



2024 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

TOWN OF LEVERETT
DRAFT MAY 2024

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Executive Summary

Question for the Planning Board and Steering Group: Should this be an in-document spread or a separate poster?

1. Introduction

1.1 WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

A comprehensive plan is a document that provides guidance to a municipality for its policies, actions, and investments over a defined period, often ten years. In Massachusetts, comprehensive plans are enabled by Section 81D. The Planning Board is responsible for creating and updating the municipal master – or comprehensive – plan.

<https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleVII/Chapter41/Section81D>

81D requires nine elements. Of these, the Goals and Policies Statement (this is often called Vision and Goals) and the Implementation Plan are the most critical components in terms of defining the future policies, actions, and investments of the Town. These elements provide the why (Goals and Policies) and the what, who, where, when, and how (Implementation Plan) of the comprehensive plan.

Comprehensive planning grew out of land use planning, and the other seven elements reflect this. Those elements are as follows:

- Circulation (which originally referred to the roadways in a town and now includes transportation, transit, and mobility)
- Economic development
- Housing
- Natural and cultural resources (which include historic resources)
- Open Space and Recreation
- Services and facilities (which refer to Town services and facilities and include water, wastewater, and stormwater management)
- Land use plan (which brings together the land use recommendations of the plan)

The Leverett Planning Board undertook the planning process with the expectation that zoning changes would likely be the first action of the Town to address community needs and values for the use of land within the town. (Note that “Town” refers to the government, while “town” refers to the geographic area.) Such changes are a frequent first step after a plan has been adopted by the community through the vote of the Planning Board.

1.2 ABOUT LEVERETT’S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Town of Leverett undertook a two-phase process for creating a comprehensive plan to guide the town’s zoning changes, policies, and investment of resources over the next ten years. This process included a Working group in Phase 1 and a Steering Group and significant public input in Phase 2. The products of the process were a Phase 1 report and this comprehensive plan, developed after the public engagement process ended in February 2024.

This plan is consistent with the legislative requirements of Section 81D and includes additional topics that arose during the planning process.

The Leverett Planning Board started the planning process for creating this comprehensive plan in 2021, with a request for proposals (RFP) for a consultant to assist with the first phase. This phase, which began in 2022, examined the available data and previous planning efforts and resulted in a Phase 1 report that summarized the existing conditions and provided a path and scope for Phase 2. Phase 2 began in 2023, after the issuance of a second RFP in fall 2022. The funding source for both Phase 1 and Phase 2 was the Community One Stop for Growth program, with a deadline of June 20, 2023 for the first phase and June 30, 2024 for the second phase.

The Town hired Innes Associates for Phase 1 and Phase 2. Innes Associates added RKG Associates and Tighe & Bond to Phase 2 to provide specialized information relative to their respective expertise.

1.3 COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement is a critical component of any planning process. Comprehensive plans identify a series of policies and actions for a municipality, in this case, the Town of Leverett, to undertake over the next ten years (the typical lifespan of a comprehensive plan). The recommendations for those policies and actions come from two sets of information: the existing conditions and public input. Existing conditions refers to the physical (built and natural environment), economic (housing, jobs, and trends), and social (demographics) context within which the planning process takes place. Community engagement seeks to understand the participants' reactions to those conditions and their hopes and expectations for the future of the town and its community. This input is translated into a set of community values in this plan; other planning processes may have a vision statement or other expression of the community's desired future.

Engaging the community for a comprehensive plan happens at several levels. A Planning Board will appoint a working group, advisory committee, or other core group of volunteers who provide detailed feedback and assist with outreach. The Leverett Planning Board, after calling for volunteers, appointed a Steering Group of thirteen members.

The second level of engagement is the in-person workshop or meeting. The Town of Leverett chose to mix three in-person large-group workshops with some smaller group meetings. This type of engagement often reaches those who are already involved with town initiatives and can capture people who become more interested during the process as future options are refined and they better understand the potential impacts. The second and third workshops included a mix of participants who had been at the previous workshop and those who were attending for the first time. The first workshop captured 73 attendees, the second had 57, and the third had 41 attendees. Workshop attendance often drops during a planning process and table exercises (the third workshop) may interest fewer people than open houses (the first and second workshops), which are more flexible for those with multiple commitments. The Steering Group sponsored several smaller group meetings that may have captured input from some who were unable to attend the larger meetings.

Finally, surveys reach a wider audience, but may only engage them for a limited amount of time. The survey sponsored by the Steering Group had 404 responses, far more than were able to attend an in-person meeting.

1.4 SUMMARY OF THE PHASE 2 PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process for Phase 2 took place between February 2023 and June 2024. The process began with a call for volunteers for the Steering Group in February 2023. The Steering Group had its introductory meeting with the consultants on April 17, 2023. Additional meetings between the Steering Group and the consultant team were as follows:

- **MAY 10, 2023.** At the Steering Group's request, the consultant team presented the full scope of work and the roles of the Steering Group and the consultant team in each task.
- **JUNE 27, 2023.** The consultant team presented the updated information on existing conditions as recommended in the Phase 1 report.
- **SEPTEMBER 26, 2023.** The consultant team presented revised options for public engagement for the remaining months of the process to the Steering Group for their review, discussion, and confirmation.
- **NOVEMBER 20, 2023.** Discussion of the input from the survey and the first public meeting and the framework for the second public meeting.
- **FEBRUARY 12, 2024.** Discussion of the framework for the third public meeting and testing the draft table exercises.

The Planning Board also sponsored three community workshops, as listed below. The Steering Group supported

these workshops with significant outreach efforts, including a flyer for the Annual Town Meeting in April 2023, posting flyers throughout the town and handing them out at the transfer station on Saturdays.

- **WORKSHOP 1: OCTOBER 17, 2023.** This first workshop was a “data walk” that introduced participants to selected information about existing conditions and invited their comments on both a large-scale map of the town and boards containing charts, graphs, and other data. Participants had the option of dropping into the open house from 3-5pm or 6-8pm. Topics included the following:
 - Draft values and goals based on the input from the Steering Group and the work in Phase 1; and
 - Existing conditions information presented to the Steering Group in June, including demographics, water and wastewater, the municipal budget, current land use and zoning.
- **WORKSHOP 2: DECEMBER 6, 2023.** The second workshop was also a data walk, although the hours were advertised from 3-8pm rather than as two separate sessions. The topics included the following:
 - Larger-scale maps of the Town Center, Route 63, Moore’s Corner, North Leverett, and Open Space;
 - Refined list of values, based on the survey and the information from the first workshop;
 - More detailed information about housing and zoning in Leverett; and
 - A series of questions that asked participants about specific alternatives for Town policies and actions.
- **WORKSHOP 3: FEBRUARY 28, 2024.** At the request of participants at the first two workshops and some members of the Steering Group, the final workshop was table-based to allow participants to discuss the presented options with each other. The workshop was again split into two sessions (3-5 pm and 6-8 pm) but was not an open house. Participants were greeted with information about what conditions in Egremont might be like in 2040 based on trends for the aging of the population and the impacts of climate change – two topics with potential for impacts on town services, facilities, and infrastructure. Each table discussed the same sample recommendations, identified those they agreed or disagreed with, and prioritized the ones they agreed with.

To support the engagement process, the Steering Group also held its own meetings and outreach efforts. The Steering

Group met, without the consultant team, on the following dates:

- July 25, 2023.
- September 19, 2023.
- October 10, 2023.
- November 6, 2023.
- November 27, 2023.
- January 15, 2024.
- February 5, 2024.

The Steering Group also sponsored a community-wide survey, which the consultant team hosted on SurveyMonkey. This survey, available online and in paper format, was open from October 17 through December 18, 2023 and received 404 responses.

Finally, members of the Steering Group hosted small group meetings to raise awareness of the planning process in the fall and early winter. In October 2023, the consultant team provided materials for these workshops, including a map of the town, a Word document for questions and notes for these small groups, and a handout of data resources. These meetings were as follows:

- November 5, 2023. Teawaddle Hill neighborhood group.
- November ?, 2023. LES Open House
- November 5, 2023. Harvest Fest Village Co-op.
- November 14, 2023. Veterans' Group.
- January 24?, 2024: Council on Aging.
- April-June 2024: Drop-in at the Leverett Public Library

The results of the public outreach and engagement process, along with research from the consultant team, inform the contents of this plan, including the highlighted topics and the case studies chosen to illustrate some of the recommendations in this comprehensive plan.

1.5 COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING: LAND USE AND ZONING

Comprehensive plans were originally land use plans for the community; establishing the allowable uses (zoning), plots (platting and subdivision), and roads (circulation). Over time, comprehensive plans expanded to include the topics in Section 81D, with a focus on the policies and actions to be implemented by the municipality. More recently, additional topics complement or expand upon the seven identified above, including public health, environmental sustainability, climate resiliency, energy efficiency, and other topics.

However, land use and zoning remain key components of any comprehensive plan, and updating the zoning to meet the goals of a newly updated comprehensive plan is often one of the first actions a municipality undertakes. For this reason, where a zoning change in an effective implementation tool to address a need identified during the planning process, recommended changes are incorporated into **Section 5.4. Planning Board and Zoning Changes** and tied back to the values in Chapter 3. Planning for the Future or the needs identified in Chapter 4. Impact of Existing Conditions.

In recognition of the importance of zoning in the next stage of the process, the Planning Board asked the consultant team to present information about zoning and the comprehensive plan on January 9, 2024 and April 17, 2024. The first was a high-level discussion of the existing zoning and its impacts on development patterns and land use in the town. The second was a more in-depth discussion of the proposed zoning recommendations in this plan.

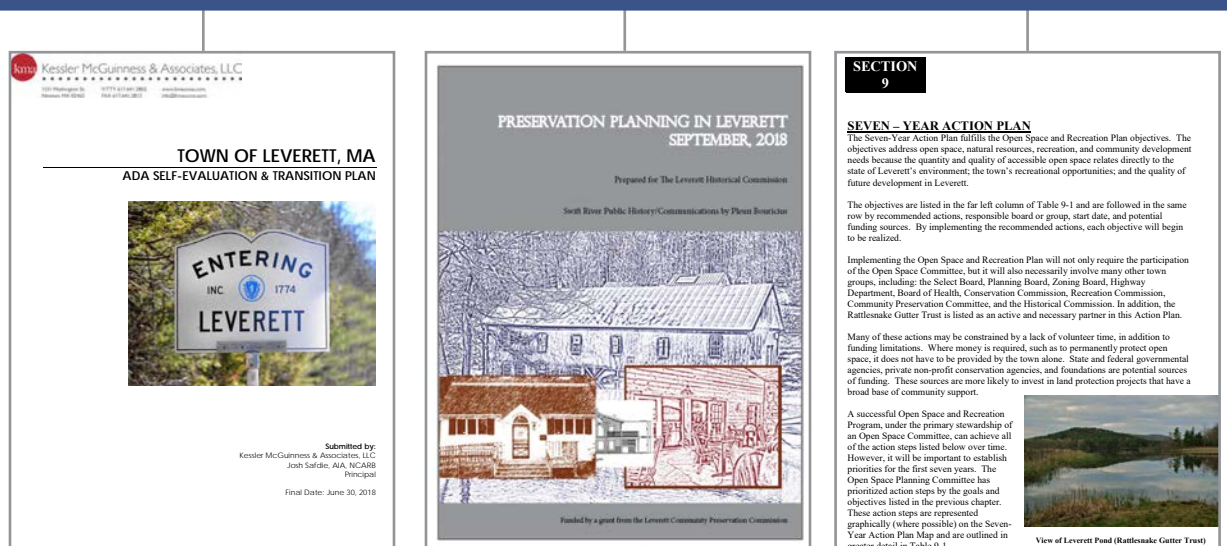


2. Existing Plans

2.1 TIMELINE OF PREVIOUS PLANS

This timeline includes the planning process undertaken over the last ten years. These documents, unless otherwise noted, were summarized in the Phase 1 report. The Phase 1 report also includes summaries of older documents and plans that are of historical importance. The reports listed below, however, have recommendations that should be considered for implementation over the next ten years. **Section 5.3** categorizes the recommendations by Section 81D planning elements and identifies who is responsible for implementation and the original report for each recommendation.

Figure 1. Timeline of Previous Plans

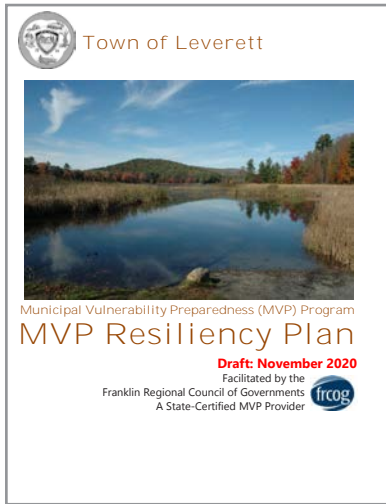


2018 Town of Leverett, MA ADA Self-Evaluation & Transition Plan (included as an appendix to the 2019 OSRP)

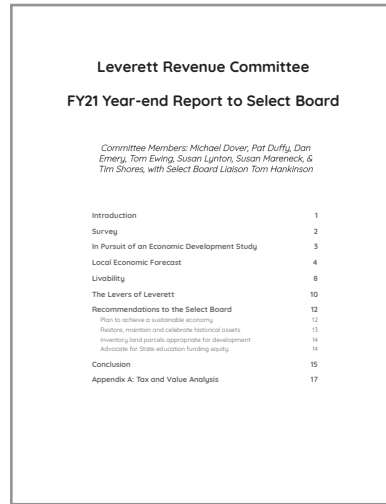
2018 Preservation Planning in Leverett

2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan (this will expire in 2026)

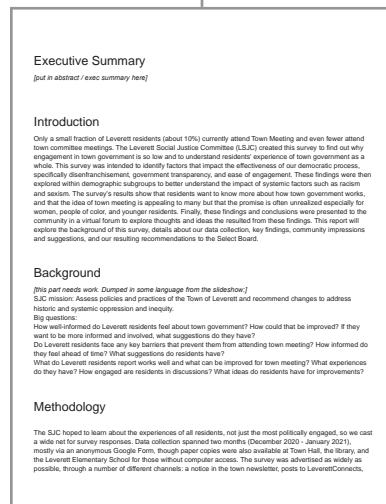
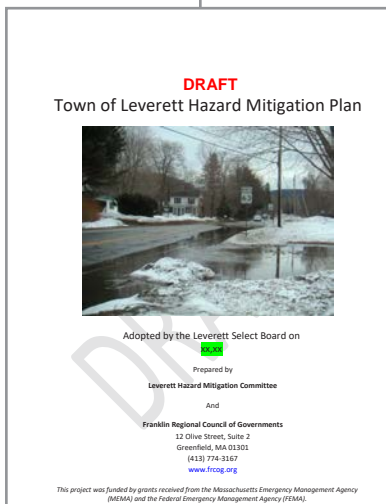
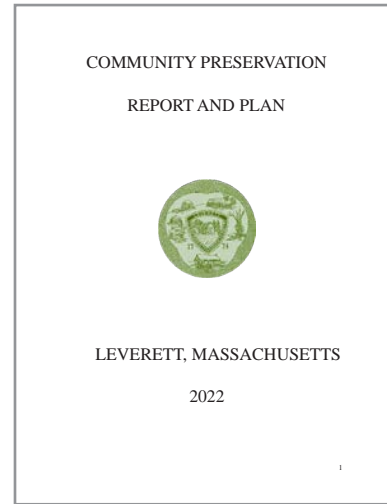
2020 Municipal Vulnerability Program (MVP) Resiliency Plan



2021 Report of the Revenue Committee (now the Sustainable Economy Committee)



2022 Community Preservation Report and Plan



2020 Draft Hazard Mitigation Plan

2021 Social Justice Report (draft)

2022 Leverett Comprehensive Plan: Phase 1 Report

2.2 LINKING PAST PLANS TO FUTURE ACTIONS

Some of the recommendations of these past plans fit neatly into concerns expressed at the community workshops and in the responses to the survey. These recommendations were tested at the third community workshop. All recommendations from these plans are included in **Section 5.3 Existing Recommendations** and sorted, not by the source plan, but by the planning elements identified in Section 81D. These recommendations should be considered a part of the implementation strategy for this plan.

The 2021 Sustainable Economy Report identified three components that should be part of for the comprehensive planning process that it envisioned. These three components are as follows:¹

¹ 2021 Sustainable Economy Report , page 13.

- An assessment of the economic challenges facing Leverett, and an asset map to reveal strengths and opportunities that the Town can use to address those challenges;
- Facilitated public meetings and listening sessions to hear feedback, engage people with the process, and build consensus for the types of growth or other changes in town that would make the town more sustainable and that residents are willing to accept; and
- Development of sustainable economy scenarios, such as smart growth, infrastructure improvements, amenity enhancement, and encouraging business investment, to guide strategic decision-making.

The focus of economic development In this plan has mostly not been on business opportunities, but on the strong desire to address significant housing needs, including the need for housing that is affordable to members of the Leverett community and housing to allow the growing senior population to age within Leverett. However, **Section 4.3 Economy and Housing** presents existing conditions and **Section 3.1 What We Learned** and **Section 5.2 Recommended Strategies** discuss community thinking around economic development.

Other critical reports that provide context for the community discussion in this planning process include the 2020 Draft Hazard Mitigation Plan, the 2020 Municipal Vulnerability Program (MVP) Resiliency Plan, and the 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan (this will expire in 2026)

Another critical report is missing from the Town's list of plans, and that is a Housing Production Plan. This is a state-defined document and planning process that would answer many questions about the need for affordable housing in the Town and the steps to address that need.

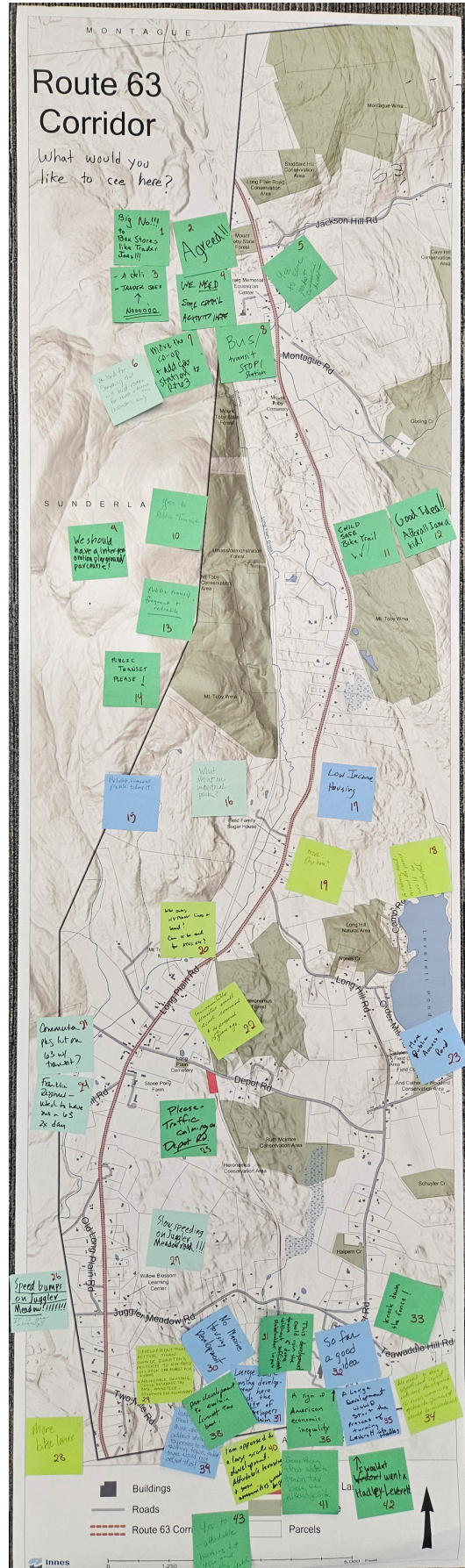


Figure 2. Map Results for Route 63 from the December 2023 Workshop

3. Planning for the Future

3.1 LISTENING TO THE COMMUNITY

From the beginning, the Steering Group requested a community-based process. In Phase 1, the recommendation for this phase was for a series of smaller conversations to take place. The Steering Group decided to take up that assignment and asked the consultant team to lead the three workshops, with input on content and format from members of the Steering Group.

The Steering Group sponsored a community-wide survey that was available on-line and through paper copies from October 9 through December 18, 2023. Although not everyone answered each question, 411 respondents or just over 22% of the 202 population of 1,865 took part in the survey. The Steering Group asked about community values, goals, what contributes positively to life in Leverett and what could improve that, and what people's concerns for the future of Leverett are. Some of the feedback received is incorporated in this plan and the full results are available for the community to continue to explore together over time.

The workshops, survey, and small group discussions, along with the work of the Steering Group, allowed for an interactive process of education, feedback, and iteration. The final content of this plan document is based on the interactions of those discussions.

WHAT WE LEARNED

The Planning Board and the Steering Group prioritized a data-driven process. Phase 1, completed in 2022, focused on understanding the information the Town had already collected, and drafting a proposed process for Phase 2. The data collection in Phase 2 focused primarily on filling the gaps in the data available from Phase 1 and then collecting community comments, values, and preferences in the workshops, small group sessions, and the survey.

The consultant team provided the raw data from each workshop and the survey to the Steering Group. Summaries of what we heard are included in the discussion of values and goals in this chapter on the specific topics in Chapter 4. Impact of Existing Conditions.

THE COMMUNITY SURVEY

Who Responded?

The Steering Group limited the demographic questions to two: the age of the respondent and the length of time they have lived in Leverett. The two pie charts below show the results. Most of the respondents were 65 and over. Most of the respondents had lived in Leverett for over 30 years. Given the demographics (see [Section 4.2](#)), these results are not surprising.

Figure 3. Age of Respondents

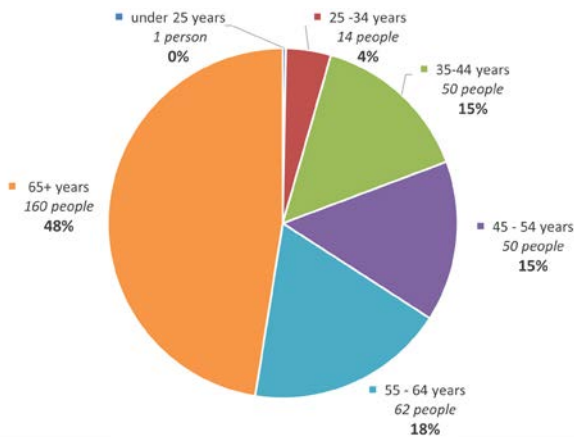
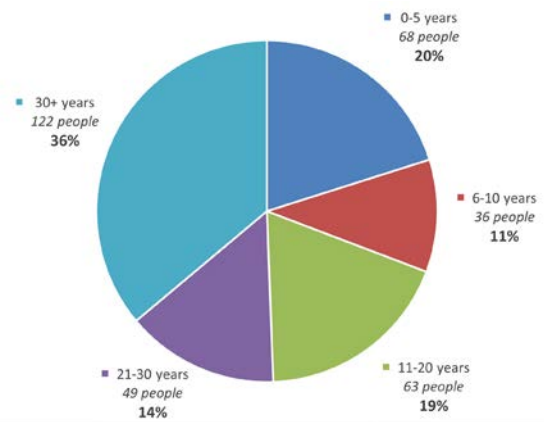


Figure 4. Length of Time Lived in Leverett



**If you see this format,
it is a quote from
a workshop or the
survey!**

What we learned from the Community Survey

With 411 respondents, it is difficult to summarize everything. This section includes a high-level summary; [Section 3.2](#) includes a summary of the top 10 values, goals, and livability factors and needs. [Quotes from the survey are included throughout the document to provide more detail about people’s thoughts and context to some of the discussion.](#)

Respondents to the survey identified specific areas of concern. 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 PVRTA transit system into Leverett to help increase access to these amenities. 43% of respondents noted that access to public transportation is important to them.

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

3. Planning for the Future

aging population is important to them. Leverett's residents live in Leverett for a reason: they love their community.

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

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.

Over-development is a concern for some residents in Leverett. Residents do not 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.

Residents fell in love with Leverett due to its rural way of life. The consensus is 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.

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

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.

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 they want to ease development restrictions 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.

Conclusions from the Survey

- 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, and access to amenities are important to the community.
- As much as residents admit the Town's 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 improving the town for its residents.

3.2 VALUES, GOALS, AND STRATEGIES

Many communities try to develop a single vision statement for the comprehensive plan that is supported by a series of goals, strategies, and actions. The Steering Group decided on a different path that members felt was more responsive to Leverett and the wide ranges of opinions, experiences, and hopes for the future that community members had expressed over time.

The Steering Group sought to identify shared values and goals that could be used to evaluate different paths to enhancing livability in Leverett for all over the next 10-15 years. The members identified a list of five key topics that they wanted to address during this planning process. Those topics are as follows:

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

This section identifies the top ten values and goals from the community-wide survey and modifications to those based on the third community workshop, which took place after the survey was closed. These values and goals were shared with the Leverett community at the third community workshop.

WHAT WE LEARNED ABOUT VALUES:

The values tested at Workshop 1 were the same ones the Steering Group developed for the community survey. For Workshop 2, the Steering Group developed a shorter list of values to test at the second community workshop. These values were as follows:

- Arts and self expression
- Commitment to public assets
- Democratic engagement
- Diversity (economic)
- Diversity (ethnic)
- Environmental Stewardship
- Fairness and Accessibility
- Fellowship and cooperation
- Freedom to have a sustainable cost of living
- Preservation of intergenerational knowledge
- Resilience
- Self-Determination

Another thing that is very important is that we are an aging community. It isn't everyone, obviously... But there were so many silver and white haired people here now. We simply have to look at that honestly. There's no way to make the entire town accessible. A large swath of good building land is such a rare opportunity. Instead of everyone having to move somewhere like Applewood 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?

- Stability
- Tradition
- Transparency

This is what we heard about the LEVERETT COMMUNITY and VALUES in both Workshops.

Comments indicated a concerns about age and income diversity. One person noted that draft values of “including everyone is important” and identified the need to make town government and social events accessible for those with hearing loss. Others noted the need to help seniors age in place but were concerned about the lack of housing, including affordable housing, and “regular & frequent” public transit.

Affordability and the lack of housing also fed comments on the ability to have a diverse population with questions of diversity focused on age and income. However, one participant stated, “Not the job of the planning board or sub committee to engage in social engineering.”

One comment indicated a concern about the possibility of needing infrastructure upgrades to accommodate more housing. Another suggested was Incremental improvements to water and sewer.

Comments also indicated a desire to support economic diversity and reducing taxes through more businesses. One participant wondered, “Can we capitalize on our concentration of highly educated folks?”

One comment noted the importance of strong community ties while another wondered how many people in Leverett had volunteered for an activity in the town.

Two comments addressed the idea of community: one person spoke of the “Sense of community connections, looking out for each other, cooperating to ensure we are welcoming + inclusive” and a second confirmed this idea, “Being a welcoming community to new residents.”

LIST OF VALUES AND GOALS

The lists of values and goals on the following pages informs the list of strategies in **Section 3.3** and the explanation of those strategies in **Section 5.2. These values and goals are critical components of how the Leverett community chooses to proceed once this planning process is complete.**

As someone who represents the next generation of people who seek to live in Leverett indefinitely, I am here because of how it is today. I value the quiet rural area and the joy placed on natural beauty by the people in the town. Leverett no doubt has ties to Amherst, but it is a complimentary relationship and easily accessible. Leverett does not ever want to be more like Amherst; instead, its strengths should be retained and fostered with the idea that there are pros and cons to every town.

Table 5. Top Ten Values

#	Potential Value	Respondents Ranking the Value as Important*	
		%	#
1	Nature and conservation are important.	92.20%	331
2	Acceptance of others is important.	87.57%	310
3	Planning for climate change is important.	83.24%	298
4	Maintaining rural character is important.	82.45%	296
5	Peaceful serenity and quiet living are important.	81.07%	287
6	Social justice, promoting equity, and including everyone is important.	76.26%	273
7	Hazard planning is important.	72.88%	258
8	Strong community ties are important.	72.07%	258
9	Affordable housing is important.	61.73%	221
10	Historic preservation is important.	51.43%	180

*Not all respondents answered the question.

The Steering Group also wanted to focus on livability – in other words, the quality of life – in Leverett. This focus was in two questions: what contributed to livability and what was needed to improve livability. The top ten answers are as follows:

Table 7. Top Ten Contributors to Livability

#	Livability Factors	Respondents Choosing the Factor*	
		%	#
1	Preservation and use of nature and forests.	90.10%	364
2	Availability of clean water.	82.18%	332
3	Passive recreation activities (trails, picnic areas, etc.).	79.70%	322
4	Rural character and rural way of life.	78.47%	317
5	Sense of community and strong social ties.	62.87%	254
6	Proximity to larger communities.	62.13%	251
7	High quality education opportunities.	49.75%	201
8	Arts and culture.	41.58%	168
9	Preservation of and access to historic and cultural resources.	39.85%	161
10	Support for local businesses.	38.37%	155

*Not all respondents answered the question.

Table 6. Top Ten Goals

#	Potential Goal	Respondents Ranking the Goal as Important*	
		%	#
1	Protect drinking water	95.57%	345
2	Protect forests and nature.	90.70%	322
3	Protect soil health.	88.20%	314
4	Protect farmland.	81.02%	286
5	Promote energy conservation and efficiency.	80.95%	289
6	Support improvement of Leverett Library.	64.66%	225
7	Support improvement of Leverett Elementary School.	64.20%	226
8	Make housing more affordable.	59.83%	210
9	Improve or maintain town infrastructure and Town Hall.	56.90%	198
10	Foster arts and culture.	55.30%	193

*Not all respondents answered the question.

Local sense of community, bringing together people whose ties to Leverett run generations deep and those who have more recently moved here.

Table 8. Top Ten Needs for Livability

#	Livability Needs	Respondents Choosing the Factor*	
		%	#
1	Better cell phone coverage and/or wi-fi.	67.09%	265
2	Town-owned solar/resilient community energy infrastructure.	61.48%	241
3	More quality, affordable/low-cost housing.	52.67%	207
4	Public transportation.	42.86%	168
5	More coffee shops or cafés.	42.13%	166
6	More community gathering spaces.	39.85%	157
7	More town-wide community events.	38.44%	148
8	Traffic calming measures.	36.20%	139
9	More access to Town information.	35.16%	135
10	Improving recreational spaces.	35.14%	136

*Not all respondents answered the question.

3.3 STRATEGIES

DO, DISCUSS, EXPLORE, RETHINK

Participants at the third workshop prioritized the draft recommendations which were developed from the responses and concerns from the first two workshops and the survey. The strategies below are listed based on the priorities given to them by the participants, using the matrix above. Participants could also place recommendations into a Discard Pile.

The maximum number of points is 7 (one for each table of participants at the workshop). The order is determined by the following sorting system:

The maximum number of points is 7 (one for each table of participants at the workshop). The order is determined by the following sorting system:

- **DO.** These strategies have scores of three or more points for high priority and three or more points for medium priority, with a combined total of six or more points between those two categories. The support for these actions is clear enough that the Town can proceed with implementation.
- **EXPLORE.** These strategies have a combined score of five high- or medium-priority points. In some cases, points in the low, partner, or discard categories indicate some dissension. The Town should proceed with implementation but may need to have additional conversations or undertake additional studies to support these strategies.
- **DISCUSS.** These strategies have a more equal distribution across the priority designations and therefore there is no clear path to implementation, although the community has indicated an interest in the strategy. These may require more in-depth conversations/ planning efforts or more data.
- **RETHINK.** These strategies had the least support or the most questions. In some cases, the strategy addressed and identified need, but the draft recommendation did not provide an approach that participants in the workshop could agree upon.

In the table below, each strategy is tied to the priority, the value(s) from Table 5, the Goals from Table 6, and the page for the details of the strategy in [Section 5.2](#). Beneath each entry is its priority scope and the Section 81D planning elements the strategy addresses.



Figure 9. Participants in the February 2024 Workshop



Table 10. Strategies

	Recommendation					Priority		Value			Goal	PG#
1	Modify the zoning to allow for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) on existing single-family lots.					DO		2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10			2, 8	AA
	High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements						
	7	0	0	0	0	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR	S+F
2	Modify the zoning to allow smaller lot sizes, and/or multiple units, on existing lots (e.g. one or two duplexes on a lot).					DO		1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9,10			2, 8	AA
	High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements						
	6	1	0	0	0	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR	S+F
3	Create zoning to encourage senior-friendly housing so that seniors can remain in the community.					DO		2, 5, 6, 8, 9			8	AA
	High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements						
	6	0	0	0	1	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR	S+F
4	Apply for grants for dam maintenance and water quality monitoring.					DO		2, 5, 6, 8, 9			1, 9	AA
	High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements						
	5	2	0	0	0	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR	S+F
5	Develop a potable water resiliency plan.					DO		1, 3, 4, 7			1	AA
	High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements						
	5	2	0	0	0	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR	S+F
6	Prioritize climate resilient solutions for repairs and maintenance of culverts, bridges, and roads.					DO		1, 3, 4, 7			1, 2, 9	AA
	High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements						
	3	4	0	0	0	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR	S+F
7	Increase the Fire and Ambulance budgets to allow for 24/7 coverage to support increasing cases of slip/falls with seniors.					DO		2, 6, 8			9	AA
	High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements						
	1	5	1	0	0	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR	S+F
8	Establish an energy resiliency plan.					EXPLORE		1, 3, 4, 7			5	AA
	High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements						
	4	1	1	1	0	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR	S+F
9	Develop a communications plan for the town for emergencies and other events.					EXPLORE		3, 4, 6, 7, 8			9	AA
	High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements						
	4	1	0	0	2	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR	S+F
10	Establish a comprehensive beaver management strategy.					EXPLORE		1, 3, 4, 7			1, 2	AA
	High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements						
	3	2	0	1	1	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR	S+F

NCR : Natural and Cultural Resources | OSR: Open Space and Recreation | S+F Town Services and Facilities

	Recommendation					Priority	Value			Goal	PG#
11	Update land use regulations to encourage climate resiliency.					EXPLORE	1, 3, 4, 7			1-5, 9	AA
	High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements					
	3	2	0	1	1	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR
12	Create a Land Stewardship Plan for Town-owned land.					EXPLORE	1, 3, 4, 7			1-5, 9	AA
	High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements					
	1	4	1	0	1	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR
13	Join the Franklin Regional Transit Authority in order to increase access opportunities for residents (especially seniors).					DISCUSS	2, 6, 8, 9			8	AA
	High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements					
	2	3	2	0	0	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR
14	Engage with regional partners to implement action plans in the Franklin County and North Quabbin Regional Action Plan for age and dementia friendly communities.					DISCUSS	2, 6, 8, 9			8	AA
	High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements					
	1	3	2	0	1	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR
15	Establish heating/cooling shelters across town that can be used during the school year.					DISCUSS	2, 6, 8, 9			6, 7, 10	AA
	High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements					
	2	2	2	1	0	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR
16	Allow for the development of multi-family units.					DISCUSS	2, 6, 8, 9			8	AA
	High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements					
	2	1	0	1	2	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR
17	Use CPA funds to purchase parcels to protect the aquifer.					RETHINK	1, 3, 4, 7			1	AA
	High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements					
	2	1	1	0	3	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR
18	Modify the Town zoning to permit activity for economic resiliency.					RETHINK	2, 4, 6, 8			8, 10	AA
	High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements					
	2	1	1	0	3	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR
19	Modify the Town zoning to allow for senior housing, and partner with a developer to build affordable/senior housing on Town owned land, including applying for State grants to finance the construction.					RETHINK	2, 6, 8			8	AA
	High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements					
	1	2	0	0	3	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR
20	Investigate adding a community center.					RETHINK	2, 6, 8			6, 7, 10	AA
	High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements					
	1	1	4	0	2	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR

4. Impact of Existing Conditions

4.1 INTRODUCTION

IMPLICATIONS OF HISTORIC LAND USE, DEMOGRAPHICS, AND TAX BASE

Land and Roads

Leverett is a town in Franklin County, Massachusetts. Its borders are the towns of Montague to the north, Wendell to the northeast and east, Shutesbury to the southeast, Amherst to the south and Sunderland to the west. State route 63 runs north to south through the western side of the town, connecting Montague to Amherst. To the west of Route 63, in Sunderland is Mt. Toby, part of the Mt. Toby Wildlife Management Area. To the east of Route 63, is a series of smaller hills (Stoddard, Ingram, Joshua, and Jackson) that parallel the larger Brushy Mountain on the central and east side of Leverett. Brushy Mountain is within the Paul C. Jones Working Forest WCE and adjacent to the Brushy Mountain Wildlife Management Area, which is in both Leverett and Shutesbury. Stoddard Hill is within the Montague Wildlife Management Area while Ingram Hill is within the Cove Hill Conservation Area. Joshua Hill is also part of the Mt. Toby Wildlife Management Area which includes land in both Sunderland and Leverett.

The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife) manages Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), which protect habitat for wildlife and are open for public enjoyment, including “walking, hiking, hunting, fishing, trapping, and wildlife viewing.”¹ The Mt. Toby Wildlife Management Area and the Brushy Mountain Wildlife Management Area are within the Connecticut Valley District.

The Cows Company created the Paul C. Jones Working Forest Wildlife Conservation Easement (WCE) in 2012. This land – 3,486 acres – is spread across Leverett, Shutesbury, and Amherst. It is the “largest contiguous, privately owned block of permanently conserved forest land in the history of the Commonwealth.”² The WCE allows public access, including hiking and hunting,, and continued forestry operations by the W.D. Cows Inc. Land Use Company. The map below shows how this WCE fits within the area defined by Leverett’s major roads, and how the steep topography

¹ <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/list-of-wildlife-management-areas-by-district#connecticut-valley-district->, last accessed May 5, 2024)

² <https://wdcows.com/forest-management/paul-c-jones-working-forest/>, last accessed May 5, 2024.

throughout the town limits the areas available for significant development.

Other defining geographic features that present barriers to further development include the Sawmill River, which runs through North Leverett and Moore's Corner, Doolittle Brook, which parallels Montague Road,

Cars, Trains, and Buses

These natural features shaped the road and development patterns in Leverett. This town is car-dependent, with no regular public transportation and very few commercial uses in town. The map names of Leverett Station and Depot Road recall that Leverett once had rail service, and an active freight rail track still exists parallel to Route 63. This lie, originally owned by the New England Central Railroad (NECR), is part of the Massachusetts Central Railroad System, owned by Genesee & Wyoming, Inc. (G&W) since 2012.³ The Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA) used to operate the #23 bus route along Route 63 until 2015 when it was rerouted to Sunderland. With this change, Leverett lost its regular public transit and its connection to both the FRTA and the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) routes. Both transit systems connect to regional bus hubs, grocery stores, and medical resources. Despite being a car-dependent community, Leverett does not have a gas station.

³ <https://www.gwrr.com/necr/>, last accessed May 5, 2024.

Population

These priorities for land use appear to have kept the population of Leverett low: in 2022, the population was 1,860. The population has remained relatively steady since 2010, when it was 1,851. However, prior to that, the population experienced significant growth from 1970 to 2010, when the population increased from 1,005 to 1,851 – 846 people or an increase of just over 84%.⁴

⁴ Municipality Population Table, MassDLS, last accessed May 5, 2024.

The people who filled those homes from 1970-2010 are aging, and that is reflected in the analysis of demographic trends. In 2010, at the end of this building boom, 21% of the population was between 0-19 years of age; 62% of the population was the traditional working age of 20-64 years of age; 11% were younger seniors of 65-74 years of age; and 6% were older seniors of 75+ years of age.

4. Impact of Existing Conditions

The 2020 numbers show that population beginning to age. The most significant change was the decrease in the working population by 11% in 2020, while the school-age population decreases by 4%. The younger seniors jump by 12% too be almost a quarter of the population while the older seniors increase slightly by 3%. Younger seniors in 2020 would have been born between 1946 and 1955, representing the early Boomer demographics (1946-1964).

The trends from 2020 to 2040, calculated by the Donahue Institute at the University of Massachusetts, show a potential major demographic change for the Town of Leverett by 2040. The projected school-age population drops slightly further and then levels off to 15% of the population (in 2040, this age group would have been born in 2021 or later). The projected percentage of younger seniors also declines during this period, also to 15% of the population (born in 1966-1975). The working-age population is projected to increase slightly from the 2020 number, but not to reach the 2010 number; ending up at 53% of the 2040 population (born 2020-1976). The biggest increase – an 8% jump from 2020 – is the older seniors – at 75+, the youngest members of this group would have been born in 1965 or earlier.

Table 11: Projected Population Distribution by Year

Ages	2010	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
0-19	21%	17%	16%	15%	15%	15%
20-64	62%	51%	49%	50%	51%	53%
65-74	11%	23%	22%	17%	16%	15%
75+	6%	9%	13%	17%	18%	17%

Source: [confirm source]

Overall, this means that in 2040, the retired and increasingly older population in town is 32% of the population with a bare majority (53%) of working age. This trend represents a problem for the Leverett community as the older working population tends to have the most discretionary income while the older senior population tends to have the most restricted income and the highest number of health problems.

Population and Development Patterns

The few major roads in town wind their way through the hilly terrain, and over the past few decades, the town has prioritized larger single-family housing lots to accommodate septic systems on poorly draining soils and protect the back areas from development.

The choice to prioritize single-family home and the increase in population can be seen in the development patterns of the town. An analysis of the 2023 Assessors' data shows that, of the existing buildings in town, 33% (261 buildings) are dated from 1723-1959. After 1959, the pace of building begins to pick up: 66 of the buildings existing in 2023 were built in the 1960s; 134 in the 1970s; and 153 in the 1980s. The pace of building then dropped, with 70 buildings built in the 1990s and 82 buildings built between 2000-2009. These buildings are primarily residential; only three new commercial buildings have been built since 1970 – one in each decade from 1970 to 2000.

Development Patterns and Tax Base

The existing tax base reflects this split: in fiscal year 2024 (FY2024), the assessed value of residential property in the town was \$344,769,800. For commercial property, during the same year, the assessed value was \$3,081,677. The assessed value of personal property was \$45,006,820.

The valuations of these asset classes translate to the following breakdown of the tax levy, or funds raised on property taxes. Property taxes represent the largest contributor to the town's budget, and fund operating expenses and capital expenditures. In FY2024, these three categories of assessment raised the following amounts in property taxes: \$5,419,781 (87.6%) for residential; \$48,444 (0.8%) for commercial, \$10,328 (0.2%) for industrial, and \$707,507 (11.4%) for personal property for a total tax levy of \$6,186,060 (100%). New growth, which can fund new services, investments, or reserves, was solely on personal property taxes.

The Massachusetts Department of Local Services provides a wide range of information from past tax years. The oldest data readily available for property taxes in from FY2003. In FY2003, the breakdown was as follows: \$2,928,126 (96.2%) for residential; \$34,739 (1.1%) for commercial; \$10,445 (0.2%) for industrial; and \$69,889 (2.3%) for personal property tax for a total levy of \$3,043,199).

4. Impact of Existing Conditions

Leverett's tax levy increased by 103.3% over this twenty-one-year period, but the changes in the tax levy for each asset class is very different. The industrial tax levy dropped by 1.1% and the commercial tax levy increased by 39.5%, but these two asset classes are a negligible part of the tax structure and these changes have no significant impact on the tax levy.

The tax levy from the residential asset class increased by 85.1% over the same period while the increase from the personal property asset class increased by 912.3%. The purpose of this discussion is not to delve deeply into the town's finances, but to demonstrate that the tax base of the town is residential and personal property taxes and that the proposed actions in this plan will need to be funded either from the existing tax base, growth in the tax base, or state, federal, and private loans and grants.

Development Patterns and Future Land Use

Given the development patterns of the town and the desires expressed by many in the community, commercial and industrial tax growth will not be a major source of revenue as any likely growth will be limited to small-scale enhancements to community life rather than major changes to the economic structure of the town. This means that most people of working age will either commute or work from home, and that future commercial uses will likely either support social interactions (such as the existing Leverett Co-op) or provide small-scale services to the increasing senior population.

Leverett Town Center Then



Figure 12: Old Post Office and Gas Station, Montague Rd

Source: <https://www.leverett.ma.us/gallery/11/35/Old-Post-Office-with-Gas-Station>

Now



Source: Google StreetView

North Leverett Then



Figure 13: Chapin's Store, North Leverett

Source: Kramer, Susan. Chapin's Grocery store: Front entrance to the store with Mobilegas gasoline pumps, ca. May 1975. Kramer-Mathews Collection (PH 080). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries

Now



Source: Google StreetView

Moore's Corner Then

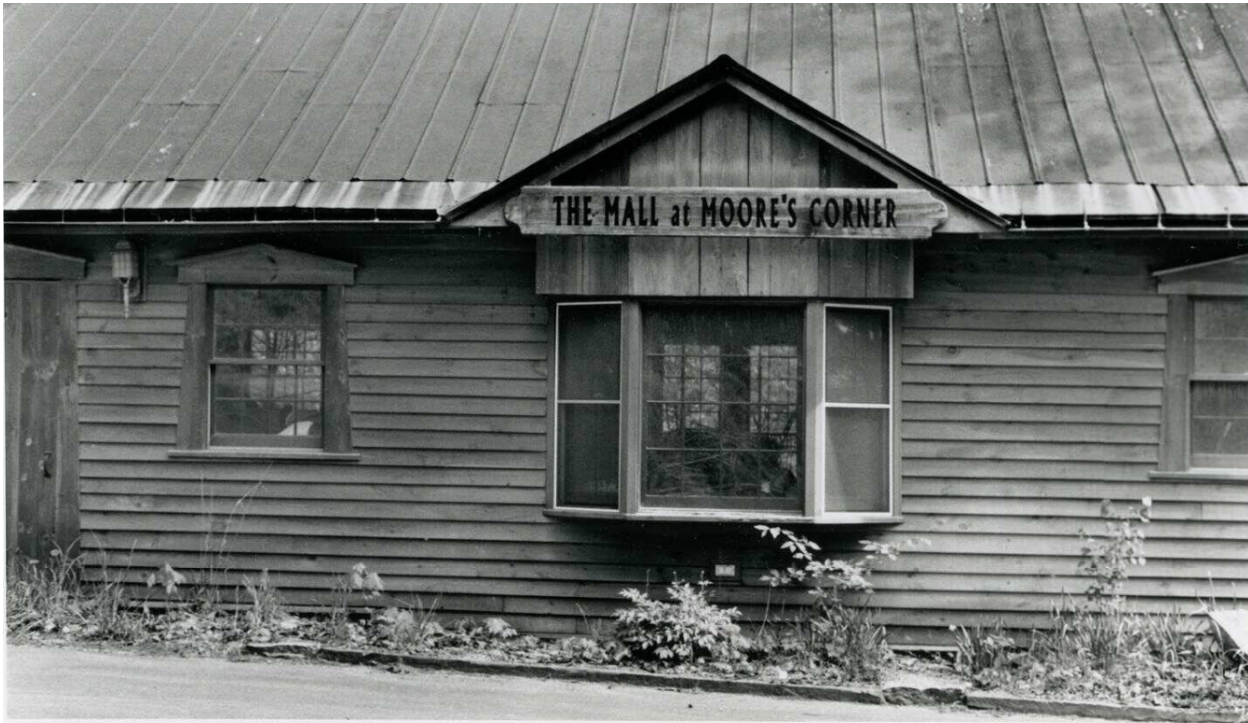


Figure 14: The Mall at Moore's Corner originally LaClaire's store

Mange, Arthur P.. The Mall at Moore's Corner, 2010. Arthur P. Mange Photograph Collection (PH 044). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries

Now



Source: Google StreetView

4.2 DEMOGRAPHICS

SUMMARY

This comprehensive plan is a framework for thinking about Leverett's future – the needs and goals of community members, the desire to protect the surrounding environment, built and natural, and the components that support a healthy community: housing, jobs, places to gather and play, and the infrastructure that connects those elements.

To understand the possibilities for Leverett's future, it is important to understand who is here now and who will be here in the Leverett of 2040; sixteen years from now.

Absent other changes – and there are factors that may change Leverett – the population in Leverett will be significantly older than the 2024 population. The aging of the community will have an impact on the type of community Leverett will be in sixteen years. This section explains the population trends showing that aging population.

Leverett's population is aging – in 2040, seniors over 80 will be over 10% of the population. Community members are concerned that the Town will not be able to address the needs of this population. Those needs include elder services, age-friendly housing, and non-driving access to medical appointments and shopping. Those needs also include housing that is suitable for aging within the community.

As the population ages, seniors may need to choose between remaining in Leverett – in housing that may not be suitable, affordable, or safe [seniors are more prone to falls, for example] – or leaving to find appropriate housing outside the town. Absent the development of new housing, as the population ages in place, housing will be less available to younger residents leading to a reduction in the working-age and school-age populations. Demand for the limited housing stock could drive prices even higher in a community that is already concerned about affordability. The loss of school-age children, over time, has implications for the Leverett Elementary School.

The following analysis also provides an overview and insights comparing Leverett to surrounding towns. This includes Amherst, Montague, Shutesbury, Sunderland, and Wendell. Throughout the analysis, Leverett is also compared to the surrounding "Region" which comprises of the five surrounding towns plus Leverett.

WHO LIVES IN LEVERETT?

Leverett’s population is decreasing from historic highs of the mid-2010s.

The Census estimates indicate that over the last decade the total population of Leverett has fluctuated, with a decrease of 9% over the last five years. The encompassing region has decreased by 0.3% over the last five years, while the state of Massachusetts population has increased by 3.7%.

Table 15. Leverett Total Population



Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2016-2021; RKG Associates

Like many communities across the country, Leverett’s older adult population continues to grow. Leverett’s median age of 50.1 is similar to two nearby communities.

Table 16. Average Age

Town	Age
Leverett	50.1
Amherst	21.3
Montague	44.6
Shutesbury	51.2
Sunderland	34.5
Wendell	50.6

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2016-2021; RKG Associates

4. Impact of Existing Conditions

Residents ages 65+ make up about 30% of Leverett’s population, a 6% increase from 2016. Residents ages 25-34 increased by 131 residents, going from 6% of the population to about 14%. Keeping current younger residents and continuing to attract new younger residents to Leverett will be important for the workforce, household spending, and the Leverett Elementary School.

Table 17. Leverett: Age Distribution

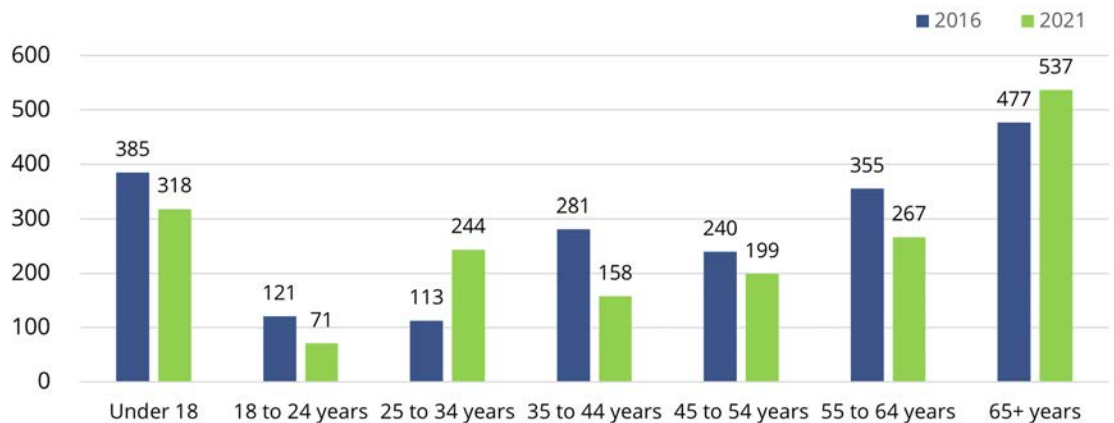
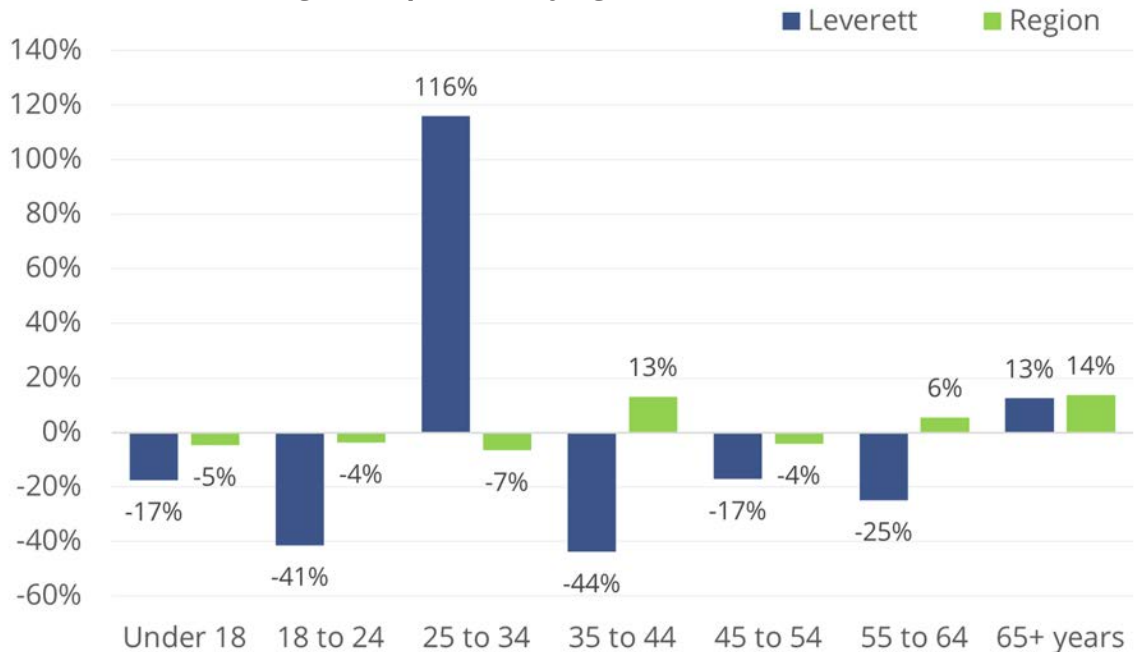


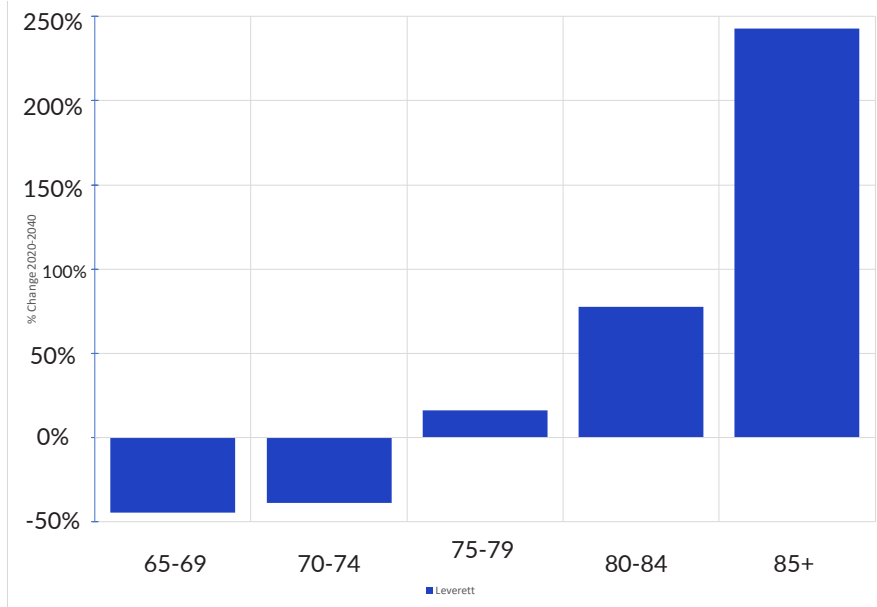
Table 18. Leverett: Change in Population by Age, 2016-2021



Source for both graphs: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2016-2021; RKG Associates

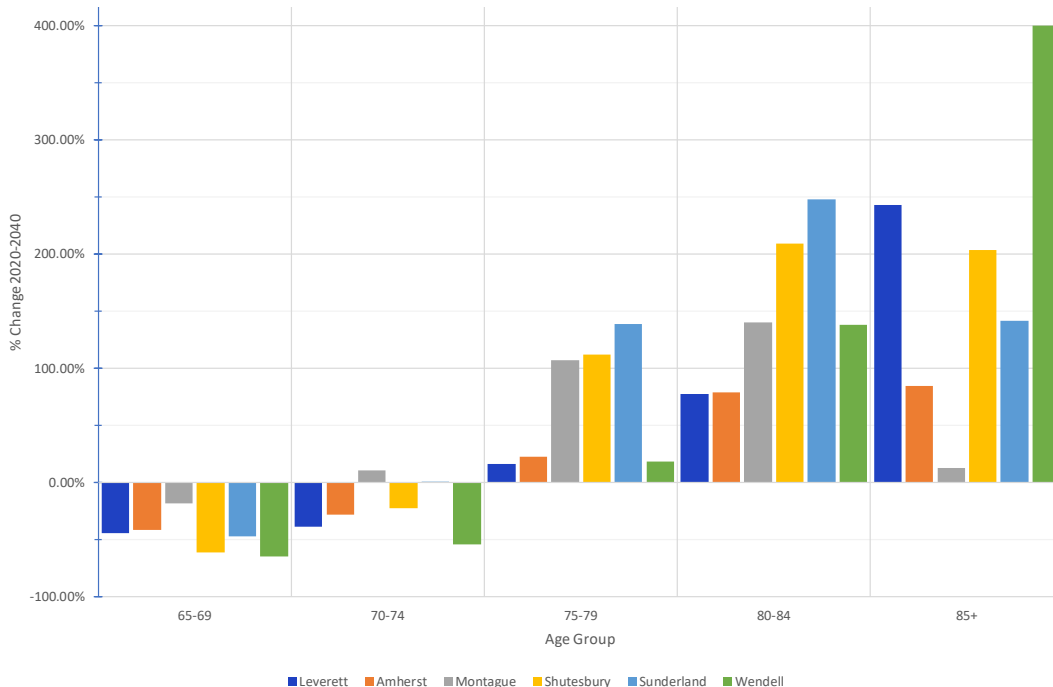
This aging trend is projected to continue: Figure 19 shows how Leverett’s post retirement population (those 65+) is estimated to change between 2020 and 2040. The largest increases will be in those 80+.

Table 19. Leverett: Projected Change in Post-Retirement Ages 2020-2040



The aging trend is not limited to Leverett; Figure 20 shows how Leverett’s post retirement population will change in comparison to the surrounding towns. All towns will see a significant increase in the population over 80 which may impact the availability of senior housing and care in the immediate area.

Figure 20. Leverett and Surrounding Communities: Change in Post-Retirement Ages 2020 - 2040



Source for both graphs: [confirm dataset]; Innes Associates

4. Impact of Existing Conditions

Leverett’s population has become slightly more diverse. Over the past five years, the share of residents that identify as White decreased by about 4% (247 residents). The largest percentage increase was from Asian identifying residents, with an increase of about 3% (49 residents). In comparison, the region had significant proportional increases in Hispanic/Latino residents with a 38% increase (1,114 residents) and residents who identify as two or more races with an 144% increase (2,397 residents).

Table 21. Leverett: Population by Race/Ethnicity

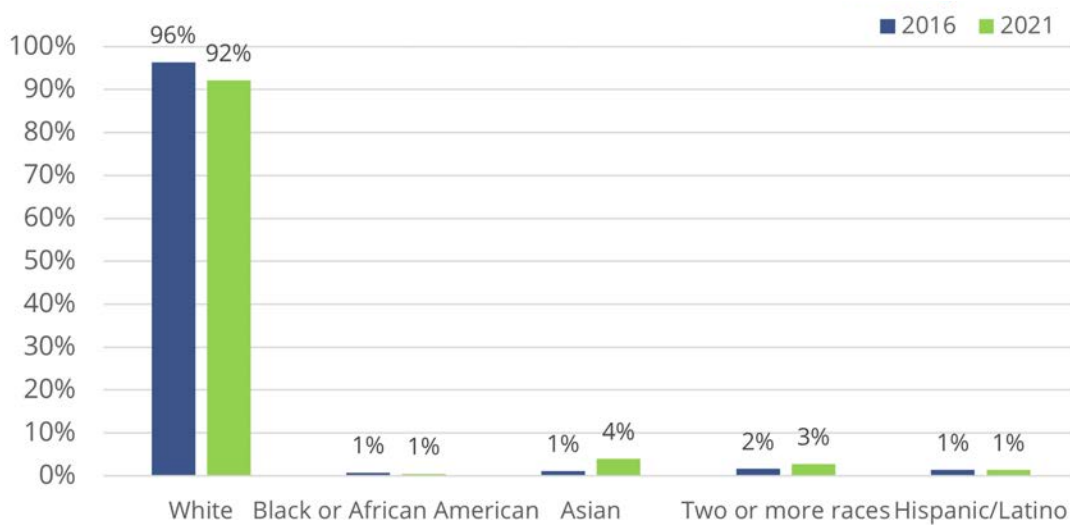
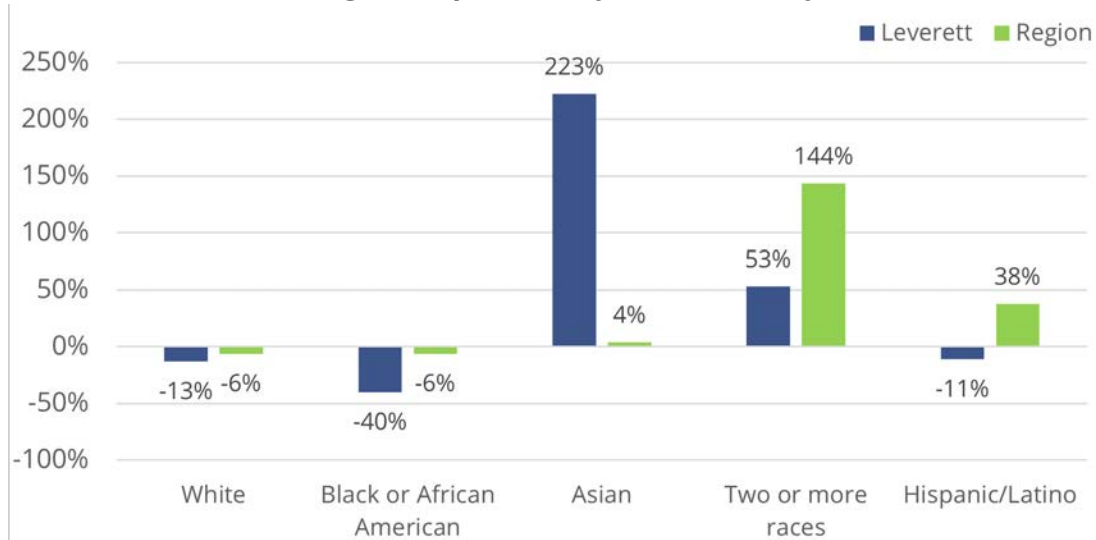


Table 22. Leverett: Change in Population by Race/Ethnicity



Source for both graphs: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2016-2021; RKG Associates

The number of Leverett residents who attended college or hold a bachelor’s degree or higher has decreased. Over the last decade, the number of residents with a bachelor’s degree decreased by about 3% (27 residents) and while residents with no high school diploma increased by about 18% (9 residents). This varies greatly from the region, where more highly educated people are increasing in proportion and residents with no high school diploma are decreasing in proportion. Changes in education have an impact on the workforce, including the availability of certain skill levels and lifetime earnings.

Table 23. Leverett: Educational Attainment

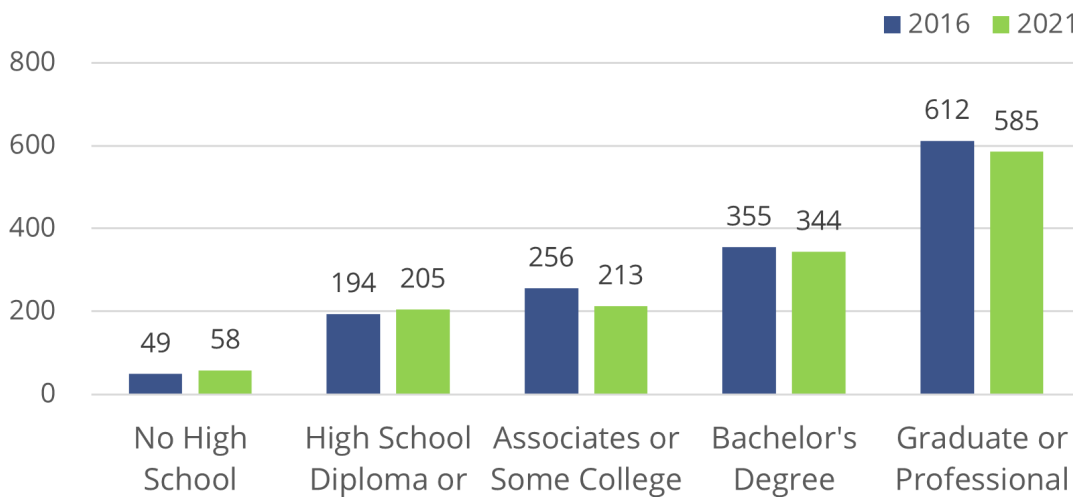
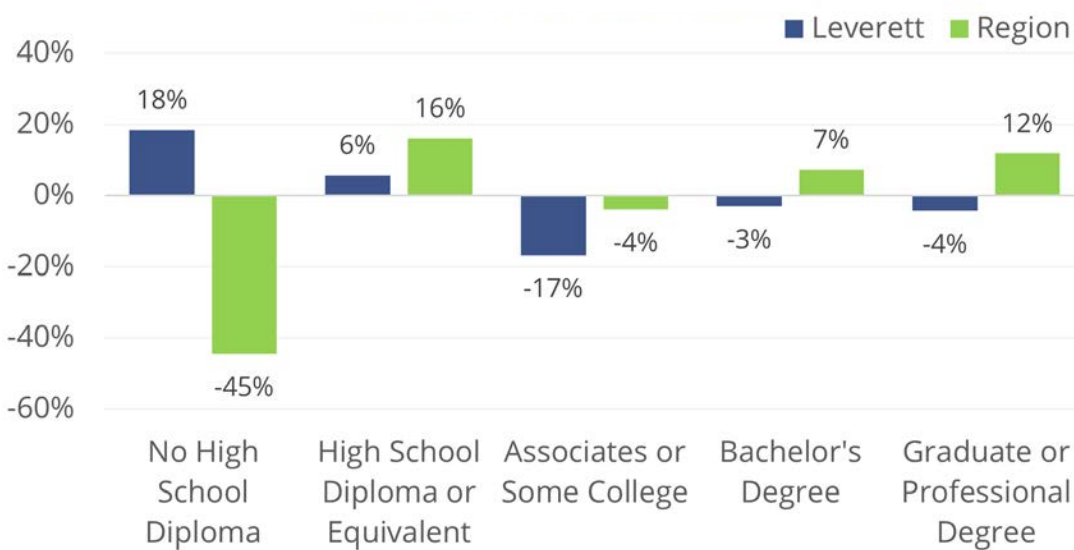


Table 24. Leverett: Change in Educational Attainment



Source for both graphs: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2016-2021; RKG Associates

4. Impact of Existing Conditions

Leverett has the highest median household income in the surrounding region.

Household incomes are increasing in Leverett. Over the past five years, Leverett saw a 45% increase in households earning between \$150,000 - \$199,999 and a 7% increase in residents earning over \$200,000. The median household income in Leverett increased from \$86,771 to \$97,188.

These increases in higher income households mean high household purchasing power and spending in local businesses as a key economic driver. This may also mean households have more income to spend on housing as home prices and rents continue to rise. However, **incomes tend to decrease after retirement as people age**; this is the population that is projected to increase by 2040.

Table 25. Region's Median Household Income

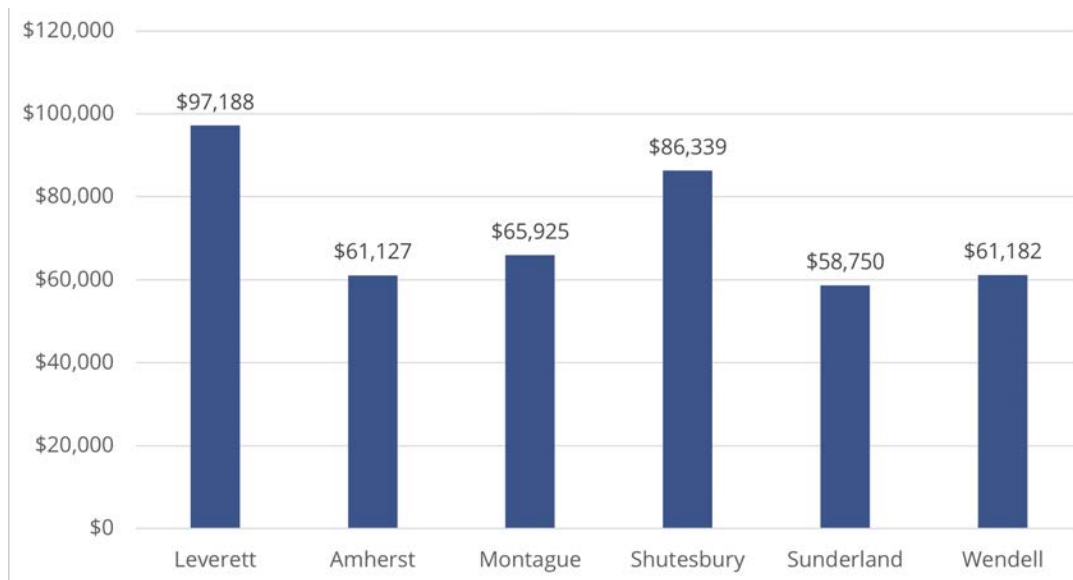


Table 26. Leverett and Region: Change in Median Household Income



Source for both graphs: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2016-2021; RKG Associates

Leverett has a higher percentage of family households compared to surrounding towns/cities. Leverett has 479 family households, which makes up about 68% of their total population. However, **Leverett is the only town that is decreasing in the proportion of family households**, while all other surrounding towns are increasing in family household as a proportion of total households. This decrease may also be a sign of an aging population.

Shutesbury and Wendell have the most positive percentage change in family households.

Household composition continues to shift as non-family households increase. Following total population trends, the number of households decreased from 809 to 708 households. Over the past five years, Leverett saw an increase in the number and percentage of non-family households, primarily driven by the increase in non-family households not living alone. The share of family households decreasing by 116 households. Non-family householders not living alone increased by 26 households. For the region, the most significant proportional change was in householders living alone, with an increase of 637 residents.

Table 27. Percent of Total Households that are Family Households

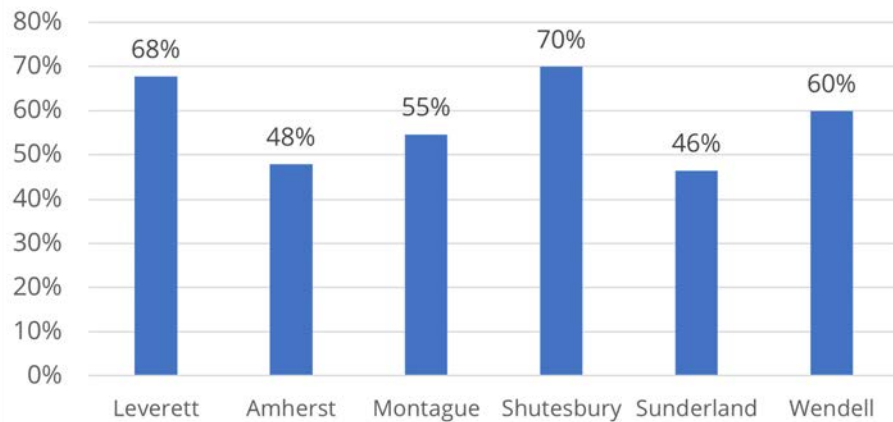


Table 28. Percent Change of Family Households

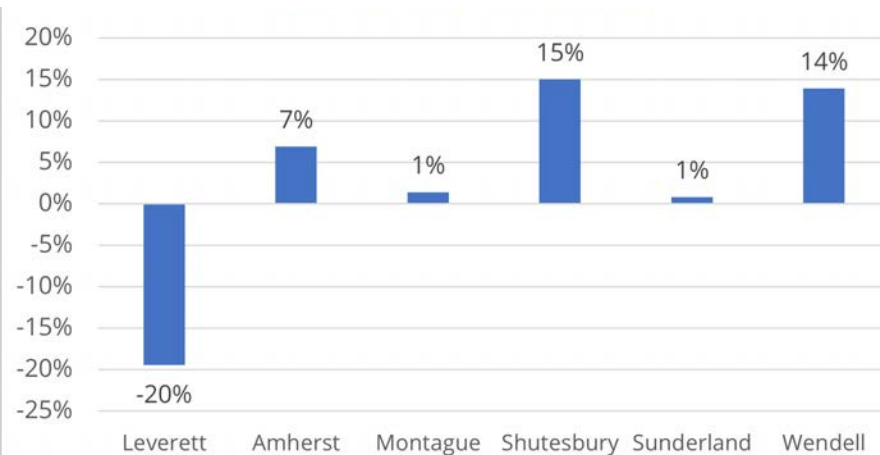
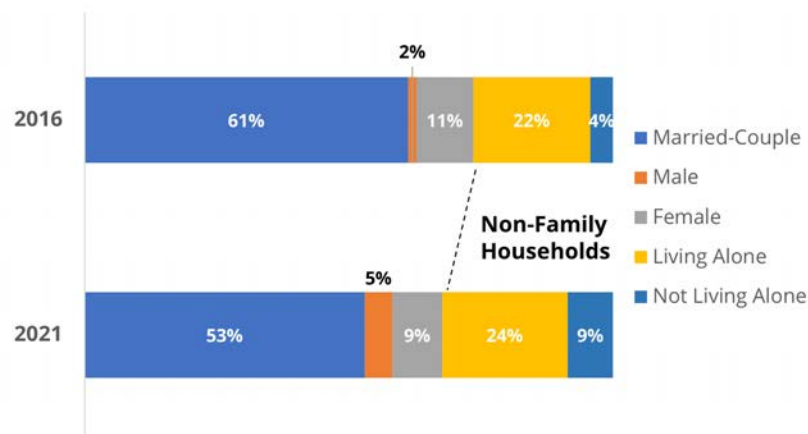


Table 29. Change in Household Composition



Source for both graphs: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2016-2021; RKG Associates

4.3 HOUSING AND ECONOMY

SUMMARY

Housing and the economy are intertwined. Leverett's housing is primarily single-family, older, and spread throughout the community. The lack of diversity in housing types means that certain populations, such as seniors or young people starting their first jobs, may not find housing that is suitable or affordable. Because this problem is not limited to Leverett, appropriate housing may not be available in adjacent towns. One effect is that Leverett seniors wishing to down-size or move to one-level living may have to leave Leverett, and therefore their social connections, to find age-friendly housing. Another effect is that people who grew up in Leverett may have to leave to find housing that matches their income levels.

Various elements contribute to a town's economic well-being. Household incomes, educational attainment, labor force composition, commercial and industrial building stock, and zoning decisions all impact the economic output of a town.

Leverett's economy is small, and the town will not be self-sufficient in terms of jobs, goods, or services. Most Leverett residents leave town to work and shop; most Leverett employees do not live in town. Because no regular public transit exists in Leverett, all traffic is by private vehicle, and dependent on the Town maintaining its roadways, including plowing and repairs, to allow for safe and convenient travel to adjacent communities.

Widely-distributed housing must be connected to these roads and Leverett's current zoning requires large lots. Large lots mean that each lot has its own well and septic system. A study of development patterns since 1960 shows the increasing spread of housing throughout the community – leading to the sprawl that many participants in the workshops identified as less desirable.

The labor force has continued its recovery from the disruption of the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. While neither the total labor force nor the number of residents who are employed has fully returned to pre-pandemic levels, unemployment rates continue to be at historic lows. Although low unemployment rates can help drive wage growth, Leverett's rate is so extraordinarily low that it make hiring extremely difficult for businesses.

Nearly everyone who lives in Leverett commutes outside of town to go to work. More than 7 times as many people leave town as arrive every day to go to work. The decrease in daytime population can make it harder to sustain retail and personal services enterprises.

The five most common work destinations for Leverett residents are Amherst, Northampton, Springfield, Greenfield, and Worcester.

This is consistent with the very low number of existing jobs in Leverett, with fewer than 150 people working in town. The largest industries by employment include Construction, Health Care & Social Assistance, Government, Manufacturing, and Other Services (except Public Administration). Of these, only Construction and Health Care & Social Assistance have grown over the last decade.

Leverett only has a small number of parcels and acreage dedicated to commercial and industrial uses, though these uses (along with multi-unity housing) also represent some of the properties with the highest assessed values on a per-acre basis.

HOW AND WHERE DO LEVERETT RESIDENTS LIVE?

Summary

- Leverett saw a boom in housing development in the period up to 1990 (77% of all housing was built by 1990). Since 2010 housing development has declined significantly.
- 88% of all housing in Leverett is single family detached units
- Lot sizes in Leverett are large and both multi-family and multiple units per lot are not allowed by right in the zoning.
- As the Leverett population ages, seniors have two choices - remain in place (and so limiting the turnover of the existing housing stock) or leave Leverett (opening up stock but breaking community ties)
- There is limited scope for further development on the remaining unbuilt parcels.

Housing Tenure

The ratio of renter-occupied and owner-occupied households has stayed consistent. Leverett’s owner occupied tenure has decreased by only 1% over the past five years. However, following population trends, households have decreased overall, with owner-occupied households decreasing by 94 households and renter occupied households decreasing by 7 households. Across comparable communities, housing tenure has stayed relatively similar since 2016, with the percentage of renter occupied units decreasing slightly in Amherst, Montague, Shutesbury, and Sunderland. Wendell was the only town to have an increased ratio of renter occupied units.

Table 30. Housing Tenure, Comparable Communities

Town	2016		2021	
	Owner Occupied	Renter Occupied	Owner Occupied	Renter Occupied
Leverett	89%	11%	88%	12%
Amherst	44%	56%	46%	55%
Montague	59%	41%	63%	37%
Shutesbury	89%	11%	91%	9%
Sunderland	43%	57%	44%	56%
Wendell	86%	14%	80%	20%

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2016-2021; RKG Associates

4. Impact of Existing Conditions

Over the past five years, Leverett saw a total decrease of 7 renter households and a decrease of 94 owner households. There was a loss of approximately 60 4-person owner households.

Leverett owner households skew older, with those 65 and older making up 50% of owner households in Leverett (314 households), while the largest cohort of renter households are aged 25-34 (28 households). This is similar to trends in other communities.

Most of Leverett’s housing stock is concentrated in single family units, while the region has a more diverse spread of structures. Ownership units are concentrated in single unit structures and tend to be older than rental units. Leverett’s median year built (1973) for housing is similar to surrounding communities.

Table 31. Leverett: Household Ages by Tenure

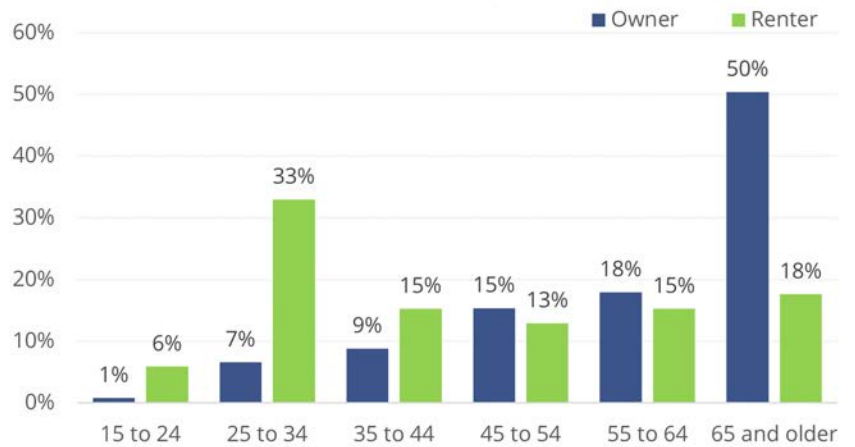


Table 32. Leverett: Household Size by Tenure

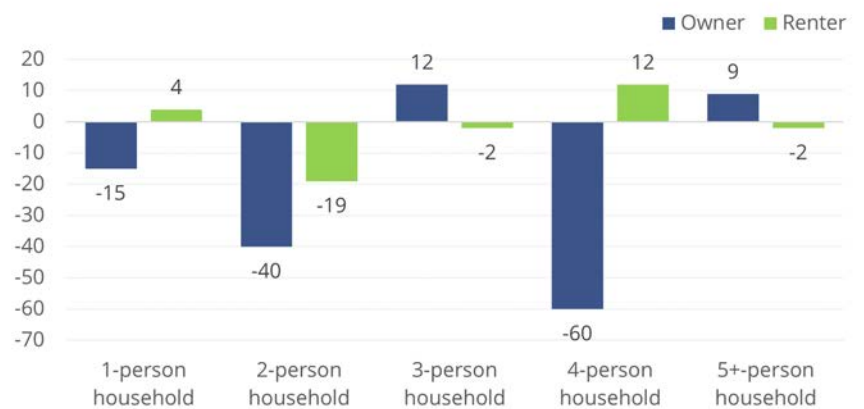
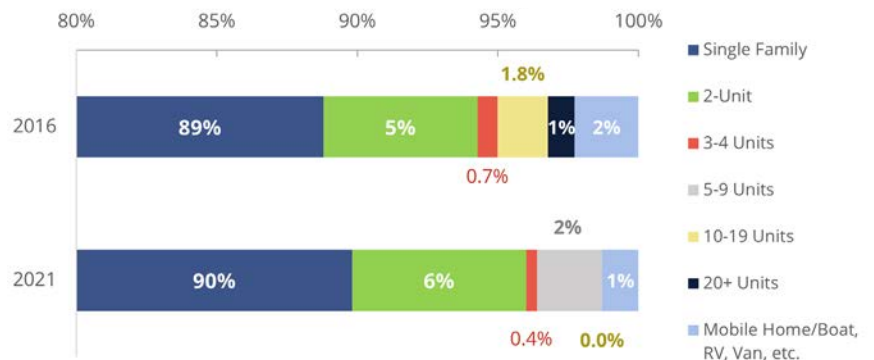


Table 33. Leverett: Units by Structure, 2016 and 2021



Source for all graphs: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2016-2021; RKG Associates

Ownership units are concentrated in single unit structures.

The majority (92%) of owner-occupied units are found in single unit structures, most of which are single family detached homes. The town has very few ownership units across all other building types. Renter-occupied units are more spread out, though almost half are single unit structures.

In the region, renter-occupied units have a much higher proportion in structures with more than three units.

Ownership units in Leverett tend to be older than rental units. Leverett has a similar median year built for their housing stock to surrounding communities.

Almost 60% of ownership units were constructed over 40 years ago, while about 46% of rental units were constructed over 40 years ago. Between 1980 and 1999, about half of the rental stock was built. Since 2000, the number of structures built has decreased significantly. Older homes can have more maintenance issues and requirements compared to newer homes, something the Town may want to keep an eye on going forward.

Table 34. Leverett: Units per Structure

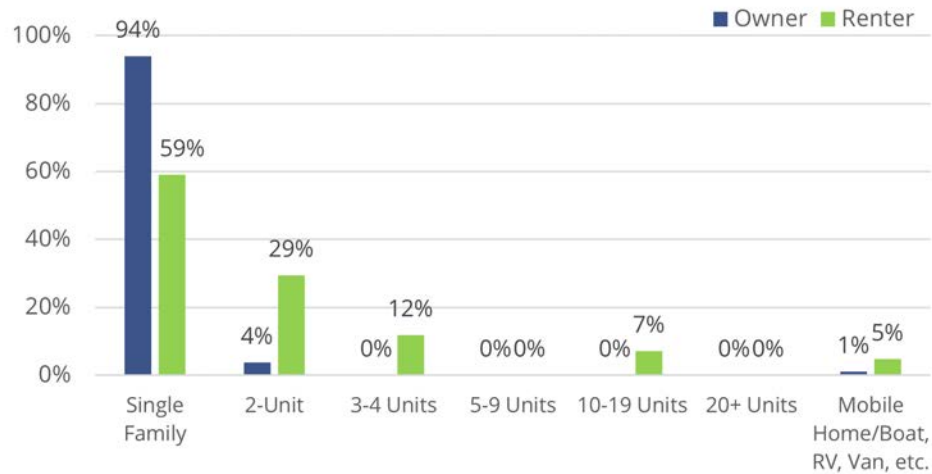


Table 35. Leverett and Region: Units per Structure

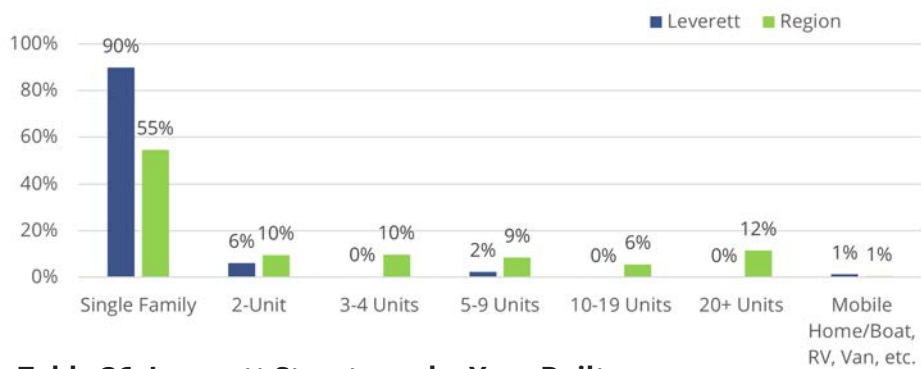


Table 36. Leverett Structures by Year Built

Ownership Structure	Count	Percentage
Built 2000 or later	55	9%
Built Between 1980 and 1999	189	30%
Built Between 1960 and 1979	169	27%
Built 1959 or earlier	210	34%

Rental Structure	Count	Percentage
Built 2000 or later	4	4.7%
Built Between 1980 and 1999	42	49.4%
Built Between 1960 and 1979	15	17.6%
Built 1959 or earlier	24	28.2%

Table 37. Median Year Built by Town

Town	Year
Leverett	1973
Amherst	1973
Montague	1953
Shutesbury	1978
Sunderland	1976
Wendell	1977

Source for all graphs: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2016-2021; RKG Associates

4. Impact of Existing Conditions

Housing Values: Ownership Units

The median home value increased by \$20,400 over the past five years. The share of housing units valued at or above \$250,000 increased from 81.2% of the total housing stock to 86.8%. Since 2016, the median home value in Leverett increased by 5.9% with the median home value increasing from \$344,200 to \$364,600. This is above most of the median values in surrounding communities.

Median home sale prices have fluctuated in the last decade but have reached their highest peak in the past two years. In November 2020, Leverett had the highest median sale price at \$710,000. Since then, there has been fluctuations of prices ranging from \$235,000 to \$646,000. The number of homes for sale has decreased drastically in the past two years, with 17 sold in 2021 and 8 sold in 2022. The years between 2013 and 2016 had the most consistent number of homes sold, between 113 and 119 homes sold annually.

Table 38. Median Home Value by Town

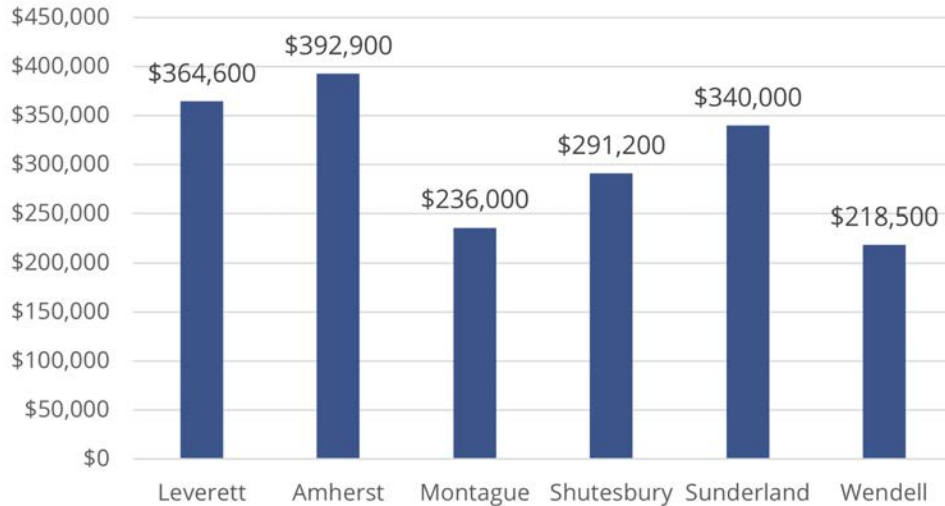
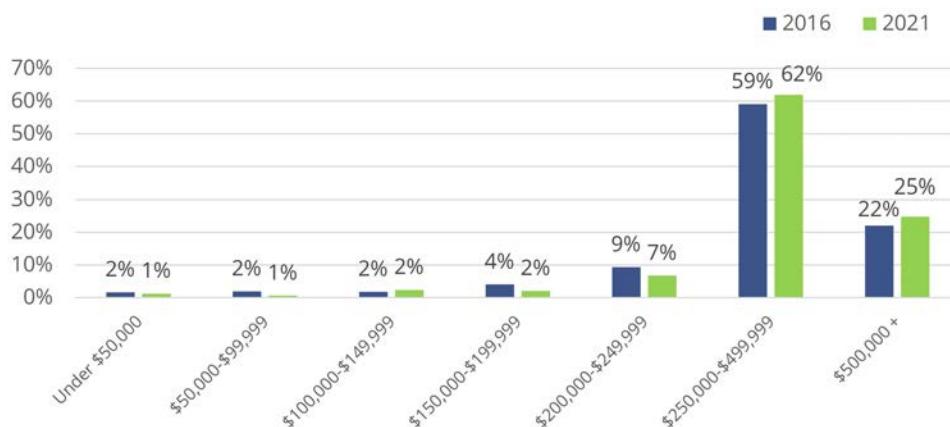


Table 39. Leverett: Change in Distribution of Home Values



Source for both graphs: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2016-2021; RKG Associates

Table 40. Leverett: Number of Homes for Sale 2012-2022

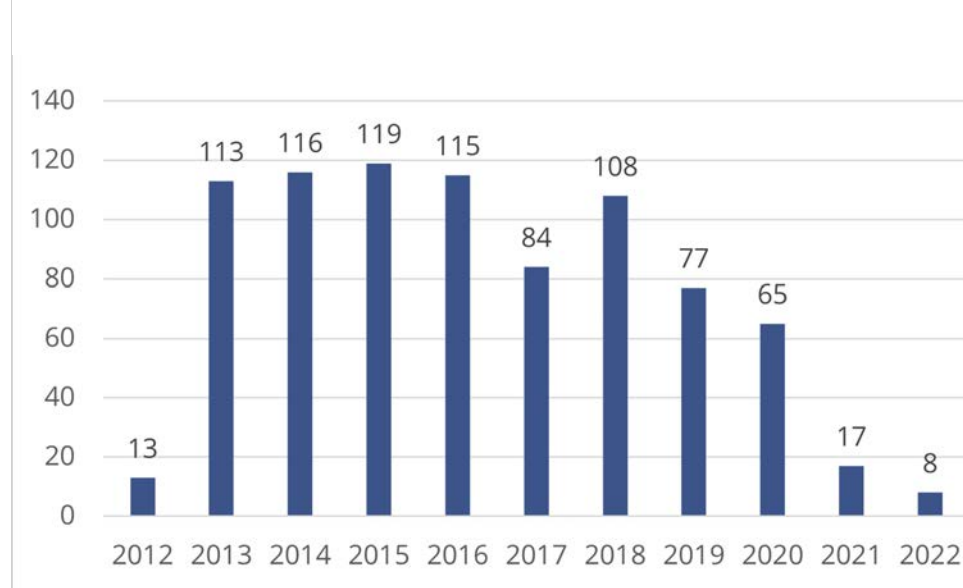
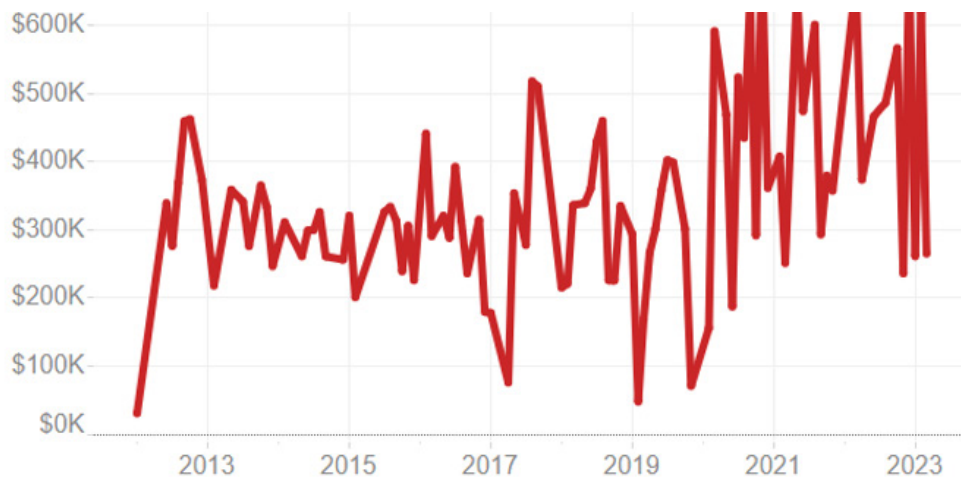


Table 41. Leverett: Median Sales Price of All Homes (2012-2023)



Source for both graphs: Redfin, 2012-2022; RKG Associates

4. Impact of Existing Conditions

Housing Values: Rental Units

Rental units are also increasing in price. 46% of Leverett’s rental units are priced at or above \$1,500 per month. The share of rental units with rents of more than \$1,500 increased from 18.1% to 45.7% of the rental stock in the past five years (17 units). There were large decreases in units priced below \$1,000 with a loss of 29 units.

Leverett has a similarly high median gross rent in comparison to the region as the second highest. Increasing rents place a financial constraint on many low to moderate income households and make it harder to for businesses to attract and retain employees who may want or need to live in the community where they work.

Table 42. Leverett: Gross Rent Distribution

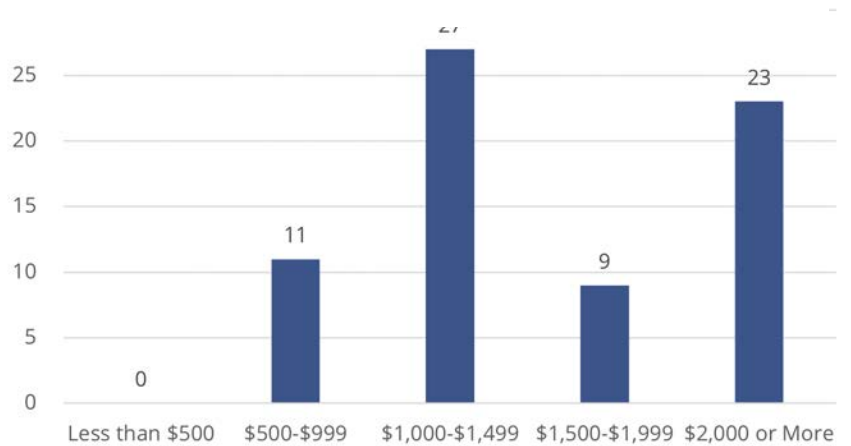


Table 43. Leverett: Change in Distribution of Gross Rent

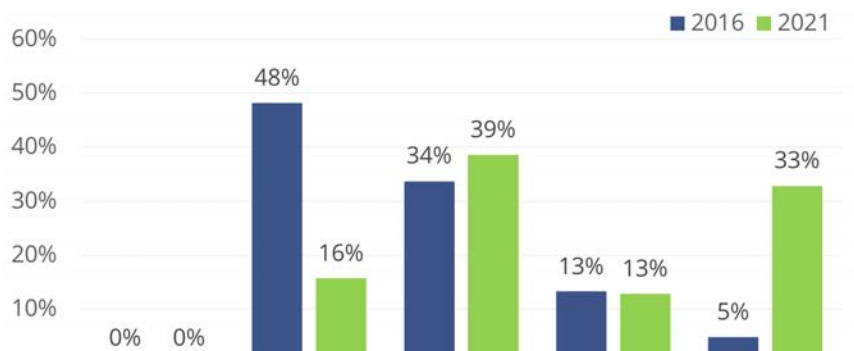


Table 44. Region: Median Gross Rent



Source for both graphs: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2016-2021; RKG Associates

Residential vacancy in Leverett is low for available units. In 2021, Leverett’s total vacancy was around 8.8%, with 68 vacant units out of 776 total units. The Census records vacant units a few different ways to comprise the total vacancy count for a particular geography. Housing vacancy is captured in four different categories by the Census, which includes: vacant available, vacant unavailable, seasonal, and vacant other.

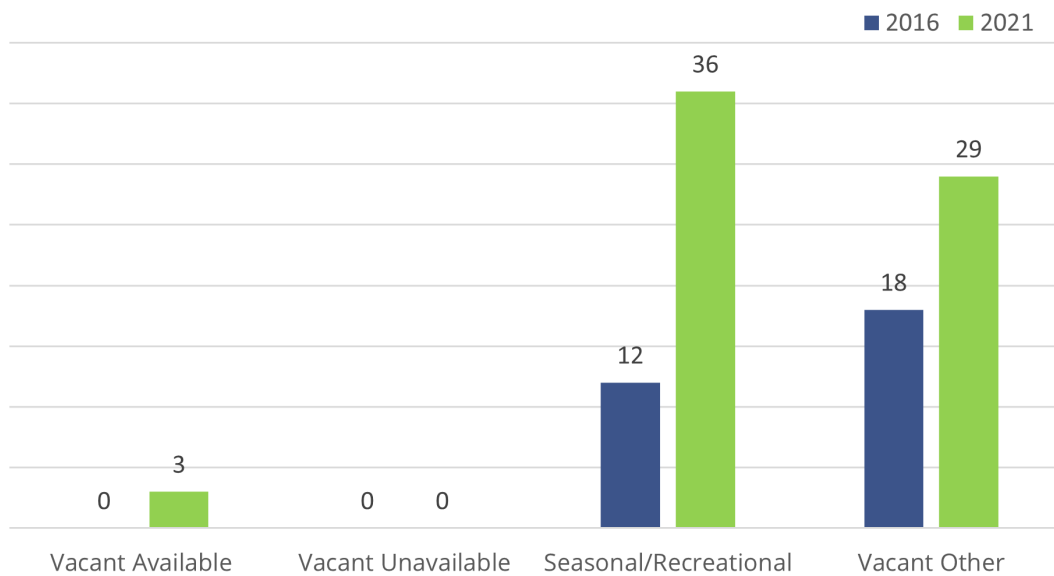
- Vacant available refers to unoccupied units that are currently for sale or for rent.
- Vacant unavailable refers to off market for sale and for rent units.
- Seasonal and recreation refer to housing units that are not occupied year-round such as second homes, beach houses etc.

Vacant Other which refers to units that are not available for rent or sale and are off the market for different reasons. These include undergoing substantial rehab, uninhabitable units, foreclosure, among others.

In 2021, Leverett’s vacancy rate for units actively listed as for sale or for rent was 0.4%.

A healthy vacancy rate for a community is typically between 4% to 6%. Maintaining a healthy vacancy level is important, because the available for sale and for rent units allow households to move in and out of the community and across housing types within the market. This dynamic typically offers some degree of insulation for owners and renters to fluctuations in regional prices because an available supply of units can help buffer against sharp rises in price that a tighter market could experience as has been the case in communities across the state.

Table 45. Leverett: Vacant Housing Units by Category



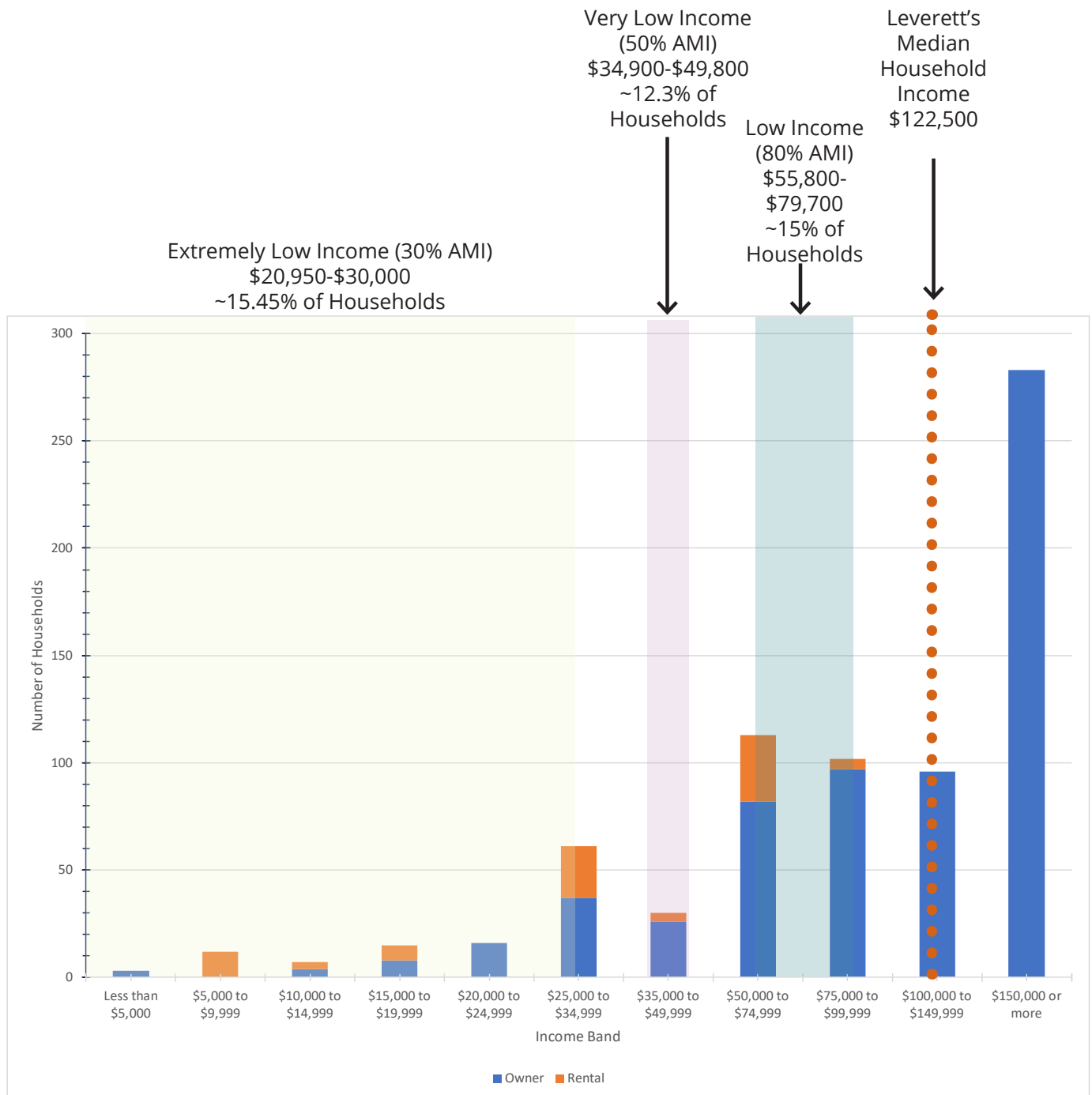
Source for both graphs: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2016-2021; RKG Associates

4. Impact of Existing Conditions

Current Housing Affordability in Leverett

This chart shows the breakdown of 2022 household incomes in Leverett and compares them to the HUD Area Median Income (AMI). The AMI is used to define and determine eligibility for assisted housing programs. Approximately 49% of the households in Leverett are below the Area Median Income for Franklin County. The Area Median Income (AMI) for Franklin County is between \$69,020 and \$98,600 depending on household size.

Figure 46. Leverett Household Incomes vs HUD 1-4 Person Households Income Limits

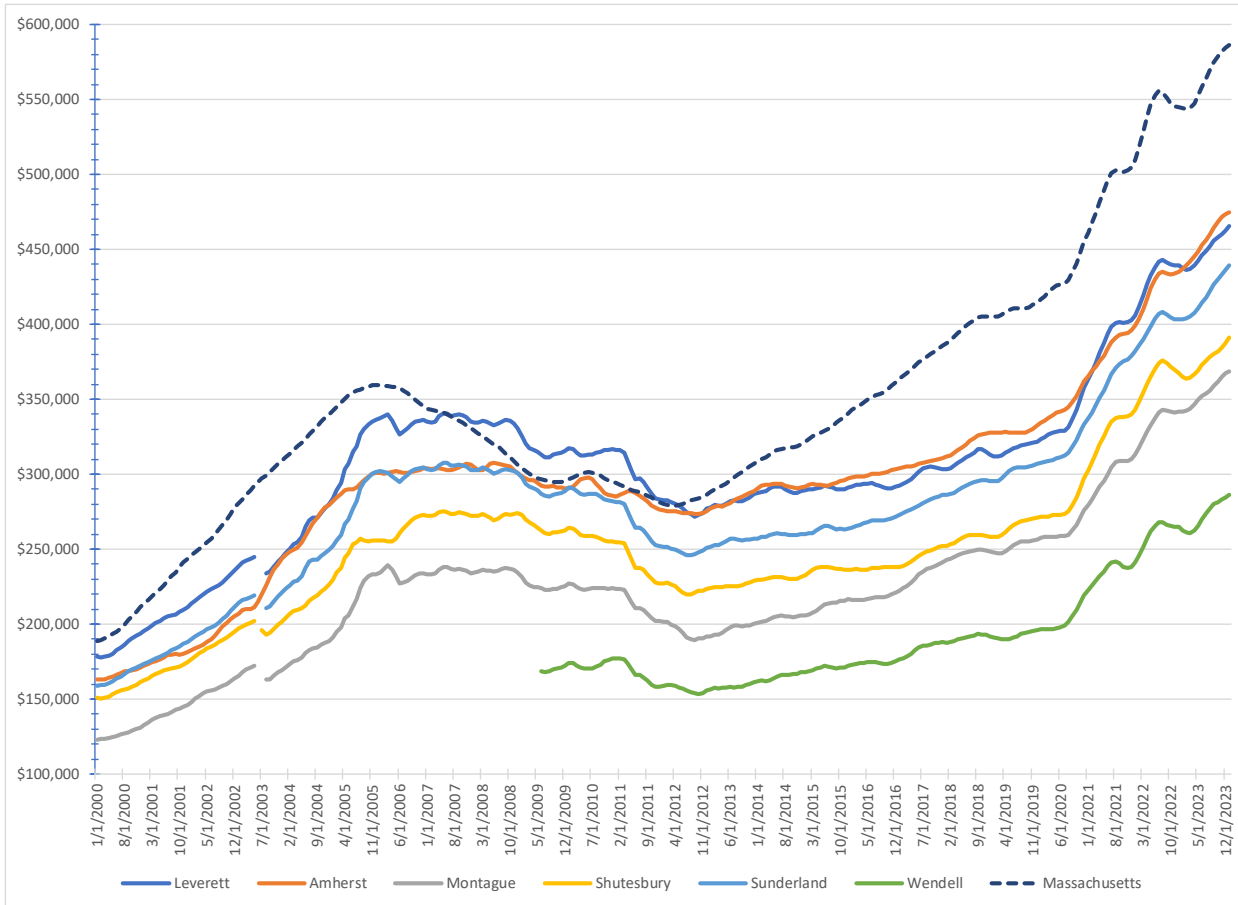


This chart shows the median housing values from 2000 to 2023 for Leverett and surrounding towns as well as for the State as a whole.

Leverett and Amherst have higher median housing prices than their neighbors, but all of these towns have lower housing values than Massachusetts as a whole.

Leverett is the dark blue line.

Figure 47. Monthly Median Housing Values 2000-2023



Source: UMDI V2022 Long-Term Population Projections for Massachusetts Municipalities and Regional Planning Areas (UMDI V2022 Population Projections) UMass Donahue Institute; National Environmental Modeling and Analysis Center; Zillow Home Value Index (ZHVI)

Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services Databank Reports; U.S. Census Bureau: OnTheMap; U.S. Census Bureau: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Detailed Tables (B19019, S2501, S2503, S1901, S0101); US Dept of Housing and Urban Development FY2023 Income Limits

HOW AND WHERE DO LEVERETT RESIDENTS WORK?

Labor Force

Leverett’s labor force dropped during the start of the COVID-19 pandemic but has started to rebound.

According to the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, 1,109 people make up Leverett’s labor force. This is an increase of 1,084 people from 2012. In 2022, Leverett has an average unemployment rate of 2.8%, a return to pre-pandemic numbers.

Leverett and its Workforce Development Area had similar trends in labor force, employment, and unemployment. After notable disruption during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, unemployment levels have once again decreased to historic lows. With unemployment both locally and regionally hovering around the 2% mark, Leverett and its neighbors are at what economists call “full employment” – essentially, nearly everyone who wants a job has already found one.

Figure 48. Leverett: Unemployment



Figure 49. Leverett: Labor Force and Employment



Figure 50. Leverett and Region: Unemployment Rates (2012-2023)



Source for all graphs: MA EOLWD, 2012-2022; RKG Associates

Table 51. Leverett: Top Ten Work Destinations for Residents

Place	Job Count	Share
Amherst	152	16.70%
Northampton	61	6.70%
Springfield	48	5.30%
Greenfield	43	4.70%
Worcester	38	4.20%
Boston	21	2.30%
Easthampton	12	1.30%
Gardner	11	1.20%
Holyoke	11	1.20%
South Deerfield	11	1.20%

Commuting Patterns

Leverett had a high volume of residents traveling outside of Leverett for work. 128 workers enter Leverett from other communities each day and about 893 residents leave Leverett each day for work. Only around 19 working Leverett residents remain in town for work. Commuting patterns suggest that Amherst is the most popular destination for residents who are leaving town for work (152 residents), and overall, most outbound commuters travel South for work. The number of residents leaving Leverett for work each day compared to the number of commuters coming into town for work suggests Leverett serves as more of a residential community than a job center for the region.

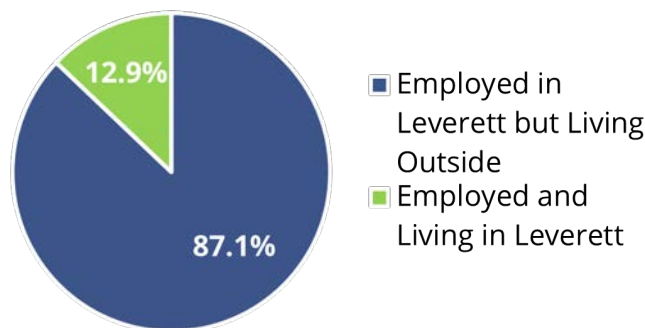
Figure 58 shows the top ten largest employers in Leverett

Leverett’s largest employers fall within the educational services and public administration sector of the economy. Leverett Elementary School is the leading employer in Leverett, with an estimated 20-49 employees. Most employers are located along Montague Road or Long Plain Road.

Figure 52. Labor Force Efficiency (All Jobs) Among People Living in Leverett



Figure 53. Labor Force Efficiency (All Jobs) Among People Employed in Leverett



Source for all graphs: OnTheMap, 2020; RKG Associates

Leverett’s Employment Base

Leverett’s Construction and Health Care industries show stability and some growth.

Leverett’s employment base consists of just 142 jobs, a 24% decrease from 2012. The largest employment industry in Leverett is the Construction sector, which increased by 36%. Some industries saw declines, like Government and Manufacturing.

Across the region, government and educational services have seen the most growth and remain the top two sectors.

The Health Care sector has grown the most across the region, with a growth of 30%. Government remains the largest employment sector, with the highest average annual earnings. Other Services and Accommodation & Food Services have decreased over the past decade.

Figure 54. Leverett: Top Six Largest Employment Sectors

NAICS	Description	2012 Jobs	2022 Jobs	2012-2022 % Change	2022 Average Annual Earnings
23	Construction	30	41	36%	\$66,904
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	19	23	21%	\$56,005
90	Government	56	17	-70%	\$64,285
31	Manufacturing	25	17	-33%	\$72,611
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	25	16	-37%	\$16,694
44	Retail Trade	11	10	-5%	\$59,842

Figure 55. Region: Top Six Largest Employment Sectors

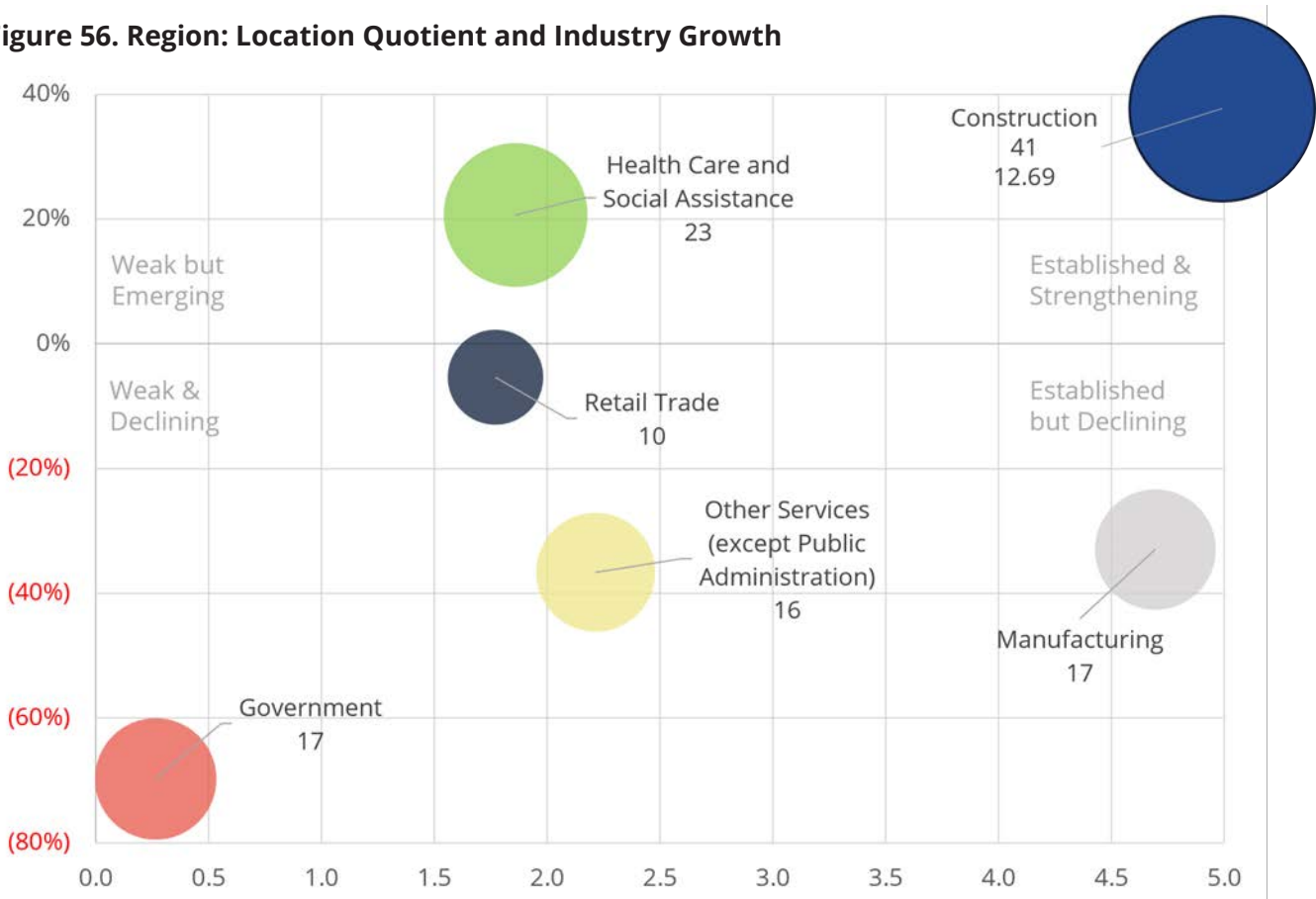
NAICS	Description	2012 Jobs	2022 Jobs	2012-2022 % Change	2022 Average Annual Earnings
90	Government	10,676	11,379	7%	\$86,407
61	Educational Services	3,987	4,077	5%	\$38,366
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	1,796	2,336	30%	\$56,121
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	2,020	1,325	-34%	\$46,437
72	Accommodation and Food Services	1,396	1,244	-11%	\$26,010
44	Retail Trade	1,074	1,079	0%	\$42,460

Source for both tables: Lightcast 2023; RKG Associates

Leverett’s Construction industry is unusually prevalent when compared to the region, Location quotients (LQs) compare employment by industry in two or more geographic areas. The location quotient is a ratio of the percentage of an industry’s employment in one geography to that of a larger comparison geography. If the ratio is less than 0.80, then the identified industry sector is thought to be under-represented in the local economy. Conversely, a ratio greater than 1.20 can show a specialty within the local economy as compared to the larger geography. The location quotient can be useful in pointing out opportunities for certain industry sectors to gain a larger share of the employment base or a specialty area in the local economy. The comparison geography used for Leverett was the surrounding region.

The graph below shows the location quotients of the top six industries compared to the region. The industry sector with the highest location quotients is Construction, followed by Manufacturing, Other Services, and Health Care & Social Assistance.

Figure 56. Region: Location Quotient and Industry Growth



Source: RKG Associates

Changes in Employment in Leverett over Time

This chart shows the breakdown of the labor force in Leverett between 1990 and 2021. The total population is in gray; the working population is in orange; and those who were unemployed are in green. In 2021, 60% of the population was in the labor force (i.e. aged between 15 and 64) with 95% of them employed.

Figure 57. Leverett Labor Force 1990-2021

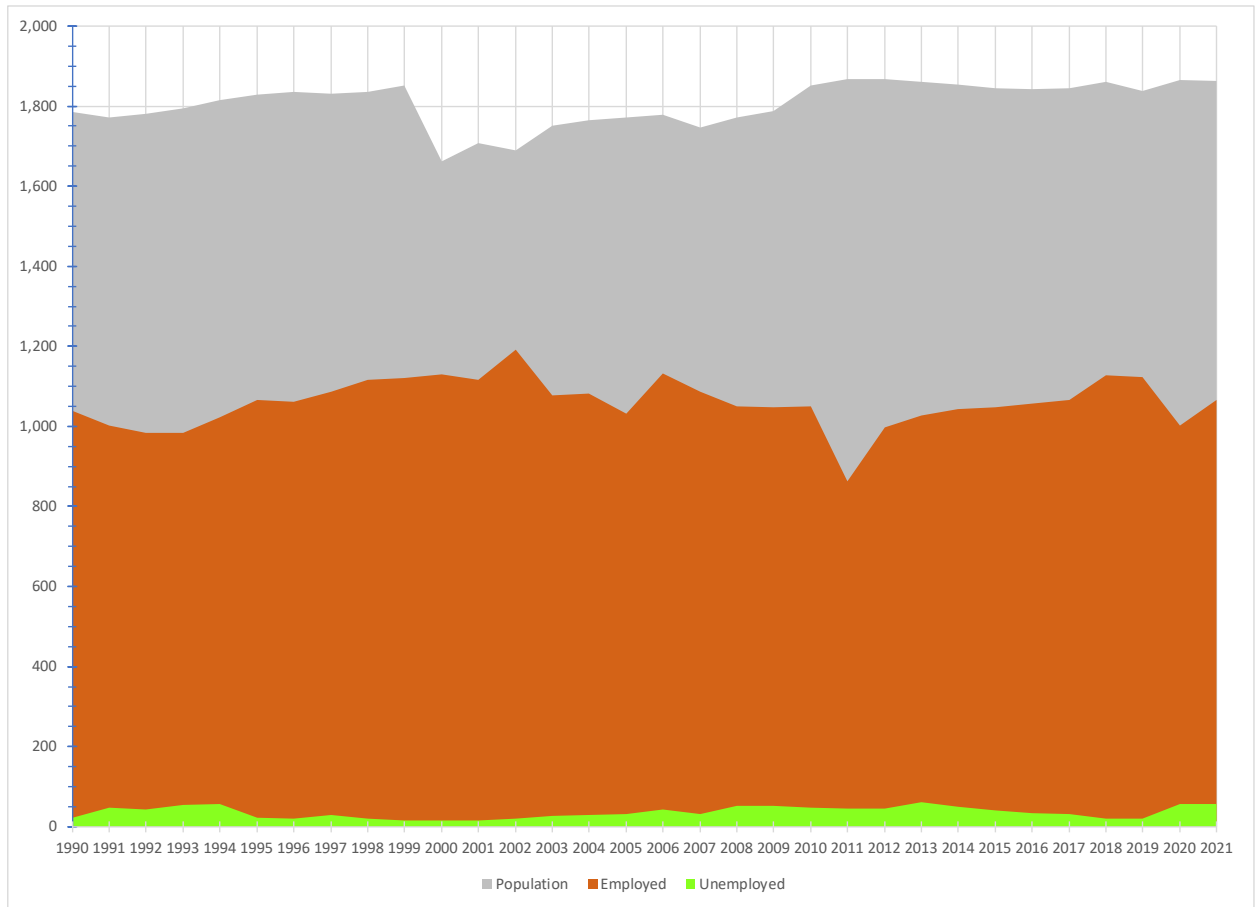


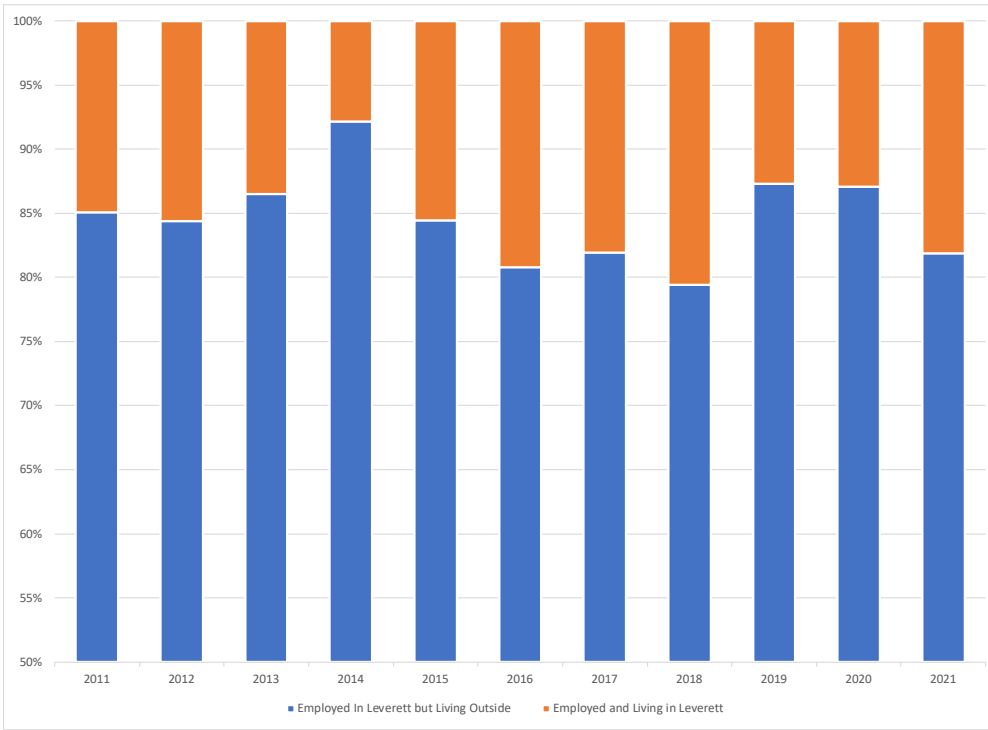
Figure 58. Leverett: Top Employers

Organization Name	Location	Number of Employees	2-Digit NAICS
Leverett Elementary School	Montague Road	20-49	
Leverett Fire Department	Montague Road	20-49	
Leverett Village Co-Op	Rattlesnake Gutter Rd	20-49	
Mudpie Potters	Montague Road	20-49	
Bourke Builders	Long Hill Road	5-9	
Coolcap Fund Inc.	Shutesbury Rd	5-9	
Hampshire Franklin Children's Day Care Center	Long Plain Road	5-9	
L&F Construction	Long Plain Road	5-9	
Leverett Police Department	Montague Road	5-9	
Local Harmony Inc.	Jackson Hill Road	5-9	

Source: MA Department of Economic Research 2023; RKG Associates

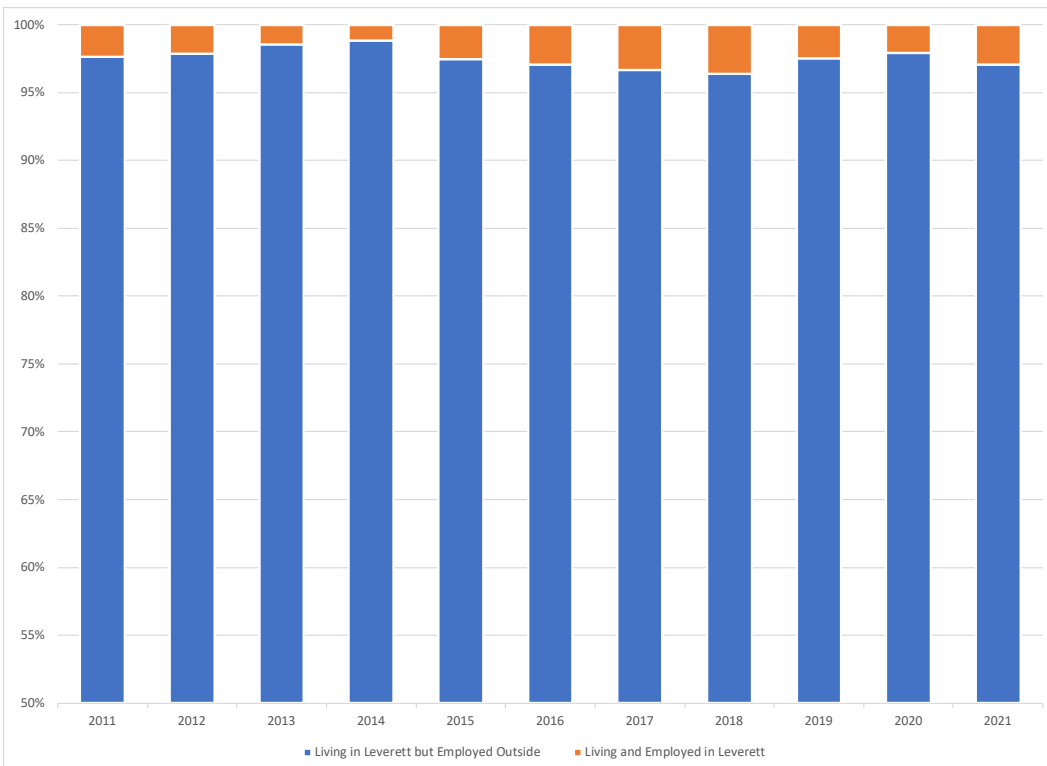
This chart shows where those who are employed in Leverett actually live. In 2021, 82% of those employed in Leverett lived elsewhere.

Figure 59: Employment Patterns: Employed in Leverett 2011-2021



This chart shows where those who live in Leverett actually work. In 2021, 97% of those living in Leverett worked elsewhere.

Figure 60: Employment Patterns: Living in Leverett 2011-2021

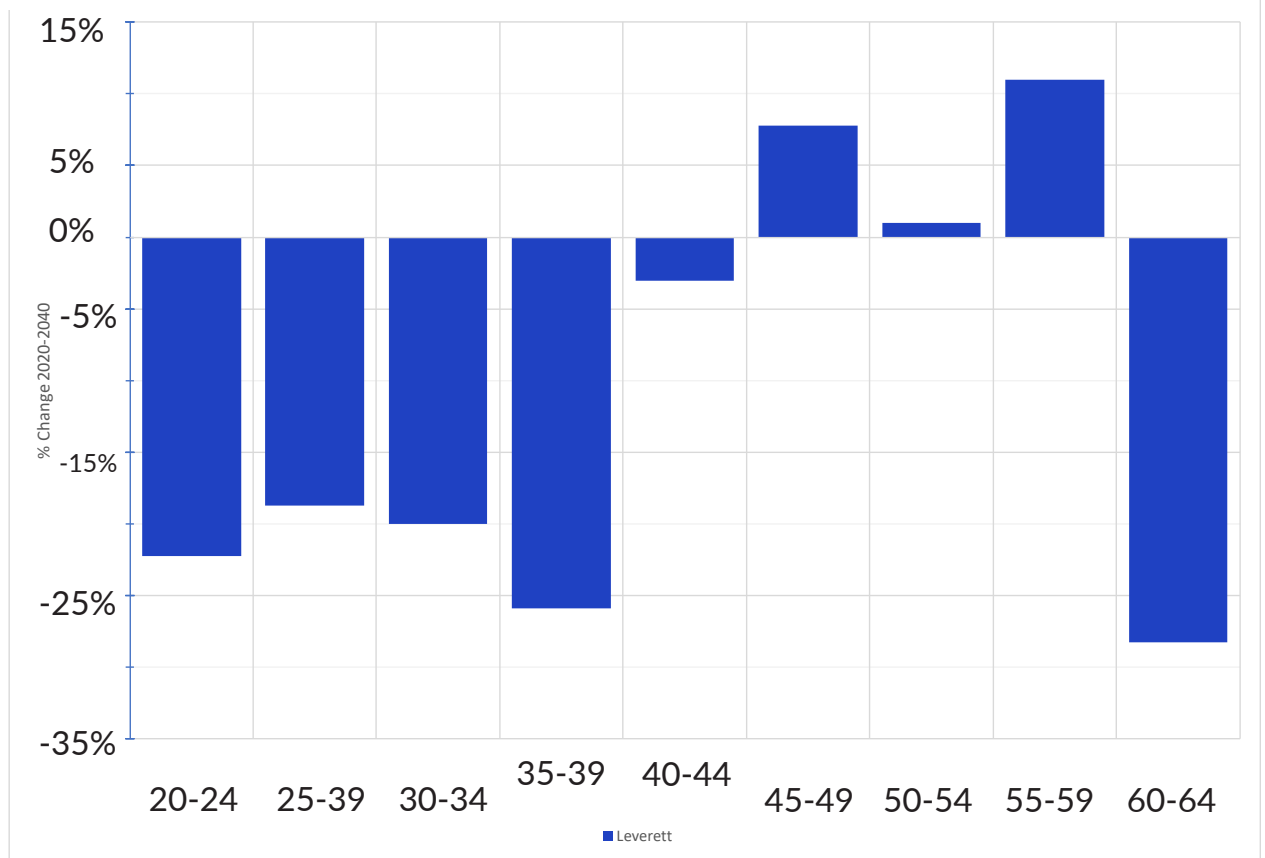


[Confirm sources]

Employment in Leverett in 2040

This chart shows how Leverett’s working population (those between 20 and 65) is estimated to change between 2020 and 2040. The largest decreases will be in those under 40 and those 60-64.

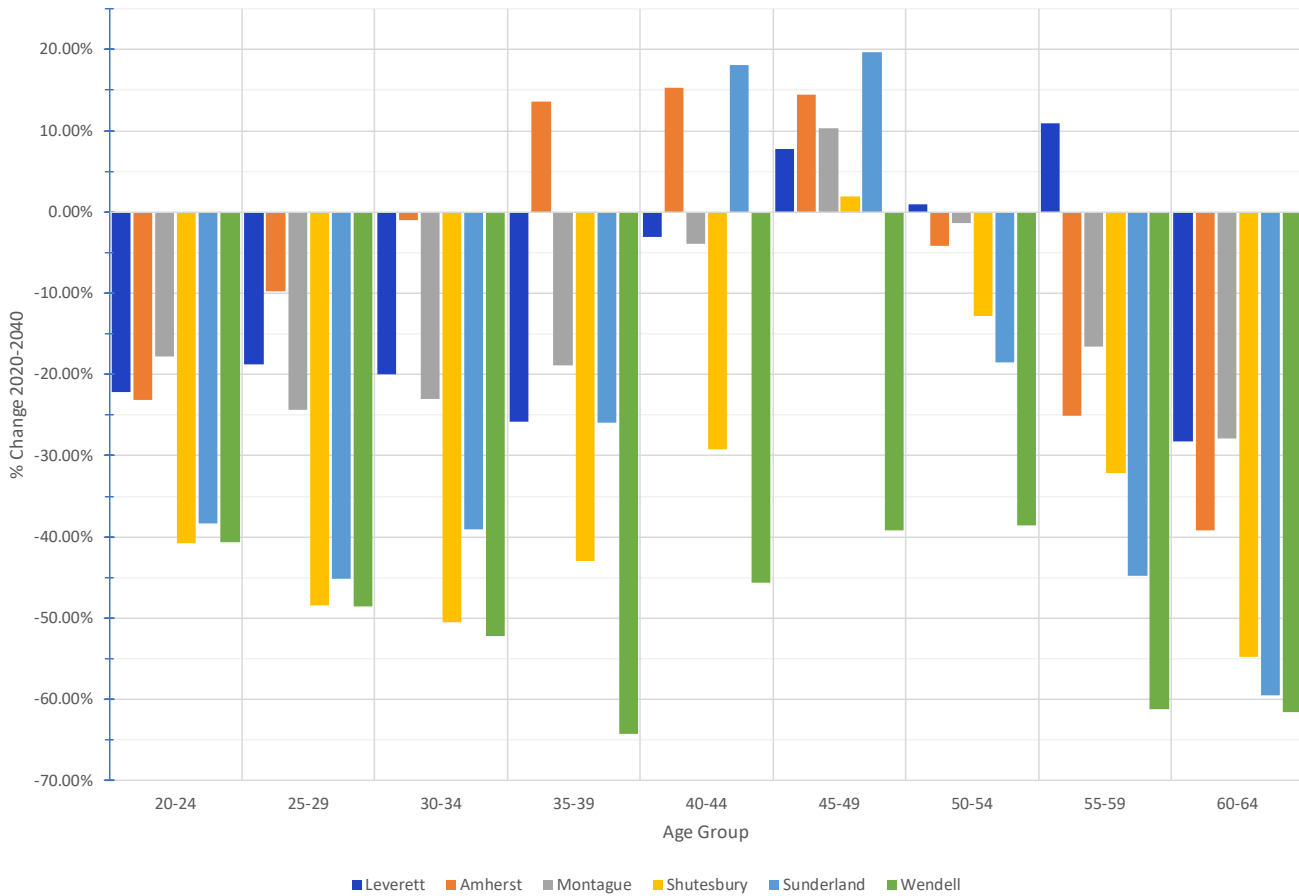
Figure 61. Leverett Working Age Population Change 2020 - 2040



Source: UMDI V2022 Long-Term Population Projections for Massachusetts Municipalities and Regional Planning Areas (UMDI V2022 Population Projections) UMass Donahue Institute

This chart shows how Leverett's working population (those between 20 and 65) is estimated to change between 2020 and 2040 compared to that in surrounding towns. All towns see the same declines in those under 40 and those 60-64.

Figure 62. Leverett and Surrounding Communities Working Age Population Change 2020-2040



Source: UMDI V2022 Long-Term Population Projections for Massachusetts Municipalities and Regional Planning Areas (UMDI V2022 Population Projections) UMass Donahue Institute

Appreciate that zoning can enhance density near Town Center + also enhance rurality + land preservation away from Town Center.

Seclude industrial development off the Route 63 Industrial Park.

Support for the arts generates awareness not only of the arts but also the community, environment generally, and encourages education.

Reduce zoning restrictions for business renters which align w/ conservation and community values.

Ropes course on Town-owned recreational land as a revenue source.

Zoning that supports pop-up shops & other innovative, eco-friendly business ideas.

What we learned about LAND USE and HOUSING.

Housing as a use of land is a source of concern, with comments identifying the need for housing, possible solutions, and concern about changing the zoning to make housing easier. Posted solutions, some of which sparked disagreement, include the following:

- Accessory Dwelling Units.
- Smaller plots for affordable housing.
- Easier permitting process for housing that meets community values.
- Tiny house communities.
- Cluster development to preserve open space.
- Allow flag lots.
- Allow multi-family (3+ units) somewhere.

What we learned about HOUSING.

Question: Should the Town reduce barriers to new construction/ housing to improve housing opportunities and increase economic diversity?

The responses to this question were mixed. Some commenters called out the need for environmental protection, including protecting back lands and the aquifer, addressing the impacts on wells and septic systems, and restrictions because of climate change. A few supported small-scale density, such as allowing Accessory Dwelling Units and four-unit buildings. A few were not in favor of reducing barriers.

Question: Should the Town allow a wider range of housing types in residential areas?

Most of the responses were positive, with a focus on affordable housing, varied architecture, co-housing, small cluster development, group or multi-family housing for single seniors, and Accessory Dwelling Units. Concerns include protecting the aquifer and the size of the development.

What we learned about LAND USE and ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development focuses on businesses and jobs. Comments included thinking about industrial development, the use of recreational land, and rethinking zoning to match the desired business sizes and locations. Comments included those in the column at left.

Leverett would be a healthy community if there were more economic opportunities here. Not just more wealthy enclaves.

Rural Character” of villages was not w/out services or businesses as it is currently. What we have now is “suburban”.

Leverett’s neighbors are providing the majority of commerce/industry/ services. Do we need to develop in these areas to be “competitive” or do residents prefer to keep us a “bedroom community”?

How reconcile retaining rural character with increasing housing stock?

WFH allows people to stay that otherwise would be in Boston/ Hartford/Springfield. Increases town diversity.

What we learned about HOUSING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, and QUALITY OF LIFE.

One of the first comments asked, “What is meant by “development” Housing? Commercial? Non-profit? Something else?” Section 81D defines the economic development planning element as “[identifying] policies and strategies for the expansion or stabilization of the local economic base and the promotion of employment opportunities”

A common theme throughout the workshops and the survey is the concern about over-development in Leverett. This concern is certainly not limited to the Leverett community, but may have particular resonance in a community that values its rural qualities. Unfortunately, this high-level concern has, in some cases, led to the rejection or dismissal of potential options to address specific needs in the community because of an assumption that the options require significant changes to the built environment. In some cases that concern is expressed in terms of the impact to the Town budget; in others, the concern is expressed in terms of the impact to natural resources and the historic built environment.

As the Leverett community continues to discuss the recommendations of this plan, members should keep in mind the scale of solutions for a rural community is very different from that of a large town and that smaller communities may need to stretch their creative muscles to come up with some solutions.

Fortunately, the strength of the Leverett arts community was a frequent comment in this section, including a reference to Leverett Community Arts (LCA) and the need for a performance space.

Creative ideas around housing include having the town collaborate with landowners to build tiny homes, subdividing existing buildings to provide more affordable housing, renting rooms in housing for below-market prices, and allowing for shared wells/septic systems for 4-8 units to provide for more moderate housing for families and seniors. Identifying and doing something with condemned housing was another comment.

Comments about the business data including wanting to know if this included people who worked from home (including remote workers and those with employees who live in other states). One commenter wanted to know how many people worked from home and the services they might need. Eco-tourism was identified as possible business opportunity

Finally, comments indicated some tension between those who think of Leverett as a rural community and those who see it as a bedroom community or a suburb.

4.4 PROJECTED IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

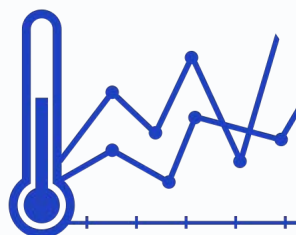
SUMMARY

Typical New England houses are built to protect us from our winters, not our summers. As the climate continues to change, our winters will become milder and our summers hotter, leading to a great need for days in which we cool our houses rather than heat them. In addition, older people are more sensitive to heat. Strategies include retrofitting existing houses to make them more energy-efficient and cooler, building new energy-efficient housing stock (especially those that rely on natural cooling), establishing warming/cooling centers to help those who are vulnerable during power outages, and creating microgrids to support additional electrical demands from cooling needs.

Climate change also leads to increased precipitation from storms – events that are more frequent and higher intensity. It also creates a shift in the pattern of temperature and precipitation, increasing periods of drought during certain months. The shift in temperature, precipitation, and drought places stress on vegetation and animals. Leverett is heavily wooded; such shifts can weaken trees, making them more prone to infestation. In addition, pests such as the Emerald Ash Borer, which has wreaked havoc on ash trees in Massachusetts, are moving north as the weather warms and are likely to further stress plants in our forests. With warmer average temperatures, pests that used to die off with the cold will no longer do so.

Increased precipitation also leads to increased flooding both along surface waters, such as ponds, rivers, and streams, and from stormwater rushing off paved surfaces (with the potential for contaminating surface water with nonpoint source pollution). For Leverett, the topography of the roads may require more frequent repairs as higher-intensity storms wash away gravel or cracked asphalt. Heat will have a negative impact on paved surfaces, causing further degradation.

Figure 63. Change in Temperatures



By 2040 the average minimum and maximum temperatures are projected to increase from the baseline of data from 1961-1990.

- Average Maximum: from 56.3F to 60.7F
- Average Minimum: from 33.6F to 37.9F

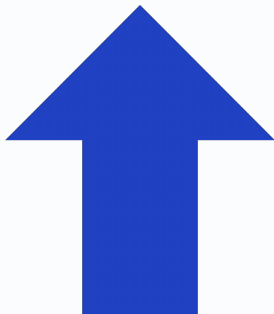
Source: National Environmental Modeling and Analysis Center

Figure 64. Climate Data



By 2040 the total precipitation (rain and snowfall) amount is projected to increase with the risk of flooding increasing accordingly.

50.21"



46.45"



By 2040 the number of days when air conditioning is required are projected to increase.

17.6



3.7



By 2040 the number of days when heating is required are projected to decline.

169.6



147.2

47.9



29.5

Source: National Environmental Modeling and Analysis Center

CURRENT CHALLENGES

The Town has experienced problems maintaining water storage for fire protection for wildfires with hydrants running out of water

The Town does not have a designated warming or cooling location for vulnerable groups (e.g. seniors) to go to in the event of extreme cold or hot periods in winter and summer. As the population ages this may become a larger issue for seniors in Town.

Wells and septic systems are impacted by climate change and beaver activity. Periods of drought may lead to wells running dry or being contaminated. Flooding can lead to contamination of the water supply from septic systems. Beavers have already impacted wells and septic systems in town leading to contamination.

The hydrography map in Figure 65 shows the DRAFT updated 2024 FEMA flooding data. Once finalized, this map will replace the existing FEMA flood map that was last updated in 1980.

Note the location of protected land relative to the major resources: the aquifer, surface water, and streams.

Also note where built structures and infrastructure may be threatened by flooding. As noted in **Section 4.6**, the Town will need to update the Zoning Bylaw once the final maps are released.

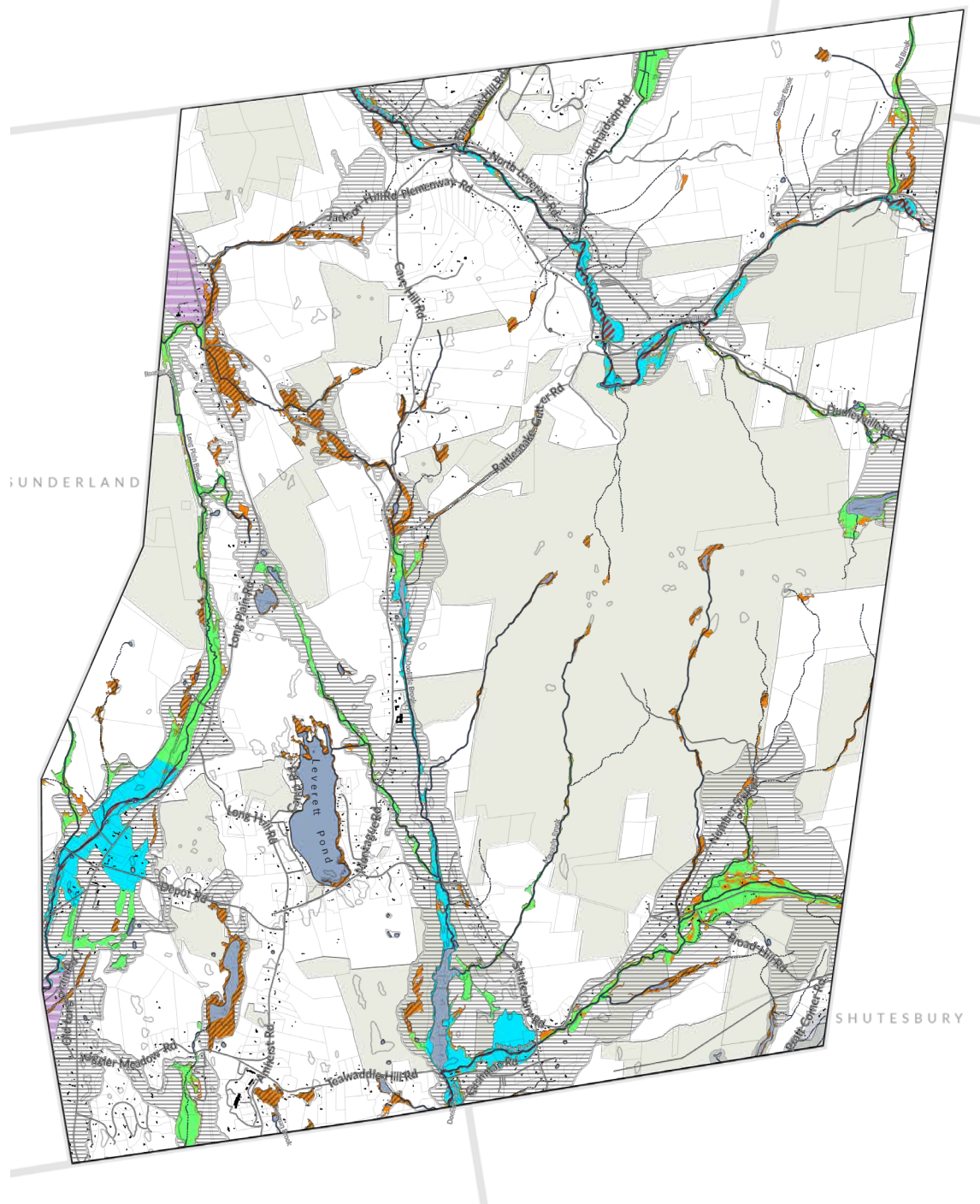
What we learned about LAND USE and ENERGY AND CLIMATE RESILIENCY

Foster conversations about how to create a resilient community in the face of climate change.

A few comments suggested community solar – one at the Transfer Station and other public land; one specific to Commonwealth land. Another comment raised the need to increase climate resilience – flooding, fires, smoke, pests, shifting ecosystems.

Conversations about the Town’s role in climate resiliency and disaster planning indicated a general unfamiliarity with the Town’s Hazard Mitigation Plan and the recommendations in that document. The consultant team tested some of the recommendations of that plan and those are included in **Sections 3.3 and 5.2**.

Comments on energy resiliency included suggestions for solar panels on town-owned parking lots and the roof of Leverett Elementary School or a town-owned community solar field.



Preliminary FEMA Data, 2024

- A: 1% Annual Chance of Flooding, no Base Flood Elevation
- AE: 1% Annual Chance of Flooding, with Base Flood Elevation
- AE: Regulatory Floodway
- X: 0.2% Annual Chance of Flooding
- X: 1% Drainage Area < 1 Sq. Mi.

Hydrological Features

- Aquifer
- Pond and wetlands
- ~ Rivers and streams
- Title IV Setbacks

Other Features

- Buildings
- Roads
- Aquifer Protection Overlay District
- Open Space Protected in Perpetuity



Figure 65. Draft Hydrography Map

4.5 TOWN SERVICES AND FACILITIES

WATER AND WASTEWATER

The public water supply is limited; most residents and businesses are dependent on private wells. The public water supply system serves the Library, the Public Safety Complex, and the Elementary School. Expanded service from Amherst to Cushman and Teawaddle Hill Roads could address contaminated wells. Per the 2020 draft Hazard Mitigation Plan, groundwater is susceptible to contamination due to flooding hazards due to widespread septic systems in Town.

Water

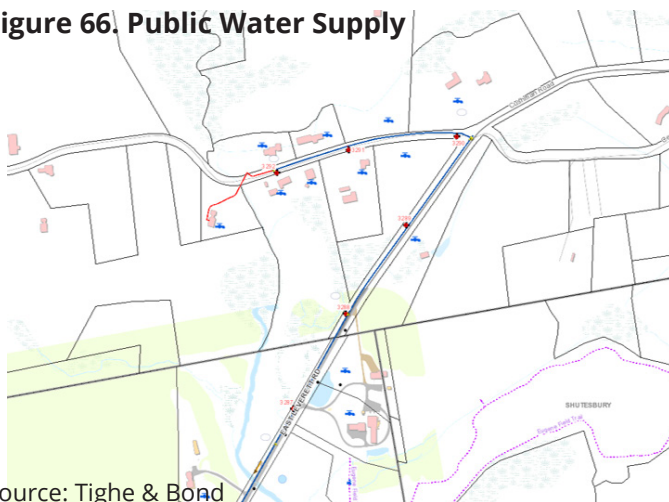
- The public water supply system serves the Library, the Public Safety Complex, and the Elementary School.
- Private wells / water supplies serve most of the town.
- Non-Transient Public Water Supplies:
 - Willow Blossom Learning Center
 - Mt. Toby Meeting of Friends Church
 - Leverett Elementary School
 - Leverett Village Co-Op

Wastewater Treatment

Wastewater is a constraint on new development. Most systems are primarily on-site subsurface sewage disposal systems with poor soil conditions for such systems. Amherst is the closest municipal wastewater system at about one mile from the Leverett border. All uses in Leverett are therefore dependent on onsite treatment of wastewater.

Public sewer was a topic during part of the planning process. In general, soil conditions are not favorable for groundwater discharge associated with wastewater treatment plant

Figure 66. Public Water Supply



SUMMARY OF UTILITIES

Broadband and Phone

- LeverettNet through South Hadley Electric Light (post-2022)

Electricity

- Leverett Community Choice Power Supply Program (Dynergy Energy Services)
- Eversource

Natural Gas

- No service within Leverett

Cell Phone Service Scores

- (Coverage Critic.com)
- AT&T (7.8/10 - blue hexagon)
- T-Mobile (7.4/10 - pink hexagon)
- Verizon (5.5/10 -red hexagon)

SUMMARY OF ROADS

- 43 miles of total roadways
 - 16 miles gravel
 - 27 miles paved
- Major north-south corridors
 - Route 63
 - Shutesbury Road / Montague Road / Cave Hill Road
 - Amherst Road / Cave Hill Road
- Major east-west corridors
 - Cushman Road / Shutesbury Road / Leverett Road
 - North Leverett Road
- Current Projects
 - Shutesbury Road culvert improvements are underway
 - Funding received for Dudleyville Road restoration

COMMUNITY-RELATED SERVICES

- Leverett Elementary School (preschool - 6th grade)
- Leverett Library
- Transfer Station
- Elder Services
- Police
- Fire

FUTURE NEED FOR SENIOR SERVICES

Leverett has an aging population with the population of seniors (65+) constituting over 30% of the total population. In 2020, the majority of seniors were between 65 and 74, by 2040 the senior population will be split almost evenly between those 65-74 and those 75+.

² Provided by Brian J. Cook, Leverett Fire Chief, [check date]

Seniors over 75 tend to require more medical services and have greater needs in terms of transportation and access to services (groceries, pharmacies etc.). The Leverett Fire department has been seeing a consistent upwards trend in call volume over the last several years as the population has aged (128 calls in 2018 vs. 215 calls in 2023).²

- Pioneer Valley Transit Authority provides a dial-a ride-service in Leverett
- Village Neighbors (www.villageneighbors.org) is a volunteer non profit that services Leverett and offers many services including transportation, household task, errands and home visits.

Figure 67 on the following pages shows the location of the closest medical facilities, grocery stores and gas stations to Leverett. Seniors need to drive or have other transportation in order to get to medical appointments or shop for groceries.

What we learned about CIRCULATION and NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES.

Question: Should the Town reopen Rattlesnake Gutter to vehicular traffic?

The overwhelming answer was no – with a few dissenting comments.

No, It's a wonderful walking trail. Why destroy it by having vehicular traffic.

Keep as dirt road. However, drainage and retaining wall need to be rebuilt. Wonderful resource for walking!

It was a peaceful place to walk + meditate before it was closed to cars – could be both. Two ends of town could use more connection.

Provides fast response for police/fire to NE Leverett and Wendell.

Yes! Yes! Would help the co-op survive!

Question: Should the Town allow more forms of recreation on Town-owned land such as four-wheeling, snow mobiles, hunting and fishing?

Comments indicate a split – some participants preferred providing limited trails for vehicular use (with a split between snowmobiles and ATVs based on time of year) while others thought that trails could be shared or that ATVs and snowmobiles should not be allowed.

Hunting on Town-owned land produced a similar split, with some commenters in favor and others against.

4. Impact of Existing Conditions

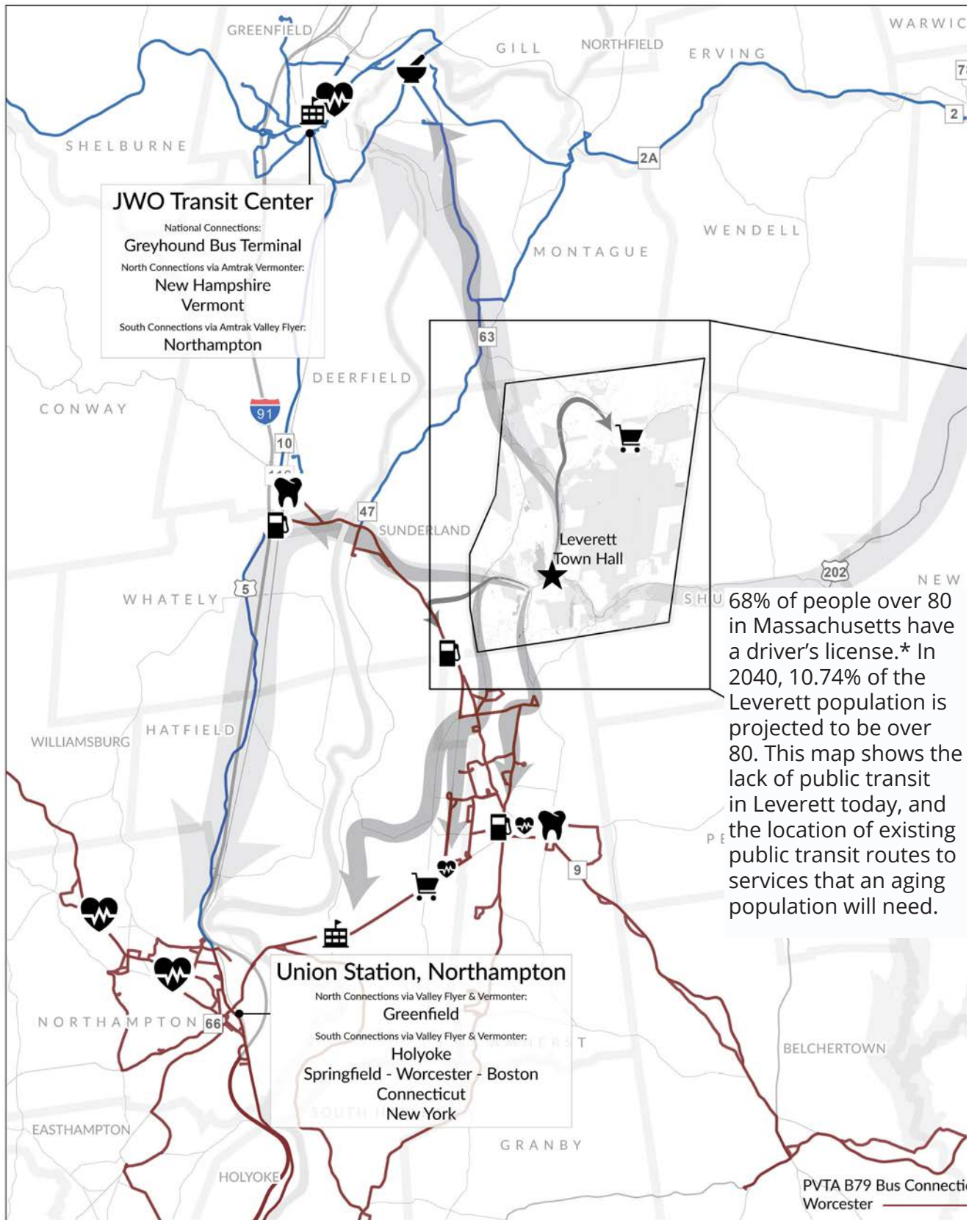
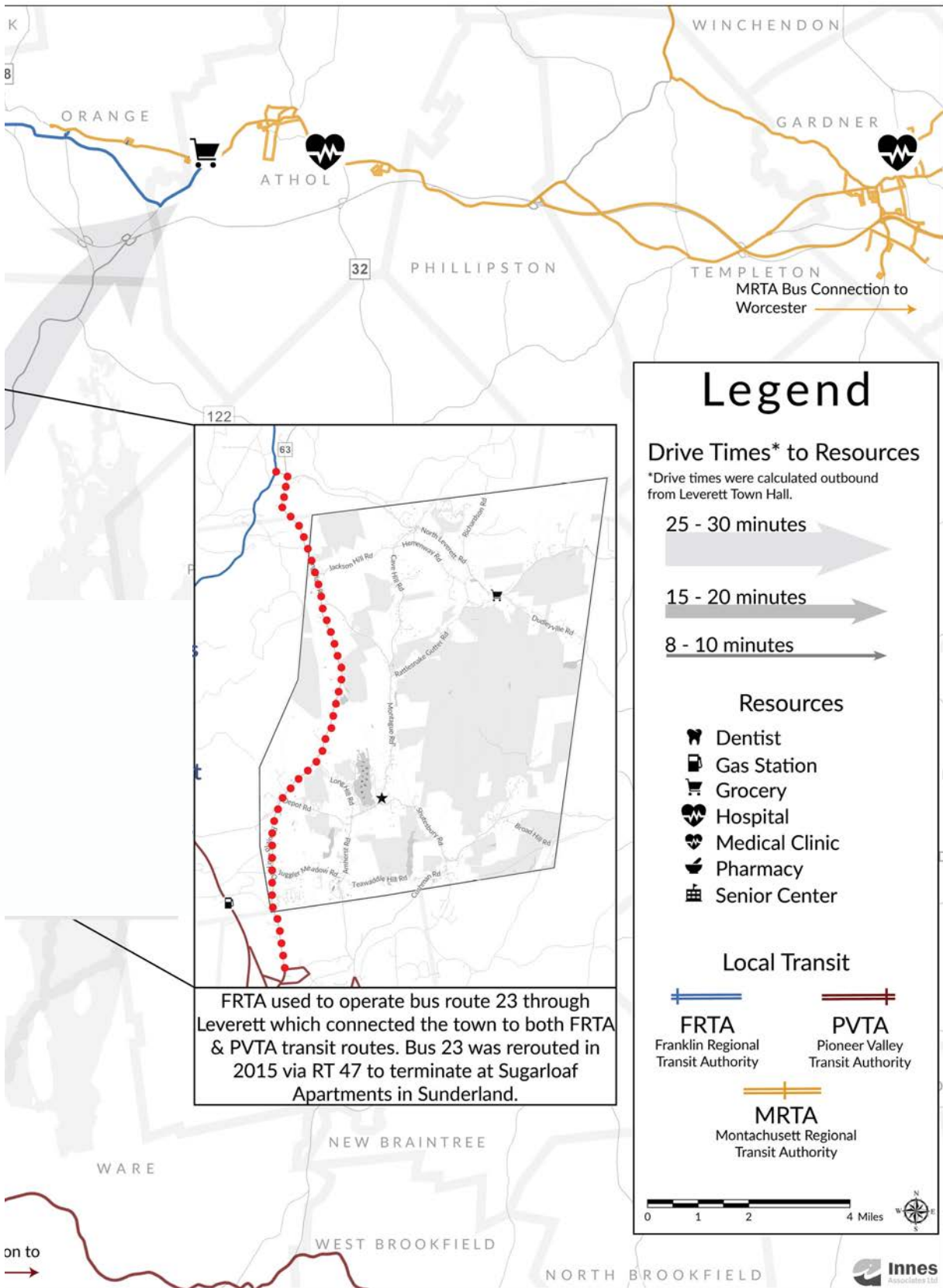


Figure 67. 2024 Accessibility of Services to Seniors



What we learned about TOWN SERVICES AND FACILITIES.

Some of the participants at the first workshop really do not want their dirt roads paved! People value them for their beauty and expression of rural values. However, it was unclear whether the dirt roads referred to were town-owned or privately owned. One commenter was concerned about the lack of maintenance creating dangerous roads.

Comments were split on the Leverett Elementary School and the Leverett Library, with most comments in support of both and a few detractors.

People also expressed concerns about taxes, with a few comments on a progressive property tax (both positive and negative), and one calling for a split tax rate. One person raised the idea of expanding limited commercial uses to keep property taxes low. Another suggested that reducing Town expenses would be more effective.

Other comments included a desire to enhance the Town Center, use Community Preservation Committee funds to highlight and preserve resources, address public transit needs and include bike lanes, and maintain Town Hall. Participants saw a role for the Town in addressing concerns about PFAS in the water.

The comments did not indicate a consensus on water and sewer – one commenter though the Town should provide it while another disagreed. One comment focused on the need to educate people about conserving water, even with private wells, during dry seasons.

Two comments addressed the need for a conservation agent – one suggested regionalizing the position while another suggested the position (full- or part-time) could include responsibility for trails and acting as the town land manager,

Question: Should the Town invest in providing additional public utilities such as solar solutions for the Public Safety Complex, School and Library?

In general, comments were positive. The strong preference was for solar installations on open land or previously developed land (such as the north parking lot for the Leverett Elementary School). Some commenters were concerned about the preservation of forests.

What about a “town-wide” AIR BNB.

Where residents could volunteer room(s) for visitors to benefit the school.

Tax businesses working from home.

Reply: This could drive people out!

Question: Should the Town invest in improving cell phone and wifi service throughout the town?

Most comments noted that the wi-fi is great, but that cell phone coverage needs to be improved.

One person noted the need to increase radio communications for highway, police and fire units and stated that these departments were unable to communicate across town on the Highway system.

Question: Should the Town invest money to improve Town communications?

The answers to this question were mostly positive. One commenter wanted the newsletter emailed while two others preferred it in print. A few noted the difficulty of finding out what was happening in Town.

YES – will be well worth the investment in terms of increased participation.

New easy to use website.

Question: Should the Town make better use of its public facilities including the library, public safety, and school buildings for greater public use (such as community gatherings, Council on Aging)?

This question received a strong positive response from participants, with support for the library as a community resource and gathering place.

Comments indicated a desire for some additions to the library's offerings:

- Live music.
- A large space for the community to socialize for meetings social events etc.
- A more comfortable, cozy meeting room.

YES! Libraries are the sole remaining non-commercial public spaces and are essential services in communities of any size – I totally support expanding the “range and reach” of our library.

Question: Should the Town prioritize local control of the school or consider more regionalization?

The response to this question was mostly negative, with a preference to keep control of Leverett Elementary School local. One commenter wondered if the school would benefit from sharing with other towns. Another commenter mentioned a concern about the Town’s ability to support the school. The characterization of Leverett as a bedroom community, seen at the first workshop, also appears here.

“I think that as a bedroom community for Amherst to Northampton it is vitally important we support the elementary school, I do not think it should be regionalized...”

Do we want to be a bdrm cmtty to Amherst or a sister town to Shutesbury.

Question: Should the Town further investigate regionalization and more cooperative use agreements with other towns in the area to improve services even if they may not decrease costs?

Answers in this area included rejection of regionalization and acceptance for targeted areas, including infrequently-used services (undefined) and the fire department (to address the difficulty of finding housing affordable to on-call firefighters and EMTs). Two of the twelve responses perceived a threat to the Leverett Elementary School from regionalization while a third suggested using the school for additional services, such as a senior center.

What we learned about RECREATION.

One comment supported space for off-leash dogs and another suggested pickle ball courts on existing paved arenas. A few comments requested more adult use of the gym at night and on weekends. Two questions, on trails and recreation on Town-owned land, revealed a split among participants.

Question: Should the Town improve access to trails?

Yes for hikers/
walkers.

Yes to increase
funding for the trails
committee.

Yes to strengthen
bridges or provide
wading spots for
horses

No – might encourage
ATVs which are
destructive.

Leverett needs a
youth corps – a
ccc-style volunteer
effort. Trained teens
investing in their place,
something to belong to.

What we learned about CULTURAL RESOURCES.

Question: Should the Town invest in its cultural resources?

This question had few responses, and the focus was that the artists are a community resource and contribute to economic development. One commenter wanted arts and performance space in existing buildings while another did not want the Town to invest tax revenue in the arts.

4.6 CURRENT ZONING AND REGULATORY LIMITATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Zoning governs how a community can change. It may not match the existing built environment. Zoning may also not match community values for future development/preservation strategies. Land use, and the zoning and other regulations that controls land use, has a significant impact on the following:

- Social and economic health of a community.
 - Controls on land use impact where people live relative to where they work, shop, learn, and play.
 - Such controls may also impact how people move from place to place.
- Physical health of a community.
 - Distances between uses can determine whether someone walks, bikes, or drives to another use.
 - Development standards work with other laws and regulations to address environmental health.

Zoning controls the uses of land, including residential, commercial, and industrial and the intensity of those uses, including height, massing, position on a lot, an relationship to other buildings and the street. Zoning can also place conditions on the use, such as development standards for landscaping, vehicular and pedestrian access, and stormwater management.

The Town of Leverett has five base zoning districts:

- Rural Residential (RR)
 - Residential/Village (RV)
 - Rural Outlying Residential (RO)
 - Commercial (COM)
 - General Business (GB)
-

ALLOWABLE USES

Allowable uses and dimensional standards vary by district. A summary of allowable uses is as follows:

- 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).

Table 68. Principal Residential Uses by Zoning District

	RV	RR	RO	GB	COM
One-Family	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Two-Family	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Multi-Family (3+ units)	N	N	N	N	N
Flexible Development	N	N	SPR	N	N
Boarding Houses	SP	SP	SP	SP	SP

DIMENSIONAL STANDARDS

Dimensional restrictions for the districts are as follows:

Table 69. Dimensional Standards

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%

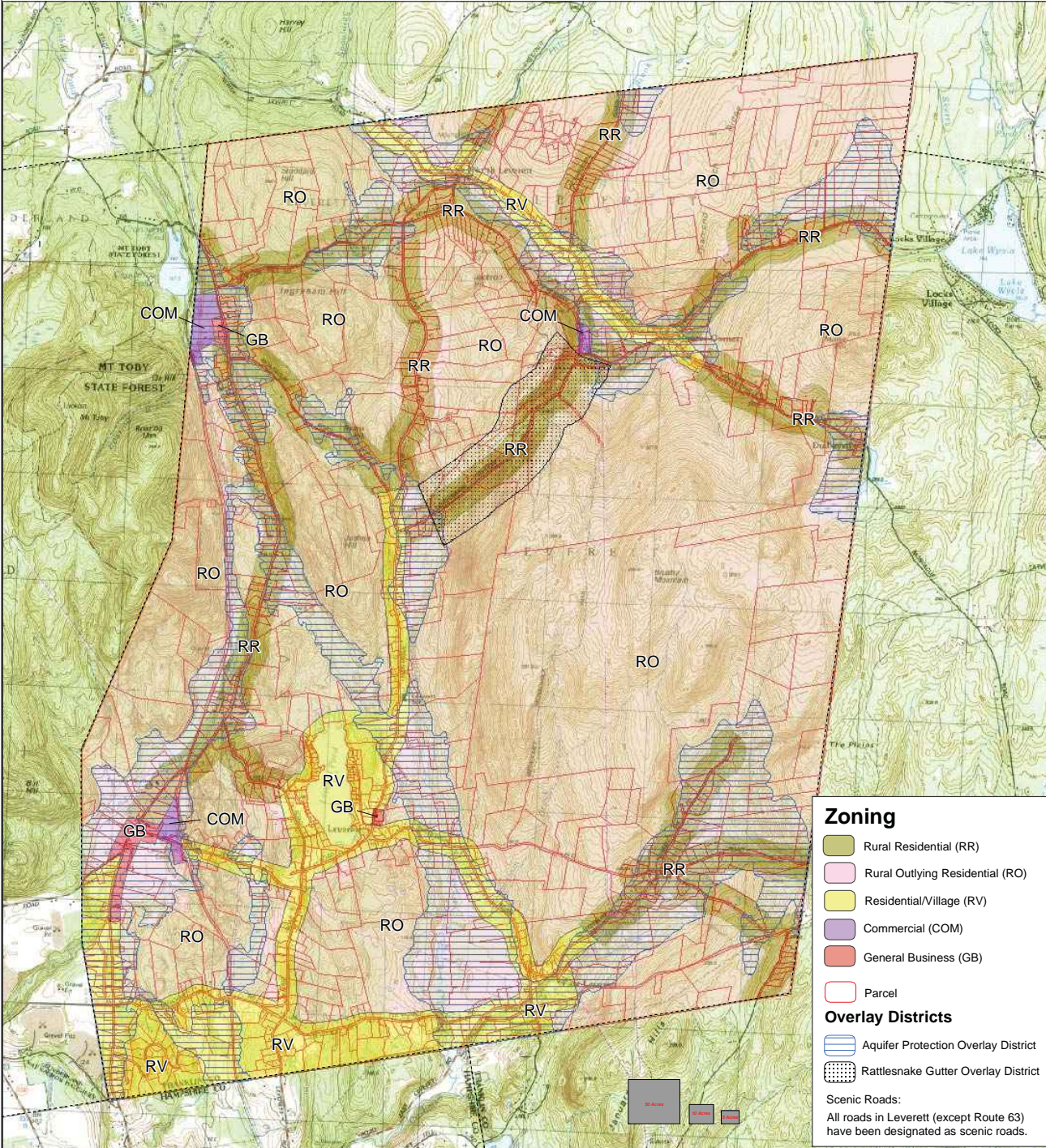
*Yards: Minimum Front (F), Side (S), and Rear (R)

**Coverage: Maximum Building (B) and Lot (L); Minimum Open Space (OS)

The restrictive lot size for the residential districts is consistent with a more rural environment. The community has expressed concerns about the need to keep the lot sizes large to provide enough room for septic systems and to reduce the impact on the environment by restricting development. See [Section 4.1](#) for a discussion of how these lot sizes have contributed to a wider distribution of housing than the community may have anticipated when establishing these standards.

Town of Leverett Official Zoning Map

March 11, 2008



Zoning

- Rural Residential (RR)
- Rural Outlying Residential (RO)
- Residential/Village (RV)
- Commercial (COM)
- General Business (GB)
- Parcel

Overlay Districts

- Aquifer Protection Overlay District
- Rattlesnake Gutter Overlay District

Scenic Roads:
All roads in Leverett (except Route 63) have been designated as scenic roads.

FRANKLIN REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
Main Office: 413-774-3167
425 Main Street
Greenfield, Massachusetts 01301



Map Sources:
Map prepared by The Franklin Regional Council of Governments Planning Department. GIS data sources include the FRCOG Planning Department, the Massachusetts Highway Department and MassGIS. Digital data obtained from MassGIS prepared for the Office of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and is approved for use in the FRCOG Planning Department. The FRCOG Planning Department is not responsible for any errors or omissions in the data. The FRCOG Planning Department is not responsible for any errors or omissions in the data. The FRCOG Planning Department is not responsible for any errors or omissions in the data. The FRCOG Planning Department is not responsible for any errors or omissions in the data.



March 11, 2008

Figure 70. Town of Leverett Zoning Map

Nonconforming parcels

Figure 71 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 require a variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals for most actions, depending on how the lot or structures does not conform (lot size, yards, etc.). The parcels shown, because they are nonconforming by lot size, would not be considered buildable under the current zoning regulations. Such nonconforming lots are typical of New England villages built prior to the introduction of zoning in the 1930s and later.

PERMITTING PROCESSES

As-of-right uses require only a building permit, unless the zoning also requires site plan review. Uses that require a Special Permit from the Planning Board have the highest level of review as the Planning Board holds a public hearing and may deny the use if the applicant does not meet the conditions for a Special Permit. Site Plan Review is in between the two level of controls; the Planning Board can require a public hearing but may not deny the use if it satisfies the conditions. The following special districts have varying approval requirements.

- 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 Review Process
 - Scenic Road Protection (Hearing – Planning Board)

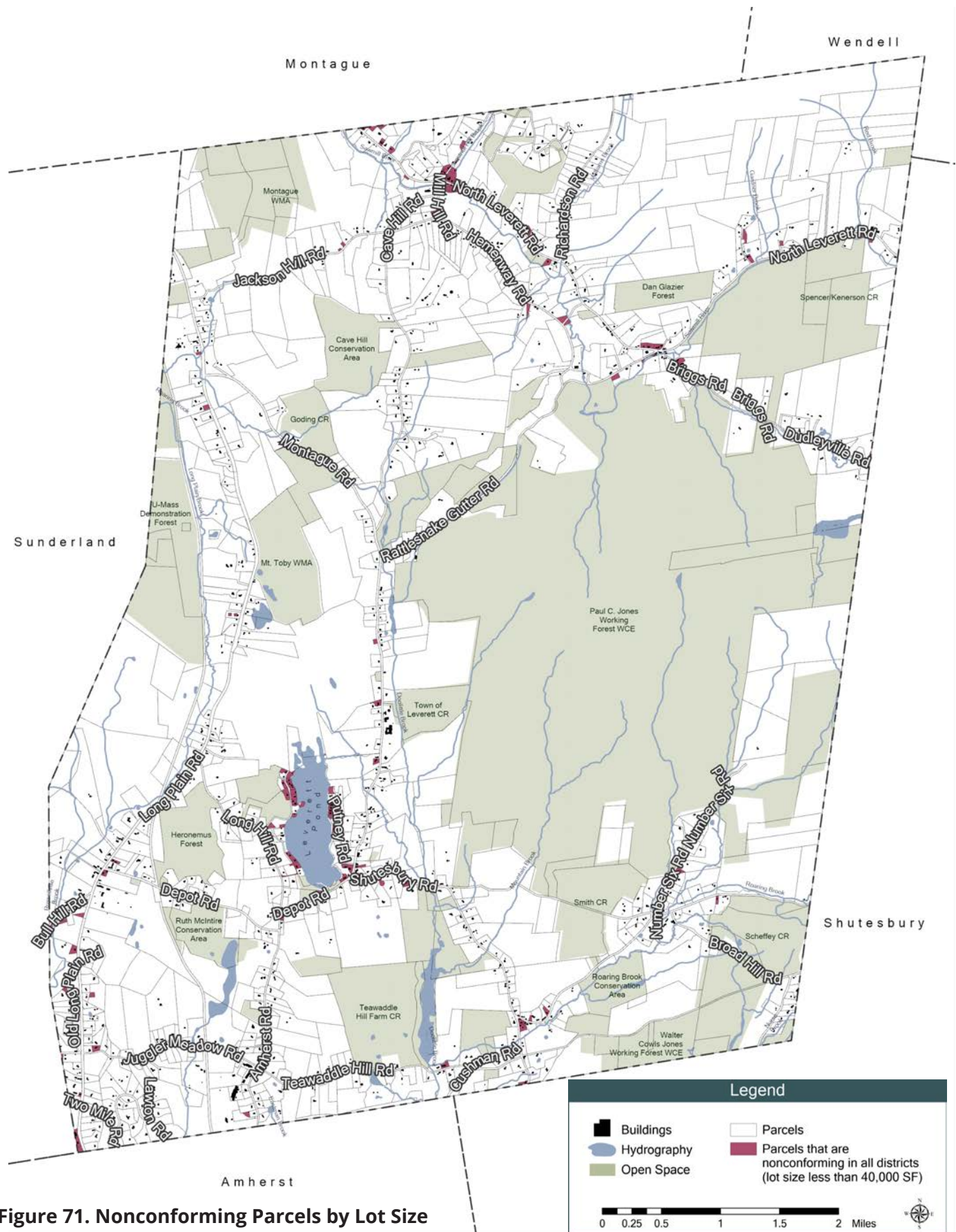


Figure 71. Nonconforming Parcels by Lot Size

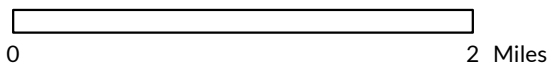
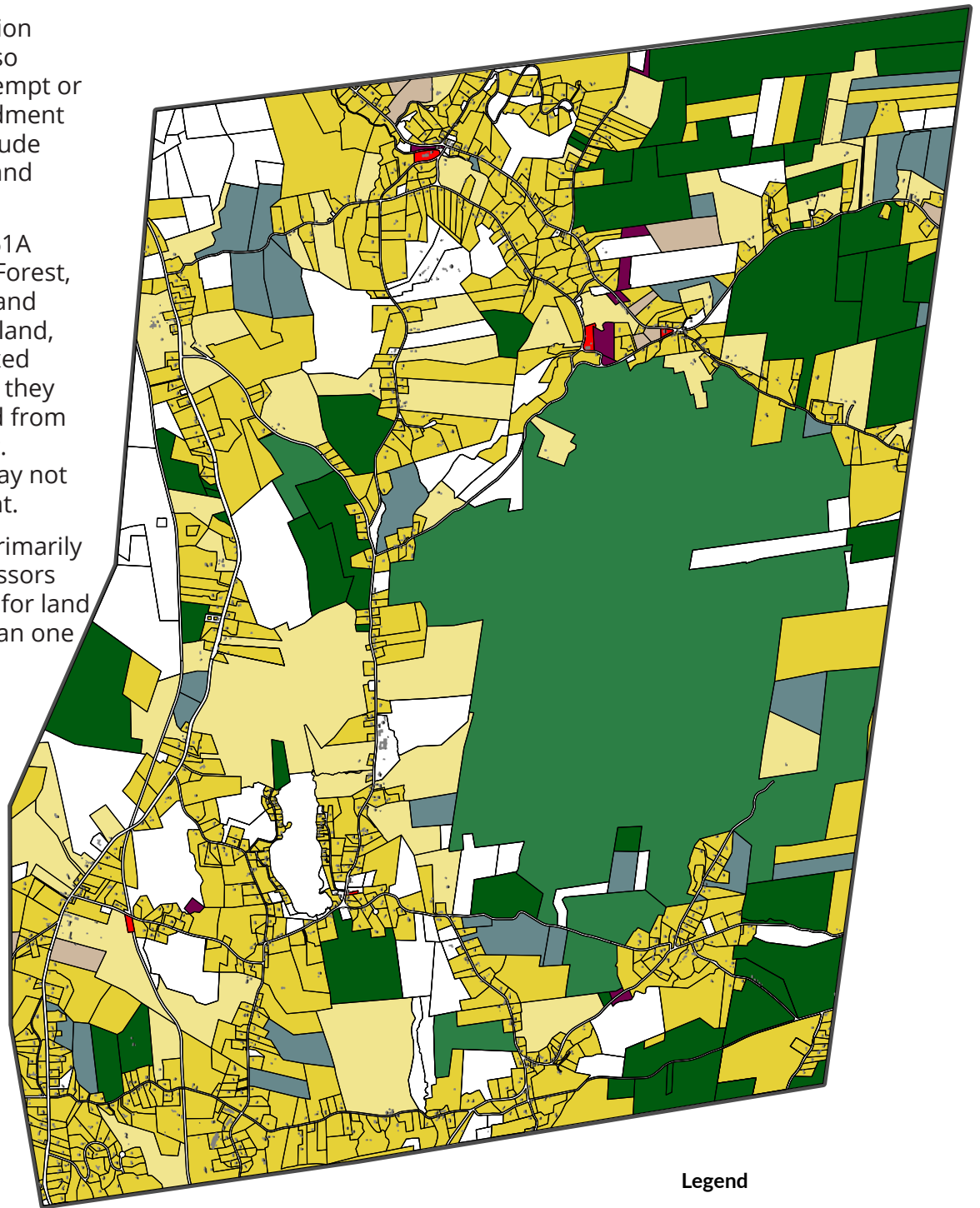
4. Impact of Existing Conditions

Notes:

Ch. 40A, Section 3 uses are also known as exempt or Dover amendment uses and include educational and religious use.

Chapter 61, 61A and 61B are Forest, Agricultural, and Recreational land, which are taxed differently as they are protected from development. Protection may not be permanent.

Mixed-use, primarily [X] is an assessors classification for land with more than one use.



Legend

■ Commercial	■ Chapter 61B
■ Industrial	■ Chapter 61A
■ Residential	■ Mixed-Use Primarily Residential
■ Chapter 40A, Sec. 3	■ Mixed-Use Primarily Forest
■ Chapter 61	

Figure 72: Consolidated Land Use Map

PROTECTIVE AND RESTRICTIVE DISTRICTS

This section presents the protective and restrictive overlay districts in the Zoning Bylaws and indicates potential problems the Planning Board should explore. These are included as part of **Section 5.4**, which discusses the Planning Board's next steps after adoption of this comprehensive plan.

4300 Aquifer Protection District

- **APPLIES TO.** Any property within the district boundaries as shown on a map held by the Town.
- **RESTRICTS.** Certain uses and structures that are deemed detrimental to the aquifer.
- **MODIFICATIONS.** May reduce certain dimensional requirements through the special permit process.
- **REQUIRES.** Special permit from the Board of Appeals.
- **INCENTIVES FOR USE.** Ability to modify the dimensional requirements provides added flexibility.
- **PROBLEM.** Restriction on lot sizes and frontage appears arbitrary. Could the goal be achieved by the Special Permit for design capacity of the on-site disposal system?

4400 Flood Hazard District

- **APPLIES TO.** All areas delineated on the Flood Insurance Rate Map.
- **RESTRICTS.** Uses within the floodplain.
- **MODIFICATIONS.** None.
- **REQUIRES.** Special permit from the Board of Appeals.
- **INCENTIVES FOR USE.** None – this is a highly restrictive bylaw that significantly reduces the uses within the designated floodplains.
- **PROBLEM.** Will need to be updated to refer to new flood maps and requirements in the model Floodplain Overlay District.

4500 Stream and Lake Protection District

- **APPLIES TO.** Land within 100 feet of a Major Stream or the highwater line of a standing open body of water, or 50 feet of a Minor Stream. Major and Minor Streams are shown on a map.
- **RESTRICTS.** Septic tanks or leachfields and dumping filling, excavation etc. within the boundary.
- **MODIFICATIONS.** None.
- **REQUIRES.** Special permit form the Board of Appeals required for a building or structure. Such building or structure may not be used for human residence.
- **INCENTIVES FOR USE.** None – this is a restrictive overlay.

4600 Scenic Roads Protection

- **APPLIES TO.** All public ways in Leverett are Scenic Roads.
- **RESTRICTS.** Cutting of trees over 10” in diameter at breast height or tearing down stone walls.
- **MODIFICATIONS.** None.
- **REQUIRES.** Planning Board public hearing.
- **INCENTIVES FOR USE.** None – this is a restrictive bylaw.

4700 Rattlesnake Gutter Overlay District

- **APPLIES TO.** All land 1,000 feet on both sides of Rattlesnake Gutter Road.
- **RESTRICTIONS.** No structure within 500 feet of the centerline of the traveled portion of the road; no excavation or removal of vegetation within 250 feet of the centerline of the road.
- **MODIFICATIONS.** Design review required.
- **REQUIRES.** Site Plan Review.
- **INCENTIVES FOR USE.** None – this is a restrictive overlay.

4800 Flexible Development

- **APPLIES TO.** Creation of 7 or more lots from a single parcel.
- **ALLOWS.** Single-family (60,000 SF lot) or two-family dwelling (90,000 SF).
- **MODIFICATIONS.** May reduce yards by no more than 50% and increase lot coverage by up to 50%.
- **REQUIRES.** At least 35% of the total parcel area is permanently protected open space. A Conservation Restriction is required for 50% of greater of the total area unless the Protected Open Land is offered to and accepted by the Town (Conservation Commission).

- **INCENTIVES FOR USE.** An increase in the number of residential lots up to 20% of the base is allowed if 10% of the lots qualify for the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI). In other words, if ten lots are allowed under the base, 2 additional lots are allowed if 1 lot qualifies for the SHI. Lots may have single-family or two-family dwellings. The total additional units cannot exceed 20% of the base units allowed. The base units are the number of single-family units that could be allowed under a normal subdivision.
- **PROBLEM.** The incentive does not work as planned; the base maximum limits the number of units that could be added even though, in theory, two-families would be allowed on all lots.

4880 Residential Subdivision Development

- **APPLIES TO.** Any subdivision of land into 2 or more lots.
- **ALLOWS.** Greater flexibility in the design of subdivisions.
- **MODIFICATIONS.** Appears to be a variation of 4800 Flexible Development.
- **REQUIRES.** Two subdivision plans – conventional and flexible, economic impact analysis.
- **INCENTIVES FOR USE.** Flexibility in determining lot lines.
- **PROBLEM.** It is unclear whether this only applies to the RO District (4883 Procedures). See also 4899 Flexible Development. As with 4800, the allowable number of units is determined by the conventional subdivision.

4970 Ground-Mounted Solar Electric

- **APPLIES TO.** Siting of medium-scale and large-scale ground-mounted solar electric installations.
- **ALLOWS.** Greater flexibility in the design of subdivisions.
- **MODIFICATIONS.** Appears to be a variation of 4800 Flexible Development.
- **REQUIRE.** Two subdivision plans – conventional and flexible, economic impact analysis.
- **INCENTIVES FOR USE.** Flexibility in determining lot lines.
- **PROBLEM.** The bylaw broadly follows the outline of the state's model bylaw. There are some differences, including the definition of different scales (Leverett is number of panels; model bylaw is kilowatts).

I'm not sure about less restrictive zoning – I care about conservation & small carbon footprint.

We should look at all options for changing zoning to meet current + future needs. “Mixed use” made this town from the beginning.

Times are requiring our community to consider other creative affordable living options.

What we learned about ZONING.

As noted in other parts of this document, Accessory Dwelling Units are a popular option. Other comments echoed the desire for cafés, other local businesses, and a focus on the Town Center. Two creative ideas not heard elsewhere included using the Town grassland for animal feed and considering future development of the sand pits, possible for solar.

What we learned about LAND USE.

The maps in Workshop 2 zoomed into the Town enter, North Leverett, Moore’s Corner, and Route 63 and asked people to think about what past uses and amenities the town had, what is available now, and what should be available in the future.

This is a summary of some of the thoughts:

- A café or gathering space: some identified Cushman’s; others suggested something at the Leverett Center for the Arts or elsewhere in the Town Center, including Town Hall itself. Many commenters supported the existing Leverett Village Co-op and some considered expanding it (see Moore’s Corner).
- More housing.
- Bus service for the elderly to access groceries.
- Gas station and convenience store.
- Pop-up stores (yarn, books, seasonal); antique store near the Co-op.
- Store with basics to support wider needs in the community.
- Sidewalks/bike lanes from Leverett Center to North Leverett.

Ideas for specific areas included the following:

North Leverett

- Sawmill as a museum, event, community center
- Guard rail at Cave Hill Road and North Leverett Road

Moore's Corner

- Historic park or site to recognize the importance of the charcoal industry.
- Traffic calming on North Leverett Road.
- Playground.
- Support the Co-op as an all-purpose space. Thoughts included a liquor license so it could be a pub; community space; events.

Most of the comments in this session focused on the Town Center and Route 63.

Town Center

- Keep the Post Office in its current location.
- Public trail around Leverett Pond with conflicting views on who should manage the pond.
- Pathway between Town Hall and the Public Safety Complex (other comments suggested the sidewalks/ bike lanes notes above).
- Enforcing speed limits.
- Save the Field Library.
- Allow beehives on Town land.
- Rent the Town Hall for events (like Montague Grange).
- Revive/restore the old inn (one commenter noted that it would need water and sewer).

Route 63

- Reliable and frequent public transit.
- Child-safe bike trail.
- Commercial activity (split between those who wanted to see more intense activity and those who were opposed).
- Smaller-scale, environmentally sensitive commercial activity.
- Solar farm.
- Affordable housing.

Many of the comments in this section appeared to refer to the Kittredge Estate which is outside the discussion of this comprehensive plan. Since the plans for this property were not confirmed during the public engagement process, there was no method of evaluating potential impact. However, the parallel public discussion about the future of this property did bring forward comments and concerns about the impact of larger development on the town.

Again – villages were not exclusively residential. Revenue producing activities would bring the community together.

4.7 LAND USE, DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS, AND PROPERTY TAXES

Leverett has a residential tax rate in the middle range compared to surrounding communities, but the second lowest commercial and industrial tax rate. The only community with a split tax rate (residential property owners charged a different tax rate per \$1,000 value than non-residential owners) is the Town of Montague. The fiscal implications of property taxes are an important consideration that businesses, and even individuals, evaluate when making choices about where to locate.

While low property taxes can help attract businesses and residents, limited funding can result in insufficient provision of public services and amenities, inhibiting a town’s ability to remain competitive with its neighboring communities.

Table 73. Fiscal Year 2023 Tax Classification

Tax Classification	Assessed Value	Tax Levy	Tax Rate
Residential	\$333,213,800	\$5,338,085	16.02
Commercial	\$3,584,768	\$57,428	16.02
Industrial	\$758,500	\$12,151	16.02
Personal Property	\$35,114,320	\$562,531	16.02
Total	\$372,671,388	\$5,970,195	

Source: Mass. Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services, 2023

Table 74. Fiscal Year 2023 Tax Rates by Class

Community	Residential	Commercial	Industrial	Personal Property
Amherst	\$20.10	\$20.10	\$20.10	\$20.10
Leverett	\$16.02	\$16.02	\$16.02	\$16.02
Montague	\$15.65	\$23.78	\$23.78	\$23.78
Shutesbury	\$18.44	\$18.44	\$18.44	\$18.44
Sunderland	\$12.80	\$12.80	\$12.80	\$12.80
Wendell	\$21.41	\$21.41	\$21.41	\$21.41

Source: Mass. Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services, 2023

These tables show the existing land use of parcels in Leverett including acreage of land, building and land values, average building area, and average year built. Tables also break out residential uses.

Residential uses comprise most of the land in Leverett, with a total of 4,471 acres. The average size of a residential unit in Leverett is 1,759 square feet, driven mostly by single family homes.

Of the non-residential uses, mixed use land has the highest total valuation at approximately \$13.5 million. However, on a per-acre basis, Commercial land is nearly twice as valuable as Residential land, and within Residential uses, multi-unit housing has the highest value.

Table 75. General Land Use

Land Use Type	# of Parcels	Total Parcel Area (Acres)	Total Assessed Value (AV)	Total AV per Acre	Avg Square Footage	Median Year Built
Commercial	5	11	\$1,203,000	\$109,763	3,856	1970
Industrial	2	3.1	\$110,400	\$35,613	-	1780
Mixed Use*	60	4,670	\$20,941,564	\$4,484	2,183	1952
Residential**	929	4,471	\$259,426,800	\$58,028	1,759	1975

Source: Town of Leverett Property Assessment Database, 2023

Table 76. Residential Breakdown

Land Use Type	# of Parcels	Total Parcel Area (Acres)	Total Assessed Value (AV)	Total AV per Acre	Avg Living Area	Median Year Built
Single Family Residential	655	2,822	\$228,642,900	\$87,910	2,184	1975
Multi-Unit Housing	39	138	\$12,144,700	\$81,031	2,574	1983

Source: Town of Leverett Property Assessment Database, 2023

*Nearly all of Leverett’s “Mixed-Use” lands are residential and agricultural or residential and forest uses

**Includes single-family, multi-family, and other – mobile homes, multiple houses on one parcel, and vacant residential land.

Municipal Revenue Sources

Land use directly impacts what the Town can spend for its operating and capital budgets as the value of land drives the amount of property taxes that can be raised. To the right are tables showing the pattern of revenue and expenses from FY2001 through FY2023. On the revenue side, property taxes have risen as a proportion of the budget while the proportion of state aid has remained relatively steady.

On the expense side, the schools are the largest proportion of the budget, and that is growing. In recent years, the increase of expenditures debt service, Town buildings, and other costs is a steeper curve than in previous years.

Below is a description of all funding sources available to the Town.

Property Taxes:

The amount that can be raised from 2.5% of the Town's assessed property values. Increases in property taxes from year to year are limited to 2.5% (excluding any new construction/improvements in existing properties).

State Aid:

Monies provided the state to every city, town and regional school district.

Local Receipts:

This comprises motor vehicle excise taxes, local excise taxes (meals, room tax etc) plus department fees, permits fees etc.

Other Available Funds:

This comprises the stabilization fund ("rainy day" fund), free cash (surplus revenue, unexpended funds, outstanding property tax collections) and other funds (gifts, federal & state grants etc)

Federal & State Grants:

Federal & State grant funds for use with specific projects (emergency management, public works, community development etc). Funds are either directed to specific projects or line items and may not be part of the general revenue.

Figure 77: Revenue Sources FY2001-FY2023

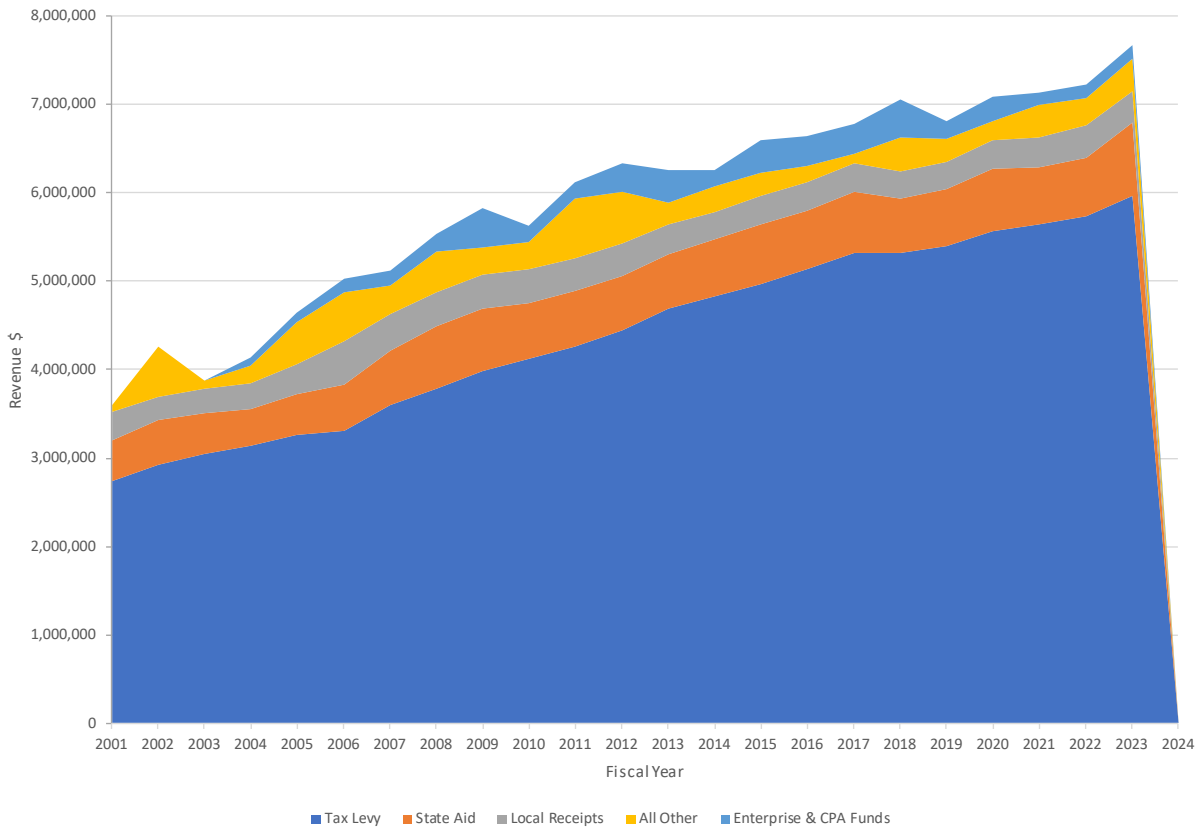
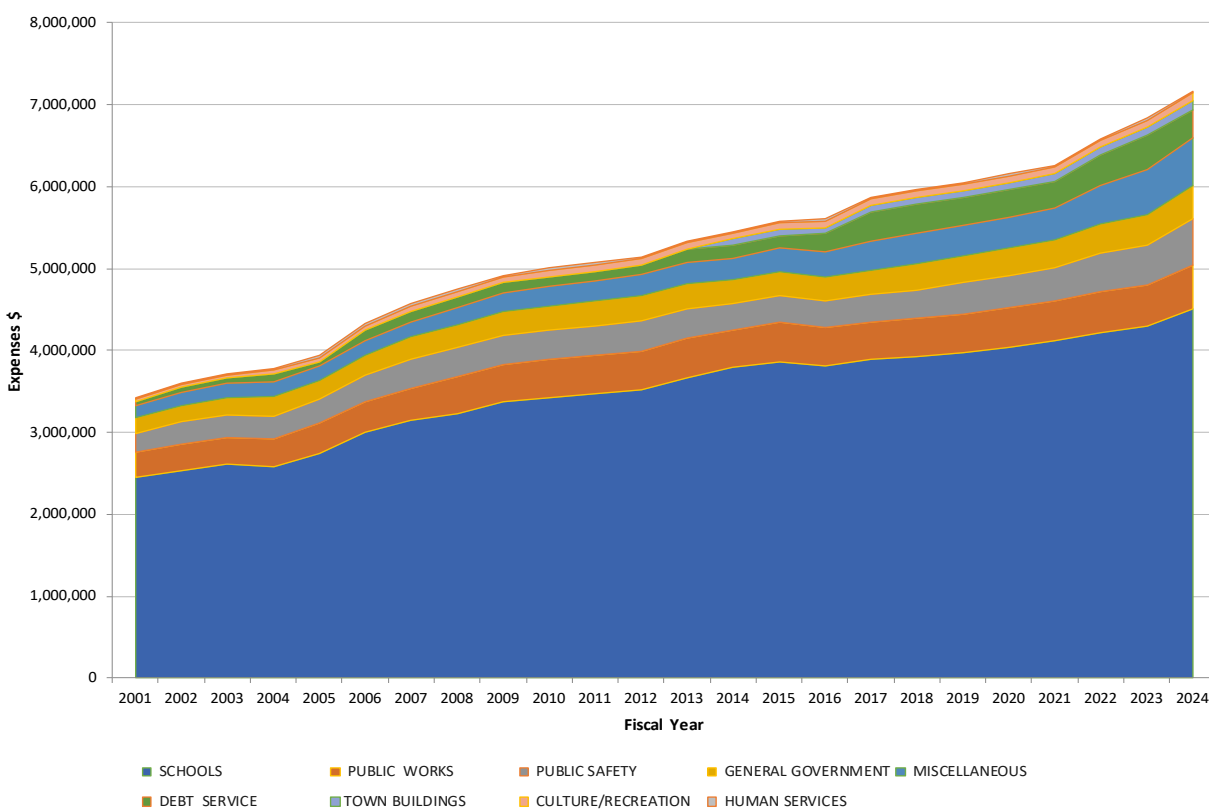


Figure 78: Expenditures FY2001-FY2023



4. Impact of Existing Conditions

The residential tax base is often the largest source of property tax revenue, and Leverett's assessed valuation is primarily residential. The table below provides a breakdown of the type of housing available;e as a percentage of the parcels and acres in town.

Table 79. Current Distribution of Residential Housing Types

Residential Description	Parcels	Parcel %	Units	Unit %	Acres	Acre %
Single-Family	655	90.59%	664	84.37%	2,824	92.01%
Condominium	4	0.55%	4	0.51%	11	0.36%
Mobile Home	18	2.49%	18	2.29%	56	1.84%
Two-Family	34	4.70%	71	9.02%	136	4.43%
Three-Family	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Multiple Houses on one parcel	11	1.52%	25	3.18%	51	1.66%
Apartment (Four to Eight Units)	1	0.14%	5	0.64%	2	0.07%

Participants in the second workshop could review the table below that explains how the property levy is reflected in an individual homeowner's tax bill. Individuals can substitute their property value for the average value in the table. Misunderstandings about how residential taxes are calculated are common.

Table 80: How to Calculate the Average Tax Bill

Step	Calculation
(a) Total Amount To Be Raised	\$6,837,954
(b) Total Estimated Other Revenues	\$1,437,892
(c) Tax Levy (a - b)	\$5,400,062
(d) Residential Class %	98.8523%
(e) Amount to be raised from Residential Class (c * d)	\$5,338,085
(f) Total Residential Assessed Valuation	\$333,213,800
(g) Tax Rate (c / f * 1000)	\$16.02
(h) Average Single Family Home Assessed Value	\$415,824
(i) Average Single Family Tax Bill (h / 1000 * g)	\$6,661.50

4. Impact of Existing Conditions

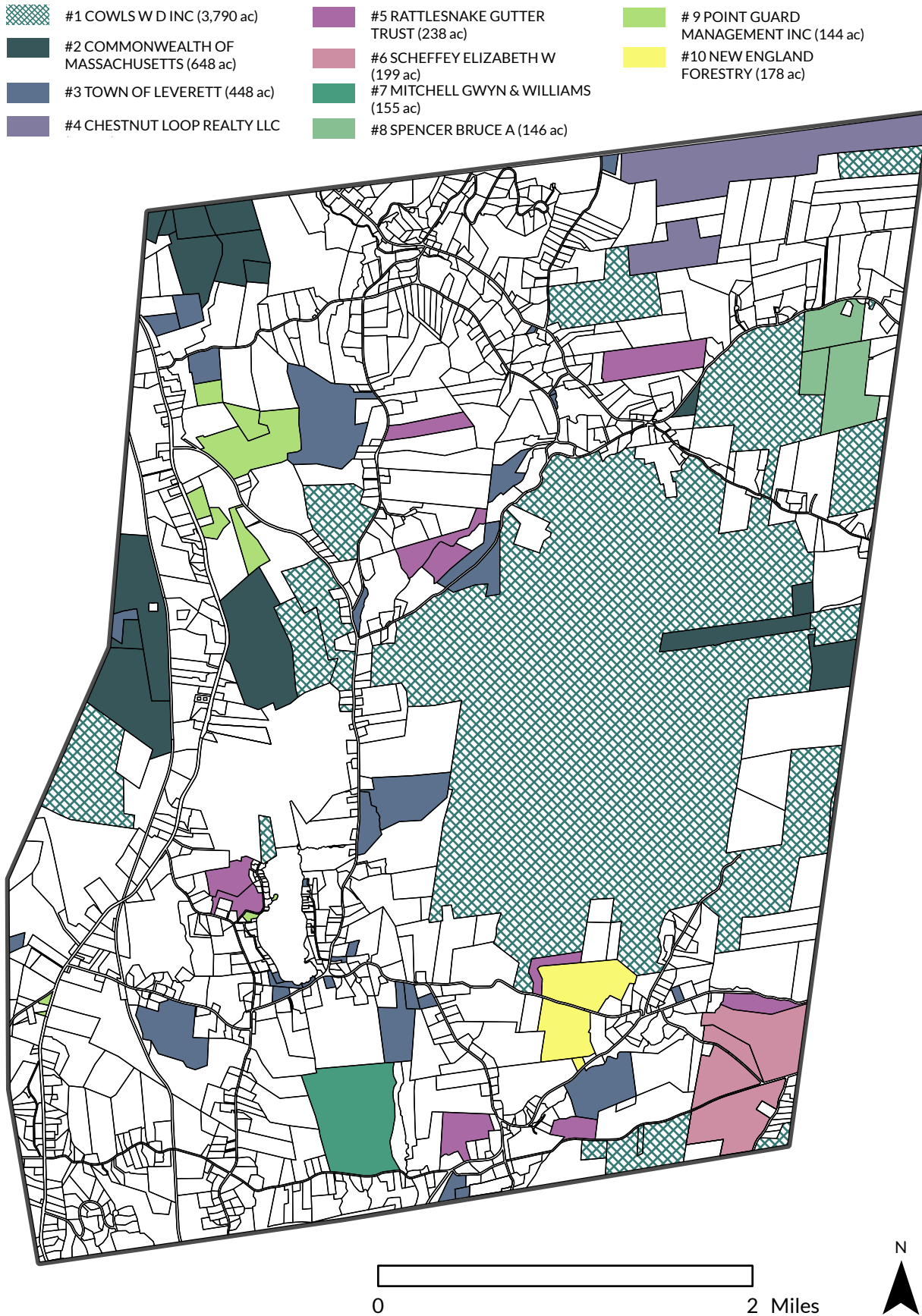


Figure 81: 2023 Ownership Map: Top 10 Owners by Acreage

What We Learned About TAXES.

Property taxes are the largest source of revenue for continuing operations of the Town and any new initiatives. Attitudes about taxes will have an impact on the implementation of some of the strategies in this plan.

Conversely, some of the strategies may have an impact on the property taxes, particularly choices made about zoning changes.

Question: Should the Town increase housing density to increase tax base?

The responses to this question were mixed. Some commenters recognized that more housing would support the tax base, while others focused on increasing affordability by adding more housing. Some commenters felt that any new housing should be in accordance with community needs and goals to address climate change and land conservation, including limitations on location relative to natural resources and existing infrastructure.

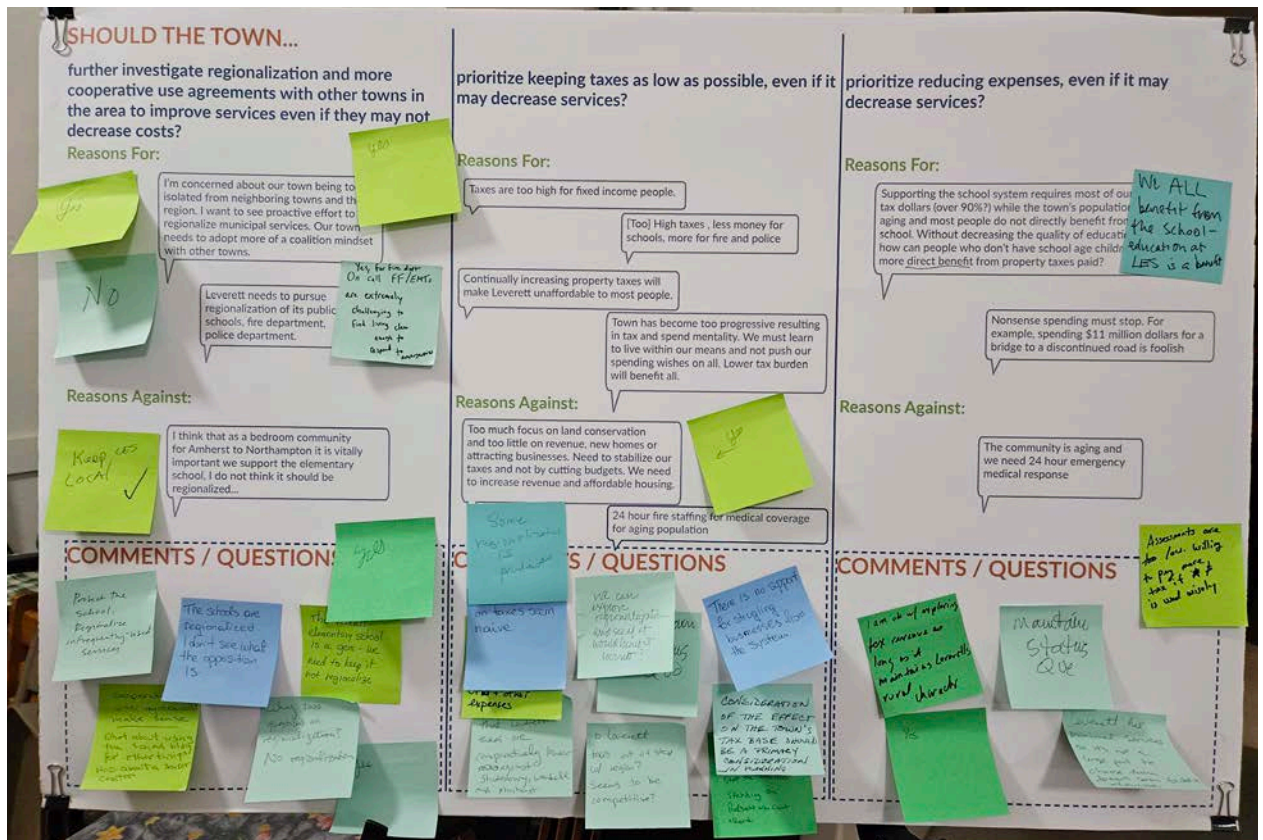


Figure 82: Comments on Taxes from the December 2023 Workshop

Question: Should the Town prioritize keeping taxes as low as possible, even if it may decrease services?

The nine responses to this question varied significantly, from those who thought the taxes were too high to those who were surprised to see that the tax rate in Leverett was lower than those of nearby towns. Others were worried about increasing housing, because of worries about an parallel increase in services to those who felt that the focus on conservation was at the expense of increasing tax revenues and affordable housing.

I'm surprised that Leverett taxes are comparatively lower against Shutesbury, Wendell and Amherst.

Leverett taxes are too high stop the endless spending on projects we cant afford.

Question: Should the Town prioritize reducing expenses, even if it may decrease services?

The six responses to this question did not provide a clear direction – one respondent wished to maintain the status quo while two others were interested in thinking about increases in tax revenue.

Assessments are too low. Willing to pay more tax if \$ is used wisely..

I am ok w/ exploring tax revenue as long as it maintains Leverett's rural character

5. Next Steps

5.1 CONTINUING COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

A clear message from the participants was how much they enjoyed gathering to discuss the data and topics. In fact, the third workshop was restructured at the request of participants in the earlier workshops to allow attendees to talk with each other in groups about the potential recommendations and implications. (The first two workshops prioritized individual comments rather than group discussion). A strong recommendation of this plan will be to continue to find ways to discuss topics of importance to the community outside the Town Meeting or town committee structure.

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION INITIATIVE

A frequent first step for communities that have completed a comprehensive plan is to appoint an implementation committee. Members of this committee are typically appointed by both the Planning Board and the Selectboard and are often responsible for reporting on progress in completing actions and recommending next steps to the Town Meeting. The committee may collect data from departments to track progress and may, at the request of the Selectboard and Planning Board, oversee some implementation actions.

As discussed in **Sections 3.3 and 5.2**, the Leverett community has identified a series of topics that require further exploration, discussion, and perhaps a different approach. One participant noted how hard it is for the community to discuss areas of interest outside Town Meeting or the board/committee structure. Rather than creating a new implementation committee, this plan recommends creating a Community Conversation Initiative. This initiative would convene 2-4 times per year to discuss topics of interest, starting with those that are identified in the plan as Explore, Discuss, and Rethink.

The Planning Board would invite the board or committee with the most relevance to the topic to convene the next session, to spread the work across many hands. An alternative would be a twice-yearly check-in among

the boards and commissions to identify areas in which community input would be helpful. Such a structure would support the conversations that began during this planning process and allow the boards, commissions, and departments to test new ideas and directions with the community in a less formal setting.

I do think more public forums on town issues would be important, even though I think we have enough other types of community events. For example, the issue of zoning + development and how both to honor the goal of more affordable housing and yet to conserve the rural nature of town + its conservation lands would be a good topic for a public forum. Also, other uses for existing town buildings to serve a range of needs, eg seniors.

5.2 RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES

The following pages provide more specific detail about each of the strategies described in [Section 3.3](#), including the following information:

- The chart of values, goals, scores, and planning elements to support the priority designation.
- The origin of the recommendation (community workshops, the survey, previous plans, or research by the consultant team).
- Why the recommendation was included based on its relevance to what the consultant team heard from the planning process.
- How the strategy could be implemented if the Town chooses to move forward. This could include additional studies.
- Barriers to and opportunities for implementation, based on community comments or existing conditions.

The twenty recommendations described in [Section 3.3](#) are first in this section. [Section 5.3](#) provides a list of recommendations from the plans and reports from the last ten years (see [Section 2.1](#)). The list groups recommendations by the Section 81D planning element to aid in evaluating whether similar recommendations from different plans can be grouped for implementation.

1	Modify the zoning to allow for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) on existing single-family lots.	DO
----------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------

Value					2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10						
Goal					2, 8						
High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements						
7	0	0	0	0	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR	S+F

Where did this recommendation come from?

The Leverett Planning Board; community workshops and the survey.

Why is it important?

In the publication of The ABCs of ADUs by AARP, it was found that ADUs play a major role in serving the housing need for communities. ADUs are economical, community compatible, better for the environment, and able to house people of all ages.

How can the Town implement this recommendation?

- Conduct community conversations around ADUs and other zoning changes.
- Develop zoning to send to Town Meeting.
- Work with Town staff and officials to ensure buy-in.

We need to allow accessory buildings as we age.

What are the barriers to implementation?

- Requires a zoning change by the vote of Town Meeting.

What are the opportunities for implementation?

- The Town will help create another options for seniors wishing to remain in their homes.

2	Modify the zoning to allow smaller lot sizes, and/or multiple units, on existing lots (e.g. one or two duplexes on a lot).	DO
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Value					1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9,10							
Goal					2, 8							
High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements							
6	1	0	0	0	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR	S+F	

<p>Where did this recommendation come from?</p> <p>Desire for additional housing, including affordable housing and senior-friendly housing from community workshops and survey; desire to cluster housing near existing infrastructure.</p>	<p>Why is it important?</p> <p>88% of all housing in Leverett is single family detached. Lot sizes are large and multifamily and multiple buildings per lot are not allowed in the zoning. Two-family units require 50% more land than a single-family. Further development on the remaining unbuilt parcels is limited.</p>
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How can the Town implement this recommendation?

- Conduct community conversations around ADUs and other zoning changes.
- Work with Town staff and officials to ensure buy-in.
- Develop zoning to send to Town Meeting.

Good idea, but must maintain H2O quality, septic regulations – esp need affordable housing/senior housing.

<p>What are the barriers to implementation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ As the Leverett population ages, seniors can remain in place (and limit housing turnover) or leave Leverett (opening up stock but breaking community ties). 	<p>What are the opportunities for implementation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Infill development to create denser areas balanced with conservation. ▪
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3	Create zoning to encourage senior-friendly housing so that seniors can remain in the community.	DO
----------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------

Value					2, 5, 6, 8, 9							
Goal					8							
High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements							
6	0	0	0	1	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR	S+F	

Where did this recommendation come from?

Community workshops and surveys; analysis of demographic trend projections.

Why is it important?

Encouraging senior-friendly housing in Town would allow for seniors to remain in their community. Surrounding towns will also experience a growth in their senior population, limiting nearby options.

How can the Town implement this recommendation?

- Conduct community conversations around ADUs and other zoning changes.
- Work with Town staff and officials to ensure buy-in.
- Develop zoning to send to Town Meeting.

Access to grants to allow older residents to make improvements to live in place.

What are the barriers to implementation?

- Assumption that senior-friendly housing is the same as a large multi-family development.

What are the opportunities for implementation?

- Several comments noted that Accessory Dwelling Units are an option to support seniors remaining in their homes.
- Providing seniors a way to age within the Leverett community preserves critical social ties and community memory.

4	Apply for grants for dam maintenance and water quality monitoring.	DO
----------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------

Value					2, 5, 6, 8, 9							
Goal					1, 9							
High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements							
5	2	0	0	0	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR	S+F	

<p>Where did this recommendation come from?</p> <p>2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan Sawmill River Dam and the Leverett Pond Dams- Low Hazard but greatest impact.</p>	<p>Why is it important?</p> <p>Wells and septic systems are impacted by climate change. Periods of drought may lead to wells running dry or being contaminated. Flooding can lead to contamination of the water supply from septic systems.</p>
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How can the Town implement this recommendation?

- Apply for grants (see **Section 7.1 Funding Resources**).
- Evaluate necessary repairs to dams and schedule them on the capital plan.
- Also implement recommendations for culvert and road repairs to protect from flooding and degradation of water quality.
- Test surface water assets to establish a baseline.

“Dam failure is a highly infrequent occurrence, but a severe incident could prove catastrophic.” (2020 HMP, pg. 195)

<p>What are the barriers to implementation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Grant funding will be competitive. ▪ Competing priorities for capital funds. 	<p>What are the opportunities for implementation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Per the 2020 HMP, proper maintenance of dams will prevent more catastrophic floods. ▪ Preservation of potable water is a major concern; flooding has a negative impact on water quality and such flooding is likely to increase with heavier storms.
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5	Develop a potable water resiliency plan.	DO
----------	-------------------------------------------------	-----------

Value					1, 3, 4, 7							
Goal					1							
High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements							
5	2	0	0	0	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR	S+F	

Where did this recommendation come from?
MVP Resiliency Plan

Why is it important?
Leverett’s draft MVP Resiliency Plan recommends developing a potable water resiliency plan as a priority. Residents are dependent on private wells for water needs, and because wells run on electricity, access to water is a concern during power outages. Actions suggested by the MVP workshop included determining the locations of artesian wells throughout town, or installing microgrids to limit the number of residents who lose power, and the ability to pump water.

How can the Town implement this recommendation?

- Public education about water quality.
- Regular testing of water to catch potential contamination early,.
- Explore developing a microgrid to address power outages.

PFAS pollution in town wells - a public water system would help this issue but might be too expensive - town could consider helping low income residents whose water is contaminated with ongoing maintenance costs for remediation clean up.

What are the barriers to implementation?

- Grant funding will be competitive.
- Competing priorities for capital funds.

What are the opportunities for implementation?

- Supporting resiliency of the electrical grid will provide additional benefits, including potential protections for vulnerable members of the community during storms.

6	Prioritize climate resilient solutions for repairs and maintenance of culverts, bridges, and roads.	DO
----------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------

Value					1, 3, 4, 7							
Goal					1, 2, 9							
High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements							
3	4	0	0	0	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR	S+F	

<p>Where did this recommendation come from?</p> <p>2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan</p>	<p>Why is it important?</p> <p>Many roads are unpaved and do not have sufficient drainage, with flooding contributing to increased deterioration of gravel roads. Bridges across town often are subject to closures due to severe weather. These closures of roads and bridges is a concern for access to routes for responders and residents in the event of an emergency.</p>
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How can the Town implement this recommendation?

- Identify and publish list of private and public roads.
- Identify those roads that are critical for emergency access and those most under threat.
- Prioritize repairs to infrastructure most at risk of failure and most at risk for additional impacts (i.e. a culvert that is blocked and causes widespread flooding).

**Yes climate resiliency
BUT: DON'T PAVE
OUR ROADS!**

<p>What are the barriers to implementation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some members of the community have a strong preference to not pave the dirt roads. 	<p>What are the opportunities for implementation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explore other options for maintaining dirt roads. ▪ Continue community conversations about climate resiliency and required maintenance of and improvements to infrastructure.
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7	Increase the Fire and Ambulance budgets to allow for 24/7 coverage to support increasing cases of slip/falls with seniors.	DO
----------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------

Value					2, 6, 8						
Goal					9						
High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements						
1	5	1	0	0	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR	S+F

Where did this recommendation come from?

Community survey, Analysis of demographic trends, Leverett Fire Department.

Why is it important?

Seniors over 75 tend to require more medical services. The Leverett Fire Department has been seeing a consistent upwards trend in call volume over the last several years as the population has aged (128 calls in 2018 vs. 215 calls in 2023).

How can the Town implement this recommendation?

- The Selectboard, Fire Department, and Police Department (see **Section 5.5** and **Table 88**) have roles in implementing this recommendation.
- Town Meeting will need to support any budget changes.

“The community is aging and we need 24 hour emergency medical response.”

“Seems like current system is working.”

What are the barriers to implementation?

- Concerns about cost and whether regionalization is an option.
- Conflicting values between self-reliance and age-friendly policies.

What are the opportunities for implementation?

- One table at the third workshop discussed whether the Council on Aging could have a role in educating the community about the danger of falls for elderly people.
- The Town could also consider working with the police department and Council of Aging to develop a vulnerable seniors list for wellness checks on seniors who live alone. Signing up for the list would be voluntary.

8	Establish an energy resiliency plan.	EXPLORE
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Value					1, 3, 4, 7							
Goal					5							
High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements							
4	1	1	1	0	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR	S+F	

<p>Where did this recommendation come from?</p> <p>2020 MVP Resiliency Plan, community workshops and survey.</p>	<p>Why is it important?</p> <p>Leverett’s draft MVP Resiliency plan recommends establishing an energy resiliency plan to reinforce the power grid. This may include a feasibility assessment of microgrids and the connection of any solar grids to three-phase power. Community solar is also of interest based on comments from the workshops and the community survey</p>
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How can the Town implement this recommendation?

- The Energy Committee (see **Table 88**) is a logical lead for investigating this strategy.
- More information about microgrids is available here: <https://www.nrel.gov/grid/microgrids.html>

**Microgrid ASAP
for public corridor
(school, PSC,
library).**

<p>What are the barriers to implementation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Grant funding will be competitive. ▪ Competing priorities for capital funds. 	<p>What are the opportunities for implementation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Energy resilience addresses several needs in this comprehensive plan, including Strategy #4, Strategy #15, and the strategies related to age-friendly communities. ▪ If Town-owned land is used for the microgrid, this strategy could also work with Strategy #12.
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9	Develop a communications plan for the town for emergencies and other events.	EXPLORE
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Value					3, 4, 6, 7, 8						
Goal					9						
High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements						
4	1	0	0	2	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR	S+F

Where did this recommendation come from?
 2020 MVP Resiliency Plan

Why is it important?
 Residents noted that it is very difficult to get in contact with everyone in town in the event of an emergency. Development of a communication plan would focus on providing public education, outreach, and resources for residents during the event of an emergency.

How can the Town implement this recommendation?

- The Emergency Planning Board (see Table 88) meets quarterly to discuss planning for emergency needs. Assign this recommendation to that board for discussion.

Communication!
Too much reliance on websites and not enough direct outreach.

What are the barriers to implementation?

- Volunteer resources to organize the guide, collect the appropriate information, and make it available in both digital and printed form.
- Volunteers and funding to support the reintroduction of the community newsletter.

What are the opportunities for implementation?

- Comments from participants at the third workshop linked this strategy to the need for more cell service, including the possibility of installing cell towers on town-owned land.
- Some groups also suggested a Neighborhood Resource Guide, listing who has what resource (ex. generator, wood stove) and contact information. The guide could also contain a list of local services and who would be willing to provide rides for people.

10	Establish a comprehensive beaver management strategy.	EXPLORE
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Value					1, 3, 4, 7							
Goal					1, 2							
High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements							
3	2	0	1	1	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR	S+F	

<p>Where did this recommendation come from?</p> <p>Leverett’s Draft Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2020, community workshops</p>	<p>Why is it important?</p> <p>Beaver activity in Leverett has increased and caused environmental changes such as flooding and development of wetlands. In some cases, beaver activity has led to the contamination of private wells and overflows of septic systems.</p>
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How can the Town implement this recommendation?

- Seek funding and technical assistance and convene a team (NRCS, etc.) to develop a beaver management strategy to reduce the risk to infrastructure, private property and residents from flooding associated with beavers.
- Maintain communication with property owners on Richardson Road where a beaver dam is a known concern.
- Monitor additional beaver activity and impoundments in town. (HMP 2020, page 213)

**People think
beavers are
cute.**

<p>What are the barriers to implementation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unfamiliarity with the impact of beaver dams on flooding and water quality. 	<p>What are the opportunities for implementation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Addressing this issue is part of a multi-pronged strategy to meet other community goals, such as protection of potable water and climate resiliency.
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11	Update land use regulations to encourage climate resiliency.	EXPLORE
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Value					1, 3, 4, 7						
Goal					1-5, 9						
High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements						
3	2	0	1	1	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR	S+F

Where did this recommendation come from?

2020 Hazard Mitigation and MVP Resiliency Plans

Why is it important?

Leverett’s draft Hazard Mitigation Plan (2020) addresses the negative impact that climate change will have on the town over the next few decades, such as increased flooding, rising temperatures, and extreme weather. The draft MVP Resiliency Plan (2020) recommends reviewing zoning bylaws to encourage climate resiliency for land use.

How can the Town implement this recommendation?

- The Planning Board should include climate resilient measures in the recommended updates to the Town’s Zoning Bylaws (see **Section 5.4** and **Table 87**).

1) climate resilience and adaptation, 2) creative economic development opportunities such as regenerative agriculture/ carbon sequestration

What are the barriers to implementation?

- Confusion about what “land use regulations” means indicating a lack of familiarity with the two plans.

What are the opportunities for implementation?

- Incorporation of development standards into the Town’s Zoning Bylaws to address energy efficiency and climate resiliency for new/ renovated buildings.

12	Create a Land Stewardship Plan for Town-owned land.	EXPLORE
-----------	------------------------------------------------------------	----------------

Value					1, 3, 4, 7						
Goal					1-5, 9						
High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements						
1	4	1	0	1	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR	S+F

Where did this recommendation come from?

Protecting the components of natural resources are the top four goals identified by the community in the survey.

Why is it important?

Forests have a significant ecological importance for the town. Implementation of a plan would allow for a committee to monitor, manage, maintain, and preserve lands in addition to educating land owners on best management practices for collective stewardship.

How can the Town implement this recommendation?

- Consider options for stewardship that include the productive use of the land.
- Update the Open Space and Recreation Plan (see **Section 5.6**) to create a community process for discussing the potential uses and protections.
- Evaluate whether any land is suitable for housing, which could be done through a Housing Production Plan (see **Section 5.6**).

The Town owns forest that no one is tending to. A plan would assure better management of these resources.

What are the barriers to implementation?

- Respondents were unclear on who was responsible for stewardship of Town-owned lands. Some participants identified the Conservation Commission and the trail committee (not currently active) as possible leads for this responsibility.

What are the opportunities for implementation?

- The City of Amherst, MA notes that one key priority for focusing on land preservation efforts is continuing to expand the funding of Agricultural Preservation Restrictions (APR) and Conservation Restrictions (CR) for the acquisition of farmland, forest land, riparian corridors, and water supply sources.
- Timber sale, ATV trails, grassland pellets for livestock, renewable energy

13	Join the Franklin Regional Transit Authority in order to increase access opportunities for residents (especially seniors).	DISCUSS
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Value					2, 6, 8, 9						
Goal					8						
High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements						
2	3	2	0	0	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR	S+F

Where did this recommendation come from?

Comments from workshops about the need for public transit; demographic projections

Why is it important?

Many people commented in both the workshops and the survey about the need for public transportation, although a few questioned it. The Town used to have service from the FRTA that provided valuable connections to services and jobs. With a growing elderly population who may be less likely to drive as they age, adding options is important for an age-friendly community.

How can the Town implement this recommendation?

The FRTA currently serves 41 towns in the region and connects to the JWO transit center in Greenfield for access to Greyhound bus service and the Valley Flyer and Vermonter Amtrak routes. FRTA also operates medical and demand service in member communities. Annual assessments are charged based on the utilization and service levels provided to the Town.

In the long run, lack of public transportation and access to nearby medical care are two that concern me.

What are the barriers to implementation?

- Concerns about the cost.
- Some respondents were not convinced of the need for regular public transportation.

What are the opportunities for implementation?

- Working with the FRTA and the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) to connect the two transit systems through Leverett would significantly increase public transit options. (See **Figure 67** for a map of current options).
- Transportation costs are a component of housing costs; providing less expensive options can help with housing affordability.

14	Engage with regional partners to implement action plans in the Franklin County and North Quabbin Regional Action Plan for age and dementia friendly communities.	DISCUSS
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Value					2, 6, 8, 9							
Goal					8							
High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements							
1	3	2	0	1	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR	S+F	

<p>Where did this recommendation come from?</p> <p>Focus on livability and age-friendly communities from the Steering Group; desire to support seniors remaining in their homes from the community workshops; comments on aging-in-place from the survey.</p>	<p>Why is it important?</p> <p>Leverett joined the AARP network of livable communities in 2021. The Franklin County and North Quabbin Regional Action Plan covers the region and outlines a series of actions referencing the outdoors, transportation, housing, social and civic participation, communication and health over a 2024 to 2028 time frame.</p>
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How can the Town implement this recommendation?

- Become familiar with the Franklin County and North Quabbin Regional Action Plan (<https://lifepathma.org/wp-content/uploads/pdfs-documents/Age-Friendly-regional-plan-final-for-web-11.13.23-optimized.pdf>).
- Support community conversations about the recommendations.
- Identify the board or committee responsible for taking the next steps and empower the members to do so.

Important, but seems to require more resources than Leverett alone can handle.

<p>What are the barriers to implementation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Confusion about the recommendation with an assumption that Leverett was solely responsible for implementation of a regional plan. 	<p>What are the opportunities for implementation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish regional partnerships to address a regional problem of an aging population and the resources necessary to help that population.
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15	Establish heating/cooling shelters across town that can be used during the school year.	DISCUSS
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Value					2, 6, 8, 9						
Goal					6, 7, 10						
High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements						
2	2	2	1	0	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR	S+F

Where did this recommendation come from?
 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Why is it important?
 The current designated heating/cooling /smoke shelter is the elementary school, which may be restricted for this function during the school year. While the community values self-sufficiency, this may leave more vulnerable residents at risk, especially those who live in older houses that are less energy efficient and may not have the resources to afford a generator or who do not have adequate systems for extreme circumstances.

How can the Town implement this recommendation?

- Evaluate other options for shelters that could provide heating/cooling, food, bathing facilities, and sleeping areas.
- Establish a list of people who may need help in an emergency and publicize the ability to join the list. Membership would be voluntary. (See **Table 88. Police Department.**)

People wanting a kind of community mutual aid/not an institutional solution.

What are the barriers to implementation?

- The Leverett Elementary School as a shelter is not optimal during the school year and the systems may need to be upgraded.
- “Do it yourself” opinions that might hurt more vulnerable members of the community.

What are the opportunities for implementation?

- Establishing several heating/cooling shelters would provide added resiliency for extreme events.
- Some participants suggested a “neighbor-to-neighbor list of resources and contact information that could provide an informal system of shelter which would also help with distribution of options across the town.

16	Allow for the development of multi-family units.	DISCUSS
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Value					2, 6, 8, 9						
Goal					8						
High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements						
2	1	0	1	2	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR	S+F

Where did this recommendation come from?

Input from community workshops, desire for more affordable housing, and more housing types, including age-friendly housing.

Why is it important?

Multifamily housing, which is generally defined as three or more units on a lot, is another technique to address community concerns about affordable housing. Multifamily housing is currently not allowed in Leverett. Other configurations, such as two duplexes on a single lot, would also qualify as multifamily housing.

How can the Town implement this recommendation?

- The Town should continue conversations about smaller housing types (for example, two duplexes on a lot) that would create additional density without changing the appearance of the town.
- Zoning changes, design guidelines, and revisiting Board of Health standards for septic systems should be part of this conversation.

Leverett should address shortage in rental units.

What are the barriers to implementation?

- Assumption that multi-family housing can only be provided in large developments.
- Assumption that multi-family is less environmentally friendly than single-family development.

What are the opportunities for implementation?

- Multi-family housing can be found in a wide range of styles and scales, many suitable for a rural environment.
- Multi-family generally represents a more efficient use of land than single-family housing, especially when located near existing streets and when using shared driveway, parking, and other infrastructure.

17	Use CPA funds to purchase parcels to protect the aquifer.	RETHINK
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Value					1, 3, 4, 7							
Goal					1							
High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements							
2	1	1	0	3	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR	S+F	

Where did this recommendation come from?

Concerns expressed during the workshops and in the survey for water protections; mapping of permanently protected land and the aquifer protection district which indicates little overlap.

Why is it important?

Placing conservation restrictions on these parcels will help improve recharging within the aquifer protection district itself and protect the land within the district from potential overdevelopment.

How can the Town implement this recommendation?

- Additional protection of land was a divisive topic in the community conversations. Some participants wanted further protection, while others felt that no further land needed to be protected.
- Updating the Open Space and Recreation Plan (See **Section 5.6**) would help the Levere community continue this conversation and gather additional data about potential threats to the aquifer.

Enough land is already protected. Zoning takes care of it.

What are the barriers to implementation?

- Divided opinions about preservation of land might derail important conversations.

What are the opportunities for implementation?

- Water protection was a significant topic during the planning process, and the desire to protect water availability and quality will become more important as the temperature and storm patterns shift over time. Continuing to discuss alternatives for aquifer protection, both town-wide and individual strategies, is another opportunity for the community conversations mentioned in **Section 5.1**.

18	Modify the Town zoning to permit activity for economic resiliency.	RETHINK
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Value					2, 4, 6, 8							
Goal					8, 10							
High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements							
2	1	1	0	3	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR	S+F	

<p>Where did this recommendation come from?</p> <p>Desire in community workshops for additional economic activity; analysis of lack of available services within Leverett for an aging population; and desire for more community gathering spaces.</p>	<p>Why is it important?</p> <p>The closest medical clinics and pharmacies require significant travel times. As the population ages, and particularly once they stop driving, access to these facilities becomes an issue. Allowing these uses will at least open the door for the services to come into the Town (it does not guarantee it).</p> <p>Adding services and gathering spots by right makes such uses more achievable over time and based on demand.</p>
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How can the Town implement this recommendation?

- Economic development is likely to be small in scale because of the lack of town-wide public water and sewer. Support community conversations about other ways to promote economic development. These could include small business clusters, with share wastewater treatment and wells, home-based businesses, or a small business incubation center as part of the community center in Strategy #20.

Group would like to support some commercial activities but not necessarily By Right. It depends on many factors.

<p>What are the barriers to implementation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Concerns about unintended consequences. ▪ Focus on larger-scale businesses that are unlikely to happen without significant infrastructure investments rather than being creative about smaller opportunities. 	<p>What are the opportunities for implementation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The arts community is a source of cultural and economic development that was not fully explored during this planning process. ▪ The Leverett community should also continue to discuss the opportunity that Route 63 presents for larger-scale businesses and options for providing water and wastewater treatment to businesses along that corridor.
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19	Modify the Town zoning to allow for senior housing, and partner with a developer to build affordable/senior housing on Town owned land, including applying for State grants to finance the construction.	RETHINK
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Value					2, 6, 8							
Goal					8							
High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements							
1	2	0	0	3	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR	S+F	

Where did this recommendation come from?

Desire for more affordable housing expressed in the community workshops and survey.

Why is it important?

Partnering with the State and developers to build affordable and/or senior housing on Town land would allow for the Town to control the process.

For example, Sunderland and Gardner partnered with developers and received State grants to build senior housing complexes on Town land. Deerfield is also in the planning process for a 100 unit senior complex on Town land.

How can the Town implement this recommendation?

- Undertake a Housing Production Plan to determine the need for affordable housing and explore options in more depth. (See **Section 5.6**).
- Because the Town owns little developable land, explore other options for affordable housing, such as zoning changes to promote small-scale “affordable by design” housing or partnerships with housing nonprofits.

Group supports aging in place improvements but not a large development.

What are the barriers to implementation?

- Assumption that this action is restricted to land the Town owns now as opposed to land the Town could purchase.

What are the opportunities for implementation?

- Community Preservation Act funds can be used for affordable housing, including purchasing land.

20 Investigate adding a community center.	RETHINK
--------------------------------------------------	----------------

Value					2, 6, 8							
Goal					6, 7, 10							
High	Med	Low	Partner	Disc.	Planning Elements							
1	1	4	0	2	LU	C	ED	H	OSR	NCR	S+F	

<p>Where did this recommendation come from?</p> <p>Community workshops, desire for community spaces expressed in the public survey.</p>	<p>Why is it important?</p> <p>Community centers serve as gathering places where residents can gather for activities, support, and public information. An easily accessible community center in Leverett would encourage community involvement, promote individual and public health, and strengthen social ties.</p>
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How can the Town implement this recommendation?

- Sponsor a community conversation about the need for a community center and the components of that center that are important.
- Investigate grants, such as those from the Mass Cultural Council, for a feasibility study (See **Section 7.1**).
- One participant mentioned the Eisner Foundation as a possible resource (<https://eisnerfoundation.org/>).

**“*Resonating Yes
But where?”**

**“Community FUN
commission”**

<p>What are the barriers to implementation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Preference to use an existing space rather than building new may limit options unless existing spaces are willing to share spaces throughout the day (Town Hall, Library, LES) ▪ Need to focus on programming to attract different ages. 	<p>What are the opportunities for implementation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Opportunities for intergenerational connections. ▪ Possible renovation of Town Hall or addition to existing buildings to accommodate more space.
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5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM EXISTING PLANS

The following actions are identified by the planning document in which they originated. The boards or committees identified as responsible for the actions may be different from those identified in the original documents. For the 2020 Draft Hazard Mitigation Plan, longer entries have been summarized to the primary action in each recommendation.

The actions have been grouped by the Section 81D planning elements. Significant gaps include housing (the Town does not have an active Housing Production Plan) and economic development. The recommendations are heavily weighted towards open space and recreation and the mitigating the impacts of natural hazards because the two most recent plans are based on state requirements for content and action plans.

LAND USE/ZONING

Explore the use of agricultural zoning, cluster zoning, wetland protection bylaws, Low Impact Development (LID) bylaws, and water supply protection bylaws, and floodplain management regulations.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Planning Board, Conservation Commission
- **SOURCE.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Explore zoning and other public levers that might be utilized to create a welcoming and encouraging environment for preservation — without lowering the tax base.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Historical Commission, Planning Board
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2018 Preservation Planning in Leverett

Review and amend existing land use regulations to reduce the risk of landslides (a list of options is provided in the plan).

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Building Inspector, Conservation Commission, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Draft Hazard Mitigation Plan

Review and update the Leverett bylaws to add requirements that ensure adequate support and anchoring systems are used for temporary mobile homes to reduce the risk to life and property from high winds.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Building Inspector, Planning Board
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Draft Hazard Mitigation Plan

Update and amend the zoning bylaw to include a Dam Safety Overlay district based on the maps produced under other action items.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Emergency Management Director
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Draft Hazard Mitigation Plan

Adopt a bylaw or amend existing regulations to address new driveway openings or “curb cuts” that include grade and design standards to reduce the risk to residents from roadway icing and snow build-up.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Planning Board, Highway Superintendent
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Draft Hazard Mitigation Plan

Work with a consultant to review zoning bylaws to encourage climate resiliency and incorporate findings from the MVP and Hazard Mitigation Planning processes into the zoning review. (Highest Priority)

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Planning Board
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 MVP Resiliency Plan

Continue to review and update land use regulations to include climate resiliency provisions (a list of options is provided in the plan).

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Planning Board, Conservation Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Draft Hazard Mitigation Plan

Review and amend the Required Improvements section of the Town’s Subdivision Rules and Regulations to include the construction of an underground water tank(s) (10,000 gal. minimum) in new subdivisions for fire suppression purposes.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Fire Department, Planning Board
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Draft Hazard Mitigation Plan

Update the Vulnerability Assessment from the 2020 plan for properties located within the 100-year floodplain

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Planning Board, Assessors
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Draft Hazard Mitigation Plan

CIRCULATION/MOBILITY

Participate in the MassDOT Complete Streets funding program.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Selectboard, Highway Department
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Hire a consultant to complete an assessment of all culverts in Town, including an evaluation of the condition and the GIS location of each.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Highway Department, Conservation Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Draft Hazard Mitigation Plan

Share FRCOG's River Corridor Toolkit and high-risk culverts/stormwater flooding inventory with all Town Boards and Committees.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Planning Board, Highway Department, Conservation Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Draft Hazard Mitigation Plan

Implement flood mitigation solutions on Teawaddle and East Leverett Road, Roaring Brook, Doolittle Brook, Route 63/ Depot Road and Long Plain Road at Depot Road where flooding is a problem using the prepared hydraulic analysis.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Conservation Commission, Board of Health, Highway Department
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Draft Hazard Mitigation Plan

Monitor the Sawmill River and Doolittle Brook and along Teawaddle and Cushman Roads for potential ice buildup and ice jams to reduce the risk of damage to infrastructure and homes from flooding.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Emergency Management Director, Fire Department, Highway Department
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Draft Hazard Mitigation Plan

Secure funding and hire a consultant to evaluate alternative designs, locations, or need for the Mill Yard Road bridge.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Emergency Management Director, Fire Department, Highway Department
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Draft Hazard Mitigation Plan

Prepare a map of beaver dams in town and neighboring towns (Montague) that have the potential to flood private property and town infrastructure if the dams were to fail.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Conservation Commission

- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Draft Hazard Mitigation Plan

Improve drainage on gravel roads throughout Town.
(Highest Priority)

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Selectboard, Highway Department
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 MVP Resiliency Plan

Evaluate and implement nature based solutions to increase flood resiliency on Long Plain Road and Teewaddle Hill Road.
(Highest Priority)

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Highway Department, Conservation Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 MVP Resiliency Plan

Inventory culverts, bridges, and roads and prioritize climate resilient solutions based on need. (Highest Priority)

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Highway Department
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 MVP Resiliency Plan

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Support the use of Slarrow Mill (North Leverett Center) as a site for a small business.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Selectboard, Planning Board
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** FY2021 Report of the Sustainability Committee

Support adaptive reuse of the former Field Library, now the Field Family Museum in Leverett Center, and/or the Moore's Corner Schoolhouse Museum in North Leverett.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Selectboard, Planning Board
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** FY2021 Report of the Sustainability Committee

Inventory land parcels appropriate for development determine sites that could support housing, commercial development, or mixed use while conserving open space and maintaining environmental quality).

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Selectboard, Planning Board
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** FY2021 Report of the Sustainability Committee

6. Next Steps

Explore feasible partnership-based low impact commercial development in character with the town and possibly utilizing historical resources.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Historical Commission, Planning Board
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2018 Preservation Planning in Leverett

HOUSING

Create affordable housing through the reuse of existing buildings or construction of new buildings on previously developed sites.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Leverett Community Preservation Committee
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2022 Community Preservation Report and Plan

Apply for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding to support home rehabilitation work for low to moderate income households to bring existing homes up to code and better withstand high wind events.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Selectboard
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Draft Hazard Mitigation Plan

NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Enhance the open space, historic resources, community housing, and recreation opportunities of the town, consistent with the Community Development Plan of 2004, the Open Space and Recreation Plan of 2005-2010, Leverett Zoning Bylaws, and informed by the Heritage Landscape Inventory of 2009, by responding to proposals from the community that meet CPA Guidelines and the Decision Guidelines adopted by the CPC.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Leverett Community Preservation Committee
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2022 Community Preservation Report and Plan

Create a Tree Ordinance that provides guidance for the planting, caring for, and removal of trees within the public right-of way.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Planning Board, Highway Department, Conservation Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Investigate ways to mitigate the use of road salt in the winters.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Highway Department, Conservation Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Survey the archaeological resources and work towards National Historic Register status, whether independently or as part of existing historic districts.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Historical Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2018 Preservation Planning in Leverett

Start a dialogue about and planning for one or more local historic districts — in collaboration with the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Historical Commission, Planning Board
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2018 Preservation Planning in Leverett

Start an educational program for residents — a “learn as you play” type program — that explores the various resources the town has.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Historical Commission, Leverett Public Library
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2018 Preservation Planning in Leverett

Assemble a focus or working group that represents a collaboration among local committees and organizations that own, maintain, or otherwise have an interest in historical resources.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Historical Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2018 Preservation Planning in Leverett

Learn more about public private partnerships and other collaborations that bring in private funds.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Historical Commission, Selectboard
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2018 Preservation Planning in Leverett

6. Next Steps

Implement recommendations of the 2018 Leverett Veteran's Recognition Project Assessment Report, which examined the conditions of the cemeteries in Town.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Historical Commission, Community Preservation Committee
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Discuss the preservation of the flood storage capacity of undeveloped land to mitigate flooding impacts.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Emergency Management Director, Conservation Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Draft Hazard Mitigation Plan

Review forest cutting plans filed under Ch. 61 to ensure that forest stewardship practices produce more stable, successional forested landscapes and reduce the risk of landslide hazards.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Conservation Commission, Fire Department, Planning Board
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Draft Hazard Mitigation Plan

Create an inventory of Town trees that should be pruned and prioritize based on risk.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Highway Department
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Draft Hazard Mitigation Plan

Identify Town-owned forested areas that are at higher risk for wildfires and implement climate resilient forest management practices that reduce the risk of fire hazards.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Conservation Commission, Fire Department, Utility Companies
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Draft Hazard Mitigation Plan

Develop climate resilient forestry practices for Town owned land and privately owned land. (Highest Priority)

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Selectboard, Conservation Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 MVP Resiliency Plan

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

Implement the recommendations of the 2018 Preservation Planning Report based on the 2017-18 Historical Assets Survey.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Historical Commission, Community Preservation Committee, Planning Board
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Use GIS tools (such as MAPPR from Mass Audubon) and field assessments to prioritize areas for protection.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Conservation Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Place Conservation Restrictions on Rattlesnake Gutter lands and town-owned Conservation Areas for permanent protection.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Rattlesnake Gutter Trust, Conservation Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Work with the Town, private landowners, and state agencies to protect parcels in the Stoddard Hill area to connect state-owned parcels and protect NHESP Priority Habitat of Rare Species

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Rattlesnake Gutter Trust, Conservation Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Explore the tax title process for the town to formally acquire lands to be protected.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Selectboard, Conservation Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Set aside protected lands for wildlife that limit or prohibit active and/or passive recreation.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Conservation Commission, Rattlesnake Gutter Trust, Trails Committee, Historical Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

6. Next Steps

Install wayfinding signage, information kiosks, and other amenities at trailheads, parking lots, and other facilities. Create parking facilities at trailheads, when feasible.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Selectboard, Conservation Commission, Rattlesnake Gutter Trust, Trails Committee, Historical Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Create GIS-based maps for existing recreational resources (hiking, skiing, fishing, etc.) within town to be published in print and/or online.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Conservation Commission, Rattlesnake Gutter Trust, Trails Committee, Historical Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Work with Library to create an informational space and supply educational materials about recreation, open space, historical resources in Leverett. Post information on town website.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Conservation Commission, Historical Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Make resources available to landowners about the benefits and options of private stewardship of land (ex. Information about landowner liability for trail usage, tax options, etc.).

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Conservation Commission, Rattlesnake Gutter Trust
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Distribute informational resources about ecological land stewardship to residents.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Conservation Commission, Rattlesnake Gutter Trust
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Create themed hikes throughout the year on trails in town.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Conservation Commission, Rattlesnake Gutter Trust, Friends of Leverett Pond, Trail Committee
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Continue to implement Nuisance Aquatic Plant Management Plan.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Conservation Commission, Friends of Leverett Pond
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Make kayaks available for public use at Leverett Pond.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Recreation Committee, Friends of Leverett Pond
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Continue to explore the possibility of creating a trail around Leverett Pond and to increase the accessibility to the Pond.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Conservation Commission, Friends of Leverett Pond, Trails Commission, Historical Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Work with willing private landowners to establish trails to connect public conservation areas and historic resources.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Conservation Commission, Rattlesnake Gutter Trust, Historical Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Create an ADA accessible public trail that all residents could use, either at the Elementary School or in other locations.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Conservation Commission, Trails Commission, Recreation Committee
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Improve accessibility to existing resources by implementing recommendations of the 2018 ADA Self-Evaluation & Transition Plan.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Conservation Commission, Trails Commission, Recreation Committee, Selectboard
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

SERVICES AND FACILITIES

Require that all public board and committee meetings are accessible remotely. Record and post the meetings for later viewing.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Selectboard, Town Clerk
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2021 Social Justice Report

Use LeverettConnects to provide weekly updates on board and committee postings and other important information.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Selectboard
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2021 Social Justice Report

Improve navigation on the Town's website and regularly update the information provided.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Selectboard, Town Clerk
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2021 Social Justice Report

Budget for and provide childcare at Town Meeting.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Selectboard
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2021 Social Justice Report

Provide supplemental information on warrant articles. Possibilities include a pre-Town Meeting public forum and a summary of articles with pro/con analysis.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Selectboard, Town Clerk
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2021 Social Justice Report

Adopt the Town Ballot Act to separate voting for elected positions from Town Meeting.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Selectboard, Town Clerk
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2021 Social Justice Report

Consider ways to allow a private vote at Town Meeting.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Selectboard, Town Clerk
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2021 Social Justice Report

Conduct a town-wide drinking water study to map groundwater sources and potential vulnerabilities, including septic systems.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Selectboard, Conservation Commission, Board of Health
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Become a MVP certified community and implement recommendations from the MVP planning process.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Selectboard, Board of Health, Conservation Commission, Highway Department
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Continue to participate in the Franklin County Regional Emergency Planning Committee (REPC) on the flood debris management plan.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Highway Department, Franklin County REPC
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Draft Hazard Mitigation Plan

Promote the installation of communication towers for emergency response.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Selectboard, Planning Board
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Draft Hazard Mitigation Plan

Gather information about the current condition and status of small dams that are on private property.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Planning Board, Conservation Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Draft Hazard Mitigation Plan

Prepare a map of significant hazard dams and low hazard dams and their potential inundation areas.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Emergency Management Director, Planning Board, Conservation Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Draft Hazard Mitigation Plan

Distribute information to dam owners in town on the Dam and Seawall Repair and Removal Fund.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Selectboard
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Draft Hazard Mitigation Plan

Adopt a standardized system for departments, property owners and business owners to record costs and property damage from natural hazard events.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Emergency Management Director, Highway Superintendent, Fire Chief
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Draft Hazard Mitigation Plan

Seek funding and technical assistance to hire a consultant to evaluate the town's critical facilities and infrastructure to determine if they are particularly vulnerable to earthquake damage and determine appropriate retrofitting measures to reduce the risk of damage from earthquakes.

6. Next Steps

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Building Inspector, Fire Department, Police Department

- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Draft Hazard Mitigation Plan

Provide information to residents to assist with emergency preparedness.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Emergency Management Director, Volunteers

- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Draft Hazard Mitigation Plan

Develop an energy resiliency plan, including a feasibility assessment of microgrids and/or three phase power, to address current vulnerabilities of the electrical grid to storms.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Energy Committee, Planning Board

- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Draft Hazard Mitigation Plan

Seek funding and technical assistance and convene a team to develop a beaver management strategy to reduce the risk to infrastructure, private property and residents from flooding associated with beavers.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Conservation Commission, Board of Health, Highway Department

- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Draft Hazard Mitigation Plan

Educate homeowners about the risk of wildfires and brushfires and how to reduce the risk by adopting general fire safety techniques.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Fire Department

- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Draft Hazard Mitigation Plan

Assess dry hydrants located near old Coke Kiln Bridge, Leverett Pond, and on Cave Hill Road and Shutesbury Road for wildfire fighting capabilities.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Fire Department

- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Draft Hazard Mitigation Plan

Develop a plan to address the recommendations of the 2018 Town of Leverett, MA ADA Self-Evaluation & Transition Plan for recommended policies.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Selectboard, Town departments

- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Develop an energy resiliency plan for Leverett, which could include a feasibility study for a microgrid. (Highest Priority)

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Selectboard, Town departments

- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 MVP Resiliency Plan

Develop a potable water resiliency plan. (Highest Priority)

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Emergency Management Director, Highway Department
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 MVP Resiliency Plan

Create a communications plan for the Town. A plan should be made for infrastructural improvements and a village level plan to ensure residents have a way to communicate with one another during emergencies. Continue to enroll residents in the Town-wide emergency contact system. (Highest Priority)

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Emergency Management Director, Highway Superintendent, Fire Chief
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 MVP Resiliency Plan

Review existing sheltering plan and update to include warming and cooling shelters. Investigate private/public agreements with businesses and community members. (Highest Priority)

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Selectboard, Emergency Management Director
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 MVP Resiliency Plan

Inventory current beaver activity and develop a comprehensive management plan. (Highest Priority)

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Highway Department
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 MVP Resiliency Plan

Join the regional Mosquito District. (Moderate Priority)

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Board of Health
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 MVP Resiliency Plan

Install additional cell towers and Wi-Fi boosters to increase access for all residents. (Moderate Priority)

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** South Hadley Electric Light Department (SHELD)
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 MVP Resiliency Plan

Routinely remove aquatic species from Leverett Pond. (Lower Priority)

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Conservation Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 MVP Resiliency Plan

Develop a public education program that covers insect borne diseases. (Lower Priority)

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Board of Health
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 MVP Resiliency Plan

6. Next Steps

Periodically clear the dry hydrants in Town in order to ensure they are usable during an emergency event. (Lower Priority)

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Fire Department, Highway Department
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 MVP Resiliency Plan

5.4 PLANNING BOARD AND ZONING CHANGES

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PLANNING BOARD

The Planning Board is enabled by Section 81D of Chapter 41 of the Massachusetts General Laws to make a master plan of the town or part of the town. (Note that “comprehensive plan” is used interchangeably with “master plan.”)

Once the Planning Board adopts the plan (by majority vote), the Town should send it to the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities.

The Town also needs to keep an economic development supplement on file that must be at least one page in length and contain the goals “with respect to industrial or commercial development, affordable housing, and preservation of parks and open space.”

There is no penalty for not completing an action identified in the comprehensive plan. The plan is supposed to be a guide to the Town in allocating of resources to meet the needs of the community. Comprehensive plans can be used to support grant applications, many of which are competitive.

ZONING CHANGES

The board is also responsible for aligning the Town’s Zoning Bylaws with the recommendations of this comprehensive plan. Such alignment is a best practice in implementing the plan. Zoning changes in the strategies in **Section 5.2** are as follows:

The Planning Board has a clear directive from the participants in the third workshop for beginning the planning process to develop zoning to address the first three strategies.

Strategy 11 caused some confusion at the third workshop because people appeared to be unfamiliar either with the recommendations of the 2020 Draft Hazard Mitigation Plan or were unfamiliar with how land use regulations could help with addressing the negative impacts of climate change. These recommendations are provided in the call-out box on the next page.

Many participants indicated an interest in discussing multifamily zoning (Strategy 16), especially as an aging-in-place strategy. As noted earlier, a barrier to this discussion is a perception that multifamily residences are only large-scale buildings. The Planning Board should evaluate smaller-scale multifamily that could fit more appropriately in Leverett’s

Table 83. Zoning Recommendations

	Recommendation	Priority
1	Modify the zoning to allow for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) on existing single-family lots.	DO
2	Modify the zoning to allow smaller lot sizes, and/or multiple units, on existing lots (e.g. one or two duplexes on a lot).	DO
3	Create zoning to encourage senior-friendly housing so that seniors can remain in the community.	DO
11	Update land use regulations to encourage climate resiliency.	EXPLORE
16	Allow for the development of multi-family units.	DISCUSS
18	Modify the Town zoning to permit activity for economic resiliency.	RETHINK
19	Modify the Town zoning to allow for senior housing, and partner with a developer to build affordable/senior housing on Town owned land, including applying for State grants to finance the construction.	RETHINK

ZONING AND HOW IT RELATES TO THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Why are we talking about Zoning?
 Zoning...
 » Governs how a community can change.
 » Zoning may not match the existing built environment.
 » Zoning may not match community values for future development/ preservation strategies.
 » Has a significant impact on the social and economic health of a community.
 » Controls on land use impact where people live relative to where they work, shop, learn, and play.
 » Such controls may also impact how people move from place to place.
 » Has a significant impact on the physical health of a community.
 » Distances between uses can determine whether someone walks, bikes, or drives to an...
 » Development standards regulations to address er...

COMMENTS

1. Permit ADUs on existing lots!
 2. Allow ADUs, Tiny houses, In-law apartments, and multi-family houses.
 3. Allow more Accessory Dwelling Units, Accessory buildings & Parks etc.
 4. I agree.
 5. Please use the form.
 6. Leverage beautiful places, don't overdevelop.
 7. Times are requiring our community to consider other strategies/affordability being options.
 8. We should look at all options for changing zoning if not working better. Some have made the town more resilient.
 9. Allow more multi-family.
 10. encourage local economic development of shops, cafes, businesses, etc.
 11. Consider zoning to allow cafes.
 12. Consider zoning to allow cafes.
 13. ...
 14. ...
 15. ...
 16. We need specific zoning for development and not a special permit.

Town of Leverett Official Zoning Map March 11, 2008

If you have not taken the questionnaire yet, it is available online (link below or QR code to the right) or in paper form tonight and at the Leverett Library or Town Hall.
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LeverettSurvey>
SURVEY CLOSES DECEMBER 15!

CURRENT 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).

Figure 84. Zoning Comments from the December Workshop

existing development patterns. An example might be two duplexes on a single lot sharing a wastewater treatment system. This zoning effort could partially address Strategy 19.

Strategy 18 is more difficult to address as the Town is unlikely to see large-scale economic development. The Planning Board should consider a planning process economic development focused on home-based businesses, twenty-first century rural businesses, and small scale options for retail or services.

Other zoning changes include exploring the recommendations suggested in the 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan (below left) and those presented by Innes Associates to the Planning Board at their meeting on April 17, 2024 (below right). Additional information is provided in [Section 5.2](#).

PUBLIC EDUCATION

The Planning Board might also consider sponsoring public education; comments from the planning process indicated a lack of familiarity with what zoning can and cannot do. The Planning Board has access to the resources of the Citizen Planner Training Collaborative (see [Section 7.2](#)) and could draw on those resources and the others listed in this plan to engage the community around zoning outside of an application process.

Table 85. Land Use Recommendations from the 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Explore the use of [the following]:

- Agricultural zoning.
- Cluster zoning.
- Wetland protection bylaws.
- Low Impact Development (LID) bylaws.
- Water supply protection bylaws.
- Floodplain management regulations.

Table 86. Recommendations from April 17, 2024 Review

- Review the lot size and frontage restrictions in 4300 Aquifer Protection District.
- Update 4400 Flood Hazard District to refer to the new maps; compare to the model Floodplain Overlay District.
- Evaluate the incentive to use 4800 Flexible Development; it does not appear to work as intended and has not been used to the knowledge of the Board.
- Review 4880 Residential Subdivision Development for clarity of intent.
- Compare 4970 Ground-Mounted Solar Electric to the model bylaw.

Table 87. Land Use Recommendations from the Draft 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

- Continue to review and update land use regulations to include **climate resiliency provisions**.
 - Best Management Practices for River Corridor areas (FRCOG’s River Corridor Toolkit), further restricting or limiting new development within the 100-year floodplain and River Corridor.
 - Low Impact Development (LID) stormwater practices, etc.
 - Amend the Subdivision Rules and Regulations to require temporary and permanent erosion control measures for streams and surface water bodies.
 - Update the review criteria in the Special Permit process to include topographic change, removal of cover vegetation, risk of erosion or siltation and increased stormwater runoff.
- Review and amend existing land use regulations to **reduce the risk of landslides**.
 - Direct new development to stable slopes and soils
 - Set limits on land clearing to maintain stable slopes to reduce the risk of landslides.
 - Protect existing development from potential landslides by ensuring that surface water and groundwater are properly managed.
- Review and update the Leverett bylaws to add requirements that ensure **adequate support and anchoring systems are used for temporary mobile homes** to reduce the risk to life and property from high winds.
- Update and amend the zoning bylaw to **include a Dam Safety Overlay district** based on the maps produced under other action items.
- Adopt a bylaw or amend existing regulations to address new driveway openings or “curb cuts” that **include grade and design standards to reduce the risk to residents** from roadway icing and snow build-up.
- Review and amend the Required Improvements section of the Town’s Subdivision Rules and Regulations to include the construction of an underground water tank(s) (10,000 gal. minimum) in new subdivisions for **fire suppression purposes**.

5.5 OTHER ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Although the Planning Board is responsible for the development and adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, addressing the recommendations of this plan is shared across all elected and appointed officials, town staff, and community volunteers. The Town of Leverett has a small staff, and is fortunate that some many community members have stepped forward to participate in town government. Current town boards, committees, departments (BCD) and their roles in implementation are listed in the table below.

The other critical committees for implementation are the following:

- **SELECTBOARD.** Develop policies for implementation and direct resources, including staff time, towards policy implementation. Work with the Finance Committee and the Capital Planning Committee to direct operating and capital funds to support the policy direction.
- **FINANCE COMMITTEE.** Become familiar with the recommendations of this plan and support operating and capital budgets that assist with the implementation of those recommendations.
- **CAPITAL PLANNING COMMITTEE.** Become familiar with the recommendations of this plan and develop long-range capital budgets that assist with the implementation of those recommendations.
- **TOWN MEETING.** Become familiar with the recommendations of this plan and support budgets and zoning changes that assist with the implementation of those recommendations.

Table 88. Roles of Town Boards, Committees, and Departments in Implementation

BCD	Role in Implementation
Town Hall <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Town Administration ▪ Town Administrator ▪ Accounting ▪ Animal Control Officer ▪ Tax Collector ▪ Town Clerk ▪ Veterans 	Continue to support community functions and needs, including those duties required under Massachusetts General Law. Advise Town Boards and Committees about any data that can easily be collected to support measurement of trends and progress against the values and goals identified in the comprehensive plan (see Section 5.7).
Affordable Housing Trust	Focus on funding and affordable housing creation; partner in a Housing Production Plan
Board of Assessors	Provide data for benchmarks to show change in development volume and valuation of asset classes.
Board of Health	Evaluate potential pilot programs for wastewater management; address anticipated increase need for health services to vulnerable seniors; track and evaluate impact on public health from climate change (heat events and flooding).
Conservation Commission	Address
Council on Aging	Continue to evaluate senior needs as aging population increases; partner on developing a community gathering space; collect data on senior community to evaluate change in population and needs over time.
Cultural Council	Continue to support local artists and arts in conjunction with the Massachusetts Cultural Council. Assist other town boards and committees with applications for cultural grants to support community initiatives.
Emergency Planning Board	Continue role in planning for hazard mitigation.
Energy Committee	Continue to support the Leverett Community Choice Power Supply Program. Collaborate on energy-related strategies and actions in this plan.
Fire Department	Continue to share data about the needs of vulnerable people within the community, especially as the population continues to age.
Highway Department	Continue to address infrastructure repairs, maintenance, and capital projects, especially addressing the negative impacts of climate change.
Historical Commission	Collaborate on strategies and actions in this plan related to the historical and cultural assets of the town, including conversations about community gathering places.
Kimball Trust	Continue to support children in need as determined by the provisions of the trust. This is consistent with Values #2, 6, and 8.

BCD	Role in Implementation
Municipal Light Plant Department Leverett MLP Board	Continue to support community broadband and phone service. Participate in community conversations about connectivity, especially in emergency situations.
Leverett Library Library Trustees	The Library is a valued part of the Leverett community and provides event programming as part of its offerings. The Trustees should be partners with the Council on Aging and Leverett Elementary School in providing more opportunities for community-wide gatherings – both spaces and events.
OSRP Update Committee	The Open Space and Recreation Committee is a subcommittee of the Conservation Commission. It is not currently active, but the plan is due to be updated in 2026. The committee should be reconstituted and begin working on a scope of work and grant application for the planning process for that report.
Personnel Board	Review staff roles and support staffing needs with respect to these recommendations and any resulting policy changes from the Selectboard.
Police Department	Continue to share data about the needs of vulnerable people within the community, especially as the population continues to age. Establish voluntary list of vulnerable residents.
Leverett-Wendall Police Services Oversight Committee	Members are split between Leverett and Wendall and, among other topics, review the joint police budget. Police officers may be the first to interact with
Recreation Committee	This committee does have members, but does not appear to be active. The desire for more community activities and gathering spaces, and the opportunity to update the Open Space and Recreation Plan in 2026 may provide additional direction for the committee.
Scholarship Committee	Support development of future workforce by continuing to provide access to education to community members who meet the requirements.
Leverett Elementary School School Committee	School needs are not normally included in a comprehensive planning process as the budget and long-range planning are under the jurisdiction of the School Committee. However, schools are an important part of a community's culture. The School Committee could work with other members of the community to consider how school spaces could be used to support the expressed desire for more gathering spaces. Adult Education programs, community gardens on school property, and other shared uses on the weekends and evenings could include the entire community. While safety for the children is critical, as the Leverett population ages, shared use of the space could provide continued support for the school; a concern of many of the participants in the planning process.

6. Next Steps

BCD	Role in Implementation
Sustainable Economy Committee	In many ways, the work of this committee was the beginning of the planning process for this comprehensive plan. This committee does not appear to have met since 2022, but its charge could be merged with that of a Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee and the combined committee reconstituted to continue the community outreach and tracking of data begun in this planning process.
Tax Relief Committee	Continue to assist vulnerable seniors and those with disabilities with tax rebates. Track the number of applications relative to ability to support the need. Assist seniors with applications for the Senior Circuit Breaker Credit (https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massachusetts-senior-circuit-breaker-tax-credit).
Trails Committee	This committee is sponsored by the Conservation Commission and the Rattlesnake Gutter Trust. The committee currently has no members and participants in the planning process identified a need to reconstitute this committee. This committee could have an important role in recommendations to address community desires for opening and maintaining trails.
Zoning Board of Appeals	The ZBA will continue to address applications for special permits, variances, appeals, and comprehensive permits. This role makes them important contributors to land use and zoning decisions in the Town. Members should track the types of applications received as this information will indicate if any zoning changes are having the desired impact on land use.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Other potential partners in implementation include the following local organizations of community groups:

- **FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF LEVERETT.**
<https://www.leverettcongregationalchurch.org/current-missions>
- **FRIENDS OF LEVERETT LIBRARY.**
<https://leverettlibrary.org/p/37/Friends>
- **FRIENDS OF THE NORTH LEVERETT SAWMILL.**
<https://leverettsawmill.org/>
- **FRIENDS OF LEVERETT POND.**
<https://friendsofleverettpond.org/>
- **LEVERETT CRAFTS & ARTS.**
<https://www.leverettcraftsandarts.org/>
- **LEVERETT EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION.**
<https://www.leveretteducationfoundation.org/>
- **LEVERETT FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION.**
<https://www.facebook.com/leverettfirefightersassociation/>
- **LEVERETT HISTORICAL SOCIETY.**
<https://leveretthistorical.org/>
- **LEVERETT TOGETHER**
<https://www.leverett.ma.us/g/72/Board-of-Health>
- **MOORE'S CORNER CHURCH.**
<https://moorescornerchurch.com/>
- **NEW ENGLAND PEACE PAGODA**
<https://newenglandpeacepagoda.org/>
- **NORTH LEVERETT BAPTIST CHURCH.**
<https://www.nlbcma.org/>
- **VILLAGE NEIGHBORS.**
<https://www.villageneighbors.org/>

5.6 OPTIONS FOR ADDITIONAL STUDIES

The Town of Leverett should consider the following additional planning studies that would provide additional information for the strategies classified as Explore, Discuss, and Rethink.

- **UPDATE THE OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN.** The Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan expires in 2026. The Town should update this plan because protecting the environment is the major priority for residents. An outdated plan reduces the Town's ability to compete for grants. The Town can apply for a grant to update the plan. The Conservation Commission should reactivate the OSRP Update Committee to help develop a scope of work for the process, based on state requirements. See <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/open-space-and-recreation-plans> for more details.
- **APPLY FOR A GRANT FOR A HOUSING PRODUCTION PLAN.** Participants in the planning process expressed significant concerns about the need for affordable housing, especially to assist Leverett seniors in aging-in-place. The Town is also well below the 10% requirement for units on the Subsidized Housing Inventory. The Town can address both concerns by undertaking a planning study for the Housing Production Plan. Towns that have such a plan, and are making progress towards their goal, can achieve a safe harbor from a comprehensive permit (MGL Chapter 40B). The Affordable Housing Trust, with support from the Selectboard and the Planning Board, could take the lead on this project. See <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/chapter-40b-housing-production-plan> for more details.
- **STUDY POTENTIAL GATHERING SPACES AND OTHER ENHANCEMENTS IN THE TOWN CENTER.** Community members expressed a consistent need for more gathering spaces, but were divided on how to accommodate that need. The recommendation to establish a community center is last on the list of recommendations, with a designation of RETHINK, because of differences of opinion on how to achieve the goal, not on the need for a place to gather. Many people identified options around the Town Center for addressing the desire for enhance community spaces; such spaces could be outdoor, re-purposed existing spaces, or additions to existing spaces. A study, which could be funded by one of the Community One-Stop grants, could delve further into the need and specific options to meet that need. See **Section 7.1 Financing Resources**.

5.7 MEASURING SUCCESS

Both this comprehensive plan and the earlier Phase 1 report contain significant amounts of baseline data that the Town can use to measure progress towards its goals. However, in a small town, the process of establishing and updating data for benchmarks cannot place a significant additional burden on town boards, committees, and departments. The key is to integrate data collection into existing processes; elaborate additional systems are unlikely to be successful.

Key data to address **HOUSING NEEDS** will be the increase or decrease in the number of housing units, including market rate and affordable housing. If the Town passes zoning to allow different housing types, such as Accessory Dwelling Units or multi-family, the Planning Board should request annual data from the Franklin County Cooperative Inspection Program (<https://frcog.org/program-services/franklin-county-cooperative-inspection-program/>) on the number of permits pulled for these new use types. Creating a Housing Production Plan (**Section 5.6**) will provide more benchmark data.

Measuring progress on **OPEN SPACE, RECREATION, and NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES** can be easily accomplished within the existing framework of the Open Space and Recreation Plan. Updating the OSRP (also **Section 5.6**) will be a valuable way to measure progress from when the current plan was drafted. Because these two plans have defined content and formats from the state regulating bodies, they are ideal vehicles for collecting and measuring comparable data over time.

Evaluating **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** will be harder as the Town does not appear to have current systems for tracking new business growth. This effort may need to be an inventory of home-based and other businesses; a biannual survey may be the best option although possibly less accurate. Unfortunately, US Census data for small towns is not always accurate.

Other departments may already track activities that are consistent with the recommendations of this comprehensive plan for **CIRCULATION** and **TOWN SERVICES AND FACILITIES**. These include repairs and maintenance on roads, dams, and other municipal infrastructure (Highway Department) and the number of emergency calls (the Fire and Police Departments).

Finally, the Planning Board can keep track of the number of zoning initiatives that have passed to measure progress in addressing **LAND USE** and zoning recommendations identified in this comprehensive plan. See **Section 5.4**.

7. Resources for Implementation

7.1 FINANCING RESOURCES

A town has four major sources of funding for implementation:

- Operating funds (Town meeting approves)
- Capital funds (Town meeting approves)
- Grant programs (state and federal, sometimes private)
- Partnering with local groups who can raise funds

The following programs can assist the Town of Leverett with recommended actions. Many of these programs are competitive and may require more than one funding cycle to achieve the funding. Some may also require matching grants from the Town.

LOCAL RESOURCES

Local Taxes

Communities in Massachusetts have the option to adopt additional local taxes:

- **Local Option Meals Excise.** Towns who adopt this tax may collect an additional 0.75% of the vendor's gross receipts from restaurant meal sales.
- **Local Option Room Occupancy Excise.** Towns may collect an additional tax on room rentals of up to 6% for 90 days or less.
- **Marijuana tax rate.** The maximum local tax rate on marijuana sales is 3%.

The Community Preservation Act

The Community Preservation Act (CPA) is a tool to help municipalities preserve open space and historic sites, create affordable housing, and develop outdoor recreational facilities.

The Town of Leverett adopted the CPA and has a Community Preservation Committee (CPC) to administer the funds. According to their 2022 report, the CPC has invested \$1.8 million as follows:

- \$681,500 (38%) for historic preservation;
- \$551,040 (31%) for open space;

- 2022 Community Preservation Report and Plan, p. 8.

- \$81,911 (4%) for recreation; and
- \$487,570 (27%) for community housing (in trust).

Given the significant desire for affordable housing and more community gathering space, the CPC should work with other Town officials to target its funds towards meeting these needs. As of 2022, the CPC had \$1.3 million available of which \$900,000 was undesignated.

COMMUNITY ONE STOP FOR GROWTH

In 2021, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts rolled the application process for ten grant programs into a single process. Programs that may be relevant include the following:

- MassWorks
- Massachusetts Downtown Initiative
- Community Planning Grants
- Site Readiness
- Underutilized Properties

More information can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/guides/community-one-stop-for-growth>

MassWorks Infrastructure Program

Administered by the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (EOHED); this is a competitive grant program for public infrastructure projects and is part of the Community One Stop for Growth program. Priority is given to those projects that support multi-family housing in walkable mixed-use districts; immediate job creation; and/or economic development in weak or distressed areas. MassWorks grants may be used for streetscape improvements, bridge repairs, and other such improvements. Municipalities must demonstrate that the application is consistent with the Commonwealth's Sustainability Principles and meets the programs investment goals.

More information is available here: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/massworks-infrastructure-grants>

Massachusetts Downtown Initiative

The focus of this grant is downtown or town center revitalization. The Technical Assistance program provides a consultant and funding for that consultant's work to communities who need help with specific problems. This grant is part of the Community One Stop for Growth program.

More information can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/massachusetts-downtown-initiative-mdi>

Community Planning Grants

This program provides funding for planning projects at a larger scale than the MDI program. Project recommendations for which this grant would be appropriate might include zoning changes, particularly those that support housing and multimodal connections, or other similar planning processes. This grant is part of the Community One Stop for Growth program.

More information can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/community-planning-grant-program>

OTHER GRANT PROGRAMS

District Local Technical Assistance Grant (DLTA)

Funds for this program are allocated to the regional planning agencies. These funds may be used for planning projects. Each Regional Planning Agency (RPA) has a different focus on how these funds may be used to meet the state's funding goals. All municipalities are eligible to apply directly to their RPA. The RPA will work with the municipality on the program; a separate consultant is not usually required. FRCOG is Leverett's Regional Planning Agency.

Mass Cultural Council

The Mass Cultural Council has one-year project grants for specific public programming. Mass Cultural Council defines public programming as activities that engage with the public. The municipality's own Local Cultural Council may have additional grants to support local arts and culture

<https://massculturalcouncil.org/organizations/cultural-investment-portfolio/projects/>

MA DEP s319 and 604(b) Grant Programs

These address water quality, including nonpoint source pollution, management planning, and stormwater management. More information can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/grants-financial-assistance-watersheds-water-quality>

MassDevelopment Commonwealth Places

This program supports placemaking projects with the support of the crowd-funding mechanism Patronicity. MassDevelopment matches up to \$50,000 if the community can meet its goal within 60 days. More information can be found here: <https://www.massdevelopment.com/what-we-offer/real-estate-services/commonwealth-places/>

MassDOT/Chapter 90

Chapter 90 refers to the highway funds in the annual state funding packages provided to municipalities throughout Massachusetts.

Mass EEA: Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) Grant Program

This grant can be used by municipalities to acquire parkland, build a new park, or to renovate an existing park. More information can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/parkland-acquisitions-and-renovations-for-communities-parc-grant-program>.

EEA MVP Program Action Grant

These grants help communities implement infrastructure improvements to address the impacts of climate change. The program prefers those strategies that are nature-based. More information about the criteria to apply can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/mvp-action-grant-eligibility-criteria>

Massachusetts Historical Commission, Survey and Planning Grant Program

This grant is a 50/50 matching program that supports planning activities that help preserve significant historic resources. For communities whose target area contains significant resources, this source may help fund design guidelines that include specific requirements for the preservation of significant historic resources. Interested communities are encouraged to reach out to the Massachusetts Historic Commission directly about this grant; it may be tied to the creation of a local historic district.

<https://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/mhchpp/surveyandplanning.htm>

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program

The Commonwealth provides funding for hazard mitigation plans. More information can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/hazard-mitigation-assistance-grant-programs>

Information on this page also includes the Flood Mitigation Assistance Grant; and the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant.

Massachusetts Department of Transportation, Complete Streets Funding Program

This program provides funds to municipalities who have adopted a Complete Streets Policy and created a Prioritization Plan. Any street infrastructure recommended in this report should be added to the Prioritization Plan. This grant program can help address recommended improvements for pedestrian and bicyclist mobility, safety, and comfort.

This grant can also assist with design guidelines; these do not have to be limited to the private realm. Creating consistency in a downtown, village, or corridor is an important part of defining its identity both within and beyond the community. As part of a Complete Streets Project, a municipality should identify the specific materials, street furniture, trees, and public signage (including wayfinding) that will be used in the target area. These choices can be incorporated into the overall design guidelines to address both public and private realms.

This program could leverage the municipality's funding under Chapter 90 to ensure that multimodal infrastructure is connected, over time, throughout the community.

<https://www.mass.gov/complete-streets-funding-program>

Massachusetts Department of Transportation, Shared Streets and Spaces

This program provides funds to support the improvement of "plazas, sidewalks, curbs, streets, bus stops, parking areas, and other public spaces." The focus is on public health, safe mobility, and renewed commerce.

<https://www.mass.gov/shared-streets-and-spaces-grant-program>

7.2 DATA SOURCES

Franklin Regional Council of Governments	https://frcog.org
Citizen Planner Training Collaborative	https://masscptc.org/
This is an excellent resource for Planning Board members and others interested in municipal planning. A recent webinar discussed the development of master plans in Massachusetts.	
Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC)	https://www.mass.gov/orgs/executive-office-of-housing-and-livable-communities
Massachusetts Executive Office of Economic Development (EOED)	https://www.mass.gov/orgs/executive-office-of-economic-development
MassDevelopment	https://www.massdevelopment.com/
Both EOHLC and MassDevelopment have grant programs and resources for implementation.	
Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)	https://www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-department-of-transportation
This site provides information about MassDOT programs that may be appropriate for some strategies.	
Massachusetts Division of Local Services	https://www.mass.gov/orgs/division-of-local-services
In addition to training for local officials, DLS supports the Municipal Finance Trend Dashboard, which, like MHP's DataTown below, allows communities to compare themselves against others. The Dashboard is here: https://www.mass.gov/service-details/municipal-finance-trend-dashboard , and the Community Comparison report is here: https://www.mass.gov/service-details/community-comparison-report .	
MassGIS	https://maps.massgis.digital.mass.gov/MassMapper/MassMapper.html
MassGIS's MassMapper is an online mapping platform that allows people to view different data layers for their town.	
Massachusetts Historical Commission/ MACRIS	https://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/
The Massachusetts Historical Commission is under the purview of the Secretary of the Commonwealth. This site provides information about MHC, resources (including grants and tax credits), and a link to the MACRIS database, which provides detailed information about historical assets.	
Massachusetts Housing Partnership	www.mhp.net/datatown
MHP supports a data portal called DataTown, which has information about demographics, housing, jobs, and the labor force. The data can be downloaded as charts or a .csv file, allowing for additional analysis and Comparisons among towns. The data is updated frequently.	
Massachusetts Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program	https://www.mass.gov/municipal-vulnerability-preparedness-mvp-program
This site provides information about the MVP planning program, adaptation strategies, and supporting grants. More information is provided in two tools:	
The ResilientMA map viewer is here:	https://resilientma.org/map/
The ResilientMA data grapher is here:	https://resilientma.org/datagrapher/?c=Temp/state/maxt/ANN/MA/

7. Resources for Implementation

American Planning Association	www.planning.org
AARP Livable Communities	https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/
Congress for the New Urbanism	https://www.cnu.org/
Cornell Small Farms Program	https://smallfarms.cornell.edu/
Esri	https://livingatlas.arcgis.com/en/home/
Lincoln Institute of Land Policy	https://www.lincolnst.edu/research-data/data/place-database
National Low Income Housing Coalition	https://nlihc.org/housing-needs-by-state/massachusetts
MassWoods	https://masswoods.org/sites/masswoods.net/files/Ch61-v2.pdf
Missing Middle Housing (Opticos)	https://missingmiddlehousing.com/
Park Score	https://www.tpl.org/parkscore
Planetizen	https://www.planetizen.com/
Project for Public Spaces	www.pps.org
RAND - Community resilience	https://www.rand.org/topics/community-resilience.html
Route Fifty	https://www.route-fifty.com/
Rural Policy Plan	https://frcog.org/publications/ma-rural-policy-plan/
Strong Towns	https://www.strongtowns.org/
Smart Growth America	https://smartgrowthamerica.org/
Trust for Public Land	https://www.tpl.org/
Urban Land Institute	https://uli.org/
UMass Center for Agriculture, Food, and the Environment	https://ag.umass.edu/
USDA Rural Development	https://www.rd.usda.gov/
Walk Score	https://www.walkscore.com/



