industrial, commercial, and agricultural users. When done properly, zoning encourages economic growth and housing types that match a community's needs. In looking at land use, a comprehensive plan can examine what aspects of a town's land use pattern are essential to the character of the town and whether existing land use patterns and future directions are consistent with community goals.

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The focus of this Land Use & Zoning Technical Memo is on past, present, and future land use and development patterns and whether and how zoning and environmental constraints align with desired land use.

This chapter builds on previous land use and related plans for Whately, including:

- [2025 Town of Whately Community Preservation Committee Plan](#)
- [2025 Assessment of Zoning & Permitting for Housing](#)
- 2024 Interchange 35 Market Analysis
- [2021 Open Space and Recreation Plan](#)
- [2018 Creating an Economic Development Vision for Whately](#)
- 2011 Land Use and Zoning Master Plan Chapter

Survey Responses

Feedback from community members in the 2024 Whately Comprehensive Plan Survey showed continued support for limited development that preserves agricultural and natural lands and a “small-town feel.” The Town’s Community Preservation Plan supports these preferences, prioritizing farmland preservation and aquifer protection.

Similar to the community feedback received during the 2018 Creating an Economic Development Vision, survey respondents to the 2024 survey preferred commercial development focused on agricultural, cultural, and recreational tourism. Respondents also favored retail and mixed-use development, while office-based development and large-scale solar was seen as less desirable. For housing development, survey respondents favored retirement communities/senior housing, starter homes, and mixed-use commercial/residential over high-priced housing and large subdivision development.

Overview of Zoning & Other Land Use Regulations

As stated in the Town’s bylaws, the purpose of the Whately Zoning Bylaw

“is to promote the health, safety and general welfare of the inhabitants of the Town of Whately; to conserve the value of land and buildings, including the protection of natural resources and the prevention of pollution; to encourage the most appropriate use of land throughout the Town; to facilitate the adequate provision of public services; to secure safety from fire, flood and other dangers; to encourage housing for residents of all income levels; and to provide for all other purposes authorized under the Zoning Act.”⁴⁶

⁴⁶ The most current version of the Whately Zoning Bylaws as of the writing of this plan dates to October, 2025.

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Recent Zoning Updates

In the past decade, Whately's Town Meeting voters have approved the following major zoning changes:

2019

- An adaptive re-use bylaw for historically significant buildings with a history of being open to the public that allows specified commercial and residential uses and relaxes dimensional requirements to encourage creative re-use of older public and private buildings.

2020

- An amendment to the solar bylaw to cap the size of facilities at 10 acres, with additional acreage allowed when the facility is out of public view or on unproductive land; add safety and monitoring provision for large-scale solar batteries; require more screening; and impose a remediation fee for the loss of farmland or timberland.

2021

- Expansion of allowed accessory uses to include accessory apartments for dwelling.

2024

- An amendment to the Aquifer Protection District to include Zones I, II, and III, including adoption of a "Whately Zoning Map – Aquifer Protection District Areas" map; prohibited uses; approved treatment of wastewater; and minimum lot dimensions.
- A new Community Housing bylaw that allows up to 12 units by special permit on a parcel (maximum four units per structure) and requires a minimum of 25% affordable units.
- Addition of affordable units to the development density bonus point incentive system in the Open Space/Cluster Development bylaw.

2025

- The replacement of the § 171-27 Flood Hazard Overlay District regulations with a new § 171-27 Floodplain Overlay District and adoption of a new Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM).

Districts and Overlay Districts

Whately has five zoning districts (see Table A17). A zoning district is a geographic area delineated on a zoning map that designates the allowed use for every parcel of land within that district. Each district allows certain uses by-right. Other uses are permitted pending conditional approval from the Zoning Board of Appeals called a special permit, with more intensive uses requiring site plan review by the Planning Board. The standards and conditions for granting a special permit are laid out in the Zoning Bylaw.

Table A17. Zoning Districts

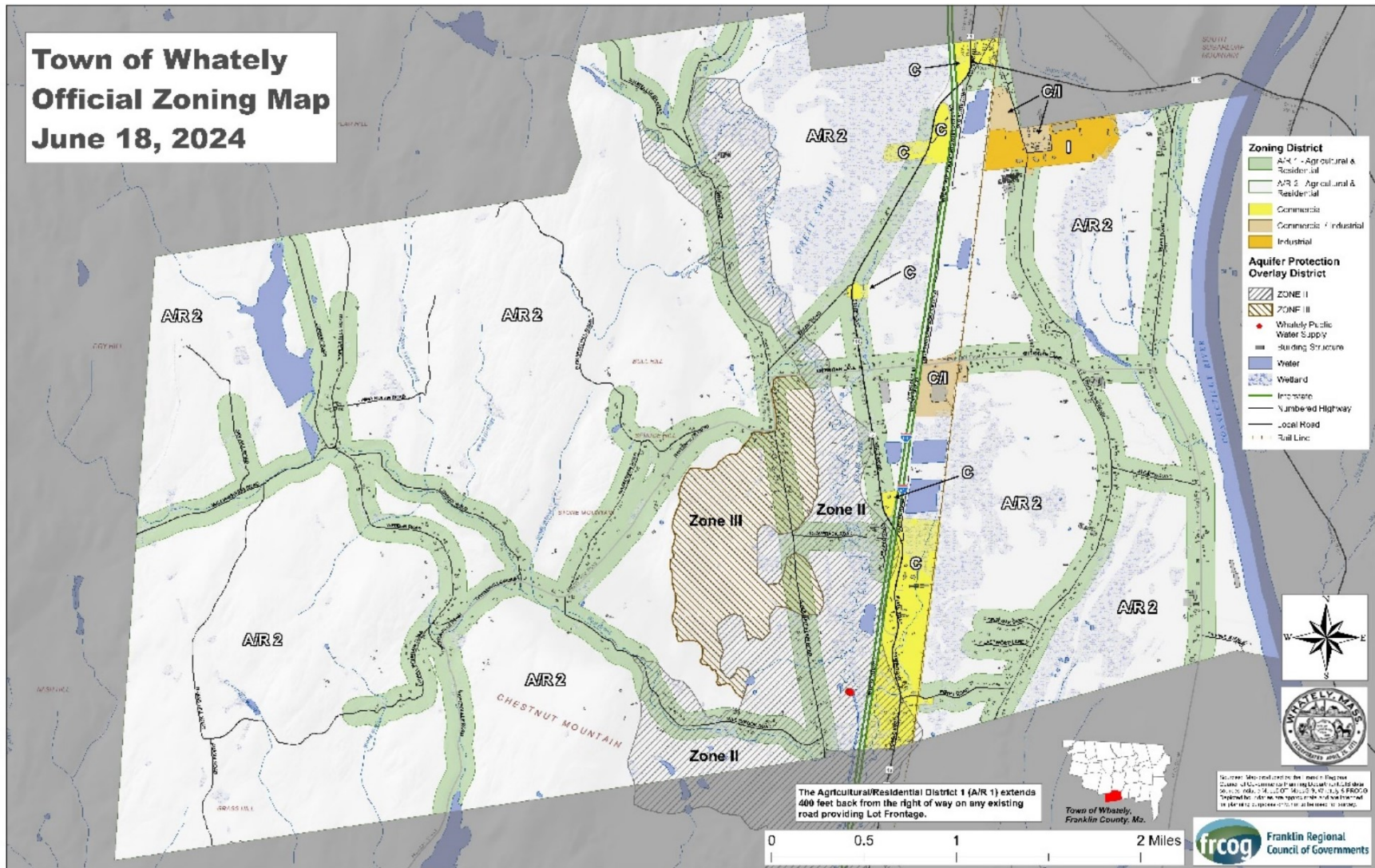
Zoning District	Abbreviation	Application	Percentage of land within town
Agricultural/ Residential 1	A/R1	Areas extending 400 feet back from the right-of-way on any existing road providing lot frontage.	22%
Agricultural/ Residential 2	A/R2	All areas beyond 400 feet from the right-of-way. No zoning commercial or industrial.	75%
Commercial	C	See Zoning Map	2%
Industrial	I	See Zoning Map	<1%
Commercial/ Industrial	C/I	See Zoning Map	<1%

Districts also establish dimensional regulations that control the location, size, and placement of buildings on each parcel in the district. In Whately, required minimum lot area and minimum frontage for all districts depend on whether the parcel has public water. Smaller lots are permitted for parcels with public water because the septic system does not need to be sited a regulated distance from a well.

In addition, Whately has two special districts and two overlay districts (see Table A18). Whately’s regular zoning districts and the Zone II and III aquifer protection overlay districts are shown in Map A5.

Table A18. Special and Overlay Zoning Districts

Zoning Districts	Application	Purpose
Planned Industrial District	This bylaw is on the books but does not have a physical mapped location in the Whately Zoning map.	To attract environmentally acceptable light industries; encourage diversity in the community tax base through appropriate industrial development; minimize potential adverse environmental conditions, such as pollution and noise, associated with industrial development; protect industrial development from commercial and residential encroachment; and ensure that industrial development is designed in a manner which protects adjacent residential areas, protects views from public ways, preserves the scenic character of the Route 5 and 10 corridor and is consistent with the rural character of the town.
Wireless Communications Services District	Located on land owned or co-owned, managed or comanaged by the Town of Whately and its affiliates which, in case of land owned or co-owned by the Town, is held in the care, custody, management and control of the Selectboard and on land zoned for commercial and/or industrial purposes.	To establish a district in which wireless communications services may be provided with minimal harm to the public health, safety and general welfare. Specifically, the Wireless Communications Services District has been created to: protect the general public from the hazards associated with wireless communication towers and facilities; and minimize visual impacts from wireless communications towers on residential districts within Whately.
Aquifer Protection Overlay District	Applies to all new construction, reconstruction, or expansion of existing buildings, parking areas, and new or expanded uses. Regulates uses, lot size, and lot coverage in each of the Zone I, Zone II, Zone III areas that comprise the district.	To promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the community by ensuring an adequate quality and quantity of drinking water for the residents, institutions and businesses of the Town of Whately; to protect existing and potential groundwater supplies and recharge areas, particularly those areas that contribute to the public water supplies; to conserve the natural resources of the Town of Whately; and to prevent temporary and permanent contamination of the environment.
Floodplain Overlay District	Located within Zones A, A1-A30, and AE on the Town's 1979 Flood Insurance Rate Map.	Prohibits encroachment (including fill, new construction, substantial improvements to existing structures, or other developments) without compensatory action.



Map A5. Official Zoning Map

Accessory Uses

The zoning bylaws allow a number of accessory uses incidental to permitted uses. The bylaws allow **home occupation** of a business or profession, if the occupation accounts for no more than 50% of the gross floor area of the residence and all accessory buildings. Whately is in the process of updating its **accessory dwelling unit (ADU)** provision to align with a 2025 state law requirement for regulation of ADUs, which will permit ADUs by right.

Special Regulations and Provisions

Special regulations and provisions in the zoning bylaws and general bylaws control housing and other types of development in ways that can encourage or discourage particular forms of development.

Whately eliminated a **growth control provision** in their zoning bylaws in 2024 that previously restricted the number of dwelling units allowed per year.

Conversion of single-family dwellings more than 10 years old to two- or three-family units is allowed by special permit in the A/R1, A/R2, and C districts. One of the units must be owner occupied, and two parking spaces per dwelling unit are required.

Conversion of historic, municipal, religious, or commercial structures for residential use is allowed by special permit.

Congregate elderly housing facilities are allowed by special permit in the A/R1, A/R2, and C Districts. A congregate housing structure may contain up to four dwelling units. More than one congregate housing structure may be placed on a lot, up to five structures. **Nursing homes** are allowed in all districts by special permit.

The **Community Housing** bylaw allows projects 12 units or less to receive dimensional relief from zoning if at least 25% of the units have long term affordability restrictions and go through a site plan review and special permit process.

Short-term rentals are allowed by special permit in owner-occupied properties, either within an owner-occupied dwelling or in an accessory apartment or single-family home within a two-family or multifamily dwelling.

Common driveways are allowed through a special permit process.

Flag lots are allowed with reduced frontage via a special permit process.

Flexible residential development is allowed with site plan review through the Planning Board in the A/R1 and A/R2 Districts. This encourages efficient use of Whately's topography to preserve unique natural and cultural features while maintaining the overall allowed

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density. It allows a subdivision of no more than 10 lots with reduced lot sizes and frontages permitted for some parcels if other lots are increased to achieve an average lot size meeting the required minimum.

The **Open space/cluster development** provision allows clustering of houses in a residential subdivision with site plan review through the Planning Board. All land not devoted to dwellings, accessory uses, roads, or other development must be set aside as common land for recreation, conservation, or agricultural uses. A point incentive system is in place to determine density bonuses in the form of extra building lots. A minimum of 20% of affordable dwelling units earn significant points toward the density bonus.

The **Solar electric generating facilities** bylaw regulates new large-scale ground-mounted solar electrical installations, providing standards for the placement, design, construction, operation, monitoring, modification, repair, and removal of installations to optimize public safety and minimize impacts to environmental, scenic, natural, and historic resources. Facilities must be smaller than 10kW in A/R1; in all other districts, facilities between 10 and 500 kW are allowed by right and facilities greater than 500 kW are allowed by special permit. Solar facilities must be designed to minimize impacts to agricultural and environmentally sensitive land and to be compatible with continued agricultural use of the land whenever possible. **Battery storage systems** are permitted where they are needed to support on-site solar installation and are required to be located outside of Zone 1 of the Aquifer Protection District and above the 100-year floodplain. The Planning Board is currently working on updates to this bylaw, which will also bring the Town into compliance with the state's new clean energy siting and permitting regulations.

Industrial planned unit developments (PUD) may be permitted within the Planned Industrial District under a special permit from the Planning Board. PUDs permit a mix of land uses, densities, and building types in one development on reduced lot sizes. A minimum of 25% of the total parcel must be permanently preserved as open space.

Land Cover/Land Use Patterns

Whately's land use patterns fall into relatively distinct zones shaped by topography, soils, and highways. In the hilly west, there are a few small farms and residential development is scattered along roads and in small subdivision clusters. In the next zone east, sitting on a flat plain dotted with wetlands along the edge of the western hills, the Chestnut Plain Road and North Street corridor contains residential development and a few farms. In the center of this corridor is Whately Center village, the town's historic town center. Whately Center village follows a classic New England village pattern, containing a few small historical commercial establishments and civic buildings intermixed with residential development. East

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of Whately Center, the Route 5/10 corridor is lined in places with mixed commercial and residential development. All of the land east of Interstate 91 is considered East Whately. East Whately is made of two flat and fertile riverplain terraces and contains residential and commercial parcels tucked between large farms and small pockets of forest. There is a cluster of industrial development on Long Plain Road at Whately's northern border.

Residential

Residential development is found throughout Whately. Most residential development is through the Approval Not Required (ANR) process that allows by-right development along existing roads if there is sufficient frontage. Many ANR subdivisions in Whately have been carved out of large family-owned lots for a family member. The number of housing units created per year in the ten years between 2016 and 2025 averaged 4.5 units (all single family or ADUs; no multi-family).⁴⁷ There has been only one major subdivision in Whately in the past 15 years—Pine Plains Estates.

Commercial

Commercial establishments are concentrated in the Commercial Districts along Route 5/10 and the Commercial/Industrial District on Long Plain Road. In recent years, Whately officials have looked at whether the commercial area around the I-91 Interchange 35 has potential to support more commercial development as there are undeveloped parcels located on the edge of that commercial zone. The 2024 *Interchange 35 Market Analysis* commissioned by the Town found that there are a number of undeveloped parcels available in the Commercial District whose commercial use could be encouraged through zoning changes.

Industrial

Industrial development is mostly contained within the Industrial and Commercial/Industrial Districts on Long Plain Road. This area is referred to as the Whately Industrial Park and is adjacent to the Deerfield Industrial Park. Both the Towns of Whately and Deerfield are interested in developing road and sewer connections between the two parks and are currently examining the feasibility of extended sewer from Deerfield.⁴⁸ A second, smaller Industrial District on Christian Lane contains a Yankee Candle manufacturing facility and a small warehouse. There are very few remaining developable parcels zoned Industrial.

⁴⁷ Franklin County Cooperative Inspection Program data

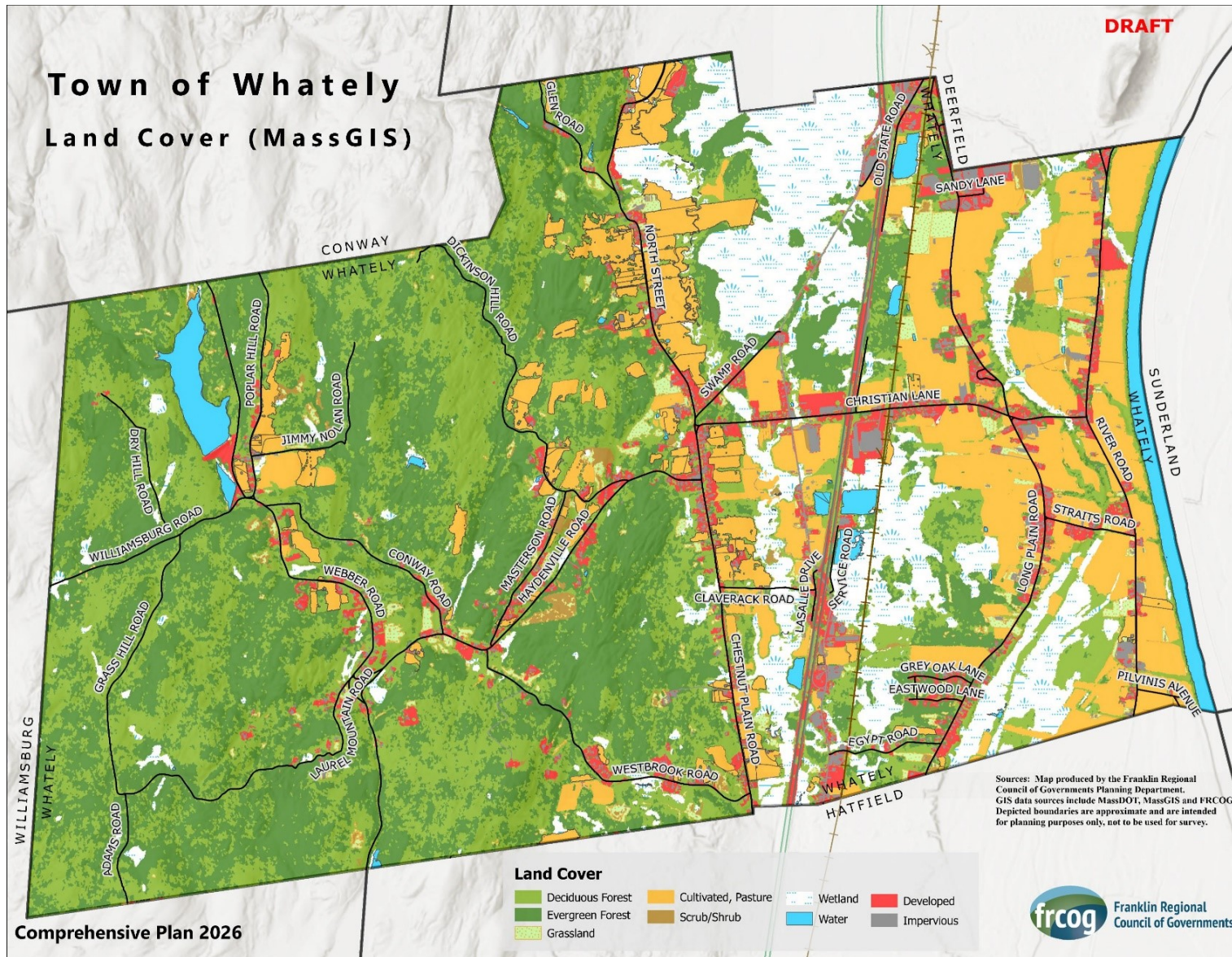
⁴⁸ <https://recorder.com/2025/06/13/study-to-determine-feasibility-of-connecting-deerfield-whately-industrial-parks-61754345/>

Agricultural

Agricultural activity is concentrated in East Whately, where it accounts for approximately 35% of the land cover east of Interstate 91.⁴⁹ Most of these farms cultivate field crops on large acreages of land owned or leased by the producer. Multiple small farms continue to operate on productive land along the Mill River and in the hills in West Whately. A much higher percentage of these hill farms are in livestock production.

Map A6 shows land cover in Whately based on aerial imagery analysis conducted in 2016. For more description of agricultural lands, see the Agricultural Technical Memo.

⁴⁹ MassGIS 2016 Land Cover/Land Use



Map A6. Land Cover

Opportunities & Challenges Analysis

Scenario Planning

There is need for approximately 3,000 additional housing units in Franklin County due to the rate of new households outpacing the decline in population. This is illustrated by near-zero vacancy rates across the county, including Whately. The need for housing is greatest in extremely low- to middle-income housing, and for disability- and aging-friendly housing.⁵⁰ Residents have indicated in surveys that they would also like more commercial and retail options in town, which would require more development or redevelopment.

It is also very possible that, if the building market shifts in the future, Whately will begin to experience an increase in development pressure in the coming years. Whately is located on a major highway near the population centers of Amherst, Hadley, and Northampton and has an abundance of flat, developable farmland.

As a community, Whately has long valued the protection of its open space assets. But the current shortage of housing, desire for some commercial development, and a strengthening development market poses a risk to the continuation of a small town feel and the preservation of farmland and natural resources.

How does Whately balance the need for some development, outside market forces, and the desire to protect open space? The first step is to understand what development is possible under current conditions. To assist with this, the following section conducts two analyses:

- 1) A residential buildout analysis to identify what can be potentially developed on existing vacant, buildable parcels, and where natural resources could be impacted; and
- 2) A residential infill analysis to determine how many units could be added to the town in the form of accessory dwelling units (ADUs).

Housing Buildout Analysis

Table A19 shows how many parcels and housing units could potentially be built out in Whately in each zoning district. FRCOG staff performed a GIS spatial analysis to identify all potentially buildable parcels based on the unit maximums and lot size minimums for all zoning districts under two scenarios: 1) vacant parcels with frontage within 400 feet of existing public water lines and 2) vacant parcels with frontage more than 400 feet from an

⁵⁰ FRCOG, Franklin County Regional Housing Plan (2024): <https://frcog.org/publications/franklin-county-regional-housing-plan-2024/>

existing public water line.⁵¹ The analysis was conducted for parcels with and without water because minimum lot size in each zoning district depends on the presence of public water.⁵² Parcels with the following prohibitive environmental constraints were removed from the selection: wetlands and river buffers, 100-year floodplain, conservation/agricultural preservation restrictions, and slopes over 12%. Farmland parcels that are not permanently protected (such as those enrolled in the Chapter 61A tax program for temporary protective status) were included. Because the analysis was not detailed enough to filter parcels based on zoning dimensional requirements (e.g. lot frontage) and all environmental limitations (e.g. Title 5 perc tests), a corrective reduction of 50% was applied to the estimated total units to give a more realistic picture of potential buildout. Table A19 also shows the percentage of potentially developable parcels which could be developed that have existing farm buildings on them.

Map A7 shows the location of potentially buildable parcels. The legend distinguishes between parcels with and without access to public water, and parcels with or without farm buildings.

The results show that an estimated total of 340 new housing units could be added to Whately under current conditions on 194 existing vacant parcels. Approximately, 60% of the new units would be located where there is public water and the remaining 40% could be built on lots without public water. However, 62% of this buildable parcel area is either active farmland (Map A8)⁵³ or mapped BioMap Core Habitat (Map A9).⁵⁴ Of the 194 potentially buildable parcels, only 94 do not have active farmland on the parcel and only 87 do not have mapped BioMap somewhere on the parcel. When combined, these constraints leave only 44 parcels, totaling 400 acres, untouched by active farmland or BioMap Core Habitat.

⁵¹ Vacant is defined as parcels with no existing residential or commercial structures, although agricultural parcels with farm structures were included.

⁵² Because there is no dataset identifying which specific lots had access to public water, the analysis shows only which lots are predicted to have water based on the 400-foot buffer.

⁵³ Active farmland was estimated based on the MassGIS 2016 Land Cover/Land Use data layer.

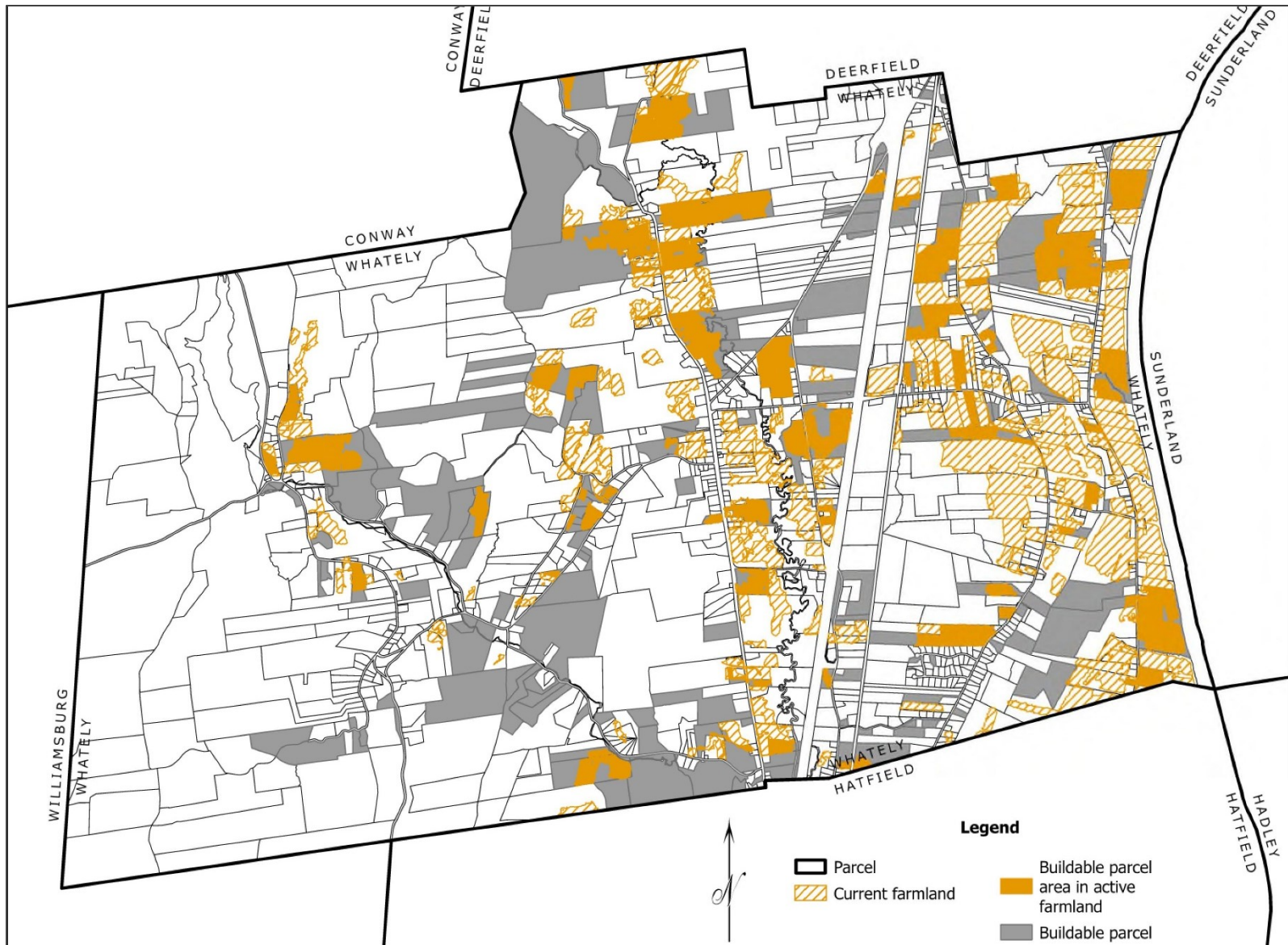
⁵⁴ BioMap is a collaborative mapping project run by MassWildlife and The Nature Conservancy. The Core Habitat element maps areas deemed critical for the long-term persistence of rare species, exemplary natural communities, and resilient ecosystems.

Table A19. Buildout Potential of Vacant Parcels with and without Public Water

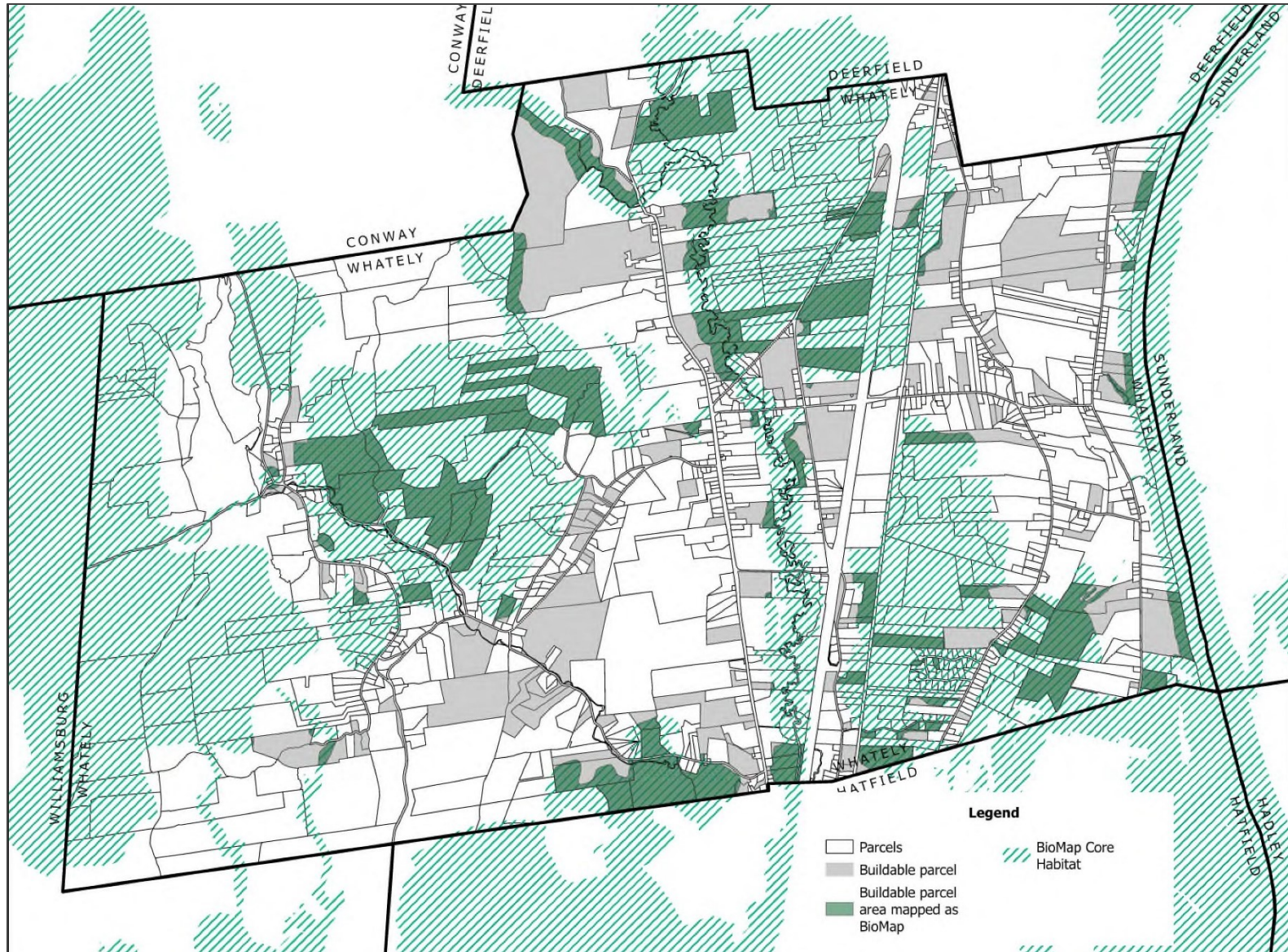
Zoning District	Buildout Potential					
	With Water			Without Water		
	Number of housing units	Number of parcels	% of parcels with existing farm buildings	Number of housing units	Number of parcels	% with existing farm buildings
Agricultural/ Residential 1 (A/R1)	165	94	7%	105	60	4%
Agricultural/ Residential 2 (A/R2)	4	2	13%	32	17	2%
Commercial (C)	19	12	11%	4	4	0%
Industrial (I)	8	4	0%	0	0	0%
Commercial/ Industrial (C/I)	2	1	0%	0	0	0%
Total Units	198	113	23%	142	81	6%



Map A7. Potentially Buildable Vacant Parcels



Map A8. Active Farmland and Potentially Buildable Vacant Parcels



Map A9. BioMap Core Habitat and Potentially Buildable Vacant Parcels

Housing Infill Analysis

Infill development refers to building on vacant and underutilized parcels within existing development patterns. Infill can also involve parcels on which property owners voluntarily redevelop the property to increase the unit density within allowed zoning. Infill development, in contrast to development in previously undeveloped areas, accommodates growth where there is more likely to be existing infrastructure and proximity to services. This can reduce the cost of municipal services and lessen the impact of development on the environment and open space.

In Whately, infill to increase housing density could take the form of building on a vacant parcel, creating accessory dwelling units (ADUs), remodeling a house or building to include more units, or redeveloping a single-family property into multi-family housing, for example.

Based on the number of existing houses in Whately, an additional 700 units could technically be added to existing single-family homes and duplexes in the form of accessory dwelling units (ADUs).⁵⁵ Attached and detached ADUs up to 900 square feet are now allowed by right everywhere in Massachusetts. However, due to the high cost of construction of an ADU and the costs of upgrading a septic system if public sewer is not available, it is very unlikely that this many ADUs will ever be created. As a result, this analysis assumes only 10% of potential ADUs would actually be constructed, resulting in an estimated 70 new infill units.

Housing Analysis Summary

The Residential Buildout Analysis shows that an estimated 340 potential new units can be built on vacant parcels.

The Residential Infill Analysis shows that an estimate of 70 new ADUs could be potentially constructed in town.

Combining these two types of development means that under current conditions, an estimated total of 410 new potential units can be created in Whately. The preceding maps show that this housing could be located throughout the entire town and could potentially impact a significant amount of active farmland or mapped BioMap Core Habitat. These maps and estimates give Town officials and the community a sense of Whately's remaining buildout potential based on current zoning with an understanding that the future could yield higher or lower levels of development.

At first glance, the estimated potential additional housing units that could be built in Whately under current zoning can seem overwhelming to a town that currently only has 719

⁵⁵ U.S. Census Data, American Community Survey, 2020 – 2024 Five-Year Estimates

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existing housing units. However, the Housing Chapter of this plan and numerous other regional and state plans very clearly identify the need for additional housing to not only correct the existing housing shortage, but to also have a healthy and sustainable population.

This analysis provides the Town with a picture of what future residential development could look like under current regulations and how that juxtaposes with sensitive environmental features. There are zoning strategies that can be employed to facilitate needed housing, while controlling it in ways to safeguard town landscapes and recreate the small village-center feel that residents value. Some of these strategies are discussed later in this Memo. Another potential way of limiting the ability of development to consume and fragment open space is to cluster the future development in a denser fashion. However, this is really only possible in a meaningful way with the availability of public sewer.

The Potential of Sewer

The development of denser housing such as senior living, infill of small vacant parcels, or clustered subdivision is considerably more expensive without municipal sewer because it requires installation of individual septic systems. While the Town does not have municipal sewer, Whately is in the unique situation of being situated next to two towns with municipal sewer systems with excess capacity in their treatment plants and potential interest in expanding the systems into Whately.⁵⁶ The ability to connect to public sewer would open up opportunities for commercial and housing development in Whately consistent with the community's vision of balancing agricultural and open space land preservation with economic development and attainable housing choices. This potential future scenario is explored below. Alternatively, if sewer expansion into Whately is deemed infeasible or for areas where sewer lines could never reach, village-scale "package" treatment plants are an emerging option.

The main sewer line for the South Deerfield Wastewater Treatment plant is located along the Deerfield-Whately border. Even if the Historic Deerfield sewer system were to be connected to South Deerfield's in the future, excess capacity in South Deerfield's wastewater treatment system could still allow for an estimated additional several hundred hookups.⁵⁷ The Towns of Deerfield and Whately are considering creating a sewer connection from the

⁵⁶ Greenfield Recorder: "Study to determine feasibility of connecting Deerfield, Whately industrial parks": <https://recorder.com/2025/06/13/study-to-determine-feasibility-of-connecting-deerfield-whately-industrial-parks-61754345/>

Hatfield 2040 Action Plan:

<https://hatfield2040.org/docs/Hatfield%202040%20Action%20Plan%20web%20FINAL.pdf>

⁵⁷ Based on FRCOG analysis of available data public sewer system capacity

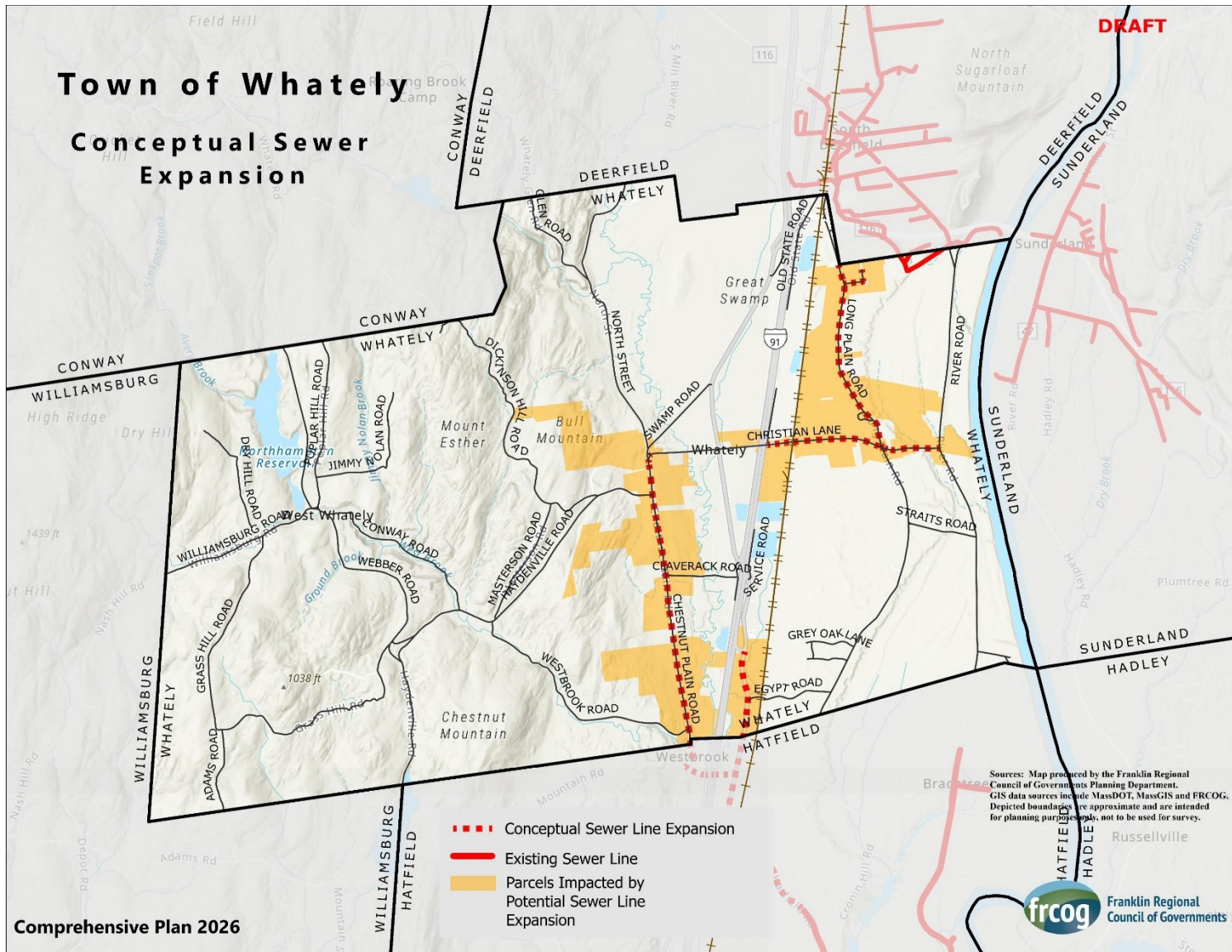
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Deerfield Industrial Park to the Whately Industrial Park to serve industrial sites; a feasibility study to explore this concept is underway. This line could potentially be extended south along Long Plain Road to serve agricultural and residential sites. Map A10 shows the parcels that could be served by this connection if the sewer was hypothetically extended 2.8 miles along Long Plain Road to Christian Lane and the length of Christian Lane.

The Hatfield Wastewater Treatment Plant, located on Main Street about 2 miles north of Hatfield Center, also has excess capacity for an estimated several hundred hookups.⁵⁸ Presently, the closest sewer line to Whately is on the eastern side of town about half a mile south of the town line on Main Street. However, extension of this sewer main north into Whately on River Road would likely not result in significant housing unit gains because of the amount of protected farmland. There may be other options, however, as Hatfield has said it is considering extending sewer north on Route 5/10 toward the Whately town line in the next 15 to 20 years. If this were to occur, Whately could potentially run sewer lines along Route 5/10 from the Hatfield town line north through the Commercial District. It could also run sewer lines to Whately Center via Mountain Road and Chestnut Plain Road. Sewer along Route 5/10 would make it possible to change commercial and residential zoning regulations to allow for more density and have public transit access. Public sewer connection in Whately Village would likewise allow for greater village-style density and commercial enterprises, such as a restaurant or cafe. Map A10 shows the parcels that could be served by these two connections in a scenario where sewer was extended along Route 5/10 as far north as the Interstate 91 overpass (1.03 miles) and to Whately Center as far north as the intersection of Chestnut Plain Road and Depot Road (2.6 miles).

While sewer expansion would certainly enable a more clustered form of development to allow for greater protection of open space, it is also a very expensive investment for a town with a small population and could disrupt the rural character of a community if proper zoning and subdivision regulations are not properly put in place. The extensions, if they occur, could still also impact active agricultural lands and BioMap Core Habitat—although because denser development could happen with sewer, it may be possible to concentrate growth in these locations and save other areas. Understanding the possible geographic extent of expansion and ballpark costs will help shape conversations as to what is feasible and/or desirable for Whately.

⁵⁸ Based on FRCOG analysis of available data public sewer system capacity



Map A10. Potential Sewer Extension Areas

Zoning Strategies

Producing Additional Housing

Redevelopment, infill, and smaller and more dense housing all help to preserve open space while meeting housing needs. The 2025 *Whately Community Preservation Committee Plan* prioritizes efforts to identify new housing opportunities in existing buildings or construct housing on previously developed or Town-owned sites.

The Whately Planning Board and Town Meeting voters have recently promoted zoning updates that increase flexibility in residential development regulations while also limiting residential sprawl. However, there have been no applications for cluster zoning development since the bylaw was adopted. The community adopted a Community Housing Bylaw in 2024 to promote housing diversity while still ensuring appropriate siting and construction. The Community Housing bylaw's affordability requirement, while laudable, means that it is unlikely developers will actually use it due to economies of scale with high development costs and low return on sales or rental prices. It also restricts occupancy, which may not be lawful, and places additional restrictions on developers. In both cases, the current weak housing market conditions in western Massachusetts make both types of development largely impossible for a developer to financially break even on.

Notwithstanding recent efforts, additional zoning changes are recommended to the zoning bylaws to better support the development of diverse housing types that are more efficiently sited on the land. These changes would help clarify the existing regulations, support affordability and housing for farmers, and make higher density development easier and residential development possible, such as in the form of two-family homes, ADUs, or community housing. *Whately's 2023 Housing Production Plan* lays out a number of housing zoning-related strategies that have been summarized in the recommendations at the end of this memo.

Encouraging Commercial Development

The Town of Whately would like to continue to see local business development that increases the tax base, provides job opportunities, and improves quality of life. However, existing zoning regulations in Whately may constrain new development, especially retail. For example, parking minimums and maximum lot size coverage together reduce the buildable area on many lots, restricting their development potential.

In 2024, the *Interchange 35 Market Analysis* commissioned by the Town took a closer look at the potential of the area around Interchange 35 as an area to promote greater commercial development. The study noted many development constraints and also found that the primary trade area can possibly only viably support 500-square-foot retail or a 5,000-

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square-foot “dollar store”. These scenarios are not very realistic for successful retail, as 500 square feet is the size of a small one-bedroom apartment, which would likely not draw enough traffic if built in isolation, and the average “dollar store” size is closer to the 7,500 – 10,000 square foot range.

Mixed use is increasingly replacing traditional zoning in communities now that commercial uses are no longer always unpleasant or harmful to live around. Mixed use generally refers to a deliberate mix of housing, civic uses, and commercial uses. When this kind of development is concentrated and near transit, it is seen as an important “smart growth” tool to improve quality of life, reduce vehicle dependence, and preserve natural spaces. It can also allow for more flexibility in what is developed so that development happens more quickly and organically. Mixed use can mean that one building may contain many different uses and/or buildings with different uses may be adjoining one another in the same district. Allowing mixed uses in a traditionally commercial district, such as through more flexible zoning in the existing district, rewriting zoning to define a mixed-use district, or applying a mixed-use overlay district, could benefit both housing and commercial objectives with a compact mix of small-scale commercial development and diverse housing options.

The town could also consider rezoning parcels as commercial adjacent to existing Commercial Districts, such as parcels where commercial uses already exist as non-conforming uses, or where commercial could be expanded. This would work best in areas that may be able to acquire sewer connections in the future.

In reality, there are very few developable parcels where new commercial development would not impact the pastoral or neighborhood character of Whately. For this reason, the town may consider revising the zoning regulations in mixed use areas to focus more on building appearance (design, scale, and placement) rather than on allowed uses so that new commercial uses can blend better with the existing character of Whately. If the community wants to encourage mixed use, the underlying zoning or overlay should be structured to be attractive to developers, and the requirements should not be onerous. The municipality typically retains control through the special permit process and can turn down any development not to its liking.

Environmental Protection

Residents want zoning regulations and land use practices to continue to protect Whately’s rich waters, soils, and habitats. Respondents to the 2024 Whately Comprehensive Plan Survey ranked the protection of additional farmland and forestland and the preservation of ground and surface water quality as the most important natural and cultural resource activities for the community to prioritize.

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Some of the largest threats to Whately's natural and built environment are the impacts of climate change and increasingly variable weather. More intense storms are leading to more frequent and severe riverine and localized flooding. Unmanaged stormwater is causing erosion on roads and carrying pollutants across the landscape into healthy bodies of water. Both floodplain management and stormwater management can be encouraged through zoning regulations and subdivision regulations.

Another contemporary threat is the ongoing fragmentation of land and habitats caused by development, including development for renewable energy generation and storage. Whately has a history of updating zoning bylaw language to protect farmland from permanent deleterious impacts from solar energy generation, but with technology changing rapidly, this need is ongoing. Refer to the Agriculture Technical Memo for more discussion of solar development impacts on farmland.

Clear Zoning and Subdivision Language and Processes

Clear, readable regulatory language helps to attract developers and reduce confusion and legal challenges. There are opportunities in Whately's zoning bylaws to clarify purposes, definitions, and specific expectations. Additionally, the Town is seeking to codify the Board's internal subdivision policies and procedures to clarify municipal handling of future applications.

Supporting Agriculture

This plan's Agricultural Technical Memo outlines the need for municipalities to undertake what they can to support farm viability, farmland access, and farmland protection if they want to preserve the farming traditions and agricultural economy in their community. The Whately Planning Board has recently worked with the Agricultural Commission on zoning amendments to allow larger farmstands, but there are likely additional opportunities for collaboration. Whately farms are located throughout town, so an Agricultural Protection Overlay District is a less practical tool in Whately. As climate changes makes growing conditions increasingly less predictable, the Planning Board will also have to grapple with what structures are considered agricultural uses.

The 2024 Whately Comprehensive Plan Survey shows that residents highly support the development of agritourism in Whately. Agritourism is any business that links agriculture with tourism to attract visitors to a farm for the purposes of education or entertainment, such as bed and breakfast, corn mazes, weddings, or haunted house. Changes to the zoning bylaws can better encourage agritourism and diversification of on-farm businesses. Diversification can mean supplemental incomes for farmers, which can help ensure the financial health and sustainability of local farms. One impactful zoning tool is the farm building reuse bylaw, which allows the reuse of vacant or under-used farm buildings for

income generation. Examples of adaptive reuse include event space for weddings and other functions, workshops, specialized storage, studio space, professional office space, or other commercial uses compatible with the surrounding landscape. There is currently legislation moving through the Massachusetts State House that would make agritourism ventures by-right under local zoning statewide. To date, the FARM Bill (S.3029) has been passed by the Senate and is now in the House of Representatives for consideration.

Recommendations

Revise Zoning to Increase Housing Production and Types

- Consider revising the Community Housing bylaw to increase the maximum building cap, provide density bonuses for affordable units to make it more feasible, and remove occupancy restriction.
- Eliminate the requirement for additional lot size and frontage required for duplexes.
- Evaluate whether the additional lot size and frontage is necessary for properties that are outside of the public water service area. Board of Health regulations will still apply to ensure that health codes related to septic and wells are enforced.
- Allow two-family by right in all residential districts or with an overlay district.
- Simplify the Open Space/Cluster bylaw to encourage its use by developers, including creating a combined site analysis/development plan and application that can satisfy Zoning Bylaw and Subdivision Control Act requirements.
- Clarify and allow manufactured homes the same way single-family homes are allowed.
- Modify zoning bylaw on ADUs to comply with state law.
- Evaluate the possibility of creating a sub-category of a district or an overlay district in village areas where denser housing is possible through smaller lot sizes and/or allow multifamily housing by right in these areas.
- Allow townhouses as a form of residential development either by-right or special permit.

Revise Zoning to Promote Flexible and Mixed-Use Commercial Development

- Allow more mixed uses along the Route 5/10 corridor.
- Explore form-based code as a zoning tool that focuses on the desired physical form, placement, size, and bulk of buildings while allowing flexibility in the type of use. Form-based code can be incorporated piecemeal and does not require a zoning overhaul.
- Allow by-right mixed-use development with upper-story residential.
- Allow drive-throughs in all or some Commercial Districts.

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- Consider rezoning parcels around the Commercial District at Interchange 35 to expand this area as a mixed-use district or apply a mixed-use overlay (e.g. the Old State Road area between I-91 and the railroad).
- Consider rezoning Christian Lane at the intersection of Route 5/10 and/or from Route 5/10 to the railroad tracks as a mixed-use district.
- Support the sustainability of farm businesses
- Begin a dialogue between the Planning Board and Agricultural Commission to discuss what additional zoning measures could support farm viability, access, and farmland protection, such as a farm building reuse bylaw with site plan review for the A/R1 and A/R2 Districts.
- Reduce minimum parking ratios and adjust maximum lot coverage in this district so that 10,000–12,000 square-foot commercial or mixed-use buildings and small restaurants can be built by right or with streamlined permitting, rather than being made infeasible by current dimensional standards.

Plan Comprehensively for Wastewater

- Commission a high-level wastewater and decentralized treatment strategy study (e.g., village-scale or cluster solutions for key growth nodes) to explore options for future commercial, housing, and civic projects to not be constrained solely by on-site septic.
- Work with the Towns of Deerfield and Hatfield to explore long-term municipal sewer expansions into Whately.
- Conduct a feasibility study with a more detailed build-out analysis to understand the benefits and drawbacks from extending municipal sewer lines into Whately.

Revise Zoning to Support Environmental Protection

- Update and align the Town's zoning bylaws, subdivision regulations, and permitting process with flood resilient and stormwater management best practices. Consider low-impact development (LID) principles, green infrastructure, and nature-based solutions to manage stormwater and heat.
- Continue to review and revise solar and battery storage siting and planning and regulation to meet high standards for farmland preservation, groundwater protection, and the protection of other resources. Take advantage of the new Renewable Energy Siting Regional Coordinator for help.

Promote Outdoor Recreation and Tourism

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- Explore how zoning can support the expansion of outdoor recreation and agritourism.

Clarify Zoning and Subdivision Language and Planning Processes

- Clarify zoning language, including:
 - Develop purpose statements for zoning districts where they currently do not exist.
 - Include housing in the zoning bylaw purpose statement.
 - Clarify the location of the Industrial Planned Industrial District.
- Update subdivision regulations and procedures
- Update and codify Planning Board internal policies and procedures.

DRAFT



APPENDIX B - SURVEY RESULTS

Whately Comprehensive Plan

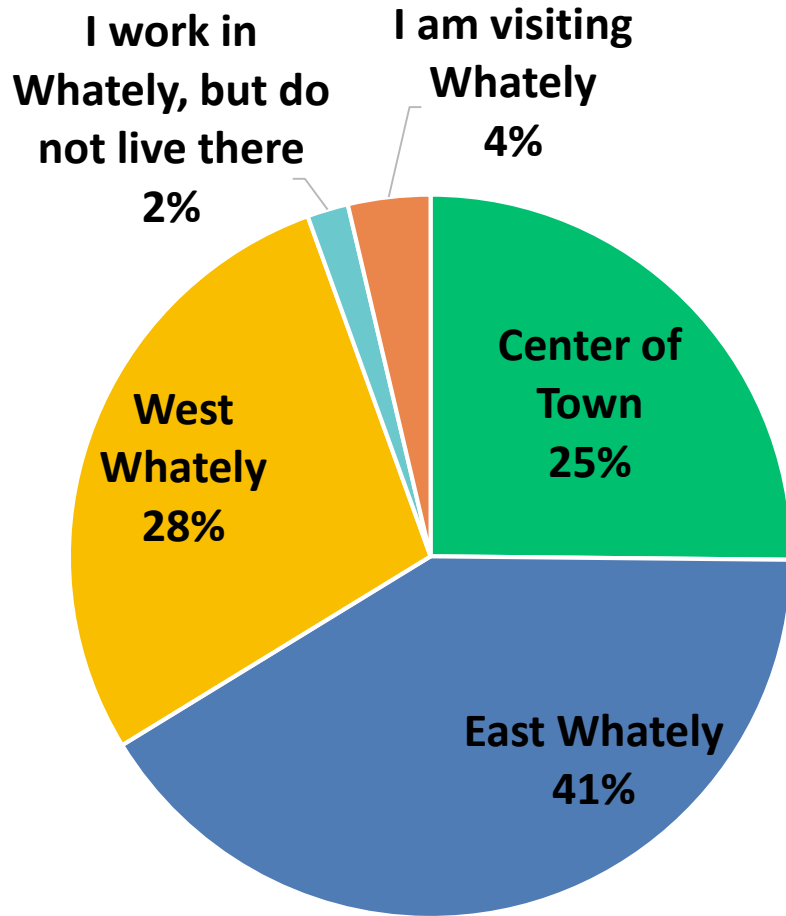
Survey Results

Responses collected January 22 – March 12, 2024

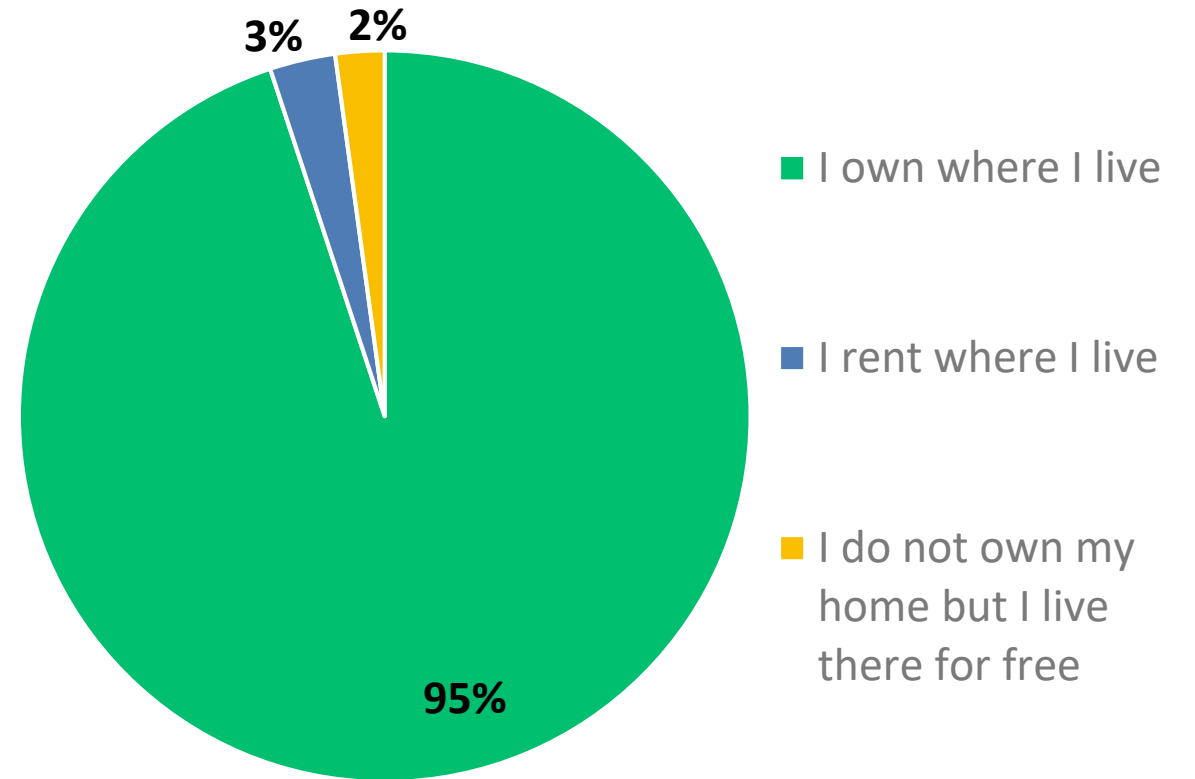
- 168 total responses
- 140 fully completed (~83%)

Demographics of Survey Respondents

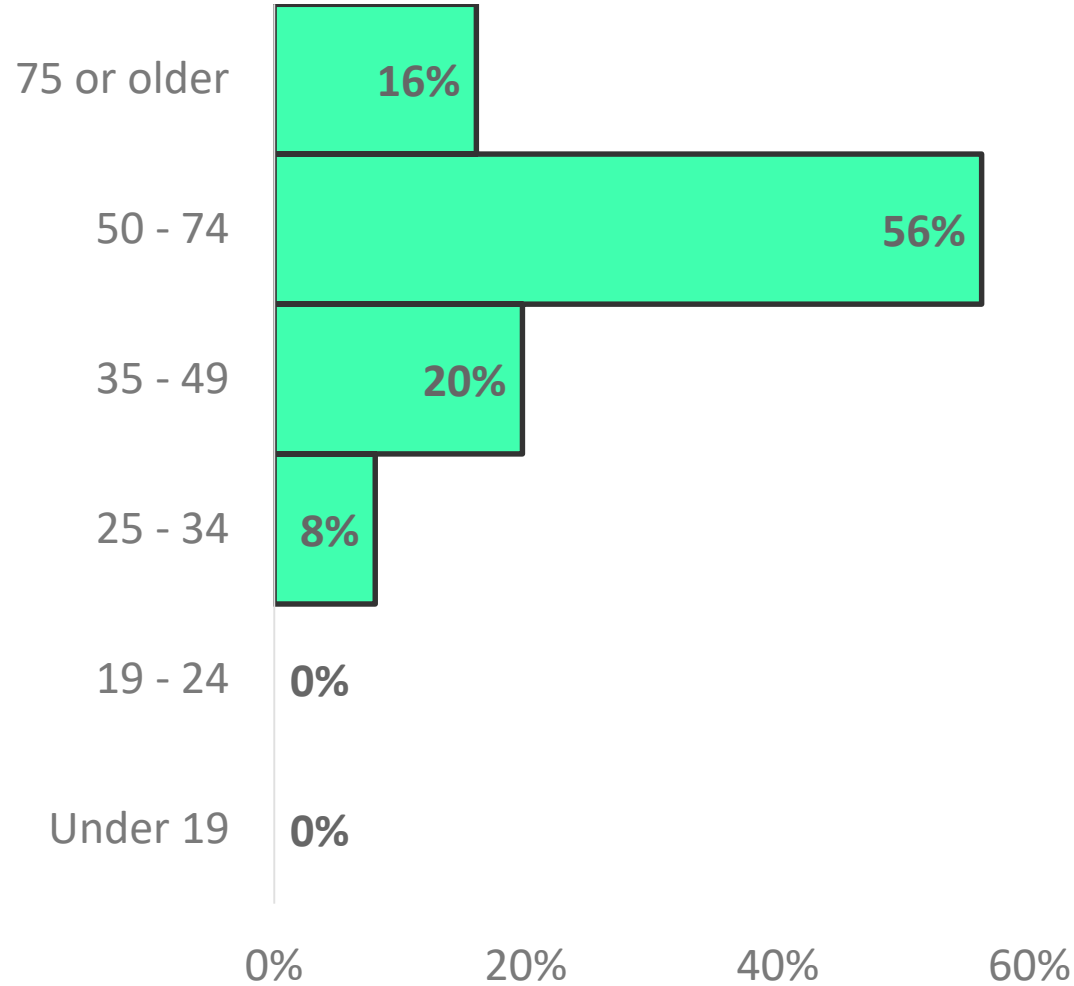
Q1: Where do you live in the Town of Whately?
Select one.



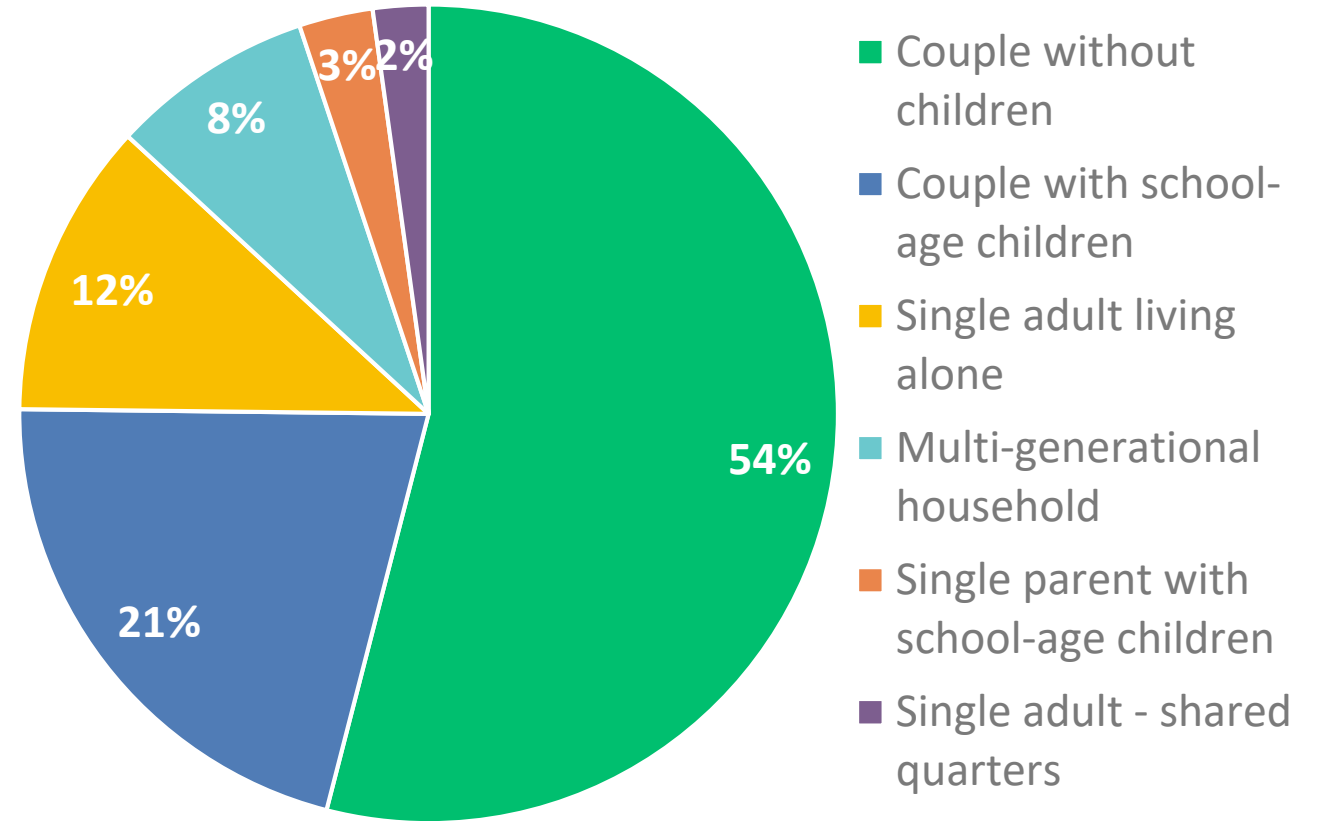
Q22: Select the phrase that best describes your housing.
Select one.



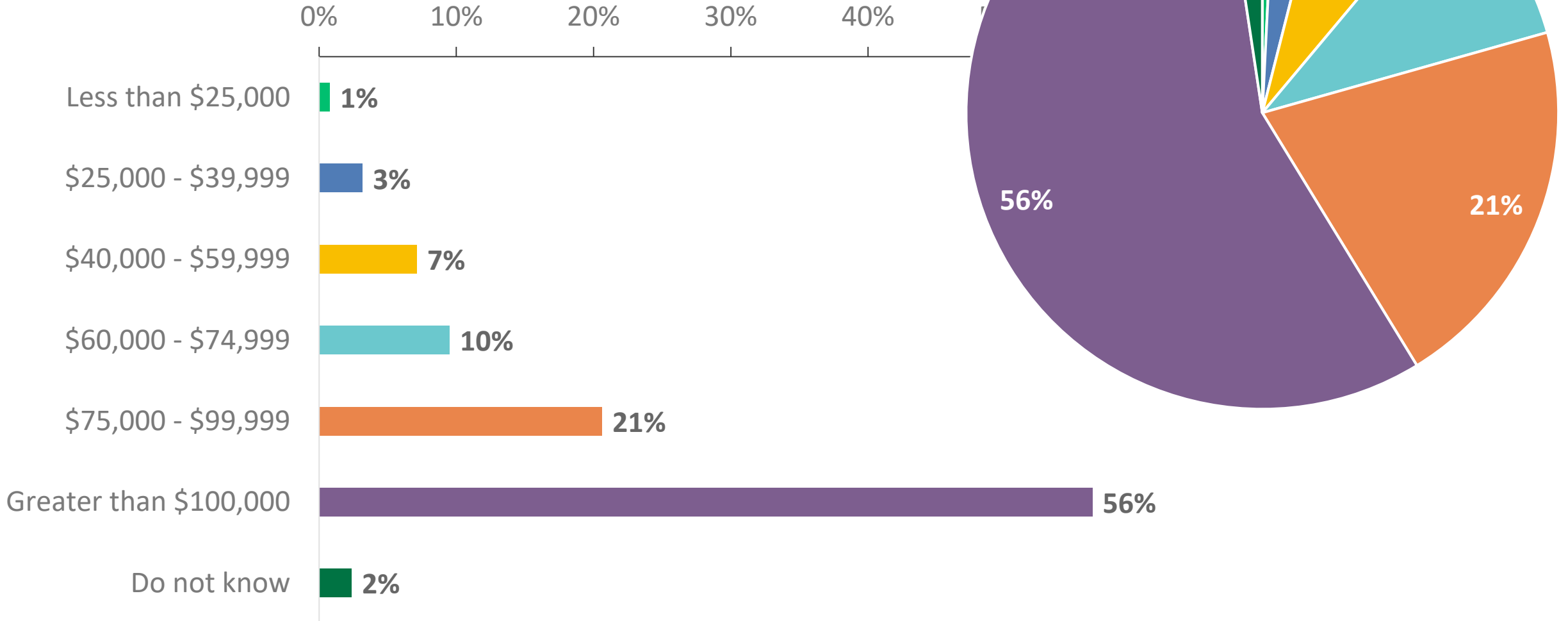
Q23: What is your age? *Select one.*



Q24: What is your current living situation? *Select one.*



Q23: What is your approximate annual household income?
Select one.



Summary of Demographics of Survey Respondents Relative to Whately Population

Housing:

Homeowners are overrepresented in the survey, at 95% compared to the actual rate of 88%.

Age:

Three-quarters (76%) of survey respondents were between the ages of 35 and 74, while this group represents 63% of the population. This survey was geared towards adults, so it was not expected to have a representative response rate from children and youth. (Table 1)

Income:

Higher income groups are more represented in the survey. People who earn less than \$60k are not well represented despite making up 25% of the population. Those earning \$100k or more are overrepresented. (Table 2)

Table 1. Age

Region	% of Responses	% of Current Pop.
Under 35	8%	31%
35-74	76%	63%
75 or Older	16%	6%
*Current population as defined in 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.		

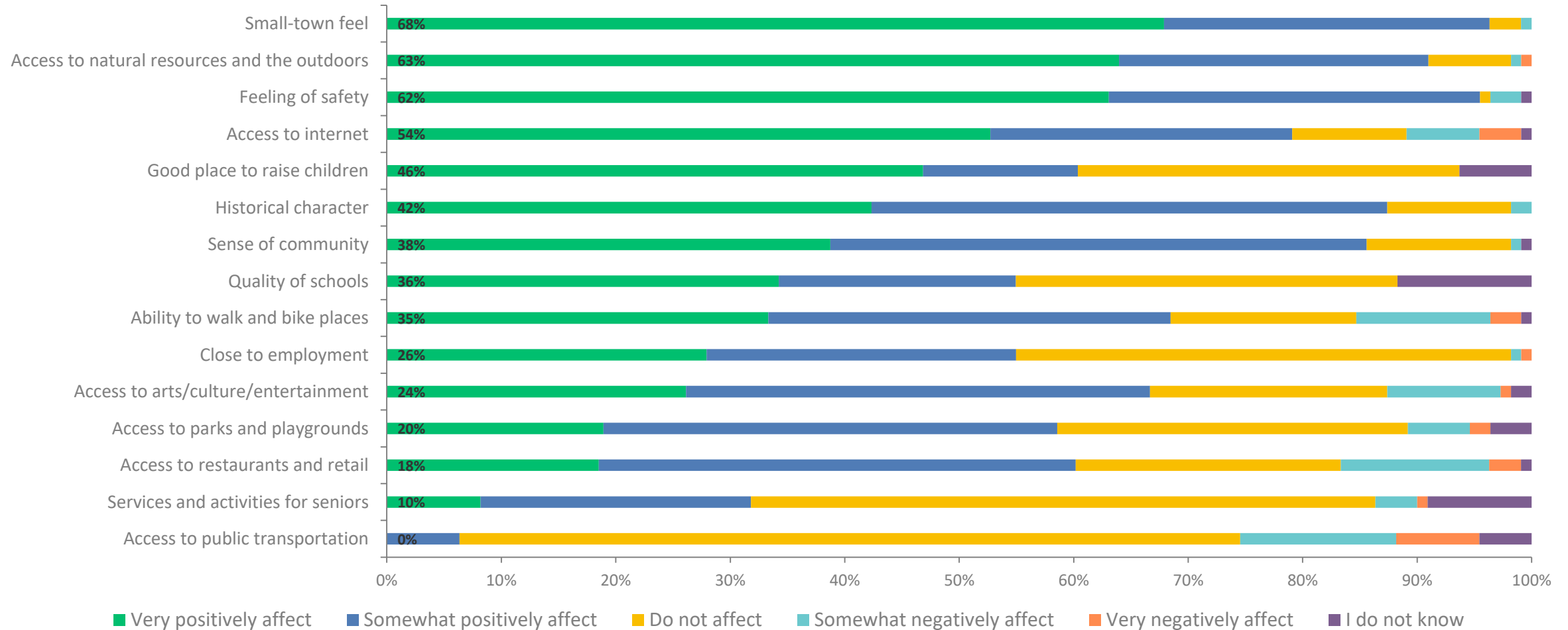
Table 2. Income

Income bracket	% of Responses	% of Current Pop.*
Less than \$25,000	1%	7%
\$25,000 - \$39,999	3%	8%
\$40,000 - \$59,999	7%	10%
\$60,000 - \$74,999	10%	11%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	21%	16%
\$100,000 or more	56%	48%
2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.		

Quality of Life

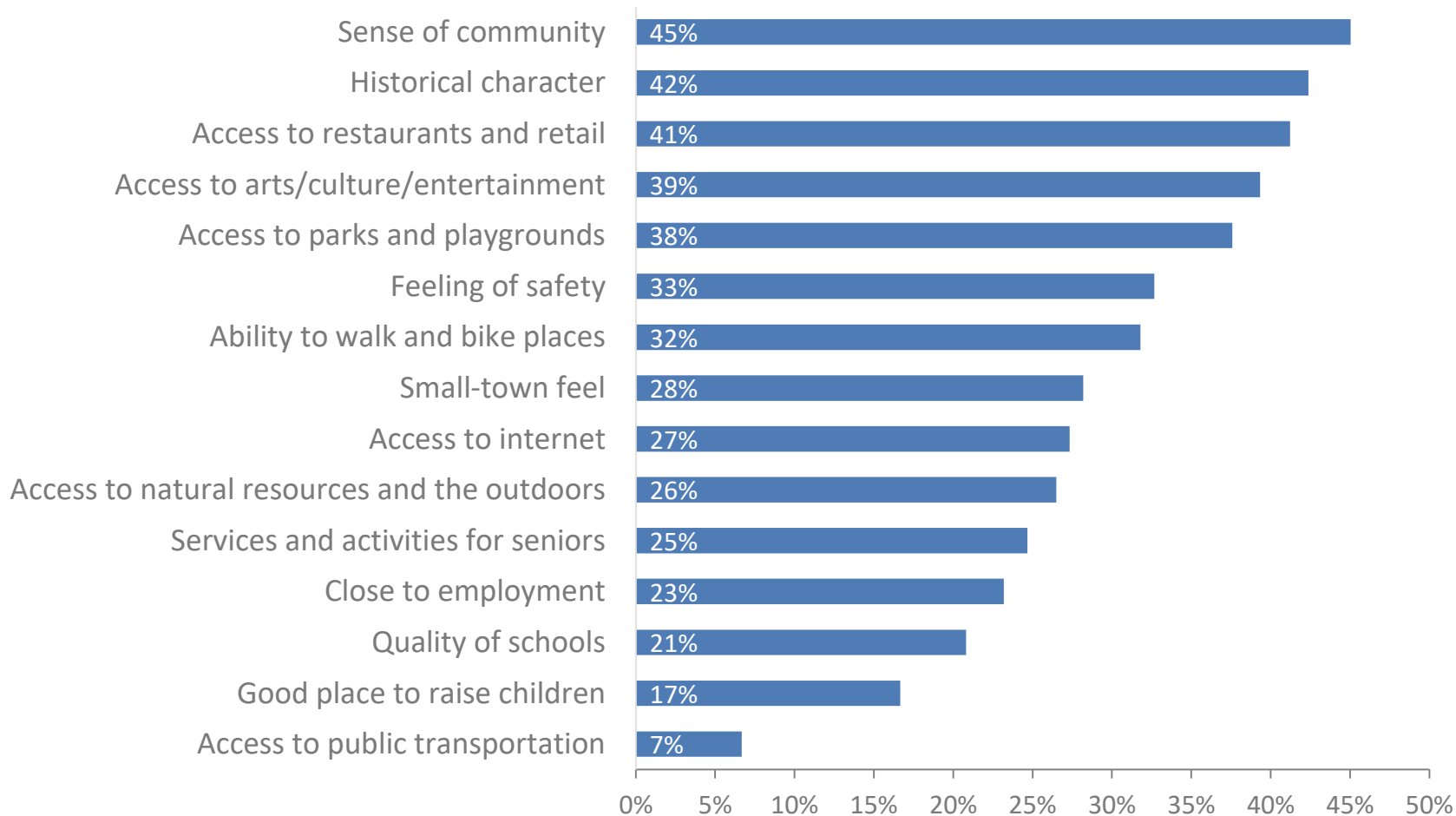
Q2: How do the following factors affect your life in the Town of Whately?

Ranked by those answering "Very positively affect"



Q2: How do the following factors affect your life in the Town of Whately?

Ranked by those answering “Somewhat positively affect”

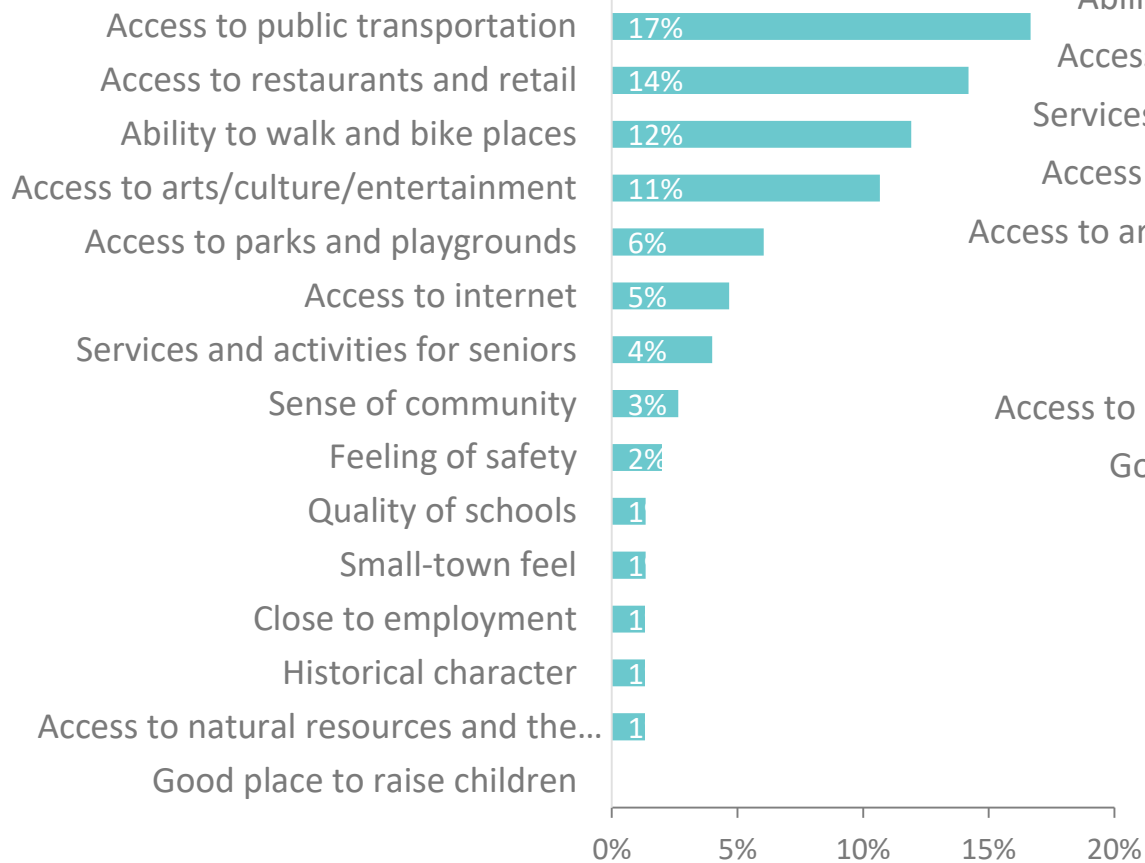


“Very positively” and “Somewhat positively” combined top 5 ranking:

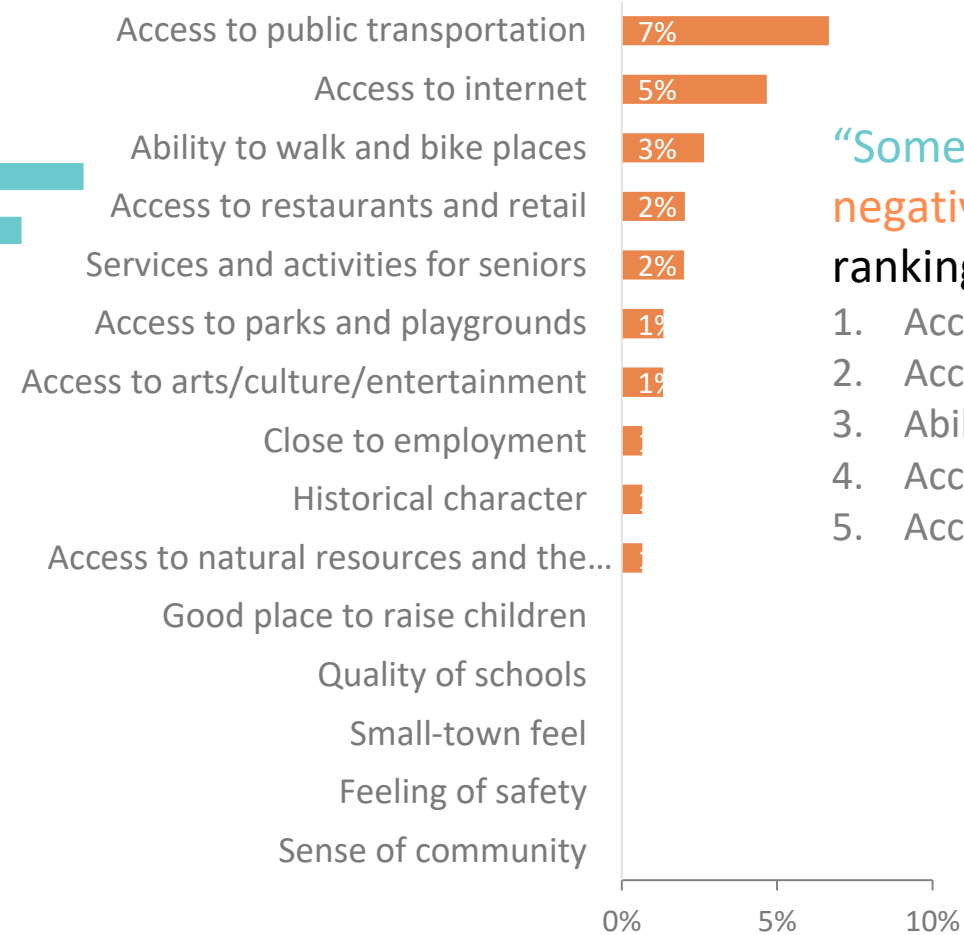
1. Feeling of safety
2. Small-town feel
3. Access to natural resources and the outdoors
4. Historic character
5. Sense of community

Q2: How do the following factors affect your life in the Town of Whately?

Ranked by those answering “Somewhat negatively affect”



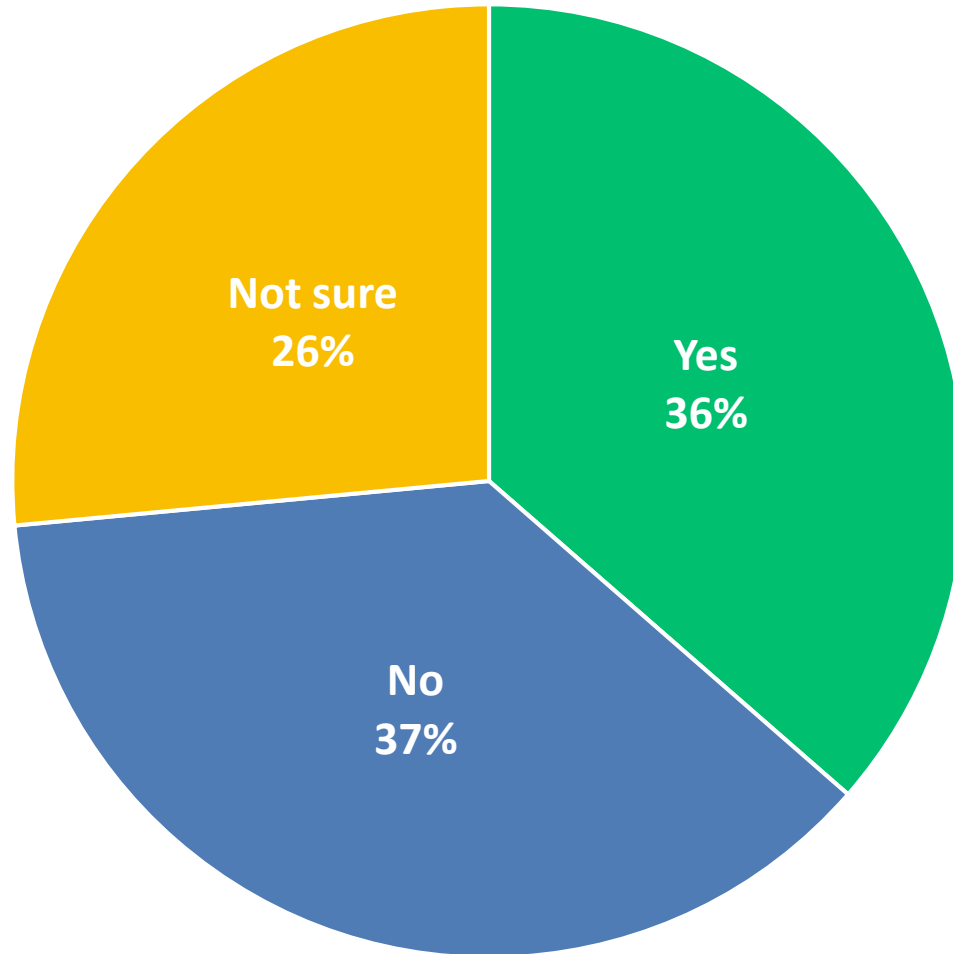
Ranked by those answering “Very negatively affect”



“Somewhat negatively” and “Very negatively” combined top 5 ranking:

1. Access to public transportation
2. Access to restaurants and retail
3. Ability to walk and bike places
4. Access to arts/culture/entertainment
5. Access to internet

Q3: Are there enough places to gather – with friends, neighbors, or as a community – in Whately? *Select one.*



Q4: What do you think is missing from Whately that would improve your quality of life? *Opened ended.*



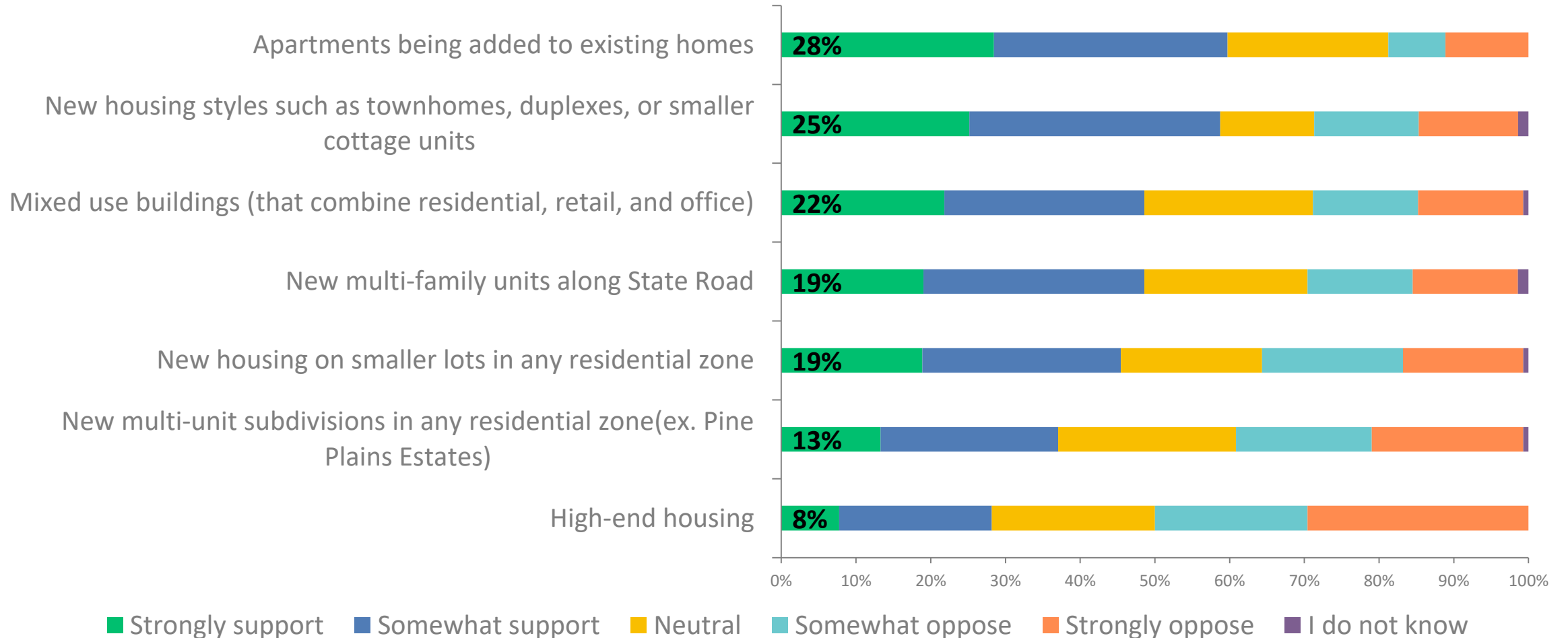
Q5: What is the best thing about our town? *Open ended.*



Housing

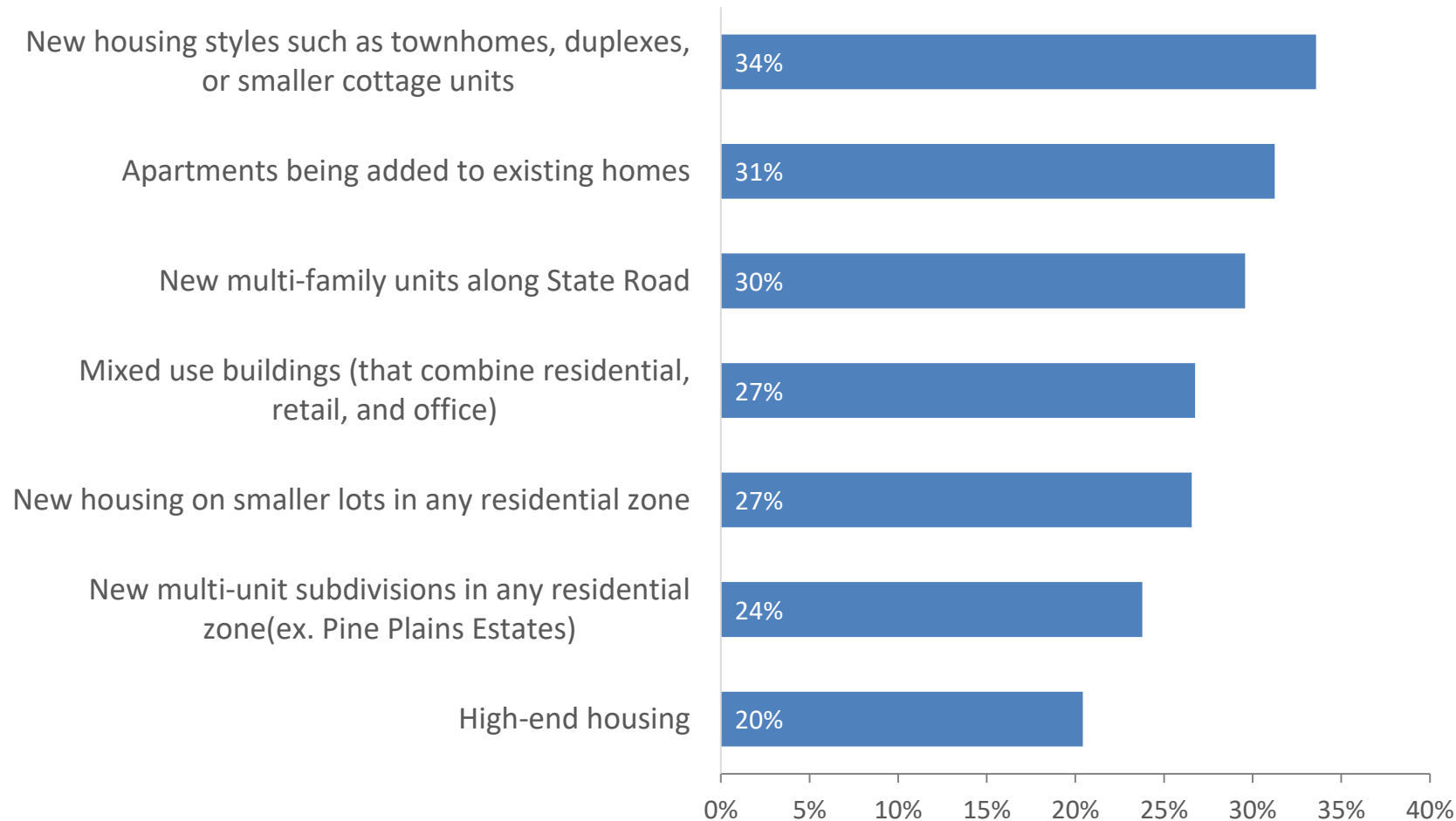
Q7: Would you support or oppose the following for new development?

Ranked by those answering “Strongly support”



Q7: Would you support or oppose the following for new development?

Ranked by those answering “Somewhat strongly support”



“Strongly support” and “Somewhat support” combined top 3 ranking:

1. Apartments being added to existing homes
2. New housing styles such as townhomes, duplexes, or smaller cottage units

Tied for 3.

Mixed use buildings (that combine residential, retail, and office)

and

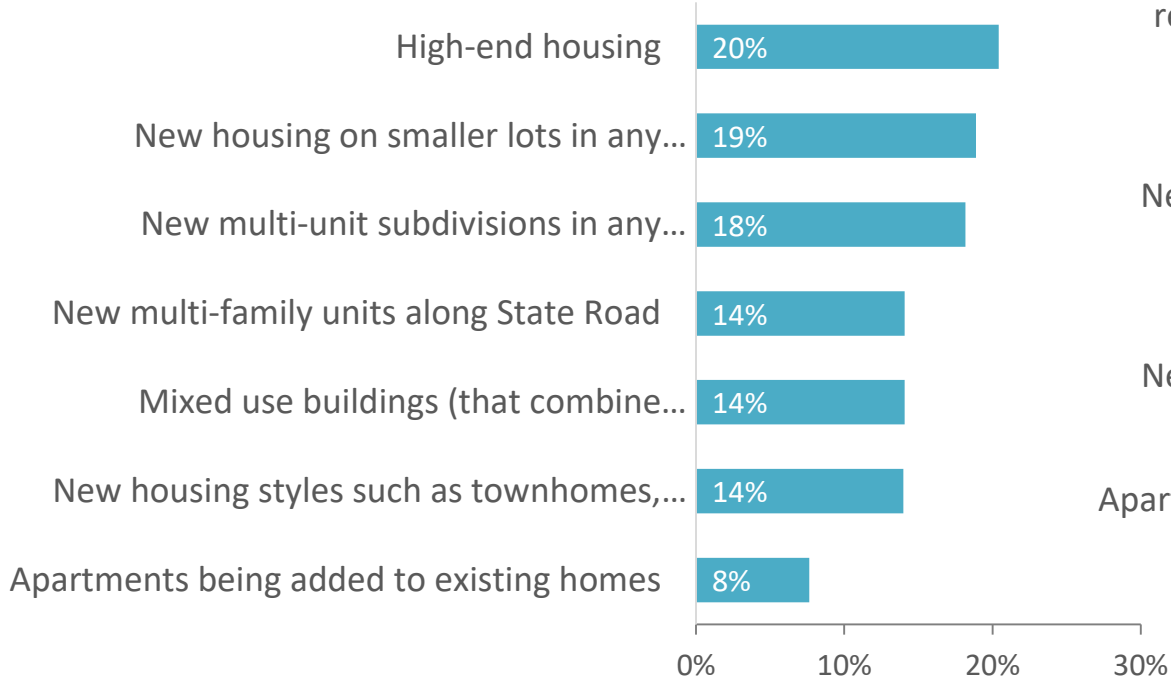
New multi-family units along State Road

Q7: Would you support or oppose the following for new development?

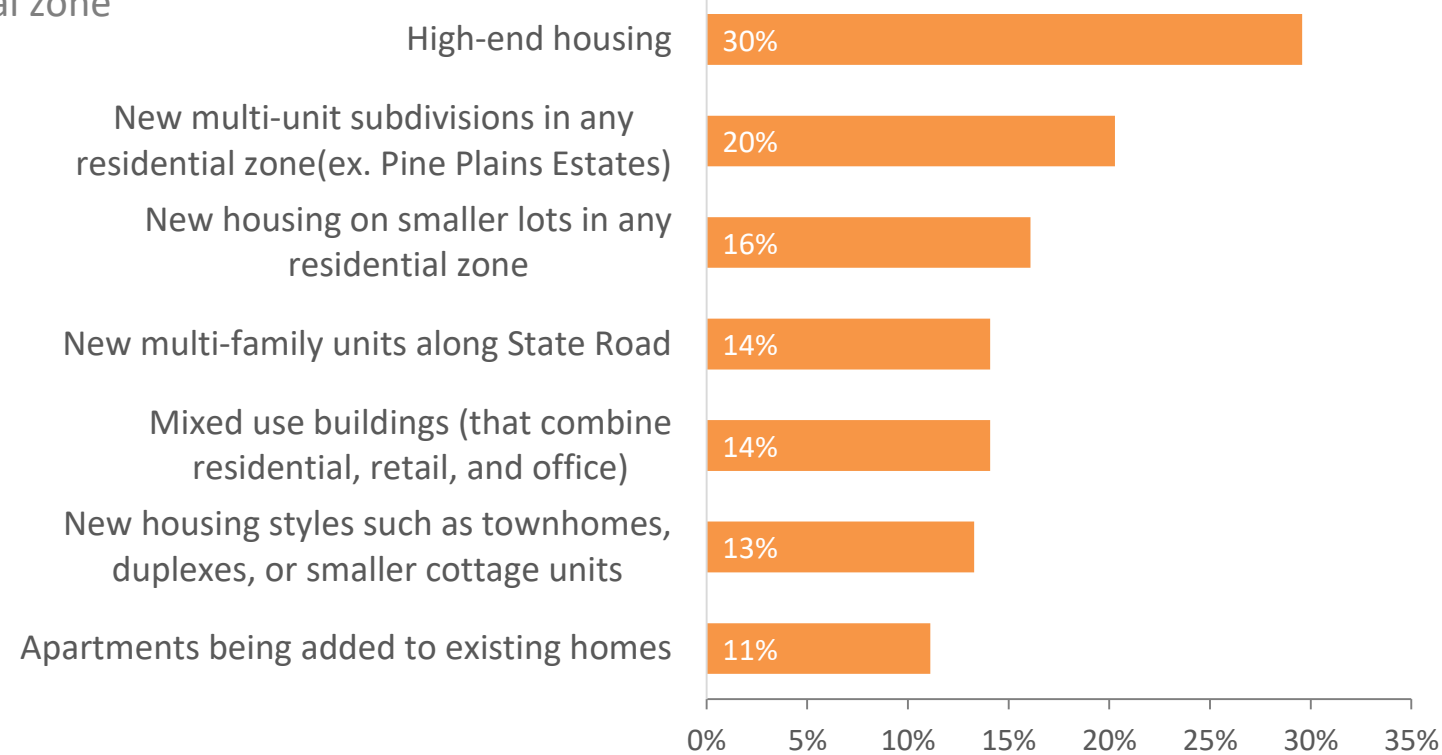
“Somewhat oppose” and “Strongly oppose” combined top 3 ranking:

1. High-end housing
2. New multi-unit subdivisions in any residential zone (ex. Pine Plains Estates)
3. New housing on smaller lots in any residential zone

Ranked by those answering “Somewhat negatively affect”



Ranked by those answering “Very negatively affect”



Q6: How should new housing be prioritized over the next 15 years?

Rank the following choices from 1 to 4 with 1 = Most Important and 4 = Least Important.

Average Ranking

2.1

#1 New housing should be made more intentionally affordable for those in the workforce
(teachers, firefighters, laborers, small business owners, etc.)

2.4

#2 New housing should be set aside for seniors

2.5

#3 New housing should include more starter homes for families

3.0

#4 New housing should include more market-rate housing

Natural and Cultural Resources

Q8: How should the Town prioritize the following natural and cultural resources actions/activities?

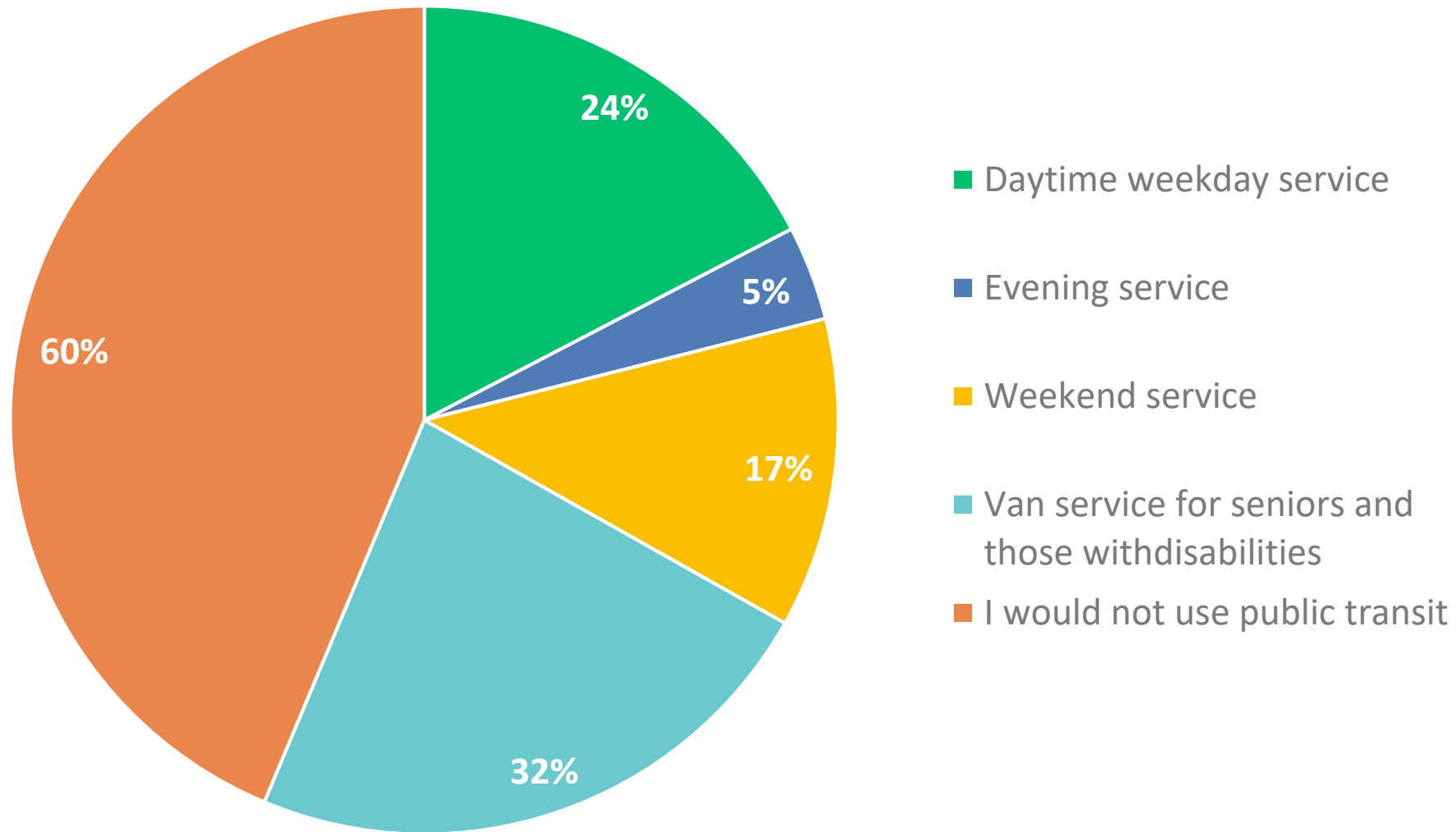
Rank the following activities from 1 to 7 with 1 = Most Important and 7 = Least Important.

Average Ranking

- | | | |
|-----|----|---|
| 1.9 | #1 | Protect additional farmland and forestland |
| 2.5 | #2 | Preserve groundwater and surface water quality |
| 3.9 | #3 | Protect hill slopes and ridgelines |
| 4.5 | #4 | Preserve scenic roads |
| 4.8 | #5 | Better link open space parcels together |
| 4.9 | #6 | Support historical preservation |
| 5.5 | #7 | Increase opportunities for community gatherings |

Transportation

Q9: Would you use the following public bus services if they were available? *Select all that apply.*



Q10: What could make walking and biking feel safer in Town? Where?
Opened ended.

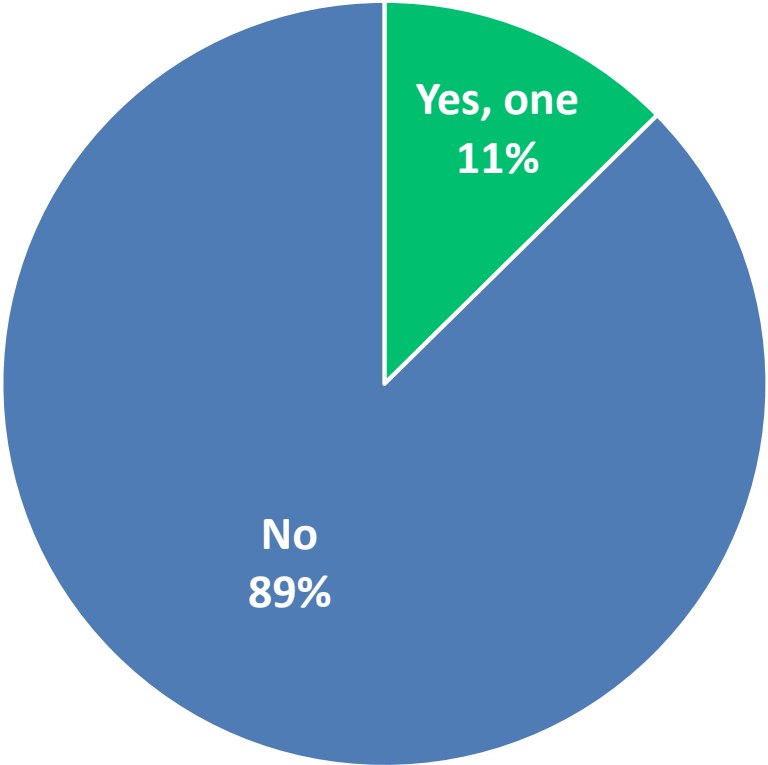


Challenging Areas for Pedestrians and Bicyclists

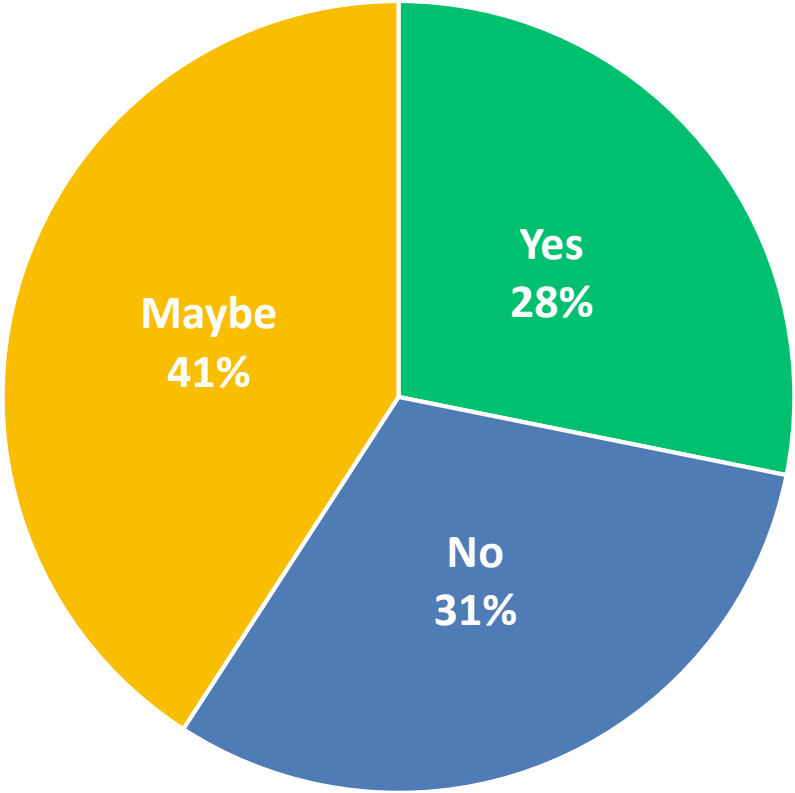
Identified in Question 10.

Pine St
Haydenville Rd
Long Plain Rd **North St**
River Rd **Westbrook Rd**
Chestnut Plain Rd
Christian Lane **State Rd 5&10**
Swamp Rd **Route 116**
Depot Rd

Q11: Does your household own an electric vehicle (EV)? *Select one.*



Q12: Would you like additional public electric vehicle charging stations in Town? *Select one.*



Recreation

Q13: How should the Town prioritize the following recreational actions/activities?
Rank the following activities from 1 to 8 with 1 = Most Important and 8 = Least Important.

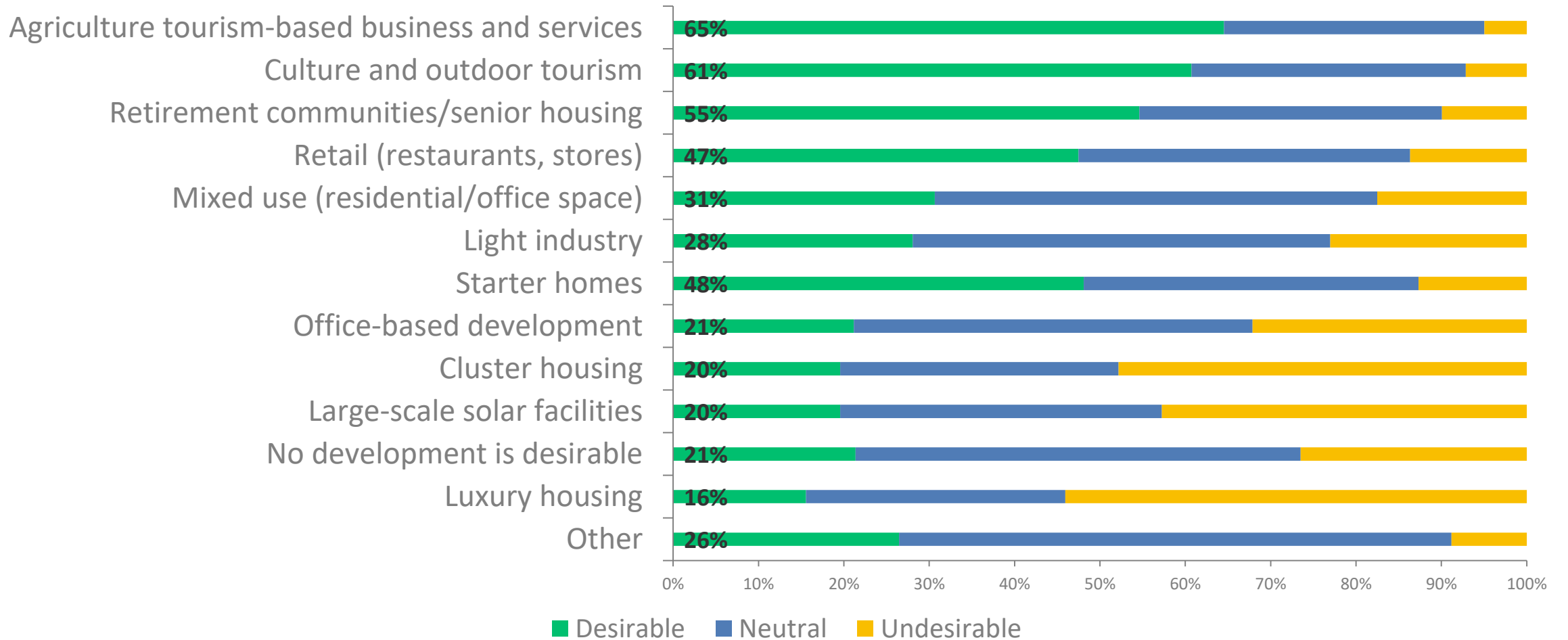
Average Ranking

- | | | |
|-------------|-----------|--|
| 2.3 | #1 | Promote outdoor recreation (hiking trails, multi-use trails, river access, etc.) |
| 3.4 | #2 | Create recreational access to the Connecticut River |
| 4.2 | #3 | Improve existing athletic facilities and playgrounds |
| 4.9 | #4 | Provide recreational programming for seniors |
| 5.06 | #5 | Provide recreational programming for youth |
| 5.07 | #6 | Increase parking for existing trails |
| 5.4 | #7 | Create more athletic facilities and playgrounds |
| 5.6 | #8 | Provide recreational programming for adults |

Economic Development

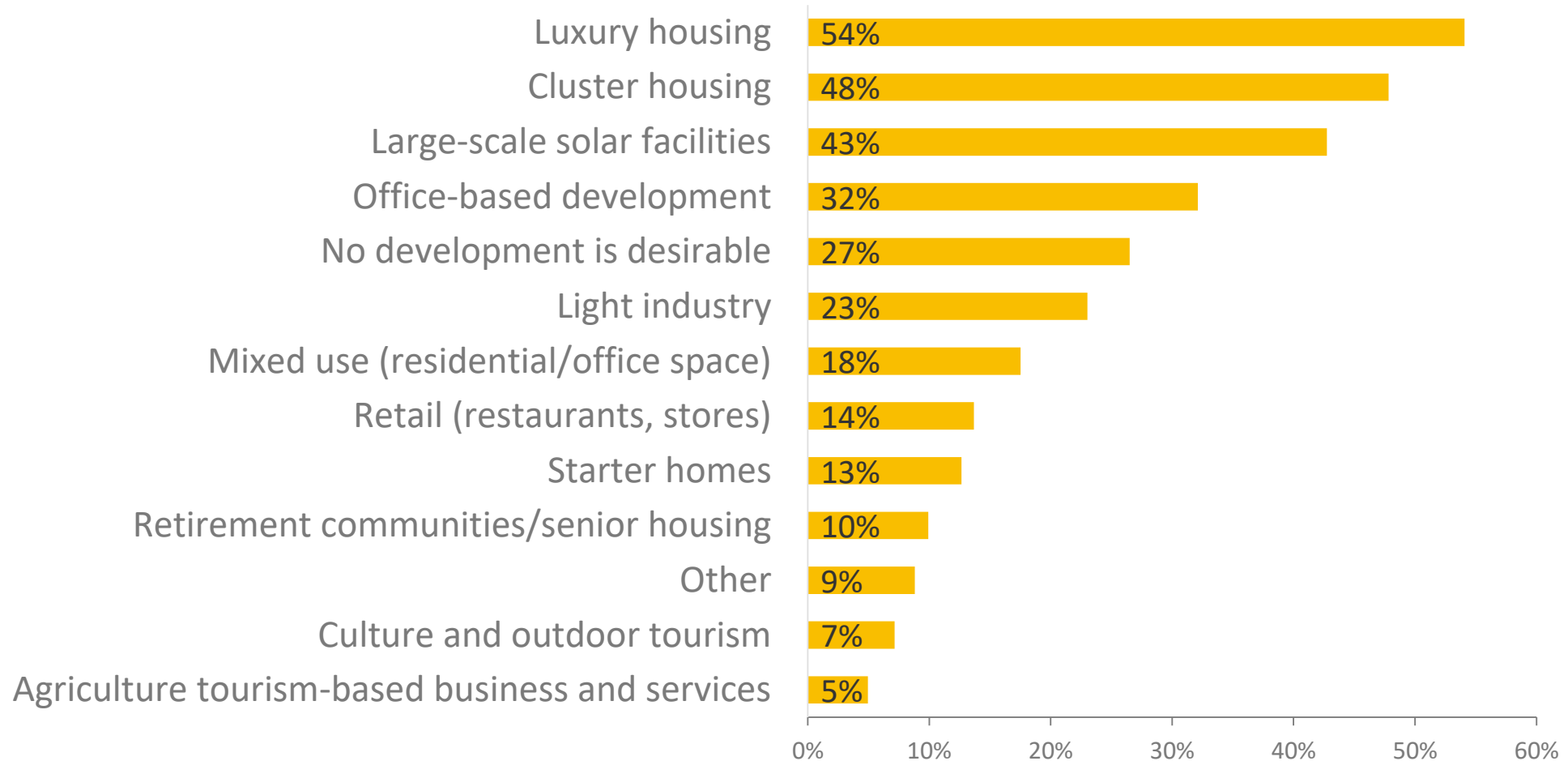
Q14: To what extent do you feel the following development types are desirable or undesirable for Whately?

Ranked by those answering "Desirable"



Q14: To what extent do you feel the following development types are desirable or undesirable for Whately?

Ranked by those answering “Undesirable”



Climate

Q15: What do you think are the most concerning impacts from climate change for Whately?
Rank the following activities from 1 to 8 with 1 = Most Important and 8 = Least Important.

Average Ranking

- 2.9** #1 Decrease in agricultural productivity (as crop yields are impacted by precipitation patterns, extreme weather, pests, and other climate factors)
- 3.4** #2 Threats to water quality and supply (due to warming waters, drought, and increased runoff)
- 4.2** #3 Health effects of extreme storms and power outages (including from injuries, food safety, and medical device failure)
- 4.4** #4 Reduction in food safety and security (due to production and supply chain issues as well as spoilage during power outages)
- 4.8** #5 Threats to forest health (from warming temperatures, changing precipitation, extreme storms, and increasing pest occurrence)
- 5.0** #6 Shifting distribution of native and invasive species (as changing climate conditions favor certain species)
- 5.3** #7 Damage to buildings, roads, and other infrastructure (from extreme weather events and flooding)
- 6.2** #8 Extreme heat and wildfire smoke (workers, school children, people wanting to be outside)

Q16: Are you concerned about other aspects of climate change that affect, or could affect, Whately? *Opened ended.*

Communication

Political/social unrest

Overreaction

Climate refugees

Decreased quality of life Disposal of solar panels and batteries

Runoff and flooding

Added infrastructure repair costs

Hillside erosion

Water supply storage

More insects to spread disease

Long term power outages

Community Facilities and Services

Q17: Is there a municipal service or facility (building or outdoor space) that is not offered that the Town should consider providing? *Opened ended.*

Rec Center

Fire department with full-time and part-time employees

Shaded gathering place with seating

Senior center

Basketball courts
Community gardens

Municipal internet service

Access to the Connecticut River

Tennis/pickleball courts

Better swimming areas/pool

Community playground

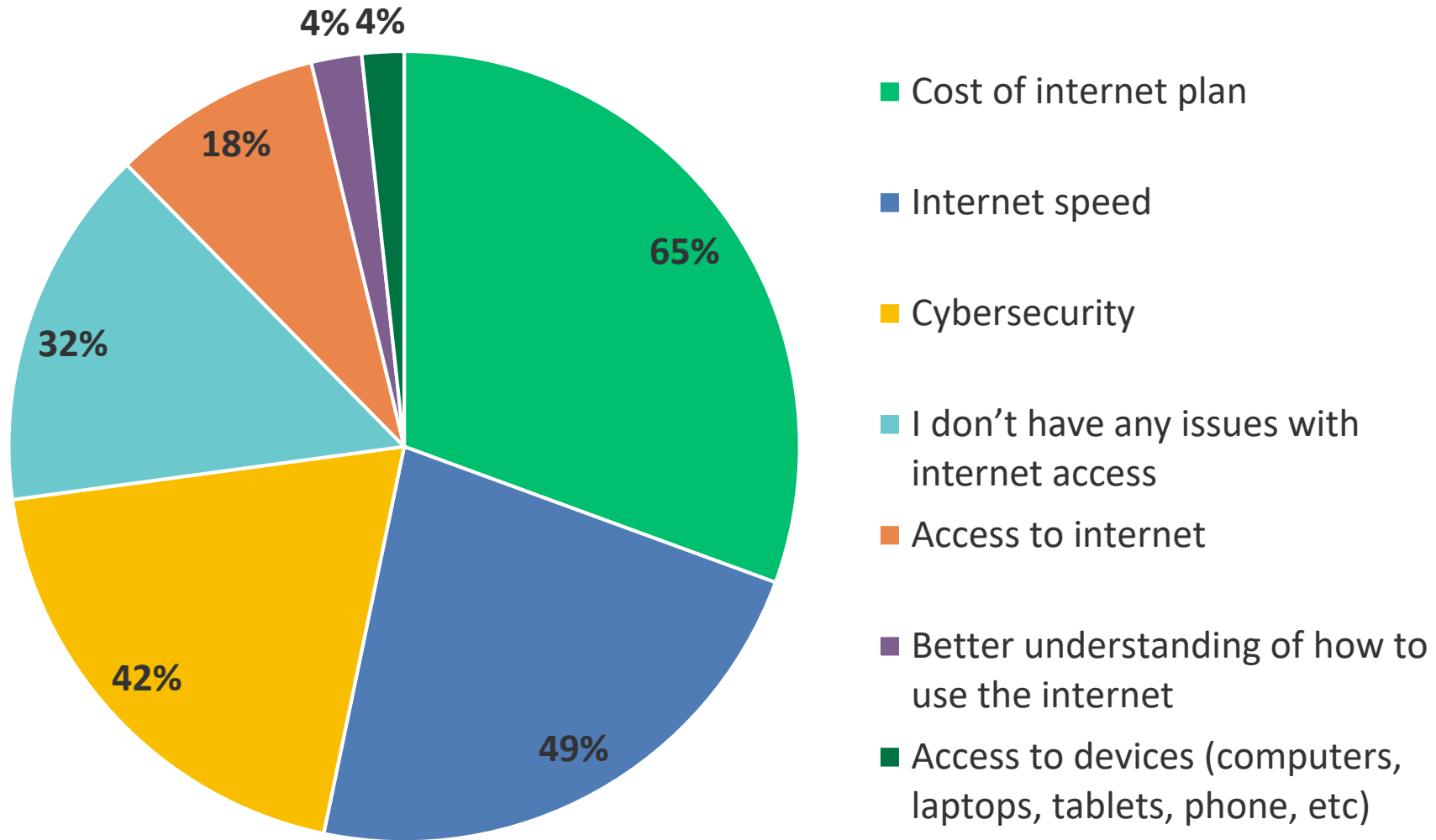
More public transportation

Town solar **Electric car charging stations**

Trash/recycling pick up services

Community center

Q18: What are the top three issues for your household regarding internet access?
Select up to 3 answers.



Q19: Please rank the following actions that the Town could take in order of importance to you.

Rank from 1 to 6 with 1 = Most important and 6 = Least important

Average Ranking

- 2.4 #1 Protect agricultural land and open space from development
- 3.0 #2 Invest in energy efficiency, renewable energy, and climate resilience for all facilities owned by the Town
- 3.3 #3 Increase walkability and safe ways to get around without cars
- 4.02 #4 Create a variety of housing options for Whately residents (senior housing, starter homes, duplexes, etc.)
- 4.03 #5 Improve the quality of municipal facilities and services
- 4.3 #6 Attract business/commercial development

General

Q20: What improvements or priorities would you like to see for the Town over the next 15 years? *Opened ended.*



Q21: Is there anything not addressed in this survey that you believe to be important in planning for the future in our community? *Opened ended.*

Forest preservation/protection incentives

No additional solar fields

Eliminating hunting in swamp lands near residences

Support the library

Education on recycling, composting, alternatives to burning

Multi-generational community spaces

Better use refurbished town hall

High property taxes

Pesticide usage and notification

Senior "Work off" plan for property taxes

Improve Tri-Town beach

Town offices staffed 5 days a week

Farmland protection

Fixing the bridge on Christian Lane by Depot Road

Opposition to using CPA funding for church or private owners

Opposition to creating a municipal sewer system

What do you think is missing from Whately that would improve your quality of life?

<i>Responses</i>
A sidewalk along Long Plain Rd, between Depot and Christian Lane.
More hiking trails, like Whately woods. A great restaurant less formal than the Inn.
Nothing. Keep it small.
Bike paths
250th anniversary was a great opportunity to bring community together
Well, it's more something that Whately has, but I WISH that it were missing: Castaways
nothing
For those aging there is little in the way of transportation; and very few young people to engage + volunteer in any activities or departments, so continuity is slipping
Lower taxes. Stop rebuilding Northampton II inside Whately. What you need is in Northampton.
Putting drainage on Christian Lane so I can farm my land to put food on peoples table and for me to make a living like my grandparents did. Fix the problem that has existed for years by working together and making it right.
A small organic cafe that serves local products/produce.
Central place to meet and interact with others.
Need more access to walking and biking trails, need access to CT river for kayaking. Need better swimming area.
Lived here all my life. Happy the way it is.
A small gallery for local artists to show their work
It has everything that I need.
Indoor and outdoor fitness (i.e. pickleball, zumba, other exercise offerings)
Gathering space, coffee shop, retail, small grocery
I believe the people who are involved with municipal government and have lived here their whole lives can hinder growth of a community. I also believe there are many in government here who are not currently raising kids, so there is a disconnect with younger families.
Rec center for seniors to include pinball, darts, cornhole, cards, shuffleboard, horseshoes, etc.
I would appreciate dedicated space for a park that could include a covered area to be rented out for parties/music/etc. and would accommodate a larger number of people.
I would love a community garden. A sidewalk on River Road would be nice.
Relaxed zoning regulations on tiny homes, home additions, or the ability to develop eco-friendly, consciously created, community oriented, rejuvenating, communal living
More business
Access to the CT River for boating and swimming.
A little more diversity. We are too white, too far along in life, too close to one another in income. I love finding families with children, people who aren't retired and all my demographic. A coffee house would attract younger people. A tutoring program would make for more connections.
More places that are food + retail spaces to gather; better public transit, biking on roads; WiFi access!!!
Nothing.
More activities for the kids at the library like surrounding towns

I think more safe areas to walk (sidewalks) would be very beneficial. I do not feel comfortable walking down my road as the traffic is busy/fast. I could never imagine allowing my son to ride his bike on our road.

sidewalks, road shoulders (in certain places)

Increased community engagement in town committees, councils, boards

Air quality and noise quality measures.

Bike lanes

Scrubbers to clean fumes on the Yankee Candle exhaust pipes

Signs to discourage the use of Jake (compression) Brakes in all of Whately

Comfy pub/cafe

Active participation in senior activities.

A pub or brewery, an informal place to gather with friends

Access to the Connecticut River

Reliable internet services. We are not included in the Comcast contract therefore only have access to DSL or have to pay for satellite services which are not as reliable as fiber. I believe Whately residents would support high speed fiber as our next internet contract.

More community events. As an example things like Hatfield Luminarium.

rail service up and down the valley every 30 minutes. Real winter.

Good, reasonably priced, sit down or take out restaurant or coffee shop--but I'm not sure it would be profitable if it were here!

Need a leash law for dogs to protect children and nesting turkeys. Need to ban hunting.

Square dancing (or some similar "wholesome" group activity) for adults

Better access to public transportation. The town could work with FRTS to have better access to busses. Especially for seniors trying to get to the senior center in Sunderland.

Affordable housing. Senior housing.

Not sure.

better town government that really understands The people of Whately and local farmers.

Potentially more spaces for kids to safely play and congregate. It is understood that filtration systems are very costly, but working towards addressing the levels of manganese in the water supply would be very beneficial.

Place for meeting friends and civic colleagues. Faster internet access. Grocer and hardware store.

More accessible public transportation

Farm to Table Restaurant that serves healthy options like gluten-free and low sugar.

bigger and more extensive Library

Safe walking areas with sidewalks; More walking trails; More Retail stores

Stores (grocery), Restaurants

Just moved to the area so still learning about the community and what it has to offer.

Better internet access

Access to transportation for seniors, teens, and people who do not drive.

A decent library with relevant engaging programs

Decent library with relevant programming , coffee shop/meeting place

More community nature spaces and hiking trails. Slow/ discourage traffic from back roads so homeowners can walk/ bike safely on roads

A cafe or coffee shop would be great.

coffee shops, restaurants, grocery stores

I'm good
Though I live on a great street for taking walks, it would be nice to be close to a playground. But generally, everything about living here is a positive.
Welcoming information about sites and services for newcomers.
Enforce of speed limits. Limit large truck "cut through" traffic.
No multi town assistance with borrowing medical equipment. We should be supplied with an adequate amount.
Limiting tree cutting.
Limiting thru traffic on rural roads by large trucks.
Recreational access to watershed lands.
An overall climate change policy that would drive all town decisions.
More options for small business. Cafe for gathering etc.
Public transportation, bike paths, and sidewalks
A real sense of community in terms of folks moving into Whately as opposed to those who run the Town.
Nip bottle and trash cleanup on roadsides
Playgrounds, more larger community events like Whately 250
More walkable shops/businesses, I.e. coffee shops, book store, etc.
A playground for kids, more hiking paths/nature areas, more activities/things for teens to do
Coffee shop, place to hang out
Sidewalks in east whately. Cafe or small store
Can't think of anything right now. I am very content living here.
I don't feel much of a sense of community. Everyone seems to keep to themselves.
No strip club next to residential houses
Tennis court
Something more for adult activities over 50
sidewalks up Haydenville Rd.; Grocery store closer;
Indoor sports complex for youth sports and community events
Affordable housing, jobs with adequate income
More retail businesses along rt 5
Community internet. Let's get rid of Comcast.
An outdoor archery range, expand on picnic area near the chicken bbq area. Adult leagues (softball or other).
In person public meetings so you can meet people more easily.
Town departments that honor or celebrate individuals or events should be open to all residents invited.
A public playground
A new zip code or other strategy to avoid package and delivery mix ups with my south Deerfield address twin.
Opportunities for interaction with other seniors.
More community programming at the library.. book clubs, concerts , speakers...any funds given to our arts council should be used exclusively for the benefit of OUR townspeople and they should be used for programming there or at the town hall
Coffee, cafe, hangout spot
A small grocery store!
More affordable housing. Better participation by citizens in their government.
Brewery or another quality restaurant like the Inn

Sidewalks

Low cost internet provided by the town, similar to GCET in Greenfield.

I think we need a town recreation facility or at the very least a basketball court. It would be great to have sidewalks on Christian lane or even speed bumps to slow the yankee candle traffic.

Quality restaurants, public pool, designated hiking areas

If Whately had a village and a little more diversity it would be the perfect place to live!