

# Norton 2021 Master Plan



**SRPEDD**  
Southeastern Regional Planning  
& Economic Development District

# Acknowledgements

This *Norton Master Plan* document would not have been possible without the support, input, and local knowledge provided by the town's citizens, professional staff, and leadership. The Town would like to acknowledge the following for their role in preparing this *Master Plan*.

## Planning Board

Timothy M. Griffin, *Chair*  
 Julie Oakley, *Vice Chair*  
 Scott Bichan, *Clerk*  
 Steve Hornsby, *Member*  
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 Renee Deley, *Member*  
 Megan Artz, *Member*

## Town Staff

Michael Yunits, *Town Administrator*  
 Paul DiGiuseppe, *Director of Planning and Economic Development*

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# Introduction to the Master Plan

Norton designed its 2021 Master Plan to be a concise, easy-to-understand document. It is not an exhaustive list of actions or ideas; rather, it presents the main missions for the town to achieve over the life of the plan – approximately 5 to 10 years.

The Master Plan consists of the following “elements,” or chapters:

-  **Norton’s Vision**
-  **Land Use**
-  **Housing**
-  **Economic Development**
-  **Open space & Recreation**
-  **Natural & Cultural Resources**
-  **Services & Facilities**
-  **Transportation & Circulation**
-  **Implementation**

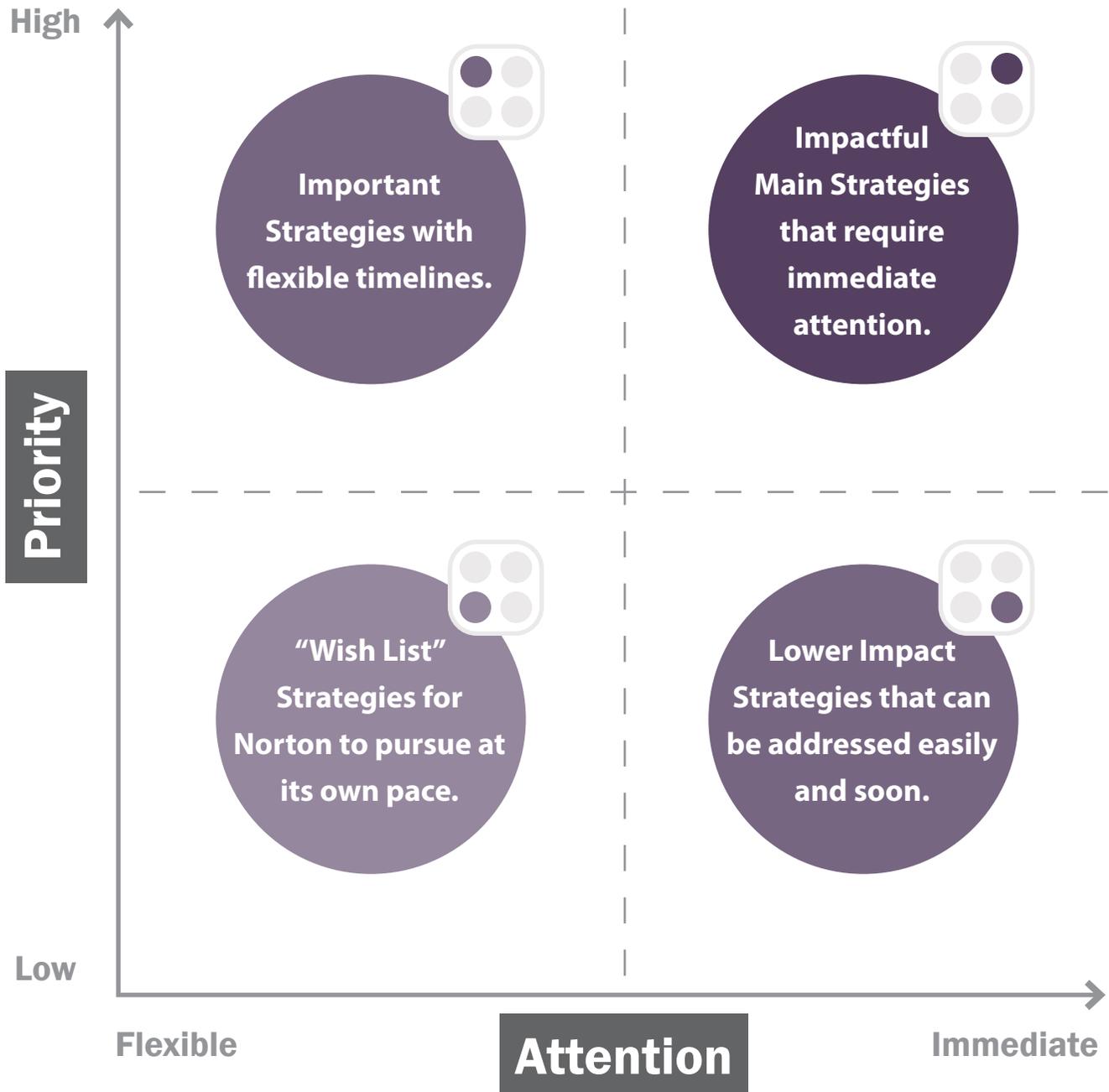
Each chapter contains the main information needed to explore and address its subject matter and is broken down in the following way:

- **“Context”** explains the topic at hand and identifies relevant issues and opportunities for Norton.
- **“Goals”** propose ways to solve problems and promote opportunities.
- **“Strategies”** contain important details to accomplish the goal, including its priority, the main steps to take action, the lead party (“who’s in charge”), and recommended partnerships and programs to pursue.
- All of these details are summarized again in the “Implementation” chapter, which explores and organizes each Strategy in a user-friendly table.

In summary, by relying on public input and clear information, the Town intends to create a transparent and representative plan. It is now up to the residents, elected, and appointed officials to read the plan and use it to guide important decisions about Norton’s future.

### Prioritizing Strategies in the Plan

Like all municipalities, Norton is constrained by its resources and staff capacity. The chart below illustrates how the planning team has prioritized different strategies in this Plan. At the top-right are strategies that require more immediate attention and are of higher priority. On the bottom-left are strategies that have a more flexible timeline and remain a “wishlist” item. Each strategy is assigned a combination of High / Low and Flexible / Immediate. A small “circle” graphic accompanies each strategy, and the following diagram is the key.



# Community-Driven Planning

Public input was the essential ingredient to this Plan. In addition to using current and accurate data, this Plan responds directly to public input. Norton’s residents and stakeholders contributed invaluable thoughts through numerous activities, four public workshops, and a Draft Plan Release

presentation and feedback period. Through public workshops, the team received feedback from residents, business owners, visitors, and many others.



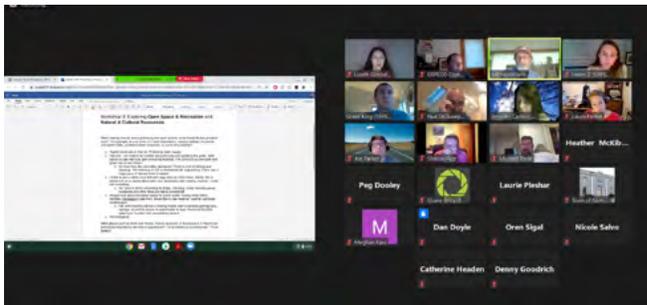
## Discovery Workshop | September 2019

Participants discussed what their visions were for Norton. Through a series of interactive writing and mapping exercises, residents identified opportunities and issues that the Plan could address.



## Land Use, Housing, and Economic Development Workshop | March 2020

Participants discussed what areas of Norton could accommodate growth and what parts should be preserved. They also discussed how the Town could continue to provide housing and attract new employers to create jobs.



## Open Space & Recreation, Natural & Cultural Resources Workshop | October 2020

Participants shared their thoughts in this online workshop about how Norton’s parks and open spaces can be improved. They also discussed important natural, cultural, and historic resources that require additional attention to be preserved.



## Transportation & Circulation, Services & Facilities Workshop | March 2021

Participants used online surveys and mapping exercises to identify safety issues and show where they would like to see improved sidewalks and biking infrastructure. They also discussed the condition of Town buildings and facilities.

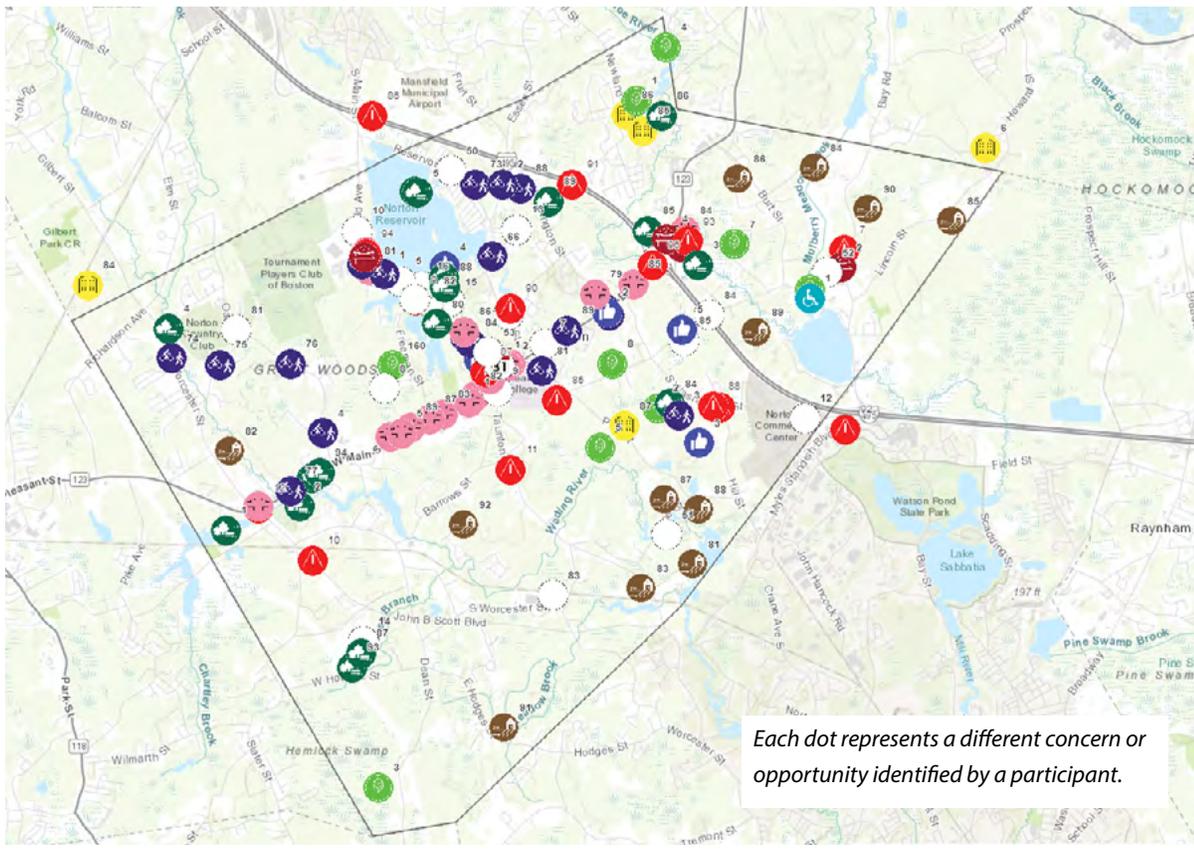
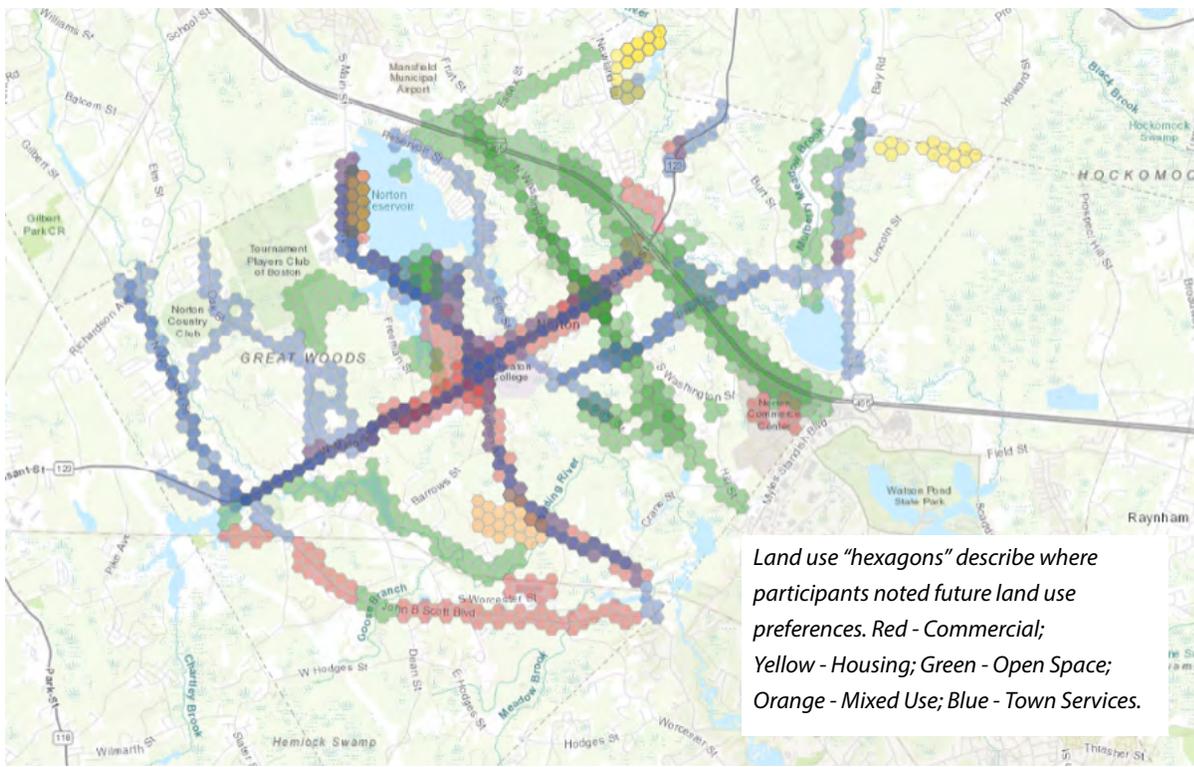


Figure 1. Summarized feedback from the Land Use, Housing, and Economic Development Workshop.

# Planning Context

## Key Information

Norton is a suburban town located in Southeastern Massachusetts. The Towns of Easton and Mansfield to the north, the City of Taunton to the east and southeast, the Town of Rehoboth to the south and southwest and the City of Attleboro to the west, all border Norton. Route 495 runs through Norton and is an important transportation connection for residents and businesses.

Like many towns in the region, Norton was largely a pastoral, rural community until post-war suburbanization and increased use of automobiles transformed farmland and forests into new housing and commercial development. Norton saw its greatest period of growth in the 1980 and 1990s.

Today, Norton is a residential community with pockets of commercial development, such as the Norton Commerce Center and Blue Star Business Park which are used by manufacturing and wholesale businesses. Because railroads did not run through town and instead stayed on its peripheries, Norton's village center never fully developed. Adjacent to the village center is Wheaton College, a liberal arts and sciences college.

While Norton's population growth has slowed considerably from its peak, demand for housing in Massachusetts continues to be high and housing prices continue to increase. Norton's retirement-age population is also increasing while the working-age population and school enrollment decrease. A steady pipeline of new commercial development contributes to the town's tax base, which will help pay for maintenance and improvements to Norton's services and facilities.

As Norton adapts to external pressures and change, this proactive Master Plan will help Norton remain resilient and economically competitive while preserving of what defines Norton - its people, open spaces, and quality of life.

Norton's last Master Plan was from 1998. Other recent planning includes:

- Norton Village Center Plan, 2019
- Municipal Vulnerability Plan (MVP), 2018
- Complete Streets Plan, 2018
- Open Space & Recreation Plan, 2018 - 2024
- Route 140 Corridor Study, 2018
- Priority Development Areas and Priority Protection Areas, 2013

*Figure 2. Opposite: Map of Norton and its regional context.*

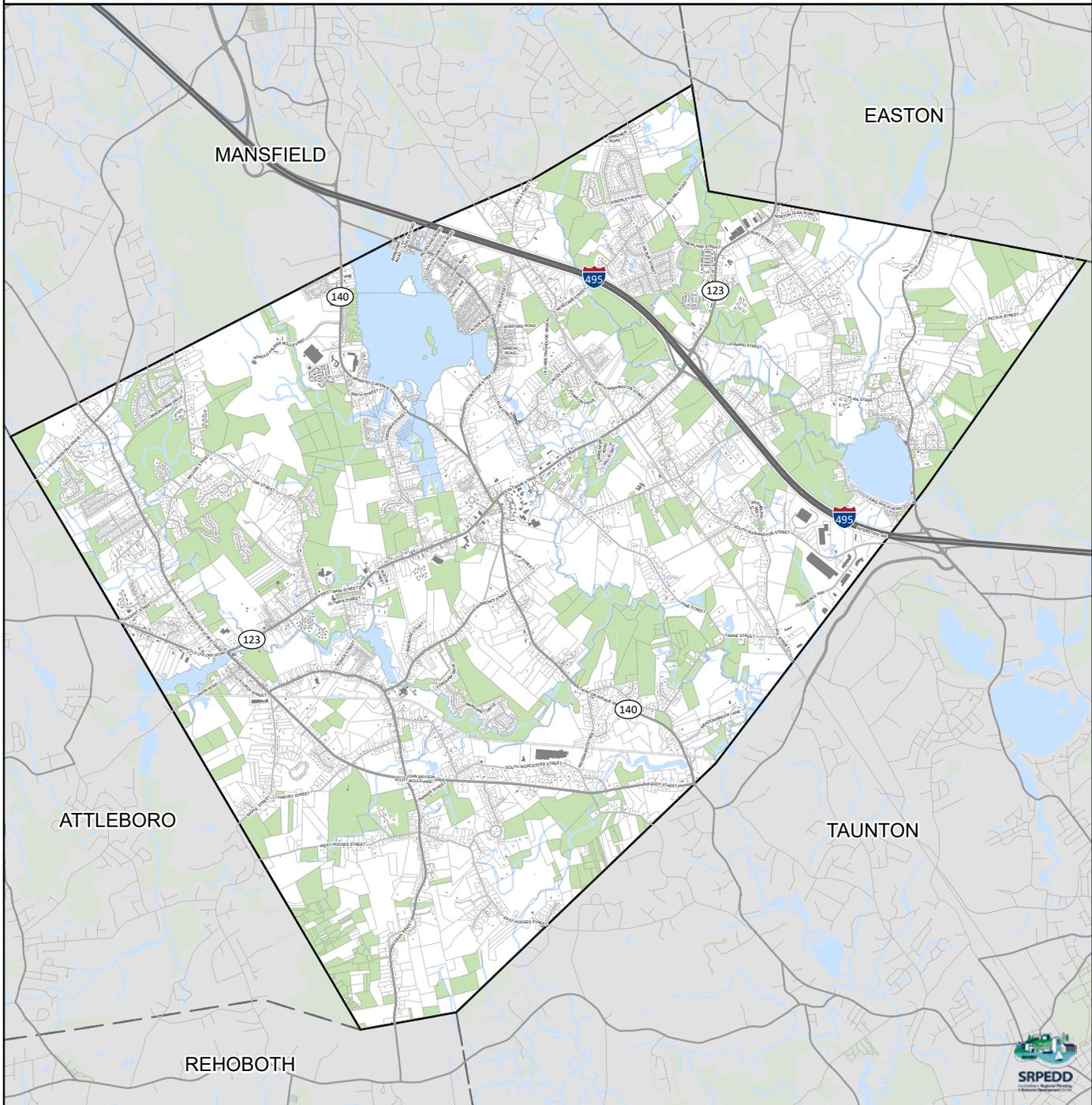
# Map of Norton

- Interstates
- Collectors and Arterials
- Local Roads
- Water
- Open Space



Data sources: MassGIS, MassDOT, and the Town of Norton. This map is for the sole purpose of aiding planning decisions and is not warranted for any other use.

July 2019  0.5 Miles 



# Norton Data

(All data from US Census ACS 2013-2017 unless otherwise noted)

## 19,515 people live in Norton.

- Norton’s “growth spurt” happened between 1990 and 2000, growing 26.44%. The town continued to grow since then, but at more modest rates of about 4% per decade.
- Median age increased from 33.4 to 41.4 between 2000 and 2017.
- The retirement age population increased by almost 100% .
- School enrollment has declined 13.8% in the last 10 years to 2,438 (2019). *(Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education)*

## 6,532 Households.

- 83.9% of Norton’s households own their home.
- Norton’s median income was approximately \$102,869.
- 10.4% of Norton’s housing units are income-restricted affordable, above the

recommended 10% state threshold. *(DHCD, May 2021); please note that this percentage will likely fall when DHCD updates the number of year-round housing units using 2020 Census data; this is anticipated in the Fall of 2021.*

- The median sale price for a single-family house in Norton is \$406,000 (2020). *(Warren Group)*

## 6,360 Jobs

- Largest sectors are Educational Services (1,014 jobs), Wholesale Trade (792 jobs), and Health Care and Social Assistance (696 jobs). *(EOLWD)*
- 16.77% of Norton’s tax base is non-residential. *(Department of Revenue)*
- Norton has a flat tax rate of \$14.90 (for both residential and non-residential) which is lower than neighboring communities like Taunton and Mansfield but slightly higher than Rehoboth. *(Department of Revenue)*

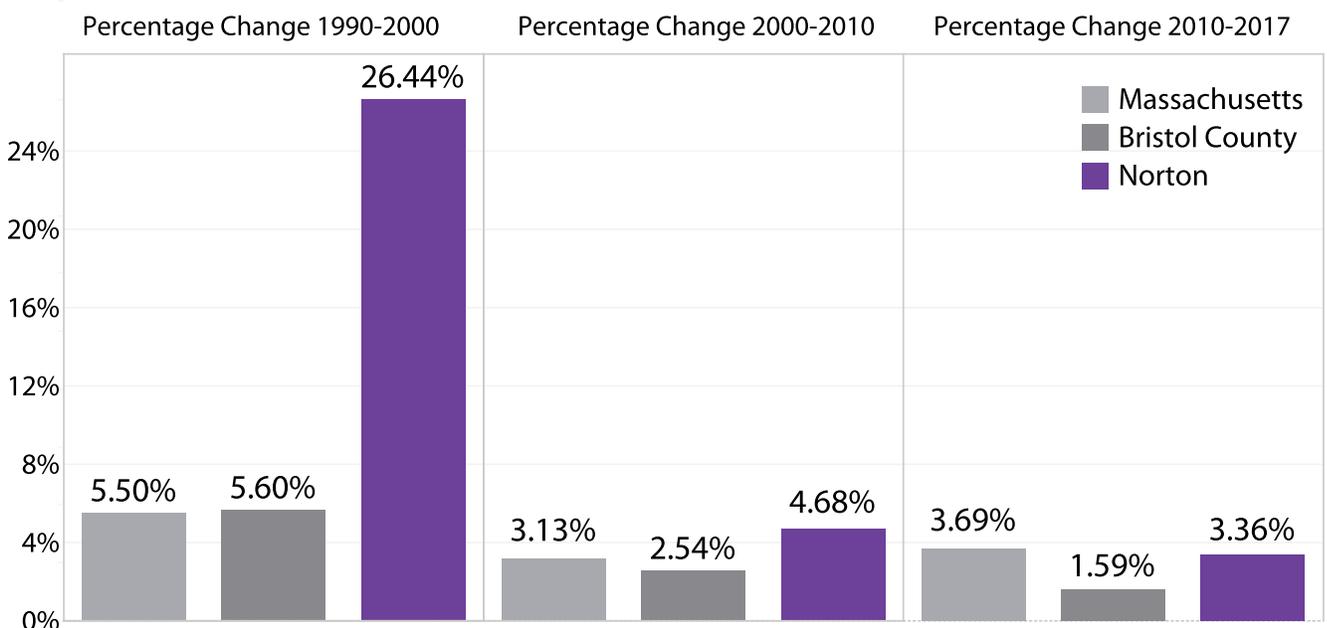


Figure 3. Population growth of Norton from 1990 to 2017. *(US Census Bureau; ACS 5-year estimates (2013-2017))*

# Norton's History

## Prior to European colonialization

The Wampanoag tribe used the area for hunting and fishing; arrowheads and other artifacts have been found near Winnecunnet Pond.

## Late 17th century

Leonard family of Taunton, a branch of a family of skilled ironworkers, mined and forged bog iron in the Chartley section of Norton.

## Nineteenth-century

Norton sees industrial development, manufacturing textile, straw hats, jewelry, and copper disks.

## 1836

The Taunton Branch Railroad opened. Abandoned in 1965, this right-of-way will form the basis for the future rail-to-trail Norton Bike Path. Norton once boasted five railroad stations, and trolley lines connected Norton through the 1940s.

## 1980's

The highway construction attracted commercial development, such as the Norton Commerce Center, and a substantial amount of residential development. Improved train service, with a MBTA station located in nearby Mansfield, has also helped to drive local development. Many new subdivisions were built throughout the town along with a good deal of infill development along existing roads.

Source: *Open Space and Recreation Plan History Section: Ruth Gould, George Yelle and Christopher Cox*

## 1669

First European development, William Wetherell.

## 1675

During the King Phillip's War, a skirmish was fought at Lockety Neck. The King Phillip's Cave was the reputed lookout spot of Metacomet, also known as King Phillip.

## 1711

Norton was incorporated as its own community. The first church was built on the Common.

## 1834

Eliza Bayliss Wheaton, the daughter-in-law of a local judge, developed the Wheaton Women's Seminary into a well-known school. In 1912, the Seminary became Wheaton College.

## 1976

The Interstate Route 495 branch between Raynham and Foxborough began construction, and more people relied on cars to get around.

## 2002

The Xfinity Center in Mansfield was completed, driving further development in the region.

## Today

Norton continues to grow, particularly east of I-495 and along its Route 123 and Route 140 Corridors.



# Vision: Plan Elements

This chapter outlines the Master Plan's guiding principles – its Vision statements.

To understand these important ideas, the Master Plan staff first reviewed previous planning documents and policy statements. Next, staff surveyed current socioeconomic and demographic trends. Lastly – and most importantly, staff gathered vital public input over the course of about 24 months. This public, data-driven, and creative planning process led to the following Vision statements.

## Norton's Vision

### Land Use

Encourage development to help Norton to grow as a vibrant, walkable, and recognizable place, particularly at its nodes and corridors, while protecting Norton's natural and cultural resources and neighborhoods.

### Housing

Increase and diversify Norton's housing supply, particularly for seniors, young families, and first-time homebuyers.

### Economic Development

Support local businesses and encourage appropriate economic development projects that expand the tax base at key locations.

### Open Space & Recreation

Improve access to the Town's parks, water bodies, and other natural areas.

### Natural & Cultural Resources

Build on Norton's strong tradition of environmental conservation by preserving historic and cultural assets that represent Norton's heritage.

### Services & Facilities

Ensure that Norton's infrastructure and town services meet the demands of growth and change.

### Transportation & Circulation

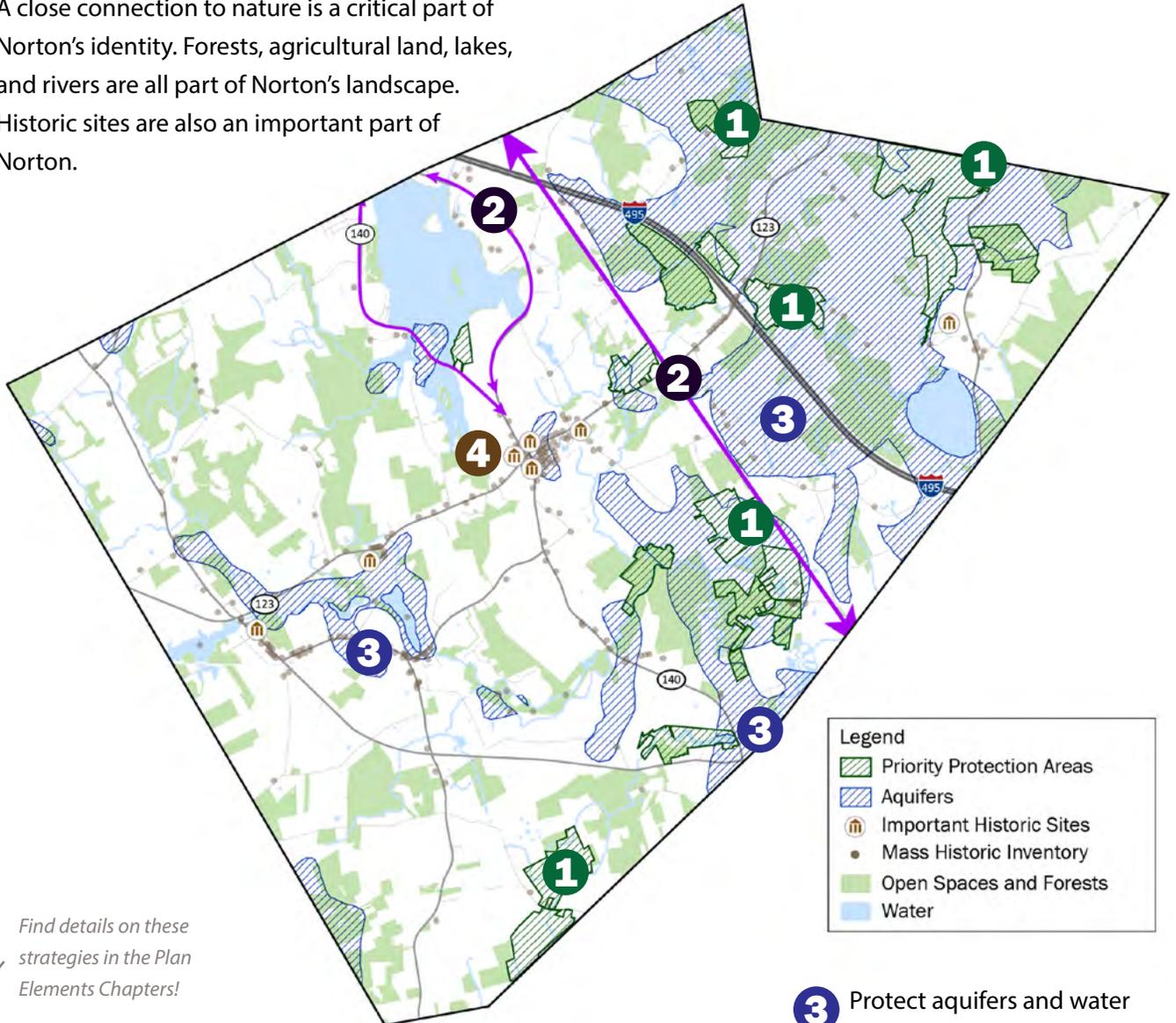
Improve circulation, safety, and appearance for all users of Norton's roads; promote alternatives to driving when enjoying Norton's natural and recreational spaces.

# The Big Idea: Norton's Vision by Area

Norton is a diverse patchwork of areas with different character, ranging from beautiful landscapes to productive commercial corridors. Each area has different targeted strategies to help Norton achieve its Town-wide goals.

## Preserve: Open Spaces and Natural Resources

A close connection to nature is a critical part of Norton's identity. Forests, agricultural land, lakes, and rivers are all part of Norton's landscape. Historic sites are also an important part of Norton.



Find details on these strategies in the Plan Elements Chapters!

**1** Preserve existing open spaces and acquire new open spaces to permanently protect them.

Key Strategies:

**2** Improve access for all to open spaces, including the Reservoir and the Norton Bike Path.

Key Strategies:

**3** Protect aquifers and water resources from pollution and harmful developments.

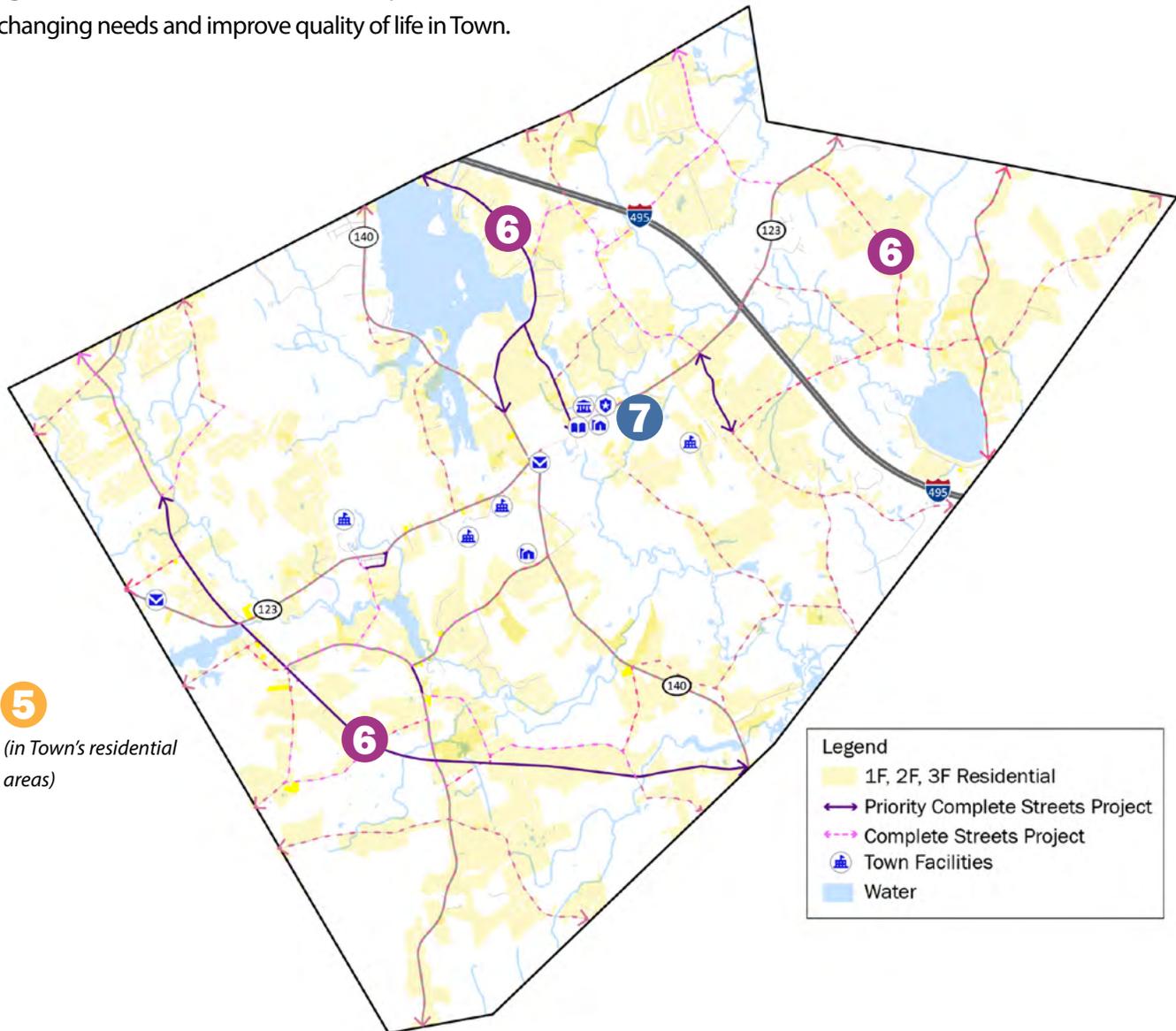
Key Strategies:

**4** Maintain and celebrate Norton's history.

Key Strategies:

## Enhance: Norton's Residential Fabric

Norton is primarily a residential community. Residents value the balance of natural spaces with a close connection to their neighbors. But as Norton's population ages, residents also want Norton to adapt to their changing needs and improve quality of life in Town.



**5**  
(in Town's residential areas)

**5** Allow for new kinds of housing to support an aging population while maintaining a semi-rural neighborhood feel.

Key Strategies:

**6** Encourage walking, biking, and transit to connect Norton residents to open spaces, schools, and businesses.

Key Strategies:

**7** Upgrade and maintain Town facilities to meet the needs of residents, such as the library, senior center, and town hall.

Key Strategies:

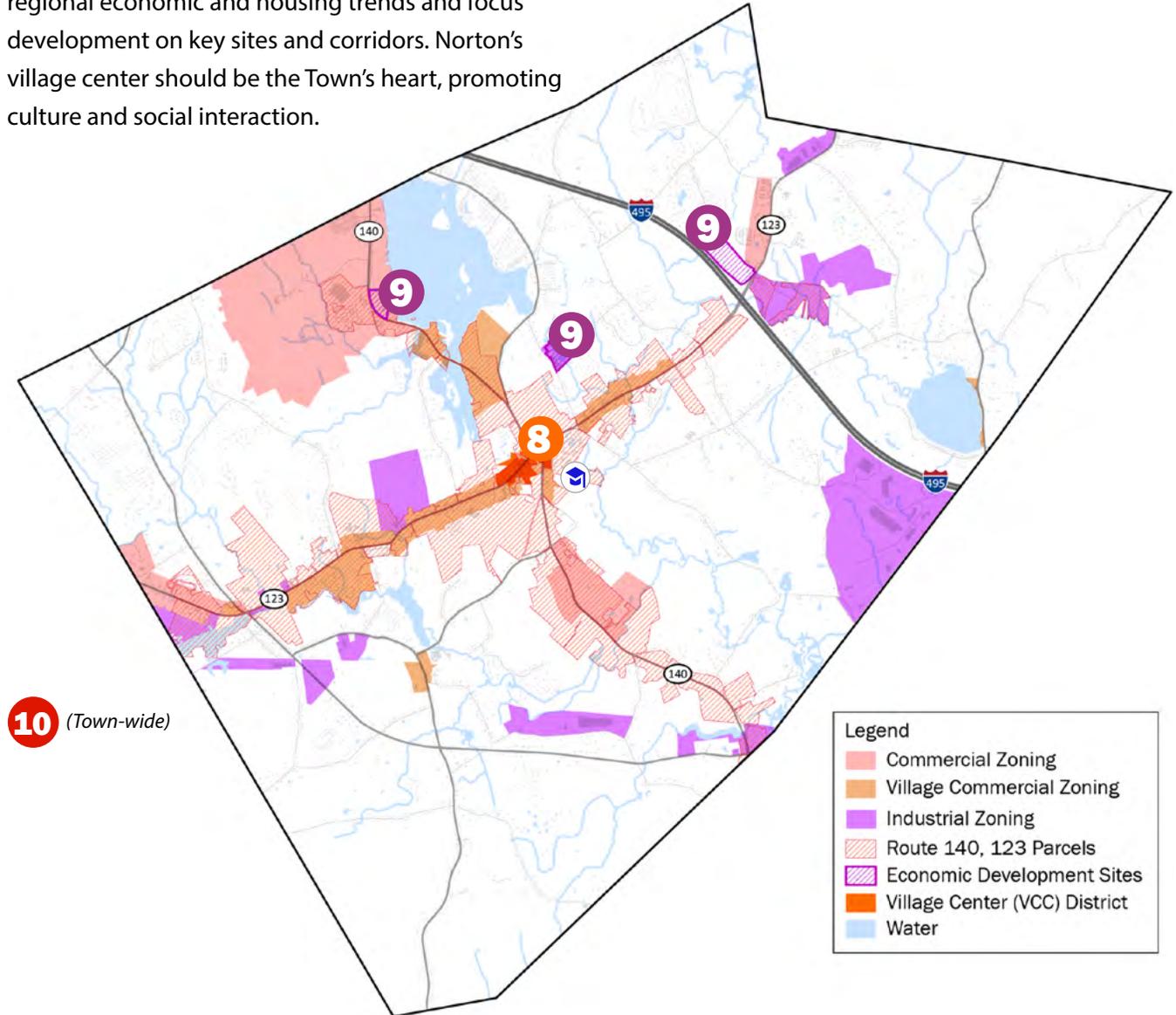
**Legend**

- 1F, 2F, 3F Residential
- Priority Complete Streets Project
- Complete Streets Project
- Town Facilities
- Water

# Norton's Area Visions (continued)

## Adapt: Economic Development Sites and Corridors

Norton continues to be an attractive place for new businesses. Norton should remain responsive to regional economic and housing trends and focus development on key sites and corridors. Norton's village center should be the Town's heart, promoting culture and social interaction.



**10** (Town-wide)

**8** Transform Norton's Village Center into a walkable, vibrant destination for residents, students, and visitors.

*Key Strategies:*

**9** Attract new businesses and new development in Norton's corridors and key economic development sites.

*Key Strategies:*

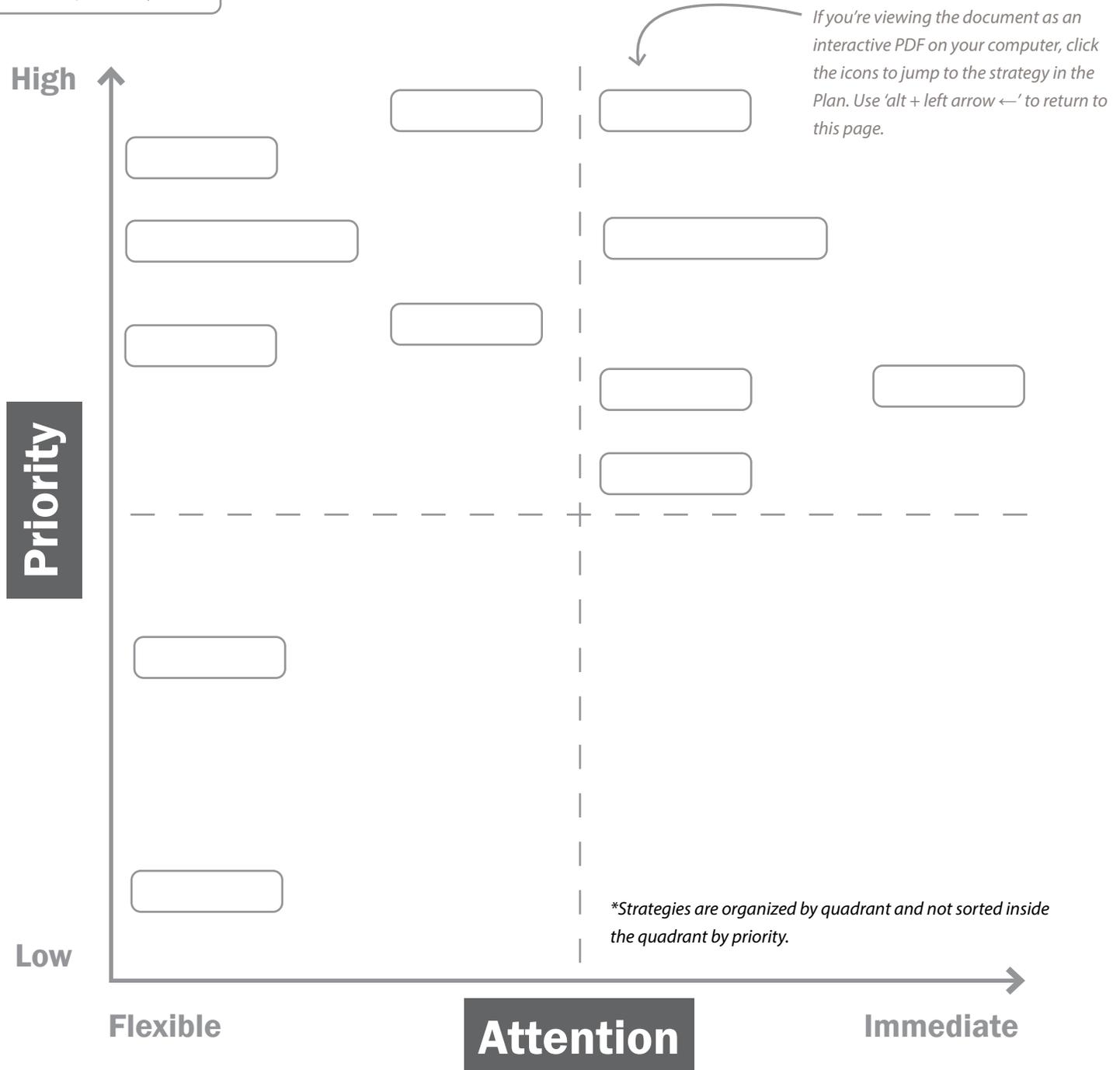
**10** Foster connections between businesses, Wheaton College, and the Town to foster economic resiliency.

*Key Strategies:*

# The Big Idea: Implementation Priority

This Plan recommends many different strategies, and many of the strategies call on the same departments or boards to take action. As mentioned in the "Introduction to the Master Plan," each strategy is assigned a Priority: High / Low level of impact and Flexible / Immediate level of attention needed. This is a summary of all the strategies, color-coded by Element (e.g., Land Use).

Direct Complementary Actions





# Land Use

Encourage development to help Norton to grow as a vibrant, walkable, and recognizable place, while protecting Norton’s natural and cultural resources and neighborhoods.

## Context

Norton is primarily a residential town with large amounts of open space. It also has a few nodes and commercial corridors, including the Village Center and Chartley’s Corner. Larger commercial and industrial sites are interspersed throughout the town, particularly close to its borders or along major roadways.

Norton’s population “growth spurt” occurred in the 1990s with a 26% increase. Afterwards, Norton has steadily grown at a rate comparable to the rest of Massachusetts. In contrast, while Norton experienced some job growth, growing 10.4% between 2010 and 2017, the job growth rate is lower than Massachusetts as a whole (12.5%) and lower than some of its neighbors, such as Mansfield (14.5%).

Zoning regulates the use and development of land in Norton. Norton established its zoning coded in 1974 and last updated it in 2020. Recent changes included the addition of the Village Center Core (VCC) District and updates to comply with the state legalization of Cannabis retail operations. Norton’s zoning code also incorporated more progressive zoning policies, such as residential cluster development (175-6.8). But much of Norton’s zoning follows typical suburban-style zoning code, calling for large

minimum lot sizes, large setbacks, and high parking requirements. While these policies were intended to protect Norton’s town character, such policies actually encourage the loss of green open spaces and increase reliance on driving while discouraging a compact, walkable, and vibrant town center.

## Goals and Strategies Overview

**Goal 1-1:** Modernize the town’s zoning bylaw to meet the Town’s priorities on growth and preservation.

1. *Implement and promote the Village Center Core (VCC) District.*
2. *Update use tables to attract emerging and changing types of uses.*
3. *Evaluate the feasibility of a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) bylaw.*
4. *Encourage Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) and smaller housing typologies.*
5. *Create a user-friendly Development and Permitting Guide to facilitate all types of housing and business development.*
6. *Perform a “Code Diagnosis” to resolve any issues with the current zoning by-law.*

**Goal 1-2:** Encourage compact, mixed-use or larger-scale commercial development at key locations.

1. *Implement new zoning overlays with clear design standards for opportunity areas and along corridors.*

Figure 5. Opposite: View of Main Street, Route 123 Corridor.

## Goal 1-1

Modernize the town's zoning bylaw to meet the Town's priorities on growth and preservation.

### Strategy 1.1.1: Implement and promote the Village Center Core (VCC) District.

At the Fall 2020 Town Meeting, the Town approved the rezoning of property within the Village Center to "Village Center Core (VCC)." The VCC is a new zoning district, along with other improvements, that will transform the center into a vibrant and walkable destination. The VCC allows for mixed-use developments, smaller minimum lot sizes, and smaller minimum frontage standards.

The [zoning language](#)<sup>1</sup> has been adopted and will need to be incorporated into the existing code, pending review by regulatory boards. The current boundaries are limited to a handful of parcels on Route 123/Main Street, between Wheaton College and Yelle Elementary. As new developments are proposed, the new zoning regulations should be evaluated to ensure the goals of the VCC are being met and there are no unintended consequences or barriers to desired development outcomes. A one-page handout based on the Town Meeting presentation could further simplify the update to help market the area to prospective developers. Allowing for more shared parking agreements could also improve the feasibility of projects.

.....  
1. [https://www.nortonma.org/sites/g/files/vyhlf3606/f/news/special\\_town\\_meeting\\_warrant\\_aug\\_29\\_2020.pdf](https://www.nortonma.org/sites/g/files/vyhlf3606/f/news/special_town_meeting_warrant_aug_29_2020.pdf)

**Priority:** High - Immediate

**Responsible Parties:** Planning & Economic Development



**Performance Measures:** By the end of 2025, at least one proposal has been approved and built to support the goals of creating a walkable, compact village district under the new zoning rules. Continued, affirmative efforts by the town Planning Board and Director of Planning and Economic Development will help make this goal a reality including marketing the district through simple materials and outreach to the development community.

**Example Success Stories:** Example bylaws that enable Village-Style development are available throughout Massachusetts.

**Complementary Actions: Economic Development**

**Strategy 3.2.2:** *Implement placemaking strategy for Village Center, including signage.*

Figure 6. Opposite: Map of land uses in Norton.

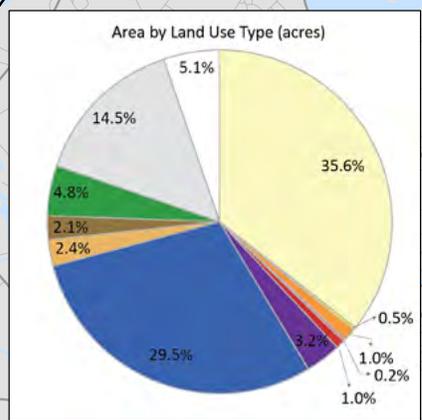
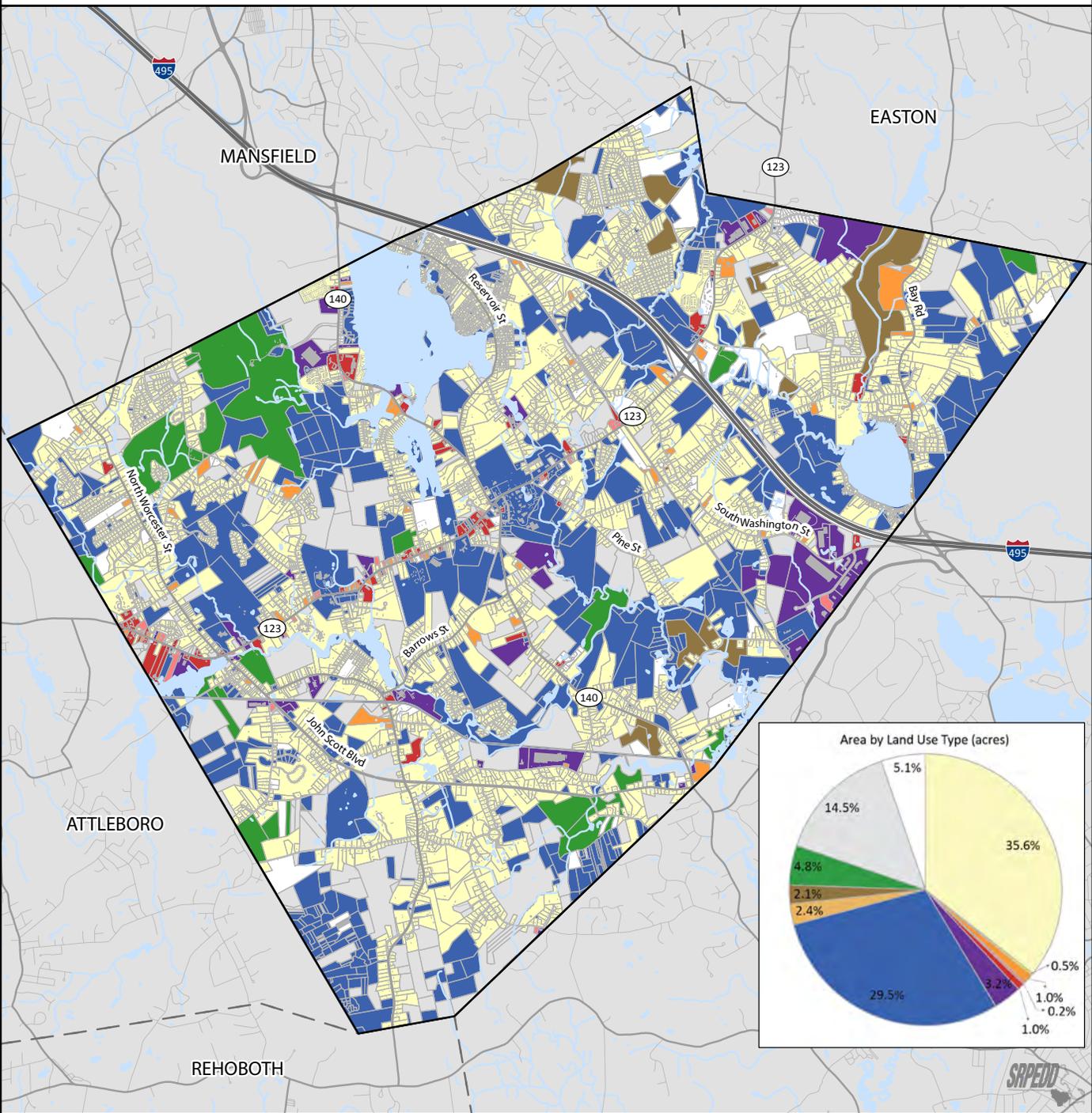
## Norton Land Use

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #ffffcc; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Residences <= 3 units | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #d2b48c; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Res AG and Res OS          |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #ffff00; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Apartments >= 4 units | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #8b6914; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Agriculture                |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #ffa500; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Mixed-Use             | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #32cd32; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Open Space and Recreation  |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #ff69b4; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Office                | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #696969; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Utility and Transportation |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #ff0000; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Commercial            | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #d3d3d3; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Vacant                     |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #4b0082; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Industrial            | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #ffffff; border: 1px solid black;"></span> No Data                    |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #00008b; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Institutional         | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #add8e6; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Water                      |



Data sources: MassGIS, MassDOT, and the Town of Norton. This map is for the sole purpose of aiding planning decisions and is not warranted for any other use.

May 2021  0.5 Miles ↑



## Goal 1-1 (continued)

Modernize the town's zoning bylaw to meet the Town's priorities on growth and preservation.

### Strategy 1.1.2: Update use tables to attract emerging and changing types of uses.

As Southeastern Massachusetts' economy evolves, Norton should position itself to capture any potential growth in new types of businesses or developments, sometimes referred to as 21st-century industry. As new businesses or anyone with an innovative idea scouts different communities, Norton should be as pre-emptive and welcoming as possible to signal their openness to new ideas.

The approvals process should be as simple as possible for new uses, such as creative-focused or cultural uses, coworking spaces, and small fabrication spaces. To anticipate potential trends, allowing co-living style apartments or compact apartments in the village center would also open up even more possibilities. For example, Bog Iron Brewing produces their beer onsite as a microbrewery with a taproom and attached restaurant. Depending on the interpretation of zoning, this type of use would generally not be allowed; further "breweries" do not appear in the zoning bylaw's use table.

Additionally, modern uses such as life science businesses and other emerging technology companies should be explicitly added to the

zoning as an allowed use. Better understanding their needs and footprints (lab spaces require different floor plates and heights, compared to traditional manufacturing and warehousing) will ensure Norton is well-positioned to attract innovative companies. Norton is already a Gold Bio-ready community; it can achieve platinum by having shovel-ready, pre-permitted land sites with completed MEPA review and municipal water and sewer capacity.

**Priority:** High - Immediate

**Responsible Parties:** Planning & Economic Development, Planning Board

**Performance Measures:** By the end of 2022, the zoning bylaw's use tables are updated with these uses.

**Example Success Stories:** [Medford \(2019\)](#) recently updated its land use table to allow for breweries in commercial areas, since manufacturing is generally forbidden.



Figure 7. Opposite: Map of zoning districts in Norton.

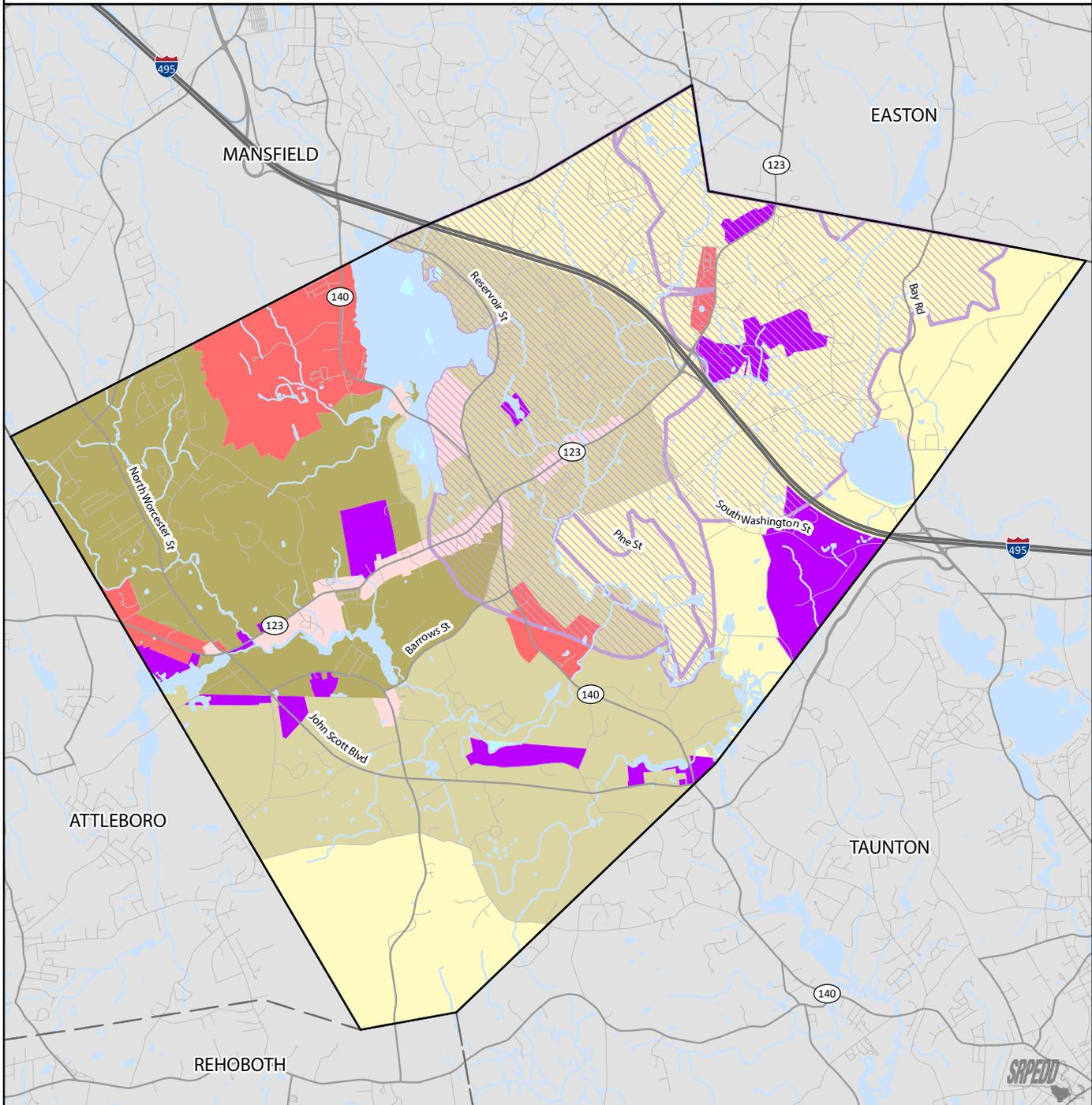
# Norton Zoning

- Residential 80 - R80
  - Residential 60 - R60
  - Residential 40 - R40
  - Village Commercial - VB
  - Commercial - C
  - Industrial - I
  - Water Resource Protection District
- Interstates
  - Collectors and Arterials
  - Local Roads
  - Water



Data sources: MassGIS, MassDOT, and the Town of Norton. This map is for the sole purpose of aiding planning decisions and is not warranted for any other use.

May 2021  0.5 Miles ↑



# Goal 1-1 (continued)

Modernize the town’s zoning bylaw to meet the Town’s priorities on growth and preservation.

## Strategy 1.1.3: Evaluate the feasibility of a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) bylaw.

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) is a zoning mechanism that uses real estate market forces to permanently protect land. The main idea is that a community can encourage development where it wants by allowing property-owners to trade the ability to build on their land.

Under TDR, “open space is permanently protected [through a conservation restriction] for water supply, agriculture, habitat, recreation, or other purposes via the transfer of some or all of the development that would otherwise have occurred in these sensitive places to more suitable locations. [Then], other locations, such as city and town centers or vacant and underutilized properties, become more vibrant and successful as the development potential from the protected resource areas is transferred to them. In essence, development rights are ‘transferred’ from one district (the ‘sending area’) to another (the ‘receiving area’).<sup>2</sup>

Communities using TDR are generally shifting development densities within the community to achieve both open space and economic goals without changing their overall development potential. Implementing a TDR program would require additional staffing to help process

2. <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/smart-growth-smart-energy-toolkit-modules-transfer-of-development-rights-tdr>

applications and creatively seek partnerships between developers and landowners. It is also important to note that, thanks to recent economic development and zoning-related legislation signed into law by Gov. Baker in 2021 (“House, No. 5250, An Act Enabling Partnerships for Growth”), the Town would only need a simple majority vote at Town Meeting to approve a TDR zoning amendment – making this strategy more attainable than it was when the Master Plan process began in 2019.<sup>3</sup>

3. Certain types of zoning changes mentioned in the plan now only require a simple majority (rather than a super majority) at town meeting under the recently passed Housing and Economic Development legislation.

**Priority:** Low - Flexible

**Responsible Parties:** Planning & Economic Development



**Performance Measures:**

- By the end of 2028, begin an education campaign to explain the benefits of a TDR and evaluate the feasibility of the process.
- By the end of 2029, begin public review process to establish TDR sending (preserve) and receiving (develop) areas.
- By 2030, approve TDR bylaw by simple majority. Establish an intermediary “land bank” held by a conservation agency to streamline “swaps.”

**Example Success Story:** Plymouth-Carver, MA; Montgomery County, MD; Seattle WA; Falmouth, MA.

**Complementary Actions:** Open Space and Recreation Strategy 4.1.4: *Explore Transfer Development Right (TDR) bylaw.*

## Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)

TDR is a regulatory strategy that harnesses private market forces to accomplish local goals for growth. First, open space is permanently protected for water supply, agricultural, habitat, recreational, or other purposes via the transfer of some or all of the development that would otherwise have occurred in these sensitive places to more suitable locations that are identified by the community. Second, other locations, such as city and town centers or vacant and underutilized properties, become more vibrant and successful as the development potential from the protected resource areas is transferred to them. In essence, development rights are "transferred" from one district (the "Sending Area") to another (the "Receiving Area"). Communities using TDR are generally shifting development densities within the community to achieve both open space and economic goals without changing their overall development potential. While less common, TDR can also be used for preservation of historic resources. - Commonwealth of Massachusetts Smart Growth/Smart Energy Toolkit.

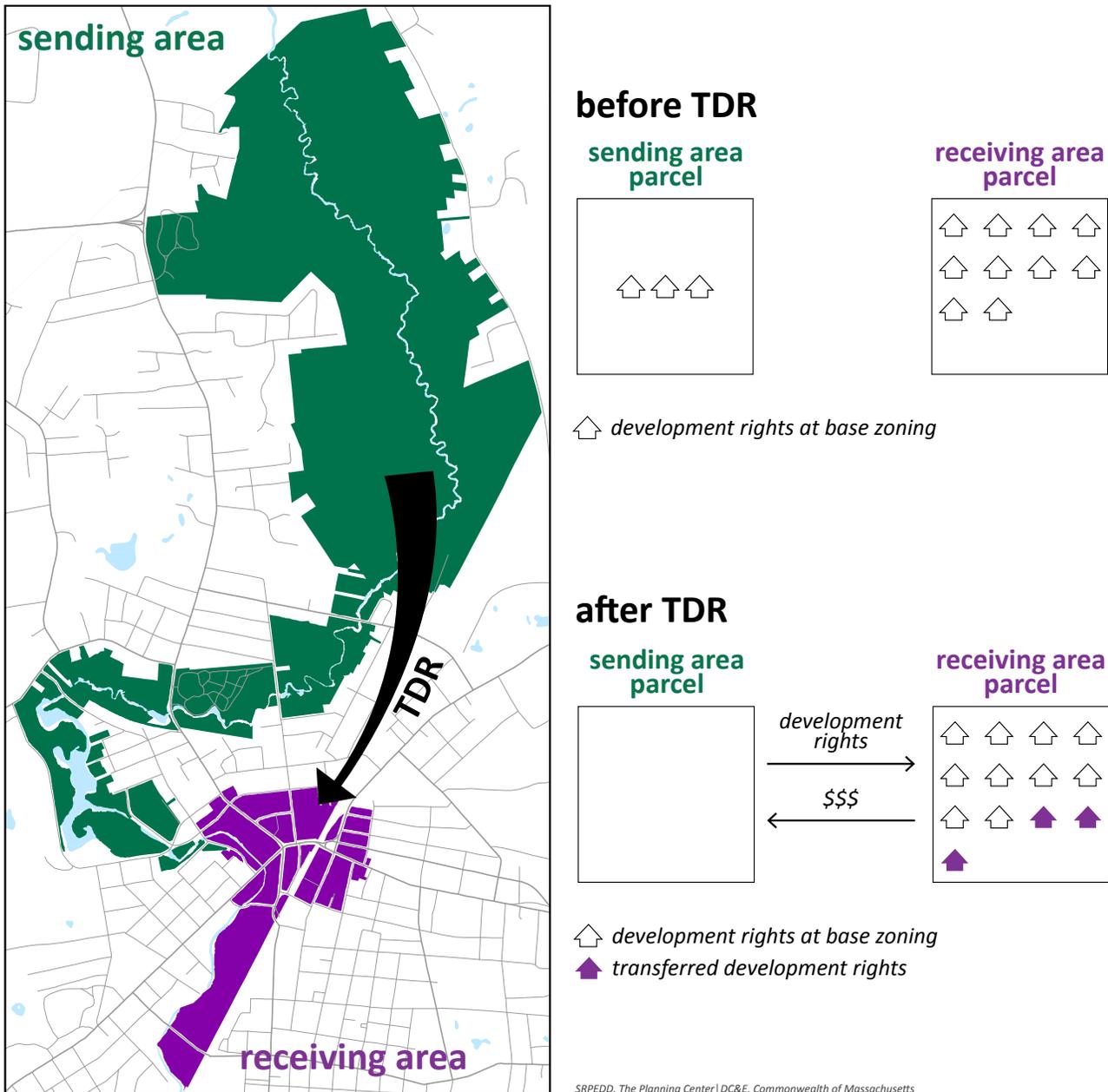


Figure 8. Diagram explaining how Transfer of Development Rights works.

## Goal 1-1 (continued)

Modernize the town's zoning bylaw to meet the Town's priorities on growth and preservation.

### Strategy 1.1.4: Encourage Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) and smaller housing typologies.

One barrier to the creation of more affordably priced housing on the market is the lack of housing diversity. Beyond traditional multi-family apartment buildings built by larger developers, the "missing middle" includes duplexes, triplexes, and accessory dwelling units (ADU). An ADU is a smaller, secondary house or apartment that shares the lot of a larger, primary house. Some ADU are stand-alone, meaning that they are built in the rear yard or above an existing outbuilding, such as a garage. Some ADUs are built in rear additions, attics, or the existing building area of a larger home. ADUs are useful for older households who do not need as much space but would benefit from additional income.

Currently, ADU's or "accessory apartments" are allowed as long as "the appearance of a single-family home is maintained and Board of Health requirement are met." A potential updated Housing Production Plan (HPP, see Housing Strategy 2.1.1) could examine how many accessory apartments currently exist and evaluate if there are any regulatory barriers to their creation. The policy could be further updated to be more flexible and include accessory apartments in additions or existing outbuildings. Addressing regulatory barriers

through the HPP or independent review would benefit from a friendly guide on permitting to coordinate future development of ADUs by providing clarity on specific information of their form and design.

Other ways to encourage smaller housing typologies is to relax the minimum lot size and allow for some subdivision. Currently, a duplex requires 80,000 sf minimum lot size in all residential zoning districts – likely too large of a minimum lot size for a multi-family unit type to be economically viable.

*Note: Affordable, income-restricted housing is subsidized and deed-restricted. Housing that is affordable to a family is generally defined as costing less than 30% of a household's income.*

**Priority:** High - Flexible

**Responsible Parties:** Planning & Economic Development, Planning Board



**Performance Measures:**

- By the end of 2023, begin an education campaign to explain the benefits of ADUs and other small housing typologies.
- By the end of 2024, begin public review process to establish any recommended changes to the Residential Use Table and Dimension Requirements.
- By 2025, approve these changes and track applications to ensure the policy is working as intended, tweaking the regulations to account for unexpected loopholes or barriers.

**Complementary Actions:** Housing Strategy 2.2.1: *Incentivize the production of smaller units on less land through zoning updates and by innovating zoning by-laws.*

### **Strategy 1.1.5: Create a user-friendly Development and Permitting Guide to facilitate all types of housing and business development.**

**Complementary Actions:** A user-friendly Development and Permitting Guide would help advance goals across land use, housing (2.2.1), economic development (3.2.1), and environmental conservation (5.1.1). Businesses, homeowners, and developers need clear expectations and predictability from local government when planning renovations or new developments. Without clear expectations, the cost of development and permitting increase with unpredictability. Town governments can work collaboratively with existing and prospective business-owners to identify clear and fair expectations while recognizing private economic realities.

For more details on the contents of the guide, please see Economic Development Strategy 3.2.1: *Create a user-friendly Development and Permitting Guide to encourage new businesses and existing business growth.*

### **Strategy 1.1.6: Perform a “Code Diagnosis” to resolve any issues with the current zoning by-law.**

Often, the zoning code cannot anticipate for special cases, or sometimes it ignores the realities of existing buildings. Though non-conforming buildings can be “grandfathered” in, house renovations can run into regulatory issues if the existing house does not meet zoning code. Periodically cleaning up and updating the zoning can help to identify pinch points and reduce unnecessary ZBA cases.

The Master Plan project team has identified a few potential issues with the code. The minimum lot size is quite large, and many existing parcels do not comply with that minimum. The minimum street frontage can also be excessive (150’ in residential zoning districts) and discourages any compact development in residential or village commercial districts. The town should conduct a thorough diagnostic of the entire code, using this Master Plan’s goals and objectives as a guide to recommending solutions.

**Priority:** Low - Immediate

**Responsible Parties:** Planning & Economic Development

**Performance Measures:**

- By 2022, hire a land use and zoning consultant to recommend changes to the zoning by-law and conduct a “literature review” of bylaws from similar communities that have produced development outcomes that are appropriate for Norton.
- By 2023, the Planning Board approves the changes, which are then brought to Town Meeting.

**Example Success Story:** In nearby Mansfield’s R-3 district, detached single-family homes require 10,000 s.f. lots; two-family homes (“duplexes”) require only 7,500 s.f. per unit.

## Goal 1-2

Encourage compact, mixed-use or larger-scale commercial development at key locations.

### Strategy 1.2.1: Implement new zoning overlays with clear design standards for opportunity areas and along corridors.

In order to allow for as much flexibility as possible on key development sites, Norton should consider implementing overlay districts with design standards. Design standards use images and text to describe numerous site and building characteristics, ranging from stormwater management to architecture and materials. Rather than impose strict dimensional requirements, design standards and performance standards balance flexibility with regulation to promote creative solutions and the best possible project outcome. These design standards would apply to projects of a certain size in a specific area, particularly ones that require special permit.

These design standards should promote walkable, compact developments; for example, the building's primary façade should front the street instead of a parking lot. Design standards can also address the public realm, including design, style, and materials for light poles, planters, benches and other public space infrastructure. Design standards integrate concepts and branding that can help new developments feel consistent with town-wide economic development efforts and wayfinding in the Village Center. This strategy builds on the creation of the small business association (3.2.7), offering a clear opportunity to coordinate façade improvements and potential funding opportunities.

These new overlay districts can then be promoted by the town's Director of Planning and Economic Development and Economic Development Commission. Though these potential new overlay districts are no guarantee of future development, they will be an effective marketing tool to signal Norton's willingness to partner with new businesses. Design standards are typically included in Planning Board Rules and Regulations governing Site Plan Review. The Planning Board can adopt and subsequently amend design standards at public hearings.

In addition to the Town's inventory of vacant commercial-industrial sites, the Master Plan has identified a number of development sites. For more detailed profiles on these sites, refer to Economic Development Strategy 3.1.1 *Pursue additional studies and funding to implement design standards and improvements for identified economic development sites.*

**Priority:** High - Flexible

**Responsible Parties:** Planning & Economic Development, Economic Development Commission, Planning Board

**Performance Measures:**

By the end of 2024, create additional zoning overlay districts to promote new development. Pursue economic development and infrastructure grants.

**Example Success Stories:** Watertown Design Guidelines, Watertown, MA; Chapter 40R Smart Growth Zoning Overlay Districts.



Figure 9. Opposite: Map of Economic Development sites and corridors mentioned in the Plan.

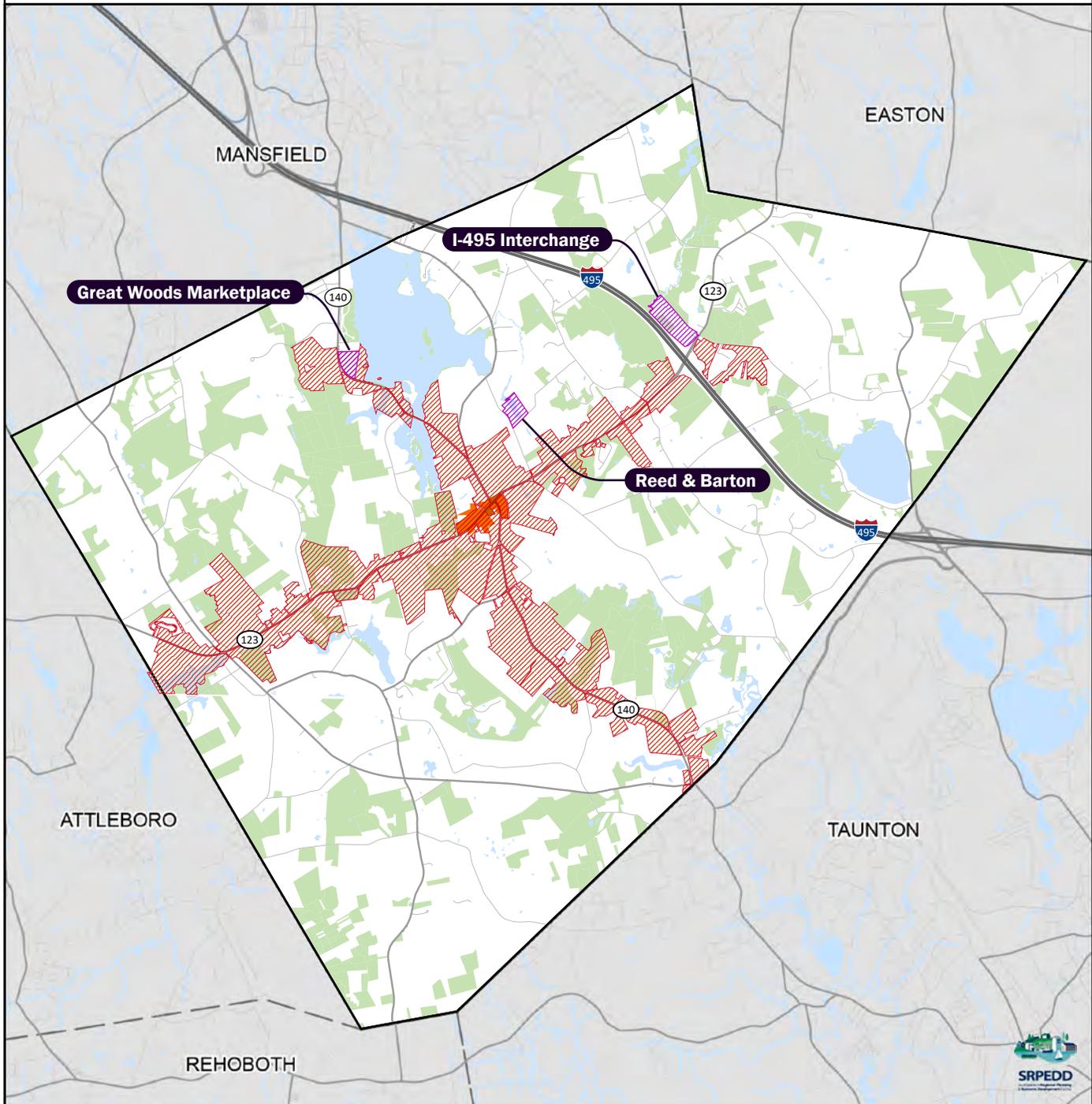
### Economic Development Sites

-  Route 140 and Route 123 Corridors
-  Economic Development Sites
-  VCC Zoning District
-  Interstates
-  Collectors and Arterials
-  Local Roads
-  Water
-  Open Space



Data sources: MassGIS, MassDOT, and the Town of Norton. This map is for the sole purpose of aiding planning decisions and is not warranted for any other use.

May 2021  0.5 Miles 





# Housing

Diversify Norton’s housing stock, including affordable “downsizing” for Norton’s seniors and small households.

## Context

Like many communities across Massachusetts, Norton exhibits common demographic trends, including an aging population and decreasing household sizes. Over the last twenty years, Norton’s median age increased by about 8 years, indicating a growing number of individuals inching closer to retirement. Household size also decreased, and data show a 5% decrease in households with children under 18 years of age. As individuals age and households become smaller (with fewer school-age kids), Norton can confidently anticipate a shift in housing needs. Older adults who live alone may consider downsizing from the home where they raised their children. Individuals entering retirement may consider alternative housing as their physical mobility changes and they budget based on fixed-incomes. All communities contribute to the statewide need for affordable housing, committing at least 10% of all housing units for low-income households. Recent data shows that Norton meets the 10% threshold, but final results from the 2020 Census will likely tip this figure below the threshold. It is therefore likely that further housing developments may take place through the Chapter 40B process.

*Figure 10. Opposite: View of Red Mill Village, a 55+ community in East Norton.*

These trends highlight a future demand for affordable housing and diverse housing types which can all be achieved through specific strategies that harness state housing programs, zoning changes, and community development strategies.

## Goals and Strategies Overview

**Goal 2-1:** Provide more affordable, income-restricted housing.

1. *Create a specialized Housing Production Plan (HPP) to set housing policy and gain more control over the Chapter 40B process.*
2. *Consider participation in the state’s Housing Choice Initiative (HCI) Program.*
3. *Adopt the Community Preservation Act (CPA) To Fund the Construction of Affordable Housing.*

**Goal 2-2:** Build a range of market-rate housing to meet the demands of young families, the senior population, and first-time homebuyers.

1. *Incentivize the production of smaller units on less land through zoning updates and by innovating zoning by-laws.*
2. *Incentivize Senior Housing Development and promote Aging-in Community strategies.*

## Goal 2-1

Provide more affordable, income-restricted housing.

Norton residents discussed the importance of supporting housing development that meet their wide range of needs. Workshop activities saw residents highlight the need for affordable housing and diverse housing types. Residents consider the eastern part of town near the Easton line as a potential site for more apartments and cluster development, while other residents preferred to integrate “missing middle housing” into the fabric of local neighborhoods. Those who stated a preference for the types of “missing middle housing,” such as duplexes or multi-family housing, also considered this an opportunity to preserve open space for recreational use in these neighborhoods. To foster a wider range of housing types as well as ensure affordability, Norton needs to take stock of its current housing and plan for change through a Housing Production Plan and participation in the Housing Choice Initiative program.

### **Strategy 2.1.1: Create a specialized Housing Production Plan (HPP) to set housing policy and gain more control over the Chapter 40B process.**

A Housing Production Plan (HPP) enables proactive planning and development of affordable housing by creating a strategy to meet affordable housing needs. By taking a proactive approach to housing production, Norton is

more likely to achieve both its housing and community planning goals. Moreover, HPPs give communities that are under the 10% affordable housing threshold of Chapter 40B more control over comprehensive permit applications. Currently, Norton meets this threshold, but the final results of the 2020 Census will likely cause this figure to decrease. The increased control and participation provided by the HPP is particularly important for communities such as Norton that seek to meet a unique set of needs based on demographic trends. Norton’s senior population, which makes up just under half of single-person households in town, is increasingly vulnerable to income limitations as they enter retirement and their household sizes decrease. Ensuring Norton pursues affordable housing, and specifically affordable senior housing, will enable current residents to age in place.

**Priority:** High - Flexible

**Responsible Parties:** Planning Board, Planning & Economic Development

**Performance Measures:** Secure grant funding and complete HPP by 2024.

**Example Success Stories:** Cities and towns across the state successfully implement HPPs, leading to more control over the 40B process and improved outcomes for their community.



Figure 11. Opposite: Map of housing in Norton.

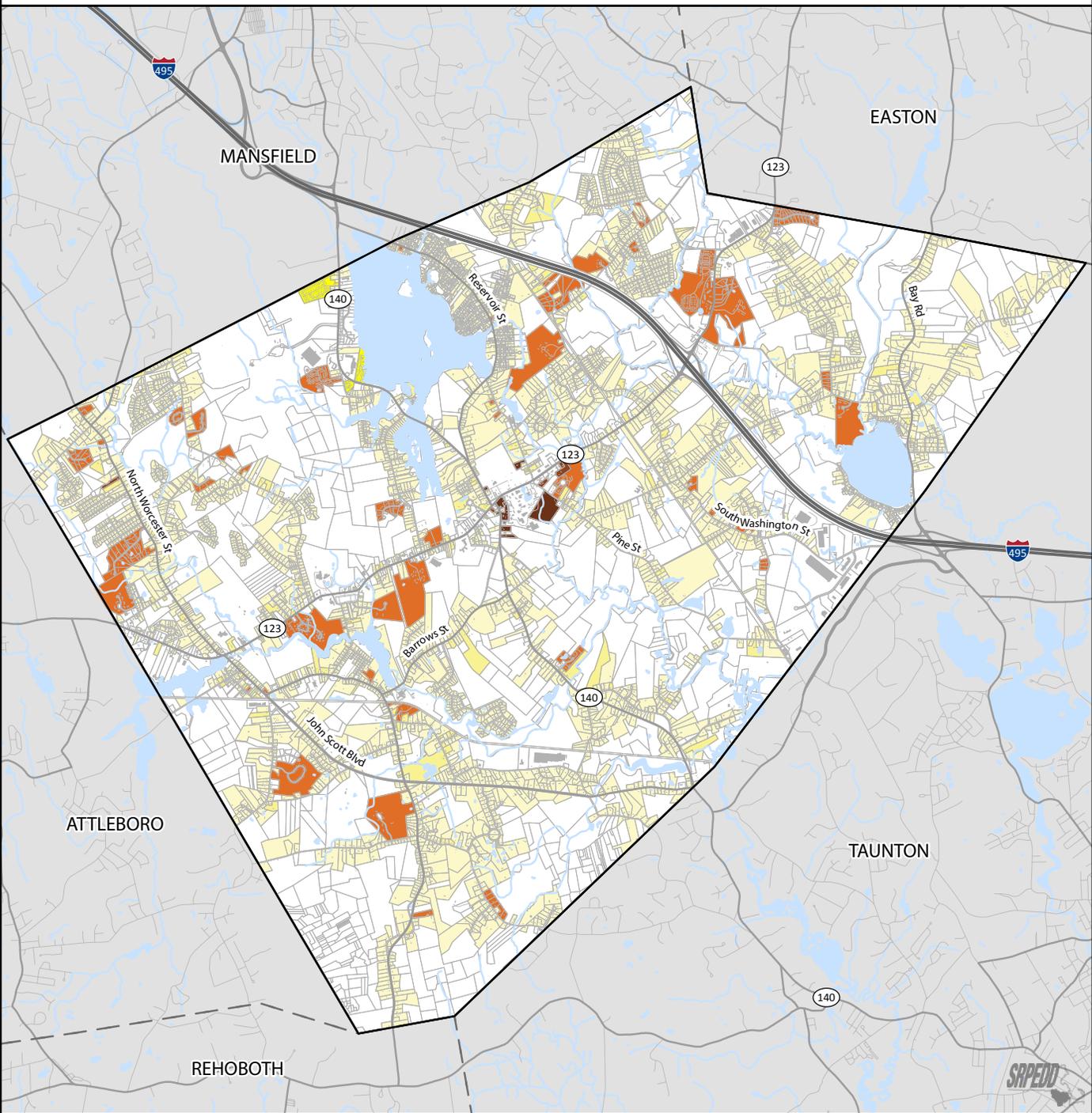
# Norton Housing

- Single Family Residential
- Two and Three Family Residential
- Mobile Homes
- Apartments and Condos
- Boarding
- Wheaton College Housing
- Interstates
- Collectors and Arterials
- Local Roads
- Water



Data sources: MassGIS, MassDOT, and the Town of Norton. This map is for the sole purpose of aiding planning decisions and is not warranted for any other use.

May 2021  0.5 Miles ↑



## Goal 2-1 (continued)

Provide more affordable, income-restricted housing.

### Strategy 2.1.2: Consider participation in the state's Housing Choice Initiative (HCI) Program.

The state's Housing Choice Initiative (HCI) program seeks to provide technical and financial assistance to communities interested in increasing their housing supply. A significant part of the HCI program is the Housing Choice designation and grant program. Norton should apply to the Housing Choice designation, which considers whether a town has reached certain housing production goals. As a Housing Choice Community, Norton would be eligible for the Housing Choice Community Grant program, which is a competitive capital grant program used to fund infrastructure projects that support affordable housing development at appropriate identified sites in town.

Currently, Norton does not qualify for designation, but should assess the method by which they could apply to the HCI program. Norton should assess their housing production data to ensure the town is on track to meet the 5% or 500 unit or 3% or 300-unit threshold. If Norton is only able to achieve the 3% or 300 unit threshold, they should assess which best practices they meet and plan to implement new best practices in time for the next round of applications. An overview of the HCI best

practices shows that Norton meets the following best practices of the HCI program:

- Have zoning that allows for accessory dwelling units by right.
- Have zoning that allows mixed-use or cluster development.
- Have units currently eligible for inclusion in the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) that equal or exceed 10% of total year-round housing stock according to the DHCD subsidized housing inventory.

**Priority:** High - Flexible

**Responsible Parties:** Planning Board, Planning & Economic Development

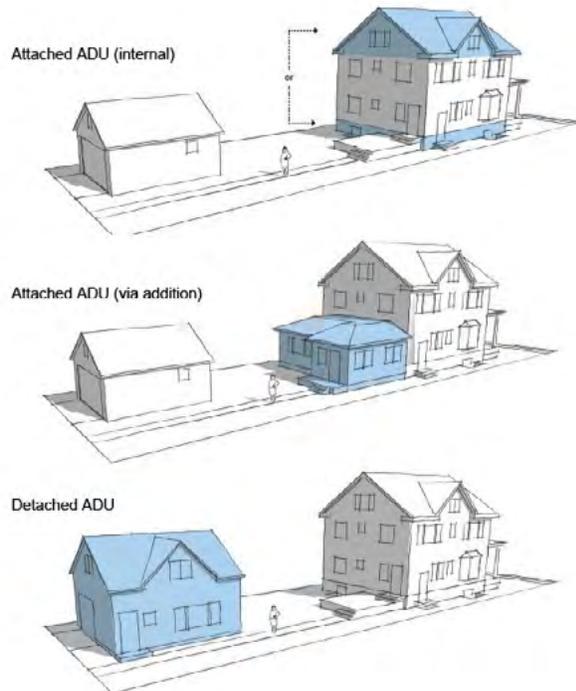
**Performance Measures:** With the HPP as a guide, foster support from the Planning Board and Select Board to discuss participation in HCI by the end of 2024. Assess housing data and projected production to determine the method by which Norton could achieve designation. If Norton cannot achieve designation by 5% or 500-unit housing production alone, Norton should ensure 3% or 300-unit goal is achievable and implement remaining best practices.

**Complementary Actions:** Housing Strategy 2.1.1: *Create a specialized Housing Production Plan (HPP) to set housing policy and gain more control over the Chapter 40B process.*



**Strategy 2.1.3: Adopt the Community Preservation Act (CPA) To Fund the Construction of Affordable Housing.**

**Complementary Actions:** At least 10% of local Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds must be spent on affordable housing. For detailed information on this essential program, please see Open Space Strategy 4.1.2: *Adopt the Community Preservation Act (CPA) to Fund the Acquisition of Open Space and Community Development Projects*, where program participation is described in full.



Examples of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) (City of St. Paul, Minnesota).



Examples of Open Space Residential Development (OSRD). More compact housing preserves larger amounts of open space.

Figure 12. Above: Images illustrating different types of housing that could be encouraged in Norton.

## Goal 2-2

Build a range of market-rate housing to meet the demands of young families, the senior population, and first-time homebuyers.

### **Strategy 2.2.1: Incentivize the production of smaller units on less land through zoning updates and by innovating zoning by-laws.**

**Complementary Actions:** As Norton revisits zoning bylaws based on community feedback, the town will be better able to guide and enable the by-right development of smaller residential typologies, including accessory dwelling units, town-houses, duplexes and apartment homes. Norton's current residential zoning predominantly allows single family homes by-right, but requires special permits for duplexes, cluster development, and elderly housing. Zoning amendments as mentioned in the Land Use chapter can support small-scale, well-designed market-rate housing in appropriate areas and produce diverse housing types that match Norton's character and serve the needs of Norton's young families, seniors, and first-time homebuyers.

As mentioned in Land Use Goal 1-1, these are the potential zoning by-law changes and recommendations that would lead to more housing diversity:

- 1.1.4: *Encourage Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) and smaller housing typologies.*
  - 1.1.5/3.2.1: *Enhance the existing permitting economic development guide to facilitate all types of housing and business development.*
  - 1.1.6: *Perform a "Code Diagnosis" to resolve any issues with the current zoning by-law.*
- Implementing the various approaches in this strategy will address "missing middle housing," which describes a range of multi-family and clustered housing types that remain compatible with adjacent single-family and transitional neighborhoods.
- 1.1.3: *Evaluate the feasibility of a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) bylaw.*

### **Strategy 2.2.2: Incentivize Senior Housing Development and promote Aging-in Community strategies.**

As demographic data show, a significant portion of Norton's population are entering retirement and living alone. Should these trends continue as expected, Norton's housing development strategies and support programs for elderly communities will see increased demand. This population seeks to remain in Norton and continue to access their network of healthcare providers, to frequent local businesses, and to maintain relationships with family and friends. To ensure seniors and retired individuals can age-in-community, Norton could address the needs of the aging population through housing, transportation, enhanced social infrastructure, and amenities. This strategy considers policies that combat isolation including incentive programs for live-in caregivers, as well as funding to support accessible, convenient and safe transportation options such as paratransit, demand response and rideshare programs. Significantly, part of aging-in-community considers the housing needs of seniors, which include downsizing, independent or assisted living, accessibility, and proximity to amenities. Norton could pursue an amendment modeled on the Town of Sudbury's Incentive Senior Development, adopted in 1998 to provide



*A duplex in Norton with a primary house and smaller house, to preserve the appearance of a single-family home while providing opportunities for downsizing (Jack Conway Realty).*



*Housing above commercial uses in a village mixed use area. Varied architecture and smaller storefronts create an attractive street wall.*



*Red Mill Village in Norton, an example of a 55+ community with community amenities and open space.*

*Figure 13. Right: Images illustrating different types of housing that could be encouraged in Norton.*

## Goal 2-2 (continued)

Build a range of market-rate housing to meet the demands of young families, the senior population, and first-time homebuyers.

discounted housing development opportunities for seniors. It allows for up to four dwelling units per buildable lot in exchange for dedicated open space, occupancy requirements (age 55+), and unit resale and price restrictions. Projects must not alter the character of the zoning district. Since its inception in Sudbury, 96 units have been approved. If modeled closely on Sudbury, this zoning change could produce a significant number of discounted, smaller units desired by Norton’s seniors; it should be noted, however, that these units do not qualify for the SHI and will therefore not advance Norton’s Chapter 40B goals.

**Priority:** High - Flexible

**Responsible Parties:** Planning Board, Planning & Economic Development, Council on Aging



**Performance Measures:** Conduct outreach with local developers to survey interest in developing senior housing. Planning Board proposes a model bylaw to enable age-friendly housing developments in appropriate sites by 2024.

**Complementary Actions:** Land Use Strategy 1.2.1: *Implement new zoning overlays with clear design standards for opportunity areas and along corridors.*

Figure 14. Opposite: Wheaton College.





# Economic Development

Encourage appropriate economic development projects at key locations to expand the tax base and support local businesses.

## Context

Strategically located between Providence and Boston, Norton is a draw for both residents and business owners who are interested in tapping into the local and regional amenities. Although MBTA commuter rail is not immediately available in town, residents can take the short, approximately 15-minute trip to nearby Mansfield or Attleboro to travel north to Boston or south to Providence for work or leisure. Over the next ten years, by pursuing a diverse and coordinated set of actions, Norton seeks to retain existing residents and draw visitors from nearby towns with the revitalization and meaningful placemaking at the Village Center and nearby corridors, as well as at critical sites for economic development. In making the Village Center a destination for shopping and dining, Norton will maintain existing businesses, while attracting new ones looking to relocate or startup. New business development is a strategy by which Norton will expand its tax base to enable the town to continue providing services to residents and maintain and expand upon the supportive infrastructure that is so necessary to future growth. Future economic development activity in Norton hinges on the ability to provide the proper water and sewer infrastructure at sites suited and identified for economic growth.

*Figure 15. Opposite: View of Reed and Barton Economic Development Site.*

## Goals and Strategies Overview

**Goal 3-1:** Encourage appropriate economic development projects that expand the tax base at key locations and other vacant or underutilized sites.

1. Pursue additional studies and funding to implement design standards and improvements for identified economic development sites.
2. Expand infrastructure, such as wastewater lines, to key locations to jump start economic development.

**Goal 3-2:** Support existing institutions and the local business community by maintaining businesses and attracting new firms.

1. Create a user-friendly Development and Permitting Guide to encourage new businesses and existing business growth.
2. Implement placemaking strategy for Village Center, including signage.
3. Update Zoning to encourage more compact development that fronts the street, particularly around Norton's Village Center.
4. Attract businesses based on community priority, such as grocery stores and life sciences.
5. Promote work-from-home amenities and support co-working spaces.
6. Work with Wheaton College and surrounding neighborhoods to reinforce a strong "town-gown" relationship that benefits everyone.
7. Coordinate local businesses to create a formal network of Norton Small Businesses.
8. Help local businesses capitalize on Norton's recreation and nature areas, such as the bike trail.

## Goal 3-1

Encourage appropriate economic development projects that expand the tax base at key locations and other vacant or underutilized sites.

The Norton Master Plan advocates for bylaw amendments that encourage new mixed-use developments. In addition to creating compact development that belongs in Norton, these bylaw changes can support economic development by creating high-value projects that expand the tax base.

Norton encourages small business growth and the expansion of light industrial uses, such as life sciences, which will require proper water and sewer connections. Anticipating these needs at specific nodes in town require pre-planning efforts to ensure that needed infrastructure is in place to support the future demand.

### **Strategy 3.1.1: Pursue additional studies and funding to implement design standards and improvements for identified economic development sites.**

To guide development to opportunity areas while also protecting open space, Norton's development should be focused on well-connected sites. Each one presents a unique opportunity to attract appropriate development, new businesses, senior housing, and diverse, more densely built housing types. By absorbing – and even incentivizing – development demand, the following areas profiled in the next pages provide an alternative to sprawl development and foster small business and commercial growth.

**Priority:** High - Flexible

**Responsible Parties:** Planning & Economic Development and the Economic Development Commission



**Complementary Actions:** For additional details on potential, accompanying zoning changes for these economic development sites to explore, see Land Use Strategy 1.2.1: *Implement new zoning overlays with clear design standards for opportunity areas and along corridors.*

### **Strategy 3.1.2: Expand infrastructure, such as wastewater lines, to key locations to jump start economic development.**

**Complementary Actions:** In order to foster economic development at identified sites, including Reed & Barton, Norton should plan for the proper wastewater infrastructure to service future commercial and industrial uses. With the proposed revision of the Village Center and nearby corridors, the town should ensure that proper connections are in place to encourage commercial activity along these corridors. Much of Main Street and Mansfield Avenue is already identified as an area in need of sewer, with potential connections nearby. The I-95 Interchange parcels and Reed & Barton are further away from a potential connection and require further study.

For additional detail, see Services & Facilities Strategy 6.2.2: *Expand infrastructure, such as wastewater lines, to key locations to jump start economic development.*

# Development Sites Overview

## Village Center and Route 123/Route 140 Corridors

247 acres, 80 parcels with an Improvement-Land Value Ratio (Value of improvements and buildings divided by land value) below 1. In the VCC, there are just 2.6 acres in three parcels.

**Existing Zoning:** A mix of VCC, VC, C, R-40, R-60. The VCC district and Village Center Vision Plan were approved in 2020.



Figure 16. Village Center Existing Conditions.

**Description:** Within a mile of the Village Center, there are numerous vacant and underutilized parcels that have the potential for redevelopment, many of which are owned by Wheaton College while others have access to the Reservoir. In addition, many of the smaller, scattered parcels are existing single-family homes or businesses which are unlikely to change in the near-term. Some parcels are oddly shaped and would require some parcel aggregation. Much of the corridor is not connected to sewer but is identified as a Needs Area.

**Improvement Strategy:** The Village Center is a critical site for compact, mixed-use development and small business growth. Given the different zoning districts, a corridor overlay district extending beyond the VCC that allows more compact, mixed-use development could help promote future development. If available the

town may pursue funding through the MassDOT Shared Streets and Public Spaces Grant as well as the state Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to fund improvements particularly at the intersection of Routes 123 and 140. The town can explore technical assistance and funding through CDBG, the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative or Community One Stop for Growth Community Planning Grant to create:

- District Management to establish a Business Improvement District or Volunteer-based organization
- Design
- Building reuse and feasibility studies
- Downtown Mobility
- Small business support activities including workshops
- Wayfinding and Branding Design and Development

## Development Sites Overview (continued)

### Reed & Barton

Parcel 17-36. 20 acres, not connected to sewer.

**Existing Zoning:** Industrial. 3 stories, 45' maximum height. Due to a large amount of the site being occupied by wetlands, there is a required 25' buffer from waterbody and 100' buffer from wetlands.



Figure 17. Reed and Barton Existing Conditions.

**Description:** The Reed & Barton site was a former silversmithing factory and is located just north of the Village Center. The building has been vacant since 2007 and the site requires significant environmental remediation. A Tufts University student team presented potential development scenarios and identified increased access to natural resources as a priority for the site. They also identified that its lack of sidewalks, distance from existing sewer, and environmental contamination are barriers to development. Assessment is currently underway. Lastly, the current zoning does not allow for mixed-use development.

**Improvement Strategy:** Due to the unique nature and history of the site, creating an overlay district that allowed greater density or height in exchange for community improvements, such as sidewalks and new open spaces, could make development feasible. To address the current conditions and lack of transportation and water infrastructure, the town may consider pursuing the following programs:

- EPA
- CDBG
- MassWorks
- EDA
- MassDevelopment
- 43D Designation

## I-495 Interchange with Route 123

Parcels 11-14-01, 11-15-00, 11-16-00, 11-17-00. 36.9 acres, close to existing sewer lines.

**Existing Zoning:** Industrial. 3 stories, 45' maximum height. Will require additional review due to its location within a Water Resource Protection District.



Figure 18. I-495 Interchange site.

**Description:** The site is located on the northwest corner of the I-495 Interchange and is occupied by a MassDOT salt shed. Due to the limited vacant land directly adjacent to I-495, it has high economic development potential and can build upon the success of the existing developments at the Blue Star Business Park.

**Improvement Strategy:** The town would like to potentially attract another life science manufacturer to the site. The town may consider the following programs to signal the town's availability to investment opportunities:

- EDA
- 43D Designation / Expedited Permitting
- MassWorks.

# Development Sites Overview (continued)

## Great Woods Market Place

Parcels: 9-265, 9-294, 9-265-01.  
14.6 acres, currently sewered.

**Existing Zoning:** Commercial. 3 stories, 45' maximum height.



Figure 19. Great Woods Market Place Existing Conditions.

**Description:** Also known as the Roche Brothers Plaza, this commercial strip mall used to have a Roche Brothers supermarket as an anchor tenant. In June 2020, the Roche Brothers market closed, leaving Norton without a supermarket in town. Besides the vacant supermarket, the commercial center has high vacancy. Other tenants include a Dollar Tree, a Planet Fitness gym, a few local and chain restaurants, a board game store, and other small personal services such as a nail salon. Nearby, there are a few residential neighborhoods, mobile home parks, retirement communities (The Residence at Greatwoods, assisted living and Great Brook, a 55+ community), and large businesses. A 100-unit, 40B apartment building called Norton Crossing was recently approved next to the plaza.

**Improvement Strategy:** Given its proximity to multifamily residential uses, this site would be a great opportunity for a mixed-use development that includes existing businesses but in the form of a more walkable destination. Future design

standards should encourage internal connections, potential ways to access the Reservoir, and open space designed for gathering.

Due to the low parking occupancy rate and proximity to many local businesses, the parking lot is a great site for temporary placemaking interventions, similar to an effort in Burtonsville, Maryland.<sup>1</sup> For example, local businesses, including the many restaurants and the boardgame shop, could create shared outdoor dining and recreation space. This temporary public space can also host larger evening or weekend events, such as movie nights, cultural or historical festivals, farmers market, and food trucks. These placemaking ideas need to be supported by the current landowner. Implementation of these improvement strategies in addition to its redevelopment might include pursuit of the following programs: MassDOT Shared Streets and Share Places grant, 43D Designation, and CDBG.

1. <https://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/placemaking/burtonsville-placemaking/>

## Old Colony Road Commercial District / Chartley

42.9 acres, 28 parcels with an Improvement-Land Value Ratio below 1.

**Existing Zoning:** Commercial, Industrial.



Figure 20. Chartley businesses on Route 123 / Main Street.

**Description:** At the western edge of Norton, this commercial area at the intersection of 123 and Pleasant Street also has the potential for growth. Currently it is not connected to sewer and does not have sidewalks. But there are many businesses concentrated here, so mixed-use development would be a good fit for the area. In April 2021, the Chartley Corner Store, a beloved local business, was closed.

**Improvement Strategy:** Similar to the Village Center, this area has the potential for smaller, compact village-style development. The economic development strategies would largely be similar to the ones for the Village Center and could be combined to be part of the same study. A combined study could determine what each area's strengths are and tailor strategies to fit them. To implement these strategies, the town may pursue funding through the following programs:

- MassDOT Shared Streets and Public Spaces
- TIP
- MassWorks
- CDBG
- Community One Stop for Growth – Community Planning Grant
- Community One Stop for Growth – MDI

## Goal 3-2

Support existing institutions and the local business community by maintaining businesses and attracting new firms.

During the ongoing pandemic, many of Norton's small businesses demonstrated their resilience. The Town recognizes their significance in local economic development and commits to supporting their future growth through policy, networking, and direct assistance. The current tax rate is the same for both residential and commercial uses, encouraging businesses to migrate to or remain in Norton compared to nearby municipalities that utilize split tax rates to expand their revenue sources. The vision for Norton's Village Center and nearby corridors relies heavily on expanding the small business community and gaining their support for design guidelines and future façade improvement programs. Collaboration between the town, Wheaton College, and the surrounding small business community fosters a positive partnership and supports placemaking efforts that will ultimately transform the Village Center into a destination for small business patronage, remote co-working spaces, and distinct place-based activities. The Town is developing a Local Rapid Recovery Plan to help business along the W. Main Street District and hopes to receive funding for a parking management study to further help these businesses.



Figure 21. Images of existing, local businesses in Norton. Top: Downtown Cafe. Middle: Bog Iron Brewing (Paige Allen, Sun Chronicle, 2014). Bottom: Blue Star Business Park, Building 6 (Blue Star Business Park, Condyne Partners).

## Job Growth in Norton and the Region

Community	2010 Jobs	2017 Jobs	Percent Change
Attleboro	16,342	17,798	8.9%
Easton	9,860	10,273	4.2%
Mansfield	10,580	12,112	14.5%
Norton	5,759	6,360	10.4%
Rehoboth	1,522	1,809	18.9%
Taunton	23,534	22,952	-2.5%
SRPEDD	227,958	250,713	10.0%
Bristol County	206,978	226,322	9.3%
Massachusetts	3,151,206	3,544,095	12.5%

Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD).

## Tax Rates in Norton and the Region

Community	Residential Tax Rate	Commercial Tax Rate
Attleboro	\$14.16	\$20.20
Easton	\$15.96	\$15.96
Mansfield	\$15.22	\$20.44
Norton	\$14.90	\$14.90
Rehoboth	\$13.11	\$13.11
Taunton	\$15.76	\$34.24

Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR): Division of Local Services (DLS), 2019.

Figure 22. Economic Development data.

## Goal 3-2 (continued)

Support existing institutions and the local business community by maintaining businesses and attracting new firms.

### Strategy 3.2.1: Create a user-friendly Development and Permitting Guide to encourage new businesses and existing business growth.

In 2019, Norton began using an online permitting system to streamline the permitting process across multiple departments, including the building inspector and Board of Health. The Town website also shares potential properties, local demographic data, and a list of contacts. To supplement the online permitting system, a user-friendly economic development and permitting guides, being developed by the Economic Development Commission, would further help businesses, landowners, and developers navigate the permitting process.

Development and permitting guides can take many forms, including concise handbooks, topic-specific brochures, marketing campaigns, E-Government web pages, or all the above. Permitting guides lean on visual references such as flow charts or process diagrams to describe required procedures, identify departmental points of contact, and to highlight fees, resources, and timelines needed to obtain various permits (including 43D permits). The Development and Permitting guide should emphasize Norton's values, town-character, and emphasis on balancing environmental

protection with development and growth to inform the types of business activity that are encouraged in town. The Guide can assist new businesses, seeking to establish their business or relocate to Norton to navigate the development and permitting process. The town's role in supporting applicants in this process will further support the town's recruitment of new business that address specific gaps.

**Priority:** High - Immediate

**Responsible Parties:** Economic Development Commission

**Performance Measure:** Create Development and Permitting Guide by 2021.

**Example Success Story:** The Town of Dedham Business Guide; the City of Attleboro's Business and Permitting Guide; the Town of Mansfield's Business Guide, Market Profile, and "Who Can I Call?" Flyer; neighboring Middleborough's Permitting Guide and Marketing Brochure. The town of Middleborough completed the Permitting Guide to streamline their permitting process and front-facing contact with business leaders.

**Complementary Actions:** Land Use Strategy 1.1.5 *Create a user-friendly Development and Permitting Guide to facilitate all types of housing and business development;* Housing Strategy 2.2.1: *Incentivize the production of smaller units on less land through zoning updates and by innovating zoning by-laws;* Natural & Cultural Resources Strategy 5.1.1: *Streamline review process and continue enforcement of environmental by-laws.*



### **Strategy 3.2.2: Implement placemaking strategy for Village Center, including signage.**

Placemaking considers programmatic (experience-based) and physical improvements to build on and foster a sense of place within neighborhoods, nodes, corridors, or communities as a whole. Public infrastructure can create experiences that connect people to the existing look, feel, and characteristics of a place; these modest investments can include wayfinding and signage, public seating, as well as landscaping and public art. Wayfinding and signage help to create a sense of place by differentiating a specific area or neighborhood from others through the use of graphic elements such as type, color, pattern, video, and motion. Placemaking strategies in Norton can combine the town's natural and man-made features, history, culture (including its relationship with Wheaton College), and potential to accentuate the experiences and identity of specific spaces in town. Wayfinding in the Village Center should coordinate with conservation and bike path wayfinding efforts as well as proposed design standards for commercial façades.

Implementing placemaking strategies, including unique branded signage in and around the Norton Village Center will enhance the sense of

place and carve a distinct identity by which to foster community and business activities.

Programmatic placemaking fosters experiences around existing public infrastructure. Working across local business groups, Norton could foster experiences in and around the Village Center through farmer's markets, arts festivals and performances, as well as shop local days and outdoor dining weekends. Implementing placemaking strategies along East and West Main Street draws pedestrian traffic to the center from surrounding streets. This improves connections between businesses and other destinations in and near the Village Center, including the library, Wheaton College, and other community assets. Funding to support technical assistance to prepare a placemaking strategy can come from the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI) which has received additional support through the Rapid Recovery Plan (RPP) Program as a response to the pandemic to help local downtowns and businesses. In addition, the Community One Stop for Growth can provide additional assistance through the Community Planning Grant program to assist in technical planning and land use/zoning assessments. Local partnerships can help leverage private funding as well as pursue Massachusetts Cultural Council funding in conjunction with the Town.

## Goal 3-2 (continued)

Support existing institutions and the local business community by maintaining businesses and attracting new firms.

**Priority:** High - Flexible

**Responsible Parties:** Planning & Economic Development, EDC, Community Groups including business stakeholders, Wheaton College

**Performance Measure:** Update the Norton Village Vision Plan and incorporate a Placemaking element to integrate the goals and strategies related arts and culture, downtown activities, as well as public infrastructure by the end of 2023. The update to the Village Center Vision Plan should also include funding strategies that directly target activities through MDI and the Community One Stop for Growth.

**Example Success Story:** Foxborough commissioned wayfinding signage that spoke directly to the history of the town. Wayfinding in Foxborough serves to signal its role as a destination and directs visitors to centers of activity.

The City of Cambridge hosts a variety of events and experiences in Central Square. Recently, the Cambridge BID temporarily repurposed a parking lot into Starlight Square to serve as a space for pop-up market and performance space.

**Complementary Actions:** Economic Development Strategy 3.1.1: *Pursue additional studies and funding to implement design standards and improvements for identified economic development sites;* Economic Development Strategy 3.2.7: *Coordinate local businesses to create a formal network of Norton Small Businesses;* Open Space & Recreation Strategy 4.2.5: *Expand outdoor passive and active recreational opportunities that promote healthy, life-long experiences for residents of all ages and abilities;* Natural & Cultural Resources Strategy 5.3.1: *Develop a coordinated wayfinding and signage model for town-wide, multi-use conservation and recreation properties, assets, and opportunities.*



Starlight Square Pop-up market place, Cambridge, MA. (Starlightsquare.org).



Burtonsville Placemaking festival in a commercial strip mall. (Montgomery County Planning).



Wayfinding signs reinforcing placemaking identity for Worcester. (Urban Culture Institute).

Figure 23. Examples of potential placemaking strategies to consider in Norton's Village Center.

**Strategy 3.2.3: Update Zoning to encourage more compact development that fronts the street, particularly around Norton’s Village Center.**

**Complementary Actions:** Land Use Strategies 1.1.1 and 1.2.1 details what zoning changes would encourage more compact development close to Norton’s Village Center. Norton’s current zoning requires 120 feet of continuous frontage for commercial businesses. Based on the intensity and location, this requirement may prove contrary to the vision set forth for the Village Center and nearby corridors. To enable more compact development that fronts the street, Norton should update zoning to decrease the minimum continuous frontage to an appropriate, lower standard as reflected by the Village Center Core zoning which reduces continuous minimum frontage to 75 feet.

Part of the vision for the Village Center considers pedestrian traffic and biking. Small businesses that rely largely on the in-person shopping experience stand to benefit from decreased frontage minimums, allowing pedestrians to window shop and stop in on a whim. In this way, zoning impacts the way in which locals experience their economy. By enabling compact development that fronts the street, zoning can

enhance customer engagement and generate enthusiasm for the local business community. This strategy builds on placemaking in the Village Center and surrounding corridors, creating a built environment that leads to more engaging experiences. In addition, this strategy will complement efforts to implement design guidelines that ensure a standard of uniformity and brand that further assists in establishing an identity for the Village Center district.

**Strategy 3.2.4: Attract businesses based on community priorities, such as grocery stores and life sciences.**

According to recent data from the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Norton is home to a variety of industries. Norton’s top industries include higher education and wholesale trade, followed closely by healthcare and social services. Importantly, Norton’s stock of certain businesses has diminished over time, including grocery stores – with the recent loss of the Roche Brothers Supermarket and Chartley’s Country Store. Though Norton is not considered a “food desert,” (most residents have the means to drive to neighboring towns for groceries), those without access to a vehicle have few alternatives in town. Norton could focus its efforts in attracting

## Goal 3-2 (continued)

Support existing institutions and the local business community by maintaining businesses and attracting new firms.

a grocery store and coordinate with GATRA to provide public transportation options to grocery options outside of town. Additionally, Norton has identified positive experiences with life science light manufacturing (Alnylam Pharmaceuticals) that support further tax revenue creation.

Attracting specific types of businesses requires a combination of outreach, marketing, as well as creating market conditions that attract developers and companies. For example, the Economic Development Commission should commission a feasibility study for the former Roche Brothers Supermarket site and identify its best future use based on existing and projected market demand. A feasibility study works to symbolize the town's interest in development activity, but also complements marketing materials typically released with an RFP. The town might consider conducting careful outreach to potential developers and companies, targeting the type of grocery store or light manufacturing operations best suited for the town. To attract interest via market conditions and policy, the town could designate the Roche Brothers Supermarket as a Chapter 43D priority development site (PDS) for expedited permitting.

**Priority:** High - Flexible

**Responsible Parties:** Planning Board, Economic Development Commission, Planning & Economic Development



**Performance Measure:** Engage the EDC to complete a feasibility study of the Great Woods Marketplace site by 2024. The feasibility study should outline the process necessary to designate the site as a 43D PDS and its viability for further grocery store and other uses. Follow up these efforts with the creation of an RFP and marketing materials to present to potential developers.

**Example Success Story:** The Town of Wareham commissioned a feasibility study for the former Decas Elementary School site. The feasibility study revealed potential best uses based on market trends and existing demand. The Town is in the process of creating an RFP to cater to developers and attract investments. Promote work-from-home amenities and local co-working spaces.

### Strategy 3.2.5: Promote work-from-home amenities and support co-working spaces.

With the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, more individuals work from home and will likely continue to do so in some capacity as employers shift away from traditional in-person, full-time office work environments and expectations. Half of Norton's residents work outside the county and only 6% of the total population in town reported working from home (2019 ACS), a figure which will likely increase well after the pandemic. These trends also present an opportunity for the town to harness work-from-home amenities and support co-working spaces. Critical to those individuals who work-from-home are cable and broadband capacity and infrastructure. The pandemic served to highlight the need to upgrade broadband capacity in identified areas in town and address persistent outages. The town is currently gathering data and feedback regarding areas targeted for improvement. In order to foster work-from-home activities in Norton, the town should complement their efforts to provide physical spaces for co-working and work-from-home with partnerships between internet service providers that can enhance the network's capacity.



Figure 24. Brickyard Coworking space. (Brickyardcowork.com)

**Priority:** Low - Flexible

**Responsible Parties:** Information Technology

**Performance Measure:** Identify areas with poor and inconsistent connectivity by 2024.

**Example Success Story:** Traditionally, co-working centers largely around urban center, but the pandemic forced many co-working spaces to shut their doors and reconsider demand following the pandemic. With more individuals working from home, small scale-suburban co-working spaces have popped up all over the country. These companies include:

- Brickyard - Located in the suburbs of Virginia, these modern co-working spaces serve as a means to retain residents in town and foster small business growth and startups.
- 25N – Located in suburban Illinois, this business meets the need of local parents, small businesses and entrepreneurs who seek to work from their existing communities. Their mission statement integrates the belief that individuals in the “second-tier, suburban target market is to be as productive as possible before returning home to their families.”

**Complementary Actions:** Services & Facilities  
Strategy 6.2.3: *Ensure reliable access to electricity and broadband internet.*

## Goal 3-2 (continued)

Support existing institutions and the local business community by maintaining businesses and attracting new firms.

### Strategy 3.2.6: Work with Wheaton College and surrounding neighborhoods to reinforce a strong “town-gown” relationship that benefits everyone.

Colleges and universities are known engines of growth for local economies, and “town-gown” refers to the academic and non-academic portions of a town such as Norton. Wheaton College is nestled in the heart of Norton; it is one of Norton’s main economic and cultural assets, attracting active students that volunteer in the community and support local businesses, while also employing local residents as faculty and staff. Though the Norton and Wheaton communities are closely intertwined, residents reported feeling disconnected from the campus. In an effort to strengthen the relationship between the Town and Wheaton, the Master Plan recommends creating regular communication channels and more student-town interactions.

Wheaton students are heavily involved in service projects for non-profits as well as entrepreneurship. Norton’s small business community and local residents have the opportunity to forge professional partnerships with students to strengthen their cultural connections to Wheaton but also harness their innovative thinking. This strategy builds on the formal network of Norton businesses that would ideally serve as the vehicle by which students and business owners come together to solve

local business problems and foster long-term relationships in the community.

To create synergy and complement existing economic development goals Norton and Wheaton can explore the following:

- Invite Wheaton staff and faculty to participate on local boards and committees .
- Partner with Wheaton to formalize a municipal and small business internship program.
- Form a town-gown committee to establish a forum to discuss and decide on matters impacting Norton and Wheaton. These groups discuss local concerns and resolve them before they become community issues and problems.
- Coordinate public transit needs such as joint parking and community parks within campus.
- Coordinate placemaking activities and wayfinding signage with Wheaton to indicate publicly accessible portions of campus.

**Priority:** Low - Flexible

**Responsible Parties:** Select Board, Town Manager



**Performance Measure:** Engage Wheaton College representatives to establish a town-gown advisory committee by 2023. Over the next few years, work to integrate and activity recruit members of the Wheaton community to serve on local boards and commissions.

**Example Success Story:** The College of William and Mary partnered with the town of Williamsburg to create a Neighborhood Relations Committee to enhance relations and collaboration between the town, students and college staff.

**Strategy 3.2.7: Coordinate local businesses to create a formal network of Norton Small Businesses.**

Local and regional surveys deployed during the pandemic highlight the need to maintain existing businesses by offering local support and direct assistance. To support small businesses in Norton, the town may consider facilitating the establishment of a small business association to help businesses grow and thrive. Small business associations provide benefits to both member businesses and the community by providing a collective voice for small business owners, credibility to business startups or those in the process of relocating, as well as access to opportunities and resources. As the town transforms the Village Center and other key locations through zoning and enabling policies, the small business association acts as a central partner in the decision-making process and subsequent transformation.



Figure 25. Example of a map produced by the Springfield Downtown BID ([springfielddowntown.com](http://springfielddowntown.com))

**Priority:** High - Immediate

**Responsible Parties:** Planning & Economic Development, Tri-Town Chamber of Commerce

**Performance Measure:** Follow up on outreach to small businesses during the pandemic and the Master Plan to coordinate future efforts and foster support to establish a W. Main Street District Collaborative by 2022. (The ongoing Local Rapid Recovery Planning project along this corridor can help create a business association here.) The business association should identify their goals and mission as well as local partners.

**Example Success Story:** The Town of Foxborough focused on supporting their small business community in their 2013 Master Plan. They identified the creation of a Business Improvement District to assist the coordination of their Downtown Revitalization efforts. Businesses leaders established the Foxborough Downtown Business Collaborative which coordinates activities and events with the Foxborough Buy Local efforts.

**Complementary Actions:** Economic Development Strategy 3.2.2: *Implement placemaking strategy for Village Center, including signage.*

## Goal 3-2 (continued)

Support existing institutions and the local business community by maintaining businesses and attracting new firms.

### Strategy 3.2.8: Help local businesses capitalize on Norton's recreation and nature areas, such as the bike trail.

Norton's residents value the recreational opportunities and natural spaces in town, creating an opportunity to harness their economic potential. Trail-oriented development combines the active transportation benefits of trails and recreation with economic development. With the proposed Norton Rail Trail, residents expressed interest in utilizing the trail for recreation, transportation, but also as a destination for economic activity. Local bike trails such as the Eastbay Bike Path in Rhode Island and Cape Cod are known for their ice cream and coffee shops that provide a source of family entertainment on a day out and contribute to unique economic development opportunities. Norton's well-loved natural resources and trails offer potential opportunities to support local small business growth and development, while ensuring that Norton's trails are a destination for the amenities they offer along the way.



Figure 26. Borealis Coffee in Riverside RI, built in a former railroad depot and along a rail trail that is popular with cyclists.

**Priority:** Low - Flexible

**Responsible Parties:** Planning Board, Planning & Economic Development, Alternative Transportation Commission

**Performance Measure:** Identify potential sites along existing or new bike trails that would be appropriate for small-scale commercial development by 2024.

**Example Success Story:** Borealis Coffee Roasters along the East Bay Bike Path in East Providence, RI offers an example of a business that thrives due to its location along the bike path. Though an adaptive reuse project from a former rail station, other examples from the Cape Cod rail trail offer examples of commercial development built adjacent to the bike path.

**Complementary Strategy:** Open Space & Recreation Strategy 4.2.1: *Implement the Norton Bike Path.*



Figure 27. Opposite: Image of Norton Commerce Center.





# Open Space & Recreation

Improve access to the Town’s parks, water bodies, and other natural areas in order to provide recreational opportunities for residents of all ages and abilities.

## Context

Norton residents value their access to parks, water bodies, and natural areas. The Town’s strong tradition of open space stewardship and conservation is coordinated and guided by its current Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP 2017 - 2024). Norton’s OSRP is intended to be a more specialized, exhaustive document than this Master Plan, which highlights main actions and themes from the OSRP that the town can consider and balance along with all its other planning and policy-making activities.

Open space broadly includes parks, conservation land, forested land, and agricultural land. Additionally, open space includes undeveloped or underutilized parcels with potential conservation or recreational significance.<sup>1</sup>

Strategies such as agricultural preservation, direct investments, continued participation in the Chapter 61 programs, and coordinated land conservation efforts will all be necessary to preserve and add to the Town’s open space.

Finally, residents emphasized the importance of continuing to expand and improve open space networks, particularly in areas with strategic habitat, recreational, or water resource protection

roles. The proposed Norton Bike Path, the Reservoir, and sites along the Canoe River and within the associated Aquifer Recharge area received particular focus and attention.

## Goals and Strategies Overview

**Goal 4-1:** Preserve open space and manage growth.

1. *Continue to protect Conservation Lands managed by the Conservation Commission.*
2. *Adopt the Community Preservation Act (CPA) to fund the acquisition of open space and community development projects.*
3. *Continue and seek out new partnerships between private landowners, land conservation groups, and state and local governments to enable future open space acquisitions.*
4. *Explore Transfer Development Right (TDR) bylaw.*

**Goal 4-2:** Improve access to natural areas, parks, and recreation facilities.

1. *Implement the Norton Bike Path.*
2. *Create safe routes to jog and walk along the Reservoir.*
3. *Improve access to Reservoir for boating and fishing.*
4. *Improve ADA accessibility of parks and recreation facilities.*
5. *Expand outdoor passive and active recreational opportunities that promote healthy, life-long experiences for residents of all ages and abilities. and nature areas, such as the bike trail.*

1. Definition of open space by DCS: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/open-space-and-recreation-plan-workbook/download>

# Goal 4-1

## Preserve open space and manage growth.

Today, despite the continuing residential and industrial development in town, Norton has permanently protected 3,945 acres or 24% of its total acreage (2017). Currently, 671 acres (although there may be some minor overlap with permanently protected lands) of the Town's open space is actively in – or in support of – forest or agricultural use and is granted conditional protection by Massachusetts General Laws Chapters 61 and 61A.

This plan seeks to balance the need for growth and development in Norton with the need to conserve land for its many conservation-related, cultural, and economic benefits. On the surface, these goals seem to be at odds with each other. However, by actively coordinating many strategies in the Master Plan, Norton can achieve both goals through improved zoning policies, targeted economic development, new state program participation, and continued proactive conservation efforts. The strategies highlighted below are some of the keys to this balanced approach.

### **Strategy 4.1.1: Continue to protect Conservation Lands managed by the Conservation Commission.**

The Norton Conservation Commission and Conservation Agent have done an excellent job protecting the conservation lands in town. Based on land use codes, the Town of Norton alone has protected 1,373 acres of conservation land. For example, in 2014, the Town of Norton, received two LAND (Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity) Grants that helped fund the Town's acquisition of 42 acres at Crane Farm and 24 acres of Bay Road known as the "Erickson Property."

### **Open Space Priorities**

The following are priority locations for continued conservation land acquisition as identified in the 2017 Norton OSRP, Priority Preservation Area planning (2013), and Master Plan process:

- Houghton Farm
- Balfour Land / Farm
- Seekonk/Hemlock Swamp (SW Norton, bordering Attleboro and Rehoboth)
- Daggatt-Crandall-Newcomb Home Land
- Other Priority Protection Areas:
  - Canoe River ACEC and Easton Corridor
  - Canoe River Greenbelt and Aquifer Recharge Area
  - Rumford River Protection Area
  - Reservoir Recreational Access
  - TNC/LPS
  - Agricultural Preservation Restriction
  - Lockety Neck
  - Meadow Brook Pond
  - Former Egg Farm
  - East Hodges Land

**Priority:** High - Flexible

**Responsible Parties:** Conservation Agent and Conservation Commission

**Performance Measures:** Continue to acquire and manage additional land under the guidance of the Conservation Director/Conservation Commission and through various methods, such as LAND grants, fee-simple acquisitions or donations, APR and Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B, and others.



### Norton Open Space

- In Perpetuity
- Limited
- None
- Unknown
- Chapter 61 Land
- Interstates
- Collectors and Arterials
- Local Roads
- Water



Data sources: MassGIS, MassDOT, and the Town of Norton. This map is for the sole purpose of aiding planning decisions and is not warranted for any other use.

May 2021 0.5 Miles ↑

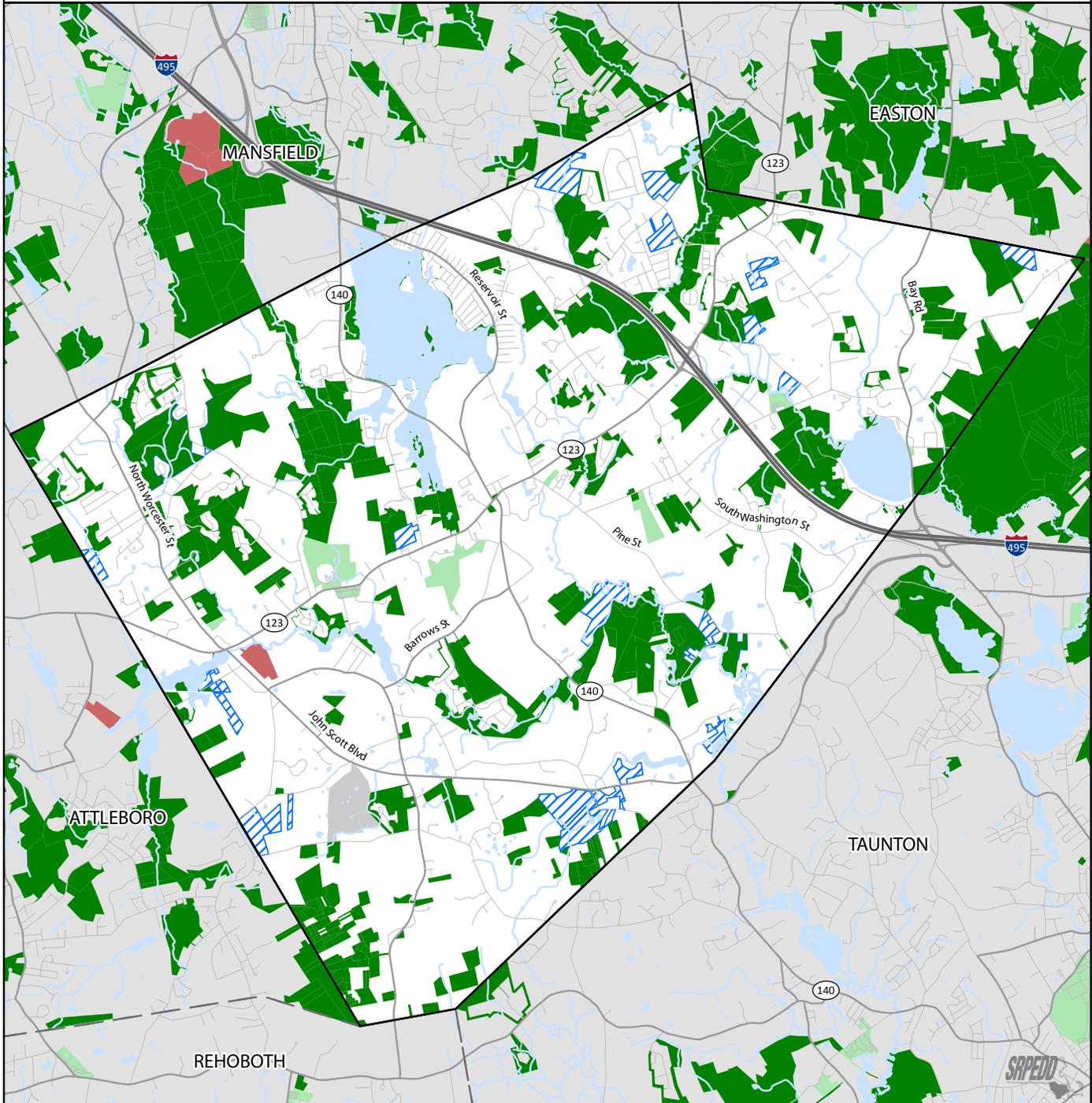


Figure 29. Map of Norton's open spaces by level of protection.

## Goal 4-1 (continued)

Preserve open space and manage growth.

### Strategy 4.1.2: Adopt the Community Preservation Act (CPA) to fund the acquisition of open space and community development projects.

Often, municipality budgets are already dedicated to providing basic maintenance and Town services. The CPA allows communities to dedicate funding to important but often overlooked projects that protect a town's sense of identity and community, including: open space, recreational opportunities, historic preservation, and affordable housing. For example, CPA funds can help pay for the acquisition of the open space mentioned in Strategy 4.1.1, the restoration of a local historic building or park improvements.

The CPA is a popular tool for communities across Massachusetts; as of the date of this plan, just over half (187 out of 351) of the cities and towns in the Commonwealth have adopted this program. Each CPA community forms a local five- to nine-member Board called the Community Preservation Committee (CPC), which makes recommendations on what projects to fund. To fund these CPA projects, each community adopts a property tax surcharge (not more than 3%). Each community then can custom tailor the surcharge and include exemptions, such as an exemption for low-income seniors or an exemption for the first \$100,000 of a property's value, leading to lesser impact on lower value properties. In addition, each year, the State also partially matches the funds that CPA communities have raised.<sup>2</sup>

2. Massachusetts Community Preservation Coalition (CPC) - <https://www.communitypreservation.org/about>

In order to create a local CPC and access a dedicated funding source for open space preservation (and other CPA-funded projects), the Town should work in partnership with the state Community Preservation Coalition and the state Attorney General's Office to initiate the process of adopting the CPA. To approve the CPA, the ballot measure must be put to a vote at Town Meeting before being placed on the local election ballot.<sup>3</sup>

This process must be accompanied by a public education campaign that accurately describes the benefits and costs of CPA, clarifies the origins of this idea (e.g., residents during this Plan's public events), and answers frequently asked questions (FAQs).

3. Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts - <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/elecpcpa/cpaidx.htm>; note that this is one of two methods, the other being a ballot petition, to place a vote to adopt CPA on a local election ballot. This Master Plan recommends this method because it is more common (used by approximately two-thirds of existing CPA communities) and because it involves public support from elected officials and local champions in advance of the ballot question.

**Priority:** High - Flexible

**Responsible Parties:** Select Board, Conservation Commission, Local champions

**Performance Measures:**

- Publicize and hold several informal public information meetings by end of 2023.
- Adopt the CPA by 2026.

**Example Success Story:** Numerous cities and towns in the region and across Massachusetts have adopted CPA and pursued CPA projects in their communities. (*Massachusetts CPC - <https://www.communitypreservation.org/map>*)

**Related Plan:** Norton Open Space and Recreation Plan Goal 1, 2, 3, and 6



### **Strategy 4.1.3: Continue and seek out new partnerships between private landowners, land conservation groups, and state and local governments to enable future open space acquisitions.**

The Town has existing, active, and successful partnerships with several environmental agencies. In the past, the Town of Norton, through their Conservation Commission and Conservation Director, have partnered with outside organizations including, but not limited to the Taunton River Stewardship Council (TRSC), the Division of Conservation Services (DCS), and the Land Preservation Society of Norton for preservation of open space. This plan supports and advocates for continued, affirmative partnerships between the Town and its conservation-minded partners to preserve more land for open space and recreation.

**Priority:** High - Flexible

**Responsible Parties:** Conservation Commission, Local champions

**Performance Measures:** The Town will continue to work with outside agencies to pursue further grant funding and projects that increase open space acquisitions in Norton.

**Example Success Story:** Crane Farm, Norton

**Complimentary Action:** Open Space & Recreation Strategy 4.1.1: *Continue to protect Conservation Lands managed by the Conservation Commission; Natural & Cultural Resources Goal 5.2: Establish partnerships between private landowners, land conservation groups, and state and local governments to enable future open space and habitat areas acquisitions.*



### **Strategy 4.1.4: Explore Transfer Development Right (TDR) bylaw.**

**Complementary Actions:** Land Use Strategy 1.1.3: *Establishing a Transfer Development Right by-law* can benefit Norton's Open Space goals by concentrating development and mixed-uses where the Town wants to see growth (for example, in areas with adequate infrastructure such as the VCC), while also preserving open spaces and agricultural lands from being converted to development. TDR allows landowners to capture some of the potential value of developing their land (by selling the development rights to be used elsewhere in town) without actually disturbing natural resources. In this way, a TDR program can lead to outcomes that balance conservation and economic development goals in town. It is also important to note that, thanks to recent economic development and zoning-related legislation signed into law by Gov. Baker in 2021 ("House, No. 5250, An Act Enabling Partnerships for Growth"), the Town would only need a simple majority vote at Town Meeting to approve a TDR zoning amendment – making this strategy more attainable than it was when the Master Plan process began in 2019.

## Goal 4-2

Improve access to natural areas, parks, and recreation facilities.

The Town of Norton has four parks and recreation facilities.

- Everett Leonard Park is the biggest facility which includes the town pool, a playground, basketball, and volleyball courts, a baseball field, horseshoe pit, and a snack pavilion.
- The Town has two baseball fields, Burchill Complex and Lions Field. Lions field is used and maintained by Norton Youth Baseball.
- The Community Playground is located in front of the middle school.
- The Tricentennial Park is registered by the Land Preservation Society of Norton as a Certified Wildlife Habitat.

One of the main themes of public workshops was the desire to have increased recreation activities in key locations in Norton. This includes more opportunities for biking and walking, water-based activities, and more access for residents of all ages and abilities. While the following strategies are not exhaustive, they do identify the main ideas that Norton residents voiced during the Master Plan's public outreach.



*Gertrude Cornish Forest.*



*Tricentennial Park.*



*Everett Pool.*

*Figure 30. Photos of existing conditions in Norton's parks and open spaces.*



Figure 31. Former rail bed that will be the future site of the Norton bike path.

### Strategy 4.2.1: Implement the Norton Bike Path.

**Complementary Actions:** The Norton Bike Path was one of the most popular topics throughout the Master Planning workshops. It will be an extension of the World War II Memorial Trail in Mansfield, MA that will travel 4 miles through Norton to the Taunton city line. The bike path will connect open space areas such as Johnson Acres, Canoe River Wildlife Management Area, and Hill Street Conservation Land. Funding through the SRPEDD Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) in FY 2022 will support the construction of the bike path. For more details, see Transportation & Circulation Strategy 7.1.2: *Implement the Norton Bike Path.*

**Related Plans:** Norton Open Space and Recreation Plan Goal 6, Objective c and Goal 4, Objective c



Figure 32. Existing conditions on Reservoir Street (Google Streetview).

### Strategy 4.2.2: Create safe routes to jog and walk along the Reservoir.

**Complementary Actions:** For more detailed information, please see Transportation & Circulation Strategy 7.1.3; Transportation & Circulation Strategy 7.2.3. During multiple public workshops, many of the Towns' residents identified the need for sidewalks along Route 140/Mansfield Avenue and Reservoir Street. Comments specifically mentioned Reservoir Street, citing high speed vehicle traffic creating unsafe conditions for people walking on the side of the road. Adding a sidewalk on one side of Reservoir Street would allow a safer option to access the Reservoir and surrounding neighborhoods. Adding a sidewalk to Route 140/Mansfield Avenue would give residents a walkable alternative to get to the Great Woods Market Place and the Reservoir.

**Related Plans:** Complete Streets Prioritization Plan Projects 6, 7, 8; Route 140 Study – Norton, Mansfield, Foxborough

## Goal 4-2 (continued)

Improve access to natural areas, parks, and recreation facilities.

### Strategy 4.2.3: Improve access to Reservoir for boating and fishing.

Norton residents expressed interest in more access to the Reservoir for water-based recreation. The Norton Reservoir is 556.5 acres of shallow water with an average depth of 4 feet and a maximum depth of 10 feet. Though it presents the perfect spot for boating and fishing, it has limited use due to the lack of parking. Norton may consider utilizing space at 113 Mansfield Ave. which has public access to establish a parking lot.

Currently, thanks to grant funding from the Taunton River Stewardship Council (TRSC), Norton is creating a Norton Water Access Plan. This plan looks at existing access points and how they can be improved to make access easier. Once this Water Access Plan is complete, the Town should pursue further grant funding and make direct investments that advance the recommendations of the Water Access Plan, including improved signage (coordinated with other placemaking and economic development efforts in this plan) and land acquisition for more access and parking opportunities.



Figure 33. Boating on the Reservoir. (Tom Maguire, Sun Chronicle)

**Priority:** High - Immediate

**Responsible Parties:** Planning Board and Conservation Commission

**Performance Measures:**

- Finish and implement the Norton Water Access Plan by the end of 2021.
- Construct Mansfield Avenue Boat Ramp by 2025.

**Example Success Story:** Berkley's Bridge Village Heritage Park on the federally Wild and Scenic Tauton River was created through a similar planning and grant-writing process.

**Complimentary Action:** Transportation & Circulation Strategy 7.1.4: *Coordinate a program of standardized signage and wayfinding throughout town.*

**Related Plans:** Norton Open Space and Recreation Plan Goal 7, Objective a and Goal 4, Objective c; Norton Water Access Plan (in-progress)

### Strategy 4.2.4: Improve ADA accessibility of parks and recreation facilities.

The 2017 - 2024 Norton Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) examined the ADA accessibility of municipal parks and recreation facilities in its ADA Transition Planning section. The purpose of this section of the OSRP is to assess the town's facilities for accessibility to persons with disabilities; whereas the ADA Self-Assessment and Transition Plan recommended in Strategy 6.1.3, below, examines all town-owned buildings and town-sponsored services. Should the town complete these two important documents, it will not only reduce its potential liability for ADA violations, but it will also become eligible for capital improvement funding to make ADA-related investments.

Norton recently made ADA-related improvements by adding an accessible swing to both playgrounds and accessible picnic tables to the Everett Leonard Park. This Master plan recommends continued investments and improvements to make parks and playgrounds accessible for all. Both playgrounds should be upgraded to be inclusive for all users. These playgrounds can include: elevated portions accessible to all, sensory/learning boards, accessible swings, and accessible paths. The baseball fields can be updated with accessible access to all areas of the field, an accessible dugout, and rubberized surface that is safe for all.



Figure 34. Example of a wheelchair accessible swing (Transfermaster.com).

**Priority:** High - Flexible

**Responsible Parties:** Conservation Director, Parks and Recreation, and ADA Coordinator

**Performance Measures:** Update parks and trails to comply with the ADA Transition Plan by 2028.

**Example Success Story:** Dacey Community Field, Franklin, MA; Forestdale Park (Alex Gentile Memorial Park), Malden, MA; John Lalli Miracle Field, Acton, MA.

**Complimentary Action:** Services & Facilities 6.1.3: Evaluate and implement an ADA transition plan for Town-owned buildings and facilities.

**Related Plans:** ADA Transition Planning section of the Norton Open Space and Recreation Plan



## Goal 4-2 (continued)

Improve access to natural areas, parks, and recreation facilities.

### Strategy 4.2.5: Expand outdoor passive and active recreational opportunities that promote healthy, life-long experiences for residents of all ages and abilities.

Norton's Parks and Recreation department hosts activities and events throughout the year, including Founder's Day, Chartley Halloween Parade, Norton Festival of Lights, and many more. The Town should continue to support these events by coordinating related efforts and available resources while working with Wheaton College and Friends of the Norton Public Library to encourage other types of events that bring the community together.

Along with adding new events, the residents of Norton seek to expand opportunities for outdoor passive and active recreation. During Master Plan workshops, many residents mentioned that they would like to see a splash pad in town for use during the summertime. Additionally, Norton should consider adding an outdoor fitness trail system to one of their existing trails. Along these types of trails there are fitness stations that range from stretches to exercises. The Middlesex Community College Fitness Trail has 10 self-guided stations along the 1.25-mile loop.

Figure 35. Right: View of wetlands adjacent to Norton Reservoir.



Figure 36. Norton Founder's Day is a popular festival, held at the Yelle Elementary School grounds. (Martin Gavin, *The Sun Chronicle*, 2018)

**Priority:** Low - Flexible

**Responsible Parties:** Conservation, Parks and Recreation, and Planning Department



**Performance Measures:**

- Create regular roster of Town events to foster inter-generational community connections, such as clean-up days, business sponsorships, and Wheaton College events.
- Identify locations for community gardens; splash pad facility and other youth creation facilities; and outdoor fitness trails and nature education center. Pursue grant-funding and partnerships for implementation.

**Example Success Story:** Livingston Street Splash Pad in Tewksbury and Hopewell Park Splash Pad in Taunton.

**Complimentary Action:** Economic Development Strategy 3.2.2: *Implement placemaking strategy for Village Center, including signage.*

**Related Plans:** Norton Open Space and Recreation Plan Goal 6, Objective a





# Natural & Cultural Resources

Support Norton's strong tradition of environmental conservation and preserve historic and cultural assets that represent Norton's heritage.

## Context

From the Timeline on page 3, it is clear that Norton has a rich history. As of April 2021, there are 333 buildings, burial grounds, objects, structures, or areas registered in the Massachusetts Historical Commission database.

Norton also hosts a wealth of natural resources including numerous Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) vernal pools and the Canoe and Three-Mile Rivers; the rivers also host significant associated habitat areas, many of which are designated as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), NHESP habitats, and BioMap2 habitats).<sup>1</sup> The Canoe River also recharges the Canoe River Sole Source Aquifer, which Norton relies on for its drinking water.<sup>2</sup>

Norton's current Open Space and Recreation Plan does an excellent job describing both its natural and cultural resources and how growth competes with efforts to maintain and protect these assets. This Master Plan element seeks to continue the

1. <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/canoe-river-aquifer-facts>

2. A sole source aquifer is one that supplies at least fifty percent of the drinking water consumed in the area overlying the aquifer. In these communities [Norton, Mansfield, Easton, Sharon, and Foxborough], there are no alternative drinking water sources that could physically, legally, and economically supply all of those who depend upon the aquifer for drinking water.

Figure 37. Left: View of Town Common or Library Square in Norton's Village Center.

work of protecting – and even promoting – these assets through the following actions.

## Goals and Strategies Overview

**Goal 5-1:** Protect the quality and quantity of Norton's groundwater and surface water resources.

1. Streamline review process and continue enforcement of environmental by-laws.
2. Actively preserve open spaces within the Canoe River Sole Source Aquifer Recharge Area.
3. Apply for MVP Funding to implement stormwater management strategies identified by the 2018 Norton Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness plan.

**Goal 5-2:** Establish partnerships between private landowners, land conservation groups, and state and local governments to enable future open space and habitat area acquisitions.

**Goal 5-3:** Protect and promote Norton's rural, cultural, scenic, and historical qualities and assets.

1. Develop a coordinated wayfinding and signage model for town-wide, multi-use conservation and recreation properties, assets, and opportunities.
2. Encourage collaboration and coordination between the Historical Commission, Historic District Commission, and the Historical Society through activities such as creating a Historic Preservation Plan and enforcing the Demolition Delay Bylaw.

## Goal 5-1

Protect the quality and quantity of Norton's groundwater and surface water resources.

Norton's water resources were a key topic in the Master Plan's public engagement process. Residents clearly expressed the desire to improve the existing quality of drinking water and to protect the future of these resources through affirmative policies and actions. The following strategies are two main ways to advance these goals.

### **Strategy 5.1.1: Streamline review process and continue enforcement of environmental by-laws.**

**Complimentary Action:** Norton's online permitting platform has already simplified the development permitting process. These environmental regulatory processes should be explained clearly, as recommended in Economic Development Strategy 3.2.1: *Create a user-friendly Development and Permitting Guide.*

Any development in Norton that takes place near sensitive ecological or natural areas requires additional permits. Some of the notable permits include:

- Developments that are within 100' of a wetland require a Wetland Permit and must be approved by the Conservation Commission at a public hearing.
- Developments that are in a Wetland

Protection District (Article 5.4), Water Resource Protection District (Article 14.5) or Floodplain Overlay District (Article 13.4) require a special permit.

- A Stormwater management permit (Chapter 133) is required for any alteration greater than one acre and is reviewed by the Conservation Commission or the Planning Board if the Conservation Commission determines no wetland impacts.

The importance of adhering to these permits and achieving their environmental protection goals is essential to balancing growth with maintaining Norton's natural and cultural resources; explaining this in clear, easy-to-understand words and images can help ensure that Norton strikes this balance.

### **Strategy 5.1.2: Actively preserve open spaces within the Canoe River Sole Source Aquifer Recharge Area.**

**Complimentary Action:** Norton draws its freshwater from the Canoe River Aquifer Recharge Area. Using the Open Space and Recreation Plan as a guide, Norton should identify potential privately-owned public spaces in the Water Resources Protection overlay and aquifer recharge area to acquire. If Norton passes the CPA, such acquisitions are more likely to

*Figure 38. Opposite: Map of water resources in Norton.*

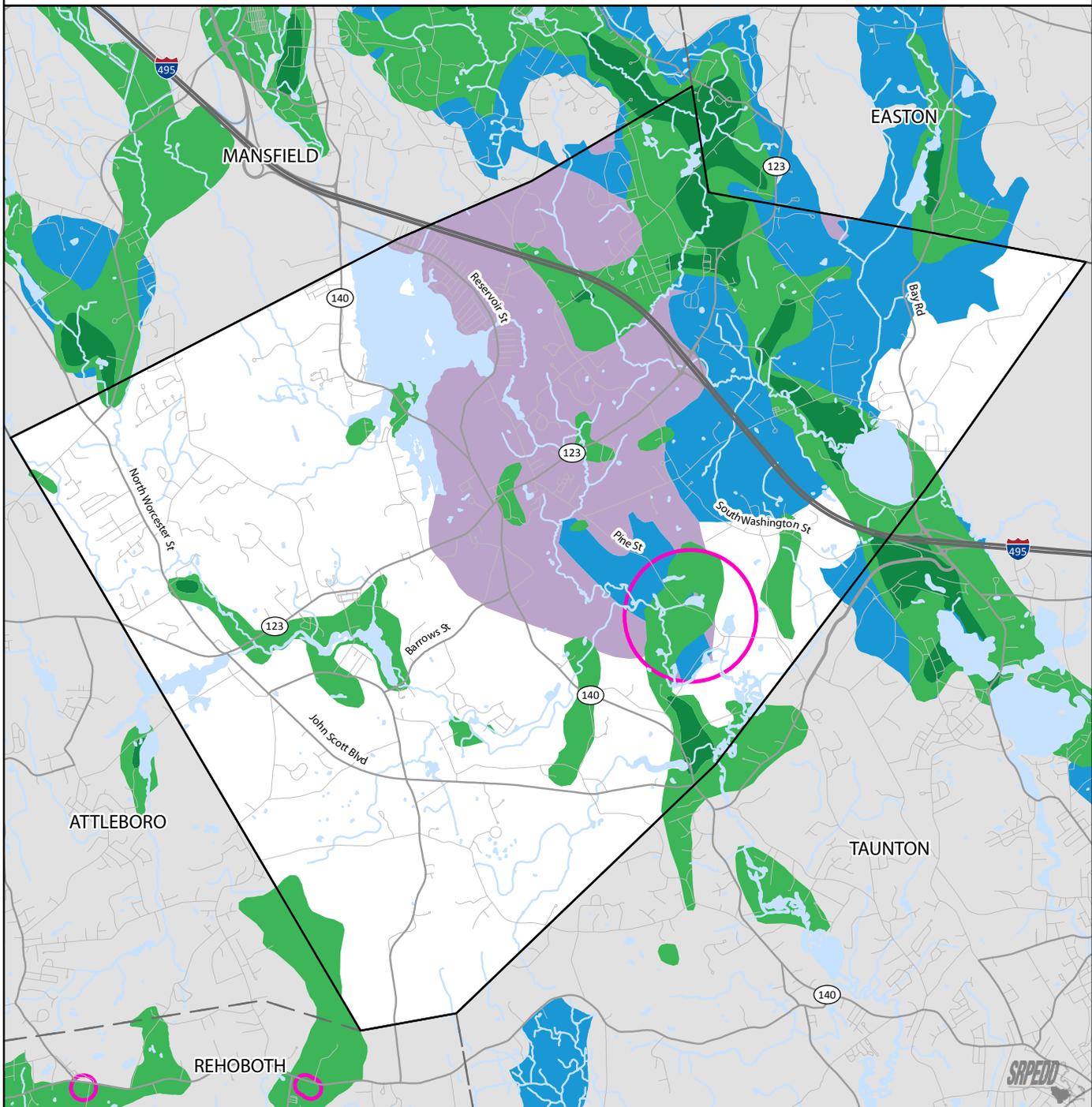
# Norton Water Resources

- █ Interim Wellhead Protection Area (IWPA)
- █ Mass DEP Approved Zone II Aquifers
- █ Zone III
- █ Mass DEP High-Yield Aquifers
- █ Mass DEP Medium-Yield Aquifers
- Interstates
- Collectors and Arterials
- Local Roads
- █ Water



Data sources: MassGIS, MassDOT, and the Town of Norton. This map is for the sole purpose of aiding planning decisions and is not warranted for any other use.

May 2021 0.5 Miles ↑



## Goal 5-1 (continued)

Protect the quality and quantity of Norton's groundwater and surface water resources.

happen. For more information, refer to Open Space & Recreation Strategy 4.1.1: *Continue to protect Conservation Lands managed by the Conservation Commission* and Strategy 4.1.2: *Adopt the Community Preservation Act (CPA) to fund the acquisition of open space and community development projects*. For information on Norton's infrastructure, consult Service & Facilities Strategy 6.2.1: *Provide clean drinking water and ensure future supply of water*.

### **Strategy 5.1.3: Apply for MVP Funding to implement stormwater management strategies identified by the 2018 Norton Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness plan.**

Climate Change is accelerating an upwards trend in the amount of precipitation that any major or minor storm event releases. As a result, Southeastern Massachusetts can expect to see an average increase of 3.2 inches of annual rainfall, leading to increased flood and stormwater runoff events.

In 2018, the Town partnered with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) to become a Certified Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Community. This exercise involved a series of planning workshops lead by members of the Resilient Taunton Watershed Network, SRPEDD, The Nature Conservancy, Manomet,

and Mass Audubon. A diversity of Norton stakeholders were involved, including members of the Conservation Commission, Highway Department, Water and Sewer Board of Health, National Grid, Town of Norton Schools, Building Department, Norton Fire/EMA, Human Services, Norton Senior Center, Alnylam, Norton Police, and the Board of Selectmen.

The goal of the workshop was to identify environmental and climate related hazards and vulnerabilities. And since MVP workshop participants identified the threats posed by flooding as one of their top concerns, the workshop proposed more than 10 development solutions to deal with flooding. This includes the installation of new culverts on Canoe and Wading River, Walker St., Plain Street, and others. This Master Plan advocates for the town to seek MVP funding to initiate these recommendations, including incorporating low-impact development in the senior center parking lot.

**Priority:** High - Flexible

**Responsible Parties:** Building Department, Norton Senior Center, Board of Selectmen

**Performance Measures:** Number of MVP Plan suggested actions that are funded by the MVP and built / number of culverts and stormwater-specific LID interventions that are constructed.

**Related Plans:** 2018 Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan



Figure 39. Opposite: Map of identified habitats in Norton.

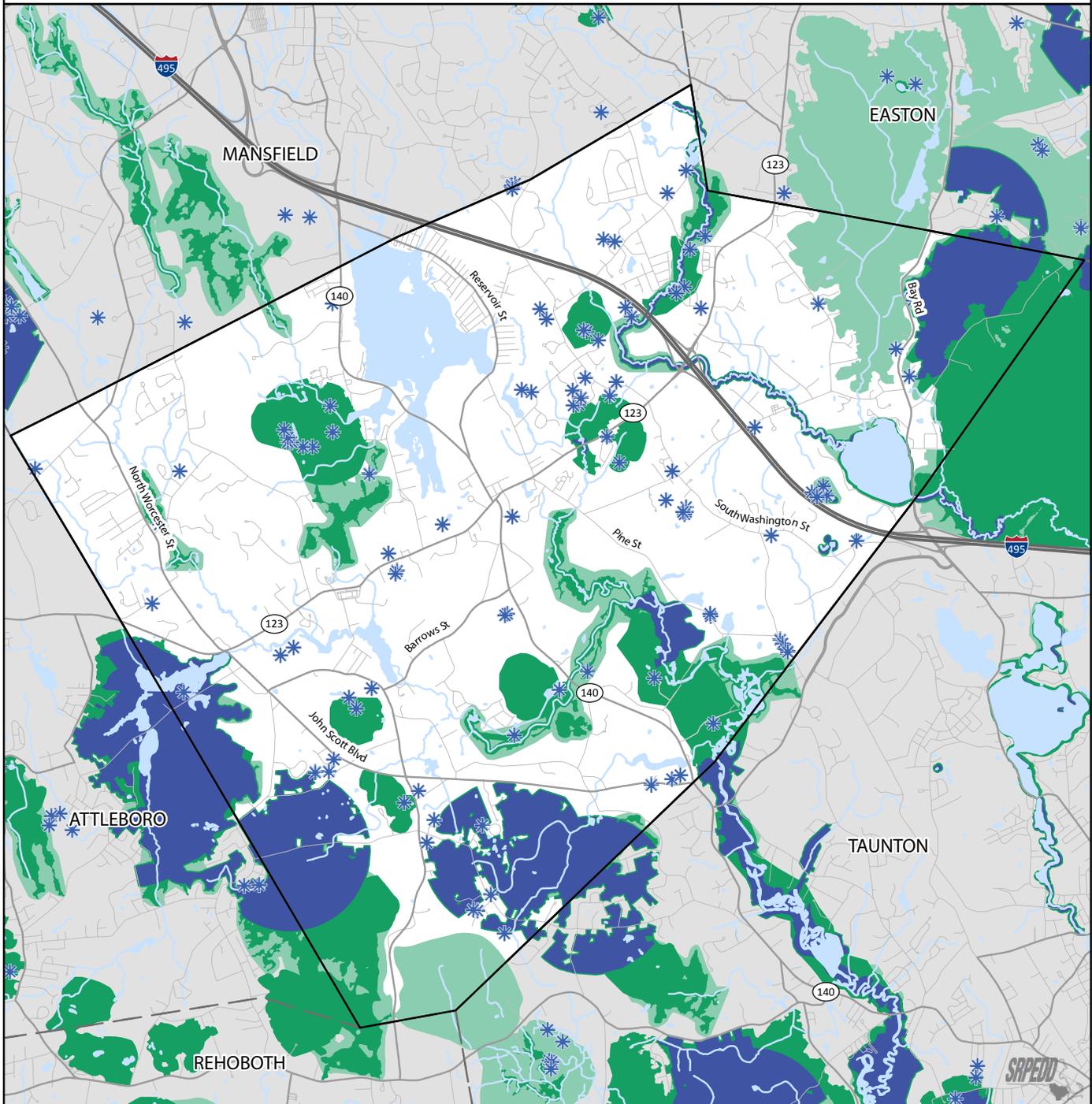
# Norton Habitats

- \* NHESP Certified Vernal Pools
- NHESP Priority Habitats of Rare Species
- BioMap2 Core Habitat
- BioMap2 Critical Natural Landscape
- Interstates
- Collectors and Arterials
- Local Roads
- Water



Data sources: MassGIS, MassDOT, and the Town of Norton. This map is for the sole purpose of aiding planning decisions and is not warranted for any other use.

May 2021  0.5 Miles ↑



## Goal 5-2

Establish partnerships between private landowners, land conservation groups, and state and local governments to enable future open space and habitat area acquisitions.

**Complementary Action:** Preserving critical natural resources and retaining the integrity of existing intact habitat areas and fisheries/wildlife corridors are a key goal of this plan. Many of the open spaces that should be targeted for preservation play these important ecological roles. Continued partnership between the Town and agencies such as the Land Preservation Society of Norton and the Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services can help enable future open space and habitat area

acquisition. For specifics, see Open Space & Recreation Strategy 4.1.3: *Continue and seek out new partnerships between private landowners, land conservation groups, and state and local governments to enable future open space acquisitions.*

**Related Plan:** Norton Open Space and Recreation Plan Goal 3, Objectives a, c, and d.

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## Goal 5-3

Protect and promote Norton’s rural, cultural, scenic, and historical qualities and assets.

Norton has numerous cultural and scenic assets: a colonial heritage, a small New England college, rivers and waterways, and forests and fields. The Town can both protect and promote these advantages through coordinated strategies that build on Norton’s inherent strengths. These strategies can also support complementary economic development and land use goals.

**Strategy 5.3.1: Develop a coordinated wayfinding and signage model for town-wide, multi-use conservation and recreation properties, assets, and opportunities.**

**Complimentary Action:** Economic Development Strategy 3.2.2 and Transportation & Circulation Strategy 7.1.4. The Town can investigate the possibility of installing informational and wayfinding signs at each open space and recreation area. These types

*Figure 40. Map of natural, cultural, and historic resources in Norton.*

# Historic and Cultural Sites

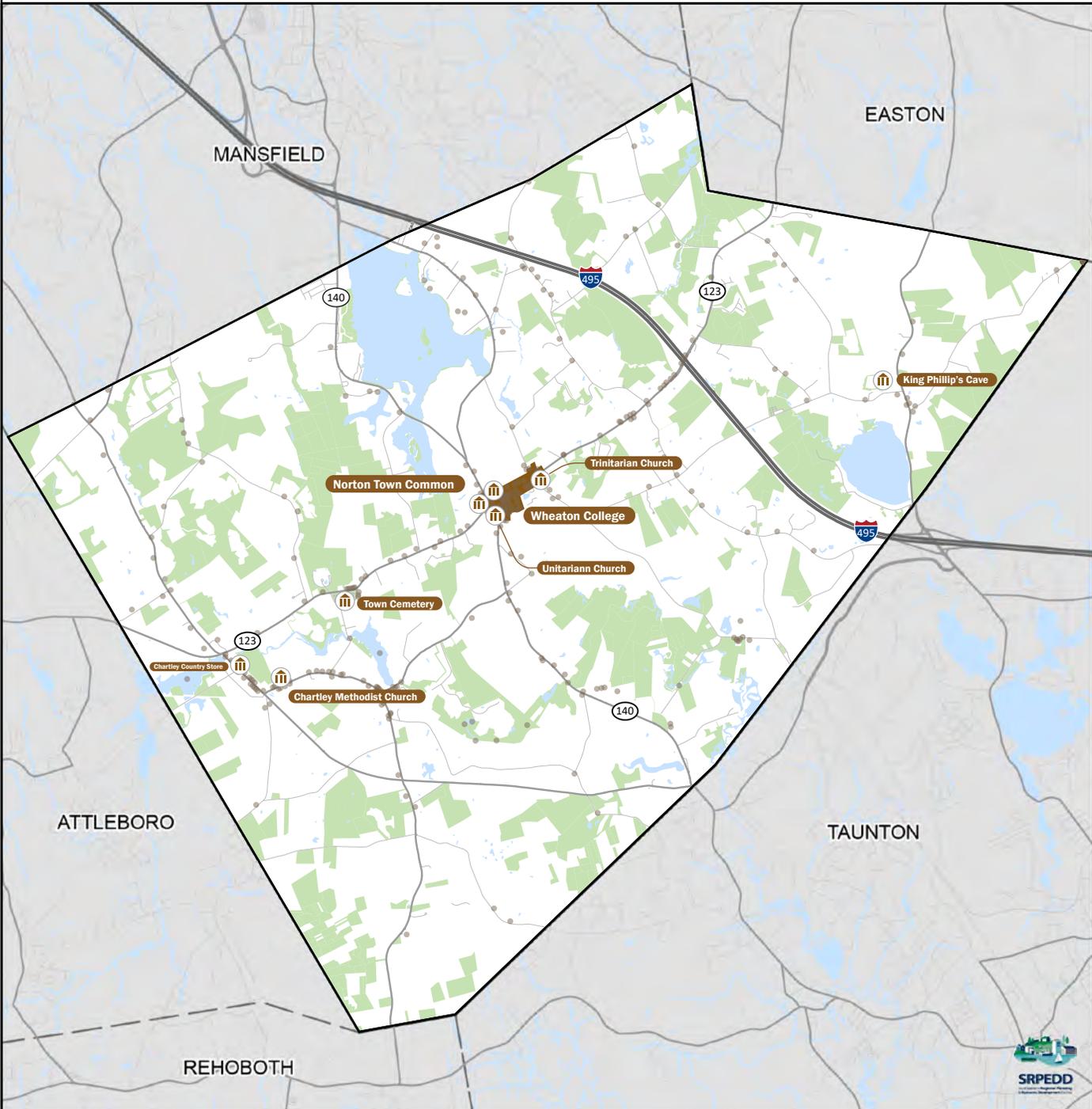
- Historic District
- Key Historic Asset
- Mass Historic Inventory
- Interstates
- Collectors and Arterials
- Local Roads
- Water
- Open Space



Data sources: MassGIS, MassDOT, and the Town of Norton. This map is for the sole purpose of aiding planning decisions and is not warranted for any other use.

May 2021

0.5 Miles



## Key Natural, Historic, and Cultural Assets

Norton's "Cultural Inventory" of historical places and other important sites includes, but is not limited to the following places and sites.

### Natural Historic Places

- King Phillip's Cave
- Canoe River
- Devil's Footprint
- Great Woods

### Open Spaces

- Everett Leonard Park - Town Pool
- Lion's Field
- Tricentennial Park
- Woodward Woods
- Norton Reservoir
- Gertrude Cornish Town Forest
- Johnson Acres
- Leo G. Yelle Conservation Area
- YMCA-Camp Finberg-Edith Read
- Rose Farm Conservation Area

### Lakes and Ponds

- Barrowsville Pond
- Chartley Pond
- Norton Reservoir
- Winnecunnet Pond



*Canoe River.*



*King Phillip's Cave.*



*Norton Wellhead Protection Area.*

*Figure 41. Images of Natural Resources in Norton.*

### Historic Places

- Old Norton Town Hall
- Old Norton Public Library
- Norton Town Common
- Norton Unitarian Church
- Norton Trinitarian Church
- Chartley United Methodist Church
- Norton Historical Society Schoolhouse

### Historic Districts/Areas

- Chartley
- Cemetery Common
- Town Common
- Red Mill Road
- Old Rail/Trolley Lines and Stations

### Businesses/Institutions

- Bog Iron Brewing
- Wendell's
- Chartley Country Store (recently closed)
- Fairland Farm – Cranberry Bog
- Produce Barn
- TPC, Norton Country Club
- Wheaton College



*Old Public Library.*



*Old Town Hall.*



*Norton Trinitarian Church (Stephen St-Denis, Flickr).*

*Figure 42. Images of Historic Places and other Cultural Resources in Norton.*

## Goal 5-3 (continued)

Protect and promote Norton's rural, cultural, scenic, and historical qualities and assets.

of signs can be helpful to residents and visitors by providing them with information about the particular site (history, maps, hours of operation, etc.) as well as providing the locations of other sites in town. Along with wayfinding signs, the Town should create/update the Town's conservation maps with locations of conservation areas, open spaces, and recreational areas.

### **Strategy 5.3.2: Encourage collaboration and coordination between the Historical Commission, Historic District Commission, and the Historical Society through activities such as creating a Historic Preservation Plan and enforcing the Demolition Delay Bylaw.**

The Town of Norton is fortunate to have three groups with an interest in the history of the Town. The Historical Commission and the Historic District Commission are two official, town-enabled entities, whereas the Historical Society is a private group. These complementary groups can pursue some of the following actions (featured under Performance Measures and including the creation of a specialized, comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan) to coordinate, advance, and publicize historic preservation efforts in town.

**Priority:** Low - Flexible

**Responsible Parties:** Historical Commission, Historic District Commission, Historical Society, and Select Board



**Performance Measures:**

- Clearly define the roles between the three agencies. If the agencies' purposes are the same investigate the possibility of merging.
- Collaborate on the enforcement of the Town's Demolition Delay Bylaw.
- Continue to update the town-wide Historic Inventory.
- Create a dedicated, full Historic Preservation Plan, using CPA funds, the Mass Cultural Facilities Fund, Mass Historical Commission Survey and Planning Grants, the Mass Preservation Projects Fund, or other programs or funds.

**Example Success Story:** Many communities across Massachusetts have successfully created a Historic Preservation Plan.

Figure 43. Opposite: Canoe River.





# Services & Facilities

Ensure that Norton's infrastructure and town services meet the demands of growth and change.

## Context

Norton's facilities house and provide the services expected by residents. These services include day-to-day administrative activities that ensure the town runs smoothly, but also the programming that enriches life in Norton. The Council on Aging and Public Library are highly regarded sources of entertainment, community, and support. Yet, despite the demand for services from these institutions, their physical limitations inhibit programmatic growth. Constructed 30 years ago, the library's second floor was never completed, but does offer the opportunity for expansion. To meet the demands of the growing senior population, the Senior Center requires a complete overhaul. In addition, the Town Hall is retrofitted from a former school gym constructed at the turn of the century that today fails to meet the needs of employees and visitors. Recent efforts led to the vote to develop and construct a new Senior Center and Town Hall to carry the Town's services into the next ten years.

Providing wastewater processing and water are two key infrastructure services Norton provides. Norton is part of the Mansfield Foxborough Norton (MFN) Wastewater district. All of these communities process their wastewater at the MFN Regional Wastewater Facility, a 3.14 million-gallon-per-day (MGD) advanced wastewater treatment plant adjacent to the Miles Standish Industrial Park. The plant discharges treated effluent to the Three Mile River which flows to Narragansett Bay via the

Taunton River. The Wastewater district is overseen by the MFN Commission, a seven-member board made up of Norton, Mansfield, and Foxborough members. The network is supported by gravity-sewer systems and some pumps.

Norton is served by five gravel-packed wells that pump 1.3 MGD (2007) and four storage facilities that hold 5.85 M gallons of water. The wells draw from the aquifers in the Taunton River Basin and the catchment area is protected by the zoning overlay Water Resource Protection District, which limits certain kinds of development in order to protect water quality.

## Goals and Strategies Overview

**Goal 6-1:** Replace, modernize, and improve aging Town buildings.

1. *Construct a new Town Hall and Senior Center Building.*
2. *Evaluate addition of space to the library and add programming.*
3. *Evaluate and implement an ADA transition plan for Town-owned buildings and facilities.*
4. *Prepare Norton buildings to respond to immediate and long-term climate challenges.*

**Goal 6-2:** Expand key infrastructure services, such as water and sewer, to meet demands for economic development and make Norton an attractive place to live and do business.

1. *Provide clean drinking water and ensure future supply of water.*
2. *Expand infrastructure, such as wastewater lines, to key locations to jump start economic development.*
3. *Ensure reliable access to electricity and broadband internet.*

Figure 44. Opposite: Norton Middle School.

## Goal 6-1

Replace, modernize and improve aging Town buildings.

Norton's stock of town facilities is aging, and though the town maintain its buildings, some lack the capacity to support the town's activities through the next ten years. While exploring services and facilities in Norton, participants highlighted the poor state of existing buildings, such as the Town Hall and Senior Center, the subjects of a successful debt exclusion measure in Spring of 2021 (more below). Notably, residents were split on the quality of services provided by the Senior Center, which dates to 1880. Given the lack of space and demand for more programming to meet the growing senior population, the results indicate that the physical condition of the space impacts the quality of service.

### Strategy 6.1.1: Construct a new Town Hall and Senior Center Building.

In Spring 2021, Norton residents voted to fund the development and construction of a new Town Hall, Senior and Community Support Center, and the Norton Public School Community Athletic Complex. The townspeople's decision corroborated the long-held claims that Town Hall failed to provide proper accommodations and safety for employees and visitors alike. The building projects are expected to incrementally increase the tax rates over the course of the next 30 years, translating to a \$41 million tax increase. For many years, Town Hall was

considered inadequate to provide the level of service residents desired, having been retrofitted from a former school gym. The \$23 million Town Hall will sit at 70 and 78 East Main Street where a 24,450 square-foot two story town hall will replace the 1910 structure. In addition, the Town proposed an \$11 million Senior and Community Support Center to accommodate the growing senior population in town at a six-acre site along Mansfield Avenue. With funding approved, the Town can develop a clear vision for the Town Hall and Senior and Community Support Center that incorporates ADA compliance, energy efficiency, modern services and amenities, as well as multi-modal transportation options to increase accessibility. To ensure that the public's needs are met, the Town should continue to engage the public on the services they seek at these facilities as well as incorporate ways to activate these public spaces beyond traditional "9 to 5" office hours to encourage community activities and programming that contribute to greater economic development goals and placemaking.

**Priority:** High - Immediate

**Responsible Parties:** Permanent Building Committee, Council on Aging, Public Works

**Performance Measure:** Complete design and permitting with meaningful and substantive public consideration by late 2022. Complete construction of Senior and Community Support Center and Town Hall by Fall 2023, with final occupancy approved by the end of the year.



Figure 45. Map of services and facilities in Norton.

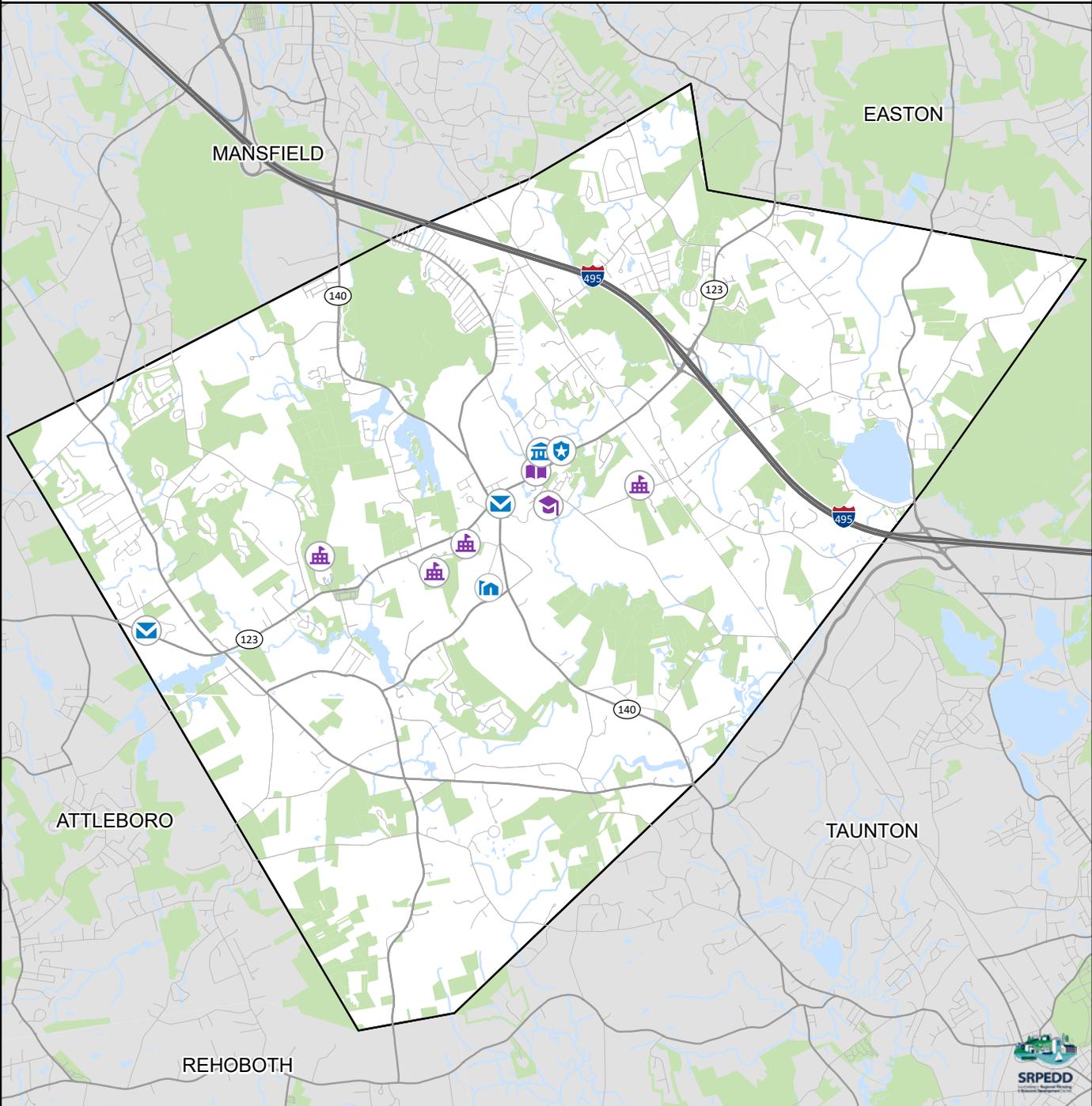
# Map of Norton



Data sources: MassGIS, MassDOT, and the Town of Norton. This map is for the sole purpose of aiding planning decisions and is not warranted for any other use.

May 2021 0.5 Miles

- Interstates
- Collectors and Arterials
- Local Roads
- Water
- Open Space
- College
- Library
- Police Station
- Post Office
- School
- Town Hall
- VFW



## Goal 6-1 (continued)

Replace and modernize aging Town buildings.



### Town Hall and Fire Station

A new Town Hall will be built between the existing location and police station, supported by a recently-passed bond measure. The fire station will expand into a portion of the existing Town Hall.



### Police Station

Built in 1999. It is at capacity (e.g., locker rooms) and the roof has water issues. The 20-person training room cannot accommodate large classes. The chief would like to consider an addition to the building, such as a third story or a 1-story, west addition.



### Council on Aging

The COA will be moving into a new building on Mansfield Avenue, supported by a recently-passed bond measure.



### Yelle Elementary School

Houses grades 4-5 and sits on 25.5 acres. The front section was built in 1948 and the back lower section added in 1954. It has 82,949 square feet and recently went through renovations of new exterior windows and exterior doors.



### **Nourse Elementary School**

Houses grades 1-3 and sits on 36 acres. It was built in 1960 with the D wing section added in 1962. It is 44,372 square feet and recently had new exterior windows and doors installed.



### **Solmonese School**

Houses grades Pre-k -3 and sits on 15.45 acres. It was built in 1978. It has 83,570 square feet and recently went through renovations of new exterior windows and exterior doors. A new roof was installed in 2013.



### **Norton Middle School**

Houses grades 6-8 and sits on 72 acres. It was built in 1998. It has 168,900 square feet.



### **Norton High School**

Houses grades 9-12 and sits on 50.82 acres. It was built in 1972. In 2013 it went through a total renovation with 30,000 more square feet added bringing the total square footage up to 179,716.

## Goal 6-1 (continued)

Replace and modernize aging Town buildings.

### Strategy 6.1.2: Evaluate addition of space to the library and add programming.

During the course of the Master Plan, residents expressed their love for the Norton Public Library while also expressing interest in seeing more activities. The Norton Public Library was constructed in 1991, after which point demand for services increased. Since its construction, the library's second floor remains unfinished, though it is continuously identified as a potential opportunity to expand. The 1998 Master Plan stated that the level of demand for library services called for completion of the second floor. Recent feedback from local residents reiterated this position over twenty years later, with many arguing for the benefits of expanding into the second floor to grow programming and services. To further evaluate the addition of space to the library, the Library Director as well as the Board of Trustees, in collaboration with the Town administration, should evaluate the demand for new services and programming as well as cost to complete the second floor according to ADA standards. With a better sense for programming and services, the Library could work with the Permanent Building Committee to commission a feasibility study as well as identify and pursue grant funding to support its development and



### Norton Public Library

Completed in 1991 with the adjacent Library Park opened in 1999. The library originally grew out of the Norton Magazine Club in 1879. There is a currently unfinished second floor.

construction. At this point, the Library should also seek counsel from the Capital Improvements Committee to consider additional funding.

**Priority:** High - Flexible

**Responsible Parties:** Library Director, Board of Directors, Capital Improvements Committee, Permanent Building Committee

**Performance Measure:** Engage the Permanent Building Committee in 2022 to explore the building and renovation project of the second floor of the library to commission a feasibility study and identify funding sources.



### Strategy 6.1.3: Evaluate and implement an ADA transition plan for Town-owned buildings and facilities.

Critical to providing quality services and accessible facilities is compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) passed into federal law in 1990. Part of the legislation requires that all municipalities in the country to complete a self-evaluation and transition plan to assess compliance with ADA standards from both a programmatic and physical perspective. The Town of Norton does not currently have a Self-Evaluation or Transition Plan, which results in increased liability for ADA-related violations and which creates diminished equity and accessibility to programs and services provided by the Town. The Town may pursue the creation of a Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan through the Municipal Americans with Disabilities Act Grant with the Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD). Following completion and submission of the plan, the Town may reapply to the MOD grant program to fund capital improvements identified in the Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan. It is important to note that all new buildings, such as the proposed and recently funded Town Hall and Community Center projects should – and will – also comply with ADA construction standards.



Figure 46. Example of an accessibility improvements in a parking lot as part of an ADA Transition Plan (Town of El Cerrito).

**Priority:** High - Immediate

**Responsible Parties:** Town Manager, Building Inspector

**Performance Measure:** Apply to the 2021-2022 MOD Municipal Americans with Disabilities Act Grant to complete the Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan. Following completion and submission of the plan to the state, Norton may apply to subsequent grant rounds to complete capital improvements to achieve full accessibility.

**Success Stories:** In 2018, MOD awarded the Town of Longmeadow with a \$20,000 Municipal Americans with Disabilities Act Grant. The following year, Longmeadow applied for a project grant to improve accessibility and remove barriers at Bliss Park. MOD awarded the town \$150,000 for these improvements.

**Complementary Actions:** Open Space & Recreation Strategy 4.2.4: *Improve ADA accessibility of parks and recreation facilities.*

## Goal 6-1 (continued)

Replace and modernize aging Town buildings.

### Strategy 6.1.4: Prepare Norton buildings to respond to immediate and long-term climate challenges.

**Complementary Action:** As noted in this plan's Natural & Cultural Resources Strategy 5.1.3, Norton and all of southeastern MA can expect to see an increase in the intensity and duration of both major and minor precipitation events and other hazardous weather.

This Plan advocates for the town of Norton to apply for MVP funding to implement the 'Multi-Hazard Mitigation Planning' efforts described in Page 10 of the Norton MVP Plan. For Norton's services and facilities, this includes the installation of generators at the Senior Center, St. Mary's, 120 West Main Street Apartments, and homes around Winnecunnet Pond; the designation of additional emergency shelters; culvert replacement to manage stormwater, and other strategies.

**Priority:** High - Immediate

**Responsible Parties:** Conservation Commission, Highway Department, Water and Sewer Board of Health, National Grid, Town of Norton Schools, Building Department, Norton Fire/EMA, Human Services, Norton Senior Center, Alnylam, Norton Police, and the Board of Selectmen

**Performance Measure:** Continue to renovate Norton buildings with an MVP-funded piece of environmental resilience infrastructure installed.



## Goal 6-2

Expand key infrastructure services, such as water and sewer, to meet demands for economic development and make Norton an attractive place to live and do business.

Norton has continued to improve its water and wastewater systems. In 2016, a major construction project began to increase the regional wastewater plant's capacity by 1.00 MGD (million gallons per day). In recent years, the wastewater capacity of the region has allowed all three communities to expand with residential and commercial development, helping the local economies. While this is the case, much of Norton remains served by septic tanks and is not connected to the sewer. While there is currently not a wastewater expansion master plan in place, through conversations with the Commission, expansions are possible and should be explored.

As for water system improvements, two wells (Well 5, Well 6) are being replaced, which will expand Norton's water capacity by 0.8 MGD. Norton's 20-year phased improvement program is focused on pipe replacement and expansion. Norton recently has some level of ongoing issues with discolored water due to Manganese oxidizing; while the water is still safe to drink, it is unpleasant and can stain textiles. Norton recently installed a Manganese-filtration system, so the brown water issues have mostly been

resolved and issues have been primarily localized and no longer widespread.

Norton should continue to focus on maintaining and improving these systems in step with potential growth.

### **Strategy 6.2.1: Provide clean drinking water and ensure future supply of water.**

In recent years, Massachusetts has experienced drought conditions that have affected water supplies across the state. As of March 2021, the Drought Management Task Force has designated Southeastern Massachusetts as experiencing Level 2 "Significant Drought." Climate change will likely cause more extreme weather events, including more droughts.

Norton should continue to promote water conservation practices, such as limiting outdoor watering and addressing system leaks. As Norton continues to expand its water network, new development should implement stormwater best practices by reducing impermeable surfaces to allow for more groundwater infiltration and reduced runoff. New developments should seek to plant drought-resistant and native species rather than putting in grass lawns.

## Goal 6-2 (continued)

Expand key infrastructure services, such as water and sewer, to meet demands of economic development and make Norton an attractive place to live and do business.

In general, Norton has enough water production capacity to continue expanding with new development – particularly when the proposed new well projects are completed in the coming years. Norton should continue with the Water System Master Plan phased plan and ensure that potential development sites have enough capacity through the pipe dimensions to serve them.

Low-Impact-Development, as mentioned in the Municipal Vulnerability Plan, will also serve to reduce stormwater runoff and increase groundwater infiltration.

**Priority:** High - Immediate

**Responsible Parties:** Public Works, Water and Sewer Commission



**Performance Measure:** Continue implementation of 20-year Water Master Plan and pipe replacement. Continue to require new developments to follow stormwater management best practices and ensure they adhere to any regulations related to Water Resource Protection District.

**Complementary Action:** Natural & Cultural Resources Strategy 5.1.2: *Actively preserve open spaces within the Canoe River Sole Source Aquifer Recharge Area.*

### Strategy 6.2.2: Expand infrastructure, such as wastewater lines, to key locations to jump start economic development.

A number of areas have been highlighted as “Areas of Need” for sewer coverage expansion.

In certain situations, sewer expansions can be proposed alongside Water infrastructure improvements. Similarly, a reduction or waiver of connection fees can be possible if the developer agrees to install the sewer system in whole or in part.

These “Needs Areas” should be coordinated with the economic development priority sites. Much of Main Street is in an identified Needs Area; an existing sewer connection already runs under Main Street, from Worcester Street to Washington Street. Reed & Barton are further away from a potential connection. New connections should align with development priorities but also Mass DEP and EPA priorities to protect natural resources from septic tank pollution.

**Priority:** High - Flexible

**Responsible Parties:** Public Works, Water and Sewer Commission, MFN Wastewater District, Planning Department



**Performance Measure:** By 2026, Create a Sewer Expansion Master Plan, including a study of how much development capacity is available for new development based on wastewater capacity of the region. Create guidelines to encourage developers to pay for sewer expansions and improvements, in lieu of sewer connection fees. Focus compact development near existing sewer connections to reduce costs, avoiding “leap frog” developments.

**Complementary Action:** Economic Development Strategy 3.2.2: *Expand infrastructure, such as wastewater lines, to key locations to jump start shovel-ready development.*

### **Strategy 6.2.3: Ensure reliable access to electricity and broadband internet.**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many communities realized how important high-speed, broadband internet access was to nearly all aspects of life, including remote school and work. In order to attract businesses and residents, access to reliable, high-speed internet is almost as important as access to other basic needs such as electricity and water. During the Services & Facilities workshop, participants noted that they have heard neighbors discuss their dissatisfaction with Norton's internet services and cellphone coverage, leading to interruptions to work and school. Currently, Norton residents have limited choice for a wired, internet provider. Regional monopolies for internet providers exist due to the high initial cost of building out the internet infrastructure; without such a guarantee (of a "cornered market"), a utility company would not be willing to invest so much money to build out an internet network for a semi-rural area, such as Norton.

One suggestion at public workshops was to consider municipal broadband. Municipal broadband is Broadband internet access owned by a public utility or Town, rather than a private, for-profit company who has a regional monopoly. One example of a successful municipal broadband system is South Hadley. In 2018, the Board of Commissioners approved plans to build a Fiber-

to-the-Home (FTTH) Network throughout the town of 17,000. South Hadley's municipal electric department runs the municipal broadband, a common implementation strategy for other communities, such as Shrewsbury.

Municipal broadband is expensive and requires a large, up-front investment. Unlike other communities who already have an electric department, Norton would need to create a dedicated department to help start and run municipal broadband.

At this time, municipal broadband is a difficult proposition for Norton. Because there is not readily available data on how big the problem is, an audit or study would help to make any case for municipal broadband stronger. Data points to consider include reliability, percentage of households with access, cost of internet, and internet speeds. Nearby Fairhaven recently completed a similar effort/study.

**Priority:** Low - Flexible

**Responsible Parties:** Public Works, Information Technology

**Performance Measures:** Because current information about issues is limited to anecdotal evidence, the Town should conduct a broadband access audit and continue to collect community feedback to better understand the issue.

**Success Stories:** South Hadley Municipal Broadband through SHELD, the municipal electricity department.





# Transportation & Circulation

Improve circulation, safety, and appearance for all users of Norton's roads; promote alternatives to driving when enjoying Norton's natural and recreational spaces.

## Context

Most trips in Norton are taken by car, but – according to Master Plan public comments – residents want more opportunities to walk, bike, and take transit. Residents also mentioned how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected their travel behavior. Most respondents noted that they have been walking and biking more for recreation and fitness and would like better pedestrian and bike infrastructure throughout town.

Norton's existing road network includes state-numbered Routes 123 (Main Street), 140 (Taunton Avenue, Mansfield Avenue), and Interstate 495. The Town's major bottleneck is the complex intersection of Routes 123 and 140, which has a high rate of crashes. It was the focus of the recent Village Center Vision Plan (2019), and remains one of the top concerns from the public engagement process. MBTA Commuter Rail Stations in Mansfield and Attleboro are located about a 15-minute drive from Norton Center. Two GATRA bus routes run through Norton.

This Master Plan's recommendations focus on supporting and coordinating the Town's existing transportation planning work. Most of the recommendations focus on improving facilities for alternative modes of mobility, including walking, biking, and taking transit. The more convenient, safe, and comfortable these modes are, the more residents will walk or bike instead of driving.

## Goals and Strategies Overview

**Goal 7-1:** Complete key transportation projects that improve circulation, safety, and appearance in Norton.

1. *Resolve the alignment of the Village Green to improve congestion and complement growth envisioned for the new Village Center Core (VCC) district.*
2. *Implement the Norton Bike Path.*
3. *Continue funding and implementing high-priority "Complete Streets" improvements.*
4. *Coordinate a program of standardized signage and wayfinding throughout town.*
5. *Investigate the creation of a traffic safety committee that would regularly meet to review documented safety issues, certain types of proposed developments and other transportation related issues.*

**Goal 7-2:** Work with Mass DOT on traffic and safety improvements to Route 140 and Route 123.

1. *Conduct Road Safety Audits (RSA) on state-owned roadways and intersections that have a high number of crashes.*
2. *Implement sidewalk and intersection improvements as identified by the Route 140 Corridor Plan between the Route 123 intersection and Mansfield.*
3. *Transform Route 123 into a safe, multi-modal spine for Norton.*

**Goal 7-3:** Work with GATRA to improve access to Route 8 and Route 140.

1. *Identify places along the flag-stop system for signage, benches, and shelters.*
2. *Consider expanding GATRA Route 140 to include East Norton, particularly near new multi-family residential development.*

*Figure 47. Opposite: View of businesses along Main Street, Route 123.*

## Goal 7-1

Complete key transportation projects that improve circulation, safety, and appearance in Norton.

While some major routes in Norton have sidewalks, the pedestrian network is inconsistent at times and the bike network is nearly non-existent. Norton has many active transportation-related plans, including a Complete Streets Plan (2018), Route 140 Study (2018), and the Norton Village Center Vision Plan. These plans work in concert to create a safe multi-modal transportation network that works for residents who walk, bike, and drive. These Transportation & Circulation strategies build on these existing plans and recommend next steps to implement their recommendations.

### **Strategy 7.1.1: Resolve the alignment of the Village Green (intersection of Routes 123 and 140) to improve congestion and complement growth envisioned for the new Village Center Core (VCC) district.**

The Village Center Vision Plan, including placemaking strategies, proposed four alternatives to improve traffic flow and safety at the Route 123 (Main Street) and Route 140 (Taunton Avenue, Mansfield Avenue) intersection.

Based on continued feedback and evolving priorities, Alternatives B or C remain the best options for implementation. Alternative B requires the most private land acquisition. Alternative C

preserves historic buildings but requires a dramatic change in the historic triangular shape of Library Square. Both Alternatives improve walkability, traffic flow, and adds new development sites to help create a destination and sense of place for the Village Center.

A more detailed concept and cost-benefit analysis should be performed between Alternatives B and C. Consulting with MassDOT would also help narrow down the options. The Town will likely need to fund land acquisitions to create the most ideal solution. The process to begin the redesign can be folded into the Route 140 improvements and funded through TIP.

**Priority:** High - Flexible

**Responsible Parties:** Planning & Economic Development, MassDOT, Wheaton College, Highway Dept.

**Performance Measure:** By 2025, begin the process to Select Preferred Alternative, Draft Concept Design, Traffic Analysis, Regulatory Approvals, including MEPA, Article 97 Disposition, NEPA, Section 106, Section 4(f), Construction of new roadway.

**Related Plan:** Village Center Vision Plan (2018).



Figure 48. Opposite: Map of Norton's Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Transit Network.

## Alternative B



- **Traffic Flow:** Provides straightforward improvement for traffic flow.
- **Pedestrian/Bike Friendliness:** Minimizes number of crossings but creates an intersection that may be hard to cross on foot.
- **Historic Character:** Retains Library Square but significantly alters the basic layout of the historic district.
- **Potential for New Development:** Includes new linear buildings and centralized parking at Post Office site and Taunton Avenue.
- **Ease of Implementation:** Requires acquisition of private land, reconfiguration of the church site, and removal of several homes and a commercial property.

## Alternative C



- **Traffic Flow:** Provides straightforward improvement for traffic flow.
- **Pedestrian/Bike Friendliness:** Minimizes number of crossings but creates an intersection that may be hard to cross on foot.
- **Historic Character:** Retains Library Square but requires significant reconfiguration of Library Square.
- **Potential for New Development:** Includes new linear buildings and centralized parking at Post Office site.
- **Ease of Implementation:** Requires acquisition of some private land and has big impact on historic district.

## Goal 7-1 (continued)

Complete key transportation projects that improve circulation, safety, and appearance in Norton.

### Strategy 7.1.2: Implement the Norton Bike Path.

The proposed a 4-mile Norton Bike Path is a 10- to 12-foot-wide multi-use path along an abandoned rail right-of-way connecting Taunton to Mansfield. It would extend the WWII Memorial Trail in Mansfield. The rail-trail will also connect many of Norton's open spaces and provide recreational and commuting opportunities. The bike path is a critical part of SRPEDD's Regional Bike Plan in the 2012 Regional Transportation Plan.

State and Federal funding (\$5,011,678) has been allocated to the trail in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for FY 2022, and construction is expected to begin soon.

**Priority:** High - Immediate

**Responsible Parties:** Highway Department, Parks & Recreation, Norton Alternative Transportation Committee

**Performance Measure:** Manage and monitor project in partnership with MassDOT and SRPEDD.

**Success Stories:** Mansfield's WWII Memorial Trail is an excellent example of the successful implementation of a rail-trail.



### Strategy 7.1.3: Continue funding and implementing high-priority "Complete Streets" improvements.

In 2018, Norton (working in partnership with SRPEDD) completed an inventory of Norton's streets and created a prioritization plan to upgrade bike and pedestrian facilities

throughout the Town. The Complete Streets plan prioritized potential projects based on livability and sustainability, connectivity, safety, trip generators, traffic volume, project readiness, and working group. High priority streets include those close to the Village Center, surrounding schools, and along major routes connecting different parts of town.

As projects included in the Complete Streets plan are completed, the Town should evaluate whether priorities have shifted. For example, most of the prioritized projects are in west and central Norton, but east Norton has experienced more residential growth in recent years and would also benefit from Complete Streets improvements. Complete Streets Tiers 1 and 2 have been completed, but Tier 3 – Project Construction Funding has not commenced yet. Town planning staff noted that additional planning resources, such as an additional transportation engineer or planner or a consultant, would be needed to commence Tier 3 and construction.

**Priority:** High - Flexible

**Responsible Parties:** Planning & Economic Development, Highway Department, Complete Streets Working Group

**Performance Measure:** Expand planning and transportation resources through additional hiring or through a consultant. Begin Tier 3 – Project Construction by 2023. Complete top 15 projects by 2030.

**Example Success Stories:** Towns of Agawam, Maynard, and Dighton Complete Streets Program.

**Related Plan:** Norton Complete Streets Plan.



# Complete Streets Projects in Order or Priority

## Complete Streets Priority Numbers

- 1 - 5
- 9 - 15
- 19 - 30
- 31 - 42
- Lower Priority
- ↔ Route 123 Crossing
- Interstates
- Collectors and Arterials
- Local Roads
- Water



Data sources: MassGIS, MassDOT, and the Town of Norton. This map is for the sole purpose of aiding planning decisions and is not warranted for any other use.

May 2021  0.5 Miles ↑

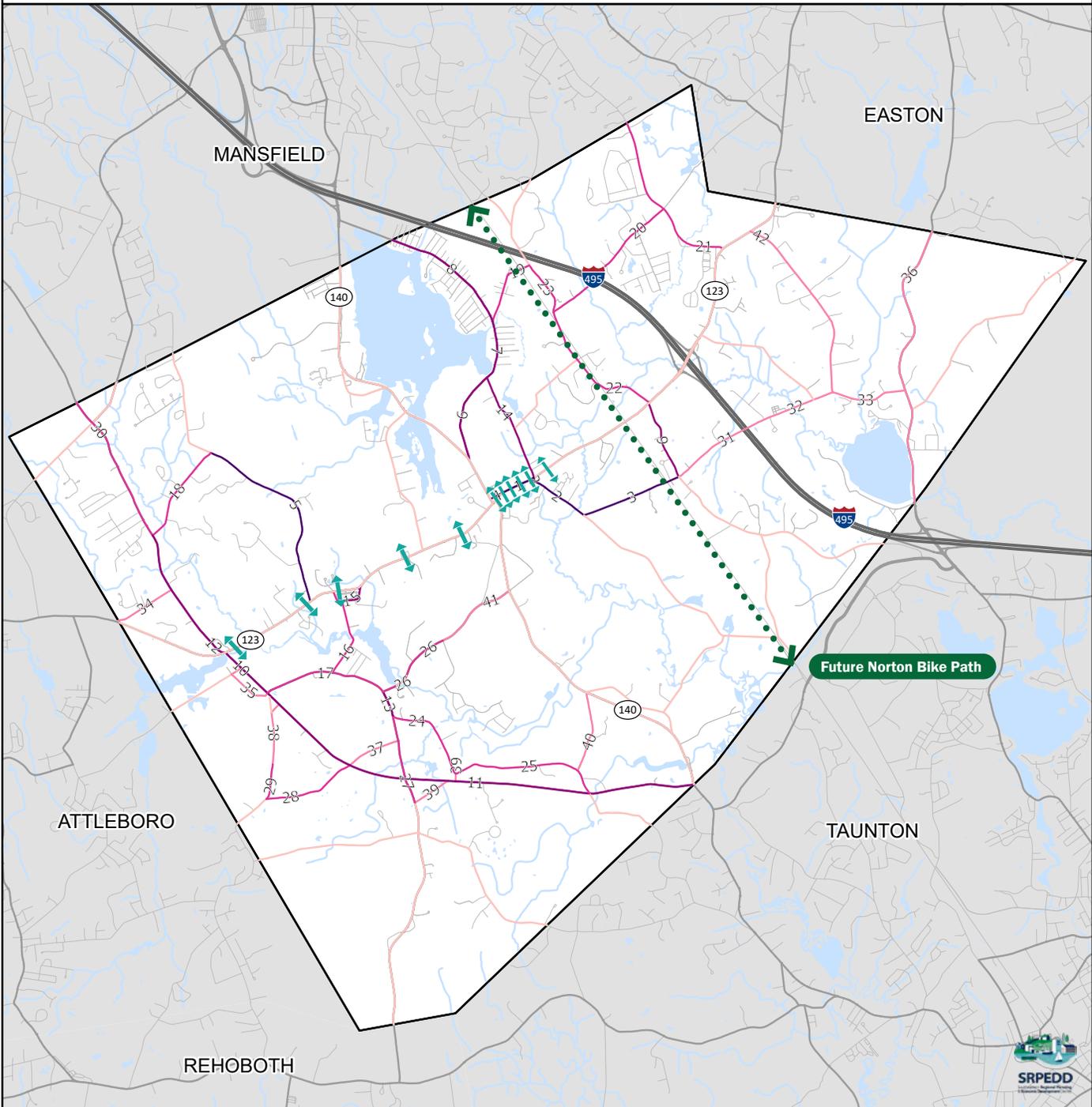


Figure 49. Map of Complete Streets Prioritization Projects.

## Goal 7-1 (continued)

Complete key transportation projects that improve circulation, safety, and appearance in Norton.

### Strategy 7.1.4: Coordinate a program of standardized signage and wayfinding throughout town.

While most people have smartphones with a digital map, physical signage plays an important part of orienting visitors and residents as they navigate Norton on foot or on a bike. Standardized wayfinding signage can also help establish a Town identity and branding. It can also help direct people to landmarks and key locations, such as Wheaton College, Library Square, and the Norton Commerce Center.

Wayfinding will also connect Norton's recreational pathways and open spaces.

Wayfinding signage should be coordinated with the final designs for the Norton Bike Path to identify trail heads and also direct visitors to rest stops and local businesses. Signage should be easily readable, consistent in color palette and shape, highly visible, and include times and distances. Signs should be limited and consolidated to avoid clutter and decrease confusion. Signage should be located at key intersections and gateways, such as the future rail trail crossing. Non-traditional options, such as murals, sidewalk markings, and digital offerings can also help as part of a broader wayfinding strategy. Depending on resources available, a small community engagement process could be useful to solicit feedback on design, locations, and color palette. Potential funding sources include CPA (if it is passed as recommended by

the plan), and the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI) which DHCD administers.<sup>1</sup>

**Priority:** High - Flexible

**Responsible Parties:** Planning & Economic Development, Highway Department.

**Performance Measure:** Complete Wayfinding community survey and recommendations by end of 2022. Establish funding for signage and coordinate maintenance plan.

**Example Success Stories:** Fall River (pilot project and survey conducted by WalkBoston). Orleans, MA (Cape Cod). Foxborough Wayfinding plan, funded by MDI.

**Complementary Actions:** Economic Development Strategy 3.2.2: *Implement placemaking strategy for Village Center, including signage.*



### Strategy 7.1.5: Investigate the creation of a traffic safety committee that would regularly meet to review documented safety issues, certain types of proposed developments and other transportation related issues.

Norton has state-owned roads, several residential subdivisions, a traditional Town Common, and multiple school zones. Without proper design and regular speed enforcement, the roadways serving these areas can be places where speeding regularly occurs. Traffic calming techniques such as radar-enabled signs (depicting a vehicle's travel speed in real time), high-visibility crosswalks, speed humps

1. <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/massachusetts-downtown-initiative-mdi>

or tables, raised intersections, traffic circles, and intersection center islands can reduce travel speeds and increase roadway safety for all users – particularly pedestrians who live in these neighborhoods or walk to school. However, without a formal process in place that allows residents to inform the appropriate town officials of safety concerns, the issues may go unnoticed and may never be resolved. Norton should therefore consider establishing a Traffic Safety Committee that would be charged with hearing and addressing these types of safety concerns. Several communities in the region have established this type of Committee, normally consisting of members from the Police Department, the Fire Department, the Planning Board, DPW, the School Committee, and representation from other appropriate groups or departments. The Committee should meet on a regular basis to discuss identified traffic safety issues in the town, to identify potential low-cost improvements (e.g., signage or targeted enforcement), and to allocate funding to pay for the improvements.



*More mid-block crossings on heavily-travelled corridors will help pedestrians cross safely.*



*A “sharrow” identifies that roads should be shared with bikers. Dedicated bike lanes would further improve bike safety.*



*Sidewalks with curbs can be expensive to implement. For low-traffic residential streets, simple pavement marking can indicate safe shoulders to travel on.*

*Figure 50. Examples of potential transportation improvements for Norton.*

**Priority:** Low - Flexible

**Responsible Parties:** Public Safety Departments, Alternative Transportation Committee

**Performance Measure:** By the end of 2022, the Town identifies Traffic Safety Committee members, establishes Rules and Regulations of the Committee, and enables the creation and performance of the Committee through the Board of Selectmen.

**Example Success Stories:** Towns of Grafton, Halifax, and Boxborough Traffic Safety Committees.

## Goal 7-2

Work with Mass DOT on traffic and safety improvements to Route 140 and Route 123.

Public workshop participants frequently highlighted the need for safer, more convenient circulation in town. In fact, the public raised these concerns at nearly all Master Plan events, regardless of the specialized workshop topic. This demonstrates the highly visible, cross-cutting role that improved transportation can play in supporting a town's character, improving the lives of its residents, and advancing complementary actions in economic development or open space and recreation. In other words, the following strategies focus on transportation enhancements, but have wider reaching applications throughout this plan.

### **Strategy 7.2.1: Conduct Road Safety Audits (RSA) on state-owned roadways and intersections that have a high number of crashes.**

The 2014-2016 crash data indicates that most incidents occur on Route 123. Besides the Route 140 and Route 123 intersection, other potential difficult intersections should be identified for future study. Other areas with higher crashes include Route 123/Washington Street, the intersection of Route 123 and Worcester Street, and the intersection of Route 123 and Freeman Street.

There have also been pedestrian-cyclist crashes near Yelle Elementary School, the middle school, and the high school, suggesting that more must be done to improve the safety of crossings

near those schools in order to encourage more families to consider walking to school. Currently, there is one signalized pedestrian crossing at the Yelle Elementary School and one unsignalized crossing at the middle school. Building on past work with Norton Middle School, continued partnership with the MassDOT Safe Routes to School program can provide funding for school-targeted improvements. Other potential points of conflict along Route 123 are the numerous curb cuts to homes and local businesses. Many businesses have curb cuts that extend the entire width of the front parking lot.

The Town should consider conducting Road Safety Audits/Assessments (through a SRPEDD request or through a hired consultant) to identify safety issues and opportunities for safety improvements. Many of these improvements would be funded through the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), where 80% of funding comes from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and 20% from MassDOT.

**Priority:** High - Flexible

**Responsible Parties:** Town Manager, Police Department, Highway Department, Fire Department

**Performance Measures:** The Town submits a request to SRPEDD for Road Safety Audits by the end of 2022.

**Example Success Story:** Lane Departure Road Safety Audits have been performed on High Street in Carver and Wareham Street in Middleborough.



# Norton Functional Classification and Intersection Crashes

- Interstate
- Principal Arterial
- Rural Major Collector
- Rural Minor Collector
- ↔ Route 123 Crossing
- Crash Totals
- Property Damage Only
- Non-Fatal Injury
- 🚲 Crashes involving Pedestrians or Bicyclists



Data sources: MassGIS, MassDOT, and the Town of Norton. This map is for the sole purpose of aiding planning decisions and is not warranted for any other use.

May 2021

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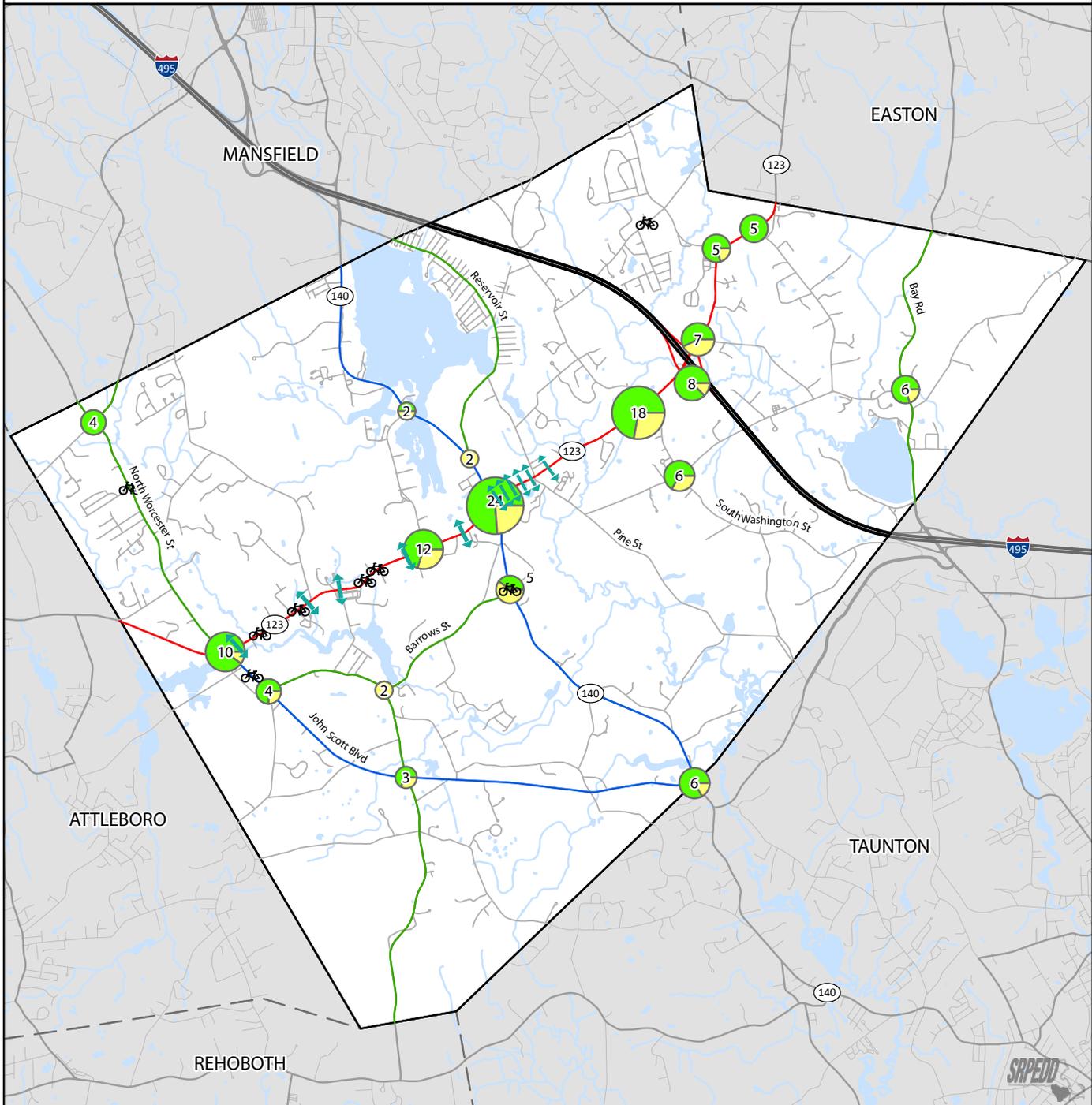


Figure 51. Map of Crash Data from 2014-2016.

## Goal 7-2 (continued)

Work with Mass DOT on traffic and safety improvements to Route 140 and Route 123.

### Strategy 7.2.2: Implement sidewalk and intersection improvements as identified by the Route 140 Corridor Plan between the Route 123 intersection and Mansfield.

In 2018, SRPEDD worked with MassDOT, Norton, Foxborough, and Mansfield on a Route 140 Corridor Plan. Route 140 is a key north-south corridor connecting these communities.

The study identified many portions of Route 140 in Norton that lacked sidewalks. The bridges are particularly noticeable choke points where there is not even a shoulder for a pedestrian to use. There are also no bike lanes or bike markings on the Route 140 roadway, where there is also fast-moving traffic (44 mph, 85th percentile speed). The study also noted the unsafe conditions and congestion problems of the Route 140 and Route 123 offset intersection. Queuing at the intersection extends very far, particularly at peak commuting times. There is not a shoulder or bus turn-out for a public transit stop in front of the post office, so when a bus stops to pick up or drop off passengers, it creates further congestion.

Along the corridor, curb cut access should be limited and opening widths reduced whenever possible. Between Arnold Palmer Boulevard and the town line, there are 17 driveways within 500

feet. To solve this, an access management plan and cross access between adjacent businesses would help alleviate conflict points.

Given the concentration of businesses and multifamily housing along this corridor, there should be a consistent multimodal cross-section and improved lighting to make the corridor as welcoming as possible for pedestrians and bikers.

Because Route 140 is owned and maintained by MassDOT, any improvements will need to be initiated by MassDOT and will likely be funded through TIP. Using the Route 140 plan to demonstrate need, the Town could consider asking MassDOT to advance certain sections or specific projects on the corridor.

**Priority:** Low - Flexible

**Responsible Parties:** Planning & Economic Development, MassDOT, Highway Department, SRPEDD

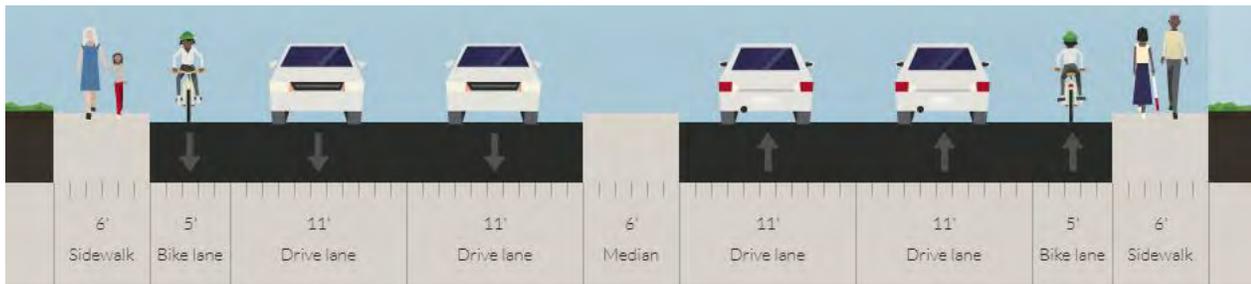
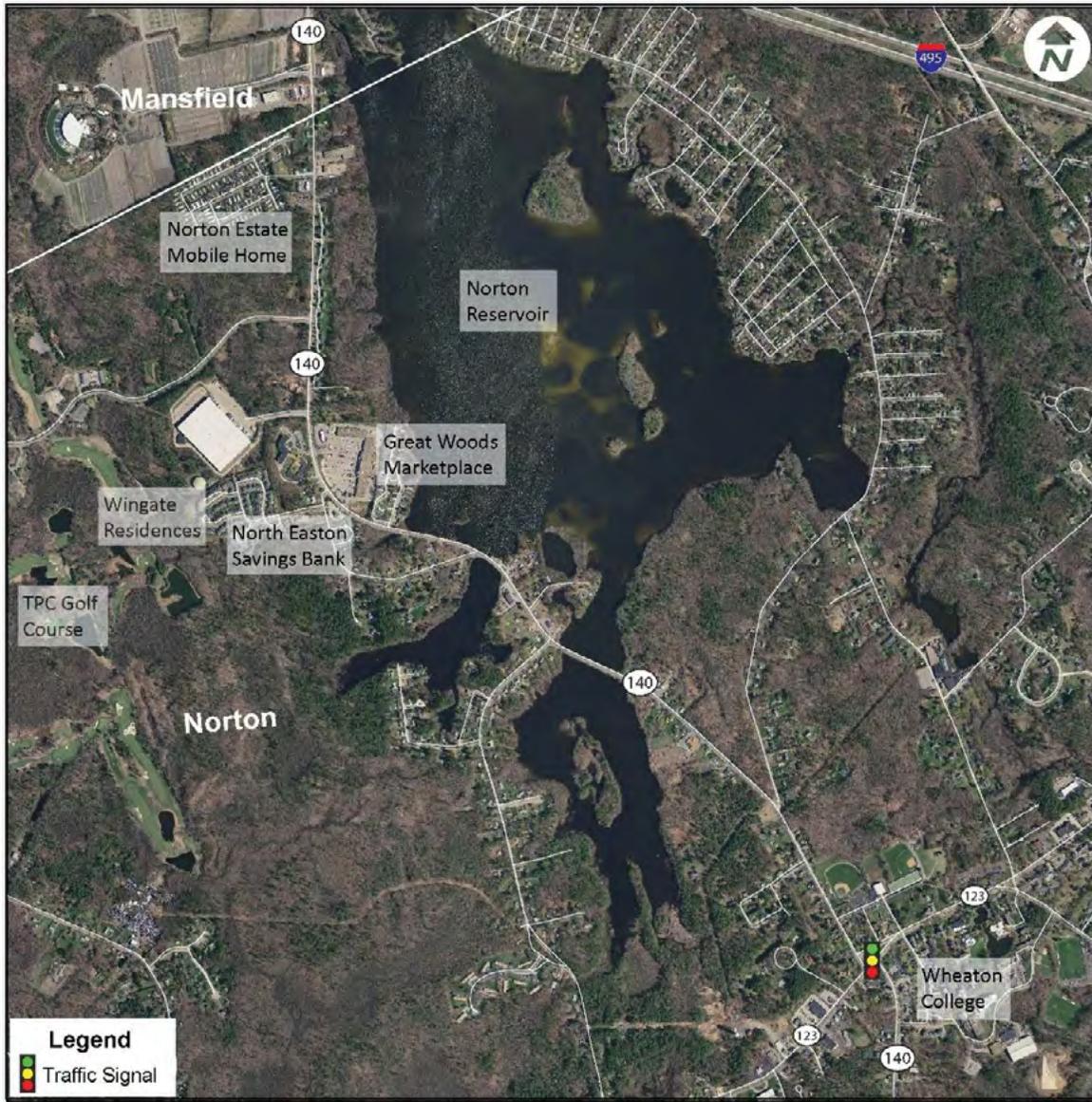
**Performance Measures:** Conduct a Route 140-specific Access Management Plan. Require new developments to adhere to the Route 140 plan guidelines. Submit requests for specific projects or certain sections to MassDOT, to be included in future TIPs.

**Success Stories:** The eastern section of Route 123 in Norton is currently undergoing improvements, funded by MassDOT and TIP.

**Related Plan:** Route 140 Corridor Plan.



Figure 52. Opposite: Route 140 Improvement Plan study area, proposed cross-section, and existing conditions.



## Goal 7-2 (continued)

Work with Mass DOT on traffic and safety improvements to Route 140 and Route 123.

### Strategy 7.2.3: Transform Route 123 into a safe, multi-modal spine for Norton.

The Main Street corridor connects Norton east to west and includes many of Norton's key locations, such as the library, the Town Common, Wheaton College, and multiple schools. GATRA's Route 8 also currently goes down West Main Street, connecting Norton to Taunton and Attleboro. Norton has jurisdiction for most of East Main Street while MassDOT has jurisdiction over West Main Street and Old Colony Road.

While some portions of Main Street have sidewalks, there are significant gaps in the sidewalk network of this critical corridor.

Between Pine Street and the Town border with South Easton, East Main Street lacks sidewalks. The section of Route 123 between the Chartley business area and North Worcester Street also lacks sidewalks and any shoulder space for pedestrians. Completing this network will be a key part of connecting all of Norton.

Additionally, there are limited opportunities to cross Route 123. In the roughly 6 ½ miles of Route 123, there are only 11 crosswalks, some of which are faded and difficult to see. The greatest concentration of crosswalks is where Wheaton College's campus paths cross Route 123. Past the library, there are no crosswalks at all on East Main Street, despite the many recent multifamily and commercial developments east of the 495 interchange. Even in areas with sidewalks, the distance between crosswalks is nearly one-

half mile or a 15-minute walk. In portions with sidewalks, utility poles and other obstructions like mailboxes create challenges for anyone with a wheelchair or stroller. Lastly, there are numerous oversized curb cuts to commercial parking lots.

In the 2021 MassDOT Capital Improvement Plan, \$4.48 M will help fund corridor improvements from Pine Street to I-495 through a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The project includes street widening, new traffic signal systems, stormwater treatment, paving, new asphalt sidewalks, driveway aprons and curbing, and landscaping. Work is expected to be completed by January 2025.

Future repaving or highway improvement projects on Route 123 should include a large pedestrian component. More safe crossings are needed, particularly at intersections with local residential streets and local businesses. Due to the high speed and volume of cars on some portions of Route 123, signaled crossings would help alert drivers to crossing pedestrians. New developments should be required to consolidate curb cuts and minimize their size.

**Priority:** High - Flexible

**Responsible Parties:** Planning & Economic Development, MassDOT, Highway Department

**Performance Measures:** Complete East Main Street improvements. Study new locations for safe crossings, particularly at existing intersections with residential areas.

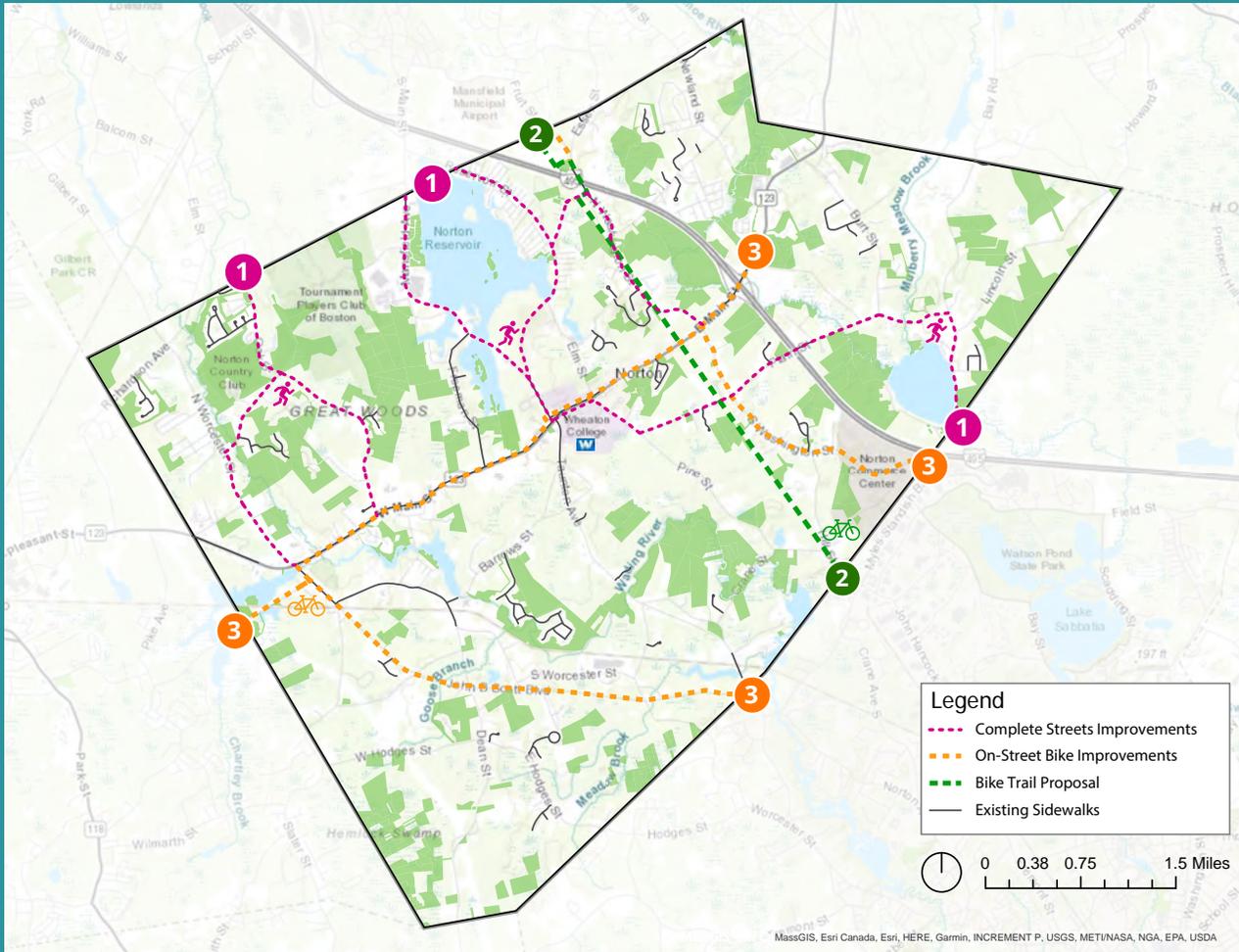
**Example Success Story:** Center Street in Dighton; Route 58 in Carver.

**Related Plan:** Norton Village Center Vision Plan.



# I want to... enjoy nature in Norton.

## Priority on Recreation, Biking, and Access to Open Space



**1** Walking Loops around Water

**2** Bike and Walking Trails

**3** On-Street Bike "Sharrows"

Figure 53. The "Recreation" focused Future for Norton was received the best in the workshop and following survey.

## Goal 7-3

Work with GATRA to improve access to Route 18 and Route 140.

GATRA Route 8 runs from Taunton, through Norton, and towards Attleboro. Route 140, temporarily non-operational, connects Norton Center and Wheaton College to the Mansfield MBTA Commuter Rail stop. GATRA operates a flag-stop system where passengers can request the bus anywhere along the line or get off anywhere along the route. But GATRA still has a few somewhat established waiting points, mostly as benchmarks to understand the schedule. People do not want to wait for a bus and feel uncertain that the bus will actually stop for them. Creating more established bus stop areas would encourage more people to use the bus, not just people who already “know” the system.

There is only one bus shelter and bumpout for the inbound side of the GATRA Route 18 in town: at the Norton Housing Authority complex at 120 W Main Street. There is some signage of a bus stop in front of the Post Office on Taunton Avenue that would serve both Route 18 and Route 140. While the unofficial bus stop at the Post Office serves both Route 8 and Route 140, there is no shelter, street furniture, or signage. There is also no shoulder or bumpout for the bus to pull over. During peak morning and afternoon congestion, the bus stopping to pick up or drop off passengers frequently adds to existing congestion.

### Strategy 7.3.1: Identify places along the flag-stop system for signage, benches, and shelters.

Bus stop amenities, such as signage, benches, bike racks, lighting, and shelters will make the GATRA system more visible. These improvements should be placed at existing places where people frequently get on and at key residential and commercial nodes. For example, a stop at Chartley near Worcester Street would help establish an identity for the area and along the W. Main Street District to support those businesses. Signage will need to be coordinated with GATRA and MassDOT.

Unofficial stops can be accomplished through “tactical transit” or partnerships with local businesses and property owners. Public art that reflects Norton’s community can also call attention to a “stop” in a creative way. These alternative, temporary improvements should still strive to accommodate all users and account for ability and age and be coordinated with the placemaking strategies described in the Land Use and Economic Development elements of this Plan.

**Priority:** Low - Flexible

**Responsible Parties:** Planning & Economic Development, GATRA, MassDOT

**Performance Measures:** Reach out to GATRA to confirm any procedures and guidelines for adding stop amenities. Explore unofficial, “tactical urbanism” strategies. Add new street furniture and signage for existing stops, consistent with any wayfinding plan by 2025.

**Example Success Story:** Modular Bus Stop, Nashville TN.



### GATRA Routes in Norton

- Interstates
- Collectors and Arterials
- Local Roads
- Water
- GATRA Route 18: Attleboro - Taunton
- GATRA Route 140: Mansfield
- Existing Sidewalk
- Potential Bus stop
- Existing Bus stop



Data sources: MassGIS, MassDOT, and the Town of Norton. This map is for the sole purpose of aiding planning decisions and is not warranted for any other use.

May 2021 0.5 Miles ↑

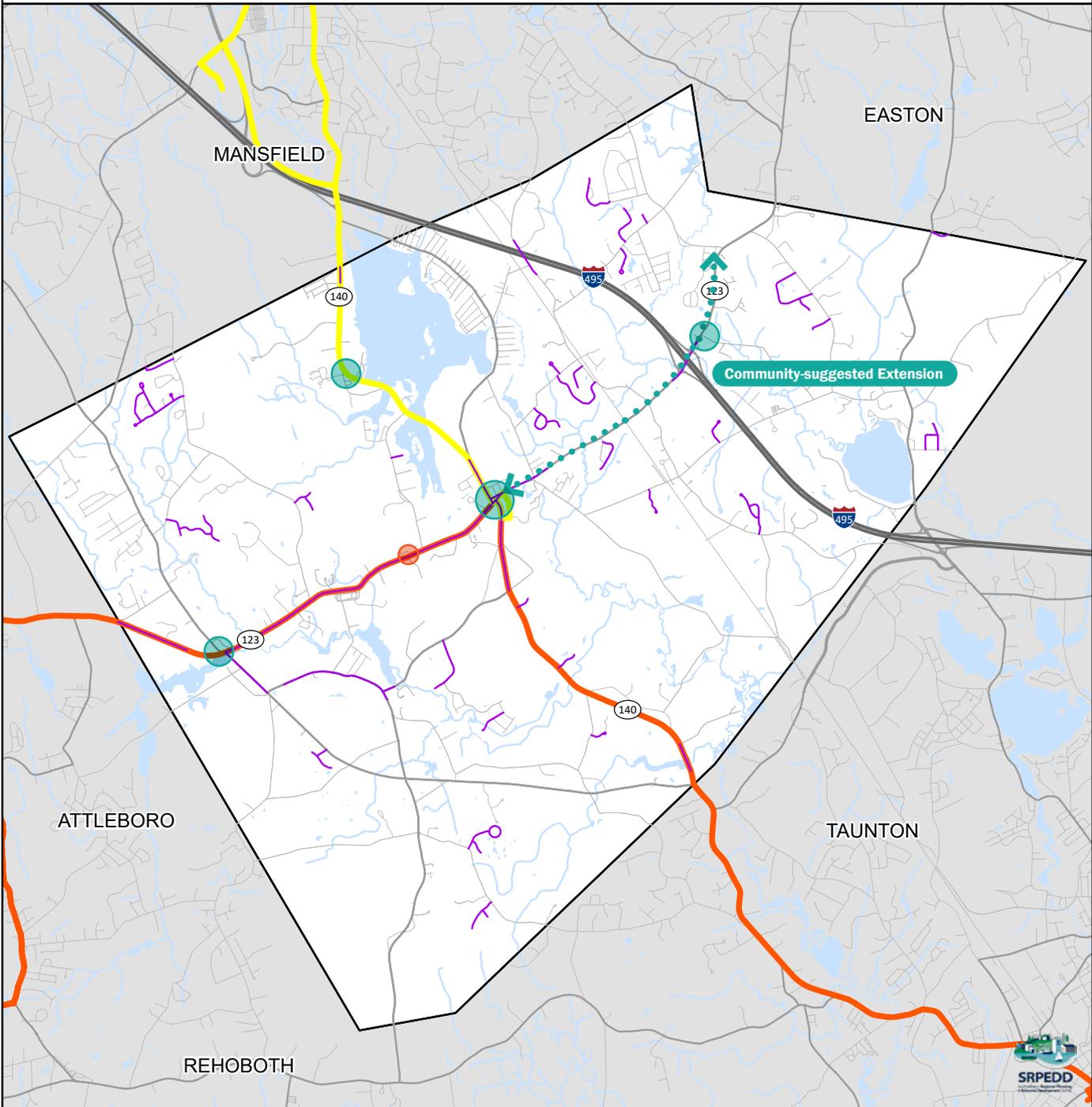


Figure 54. Existing GATRA network and pedestrian network.



## Goal 7-3 (continued)

Work with GATRA to improve access to Route 8 and Route 140.

### Strategy 7.3.2: Consider expanding GATRA Route 140 to include East Norton, particularly near new multi-family residential development.

In East Norton, there are many recently built, under-construction, or planned residential and commercial developments along East Main Street. Participants at workshops wanted to explore the feasibility of extending transit service to East Norton. However, the GATRA system does not connect to any of these areas. Given the short length of GATRA Route 140 (not to be confused with State Route 140), extending that Route down East Main Street would increase transit coverage in Norton. This extended route will connect these new residences and businesses to Wheaton College, Norton Village Center, and the Mansfield MBTA Commuter Rail stop. A reserved bus stop is available at the Blue Star Business Park.

When considering an extension to a route, Norton should work with GATRA to understand whether there is enough demand and system capacity to lengthen the route. The route extension may also require an additional bus and driver, increasing capital and operation costs. Existing and future traffic should also be considered, especially if the bus would become stuck and fall severely behind schedule.

**Priority:** High - Flexible

**Responsible Parties:** Planning & Economic Development, GATRA, MassDOT



**Performance Measures:** Reach out to GATRA to explore a Route 140 extension, particularly since Route 140 service is currently paused. Work with GATRA to determine the feasibility of the extension and how Route 123 improvements could help the realization of the extension.

Figure 55. Opposite: View of Route 140 from the Great Woods Marketplace or former Roche Brothers.





# Implementation

## A Note About Moving This Plan Forward

This Plan recommends numerous actions across many different plan elements. Making these recommendations a reality depends largely on the town's capacity to dedicate resources to the work and the capabilities needed to complete the recommendations. Many of these recommendations call on the same Town positions (as well as Boards and Commissions) to implement the plan in addition to their other, day-to-day responsibilities. Additionally, in some cases, the Town may lack certain expertise to fulfill a recommendation without assistance from a partner agency or consultant. In order to fully implement this Master Plan, the Town should look at options to boost its capacity and capabilities, such as increasing staffing, hiring consultants where appropriate, and partnerships with stakeholders.

## Implementation Table

Please note that the Implementation element and supporting graphics and tables will be updated in the final plan once all public comment and edits have been received. The Implementation element summarizes the strategies, performance measures, responsible parties, and priority measures in a table.

STRATEGY	COMPLEMENTARY ACTIONS	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	PROGRAMS & PARTNERSHIPS	MAIN STEPS
<b>Goal 1-1: Modernize the town’s zoning bylaw to meet the Town’s priorities on growth and preservation.</b>					
1.1.1: Implement and promote the Village Center Core (VCC) District.	<i>Economic Development Strategy 3.2.2: Implement placemaking strategy for Village Center, including signage.</i>	High - Immediate	Planning & Economic Development		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By the end of 2025, at least one proposal has been approved and built to support the goals of creating a walkable, compact village district under the new zoning rules.</li> <li>Continued, affirmative efforts by the town Planning Board and Director of Planning and Economic Development will help make this goal a reality including marketing the district through simple materials and outreach to the development community.</li> </ul>
1.1.2: Update use tables to attract emerging and changing types of uses.		High - Immediate	Planning & Economic Development, Planning Board		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By the end of 2022, the zoning bylaw’s use tables are updated with these uses.</li> </ul>
1.1.3: Evaluate the feasibility of a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) bylaw.		Low - Flexible	Planning & Economic Development		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By the end of 2028, begin an education campaign to explain the benefits of a TDR and evaluate the feasibility of the process.</li> <li>By the end of 2029, begin public review process to establish TDR sending (preserve) and receiving (develop) areas.</li> <li>By 2030, approve TDR bylaw by simple majority. Establish an intermediary “land bank” held by a conservation agency to streamline “swaps.”</li> </ul>
1.1.4: Encourage Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) and smaller housing typologies.	<i>Housing Strategy 2.2.1: Incentivize the production of smaller units on less land through zoning updates and by innovating zoning by-laws.</i>	High - Flexible	Planning & Economic Development, Planning Board		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By the end of 2023, begin an education campaign to explain the benefits of ADUs and other small housing typologies.</li> <li>By the end of 2024, begin public review process to establish any recommended changes to the Residential Use Table and Dimension Requirements.</li> <li>By 2025, approve these changes and track applications to ensure the policy is working as intended, tweaking the regulations to account for unexpected loopholes or barriers.</li> </ul>
1.1.5: Create a user-friendly Development and Permitting Guide to facilitate all types of housing and business development.	<i>3.2.1: Create a user-friendly Development and Permitting Guide to encourage new businesses and existing business growth.</i>				
1.1.6: Perform a “Code Diagnosis” to resolve any issues with the current zoning by-law.		Low - Immediate	Planning & Economic Development		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By 2022, hire a land use and zoning consultant to recommend changes to the zoning by-law and conduct a “literature review” of bylaws from similar communities that have produced development outcomes that are appropriate for Norton.</li> <li>By 2023, the Planning Board approves the changes, which are then brought to Town Meeting.</li> </ul>

STRATEGY	COMPLEMENTARY ACTIONS	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	PROGRAMS & PARTNERSHIPS	MAIN STEPS
<b>Goal 1-2: Encourage compact, mixed-use or larger-scale commercial development at key locations.</b>					
1.2.1: Implement new zoning overlays with clear design standards for opportunity areas and along corridors.		High - Flexible	Planning & Economic Development, Economic Development Commission, Planning Board		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By the end of 2024, create additional zoning overlay districts to promote new development. Pursue economic development and infrastructure grants.</li> </ul>
<b>Goal 2-1: Provide more affordable, income-restricted housing.</b>					
2.1.1: Create a specialized Housing Production Plan (HPP) to set housing policy and gain more control over the Chapter 40B process.		High - Flexible	Planning Board, Planning & Economic Development	SRPEDD, DHCD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secure grant funding and complete HPP by 2024.</li> </ul>
2.1.2: Consider participation in the state's Housing Choice Initiative (HCI) Program.	<i>Housing Strategy 2.1.1: Create a specialized Housing Production Plan (HPP) to set housing policy and gain more control over the Chapter 40B process.</i>	High - Flexible	Planning Board, Planning & Economic Development	SRPEDD, DHCD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With the HPP as a guide, foster support from the Planning Board and Select Board to discuss participation in HCI by the end of 2024.</li> <li>Assess housing data and projected production to determine the method by which Norton could achieve designation. If Norton cannot achieve designation by 5% or 500-unit housing production alone, Norton should ensure 3% or 300-unit goal is achievable and implement remaining best practices.</li> </ul>
2.1.3: Adopt the Community Preservation Act (CPA) To Fund the Construction of Affordable Housing.	<i>Open Space Strategy 4.1.2: Adopt the Community Preservation Act (CPA) to Fund the Acquisition of Open Space and Community Development Projects</i>			Community Preservation Act, Community Preservation Coalition	
<b>Goal 2-2: Build a range of market-rate housing to meet the demands of young families, the senior population, and first-time homebuyers.</b>					
2.2.1: Incentivize the production of smaller units on less land through zoning updates and by innovating zoning by-laws.	<i>Land Use Strategy 1.1.3; Land Use Strategy 1.1.4; Land Use Strategy 1.1.5; Economic Development Strategy 3.2.1; Land Use Strategy 1.1.6</i>	High - Flexible	Planning & Economic Development, Planning Board		
2.2.2: Incentivize Senior Housing Development and promote Aging-in Community strategies.	<i>Land Use Strategy 1.2.1: Implement new zoning overlays with clear design standards for opportunity areas and along corridors.</i>	High - Flexible	Planning Board, Planning & Economic Development, Council on Aging		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct outreach with local developers to survey interest in developing senior housing. Planning Board proposes a model bylaw to enable age-friendly housing developments in appropriate sites by 2024.</li> </ul>

STRATEGY	COMPLEMENTARY ACTIONS	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	PROGRAMS & PARTNERSHIPS	MAIN STEPS
<b>Goal 3-1: Encourage appropriate economic development projects that expand the tax base at key locations and other vacant or underutilized sites.</b>					
3.1.1: Pursue additional studies and funding to implement design standards and improvements for identified economic development sites.	<i>Land Use Strategy 1.2.1: Implement new zoning overlays with clear design standards for opportunity areas and along corridors.</i>	High - Flexible	Planning & Economic Development and the Economic Development Commission		
3.1.2: Expand infrastructure, such as wastewater lines, to key locations to jump start economic development.	<i>Strategy 6.2.2: Expand infrastructure, such as wastewater lines, to key locations to jump start economic development.</i>				
<b>Goal 3-2: Support existing institutions and the local business community by maintaining businesses and attracting new firms.</b>					
3.2.1: Create a user-friendly Development and Permitting Guide to encourage new businesses and existing business growth.	<i>Land Use Strategy 1.1.5; Housing Strategy 2.2.1; Natural &amp; Cultural Resources Strategy 5.1.1</i>	High - Immediate	Economic Development Commission	, SRPEDD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create Development and Permitting Guide by 2021.</li> </ul>
3.2.2: Implement placemaking strategy for Village Center, including signage.	<i>Economic Development Strategy 3.1.1; Economic Development Strategy 3.2.7; Open Space &amp; Recreation Strategy 4.2.5; Natural &amp; Cultural Resources Strategy 5.3.1</i>	High - Flexible	Planning & Economic Development, EDC	DHCD, Massachusetts Downtown Initiative, Wheaton College, Community Groups including business stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update the Norton Village Vision Plan and incorporate a Placemaking element to integrate the goals and strategies related arts and culture, downtown activities, as well as public infrastructure by the end of 2023.</li> <li>• The update to the Village Center Vision Plan should also include funding strategies that directly target activities through MDI and the Community One Stop for Growth.</li> </ul>
3.2.3: Update Zoning to encourage more compact development that fronts the street, particularly around Norton's Village Center.	<i>Land Use Strategy 1.1.1 Implement and promote the Village Center Core (VCC) District.; Land Use Strategy 1.2.1 Implement new zoning overlays with clear design standards for opportunity areas and along corridors.</i>				
3.2.4: Attract businesses based on community priority, such as grocery stores and life sciences.		High - Flexible	Planning Board, Economic Development Commission, Planning & Economic Development		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage the EDC to complete a feasibility study of the Great Woods Marketplace site by 2024. The feasibility study should outline the process necessary to designate the site as a 43D PDS and its viability for further grocery store and other uses. Follow up these efforts with the creation of an RFP and marketing materials to present to potential developers.</li> </ul>

STRATEGY	COMPLEMENTARY ACTIONS	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	PROGRAMS & PARTNERSHIPS	MAIN STEPS
3.2.5: Promote work-from-home amenities and support co-working spaces.	<i>Services &amp; Facilities Strategy 6.2.3: Ensure reliable access to electricity and broadband internet.</i>	Low - Flexible	Information Technology		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify areas with poor and inconsistent connectivity by 2024.</li> </ul>
3.2.6: Work with Wheaton College and surrounding neighborhoods to reinforce a strong “town-gown” relationship that benefits everyone.		Low - Flexible	Select Board, Town Manager	Wheaton College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage Wheaton College representatives to establish a town-gown advisory committee by 2023.</li> <li>Over the next few years, work to integrate and activity recruit members of the Wheaton community to serve on local boards and commissions.</li> </ul>
3.2.7: Coordinate local businesses to create a formal network of Norton Small Businesses.	<i>Economic Development Strategy 3.2.2: Implement placemaking strategy for Village Center, including signage.</i>	High - Immediate	Planning & Economic Development	Tri-Town Chamber of Commerce, Local businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow up on outreach to small businesses during the pandemic and the Master Plan to coordinate future efforts and foster support to establish a W. Main Street District Collaborative by 2022.</li> <li>(The ongoing Local Rapid Recovery Planning project along this corridor can help create a business association here.)</li> <li>The business association should identify their goals and mission as well as local partners.</li> </ul>
3.2.8: Help local businesses capitalize on Norton’s recreation and nature areas, such as the bike trail.	<i>Open Space &amp; Recreation Strategy 4.2.1: Implement the Norton Bike Path.</i>	Low - Flexible	Planning Board, Planning & Economic Development, Alternative Transportation Commission	Local businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify potential sites along existing or new bike trails that would be appropriate for small-scale commercial development by 2024.</li> </ul>
<b>Goal 4-1: Preserve open space and manage growth.</b>					
4.1.1: Continue to protect Conservation Lands managed by the Conservation Commission.		High - Flexible	Conservation Agent and Conservation Commission		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to acquire and manage additional land under the guidance of the Conservation Director/Conservation Commission and through various methods, such as LAND grants, fee-simple acquisitions or donations, APR and Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B, and others.</li> </ul>
4.1.2: Adopt the Community Preservation Act (CPA) to fund the acquisition of open space and community development projects.	<i>Norton Open Space and Recreation Plan Goal 1, 2, 3, and 6</i>	High - Flexible	Select Board, Conservation Commission, and local champions	Community Preservation Act, Community Preservation Coalition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publicize and hold several informal public information meetings by end of 2023.</li> <li>Adopt the CPA by 2026.</li> </ul>

STRATEGY	COMPLEMENTARY ACTIONS	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	PROGRAMS & PARTNERSHIPS	MAIN STEPS
4.1.3: Continue and seek out new partnerships between private landowners, land conservation groups, and state and local governments to enable future open space acquisitions.	<i>Open Space &amp; Recreation Strategy 4.1.1: Continue to protect Conservation Lands managed by the Conservation Commission; Natural &amp; Cultural Resources Goal 5.2: Establish partnerships between private landowners, land conservation groups, and state and local governments to enable future open space and habitat areas acquisitions.</i>	High - Flexible	Conservation Commission and local champions	MA Dept. of Fish & Game, Property Owners, Wildlands Trust, Mass Audubon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Town will continue to work with outside agencies to pursue further grant funding and projects that increase open space acquisitions in Norton.</li> </ul>
4.1.4: Explore Transfer Development Right (TDR) bylaw.	<i>Land Use Strategy 1.1.3: Establishing a Transfer Development Right by-law</i>				
<b>Goal 4-2: Improve access to natural areas, parks, and recreation facilities.</b>					
4.2.1: Implement the Norton Bike Path.	<i>Transportation &amp; Circulation Strategy 7.1.2: Implement the Norton Bike Path.</i>				
4.2.2: Create safe routes to jog and walk along the Reservoir.	<i>Transportation &amp; Circulation Strategy 7.1.3; Transportation &amp; Circulation Strategy 7.2.3</i>				
4.2.3: Improve access to Reservoir for boating and fishing.	<i>Transportation &amp; Circulation Strategy 7.1.4: Coordinate a program of standardized signage and wayfinding throughout town. Norton Open Space and Recreation Plan Goal 7, Objective a and Goal 4, Objective c; Norton Water Access Plan (in-progress)</i>	High - Immediate	Planning Board and Conservation Commission	SRPEDD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finish and implement the Norton Water Access Plan by the end of 2021.</li> <li>Construct Mansfield Avenue Boat Ramp by 2025.</li> </ul>
4.2.4: Improve ADA accessibility of parks and recreation facilities.	<i>Services &amp; Facilities 6.1.3: Evaluate and implement an ADA transition plan for Town-owned buildings and facilities. ADA Transition Planning section of the Norton Open Space and Recreation Plan</i>	High - Flexible	Conservation Director, Parks and Recreation, and ADA Coordinator		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update parks and trails to comply with the ADA Transition Plan by 2028.</li> </ul>

STRATEGY	COMPLEMENTARY ACTIONS	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	PROGRAMS & PARTNERSHIPS	MAIN STEPS
4.2.5: Expand outdoor passive and active recreational opportunities that promote healthy, life-long experiences for residents of all ages and abilities, and nature areas, such as the bike trail.	<i>Economic Development Strategy 3.2.2: Implement placemaking strategy for Village Center, including signage.</i>	Low - Flexible	Conservation, Parks and Recreation, and Planning Department		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create regular roster of Town events to foster inter-generational community connections, such as clean-up days, business sponsorships, and Wheaton College events.</li> <li>• Identify locations for community gardens; splash pad facility and other youth creation facilities; and outdoor fitness trails and nature education center. Pursue grant-funding and partnerships for implementation.</li> </ul>
<b>Goal 5-1: Protect the quality and quantity of Norton's groundwater and surface water resources.</b>					
5.1.1: Streamline review process and continue enforcement of environmental by-laws.	<i>Economic Development Strategy 3.2.1: Create a user-friendly Development and Permitting Guide.</i>				
5.1.2: Actively preserve open spaces within the Canoe River Sole Source Aquifer Recharge Area.	<i>Open Space &amp; Recreation Strategy 4.1.1: Continue to protect Conservation Lands managed by the Conservation Commission. Strategy 4.1.2: Adopt the Community Preservation Act (CPA) to fund the acquisition of open space and community development projects. Service &amp; Facilities Strategy 6.2.1: Provide clean drinking water and ensure future supply of water.</i>				
5.1.3: Apply for MVP Funding to implement stormwater management strategies identified by the 2018 Norton Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness plan.	<i>2018 Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan</i>	High - Flexible	Building Department, Norton Senior Center, Board of Selectmen		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of MVP Plan suggested actions that are funded by the MVP and built / number of culverts and stormwater-specific LID interventions that are constructed.</li> </ul>
Goal 5-2: Establish partnerships between private landowners, land conservation groups, and state and local governments to enable future open space and habitat area acquisitions.	<i>Open Space &amp; Recreation Strategy 4.1.3: Continue and seek out new partnerships between private landowners, land conservation groups, and state and local governments to enable future open space acquisitions. Norton Open Space and Recreation Plan Goal 3, Objectives a, c, and d.</i>				

STRATEGY	COMPLEMENTARY ACTIONS	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	PROGRAMS & PARTNERSHIPS	MAIN STEPS
<b>Goal 5-3: Protect and promote Norton’s rural, cultural, scenic, and historical qualities and assets.</b>					
5.3.1: Develop a coordinated wayfinding and signage model for town-wide, multi-use conservation and recreation properties, assets, and opportunities.	<i>Economic Development Strategy 3.2.2. Transportation &amp; Circulation Strategy 7.1.4.</i>				
5.3.2: Encourage collaboration and coordination between the Historical Commission, Historic District Commission, and the Historical Society through activities such as creating a Historic Preservation Plan and enforcing the Demolition Delay Bylaw.		Low - Flexible	Historical Commission, Historic District Commission, Historical Society, and Select Board	Mass Cultural Facilities Fund, Mass Preservation Projects Fund, Mass Historical Commission (MHC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clearly define the roles between the three agencies. If the agencies’ purposes are the same investigate the possibility of merging.</li> <li>Collaborate on the enforcement of the Town’s Demolition Delay Bylaw.</li> <li>Continue to update the town-wide Historic Inventory.</li> <li>Create a dedicated, full Historic Preservation Plan, using CPA funds, the Mass Cultural Facilities Fund, Mass Historical Commission Survey and Planning Grants, the Mass Preservation Projects Fund, or other programs or funds.</li> </ul>
<b>Goal 6-1: Replace, modernize, and improve aging Town buildings.</b>					
6.1.1: Construct a new Town Hall and Senior Center Building.		High - Immediate	Permanent Building Committee, Council on Aging, Public Works		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete design and permitting with meaningful and substantive public consideration by late 2022.</li> <li>Complete construction of Senior and Community Support Center and Town Hall by Fall 2023, with final occupancy approved by the end of the year.</li> </ul>
6.1.2: Evaluate addition of space to the library and add programming.		High - Flexible	Library Director, Board of Directors, Capital Improvements Committee, Permanent Building Committee	Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage the Permanent Building Committee in 2022 to explore the building and renovation project of the second floor of the library to commission a feasibility study and identify funding sources.</li> </ul>
6.1.3: Evaluate and implement an ADA transition plan for Town-owned buildings and facilities.	<i>Open Space &amp; Recreation Strategy 4.2.4: Improve ADA accessibility of parks and recreation facilities.</i>	High - Immediate	Town Manager, Building Inspector	MOD Municipal Americans with Disabilities Act Grant, Massachusetts Office on Disability, SRPEDD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply to the 2021-2022 MOD Municipal Americans with Disabilities Act Grant to complete the Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan.</li> <li>Following completion and submission of the plan to the state, Norton may apply to subsequent grant rounds to complete capital improvements to achieve full accessibility.</li> </ul>

STRATEGY	COMPLEMENTARY ACTIONS	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	PROGRAMS & PARTNERSHIPS	MAIN STEPS
6.1.4: Prepare Norton buildings to respond to immediate and long-term climate challenges.	<i>Natural &amp; Cultural Resources Strategy 5.1.3, 2018 Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan.</i>	High - Immediate	Conservation Commission, Highway Department, Water and Sewer Board of Health, Town of Norton Schools, Building Department, Norton Fire/EMA, Human Services, Norton Senior Center, Norton Police, and the Board of Selectmen	National Grid, Alnylam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to renovate Norton buildings with an MVP-funded piece of environmental resilience infrastructure installed.</li> </ul>
<b>Goal 6-2: Expand key infrastructure services, such as water and sewer, to meet demands for economic development and make Norton an attractive place to live and do business.</b>					
6.2.1: Provide clean drinking water and ensure future supply of water.	<i>Natural &amp; Cultural Resources Strategy 5.1.2: Actively preserve open spaces within the Canoe River Sole Source Aquifer Recharge Area.</i>	High - Immediate	Public Works, Water and Sewer Commission		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue implementation of 20-year Water Master Plan and pipe replacement.</li> <li>Continue to require new developments to follow stormwater management best practices and ensure they adhere to any regulations related to Water Resource Protection District.</li> </ul>
6.2.2: Expand infrastructure, such as wastewater lines, to key locations to jump start economic development.	<i>Economic Development Strategy 3.2.2: Expand infrastructure, such as wastewater lines, to key locations to jump start shovel-ready development.</i>	High - Flexible	Public Works, Water and Sewer Commission, Planning Department	MFN Wastewater District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By 2026, Create a Sewer Expansion Master Plan, including a study of how much development capacity is available for new development based on wastewater capacity of the region.</li> <li>Create guidelines to encourage developers to pay for sewer expansions and improvements, in lieu of sewer connection fees.</li> <li>Focus compact development near existing sewer connections to reduce costs, avoiding “leap frog” developments.</li> </ul>
6.2.3: Ensure reliable access to electricity and broadband internet.		Low - Flexible	Public Works, Information Technology	Internet Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Because current information about issues is limited to anecdotal evidence, the Town should conduct a broadband access audit and continue to collect community feedback to better understand the issue.</li> </ul>
<b>Goal 7-1: Complete key transportation projects that improve circulation, safety, and appearance in Norton.</b>					
7.1.1: Resolve the alignment of the Village Green to improve congestion and complement growth envisioned for the new Village Center Core (VCC) district.	<i>Village Center Vision Plan.</i>	High - Flexible	Planning & Economic Development, Highway Dept.	Wheaton College, MassDOT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By 2025, begin the process to Select Preferred Alternative, Draft Concept Design, Traffic Analysis, Regulatory Approvals, including MEPA, Article 97 Disposition, NEPA, Section 106, Section 4(f)</li> <li>Construction of new roadway.</li> </ul>

STRATEGY	COMPLEMENTARY ACTIONS	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	PROGRAMS & PARTNERSHIPS	MAIN STEPS
7.1.2: Implement the Norton Bike Path.		High - Immediate	Highway Department, Parks & Recreation, Norton Alternative Transportation Committee.	MassDOT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Manage and monitor project in partnership with MassDOT and SRPEDD.</li> </ul>
7.1.3: Continue funding and implementing high-priority "Complete Streets" improvements.	<i>Norton Complete Streets Plan.</i>	High - Flexible	Planning & Economic Development, Highway Department, Complete Streets Working Group	MassDOT Complete Streets Funding Program, MassDOT, SRPEDD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand planning and transportation resources through additional hiring or through a consultant. Begin Tier 3 – Project Construction by 2023.</li> <li>Complete top 15 projects by 2030.</li> </ul>
7.1.4: Coordinate a program of standardized signage and wayfinding throughout town.	<i>Economic Development Strategy 3.2.2: Implement placemaking strategy for Village Center, including signage.</i>	High - Flexible	Planning & Economic Development, Highway Department		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete Wayfinding community survey and recommendations by end of 2022.</li> <li>Establish funding for signage and coordinate maintenance plan.</li> </ul>
7.1.5: Investigate the creation of a traffic safety committee that would regularly meet to review documented safety issues, certain types of proposed developments and other transportation related issues.		Low - Flexible	Public Safety Departments, Alternative Transportation Committee		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By the end of 2022, the Town identifies Traffic Safety Committee members, establishes Rules and Regulations of the Committee, and enables the creation and performance of the Committee through the Board of Selectmen.</li> </ul>
<b>Goal 7-2: Work with Mass DOT on traffic and safety improvements to Route 140 and Route 123.</b>					
7.2.1: Conduct Road Safety Audits (RSA) on state-owned roadways and intersections that have a high number of crashes.		High - Flexible	Town Manager, Police Department, Highway Department, Fire Department	MassDOT Road Safety Audit Program, SRPEDD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Town submits a request to SRPEDD for Road Safety Audits by the end of 2022.</li> </ul>

STRATEGY	COMPLEMENTARY ACTIONS	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	PROGRAMS & PARTNERSHIPS	MAIN STEPS
7.2.2: Implement sidewalk and intersection improvements as identified by the Route 140 Corridor Plan between the Route 123 intersection and Mansfield.	<i>Route 140 Corridor Plan.</i>	Low - Flexible	Planning & Economic Development, Highway Department	MassDOT, SRPEDD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a Route 140-specific Access Management Plan.</li> <li>• Require new developments to adhere to the Route 140 plan guidelines.</li> <li>• Submit requests for specific projects or certain sections to MassDOT, to be included in future TIPs.</li> </ul>
7.2.3: Transform Route 123 into a safe, multi-modal spine for Norton.	<i>Norton Village Center Vision Plan.</i>	High - Flexible	Planning & Economic Development, MassDOT, Highway Department.	MassDOT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete East Main Street improvements.</li> <li>• Study new locations for safe crossings, particularly at existing intersections with residential areas.</li> </ul>
<b>Goal 7-3: Work with GATRA to improve access to Route 8 and Route 140.</b>					
7.3.1: Identify places along the flag-stop system for signage, benches, and shelters.		Low - Flexible	Planning & Economic Development	GATRA, MassDOT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reach out to GATRA to confirm any procedures and guidelines for adding stop amenities.</li> <li>• Explore unofficial, “tactical urbanism” strategies.</li> <li>• Add new street furniture and signage for existing stops, consistent with any wayfinding plan by 2025.</li> </ul>
7.3.2: Consider expanding GATRA Route 140 to include East Norton, particularly near new multi-family residential development.		High - Flexible	Planning & Economic Development	GATRA, MassDOT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reach out to GATRA to explore a Route 140 extension, particularly since Route 140 service is currently paused.</li> <li>• Work with GATRA to determine the feasibility of the extension and how Route 123 improvements could help the realization of the extension.</li> </ul>



**SRPEDD**  
Southeastern Regional Planning  
& Economic Development District