

Town of Acushnet

Master Plan

June 2026

SRPEDD
Southeastern Regional Planning & Economic Development District

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Title VI Coordinator - SRPEDD
88 Broadway, Taunton, MA 02780
Phone: 508 824-1367 or dial 711 to use MassRelay
Email: **aduarte@srpedd.org**

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Portuguese: Caso estas informações sejam necessárias em outro idioma, por favor, contate o Coordenador de Título VI da MPO pelo telefone 508-824-1367, Ramal 235 ou em **aduarte@srpedd.org**.

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Simplified Chinese: 如果需要其他语言的此信息，请致电 508-824-1367 分机联系 MPO Title VI 协调员。 235 或发送电子邮件至 **aduarte@srpedd.org**。

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Traditional Chinese: 如果需要其他語言的此信息，請致電 508-824-1367 分機聯繫 MPO Title VI 協調員。 235 或發送電子郵件至 **aduarte@srpedd.org**。

Mon Khmer Cambodian (Khmer): បុរសិនបើព័ត៌មាននេះត្រូវការជាភាសាផ្សេង សូមទាក់ទង អ្នកសម្របសម្រួល MPO Title VI តាមរយៈលេខ 508-824-1367 ext ។ 235 ឬនៅ **aduarte@srpedd.org** ។

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TOWN OF ACUSHNET

Victoria Alfaro, Town Planner
Julia Goncalves, Conservation Agent
James Kelley, Town Administrator

Master Plan Committee

Kevin A. Gaspar, Sr, Board of Selectmen, Chair
Steven Boucher, Planning Board
Peter J. Giampa, Planning Board
Peter Benoit, Finance Committee
Melissa Cordeira, School Committee
Paul Sullivan, Resident
Ryan Rezendes, Conservation Commission (former)
Jesse St. Gelais, Resident
David Davignon, Board of Health
Jacob Bolarinho, Resident, Alternate
Kelsey Janak, Resident, Alternate
Jessica Braley, Resident, Alternate

SOUTHEASTERN REGIONAL PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT (SRPEDD)

Comprehensive Planning

Robert Cabral, Assistant Comprehensive Planning Manager
Amber Davis, Senior Comprehensive Planner
Aubrey Hoes, Comprehensive Planner
Lizeth Gonzalez, Director of Economic and Community Development
Maria Jones, Senior Public Engagement and Communications Planner
Grant King, AICP, Comprehensive Planning Manager/Deputy Director
Joseph Monet, Homeland Security Specialist/Comprehensive Planner
Taylor Perez, Director of Housing and Research
Joseph Osborne, Homeland Security Planner
Laura Tsang, Senior GIS and Data Planner
Chris Welch, Principal Comprehensive Planner
Kaitlin Whalen, Comprehensive Planner

Environmental Planning

Danica Belknap, Environmental Planning Manager
Sara Singh, Principal Environmental Planner
Michelle Tinger, Assistant Director of Environmental Planning

Transportation Planning

Sean Hilton, Senior Transportation Planner
Jackie Jones, AICP, Assistant Director of Transportation Planning

1

Introduction

In early 2025, the Town of Acushnet began planning to update the community's 2008 Master Plan. A Master Plan is a 10-year document that the State of Massachusetts requires cities and towns create and update as needed. Through a successful Community One Stop for Growth Application, Acushnet received a Community Planning grant award to create a new Plan in partnership with the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD). Kicking off in the new year of 2025, the Acushnet Master Plan process has spanned just over a year. During this time, the project team heard from you – Acushnet residents, business owners, and stakeholders – through various means including thirteen Master Plan Committee Meetings, two public workshops, two online surveys, six tabling events, and numerous meetings with local experts. This feedback, along with a robust data analysis, culminated into the final Plan you see here, featuring broad goals and actionable strategies.

ABOUT THE MASTER PLAN

A Master Plan is a strategic long-range planning document meant to guide a community as it reevaluates its past, present, and future goals. Master Plans are a culmination of local knowledge and aspirations as well as “hard data” and its analysis. There are several components to a Master Plan, and each one compliments the other. In Massachusetts, the Master Planning process considers this long-term planning through the perspective of the 7 planning elements.

The summation of data analysis, historical context, existing policies, and residents’ experiences relevant to each element is the foundation of this Master Plan. From these factors, residents, Town staff, and planners can articulate the needs and aspirations of the community into goals and strategies – thus helping the Town create an actionable set of initiatives and tasks to achieve the community’s vision over the next ten (10) years.

A DIFFERENT APPROACH

Taking advantage of the captive audience during the Master Plan process, the Town of Acushnet chose to develop the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) and Water Resource Management Strategy (WRMS). The development of both these plans complemented the Master Planning process as it sought to consolidate the Town's vision and establish a new path forward. The Town funded the OSRP utilizing Community Preservation Act Funds and likewise supported the WRMS through the request and allocation of a State earmark awarded through the Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, Chapter 102 of the Acts of 2021..

Statutory Elements

Master Plans are defined within M.G.L. c. 41 s.81D. According to the statute, a Master Plan has nine required “elements.” Given that the Acushnet Master Plan took a different approach to this long-term planning process, the structure of the Master Plan looks a little different, though no less complete.

- The **Statement of Goals and Policies** sets out Acushnet's vision for the future. It presents community values, goals, and the land use objectives that will meet these goals.
- The **Land Use Element** describes Acushnet's current and future land use patterns, including proposed locations for various types of activity, such as residences and businesses, alongside preferred intensity of development across the town’s built landscapes.
- The **Housing Element** creates a plan to meet the town’s housing needs, which are identified using demographic and market information.
- The **Economic Development Element** identifies strategies for growing the town’s economy by building upon local strengths and bringing new, compatible opportunities to Acushnet.
- The **Cultural Resources Element** presents an opportunity to revisit cultural and historic assets, while renewing commitments to preserve and protect them.
- The **Services and Facilities Element** identifies existing and anticipated needs for public infrastructure and services.
- The **Transportation Element** provides an inventory of existing transportation infrastructure and services across all modes including private cars, public transit, and bicycle and pedestrian routes.
- The **Implementation Section**, which provides a blueprint and schedule for making the master plan a reality.
- The **Open Space and Recreation Plan** is a supplemental document that informs the **Open Space and Recreation** as well as the **Natural Resources Element.** This Plan describes existing natural resources, open space and recreational facilities in town and aligns plans for future recreation and open space with population needs.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Quantitative data (population trends, taxes, mapping, etc.) and its analysis play a pivotal role in establishing the context of a community, though it fails to capture the thoughts and feelings of Acushnet residents.

To create a Master Plan representative of its people, it is necessary to connect with those who live and work in a community. Public engagement for this Plan emphasized meeting residents, Town staff, and business owners out in the community. Over the course of 2025, the project team participated in meetings and events, capturing the spirit and desires of Acushnet residents. The Master Plan kicked off with the Town in January 2025.

MASTER PLAN COMMITTEE

A Master Plan Committee (MPC) is a volunteer-based, public group that meets periodically to discuss the Master Planning process and guide the development of the project. Acushnet's Master Plan Committee acted as the first point of contact for the community engagement process. Made up of a group of local champions that care deeply about their community, the Committee consisted of twelve members, both residents and Town staff. Members provided a reliable foundation for local context and served to discuss ideas related to the seven planning elements of the Master Plan. This Committee began meeting in January of 2025 and met 13 times.

The project team would like to thank the members of the Master Plan Committee for their time and contribution to this Plan.

DEEP DIVES

Deep Dives represent topic specific presentations to gather feedback from both the MPC and residents. First presented at regular MPC meetings, project staff used the Deep Dives to discuss ideas, concerns, and goals across the nine planning elements. Project Staff invited or requested specific Town Staff or Committees to attend, offering one on one meetings as well.

Deep Dive presentations were also made available on the project website for independent review.

TOWN DISCUSSIONS

Complementary to MPC meetings, Tabling Events, and online feedback methods, project staff also attended meetings with various Town Committees and Boards. The project team hosted a meeting with all Department Heads at the onset of the project. In addition, the project staff attended the following meetings:

- New Bedford Department of Public Infrastructure: February 26, 2025
- The Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Committee: March 13, 2025
- The Parent Teacher Organization of Acushnet Public Schools: March 18, 2025
- Interdepartmental Permitting Meeting: May 22, 2025
- Conservation Committee Meeting: May 28, 2025

Deep Dive Title	Details
Land Use, Housing, and Economic Development **January 2025**	Participants discussed areas of interest for economic development as well as the steady pace in agricultural land loss. Other topics included the need for expanded water and sewer infrastructure in specific areas of Town. Repeated in May 2025.
Services & Facilities and Transportation **February 2025**	Participants discussed challenges of specific roadways and their maintenance. They also discussed how many goals of the 2008 Master Plan related to Town facilities were completed or out of date, including the need for more office space for Town staff. Other topics of note included the future of the Old Russell Memorial Library and potential configurations for a future bike path.
Water Resource Management Strategy **March 2025**	Participants discussed the need and current projects of wastewater infrastructure in Town. They also discussed the ongoing issues of flooding in roadways due to a variety of factors and the need to expand stormwater infrastructure.
Open Space and Recreation Plan **April 2025**	Participants discussed the existing conservation and recreation resources in Town. Developed alongside the Acushnet Master Plan, the OSRP considered the context of a community, assessed environmental resources, incorporated an inventory of lands, and articulated the community's vision into a Five-Year Action Plan.
Historic & Cultural Resources **June 2025**	Participants discussed the existing historic and cultural assets in the community, highlighting key sites and the impacts of applying for designation under the National Register of Historic Places. Additionally, participants reviewed the Town's historic use of their Community Preservation Act funds, considering future priorities for major town-wide events.

Table 1. Summary of Deep Dives

TRAVELING WORKSHOPS

"Meeting residents where they are at" was an effective mantra for this Plan. Between work, family, and other obligations, participating in extracurriculars is challenging for most.

Strategically meeting people in the community at events they were already planning on attending facilitates gathering a diverse set of ideas and opinions. Across most communities, feedback tends to come from older residents. Luckily for this Plan, survey respondents represent a variety of age groups and backgrounds. However, to maximize the feedback opportunities for individuals most impacted by outcomes of this Plan, the project team actively attended events through "traveling workshops". At these workshops, residents got to experience what the Open House was like through the information that was provided. Some of the venues that the project team visited included:

Table 2. Summary of tabling events.

Tabling Event	Details
Dunkin Donuts	Staff distributed flyers for the upcoming Open House, shared the Kick-off Survey, and heard resident feedback.
Acushnet Library Storytelling	Staff shared Open House materials, the Master Plan and OSRP/WRMS Survey, and heard resident feedback.
Acushnet Library Seedball	Staff shared Open House materials, the Master Plan and OSRP/WRMS Survey, and heard resident feedback.
COA Coffee Hour	Staff shared Open House materials, the Master Plan and OSRP/WRMS Survey, and heard resident feedback.
Acushnet Library Summer Concert	Staff shared Open House materials, the Master Plan and OSRP/WRMS Survey, and heard resident feedback.
Little League Baseball Tournament	Staff shared Draft Goals and Strategies.
Police & Fire Charity Baseball Game	Staff shared Draft Goals and Strategies.

ONLINE SURVEY

The Master Plan process consisted of 3 surveys: the Kickoff Survey, the Master Plan Survey, and the combined Water Resource Management Strategy (WRMS) and Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) Survey. The latter was created as a result of the simultaneously occurring OSRP project and its intersections with the WRMS.

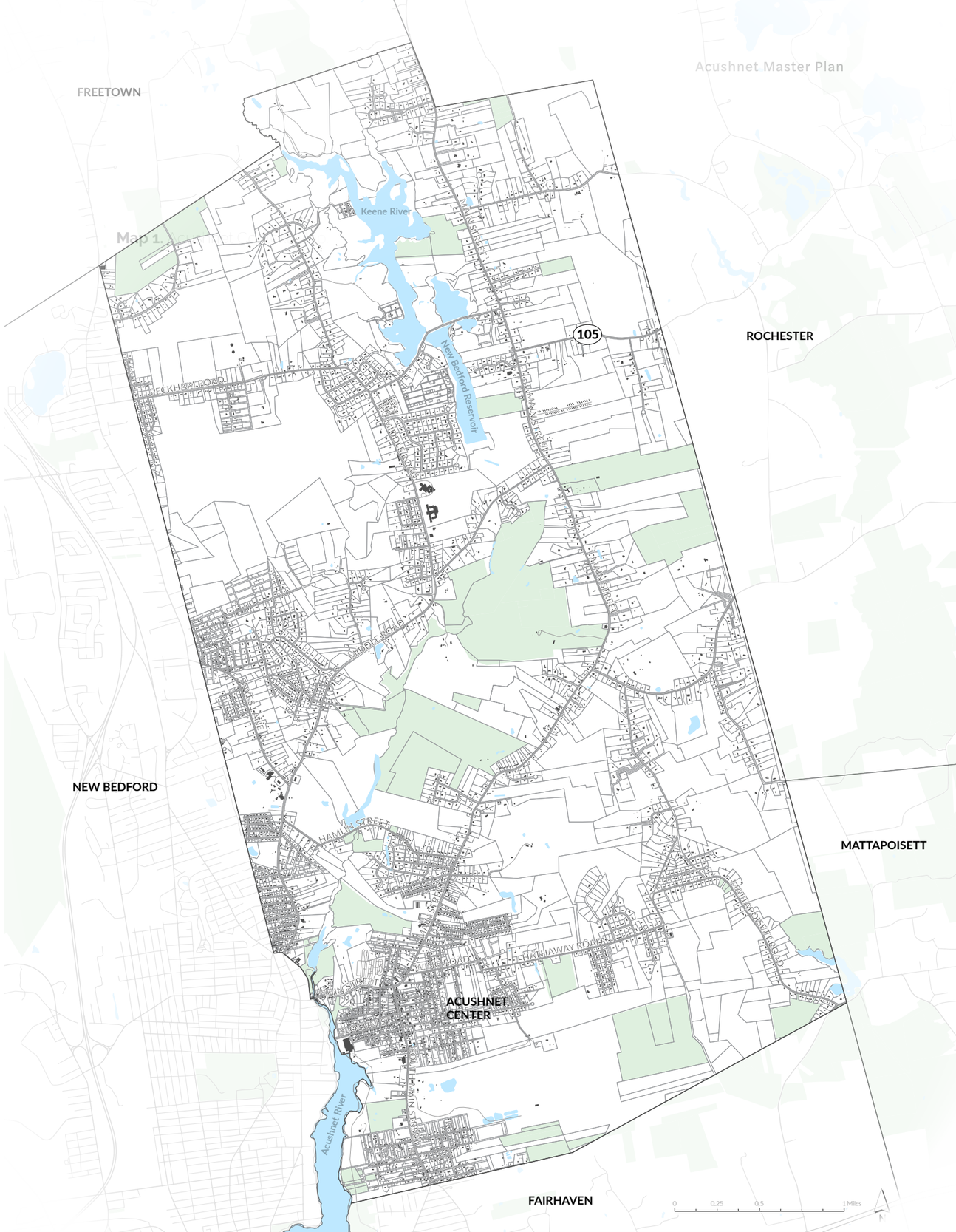
The Open Space and Recreation Plan and Water Resource Management Strategy survey served to cover water resources, open space, and recreation related topics. This survey ran from February 4, 2025 – December 3, 2025, had 74 respondents, and consisted of 29 questions.

Table 3. Summary of Surveys

Survey Topic	Details	Timeframe	Total Respondents
Kick-Off 10 Questions	Introduced broad concepts and provided insights to develop future engagement materials.	December 17, 2024 January 20, 2025	195
Master Plan 27 Questions	Questions focused on gathering feedback for elements of the Master Plan.	January 27, 2025 June 30, 2025	318
Open Space & Recreation Plan/Water Resource Management Strategy 29 Questions	Questions focused on gathering feedback on water management, open space, and recreation related topics.	February 4, 2025 December 3, 2025	74

About the Town of Acushnet

Acushnet is a town in Southeastern Massachusetts, between the Boston and Providence metropolitan areas and located adjacent to Route 140 and I-195. Acushnet borders the City of New Bedford to the west and the Towns of Fairhaven to the south, Freetown to the north, Mattapoisett to the southeast, and Rochester to the northeast. The Acushnet River cuts through the town's eastern border and the New Bedford reservoir lies in its north section. It is a primarily suburban and a semi-rural residential community, with a few notable employment centers on South Main Street and Main Street.



The area that would eventually become the Town of Acushnet was settled by a band of the Wampanoag tribe, known as the Cushenas, from which the Town's name is derived. Settlement of the area by Old World colonists took place in 1659 by the Puritans. Originally, the settlement focused on agricultural production, but as technological advancements rapidly occurred during the Industrial Revolution, the community began to transition into textile manufacturing through cotton mills. Industrial developments gave way to both construction-based industries as well as golf ball production. The community still retains some of its agrarian character, but that identity is slowly disappearing due to modern commuting patterns, demand for housing, and other economic pressures.

Acushnet has worn many hats in terms of its political administration, first being part of the Town of Dartmouth, then New Bedford, and finally Fairhaven. The Town was incorporated in its current state in 1860. With the construction of I-1495 and Route 140, as well as the conclusion of the Second World War, the population surged from 4,145 in 1940 to 10,589 in 2020. Today, Acushnet is known for its orchards, farmlands, and its scenic riverine aesthetic.



Photo 1. The State of Massachusetts,' created by Mathew Carey in 1815

PRIOR PLANNING SUMMARY

Over the last 20 years, Acushnet pursued a variety of planning initiatives that support the development of this Master Plan today. Topic specific initiatives such as the Open Space and Recreation Plan, Housing Production Plan, and Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan allow the Town to monitor progress and set new goals. More recent projects consider the town's vulnerability to increased flooding, extreme storm events, and mitigation strategies, including sewer and water infrastructure.

Acushnet produced a Master Plan back in 2008 - nearly two decades ago! As a result, the Town deemed it necessary to develop a plan that guides the community for the next 10 years. This Plan is the result of the Town's initiative and various funding sources including the Community Planning Grant, Community Preservation Act Funds, as well as a State earmark.

2001: Open Space and Recreation Plan

Update to the 1994 OSRP, the plan guides the town in strategies to preserve and maintain its natural and recreational assets.

2008: Master Plan

Crafted a blueprint to guide the town through inevtiable change across the seven planning elements.

2015: Acushnet Housing Production Plan

Developed the Town's goals to produce affordable housing, also enabling the Town to regulate future 40B developments.

2019: Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan

Details the benefits and need for sewer expansion in town, providing a six phase approach.

2020: Municipal Vulnerability Plan

Identifies vulnerabilities and prioritizes strategies to improve the town's resilience to greater, more frequent, and impactful natural events.

2024: Priority Areas Report Update

Planning exercise to identify areas in town for development and protection, with some nodes balancing a combination of both.

2005 New Bedford-Acuhshnet Water Agreement

Intermunicipal Agreement (IMA) detailing the terms and conditions to establish a partnership for the Town to purchase water from the City of New Bedford.

2014: Department of Public Works Review

Report completed by the Division of Local Services to provide guidance to the town, identifying issues, and offering recommendations.

2023: Acushnet Water Quality Report

Annual report detailing the Town's independent monitoring and testing in local drinking water. Acushnet conducts approximately 185 of its own water quality tests for approximately 5 contaminants, confirming compliance with state and federal drinking water quality standards.

ACUSHNET BY THE NUMBERS

Establishing context is critical to understanding the challenges and solutions Acushnet faces. The following provides a summary of Acushnet by the numbers regarding population and demographics.

The Town of Acushnet is home to 10,559 people (2020 Decennial Census). Following a period of growth in past decades, Acushnet's population increased modestly by 2.5% between 2010 and 2020. (Figure 1)

Modest population growth correlates with an aging population. Over the past two decades, the population of residents over 60 years old increased (Figure 2). The average resident in Acushnet is 46 years old - up 6 years from a decade ago (Figure 3).

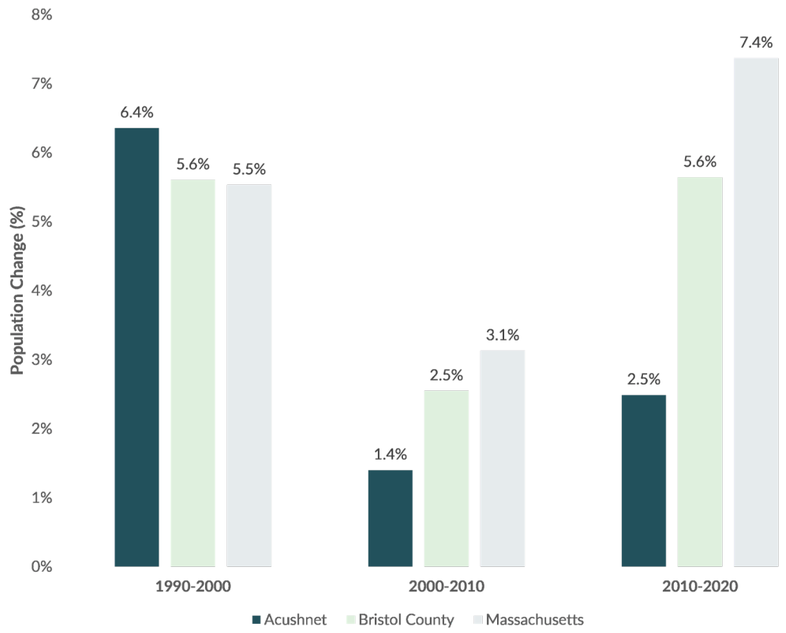


Figure 1. Population growth in Acushnet, Bristol County, and Massachusetts. Source: 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2020 Decennial Census.

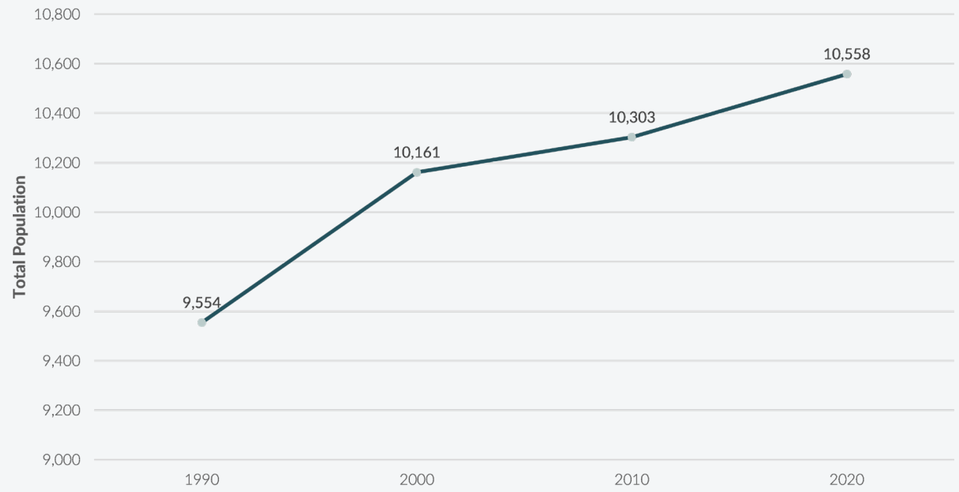


Figure 2. Total population growth in Acushnet. Source: Source: 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2020 Decennial Census.

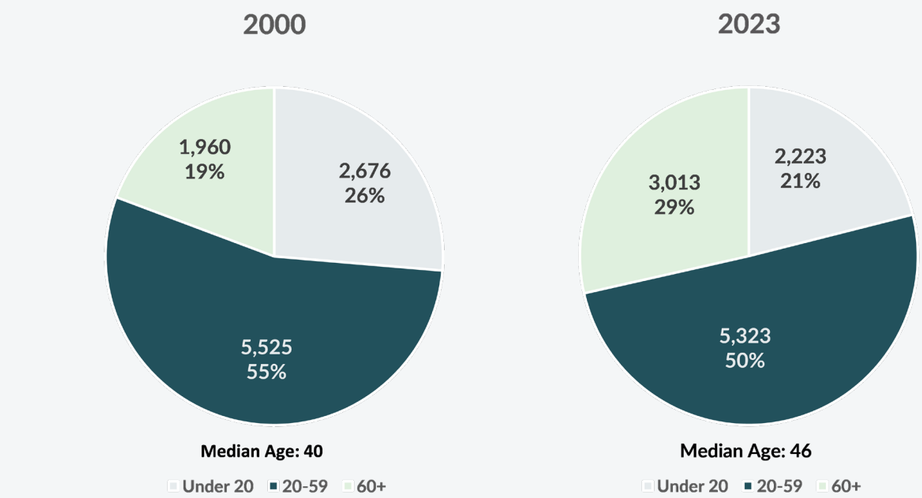


Figure 3. Age trends in Acushnet. Source: 2000 Decennial Census and 2023 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year Estimates

As Acushnet's population of residents under 20 decreases, schools are also experiencing student population loss. Over the last decade, total school enrollment decreased by 4.7% since the 2014-2015 school year (Figure 4).

Despite a steady, but aging population, Acushnet residents experience a high quality of life. Median household income in Acushnet increased steadily over the past two decades, from $51,500 in 2000 to $88,196 in 2022 – rising well above Bristol County (Figure 5).



Figure 4. School Enrollment. Source: Department of EducationW

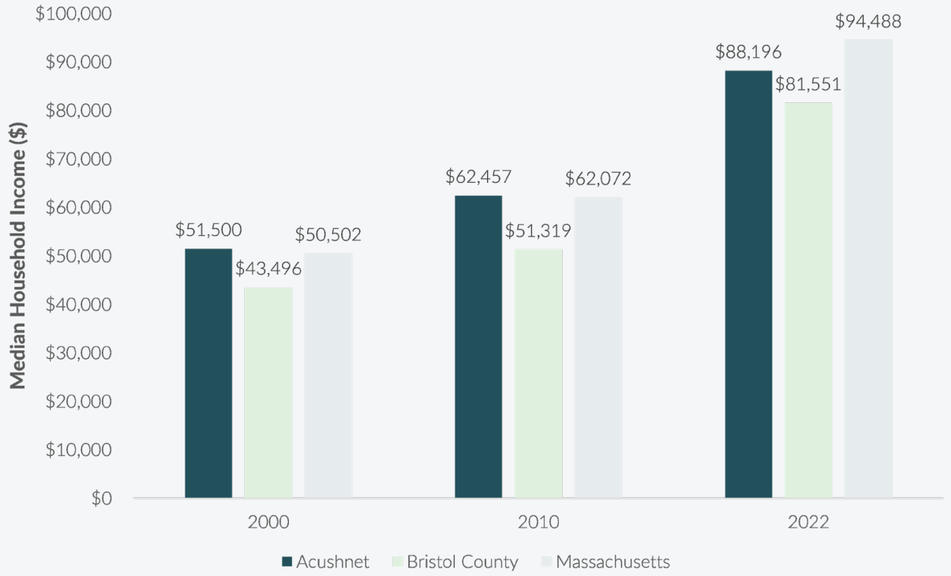


Figure 5. Median Household Income.. Source: 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year Estimates.

The Vision – Where We Want to Be

Public engagement for the Master Plan culminated in the development of the Community Vision, which serves as the "Statement of Goals and Policies" as required by Massachusetts General Law.

Acushnet residents value their Town's rural character, natural spaces, and small town identity. However, residents recognize the need to balance preservation with revenue generation to support much needed infrastructure and services. Residents also want to see the full potential of their Town Center and improve the safety of their roads and sidewalks.

The unique goals and strategies of the 2025 Acushnet Master Plan represent the actionable steps the town must take to achieve their vision.

Element	Vision
Land Use	Maintain small-town identity. Focus commercial development to the Town Center and South Main Street.
Housing	Consider environmental impacts when producing housing. Build more senior (55+) housing.
Economic Development	Attract new small businesses. Improve infrastructure to accommodate new businesses.
Services and Facilities	Improve accessibility of Town facilities. Expand Town infrastructure where needed.
Transportation	Improve roadway and pedestrian safety. Expand bike lanes and sidewalks.
Historic and Cultural Resources	Preserve historical structures. Find creative solutions for underutilized Town land/buildings.
Water Resource Management Strategy	Address flooding concerns. Improve water quality in bodies of water.

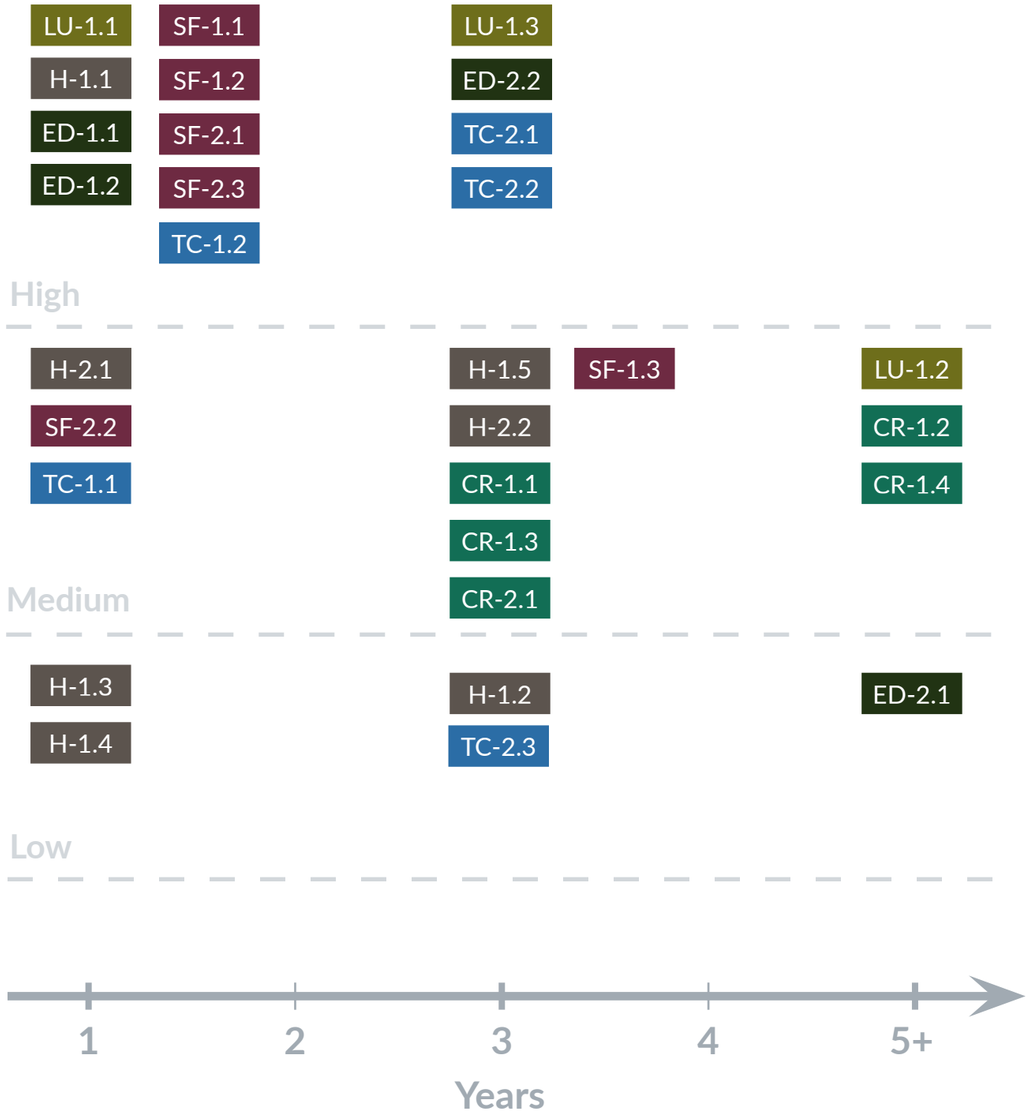
Implementation – How We Get There

Developing the Master Plan is only the beginning - the most challenging work starts with implementation. To faciliatate Acushnet's ability to take the Plan's goals and strategies and put them into action, this plan provides priorities, responsible parties, and realistic timelines. Below is a summary of each goal and accompany strategies for all eight topic-based elements within this Master Plan. Each strategy is explored in further detail in the element chapters following.

A NOTE ON PRIORITIZATION

Every strategy within this Master Plan has an assigned "priority" – low, medium, or high. This priority is based on feedback from the in-person traveling workshops and numerous meetings with the MPC. These priority categorizations are intended to help town staff, elected officials, and stakeholders plan out the implementation of this Master Plan.

Additionally, a "high priority" strategy in one chapter may, in the context of the entire Master Plan, be less urgent than a "high priority" strategy in another chapter. In these instances, the project team worked with the MPC and Town Officials, to further parse out the implementation of these strategies into a ten-year timeline, which is shown within the Implementation Chapter.



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Land Use

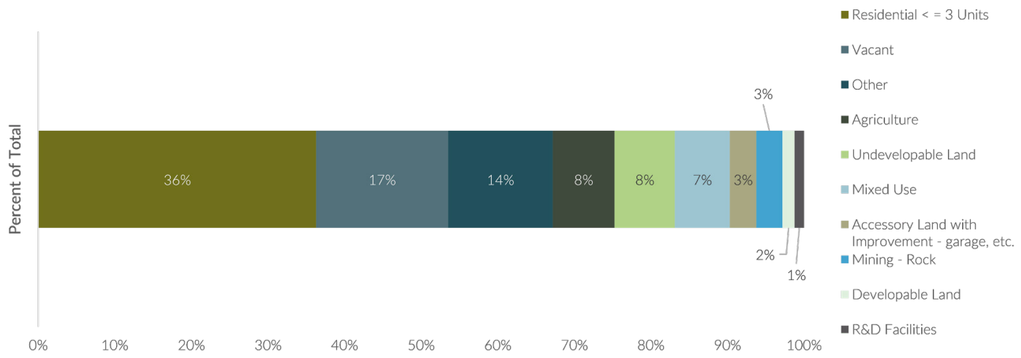
Introduction

Changes to the built environment require zoning interventions to allow new, efficient, or improved development processes. Zoning represents the laws and regulations that determine how land can - and cannot - be used throughout a community.

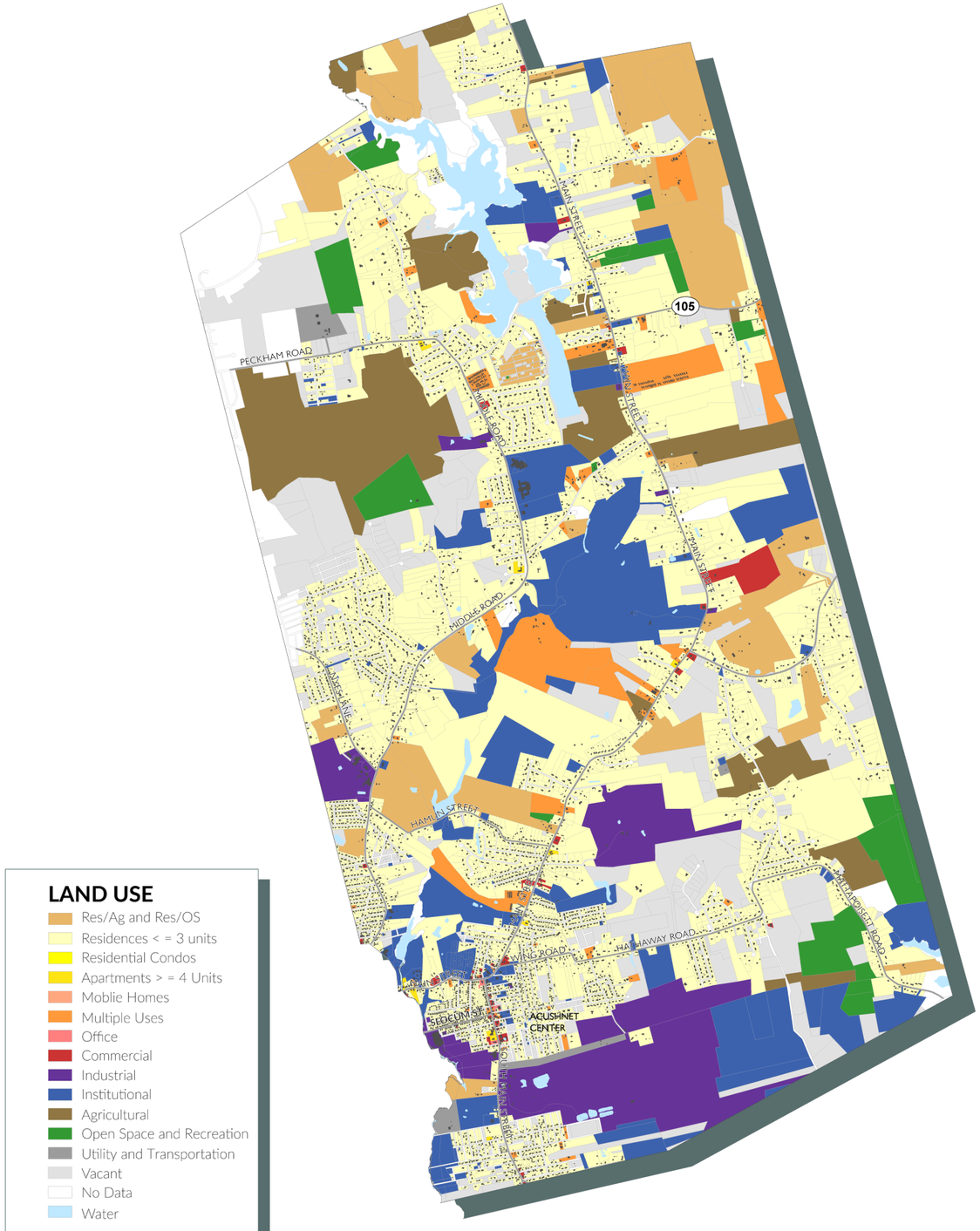
Existing Conditions

Acushnet's zoning and land use allows the Town to direct growth to targeted areas, control traffic, manage noise, and protect resources. Residential zoning covers about 95% of Acushnet, including a small area of village-style residential housing around South Main Street and Acushnet Center. All commercial activity is concentrated along Main Street and South Main Street, through the Business Village, Commercial Village, and Industrial Zones.

Figure 6. Land use percentages as a total of land area. Source: MassGIS Parcels.



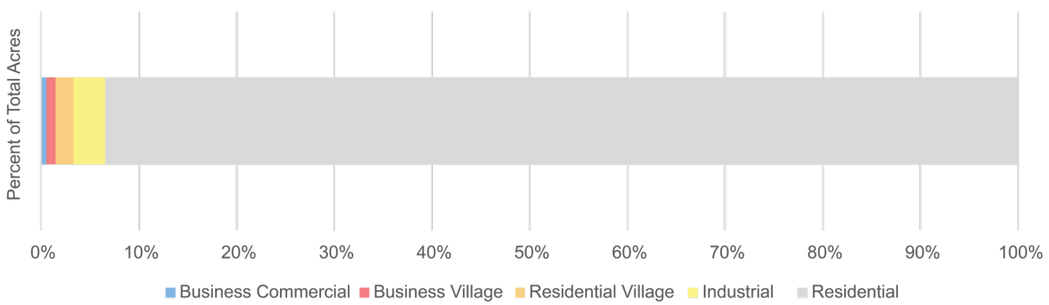
Map 2. (Right) Land Use



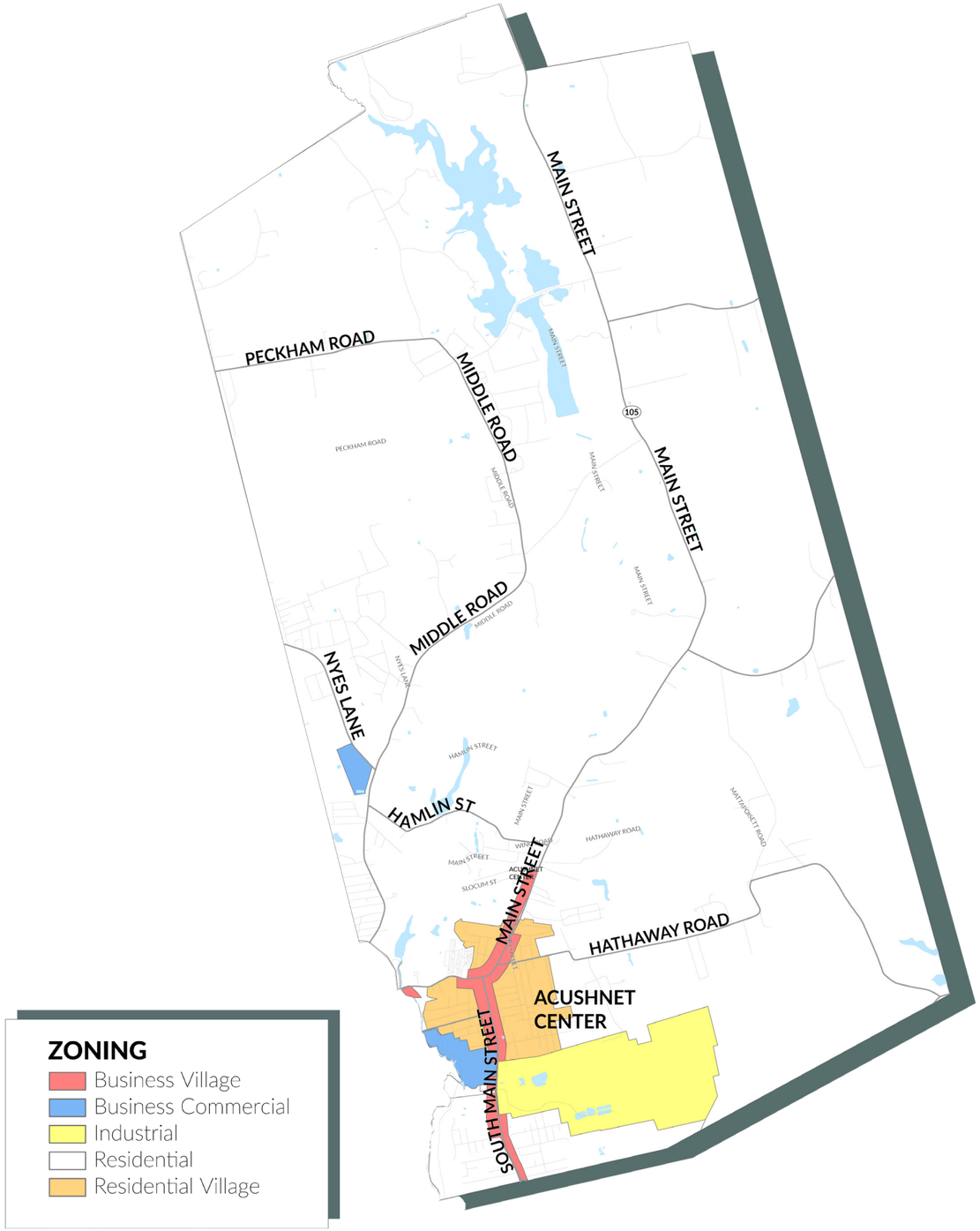
ZONING

Acushnet currently has four main zoning districts, though a majority of the Town - 95% - is zoned Residential A. Use regulations, as well as dimensional requirements, dictate the density and type of development in different areas of Town. However, Acushnet's Zoning Bylaws lack an official dimensional use table.

Figure 7. Zoning district percentages as a total of land area. Source: MassGIS Parcels.



Map 3. Zoning Map



Residential Zones

Acushnet has two residential base zoning districts: Residential A (RA) and Residential Village.

Residential A

This district is intended to preserve the Town's traditional pattern of single-family neighborhoods. It allows homes, schools, religious and cultural institutions, and small-scale agricultural uses by-right. Certain other uses, such as multi-family housing for seniors, or light commercial activities, may be allowed by special permit to provide flexibility while maintaining the residential character.

Residential Village

The Residential Village District allows for denser residential development than the Residence A District, reflecting the more compact, village-style neighborhoods in Acushnet. In addition to single-family homes, it provides opportunities for two-family or senior housing and select community-oriented uses by special permit. The district is meant to balance housing needs with neighborhood character and ensure access to utilities and community infrastructure.

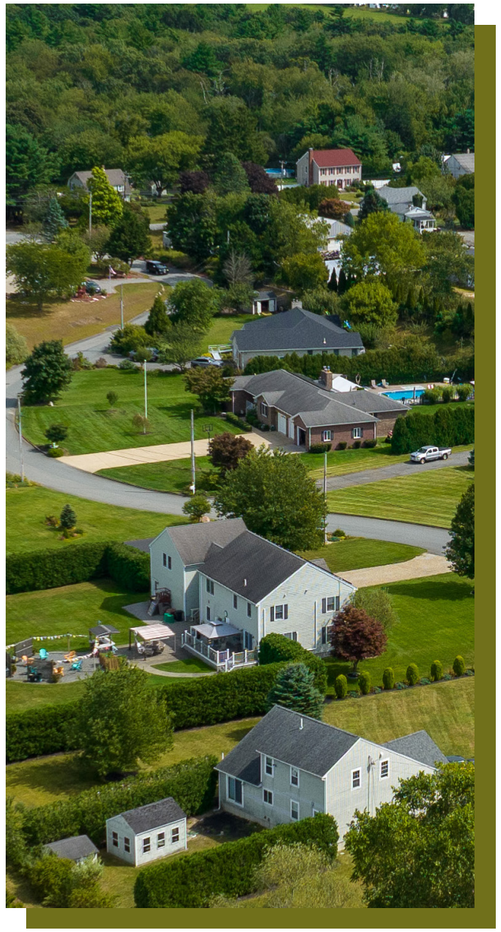


Photo 2. Residential homes in Acushnet.

Commercial Zones

Acushnet has three commercial districts with varying levels of intensity.

Business Village

The Business Village District serves as the town's small-scale commercial hub, designed to accommodate shops, restaurants, offices, and neighborhood services. The District encourages walkable, mixed-use development that supports daily needs close to residential areas. Larger businesses or more intensive activities may be allowed with special permits to ensure compatibility with the surrounding community.

Business Commercial

This district provides space for broader commercial and service-oriented development. While it shares similarities with the Business Village District, it is intended to host more expansive automobile-oriented businesses, accommodating a wider range of retail, office, and service uses.

Industrial

Acushnet's industrial districts provide areas for employment, production, and utility uses. The I-1 District accommodates offices, warehouses, and certain processing activities, while the I-2 District is reserved for heavier industrial operations. These zones are set apart from residential and village areas to minimize conflicts and support the Town's economic base.

Goals and Strategies

LU Goal 1: Modernize the Town's zoning bylaws to meet the priorities for economic growth and housing development.

LU-1.1: Conduct a Zoning Recodification to update, modernize, and reconcile conflicts within the Town's zoning by-law

LU-1.2: Reconcile split zoned lots to support infill and redevelopment, particularly in the Business Village District.

LU-1.3: Develop design guidelines for select districts to enhance the community's small-Town feel.commercial growth while limiting disturbance to untouched lands.

LU Goal 2: Maintain the Town's rural character.

Acushnet prides itself on its agricultural and rural heritage. Though the Town experienced rapid growth over the last decade, residents seek to preserve the Town's rural character. Over 75% of residents reported that preserving historic and natural areas of Town were a top priority. At the same time, many also conceded that preserving the Town's character should balance increased demand for housing for seniors and families. Maintaining green space, natural resources, and historic assets remains a significant priority for Acushnet.

For more information regarding these topics, refer to the Acushnet Open Space and Recreation Plan, which was developed alongside the Master Plan.

LU Goal 1: *Modernize the Town's zoning bylaws to meet economic and housing priorities.*

Zoning plays a critical role in regulating land use to allow communities to meet their development goals. The Master Plan process revealed that residents are willing to consider a range of development styles to support their goals in relation to economic development and housing. Survey results revealed that 44% of residents would like to see enhanced economic activities Downtown. Another 34% expressed interest in transforming Main Street into a community-friendly space; however, current zoning requirements may not enable or facilitate the type of redevelopment that leads to a walkable or cohesive neighborhood. In addition, the current zoning does not provide the clarity needed to allow the type of infill and redevelopment necessary to support village-style development. While many of the zoning tools in the Town's bylaw can dictate the terms of new development, they can also act as a barrier to the types of change residents would like to see. Modernizing the Town's zoning to meet economic and community needs entails updating the existing zoning bylaws, amending existing districts, and adopting new ones to better meet the expressed aspirations of the community.

ID	Strategy	Priority	Complementary Strategies
LU-1.1	Conduct a Zoning Recodification to update, modernize, and reconcile conflicts within the Town's zoning by-law.	High	LU-1.2, LU-1.3 H-1.1, H-1.3 ED-1.1, ED-1.2, OSRP-1.2, OSRP 5.5
LU-1.2	Reconcile split zoned lots to support infill and redevelopment, particularly in the Business Village District.	High	LU-1.1, LU-1.3 ED-1.2
LU-1.3	Develop design guidelines for select districts to enhance the community's small-Town feel.	Medium	LU-1.2 ED-1.2

LU-1.1: Conduct a Zoning Recodification to update, modernize, and reconcile conflicts within the Town's zoning by-law.

Priority: High

Responsible Parties: Planning Board, Selectboard, By-Law Committee, Town Planner, Building Inspector

Case Study: The Town of Wareham recieved $98,000 from the Executive office of Housing and Livable Communities FY25 Community Planning Grant Program to pursue a zoning recodification to address inconsistencies, increase clarity, and update bylaws with state requirements and standards.

Hosting a modern, searchable, and easily navigable zoning bylaw facilitates potential development. Acushnet's zoning bylaw and other Town ordinances are available on the Town website as a PDF. The zoning bylaws provide a narrative of use regulations, dimensional regulations, non-conforming uses and structures, and administration. The Master Plan process revealed the existing zoning bylaws are not up to date. In fact, the Town's Industrial Zone is two separate districts that are defined as I-1 and I-2, where the uses are different and dimensional requirements are only outlined for uses under I-1. Light manufacturing is defined in multiple ways in the bylaw, creating potential for subjective interpretations and inconsistent application.

Modernizing the Town's Zoning By-laws will enable the Town to implement the strategies listed in this plan. The Town should consider pursuing a zoning recodification to rewrite bylaws for clarity and consistency to help facilitate future economic growth and development. Through a hired consultant, the Town Zoning Bylaws will undergo a zoning diagnostic to analyze the weaknesses, inconsistencies, and outdated or omitted references, as well as identify missing topics. Upon completion of a zoning diagnostic, the consultant will improve the bylaw's structure, organization, and language. For ease of use, the Town should incorporate a dimensional use table. This will become especially important as the Town explores potential new districts and boundary changes. The Town provides the Intensity Regulations table found on the building inspector's website, which meets many of the dimensional use table requirements, however it is not linked or referenced in the bylaws. The consultant hired through this process will update and incorporate the dimensional use table, which currently exists exclusively outside the context of the Town's bylaws.



Photo 3. Town Cemetary

LU-1.2: Reconcile split zoned lots to support infill and redevelopment, particularly in the Business Village District.

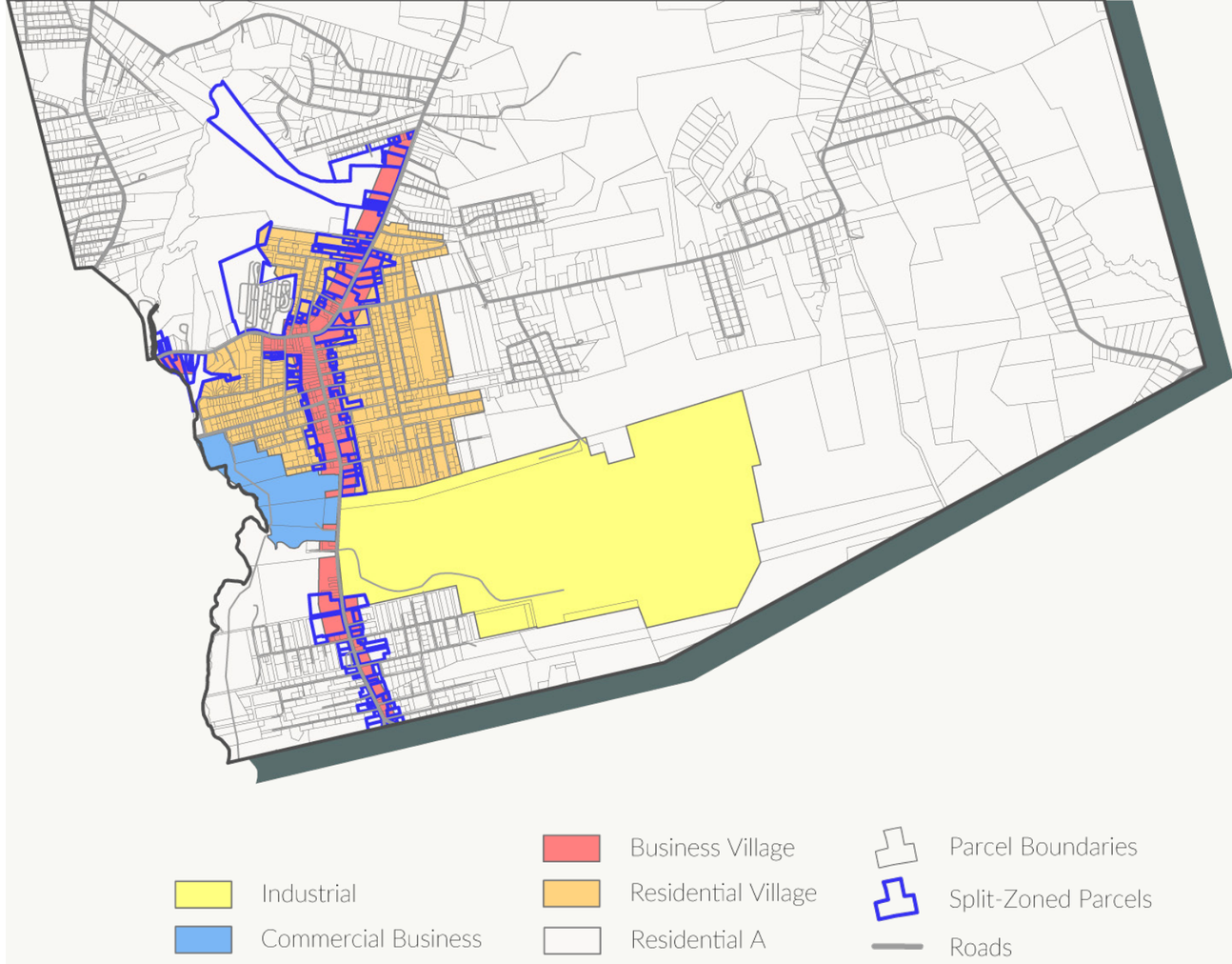
Priority: High

Responsible Parties: Planning Board, Selectboard, By-Law Committee, Town Planner, Building Inspector

Case Study: The Town of Chicopee struggles with split-zoned lots. In particular, developers proposed a Starbucks with drive-thru at 523 James St., which is zoned 70% residential and 30% commercial. In late 2023, the Town reviewed the proposal, which later came to also include residential development where zoning allowed. Despite safety concerns related to an adjacent rotary, the Planning Board approved the site plans given proposed uses fell within allowed zoning.

Acushnet's Business Village District hosts over 130 split-zoned lots, which creates unclear situations where property owners must navigate subtle, and sometimes vague language in a Town's zoning code. As the Town reconsiders the Business Village District's zoning requirements to encourage infill and redevelopment, split-zoned lots may be particularly challenging to navigate.

The Town should examine its current zoning for conflicts with local land-use patterns that already fit the intended direction for the Town's development. Acushnet should provide a clear process to reconcile split-zoned lots and provide guidance for development. Doing so will streamline the development and permitting process, making decisions about a property easier to understand for current and future property owners.



LU-1.3: Develop design guidelines for select districts to enhance the community's small-Town feel.

Priority: Medium

Responsible Parties: Planning Board, Selectboard, By-Law Committee, Town Planner, Building Inspector

Case Study: In 2013, the Town of Somerset established the Slade's Ferry Overlay District to encourage mixed-use development. The area has seen modest growth, however recent amendments slated for adoption in 2026 will create more flexible applications of the overlay to encourage additional development. Importantly, the town paired zoning amendments with Design Guidelines to encourage a disinct architectural style and on-the-ground experience.

Like many communities, Acushnet's residents seek a walkable village that cultivates a small-Town feel. From a zoning perspective, implementing design guidelines and standards helps define and encourage preferences so that future development feels cohesive and consistent with the Town's vision for the village.

Design guidelines use images, text, and diagrams to describe preferred site and building characteristics, ranging from stormwater management to architecture and materials. Rather than impose strict architectural requirements, design guidelines balance flexibility with regulation to promote creative solutions and encourage the best possible project outcome.

Careful implementation of design guidelines should promote walkable, compact developments; for example, the building's primary façade should front the street instead of sitting behind a parking lot. Design guidelines, while not enforceable, serve to ground conversations with the permitting authority to address preferences for the public realm, including design, style, and materials for light poles, planters, benches, and other public space infrastructure. These guidelines integrate concepts and branding that can help new developments feel consistent with Town-wide economic development efforts and wayfinding.

Design guidelines typically arrive in a Town's by-law via their inclusion in Planning Board Rules and Regulations governing Site Plan Review. They can also act as a standalone accompaniment to a specific bylaw. The Planning Board can adopt and subsequently amend design guidelines at public hearings. The incorporation of design guidelines will achieve a greater sense of place within the Acushnet Village, particularly as the Town considers its expansion in this plan as the Business Village Neighborhood District.



LU Goal 2: *Maintain the Town's rural character.*

Acushnet prides itself on its agricultural and rural heritage. Though the Town experienced rapid growth over the last decade, residents seek to preserve the Town's rural character. Over 75% of residents reported that preserving historic and natural areas of Town were a top priority. At the same time, many also conceded that preserving the Town's character should balance increased demand for housing for seniors and families. Maintaining green space, natural resources, and historic assets remains a significant priority for Acushnet.

For more information regarding these topics, refer to the Acushnet Open Space and recreation Plan, which was developed alongside the Master Plan.

ID	Strategy	Priority	Complementary Strategies
OSRP 1.1	Monitor chapter 61A land to prevent sale or development by working with land owners to apply conservation restrictions or easements and develop priority list to act on right of first refusal.	High	
OSRP 1.2	Develop an Open Space Residential Design (OSRD) bylaw	High	
OSRP 1.3	Support existing land preservation and recreation initiatives, focusing early efforts at Keith's Farm, under FALPT's direction	High	
OSRP 5.3	Develop a Water Resource Protection Overlay District to protect water resources during development activities surrounding greenbelts, aquifers, and wetlands.	High	
OSRP 5.5	Align solar ordinance bylaw with new state environmental standards to enhance town stewardship of solar siting.	High	

3

Housing

Introduction

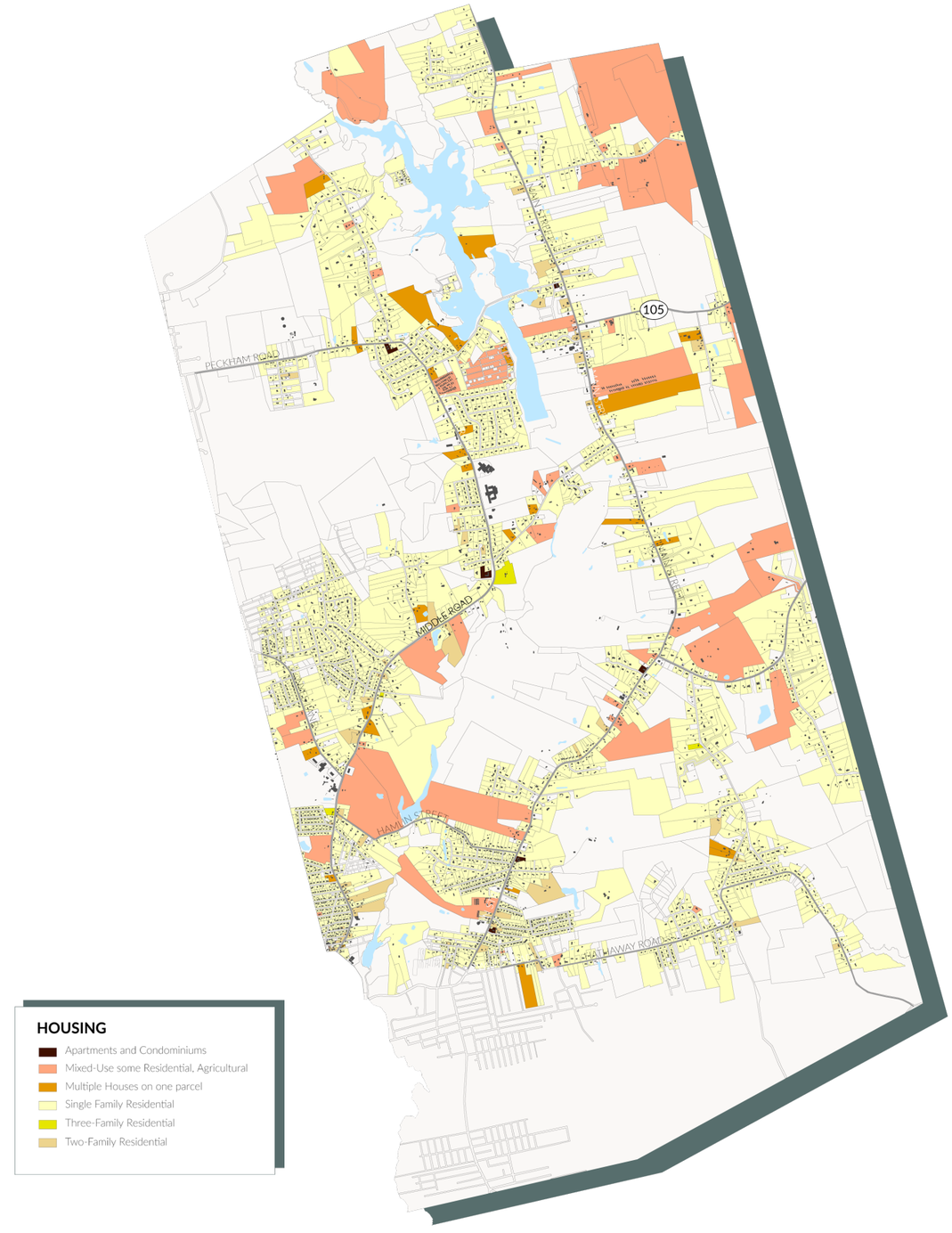
The state of a community's housing market tells a story about affordability and accessibility. Trends in the market guide future policy to determine the intensity of growth.

Existing Conditions

Acushnet is a traditional suburban community that consists of mostly single-family homes. Nearly 87% of housing in Acushnet is defined as detached single-family units. Other housing types that are present in Acushnet include attached accessory dwellings, single family conversions to two-family, mobile homes, and multi-family.

In addition to single-family home dependance, a vast majority of Acushnet's homes are aging - over 70% of housing construction took place before 1980. As Acushnet's population continues to age and downsize, the Town is beginning to look to other housing options. The median sales price for all housing continues to rise nationwide, and this is evident in Acushnet where the median sales price for single-family homes and condos climbed by 107% from 2014-2023. Rising costs deter residents from remaining in Town, especially when on a fixed income.

Figure 8. Types of Housing Units. Source: 20XX ACS 5-year Estimates.



Map 4. (Right) Residential uses in town. Source: MassGIS FY23 Tax Parcel Data.

ZONING

Zoning is the single most influential factor in determining the type of housing that a community may develop. Acushnet's zoning currently only allows single-family homes by-right. This is the case for RA, BV, and RV. The remaining residential uses are allowed through special permit by either the Planning Board in RA or BV and through the Zoning Board of Appeals in RV. Residential uses are prohibited in B/C, I-1, and I-2.

Table 4. Residential use allowances across all zoning districts.

Principal Use	RA	BV	BC	RV	I-1	I-2
One single-family dwelling per lot	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N
Hospital, nursing home, home for the aged	PB	PB	N	ZBA	N	N
Conversion of a one-family house to a two-family dwelling	PB	PB	ZBA	ZBA	N	N
Multi-family housing for the elderly (55 years and older)	PB	PB	N	ZBA	N	N

Key:

Y – Allowed By-right

N – Prohibited Use

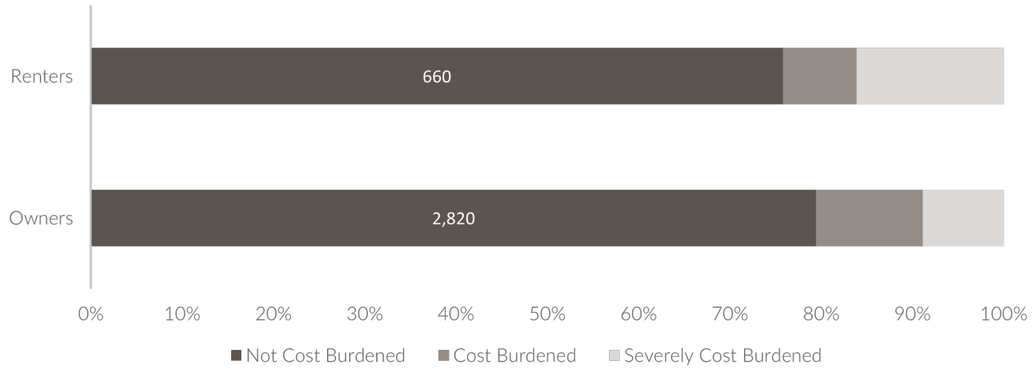
PB – Special Permit though PB

ZBA – Special Permit through ZBA

AFFORDABILITY

Though most Acushnet residents can afford their housing, the need for affordable housing remains. Currently, 470 Acushnet households are eligible for some form of subsidized affordable housing or are considered as at least "cost-burdened", but there are only 95 of these units available. A resident household is considered "cost burdened" when they spend over 30% of their gross monthly income on living expenses, exclusively for rent or mortgage payments as well as utility costs. Residents are considered "severely cost-burdened" when they spend over 50% of their monthly income on basic costs of living associated with housing expenses.

Figure 9. Acushnet Housing Cost Burden. Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development



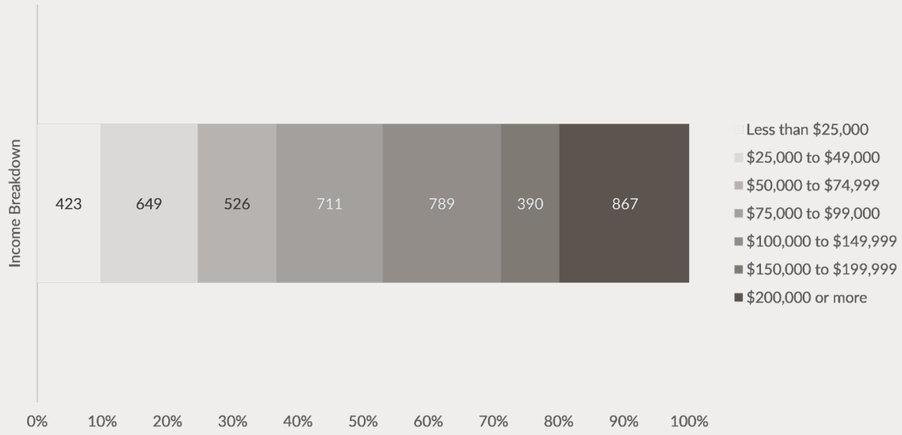


Figure 10. Median household income breakdown. Source: 2021 ACS 5-year Estimates.

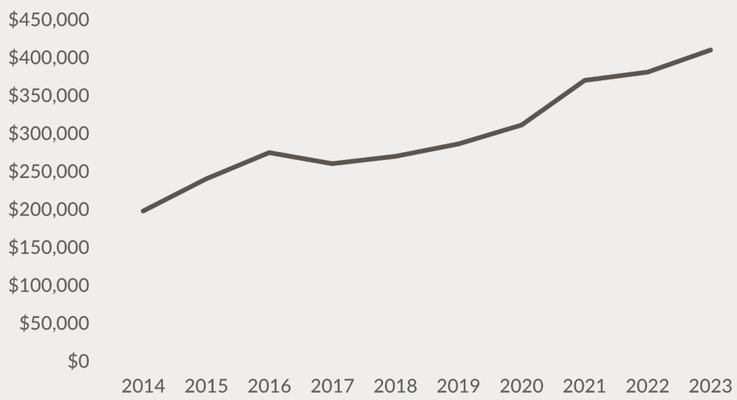


Figure 11. Median Sale of Homes.. Source: The Warren Group, ACS Supplemental 1-Year Estimates.

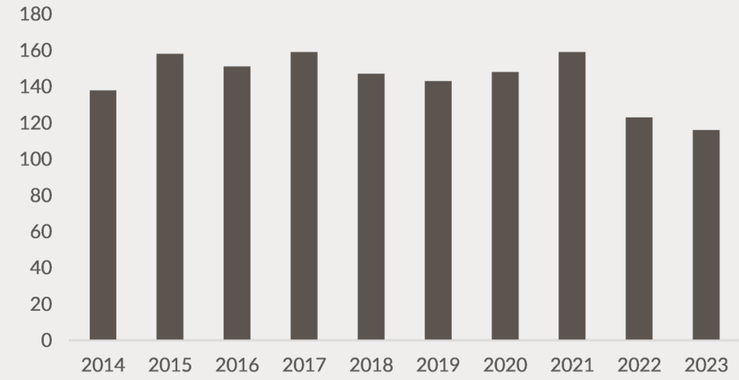


Figure 12. Number of Home Sales per Year. Source: The Warren Group, ACS Supplemental 1-Year Estimates.

Goals and Strategies

H Goal 1: Focus on diversifying the Town's housing stock to meet the needs of the entire community.

H-1.1: Review the minimum lot size of the Residence A District to facilitate new development throughout Acushnet.

H-1.2: Expand the Residential Village District into southern Acushnet.

H-1.3: Consider zoning changes to accommodate the production of diverse housing types and implement design guidelines to integrate with existing neighborhood.

H-1.4: Review the market viability of the Special Residential Development Special Permit in creating 55+ housing developments.

H-1.5: Work with property owners of vacant or underutilized parcels to develop housing opportunities.

H Goal 2: Maintain and expand the Town's affordable housing stock.

H-2.1: Update the Town's Housing Production Plan.

H-2.2: Prepare Town-owned properties for private residential development.

H Goal 1: *Support sustainable housing growth.*

The Town should begin to develop strategies to diversify its housing stock to accommodate a variety of demographics and incomes. Diversifying the Town's housing stock means supporting new housing types and densities, including apartments in mixed-use areas, condos or Townhouses, and retirement communities. The Town should consider a variety of options for developing additional housing, including amending zoning and leveraging resources within and outside of the Town for housing production. The Town adopted the Community Preservation Act (CPA) which can be used for housing production. The last housing project undertaken using these funds was back in 2018 by the Housing Authority. From 2015-2024, only 8% of CPA funding was used for housing. Funding for housing projects is limited to those focused exclusively on residents that make less than 100% the Area Median Income (AMI).

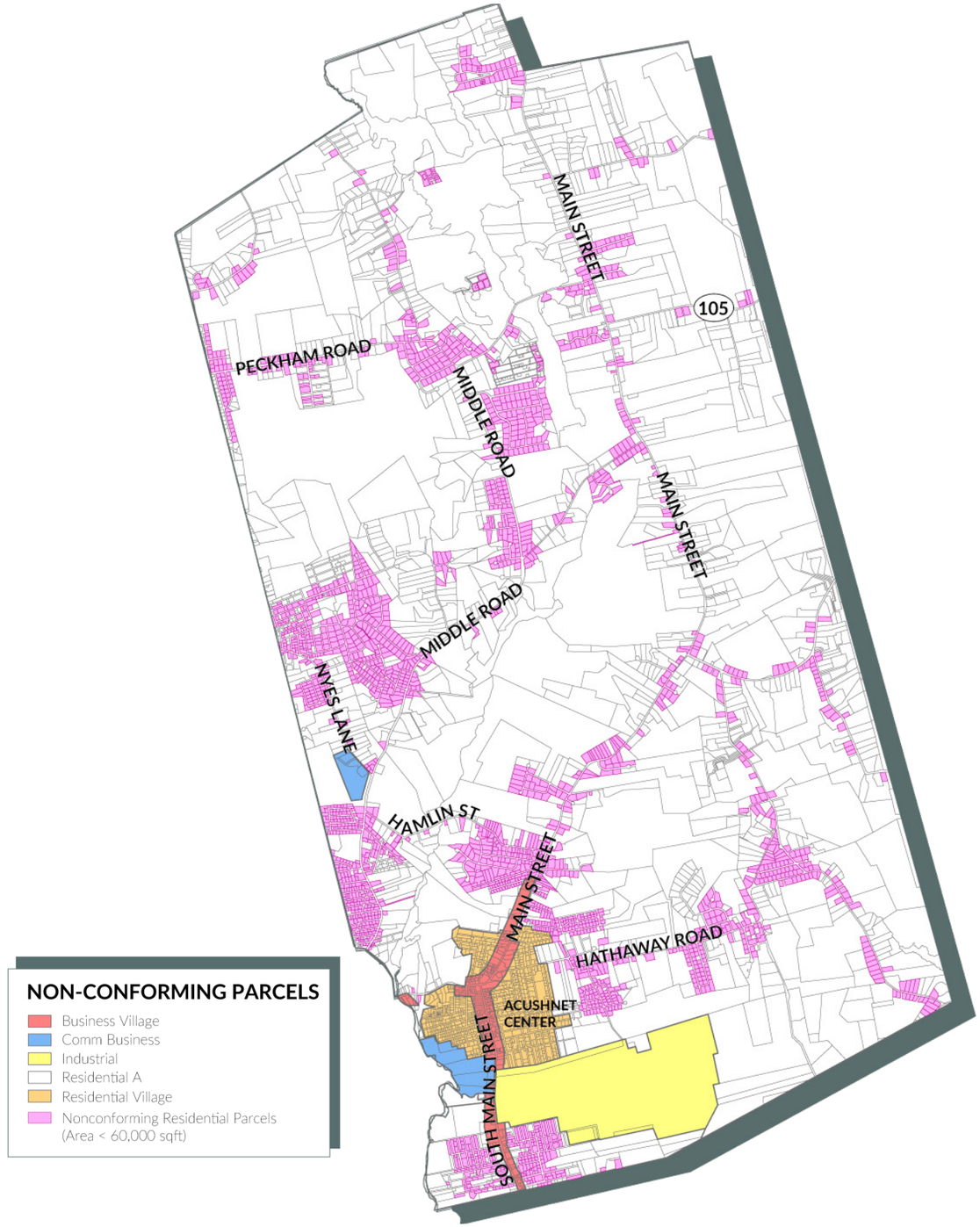
ID	Strategy	Priority	Complementary Strategies
H-1.1	Review the minimum lot size of the Residence A District to facilitate new development throughout Acushnet.	High	LU-1.1 H-2.1 WRMS-7.3
H-1.2	Expand the Residential Village District into southern Acushnet.	Low	H-1.3, H-1.5, H-2.1
H-1.3	Consider zoning changes to accommodate the production of diverse housing types and implement design guidelines to integrate with existing neighborhood.	Low	LU-1.1 H-1.1, H-2.1 OSRP-1.2
H-1.4	Review the market viability of the Special Residential Development Special Permit in creating 55+ housing developments.	Medium	LU-1.1 H-2.1 WRMP-7.3
H-1.5	Work with property owners of vacant or underutilized parcels to develop housing opportunities.	Medium	H-1.2, H-2.1, H-2.2

H-1.1: Review the minimum lot size of the Residence A District to facilitate new development throughout Acushnet.

Priority: High

Responsible Parties: Planning Board, Selectboard, By-Law Committee, Town Planner, Building Inspector

The Master Plan community engagement process serves to guide the Town's housing strategy. Through this process, key stakeholders voiced concerns about the existing minimum lot size requirement of 60,000 square feet in the Residential A District – which covers 95% of Town. This requirement creates a problem for lots that fall below the threshold, otherwise known as non-conforming lots. Owners of non-conforming lots must meet additional special permit requirements to build or alter existing structures, creating challenges that impede redevelopment. Residential A District hosts 2,158 non-conforming lots that either fall under the minimum lot size requirement or contain too much wetland to build. The Town should determine the most amenable path forward to facilitate development of available property. A major step to alleviating these challenges includes lowering minimum lot size requirements to accommodate as many of these non-conforming lots as possible. The average square footage of non-conforming lots in the Residential A District is about 23,300 square feet, which is well below the 60,000 square foot lot size minimum requirement. These determinations can be further refined with additional feedback from residents in future planning activities, such as a Housing Production Plan update.



Map 5. Non-conforming parcels in Res A

H-1.2: Expand the Residential Village District into southern Acushnet.

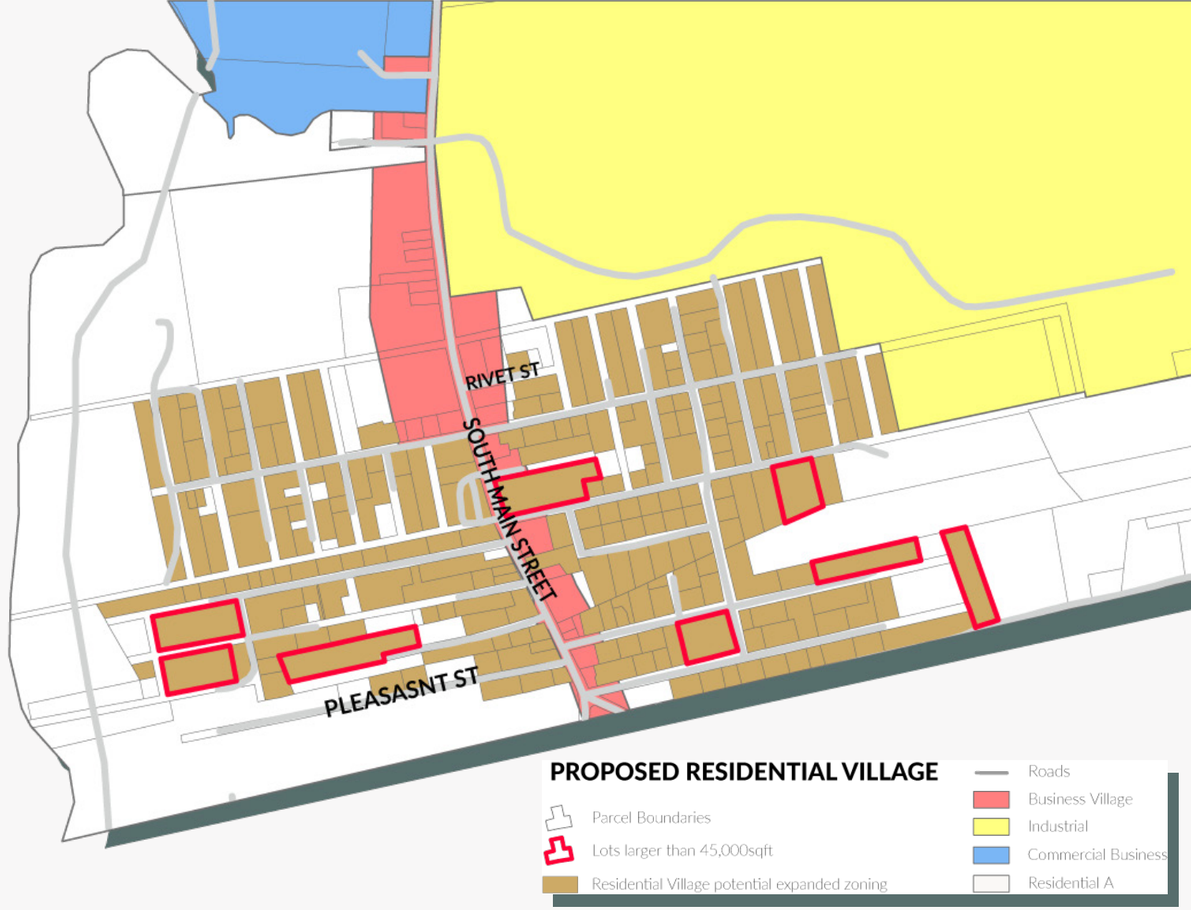
Priority: Low

Responsible Parties: Planning Board, Selectboard, By-Law Committee, Town Planner, Building Inspector

Traditionally, village districts provide opportunities for communities to create interconnected and walkable areas for housing and commercial activities. The area south of Rivet Street to the Fairhaven border along South Main Street has a similar neighborhood fabric to that found in the existing Residential Village (RV) District, making it an appropriate site for its further expansion. Acushnet's existing RV District covers the most active portion of Downtown, extending from Harbeck Street to just south of Pembroke Street along South Main Street. This area is characterized by smaller lot sizes and street-facing amenities including restaurants, banks, and other services.

The area from Rivet Street to the Fairhaven border is currently zoned Residential A. Most lots here are considered non-conforming, averaging 17,800 square feet, making redevelopment challenging. Meanwhile, the RV District requires a minimum lot size of 10,000 square feet, which is more in line with what is observed in southern Acushnet along South Main Street. Both the Residential A and Residential Village District share the same allowable uses, but not the same dimension and setback requirements. The Residential Village has lower minimum setback standards.

Acushnet should also consider redevelopment potential based on water and sewer connections in the expanded Residential Village District. According to the dimensional use table, lots within the Residential Village District that cannot connect to Town water or sewer must have a 45,000 minimum lot size. Only 9 parcels in the proposed expansion area would meet this minimum lot



requirement. Without expanded water and sewer connections, redevelopment under Residential Village zoning may still prove difficult in Southern Acushnet. This area's proximity to Fairhaven creates an opportunity to connect to existing water and sewer infrastructure to unlock development. Ultimately, the Town should consider expanding the Residential Village District into southern Acushnet to enable village-style development and align the existing landscape with more appropriate dimensional requirements, while pursuing infrastructure improvements to facilitate redevelopment.

The Town determines where the overlay district would be placed as well as design guidelines, to ensure development aligns with the existing landscape. The overlay is also allowed to overlap or coincide with a historic district. The Town should consider utilizing this tool to fulfill their goals of developing additional housing stock.

Map 6. Proposed Residential Village Southern Acushnet.

H-1.3: Consider zoning changes to accommodate the production of diverse housing types and implement design guidelines to integrate with existing neighborhoods.

Priority: Low

Responsible Parties: Planning Board, Selectboard, By-Law Committee, Town Planner, Building Inspector

Case Studies: The Town of Mansfield is working toward developing both 40R and 40Y Districts. The Town of Swansea is working toward developing an OSRD and other zoning changes. The Town of Lakeville is working on activating their municipal affordable housing trust and planning for negotiating deed restrictions.

In the last 70 years, housing trends in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and Acushnet focused on single-family home construction. However, demand for diverse housing types due to an aging population and affordability concerns led the Master Plan Committee and members of the public to consider ways to integrate smaller and denser housing types into the Town's zoning.

Current residential zoning – Residential A or Residential Village District - does not allow multi-family uses by-right or through special permit. Residential A does allow the conversion of a single-family home to a two-family home by special permit. Residents may not support large, block-style apartment complexes in Acushnet, though survey results indicated an openness to diverse, housing types that create opportunities for seniors (55%), families (26%), and young adults (37%). Based on feedback, the Town should consider adding specific housing types to the allowable uses under Residential A and Residential Village, including duplexes,

DUPLEX

A housing type that contains two attached housing units with a shared wall or are separated by a floor on one parcel. This housing typology typically shares a similar floor plan for the interior and architectural style for the exterior for both units.



Photo 5. Stonebridge Homes

TRIPLEX

Similar to a duplex, a triplex contains one attached structure on one parcel with three units that can have separate owners. Also - like with a duplex - these units are typically separated by a shared wall or floor, depending on the type of unit.



Photo 6. MassDevelopment

COTTAGE

A grouping of smaller, cottage-style homes. The number of homes in the cluster can vary but usually consists of 4-12 units that share a common green space or courtyard. Cottage clusters help create small, affordable housing options while minimizing the overall impact on the surrounding green spaces and natural resources.



Photo 7. Village Hill Northampton

triplexes, and cottage clusters. Updating the Town's Housing Production Plan would allow the Town to produce an in-depth analysis of housing unit ownership structure (condo vs Townhouse) as well as architectural styles.

Acushnet may choose to allow diverse, denser housing by-right, special permit, or embed threshold requirements. Thresholds trigger a special permit process by dictating the number of units. The Town should keep in mind that all uses listed under Residential A are also allowed under the Business Village District. Amending Residential A zoning would also allow multi-family housing under other zoning districts. In order to avoid the challenges posed by amending the Residential A District zoning, the Town should consider the development of specialized overlay districts, focused on diverse housing typologies, like a 40Y Starter Home Zoning District.

By providing opportunities for these types of development, the Town can also incentivize the production of housing that fits the character of the community through its aesthetic and dimensional composition. Design guidelines would provide an excellent way to interconnect units through a common aesthetic that matches the priorities of the community. Overall, the Town should consider zoning amendments that suit the priorities of residents looking for more affordable and interconnected housing typologies.

CHAPTER 40Y STARTER HOME ZONING DISTRICTS (SHZDS)

Chapter 40Y SHZDS promotes the development of small single-family homes (up to 1,850 sqft of heated living area) and accessory dwelling units (with a default size limit of 600 sq ft, that can be increased up to 900 sq ft at the municipality's discretion) on the same lot. SHZDs may not exceed 15% of a city or town's total land area, unless otherwise approved by EOHLC. These districts allow single-family home development by-right at a density of no fewer than 4 units per acre (approximately 10,000 sqft lots). The State provides a one-time incentive payment to towns that adopt and comply with Chapter 40Y. Also, these districts have an inclusionary component, where, in developments of more than 12 starter homes, not less than 10% of the starter homes shall be affordable to and occupied by individuals and families whose annual income is less than 110% of the Area Median Income.



Photo 8. EOHLC

H-1.4: Review the market viability of the Special Residential Development Special Permit in creating 55+ housing developments.

Priority: Low

Responsible Parties: Planning Board, Selectboard, By-Law Committee, Town Planner, Building Inspector

Case Study: Contemporary +55 community bylaws in the region allow flexibility for both buildable area and density. The Town of Mansfield allows residential facilities for residents 55 years of age or older. Provisions in the Zoning Bylaw do not limit acreage and instead rely on units per acre (10) to manage density.

Acushnet's population, like the State and the Nation, is aging. The median age in Town increased from 40 years old in 2000 to 46 years old in 2023. Coinciding with this trend, the proportion of residents over the age of 60 increased from 19% in 2000 to 29% in 2023. To meet the needs of an aging population, the Town adopted a Special Residential Development – Over 55 Housing, which allows age-restricted housing developments through special permit, with the Planning Board acting as the Special Permit Granting Authority, within the Residential A, Residential Village, and Business Commercial Districts.

Although the Town passed this bylaw in 2023, they have recieved no applications, prompting the Town to revisit the adopted zoning. For example, the density requirements defined in the Bylaw may limit the number of units a developer can accommodate. Under the bylaw, 55+ communities are capped at a maximum of 30 acres of buildable area and 90 units (3 units per acre).

The Town of Mansfield facilitates development by relying on units per acre to manage density, instead of setting a limit. In order to refine the existing +55 community bylaw in Acushnet, the Town should explore ways in which to embed more flexibility to attract developers. In addition, the Town should consider the benefits of amending the bylaw to require a certain percentage of open space and remove setback requirements to encourage development under the Over 55 Housing Bylaw.

		55+ Bylaw	
		Acushnet	**Mansfield**
Minimum	**Lot Size**	3 Acres/ 10 Acres without municipal water/sewer (Buildable Area)	6 Acres/ 15 Acres in Res 1 Zone
	Setback	40 ft	Varies by District
	Perimeter Buffer	50 ft	50 ft
Maximum	**Lot Size**	30 Acres with municipal water/ sewer (Buildable Area)	NA
	Units	90 Units (3 x the number of buildable acres)	100 units or 10 units per Acre
	Height	35 ft	40 ft
Open Space Requirement		NA	35%

H-1.5: Work with property owners of vacant or underutilized parcels to develop housing opportunities.

Priority: Medium

Responsible Parties: Planning Board, Selectboard, By-Law Committee, Town Planner, Building Inspector

Case Study: The City of New Bedford created a position - vacant property development manager - under its Housing and Community Development Department in 2023 in order to work with property owners to revitalize vacant or underutilized housing units.

Acushnet has limited space for additional housing due to existing developments, lack of infrastructure, and political will. In order to address the limited supply of housing, communities should consider creative solutions. One method is to look at existing opportunities, especially those that are underutilized. Many communities pursue vacant and underutilized parcels for housing. These properties fall into disrepair and often sit for many years without providing valuable tax income – and more importantly – housing. The Town should begin cataloging properties that are considered vacant or underutilized. From here communities can take several paths to develop housing on these parcels by partnering with a property owner, a developer, taking it by tax title, and/or purchasing the property outright.



Photo 4. Vacant Property New Bedford (SouthCoast Today)

H Goal 2: *Support sustainable housing growth.*

This second housing goal is straightforward in its intent – to produce affordable housing options for residents in Acushnet. Resident sentiments echoed through the Master Plan Survey and demographic data show there is a need for affordable housing. In order to unlock potential areas for affordable housing, the Town should begin the process of identifying sites best suited for this type of development. This process can be conducted through several different means, including a Housing Production Plan, as well as through cataloguing of available Town properties.

ID	Strategy	Priority	Complementary Strategies
H-2.1	Update the Town's Housing Production Plan.	Medium	LU-1.1 OSRP-1.2
H-2.2	Prepare Town-owned properties for private residential development.	Medium	H-1.5, H-2.1

H-2.1: Update the Town's Housing Production Plan.

Priority: Medium

Responsible Parties: Planning Board, Town Planner, Building Inspector

Case Study: In the SRPEDD region, there are 11 communities that have either completed an approved HPP or are in the process of doing so, as of the date of this plan.

Acushnet's most recently completed Housing Production Plan (HPP) was produced in 2015; however, given its age, Acushnet should consider an update.

An HPP is a municipal planning document that:

1. Identifies a Town's housing needs by conducting a thorough data survey and recognizing potential barriers to housing production;
2. Creates goals for housing based on those needs; and
3. Presents a Town's plan to meet those goals in a manner consistent with Chapter 40B and 760 CMR 56.00.

By taking a proactive approach to housing production, Towns are much more likely to achieve both their 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. This increased control and participation is particularly important for communities such as Acushnet, where the share of affordable housing as a percentage of year-round housing units is well below the required 10%, at 2.2%.

Finally, HPPs require that communities create an Action Map of municipally owned land (for example, properties taken through tax title) that is appropriate for affordable housing. Acushnet can consider conducting a Vacant and Underutilized Property Survey to determine various distressed properties throughout Town– particularly tax title properties in residential neighborhoods. The Town can dispose of such property through a negotiated sale or an RFP, which allows the Town to control future use of the property, including designating the property for the creation of affordable housing with partners, such as Habitat for Humanity.



H-2.2: Prepare Town-owned properties for private residential development.

Priority: Medium

Responsible Parties: Selectboard, Planning Board, Town Planner, Building Inspector

Case Study: There are numerous examples of community-owned properties that converted into housing, including in Harwich where a 1871 school house was converted into multifamily apartments in 2025. Harwich put the property up for sale in through a RFP process in 2022.

Another key strategy to expand housing supplies in communities is to look at existing publicly owned land. Like with privately owned properties, underutilized Town properties represent an opportunity for housing production. These properties include those that were seized as a tax title or those that the Town purchased in the past. As mentioned in the previous section, creating a catalogue of existing of municipally owned properties is the first step to determining which of these would be appropriate for development, such as those that were previously located within residential neighborhoods. The Town can dispose of such property through a negotiated sale or an RFP, which allows more ability to control future use of the property, including designating the property for creation of affordable housing. One such property that residents mentioned during the Master Plan process included the Old Russell Memorial Library Building, which closed in 2015. These types of developments would augment and preserve the existing historical character of culturally significant structures that fall out of use.



4

Economic Development

Introduction

A community's economy highlights its strengths and weaknesses to attract industry and generate revenues to support services. Economic policy, coupled with careful zoning, influences tangible outcomes through tax revenues, small business growth, and job opportunities.

Existing Conditions

The Acushnet Master Plan highlighted the need to revisit the Town's approach to economic development. With the rising cost of living and the rising rate of municipal taxes, residents and Town officials alike understand the importance of economic diversification and small business growth.

Despite concerns, Acushnet's economy is stable; analysis of the job market shows that it grew by 38% - translating to over 500 new jobs - over the last decade. Employment is concentrated in the following top five industries, only some of which require advanced degrees. Many of these industries experienced growth in the last decade indicating the Town should continue to align its priorities with supporting industry growth:

1. Construction
2. Health Care and Social Assistance
3. Accommodation and Food Service
4. Other Services, Except Public Administration
5. Retail Trade

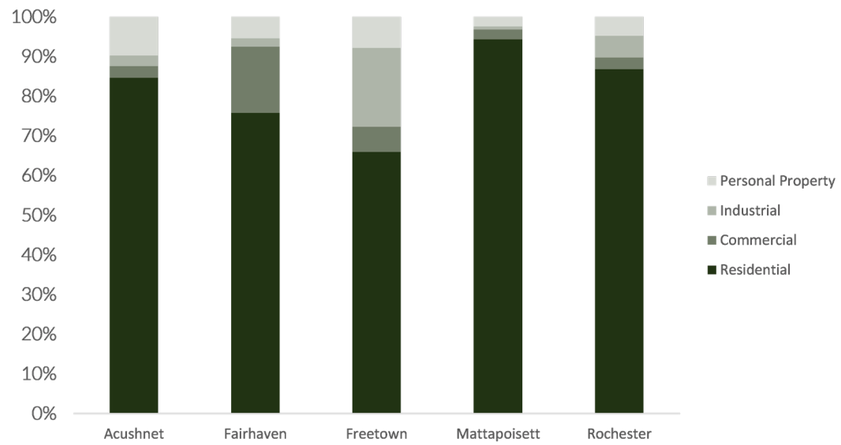
Though trends are positive in the Acushnet economy, tax revenues offer insight into the Town's operating budget. The Town utilizes a split tax rate, meaning residential and commercial uses are taxed differently. Among its neighbors, Acushnet has the highest residential tax rate (11.41). The commercial tax rate in town is competitive, standing at 16.13. In structuring the split tax rate, the Town seeks to ensure that commercial and industrial activities, which disproportionately stress infrastructure, contribute a fair share of taxes.

Though not uncommon, Acushnet's year to year revenues show that residents continue to bear a greater burden due to several factors, including zoning and infrastructure. Less than 5% of land area in Acushnet is

Industry NAICS Codes		2014		2023		2014-2023
	Description	Employment	Percentage	Employment	Percentage	Percent Change
23	Construction	336	25%	536	29%	60%
42	Wholesale Trade	15	1%	11	1%	-27%
44-45	Retail Trade	79	6%	83	5%	5%
48-49	Transportation & Warehousing	43	3%	46	3%	7%
52	Finance and Insurance	14	1%	11	1%	-21%
52	Real Estate & Rental and Leasing	18	1%	15	1%	-17%
54	Professional & Technical Services	14	1%	33	2%	136%
56	Administrative and Waste Services	54	4%	81	4%	50%
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	111	8%	282	15%	154%
72	Accommodation and Food Services	192	15%	214	12%	11%
81	Other Services, Except Public Administration	43	3%	110	6%	156%
	Total, All Industries	1,322		1,826		38%

Figure 13. Jobs by industry. Source: EOLWD

zoned for commercial or industrial uses, severely limiting growth potential. Additionally, Acushnet lacks appropriate water and sewer infrastructure to support significant growth that encourages industrial or commercial activities.



	Acushnet	Fairhaven	Freetown	Mattapoisettt	Rochester
Personal Property	9.8%	5.4%	7.9%	2.4%	4.8%
Industrial	2.6%	2.1%	19.9%	0.8%	5.5%
Commercial	2.9%	16.7%	6.3%	2.5%	2.9%
Residential	84.6%	75.7%	65.9%	94.3%	86.8%

Figure 14. Tax Levy by Use. Source: DLS

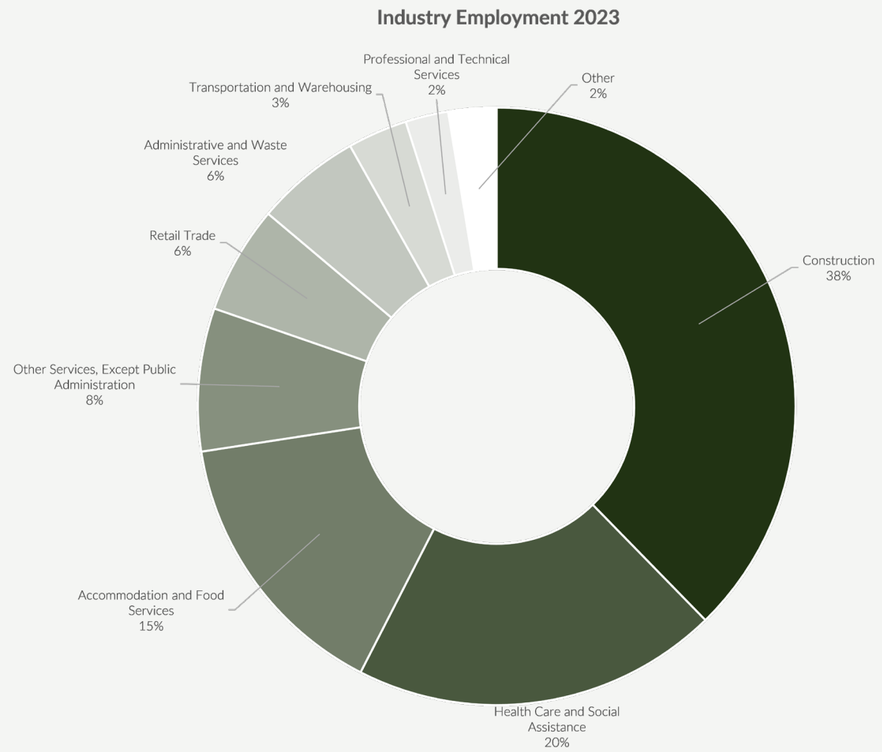


Figure 15. Jobs by industry. Source: EOLWD

Goals and Strategies

ED Goal 1: Revitalize Main and South Street to encourage walkability, placemaking, and small business development.

ED-1.1: Create a neighborhood-friendly Business District from Middle Road to Leonard Street.

ED-1.2: Review current zoning to determine barriers to specific types of development and industries in the Downtown.

ED Goal 2: Focus economic development to remaining areas in Town that are suitable for mixed-use, commercial, and industrial growth.

ED-2.1: Assess vacant, underutilized, and suspected Brownfield sites and pursue remediation at critical parcels in Town.

ED-2.2: Expand the Industrial Zoning District in the southeast section of Town.

ED Goal 1: *Revitalize Main and South Street to encourage walkability, placemaking, and small business development.*

Main Street Acushnet is a major corridor in Town with unrealized potential for small business and community development. Over 45% of residents support enhancing economic activities downtown using various strategies, such as welcoming new businesses, addressing the needs of current business owners, creating mixed-use overlays, allowing for innovative uses, among other strategies. Known for their small format business models, main streets support the growth of restaurants, pharmacies, and local retail shops – for which residents expressed their support. Residents also were most amenable to replacing car trips with walking in cases where the Town promoted sidewalk connections. Discussions with residents and businesses revealed that parking along Main Street is limited, and few establishments have enough space to accommodate large parking facilities.

ID	Strategy	Priority	Complementary Strategies
ED-1.1	Create a neighborhood-friendly Business District from Middle Road to Leonard Street.	High	LU-1.2 WRMP-7.5
ED-1.2	Review current zoning to determine barriers to specific types of development and industries in the Downtown.	High	LU-1.1 WRMS-7.1, WRMS-7.3, WRMS-7.5

ED-1.1: Create a neighborhood-friendly Business District from Middle Road to Leonard Street.

Priority: High

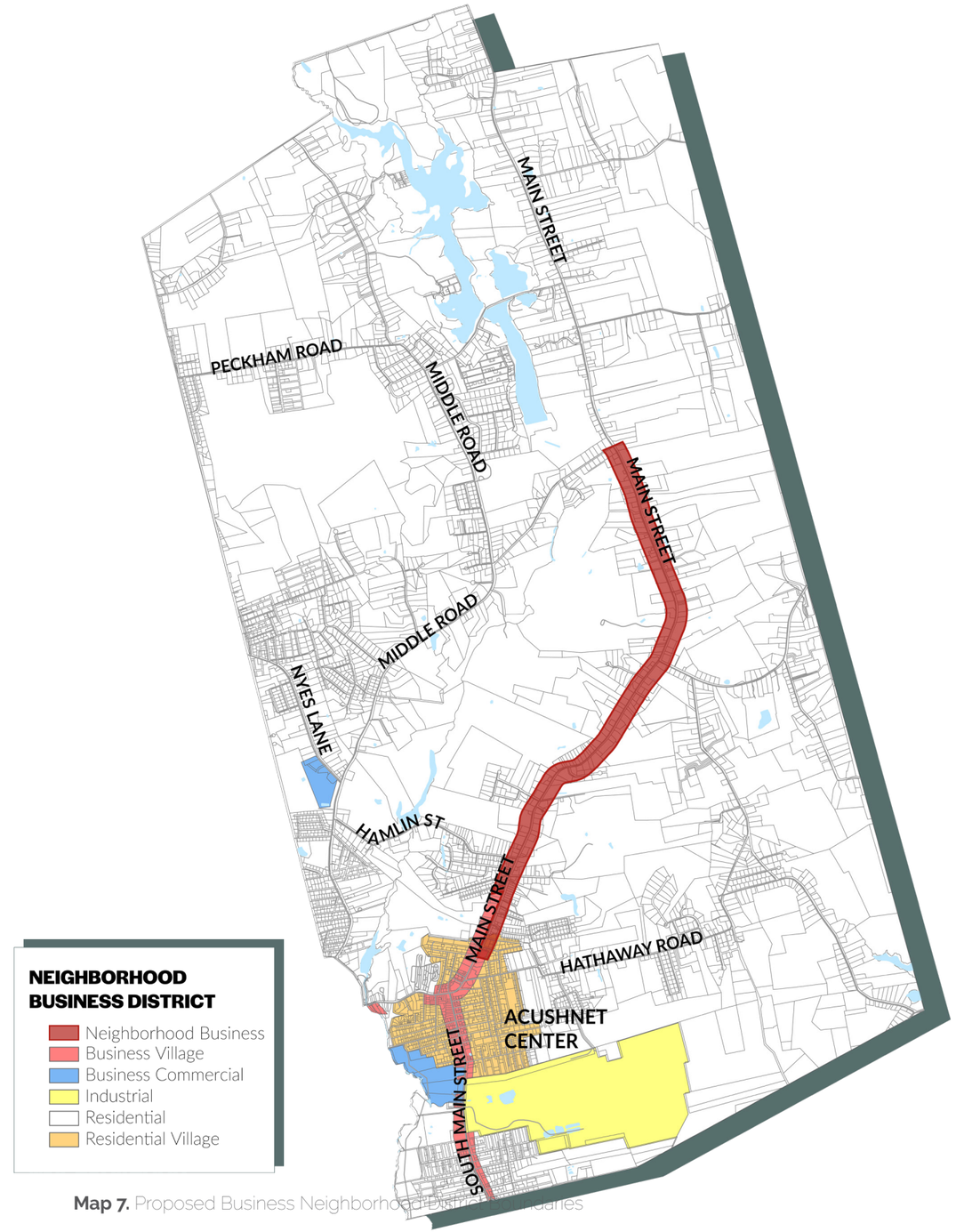
Responsible Parties: Planning Board, Selectboard, By-Law Committee, Town Planner, Building Inspector

Case Study: The Town of Easton commissioned a study in 2018 to develop the Queset Commercial District. The Town sought a mixed-use district that provided a walkable, vibrant, maintained built landscape that directly benefited nearby residential neighborhoods.

Discussions with the Master Plan Committee and survey results revealed the need – and desire – to expand small business opportunities in Acushnet. The Town of Acushnet may consider expanding the Business Village District or create a new Business Neighborhood (BN) District that cultivates a neighborhood-sensitive design.

The South Main Street area is home to a small commercial corridor with several restaurants including Blue Point Restaurant, Dunkin Donuts, and other establishments. The existing commercial corridor is also near Town offices, the post office, as well as local banking institutions. The zoning in this area requires a minimum of 10,000 square foot lots and 60 feet of frontage. Setback requirements detail standard dimensions with no exceptions for residential abutters. Simply expanding the Business Village District provides little protection for existing neighborhoods.

The MPC discussed the proposal of a new Business Neighborhood District, which would extend from the existing Business Village District to Middle Road and Main Street. This area is currently zoned Residence A, which requires 60,000 square foot lots and 150 feet on frontage. The Business Village District allows all uses under Residence A, including multi-family



Map 7. Proposed Business Neighborhood District Boundaries

housing for the elderly (55 years and older) or as allowed under MGL Ch. 40B.

Expanding zoning for small business development, allows Acushnet to support business-friendly redevelopment with frontage focused along Main Street. The BN would mirror many uses and dimensional restrictions of the Business Village District. Importantly, though, the BN could integrate buffers to protect existing residential abutters. For example, a lot that abuts an existing residential parcel from the rear would require an increased rear setback of about 25 feet with recommendations for landscaping and drainage. Given that the proposed Business Neighborhood District would be carved out of the existing Residence A District, multi-family housing may be a compatible use by right or special permit.



ED-1.2: Review current zoning to determine barriers to specific types of development and industries in the Downtown.

Priority: High

Responsible Parties: Economic Development Coordinator, Select Board

Case Study: In 2016, the City of Attleboro revisited allowed uses in their Industrial Zone to facilitate development. Rezoning enabled their Redevelopment Authority to sell industrial property to Sturdy Memorial Hospital to pave the way for a multi-million dollar expansion of the campus.

In the last several years, Acushnet saw a 118% growth in new business licenses (2019-2023) with a peak of 30 new licenses in 2022 alone. These trends show that Acushnet has a latent and growing small business community. The Town can support small business and commercial activity by facilitating development throughzoning and permitting. The following explores the commercial and industrial districts in Town and identifies strategies to increase small business and community development.



Photo 10. Acushnet Creamery. Source: Fun 107

Small Business Development

Surveys and conversations during the Master Plan process revealed interest in small, local businesses, and restaurants. Both the Business Village (BV) and Business Commercial (BC) Districts allow flexibility in development due to minimum lot size requirements. Given denser land use patterns within both districts, dimensional standards may impede new development and redevelopment of existing sites. For example, the BV District requires that all parcels unable to connect to municipal water or sewer should have a 45,000 sqft minimum lot area with 100 ft. of approved road frontage. However, water and sewer connections are limited in Acushnet. As a result, attracting small business development to designated commercial districts is challenging.

The Town should also revisit Title V regulations, which do not set minimum lot size requirements for properties served by septic systems. Instead, Title V defers to the expertise of engineers to determine septic systems based on several factors including anticipated use, number of bedrooms, and a percolation test. In fact, the only dimensional requirement Title V establishes includes minimum setbacks for subsurface wastewater disposal systems.

Lastly, parking requirements may present one of the more significant barriers to small business development. The BV District requires parking in the front setback of any building and requires a special permit for shared parking between lots. The BC District adheres to the General Parking requirements determined by proposed use (Table X).

Acushnet's general parking requirements indicate parking is ideally placed off-street, in the side or rear yards. Unfortunately, off street parking is very limited in both the BV and BC Districts, making it difficult for retailers to meet these requirements without requesting a variance.

Use	Parking Minimum	Factor
Commercial/Retail	1 Space	200 SF
Medical/Dental Office	1 Space	200 SF
Restaurant	2 Space	3 Seats, plus 1 per employee

Table 5. General Parking Requirements

Light Manufacturing

Light manufacturing is allowed in all districts in Acushnet either by special permit or by-right. Trends in recent years show a rising demand for locally made artisan crafts. In many communities, these artisan activities may be considered light manufacturing that are characterized by little impact to the public realm and neighborhood, including little to no noise, fumes, or traffic. Activities fitting that description might include breweries, bakeries, woodworking shops, and coffee roasters.

According to the Town's definitions, light manufacturing "involves the processing, assembly or the packaging of previously prepared or finished materials without the use of heavy machinery, completely housed within a structure of less than 10,000 sq. ft. which employs 10 or fewer people having a capital investment of no more than 1 million dollars and produces no discernible disturbing agents beyond the property lines."[1] It is possible that Acushnet's stipulations for employment numbers and investment caps may deter entrepreneurs from taking advantage of this zoning. This is particularly important as small business continues to grow in the region and expands to new communities.

Industrial Development

Acushnet has two distinct industrial districts which are combined in the zoning map. Industrial Districts (I-1 and I-2) allow different uses, but are applied on the same areas in Town. The Town may consider consolidating these districts in the bylaw, particularly given that the I-2 District provides no guidance for dimensional standards.



Photo 11. Town of Acushnet

ED Goal 2: *Focus economic development to remaining areas in Town that are suitable for mixed-use, commercial, and industrial growth.*

Like many communities in southeastern Massachusetts, Acushnet is facing a fiscal cliff due to the rising cost of services associated with municipal activities. Importantly, Acushnet has a 4.72 split tax rate where commercial and industrial activities are intended to bear the greater tax burden. However, Acushnet's residents account for over 84% of the Town's tax levy. Industrial and commercial contributions to the tax levy account for less than 6%, indicating a small market. Industrial, Business, and Commercial zones account for less than 5% of total landmass in Acushnet. As such, the Town struggles to support industrial growth due to limited inventory of land zoned for industrial use.

In expanding the Residential Village and creating the Business Village Neighborhood Districts, Acushnet is creating opportunity for small businesses. In addition, by expanding Industrial Zoning on Town-owned parcels, the Town is enabling industrial development. Furthermore, the Town should continue to identify land appropriate for commercial and potential industrial use.

ID	Strategy	Priority	Complementary Strategies
ED-2.1	Assess vacant, underutilized, and suspected Brownfield sites and pursue remediation at critical parcels in Town.	Low	H-1.5 WRMS-7.5
ED-2.2	Expand the Industrial Zoning District in the southeast section of Town.	High	TC-1.2 WRMS-7.5

ED-2.1: Assess vacant, underutilized, and suspected Brownfield sites and pursue remediation at critical parcels in Town.

Priority: Low

Responsible Parties: Selectboard, Planning Board, ConCom, Town Planner

Case Study: The City of Taunton recieved $200,000 from the Executive Office of Economic Development (EOED) under the FY23 Brownfields Remediation Program. The City utilized the funds to pursue cleanup and remediation at 5-7 Nickerson Ave, the site of the former Stove Factory. A known brownfield, the City took the property by tax title in 2013, and since targeted this site for future mixed-use development.

The New Bedford Harbor is Acushnet's only known brownfield; however, residents reported areas in Town that may benefit from assessments and potential remediation. In 1988, the State of Massachusetts passed legislation to support the cleanup and redevelopment of brownfield properties. According to the State, brownfield properties are often vacant or underutilized and have a history of commercial or industrial use. The State's list of brownfield sites is not comprehensive given that private property owners do not pursue assessment fearing the costs of remediation. Residents pinpointed various sites in Town that are either vacant or have suspected contaminants. The Town should consider this list and explore conducting outreach to private owners to pursue assessments and remediation, if needed.



Photo 12. (Right) Salt Marshes off Beech Street. Source: BUzzards Bay Coalition

- Riverside Auto Wrecking
- Old Titleist Parking Lot (River Road)
- Former Dump (Beech Street)
- End of Rock Street
- 157 Main South Street (Former Gas Station and Auto Service Center)

Rehabilitated sites, whether classified as brownfields, add to the inventory of commercial, residential, and light industrial tax-generating developments. For example, several survey respondents mentioned the former Gas Station at the corner of Slocum and South Main Street. This site may present potential contamination, but if remediated could serve as a much-needed parking area for small businesses in the Village Center. Financial support for sites classified as brownfields is available from MassDEP and EOED. Clean up efforts upon vacant and underutilized sites not only foster positive development, but they improve the look and feel of their given neighborhood.

ED-2.2: Expand the Industrial Zoning District in the southeast section of Town.

Priority: High

Responsible Parties: Planning Board, Selectboard, By-Law Committee, Town Planner, Building Inspector, Conservation Commission

Acushnet holds a very small Inventory of industrial zoned land, limiting the Town's potential tax revenue and employment opportunities. The Town should consider areas that have few wetlands, low environmental impact, and access potential. The Town identified areas in the northwest and southeast for potential industrial or commercial expansion through rezoning.

The MPC revisited goals from the 2008 Master Plan, prioritizing new development in the southeast portions of Town with an existing industrial footprint. Currently, the major industrial employer in Acushnet is PJ Keating, a commercial paving supplier and construction services company. The 2008 Master Plan identified the parcels surrounding PJ Keating as potential sites for industrial rezoning and development. The parcels directly west of PJ Keating present ecological and logistical challenges. Covering 120 acres, the parcels are covered by 70% wetlands, lack water and sewer infrastructure, as well as road access. Additionally, the parcels have deeded protections under Chapter 97 which would require a 2/3 vote in the legislature to amend. Surrounding parcels may provide additional felxibility.

To provide direct road access, the Town should pursue the extension of Route 240. The previous Master Plan (2008) detailed the potential extension of Route 240 into Acushnet from Fairhaven, diverting all freight traffic away from local roads. However, the path to state/federal approval and construction is challenging.

With limited growth potential, the Town should continue to explore areas for new developmet opportunities and pursue rezoning where appropriate.



Endnotes

1 Town of Acushnet General Bylaws
Year: 2018 URL: https://www.acushnet.ma.us/sites/g/files/vyhlif2721/f/uploads/2020_bylaw_book_update.pdf

5

Cultural Resources

Introduction

Crafting an inventory of cultural resources and historic assets, while exploring ways to support, enhance, and protect them, serves as a reminder that cultivating a sense of place is critical to a community's identity.

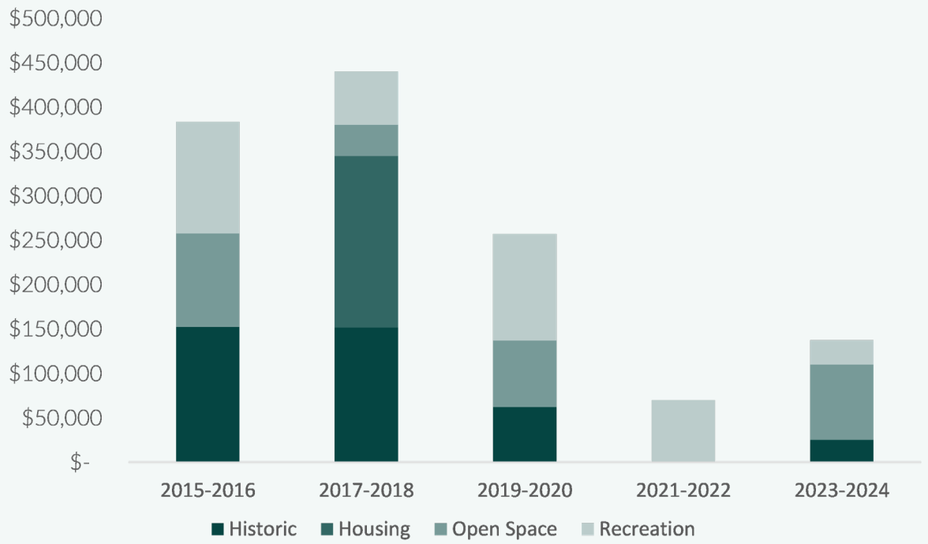
Existing Conditions

Acushnet is a community rich in history and cultural assets, including historic buildings, museums, and local events. Though limited, local events in town cultivate and harness the agrarian history beloved by residents.

Despite enthusiasm for existing activities, public engagement through the Master Plan revealed that the Town could do more to cultivate a sense of community, support local events, and highlight the assets that make Acushnet special. Feedback through the Master Plan process revealed that residents sought more cultural activities in Town including food truck and restaurant nights, seasonal concert series, and open street events.

Acushnet is home to various historic buildings – even a shared Historic District with New Bedford; however, awareness and investment in these facilities is limited. Close to 50% of residents reported interest in wayfinding to highlight historical landmarks throughout the community.

Acushnet is committed to supporting community efforts, evident in its adoption of the Community Preservation Act (CPA) in 20XX. The CPA is a surcharge of not more than 3% of the tax levy against property which can then be used for open space protection, historic preservation, affordable housing, and outdoor recreation. Over the last several years, Acushnet's utilization of CPA funds slowed; however, it remains an important tool to support revitalization, rehabilitation, and support of historic and cultural events.



	2015-2016	2017-2018	2019-2020	2021-2022	2023-2024
Recreation	$125,680	$60,000	$120,000	$70,000	$27,000
Open Space	$105,000	$35,000	$75,000	-	$85,000
Housing	-	$193,000	-	-	-
Historic	$152,500	$151,893	$62,000	-	$25,195

Figure 16. CPA Spending

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Apple-Peach Festival: The longest running event in Acushnet, the Apple-Peach Festival was first held in 1979. The event celebrates the Fall Harvest with music, food, and fresh fruits.

Summer Concert Series: Hosted by the Acushnet Public Library, the Summer Concert Series in increasingly well attended by residents and nearby visitors.

Acushnet Car Cruise: The annual event is sponsored by the Town and takes over the Parting Ways area around Town Hall. The Town closes Main Street to allow hundreds of people to check out classic cars on the street, in the parking lots of the Town Hall, St. Xavier Church, and Parting Ways.

HISTORIC ASSETS

Long Plain Friends Meetinghouse/ Quaker Church: Located at 1341 Main Street, the Long Plain Friends Meetinghouse is the oldest Quaker Church in the region. Built in 1759, it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places for its religious, architectural, and community planning significance.

Long Plain School/Museum: Located at 1203 Main Street, the Long Plain School is a historic school building. Built in 1875, the building went though numerous expansions and today serves as the Long Plain Museum. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Perry Hill Church: Established by a group of parishoners from the First Christian Church of North Fairhaven, the Perry Hill Church was built in 1951 at 39 Perry Hill Road. The Acushnet Historic Commission pursued renovations in 2012.

Head of the River Historic District: Shared by Acushnet and New Bedford at the edge of Main Street, the District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2009. The District's period of significance spans 1750-1959 and contains 38 historic buildings.



Photo 15. 2023 Apple Peach Festival. Source: SouthCoast Today

Goals and Strategies

CR Goal 1: Preserve Acushnet's historic properties and expand the public's knowledge of their importance.

CR-1.1: Explore funding opportunities to improve facilities at Perry Hill Church and the Long Plain Friends Meetinghouse/Quaker Church.

CR-1.2: Work with the Library, COA, and School Department to expand historical education programming.

CR-1.3: Research funding opportunities to implement the 2008 Master Plan improvements for the Apple-Peach Festival operations.

CR-1.4: Formally adopt the shared Historic District with New Bedford.

CR Goal 2: Protect and promote Acushnet's rural, cultural, scenic, and historical qualities and assets.

CR-2.1: Develop creative solutions to enhance Town programming, such as the Summer Concert Series.

CR Goal 1: *Preserve Acushnet's historic properties and expand the public's knowledge of their importance.*

The Town of Acushnet is comprised of numerous historic properties that are important to its cultural fabric. Increasing the public's awareness of local historic buildings will enable the Town to pursue and allocate funds to their preservation. The Town of Acushnet has two buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Long Plain Friends Meetinghouse/ Quaker Church and Long Plain School/Museum as well as one Historic District - the Head of the River Historic District - which is a shared historic district with the City of New Bedford. These buildings, along with other historic properties in Acushnet, such as the Perry Hill Church, are important facets of the town's character and history. The Town should seek to preserve these properties as a way of honoring Acushnet's history.

ID	STRATEGY	PRIORITY	COMPLEMENTARY STRATEGIES
CR-1.1	Explore funding opportunities to improve facilities at Perry Hill Church and the Long Plain Friends Meetinghouse/ Quaker Church.	Medium	CR-2`1
CR-1.2	Work with the Library, COA, and School Department to expand historical education programming.	Medium	CR-1.4, CR-2.1
CR-1.3	Research funding opportunities to implement the 2008 Master Plan improvements for the Apple-Peach Festival operations.	Medium	CR-2.1
CR-1.4	Formally adopt the shared Historic District with New Bedford.	Medium	CR-2.1

CR-1.1: Explore funding opportunities to improve facilities at Perry Hill Church and the Long Plain Friends Meetinghouse/ Quaker Church.

Priority: Medium

Responsible Parties: Historical Commission, Community Preservation Committee, Planning Board, Town Planner, Board of Selectmen

Perry Hill Church and the Long Plain Friends Meetinghouse/Quaker Church are two of the most important historic properties in Acushnet. As the oldest church building in Southeastern Massachusetts, the Town should carefully maintain and pursue improvements to ensure the preservation and functionality of the Long Plain Friends Meetinghouse. Similarly, Perry Hill Church is the final remaining vernacular Greek Revival church in Acushnet.

The Town should explore funding opportunities to improve facilities at both locations.

Program	Organization	Description
Preservation Projects Fund	Massachusetts Historic Commission	Provides funding for various pre-development, development, and acquisition projects for buildings listed on the state historic register. Eligible activities include things such as building preservation, stabilization, and restoration.
Community Preservation Act	Town of Acushnet	Acushnet has adopted the Community Preservation Act, which is overseen by the Acushnet Community Preservation Committee. In the historic preservation realm, CPA funds can be used to acquire historic properties, preserve, rehabilitate, and restore them. Funding cannot be used to create or support historic properties.
Cultural Facilities Fund	Mass Cultural Council	Provides grants to cultural organizations and municipalities that own cultural facilities to support planning and development projects for cultural facilities across Massachusetts. The funding can be used for acquisition, construction, repair, renovation, rehabilitation, other capital improvements or maintenance of a cultural facility, conducting a planning and feasibility assessment for a project, or to conduct a System Replacement Plan, which is a 20-year capital needs assessment

CR-1.2: Work with the Library, COA, and School Department to expand historical education programming.

Priority: Medium

Responsible Parties: Library, COA, School Department

Case Study: The Concord Museum, funded through the Mass Cultural Council, works with local schools to put on historically relevant education programs on site and at participating institutions.

During the public engagement process for this Plan, residents expressed interest in having historical education programming available in the town so residents could learn about the town's origins and deep history. The Town should work with the Library, Council on Aging, and the School Department to expand their historical educational programming around local Acushnet history. This could include local history workshops at the Library and Council on Aging or incorporating local Acushnet history into the school curriculum. The Town could explore leading a weekly lecture series at the Library or Council on Aging, discussing important historic events in Acushnet history. The Town may explore grant opportunities to fund these activities through State cultural grants, such as the Mass Cultural Council, or private foundations.

CR-1.3: Research funding opportunities to implement the 2008 Master Plan improvements for the Apple-Peach Festival operations.

Priority: Medium

Responsible Parties: Event Organizers, Historical Commission, Community Preservation Committee

The Apple-Peach Festival is the most significant annual cultural event in Acushnet - 2025 marked the 44th year of the Apple Peach Festival. A group of Acushnet residents founded the Festival in 1979 to celebrate the fall harvest, featuring fresh fruit harvested by local farmers. The festival takes place at the Long Plain Museum each year on a Saturday and Sunday in September. The Sunday of the festival also included a parade that starts at Pope Park and culminates in a festival at the Long Plain Museum.

The 2008 Acushnet Master Plan identified improvements to the festival; however, few were implemented. Specifically, the 2008 Plan advocated for:

- Improved parking and a traffic plan to reduce traffic congestion around the Festival;
- Improving the septic system; and
- Revisiting legal protections against any potential liabilities.

Currently, people can park in one of two fields across the street from the festival, or park at the Acushnet Elementary School and take a shuttle over to the Festival. For bathrooms, there are portable restrooms, including handicap accessible portable restrooms, located at the entrance of the festival grounds. Since the Festival has yet to undergo any of the improvements mentioned in this Plan, the Town should research funding opportunities that would allow them to implement some or all these improvements to the Festival.

CR-1.4: Formally adopt the shared Historic District with New Bedford.

Priority: Medium

Responsible Parties: Planning Board, Historical Commission

Acushnet should work to formally adopt the Head of the River Historic District, which is a nationally registered historic district, shared with the City of New Bedford. Currently, the Head of the River Historic District is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, which is a federal designation, but it is not formally adopted at the local level. The District is listed in the National Register because of its planning, community development, and architectural significance, with a period of significance between 1750-1959. Additionally, the District contains thirty-eight contributing historic buildings between Acushnet and New Bedford.

A National Register listing is a good first step in acknowledging an area as historically significant, but there are no restrictions regarding physical improvements. While this allows property owners freedom and flexibility to redevelop or update properties, it can hinder the preservation of historic buildings and the overall character of the historic district. Alongside recognizing the area's importance, a National Register listing gives the opportunity for owners of income-producing properties to get federal tax incentives for certain rehabilitation projects.

Formally adopting the District at the local level will allow Acushnet to ensure the preservation of the area and the contributing properties within it. The oversight of the District would become the responsibility of the Acushnet Historical Commission. The Commission would then have the authority to review any proposed additions or changes to the exterior of buildings within the District. Additionally, the Historical Commission would have the opportunity to prepare Historic District Design Guidelines to guide properties in how to respect the historic character of the District.



Photo 13. Stone Bridge, Acushnet. Courtesy of the New Bedford Whaling Museum

Prior to the District being listed in the National Register, the oldest house in Acushnet - the Summerton House - which was located within the District, was demolished. The home was located on the Acushnet Cemetery, and it was also the first home with a gambrel roof in Massachusetts. Pursuing a formal adoption of the Head of the River Historic District will allow the Town to have further protections over properties like this and prevent losses of historic homes.

In line with Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40C, a historic district can be locally adopted by a two-thirds vote at a Town Meeting.

CR Goal 2: *Preserve Acushnet's historic properties and expand the public's knowledge of their importance.*

Acushnet's identity centers around its agrarian heritage, industrial past, and its natural beauty. Retaining Acushnet's identity requires the preservation of historic and cultural assets as well as natural resources, The OSRP – completed alongside the Master Plan, addresses ways in which the Town can protect its natural resources. Promoting the town's identity requires the cultivation of events and amenities that speak directly to the assets that residents value in the Acushnet Community. Residents speak highly of the events that take place in town; however, folks would like to see more put on in their community. During the public engagement process, respondents highlighted their support for food festivals (74%), open streets events (70%), and seasonal concert series (67%). All of these events represent an opportunity for the Town to expand community connections while simultaneously expressing the values, history, and culture of Acushnet.

ID	Strategy	Priority	Complementary Strategies
CR-2.1	Develop creative solutions to enhance Town programming, such as the Summer Concert Series.	Medium	OSRP-2.1, OSRP-1.4

CR-2.1: Develop creative solutions to enhance Town programming, such as the Summer Concert Series.

Priority: Medium

Responsible Parties: Library, COA, School Department

The Town should explore solutions to enhance current cultural programming, such as the Summer Concert Series. A popular event among residents, the series runs for ten weeks through the summer, beginning in June and ending in August. The concerts take place under the pavilion at the Acushnet Public Library. Feedback through the survey and public meetings revealed that residents are concerned about public safety along Middle Road during the event due to high parking demand.

For a safer - and enjoyable - experience, the Town should explore solutions to improve the current state of traffic and parking at the Summer Concert Series. Currently, attendees park at the Library and overflow parking is available along Middle Road for the Summer Concert Series. Residents expressed interest in improving the parking accommodations at the current location of the Summer Concert Series or finding a new location to host the concert series.

One option to improve this would be for the Town to work with the Fairhaven Acushnet Land Preservation Trust which recently acquired Keith's Farm in 2025. Keith's Farm represents an opportunity for an event space that is connected to open space, in a community that is limited with the latter. Another option would be for the Town to implement a shuttle program to transport people to the Summer Concert Series, similar to the shuttle that is available to transport people to the Apple-Peach Festival each year.



Photo 14. Acushnet Public Library

6

Services & Facilities

Introduction

A municipality's primary responsibility is to serve its residents. Reviewing the quantity and quality of services ensures a more efficient and sustainable community management model.

Existing Conditions

The Town of Acushnet employs 594 full-time, part-time, seasonal, and temporary staff across various departments in Town. The map highlights the location of all Town-owned facilities, including the departments housed within them.

Generally, residents are satisfied with the condition and accessibility of facilities. However, focused discussions with Town leadership revealed increasing staffing shortages, most critical for Public Safety.

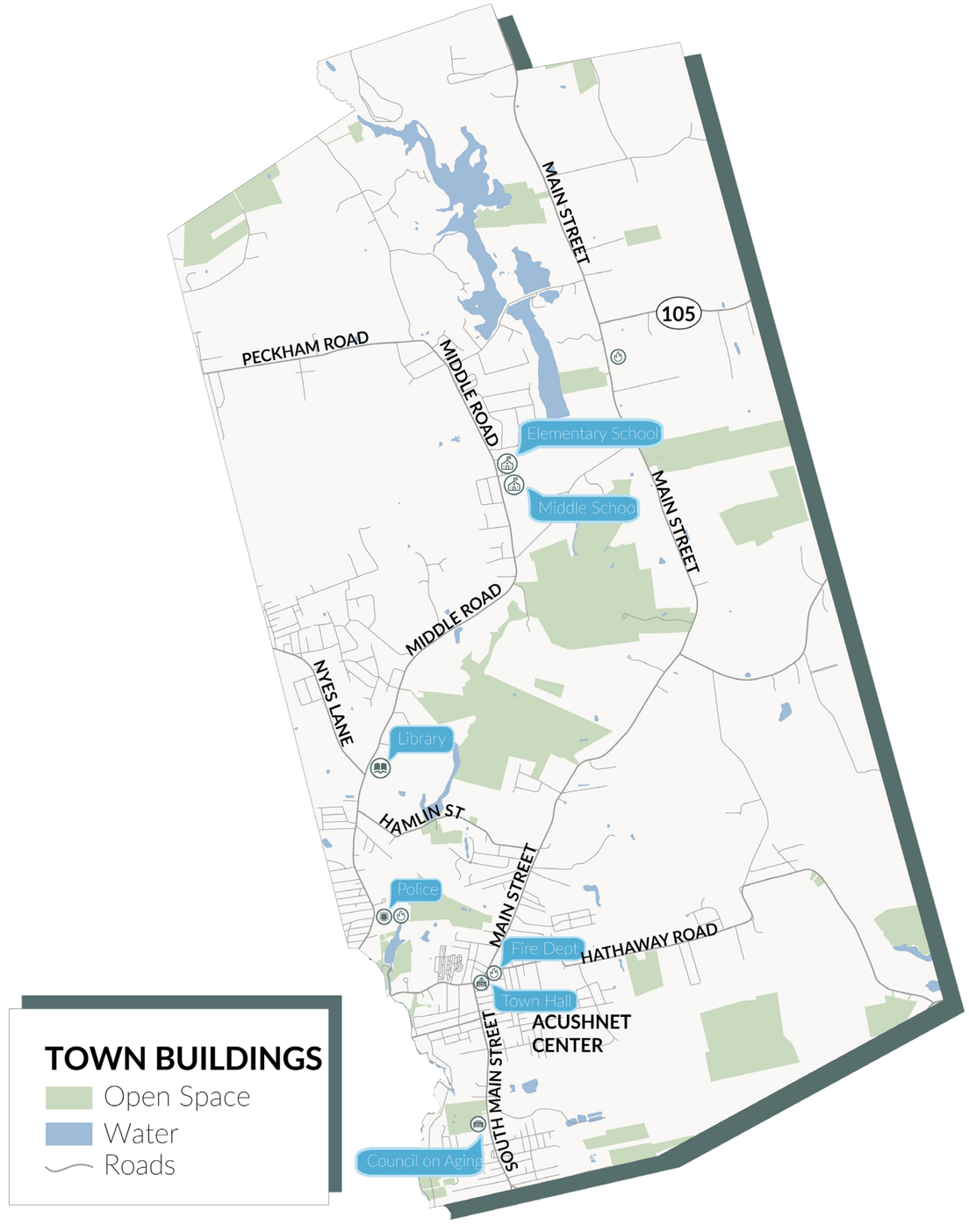
TOWN HALL

The following departments are located in Town Hall at 122 Main Street:

- Planning Board
- Board of Health
- Department of Public Works
- Conservation Commission
- Building Department
- Zoning Board of Appeals

PARTING WAYS BUILDING

- Planning Board
- Board of Health
- Department of Public Works
- Conservation Commission
- Building Department
- Zoning Board of Appeals





COUNCIL ON AGING

The COA and Senior Community Center are major resources for residents over 50 years old in Acushnet. The Department provides a variety of offerings for eligible residents in order to meet their needs, which comes in the form of holistic programming. The COA also aids with valuable local, State, and Federal resources, including, but not limited to, Food stamps, fuel assistance, MassHealth, Medicare, Medicaid, and meals.

LIBRARY

The Acushnet Public Library was built in 2015 and serves to provide programming to residents of all ages in Acushnet. Programming includes topic specific clubs, activities for children, presentations, outings, and events, such as the Summer Concert Series.

SCHOOLS

Acushnet has two public schools serving 937 students (2023-2024) from Pre-K to 8th Grade:

- Acushnet Elementary School (Pre-K to 4th Grade)
- Albert F. Ford Middle School (5th Grade to 8th Grade)

HOUSING AUTHORITY

The Housing Authority currently manages two properties in Town. Presidential Terrance hosts 60 units for low-income elderly and non-elderly individuals and families. The Housing Authority also leases a house to the Department of Mental Health.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

The Acushnet Fire Department operates three fire stations in Town, Headquarters (Station 1), Long Plain (Station 2), and EMS (Station 3). As of December of 2025, Station 2 is not staffed. The Fire Department also provides residents with fire prevention and safety tips.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

A new headquarters was built for the Police Department in December of 2015.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

The Acushnet Department of Public Works (DPW) handles stormwater, wastewater treatment, water, and the highway department. The highway department is responsible for the maintenance of roadways, including bridge repairs, painting street markings, drainage, roadway maintenance, roadside mowing, and street sweeping.

DPW is also responsible for rubbish and recycling, which is located at 700 Middle Road.



Photo 16. Parting Ways Building

Goals and Strategies

SF Goal 1: Enhance services and support an efficient and fiscally responsible government.

SF-1.1: Update infrastructure on critical roads with planned improvements.

SF-1.2: Complete utility work on South Main Street prior to repaving and ownership takeover.

SF-1.3: Support staffing increases across key departments, including the Fire, Police, and Planning Department.

SF Goal 2: Replace, modernize, and improve aging Town buildings.

SF-2.1: Pursue development of an ADA Self-Evaluation & Transition Plan.

SF-2.2: Prioritize and seek funding for needed improvements at Acushnet Elementary School and Ford Middle School.

SF-2.3: Develop a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to support long term infrastructure goals and consider future financial responsibilities.

SF Goal 1: *Enhance services and support an efficient and fiscally responsible government.*

The Town of Acushnet provides services that require investment, most importantly staffing and infrastructure. The challenges faced by aging and deteriorating roadway, sewer, and water infrastructure can place significant financial stress on a small community like Acushnet. Previous chapters highlight the critical connection between strategic economic growth and expanding water and sewer infrastructure to support new tax revenue. Planning for the maintenance, repair, and replacement across major infrastructure positively impacts the economy, community, and public safety.

A municipality's efficiency and fiscal responsibility are defined by quality personnel. Investing in qualified and sufficient staff is critical to meet the full needs of municipal government services. As Acushnet continues to grow, it is critical to ensure adequate infrastructure capacity and high-quality services for all residents.

ID	Strategy	Priority	Complementary Strategies
SR-1.1	Update infrastructure on critical roads with planned improvements.	High	SF-1.2, SF-2.3, WRMS-7.2, WRMS-7.5
SR-1.2	Complete utility work on South Main Street prior to repaving and ownership takeover.	High	SF-1.2, SF-2.3, WRMS-7.2, WRMS-7.5
SR-1.3	Support staffing increases across key departments, including the Fire, Police, and Planning Department.	Medium	CR-2.1

SF-1.1: Update infrastructure on critical roads with planned improvements.

Priority: High

Responsible Parties: DPW, Board of Selectman, W&S Commissioners, Planning Board

Acushnet's water and sewer network is solely located in downtown Acushnet, leaving most residents with septic systems as their only option. Due to the limited water and sewer infrastructure, commercial and industrial developers have limited opportunities for growth in other areas in town.

In September 2025, the Town applied for $38,000 in technical assistance funding through the MassDOT Complete Streets Program for the development of a Tier II Prioritization Plan. Funding from the Complete Streets Program will enable the Town to make necessary safety improvements for bicyclists and pedestrians, road width expansions to reduce congestion, and other aesthetic improvements. Master Plan survey respondents noted multiple high priority locations, including:

- Slocum Street;
- South Main Street;
- Main Street/South Main Street intersection, and;
- Mendall Road and Meghan's Way intersection.

In addition, the Town should consider implementing critical infrastructure updates to public utilities alongside these planned improvements to reduce costs and to eliminate the need for future projects. Water and sewer expansion will help promote economic development and residential cost savings by reducing barriers for developers and providing adequate water access to residents.

Program	Description
State Revolving Fund Program (SRF)	Offers affordable financing options to cities, towns, and public water utilities to improve water infrastructure and drinking water safety to meet federal and state water quality requirements for wastewater treatment plants and collection systems. Makes loans available to homeowners with failed septic systems in communities with community septic management programs.
MassWorks Infrastructure Program	Provides the largest and most flexible source of capital funds to municipalities public infrastructure projects that support and accelerate housing production, spur economic development, and create jobs throughout the Commonwealth.
Section 319 Nonpoint Source (NPS) Competitive Grant Program	Provides grants for implementation projects that address the prevention, control, and abatement of NPS pollution. Eligible projects include implementation measures that address, target, and/or evaluate the prevention, control, and abatement of NPS pollution.
Section 604(b) Water Quality Management Planning Grant Program	Offers funding to help municipalities conduct watershed analyses to identify and assess existing or potential water quality issues. Funding is provided for the development of water quality protection or restoration planning projects.
Public Works	Funding supports distressed communities to update, expand, and upgrade infrastructure that can demonstrate project impacts to retain or attract new industry and josbs, diversify local economies, generate local investment.
Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)	Community Development Block Grants provide funding for a variety of activities that benefit underrepresented groups, including water and sewer expansion.
Water & Waste Disposal Loan & Grant Program	Provides funding to support clean and reliable drinking water systems, sanitary sewage disposal, sanitary solid waste disposal, and storm water drainage to households and businesses in eligible rural areas. Managed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

SF-1.2: Complete utility work on South Main Street prior to repaving and ownership takeover.

Priority: High

Responsible Parties: DPW, Board of Selectman, W&S Commissioners, Planning Board, State Representatives

MassDOT is currently working on a $13,000,000 roadway improvement project along the portion of South Main Street between Main Street and Alden Road. These improvements include pavement upgrades as well as sidewalk reconstruction and installation.

Upon completion of the project, MassDOT plans to turn over the maintenance responsibilities of South Main Street to the Town of Acushnet. Given the state of the ongoing construction, the Town should consider concurrently expanding and upgrading water and sewer lines along South Main Street to reduce costs and eliminate the need for a water expansion project in the future.



Photo 17. View on South Main Street

SF-1.3: Support staffing increases across key departments, including the Fire, Police, and Planning Department.

Priority: Medium

Responsible Parties: Conservation Agent, Conservation Commission, Town Manager, Select Board

Case Study: The Towns of Yarmouth and Dennis established a regional CERT in 2002. Since then the team served at hurricane shelters and participated in disaster drills.

Acushnet relies on its municipal staff to provide essential services. Residents who responded to the Master Plan survey noted complaints for various public services, such as insufficient service for recycling and waste disposal, as well as limited hours at the Town Hall offices. Meetings with Department Heads also revealed key staffing deficiencies, particularly within the Police Department, Fire Department, and the Planning Department.

Police and Fire Departments require local allocations to increase staffing; however, communities may tap into volunteer networks to alleviate staffing shortages. Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) are grassroots groups of volunteers trained to assist in emergency situations within their communities. Established under the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), CERT programs serve to enhance community resilience and reduce the burden on professional emergency responders.[1] Pending availability of funding through FEMA, CERT initiatives, particularly on the regional level, are eligible for reimbursement based financial support.

The SRPEDD Evacuation Study highlighted regionalization. "A municipality with one or two dedicated CERT volunteers is extremely limited in what it can accomplish, [however] if five municipalities have one or two each then together, they have a team that can be dedicated to the mission. Regionalization also lets municipalities pool their budgets and share assets. In some cases, regionalization can open grant opportunities not available to single municipalities. Response times within the region would also be improved compared to seeking mutual aid from other municipalities." Acushnet could be the catalyst to forming a regional CERT with neighboring municipalities.

Acushnet is open to creative approaches, including hiring part-time shared staff with other communities. The Town Planner is a shared position with Mattapoisett; however, demand for their time and full-time support is critical to this continued structure. To ensure high quality services and prepare for future growth, the Town should consider increasing full-time and part-time staff across its departments where possible.

SF Goal 2: *Replace, modernize, and improve aging Town buildings.*

Acushnet maintains approximately 23 town-owned facilities. These facilities range widely in age, from the Long Plain Friends Meeting House (constructed in 1800) to the Acushnet EMS Facility (constructed in 1997). Many of these buildings house the Town's essential public services and departments; however, most of the Town's building stock is more than 45 years old, and several facilities—including the Long Plain Museum and the Parting Ways Building—are exhibiting signs of aging.

As identified in Acushnet's 2020 Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Plan, prolonged cycles of flooding and drought, heavy precipitation, and increasingly frequent extreme weather events may place additional strain on aging municipal buildings and infrastructure in the future. The Town's older infrastructure should be updated and properly equipped to withstand emergency conditions.

The Town may consider pursuing various federal and state funding opportunities, such as the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program and the Commonwealth's MVP program. These resources can support projects such as building preservation, energy-efficiency upgrades, heating and cooling improvements, as well as targeted renovations and updates to general infrastructure. In 2013, Acushnet became a designated Green Community, which outlines ways to enhance energy efficiency and enables the Town to tap into funding for capital improvements. Over the last 10 years, the program awarded Acushnet over $1.5 million in capital improvements across schools and municipal buildings.

ID	Strategy	Priority	Complementary Strategies
SF-2.1	Pursue development of an ADA Self-Evaluation & Transition Plan.	Medium	CR-1.1
SF-2.2	Prioritize and seek funding for needed improvements at Acushnet Elementary School and Ford Middle School.	Medium	SF-2.1, SF-2.3
SF-2.3	Develop a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to support long term infrastructure goals and consider future financial responsibilities.	Medium	SF-1.1, SF-1.2, SF-2.2

SF-2.1: Pursue development of an ADA Self-Evaluation & Transition Plan.

Priority: Medium

Responsible Parties: Planning Board, ADA Cooridinator, School Department, COA, Library, Historical Commission

Case Study: In 2024, the Massachusetts Office on Disability awarded the Town of Mansfield $40,000 to complete a town-wide ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan. Today, Mansfield is eligible for implementation funds to complete projects outline in their Plan.

ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plans are a municipality's way of diagnosing problems with accessibility and making a "plan of care" to correct them. Though required by federal law (Americans with Disabilities Act 1990), many communities like Acushnet, lack a town-wide Self-Evaluation and Transition plan - which actually provides protection from liability for failure to comply with accessibility requirements.

Residents were largely satisfied with the condition and accessibility of Acushnet's municipal facilities. However, some Master Plan survey respondents indicated various concerns, such as the lack of wheelchair accessible ramps, elevators, and adequate indoor air quality, as well as the overall age and condition of various municipally owned buildings.

The Town moved many departments to the Parting Ways Building in 20XX which provides greater access than Town Hall. The Town should continue to make independent improvements in order to enhance competitive future applications. The Town should apply for funding from the Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD) to develop an ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan. Acushnet is also a CPA community and should consider allocating funds to this effort to make any grant requests more competitive.



Photo 18. Senior Center

Funded by the Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD), the Self-Evaluation and Transition plan is the first step to making both physical improvements and changes to the provision of services that ensure all Acushnet residents can access the broadest range of community resources. Importantly, completing the Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan unlocks capital improvement funds that communities can apply directly to identified deficiencies.

SF-2.2: Prioritize and seek funding for needed improvements at Acushnet Elementary School and Ford Middle School.

Priority: Medium

Responsible Parties: Superintendent of Schools, School Committee, Town Administrator

The Acushnet School Department is responsible for two facilities: Acushnet Elementary School and Ford Middle School. Due to age, both facilities are in need of repairs and replacements to continue providing adequate services to students. Some key projects the School Department would like to tackle in the future include (in no particular order):

- Boilers replacement at both the Elementary and Middle Schools;
- Boilers' drain replacement;
- HVAC Decarbonization and transition to electric heat;
- Elementary School roof repair;
- Underground oil tank maintenance and site repaving;
- Moisture sealing on various surfaces of both schools; and
- Schools' heating system improvements.

The Master Plan Survey reflected the need to provide maintenance to school facilities. Only 40% of survey respondents felt satisfied with the condition and accessibility across both schools. Open responses within the survey mentioned concerns of poor ventilation and the presence of mold. As State and Federal sources of funding become more difficult to procure, the School Department and the Town should consider developing long term planning objectives for these needed facility and service improvements through future planning activities.



Photo 19. Acushnet Public Schools

In the past, the Town successfully applied for grant funding to pursue improvements. For example, the Green Communities Program awarded partial funding to electrify heating in both schools. However, additional funds required to complete the project failed a debt exclusion vote at Town Meeting in April 2025. In the future, the Town should deploy engagement strategies to gather resident buy-in to approve funding, while challenging misinformation surrounding funding sources.

Another source of funding that the School Department may consider in the future includes the Green School Works Implementation Grant. This program covers a variety of school decarbonization projects, including heat pump conversions, photovoltaics, and ventilation system upgrades, ranging from $50,000 - $5,000,000. Eligibility focuses on school districts with at least 40% of low-income students. As of 2025, only 36% of Acushnet students are considered low-income. The School Department should monitor this data to determine their future eligibility.

SF-2.3: Develop a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to support long term infrastructure goals and consider future financial responsibilities.

Priority: High

Responsible Parties: Selectboard, Finance Department, Town Administrator

Case Study: The Town of Mattapoisett adopted a Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Since then, the Town and its departments have followed a standard process to propose improvements and plan for expeditures capital projects.

Adopting a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) will enable Acushnet to proactively plan for future projects, developments, and maintenance of facilities. The Master Plan leads to numerous projects that often require significant investment, which can overwhelm a Town's budget. Town officials and the MPC sought a tool to coordinate the various projects and priorities over the long-term.

Many communities adopt a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to support the development and maintenance of the Capital Plan. The process anticipates the needs of aging facilities, equipment, and can even put aside monies into rainy day funds.

The Division of Local Services provides a **guide** to establish a Capital Improvement Program (CIP), beginning with the adoption of a bylaw at Town meeting to create the CIP Committee. At the outset, the Committee develops an inventory of existing capital assets and works with the Town's Finance Department to establish the Town's financial capacity to fund future capital improvements. In the months leading up to Annual Town Meeting, the CIP solicits, compiles, and evaluates project requests from all Town departments. The Committee considers the requests based on established criteria to determine project priority. Utilizing consistent criteria ensures a fair and transparent process; however, the Committee does have flexibility in prioritizing based on emergencies or available funding. In close collaboration with the Finance Department, the CIP develops a Financing Plan, meant to outline the many options available to municipalities to fund projects. This process culminates in the annual presentation of the Capital Program and Budget at Annual Town Meeting. Residents don't vote to fund projects; however, they vote to approve the Plan as developed, highlighting the ongoing proactive approach to maintaining facilities.



Photo 20. Fire Station

Capital Improvement Programs ensure that when a facility needs repair or replacement, Town government is not caught unaware or unprepared. Acushnet may go a step further and establish a Capital Stabilization Fund to pay for all or portions of projects in the CIP. The Town of Acushnet would benefit from such an initiative, particularly as the Town considers ways in which to grow commercial and industrial revenues.

Endnotes

1 Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) in Massachusetts
Year: 2024 Container: Mass.gov URL: https://www.mass.gov/info-details/community-emergency-response-team-cert-in-massachusetts



7

Transportation

Introduction

Transportation goes far beyond the motor vehicle and getting from point A to B. Communities are responsible for advocating and facilitating movement and connection across and beyond its boundaries to ensure residents of all ages and abilities have the freedom to move.

Existing Conditions

ROADWAYS

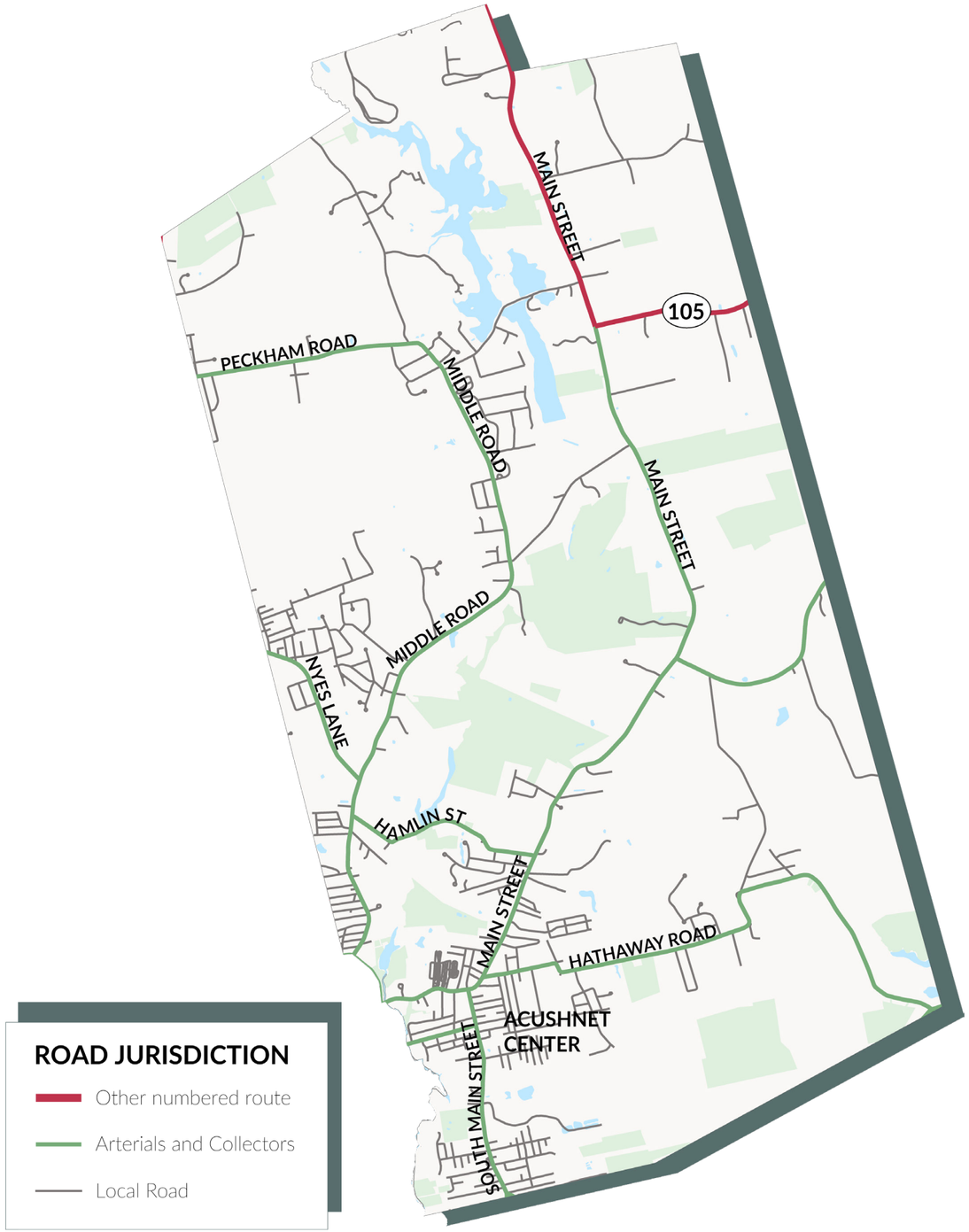
Acushnet is an auto-centric suburban community with limited public transit and bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure. Acushnet sits between several major interstates, including Route 140 to the west and Interstate-195 to the south. Due to the lack of highways directly within the Town, Acushnet drivers rely on major or minor roads for everyday travel .

TRAFFIC SAFETY

Frequently traveled major and minor roads include several high crash intersections:

- Main Street and South Main Street
- Hamlin Street and Main Street
- Slocum Street and South Main Street.

Most crashes occur at the intersection of Main Street and South Main.

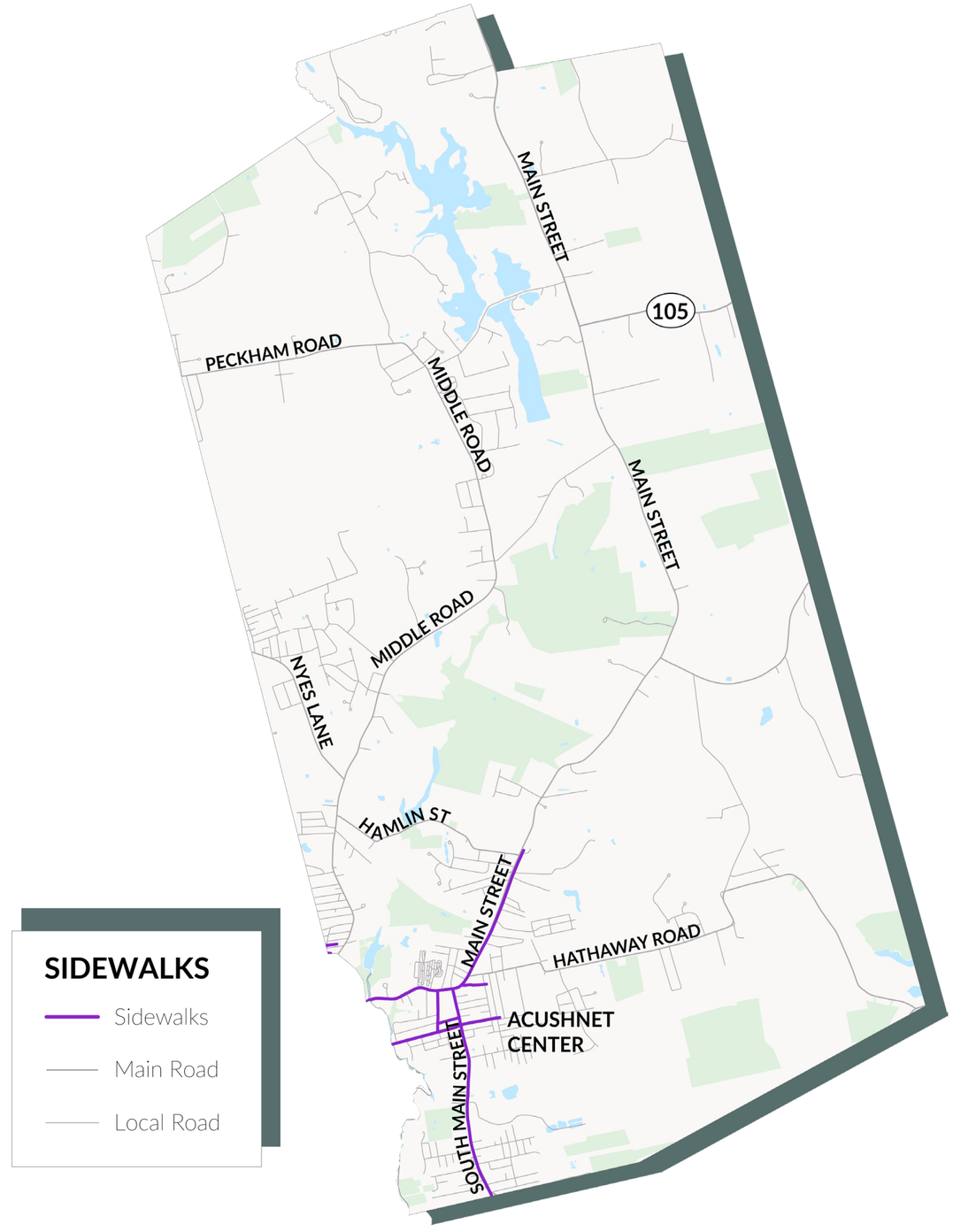


Map 8. (Right) Road network by jurisdiction. Source: MassDOT.

SIDEWALKS AND TRANSIT

Acushnet has a limited pedestrian and public transit network. Most sidewalks in town are concentrated in the Town Center, which also hosts the highest densities.

Though Acushnet is not served by either the Southeastern Regional Transit Authority or the Greater Attleboro Taunton Regional Transit Authority, residents can access routes nearby in New Bedford, specifically Routes 202 Lund's Corner and Route 211 in Fairhaven.



Map 9. (Right) Sidewalks. Source: MassDOT

Goals and Strategies

T Goal 1: Complete key transportation projects that improve circulation, safety, and appearance in Acushnet.

T-1.1: Pursue Complete Streets program adoption to support infrastructure improvements.

T-1.2: Continue to lobby for the construction of a bypass road to provide frontage to Town-owned land.

T Goal 2: Provide more bicycle, pedestrian, and transit facilities in key areas in Town.

T-2.1: Continue developing connections between the Fairhaven Bike Path, New Bedford, and Acushnet.

T-2.2: Create a Townwide Bike and Pedestrian Plan.

T-2.3: Explore potential permanent bus routes in Town with SRTA.

T Goal 1: *Complete key transportation projects that improve circulation, safety, and appearance in Acushnet.*

With limited alternatives to vehicle travel, improving safety and expanding circulation options will positively impact transportation in Acushnet. Careful consideration of existing crash locations and identifying areas of efficiency will support safer vehicle travel. Implementing these changes presents unique challenges and requires careful coordination with local and state partners.

ID	Strategy	Priority	Complementary Strategies
T-1.1	Pursue Complete Streets program adoption to support infrastructure improvements.	Medium	LU-1.3, SF-1.1, SF-1.2 TC-2.2, TC-2.3
T-1.2	Continue to lobby for the construction of a bypass road to provide frontage to Town-owned land.	High	ED-2.2

T-1.1: Pursue Complete Streets program adoption to support infrastructure improvements.

Priority: Medium

Responsible Parties: Planning Board, DPW, Board of Selectmen

Case Study: The Town of Swansea published their Complete Streets Prioritizaion Plan in 2022. The following year, the Town began implementation, holding wotkshops to explore future configurations of Swansea Mall Drive.

Adding sidewalks and bike lanes in key areas of town will connect residents to popular areas such as schools, parks, commercial areas, and neighborhoods. A “Complete Street” seeks to provide safe and accessible options for all travel modes (walking, biking, transit, and vehicles) for people of all ages, abilities, and incomes. Complete Streets improvements include sidewalks, bike lanes, signage, lighting, pedestrian crossing improvements, bicycle parking, and transit stop improvements. It is important to note that Complete Streets is not a one-size fits all approach; rather, it is about finding the best fit for specific areas in town, which range from rural to suburban in character.

During the Master Plan process, the Town identified Complete Streets as a priority to implement many of its community development and placemaking strategies. In Fall 2025, the Town submitted a letter of intent to MassDOT, commiting to developing a Complete Streets Policy. Since then the Town applied for technical assistance funds to develop a Prioritization Plan. The Prioritization Plan (Tier 2) catalogues key sites that require improvements. With a complete Prioritization Plan, a community can apply for Tier 3 capital improvement grants to address identified high priority projects. Utilizing this program, Acushnet can address its goals for circulation, safety, and multi-model transportation.



Photo 21. South Main and Main Street

T-1.2: Continue to lobby for the construction of a road to provide frontage to potential industrial land.

Priority: High

Responsible Parties: Board of Selectmen, DPW, Planning Board, Conservation Commission

Acushnet is increasingly reliant on the residential tax levy for a majority of its revenues and has the highest residential tax rate of its neighbors. Residents are well aware of the high residential tax rate and worry about the long-term impacts on affordability. In order to limit future increases in the residential tax rate, the Town should explore strategies to generate revenue through commercial or industrial uses.

The Town will first need to rezone land for development. Acushnet has limited areas that are logistically and politically feasible for industrial development, including the southeastern parcels near PJ Keating in southern Acushnet.

Much of this land is currently inaccessible. As it pursues rezoning and development, the Town should explore steps to construct a bypass road south to Route 240 in Fairhaven. In doing so, the Town would divert new traffic away from South Main Street. This process, which involves state and congressional support, is lengthy and challenging.

Funding the extension through the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is the most cost-effective path. Initiation through the TIP requires a functional classification approval from MassDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The TIP enables the Town to access State and Federal funding to extend the highway.

Map 10. Proposed Access Road.

THE PROCESS FOR SEEKING FHWA APPROVAL FOR A FUNCTIONAL CLASS DESIGNATION IS AS FOLLOWS:

1. The Town writes a letter to their Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO, such as SMMPO/SRPEDD for this region) requesting approval of a functional class designation. Maps should be included with the letter.
2. MPO (SRPEDD) staff review the letter to determine if the request is viable.
3. The MPO works with the Town to obtain data supporting functional class designation. This typically involves hiring an engineer to write a justification memo.
4. The MPO will send a request for consideration to MassDOT's Office of Transportation Planning's (OTP) GIS Services Group to be reviewed.
5. Upon completion of steps 2-4, the request is packaged and presented to the MPO board for approval.
6. If approved, the approved package is sent to MassDOT's OTP GIS Services Group. The package should include:
    - A letter from the Town requesting the change;
    - Volume counts along roadways under review;
    - Maps highlighting roadways under review;
    - Descriptive text explaining why the change is warranted, citing land use changes, roadway alignment changes, or other reason;
    - MPO Board approval; and
    - A cover letter addressed to OTP.
7. OTP will submit the package to FHWA for their approval. Once FHWA provides a ruling, OTP will provide results to the MPO.

T Goal 2: *Provide more bicycle, pedestrian, and transit facilities in key areas in town.*

Acushnet's residents interested in multi-modal travel options have few alternatives. Importantly, public engagement activities associated with the Master Plan revealed latent demand for better sidewalk connections (52%) and protected bike paths/lanes (33%). Acushnet's existing biycle and pedestrian infrastructure is limited and concentrated to discrete areas of town. Lack of alternatives poses risks for children and older adults unable to drive. For a more interconnected and accessible community, Acushnet should explore new partnerships with local leaders and transit agencies, while exploring the Town's responsiblity to provide for this infrastructure.

ID	Strategy	Priority	Complementary Strategies
T-2.1	Continue developing connections between the Fairhaven Bike Path, New Bedford, and Acushnet.	High	SF-1.1 TC-2.2 OSRP 3.1
T-2.2	Create a Townwide Bike and Pedestrian Plan.	High	TC-1.1, TC-2.1 OSRP 3.1
T-2.3	Explore potential permanent bus routes in Town with SRTA.	Low	TC-1.1

T-2.1: Continue developing connections between the Fairhaven Bike Path, New Bedford, and Acushnet.

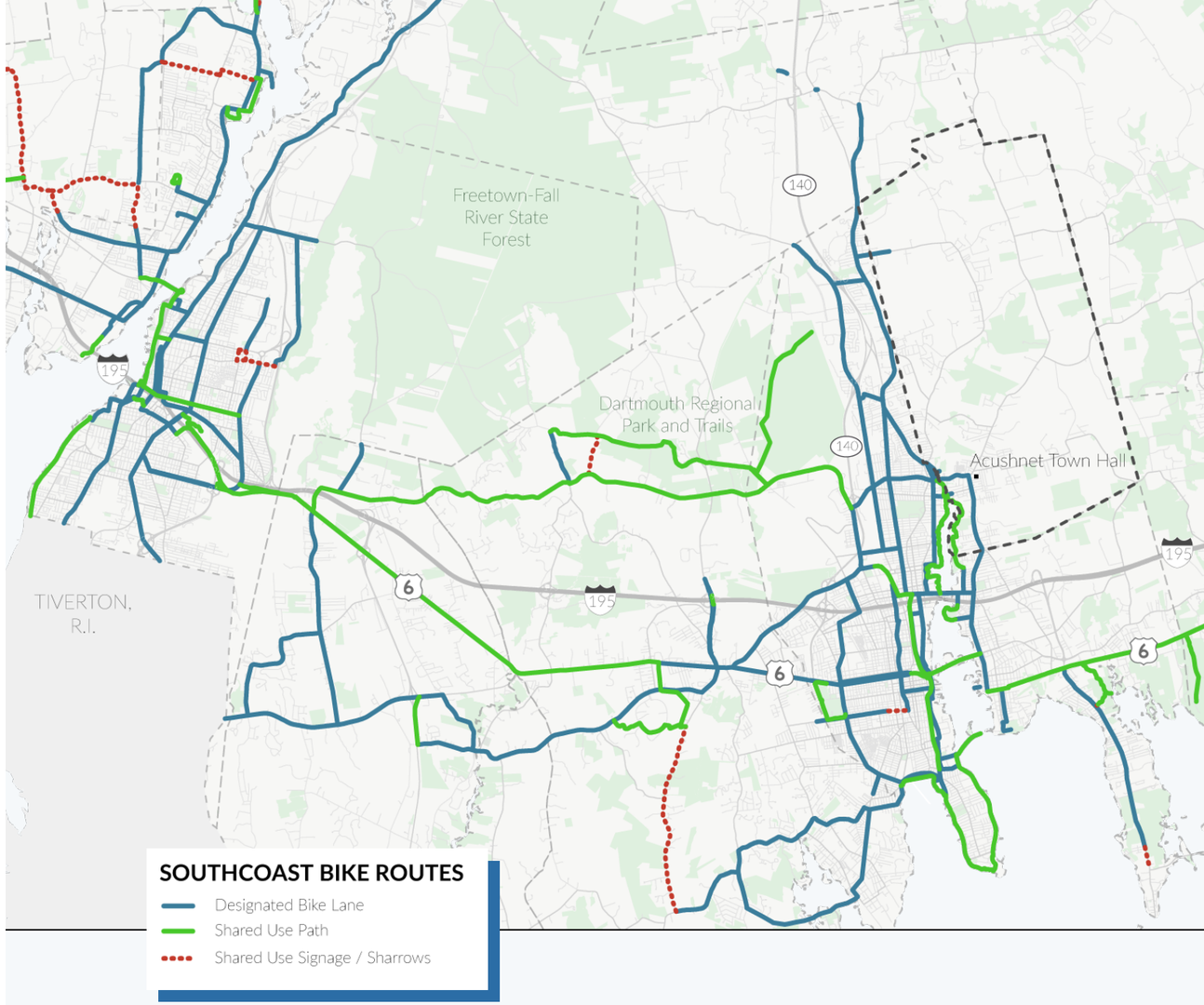
Priority: High

Responsible Parties: Board of Selectmen, DPW, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee, Southcoast Bike Alliance

Case Study: The Towns of Bedford, Lexington, Arlington, and the City of Cambridge, manage the Minuteman Bikeway.

Creating more accessibility to travel is a necessary step to enhancing the fabric of Acushnet's transportation system, especially by expanding biking infrastructure. During the Master Plan process residents identified protected bike paths/lanes (33%) as a major factor that could sway them to change how they travel around town (6.1.1 survey chart). There were several areas identified in this process where residents would like to see additional biking infrastructure, and the most noteworthy was on South Main Street. This Corridor connects to the center of town as well as Fairhaven to the South and New Bedford through Main Street to the southwest. South Main Street's position near the South Coast Bikeway provides the Town with an opportunity to connect to a regional bikeway.

As Acushnet takes over management of South Main Street from MassDOT opportunities will arise to expand bicycle access along this major corridor. All of these developments require a nuanced attention to detail with all of the parties involved, as the Town can pursue several different variations of this bicycle infrastructure expansion. In order to accomplish this task, the Town will need to coordinate with other communities as well as property owners to bring this strategy to fruition.



Map 11. (Right) South Coast Bikeway

The South Coast Bikeway will be a 50-mile continuous system of bike paths, multi-use paths and bike lanes connecting existing routes in Rhode Island to Cape Cod, running through Swansea, Somerset, Fall River, Westport, Dartmouth, New Bedford, Fairhaven, Mattapoisett, Marion, and Wareham. While some portions of the bikeway are currently built, others are proposed for the future, such as in Acushnet.

T-2.2: Create a Townwide Bike and Pedestrian Plan.

Priority: High

Responsible Parties: Board of Selectmen, DPW, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee, Southcoast Bike Alliance

Case Study: In February 2015, the Town of Watertown, MA, developed a Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan to address inadequacies with multi-modal mobility. This Plan identified necessary improvements to the Town's infrastructure, zoning policies, and sub-division regulations to improve and protect pedestrian and bicycle safe into the future. As a result of the Plan, the Town undertook efforts to improve bike lane buffers along Mt. Auburn Street.

The Master Plan's public engagement process identified a goal of increasing sidewalks and bike paths; however, many of Acushnet's roadways lack adequate access for pedestrians and bicyclists (6.1.1 survey chart) –a situation that is common in rural communities across Massachusetts. Put simply, due to existing roadway design, many of the town's major routes fail to accommodate for multimodal transportation, almost always requiring pedestrians and cyclists to share the roadway with vehicles.

To ensure safe travel for these road users, the Town may consider the creation of a Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan that will be charged with identifying appropriate locations for "bike/ped" interventions (not all areas of Town are suitable), closing existing gaps in the transportation network, and providing or improving safety facilities, such as bicycle lanes, sidewalks, crosswalks, bicycle parking, and signage.



Photo 22. Mattapoisett Rail Trail

The Bike and Pedestrian Plan will also identify sources of state and federal funding, such as the One Stop Grant Program, to finance infrastructure improvements within the Town. Additionally, the Plan will take input from residents, business owners, and other stakeholders to determine priority roadway design improvements where this funding can be effectively allocated. For funding the Plan itself, the Town can apply through SRPEDDs Unified Planning Work program. The application process is open February to March every year. Another funding source the Town can utilize for a Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan is through the Community Preservation Act, for more information on this review OSRP.

T-2.3: Explore potential permanent bus routes in Town with SRTA.

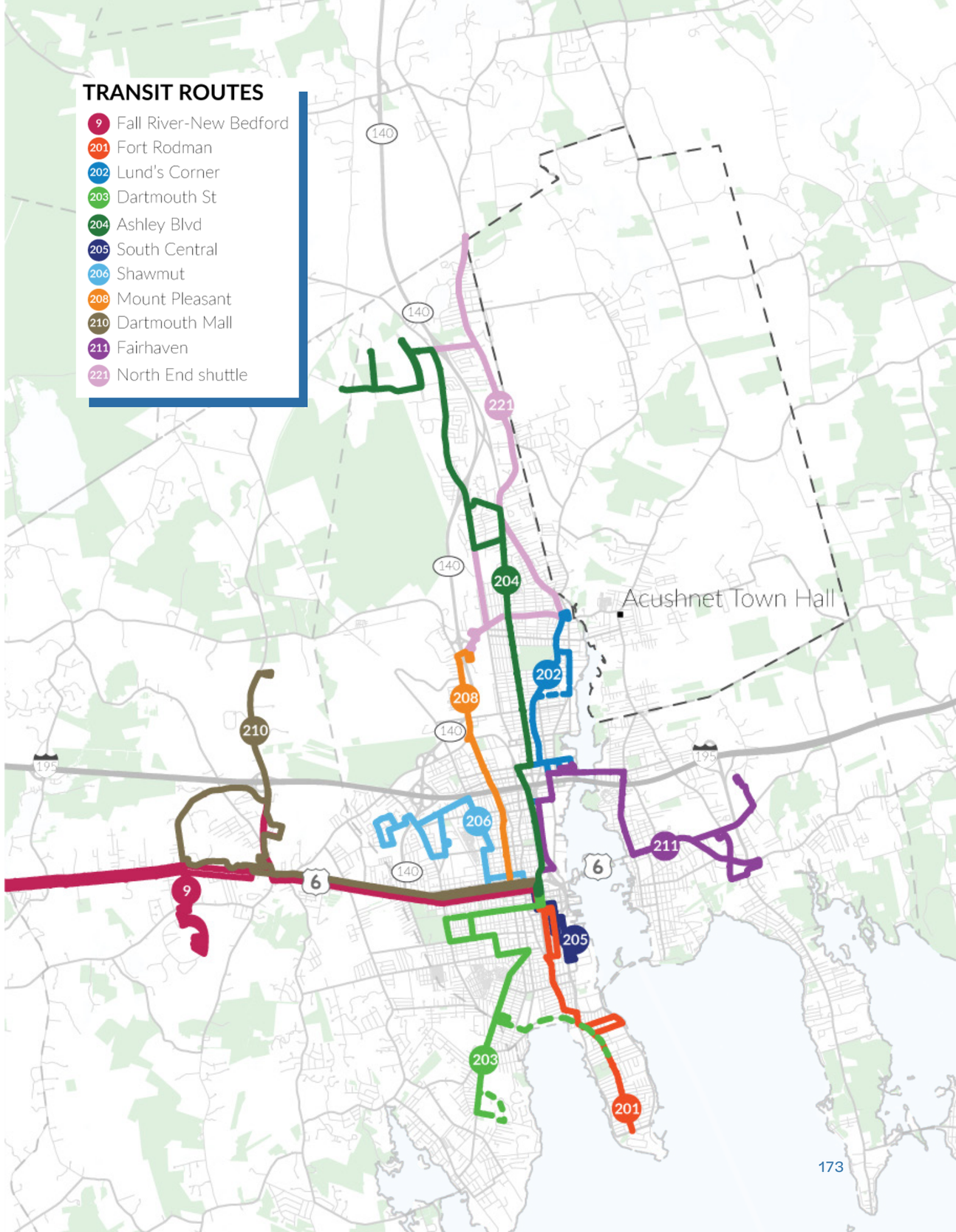
Priority: Low

Responsible Parties: Town SRTA Representative, Board of Selectmen, Housing Authority, JTPG

Case Study: In 2017, SRTA and GATRA collaborated on a new service route connecting New Bedford, Fairhaven, Mattapoisett, Marion, and Wareham.

Existing conditions, coupled with demographic trends highlighted the need for expanded public transit in Acushnet. The COA operates an on own shuttle service, which residents use to attend doctor's appointments and run errands. Currently, there are no permanent bus routes through the Southeastern Regional Transit Authority (SRTA) into Town, and the closest routes are across the Town border in New Bedford on Main Street (Number 2 Line) and along Route 18 (North End Shuttle). The Town should consider collaborating with SRTA in order to adequately provide needed public transportation to its residents. This potential expansion would benefit residents who are dependent on public transit to get around, specifically older adults or individuals with disabilities. Considering the Town's aging population, the demand and need for public transit may increase overtime. The timing is right for the Town to strengthen its partnership with SRTA, especially with pertinent projects – like Complete Streets – on the horizon.

In terms of additional routes, the Town should work with SRTA to consider adding a route that would connect to commuter rail service at New Bedford or Freetown.



Map 12. (Right) SRTA Routes



8

Implementation

Introduction

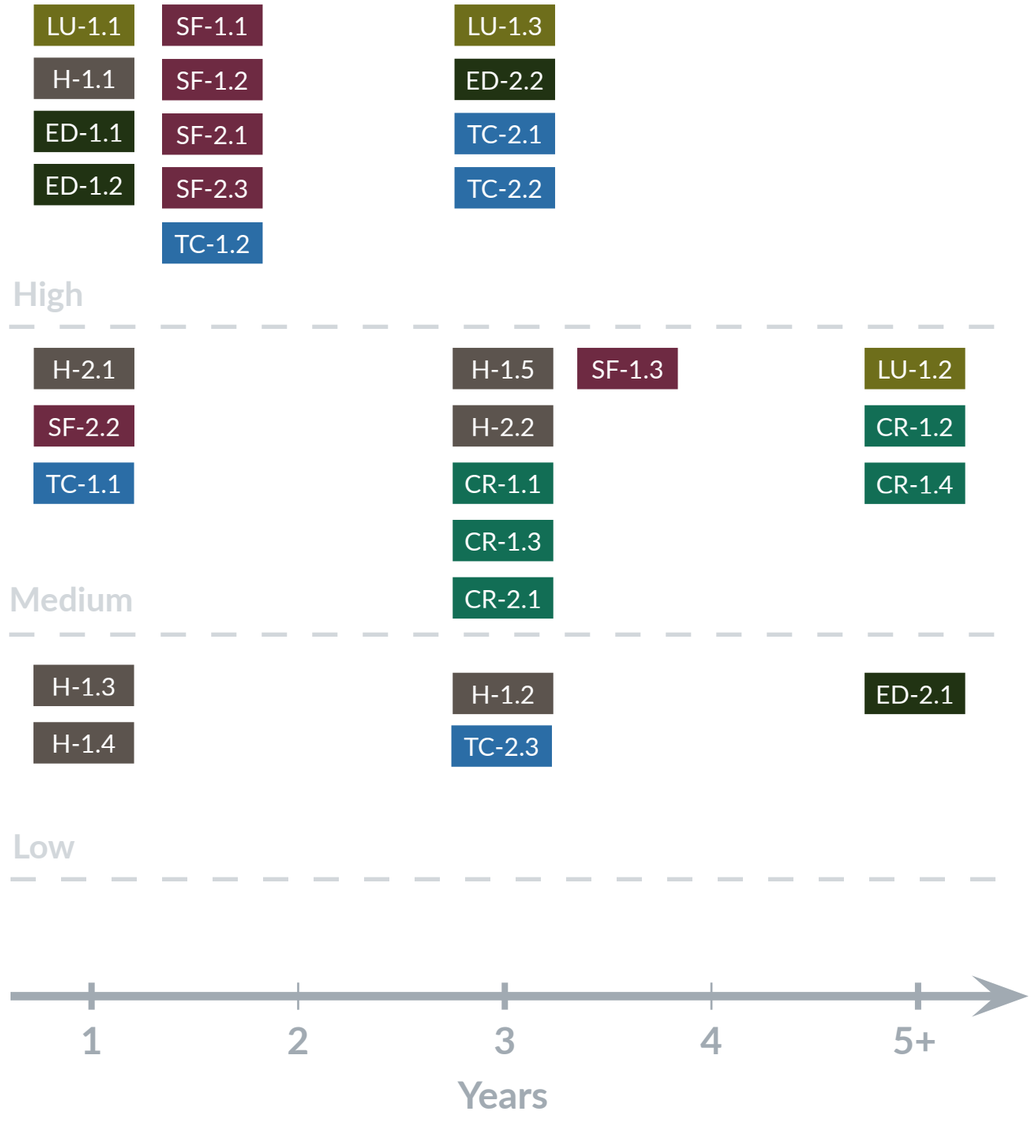
Strategic plans can be a powerful tool to enact change in a community. The Acushnet Master Plan includes an implementation chapter to guide the next step and empower dedicated champions as the true work begins.

Next Steps

The Acushet Master Plan provides a preview of next steps to ensure the plan is utilized to its full potential. Continuously, the Plan calls on the stewardship of Town officials, staff, local partners, and various stakeholders to implement this plan step-by-step,

Taking these recommendations off paper depends largely on the Town's capacity to dedicate staff and resources to implementation of the Master Plan. However, the Town should consider the benefits of outsourcing to a partner agency or consultant to fulfill a recommendation if necessary.

To fully implement the Acushnet Master Plan, the Town will need to consider its capacity and funding strategies. The Implementation Chapter outlines both these needs for each strategy, where applicable.



Implementation Table

Strategy	Responsible Parties	Priority	Case Study	Complimentary Strategies
LU-1: Modernize the Town's zoning bylaws to meet the priorities for economic growth and housing development.				
LU-1.1 Conduct a Zoning Recodification to update, modernize, and reconcile conflicts within the Town's zoning by-law.	Planning Board, Selectboard, By-Law Committee, Town Planner, Building Inspector	High	The Town of Wareham received $98,000 from EOHLC to pursue a zoning recodification to address inconsistencies, increase clarity, and update bylaws with state requirements and standards	LU-1.2, LU-1.3 H-1.1, H-1.3 ED-1.1, ED-1.2 OSRP-1.2
LU-1.2 Reconcile split zone lots to support infill and redevelopment, particularly in the Business Village District.	Planning Board, Selectboard, By-Law Committee, Town Planner, Building Inspector	High	Despite safety concerns, the Chicopee Planning Board approved the site plans for a Starbucks with drive-thru and residences at 523 James St. because the site is zoned 70% residential and 30% commercial.	LU-1.1, LU-1.3, ED-1.2
LU-1.3 Develop design guidelines for select districts to enhance the community's small-town feel.	Planning Board, Town Planner	Medium	The Town of Somerset established the Slade's Ferry Overlay District to encourage mixed-use development.	LU-1.2, ED-1.2
H-1: Focus on diversifying the town's housing stock to meet the needs of the entire community.				
H-1.1 Review the minimum lot size of the Residential A District to facilitate new development throughout Acushnet.*	Planning Board, Selectboard, By-Law Committee, Town Planner, Building Inspector	High		LU-1.1, H-2.1, WRMS-3.3.1, 3.3.4, & 4.0.1
H-1.2 Expand the Residential Village District into southern Acushnet.	Planning Board, Selectboard, By-Law Committee, Town Planner, Building Inspector	Low		H-1.3, H-1.5, H-2.1
H-1.3 Consider zoning changes to accommodate the production of diverse housing types and implement design guidelines to integrate with existing neighborhood.	Planning Board, Selectboard, By-Law Committee, Town Planner, Building Inspector	Low	Multiple towns including the Town of Mansfield and Swansea, are working toward developing 40R, 40Y, or OSRD bylaws.	LU-1.1, H-1.1, H-2.1, OSRP-1.2
H-1.4 Review the market viability of the Special Residential Development Special Permit in creating 55+ housing developments.	Planning Board, Selectboard, By-Law Committee, Town Planner, Building Inspector	Low	The Town of Mansfield allows residential facilities for residents 55 years of age or older. Provisions in the Zoning Bylaw do not limit acreage and instead rely on units per acre (10) to manage density.	LU-1.1, H-2.1, WRMS-3.3.1, 3.3.4, & 4.0.1
H-1.5 Work with property owners of vacant or underutilized parcels to develop housing opportunities.	Planning Board, Selectboard, By-Law Committee, Town Planner, Building Inspector	Medium	The City of New Bedford created a position - vacant property development manager - under its Housing and Community Development Department in 2023 in order to work with property owners to revitalize vacant or underutilized housing units.	H-1.2, H-2.1, H-2.2

H-2: Maintain and expand the town's affordable housing stock.				
H-2.1 Update the Town's Housing Production Plan.	Planning Board, Town Planner	Medium	In the SRPEDD region, there are 11 communities that have either completed an approved HPP or are in the process of doing so, as of the date of this plan.	LU-1.1, All housing strategies OSRP-1.2
H-2.2 Prepare Town-owned properties for private residential development.	Selectboard, Planning Board, Town Planner, Building Inspector	Medium	The Town of Harwich converted an 1871 school house into multifamily apartments in 2025. Harwich put the property up for sale in through a RFP process in 2022.	H-1.5, H-2.1
ED-1: Revitalize Main and South Street to encourage walkability, placemaking, and small business development.				
ED-1.1 Create a neighborhood-friendly Business District from Middle Road to Leonard Street.	Planning Board, Selectboard, By-Law Committee, Town Planner, Building Inspector	High	The Town of Easton commissioned a study in 2018 to develop the Queset Commercial District to develop a mixed-use district for a walkable, vibrant, maintained built landscape that directly benefited nearby residential neighborhoods.	LU-1.2, WRMS-3.3.1, 3.3.2, 3.3.4, & 4.0.1
ED-1.2 Review current zoning to determine barriers to specific types of development and industries in the Downtown.	Planning Board, Selectboard, By-Law Committee, Town Planner, Building Inspector	High	In 2016, the City of Attleboro revisited allowed uses in their Industrial Zone to facilitate development. Rezoning enabled their Redevelopment Authority to sell industrial property to Sturdy Memorial Hospital to pave the way for a multi-million dollar expansion of the campus.	LU-1.1, WRMS-3.3.1, 3.3.2, 3.3.4, & 4.0.1
ED-2: Focus economic development to remaining areas in Town that are suitable for mixed-use, commercial, and industrial growth.				
ED-2.1 Assess vacant, underutilized, and suspected Brownfield sites and pursue remediation at critical parcels in town.	Selectboard, Planning Board, ConCom, Town Planner	Low	The City of Taunton recieved $200,000 from EOED under the FY23 Brownfields Remediation Program. The City utilized the funds to pursue cleanup and remediation at 5-7 Nickerson Ave.	H-1.5 WRMS-3.3.1, 3.3.2, 3.3.4, & 4.0.1
ED-2.2 Expand the Industrial Zoning District in the southeast section of town.	Planning Board, Selectboard, By-Law Committee, Town Planner, Building Inspector, ConCom	High		TC-1.2 WRMP-3.3.1, 3.3.2, 3.3.4, & 4.0.1

CR-1: Preserve Acushnet's historic properties and expand the public's knowledge of their importance.				
CR-1.1 Explore funding opportunities to improve facilities at Perry Hill Church and the Long Plain Friends Meetinghouse/ Quaker Church.	Historical Commission, Community Preservation Committee, Planning Board, Town Planner, Board of Selectmen	Medium		CR-2.1
CR-1.2 Work with the Library, COA, and School Department to expand historical education programming.	Library, COA, School Department	Medium	The Concord Museum, funded through the Mass Cultural Council, works with local schools to put on historically relevant education programs on site and at participating institutions.	CR-1.4, CR-2.1
CR-1.3 Research funding opportunities to implement the 2008 Master Plan improvements for the Apple-Peach Festival operations.	Event Organizers*, Historical Commission, Community Preservation Committee	Medium		CR-2.1
CR-1.4 Formally adopt the shared Historic District with New Bedford.	Planning Board, Historical Commission	Medium		CR-1.2
CR-2: Protect and promote Acushnet's rural, cultural, scenic, and historical qualities and assets.				
CR-2.1 Develop creative solutions to enhance Town programming, such as the Summer Concert Series.	Library, COA, School Department	Medium		OSRP-2.1, OSRP-1.4
SF-1: Enhance services and support an efficient and fiscally responsible government.				
SF-1.1 Update infrastructure on critical roads with planned improvements.	DPW, Board of Selectman, W&S Commissioners, Planning Board	High		SF-1.2, SF-2.3, WRMP-3.3.1, 3.3.2, 3.3.3, 3.3.4, & 4.0.1
SF-1.2 Complete utility work on South Main Street prior to repaving and ownership takeover.	DPW, Board of Selectman, W&S Commissioners, Planning Board, State Representatives	High		SF-1.2, SF-2.3, WRMP-3.3.1, 3.3.2, 3.3.3, 3.3.4, & 4.0.1
SF-1.3 Support staffing increases across key departments, including the Fire, Police, and Planning Department.	Fire Department, Police Department, Planning Department, Board of Selectmen	Medium	The Towns of Yarmouth and Dennis established a regional CERT in 2002. Since then the team served at hurricane shelters and participated in disaster drills.	CR-2.1

SF-2: Replace, modernize, and improve aging Town buildings.				
SF-2.1 Pursue development of an ADA Self-Evaluation & Transition Plan.	Planning Board, ADA Coordinator, School Department, COA, Library, Historical Commission	High	In 2024, the Town of Mansfield recieved $40,000 from MOD to complete a town-wide ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan. Today, Mansfield is eligible for implementation funds to complete projects outline in their Plan.	CR-1.1
SF-2.2 Prioritize and seek funding for needed improvements at Acushnet Elementary School and Ford Middle School.	Superintendent of Schools, School Committee, Town Administrator,	Medium		SF-2.1, SF-2.3
SF-2.3 Develop a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to support long term infrastructure goals and consider future financial responsibilities.	Selectboard, Finance Department, Town Administrator	High	The Town of Mattapoisett adopted a Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Since then, the Town and its departments have followed a standard process to propose improvements and plan for expenditures for capital projects.	SF-1.1, SF-1.2, SF-2.2
TC-1: Complete key transportation projects that improve circulation, safety, and appearance in Acushnet.				
TC-1.1 Pursue Complete Streets program adoption to support infrastructure improvements.	Planning Board, DPW, Board of Selectmen	Medium - Immediate	The Town of Swansea published their Complete Streets Prioritization Plan in 2022. The following year, the Town began implementation, holding workshops to explore future configurations of Swansea Mall Drive.	LU-1.3, SF-1.1, SF-1.2, TC-2.2, TC-2.3
TC-1.2 Continue to lobby for the construction of a bypass road to provide frontage to Town-owned land.	Board of Selectmen, DPW, Planning Board, Conservation Commission	High - Immediate		ED-2.2
TC-2: Provide more bicycle, pedestrian, and transit facilities in key areas in town.				
TC-2.1 Continue developing connections between the Fairhaven Bike Path, New Bedford, and Acushnet.	Board of Selectmen, DPW, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee, Southcoast Bike Alliance	High - Focused	There are numerous examples of communities connecting major bikeway infrastructure with their neighbors. A major example is Bedford, Lexington, Arlington, and Cambridge, who manage the Minuteman Bikeway.	SF-1.1, TC-2.2
TC-2.2 Create a Townwide Bike and Pedestrian Plan.	Board of Selectmen, DPW, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee, Southcoast Bike Alliance	High - Focused	In February 2015, the Town of Watertown, MA, developed a Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan to address inadequacies with multimodal mobility. As a result of the Plan, the Town undertook efforts to improve bike lane buffers along Mt. Auburn Street.	TC-1.1, TC-2.1
TC-2.3 Explore potential permanent bus routes in town with SRTA.	Town SRTA Representative, Board of Selectmen, Housing Authority, JTPG	Low - Flexible	In 2017, SRTA and GATRA collaborated on a new service route that connected New Bedford, Fairhaven, Mattapoisett, Marion, and Wareham.	TC-1.1