



TOWN OF NORTHBRIDGE

PLANNING BOARD

7 MAIN STREET
WHITINSVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS 01588

PHONE: (508) 234-2447

EMAIL: planning@northbridgemass.org

AGENDA

TUESDAY, MARCH 12, 2024

NORTHBRIDGE MEMORIAL TOWN HALL

7 MAIN STREET

7:00 PM

I. CITIZENS FORUM

II. FORM A'S

III. 7:05PM MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTUAL LAYOUT PLAN -REVIEW
Bill Renaud (BK & R LLC) & Mark Allen, PE (Allen Eng Assoc)
Providence Road /Assessor Map 14 Parcel 17 & Ap 24-21

V. OLD/NEW BUSINESS

- a. Approval of Meeting Minutes -February 27, 2024
- b. Planning Office/Town Hall Annex -Move to New Fire Station (TBD)
- c. Post-Development Stormwater Management Bylaw (DRAFT)
- d. (Northbridge) Smart Growth Zoning Overlay District
- e. Comprehensive Master Plan -MGL Chapter 41 Section 81D
- f. MBTA Communities -MGL Chapter 40A Section 3A
- g. 2024 Spring Annual Town Meeting -Tuesday, May 07, 2024
- h. Planning Board Vote to Sponsor Article(s) -2024 SATM
- i. 2024 SATM Warrant Closes -Friday, March 15, 2024
- j. Site Plan/Subdivision Developments -Status
- k. Planning Board Comments/Concerns
- l. Mail -Review
- m. Other

Please note this Planning Board Agenda may be subject to change.

Next meeting of the Northbridge Planning Board scheduled for March 26, 2024

[An audio/video recording of the meeting may be made to assist in the preparation of minutes; such recording will not be archived]
Meeting minutes shall serve as the official record of the Planning Board



TOWN OF NORTHBRIDGE
PLANNING BOARD
7 MAIN STREET
WHITINSVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS 01588

PHONE: (508) 234-2447

EMAIL: planning@northbridgemass.org

AGENDA
TUESDAY, MARCH 26, 2024

NORTHBRIDGE MEMORIAL TOWN HALL
7 MAIN STREET
7:00 PM

DRAFT

I. CITIZENS FORUM

II. FORM A'S

III. 7:05PM

V. OLD/NEW BUSINESS

- a. Approval of Meeting Minutes -March 12, 2024
- b. Planning Office/Town Hall Annex -Move to New Fire Station
- c. Comprehensive Master Plan -MGL Chapter 41 Section 81D
- d. MBTA Communities -MGL Chapter 40A Section 3A
- e. 2024 Spring Annual Town Meeting -Tuesday, May 07, 2024
- f. Planning Board Vote to Sponsor Article(s) -2024 SATM
- g. Site Plan/Subdivision Developments -Status
- h. Planning Board Comments/Concerns
- i. Mail -Review
- j. Other

Please note this Planning Board Agenda may be subject to change.

Next meeting of the Northbridge Planning Board scheduled for April 09, 2024

*[An audio/video recording of the meeting may be made to assist in the preparation of minutes; such recording will not be archived]
Meeting minutes shall serve as the official record of the Planning Board*

CITIZENS FORUM

Citizens Forum is intended to provide the public with an opportunity to present concerns to the Planning Board. Citizens Forum is not meant to be a back-and-forth discussion. If the Planning Board feels a follow-up discussion is warranted arrangements may be made with the Owner/Applicant (Developer) to discuss concerns at the next available meeting -with the hopes of concluding a resolution.

- The Chair shall solicit comments from those in attendance;
- Board members shall not participate in any discussion;
- Topics included on the agenda shall be reviewed/discussed as they appear on the agenda;
- Items not included on the agenda may be commented on during Citizens Forum.

BK & R LLC (point of contact: Bill Renaud)
665 Church Street Whitinsville, MA 01588
Email: billtheeng@gmail.com

FEBRUARY 15, 2024

COPY

Town Resident/Neighbors:

Arrangements are being made for us (BK & R, LLC) to go before the Planning Board (Tuesday, March 12, 2024 @ 7PM-Town Hall) to informally review a mixed-use development proposal; showing Senior Housing, Apartment Rentals, Retail/Commercial Buildings, & Dedicated Open Space (parkland) to be sited off Providence Road (RT 122). The subject property is located across the street from the town's Wastewater Treatment Plant and directly adjacent to the town's undeveloped parcel & the High School's upper ballfields. The imagery provided here is a general depiction of our initial conceptual layout plan.

The purpose of this meeting is to introduce a development plan to the Planning Board, where an amendment to the town's existing zoning bylaw would be required (Town Meeting action). As part of this consideration, we want to include others in the discussion before we get too far ahead of ourselves. In doing so we aim to submit a proposal that has been vetted & scrutinized by other stakeholders (residents/abutters).

The existing zoning of the property (Industrial-2) allows for a number of different land uses; including office/commercial, manufacturing, trucking/warehouse, hotel/motel, automotive repair, retail, marijuana establishments, adult use, & solar photovoltaic facilities. It is our belief a mixed-use development (proposed) may be a better fit & certainly a more complementary use for the neighborhood, compared to uses permitted under the I-2 Zoning District.

We recognize some may prefer the property remain undeveloped open space, this however is not a realistic long-term option for us, as property owners. With that said we understand, respect & value your same rights as property owners and have incorporated open space & buffer areas aimed to minimize impacts with developing the property. The concept plan shows integrated areas for open space, including "public amenities" such as playground, walking/hiking trails, gazebo & picnic areas. Additionally, as part of the development proposal a dedicated & much improved access (w/parking) will be provided to the Northbridge High School upper ballfields. We believe this to be another added benefit to the public.

The housing proposed is intended to fulfill local needs for retirees, working-families, empty nesters, & next-generation individuals who wish to remain local & in Northbridge. The retail/commercial buildings may include restaurant, retail/business, professional offices, microbrewery/brew pub, and other similarly appropriate establishments.

Please join us in the conversation on **Tuesday, March 12, 2024 (7:00 PM-Northbridge Memorial Town Hall, 7 Main Street, Whitinsville, MA 01588)**. We understand this is a big project for Northbridge & want to make sure there are opportunities for voices to be heard. Should you have any questions or wish to speak with us directly in advance of or following this meeting please contact Bill Renaud at billtheeng@gmail.com.

Thank you.



DRAFT
NOT FOR
CONSTRUCTION
2-7-2024

TITLE:
CONCEPTUAL
MASTER PLAN
OF
Providence Road
in
Northbridge, MA



ALLEN ENGINEERING
& ASSOCIATES
Civil Engineers, Surveyors
Land Development Consultants
140 Hartford Avenue East
Hopedale, MA 01747
(508) 384-5212 • Phone
www.aallen.com

PREPARED BY:

SCALE:
1"=100 FEET

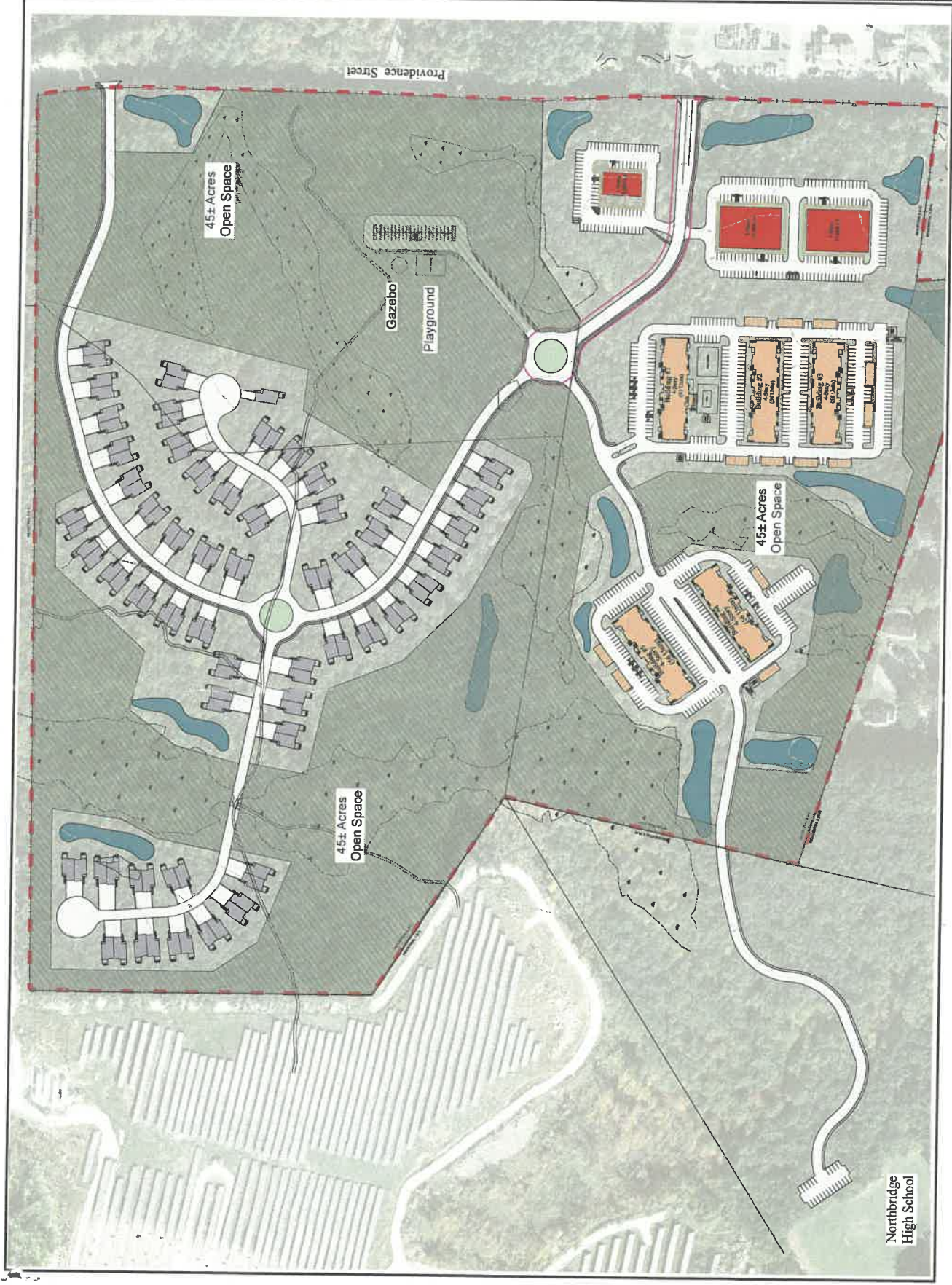


DATE:
February 7, 2024

REVISIONS

#	DATE	DESCRIPTION	INT

SHEET: 2 of 2





DRAFT
NOT FOR
CONSTRUCTION
2-7-2024

TITLE: CONCEPTUAL
MASTER PLAN
OF
Providence Road
in
Northbridge, MA

PREPARED BY:



ALLEN ENGINEERING
& ASSOCIATES
Civil Engineers, Surveyors
Land Development Consultants
140 Herford Avenue East
Hopedale, MA 01747
(508) 381-3312 • Phone
www.allen-es.com

SCALE:

1"=200 FEET



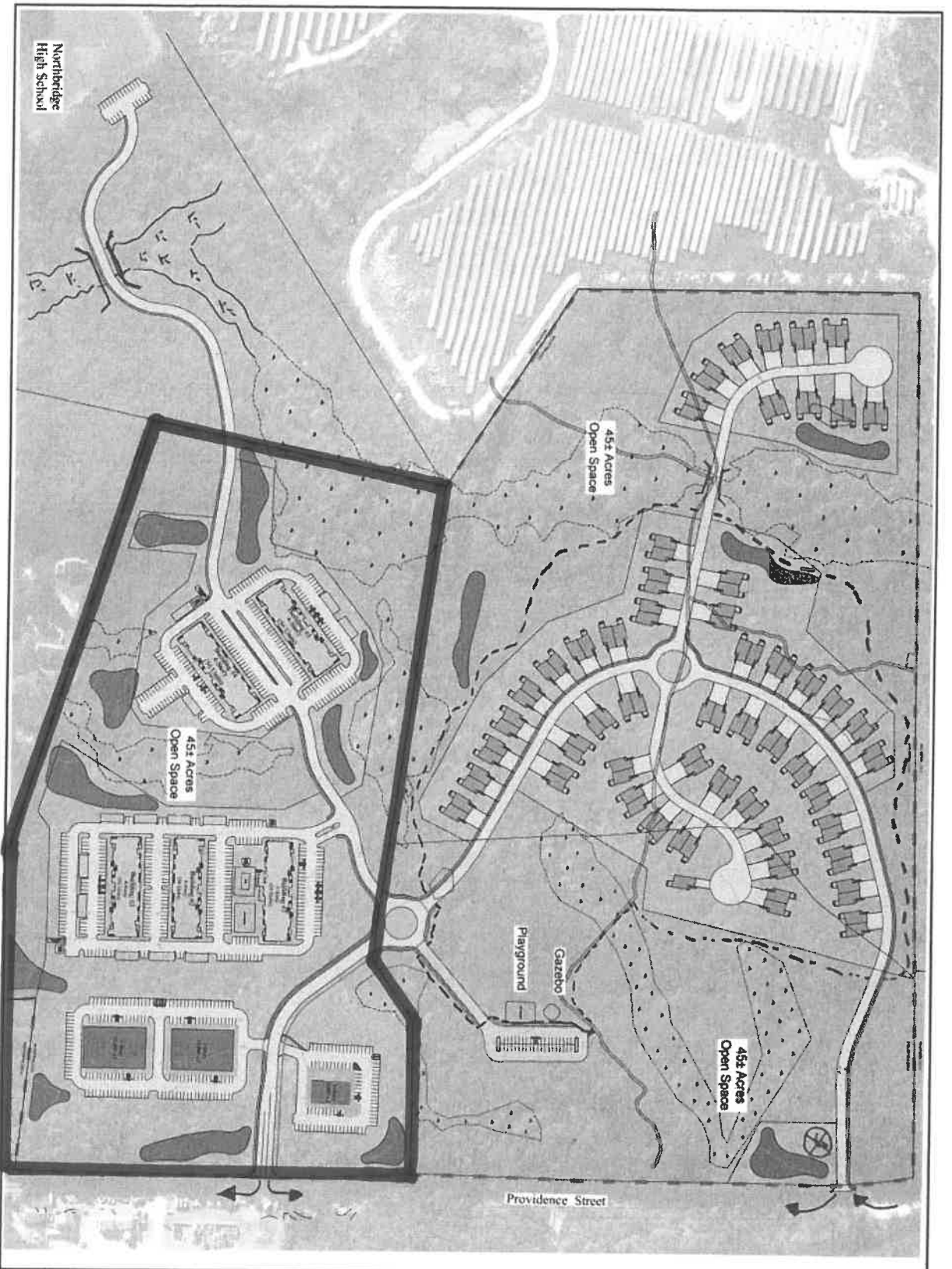
DATE: February 7, 2024

REVISIONS

DATE DESCRIPTION

JOB NO: 00501
SHEET: 1 of 2



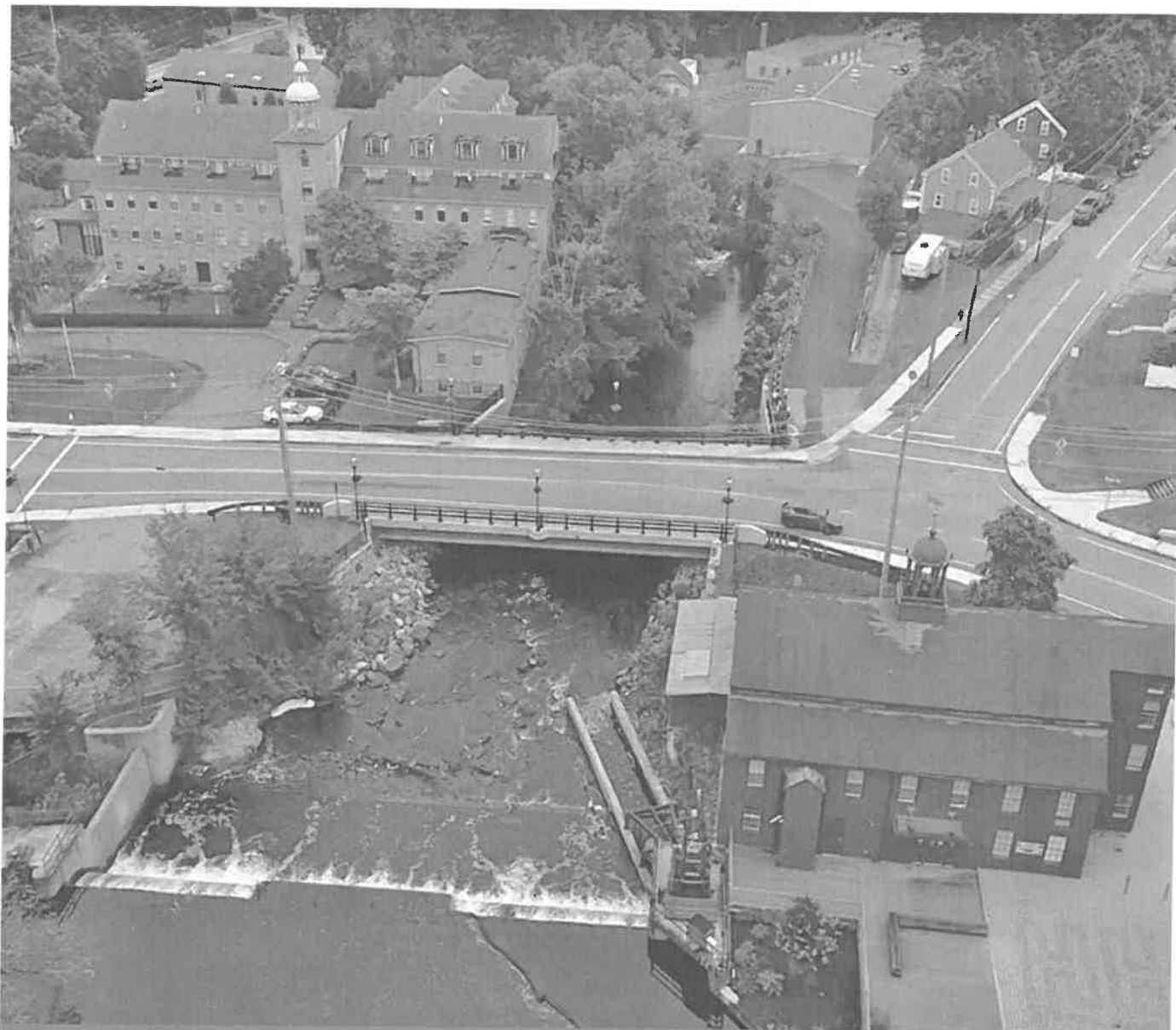


THE
CONCEPTUAL
MASTER PLAN
OF
Providence Road
Northbridge, MA

ALLEN ENGINEERING & ASSOCIATES
Civil Engineers, Surveyors
and Development Consultants
140 Worcester Avenue, Suite 100
Northbridge, MA 01532
Phone: 508-332-1100
Fax: 508-332-1101
www.aeassoc.com

DATE: February 7, 2024
PROJECT: PROJ-215
SHEET: 2 OF 2

DRAFT
NOT FOR
CONSTRUCTION
2.7.2024



Town of Northbridge Housing Production Plan

Prepared by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
September 2023

Town of Northbridge Housing Production Plan

November 2023

Prepared for: Town of Northbridge, Massachusetts

Prepared by: Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
60 Congress Street, Floor 1
Springfield, MA 01104
Phone: (413) 734-6024
www.pvpc.org

Acknowledgements

Northbridge Select Board

Russell D. Collins, Chair
Brian M. Paulhus, Vice Chair
Thomas Begin, Clerk
Thomas J. Melia
Charles Ampagoomian, Jr.

Town Manager

Adam D. Gaudette

Northbridge Planning Board

Rebecca Rushford, Chair
James Berkowitz, Vice Chair
Michael Wilkes, Clerk
Michael W. Baker
Abdul Kafal
Andrew Howden, Associate Member

Northbridge Community Planning & Development

R. Gary Bechtholdt II, Town Planner
David Pickart, Conservation Agent
Barbara Kinney, Administrative Assistant

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

Ken Comia, Deputy Director, Land Use and Environment Department
Lori Tanner, Senior Planner II - Special Projects
Jacob Dolinger
Jacinta Williams, Land Use Planner

Cover Photo: Cotton Mill Apartments [credit: SouthernWorcesterCounty.com]

Northbridge Housing Production Plan

Table of Contents

Chapter 1	Introduction	5
1.1	Purpose	5
1.2	Housing Production Plans and MGL Chapter 40B	5
1.3	Defining Affordable Housing	7
1.4	Fair Housing and Housing Discrimination	8
	<i>Creating Fair Housing Choices.....</i>	<i>8</i>
	<i>Housing Discrimination in Massachusetts.....</i>	<i>9</i>
1.5	Plan Process	10
1.6	Plan Method	11
Chapter 2	Housing Needs Assessment.....	12
2.1	Population Characteristics	12
2.2	Housing Supply Characteristics	20
Chapter 3	Housing Development Constraints: Opportunities	27
	and Challenges.....	27
3.1	Housing Market	27
3.2	Development Constraints, Limitations and Opportunities.....	30
Chapter 4	Housing Production Goals and Strategies	46
4.1	Affordable Housing Goals	46
	<i>Northbridge's 10% Affordable Housing Goal (Chapter 40B).....</i>	<i>46</i>
	<i>Participation in Regional Collaborations</i>	<i>46</i>
	<i>Variety of Housing Types</i>	<i>46</i>
	<i>Zoning Modifications</i>	<i>47</i>
	<i>Identification of Specific Sites.....</i>	<i>47</i>
	<i>Funding Opportunities.....</i>	<i>47</i>
4.2	Current Housing Development Status	47
	<i>Developments Currently Under Construction.....</i>	<i>48</i>
	<i>Previous Proposals</i>	<i>50</i>
	<i>Potential Housing Development Sites</i>	<i>51</i>
4.3	Housing Production Strategies	54
4.4	Summary of Applicable Housing Regulations and Tools	61
4.5	Funding Opportunities	63

4.6	Key Players for Affordable Housing Initiatives	66
-----	--	----

Appendix A Subsidized Housing Inventory

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

A Town-approved Housing Production Plan (HPP) expresses a community's proposed approach to assuring affordable housing – prices and rents – for people who wish to live there. Although there are other community documents that may address housing, such as a Master Plan or local Zoning, it is the purpose of an HPP to present a clear strategy that will enable Northbridge to meet its housing needs in a manner consistent with town residents' desires, Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40B and other related state and federal regulations. The plan will consider the types of housing needed by first-time homebuyers, seniors on fixed incomes, and young people starting out – and how this housing can be affordable to them. The Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC), formerly Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD) encourages local governments to prepare and submit a Housing Production Plan (HPP). The plan is intended to address a five-year timeline and is effective for that period after it is approved by EOHLC.

As will be described in Section 1.2 below, in order to meet state guidelines, the Town will need to increase the number of Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI)-eligible units by at least 33 over the course of a one-year period. This is 0.5% of the total number of housing units in Northbridge (6,655). This percentage is the minimum housing production required by the state in order for a town to reject a Chapter 40B Comprehensive Permit application.

1.2 Housing Production Plans and MGL Chapter 40B

This section summarizes the state laws and regulations that apply to local housing production plans. Under Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40B, municipalities are encouraged to ensure that at least 10% of their total housing stock qualifies as affordable to individuals and families who earn up to 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI) for the region in which the municipality is located, in this case Worcester County. **Currently in Northbridge, 6.8% of the town's housing units are on the subsidized housing inventory.**¹

Chapter 40B was adopted in 1969 by the Massachusetts Legislature to “address the shortage of low- and moderate-income housing in Massachusetts and to reduce regulatory barriers that impeded the development of such housing.”² The law promotes responsible housing growth by creating a streamlined permitting process for eligible projects that utilize subsidized financing and that meaningfully accommodate lower-income residents. These eligible developments may receive a

¹ [download \(mass.gov\)](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/download-mass-housing-inventory)

² [760 CMR 56 \(mass.gov\)](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/760-cmr-56)

comprehensive permit, even when the project does not meet local zoning requirements. However, in cities and towns that achieve affordable housing production goals (minimum of 10%), zoning boards of appeal may reject 40B proposals without facing an appeal from the developer, giving those communities great discretion over 40B development. Municipalities that have not achieved minimum affordable housing production thresholds have a more limited ability to reject 40B proposals.³

A Housing Production Plan (HPP) is a proactive approach to help communities make progress toward the 10% goal, avoiding the obligation to issue Comprehensive Permits and thereby retaining their local control over housing development. It provides an opportunity for town officials and residents to understand local housing needs, at both market and affordable rates, and consider how they can be met in the most appropriate way. The HPP is a companion document to a town's master plan and considers potential residential buildout, availability of water and sewer services, and other factors in the town's long-term vision.

The Housing Production Plan encourages communities to:

- 1) Complete a comprehensive housing needs assessment that takes into consideration both local and regional housing needs and identifies opportunities and constraints to meeting those needs.
- 2) Develop strategies to enable the community to meet its affordable housing needs, including an explanation of how constraints will be mitigated. Specifically, the HPP must show how the community will meet its annual affordable housing production goal of 0.5% of existing units.
- 3) The HPP shall be adopted by the local Planning Board and Select Board, submitted to EOHLC for a 30-day review period, and **approved** by EOHLC.
- 4) The Town shall generate the required number of new affordable units (0.5% of existing units) within a one-year period and then request **certification** from EOHLC.
- 5) Once the Housing Production Plan and new development is **certified** by EOHLC, the Town has the right to deny an unwanted Comprehensive Permit.

There are two major benefits for a community to have an HPP that is certified by EOHLC. First, communities with approved and certified HPPs are given preference over non-HPP communities for certain state grant funds. Second, a municipality can retain its local authority to require developers to comply with local zoning and local wetlands laws (and avoid the Chapter 40B Comprehensive Permit) so long as the municipality has an approved and certified HPP in place and is making progress toward the 10% goal at a rate of at least 0.5% per year. Any decisions by the local Zoning Board of Appeals to

³ Planning & Programs - Chapter 40B & MassHousing

deny a Comprehensive Permit will be deemed “consistent with local needs” under Chapter 40B by the Massachusetts Housing Appeals Court, and the local zoning board of appeal’s denial of a Comprehensive Permit application will be upheld.

A developer may still appeal the denial of a Comprehensive Permit in such cases, first to EOHLC and then to an interlocutory appeal with the Massachusetts Housing Appeals Committee, on an expedited basis. Additional information about the HPP program, including information on compliance, is provided on the EOHLC website: www.mass.gov/hed/community/40b-plan/housing-production-plan.html.

For Northbridge, in order for EOHLC to certify the Housing Production Plan, the Town would need to increase the number of SHI Eligible Housing units by 33 (0.5% of 6,655) or more during the year prior to the request for certification. Once **certified**, the Town will be eligible to become temporarily “appeal-proof” from the Chapter 40B Comprehensive Permit for one calendar year. Units counted for certification must be produced *after* the effective date of the plan (i.e. the date of EOHLC approval).

1.3 Defining Affordable Housing

In most contexts, housing is considered “affordable” if the individual or family (hereinafter known as “household”) that occupies, or wishes to occupy, the home pays no more than 30% of their income on “housing,” which includes mortgage, or rent, and any property taxes. Households that pay more than 30% of their income on housing are considered “cost-burdened” and may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation, and medical care, as well as saving for their future. A moderately cost-burdened household pays 30% to 50% of its income for housing. Households that pay more than 50% of their income are considered to be severely cost-burdened. They may be living paycheck to paycheck, cutting back on essential expenses, and delaying bill payment or even taking on new debt. A single mother, for example, earning the Massachusetts minimum wage of \$15/hour who spends 50% or more of her pretax income on housing may have only \$280 per week left to spend on all other necessities. A cost-burdened renter may have less than \$50 in savings. Households that find themselves in these situations simply aren’t able to put money aside and will have trouble bouncing back from unexpected life events such as losing a job, caring for a sick family member or recovering from an accident.⁴

This is also the generally accepted definition of housing affordability used by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) in the calculation of the Area Median Income (AMI) and promotion of income-restricted housing. The AMI is the median family income for a given area, in this case the Worcester HUD Metro Fair Market Rent Area, which includes Northbridge. This Fair Market Rent Area is 1 of 4 in the Worcester Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). HUD calculates the AMI annually, based on the U.S.

⁴ [The impact of housing affordability on families | Cost of Home \(habitat.org\)](#)

Census Bureau's American Community Survey's (ACS) estimated median family income for the area. The Worcester area AMI was \$122,000 in 2023, which is based on a 4-person family.

2023 Income Limits for Worcester, MA HUD Fair Market Rent Area (includes Northbridge)

of Persons in Family

Area Median Income (AMI) for 4-person family	Income Category	1	2	3	4	5
\$122,000	"Low" Income (80% of AMI)	\$65,550	\$74,900	\$84,250	\$93,600	\$101,100
	"Very Low" Income (50% of AMI)	\$40,950	\$46,800	\$52,650	\$58,500	\$63,200
	"Extremely Low" Income (30% of AMI)	\$24,600	\$28,100	\$31,600	\$35,100	\$37,950

Source: [Income Limits](#) | HUD USER

Note: HUD Calculations modify the income limits based on several factors including U.S. median family income, locally high housing costs, and annual income limit adjustment caps.

Affordable housing in Massachusetts usually refers to housing that is reserved for households with incomes at or below 80% of the area median income. The Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) maintains a Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) that lists all subsidized housing developments in a community that includes units reserved for households with incomes at or below 80% of median under long-term legally binding agreements and are subject to affirmative marketing requirements. In 2023, 80% of the area median income for the Worcester area was \$93,600 for a family of four, making them "low income" according to HUD definitions. For an individual householder, perhaps a retired and widowed schoolteacher, a low income would be \$65,550, and if she only received a pension of \$40,950 or less, she would be "very low" income. A single parent working part-time and caring for a disabled child might only make \$20,000 a year, and he would be "extremely low income."

1.4 Fair Housing and Housing Discrimination

Creating Fair Housing Choices

Northbridge's Housing Production Plan, as well as Massachusetts Chapter 40B regulations, are rooted in broader efforts to assure access to fair housing choice and combat housing discrimination for all. This section summarizes key federal and state statutes and regulations applicable to these topics.

Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, commonly referred to as the Fair Housing Act, was enacted with the primary purpose of prohibiting discrimination in transactions involving the rental, sale or financing of a home based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status and mental or physical

handicap. Massachusetts law includes additional protected classes: marital status, sexual orientation, age, gender identity and expression, military or veteran status, ancestry, genetic information, and receipt of public assistance or rental subsidies.

Under Federal law, state and local governments that receive federal housing funds are not only required to refrain from discriminatory practices, they must also take steps to advance the goals of fair housing and use their policies and programs to help promote open and inclusive patterns of housing (also referred to as “affirmatively furthering fair housing.”) HUD defines “affirmatively furthering fair housing” to include the following:

- Analyze and eliminate housing discrimination in the jurisdiction;
- Promote fair housing choice for all persons;
- Provide opportunities for inclusive patterns of housing occupancy regardless of race, color, religion, sex, familial status, disability, and national origin;
- Promote housing that is structurally accessible to, and usable by all persons, particularly persons with disabilities;
- Foster compliance with the nondiscrimination provision of the Fair Housing Act.

Massachusetts Executive Order 526 (2011), an “Order Regarding Non-Discrimination, Diversity, Equal Opportunity, and Affirmative Action,” provides that “Equal opportunity and diversity shall be protected and affirmatively promoted in all state, state-assisted, and state-regulated programs, activities, and services.” All state-funded programs, including Community Preservation Act funds, fall under this Executive Order.

Under Federal and State law, municipalities must also ensure that municipal policies and programs do not have a disparate impact (or negative impact) on members of a protected class compared to the general population. “Disparate impact” is a legal term in which liability based upon a finding of discrimination may be incurred even when the discrimination was not purposeful or intentional. The municipality should consider if the policy or practice at hand is necessary to achieve substantial, legitimate, non-discriminatory interests and if there is a less discriminatory alternative that would meet the same interest.

Examples of municipal policies and programs that could have a disparate impact include:

- Municipal plans or zoning ordinances that prioritize 1-bedroom units or strictly limit number of bedrooms by unit rather than by development or lot.
- Having exclusively single-family or large lot size requirements.
- Plans to fund affordable housing for elders only.
- Planning or zoning approval processes that mandate or prioritize townhouses.

Housing Discrimination in Massachusetts

Sources of housing discrimination can be landlords, realtors, or other entities associated with housing-related transactions, programs or policies such as municipalities, lenders and insurance companies. Research from the Massachusetts Fair Housing Center (MFHC), and the Massachusetts Commission

Against Discrimination (MCAD) shows that illegal discrimination continues to persist throughout the state and limits housing choice.

Following are the most prevalent examples of discrimination that affect housing siting, access to housing, and/or access to housing services in the region:

- Predatory lending, redlining, and active steering of home buyers of color towards certain areas of a community based on race/ethnicity, economic characteristics, and familial status.
- Rental discrimination against families with children and particularly against families with young children due to the presence or potential presence of lead-based hazards.
- Municipal zoning that restricts housing choice and mobility in the region by not allowing, or restricting, uses that favor more affordably priced homes and rents, particularly prohibitions on multi-family housing. (While such regulations are not in violation of housing laws and can be well-intentioned, they also have the effect of disproportionately reducing housing choice for people with specific demographic characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, religion, sex, economic status, familial status, disability and national origin.)
- Linguistic profiling in both the rental and homeownership markets, especially against persons of Latino origin.
- Landlords who refuse to make reasonable accommodations, changes in rules or policies to allow an equal opportunity to use and enjoy housing, or reasonable modifications, structural changes to allow an equal opportunity to use and enjoy housing, for individuals with disabilities.
- Landlords who refuse to accept housing subsidies, such as a Section 8 housing choice rental voucher, as a source of rental payment.

1.5 Plan Process

The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC), Consultant, worked with the Town of Northbridge to develop this Housing Production Plan in accordance with the requirements of 760 CMR 56.03(4) (Housing Production Plans). The Northbridge Planning Board was the reviewing body for this plan, working cooperatively with other town boards and committees meeting routinely over the course of the process. PVPC staff met with the Planning Board to review chapter drafts, identify and prioritize recommendations, prepare public presentations, and other related tasks. A presentation of the purpose of the Housing Production Plan was given to the Northbridge Board of Selectmen on October 17, 2022.

An in-depth Housing Survey was distributed widely throughout town via the town website, public notices, social media, and hard copies at various locations. The survey generated 157 responses between September 28 and November 1, 2022. The results of the survey were considered and utilized during preparation of the plan and can also be found in the Appendices. A public forum/meeting was

held on November 22, 2022 which included a presentation of the planning process, a summary of the housing assessment, results of the survey, and a public comment period to receive input. A subsequent public forum was held on June 27, 2023, to review initial findings and begin to identify opportunities and actions to address local housing needs. The Northbridge Planning Board in vote taken September 12, 2023 approved and recommended its support to adopt the September 2023 Housing Production Plan. A fourth public meeting was held with the Board of Selectmen on Monday, September 25, 2023, where the public reviewed goals and strategies and the Selectmen formally voted to approve the HPP. Comments received at the public meetings have been incorporated into the goals and strategies.

1.6 Plan Method

Data about Northbridge for this report was obtained from the following sources:

- Northbridge Assessor's Office
- Northbridge Building Department
- Northbridge Community Planning & Development
- Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC)
- Citizens Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA)
- Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP)
- Massachusetts Department of Employment and Training
- Massachusetts Department of Revenue
- Massachusetts Department of Education
- Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development
- US Census Bureau

The following documents were consulted frequently during the development of this HPP:

- Northbridge Zoning Bylaw
- Northbridge Subdivision Rules & Regulations
- Draft Northbridge Open Space and Recreation Plan (2023-2030)
- Slum & Blight Inventory Reports (2022)
- Northbridge Community Preservation Plan (2021)
- Northbridge Local Rapid Recovery Plan (2021)
- Water Infrastructure Evaluation and Capital Improvement Study (Tata & Howard, 2020)
- Village of Rockdale Technical Assistance Panel Report (2018)
- Northbridge Hazard Mitigation Plan (2018)
- Northbridge Community Resilience-Building Workshop Report (2018)
- Northbridge Economic Development Strategic Plan (2017)
- 2040 Providence Road Reuse Study (2014)
- Northbridge Reconnaissance Report (2007)
- Northbridge Master Plan (1994)

Chapter 2 Housing Needs Assessment

Community Overview

Northbridge is located in the Blackstone Valley subregion of Central Massachusetts, southeast of the City of Worcester. Because of its close proximity to the confluence of the Blackstone and Mumford Rivers and the hydropower they afforded, Northbridge became a key manufacturing center throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. By the late 19th century, Rockdale, Riverdale, Linwood, and Whitinsville were established as stable mill villages to support the growing population of Northbridge mill workers and their families. These industries thrived in Northbridge until the Great Depression, when several mills closed due to economic decline. This downward trend continued through the 20th century as manufacturing declined across the country. In recent years, Northbridge, like many mill towns, has struggled to reorient its economy to the new post-industrial era. In the mid-20th century, many former industrial centers like Northbridge were repurposed as bedroom communities for larger cities. Easy access to Worcester and Providence via Route 146, and to Boston via Route 90, has allowed Northbridge to maintain a robust housing market and a comparatively high standard of living.

In December 2014, the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park, which spans parts of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, was established to preserve and protect the historic legacy in the Blackstone River Valley. Northbridge (village of Whitinsville) and other prominent mill towns are included in the park.

2.1 Population Characteristics

Northbridge is a growing community; between 2010 and 2020, the population rose from 15,707 to 16,335.⁵ This is a 4% increase since 2010, similar to other communities in the Blackstone River Valley region.⁶ This region of Massachusetts is comprised of eleven communities⁷ located in south-central Massachusetts: Blackstone, Douglas, Grafton, Hopedale, Mendon, Millbury, Millville, Northbridge, Sutton, Upton and Uxbridge.⁸ The chart below illustrates population change over the past decade. Most communities have grown modestly (4-6%), while some have barely changed or even decreased (such as Blackstone and Millville). However, the Town of Grafton is growing rapidly, no doubt because of its MBTA commuter rail station.

⁵ Source: 2020 P1: Census Bureau Table

⁶ Source: [Massachusetts Census Data \(malegislature.gov\)](https://malegislature.gov/Data/0000/Massachusetts-Census-Data) for Municipal Populations

⁷ Source: [Region: Blackstone Valley - MetroWest Economic Research Center \(MERC\) \(merc-fsu.org\)](https://www.merc-fsu.org/)

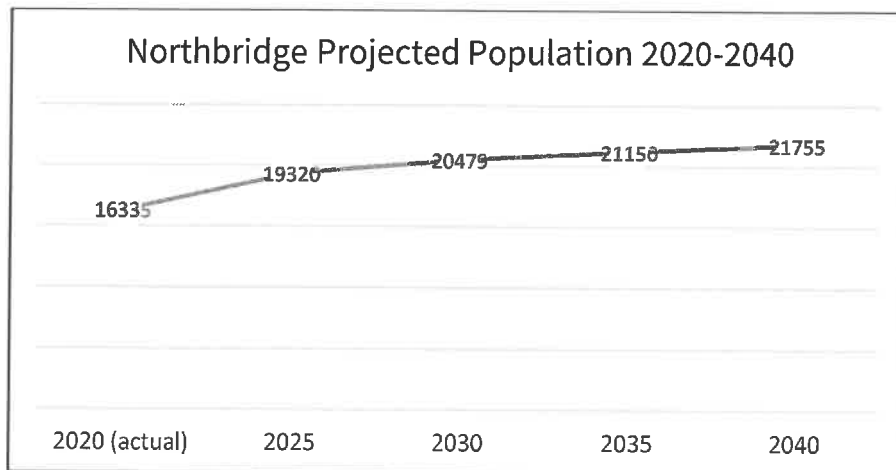
⁸ Source: [About Northbridge | Northbridge MA \(northbridgema.org\)](https://www.northbridgema.org/)

Population Change in Blackstone Valley Communities

Town	2010	2020	Change	% Change
Blackstone	9,026	9,208	182	2.0%
Douglas	8,471	8,983	512	6.0%
Grafton	17,765	19,664	1,899	10.7%
Hopedale	5,911	6,017	106	1.8%
Mendon	5,839	6,228	389	6.7%
Millbury	13,261	13,831	570	4.3%
Millville	3,190	3,174	-16	-0.5%
Northbridge	15,707	16,335	628	4.0%
Sutton	8,963	9,357	394	4.4%
Upton	7,542	8,000	458	6.1%
Uxbridge	13,457	14,162	705	5.2%

Source: U.S. Census

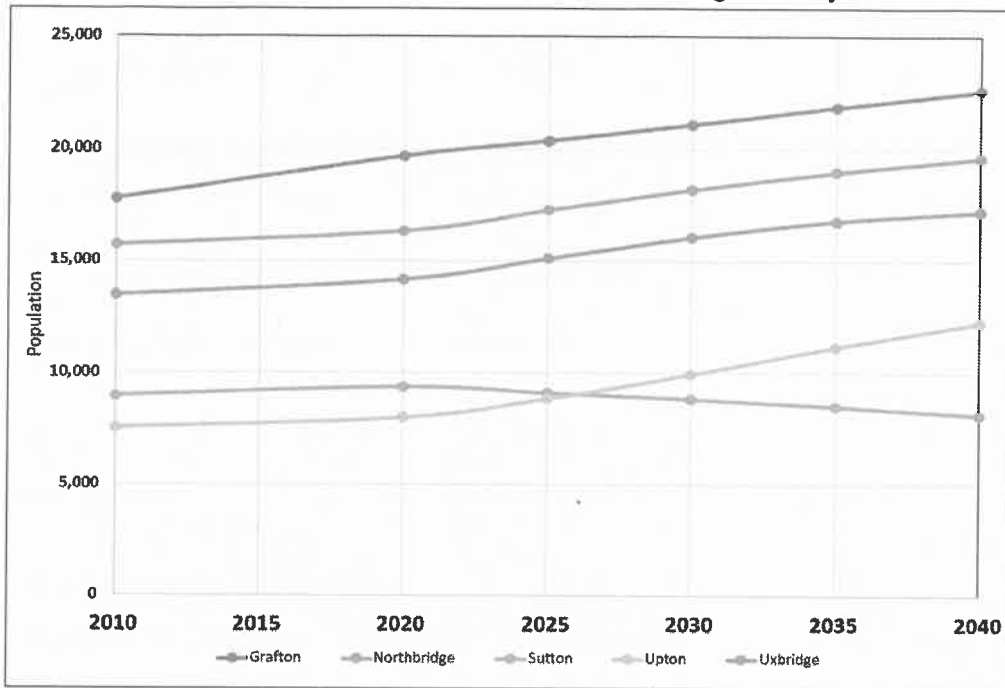
The population is expected to continue to grow steadily over the next two decades; please see the chart below.



UMass Donahue Institute | Massachusetts Population Projections (donahue-institute.org)

Additionally, towns adjacent to Northbridge, along the Route 146 corridor, are also expected to grow modestly. The chart below illustrates projections for Grafton, Sutton, Upton and Uxbridge as well as Northbridge. This reflects general statewide population growth estimates and expansion of residential areas west of Route 495.

Population: Historical and Projected, 2010-2040, Northbridge and Adjacent Towns



Race

Residents of Northbridge are mostly White, although there are other ethnicities and a small but significant Hispanic population.

Population (2020 Decennial Census Redistricting Data)⁹

Population			
Race	Northbridge	Worcester County	Massachusetts
White	88.8%	73.6%	69.6%
Black	1.29%	5.57%	7.03%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.09%	0.3%	0.34%
Asian	1.27%	5.38%	7.2%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.02%	0.3%	0.03%
Other Race (unspecified)	2.22%	6.43%	7.07%
2+ races	6.35%	8.7%	8.6%

⁹ Source: 2020 P1: Census Bureau Table

Hispanic or Latino Origin¹⁰

Population			
	Northbridge ¹¹	Worcester County ¹²	Massachusetts ¹³
Hispanic or Latino	8.3%	11.8%	12.0%
Not Hispanic or Latino	91.7%	88.2%	88%

Source: P1: Census Bureau Table & DP05: ACS DEMOGRAPHIC AND HOUSING... - Census Bureau Table

Population Age

Like many communities in the Blackstone Valley and throughout New England, the population of Northbridge is relatively older. Current estimates show that 16.5% of Northbridge's population is over the age of 65, which is slightly higher than the Worcester County rate of 15.7%.

Population Age (2020: ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables)¹⁴

Age	Northbridge ¹⁵	Worcester County ¹⁶	Massachusetts ¹⁷
Under 5 years	7.1%	5.4%	5.2%
5 to 18 years	14.0%	15.7%	14.6%
18 and older	78.9%	78.9%	80.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
65 and older	16.5%	15.7%	16.5%

Source: 2020 S0101: AGE AND SEX - Census Bureau Table

Population and School Enrollment

The same demographic trends that have led to an older population have also reduced the school population in Northbridge. Despite steady population growth, school enrollment has just as steadily declined (note that 2021 and 2022 on this chart are projections).

¹⁰ Source: DP05: ACS DEMOGRAPHIC AND HOUSING... - Census Bureau Table

¹¹ Source: DP05: ACS DEMOGRAPHIC AND HOUSING... - Census Bureau Table

¹² Source: DP05: ACS DEMOGRAPHIC AND HOUSING... - Census Bureau Table

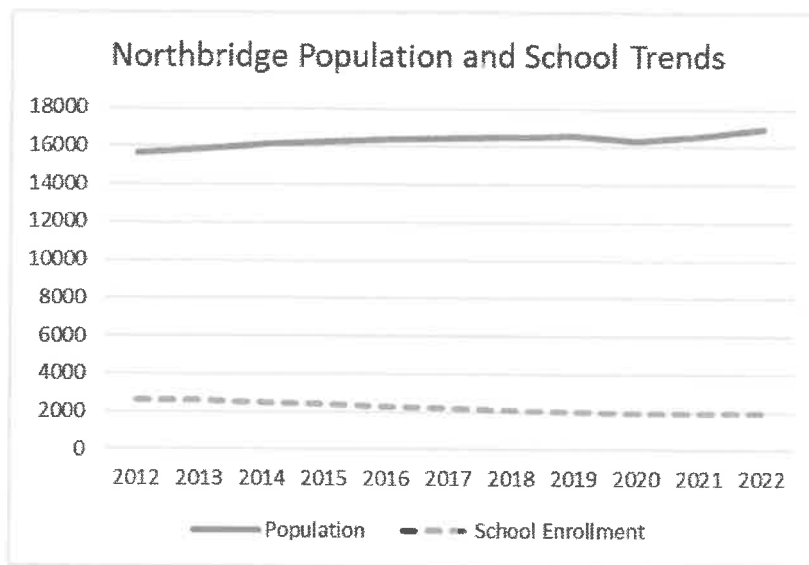
¹³ Source: DP05: ACS DEMOGRAPHIC AND HOUSING... - Census Bureau Table

¹⁴ Source: 2020 population age, Northbridge,... - Census Bureau Tables

¹⁵ Source: S0101: AGE AND SEX - Census Bureau Table

¹⁶ Source: S0101: AGE AND SEX - Census Bureau Table

¹⁷ Source: S0101: AGE AND SEX - Census Bureau Table



Source: [Enrollment Data - Information Services/Statistical Reports \(mass.edu\)](https://enrollment.mass.gov/information-services/statistical-reports)

Household Type

Northbridge has 6,655 total housing units, and of those, 6,435 units are occupied; therefore, as defined by the U.S. Census, there are 6,435 households in Northbridge.¹⁸ A housing unit is considered “occupied” if a person or group of persons is living in it at the time of the census-taker’s interview or if the occupants are only temporarily absent, as for example, on vacation. A “household” is defined as all of the people who occupy a housing unit, regardless of their relationship, including individuals alone. Of the total households in Northbridge, approximately 54.4% are headed by married couples, and 7.6% are cohabiting couple households.¹⁹ Just over a third (34.7%) of all households in Northbridge have children under the age of 18.²⁰ Almost 29.6% of households in Northbridge have at least one person over the age of 65.²¹

¹⁸ Source: [S1101: HOUSEHOLDS AND FAMILIES - Census Bureau Table](#)

¹⁹ Source: [DP02: SELECTED SOCIAL... - Census Bureau Table](#)

²⁰ Source: [S1101: HOUSEHOLDS AND FAMILIES - Census Bureau Table](#)

²¹ Source: [DP02: SELECTED SOCIAL... - Census Bureau Table](#)

2020 Various Households by Type – Data retrieved from^{22, 23}

American Community Survey - DP02 SELECTED SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS IN THE UNITED STATES

HOUSEHOLDS BY TYPE	Northbridge		Worcester County		Massachusetts	
	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent
Total households	6,435	100%	314,081	100%	2,646,980	100%
Married-couple family	3,502	54.4%	153,614	48.9%	1,240,714	46.9%
--With own children of the householder under 18 years	1,853 ²⁴	28.8%	88,226 ²⁵	28.1%	690,194 ²⁶	26.1%
Cohabiting couple household	489	7.6%	24,435	7.8%	185,695	7.0%
Male householder, no spouse/partner present	900	14.0%	53,108	16.9%	458,359	17.3%
Male householder living alone	571	8.9%	38,342	12.2%	316,591	12.0%
--65 years and over	249	3.9%	11,674	3.7%	99,791	3.8%
Female householder, no spouse/partner present	1,544	24.0%	82,924	26.4%	762,212	28.8%
Female householder living alone	857	13.3%	47,522	15.1%	434,945	16.4%
--65 years and over	426	6.6%	24,123	7.7%	220,082	8.3%
Households with one or more people under 18 years	2,234	34.7%	97,136	30.9%	762,279	28.8%
Households with one or more people 65 years and over	1,905	29.6%	91,890	29.3%	815,668	30.8%

²² Source: DP02: SELECTED SOCIAL... - Census Bureau Table

²³ Source: S1101: HOUSEHOLDS AND FAMILIES - Census Bureau Table

²⁴ Source: S1101: HOUSEHOLDS AND FAMILIES - Census Bureau Table

²⁵ Source: S1101: HOUSEHOLDS AND FAMILIES - Census Bureau Table

²⁶ Source: S1101: HOUSEHOLDS AND FAMILIES - Census Bureau Table

Education

Ninety-four percent (94%) of Northbridge residents have a High School diploma or higher which is slightly more than the state of Massachusetts as a whole (91.1%). Forty-six percent (46%) have a Bachelor's degree or higher, which is 17.8 percentage points lower than Massachusetts and 7 percentage points lower than Worcester County.

Education Levels (2020: ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables) ²⁷

Education	Northbridge	Worcester County	Massachusetts
High school or equivalent	66%	60.5%	51.1%
Some college or Associate's degree	36.4%	41.6%	43.4%
Associate's degree	9.5%	9.0%	7.7%
Bachelor's degree or higher	45.8%	52.8%	63.6%
Graduate or professional degree	13.6%	15.1%	20.0%
<i>High School Graduate or higher</i>	93.5%	91.3%	91.1%

Source: 2020 S1501: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT - Census Bureau Table

Labor Force

A community's labor force includes all residents 16 years and over with a job or in the market for a job. Northbridge's labor force includes approximately 13,406, or 72% of the total population.²⁸ The unemployment rate according to the 2020 Census is 5 percent.^{29, 30}

Workers who reside in Northbridge rely primarily on car, truck or van transportation for commuting, with 84.8% commuting in this fashion, while 8.4% worked from home. The remainder of workers commuted in other way, including carpooling or public transit³¹. The average commute time is 31.1 minutes³². The percentage of people who work from home may be in flux due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Employment in Northbridge is spread across a variety of industries, although the largest percentage (27.3%) work in educational services, and health care and social assistance.³³

²⁷ Source: S1501: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT - Census Bureau Table

²⁸ Source: S2301: EMPLOYMENT STATUS - Census Bureau Table

²⁹ Source: S2301: EMPLOYMENT STATUS - Census Bureau Table

³⁰ Source: 2020 DP03: Census Bureau Table

³¹ Source: DP03: SELECTED ECONOMIC... - Census Bureau Table

³² Source: DP03: SELECTED ECONOMIC... - Census Bureau Table

³³ Source: DP03: SELECTED ECONOMIC... - Census Bureau Table

Disability

Disability is a protected class under federal law. The U.S. Census Bureau defines a disability as a long-lasting physical, mental or emotional condition. This condition can make it difficult for a person to do activities such as walking, climbing stairs, dressing, bathing, learning or remembering. This condition can also impede a person from being able to go outside the home alone or to work at a job or business. Many residents with one or more disabilities face housing challenges due to a lack of housing that is affordable and physically accessible.

An estimated 13.6% (2,212) of Northbridge's population is considered disabled.³⁴ Ambulatory Difficulty and Cognitive Difficulty were listed as the most prevalent types of disability. An estimated 59.6% of elderly residents reported having one or more disabilities. Northbridge's elderly population is expected to continue to increase, which will likely raise demand for affordable and barrier-free housing.

2020 Disability Characteristics for Civilian Population³⁵

Total Civilian Noninstitutionalized Population (Estimated)	16,322	100%
With a disability	2,212	13.6%
Under 18 years	3,503	21.5%
With a disability	0	0.0%
18 to 64 years	10,301	63.1%
With a disability	285	2.8%
65 years and over	2,518	15.4%
With a disability	429	17.0%

Source: [2020 disability, Northbridge, ... - Census Bureau Tables: ACS 5-year Estimate](#)

Income

The ability to exercise housing choice bears a strong relationship to the amount of money a household can afford to spend on housing. Housing that is affordable to lower- and moderate-income households is critical to creating economic self-sufficiency and for building and retaining talent to improve the region's and the state's overall economic competitiveness.

Northbridge overall is a generally wealthy community. The median household income is \$85,503, higher

³⁴ Source: [2020 disability, Northbridge, ... - Census Bureau Tables](#)

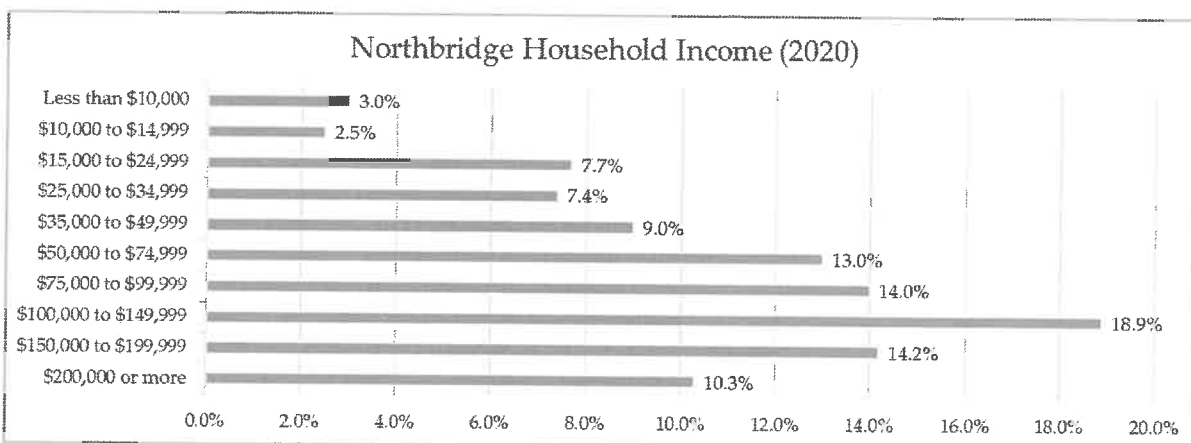
³⁵ Source: [2020 disability, Northbridge, ... - Census Bureau Tables](#)

than Worcester County (\$77,155) and Massachusetts as a whole (\$84,385).³⁶ The median income is that which is at the midpoint of all incomes in the community, as opposed to the mean, or average, which can be strongly influenced by extremes at either end.³⁷ At the same time, the poverty rate in Northbridge was 5.5% in 2020. The poverty rate for children under 18 stands at 6.9%. Further, 11.1% of households received SNAP/food stamps in the past 12 months.³⁸ Thus, there are households in Northbridge that are cost burdened (defined as those spending more than 30% of their income on housing costs). U.S. Census data indicates that 23% of homeowners and 44% of renters are cost-burdened.

Median Income^{39, 40}

	Northbridge	Worcester County	Massachusetts
Median Household Income	\$85,503	\$77,155	\$84,385
Poverty Rate	5.5%	9.7%	9.8%

Source: [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Hampshire County, Massachusetts](#) & [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Massachusetts](#)



2.2 Housing Supply Characteristics

The purpose of this section is to review the characteristics and types of housing in Northbridge to assess how the housing stock is responding to changing demographics, affordability pressures, and market conditions. Many factors affect where homes have been built and will continue to be built, as well as

³⁶ Source: [S2503: FINANCIAL CHARACTERISTICS - Census Bureau Table](#)

³⁷ The median is the middle number in a sorted, ascending, or descending list of numbers and can be more descriptive of that data set than the average. It is the point above and below which half (50%) the observed data falls, and so represents the midpoint of the data. The median is sometimes used as opposed to the mean (or average) when there are outliers in the sequence that might skew the average of the values.

³⁸ Source: [S1701: POVERTY STATUS IN THE PAST 12... - Census Bureau Table](#)

³⁹ Source: [S2503: FINANCIAL CHARACTERISTICS - Census Bureau Table](#)

⁴⁰ Source: [S1701: POVERTY STATUS IN THE PAST 12... - Census Bureau Table](#)

the type and characteristics of housing. The housing supply in any community is a reflection of state and local land use policies, the strength or weakness of the regional and local housing markets, mortgage lending practices, housing discrimination, transportation networks, topography, and public infrastructure, all of which are addressed in this plan.

A Town needs a full range of housing opportunities that are affordable to households of all racial and ethnic backgrounds, abilities, and income ranges to ensure that the town and region remain economically competitive. As noted previously, Northbridge's future housing needs include the ability for older residents, both currently living and incoming, to downsize and still live in town and also to develop more affordable units for all other age and socioeconomic levels.

Housing Units

Analysis of homeownership levels and renter opportunities is an important feature of a housing assessment. Data on owner-occupancy and renter-occupancy is used to aid in the distribution of funds for government programs, including mortgage insurance and public housing programs. It also allows planners to evaluate the overall viability of housing markets, to assess the stability of neighborhoods and to aid in the planning of housing programs and services.

There were 6,655 housing units in Northbridge. These units had an occupancy rate of 97%. Conversely, the vacancy rate is currently at 3%. In Worcester County, the occupancy rate for 2020 was 93.3%.⁴¹

2020 Housing Occupancy Ratios in Adjacent Towns and Worcester County⁴²

	Northbridge		Grafton		Sutton		Uxbridge		Worcester County	
Total Housing Units	6,655	100%	7,760	100%	3,502	100%	5,696	100%	336,533	100%
Occupied	6,435	97%	7,494	96.6%	3,349	95.6%	5,382	94.5%	314,081	93.3%
Vacant	267	3.0%	266	3.4%	153	4.4%	314	5.5%	22,452	6.7%

Of the Northbridge housing units, 68% are owner-occupied; thus a large number of units (about 2,130) are rentals, likely including most of the vacant units.

Age of Housing

The age of a town's housing stock and areas with concentrated numbers of older housing are important to consider when developing a Housing Production Plan as certain public monies may be available to improve the housing condition of substandard housing. Northbridge has taken advantage of these types of funding (e.g. Community Development Block Grants) for housing rehabilitation. According to the latest data from the 2020 American Community Survey, 39.2% of all housing units in Northbridge

⁴¹ 2020 U.S. Census

⁴² U.S. Census 2017-2021 ACS 5-year estimates

were built after 1979.⁴³ However, 30% of the housing stock was built before 1940 suggesting the continued need for maintenance and rehabilitation efforts.⁴⁴

Northbridge is currently offering housing rehabilitation assistance to income eligible property owners (& tenants); up to \$40,000 may be awarded for housing repairs. The program provides 15-year deferred payment loans at 0% interest to qualifying households. The purpose of the program is to correct code-related violations and substandard housing conditions, including abatement of health hazards such as lead and asbestos.

Challenges of Older Housing Stock

Well-maintained older homes are an important part of a community's local history and help preserve historic character. However, older homes can have many challenges. These can include:

- Increased need for maintenance and repairs
- Poor past maintenance and repair history
- Design not well-suited for people with mobility impairments (particularly relevant with an aging population)
- Outdated and inefficient heating, cooling, and insulation systems
- Lead paint, asbestos, and lead pipes that present health risks (particularly true in housing built before 1978).

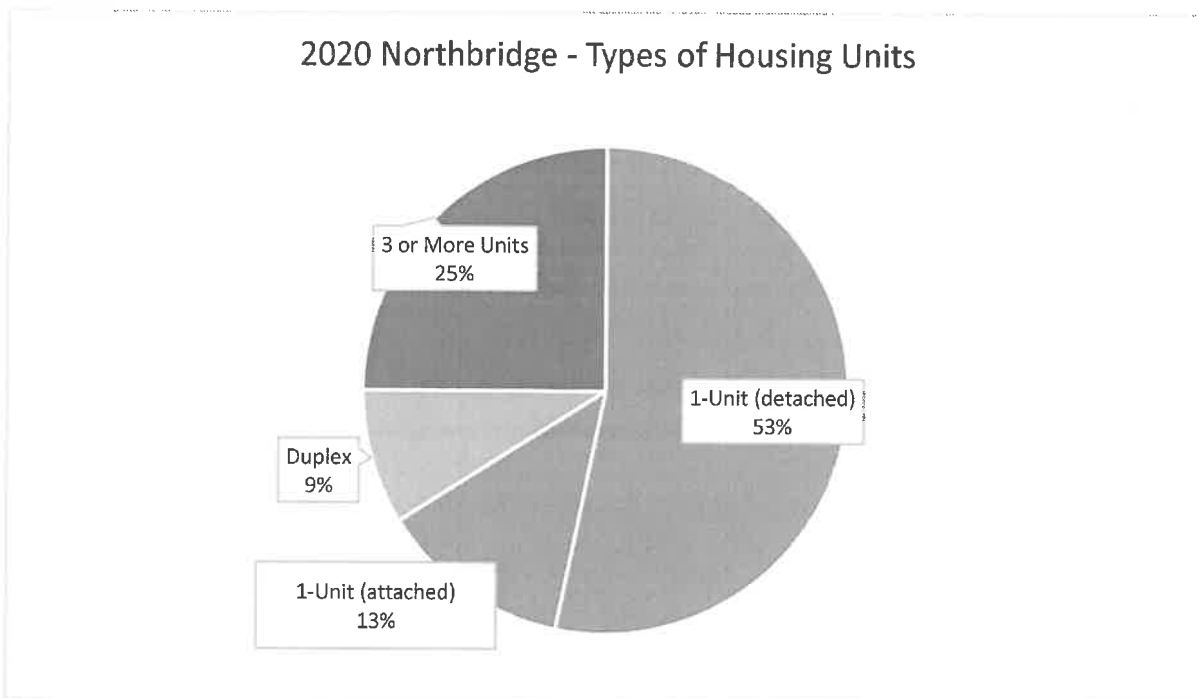
Since the cost to rehabilitate and achieve code compliance in older houses can be extremely high, some landlords and homeowners may not be able to afford to make these improvements or some may not invest in their properties because they fear that a low home value does not justify the cost of capital or maintenance improvements. Deferred maintenance and repairs can result in unsafe or poor-quality housing for homeowners and renters. The town has taken a proactive approach to assist eligible applicants as part of its ongoing Housing Rehabilitation Program.

Housing Structure Type

Housing affordability is closely related to housing structure type. Multi-family housing, two-family housing, and smaller single-family homes on smaller lots tend to be more affordable to a wide range of households than larger single-family homes on large lots. In Northbridge just over half, or 53%, of housing units are single-family detached dwellings. Another 13% are single-family attached units (townhouses), while nine (9) percent are duplexes and 25% are multi-family units in buildings with three or more units. The following chart illustrates this breakdown for the 6,655 total occupied housing units in Northbridge.

⁴³ Source: [DP04: SELECTED HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS - Census Bureau Table](#)

⁴⁴ Source: [DP04: SELECTED HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS - Census Bureau Table](#)



Source: S2504: PHYSICAL HOUSING--... - Census Bureau Table

In comparison with nearby towns, Northbridge has significantly more multi-family housing stock. As shown in the chart below, Northbridge has a much smaller percentage of single-family homes and more multifamily options than its neighbors (Grafton, Sutton, Upton, & Uxbridge). This is also true in comparison to other parts of Massachusetts: statewide, the percentage of single-family homes is 76% of all housing units.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Source: MAPC's Massachusetts Housing Data Portal at Housing MA

Housing Types – Northbridge and Adjacent Towns (by # of units in building)

	Northbridge	Grafton	Sutton	Upton	Uxbridge
1-unit	66%	73%	83%	82%	75%
2-4-family	19%	15%	9%	8%	16%
5-9 family	8%	7%	5%	3%	7%
10 - 19 family	1%	4%	2%	0%	1%
20+	5%	1%	1%	6%	1%
Mobile homes	1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%

Affordable Housing Inventory

Based upon current information available, Northbridge has 453 units on the state's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI), which amounts to 6.8% of the town's 2020 total year-round housing stock (see SHI Inventory, next page). Through Chapter 40B, Massachusetts municipalities are encouraged to increase their overall percentage of affordable units to 10% or more. Given the recent growth of housing (2010-20), Northbridge has done well to maintain its percentage of affordable housing.

Of these 453 SHI units, 86 are owned and operated by the Northbridge Housing Authority. These include the following:

- Colonial Drive Apartments (44) One Bedroom Apartments
- Lake Terrace Apartments (28) One Bedroom and (4) Two Bedroom Apartments
- Sutton Street three-story building with 10 units.



**Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities Subsidized Housing Inventory
Northbridge, MA 2023**

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF HOUSING AND LIVABLE COMMUNITIES CH40B SUBSIDIZED HOUSING INVENTORY							
Northbridge							
DHCD ID #	Project Name	Address	Type	Total SHI Units	Affordability Expires	Built w/ Comp. Permit?	Subsidizing Agency
2299	n/a	Colonial Dr.	Rental	44	Perp	No	EOHLC
2300	n/a	99 Sutton St.	Rental	10	Perp	No	EOHLC
2301	Lake Terrace	Lake St.	Rental	32	Perp	No	EOHLC
2302	Cotton Mill Apts	17&23 Douglas Rd; 10 Linwood Ave.	Rental	55	2038	No	MasaHousing
2303	Foundations Project	49-59 D Street	Rental	8	2097	No	EOHLC
							HUD
2304	Rockdale Apts	Scattered sites	Rental	85	2033	No	MHP
							EOHLC
							EOHLC
2305	Rockdale Common	4-6,12-14,18-20 McBride St. 37-47 Taft St.	Rental	40	2028*	No	MasaHousing
2306	Rockdale House	63 School St.	Rental	40	2027	No	HUD
2307	Whitinsville Retirement Elderly Housing	2 Chestnut St.	Rental	24	perp	Yes	HUD
							xRHS
2308	Woodland Heights	Walton Way (aka South Main St)	Ownership	30	-	No	EOHLC
4402	DDS Group Homes	Confidential		17	N/A	No	DDS
9509	Linwood Mill Apartments	670 Linwood Ave.	Rental	75	2083	NO	EOHLC
							MasaHousing
10538	DMH Group Homes	Confidential	Rental	15	N/A	NO	DMH

8/16/2023 Northbridge
Page 1 of 2

This data is derived from information provided to the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) by individual communities and is subject to change as new information is obtained and use restrictions expire.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF HOUSING AND LIVABLE COMMUNITIES CH40B SUBSIDIZED HOUSING INVENTORY							
Northbridge							
DHCD ID #	Project Name	Address	Type	Total SHI Units	Affordability Expires	Built w/ Comp. Permit?	Subsidizing Agency
	Northbridge Totals			483	Census 2020 Year Round Housing Units		6,655
					Percent Subsidized		6.61%

Section 8 Housing Voucher and Other Rental Assistance Programs

Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Rental Assistance is a federal housing assistance program that is managed in Massachusetts by the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities. Under this program, eligible individuals are issued a voucher to locate and rent decent, safe, and affordable housing of their choice in the privately-owned market, subject that the unit meets the program's criteria. Participants pay thirty percent of their monthly income for rent and utilities and the government pays the balance directly to the property owner.

Section 8 Housing Vouchers typically are tied to an individual and not to a unit and, for this reason, a unit inhabited by an individual with a Section 8 Housing Voucher does not count toward a town's Subsidized Housing Inventory. This information is presented in this section because it is a common misunderstanding that these units count as subsidized housing units; where in fact they do not.

Wayfinders, a non-profit regional housing agency serving western and central Massachusetts, administers a large percentage of Section 8 vouchers for the region on behalf of the state, with the organization administering the Housing Choice Voucher Program in Northbridge.

The South Middlesex Opportunity Council (SMOC) provides housing facilities and services in Northbridge. The agency was founded in 1965 to alleviate poverty in eastern Massachusetts and is an umbrella organization that works in the community to provide a wide range of services including Comprehensive Housing Services. As part of these services, SMOC created a wholly owned subsidiary, the South Middlesex Non-Profit Housing Corporation (SMOC Housing Corporation), to address the need for safe, decent and affordable housing for low-income families, individuals and disabled adults.

SMOC Housing Corporation owns and operates 13 buildings with 63 units in Northbridge. Most are located in the village of Rockdale and are rental apartment units.

Chapter 3 **Housing Development Constraints: Opportunities and Challenges**

Local housing development is influenced by a variety of conditions. Some conditions have to do with the specific characteristics of the community and site conditions where homes can potentially be built. These characteristics include the availability of land, presence of roads and infrastructure, environmental constraints, proximity to jobs and accessibility to desirable amenities. Other conditions that impact development include local and state land use and development regulations. These regulations include zoning and subdivision regulations, permitting processes, building codes and environmental regulations. This chapter will look at the various conditions affecting housing development in Northbridge.

3.1 Housing Market

Housing by Cost

Housing is a basic human need and is often the largest expenditure for an individual, family or household. As a whole, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is an expensive place to live. According to the Council for Community and Economic Research (C2ER)⁴⁶, Massachusetts has the 5th highest cost of living in the nation both as an index and with the cost of housing, trailing behind only Hawaii, District of Columbia, New York and California. While single-family homes prices and rents are more affordable outside of the Boston area, prices in Central Massachusetts, including Northbridge are still more expensive than in many places across the country.

Rental Market

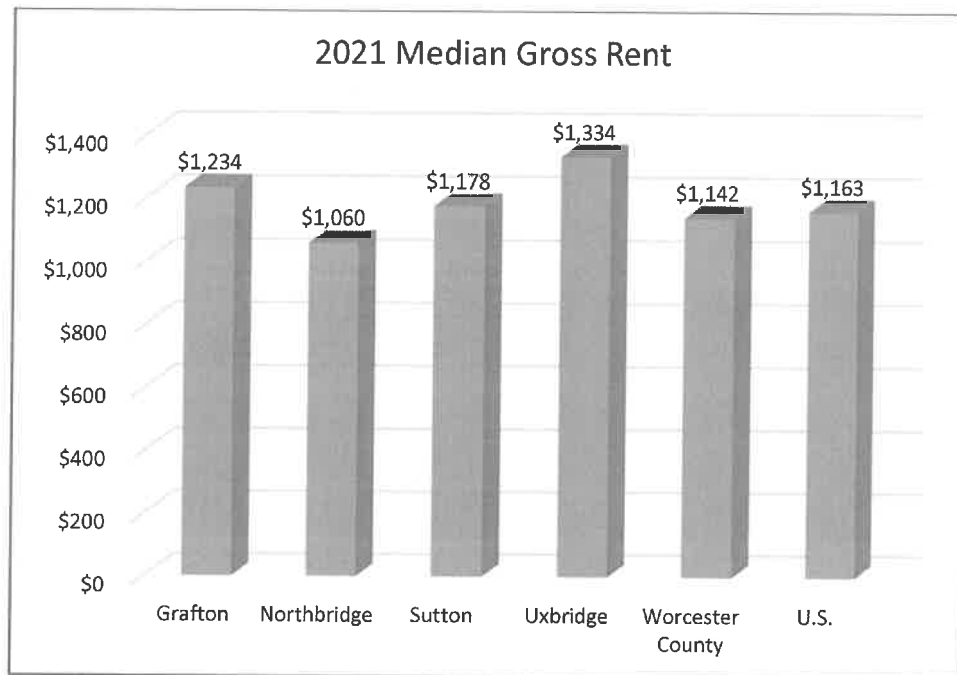
Rental data below is based on the most recent U.S. Census data that was estimated for 2021 based on the American Community Survey (ACS) Five-Year Estimates. The ACS is a sampling of households rather than a full decennial census.⁴⁷ The ACS estimated the median monthly gross rent for a home in Northbridge to be **\$1,060** in 2021. However, actual available rentals in 2023 are in the **\$1,600-\$2,500** range. Additionally, inventory is quite low, with only two available apartments in August of this year.

The estimated 2021 monthly Northbridge rent of \$1,060 is significantly lower than in neighboring towns (Grafton/\$1,234; Sutton/\$1,178 & Uxbridge/\$1,334), Worcester County as a whole, and the U.S., all of

⁴⁶ Cost of Living Data Series. <https://meric.mo.gov/data/cost-living-data-series>

⁴⁷ It is called a five-year estimate because it is based on data collected over a period of five years. The American Community Survey (ACS) is an ongoing survey that provides data every year, but the five-year estimates are more reliable for less populated areas and small population subgroups. The five-year estimates represent the average characteristics of the population and housing over the period of data collection, not a single point in time. For example, the 2017-2021 ACS five-year estimates reflect the data collected from January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2021.

which are also ACS Five-Year Estimates.⁴⁸ This is most likely related to the existence of a higher-than-average percentage of multi-family units, particularly former mill housing built in the early 1900s. Nearly a third (30%) of housing units in Northbridge were built in 1939 or earlier. Rental rates in the region are shown below (Source: U.S. Census American Community Five-Year Estimates, 2017-2021).



Single-Family Home Market

As of September 2022, there were 101 single family home sales for the year to date in Northbridge with a median sales price of \$465,000.⁴⁹ Comparatively, in 2021, there were a total of 21 single family home sales in Northbridge, with an average sales price of \$450,000.⁵⁰ According to the real estate website, Redfin, Northbridge is very competitive, and homes sell in about 24 days. The most competitive homes can sell for about 2% above list price and go to “pending sale” status in around 6 days. Hartford homebuyers searched to move into Northbridge more than any other metro, followed by New York and Springfield.⁵¹ The inventory of new single-family homes is currently extremely low, with 12 homes on the market in August 2023 and an average sale price of \$678,000.

As of September 2022, there had been 60 condominium sales in Northbridge with an average sales price

⁴⁸ Source: [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: United States](#)

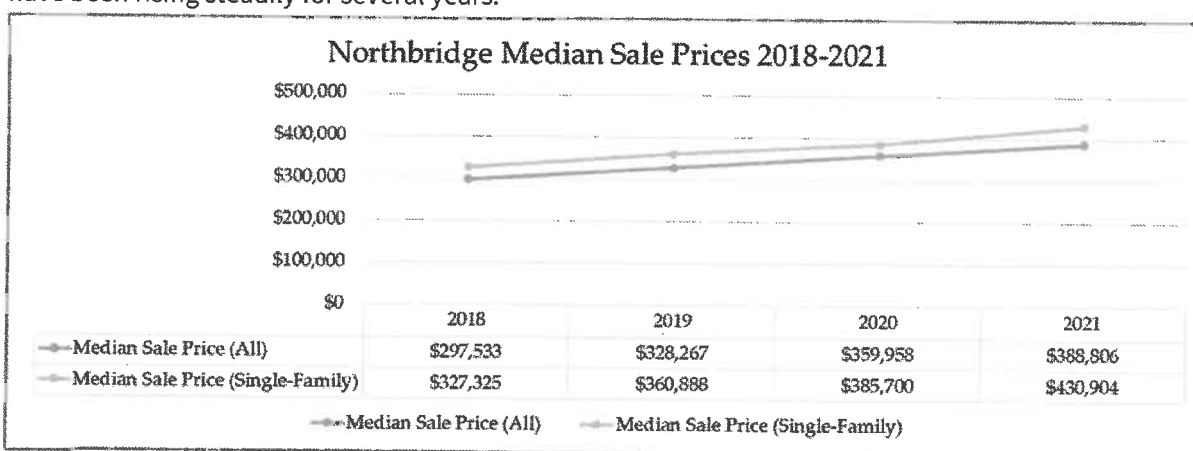
⁴⁹ Source: [Northbridge Housing Market: House Prices & Trends | Redfin](#)

⁵⁰ Source: [Northbridge.pdf \(showingtime.com\)](#)

⁵¹ Source: [Northbridge Housing Market: House Prices & Trends | Redfin](#)

of \$437,500.⁵² In 2021, there were 39 condominium sales in Northbridge, averaging \$281,000.⁵³ In May of 2023, a 3-bedroom/2-bath home sold for \$430,000, and in June a 3br/2ba sold for \$525,000. Recent condominium sales include 2-bedroom/2 bath condominiums that sold for \$429,500 and 537,330 in June of 2023.⁵⁴ Current inventory of condominiums and townhouses is also extremely low, with six condominiums and one townhouse available in August 2023 at an average of about \$500,000.

Compared to the median sales price for Worcester County, Northbridge homes are somewhat more expensive, but compared to Massachusetts as a whole (with extremely high prices in eastern Massachusetts), they are significantly less expensive. In 2022, the median sales price of a single-family home in Worcester County was \$430,000, while for Massachusetts it was \$580,000. These home prices have been rising steadily for several years.



Median Sales Price of a Single-Family Home, Year to Date 2022

	Northbridge ⁵⁵	Worcester County ⁵⁶	Massachusetts ⁵⁷
Median Sales Price of a Single-Family Home	\$465,000	\$430,000	\$580,000

2020 Median Monthly Homeowner Costs (2020: ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles)⁵⁸

Avg Monthly Homeowners Cost	Northbridge	Worcester County	Massachusetts
With a mortgage	\$2,195	\$1,971	\$2,268
Without a mortgage	\$719	\$756	\$829

Source: 2020 DP04: SELECTED HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS - Census Bureau Table

⁵² Source: [Northbridge.pdf \(showingtime.com\)](#)

⁵³ Source: [Northbridge.pdf \(showingtime.com\)](#)

⁵⁴ Source: [Recently Sold Homes in Northbridge MA - 374 Transactions | Zillow](#)

⁵⁵ Source: [Northbridge.pdf \(showingtime.com\)](#)

⁵⁶ Source: [2022-09 Counties.pdf \(mards.wpenginepowered.com\)](#)

⁵⁷ Source: [MAR Statewide MMI 2022-09.pdf \(mards.wpenginepowered.com\)](#)

⁵⁸ Source: [DP04: SELECTED HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS - Census Bureau Table](#)

Building Activity

New residential building permit activity has varied significantly from year to year, as can be seen in the chart below. Most recently, 57 residential permits were issued in 2022, an increase from 51 the previous year. Of the 57 new residential permits issued, 15 were for duplexes. Building activity did not appear to slow down significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic and has increased in the last couple of years. The continued development of new multifamily housing means that the town's proportion of multi- to single-family housing will remain high.

Building Permits in Northbridge⁵⁹

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total Units	58	20	27	38	47	34	37	29	14	28	24	51	57
Units in Single-Family Structures	58	20	27	36	34	34	37	29	12	22	12	15	42
Units in Multi-Family Structures	0	0	0	2	13	0	0	0	2	6	12	36	15

3.2 Development Constraints, Limitations and Opportunities

Northbridge is located southeast of Worcester and has good access to the Massachusetts Turnpike, resulting in significant residential growth. The town's landscape includes rolling hills, a low river valley, an upland ridge, and a high plateau. The Blackstone River runs from north to south through the center of town, creating a prominent feature that contributes to the rural and scenic character of the town.

Natural Constraints

Northbridge has some natural constraints as described above, including ridges and floodplains, with the most restrictive being wetlands and flood-prone areas. Water supplies are sufficient for more development, provided the infrastructure is adequate, which it appears to be (see section on infrastructure below). The town has significant tracts of protected open space, this is an asset to the community, and there are numerous other areas that can be developed appropriately. This section provides more detailed information on each of these constraints.

Steep Slopes

⁵⁹ Source: 2020 Census Data; Local Building Department

Generally, any slope zero to fifteen (15) percent is considerable suitable for development. Slopes greater than 15 percent are considered “excessive” or “steep” for residential uses. It is generally preferred to leave steep slopes undeveloped due to the high potential for erosion.

The majority of steeper slopes, those greater than 8%, are located in the eastern half of town. The southwestern corner has several areas of slopes with grades greater than 15%. The highest elevations are found in the town’s northwest corner, although the area is generally level. The central and southern areas contain gentle (less than 8%) and moderate (8-15%) slopes broken by areas of short steep grades (more than 15%).

Soils

Soil types and percolation rates influence land uses and comprise some of the major limiting factors for development. As the demand for new homes increases, developers and engineers are devising new technologies to overcome previous obstacles such as steep slopes and unsuitable soils. Soil types and subsurface geology affect water infiltration and surface drainage.

The Worcester County Soil Conservation District has identified eleven general soil types in Worcester County, of which seven are found in Northbridge. The most common soil group in Northbridge is Soil Group #1, which is stony with frequent bedrock outcrops. The soils are either shallow to bedrock or moderately well-drained with hardpan. Both are very restrictive for development. Areas that are suitable for development are Soil Groups #2, #4 and #7. These have higher permeability and are relatively deep.

Flood Plains and Flood Hazard Areas

The 100-year floodplain is defined as an area with 1% chance of flooding in a given year. The floodplain serves as a critical habitat for many plant and animal species and provides some of the most fertile soils in the region. Accurate mapping of the flood plains has been achieved and zoning created accordingly as part of the Federal Government’s flood plain insurance program. Floodplains are found bordering the town’s three major rivers. The floodplain along the Blackstone River closely follows the river’s channel in the northern half of town. South of Riverdale Street, large floodplain areas are found both east and west of the river channel. Floodplains are also found on either side of the Mumford River and on the unnamed stream entering the northern tip of Carpenter Reservoir. A major portion of the town’s floodplains are located near the West River. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers operates the West Hill Dam for purposes of flood control. The Flood Plain District overlay zone provides zoning protection in these areas.

Wetlands

Wetlands absorb flood water, store and degrade pollutants, and provide wildlife habitats. Wetlands consist of shrub swamps, beaver ponds, shallow and deep marshes, wet meadows, bogs, forested swamps, seasonally flood areas, and lands within the charted 100-year flood plains.

Numerous wetland areas are found throughout the town (see map below). Any development activity within 100-feet of a wetland requires an Order of Conditions from the Conservation Commission. Northbridge also has a Wetland Protection overlay zone.

Aquifer

Northbridge has a large aquifer that stretches from north to south in the town's western half of town. This area should be protected from excessive development. In 1996 Northbridge adopted an aquifer protection zone to protect the wellheads located in the Meadow Pond area. Northbridge's underground water resources can provide good quality drinking water for years to come, provided they and their recharge areas are protected from contamination.

Protected Lands

Protected lands are public or semi-public parcels which are permanently protected for conservation purposes, or private lands that have been permanently protected with a Conservation Restriction (CR) or Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR).

The Blackstone River Heritage State Park was developed in the mid-1980s and is managed by the state Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). Seventy-six acres of state-owned property comprise the Northbridge portion of this park. It includes the Blackstone Canal, which was created in 1828 connecting Worcester and Providence, RI. Vestiges of the canal exist in Northbridge, and a linear park has been created along it.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts owns hundreds of additional acres in Northbridge. These include 750 acres of the Upton State Forest, managed by DCR and located mostly in the southeastern part of town. The E.K. Swift Wildlife Management Area is adjacent to the Upton State Forest and is managed by the MA Department of Fisheries and Wildlife. The West River Dam, with 319 acres (Northbridge/Uxbridge), is owned by the federal government but managed by MA Fisheries and Wildlife.

The Town of Northbridge owns about 136 acres of conservation land and 55 acres for recreational use. The Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan has a list of parcels and detailed information on protected open space in Northbridge.

See Map 1 below for Environmental Constraints to Development in Northbridge. This map generally depicts wetland areas, open waters, areas that would be protected under the Wetlands Protection Act like the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP), and areas in town where the slope is over 15 percent.

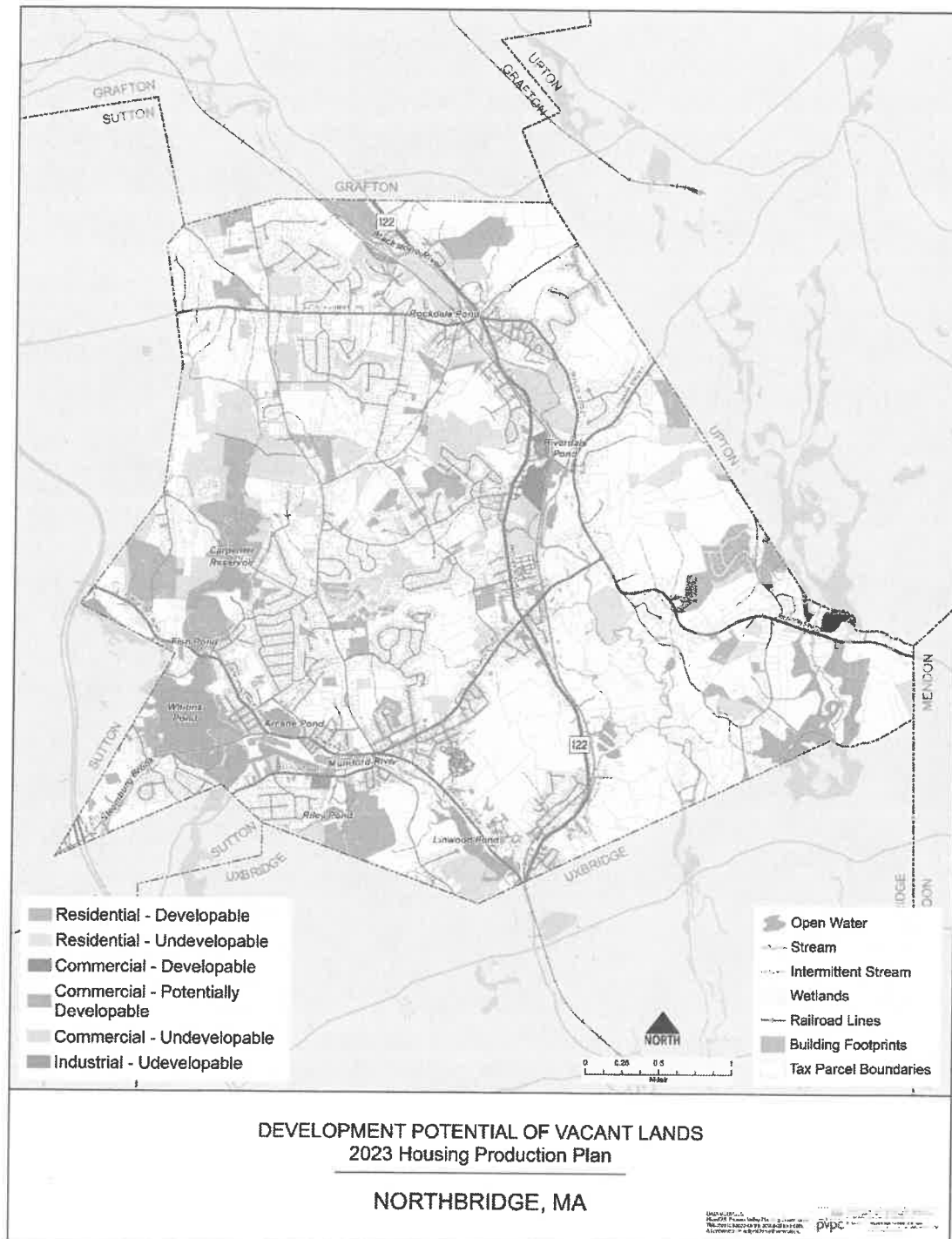
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRAINTS TO DEVELOPMENT
2023 Housing Production Plan

NORTHBRIDGE, MA

4/18/2023
 Northbridge, MA
 2023 Housing Production Plan
 Environmental Constraints to Development
 Map
 1:10,000
 11/1/2023

The following map overlays zoning districts onto development constraints to obtain a map of developable parcels in Northbridge by type of allowed development.

Map 2 Northbridge Development Potential



Zoning

Local zoning is a powerful regulatory tool that allows communities to exercise a level of local control over how land may be used (land-use) within town borders. Northbridge has a number of districts, including six residential zones with provisions allowing for a wide variety of housing types. A Senior Living Bylaw and three overlay districts allowing for additional options for housing development. One of the overlay districts, the Open Space Development Overlay, has already been developed in full (Shining Rock Golf Community) with single-family homes and market rate townhouses.

Zoning in Northbridge

Current zoning provides for 12 base districts and six (6) Overlay districts:

Residential One (R-1) through Residential Six (R-6)

Business One (B-1) through Business Three (B-3)

Industrial One (I-1) and Industrial Two (I-2)

Heritage (H)

Floodway (FW) Overlay

Floodplain (FP) Overlay

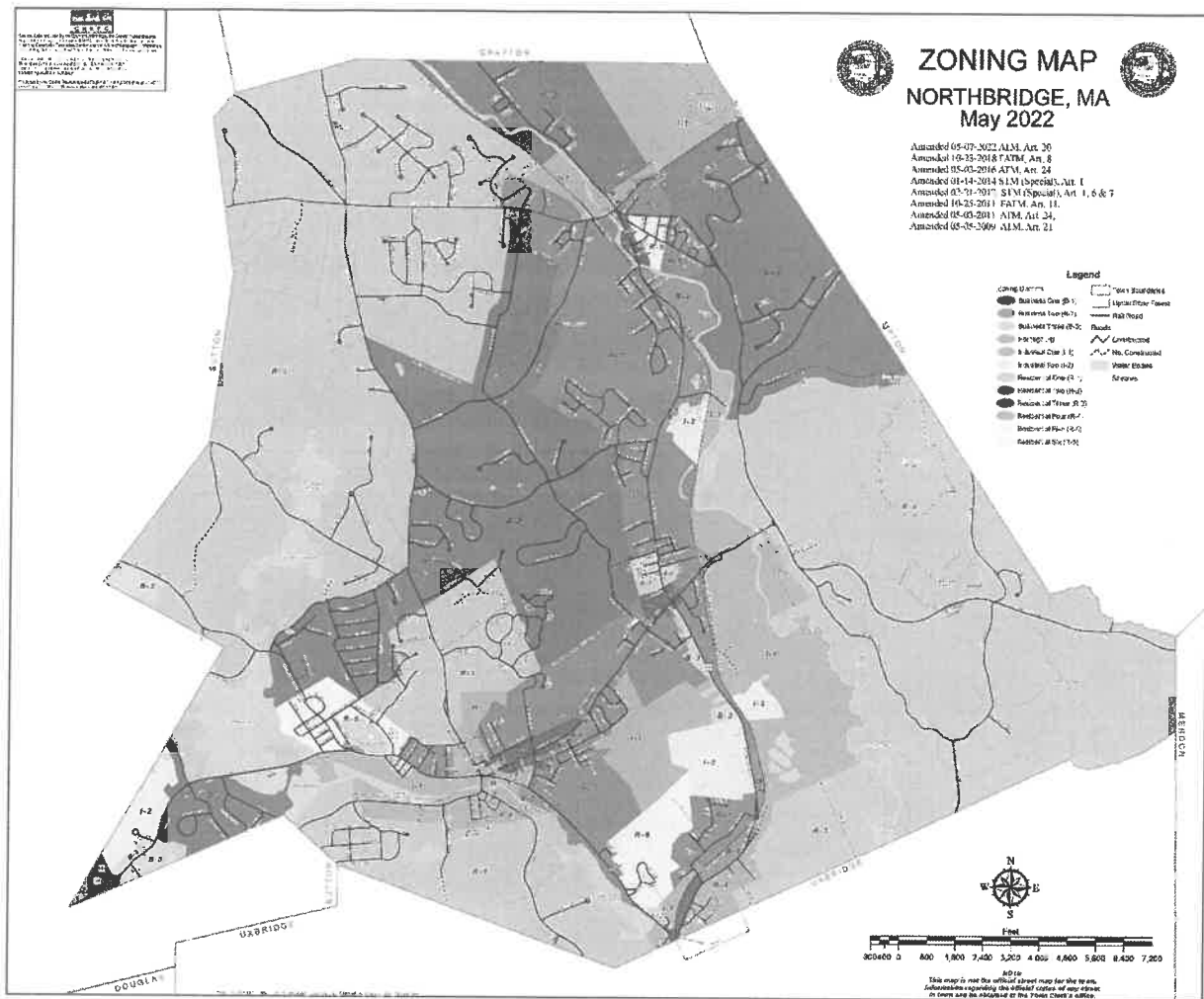
Forest Products Overlay (FPOD)

Open Space Development Overlay (OSDOD)

Route 146 Overlay

Historic Mill Adaptive Reuse Overlay (HMAROD)

(see next page for zoning map)



Residential Districts

Single-family dwellings are allowed by-right in all residential districts except R-5, where single-family dwellings are allowed by special permit. Two-family dwellings are allowed in most residential districts (except R-1) requiring a special permit in R-2 and R-3. Multifamily dwellings are permitted by-right in R-5 and by special permit in R-4 and B-1. A Planned Townhouse Development is allowed by special permit in R-6. Density requirements for all residential uses vary depending on whether the property is served by town sewer or not. Accessory apartments are not currently permitted in town.

As provided for in Northbridge Zoning Bylaw Section 173-17, a Planned Townhouse Development is defined as “a subdivision to be developed as an entity by a landowner with residential buildings comprising three or more dwelling units and having an exterior entrance serving no more than two dwelling units unless otherwise permitted by the Board of Appeals by special permit. Each unit shall have a screened yard or balcony.” The minimum tract size is 10 acres; all dwelling units must be served by municipal water and sewerage; and the number of dwelling units permitted cannot exceed an

average of eight dwelling units per net buildable acre.

Senior Living Bylaw

The Town has established a bylaw within the zoning regulations to allow 55+ senior living communities to be built in most residential zones (excluding R-6) under certain conditions.⁶⁰ The purpose of the bylaw is to encourage alternative housing choices for people who are age 55 and older, with 10% of the units to be “affordable” in perpetuity. The property must be located near a village center (Rockdale, Whitinsville, or Linwood) and must meet other requirements to ensure a desirable result. Pine Knoll and Stone Hill are two (2) examples of the senior living development.

Business Districts

Business-One (B-1) District allows for residential use (Multifamily dwelling) by special permit. The B-2 and B-3 zones do not allow for residential land-use.. Northbridge Business-One (B-1) Zoning District is These B-1 zones are located in the downtown areas of Whitinsville, Linwood, Plummers Corner, and Rockdale.

Industrial Districts in Northbridge do not allow residential uses.

Heritage District

Heritage District (H) allows for single-family and two-family dwellings by special permit. The purpose of this district is to preserve and reinforce the visual and historical character of the Memorial Square Area of Whitinsville, while at the same time providing some flexibility in uses.

Flood Overlay Districts

Flood overlay districts require that all development proposals for property in the Floodway and Floodplain Overlay District shall be reviewed to assure that: such proposals minimize flood damage; public utilities and facilities are located and constructed so as to minimize flood damage; and adequate drainage is provided.

Open Space Development Overlay District (OSOD)

The OSOD allows townhouses and single-family homes, clustered to allow 51% of the development to be open space, including a golf course. The OSOD is limited to a locus area in town and has already been developed. An example of this is the Shining Rock Golf Community located within the northeast portion of town bordering Upton, MA.

Route 146 Overlay District

The Rt. 146 Overlay District was developed to facilitate the long-term economic growth of the corridor by coordinating development among several adjacent communities and by promoting high quality development. This overlay does not include any underlying Residential zoning districts.

⁶⁰ Chapter 173. Zoning, Article XVII Senior Living Bylaw (Added 4-03-2001)

Historic Mill Adaptive Reuse Overlay District

Established in 2004, the Historic Mill Adaptive Reuse Overlay District (HMAROD) was intended to preserve and allow for the adaptive reuse of two (2) historic mills in Northbridge – the Linwood Mill on Linwood Avenue and the John Whitin Mill on Douglas Road. The overlay encourages mixed uses, including but not limited to offices, retail, service establishments, community facilities, and multi-family housing. The *Historic Mill Adaptive Reuse Overlay District* is the only district in Northbridge that explicitly allows for mixed-use redevelopment.

Under the HMAROD guidelines, the historic Linwood Mill has been repurposed as a residential/commercial mixed-use development, including the Linwood Mill Lofts, 75 rental apartments that are all SHI-eligible. The historic John Whitin Mill has been redeveloped with commercial and social service uses and includes three (3) residential units.

Flexible Development

The Town's zoning bylaw includes a provision for Flexible Development, by special permit, in zones R-1 and R-2. The Flexible Development Bylaw allows for smaller lots (lot area/frontage) in exchange for dedicated open space. Thus, with the creation of five or more lots, dimensional requirements can be modified to cluster the dwelling units and leave an area of open space, which must be a minimum of 30% of the property and must be contiguous open space with permanent use restrictions. Residential lot sizes can be reduced by about half, but each lot must have its own frontage of at least 50 feet and its own buffers. The only provision for attached dwellings under this bylaw is within the R-2 district, which allows two-family dwellings by special permit. Examples include Reservoir Heights, Carpenter Estates, and Presidential Farms.

MBTA Communities Requirements

A new State Law (Section 3A of the Zoning Act) became effective in July 2021 that requires "MBTA Communities" to provide sufficient multifamily housing options by-right. Northbridge is considered an MBTA "Adjacent Community," due to its proximity to the Grafton MBTA commuter rail line and is subject to the requirements of Section 3A of MGL Chapter 40A. An MBTA community that fails to comply shall not be eligible for funding from the Housing Choice Initiative, the Local Capital Projects Fund, or the State's MassWorks Infrastructure Program. MBTA Communities that fail to comply with the Law's requirements may result in civil enforcement action or liability under federal and state fair housing laws.

The new Law requires that an MBTA community shall have at least one (1) zoning district of reasonable size in which multi-family housing is permitted as of right and meets these other criteria:

- 1) Minimum gross density of 15 units per acre.
- 2) No age restrictions and suitable for families with children.

For Northbridge, the minimum land area required for compliance is 50 acres with a multifamily housing

capacity of 750 dwellings.

Based on current zoning, and as determined by the Town's Building Inspector/Zoning Enforcement Officer, Northbridge satisfies the MBTA Communities requirements within its Residential Five (R-5) Zoning District, where multifamily dwelling is allowed by-right at a density equal or greater than 15 units per acre. The town is currently working with its regional planning agency (CMRPC) in submitting documentation to the MA Executive Office of Housing & Livable Communities (EOHLC) for issuance of compliance. If deemed not to be in compliance the Town will perform the necessary steps required to amend the R-5 district accordingly.

It should be noted, the new Law established for MBTA Communities does not include or provide for the requirement of affordability provisions, something the town may want to consider if they are to amend the R-5 district provisions to promote affordable housing.

Master Plan

Northbridge's most recent Master Plan was prepared in 1994. A Comprehensive master plan update initiative is currently underway, where the Town is presently engaged in updating its 2002 Open Space & Recreation Plan and completed an Economic Development Strategic Plan. Housing goals in the 1994 Master Plan included:

- 1) Prepare for rapidly increasing population: Update and expand the existing sewer system, upgrade the roadway system, and expand town services.
 - Revise the zoning bylaw to increase lot sizes in some residential areas.
 - Adopt a Cluster Housing bylaw.
 - Adopt a phased growth bylaw.
 - Reduce the allowed density in the R-4 and R-5 zones.
- 2) Maintain the social and economic diversity of the community by providing housing options for all segments of the population without overstressing infrastructure and without compromising the environment or existing quality of life.
 - Provide subsidized homeownership opportunities.
 - Pursue CDBG funding for housing rehabilitation.
 - Allow mixed uses in downtown Whitinsville and Rockdale, by special permit.
 - Provide landlord/tenant education programs through the Housing Authority.
 - Provide suitable market rate housing for the elderly such as continuing care communities.
 - Rezone some areas for large lots to provide larger buffers for higher-end housing units.
- 3) Allow higher density and encourage infill development in the village centers while limiting density in outlying areas.

- Adopt a cluster or open space bylaw.
- Allow mixed uses by special permit in downtown areas of Linwood, Whitinsville, and Rockdale.
- Revise the zoning bylaw to increase lot sizes in some residential areas.

Infrastructure Conditions and Capacity

Infrastructure conditions in Northbridge are generally good and can support additional development. Water supplies and infrastructure are robust; and a town sewer system serves a majority of the population (mainly west of the Blackstone River, with easterly section of town on-site septic). Roads and bridges will of course need continual repair and upgrading.. Upgrades to the town's water and sewer infrastructure are funded through enterprise accounts established by users of the municipal water and sewer.

Northbridge does not have solid waste disposal facilities and does not provide municipal curbside pickup. This should not constrain new development, but there may be growing pressure to provide these services.

Water Supply

The Whitinsville Water Company (WWC) supplies the Town of Northbridge with water via four metered interconnections and 41 miles of water main. The water supply is classified as a ground water supply yet depends on a series of five reservoirs to satisfy demand. The WWC owns over 1,600 acres of undeveloped watershed land which protects the five reservoirs. According to the WWC website, the system has the capacity to produce more than 2.5 million gallons per day (mgd). The WWC provides water service to a population of about 14,000 throughout Northbridge in addition to providing operations contracts to an additional 1,100 customers in three surrounding water systems.

A 2020 engineering report (Tata & Howard) for the Whitinsville Water Company indicated that the system currently has surplus capacity, although it is in need of repairs and upgrades. The 2040 projections for average day demand (0.67 mgd) and maximum day demand (1.21 mgd) appear to be well within the current capacity of 2.5 mgd stated by the WWC.

Wastewater Disposal

The town sewer system serves about two-thirds of the population, and the remainder rely on on-site septic systems. The Northbridge Water Treatment Plant (WTP) is a two million gallon per day (MGD) advanced secondary wastewater treatment facility, , and no Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs).

Solid Waste Management

There are no town facilities (landfill/transfer station) for the use of Northbridge residents. Residents must subscribe for trash pick-up services with a licensed hauler. Each licensed trash hauler is required to offer curbside pickup of recyclables (paper, plastics, glass).

Transportation Infrastructure and Commuting Distances

Northbridge is bisected by Route 122 (Providence Road) and has good access to the Massachusetts Turnpike (I-90) via Route 146 and indirect access to Interstate 495 through local roadways (Northbridge/Upton). Route 146 (the Worcester-Providence Turnpike) traverses the Town's southwestern-most corner, where an interchange joins with Main Street. Northbridge is thirteen (13) miles southeast of Worcester, thirty-eight (38) miles southwest of Boston, and thirty-four (34) miles northwest of Providence. This makes it a 25-60-minute drive to Worcester, Providence, Framingham, the Route 495 corridor, Route 128 corridor and the many other employment centers in central Massachusetts and the Greater Boston area. Access to the Framingham commuter rail line, with end points in Worcester and Boston, is available in the neighboring town of Grafton, with the commuter rail station approximately 7.5 miles from the northern boundary of Northbridge and 11.5 miles from the Northbridge Town Hall, making it a 15-22-minute drive. Effectively, Northbridge is in a "sweet spot" for an ideal rural bedroom community for commuters.

Excellent medical centers and colleges are also convenient to Northbridge residents. Milford Regional Medical Center is located just nine (9) miles from Town while Saint Vincent's Hospital and UMass Medical Center are located approximately fourteen (14) miles away. Additionally, Worcester is home to eleven (11) colleges and universities while nearby Grafton is home to the Tufts University Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine.

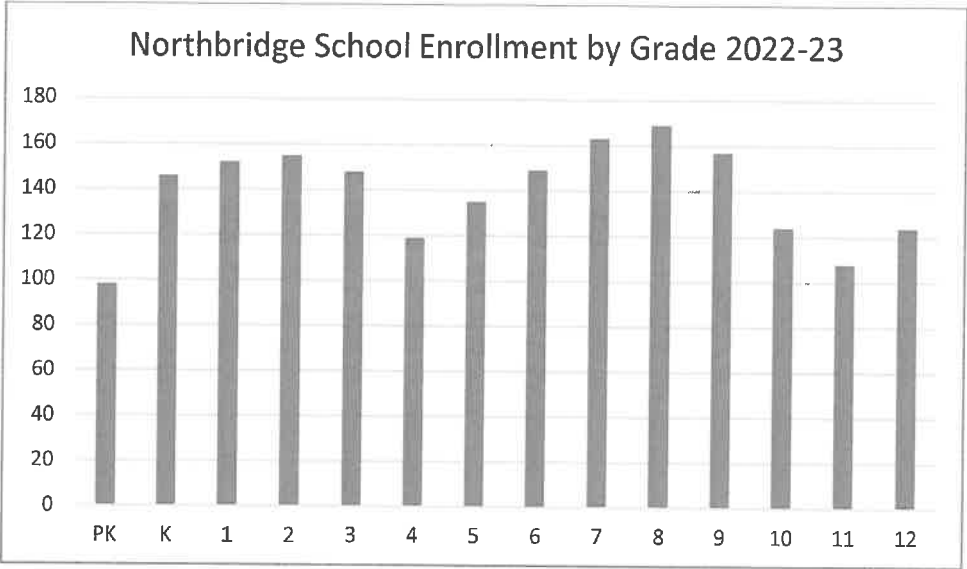
In addition to this infrastructure, Northbridge also benefits from inter-municipal transit access via the Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) shuttle bus. Two fixed-route lines connect Whitinsville and Rockdale to the Shoppes at Blackstone Valley in Millbury, the MBTA train Station in Grafton, Tufts University, and other sites. This service connects residents to diverse shopping, employment, and educational opportunities.

Local roads are in generally good condition; however, at the 2018 Municipal Vulnerability Workshop, participants indicated that the Church Street extension is vulnerable to hazards resulting in periodic flooding.

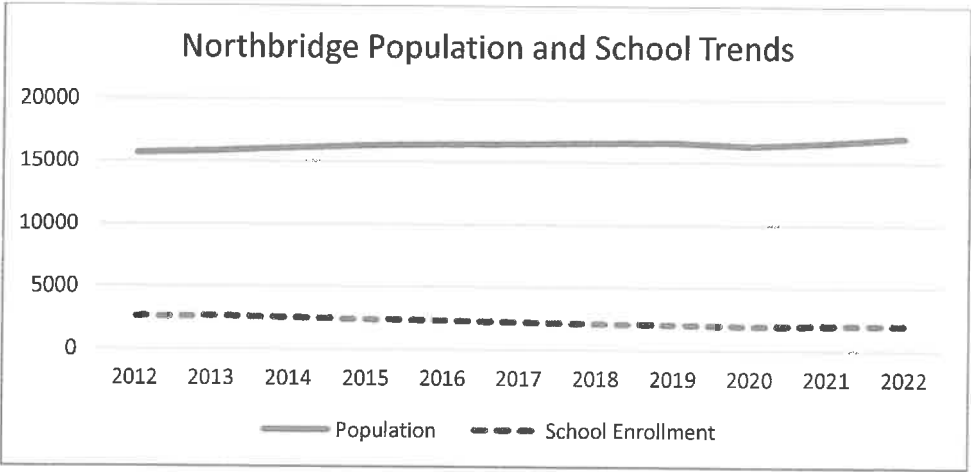
Schools

The Town constructed a new elementary school in 2021, while the High School dates to 2002 and the Middle School to 1905 with a major addition in 1955 and other additions and renovations. The Middle

School has had repairs and upgrades including a major boiler replacement in 2021 and is able to handle its current enrollment of 481 students. If the town’s general enrollment remains stable, the school (Grades 6-8) should be able to accommodate students for several years to come, as grades PK-5 are somewhat smaller, and the school-age population is not expected to increase, as discussed below.

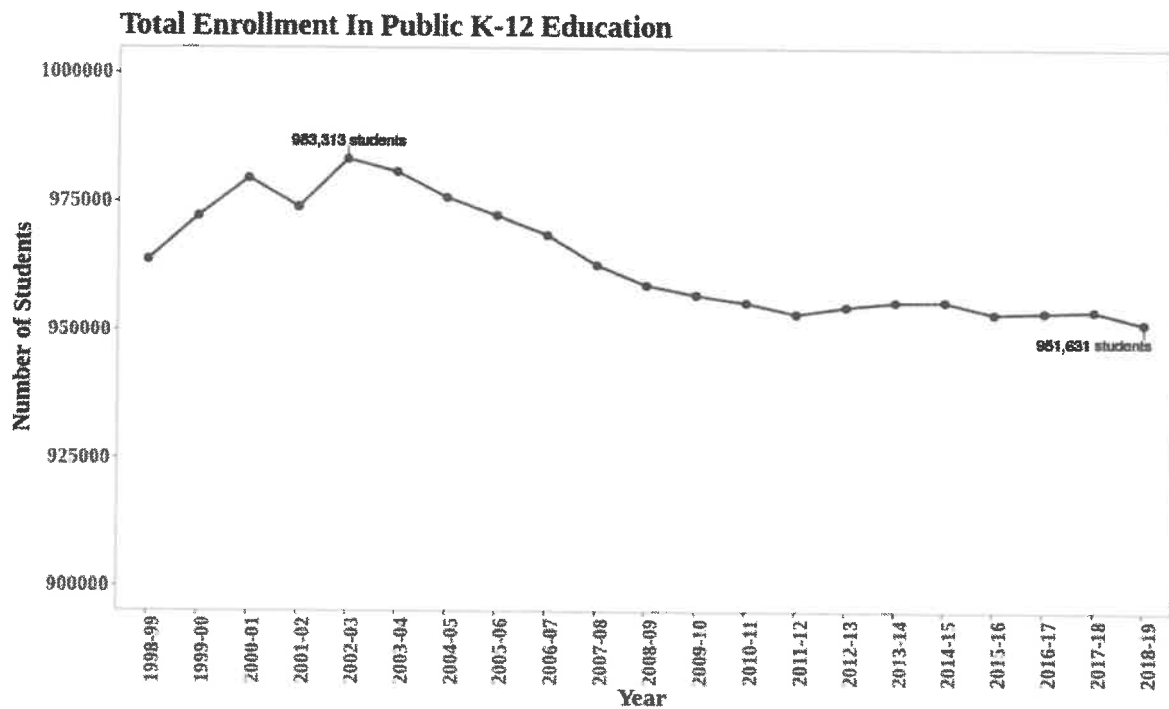


The chart below illustrates the recent population growth in Northbridge along with the associated school enrollment.



This is typical for the region and state as a whole, as can be seen in the graph showing K-12 enrollment decline in Massachusetts over the past two decades.⁶¹

⁶¹ K-12 student enrollment trends in Massachusetts: Second in a series on school funding - Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education (mbae.org)

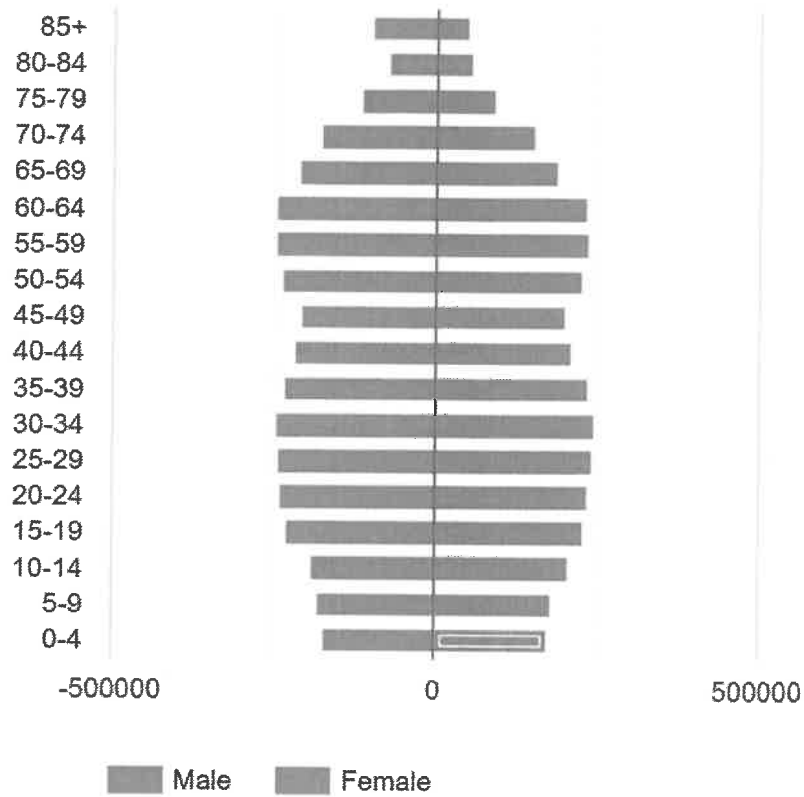


As the Massachusetts population ages, and high housing costs in suburban areas discourage young families, future population increases are not expected to translate into higher numbers of students.⁶² This is complicated by the pandemic that disrupted school enrollment and is still affecting how families are navigating their work and school lives. A clear picture of post-pandemic school enrollment should emerge over the next several years; however, it should be noted that the number of children under 5 years old is smaller than the current number of school age children, as illustrated in the 2021 census data below.⁶³

⁶² [Public school enrollment falls in Mass. amid pandemic, high housing costs, and aging suburbs \(msn.com\)](https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/politics/story/public-school-enrollment-falls-in-mass-amid-pandemic-high-housing-costs-and-aging-suburbs)

⁶³ [Massachusetts Population 2022/2023 \(populationu.com\)](https://populationu.com/massachusetts-population-2022-2023)

**Population Pyramid of Massachusetts as per 2021
US Census estimates**



Source: 2021 US Census Estimates: Population In Five Year Age-Group

Chapter 4 Housing Production Goals and Strategies

This chapter of the Housing Production Plan will set forth affordable housing goals, describe existing housing activity in Northbridge, and lay out strategies to increase the number and proportion of affordable units.

4.1 Affordable Housing Goals

Based on the demographic conditions, environmental constraints, and existing regulations, the Town of Northbridge has identified the following housing goals. Working to achieve these goals will help to ensure that Northbridge is a community where housing affordability, housing choice and fair access to housing are ensured for all community members.

Northbridge's 10% Affordable Housing Goal (Chapter 40B)

As described in Chapter 2, Northbridge has 453 units on the state's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI), which amounts to 6.8% of the town's 2020 total year-round housing stock of 6,655 units as (see SHI Inventory, page 24). Through Chapter 40B, Massachusetts municipalities are encouraged to increase their overall percentage of affordable units to 10% or more. The town would need to add 213 additional subsidized housing units to meet its 10% affordable housing goal, while also ensuring that existing units on the SHI are renewed upon expiration.

The state sets annual housing unit production goals for each municipality for the purpose of providing municipalities with target numbers to work toward. The annual housing target numbers reflect 0.5% of a community's housing stock as determined by the latest decennial census. As Northbridge contained 6,655 housing units in the year 2020, **the Town will seek to produce 33 units of affordable housing per year.**

Participation in Regional Collaborations

The Town of Northbridge will work with regional partners to achieve its housing goals and provide housing services to local residents.

Variety of Housing Types

The Town will encourage a variety of housing types in the community that will serve the needs of families, individuals, persons with special needs, and the elderly. These will include ownership and rental opportunities such as smaller single-family homes, senior housing, mixed-use development, condominiums, and conversions of historic buildings.

Zoning Modifications

The Town will consider a variety of zoning and other regulatory tools to achieve its housing objectives. These are outlined in detail in Section 4.3 of this report but include Senior Living Bylaw modifications, Transfer of Development Rights, Inclusionary Zoning, the Local Initiative Program, a 40R District, and Accessory Apartments.

Identification of Specific Sites

The Town has identified specific sites for which it will encourage the filing of Comprehensive Permit applications, as well as sites where the Town or Housing Authority commit to issuing requests for proposals for SHI-Eligible Housing. These sites are listed in Section 4.3 of this report.

Funding Opportunities

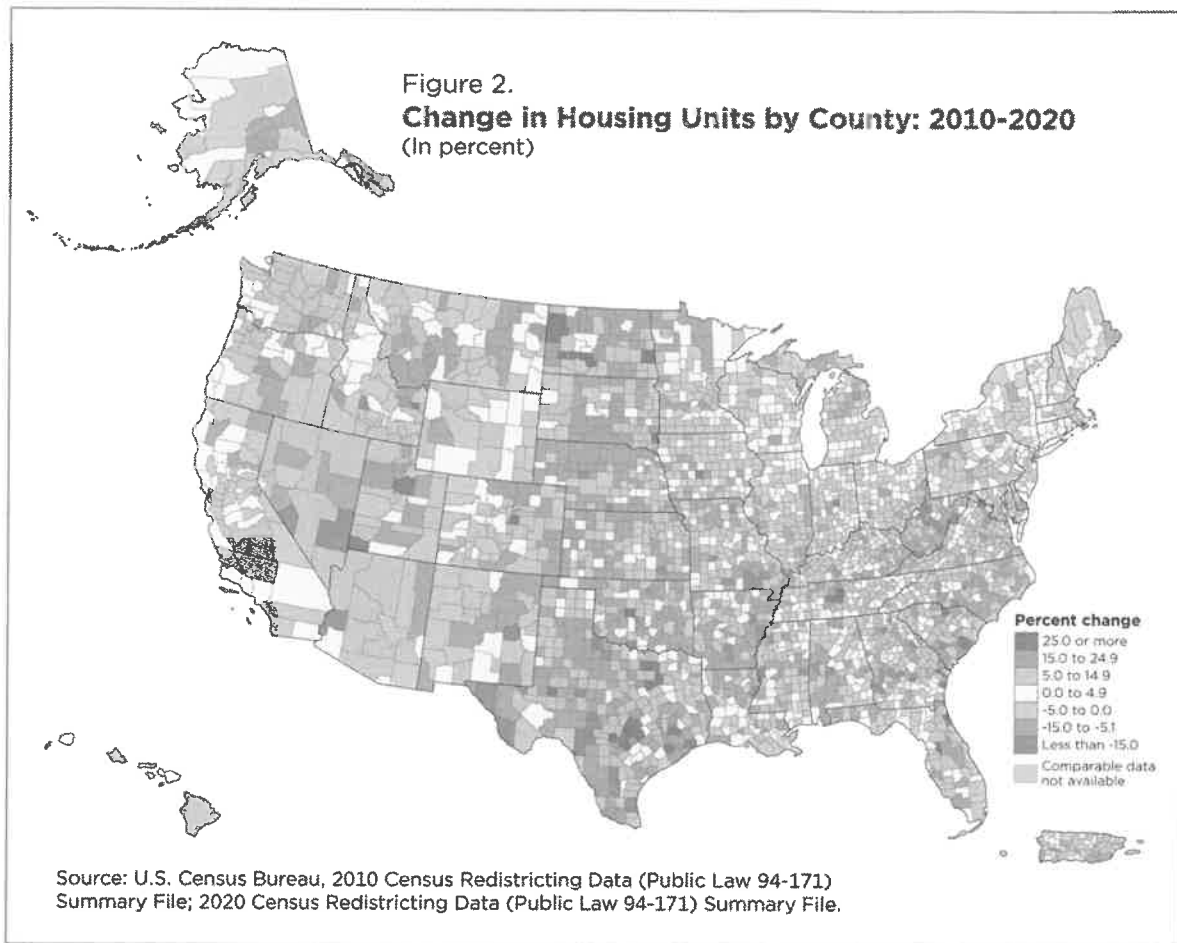
The Town will also seek funding from a variety of sources to achieve these housing goals, including its own Community Preservation Act funds, state planning and site preparation funds, and other funding sources as applicable.

4.2 Current Housing Development Status

Given these stated goals, the Town has undertaken an inventory of current housing activity to provide context for its future efforts. There has been significant residential development activity in Northbridge in recent years, likely due to its location near major employment centers (Worcester, Providence, Framingham, etc.) while also being outside the most expensive Boston suburbs. Northbridge is not alone in this regard; much of the Worcester region and Blackstone Valley corridor are experiencing increased housing development. As Boston development becomes unaffordable, many Boston-area investors are looking toward Central Massachusetts where the cost of real estate is lower, while revenue returns are still high.⁶⁴ Additionally, with the trend of working from home, more residents can live farther from their jobs and still remain within a reasonable commute.

The following map of the United States shows the change in number of housing units by county. Areas of yellow and green indicate increases in housing, while orange indicates a decrease in units. The entire state of Massachusetts, along with its neighbors Connecticut and Rhode Island, shows increases over the past decade, particularly in central and eastern Massachusetts.

⁶⁴ Worcester Business Journal, November 2021



The Town has been carefully tracking proposed housing developments and their status over time, including whether they are under construction, withdrawn, or their permits have expired.

Developments Currently Under Construction

As of February 2023, there are six (6) housing developments under construction in Northbridge, with a total of at least 271 units being built. Of these, 149 are single-family; 18 are duplex units (Mike's Way); and 104 are market-rate condominiums and townhouses for seniors (Stone Hill Senior Development). None of these units will qualify for the state's Subsidized Housing Inventory. The Stone Hill project was constructed under the Town's "Senior Living" bylaw, which requires 10% of the units to be affordable in perpetuity, but the developer paid a fee "in-lieu-of" affordable units. The funds were used for a variety of public improvements throughout town. See below for map and table of current developments.

TOWN OF NORTHBRIDGE
Massachusetts

Legend

Zoning District

- Business One (B-1)
- Business Two (B-2)
- Business Three (B-3)
- Town Boardland
- Upton State Forest
- Road

- 1 Camelot (60-lots)
- 2 Hemlock Estates (31-lots)
- 3 Leonardo Estates (18-lots)
- 4 Mike's Way (18-duplex)
- 5 Moon Hill Estates (40-lots)
- 6 Stone Hill Senior Development (104-units)
- 7 Winston Woods (18-duplex)

- ① Apple Ridge Estates (80-lots) **portion now Solar*
- ② Granite Hill Estates (124-units) ***land gifted to Town*
- ③ Linwood Estates (125-units)
- ④ Sunrise Estates (72-lots)
- ⑤ North/South Pasture (37-lots)
- ⑥ Prospect Place (13-lots)
- ⑦ West End Estates (47-lots)
- ⑧ Woodside @ Northbridge (67-lots)
- ⑨ Castle Hill Farm property (75-lots) ****CPA Fund Land Acquisition*
- ⑩ Union Place (8-lots)



Town of Northbridge -Residential Buildout (November 2022)

	Project Name (Date)	Street(s)/Location	Housing Type	# of Units	Status
1	Camelot (December 2010)	Rebecca Rd, Joseph Cr, Genivieve Dr & Grace St (Hill St & Hillcrest)	Single-Family	65	Under Construction
2	Hemlock Estates (June 2008)	Helmock St & Fir Hill Ln (Gendron /Sutton St)	Single-Family	31	Under Construction
3	Leonardo Est (May 2014)	Windstone Dr (Highland St)	Single-Family	18	Under Construction
4	Mike's Way (September 2020)	Mike's Way (Providence Rd/Grafton)	Duplex-units	18	Under Construction
5	Moon Hill Est (September 2019)	Valerie Run, Monica Way & Amy Terrace (Moon Hill Rd)	Single-Family	40	Under Construction
6	Stone Hill Senior Dev (July 2019)	Stone Hill Dr, Rolling Ridge Dr, Secluded Ct, Viewpoint Way, & Crestwood Cr (Church St)	Townhouse/Condos	104	Under Construction
7	Winston Woods (March 2022)	Spring St (extension of)	Duplex-units	18	Approved
				294	

	Project Name (Date)	Street(s)/Location	Housing Type	# of Units	Status
1	*Apple Ridge Estates (2004)	Quaker Street/Puddon Street	Single-Family	80	Prelim-Expired
2	**Granite Hill Estates (2006)	Highland Street	Multi-Family	124	Withdrawn
3	Linwood Estates (2005)	Providence Road (Puccio property)	Single/Multi-Family	125	40B-Expired
4	Sunrise Estates (2016)	Fowler Road/Tessier Lane	Single-Family	72	Prelim-Expired
5	North/South Pasture (2005)	Hill Street/Pollard Road	Single-Family	37	Prelim-Expired
6	Prospect Place (2006)	Prospect Street/Church Street	Single-Family	13	Prelim-Expired
7	West End Estates (2006)	Rocky Road/Purgatory Road	Single-Family	47	Prelim-Expired
8	Woodside @ Northbridge (2006)	Hill St/Sunset/Fowler Road (Kroll Farm)	Single-Family	67	Expired
9	***Castle Hill Road (2021)	Castle Hill Road/Whitin Ave	Single-Family/(Senior)	75/(152)	Conceptual
10	Union Place	Union Street	Single-Family	8	Prelim-Expired
				648/(725)	

*Portion of property now occupied by Solar

**Land "gifted" to Town (2015) ±50-acres

***CPA Fund Land Acquisition (2022 FATM)

Previous Proposals

Several other single-family developments were proposed around 2004-2006; however, they were not pursued, and their permits may have expired. Nevertheless, in most cases the land remains available, and the total number of these potential lots in existing residential zones may be about 250. Very few of them are in areas served by water and sewer systems, and most of the locations allow only single-family dwellings. Just a few allow two-family dwellings by special permit (R-2 and R-3 zones). When these lots are developed, the proportion of market-rate to subsidized housing units will grow significantly and will need to be offset by additional affordable housing.

One of the proposed developments mentioned above was a 40B application in an Industrial (I-2) zone; details of a current proposal for the site are below. Another of these previous proposals was a large development of about 100-150 units at Castle Hill Farm, and fortunately this historic and scenic property has since been purchased by the Town using CPA funds and will be preserved as open space. Another large proposal (124 units) for multifamily dwellings was put forward in 2006 and later withdrawn. The +/-50-acre site was gifted to the Town.

Potential Housing Development Sites

This section addresses several potential sites that could accommodate higher-density residential development with affordable units. Information is based on Town records, site reuse studies, and conceptual plans prepared. The proposed use of these properties is discussed further in Section 4.2, Housing Production Strategies.

Winston Woods

A recently approved residential subdivision development, an extension of Spring Street in Whitinsville includes an oversized lot at the cul-de-sac that may be suitable for additional dwelling units as part of a Local Initiative Program (LIP). The “friendly 40B” process, also known as a Local Initiative Program, allows for negotiation and compromise between a developer and town, with the result of an agreed upon development as it relates to density, setbacks, and complementary architecture. The Winston Woods subdivision includes nine (9) duplex lots for 18 market-rate dwelling units and one (1) oversized lot for a potential LIP project with the Town. The LIP has not yet been vetted or approved, where the number of affordable units has yet to be determined.

2040 Providence Road Commercial Site (Rt. 122)

Just south of Rockdale village center is a commercially-zoned property (Business-2) along Route 122 (Providence Road).. This property, formerly an auto-salvage yard at 2040 Providence Road, is about 26 acres and has been identified by the Town as a Priority Development Area within the 2012 Blackstone Valley Prioritization Project. Fuss & O’Neil prepared a Phase I ESA (January 2011) and a Phase II Environmental Site Assessment (July 2012) as part of the state’s Brownfield Assessment Program. A Reuse Study for the site was prepared in 2014 by the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC), where the primary recommendation was to promote cleanup and redevelopment of the site for mixed use development. Such a designation would allow for the development of apartments, particularly situated above a commercial main floor.

The property could serve as a receiving site for Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) from other parts of Northbridge. The designation of this property for potential housing is intended to help incentivize the owner/developer to clean up and redevelop the site, which is a “brownfield” with some degree of soil contamination from its past use. The buildable portion of the site is only about 2-3 acres (the remainder is in the floodplain), so the number of units may be limited. As a designated “receiving zone” as part of a local Transfer Development Rights provision the site density would increase.

Northbridge Elementary School

The Town has conducted a reuse study for the former Northbridge Elementary School, located in Whitinsville. The consultants considered and evaluated several housing-related options for the site, including townhouses, apartments, and senior housing. Another use that is highly desirable for the property is the construction of a new senior center. With that option, a few units of senior housing could potentially also be built on the property.

Aldrich School -Town Hall Annex

This property is currently being used for municipal land use planning offices. The Town is considering alternative uses of the building, as the municipal offices will be relocated to a wing in the new Fire Station currently under construction on Route 122. The Aldrich School was the first Northbridge High School and is located in downtown Whitinsville within walking distance to many businesses and services. The building includes two (2) full stories, as well as a third floor and basement. The Town may potentially partner with a local community center to re-use the building for additional childcare and programs for eligible families. Possible other adaptive reuse could be housing or live-work space.

Northbridge Fire Station -Main Street Headquarters

Like the Town Hall Annex, the Fire Station on Main Street will soon be vacated and operations relocated to a new Fire Station Headquarters on Providence Road. The Town may likely conduct reuse study for this property (similar to the Northbridge Elementary School), where residential housing with an affordability component may be considered as a possible reuse option for this property.

Northbridge Fire Station -Substation

Located in Rockdale village center, the fire substation may be vacated with equipment storage and operations to be sited within the new Northbridge Fire Station Headquarters currently under construction. The size of the site, proximity to the Blackstone River (floodplain/floodway) and adjacent land use (gas & auto service station) may limit reuse options for the substation, including residential. The Town has not formally undertaken a reuse study at this time.

Whitin Machine Works (The Shop)

The circa 1831 Whitin Machine Works is a former textile machinery manufacturing facility, locally known as “the Shop.” Today, the Shop is home to many different businesses, manufactures and services, including incubator space. The mill complex is located in downtown village of Whitinsville, within walking distance of the Town Hall, library, post office, churches, and numerous commercial retail businesses on Church Street. It is unclear if there is any unoccupied vacant space within the mill at this

time or if there is a desire to consider a residential component (if appropriate, given past use) for portions of the complex. The purpose of including this property in the Housing Production Plan is to simply identify the site as a possible candidate for affordable housing opportunities in the future, if/when alternative land uses are to be contemplated or necessary to help preserve, restore, or rehabilitate section(s) of this historic mill complex.

Providence Road (Rt. 122)

Owner(s) of a privately held property on Providence Road (Rt. 122) have approached the Town (Planning Board & Board of Selectmen) to rezone the site from industrial to mixed-use residential/commercial use. The subject property is situated along a main roadway (Rt. 122) and has access to public infrastructure (water/sewer). The site abuts an undeveloped town-owned parcel and is generally located near existing residential properties. The 72-acre parcel had previously secured a Comprehensive Permit (40B) from the Northbridge Zoning Board of Appeals for 125 dwelling units in 2005, however never followed through with development. A conceptual layout plan for proposed mixed use was informally presented to the Town in 2021 and 2022, showing commercial retail space and 394 dwelling units; comprised of single, multifamily and apartment units. The concept plan is currently being evaluated by the Town and awaiting completion of the Housing Production Plan before any formal submission or zoning change considerations is to be pursued. There is potential for this site to be rezoned allowing for mixed use, including residential units with provisions for an affordability component at 15% to 20%, where 10% affordable would not further the Town's efforts to satisfy the minimum percentage required by the State's SHI.

If approved for eligibility, the property could also be designated a 40R district, although this would delay any project for a year or more. In either case, this is a significant opportunity for the Town to increase its subsidized housing inventory, thereby providing opportunities for moderate-income and elderly residents to remain in town and to meet the required 10% threshold to avoid possible unwanted 40B development.

Since 2004, when the state law Chapter 40R was passed authorizing incentives to encourage municipalities to zone for dense developments in smart growth locations, over 15,000 units have been zoned and 3,500 homes have been built in 40R districts. Chapter 40R is unlike any other state housing program. Communities are directly paid for zoning and permitting smart growth development. Municipalities receive a zoning incentive payment of \$10,000–\$600,000 when they create a 40R overlay followed by a bonus unit payment of \$3,000 per unit when developments receive building permits. To date, zoning incentive and bonus unit payments have totaled \$20.2 million. A companion law, Chapter 40S, provides state reimbursement for school costs not covered by taxes generated by 40R projects; reimbursements to date have totaled \$2 million.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ "The Use of Chapter 40R in Massachusetts" 2018 Update CHAPA -Citizens' Housing & Planning Association

Downtown/Village Centers

The village centers provide an opportunity for mixed use development, with commercial uses at ground level and apartment units above. Locations most suited for small-scale, mixed-use would be Whitinsville (Church Street), sections of Rockdale that are not in the flood zone, and perhaps section in Linwood, along Providence Road that are already zoned B-1, which allows multifamily development. This could be accomplished as part of the redevelopment of existing buildings or upzoning over the next decade.

Other Properties

A number of other properties have potential for residential development, but very few of them are in areas served by water and sewer systems and most allow only single-family dwellings. Some of the areas that are more remote from services do allow two-family dwellings by special permit (R-2 and R-3 zones).

In considering other properties (town-owned or privately held), one should evaluate existing transportation corridors, availability of public infrastructure (water/sewer), general proximity to commercial areas and town services, as well as how such a residential development may fit within the character of existing neighborhoods. In doing so, the Town shall look to promote and support redevelopment options, opportunities for infill projects and discourage sprawl where existing housing many do not support higher density.

4.3 Housing Production Strategies

The Town of Northbridge will need to complete the following requirements for the state to *approve* this Housing Production Plan. In order for the Plan to be *CERTIFIED*, the Town will need to implement these steps and increase the number of Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI)-eligible units by at least 33 over the course of a one-year period. This is 0.5% of the total number of housing units in Northbridge (6,655). This percentage is the minimum housing production required by the state in order for a town to reject a Chapter 40B Comprehensive Permit application.

1. Participation in regional collaborations addressing housing development.

The Town will seek connections with the following agencies in order to participate in regional collaborations and avail local officials and residents of potential services. Worcester Community Housing Resources offers workshops that Northbridge residents may be interested in, and the Central MA Housing Alliance provides services including emergency home repair for eligible seniors.

- Worcester Community Housing Resources (Worcester County) [Worcester Community Housing Resources \(wchr.org\)](http://WorcesterCommunityHousingResources.org)

- Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance [Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance \(cmhaonline.org\)](http://cmhaonline.org)
- RCAP (Resources for Communities and People) Solutions RCAP Solutions, the Worcester-area member of the Regional Housing Network of Massachusetts Regional Housing Network of Massachusetts | [Housing Consumer Education Centers of Massachusetts \(masshousinginfo.org\)](http://Housing Consumer Education Centers of Massachusetts)

Time frame: Ongoing

2. Statement of the characteristics of proposed residential or mixed-use developments that would be preferred by the municipality.

Based on feedback from local residents, the Northbridge Planning Board and Northbridge Select Board the municipality would prefer the following types of developments. Some of these would be lower-cost housing but not SHI-eligible, and some would be entirely or partly SHI-eligible housing.

- Smaller single-family “starter” homes.
- Senior housing 55+ with a percentage of affordable units.
- Mixed use development in village centers, with commercial on the ground floor and residential units above, whether apartments or condominiums. These could be 3-4 story buildings.
- Conversion of existing historic mill or school building (sites) to housing or mixed use with commercial activities.
- Condominiums in general – this was the next most preferred option of residents taking the housing survey.
- Privately-owned apartment buildings and Housing Authority apartments are also acceptable in areas zoned for that density.
- Assisted living facilities.
- Accessory Dwelling Units

Time frame: Ongoing

3. Identification of zoning districts or geographic areas in which the municipality proposes to modify current regulations for the purposes of creating SHI Eligible Housing units to meet its housing production goal.

- In order to increase the number of affordable homes available to seniors and offset the large number of market-rate homes being built, the Town will consider increasing the required number of **affordable units under the Senior Living Bylaw to 25%.**

- The Town will seek to **adopt an Inclusionary Zoning Bylaw** to increase affordable housing opportunities.

Inclusionary zoning is a planning tool used by towns in Massachusetts (and elsewhere in the U.S.) to increase the affordable housing inventory in a community. The provision helps to provide a range of housing options available to homebuyers or renters whose income is below the regional median household income. Since Northbridge is a rapidly growing community, there is an opportunity for the Town to increase its supply of affordable housing through the normal course of real estate development. Typically, an Inclusionary Zoning Bylaw would require small developments of 10 units or more to include at least one affordable unit, and larger developments to include up to 25% affordable units; however, the percentage could be set by Northbridge, as there is no state requirement. Some communities also allow developers to give money or land to a local fund instead of building the affordable units. Such trust funds are authorized by M.G.L. Chapter 44: Section 55C, Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Fund. Special considerations can also be negotiated with developers. If a community wishes to focus development in the town center, a developer might contribute to adding new units outside of their development project area and in the town center. Northbridge's Regional Planning Agency (CMRPC) can provide examples of inclusionary zoning bylaws to the town.

- The Town may consider **adopting a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Bylaw** that could be used specifically in the Rockdale village but also throughout the town as specified in the bylaw; including unprotected "valued" open space land such as Kroll's Farm, etc.

"Transfer of Development Rights" is a zoning technique used to permanently protect land with conservation value (such as farmland, community open space, or other natural or cultural resources) by redirecting development that would otherwise occur on this land (the sending area) to an area planned to accommodate growth and development (the receiving area).

TDR programs financially compensate landowners for choosing not to develop some or all of their land. These landowners are given an option under municipal zoning to legally sever the development rights from their land and sell these rights to another landowner or a real estate developer for use at a different location. The land from which the development rights have been severed is permanently protected through a conservation easement or a restrictive covenant. The development value of the land where the transferred development rights are applied is enhanced by allowing for new or special uses; greater density or intensity; or other regulatory flexibility that zoning without the TDR option would not have permitted.

TDR allows landowners in areas typically zoned for agricultural or very low-density residential use to capture some of the same financial rewards available to landowners located in areas zoned for suburban and urban land uses.

In the Rockdale neighborhood of Northbridge, the rights to develop new units as well as the rights to existing units that are in the floodplain could be transferred to a new location, such as one of the sites designated for affordable housing. The existing units, which are in poor condition and vulnerable to flooding, could be demolished and the land allowed to absorb floodwaters, protect existing wetlands, and provide natural habitat.⁶⁶

- Multifamily dwellings are currently allowed by special permit in Zones R-4 and B-1. The Town will consider allowing **multifamily dwellings by right** in these zones, subject to site plan review.
- The Town may consider designating the B-2 Business District south of Rockdale Village (the former auto-salvage yard) as a **“receiving area” for the Transfer of Development Rights** (TDR) as part of the development of a new TDR bylaw (see above). Although much of the land in this zone is in the floodplain, enough remains buildable for a small mixed-use development, as per recommendations in the CMRCP analysis.⁶⁷ This “up-zoning” may incentivize the owner/developer to clean up this Brownfield site.
- The **R-3 Residential zones** are located along the major routes through town and in the main village centers (Whitinsville, Linwood, Plummers Corner, and Rockdale). These areas still appear to have buildable land and **could be rezoned to R-4**, thus allowing two-family dwellings by right and multifamily units by Special Permit.
- The Town may rezone a **privately held property on Providence Road (Rt. 122)** which has been proposed for mixed-use residential/commercial use. The subject property is zoned industrial and has access to public infrastructure (water/sewer). The site abuts an undeveloped town-owned parcel and is generally located near existing residential properties. The concept plan is currently being evaluated by the Town and awaiting completion of the Housing Production Plan before any formal submission or zoning change considerations is to be pursued. There is potential for this site to be rezoned allowing for mixed use, including residential units with provisions for an affordability component at 15% to 20%, where 10% affordable would not further the Town’s efforts to satisfy the minimum percentage required by the State’s SHI.
- The Town is open to a “friendly 40B” Comprehensive Permit using the Local Initiative Program for a lot adjacent to the Winston Woods subdivision off of Spring Street in Whitinsville. The subdivision includes nine (9) duplex lots for 18 market-rate dwelling units and one (1) oversized lot for a potential LIP project with the Town. The LIP has not yet been vetted or approved, where the number of affordable units has yet to be determined.

⁶⁶ The properties referred to here are adjacent to the Blackstone River and fully located in FEMA Flood Zone AE, which has a 1% chance of flooding in a given year and a 26% chance of flooding during a 30-year mortgage. Properties within this zone are required to have flood insurance. Source: [NEPAssist](#)

⁶⁷ 2040 Providence Road Re-use Plan, Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC), 2014.

- The Town will consider adopting an **Accessory Apartment Bylaw**, to provide additional housing options. These could be helpful for extended families who wish to remain together in Northbridge, such as elderly parents living near their children or young people needing a separate apartment near their families. This could also help elderly homeowners to remain in their homes with the help of extra income from a renter in an attached accessory apartment.

- The Town will investigate and consider the designation of a **40R Smart Growth Zoning Overlay District**.

The Town could consider implementing a 40R District to encourage mixed-income housing and receive incentive payments from the state. M.G L. Chapter 40R (760 CMR 59:00) is intended to increase the supply of housing and decrease its cost by increasing the amount of land zoned for dense housing. It targets the shortfall in housing for low- and moderate-income households by requiring the inclusion of affordable units in most private projects. Since the enactment of these provisions, 51 such districts have been created in 42 municipalities.

40R districts are known as Smart Growth Zoning Overlay Districts and were established in 2004. 40R districts create dense residential or mixed-use zones that include affordable housing units and are located near transit stations in areas of concentrated development such as existing city and town centers or other “highly suitable” locations. The designation of such a district provides direct financial rewards to the community.

Specifically, the districts must allow densities of 8 units/acre for single family homes, 12 units/acre for townhouses, and 20 units/acre for condominiums and apartments. Not less than 20% shall be affordable units, meaning that they meet requirements established by state law and guidance issued by the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) that makes them eligible for the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI). These districts can also be mixed-use.

Upon state review and approval, communities become eligible for Chapter 40R payments. The community may also qualify for additional bonus payments if the density exceeds the underlying district provisions.

The initial incentives are as follows:

<u>Incentive Units</u>	<u>Payment</u>
Up to 20	\$10,000
21 to 100	\$75,000
101 to 200	\$200,000
201 to 500	\$350,000
501 or more	\$600,000

Model bylaws are provided by EOHLC for these zoning districts, and additional guidance is also available at Chapter 40R | Mass.gov. Once a 40R Smart Growth District has been created, a city

or town shall receive smart growth school cost reimbursement from the Commonwealth, per Chapter 40S (Chapter 40 S | Mass.gov), to cover the costs of educating any school-age children who move into such districts.

Timeline for all strategies in #3: These changes can all be addressed over the next couple of years but ideally would move forward quickly, as development is proceeding rapidly. They can also be included in the Town’s Master Plan update that is planned for the near future.

Milestones for all strategies in #3:

- Conduct public outreach and education to address potential questions/concerns (2023-2024)
- Prepare bylaws and rezoning proposals (2024-25)
- Present explanation of proposed measures at Town Meeting (October 2024 or May 2025)
- Adopt bylaws/zoning amendments at town meeting (October 2024 or May 2025)

4. Identification of specific sites for which the municipality will encourage the filing of Comprehensive Permit applications.

The Town has identified specific sites that could be developed for SHI-eligible housing. The Town will work with MassHousing and other housing agencies to identify the best options and seek developers. The Town is open to encouraging and using 40B as a permitting tool for these sites. If this were to occur, the rezoning suggestions given here would most likely no longer apply, as the 40B Comprehensive Permit allows waivers from existing allowed zoning uses and densities.

Potential Comprehensive Permit Sites			
Name	Address and Acreage	Zoning	Status
2040 Providence Road	2040 Providence Road; about 2-3 developable acres	B-2	Phase I & Phase II ESA prepared for site (Brownfield Assessments) Reuse Study completed in 2014; current site land use may be in violation w/zoning & lacking appropriate approvals; consider Transfer Development Rights provisions designating as a “receiving zone” consider zoning change to allow for mixed use with residential.

Whitin Machine Works	1 Main Street, Whitinsville	I-1	This area could be rezoned as a Heritage District by extending the existing Whitinsville Heritage District.
Winston Woods	Spring Street	R-3	This proposed residential subdivision includes an additional oversized lot that may be suitable for additional dwelling units as part of a Local Initiative Program (LIP).

Time frame: This process could take several years from 2023-2028.

Milestones:

- Discuss potential opportunities with Town officials and local residents (2023-2024).
- For Town-owned properties, conduct feasibility studies and/or site planning efforts (2024-2025).
- Market one or more properties as a 40B opportunity or rezone areas to indicate desired future use (2025-2026).
- Work with potential housing developers, including Worcester Affordable Housing Resources, to develop a mix of market rate and subsidized housing (2025-2027).
- Potential new construction (2026-2028).

5. Identification of municipally owned or Housing Authority-owned parcels for which the municipality or Housing Authority commits to issue requests for proposals (RFP) to develop SHI Eligible Housing.

If the Town determines that the best use of either the **Aldrich School** or **Northbridge Elementary School property** is housing, the Town may issue an RFP for SHI-eligible housing for these properties. At the time of this report, other uses have become priorities, including a Senior Center and a Child Care Center.

Additionally, the Northbridge Housing Authority (NHA) Executive Director has expressed interest in obtaining additional properties to better accommodate the very long waiting list for units. The Town may wish to partner with the NHA to find appropriate sites that would be dedicated to subsidized housing; including possible site expansion (unit construction) at Colonial Drive.

Time frame: This is a medium-term goal, ideally completed in the next 3-5 years.

Milestones:

- Discuss potential opportunities with the Northbridge Housing Authority and Town officials (2023-2024).
- Conduct feasibility studies and/or site planning efforts (2024-2025).
- Market one or more properties to potential housing developers, including Worcester Affordable Housing Resources, for a mix of market rate and subsidized housing (2024-2025).
- Potential new construction (2026-2028).

4.4 Summary of Applicable Housing Regulations and Tools

Accessory Apartments

Accessory dwelling units (also known as ‘accessory apartments’, ‘guest apartments’, ‘in-law apartments’, ‘family apartments’ or ‘secondary units’) are self-contained housing units incorporated within a single-family dwelling or in an accessory structure to a single-family dwelling that are clearly subordinate to the main dwelling. Such units can provide lower cost housing that can be integrated into existing single-family neighborhoods to provide low priced housing alternatives and have little or no negative impact on the character of the neighborhood. The regulatory approach used by most municipalities for accessory dwelling units is a zoning bylaw that permits an accessory unit, thereby allowing certain improvements to be made to the existing dwelling.

Provisions can address certain restrictions based on whether the dwelling existed as of a certain date, the maximum allowed building and site modifications, the options for choosing inhabitants, whether the main unit needs to be owner occupied, and minimum lot sizes. However, the greater the number of restrictions, the fewer options there are available to homeowners for adding the units.

Inclusionary Zoning

Inclusionary zoning is a planning tool used by towns in Massachusetts and elsewhere in the U.S. to increase the affordable housing inventory in a community. The provision helps to provide a range of housing options available to homebuyers or renters whose income is below the regional median household income. Since Northbridge is a rapidly growing community, there is an opportunity for the Town to increase its supply of affordable housing through the normal course of real estate development. Typically, an Inclusionary Zoning Bylaw would require small developments of 10 units or more to include at least one affordable unit, and larger developments to include up to 25% affordable units; however, the percentage could be set by the Town, as there is no state requirement.

Some communities also allow developers to give money or land to a local fund instead of building the

affordable units. Such trust funds are authorized by M.G.L. Chapter 44: Section 55C, Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Fund, which the community can then utilize for other affordable housing developments. Special considerations can also be negotiated with developers. If a community wishes to focus development in the town center, a developer might contribute to adding new units outside of their development project area and in the town center.

Massachusetts General Law (M.G.L.) Chapter 40R

M.G.L. Chapter 40R (760 CMR 59:00) is intended to increase the supply of housing and decrease its cost by increasing the amount of land zoned for dense housing. It targets the shortfall in housing for low- and moderate-income households by requiring the inclusion of affordable units in most private projects. Since the enactment of these provisions, 51 such districts have been created in 42 municipalities. 40R districts are known as Smart Growth Zoning Overlay Districts and were established in 2004. 40R districts create dense residential or mixed-use zones that include affordable housing units and are located near transit stations in areas of concentrated development such as existing city and town centers or other “highly suitable” locations. The designation of such a district provides direct financial rewards to the community.

Specifically, the districts must allow densities of 8 units/acre for single family homes, 12 units/acre for townhouses, and 20 units/acre for condominiums and apartments. Not less than 20% shall be affordable units, meaning that they meet requirements established by state law and guidance issued by the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) that makes them eligible for the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI). These districts can also be mixed-use.

Upon state review and approval, communities become eligible for Chapter 40R payments. The community may also qualify for additional bonus payments if the density exceeds the underlying district provisions.

The initial incentives are as follows:

<u>Incentive Units</u>	<u>Payment</u>
Up to 20	\$10,000
21 to 100	\$75,000
101 to 200	\$200,000
201 to 500	\$350,000
501 or more	\$600,000

Model bylaws are provided by EOHLC for these zoning districts, and additional guidance is also available at [Chapter 40R | Mass.gov](#). Once a 40R Smart Growth District has been created, a city or town shall receive smart growth school cost reimbursement from the Commonwealth, per Chapter 40S ([Chapter 40 S | Mass.gov](#)), to cover the costs of educating any school-age children who move into such

districts (see below for more on Chapter 40S).

Massachusetts General Law (M.G.L.) Chapter 40S

Chapter 40S is a companion law to Chapter 40R and provides state reimbursement for school costs not covered by taxes generated by 40R projects. State reimbursements since the funding began in 2008 have totaled \$2 million. For cities and towns that establish a 40R district, additional state funding can be directed to cover the costs of educating any school-age children who move into such districts. This legislation was in response to the common concern that new housing was costly in terms of municipal finances, given the imbalance of tax revenues and service costs. Qualifying communities will be reimbursed for the net cost of educating students living in new housing in smart growth districts. The reimbursement equals the cost of educating students living in new housing in smart growth districts less an amount equal to the sum of:

- (a) new property and excise taxes in the smart growth district multiplied by the average percent of total local spending on education across the commonwealth (about 52%), and
- (b) any increases in other state education funding that is directly a result of these new students.

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)

“Transfer of Development Rights” is a zoning technique used to permanently protect land with conservation value (such as farmland, community open space, or other natural or cultural resources) by redirecting development that would otherwise occur on this land (the sending area) to an area planned to accommodate growth and development (the receiving area). TDR programs financially compensate landowners for choosing not to develop some or all of their land. These landowners are given an option under municipal zoning to legally sever the development rights from their land and sell these rights to another landowner or a real estate developer for use at a different location. The land from which the development rights have been severed is permanently protected through a conservation easement or a restrictive covenant. The development value of the land where the transferred development rights are applied is enhanced by allowing for new or special uses; greater density or intensity; or other regulatory flexibility that zoning without the TDR option would not have permitted. TDR allows landowners in areas typically zoned for agricultural or very low-density residential use to capture some of the same financial rewards available to landowners located in areas zoned for suburban and urban land uses.

4.5 Funding Opportunities

Northbridge’s Community Preservation Act Funds

Northbridge adopted the Community Preservation Act in 2017 at a rate of 1%. Once adopted, the Act

requires towns to dedicate at least 10% of the monies raised to each of the following three categories: open space, historic preservation, and affordable housing. The remaining 70% can be spent on one or all of these three uses, however the community sees fit. The state matches the CPA monies collected with funds from the Community Preservation Trust Fund.

CPA funds can be used for numerous affordable housing initiatives, including rehabilitation or modification programs, predevelopment costs related to property purchases, purchases of property, assistance to private affordable housing developer, or subsidizing one or more units that are existing or under construction for affordable housing. Funds can also be used to develop outreach materials related to affordable housing and to hire staff or a consultant for planning and administrative purposes.

Most pertinent to this Housing Production Plan, CPA funds can be used for the “acquisition, creation, preservation and support of community housing; and for the rehabilitation or restoration of...community housing that is acquired or created [with CPA funds].” Many CPA communities allocate funds to physically preserve existing aging affordable housing units, such as at a local housing authority property. However, rehabilitation or restoration of community housing is only eligible if the property was acquired or created with CPA funds. The Act specifically states that “funds expended pursuant to this chapter shall not be used for maintenance.” (Chapter 44B, Section 5(b)(2)).

In addition to the eligible activities described in Section 5(b)(2), the law allows the municipality to appropriate CPA funds to an affordable housing trust fund per Section 5(f) and to fund regional projects.

Affordable Housing Trust Fund

Under Section 5(f) of the CPA statute, CPA funds may be allocated to a Municipal Affordable Housing Trust, and CPC members may be represented on the trust board to create overlap and integrate communications between the two municipal entities. This transfer of CPA funds can be a particularly helpful option when town meetings approving CPA fund expenditures convene only once or twice a year. Communities may establish the housing trust fund under the Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Fund Law (MGL c.44 s.55C), allowing them to collect funds for affordable housing from various sources, segregate them out of the general municipal budget, and use the funds for local initiatives to create and preserve affordable housing.

Since the law passed in 2005, at least 70 communities in Massachusetts have established municipal affordable housing trust funds, raising the overall total of communities with local housing trusts to approximately 80 (only cities were previously able to do this). Communities use a variety of funding sources to establish the trusts, including general funds, CPA funds, tax title funds, cell tower lease payments, negotiated developer fees, and others. In most communities with housing trusts, CPA funds are the most common source of funds. In fact, many CPA communities appropriate CPA funds to their trusts in excess of the 10 percent minimum annual expenditure for community housing required by the CPA statute.

Historic Tax Credits: Federal & State

Several districts and properties in Northbridge are listed on the National Register of Historic Properties, including three that encompass privately owned buildings: the Whitinsville Historic District, Linwood Historic District, and Rockdale Common Housing District. Owners of properties listed on the National Register are automatically eligible for a 20 percent investment tax credit for the certified rehabilitation of income-producing certified historic structures such as commercial, industrial, or rental residential buildings.

The state also offers tax credits through the Massachusetts Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit program. These tax credits are not automatic and are awarded competitively to projects that provide the most public benefit. Almost all of the residential projects that have been awarded state historic tax credits resulted in the development of over fifty units.

Neither historic tax credit program requires that the units be made affordable to income eligible households. However, affordable housing developers commonly use these historic tax credit programs as a funding source for affordable housing developments.

Community Development Block Grant Funding

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds are federal dollars that are distributed annually by the state to complete housing and economic development projects. Northbridge has benefitted from CDBG funding in the past, including awards for housing rehabilitation programs and “Slum and Blight” inventories in Rockdale and New Village. The latter designation will allow the Town to apply for additional funding, including infrastructure improvements, housing rehabilitation and other activities that support neighborhood revitalization. The boundaries of Northbridge’s “Slum and Blight” target areas were determined by identifying areas with high concentrations of properties displaying signs of deferred maintenance, disinvestment, and abandonment. As these areas coincide with significant areas of rental housing and lower-income housing, investments made by the Town will maintain and improve significant amount of the existing affordable housing for local residents.

Other Funding Sources

State and federal funding and financing sources to assist with the development of affordable housing do exist, and experienced affordable housing developers know these funding sources well. Affordable housing developers often coordinate several funding sources in order to move such projects forward. Some of those funding sources include Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC), Local Initiative Program (LIP), HOME investments Partnership Program, and Capital Improvement and Preservation Fund (CIPF).

4.6 Key Players for Affordable Housing Initiatives

The key players in town that can work together to address housing need are the Northbridge Housing Authority, Northbridge Planning Board, Northbridge Select Board, Northbridge Council on Aging, Northbridge Town Planner, town hall staff, regional housing partnerships, and regional community development corporations. The biggest decision makers will be town residents, as approval at Town Meeting is necessary for appropriations of town funds and zoning bylaw amendments.

Local Partners

Town Residents: Must approve all appropriations of town funds and town bylaw amendments. Extensive public outreach should occur on proposed affordable housing initiatives or projects to ensure that town residents are adequately informed.

Northbridge Housing Authority: Provides local affordable housing to low-income elderly and disabled residents. Has legal authority to purchase and hold property in accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 121B, Section 11. There is potential to collaborate with the Housing Authority on new affordable units or redevelopment of existing buildings for affordable housing.

Northbridge Select Board: The Select Board is the Chief Executive Office in Northbridge. All activities undertaken by the Board are the direct results of Town Meeting directives, Northbridge bylaws, and state and federal laws or regulations. The Select Board appoints some residents to town boards or committees.

Northbridge Planning Board: Guides development as specified by the Northbridge Zoning Bylaw and Massachusetts General Law. The Planning Board makes recommendations for zoning bylaw changes to Town Meeting. The Planning Board reviews and approves all subdivisions.

Northbridge Council on Aging: The Council on Aging runs the senior center and provides nutrition, transportation, and social services for the increasing population of older adults in town. Staff are in tune with elderly housing needs.

Northbridge Community Preservation Committee: Administers the town's Community Preservation Act Program and allocates revenues generated from the Community Preservation Act Fund.

Office of the Town Manager: Responsible for overseeing certain staff as the Chief Administrative Officer and assists the Northbridge Select Board in managing town affairs.

Regional Resources

Wayfinders: This agency is a non-profit regional housing agency serving western and central Massachusetts. Wayfinders administers a large percentage of Section 8 vouchers for the region on behalf of the state, including the Housing Choice Voucher Program in Northbridge. It also plans, builds and manages affordable housing projects. [Welcome to Way Finders | Way Finders](#)

Worcester Community Housing Resources (Worcester County): Worcester Community Housing Resources is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to create and preserve affordable housing opportunities for low to moderate income households and to initiate and support neighborhood revitalization throughout Worcester County. The agency also offers workshops that Northbridge residents may be interested in. [Worcester Community Housing Resources \(wchr.org\)](#)

Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance (CMHA): Central MA Housing Alliance leads a collaborative response to homelessness that fosters long-term housing stability through prevention, shelter & safety net, moving beyond homelessness, and public education & advocacy. The agency provides services including emergency home repair for eligible seniors. [Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance \(cmhaonline.org\)](#)

RCAP (Resources for Communities and People) Solutions : RCAP Solutions is the Worcester-area member of the Regional Housing Network of Massachusetts and the Northeast affiliate of the Rural Community Assistance Partnership. RCAP is a national network of regional nonprofit organizations that provide comprehensive, on-site technical assistance and training to help small, rural communities address their drinking water, wastewater, and other community development needs. [RCAP Solutions and Regional Housing Network of Massachusetts | Housing Consumer Education Centers of Massachusetts \(masshousinginfo.org\)](#).

Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC): CMRPC is the regional planning agency for Northbridge and the Worcester area.

The Northbridge Housing Production Plan was prepared according to the requirements of the HPP program. Once this HPP is adopted by the Northbridge Select Board and Planning Board, it may be submitted to EOHLC for approval. EOHLC will conduct an initial 30-day completeness review and may suggest edits or additions. After that time, EOHLC will approve the plan within 90 days, and once approved, it is valid for five years.

ARTICLE XXI -NORTHBRIDGE SMART GROWTH OVERLAY DISTRICT (NSGOD)

§173-138 Purpose.

The purpose of the Northbridge Smart Growth Overlay District is to encourage smart growth in accordance with the goals and objectives of G. L. Chapter 40R by adopting local zoning provisions in accordance with the Governing Laws; to foster a range of housing choices in Northbridge for households of diverse incomes, ages, and size; allowing mixed-use development in a distinctive and attractive site development program that promotes compact design; along Providence Road/Route 122, a transportation corridor suited to accommodate density; located within proximity to existing town infrastructure (water/sewer); and accessible to public facilities and amenities (open space, school & recreational ballfield).

Other objectives of the Northbridge Smart Growth Overlay District (NSGOD) are to: Promote public health, safety, and welfare by encouraging diversity of housing opportunities; Increase the production of a range of housing units to meet existing and anticipated housing needs of Northbridge; Establish requirements and guidelines to ensure predictable, fair and consistent development review; Enable the Town to receive Zoning Incentive Payment and/or Density Bonus Payments in accordance with G. L. Chapter 40R, 760 CMR 59.06, and additional Chapter 70 aid in accordance with G. L. Chapter 40S arising from the development of housing in the Northbridge Smart Growth Overlay District.

§173-139 Applicability.

This bylaw applies to Residential and Mixed-use Development projects filed in accordance with Article XXI -Northbridge Smart Growth Overlay District (NSGOD) as defined and prescribed herein.

In accordance with the provisions of G. L. Chapter 40R and 760 CMR 59.00, an Applicant for Project located in the NSGOD may seek Plan Approval pursuant to Article XXI - Northbridge Smart Growth Overlay District. In such case, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the Northbridge Zoning Bylaw, such application shall not be subject to any other provisions of the Zoning Bylaw, including limitations upon the issuance of building permits for residential uses related to a rate of development or phased growth or local moratorium on the issuance of such permits. To the extent there is any conflict between the Governing Laws and the NSGOD provisions, inclusive of the Design Standards, the PAA Regulations, and any applicable associated local zoning requirement (e.g., zoning requirement contained in another section of the Zoning Bylaw that is nonetheless incorporated by reference), the Governing Laws shall be applicable.

§173-140 Definitions.

The following definitions shall apply to Northbridge Smart Growth Overlay District (NSGOD). All capitalized terms shall be defined in accordance with the definitions established under the Governing Laws or as provided for as follows. To the extent there is any conflict between the definitions set forth in §173-40 and the Governing Laws, the terms of the Governing Laws shall be referenced.

Affordable Homeownership Unit -an Affordable Housing unit required to be sold to an Eligible Household.

Affordable Housing -housing that is affordable to and occupied by Eligible Households.

Affordable Housing Restriction -a deed restriction of Affordable Housing meeting the statutory requirements in G.L. Chapter 184, Section 31 and the requirements of the NSGOD.

Affordable Rental Unit -an Affordable Housing unit required to be rented to an Eligible Household.

Applicant -the individual or entity that submits a Project application for Plan Approval.

As-of-right -a use allowed without recourse to a special permit, variance, zoning amendment, or other form of zoning relief other than waiver(s) issued in accordance with §173-XX.

EOHLC or Secretariat - the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, or any successor agency.

Design Standards -provisions of §173-XX made applicable to Projects within the NSGOD that are subject to the Plan Approval process.

Eligible Household -individual or household whose annual income is less than or equal to 80% of the area-wide median income as determined by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), adjusted for household size, with income computed using HUD's rules for attribution of income to assets.

Enabling Laws -G. L. Chapter 40R and 760 CMR 59.00

Governing Laws -G.L. Chapter 40R and 760 CMR 59.00.

Mixed-Use Development Project -a Project containing a mix of one or more residential uses and one or more non-residential uses, as allowed in §173-XX, and subject to all applicable provisions of the Northbridge Smart Growth Overlay District.

Monitoring Agent -the local housing authority or other qualified housing entity designated by the Plan Approval Authority.

NSGOD -Northbridge Smart Growth Overlay District as established herein.

Open Space -the part or parts of land within a Project which are reserved or restricted for permanent open space. Open space shall exclude parking areas and stormwater management areas and may include required setbacks and walkways.

Open Space may include playgrounds, outdoor seating areas, outdoor recreation areas, including but not limited to walking trails and dog parks.

PAA Regulations -the rules and regulations of the PAA adopted pursuant to §173-XX.

Plan Approval -standards and procedures which a Project in the NSGOD must meet under the procedures established herein and the Governing Laws.

Plan Approval Authority (PAA) -for the purposes of reviewing Project applications and issuing decisions on development Project within the Northbridge Smart Growth Overlay District, the Plan Approval Authority (PAA), consistent with G. L. Chapter 40R and 760 CMR 59.00 shall be the Northbridge Planning Board. The PPA is authorized to review and approve a site development plan to implement a Project.

Project -a Residential or Mixed-use Development Project undertaken within the NSGOD in accordance with the requirements of Article XXI.

Recreational Use -Active recreational use, including but not limited to ballfields, basketball/tennis courts, and playgrounds; Passive recreational use, including but not limited to hiking and walking trails.

Residential Project -a Project that consists solely of residential use and parking and accessory uses as may be permitted in §173-XX

Zoning Bylaw -the Zoning Bylaw of the Town of Northbridge.

§173-41 Overlay District.

The Northbridge Smart Growth Overlay District (NSGOD) is hereby established as an overlay district. All requirements pertaining to the underlying district(s) shall continue to be in full force and effect, except for those Projects undergoing development pursuant to Article XXI -Northbridge Smart Growth Overlay District. Within the boundaries of the NSGOD, a developer may elect either to develop a Project in accordance with the requirements of the Smart Growth Zoning, or to develop a project in accordance with requirements of the regulations for use, dimension, and all other provisions of the Zoning Bylaw in accordance with the underlying zoning district.

The boundaries of the Northbridge Smart Growth Zoning District, having land area of approximately 35 acres being portions of Assessor's Map 24 Parcel 21, is shown on map entitled "Northbridge Smart Growth Overlay District" dated May 2024 prepared by CMRPC -Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission. This map is hereby made a part of the Northbridge Zoning Bylaw which is on file in the Office of the Town Clerk.

§173-142 Administration.

The provisions of Article XXI -Northbridge Smart Growth Overlay District (zoning), shall be administered by the Building Inspector, except as otherwise provided herein. Any legal appeal arising out of a Plan Approval decision by the PAA shall be governed by the applicable provisions of G. L. Chapter 40R. Any other request for enforcement or appeal arising under shall be governed by the applicable provisions of G. L. Chapter 40A.

§173-143 Plan approval authority (PAA).

The Northbridge Planning Board consistent with G.L. Chapter 40R and 760 CMR 59.00, shall be the Plan Approval Authority (the "PAA"), authorized to conduct the Plan Approval process for purposes of reviewing and approving Project applications in accordance with Article XXI -Northbridge Smart Growth Overlay District.

§173-144 PPA Regulations.

The Plan Approval Authority (PPA) may adopt administrative rules and regulations relative to Plan Approval. Such rules and regulations and any amendments thereof must first be approved by the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities before local enactment.

§173-145 Fees.

- A. Administration Fee. Application shall be accompanied by an application fee of \$500 plus \$10 per required parking space as prescribed in §173-XX.
- B. Peer Review. The Applicant shall be required to pay for reasonable consulting fees to provide peer review of the Plan Approval application, pursuant to G.L. Chapter 40R, Section 11(a). Such fees shall be held by the Town in a separate account and used only for expenses associated with the review of the application by outside consultants, including, but not limited to, attorneys, engineers, urban designers, housing consultants, planners, and others. Any surplus remaining after the completion of such review, including any interest accrued, shall be returned to the Applicant forthwith.

§173-146 Permitted Uses.

The following uses are permitted As-of-right for Projects within the Northbridge Smart Growth Overlay District:

- A. Residential Project within the NSGOD may include:

- 1) Two- and three-family, and/or Multi-family Residential Use(s);
- 2) Parking accessory to any of the above permitted uses, including surface, garage-under, and structured parking (e.g., parking garages);
- 3) and Accessory uses customarily incidental to any of the above permitted uses.

B. Mixed-use Development Projects. A Mixed-use Development Project within the NSGOD must include at least one residential use and one non-residential use from these respective use categories as permitted below and may further include parking and other accessory uses customarily incidental as additionally provided for:

- 1) Multi-family Residential Use(s), provided that the minimum As-of-right density allowances for residential use specified in §173-XXX shall apply to the residential portion of any Mixed-use Development Project;
- 2) Any of the following Non-residential uses: Restaurant, provided such restaurant shall not be a drive-thru; retail establishment; day care center; community or neighborhood center; personal or consumer service establishment; business, professional or general office; bank; health club; assisted living facility; microbrewery; brewpub; higher education satellite campus or facility.

The total gross floor area devoted to residential uses within a Mixed-use Development Project shall be at least 51% of the total gross floor area of the Project.

C. Prohibited Uses.

The following non-residential uses shall be considered not permitted within the NSGOD: Automotive Services, including storage, junk yard or repairs, Carwash, Contractor yard, Hotel, Motel, or Lodging house, Industrial manufacturing, Trucking services, and all other principal uses not expressly identified in §173-143B, are prohibited.

§173-147 Housing and housing affordability.

- A. Number of Affordable Housing Units. For all Projects containing 10 or more residential units, not less than twenty percent (20%) of housing units constructed shall be Affordable Housing. Unless the PAA provides a waiver on the basis that the Project is not otherwise financially feasible and not less than twenty-five percent (25%) of rental dwelling units constructed in a Project containing rental units must be Affordable Rental Units. For purposes of calculating the number of units of Affordable Housing required within a Project, any fractional unit shall be deemed to constitute a whole unit.
- B. Monitoring Agent. A Monitoring Agent which may be the local housing authority or other qualified housing entity designated by the PAA (Planning Board, "designating official"). In a case where the Monitoring Agent cannot adequately carry out its administrative duties, upon certification of this fact by the designating official or by EOHLC such duties shall devolve to and thereafter be administered by a qualified housing entity designated by the designating official. In any event, such Monitoring Agent shall ensure the following, both prior to issuance of a Building Permit for a Project within the SGOD, and on a continuing basis thereafter, as the case may be:
 - 1) Prices of Affordable Homeownership Units are properly computed; rental amounts of Affordable Rental Units are properly computed;
 - 2) Income eligibility of households applying for Affordable Housing is properly and reliably determined;
 - 3) Housing marketing and resident selection plan conform to all requirements, have been approved by EOHLC specifically with regard to conformance with M.G.L. c.40R and 760 CMR 59.00, and are properly administered;
 - 4) Sales and rentals are made to Eligible Households chosen in accordance with the housing marketing and resident selection plan (Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing Plan (AFHMP)) with appropriate unit size for each household being properly determined and proper preference being given; and
 - 5) An Affordable Housing Restriction (AHR) meeting the requirements of this section is approved by EOHLC specifically for conformance with M.G.L. c.40R and 760 CMR. 59.00, recorded with the proper registry of deeds.
- C. Cost and Eligibility Requirements. Affordable Housing shall comply with the following requirements:
 - 1) Affordable Housing required to be offered for rent or sale shall be rented or sold to and occupied only by Eligible Households.

- 2) For an Affordable Rental Unit, the monthly rent payment, including applicable utility allowances, shall not exceed 30 percent of the maximum monthly income permissible for an Eligible Household, assuming a family size equal to the number of bedrooms in the unit plus one, unless another affordable housing program methodology for calculating rent limits, as approved by EOHLC, applies.
- 3) For an Affordable Homeownership Unit the monthly housing payment, including mortgage principal and interest, private mortgage insurance, property taxes, condominium and/or homeowner's association fees, and insurance, shall not exceed 30 percent of the maximum monthly income permissible for an Eligible Household, assuming a family size equal to the number of bedrooms in the unit plus one, unless another affordable housing program methodology for calculating rent limits, as approved by EOHLC, applies.

Prior to the granting of any building permit for a Project, the Applicant must demonstrate, to the satisfaction of the Monitoring Agent, that the method by which such affordable rents or affordable purchase prices are computed shall be consistent with state or federal guidelines for Affordability applicable to Town of Northbridge.

D. Design and Construction.

Units of Affordable Housing shall be finished housing units. With respect to the minimum number of units in a given Project that are required to be Affordable Housing under §173-147 and the Governing Laws, such units shall be equitably integrated and proportionately dispersed throughout the residential portion of the Project of which they are part, across all residential buildings, floors, distinct unit types, and with respect to the gross floor area devoted to residential units, in accordance with the Affordable Housing Restriction and the Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing and Resident Selection Plan, as approved by EOHLC. The Affordable Housing units shall be comparable in initial construction quality, size, amenities, and exterior design to the other housing units in the Project. Unless expressly required otherwise under one or more applicable state or federal housing subsidy programs, the bedroom-per-unit average for the Affordable Housing must be equal to or greater than the bedroom-per-unit average for the unrestricted/market-rate units.

E. Affordable Housing Restriction.

Each Project shall be subject to an Affordable Housing Restriction which is recorded with the Worcester Registry of Deeds or District Registry of the Land Court, and contain the following:

- 1) Specification of the term of the Affordable Housing Restriction which shall be stipulated in the Plan Approval decision but in no case be less than thirty-year period;
- 2) Name and address of the Monitoring Agent with a designation of its power to monitor and enforce the Affordable Housing Restriction;
- 3) Description of the Affordable Homeownership Unit(s), if any, by address and number of bedrooms; and a description of the overall quantity, initial unit designations and number of bedrooms and number of bedroom types of Affordable Rental Units in a Project or portion of a Project which are rental. Such restriction shall apply individually to the specifically identified Affordable Homeownership Unit and shall apply to a percentage of rental units of a rental Project or the rental portion of a Project with the initially designated Affordable Rental Units identified in, and able to float subject to specific approval by EOHLC in accordance with, the corresponding Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing Plan (AFHMP) and EOHLC's AFHMP guidelines;
- 4) Reference to an Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing and Resident Selection Plan, to which the Affordable Housing is subject, and which includes an affirmative fair housing marketing program, including public notice and a fair resident selection process. Such plan shall be consistent with EOHLC guidance and approved by EOHLC. Consistent with EOHLC guidance, such plan shall include a preference based on need for the number of bedrooms in a unit and a preference based on need for the accessibility features of a unit where applicable and may only provide for additional preferences in resident selection to the extent such preferences are also consistent with applicable law and approved by EOHLC;
- 5) Requirement that buyers or tenants will be selected at the initial sale or initial rental and upon all subsequent sales and rentals from a list of Eligible Households compiled in accordance with the housing marketing and selection plan;
- 6) Reference to the formula pursuant to which the maximum rent of an Affordable Rental Unit or the maximum resale price of an Affordable Homeownership Unit will be set;
- 7) Requirement that only an Eligible Household may reside in Affordable Housing and that notice of any lease of any Affordable Rental Unit shall be given to the Monitoring Agent;

- 8) Provision for effective monitoring and enforcement of the terms and provisions of the Affordable Housing Restriction by the Monitoring Agent;
- 9) Provision that the AHR on an Affordable Homeownership Unit shall run in favor of the Monitoring Agent and/or the municipality, in a form approved by municipal counsel, and shall limit initial sale and re-sale to and occupancy by an Eligible Household;
- 10) Provision that the AHR on Affordable Rental Units in a rental Project or rental portion of a Project shall run with the rental Project or rental portion of a Project and shall run in favor of the Monitoring Agent and/or the municipality, in a form approved by municipal counsel, and shall limit rental and occupancy to an Eligible Household;
- 11) Provision that the owner[s] or manager[s] of Affordable Rental Unit[s] shall file an annual compliance report with the Monitoring Agent, in a form specified by that agent certifying compliance with the Affordable provisions of this Bylaw/Ordinance and containing such other information as may be reasonably requested to ensure Affordability; and
- 12) Requirement that residents in Affordable Housing provide such information as the Monitoring Agent may reasonably request to ensure Affordability.

F. Costs of Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing and Resident Selection Plan.

The Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing and Resident Selection Plan and/or any associated Monitoring Services Agreement may make provision for payment by the Project Applicant of reasonable costs to the Monitoring Agent to monitor and enforce compliance with Affordability requirements consistent with the Affordable Housing Restriction and otherwise fulfill the responsibilities contained herein.

G. Age Restrictions.

Nothing in Northbridge Smart Growth Overlay District shall permit the imposition of restrictions on age upon Projects unless proposed or agreed to voluntarily by the Applicant. However, in its review of a submission under §173-XXX for a given NSGOD, the PAA may allow a specific Project, designated exclusively for the elderly, persons with disabilities, or for assisted living, provided that any such Project shall be in compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local fair housing laws and regulations and not less than twenty-five percent (25%) of the housing units in such a restricted Project shall be restricted as Affordable Housing units.

H. Phasing.

For any Project that is approved and developed in phases in accordance with Article XXI -Northbridge Smart Growth Overlay District, the percentage of Affordable units in each phase shall be at least equal to the minimum percentage of Affordable Housing required under §173-147 A or §173-147 G, as applicable. Where the percentage of Affordable Housing is not uniform across all phases, the unit dispersal and bedroom proportionality requirements shall be applied proportionately to the Affordable Housing provided for in each respective phase.

I. No Waiver.

Notwithstanding anything to the contrary herein, the Affordability provisions shall not be waived unless expressly approved in writing by EOHLC under the 40R Smart Growth Zoning Program pursuant to the Governing Laws, to eliminate conflict with an associated state or federal housing financing program and/or at the request of the Plan Approval Authority.

§173-148 Dimensional, density and parking requirements.

A. Table of area and other requirements.

Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the Northbridge Zoning Bylaw, the dimensional requirements applicable in any NSGOD are as follows:

Minimum Lot Area:	10 acres
Minimum Lot Frontage:	200 feet

Maximum Building Height: X stories (not higher than XX-feet)
Minimum Street and Lot Line Setback: 75 feet
Minimum Building Separation: XX Feet
Minimum Open Space: XX% (total project area)

B. Residential Density

The density of Residential and Mixed-Use Projects within NSGOD are as follows:

Two & Three-family: maximum of 12 dwellings units per developable acre
Multi-family: maximum of 20 dwellings units per developable acre

C. Parking Requirements

The parking requirements applicable for Projects within NSGOD are as follows:

Two & Three-family: 2.00 parking spaces per dwelling unit
Multi-family: 1.75 parking spaces per dwelling unit
Non-residential Use: 1 per 100 square-feet (restaurant/brewpub)
1 per 225 square-feet (retail establishment)
1 per 250 square-feet (general office/bank)

- 1) Shared Parking. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary herein, the use of shared parking to fulfill parking demands noted above that occur at different times of day is strongly encouraged. Any minimum parking requirements above may be reduced by the PAA through the Plan Approval process if the Applicant can demonstrate that shared spaces will meet parking demands by using accepted methodologies (e.g. the Urban Land Institute Shared Parking Report, ITE Shared Parking Guidelines, or other approved studies).
- 2) Reduction in parking requirements. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary herein, any minimum required amount of parking may be reduced by the PAA through the Plan Approval process, if the Applicant can demonstrate that the lesser amount of parking will not cause excessive congestion, endanger public safety, or that lesser amount of parking will provide positive environmental or other benefits, taking into consideration:
 - a) the availability of surplus off-street parking in the vicinity of the use being served and/or the proximity of a bus stop or transit station;
 - b) the availability of public or commercial parking facilities in the vicinity of the use being served;
 - c) shared use of off-street parking spaces serving other uses having peak user demands at different times;
 - d) to the extent consistent with 760 CMR 59.04(1)(g) and 760 CMR 59.04(i)(1), age or other occupancy restrictions which are likely to result in a lower level of auto usage;
 - e) impact of the parking requirement on the physical environment of the affected lot or the adjacent lots including reduction in green space, destruction of significant existing trees and other vegetation, destruction of existing dwelling units, or loss of pedestrian amenities along public ways; and
 - f) any applicable transportation demand management strategies that will be integrated into the Project or such other factors as may be considered by the PAA.

§173-149 Submission Requirements.

- A. Documentation.

As part of any application for Plan Approval for a Project submitted under Article XXI -Northbridge Smart Growth Overlay District, the Applicant must submit the following documents to the PAA and the Monitoring Agent:

- 1) Evidence that the Project complies with the cost and eligibility requirements prescribed §173-XXX;
- 2) Project plans that demonstrate compliance with the requirements of §173-XXX; and
- 3) A form of Affordable Housing Restriction that satisfies the requirements of §173-XXX prescribed herein.

These documents in combination, to be submitted with an application for Plan Approval (or, for Projects not requiring Plan Approval, prior to submission of any application for a Building Permit), shall include details about construction related to the provision, within the development, of units that are accessible to the individuals with disabilities and appropriate for diverse populations, including households with children, other households, individuals, households including individuals with disabilities, and the elderly.

B. Required application submittals.

An application for Plan Approval shall be submitted to the Northbridge Planning Board on the Project Application Form provided by the PAA as approved by EOHLC, along with application fee and Peer Review consultant fee(s) prescribed and set forth herein. The application shall be accompanied by such Project plans and documents as may be required and set forth §173-147 (A-I). For any Project subject to the Affordability requirements of §173-147, the application shall be accompanied by all materials required therein.

All site plans shall be prepared by a certified architect, landscape architect, and/or a civil engineer registered in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. All landscape plans shall be prepared by a certified landscape architect registered in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. All building elevations shall be prepared by a certified architect registered in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. All plans shall be signed and stamped, and drawings prepared at a scale of one-inch equals forty feet (1"=40') or at a scale approved by the PAA.

C. Filing.

An Applicant for Plan Approval shall file one (1) original and one (1) copy of the application form and supportive documentation; two (2) full-size prints and three (3) reduced prints of Project plan, along with an electronic-version of the **complete submittal** (including Stormwater Report and Traffic Impact Assessment Study) with the Town Clerk and a copy of application noting the date of filing certified by the Town Clerk shall be filed forthwith with the Northbridge Planning Board, the Plan Approval Authority.

1. Project plan shall include all of the data, details and supporting information as follows:

- a) Name of the project, property boundaries and locus maps showing site's location, date, North arrow, and scale of the plan.
- b) Names and addresses of the owner of record, developer and seal of engineer, architect, and or landscape architect.
- c) Names and addresses of all owners of record of abutting parcels and those within 300 feet of property line.
- d) All existing lot lines, easements, and rights-of-way (including area in acres or square feet), abutting land uses and location and use of structures within 300 feet of site. All minimum dimensional requirements in district and setback requirements.
- e) Locations and uses of all existing and proposed buildings and structures within the development, including all dimensions of height and floor area, and showing all exterior entrances and all anticipated future additions and alterations.
- f) Location of all present/proposed public and private ways, parking areas, driveways, sidewalks, ramps, curbs, fences, paths, landscaping, walls, and fences.
- g) Location, type, and screening details for all waste disposal containers.
- h) Location, height, intensity, and bulb type of all external lighting fixtures and details and design of proposed signage.
- i) Location of all present/proposed utility systems, including sewage or septic system; water supply system; telephone, cable, and electrical systems; and storm drainage system, including existing and proposed drain lines, culverts, catch basins, headwalls, end walls, hydrants, manholes and drainage swales.
- j) Plans to prevent pollution of surface/ground water, erosion of soil, both during and after construction, excessive runoff, excessive raising or lowering of the water table and flooding of other properties, as applicable.

- j) Existing/proposed topography at a two-foot contour interval. All elevations shall refer to the nearest US Geodetic Bench Mark.
- k) A landscape plan showing existing natural land features, trees, forest cover and water sources and all proposed changes to these features, including size and type of plant material.
- l) Traffic flow patterns within site, entrances/exits, loading/unloading areas, curb cuts on site and within 100 feet of the site.
- m) Elevation plans (1/4-inch equals one foot) for all exterior facades of the proposed structure(s) and/or existing facades, showing design features, and indicating type and color of materials to be used.
- n) Information on the location, size and type of parking, loading, storage, and service areas.

D. Project design standards.

Projects undergoing Plan Approval process shall be subject to Design Standards as set forth herein. The Design Standards are enacted to ensure that the physical character of Projects within NSGOD are complementary to nearby buildings and structures and consistent with Northbridge's approved Housing Production Plan. The Design Standards shall offer guidance on Building architecture, Landscape and lighting, Pedestrian and vehicle circulation, Public utilities (water/sewer), and Stormwater management.

1. Architectural standards.

- a) Buildings shall be designed in keeping with the historical patterns of the Blackstone Valley. Architects should research building types that typify the region's heritage and incorporate details in their structures that are based upon examples from the region. Use of materials such as clapboard, stone, and brick that reflect housing and mill styles should be considered. Buildings should contain variation in detail to provide visual interest and to avoid monotony. Use of pitched roof, breaks in roof, and wall lines, towers, cupolas and building ornamentation are examples of measures to incorporate.

2. Landscaping and lighting.

- a) Landscape buffer area of a minimum of 50-feet shall be dedicated/provided along existing abutting residential property. A registered landscape architect shall submit a landscape plan drawn to scale, including dimensions and distances of all proposed parking spaces, access aisles, driveways, walkways, and the species type, size, and quantity of landscaping materials. There shall be provided a central gathering place for each grouping of buildings dedicated for residential. To include elements such as a raised vegetated planting beds, benches, decorative stone walls or similar amenities accessible to individuals in wheelchairs.
- b) Lighting and utilities. All electric, telephone, and other communication lines, both main and service connections, servicing project development shall be provided underground. All exterior lights and illuminated signs shall be designed and installed in such a manner as to prevent light-trespass. Light standard design shall be consistent with the architectural objectives of the development.

3. Circulation, roadway, access, and parking.

- a) At the main entrance, one combined entrance/exit location is encouraged to facilitate traffic movement; such an entrance shall be separated by a landscaped traffic island with separate in and out movements.
- b) Project development shall contain facilities that will encourage transit services as a means of reducing automobile travel. Shelters shall be installed at central locations in the development to provide convenient access for buses. Secure bicycle racks shall also be provided to promote bicycle commuting.
- c) Roadways, driveways, access aisles and parking areas shall comply with applicable construction standards.
- d) Sidewalks and pedestrian paths shall offer connectivity within the entirety of project development. Such walkways shall be constructed with brick, decorative pavers, or other materials, and shall be bordered with fencing or shrubbery to clearly separate pedestrians from automobile traffic.
- e) Parking garages are permitted as an alternative to extensive surface lots. Exterior treatment of the garages shall consist of the same materials as the principal buildings in the development. Above ground garages shall be limited to two-stories in height.

4. Public utility (water/sewer).

- a) Project development shall tie-in to a public water system if an available connection is located within 1,000-feet of the property, unless evidence is submitted by the water supplier that its available capacity is insufficient to service the development.
 - b) Project development shall tie-in to a public sewer system if an available connection is located within 1,000-feet of the property line unless evidence is submitted by the sewer provider that the sewer mains or treatment plant has insufficient capacity to service the development. If an on-site package treatment plant is proposed, the plant shall be built prior to the issuance of any occupancy permits.
5. Stormwater management.
- a) Drainage systems shall be designed using best management practices (BMPs) as found in the most recent version of DEP's "Non-Point Source Management Manual." The applicant shall submit a stormwater management plan implementing the Stormwater Management Standards of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Applicant shall submit Erosion and Sediment Control Plan as part of project application.

\$173-150 Plan approval process.

A. Plan Approval.

1. An application for Plan Approval shall be reviewed by the PAA for consistency with the purpose and intent of Article XXI -Northbridge Smart Growth Overlay District. Such Plan Approval process shall be construed as an As-of-right review and approval process as required by and in accordance with the Governing Laws. The following categories of Projects shall be subject to the Plan Approval process: Residential Project containing at least [10] residential units, Mixed-use Development Project, and Project Phasing.
 2. An Applicant may propose, in a Plan Approval submission, that a Project be developed in phases, provided that the submission shows the full buildout of the Project and all associated impacts as of the completion of the final phase, and subject to the approval of the PAA. Any phased Project shall comply with the provisions of §173-XXX.
- B. Hearing.

The PAA shall hold a public hearing for which notice has been given as provided in Section 11 of G.L. Chapter 40A. The decision of the PAA shall be made, and a written notice of the decision filed with the Town Clerk, within 120 days of the receipt of the application by the Town Clerk. The required time limits for such action may be extended by written agreement between the Applicant and the PAA, with a copy of such agreement being filed in the office of the Town Clerk. Failure of the PAA to take action within said 120 days or extended time, if applicable, shall be deemed to be an approval of the Plan Approval application.

C. Circulation to other boards.

Upon receipt of application, the PAA shall provide copy of application materials to the Board of Selectmen, Zoning Board of Appeals, Board of Health, Conservation Commission, Fire Department, Police Department, Building Commissioner, Department of Public Works, the Monitoring Agent and other municipal officers, agencies or boards for review and comment. Such boards, agency or officer shall provide written comments to the Northbridge Planning Board within 60 days of its receipt of a copy of the plan and application for approval.

C. Pre-application.

Prior to the submittal of a Plan Approval submission of a "Concept Plan" may be submitted to help guide the development of the definitive submission for Project buildout and individual elements thereof. If submitted, such Concept Plan should reflect the overall building envelope areas, open space, and natural resource areas; and general site improvements, groupings of buildings, and proposed land uses. The Concept Plan is intended to be used as a tool for both the Applicant and the PAA to ensure that the

proposed Project design will be consistent with the provisions of the NSGOD, dimensional and density requirements, as well as discussion and consideration of the Monitoring Agent.

D. Waivers.

Except where expressly prohibited herein, upon the request of the Applicant and subject to compliance with M.G.L. c. 40R, 760 CMR 59.00 and Section 6.10, the PAA may waive dimensional and other requirements, including Project design standards, in the interests of design flexibility and overall Project quality, if it finds that such waiver will allow the Project to achieve the density, affordability, and mix of uses.

§173-151 Decisions.

A. Plan Approval.

1. Plan Approval shall be granted by simple majority vote where the PAA finds that:

- a) Project and Plan meet the requirements and standards set forth in Article XXI -Northbridge Smart Growth Overlay District, or a waiver has been granted therefrom;
- b) Monitory Agent has provided written confirmation that all requirements of affordability restrictions have been satisfied; and
- c) Adverse impacts of the project identified as part of public hearing have been adequately mitigated by means of suitable conditions of project approval.

2. Project Phasing.

The PAA, as a condition of any Plan Approval, may allow a Project to be phased at the request of the Applicant, or it may require a Project to be phased for the purpose of coordinating its development with the construction of Planned Infrastructure Improvements (as that term is defined under 760 CMR 59.00), or to mitigate any extraordinary adverse Project impacts on nearby properties. For Projects that are approved and developed in phases, unless otherwise explicitly approved in writing by EOHLC in relation to the specific Project, the proportion of Affordable units in each phase shall be at least equal to the minimum percentage of Affordable Housing required under §173-150 Section 6.1 or 6.8, as applicable.

B. Project Disapproval.

1. A Project application may be disapproved by simple majority vote only where the PAA finds that:

- a) Applicant has not submitted the required fees and information as set forth; or
- b) Project as described in the application does not meet the requirements and standards in accordance with Northbridge Smart Growth Overlay District and the PAA Regulations; or
- c) Requested waiver therefrom has not been granted; or
- d) Monitory Agent has not provided written confirmation that all requirements of affordability restrictions have been satisfied; or
- e) it is not possible to adequately mitigate extraordinary adverse Project impacts on nearby properties by means of suitable conditions.

C. Form of Decision.

The PAA shall issue to the Applicant a copy of its decision containing the name and address of the owner, identifying the land affected, and the plans that are the subject of the decision, and certifying that a copy of the decision has been filed with the Town Clerk and that all plans referred to in the decision are on file with the PAA.

1. If twenty (20) days have elapsed after the decision has been filed in the office of the Town Clerk without an appeal having been filed or if such appeal, having been filed, is dismissed, or denied, the Town Clerk shall so certify on a copy of the decision.
2. If a plan is approved by reason of the failure of the PAA to timely act, the Town Clerk shall make such certification on a copy of the application.

A copy of the decision for application bearing such certification shall be recorded in the Worcester Registry of Deeds, indexed in the grantor index under the name of the owner of record or recorded and noted on the owner's certificate of title. The fee for recording or registering shall be paid by the Applicant.

D. Validity of Decision.

A Plan Approval shall remain valid and shall run with the land indefinitely, provided that construction has commenced within two (2) years after the decision is issued, which time shall be extended by the time required to adjudicate any appeal from such approval and which time shall also be extended if the Project proponent is actively pursuing other required permits for the Project or there is other good cause for the failure to commence construction, or as may be provided in a Plan Approval for a multi-phase Project.

E. Change in plan after approval by the PAA.

1. Minor Change.

After Plan Approval, an Applicant may apply to make minor changes to a Project involving minor utility or building orientation adjustments, or minor adjustments to parking or other site details that do not affect the overall buildout or building envelope of the site, or provision of open space, number of housing units, or housing need or affordability features. Such minor changes must be submitted to the PAA on redlined prints of the approved plan, reflecting the proposed change, and on application forms provided by the PAA. The PAA may authorize such changes at any regularly scheduled meeting, without the need to hold a public hearing. The PAA shall set forth any decision to approve or deny such minor change by motion and written decision and provide a copy to the Applicant for filing with the Town Clerk.

2. Major Change.

Those changes deemed by the PAA to constitute a major change to a Project because of the nature of the change in relation to the prior approved plan, or because such change cannot be appropriately characterized as a minor change as described above, shall be processed by the PAA as a new application for Plan Approval..

§173-152 Severability.

If any provision of Article XXI -Northbridge Smart Growth Overlay District is found to be invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, the remainder of Article XXI shall not be affected but shall remain in full force. The invalidity of any provision of Article XXI -Northbridge Smart Growth Overlay District shall not affect the validity of the remainder of the Northbridge Zoning Bylaw.

Household Size								
	One (1) Person	Two (2) People	Three (3) People	Four (4) People	Five (5) People	Six (6) People	Seven (7) People	Eight (8) People
50% AMI Minimum Income	\$34,400.00	\$39,300.00	\$44,200.00	\$49,100.00	\$53,050.00	\$57,000.00	\$60,900.00	\$64,850.00
80% AMI Maximum Income	\$54,950.00	\$62,800.00	\$70,650.00	\$78,500.00	\$84,800.00	\$91,100.00	\$97,350.00	\$103,650.00
							Worcester County (HUD Metro FMR Area)	
Household Size	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
80% Income Limits	\$68,850.00	\$78,650.00	\$88,500.00	\$98,300.00	\$106,200.00	\$114,050.00	\$121,900.00	\$129,800.00
100% Income Limits	\$86,050.00	\$98,350.00	\$110,650.00	\$122,900.00	\$132,750.00	\$142,600.00	\$152,400.00	\$162,250.00
						Worcester County - Borrowers total household income limits (updated May 2023)		
# of Bedrooms	Studio	1BR	2BR	3BR	4BR			
50% Rent	\$1,023.00	\$1,096.00	\$1,316.00	\$1,521.00	\$1,697.00			
80% Rent	\$1,638.00	\$1,755.00	\$2,106.00	\$2,433.00	\$2,715.00			
	MHP - 2023 Maximum Allowable Rents for Affordable Housing Units (Worcester, MA)							
Area Median Income (AMI) for 4-person family (\$122,000)	Income Category	1	2	3	4	5		
	"Low" income (80% of AMI)	\$65,550.00	\$74,900.00	\$84,250.00	\$93,600.00	\$101,100.00		
	"Very Low" income (50% of AMI)	\$40,950.00	\$46,800.00	\$52,650.00	\$58,500.00	\$63,200.00		
	"Extremely Low" income (30% of AMI)	\$24,600.00	\$28,100.00	\$31,600.00	\$35,100.00	\$37,950.00		
	Fiscal Year	Info offered/provided for DISCUSSION PURPOSES ONLY as-AMI & Fair Market Rent (FMR) may be adjusted each Fiscal Year						
*One shall consult HUD and/or EOHLC for current (FY) threshold calculations.								
2023 Income Limits for Worcester, MA HUD Fair Market Rent Area								
Year	Efficiency	Fair Market Rent by Unit Bedrooms						
		1BR	2BR	3BR	4BR			
FY 2024 FMR	\$1,282.00	\$1,292.00	\$1,661.00	\$2,008.00	\$2,212.00			
FY 2023 FMR	\$1,231.00	\$1,272.00	\$1,635.00	\$1,990.00	\$2,196.00			
FY 2024 Worcester, MA HUD Metro FMR Area FMRs for All Bedroom Sizes -Fair Market Rent								

Guidelines for G.L. C. 40B /Regulatory Authority-760 CMR 56.00

Section II.A.2.b-Rental & Assisted Living Facility

(1) General- In a rental or ALF development, if at least 25% of units are to be occupied by Income Eligible Households earning 80% or less than the area median income, or alternatively, if at least 20% of units are to be occupied by households earning 50% or less of area median income, and meet all criteria outlined in Section 1, **then all of the units in the rental development shall be eligible for inclusion on the SHI.** In determining the number of units required to satisfy either percentage threshold, fractional numbers shall be rounded up to the nearest whole number (e.g.: in a 51-unit development, one would restrict 13 units in order to meet the 25% standard).



TOWN OF NORTHBRIDGE
PLANNING BOARD
7 MAIN STREET
WHITINSVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS 01588

(508) 234-2447

planning@northbridgemass.org

February 28, 2024

Linda Zywiec, Town Clerk
Northbridge Memorial Town Hall, 7 Main Street
Whitinsville, MA 01588

RE: 2024 SPRING ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
Post-Construction Stormwater Management Bylaw

Dear Mrs. Zywiec:

Please be advised, at its meeting of Tuesday, February 27, 2024, the Planning Board, upon motion duly made (J Berkowitz) and seconded (M Wilkes) voted (5-0) to SPONSOR the following article for the 2024 Spring Annual Town Meeting:

1. AMEND Town of Northbridge General Bylaw (Code) by ADOPTING a "Post-Construction Stormwater Management Bylaw". Reference is made to the town's existing stormwater management bylaw Section 7-800 entitled "Stormwater Management Bylaw" [adopted May 06, 2008, ATM, Art. 22].

The language of the proposed (Post-Construction Stormwater Management Bylaw) is currently being prepared by Consultant of the Department of Public Works (DPW) and is to be ready in time for printing of the Warrant. The purpose of this article is to bring the Town of Northbridge in compliance with its Municipal Stormwater Permit (MS4) in accordance with the federal Clean Water Act.

As a General Bylaw (Code), it is understood the Planning Board is not required to hold a public hearing prior to consideration at Town Meeting. Accordingly, the Planning Board shall present the motion, offer its recommendation, and shall look to the Director of Public Works and others for more detailed explanation, if so required at Town Meeting.

Should you have any questions please contact the Planning office.

Sincerely,

R. Gary Bechtoldt II, Director
Community Planning & Development

Cc: Town Manager/BOS Planning Board Director of Public Works Finance Committee /File



TOWN OF NORTHBRIDGE

PLANNING BOARD

7 MAIN STREET
WHITINSVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS 01588

PHONE: (508) 234-2447

EMAIL: planning@northbridgemass.org

February 29, 2024

Linda Zywien, Town Clerk
Town of Northbridge
7 Main Street, Whitinsville, MA 01588

COPY

RE: WINSTON WOODS SUBDIVISION
Extension of Completion Date

Dear Ms. Zywien:

Please be advised at its meeting of February 27, 2024, the Planning Board, upon motion duly made (J. Berkowitz) and seconded (M. Wilkes) voted (5-0) to GRANT AN EXTENSION OF THE DATE OF COMPLETION for the "Winston Woods Definitive Subdivision" from March 11, 2024 through to March 11, 2025.

Reference is made to Covenant dated March 10, 2022 [BK 68234 PG 242], Certificate of Approval dated March 10, 2022 [BK 68234 PG 246], and Definitive Subdivision Plan entitled "Winston Woods" dated June 05, 2023 [Plan BK 975 PG93].

Should you have any questions or require additional information please contact the Planning Office.

Sincerely,


Barbara A. Kinney
Planning Administrative Assistant

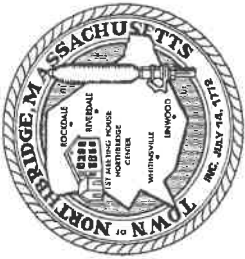
Cc: Owner/Developer/Engineer
DPW Director
Planning Board
/File

Community Planning & Development -Weekly Report March 04-08 2024

- **FY2020 & FY2024 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)** -Consultant (Turning Point Eng) provided deliverable for Church Avenue project (construction plan drawings, Bid doc & cost estimator certificate); TPE issued final invoice (\$6k) for deliverables; Planning continues to work w/COG on grant administration & FY2020 CDBG program close-out.
- **Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program (MVP)** -attended meeting 3/7 w/Consultant (Fuss & O'Neil); J Luchini, DPW Director; D Pickart, Conservation Agent; Whitinsville Water Co., & Hillary King, MVP Regional Coordinator; other attendees included representatives from Army Corp., MassDOT, MassDEP, MEPA, & CMRPC; purpose of meeting was to review permitting requirements (federal/state/local) for the Carpenter Road Causeway Improvement Project (currently undergoing 25% design).
- **(2023) Green Communities Program** -in accordance w/MGL CH 25 Sec 14, Northbridge may contract directly w/Project Expediter (Energy Conservation, Inc) & its subcontractor for energy conservation measures; prepared Contract Agreement (for Energy Conservation, Inc & Public Schools); confirmed w/Consultant (ECI) Sub-contractor (Logic Automation Services) to perform work (High School Unit Ventilator Control Replacements); coordinating work-schedule w/Consultant & R Wetherbee (Public Schools Director of Facilities & Operations) TBD; provided Accounting w/GC Grant award announcement & supportive docs; notified Treasurer of forthcoming initial disbursement of grant funds from DOER (25% of grant award); prepared correspondence for Town Manager regarding GC Grant Administration; reviewed grant award contingencies & special conditions; prepared 2023 GC Grant budget spreadsheet & draft of first Quarterly Report (Jan-Mar) due April 2024.
- **MBTA Communities (MGL Ch 40A Sec 3A -Multifamily Zoning)** -EOHLC to make formal decision on Northbridge's existing zoning (R5 Zoning District/multifamily by-right); town is considered to be in compliance at this time.
- **Mumford Riverwalk Boardwalk (ARPA funds & monetary donation)** -J Luchini, DPW Director coordinating w/General Contractor & Subcontractor on Contract Amendment (to include ADD ALTs) & the anticipated construction-start (TBD); project completion date end of Summer remains unchanged; project budget includes 2 funding sources (ARPA & Stone Hill Dev donation) totaling \$750K; no ARPA funds expended at this time (sum of \$550K in ARPA funds committed).
- **Rockdale Pocket Park (ARPA funds & monetary donation)** -Invitation For Bids (IFB) for construction posted/advertised; Bids due 4/19; pre-bid site visit (4/03); anticipated project-start of May/June 2024; project budget includes 2 funding sources (ARPA & Stone Hill Dev donation) totaling \$115K; no ARPA funds expended at this time (sum of \$65K in ARPA funds committed).
- **Historic Whitinsville Walking Tour Brochure (ARPA Funded Project)** -continues to be somewhat of a challenge to obtain information from Historic Commission; understand NHC is working w/Artist on updating brochures & finalizing pricing for printing, etc.; arrangements to be made w/C Johnson & K Warchol (NHC members) once draft brochure is readied (TBD); no ARPA funds expended at this time (sum of \$5K in ARPA funds committed).
- **Subdivision/Site Development Status** -Planning Board Consultant (Graves Engineering, Inc.) & Conservation Agent (D Pickart) continue to oversee subdivision & site developments; pre-construction

site visit held (3/07) for Douglas Road Contractors Yard, where Owner/Engineer reviewed w/DPW Director, Conservation Agent & PB Consultant existing conditions along Douglas Road (culvert & flowage easement area); PB Consultant to perform subdivision inspection at Hemlock Estates to identify remaining improvements & construction estimates for completion; Planning to issue letters to Developer(s) of all active subdivisions (& Stone Hill development) to provide Planning Board w/updated construction schedules for project completion; arrangements to be made w/Developers to meet w/PB at a public meeting to review overall status (TBD).

- **(Northbridge) 40R Smart Growth Overlay Zoning District** -on 2/01 Planning submitted initial draft of local 40R provisions to EOHLC; B Reyelt (EOHLC) is to provide comment on draft language, where local provisions must be approved by EOHLC in order to be eligible for state's 40R incentive payment, bonus payments & 40S (reimbursement to School, if any); Planning sent notice (3/04) to EOHLC (B Reyelt & E Wijnja) seeking status update of review; Planning awaiting response.
- **Providence Road Mixed-Use Concept Development Plan** -arrangements made w/Planning Board to host meeting for proposed mixed-use project along Providence Road (3/12); Owner/Engineer is to review w/public conceptual layout & buildout proposed; met w/B Gallant on 3/04 to review mixed-use concept plan layout & potential demands on town services (water/sewer, schools, etc.); B Gallant invited to attend next PB meeting; met on 3/07 w/B Renaud (Owner), R Knapik (Engineers), & B Rushford (PB Chair) to review mixed-use presentation in advance of 3/12 PB meeting; Owner sent mailing to direct abutters inviting to meeting; members of public also welcome to attend.
- **Community Preservation Committee** -next meeting scheduled for Monday 3/18 (6:30PM -via ZOOM).
- **Economic Development Committee** -next meeting scheduled for Monday 3/11 (6:30PM -Town Hall); Planning in receipt of resignation email from Bill Davis; as result EDC has an open position (vacancy).
- **Safety Committee Meeting** -next meeting scheduled for Wednesday 3/20 (10:00AM -Police Station).
- **Planning Board** -next meeting scheduled for Tuesday 3/12 (7:00PM -Town Hall).
- **Community Planning & Development** -Planning continues to follow-up on general inquiries, application submittals & requests from residents, developers, & public; D Sullivan continues to assist Planning/Conservation in archiving & organizing files for anticipated move to new Fire Station.



TOWN OF NORTHBRIDGE
PLANNING BOARD
Aldrich School –Town Hall Annex
14 Hill Street, Whitinsville, MA 01588
Telephone: (508) 234-2447 planning@northbridgemass.org

NORTHBRIDGE PLANNING BOARD

Please find below meeting dates of the Northbridge Planning Board for the calendar year of 2024:

	2024	
	<i>Spring Annual Town Meeting (May 07, 2024)</i>	<i>Primary Election (September TBD)</i>
Tuesday, January 09, 2024	Tuesday, May 14, 2024	Tuesday, September 10, 2024
Tuesday, January 23, 2024	Tuesday, May 28, 2024	Tuesday, September 24, 2024
	<i>Town Elections (May 21, 2024)</i>	
Tuesday, February 13, 2024	Tuesday, June 11, 2024	Tuesday, October 08, 2024
Tuesday, February 27, 2024	Tuesday, June 25, 2024	Tuesday, October 22, 2024
		<i>Fall Annual Town Meeting (October 22, 2024)</i>
Tuesday, March 12, 2024	Tuesday, July 09, 2024	Tuesday, November 12, 2024
Tuesday, March 26, 2024	Tuesday, July 23, 2024	Tuesday, November 26, 2024
		State Election (November 05, 2024)
Tuesday, April 09, 2024	Tuesday, August 13, 2024	Tuesday, December 10, 2024
Tuesday, April 23, 2024	Tuesday, August 27, 2024	Tuesday, December 24, 2024
		December 24, 2024 Christmas Eve

Unless otherwise noted, the Planning Board typically meets the second & fourth Tuesday of each month. The Planning Board will meet in the Northbridge Memorial Town Hall (7 Main Street, Whitinsville, MA) Board of Selectmen's Room - beginning at 7:00 PM. Meeting dates may be subject to change.

Pursuant to Mass General Laws, notice of meetings must be posted with the Office of the Town Clerk 48 hours prior to the meeting. All meetings are open to the public.

[An audio recording of the meetings may be made to assist in the preparation of minutes; such recordings will not be archived]
Meeting minutes shall serve as the official record of the Planning Board