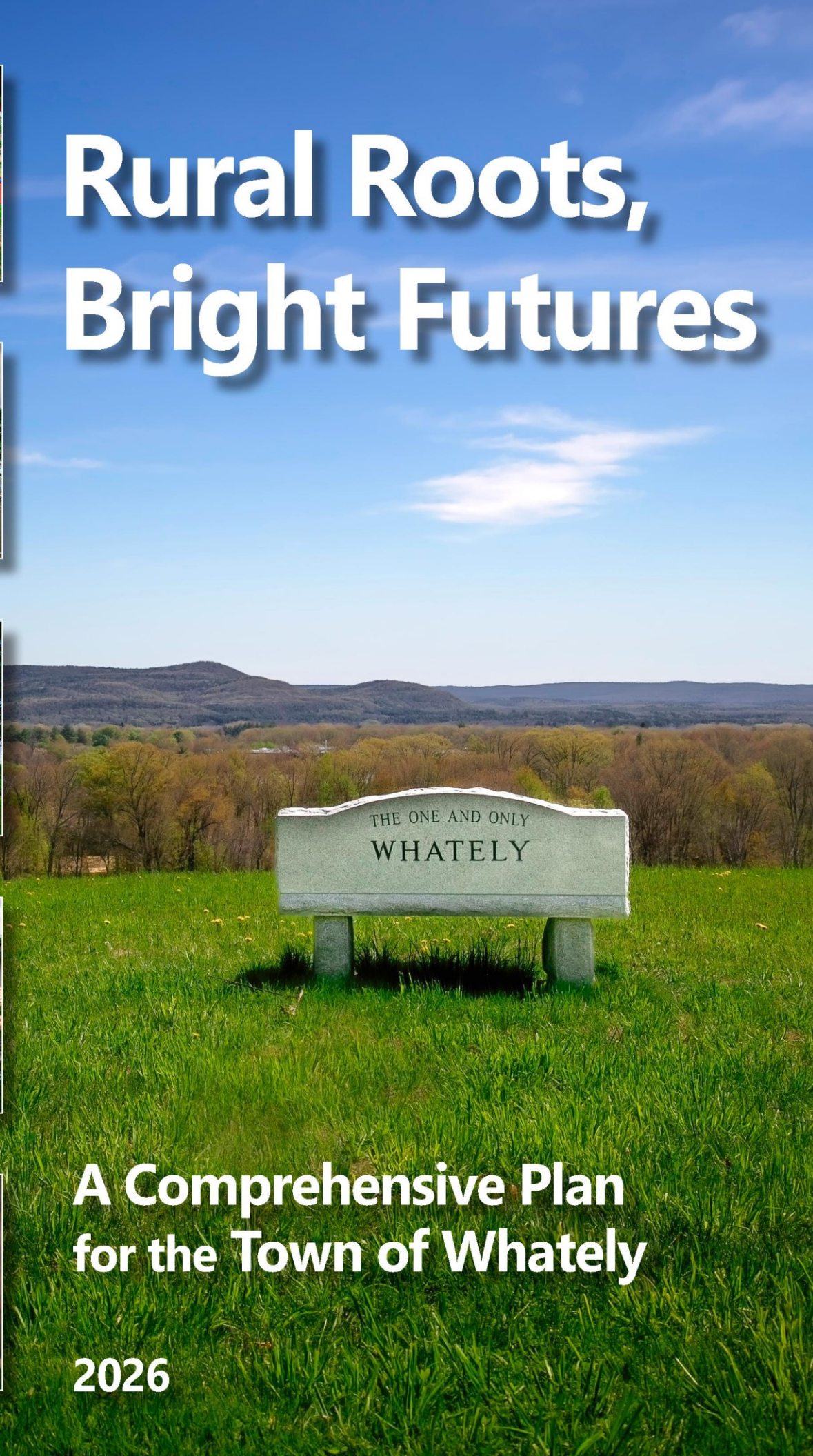


Rural Roots, Bright Futures



**A Comprehensive Plan
for the Town of Whately**

2026

Public Review Draft

TITLE PAGE PLACEHOLDER

DRAFT

Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
Overview	2
A Comprehensive Plan	2
Context and History	2
What should Whately's future look like?	4
Comprehensive Plan Process	5
Vision and Goals	8
Community Vision.....	8
Shared Goals.....	8
Population at a Glance.....	9
Overall Demographic Trends.....	9
Population Projections.....	9
EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS.....	11
About the Plan.....	12
Agriculture.....	13
Context & Existing Conditions.....	13
Challenges & Opportunities	14
Open Space and Recreation	16
Context & Existing Conditions.....	16
Challenges & Opportunities	17
Climate & Energy.....	19
Context & Existing Conditions	19
Challenges & Opportunities	20
Community Facilities & Services.....	22
Context & Existing Conditions	22
Challenges & Opportunities	23
Transportation	24

Public Review Draft

Context & Existing Conditions24
Challenges & Opportunities25
Economic Development & Cultural Resources.....27
Context & Existing Conditions27
Challenges & Opportunities28
Housing31
Context & Existing Conditions31
Challenges & Opportunities33
Land Use & Zoning35
Challenges & Opportunities36
REALIZING THE VISION38
Recommendations39
Agriculture40
Open Space & Recreation.....42
Climate & Energy44
Community Facilities & Services47
Transportation.....49
Economic Development & Cultural Resources51
Housing.....53

APPENDIX A : TECHNICAL MEMOS

APPENDIX B: SURVEY RESULTS



Whately
Town Hall

194

1944

WHATELY
TOWN HALL
1944

INTRODUCTION

Overview

*Whately is home to **1,521** people, **20** square miles of land, **3** miles of Connecticut River, and **2,000** acres of farmland. How should we be shaping its future?*

A Comprehensive Plan

Comprehensive planning is an open, public process that identifies a community's vision for its development. A comprehensive plan helps communities:

- Guide physical development
- Manage population and demographic change
- Protect agricultural and environmental resources
- Recognize opportunities for economic development
- Set priorities for public infrastructure and public facilities and services
- Understand future potential impacts of climate change
- Strengthen local sense of place and identity
- Create a framework for future policy decisions
- Provide guidance to landowners, developers, and permitting authorities
- Be eligible for state and federal funding

Massachusetts General Law Chapter 41, Section 81D requires municipalities to prepare and adopt a comprehensive plan to guide land use, development, and local decision-making. This Plan complies with the State's requirements.

Rural Roots, Bright Futures builds on decades of planning and community studies in Whately. These past and ongoing efforts provide analysis and recommendations at the regional, town-wide, and village scale. The intent of this plan is not to repeat or replace past efforts, but to learn from the analyses and reconcile their recommendations to provide a clear path to implementation through a single guiding document.

Context and History

Whately is a rural town in southern Franklin County on the Connecticut River. Topographically, it is a study of two contrasting landscapes: a flat plain stretching between the Connecticut River and the Mill River in eastern Whately, and high hills with valleys

Public Review Draft

carved by brooks in the western part of town.¹ Neighboring towns are Hatfield to the south, Williamsburg to the south and west, and Conway and Deerfield to the north. The Connecticut River forms the eastern boundary of the town. The town is a 15 – 20 minute drive to the population centers of Greenfield and Northampton via Interstate 91 and Route 5/10, and to Amherst by Route 116.

By 3,000 years ago, soils had accumulated and the climate had warmed sufficiently for Indigenous residents of the area to develop agriculture. Farming likely occurred along the river between Pocumtuck (now Deerfield) and Nonotuck (now Northampton). Several of Whately's current north-south roads follow the trails used by these tribes.

In 1672, the land within the Town of Whately's contemporary borders was purchased from the widow and children of Quonquont, the Nonotuck sachem, as part of the Town of Hatfield. Whately petitioned for separation and was incorporated as its own Town on April 26, 1771.

Early colonial settlers grew crops in the valley and uplands, hunted in the forests, and built mills along the many brooks. Pits of red clay, rich in iron deposits, made good bricks and provided material for 21 potters in Whately between 1778 and 1861. Whately's abundant and powerful streams powered numerous mills in the 18th and 19th centuries, including grist mills, sawmills, woolen mills, and furniture mills.

By 1850, there were 140 farms in Whately growing a very wide range of products. Whately has some of the lushest river valley land in New England and is one of the few areas where the high-quality Sumatra tobacco can be grown outside of Indonesia. Tobacco has been a cash crop in town since the mid-1800s and was a particularly large source of income and a way of life in Whately from the 1940s through the 1960s. Agriculture is still a vital element of the economy.

Whately's main street, Chestnut Plain Road, is lined in Whately Center with historic buildings such as the Town Hall and the Congregational Church, as well as many historic houses. With its large trees set back from the road, it has a classic New England main street feel.

Although some industrial development occurred in the north of town in the latter half of the 20th century and housing development has slowly sprawled, Whately has remained relatively unchanged as a rural farming community. Whately's current residents are farmers, college professors, tradespeople, teachers, artists, health workers, and construction contractors.

¹ History and Context section is adapted from the Massachusetts DCR's [Whately Reconnaissance Report](https://www.whately.org/about/whately_history.php), published June 2009 with assistance from the FRCOG.
https://www.whately.org/about/whately_history.php

What should Whately's future look like?

Rural Roots, Bright Futures helps the community ask itself important planning questions and prepare for anticipated challenges and change.

Over the past decade, single-family sale prices have increased at a faster rate than median household income. The vacancy rate for all housing is estimated to be at 1%. Over a third of renters are cost-burdened by their housing. **How can we meet the need for housing in Whately?**

Population projections suggest Whately's population will decline slightly over the next two decades. The number of school-age children continues to decline due to changes in age demographics and the lack of housing that young families can afford in town. **How can we encourage a sustainable population that will support our schools and economy?**

Whately's tax base is 79% dependent on residential properties. **How can commercial and industrial development be encouraged to diversify and grow the tax base?**

As the last several years have shown, climate, the economy, and other large events can change migration and demographics in unexpected ways. Since the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, people have moved to rural parts of Franklin County at a faster rate than in the past. Whately's proximity to population centers and major highways means that it could experience population growth and development pressure. **How can we plan for possible in-migration of new residents?**

Population projections show the share of residents 65 and older increasing over the next 20 years. **What are we doing to anticipate the needs of senior residents?**

Many Town-owned buildings and facilities need upgrades or replacement. **Where will buildings be located and how will capital projects be funded?**

Whately farmers are aging. At this time, the cost of operating a farm is greater than income for the average Massachusetts farmer, challenging the future of farming.² Only about 27% of Whately's farmland is permanently protected. **How do we preserve the farm economy and Whately's world-class farmland?**

Given these competing needs, **how do we balance the use of land for needed housing, economic development, protection of natural and recreational resources, preservation of the farming economy, all while achieving financial stability and building resilience to the impacts of climate change?**

² <https://recorder.com/2026/01/17/massachusetts-farmers-face-challenges/>

Public Review Draft

This Plan examines a variety of topics and recommends strategies and tools that can help answer these questions and implement a shared future for Whately. The body of this Plan provides an overview of this topical analysis, while the Technical Reports in *Appendix A* provide detailed information on the existing conditions, trends, challenges, and opportunities. *Appendix B* provides the survey results that helped inform this Plan.

Comprehensive Plan Process

The Town of Whately created *Rural Roots, Bright Futures* through grant funding from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the assistance of the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG). The FRCOG worked under the direction of the Selectboard and Planning Board to ensure that this document is grounded in town realities and vision for the future.

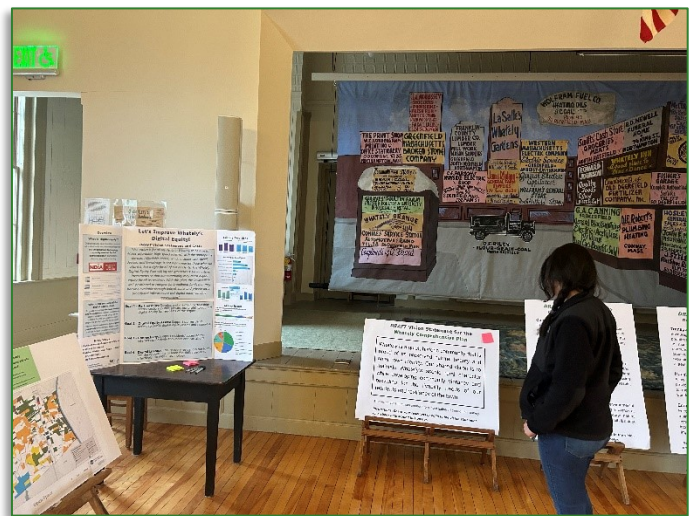
This plan is based on a thorough assessment of completed studies and planning efforts (see Table 1), as well as a robust public engagement process. The following is a summary of the steps involved in creating this document and what will be needed to make this vision a reality.

Engage

Before any writing or analysis was conducted for *Rural Roots, Bright Futures*, a Phase 1 year-long public outreach effort was conducted between 2023-2024 to understand residents' needs, issues, and desires. The collected information was used to create a Plan vision, goals, and objectives. The following are community engagement tools that were used in both Phase 1 as well as during Phase 2 for the drafting of the Plan.



Figure 1. Responses from Comprehensive Plan Survey about what residents love about Whately.



Project Communication

- **Project Website**

Rural Roots, Bright Futures' public outreach process began with the creation of a dedicated website for the plan: www.whatelyplans.org. The plan's purpose, background information, as well as opportunities for public engagement, results of public engagement, and draft sections for review were shared on the website.

- **Other forms of communication**

In addition to the website, outreach was conducted to residents in several other ways. Postcards were mailed to every household at the beginning of the project with the survey link and at the end of the project letting people know they could provide feedback virtually on the draft plan or attend the open houses. Articles were also regularly placed in the community newsletter, the *Whately Scoop*.

- **Surveys**

A Community Needs Survey was conducted for Phase 1 and captured 168 responses, representing 23% of households. The surveys were distributed at 250th Anniversary Parade, Town Meeting, Town Elections and via postcards mailed to all households as well as online via the Town website and local social media pages. A survey was also available at the end of project to capture feedback on the draft plan. Results can be found in the Appendix.

- **Open Houses**

Two open houses were held to present the results of the initial community engagement and the resulting vision and goals and objectives at the *Whately Town Hall*. Once a draft Plan had been completed, in-person and virtual open houses were held to obtain input on the draft. A comment table was also set up at the Annual Town Meeting.

- **Town feedback at open meetings**

In addition to reaching out to *Whately* residents, regular check-ins were also conducted with the Planning Board and Selectboard at public meetings to review draft chapters.

Analyze & Create

Development of *Rural Roots, Bright Futures* took place from Fall 2024 through Spring 2026. Plan writing was informed by an array of information sources to ensure a comprehensive examination of town needs. For each topic, a Technical Report was drafted with a robust

Public Review Draft

description of existing conditions and full explanation of the analysis that led to the Plan’s recommendations. These Technical Reports can be found in the Appendix. The following is a description of the Phase 2 Analysis and Drafting process:

- Reviewed past municipal studies and plans (see Table 1 below for a list of past plans and studies that have been incorporated into this Plan)
- Conducted data analysis
- Interviewed municipal committees, boards, and staff, as well as residents and business owners
- Drafted detailed Technical Reports for basis of Plan recommendations
- Created a concise, user-friendly Comprehensive Plan

Implement Vision

This Plan provides an assessment of existing conditions and needs and then with a foundation of community-based goals and objectives, lays out recommendations to achieve the shared vision. However, to make this document a useful and living tool, it needs to be regularly revisited. The Town will need to:

- Review Plan recommendations and strategies annually.
- Assign tasks to staff, boards, and committees for implementation.
- Track implementation and communicate implementation success with the community.

Table 1. Whately Plans and Studies

Community Preservation Committee Plan	2025
Assessment of Zoning & Permitting for Housing	2025
Center School Re-Use Feasibility Study	2025
Digital Equity Plan	2024
Interchange 35 Market Analysis	2024
S. White Dickinson Memorial Library Strategic Plan	2024
Housing Production Plan	2023
Water-Wise Whately: A Watershed Scale Climate Resilience Plan	2023
MVP Resiliency Plan	2021
Open Space and Recreation Plan	2021
Hazard Mitigation Plan	2020
Creating an Economic Development Vision for Whately	2018
Complete Streets Prioritization Plan	2018
A More Welcoming Walkable Whately	2016
Community Food Assessment	2015
Whately Master Plan	2012
Whately Reconnaissance Report	2009

Vision and Goals

The following community vision and goals were created through the initial public engagement and has been used to guide the recommendations and strategies of *Rural Roots, Bright Futures*.

Community Vision

Whately is a quiet, historic community that is proud of its preserved natural beauty and small town identity. Our shared vision is to maintain Whately's scenic rural character while developing community vibrancy and providing for the livability needs of our residents and resiliency of the town.

Shared Goals

- Maintain farming culture and protect farmland
- Safeguard sensitive environmental resources
- Strengthen and diversify local economy
- Create a healthy housing market for all
- Invest in public infrastructure
- Provide transportation options
- Enhance clean energy options and infrastructure
- Reinforce community ties and vibrancy



Figure 2. Top survey responses when asked "what improvements or priorities you would like to see for the Town over the next 15 years?"

Population at a Glance

Overall Demographic Trends

According to the 2023 U.S. Census estimates, there are 1,521 residents in Whately.³ 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.

In Whately, 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.

Whately is a generally homogeneous population in terms of race and ethnicity. Currently, 90% of its population is White and 4.2% identify as Hispanic.

Whately households tend to have higher household incomes than in other Franklin County towns. The median household income in Whately was \$102,734, the 5th highest in Franklin County and just above the state's median household income of \$101,341. A large portion of households (56%) make \$75,000 or more.

Population Projections

Population projections provided by the UMass Donahue Institute anticipate that Whately's total population will decline by 4% by 2040.⁴ The need for housing does not diminish with potential population loss, however. In fact, while Franklin County is projected to lose one person every eight days, the number of households is increasing at a rate of one household per five days.⁵ This is due to the demographic pattern of smaller households that are spreading out into more homes. An example of this change is illustrated in the figure below.

³ U.S. Census American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates 2019 – 2023

⁴ 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>.

⁵ FRCOG, 2024 Regional Housing Plan: <https://frcog.org/publications/franklin-county-regional-housing-plan-2024/>.

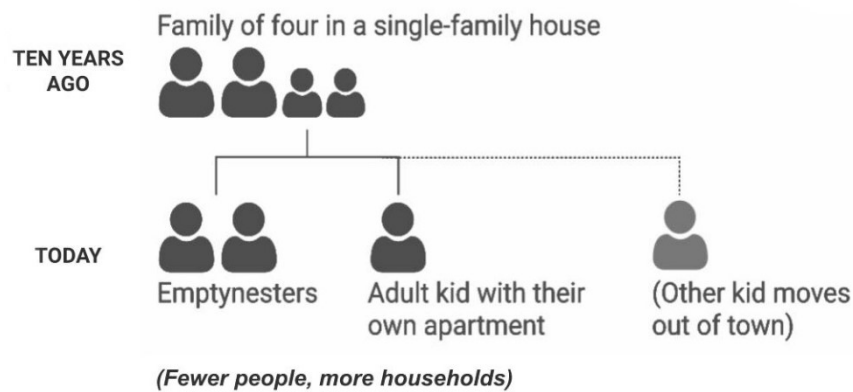


Figure 3. Example of how Franklin County needs more homes while still losing total population.

These projections are based exclusively on past trends and do not take into account recent developments within the region, such as the restoration of north-south passenger rail to Greenfield, the installation of almost universal broadband internet access and rising popularity of remote work, and climate migration. Because of these and other potential social and economic changes, the predicted population loss may not occur. In fact, Whately could experience population growth. This is particularly true since Whately is located along a major highway, near growing population centers, and has easily developable farmland.

However, the town is still rapidly aging and population decline projections need to be taken seriously. A decline in population could lead to a cascade of negative impacts that include school enrollment decline, businesses unable to attract/hire employees, employers less likely to establish in a declining area, greater municipal reliance on residential tax revenue to keep basic services, loss of local services and amenities, and loss of state/federal funding for infrastructure, capacity, and services. To prevent population loss, Whately will need to think about how to attract new residents through its housing, schooling, jobs and economic development, and general livability.



EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS

About the Plan

This section summarizes the existing conditions and both current and future issues that Whately faces. It identifies the major opportunities and challenges that inform the recommendations of the comprehensive plan. At the beginning of each topic is the guiding principle that was created through the Phase 1 public engagement process. For a more detailed description of the existing conditions, refer to the Technical Reports in *Appendix A*.

DRAFT



Agriculture

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.

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.^{6,7}

This chapter 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](#)

Context & Existing Conditions

Given the amount of prime farmland along the Connecticut River, it is no surprise that eastern Whately contains a large number of farms of varying sizes. Though, even when just passing through town, it is visually apparent that 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.⁸ Whately is home to half a dozen farms in the 100 – 350-acre range.

WHAT DO WHATELY RESIDENTS SAY?

When asked **what the best thing about Whately is**, respondents to the 2024 survey had a lot to say about rural life and agriculture:

"I like how close we are to amenities but I like that we still have farmland."

"I like the simple life. The farms, small businesses and community feel make Whately attractive."

"Rural character and abundance of fresh vegetables and fruits from the many local farmers."

"'Illusion of seclusion' feels like you're way out in the country, but you're actually very close to a lot of things."

"The open farmland and beautiful farms."

⁶ Whately Agricultural Commission, "Whately Farms Database," updated March, 2025

⁷ MassGIS 2016 Land Use/Land Cover

⁸ United States Department of Agriculture, *2022 Census of Agriculture* (Washington, DC: USDA, 2022) <https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/>

Challenges & Opportunities

The Whately Agricultural Committee identified several main concerns for the future of farming in Town. Whately farmers have noticed a reduced understanding of the seasonality of produce and a decreasing appreciation in the value of local food, which negatively impacts farmers. The cost of new regulations and operations is high, especially when compared to other states in the country. Smaller farming operations have difficulty competing when market consolidation happens and have smaller economy of scale when making purchases that are already more expensive in Massachusetts, like supplies, water, energy, and infrastructure.

Financing for farmers is also limited, which constricts budgets even further. On top of this, weather is becoming more unpredictable and natural disasters more frequent due to climate change. All of this contributes to the reality that, currently, two out of every three farmers in Massachusetts operate at a loss.⁹



This links inextricably with continuity of operations. Farm operators in Massachusetts generally are aging and lining up someone to inherit or buy the farm can be difficult. Farmers may also need to sell off land for development to either keep their farms operating in tight economic conditions or to afford retirement. Housing for farm workers is in short supply in Whately and measures to allow production of housing will need to be balanced with farmland protection.

Massachusetts is projected to lose 1,200 farms and 50,000 to 89,000 acres of farmland by 2040.¹⁰ Being ideal locations for both, farmland is most often lost to housing and increasingly solar development. Although Whately has an abundance of farmland, just over a quarter of it is permanently protected, and only 22% of the most important agricultural soils. Almost all farmland in Whately is temporarily protected through the Chapter 61A program because of the tax benefits, but this land is still vulnerable to development long-term. Farmers in Whately are noticing that there is less competition among them for land, indicating that the demand for the town's farmland is decreasing. Supporting the viability of

⁹ "Report of the Special Legislative Commission on Agriculture in the Commonwealth in the 21st Century": <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/194/SD3460.pdf>

¹⁰ American Farmland Trust. *Farms Under Threat: A New England Perspective*, 2020: <https://farmlandinfo.org/publications/farms-under-threat-a-new-england-perspective/>

Public Review Draft

farming in Whately is one of the most important tools for farmland protection, as a profitable farm is unlikely to be sold off.

The diversity of the farming sector in Whately makes it resilient to shocks overall, but individual farmers are also always shifting and diversifying their farm operations to stay resilient. Farmstands, value-added products, farm-based tourism, farm building re-use, and even solar are all opportunities to diversify income for farmers, with the possibility in many cases of adding higher-margin local jobs and protecting rural character.





Open Space and Recreation

Steward open spaces for ecological benefit and provide recreational opportunities for residents and visitors at a variety of ages, abilities, and interests.

Whately residents have a deep appreciation for the town's forests, waterways, agricultural lands, and breathtaking scenery. Its landscape—working farms, extensive forests, steep hillsides and broad, flat corridors—gives the town its unique character and charm. In 2021, Whately completed an [Open Space and Recreation Plan](#) (OSRP), an extensive process inventorying the recreational and environmental assets of the town and how they intersect with the needs and desires of the population. This chapter references that research and analysis. In the OSRP, overarching goals are apparent: deepen residents' interactions with existing recreational amenities; balance carving out developable land with protecting habitat and water resources; and improve connectivity of existing corridors and trails.

Context & Existing Conditions

Whately is situated along the Connecticut River and contains two distinct topographies. Between the Connecticut River and the Mill River, is a large, uniformly flat area comprising of some of New England's most fertile farmland. West of the Mill River is a forested landscape marked by peaks and valleys carved by brooks that contains the reservoir for Northampton and Hatfield's drinking water. Although 33% of Whately is permanently protected, there are still a number of ecologically valuable unprotected private parcels in Whately that provide a range of value to the town (aquifer protection, wildlife and biodiversity, historic, agriculture, and scenic, historic, and cultural value). Therefore, it is important that Whately identify the most appropriate land for development as well as priorities for land conservation to protect its natural resource values.

WHAT DO WHATELY RESIDENTS SAY?

As part of the 2024 comprehensive plan survey, residents were asked to **rank their open space goals**. The top three priorities were:

1. Protect additional farmland and forestland
2. Preserve groundwater and surface water
3. Protect hill slopes and ridgelines

As well as their top three **recreation priorities**:

1. Promote outdoor recreation
2. Create recreational access to the Connecticut River
3. Improve existing athletic facilities and playgrounds

Public Review Draft

Since the adoption of the Community Preservation Act (CPA), Whately's CPA funds have provided local match for twelve Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) projects that have preserved 300 acres of Whately agricultural land. CPA funds have also been used to make upgrades to municipal recreational facilities including the installation of a softball field at Herlihy Park.

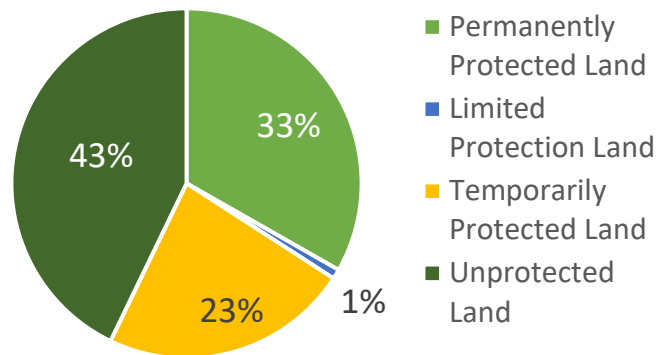


Figure 4. Protected land in Whately.

Challenges & Opportunities

One of the priority needs identified in the 2021 OSRP was to have more robust recreational opportunity information available to residents. The Commonwealth has a forthcoming web-based statewide outdoor recreation inventory which will be made available to the public in 2027. This resource will have detailed information on every outdoor public recreation site in the county with photographs, accessibility details, parking and access points, and more. This information will allow the municipality to better inform residents about the available opportunities in Town. The inventory will also offer insight about the gaps in location and types of trails available, which would allow Whately to better prioritize recreation improvements, as well as which areas need improved signage, parking, kiosks, or other amenities.

The Tri-Town Beach is a 33-acre independent district shared between the Towns of Deerfield and Whately, available to residents of those towns as well as Sunderland, Conway, and Hatfield. Comments on the OSRP survey underscored the importance of a public swimming area in town, including its value to families with young children, as a community meeting spot, and for cooling off in the summer. Aside from Tri-Town Beach, Whately has no official or commonly used unofficial swimming holes.

Other issues that have been raised in the past are the unavailability of bathrooms at Town recreation facilities and throughout town where bicyclists tend to stop. There also have been proponents of developing a dog park in Whately, ideally adjacent to playgrounds, to meet the needs of families. Participants in the OSRP survey noted that dog parks help keep dogs out of wildlife areas, are good for building community, and could be a regional draw.

Related to more organized recreation programming, residents have suggested they would like to see more Town-led programming that includes guided historical or nature walks,

Public Review Draft

lectures, town-wide celebrations, outdoor entertainment, and fun runs. In 2022, Whately hosted a series of events celebrating the Town's 250th anniversary. Events were spread over the span of several months, involved multiple town departments and facilities, and offered concerts, a barbecue & fireman's muster, and arts and crafts. In addition to these well-received events, residents also desire more gathering places in Whately.





Climate & Energy

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.

Climate change impacts Whately residents can continue to anticipate include increasing temperatures, more intense precipitation and longer dry spells, and greater weather variability, which together impact all parts of life in Whately. This chapter 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](#)

Context & Existing Conditions

Variability in precipitation is anticipated to impact the quality of drinking water and surface waters, and the supply of drinking water. The majority of Whately residents and farms get their drinking and irrigation water from the Whately Water Department's public water system, which is potentially vulnerable to drought, contamination, and flood or erosion damage to the system's two wells located along the Mill River. Whately's Hazard Mitigation Plan, Municipal Vulnerability Plan, Watershed Resilience Plan lay out the case for and steps the Town can take to address climate threats via river restoration and stormwater management. 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 the case of a contamination event or infrastructure failure.

WHAT DO WHATELY RESIDENTS SAY?

When asked about **aspects of climate change that currently, or could, affect Whately**, here's what residents were concerned with:

"water supply storage for periods of prolonged drought"

"flooding and erosion of hillsides"

"government over-reaction to such changes and the disposal of solar panels and batteries at end of life"

"how Whately can accommodate climate refugees from other states"

"power outages"

"woodsmoke from chimneys causes cancer"

"infrastructure repair costs"

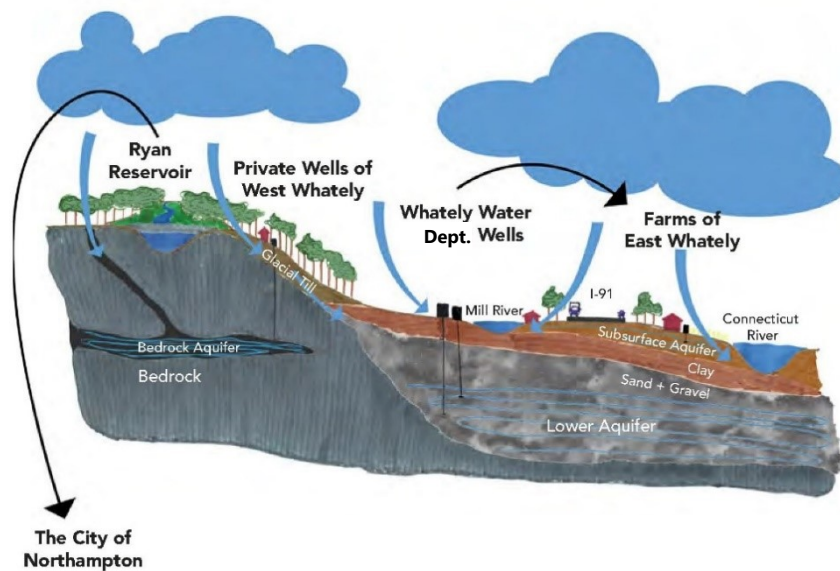


Figure 5. Drinking water systems of Whately.

Through the Massachusetts Green Communities program, Whately has made strides in energy efficiency retrofits, electrification, and decarbonization but has not yet reached its energy targets established when they were designated in 2012. Accomplishments include the establishment of the Whately Community Choice Power Supply Program, a municipal aggregation program, as well as SolarizeWhately, a program to assist residents in installing solar arrays on their properties.

Challenges & Opportunities

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. As extreme heat becomes more common and impactful for residents, farmers, workers, the Town can play a role in managing heat impacts in public buildings, building public awareness of cooling centers, and working to integrate other supportive services to reach those most in need.

WHAT DO WHATELY RESIDENTS SAY?

When asked to rank their **concerns for potential local impacts of climate change**, residents ranked as their top two concerns:

“Decrease in agricultural productivity (as crop yields are impacted by precipitation patterns, extreme weather, pests, and other climate factors)”

“Threats to water quality and supply (due to warming waters, drought, and increased runoff)”

Public Review Draft

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. Municipalities are also 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. Being prepared for when emergencies do happen includes having adequate emergency shelters, access to materials and equipment, shared service agreements in place, and knowing how to track expenses for eventual state and federal reimbursement if applicable.

There are many opportunities and stackable funding resources available right now to assess and implement energy efficiency and decarbonization projects in every municipal building. Focusing on the school, which is the community's highest energy use intensity building, will have the biggest payoff. New buildings and major retrofits are also important opportunities to not only decarbonize, but reduce the municipality's energy costs long term. Energy use reduction and municipal solar can also provide cost savings and bolster resiliency for the Town in the long run.





Community Facilities & Services

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.

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. The information in this chapter 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.

- [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

Context & Existing Conditions

The Town of Whately owns and manages ten buildings, three drinking water facilities, the Herlihy Park facilities, three current cemeteries, and one future cemetery. There are 14 official Town departments, most of which operate out of the Town Offices on Sandy Lane. Many municipal services, such as building inspection and EMS, are provided by a regional agency.

The Whately Water Department serves approximately 460 connections in central and east Whately, with remaining households and businesses relying on private wells. The system is interconnected to the water systems of Hatfield and South Deerfield's municipal systems as back up. There is no municipal sewer in Whately; all buildings rely on on-site septic.

WHAT DO WHATELY RESIDENTS SAY?

In the survey results, accolades were given to the Whately staff and volunteers who dedicate their time to keeping the Town running. When asked **what they love about their Town**, several residents answered:

"The administration of the town seems to be run efficiently"

"The **hard work** of volunteer government"

Others called out **facilities**:

"Historic buildings and appreciation for history of our region"

"The purchase of the new town office building was the best in recent times."

Challenges & Opportunities

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. The Highway Garage is well past its useful life and needs to be replaced. The elementary school building layout also makes it difficult to offer appropriate spaces for one-on-one student needs.



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.

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.

Service gaps are more commonly seen in West Whately, which has limited broadband, poorer cell coverage, fewer fire hydrants, and no public water, which places West Whately residents who are more marginalized at further disadvantage. Service gaps are also potential deterrents to economic development.

Whately has a strong municipal budgeting process with a Capital Improvement Plan to use as an outline of priorities and has the flexibility of multiple accounts of money to pull from to match grants or make sudden fixes if they appear. Whately's strong regional ties leverage surrounding populations and resources and sets the Town up as an example for other small towns considering regionalization for the first time.



Transportation

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.

A good transportation network plays the critical role of connecting residents with essential services and employment opportunities. It also contributes to an overall sense of community and can help a place's economy and livability.

The information from this memo builds on previous planning that the Town of Whately has already conducted, including the following plans:

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

Context & Existing Conditions

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. Whately has sixteen roadway structures that are classified as bridges. 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. An assessment of the conditions of culverts, which are important to keeping water moving past roads without damage to the road, is anticipated in 2026.

There is one fixed bus route in Whately, the Route 31, that provides daytime weekday and limited weekend service from Greenfield to Northampton via Route 5/10. For older

QUICK FACTS

29

Total miles of roadways

7

Total miles of roadways that are unpaved

16

Number of bridges

14

Number of times that the FRTA Route 31 passes through Whately per weekday (every hour)

7

Number of days that FRTA Route 31 operates

15.5

Miles of Franklin County Bikeway and Pioneer Valley Bikeway Connections in Whately

3,924 vehicles

Average daily traffic volume on Route 5/10

Sources for all quick facts are listed in the Transportation Technical Memo.

adults and people with disabilities, the FRTA provides a Demand Response Program. 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. Rides on the Access Program can be booked via smartphones.

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 low volume and picturesque roadways of Whately make it very popular for bicycling. There are two official routes of the Franklin County Bikeway with connectors to the Pioneer Valley that pass through Whately.

Challenges & Opportunities

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 operates on an hourly basis on weekdays, it requires residents to travel to Route 5/10 in order to access this service. To expand fixed route service geographically, the FRTA will need support and funding from both Whately and state sources.

The FRTA's microtransit Demand Response and Access Program provide transportation options for many in town that are much easier to use than the fixed route system. While it does not provide the transit needed for a regular daily commuter, it does provide access for residents to get to essential medical appointments, shopping, etc. It seems that few residents, particularly older adults, are aware of these options and better education and marketing of these opportunities is needed.

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. To access these grant programs and other transportation-related improvement 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,

WHAT DO WHATELY RESIDENTS SAY?

In the 2023 survey, **Whately residents strongly desire more public transit options as well as more sidewalks and safer walking and bicycling on the roadways.**

One respondent stated "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."

Another respondent expressed that there is a need for "access to transportation for seniors, teens, and people who do not drive."

Another resident echoed this by saying "For those aging there is little in the way of transportation."

Public Review Draft

preliminary design, and permitting. However, completing this work will then allow the Town to 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 also need to properly maintain its pavement and gravel road surfaces so that they are able to last longer.



Residents would like safer ways to walk and bike throughout town. Increased safety may come in the form of slower traffic on the roadways or through the creation of additional sidewalks and multi-use paths. The Town's 2018 Complete Streets Prioritization Plan highlights the need for pedestrian improvements on the following roadways:¹¹

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



¹¹ There are a total of 19 pedestrian and bicycling improvements listed in the [Whately Complete Streets Prioritization Plan](#).



Economic Development & Cultural Resources

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

Whately is positively positioned between several economic hubs in the Pioneer Valley and along main transportation arteries. These place Whately in an advantageous position to sustain their current economic success and build strategically upon it. This chapter incorporates previous economic development studies and plans, including:

- [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](#)

Context & Existing Conditions

Whately's population reflects both the current population and trajectory of the county as a whole. The total number of residents has remained fairly stable, while the median age has risen significantly since the beginning of the century. Population projections from the UMass Donahue Institute anticipate that Whately's total population will decline by 4% by 2040, with the proportion of residents 65 and older jumping from 22% to 46%.

Household incomes in Whately are slightly higher and poverty rights lower than the state and significantly higher than the county. Since the COVID-19 pandemic there has been a small reduction in the labor force and a slight rise in unemployment.

QUICK FACTS

Median Household Income

\$102,734, higher than both Franklin County and the state

Poverty Rate

8.2%, lower than both Franklin County and the state

Labor Force Participation Rate

>65%, higher than Franklin County but lower than the overall state's

Unemployment Rate

>5%, higher than both the county and the state

Work From Home

Whately residents are more likely to work from than Franklin County on average.

Self-Employed

15.2% of Whately workers are self-employed vs 5.6% for the state.

Sources for all quick facts are listed in the Economic Development Technical Memo.

Public Review Draft

Whately is a destination for jobs, with an estimated nearly 1,400 people commuting into Whately for work. The major employment sectors have remained stable, including the agricultural sector, as well as construction and retail. Manufacturing remains a strong employment base throughout Franklin County, and in Whately with the Yankee Candle plant.

Whately has a very active Historical Commission which hosts educational events on the industrial, agricultural, and genealogical history of the area, alongside running a museum of artifacts. The town has designated two historic districts and six scenic roads.

Challenges & Opportunities

The agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting industry sector have been key parts of Whately's economy throughout its history and remains the largest sector in Whately in terms of both total wages and average monthly employment. While most farmwork is seasonal, the Agricultural Commission estimates that there are around 100 year-round agricultural employees. That sector has grown in



recent years as well, likely due to large investments at Nourse Farms and thriving cannabis cultivation. Farms in Whately primarily operate in the wholesale distribution sector – using large swaths of excellent soil and selling their products to grocers rather than at markets or direct to consumers. These operations can be nimble when there are market disruptions.

Some area farms have recently begun catering to the agrotourism market by selling value-added products and local artisan wares or hosting events. Quonquont Farm has become known for hosting beautiful weddings in their barn event-space and have hosted wedding expo events to promote other locally owned wedding industry businesses. Agrotourism and other forms of business diversification allow operations to diversify their income streams, increasing their long-term stability. This could be an area of growth for Whately.

Tourism in Whately is limited, though visitors may arrive for events such as weddings at Quonquont Farm, stay at the Whately Inn, or visit destinations in nearby South Deerfield such as Yankee Candle village or Treehouse Brewery. While Whately has small outdoor recreation sites, they generally do not attract people from outside of the area. However, Whately is regionally situated along popular regional bike-touring routes and near popular destinations, giving the town an opportunity to capture more spending on food and

services, hospitality, small events, and guided recreation if created. Avid bicyclists travel from all over to enjoy the region's picturesque roadways.

Whately has limited restaurant options for residents or visitors. The Whately Inn is a higher-end, historical restaurant which has a devoted customer base of folks who return for anniversary dinners, celebrate milestones, or enjoy an intimate setting. The Nouria Whately Diner is the only 24-hour sit-down restaurant in the county, and one of very few in the region overall. Its location just off the highway and not far from the Five Colleges makes it a destination for truck drivers, late-shift workers, and students. Residents have expressed strong interest in having a café in town. Some zoning restrictions and lack of sewer limit the feasibility of the development of hospitality establishments.

The I-91 Interchange 35 area has high traffic, multiple vacant or underutilized parcels, and is one of only a few commercial zones in town. A 2024 market analysis identifies some unmet retail demand within a 5-minute drive, including a small, full-service restaurant. 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 few vacant parcels meet current minimum lot size and current zoning presents various additional barriers.

There is very limited industrial park space available for development in Franklin County. The Whately Industrial Park was established in 1995 and has only one development-ready parcel left. The Whately Industrial Park is located next to the Deerfield Industrial Park. The two are separated by a few hundred feet of undeveloped land. There is currently no access through 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 the approval of the Deerfield EDIC, is currently looking into the feasibility of creating a road

WHAT DO WHATELY RESIDENTS SAY?

In the 2023 survey, **Whately residents strongly supported agriculture tourism-based business and services, and culture and outdoor tourism.**

Respondents expressed strong interest in having a coffee shop or café in town.

One respondent noted, "The important question is, where should development take place, not should it take place. Forest, agricultural, open space, rural character should not be sacrificed for development."

Another respondent said, "I kind of like things the way they are. While having more retail and restaurants and trails etc. would be good for me, I'm not psyched about bringing in a lot more outside traffic. But I trust the town planners to make smart decisions for everybody."

Public Review Draft

connection between the two parks as well as expanding the sewer system to the Whately Industrial Park.

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 must be small-scale and context-sensitive.



Housing

Promote a variety of housing types that create and sustain affordable, stable, multi-generational and diverse neighborhoods; encourage a mix of housing densities, ownership patterns, prices, and building types to match the needs of residents and businesses now and in the future; to increase the amount of affordable housing in Whately in a way that is sustainable for the town's natural resources.

Whately prioritizes strategies that support quality housing options at a range of prices to ensure Whately residents can afford to stay in their community and that the town continues to be a vibrant community into the future. This will require balancing the need for more housing while preserving features important to residents, such as farmland and forests.

In 2023, Whately undertook the process of creating a [Housing Production Plan](#), which documented the demographic & housing trends in town, current development conditions as well as outlined goals and implementation strategies for the town to meet the state's affordable housing goal of 10% subsidized housing inventory (SHI). This chapter references technical data from that document which should be referred to for more detail.

Context & Existing Conditions

Since housing is a commodity that is slow to produce but has a long-life span, changes in the supply or market must be carefully considered years in advance to anticipate repercussions. The following table provides a snapshot of different types of households in Whately that can have very different housing needs and how they have changed over the last decade as the population has shifted. This provides a window into how to plan for future housing.

KEY TERMS

Affordable

A household spends 30% or less of their income on housing costs. This could be through "naturally occurring" low rents or through formal restrictions and programs.

Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI)

- Household earning no more than 80% of the area median income;
- must have some form of subsidy for development and/or operations; and
- the housing must have deed restrictions to ensure long-term affordability.

Table 2. Changes in Whately Households over the last 20 Years

Household Type	2010		2023		2010 - 2023 Change	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total Households	665	100%	659	100%	-6	-0.9%
Total Families	447	67%	437	66%	-10	-2.2%
Households with individuals 60 years and over	171	26%	235	54%	64	37.4%
Family Households with children	142	21%	138	32%	-4	-2.8%
One-person Household	131	20%	184	28%	53	40.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Communities Survey Five-Year Estimates

Housing is considered affordable when households spend no more than 30% of their income on housing costs. According to the U.S. Census, at least a quarter of Whately residents are spending unaffordable amounts on housing. Specifically, 26% of Whately homeowners, and 27% of renters, spend more than 30% of their household income on housing-related costs. It is likely that what is affordable to residents is widening – the July 2025 Zillow Home Value Index for Whately is \$544,035 compared to the July 2021 value of \$451,398. This is a 20% increase in values compared to only a 16% increase in median household income over that same period.

According to the Center for Neighborhood Technology’s Housing & Transportation Index, Whately’s combined housing and transportation index is 63%.¹² Ideally,



¹² [H+T Affordability Index](#), Center for Neighborhood Technology, accessed August 2025 using Regional Typical

QUICK FACTS

715

Total housing units

0.6%

Subsidized Housing Inventory units (June 2023)

29.7%

Housing stock built pre-1940

1972

Median year of housing construction (Whately)

1959

Median year of housing construction (Franklin Cty)

85%

Owner-occupied units

\$388,500

Median single-family sales price (2021)

\$1,866

Monthly Fair Market Rent for a Two-Bedroom Unit (FY26)

Sources: US Census Bureau ACS Five-Year Estimates 2019-2023, MA EOHLC, HUD.

a household does not spend more than 40% of their income on a combination of housing and transportation costs, so many Whately residents are overburdened when driving costs are factored into their living situations.

Currently, only 0.6% (two units) of Whately housing stock is currently on the Subsidized Housing Inventory, which is well below the 10% threshold required by Massachusetts. A healthy housing market is generally considered to have vacancy rates of 2-3% for owner-occupied homes and 4-5% for rental properties. Whately has a combined vacancy rate of 1% (or 8 units). Of the limited homes that are on the market, many are outside of the price range the median household can afford, which is around \$335,000.¹³ In the first half of 2025, there were 6 houses sold and each month's median sale price ranged from \$332,000 to \$706,280.¹⁴ Since January 2020, only 15 new homes have been built in Whately.

Challenges & Opportunities

The UMass Donahue Institute (UMDI) released a [regional housing study for all of Western Massachusetts](#) in September 2025. This report found that there will be a need for 2,230 additional housing units by 2035 in Franklin County to have just enough housing to meet population demands and have a healthy housing market. Population projections for Whately and the region show that we will be losing population. However, while the number of people in the region will decline over time, the number of households is increasing.¹⁵ This is due to the demographic pattern of smaller households that are spreading out into more homes. Some of the housing needed in Franklin County will be needed in Whately.

¹³ Calculated using Fannie Mae mortgage affordability calculator with 6.4% interest rate. This number is likely to be on the high end since the calculator's default settings include limited debt per household

¹⁴ Massachusetts Association of Realtors, Single Family Market Data by Town

¹⁵ FRCOG, 2024 Regional Housing Plan: <https://frcog.org/publications/franklin-county-regional-housing-plan-2024/>.

Public Review Draft

The [FRCOG's 2024 Regional Housing Plan](#), UMDI's Housing Study for Western Massachusetts, and the [2025 Statewide Housing Plan](#) all identified the need for increased housing production as critical for the continued vitality of both Franklin County and Massachusetts. The region's and state's vacancy rates are too low and housing prices are too high; indicating a clear need for more housing supply. At the local level, enrollment at Whately Elementary School has been slowly declining despite the fact that a third of the students choose to attend from other districts.¹⁶ To ensure that the town's population is sustainable and institutions like local schools are viable, more housing is needed to welcome new residents and youth.

When asked "how should new housing be prioritized over the next 15 years," residents responded with the following top priorities:

1. New housing should be made more intentionally affordable for those in the workforce (teachers, firefighters, laborers, small business owners, etc.)
2. New housing should be set aside for seniors
3. New housing should include more starter homes for families
4. New housing should include more market-rate housing



¹⁶ Data Explorer, Wayfinders, accessed August 2025

WHAT DO WHATELY RESIDENTS SAY?

In the 2023 survey, **Whately residents strongly supported "apartments added to existing homes" and "new housing styles such as townhomes, duplexes, or smaller cottage units", as well as housing affordable to the workforce.** Luxury or high-end housing was consistently ranked as least desirable.

One respondent expressed concern about reducing minimum lot sizes due to setback requirements for septic and wells, since there is no sewer system.

Another respondent expressed "Not only is the inventory of starter homes and affordable homes insufficient, the high cost of property taxes makes it difficult for young families to move to and/or stay in town."



Land Use & Zoning

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.

Whately has adopted zoning bylaws with the purpose of promoting the health, safety and general welfare of the inhabitants of the Town of Whately, as well as encouraging appropriate land use, conserving the value of land and buildings, protecting natural resources and environmental health, and encouraging housing for residents of all income levels. It can be a challenge to envision how a place can change over generations, until it is visible. Zoning is a useful tool for a community to shape desired changes in land use patterns, but zoning must be updated regularly to align with desired land use. This section explores past, present, and future land use and development patterns and how zoning and environmental constraints could shape Whately's future.

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

QUICK FACTS

97%

Land in Town is zoned Agricultural/Residential

<4%

Land in Town is zoned Commercial or Industrial

4.5 units

Average number of new homes built per year since 2016 (all single-family homes)

719

Number of existing housing units

340

Estimated number of new units that could potentially be built on vacant parcels

70

Estimated number of ADUs that could potentially be added to existing homes

Sources for all quick facts and methodology for estimates are listed in the Land Use & Zoning Technical Memo.

Challenges & Opportunities

FRCOG conducted a housing build-out analysis that found an estimated 340 potential new housing units could be built out on vacant parcels under current zoning. However, of these vacant parcels, 62% are either active farmland or important habitat areas. In addition, an estimated total of 70 new accessory dwelling units (ADUs) could be added at existing homes in Whately. These analyses are described in detail in the Land Use & Zoning Technical Memo. Adding units to already developed parcels can help preserve the rural feel of Whately and protect farmland and the environment.

While the residential building market has been slow and is unlikely that Whately will see this amount of housing built out for decades, the town's proximity to several highways and the Five College Area make it very possible that there will be increased development in the future. Some of that development will be welcome—particularly more diverse housing options and desired commercial uses. However, a town the size of Whately, especially one that so deeply values its rural character, will have to plan carefully to strike a desired balance in the amount, type, placement, and timing of projects. One common strategy to prevent the kind of dispersed development of open space that impacts natural resources and increases the cost of municipal services is to cluster housing together, however this option is much more possible when public sewer is available.

Development of all kinds can be stymied by the need for expensive, space-consuming septic systems in areas without public sewer. This is especially true for commercial projects and denser types of housing where the space requirements of leach fields make clustering housing together challenging and cost prohibitive. Not only does this result in fewer units built, but also development taking up more land, resulting in sprawl. The ability to connect to public sewer would open 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. The neighboring South Deerfield Wastewater Treatment Plant and Hatfield Wastewater Treatment Plant both have excess capacity in their system and have expressed interest in

WHAT DO WHATELY RESIDENTS SAY?

Creating density by adding housing units to existing homes is the most preferred option when it comes to adding development into town, followed by gentle density with duplexes, town homes, or cottage clusters.

This type of development feels in line with feedback many residents gave about wanting to maintain the "small town feel" of Whately.

When polled on the demographics new housing should be aimed towards, workforce housing, affordable to local laborers in the middle class, was deemed the highest priority.

Public Review Draft

exploring expansion into Whately. There is currently a feasibility study underway for expansion of the South Deerfield system into the Whately Industrial Park. Both options are likely to be expensive and careful study of impacts and cost of the investment will be important as the Town explores these opportunities.

Whately residents would like to see more commercial development, such as retail and restaurants, and the production of more diverse housing types. There are opportunities to clarify the zoning and change use and dimensional rules to encourage more flexibility and production of housing. Similarly, there are opportunities to modestly expand the Commercial Districts and change zoning to encourage commercial growth where it is desired. Encouraging more mixed-use development that focuses on appearance and character rather than the use will facilitate both residential and commercial development simultaneously. Exploring zoning revisions that allow farm businesses to re-use buildings for new purposes and enable business diversification can support the long-term viability of farming in Whately. Climate change concerns can also continue to be addressed through zoning and subdivision updates, particularly those related to stormwater management and surface- and ground-water protection.





REALIZING THE VISION

Recommendations

The following recommendations are drawn from the previous and concurrent planning studies described in Planning Context, input from the public, and the research and analysis completed by the project team.

The strategies in this table outline ways that the Town of Whately can work towards achieving the vision set forth in this plan. The following tables correspond with each topic presented in the plan. Each table presents the topic's goal, multiple objectives, and strategies for achieving those objectives.

The objectives and recommended strategies identified for each element are not prioritized, as priorities are subject to change easily under economic pressure, when funding shifts, or in emergency situations. Town boards and committees are free to prioritize the objectives and strategies under their mandate as situations warrant.

Rural Roots, Bright Futures lays out several potentially competing issues – namely the need to produce more housing, the desire for more commercial/retail options in town, and the importance of preserving the small town feel and agricultural and natural resources. To achieve balance between these seemingly opposing needs, difficult decisions are ahead for the Town related to zoning changes, infrastructure investments, and prioritization of municipal funding. This Plan provides a basis for these conversations with suggested directions for which the Town to consider.

Agriculture

Goal: 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.

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.

Public Review Draft

- 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.

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

Open Space & Recreation

Goal: Steward open spaces for ecological benefit and provide recreational opportunities for residents and visitors at a variety of ages, abilities, and interests.

Use planning tools such as mapping, consultants, public engagement, and land use regulations to preserve open space, and improve environmental health and climate resilience outlined in this plan and other relevant Town plans

- Request technical assistance from the FRCOG to assist with a review of Whately's zoning bylaws, subdivision regulations, and general Town bylaws for best practices for open space protection, stormwater management, habitat (including pollinator habitat), water resource protection, drought tolerance, climate-resilient landscaping, and other open space priorities to ensure Whately continues to update its land use regulations to protect natural resources and to increase resilience to climate change.

Work to preserve areas of Whately that are most important to protect, recognizing the reality of climate change

- Work with the Selectboard to hire a consultant to conduct a geomorphic assessment of the Mill River Watershed and identify flooding and fluvial erosion threats to Whately's public water supply wells and other critical infrastructure (culverts, roads, utilities) within the watershed. Identify new priority nature-based solutions to mitigate these threats. Prepare conceptual designs and cost estimates for projects that increase climate resiliency and mitigate flood and fluvial erosion hazards.
- Use existing or emerging tools, including land use regulations, to incorporate Best Management Practices for River Corridor areas (FRCOG's River Corridor Toolkit) to secure more effective riparian buffers along the Connecticut and Mill Rivers and their tributaries.
- Tap into local expertise or hire a consultant to assess stormwater drainage on gravel roads, with an emphasis on impacts to adjacent coldwater fisheries and wetlands. Develop stormwater BMP concept designs such as those developed by FRCOG as part of the 2021 Franklin County Stormwater Pilot Project.

Provide Whately residents with structured programming that supports use and enjoyment of Whately's natural environment, open space resources, and history

- Work together and with the Agricultural Commission, Conservation Commission, Recreation Commission, local land trusts, and Smith College to develop programming responsive to the results of the 2021 OSRP survey, including lectures, workshops, and outdoor activities, with an emphasis on history, natural history and the environment.

Public Review Draft

Promote the use of new and existing trails, ensure good public access, improve and/or develop trail systems throughout town

- Work with Town Boards and local volunteers to maintain and improve trail network.
- Create a Town Trail Plan, including an assessment of existing trail conditions and potential trail routes.

Work with the Recreation Committee to create and improve recreational facilities of public interest

- 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. Conduct a site analysis and feasibility study of water quality and infrastructure improvements to the Tri-Town Beach facilities.
- Work with the Board of Health and Recreation Commission to improve availability of and access to bathrooms at Town-owned properties for bicyclists and hikers.
- Explore the feasibility of various improvements to Herlihy Park, including the addition of a playground for children of different ages, ADA improvements, park expansion into adjacent parcels, and Connecticut River access.

Improve public awareness of environmental issues, natural resource protection, and open space, recreation, and multi-use trail opportunities

- Identify community organizations and volunteers (including students), to develop materials and use existing communication systems (e.g., the Town website, The Scoop) to provide information to the Whately community about open space and recreation (including trail information), and resource protection (e.g., drought and heat tolerant landscaping, pesticide use, good forest stewardship practices). Work with the Conservation Commission and Agricultural Commission to identify topics.
- Create guide to recreation resources in Whately to be posted to Town website and social media.

Work with town committees and other organizations to encourage continued engagement with Open Space and Recreation Goals

- Convene annual meetings to discuss progress on OSRP action items and share general news and ideas regarding open space and recreation.

Climate & Energy

Goal: 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.

Continue to undertake recommended projects that 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.

Public Review Draft

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.

Public Review Draft

- 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.

Look for and 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.
- 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.

Community Facilities & Services

Goal: 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.

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, to lower operating costs and maintain services during outages and heat events.

Building consolidation

- Consider consolidating 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 Dept building, the town could then move the Highway Department 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 (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 neighboring towns 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 Field, emphasizing ADA compliance and safe routes to civic destinations.

Public Review Draft

- Identify and implement small-scale site 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 Field to include: irrigation, power & dugouts.
- Develop a multi-purposed trail network that provides hiking and other outdoor recreational possibilities such as snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, mountain biking, horseback riding, and the like, and provides 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.

Elementary School

- Ensure the facility remains flexible and responsive to ongoing and anticipated future needs of students.
- Explore opportunities for upgrades and capital improvements while reducing Green House Gas emissions through grant programs like Green Communities.

Transportation

Goal: 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.

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.
- 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/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 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.

Public Review Draft

- 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.

DRAFT

Economic Development & Cultural Resources

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

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 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.

Public Review Draft

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.
- 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.

Housing

Goal: Promote a variety of housing types that create and sustain affordable, stable, multi-generational and diverse neighborhoods; encourage a mix of housing densities, ownership patterns, prices, and building types to match the needs of residents and businesses now and in the future; to increase the amount of affordable housing in Whately in a way that is sustainable for the town's natural resources.

Zoning Strategies

- Conduct feasibility study to create new zoning overlay districts that reduce dimensional requirements as feasible for building lots on public water in the AR1, A/R2 Districts.
- Consider soil-based lot sizing subdivision regulations.
- See *Land Use & Zoning* section for additional zoning recommendations.

Non Zoning Strategies

- Identify sites for potential new affordable housing and work with local developers for them to consider.
- Create a buy-down program for first-time, income eligible, homebuyers.
- Develop a plan to use CPA money to create affordable housing in Whately.
- Consider earmarking all or some portion of lodging tax revenues to be added to the Affordable Housing Trust funds.
- Consider a shared housing coordinator position with other CPA/Housing Trust communities nearby.

Land Use & Zoning

Goal: 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.

Revise Zoning to Increase Housing Production and Types

- Consider revising the Community Housing bylaw to increase the maximum building cap and 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.
- Reduce parking requirements in Commercial Districts.
- Allow by-right mixed-use development with upper-story residential.
- Allow drive-throughs in all or some Commercial Districts.

Public Review Draft

- 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 and 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 AR1 and AR2 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 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

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

Public Review Draft

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