



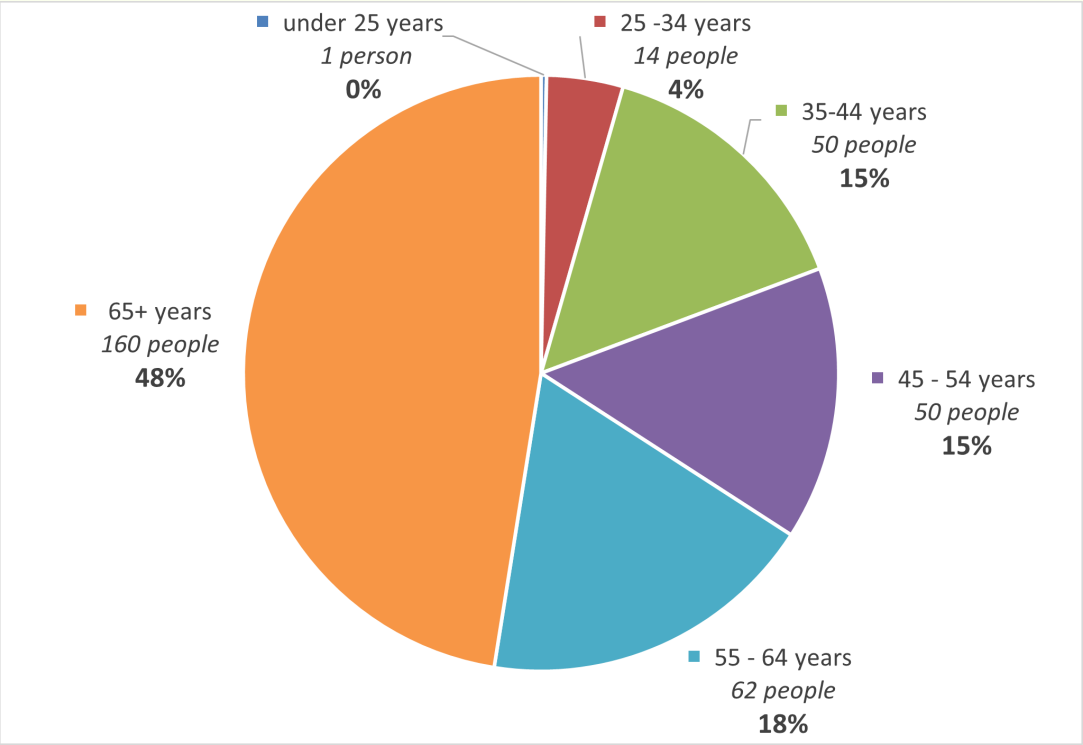
Planning Board

Town of Leverett
Comprehensive Plan Phase 2
January 31, 2024

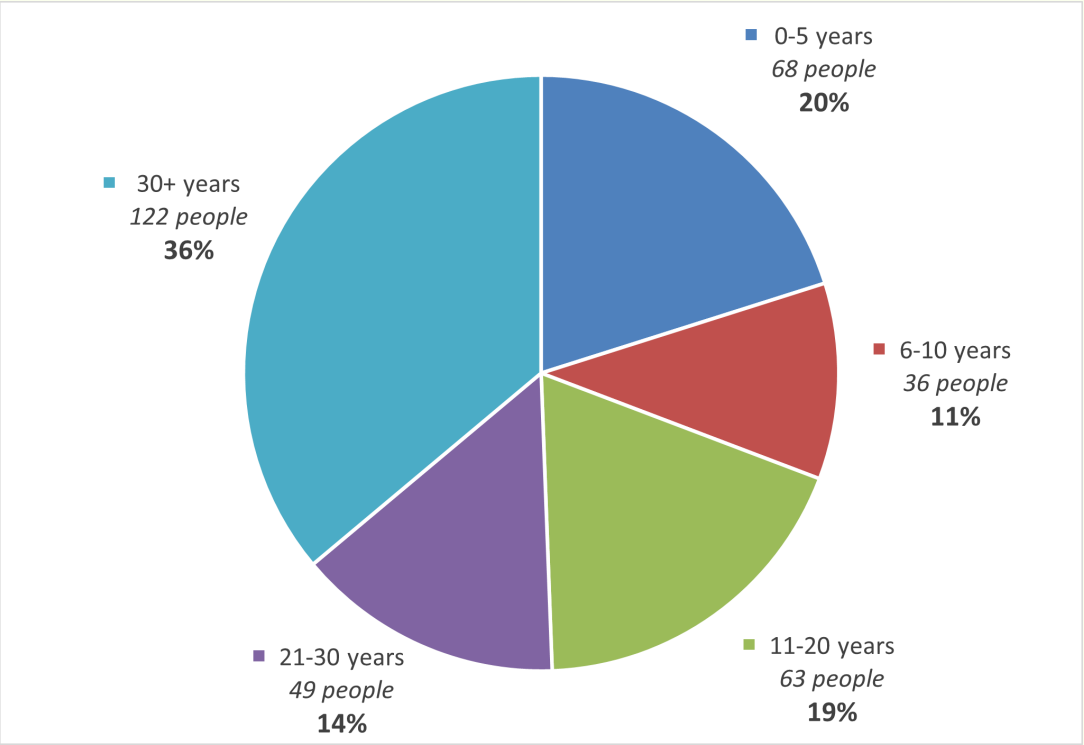
Survey Results

Who we heard from in our last survey:

Age of Respondents



How long have you lived in Leverett?





Major Themes

Steering Group

- Affordable Housing
- Aging in Place
- Climate Resilience
- Recreation and Rural Character
- Town Services

Survey

- Lack of resources
 - Resource for seniors
- Need for housing
- Concerns about over-development
- Protecting Leverett
 - Rural way of life
 - Climate resiliency
 - History and community
 - Nature



Major Themes: Lack of Resources

Many responses included concerns about the lack of amenities within town and how it affects their quality of life.

Proximity to neighboring towns such as Amherst and Hadley for access to jobs and amenities is ***important*** to Leverett's residents.

Some people support the ***expansion of the PVTa transit system*** into Leverett to help increase access to these amenities.

43% of respondents noted that ***access to public transportation is important*** to them.



"I would like Leverett to be 'less precious' and more accessible. We can have both-our ruralness, our woods and trails and, more housing."

"Social isolation is a detriment to the quality of life of Leverett. The anti-commercial development sentiment is weighing the town down."

"We are concerned that if there is any emergency, ambulances will take too long to arrive"



Major Themes: Lack of Resources for Seniors

Many respondents mention Leverett's aging community and concern for lack of senior activities and housing.

73% of survey respondents answered that ***meeting the needs of an aging population*** is ***important*** to them.

Leverett's residents live in Leverett for a reason: they love their community. How do we make it easier for seniors to stay in the community they love?

"Senior housing and activities like Hadley"

"...we are an aging community...Instead of everyone having to move somewhere like ApplewoSenior housing and activities like Hadley or Christopher Heights in Northampton, wouldn't it be amazing if we had our own independent/assisted living Center that really reflected our cultural values?"

"Lack of public transportation, lack of housing for seniors"

"Leverett is a wonderful place to live for young families - but it is not so great for seniors – We would like to age in place in our home... We would like to live in a condo development in Leverett...so that we can stay in our beloved town and not have to move elsewhere - as we get into our eighties and nineties."



Major Themes: Lack of Resources for Seniors continued

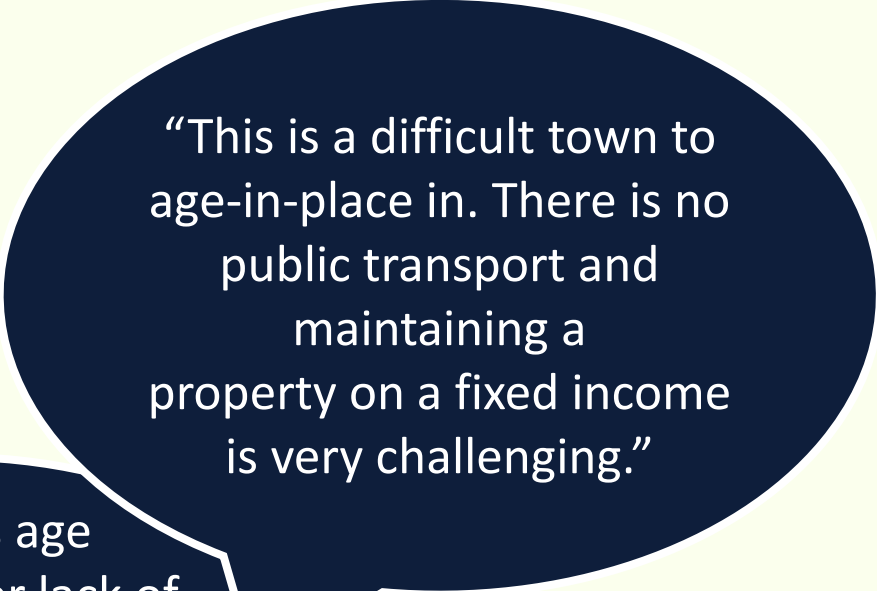
Other responses in the survey focused on Leverett's ***lack of resources*** for older residents within town and how people rely on neighboring communities for these amenities.

Some of these amenities may include, ***grocery stores, health care services,*** and ***senior centers*** in Amherst & Hadley.

A significant number of respondents who mentioned aging in Leverett also noted that ***unaffordability*** and ***inability to maintain upkeep of their home*** as personal concerns.



"...But as age concerned for lack of resources and public services due to living in a rural small community."



"This is a difficult town to age-in-place in. There is no public transport and maintaining a property on a fixed income is very challenging."



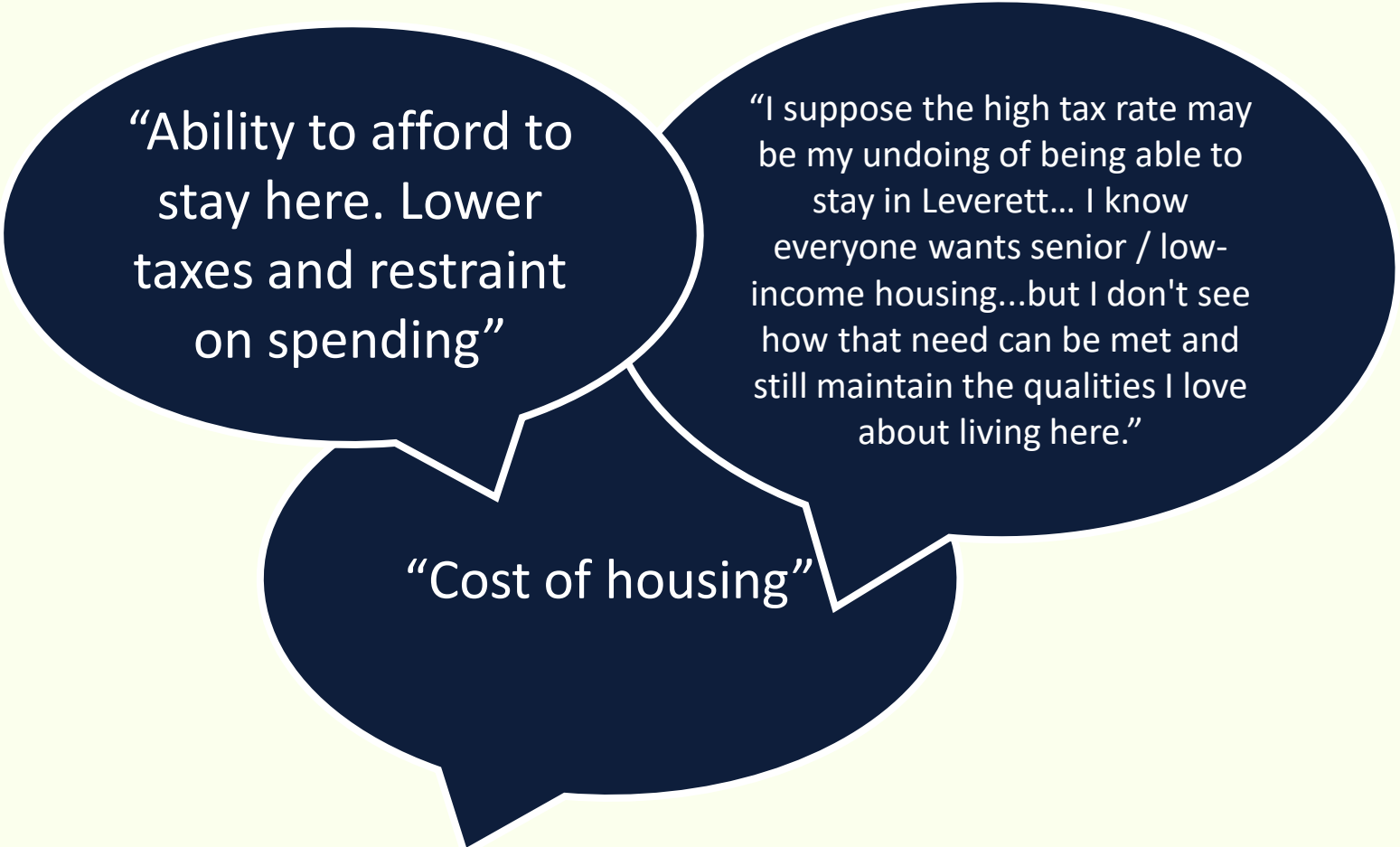
Major Themes: Need for Housing

Some residents in Leverett are concerned about housing. They want their community to be more affordable and meet the needs of everyday residents.

53% of respondents noted that *more quality, affordable housing* is *important* to them.

Some residents mention Leverett's high tax rate as a concern.

How does Leverett meet its need for housing while maintaining its charm as a place that residents fell in love with for its ruralness?



"Ability to afford to stay here. Lower taxes and restraint on spending"

"I suppose the high tax rate may be my undoing of being able to stay in Leverett... I know everyone wants senior / low-income housing...but I don't see how that need can be met and still maintain the qualities I love about living here."

"Cost of housing"



Concern about Over-Development

Over-development is a concern for residents in Leverett. Residents don't want to see development bring radical change to the community.

Of those residents who support development, they want to see it directly benefit their community and not just certain stakeholders.

45% of survey respondents want to **prevent development sprawl by focusing growth near town center.**

"I just moved to Leverett from Northampton and enjoy the peaceful solitude of living in a forested area. Downtown Amherst is 10 minutes away; I don't think development of commerce beyond the community-based resources that are already here are needed."

"I am concerned that maybe the zoning laws are too restrictive, but I am also not for over development..."

"From talking with neighbors many people like the quietness of the town - and that houses being built need to have a certain amount of land to avoid over-development."



Protecting Leverett: Rural Way of Life

Residents fell in love with Leverett due to its ***rural way of life***. It's a consensus that most residents want to keep this charm.

Respondents to the survey also cite sense of ***community*** and strong ***social ties*** as contributing positively to their ***quality of life*** in Leverett.

"Rural living. We do have a housing shortage, but we do not need a crazy development and would be disappointed and sad to have a development built in our neighborhood"

"I know that our town can be improved but I really want the character of our town to remain the same. Small, rural, wooded with lots of protected land for wildlife. Friendly places to gather. Helpful neighbors. Some sort of economic development that is in character with the town."

"Leverett is a wonderful, beautiful, rural small town. I don't want to see development that would make it lose that characteristic. Striving to make it a place with more urban amenities and the associated expenses could undermine our rural character."

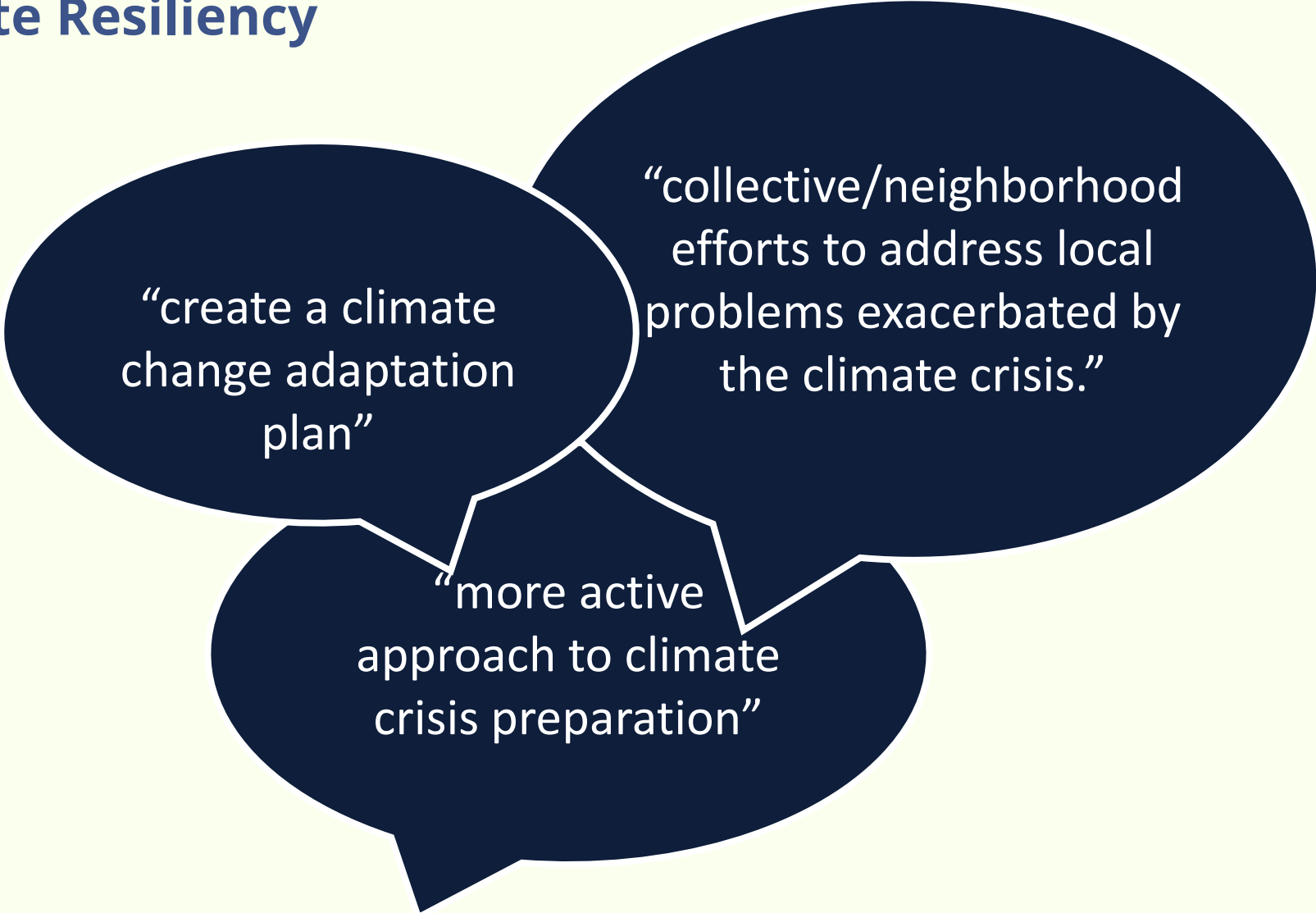


Protecting Leverett: Climate Resiliency

Throughout the survey there were echoes of the need to protect Leverett for climate resiliency.

These calls were **not for a reactive approach** but rather a **preventative** one to protect Leverett.

84% of respondents answered that *Planning for climate change is important* as important to their values as a member of the Leverett community



“create a climate change adaptation plan”

“collective/neighborhood efforts to address local problems exacerbated by the climate crisis.”

“more active approach to climate crisis preparation”



Protecting Leverett: History & Community

Leverett is a historic town and **47%** of survey respondents want to see ***preservation of historic buildings***. **50%** of people support ***adapting historic buildings*** for new purposes.

Community spaces are also important places for residents. **65%** listed support improvement of ***Leverett Library*** as ***important*** and **64%** listed support improvement of ***Leverett Elementary School*** as ***important***.

72% of respondents answered that ***strong community ties*** are ***important***.

"The history of town should be visible and shared, not contained in crumbling building. Decision making needs to be transparent + action oriented."

"...arts, culture, and history should be preserved and schools for a vibrant community for future generations. Minimizing development and commercial enterprise for low impact a quiet lifestyle in natural surrounds is important to me."

"Very difficult to meet the community if you don't have school-ages children. Lack of community-building events"



Protecting Leverett: Nature

Some residents want to **protect and expand** the access to **outdoor recreation** and **open space** in Leverett.

Other residents note there is plenty of protected land already and to **ease development restricts** to help the tax base.

Protecting natural resources such as drinking water, soil, and forests is extremely important to residents. **95%** of respondents listed **Protect drinking water** as an important goal.

“Trail development, Leverett pond access and swimming”

“...building restrictions should be eased allowing property owners to build within safe buildings requirements. Too much land has been placed in conservation, eroding the tax base. We have enough forests to support wildlife and should be capped at what we have.”

“Forests are a treasure; concerned about losing them to development...”



Key Takeaways

- As the population of Leverett ages, a major concern for senior residents is their ability to age in their community. Residents note that affordability concerns as well as a lack of existing accessibility and resources will make it hard for them to stay in Leverett and support themselves.
- Development is a controversial topic. However, many survey respondents are open to ***thoughtful and planned development that isn't excessive and directly benefits the community***. Desires such as affordable and senior housing, community resources, access to amenities are important to the community.
- As much as residents admit the towns need for some sort of development to address issues (accessibility, senior care, high taxes) they are resistant to see much change in Leverett. The town has a rural way of life that they love, and they want to protect natural resources while making the improving the town for its residents.
- Residents want to see historic buildings cared for.

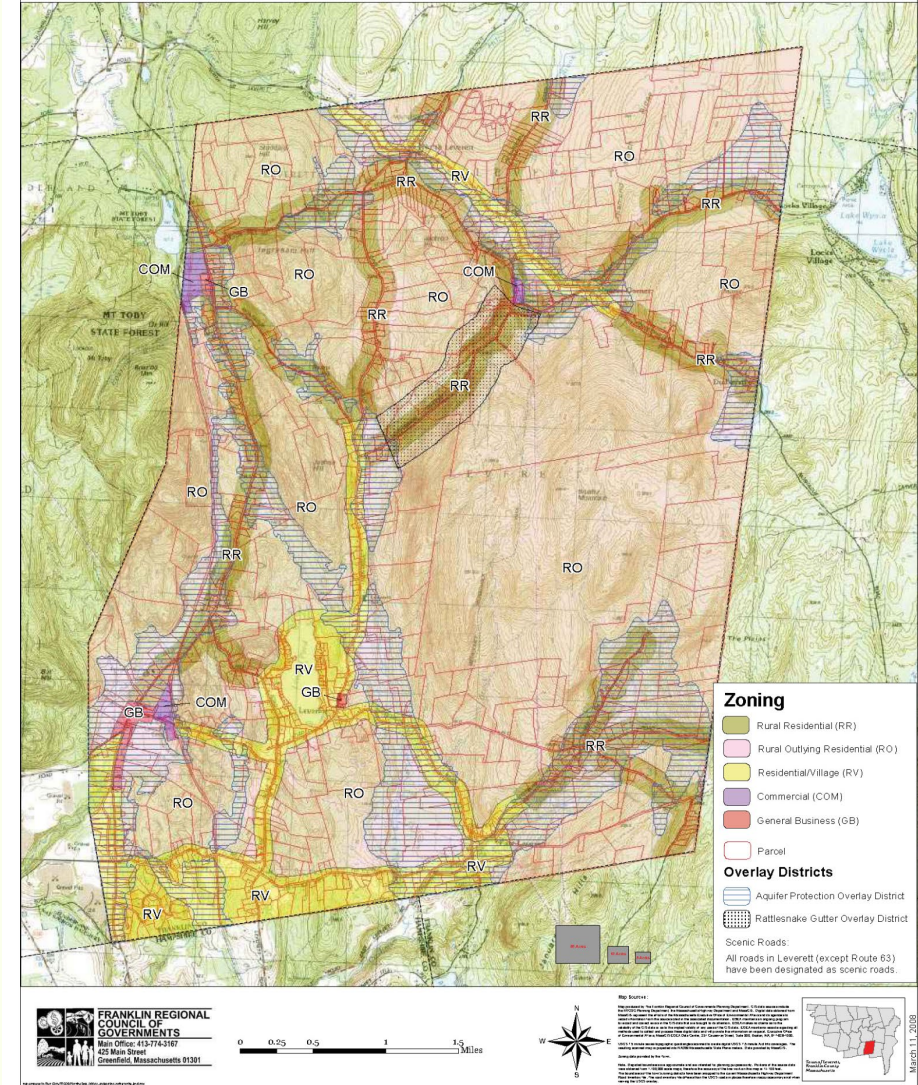
Current Zoning

EXISTING CONDITIONS: EXISTING ZONING

Zoning District	Minimum Lot Size	Yards	Coverage
Rural Residential (RR)	60,000 SF	F 40 ft S 25 ft R 30 ft	B 10% L 35% OS --
Residential/Village (RV)	40,000 SF	F 40 ft S 20 ft R 30 ft	B 15% L 35% OS --
Rural Outlying Residential (RO)	200,000 SF	F 40 ft S 25 ft R 30 ft	B 10% L 25% OS --
Commercial (COM)	40,000 SF	F 40 ft S 25 ft R 30 ft	B 20% L 50% OS 40%
General Business (GB)	40,000 SF	F 40 ft S 25 ft R 30 ft	B 20% L 50% OS 40%

Town of Leverett Official Zoning Map

March 11, 2008



EXISTING CONDITIONS: EXISTING ZONING

Selected Uses: All districts

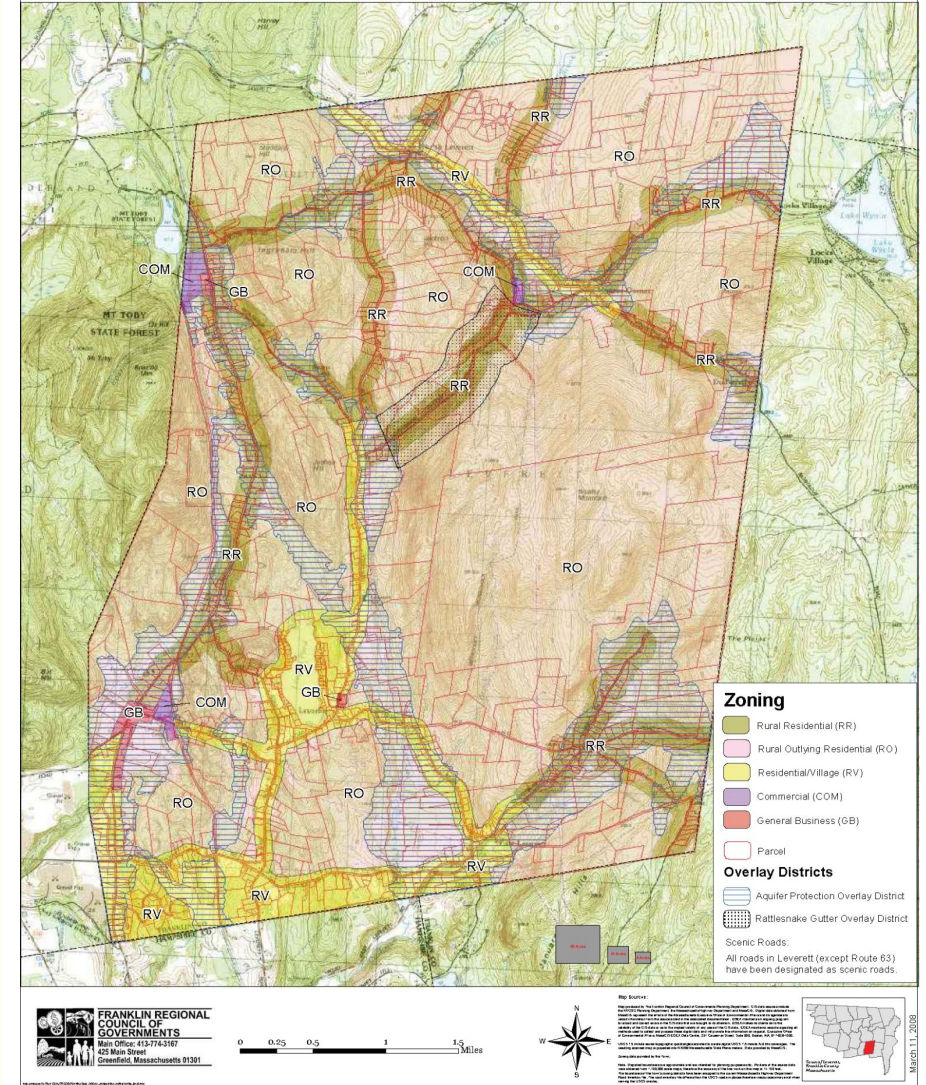
- Single and two-family allowed as-of-right.
- Small Home Occupations are allowed as of right.
- Home Occupations, Small-scale Craft Production, Bed & Breakfasts and Inns, Restaurants require a **special permit**.
- Multifamily (3+ units) is **not allowed** in any district.

Selected Uses: GB and CO Districts

- Retail grocery or general store up to 3,000 SF is allowed **as-of-right**; by special permit if larger.
- All other retail stores and services are by **special permit**.
- Banks and professional offices, Research facilities, Manufacturing/Production/Processing require a **special permit**.
- Conversion of non-residential historic buildings requires a **special permit** (short list of uses, including office, residential, microbrewery, restaurant, artisan studios, or sawmill).

Town of Leverett Official Zoning Map

March 11, 2008





EXISTING CONDITIONS: EXISTING ZONING

Special Districts

Special Permit – ZBA

- Flood Hazard District
- Stream and Lake Protection District
- Wireless Telecommunications Facilities

Site Plan Review – Planning Board

- Rattlesnake Gutter Overlay District
- Flexible Development
- Residential subdivision
- Upper Elevation Site Plan Review
- Ground-Mounted Solar Electric (also Special Permit – Planning Board)

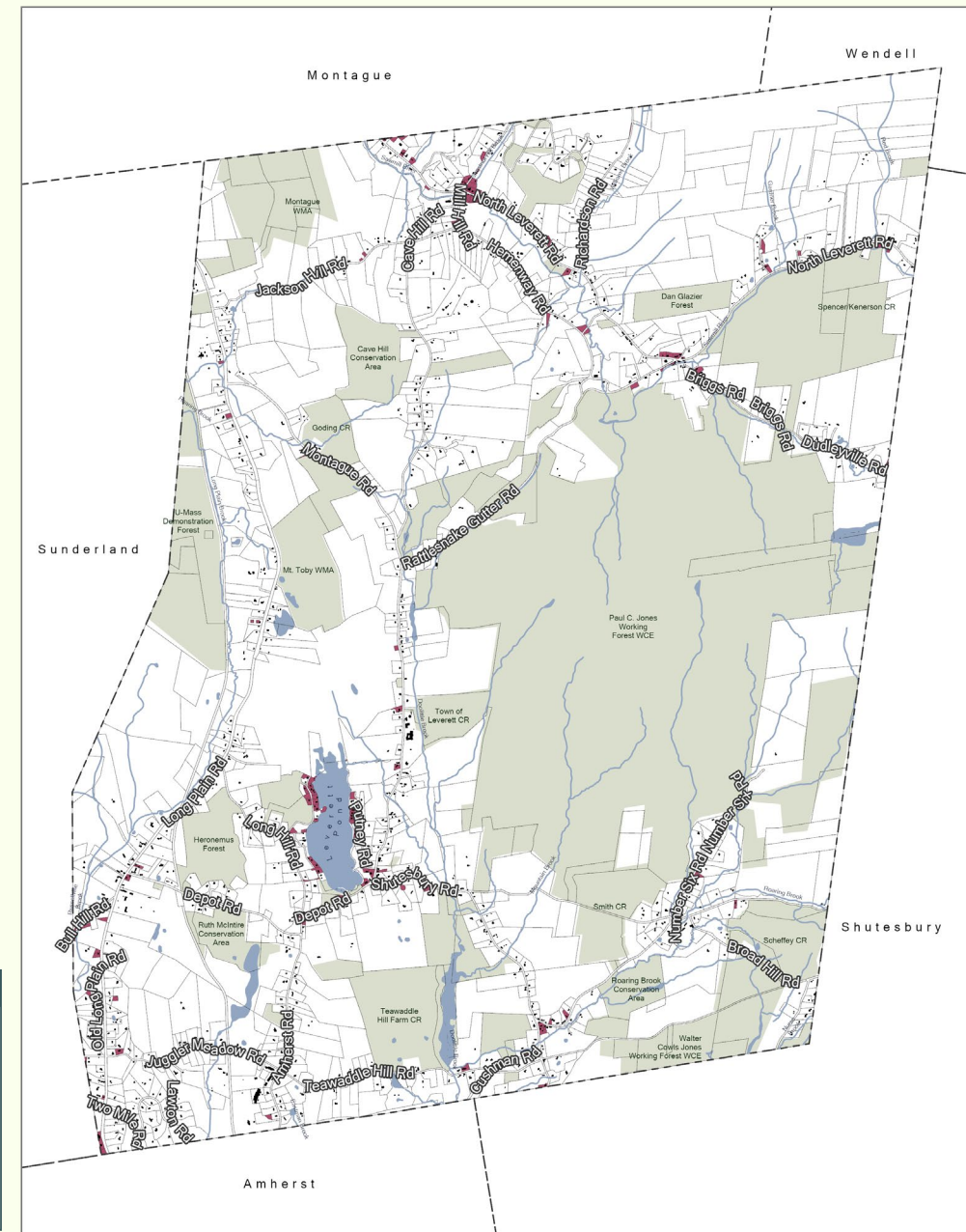
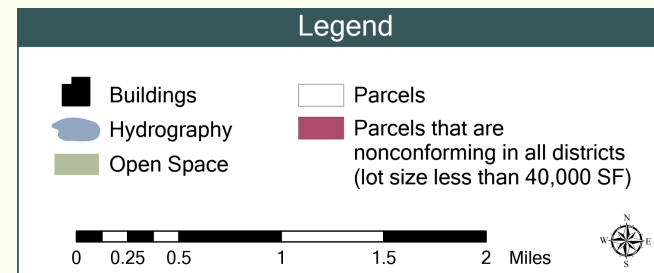
Other

- Scenic Road Protection (Hearing – Planning Board)

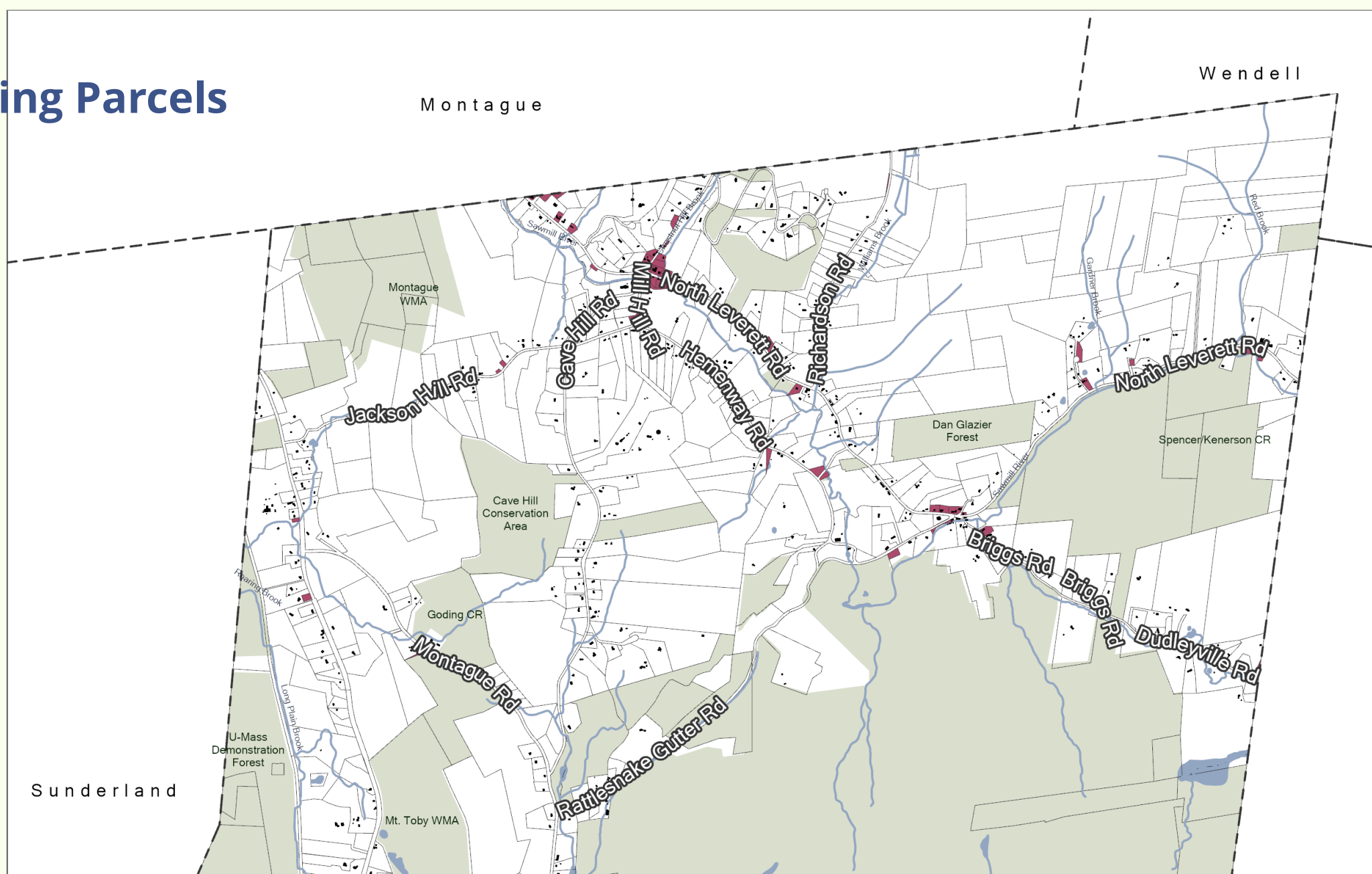
Nonconforming Parcels

This map shows parcels that are nonconforming in **all** Leverett's zoning districts. A total of 126 parcels were found to have a lot size **under** 40,000 SF.

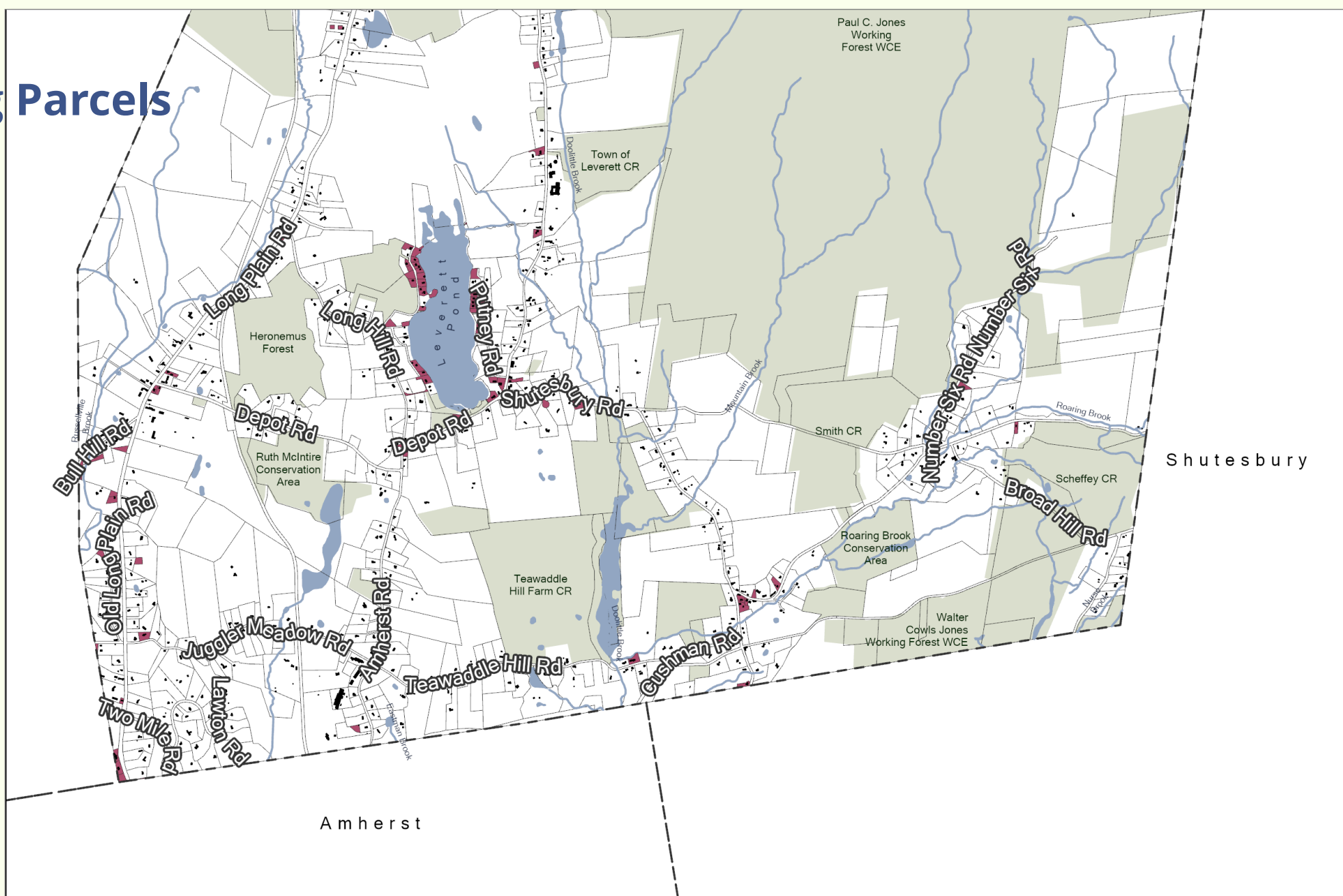
Most of these are around the historic centers: Town Center, North Leverett, and Moore's Corner.



Nonconforming Parcels



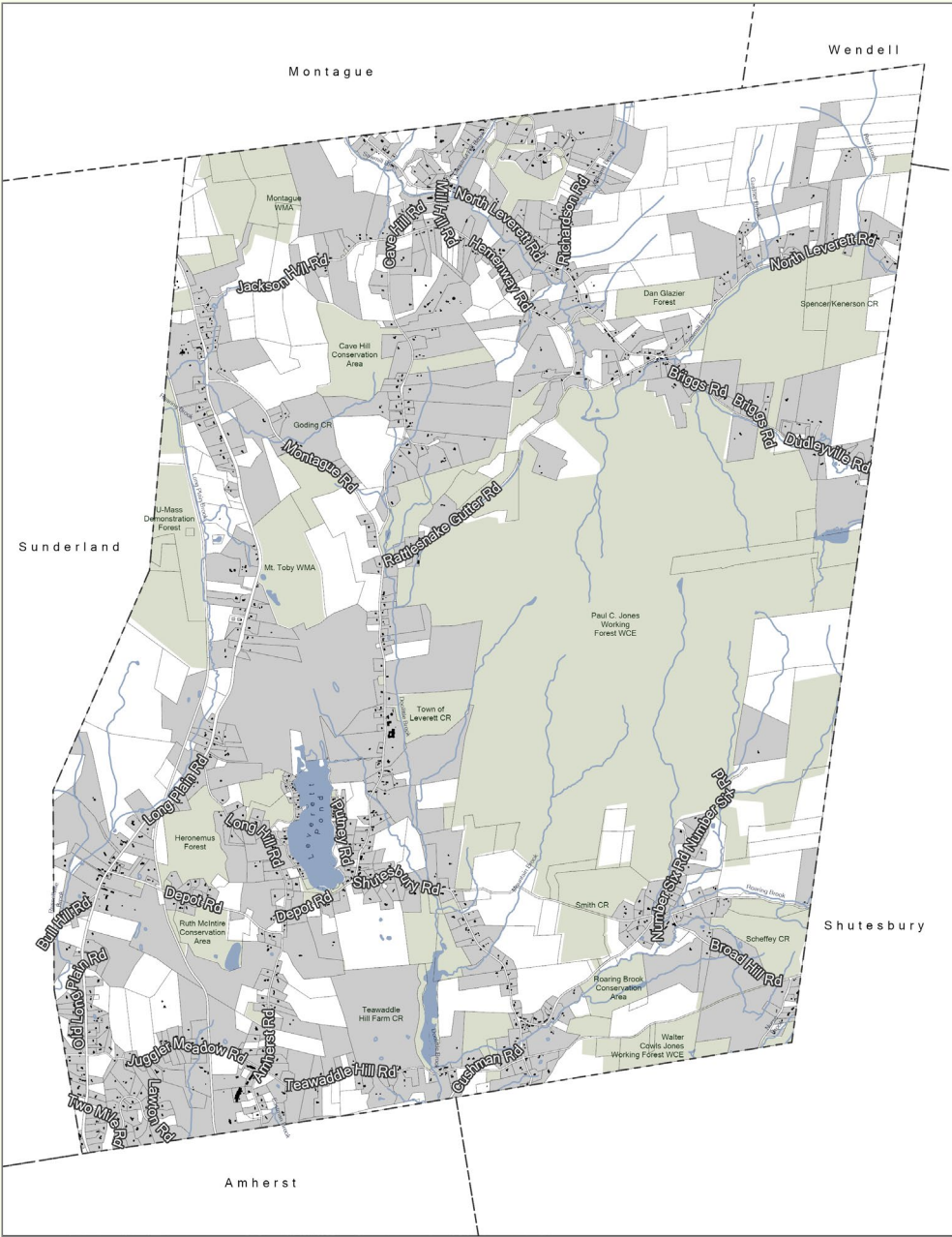
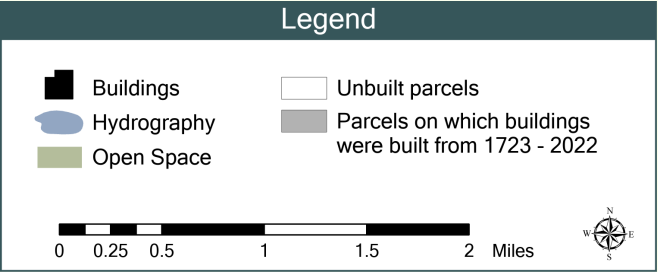
Nonconforming Parcels



Unbuilt Parcels

Parcels in white are those that the Assessors' data indicates are unbuilt and not considered to be open space.

Parcels in grey contain existing buildings built between 1723 and 2022.

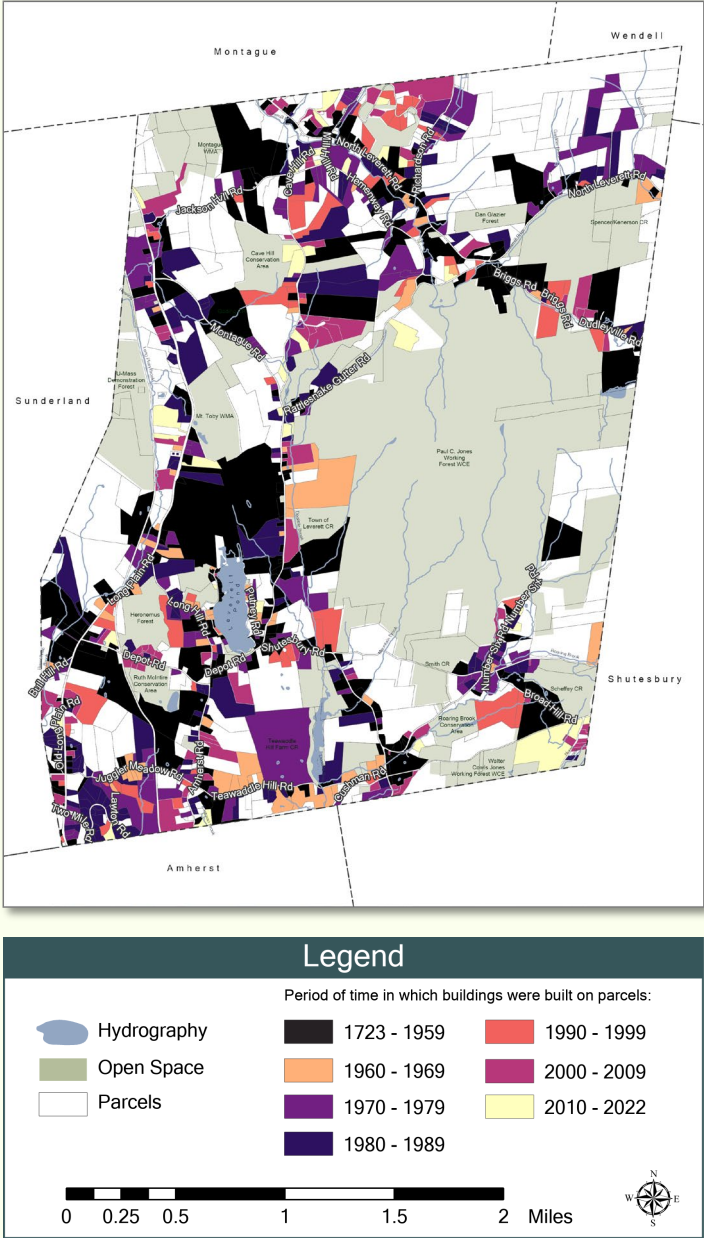


Development Patterns

An analysis of Leverett's historic development patterns
through land use

Development Patterns

The maps and charts on the next few slides show Leverett’s development patterns from 1723 to 2022 based on the most recently updated assessor's data for the town (as of 1/5/2024). Each map shows the corresponding time period’s development by parcel.

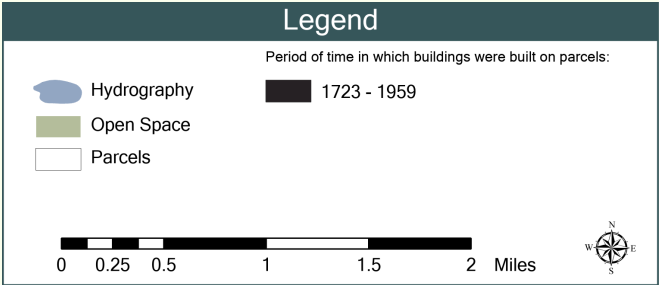


Development from 1723 - 1959

From **1723 to 1959** the total development in Leverett was **261 buildings**.

This is **less than one building per year**.

From this period:
97% (252 buildings) are currently residential.
2% (7 buildings) are currently exempt.
1% (2 buildings) are currently commercial and industrial.



Development from 1960 - 1969

From 1960 to 1969 the total development in Leverett was **66 buildings**.

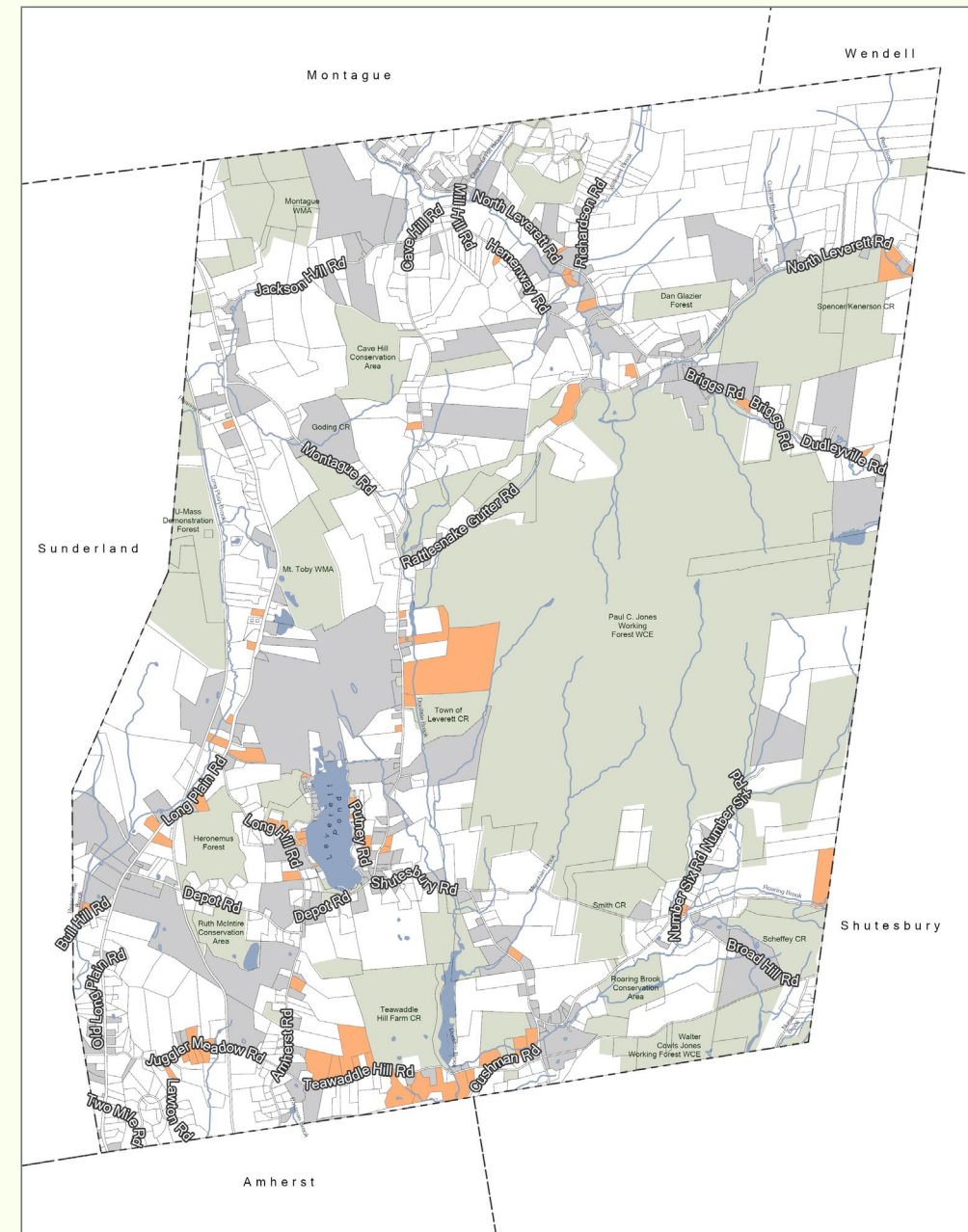
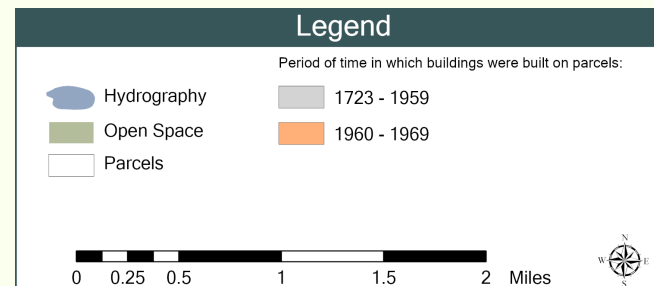
This is **almost seven buildings per year**.

From this decade:

97% (64 buildings) are currently residential.

3% (2 buildings) are currently exempt.

0% are currently commercial.



Development from 1970 - 1979

From **1970 to 1979** the total development in Leverett was **134 buildings**.

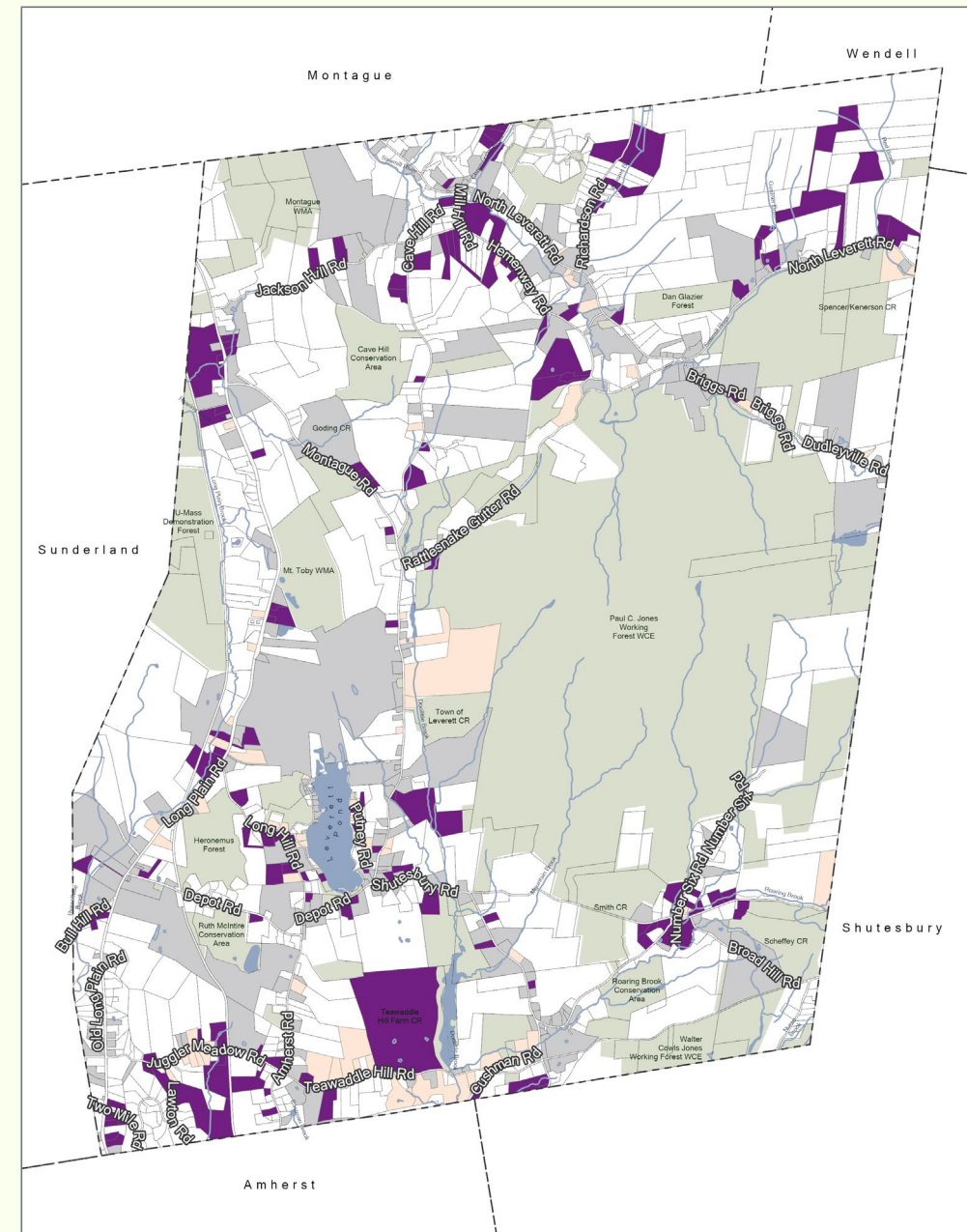
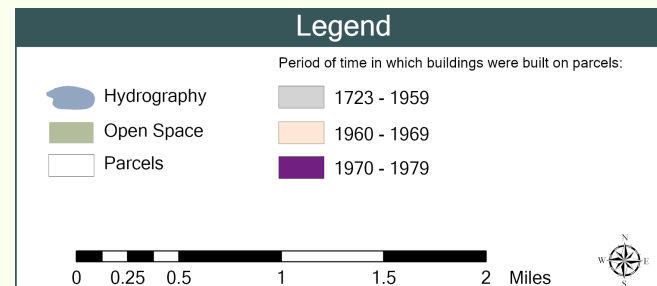
This is **just over thirteen buildings per year**.

From this decade:

98% (131 buildings) are currently residential.

1% (2 buildings) are currently exempt.

1% (1 building) is currently commercial.



Development from 1980 - 1989

From **1980-1989** the total development in Leverett was **153 buildings**.

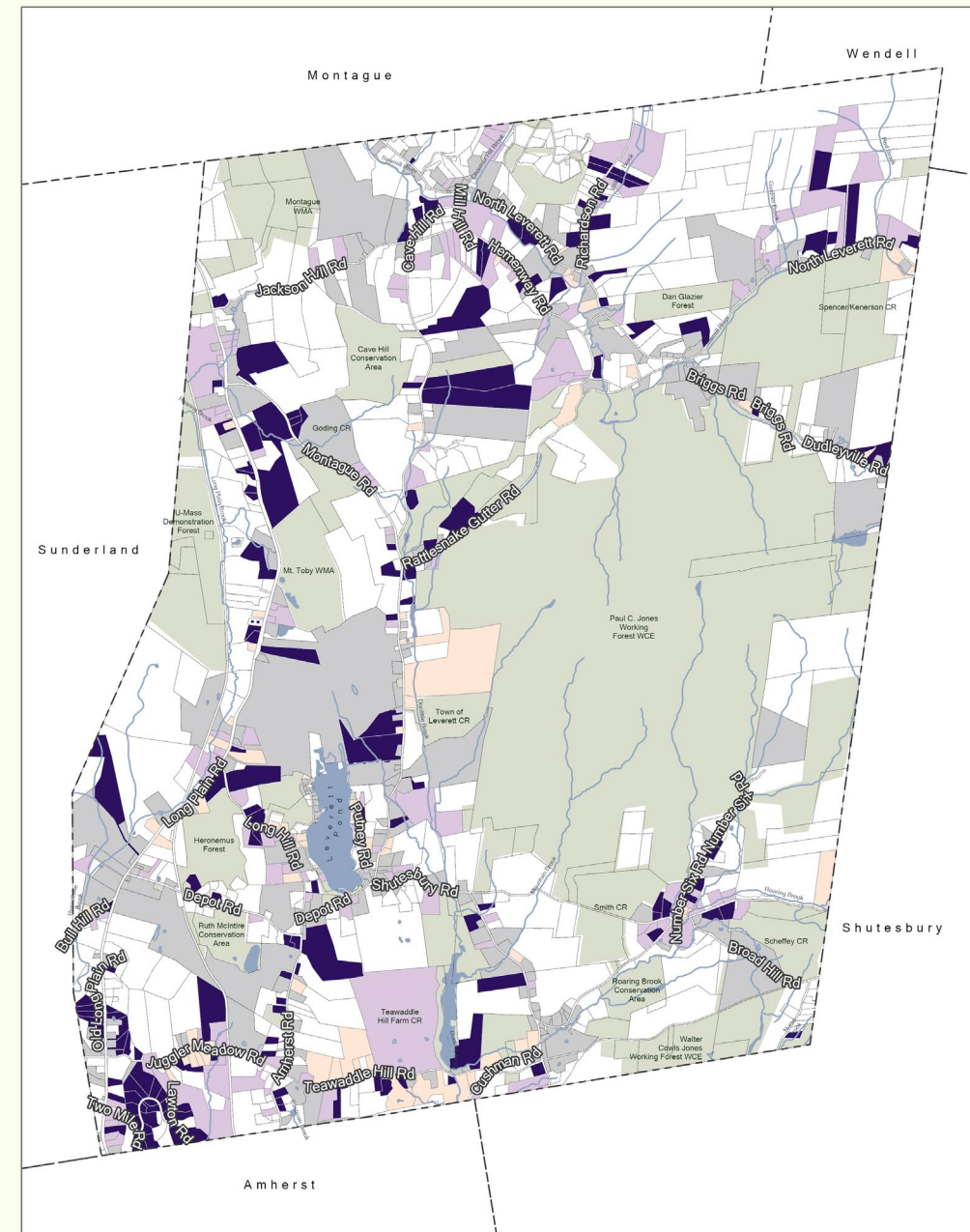
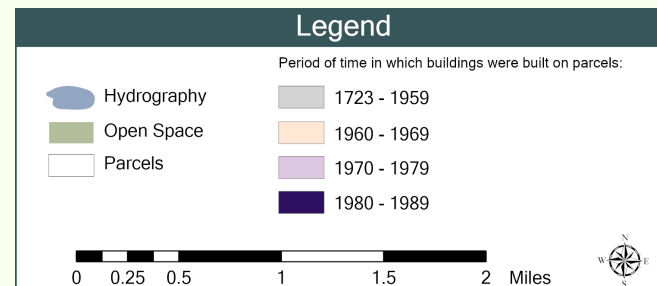
This is **just over fifteen buildings per year**.

From this decade:

97% (149 buildings) are currently residential.

2% (3 buildings) are currently exempt.

1% (1 building) is currently commercial.



Development from 1990 - 1999

From **1990 to 1999** the total development in Leverett was **70 buildings**.

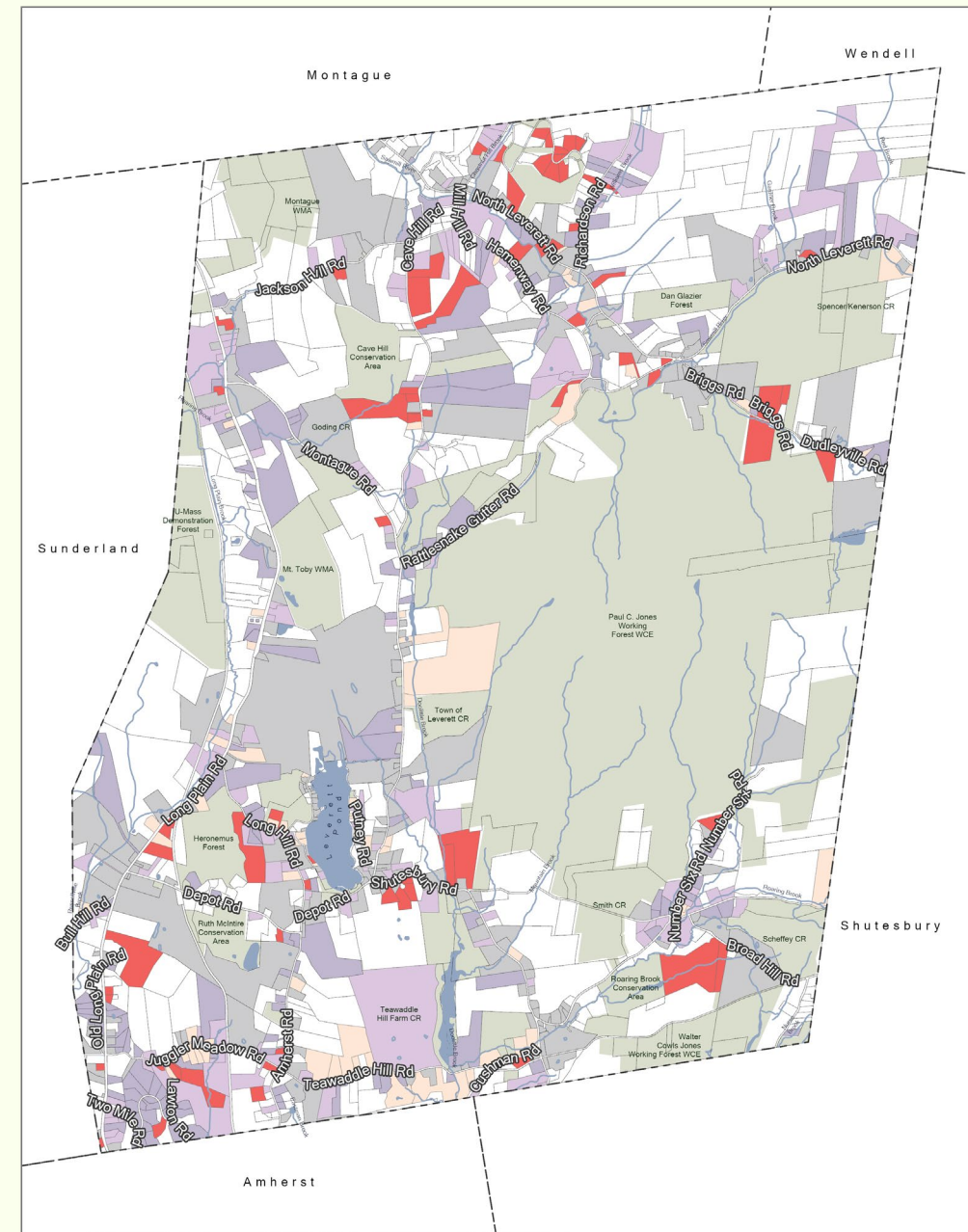
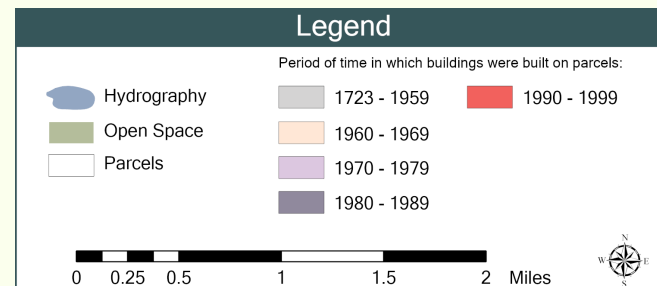
This is **seven buildings per year**.

From this decade:

97% (68 buildings) are currently residential.

1.5% (1 building) is currently exempt.

1.5% (1 building) is currently commercial.

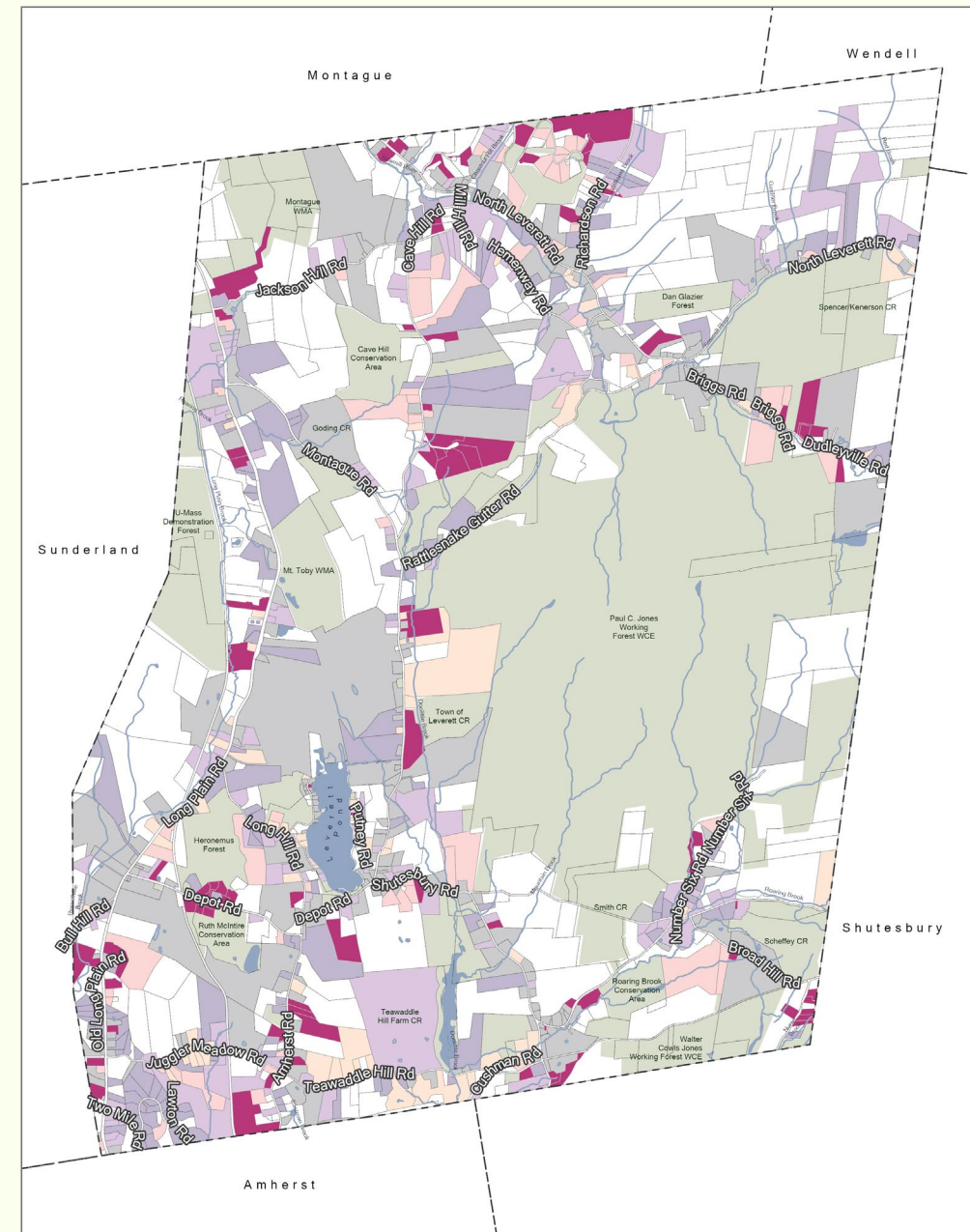
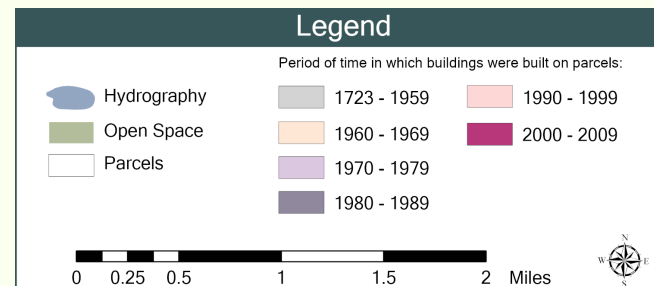


Development from 2000 - 2009

From **2000 to 2009** the total development in Leverett was **82 buildings**.

This is **just over eight buildings per year**.

From this decade:
99% (81 buildings) are currently residential.
1% (1 building) is currently exempt

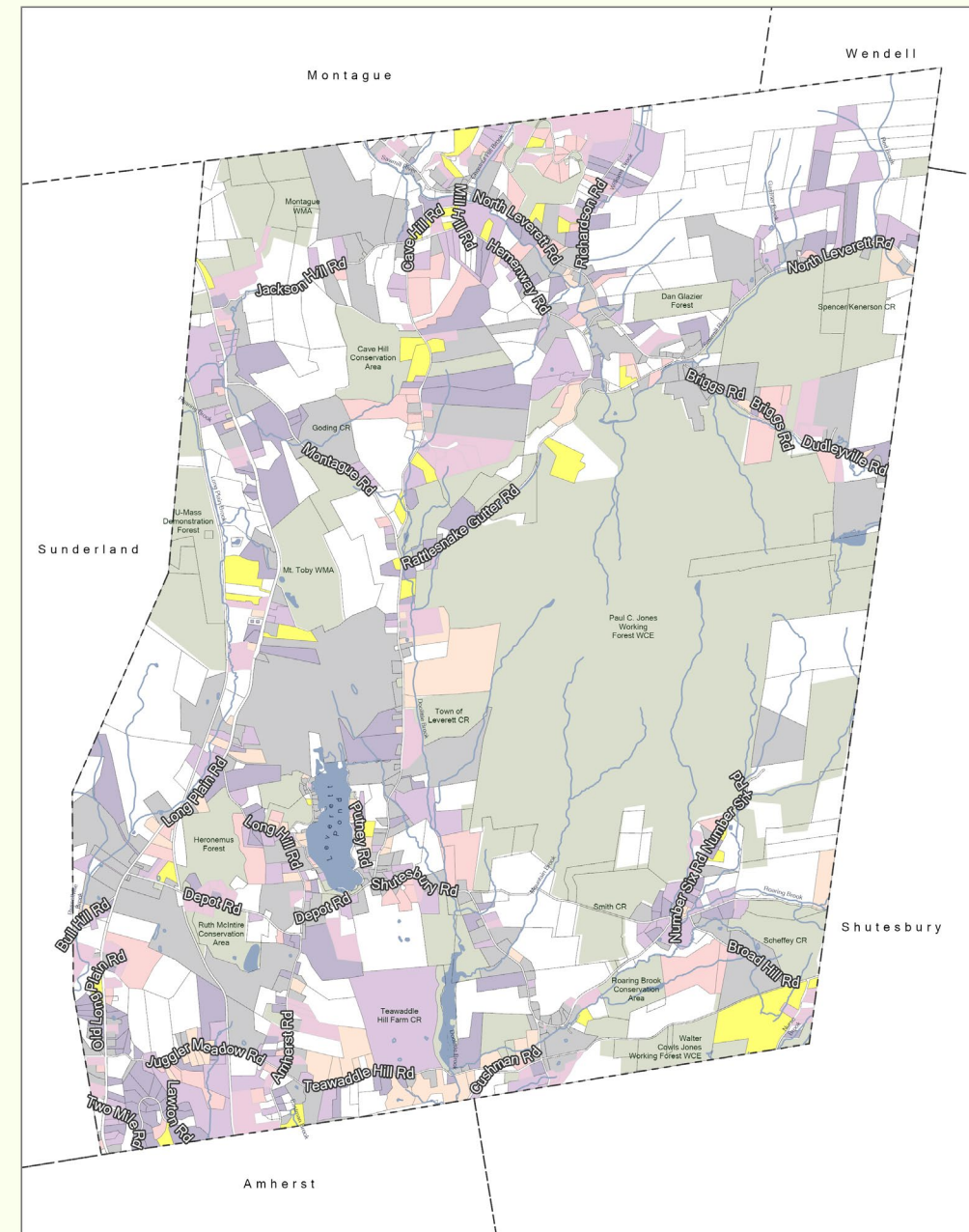
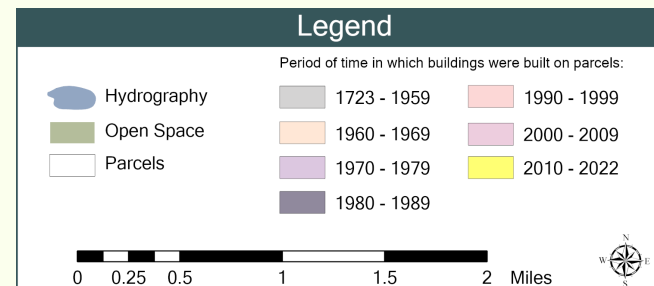


Development from 2010 - 2022

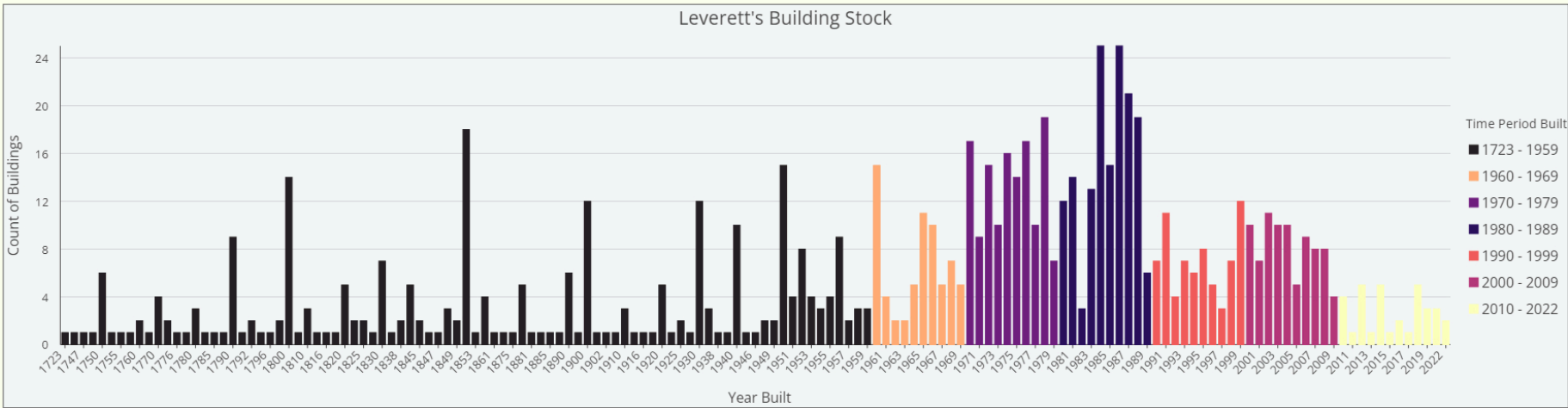
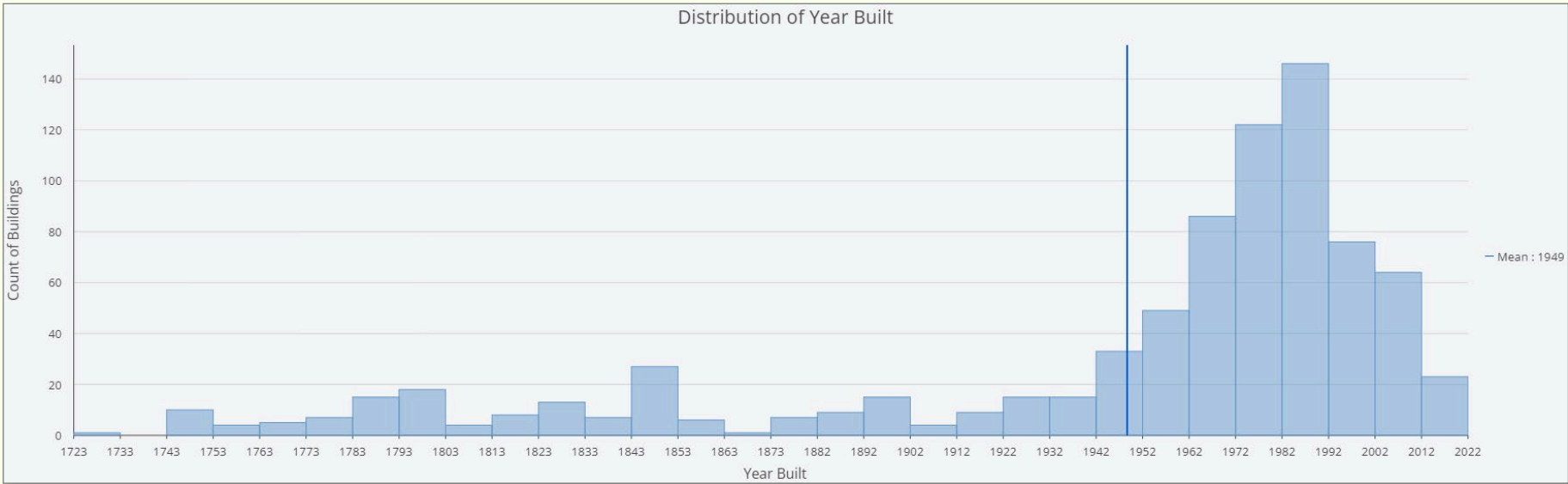
From **2010 to 2022** the total development in Leverett was **33 buildings**.

This is **under three buildings per year**.

From this period:
97% (32 buildings) are currently residential.
3% (1 building) is currently exempt.

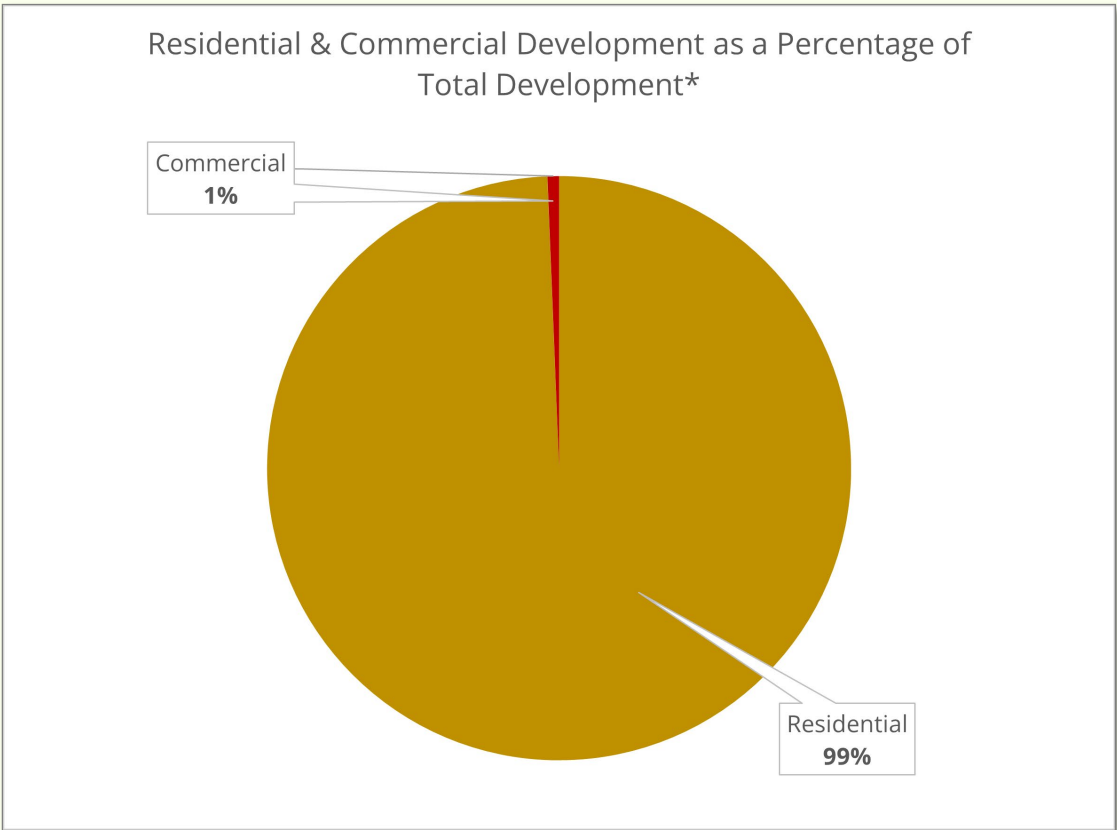
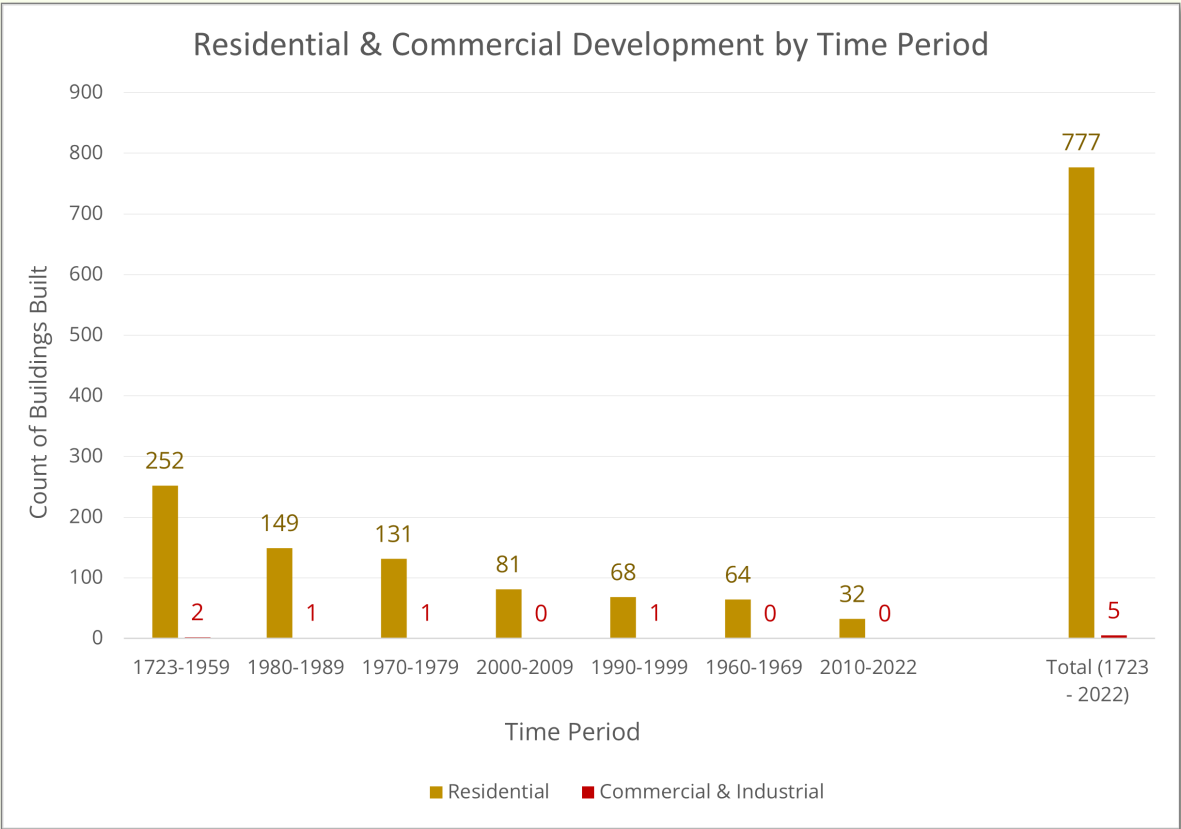


Trends in Development Through the Years



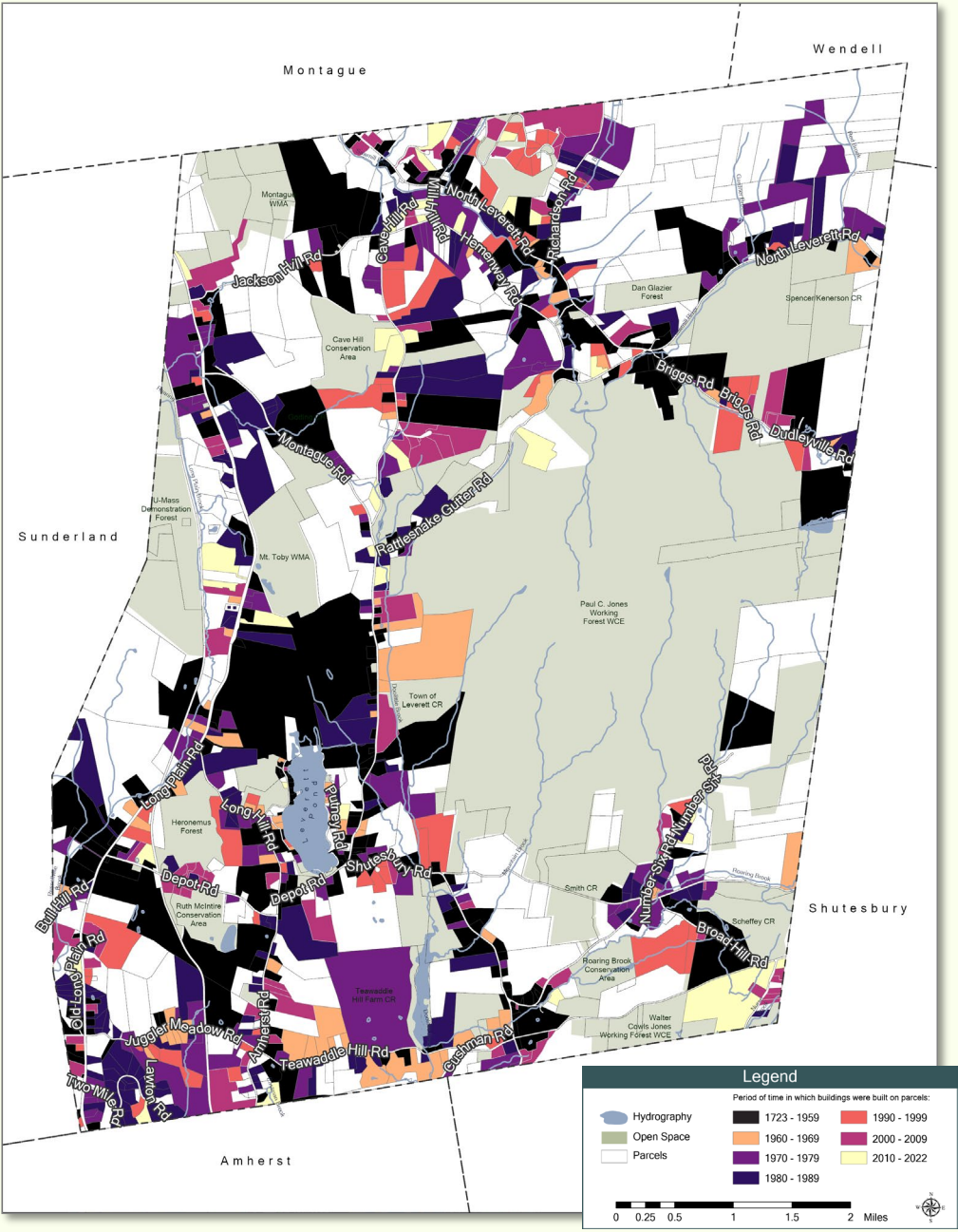
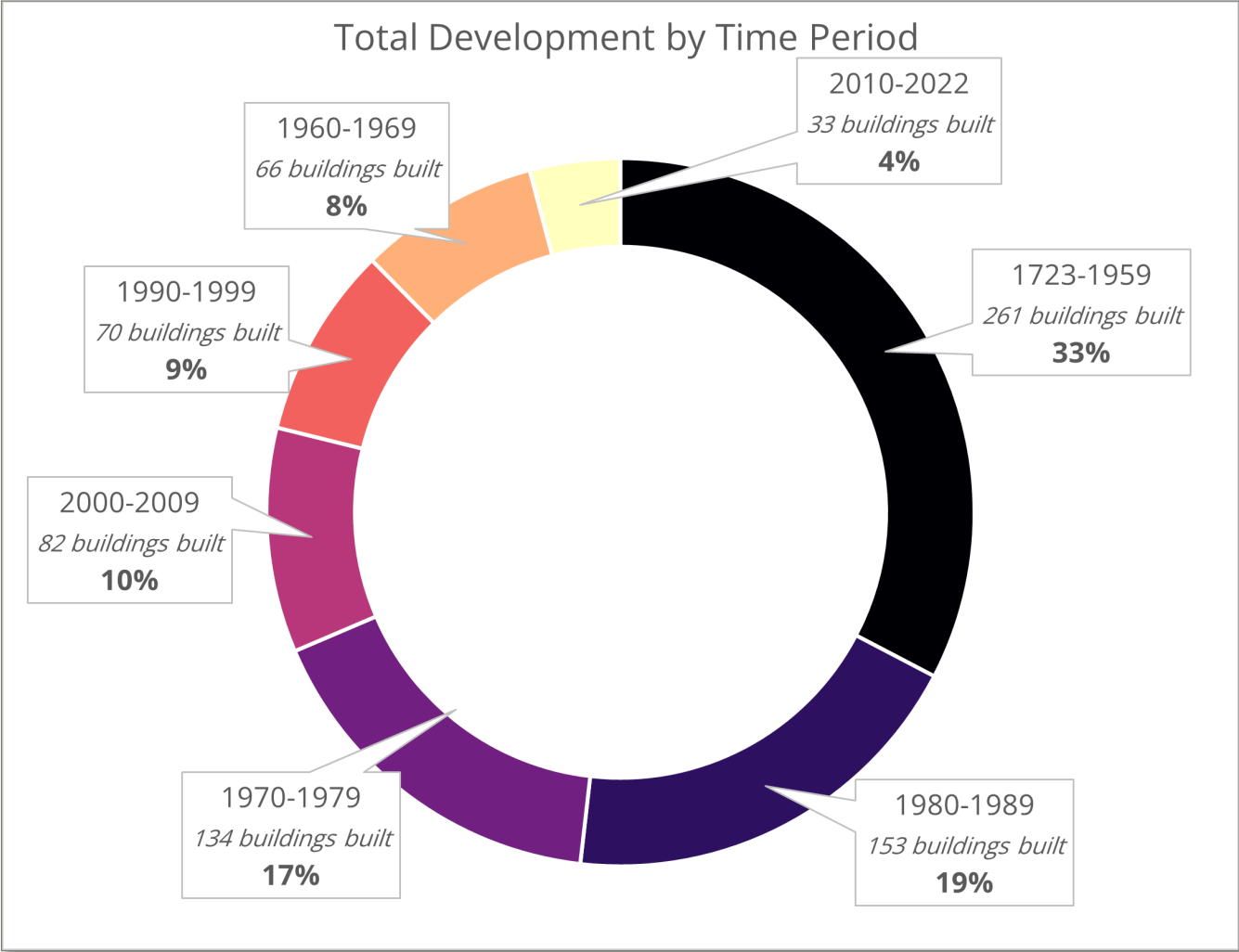
Total Development from 1723 – 2022 continued

Residential buildings represent most of the buildings in Leverett.



*This chart excludes buildings with an exempt use code.

Total Development from 1723 - 2022

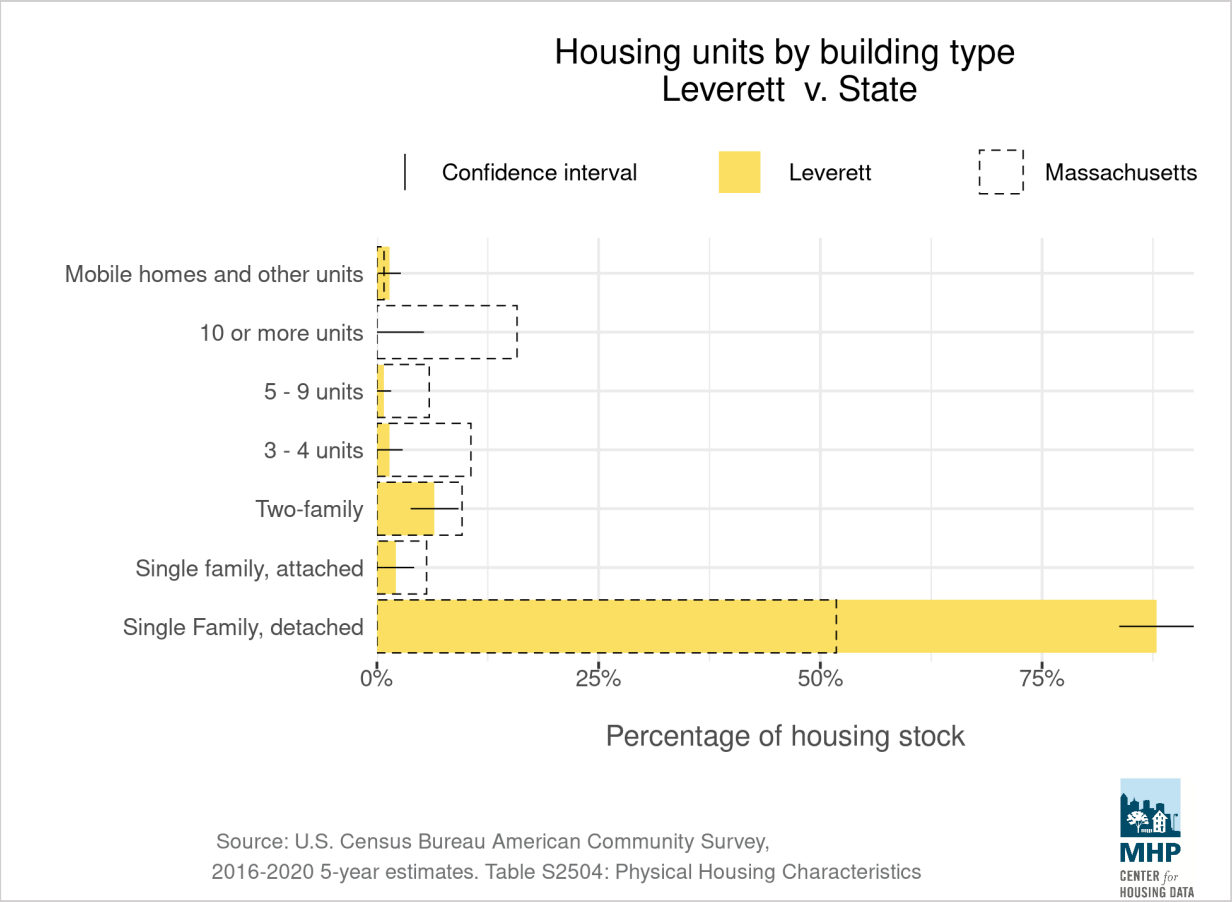


Housing Stock by Type

This graph shows Leverett’s housing units by building type versus the state of Massachusetts.

In the *Massachusetts*, it is estimated that **52%** of the states housing is *single family, detached units*.

For *Leverett*, **88%** of its housing is *single family, detached units*.

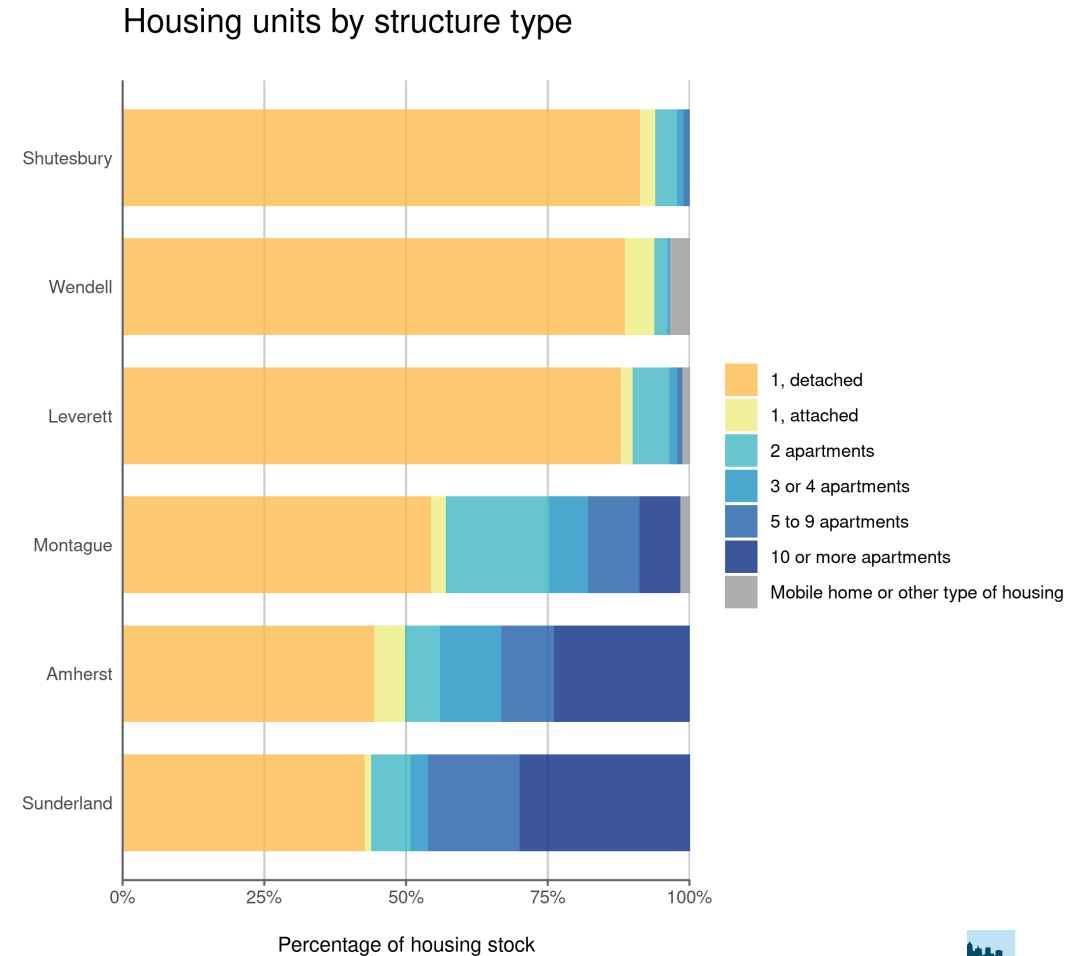


Source: MHP Data Town

Comparison of Housing Stock Types with Leverett's Neighbors

These graphs show that Leverett's housing characteristics are very **similar** to its neighbors of **Shutesbury** and **Wendell**.

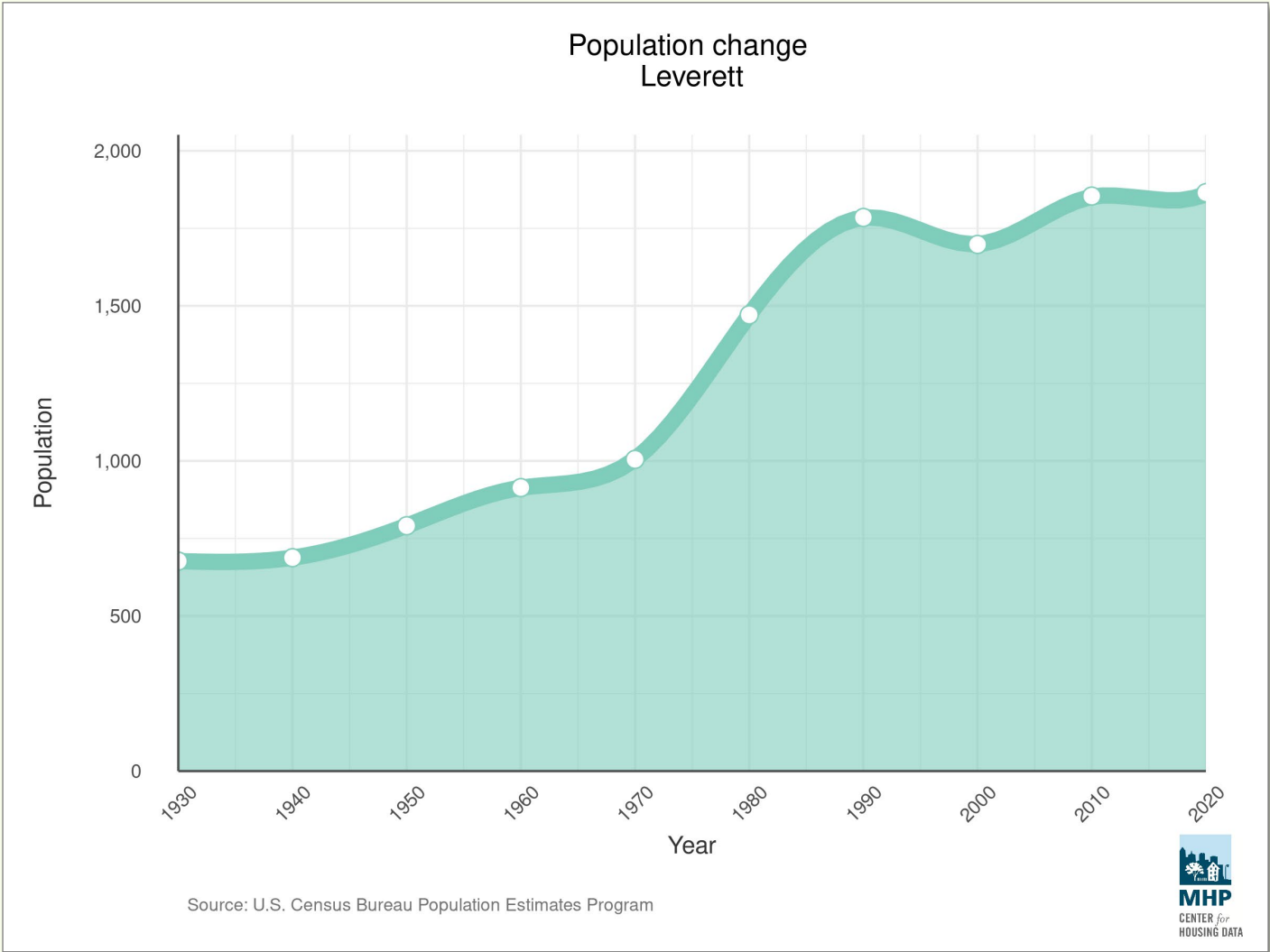
In contrast, **Montague, Amherst, and Sunderland** have a more **diversified housing stock**.



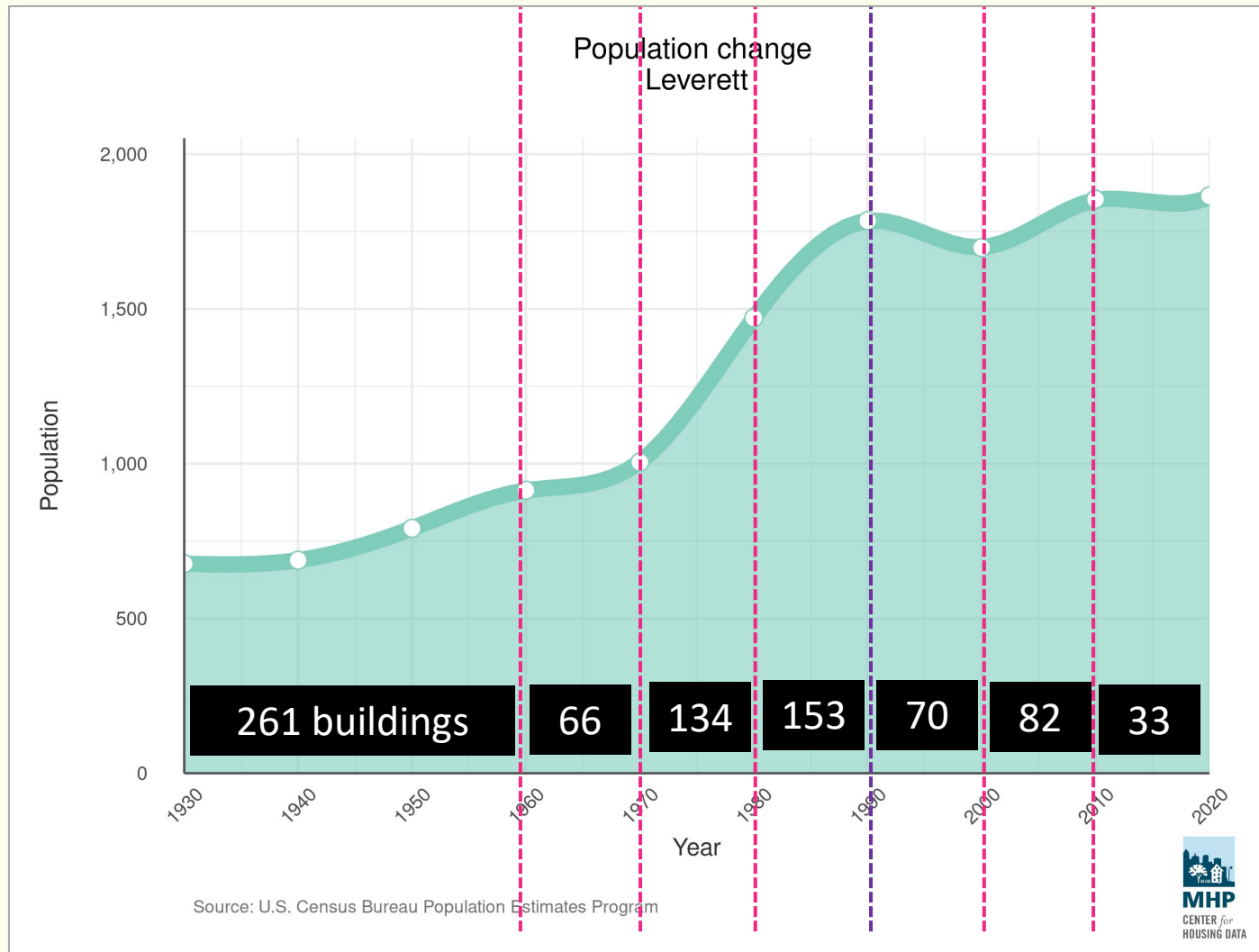
Source: MHP Data Town



Impact of Development Patterns on Population



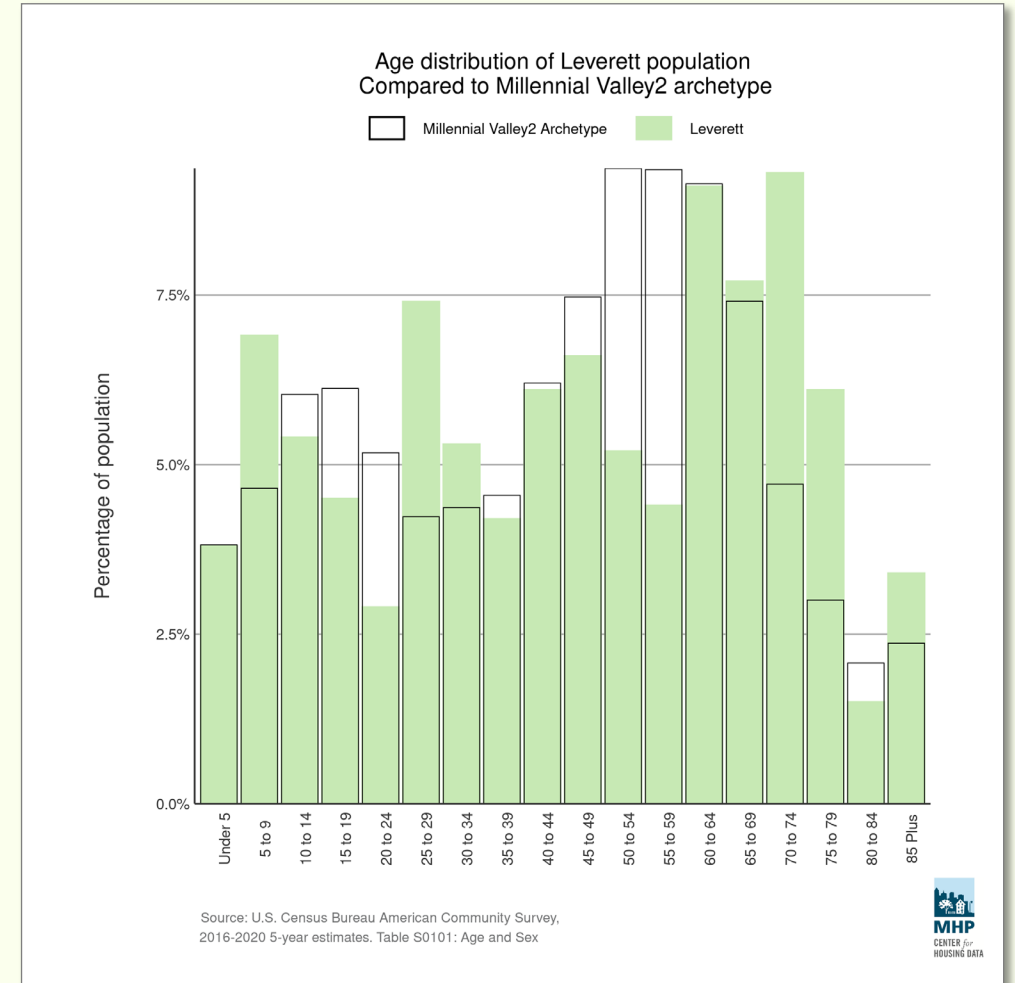
Impact of Development Patterns on Population



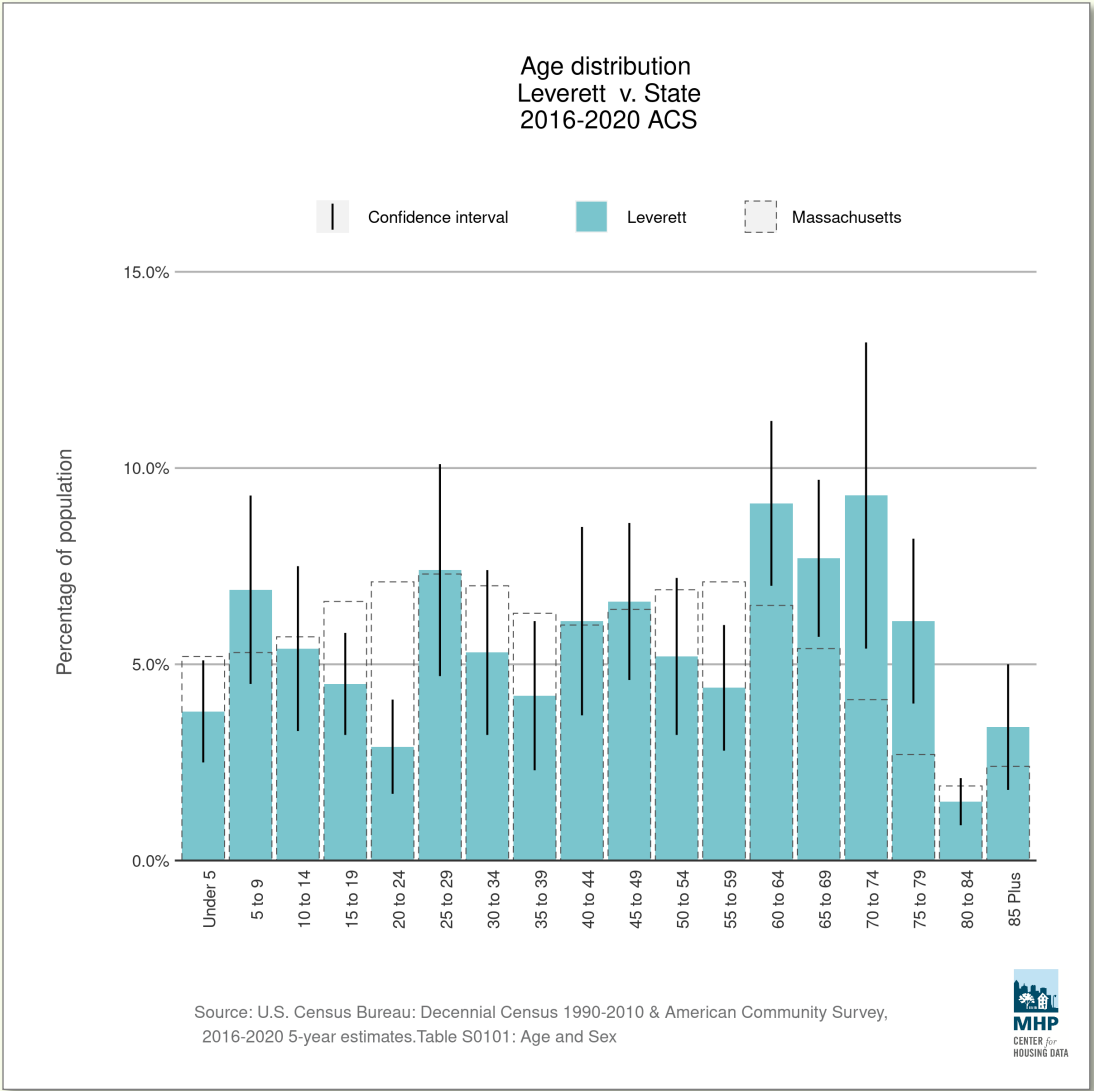
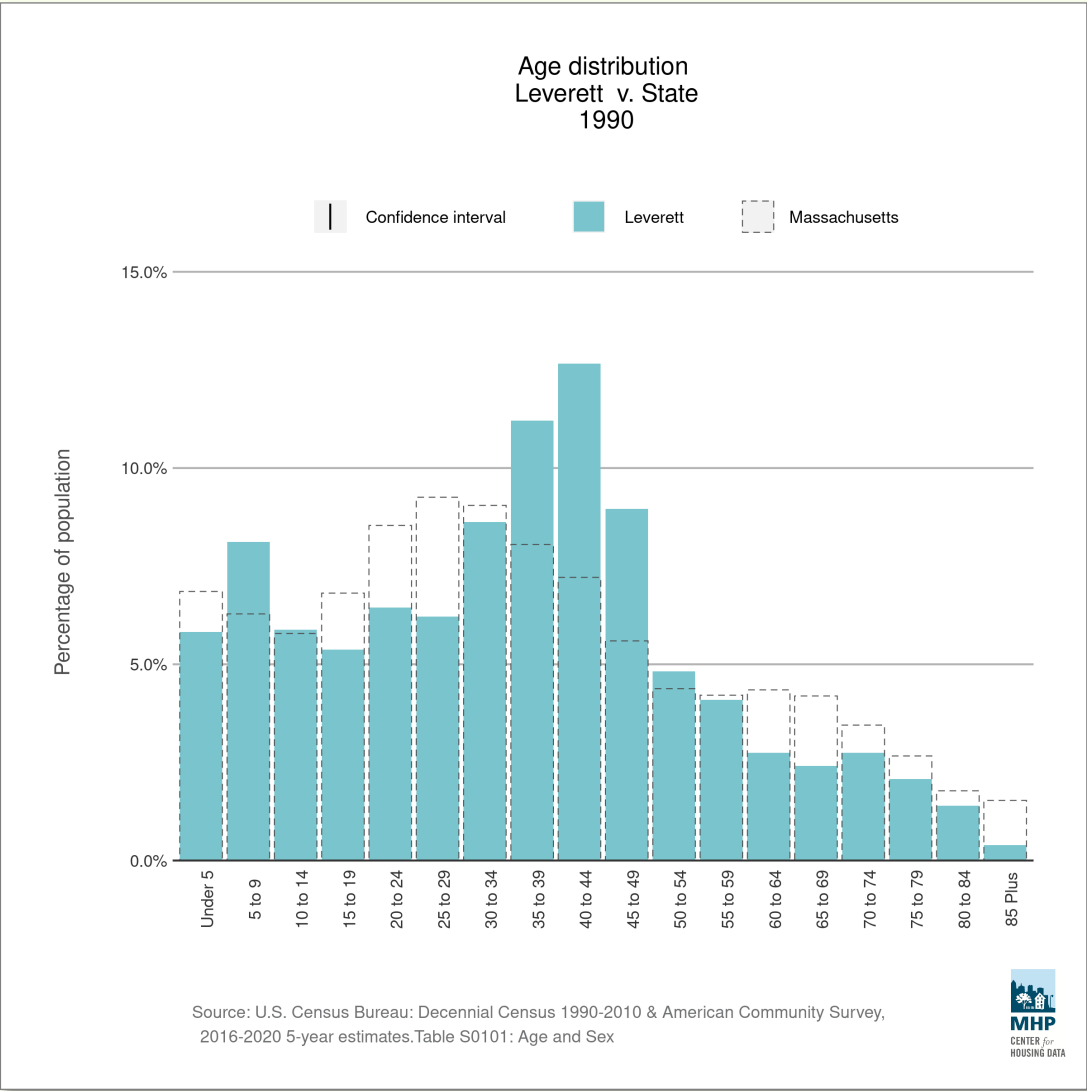
Impact of Development Patterns on Population

“Your community's age typology type: **Millennial Valley2**
Millennial Valley (type 2) communities **have relatively high numbers of older adults and higher numbers of children** than the rest of the state. In contrast to Type 1 Millennial Valleys, **these communities tend to be less competitive for new households, in terms of schools and access to economic opportunities.** There are **74 communities** that match this profile, and they are **predominantly located in the western part of the state.**”

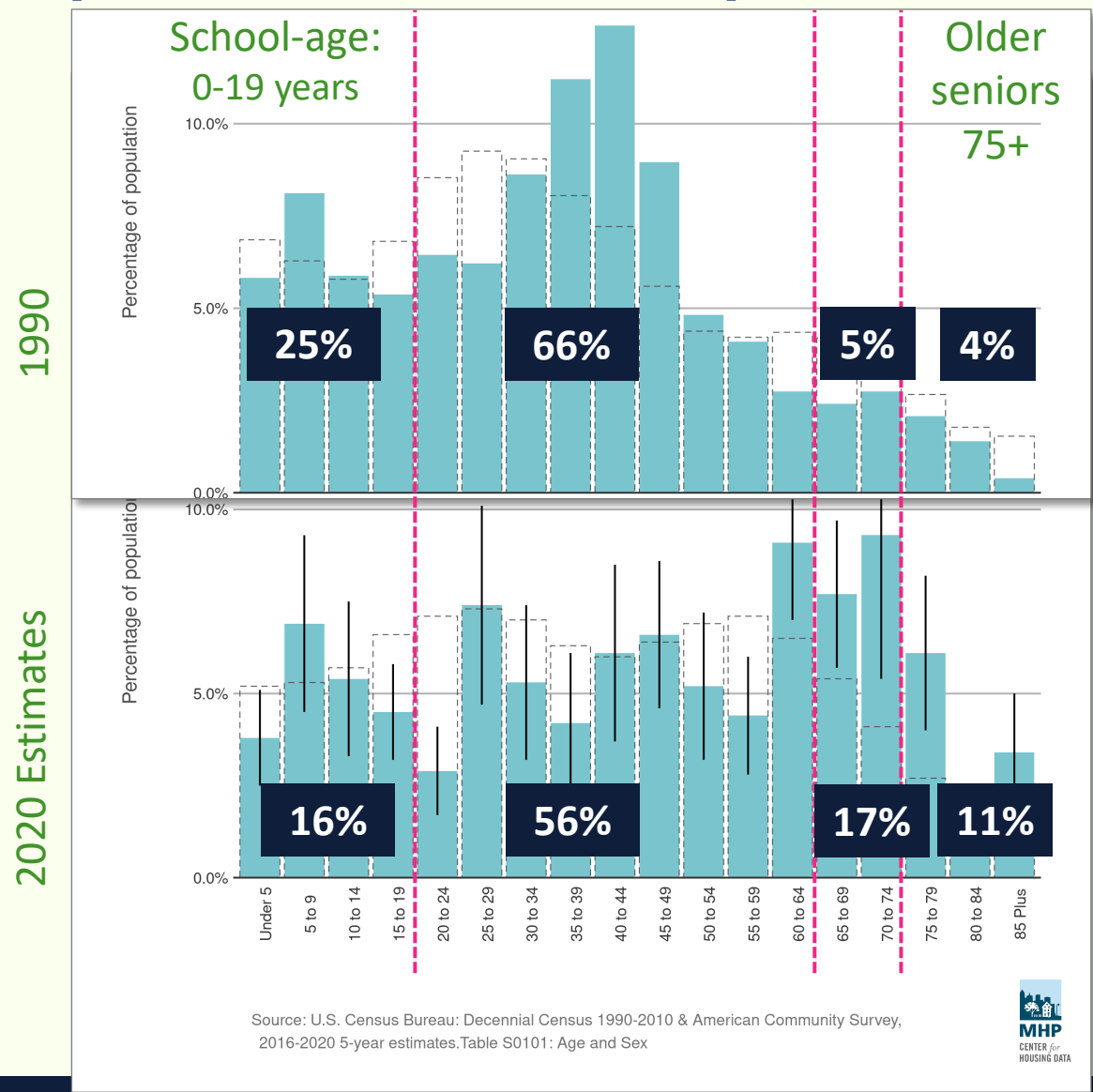
Mass Housing Partnership



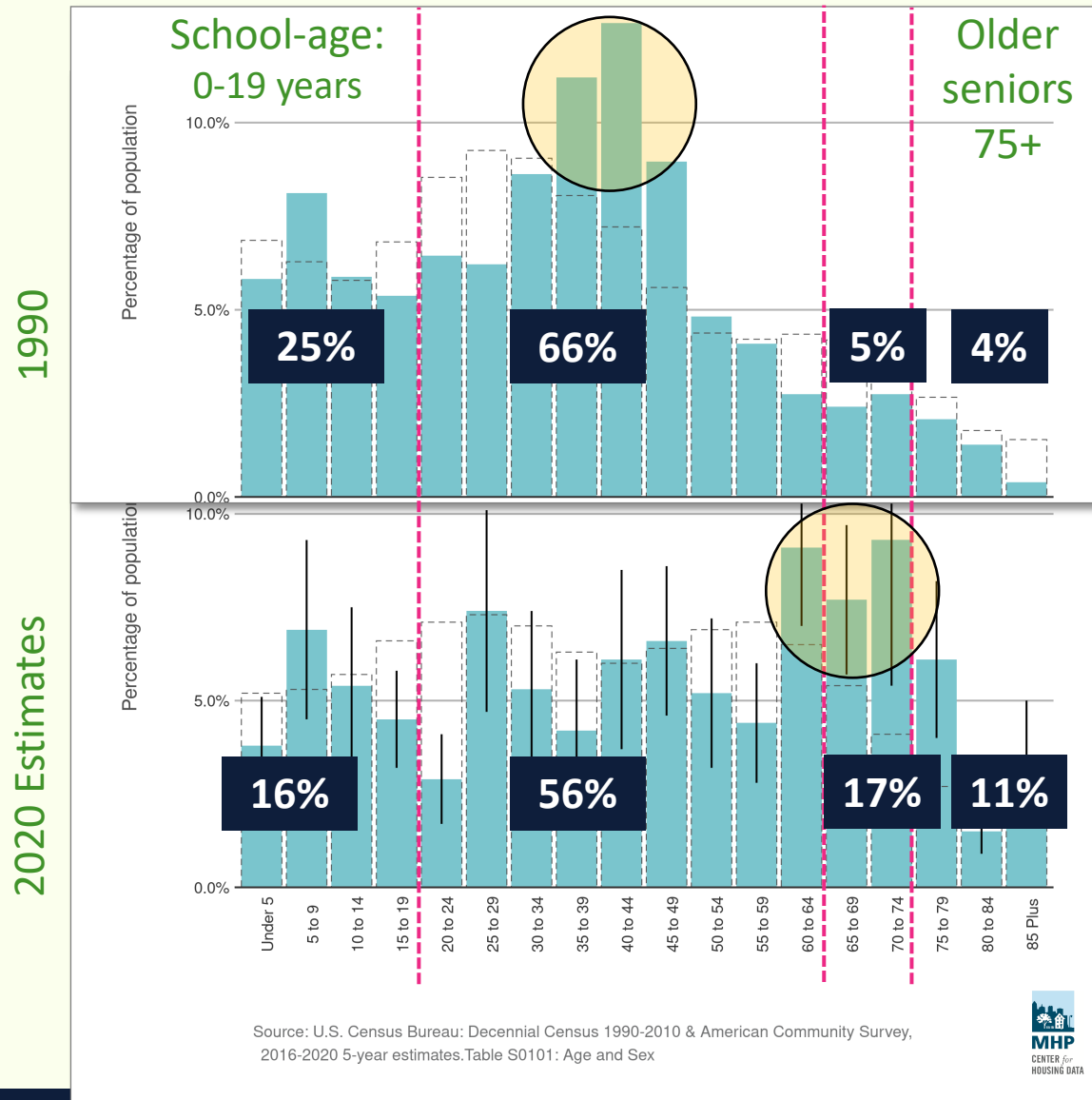
Impact of Development Patterns on Population



Impact of Development Patterns on Population



Impact of Development Patterns on Population



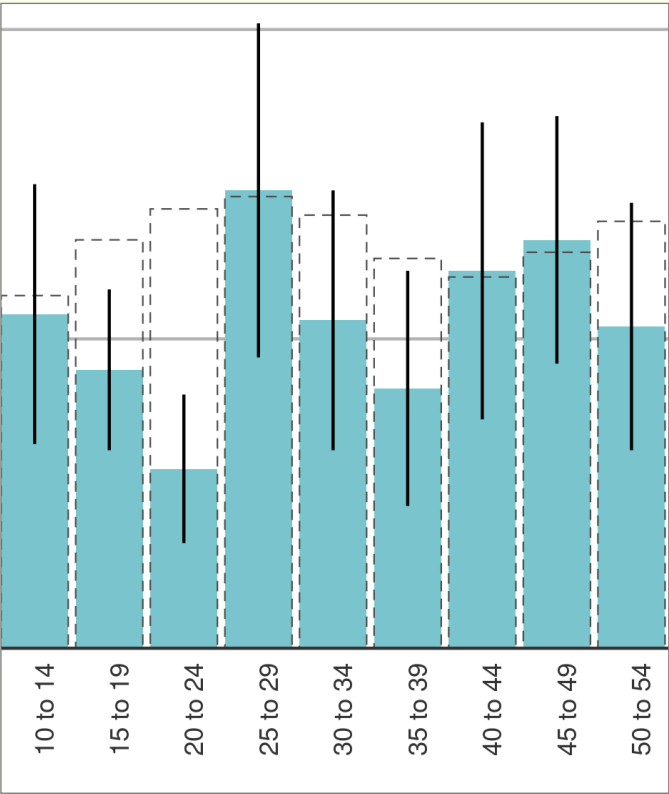
122 people who responded to the survey said they had lived in Leverett for more than thirty years.



Impact of Development Patterns on Population

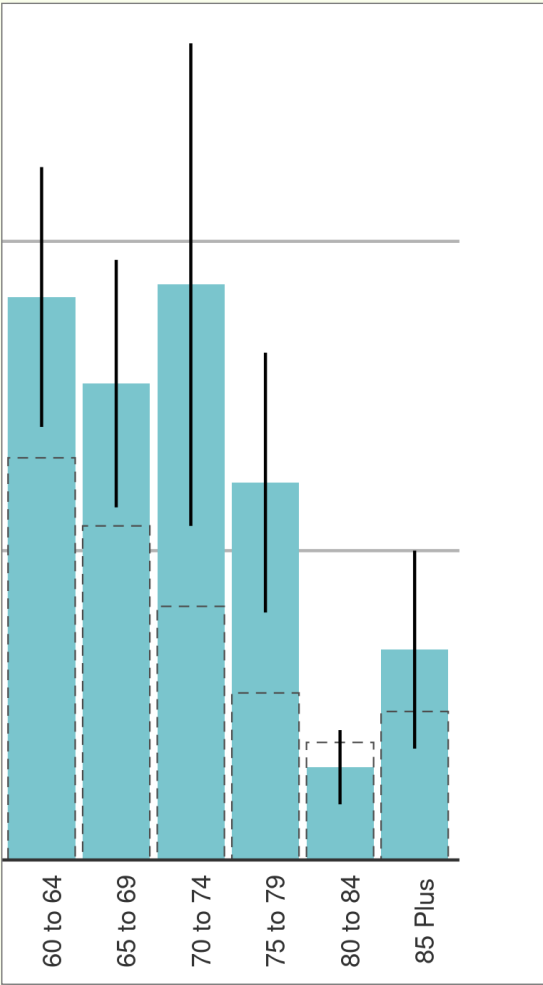
What is needed to help this group stay in Leverett during what will be their prime working years?

Housing needs?
Jobs?
Access to education?
Growing up and contributing to the community?



What will this group need over the next 10 years (life of the comprehensive plan)?

Housing needs?
Access to health care?
Emergency services?
Aging in place within the community?





Next Steps

- February 12: steering group: February 28 public workshop
- February 28: Public Workshop! Table exercises for group discussions
- Post-forum:
 - Small group discussions continue
 - Consultant team begins assembling draft document

