HARWICH LOCAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

2025

The Town of Harwich |
Local Planning Committee

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What is a Local Comprehensive Plan?

The Local Comprehensive Plan (LCP) is an important planning tool used to guide future growth and development in Harwich while balancing a wide variety of needs, including protection of environmental resources, economic growth, quality of life, and community character. As such, this document identifies the vision, goals, and community needs over the next 5-10 years and provides action steps to achieve those goals. The LCP is meant to be a living document guiding the long- and short-term decisions of the town.

Harwich's 2025 LCP was informed by the goals and objectives in CCC's 2018 Regional Policy Plan, information obtained through significant public outreach, supporting plans and reports, and collaboration with town staff, boards, and committees. In addition, the Town's Housing Production Plan (HPP) and the Open Space & Recreation Plan (OSRP) were prepared during the same timeframe as the LCP, which allowed the Local Planning Committee (LPC) to incorporate the findings, goals, and strategies from the HPP and OSRP into the LCP.

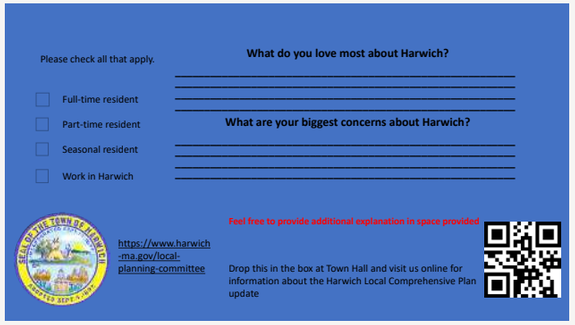
Benefits of a certified LCP by the Cape Cod Commission includes prioritized planning technical assistance and ability to enter into Development Agreements.



First Congregational Church

LCP Process

The LPC actively engaged stakeholders and the broader Harwich community using a variety of methods, including:



Summer 2023 visioning postcard survey



HPP July 2024 stakeholder meeting



April 2024 Visioning Workshop



LPC action plan prioritization

- Summer 2023 visioning postcard survey - with over 300 responses.
- Community survey – with over 1000 responses. Survey results are in Appendices A and B.
- Promotional flyer used in tabling events such as the Cranberry Festival, Brooks Park and Cultural Center summer concerts.

2023

- LCP visioning workshops held in March and April 2024.
- Outreach to Harwich public schools on survey availability.
- Periodic updates and joint meeting on the LCP with the Selectboard and Planning Board.
- Public outreach on the HPP update including a well-attended workshop with town officials and other stakeholders on housing needs.

2024

- Public outreach conducted on the OSRP update, including a separate survey on open space and recreational needs.
- Use of social media throughout the LCP process.
- LCP Webpage created to post updates.

2025

- Outreach to Town Boards and Committees by LPC members at various stages in the process.
- Public hearing on the final draft LCP in 2026.

Harwich's Vision

In 2050 Harwich is a **vibrant and sustainable community that honors its natural beauty, historic charm and village character** while meeting the needs of our residents for attainable housing to support economic and community growth. Our commitment to this vision is deeply rooted in the protection of water and natural resources, recognizing their intrinsic value to our community.

With a focus on social diversity, strong community values, cultural identity, and recreational appeal that contribute to Harwich's unique identity, we prioritize preserving the tranquility and outdoor appeal that define our town's ambiance, responding to concerns about climate change, and the impact of human development on our environment. In the face of change, our vision aspires to create a sustainable haven where diverse housing options, economic vitality, and the cherished essence of our community coexist harmoniously.

This commitment to sustainable development aligns with the essence of Cape Cod's Regional Policy Plan (RPP), ensuring our community respects its environment while meeting the diverse needs of our residents, businesses, and visitors.

Harwich's Growth Policy

Harwich, as part of the Cape Cod region, has a limited capacity to absorb additional population growth without degrading the environment upon which we all depend and enjoy.

To achieve our vision, the **Harwich Growth Policy is to meet the needs of future generations for housing and economic sustainability through strategic investments in infrastructure focused on our seven unique village areas.** Infrastructure and facilities will be implemented at an appropriate scale to protect historic and community character and protect and restore the environment.

Harwich will actively collaborate with neighboring communities to address regional infrastructure needs, including reliable internet services, wastewater, and transportation improvements.

Growth in Harwich will be intentional, designed to meet identified needs such as housing for seniors, young families, and individuals of all types. We are dedicated to integrating new housing throughout our town. As we move forward, our work is to balance different needs and priorities, supporting both a thriving summer tourist economy and a year-round community.

We are committed to addressing climate change, a global crisis that has direct impacts on the Harwich community by reducing our carbon footprint through smart growth practices and sustainable development and taking action to be more resilient to the impacts from climate change along our coastline.

In the spirit of collaboration and transparency, the Harwich Growth Policy is designed to ensure an open and inclusive decision-making process. By carefully planning and coordinating growth, we aim to preserve our community's unique character, foster fiscal and environmental sustainability, and create a vibrant, diverse, and sustainable Harwich for present and future generations.

Key Challenges Facing the Town

Lack of Available Land/Existing Zoning

Since 1988, the minimum required area for single-family purposes anywhere in Town is 40,000 square feet, based on a finding that one unit per acre was the maximum acceptable density to protect the drinking water supply. However, this low single-family residential development pattern resulted in residential sprawl, with only 5 percent of the Town's undeveloped land area currently available for development. The lack of available land and existing zoning have severely constrained the construction of affordable and attainable housing in Harwich.

Housing Affordability

The State's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) for the Town of Harwich revealed 4.98% of year-round housing units designated as affordable. Market prices for homes and rentals have increased dramatically over the past decade. These prices have risen faster than incomes, which is making the market less affordable. Harwich is facing challenges in providing affordable housing for low- to moderate-income groups, particularly individuals who have claimed some type of disability.

Wastewater Management

Harwich currently has limited sewer infrastructure, making denser development including multifamily housing more costly and difficult. Implementation of the Town's Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan (CWMP) may provide for areas where higher density housing can be achieved. Construction of sewers could provide additional opportunities for housing development provided that zoning supports such development.

Maintaining Village Character

Harwich values the individual identity of its seven villages. Zoning changes to accommodate additional housing should balance residential and commercial growth with the community's vision for each of the village centers, while maintaining appropriate scale and character in residential areas to be sewered. Pedestrian and bicycle improvements and improved parking facilities in villages are also needed.

Climate Change Impacts to Property and Resources

Based on data from the Harwich 2017 Hazard Mitigation Plan, the value of buildings in hazard areas (FEMA A Zone) is over $272 Million dollars, the majority of which is residential development. Design guidelines to provide review boards and property owners with specific guidance on new development and redevelopment in these hazard areas are needed, along with nature-based strategies to provide protection during storm events. Strategies to address the Town's low-lying roads, culverts and stormwater infrastructure are also needed to ensure public safety during severe storm events.

Environmental Protection

Of the six overlay districts, the Drinking Water Protection District and Six Ponds Special District are significant for purposes of water resource protection. These Overlay Districts allow the Town to better control and direct development away from these areas. A resource management plan for the Six Ponds Special District needs to be developed and regulations refined to ensure that the Special District is effective. Additional data collection and monitoring is needed to improve the overall health and water quality of ponds and lakes.

Capital Improvement Plan

The **Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)** is intended to support and advance the LCP Vision, Growth Policy, Goals, and Actions. This section includes a description of existing capital facilities and infrastructure and capital budgeting programmed over the next five years in the Town's Five-Year Capital Outlay Plan (COP) that is presented in each year's Annual Town Meeting warrant. The CIP then describes key capital facilities and infrastructure needs identified in the LCP with high-level costs and funding options.



Goals & Actions: *Natural Systems*

Goals

Water Resources
To maintain a sustainable supply of high-quality drinking water and to protect, preserve, or restore the ecological integrity of Harwich's fresh and marine surface water resources for present and future community needs.

Ocean Resources
To protect, preserve, or restore the quality and natural values and functions of ocean resources.

Wetland Resources
To protect, preserve, or restore the quality and natural values of both freshwater and saltwater wetlands and their buffers to support the important functions they provide for the environment and the community.

Wildlife and Plant Habitat
To protect, preserve, or restore wildlife and plant habitats in Harwich to promote natural diversity.

Open Space
To conserve, preserve, or enhance Harwich's open space network to promote natural and community well-being and quality of life.

Actions

- Completion of pond profiles & expand monitoring
- Acquire open space in public water supply areas
- Resource management plan for the Six Ponds DCPC
- Coastal rebuilding standards
- Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan (CWMP) implementation
- Habitat protection & land management plans

Goals & Actions: *Built Systems*

Goals

Community Design
To protect and enhance the unique character of Harwich's built and natural environment based on village context.

Coastal Resiliency
To prevent or minimize human suffering and loss of life and property or environmental damage resulting from storms, flooding, erosion, and relative sea level rise, including but not limited to that associated with climate change.

Community Facilities Services & Infrastructure
To maintain and enhance existing community resources, services and infrastructure prioritizing accessibility, sustainability, and inclusivity, catering to diverse resident needs while fostering community connectivity and well-being.

Transportation
To provide and promote a safe, reliable, and multi-modal transportation system consistent with community character goals to meet present and future needs.

Energy
To provide an adequate, reliable, and diverse supply of energy to serve the needs of Harwich residents, businesses, and visitors.

Waste Managment
To promote a sustainable solid waste management system that protects public health, safety, and the environment and supports the economy of Harwich.

Actions

- Historic districts and mixed-use bylaws
- Streetscape improvements along Route 28
- Master plan and bylaws to redevelop properties on Route 28
- Reinstate the Tree Warden position
- Flood Area Design Guidelines
- Certified Floodplain Managers
- Storm event preparedness
- Climate resilience for critical infrastructure and facilities
- Resources and services for all ages, demographic groups and interests by Town departments
- School facility maintenance and improvements
- ADA accessibility improvements for Town services, buildings and facilities
- Enhance support for families with children
- After school services
- Sidewalk and roadway improvement projects
- Shuttle buses
- Composing educational materials

Goals & Actions: *Community Systems*

Goals

Cultural Heritage
To protect and preserve Harwich's significant cultural, historic, scenic, and archaeological values and resources.

Economy
To promote a sustainable local economy that consists of a broad range of businesses providing employment opportunities to a diverse workforce.

Housing
Promote the production and preservation of a wide range of ownership and rental housing that is attainable for diverse levels of incomes and needs.

Actions

- Design guidelines for villages
- School support services
- Seasonal Communities designation
- Queen Anne Road affordable housing
- Affordable & attainable housing education
- Revised multifamily & mixed-use bylaw
- Conversion & infill development
- Re-use existing buildings for housing
- ADU bylaw improvements
- Seasonal workforce housing
- Affordable housing financing & rehabilitation programs
- Creative funding & housing partnerships
- Additional housing programs
- Monitor Subsidized Housing Inventory
- Further capitalize Harwich Affordable Housing Trust
- Short-term rental bylaws
- Tax relief for property owners renting to income-qualified year-round renters

Section 1

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS A LOCAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

The **Local Comprehensive Plan (LCP)** is an important planning tool used to guide future growth and development in Harwich while balancing a wide variety of needs, including protection of environmental resources, economic growth, quality of life, and community character. As such, this document identifies the vision, goals, and community needs over the next 5-10 years and provides action steps to achieve those goals. The LCP is meant to be a living document guiding the long- and short-term decisions of the town.



In its guidance documents on LCPs, the Cape Cod Commission (CCC) states: "It is through the LCP that each town defines its vision for how to plan for growth and change and protect shared resources on Cape Cod. In addition to articulating a vision and growth policy, the LCP is a source of information about existing and expected conditions within a town that will change over time as the values and expectations of the community evolve. Preparing and updating an LCP helps to ensure that Cape communities respond to changing needs in a sustainable manner. It can also serve as a guide and resource for elected officials, board members, and community residents for future decision making."

The creation of Harwich's 2025 LCP was informed by the goals and objectives in CCC's 2018 Regional Policy Plan, information obtained through significant public outreach, supporting plans and reports, and collaboration with town staff, boards, and committees. In particular, preparation of the Housing Production Plan (HPP) and the Open Space & Recreation Plan (OSRP) concurrent with the LCP has allowed coordination among all 3 plan updates and their goals, strategies and actions.

LCP Process

The Harwich Local Comprehensive Planning Committee (LCPC) was appointed by the Board of Selectmen in September 2022. Among the LCPC's initial goals was to develop priorities for a scope of work for a consultant to assist with preparing the LCP. The LCPC also conducted research on best practices in LCP development, including visioning processes used in other towns, a review of community engagement methods, and development of key subject areas and stakeholders that were identified as vital to the planning process.

2023

Upon engagement of a consultant in June 2023, the LCPC actively engaged stakeholders and the broader Harwich community using a variety of methods.

Summer 2023 visioning postcard survey - with over 300 responses.

Community survey – with over 1000 responses. Survey results are in Appendix A and B.

Promotional flyer used in tabling events such as the Cranberry Festival, Brooks Park and Cultural Center summer concerts.

LCP webpage on the Town's website.

QR code with a link to the postcard survey; postings on social media; and outreach to the Harwich Superintendent of Schools regarding availability of the survey.

2024

LCP visioning workshops held in March and April 2024.

Public outreach on the OSRP update included a second survey focused on open space and recreation needs and a public workshop held in June.

LCP Process

LCPC stakeholders, Boards and Committees incorporated

- Harwich Cultural Council
- Chamber of Commerce, Harwich Health Director/Board of Health
- Library Board
- East Harwich community organization regarding development issues in East Harwich
- Attendance at the Harwich Housing Huddle sponsored by Housing Alliance at The 204
- Attendance at the Harwich Housing Trust forum at Community Center
- Harwich Conservation Commission
- Harwich Energy Committee

HPP Workshop: Specific outreach on the HPP update included a well-attended workshop with town officials and other stakeholders on housing needs.

The LCPC also provided periodic updates on the LCP to the Selectboard and Planning Board and held a **joint meeting on a preliminary draft LCP** and its relationship to the HPP and OSRP in January 2025.

The LCP Committee holds a **public hearing on the final draft LCP** in 2026.

Future Steps

Following Town Meeting approval, the LCP will be sent to the CCC for certification that the LCP is consistent with the 2018 RPP. Once the CCC has certified our LCP, the benefits include:

- Priority consideration for planning and technical assistance from the CCC. The technical assistance covers a variety of topics and issues, and helps towns implement actions identified in the Targeted Action Plan in their LCP.
- The ability to enter into Development Agreements, provided Harwich adopts a Development Agreement Bylaw, and to assess impact fees pursuant to the Cape Cod Commission Act.

Town Meeting approval

CCC certification of the LCP

2025

Acknowledgements

Land Acknowledgement

The Town of Harwich is located on the traditional and ancestral lands of the Wampanoag people, specifically the Nauset Tribe. The Nauset Tribe has inhabited and cared for these lands for thousands of years. The Nauset Tribe and their descendants are honored as the past, present, and future stewards of this territory. The enduring relationship between the Nauset Tribe and their traditional homelands is recognized. The painful history of colonization and its impact on the Nauset people, including forced removal from their territories and the disruption of their traditional ways of life, is acknowledged. The voices and histories of Indigenous Peoples are committed to be uplifted, and working toward reconciliation and a more inclusive future is committed.

CCC Staff involvement

- CCC transportation staff provided traffic count data.



Section 2

VISION STATEMENT

THE VISION

A “vision” statement expresses the shared values of the community for future growth and development and resource protection and represents a growth policy for the community. The vision statement provides a growth policy that expresses the shared values of the community for future development and resource protection. It defines what the town is today and what the community wants and envisions it to be in the future.

The Town of Harwich adopted the following Vision Statement and Growth Policy:

Harwich’s Vision Statement

In 2050 Harwich is a vibrant and sustainable community that honors its natural beauty, historic charm and village character while meeting the needs of our residents for attainable housing to support economic and community growth. Our commitment to this vision is deeply rooted in the protection of water and natural resources, recognizing their intrinsic value to our community.

With a focus on social diversity, strong community values, cultural identity, and recreational appeal that contribute to Harwich’s unique identity, we prioritize preserving the tranquility and outdoor appeal that define our town’s ambiance, responding to concerns about climate change, and the impact of human development on our environment. In the face of change, our vision aspires to create a sustainable haven where diverse housing options, economic vitality, and the cherished essence of our community coexist harmoniously.

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GROWTH POLICY

Harwich's Growth Policy

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Growth in Harwich will be intentional, designed to meet identified needs such as housing for seniors, young families, and individuals of all types. We are dedicated to integrating new housing throughout our town. As we move forward, our work is to balance different needs and priorities, supporting both a thriving summer tourist economy and a year-round community.

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In the spirit of collaboration and transparency, the Harwich Growth Policy is designed to ensure an open and inclusive decision-making process. By carefully planning and coordinating growth, we aim to preserve our community's unique character, foster fiscal and environmental sustainability, and create a vibrant, diverse, and sustainable Harwich for present and future generations.

Section 3

EXISTING COMMUNITY ASSETS, ISSUES & NEEDS

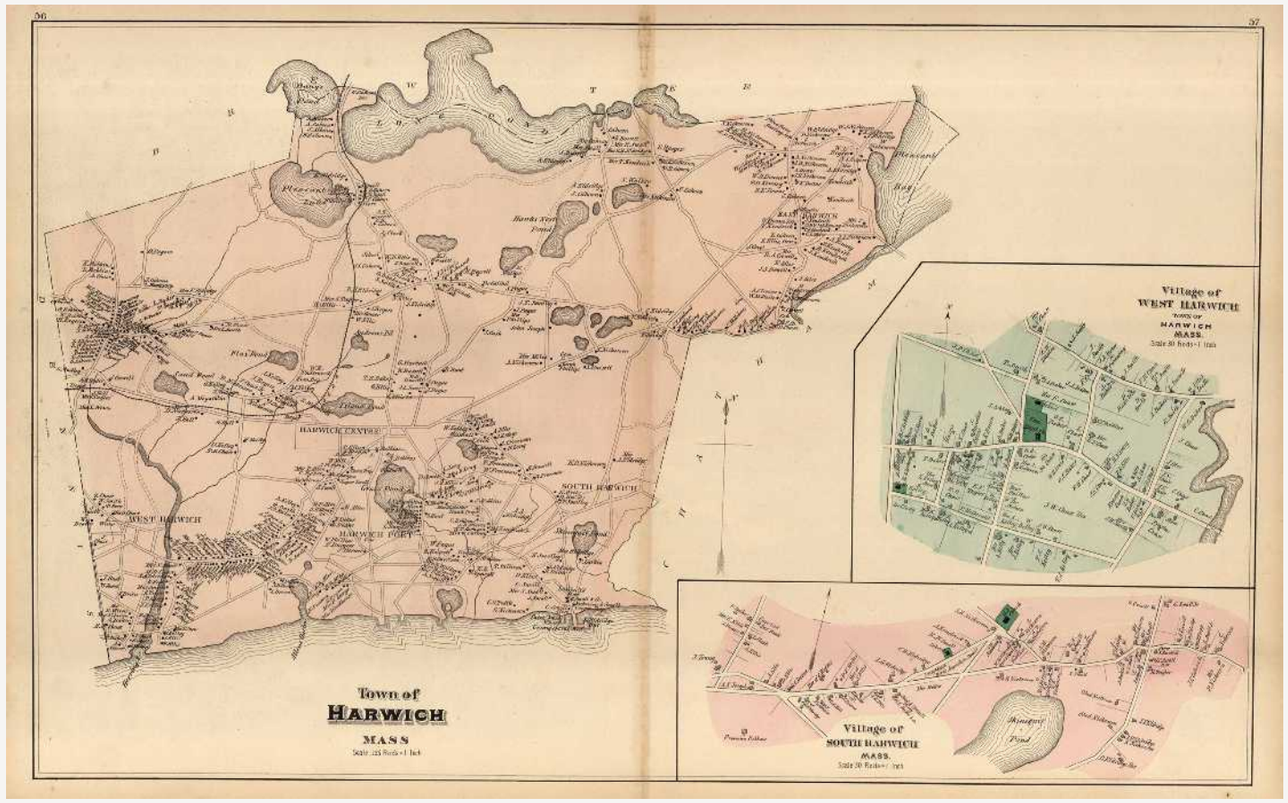
HARWICH TODAY

The Town of Harwich can be characterized as a small coastal community with an abundance of natural resources, rich historical connection to the sea with three harbors on Nantucket Sound; miles of coastal and freshwater shoreline; and, numerous freshwater ponds, reservoirs, scenic river corridors, and natural areas. The Town consists of seven villages, each with its unique historic and community character. The Town has largely retained its small-town character because of its vibrant citizens and through its efforts to protect open space and historic resources. In the LCP community survey, respondents identified their fellow townspeople and Harwich's coastal, small-town community charm as their top values for the Town. Harwich maintains its cultural connection to historic agricultural activities such as cranberry farming through community activities such as Cranberry Fest held during the fall. Harwich also has the Cape's largest exhibit dedicated to interpreting and presenting the history of cranberry culture on Cape Cod at the Harwich Historical Society Museum.

Historic Development Patterns

Evidence of settlement by indigenous peoples dates back 9000 years. The Nauset, Monomoick, and Wampanoag peoples subsisted on hunting, fishing and shellfishing, limited farming and gathering. Wild cranberries served as an important food source and a colorful dye. With the first European settlement of the Harwich area beginning with the "Purchasers or Old Comers" grant in 1641, settlement accelerated in 1665 with the development of larger scale farming leading to the domestication of the wild cranberry. Further development centered around marine industries and later, tourism. Today, to honor the importance of the cranberry in the 9000 years of settlement on Cape Cod, Harwich hosts an annual Cranberry Arts & Music Festival which has brought the community together since 1976.

In 1694, the Town of Harwich included the present-day Town of Brewster, known then as the North parish, which was separated from the South parish (Harwich) in 1803. Today, the town is comprised of seven villages including East Harwich, Harwich Center, Harwich Port, Pleasant Lake, West Harwich, North Harwich and South Harwich. North Harwich has the highest level of year-round occupancy, while Pleasant Lake, East Harwich and Harwich Center are also predominantly year-round villages. South Harwich, Harwich Port, and West Harwich neighborhoods include more density and seasonal housing. In the 1860's, as the whaling industry began to decline, Harwich's character became more residential and seasonal. Cranberry bogs continued operating while summer season resorts opened. Harwich's first resort hotel was established in 1880. Today, Harwich's resort businesses and cranberry operations continue to support the small-town setting and economy of Harwich, while maintaining many important historic buildings and natural surroundings.



Harwich Today

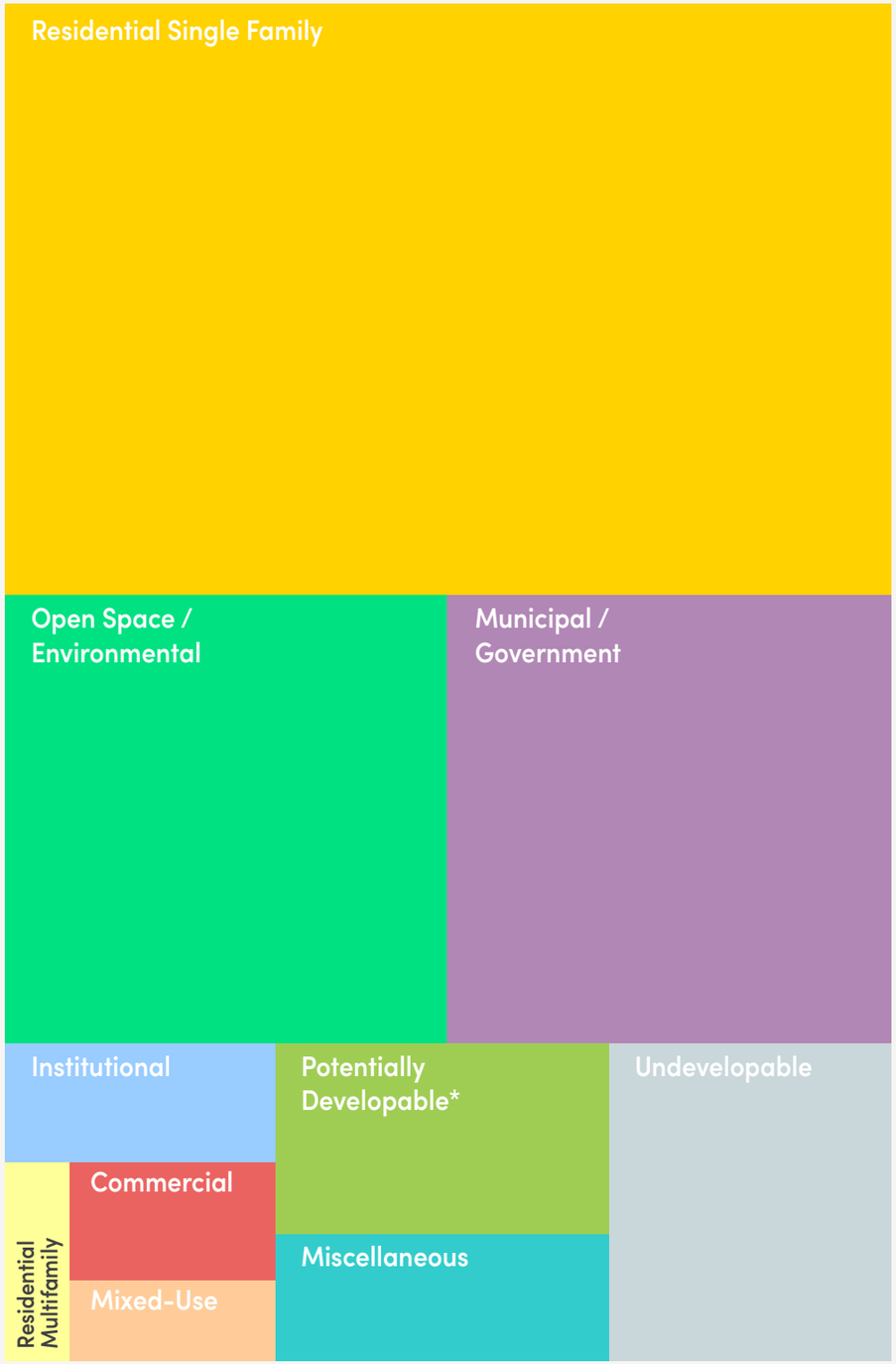
Existing Land Use

Based on current Harwich Assessor's data, almost half (41%) of the total land area in Harwich, +/-4,814 acres out of 11,619 acres total, is used for single-family residential purposes. The next largest land use category is Municipal/ Government at 15.6% followed by Environmental/Open Space at 15.5%. Multifamily residential, Commercial and Institutional land uses comprise the smallest percentage of land area in Town. **Only 5 percent of the Town's undeveloped land area is potentially developable under existing zoning.**

Table 3.1 | Land Use Categories

Land Use Category	Acreage	Percent
Residential Single Family	4,815	41%
Municipal/Government	1,807	15.6%
Open Space / Environmental	1,798	15.5%
Undevelopable	847	7%
Potentially Developable*	577	5%
Institutional	290	2.5%
Miscellaneous	384	3.3%
Commercial	221	1.9%
Mixed-Use	148	1.3%
Residential Multifamily	126	1%

**Assessor classification as potentially developable equates with buildable as determined by Building Commissioner/Zoning Enforcement Officer.*



Harwich Landuse Map

Harwich Today

Existing Zoning

The Harwich Zoning Bylaw includes the following districts:

Residential
- Rural Estate (R-R)
- Low Density (R-L)
- Medium Density (R-M)
- High Density 1 (R-H-1)
- High Density 2 (R-H-2)
- High Density 3 (R-H-3)

Multi – Family Residential
- Low Density (M-R-L)
- Low Density 1 (M-R-L-1)

Commercial
- Village (C-V)
- Highway 1 (C-H-1)
- Highway 2 (C-H-2)

Industrial
- Limited (I-L)

Harwich also has **six zoning overlay districts**, including:

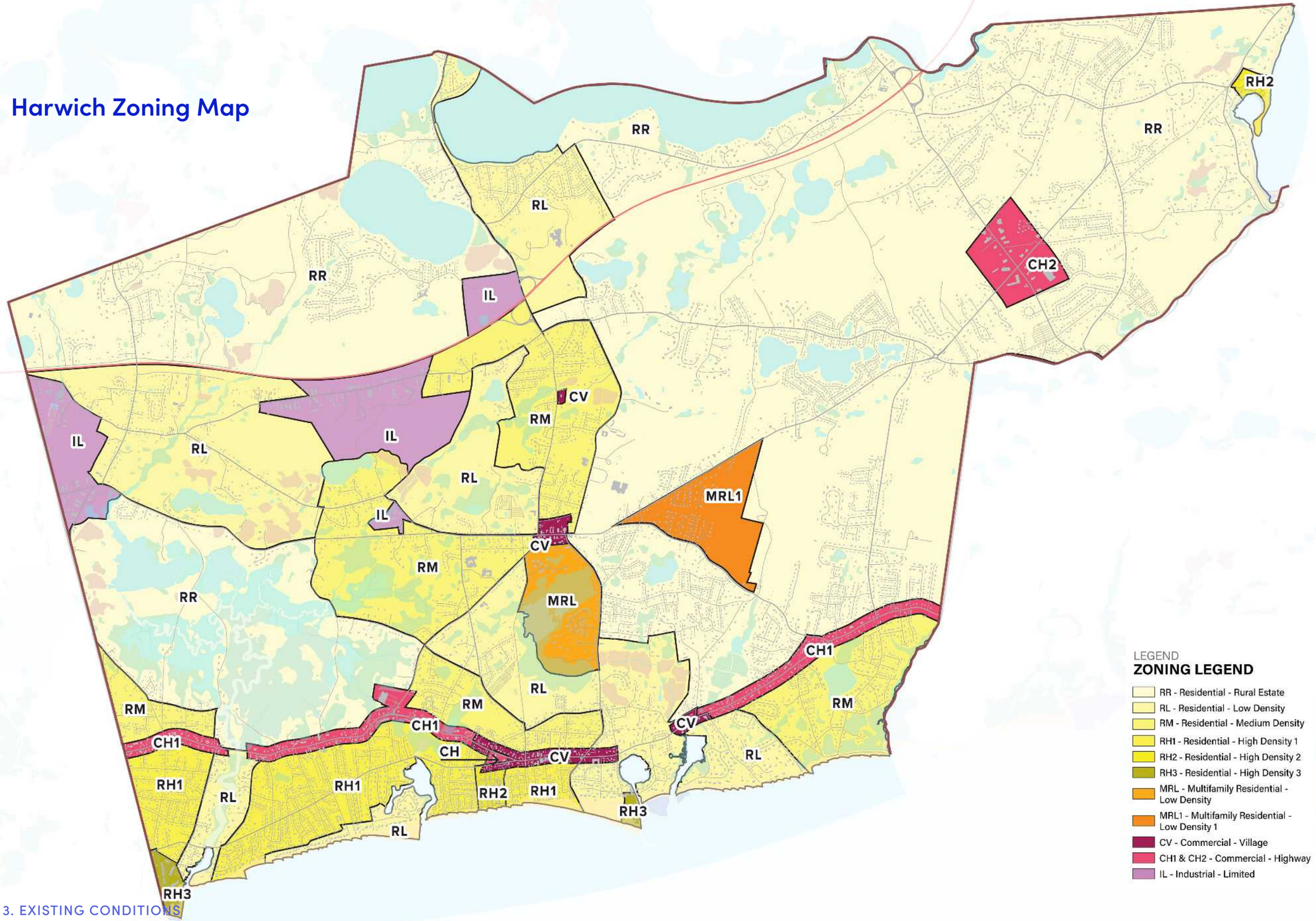
Zoning Overlay Districts
- Village Commercial Overlay District
- Harwich Center Overlay District
- Personal Wireless Service Overlay District (P-W-S)
- Elderly Affordable Housing (E-A-H)
- Drinking Water Resource Protection District (W-R)
- Six Ponds Special District.

Commercial and industrial districts allow a variety of uses related to public and quasi-public, agricultural, and commercial uses. Accessory buildings (residential, without bedrooms) are permitted by right and accessory buildings (residential, with bedrooms) are permitted with a Special Permit in all residential districts. The Industrial (I-L) district permits manufacturing, offices, storage, home occupation, trailer, houseboat or boat storage, religious use, educational use, institutional use, municipal use, nursing homes, or agricultural use. The zoning bylaw also allows mixed-use development by special permit in the CV, CH-1, CH-2 and WR zoning districts.

The overlay districts include specific regulations and requirements to protect environmentally sensitive areas, promote housing for seniors, and control commercial development in village centers. **Of the six overlay districts, the Drinking Water Protection District and Six Ponds Special District are significant for purposes of water resource protection.** These Overlay Districts allow the Town to better control and direct development away from these areas. Since May 1988, the minimum required area for single-family purposes anywhere in Town became 40,000 square feet based on a finding that one unit per acre was the maximum acceptable density to protect the drinking water supply. The minimum required frontage became 150 feet. However, this low single-family residential housing density has severely constrained the construction of affordable and attainable housing, and given market forces, has incentivized construction of seasonal homes, with much debate in the community.

Cluster residential development is intended to allow flexibility in lot sizes and building arrangements for single-family dwellings. Open space residential development is synonymous with the concept of 'cluster' development, which promotes a "smarter" and more compact type of development patterns as units and structures are built in a cluster, sensitive to the natural resources of the site, rather than the conventional grid pattern. **Implementation of the Town's Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan (CWMP) may provide for areas where higher density housing can be achieved.**

Harwich Zoning Map

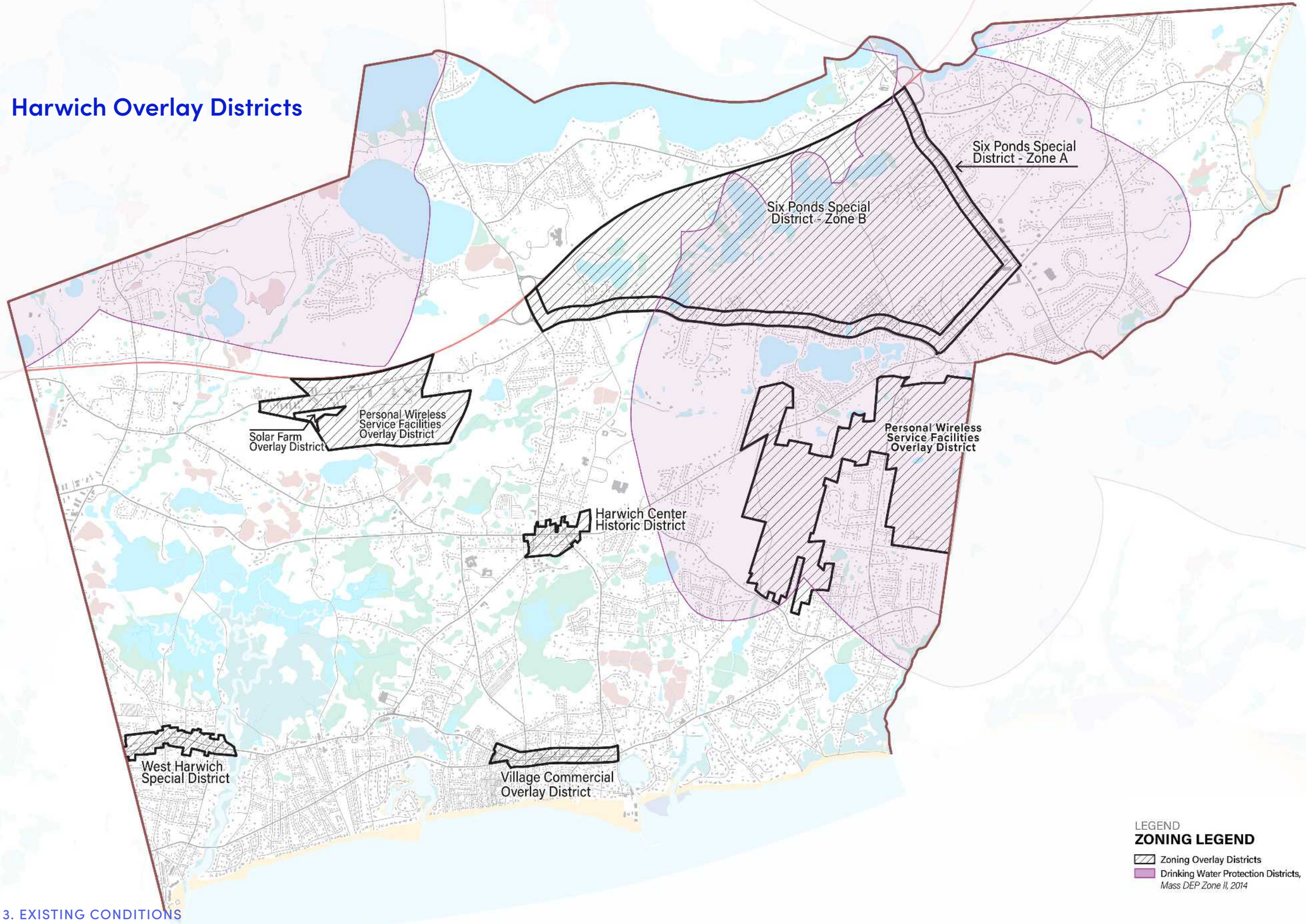


LEGEND

ZONING LEGEND

- RR - Residential - Rural Estate
- RL - Residential - Low Density
- RM - Residential - Medium Density
- RH1 - Residential - High Density 1
- RH2 - Residential - High Density 2
- RH3 - Residential - High Density 3
- MRL - Multifamily Residential - Low Density
- MRL1 - Multifamily Residential - Low Density 1
- CV - Commercial - Village
- CH1 & CH2 - Commercial - Highway
- IL - Industrial - Limited

Harwich Overlay Districts



Report on Trends

Population

Harwich experienced rapid population growth between 1960 (3,725 persons) and 2000 (12,386 persons) according to the US Decennial Census data. The rate of growth slowed from a 58% increase in population between 1960 and 1970 to a 21% increase between 1990 and 2000, and then has been fairly level since 2000. According to the Town's website, the Town's current population is approximately 12,677 persons.

In the summer months Harwich's resident population doubles in size, putting enormous pressure on Town services and the permanent population. It is no surprise that Harwich is experiencing substantial year-round housing pressure. **About 44% of the town's housing stock is comprised of seasonal or occasional residences, up from 38% in 2000, and higher than 37.2% for the Cape as a whole and 4.3% statewide.**

Seasonal residents have bolstered the local economy with employment increasingly focused on servicing these residents. The increase in seasonal population places stress not only on the Town's natural resources and recreation facilities, but also on its infrastructure.

Today, the Town's resources for absorbing growth are limited given significant physical and environmental constraints. Harwich currently has limited sewer infrastructure, making denser development more costly and difficult; however, the Town is in the process of implementing its Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan (CWMP) with the first phase completed in East Harwich. Local zoning allows multi-family housing development by special permit in all zoning districts except the CH-2 and IL districts.

Population Projections

According to the 2024 Harwich Housing Production Plan, population projections for the Town of Harwich from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) estimate that Harwich's population will increase to 13,445 by 2030, a 9.8% increase from the 2010 census count of 12,243 residents. On the other hand, the State Data Center at the University of Massachusetts' Donahue Institute calculates population losses to 11,679 by 2030, representing a 4.6% population decrease since 2010.

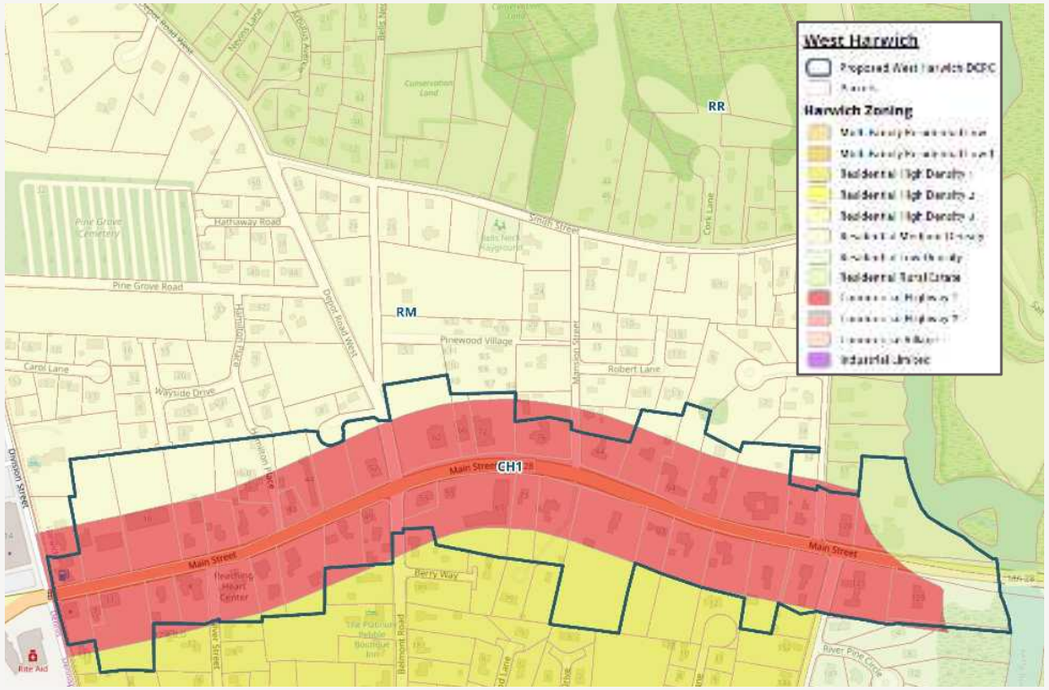
There have been significant losses of younger residents with those under 20 years of age decreasing from 19.9% to 17.7% of all residents between 2000 and 2014 compared to a smaller loss in Barnstable County and percentage gains statewide.

On the other hand, those 55 to 64 years of age or older increased at relatively the same rate as the County and significantly higher than the state. While the 2014 census estimates suggest some decline of those 65 years of age or older, Harwich's level at 27.7% of all residents is still higher than the 26.4% level for the County and almost twice that of the Commonwealth. MAPC population projections suggest a continuation of these trends with children under age 20 down to 3.7% and those 65 and older up to 42% of all residents by 2030.

Report on Trends

Land Use and Development

The number of new subdivisions and single-family dwellings increased dramatically during the COVID-19 pandemic. A few large tracts of undeveloped land remain in North Harwich and the Six Ponds Special District that is bounded by Route 6, Route 124 and Route 137 and by Queen Anne Road. There has been considerable redevelopment activity in proximity to Nantucket Sound, with smaller homes demolished and larger houses built. Overdevelopment was cited as the top concern (36.6%) among respondents to the LCP community survey with population pressures cited as one of the largest concerns in early postcard outreach conducted for the LCP update.



Recent Actions by the Town

In 2019 the West Harwich District of Critical Planning Concern (DCPC) was designated by Barnstable County regional government. The district consists of approximately 43 acres of land located entirely within the Town of Harwich, Village of West Harwich, and parcels in the existing Commercial Highway (CH-1) zoning district. The purpose of the designation is to develop implementing regulations (i.e. zoning) to protect historic resources, community character, and transportation safety as well as the balanced economic development goals desired by the community.

The West Harwich DCPC is the second such designated area by the Town. The first was the Six Ponds District designated in 2000 to protect the water and natural resources and to manage growth over more than 1,200 acres of land and 110 acres of water in northeastern Harwich. These efforts demonstrate a strong collaboration between local and regional efforts to balance growth and development with resource protection.

In 2023, the Town amended the Accessory Apartment Bylaw (ATM 2023 – Article 37) to allow accessory residential uses by right in all zoning districts except the CH-2 and IL districts.

The zoning amendment removed minimum lot area requirements and simplified permitting requirements to increase the number of small dwelling units available for rent, increase the range of housing choices, and encourage an economic use of the Town's housing supply while maintaining the appearance and character of residential neighborhoods.

The intent of the amendment is to provide an alternative to large single-family homes that are more accessible to local wage earners and increase the housing supply. (Insert number of units constructed, if available)

The Town also adopted Floodplain Regulations in 2014 as an overlay district that includes all special flood hazard areas within the Town defined by the 1 percent chance base flood elevations shown on the Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) dated July 16, 2014. The purpose of the Floodplain Regulations is to promote flood resiliency through planning and design; reduce the creation of new public safety hazards caused by new construction and redevelopment in flood zones; and, reducing damage to public and private property resulting from flooding waters, among other stated purposes. In 2023, the Town amended its Floodplain District zoning overlay to be consistent with FEMA's requirements for communities that are a member of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

Report on Trends

Key Issues Moving Forward

Development within the Town is governed by zoning and other regulatory tools that enable the Town to make informed decisions on residential, commercial, municipal, and environmental protection projects.

The Town has adopted a Housing Production Plan (HPP) and an update to its 2017 Open Space and Recreation Plan in conjunction with this LCP update that identifies housing production goals and strategies for smarter housing development as well as priorities for future open space acquisitions and improvements to existing open space.

The Town will need to evaluate policies and zoning bylaws to support the development of additional housing while also ensuring protection of environmental resources.

Despite a rising housing crisis across Cape Cod, the Town's zoning is predominantly single-family residential, which limits the variety of housing options accessible to a range of incomes. In addition, while mixed-use is allowed by special permit in the CV, CH-1, and CH-2 zoning districts, multifamily development is not permitted in the CH-2 district. The Town should examine the conflict between these two provisions in the zoning bylaw as well as other zoning bylaw amendments to allow a greater density and range of housing types in appropriate locations to achieve the goals of the HPP. As discussed in the Natural Resources section, Phase 2 of the Town's CWMP is currently being implemented. Phase 2 included the purchase of wastewater treatment capacity at the Water Pollution Control Facility in neighboring Chatham. In 2023, voters approved $50 million dollars to expand the wastewater collection system in East Harwich. Construction of sewers could provide additional opportunities for housing development provided that zoning supports such development.

The Town implemented specific land use controls to minimize the impacts of future development on natural resources and protect the character of the community through the Six Ponds and West Harwich DCPCs. A resource management plan for the Six Ponds DCPC still needs to be developed, and further refinements in the regulations may be needed to ensure that the Special District is effective.

The sections below provide an overview of Town characteristics, existing key assets, issues and needs organized by Natural Environment, Built Environment, and Community Networks.

EXISTING COMMUNITY ASSETS, ISSUES AND NEEDS

Natural Environment

Water Resources
- Marine and Ocean Resources
- Groundwater
- Lakes and Ponds
- Wetlands

Wildlife and Plant Habitat

Open Space & Conservation Lands

Recent Actions by the Town
- Marine Water Quality
- Pond Water Quality

Built Environment

Community Design
- Background
- Current Built Environment
- Village Character
- Site Plan Review
- Architectural Review
- Development Trends

Coastal Resiliency
- Background
- Current Trends

Community Facilities
- Background
- Town Facilities
- Community Facilities
- Non-Profit & Religious Orgs

Waste Management

Water Supply

Recreational Facilities
- Analysis of Community
- Facility Needs

Transportation
- Background
- Roadways
- Traffic Count Data

Energy
- Background
- Recent Trends

Community Networks

Cultural Heritage

Local Economy
- Background
- Regional Economy
- Local Economy
- Local Demographics

Housing
- Background
- Population and Household Trends
- Housing and Market Affordability
- Priority Affordable Housing Needs
- Regulatory Barriers and Challenges
- Community Perceptions

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Background

Harwich is home to a wide variety of nature that contributes to its charm and character. The natural environment and open space were some of the highest-ranked values among respondents to the 2024 LCP community survey. The Town's natural beauty, recreational opportunities including hiking, biking and walking, and proximity to a variety of natural resources were also common themes from early postcard outreach conducted as part of the LCP update.

In addition to the value of nature to the community, natural resources play a key role in the community's ability to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change.

Climate change is a key challenge facing every Cape Cod community. Cape Cod is vulnerable to many climate-related hazards such as sea level rise, storm surge and flooding, erosion, damaging winds, elevated summer temperatures, and wildfire. Harwich's natural resources can play an important role in helping the Town become more resilient to climate related stressors and impacts, making their protection, preservation, and enhancement a priority.

Natural Environment

Water Resources
- Marine and Ocean Resources
- Groundwater
- Lakes and Ponds
- Wetlands

Wildlife and Plant Habitat

Open Space & Conservation Lands

Recent Actions by the Town
- Marine Water Quality
- Pond Water Quality



View of Herring River, West Harwich

Water Resources

Marine and Ocean Resources

As a coastal community, Harwich is home to various marine and ocean resources, including estuaries, embayments, and harbors of which the town has five, three, and four respectively.

An important resource to residents and visitors alike, Harwich is home to 14 public saltwater beaches and numerous private beaches. The town has approximately 11 miles of tidal shoreline along Nantucket Sound and Pleasant Bay.

The town has five estuaries: Herring River, Red River, Allen Harbor, Saquatucket Harbor, and Muddy Creek (Monomoy River). The Herring River watershed is also partially located in Brewster and contains the approximately 7-mile Herring River which flows from Long Pond to Nantucket Sound. According to the 208 Area Wide Water Quality Management Plan watershed report for the entire watershed (including Brewster and Dennis), the Herring River watershed contains 9,135 acres of land and 23 ponds. The Herring River was included in the 2001 Massachusetts Estuaries Project which indicated that the river system historically experienced water quality issues such as exceeding its critical threshold for nitrogen – a problem found across the Cape and within Harwich's five key watersheds.

The Herring River, Allen Harbor, Wychmere Harbor, Saquatucket Harbor, and Pleasant Bay (the largest) watersheds were all identified in the town's 2016 Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan (CWMP) as requiring mitigation to decrease nitrogen loading to meet thresholds for water quality.

All of the harbors in Harwich are valuable components of the Town's history and economy. The harbors support many fishing boats, charter boats, ferry service, harbor cruises, and space for recreational boating. Of the four harbors, Allen, Saquatucket, Round Cove, and Wychmere, Round Cove is the only naturally occurring harbor. Round Cove is located off Pleasant Bay. Wychmere, Allen, and Saquatucket harbors were dredged to provide protection for sea vessels along the southern coastline. Harwich shares shoreline and watershed area with Orleans, Brewster and Chatham within Pleasant



Water Resources

Marine and Ocean Resources

Bay, a State designated Area of Environmental Concern (ACEC) and a productive resource for finfish and shellfish.

The Herring River, Red River, and Saquatucket Harbor are all considered critical salt marsh habitats in the Draft 2024 Open Space and Recreation Plan update. Critical habitats are identified in the Cape Cod Critical Habitats Atlas (1990). These marshes are key to protecting shellfish and fisheries and also provide storm damage prevention and flood control townwide. Salt marshes generally support a wide array of wildlife such as shore and songbirds, aquatic life, and smaller mammals. Species that can be found in salt marshes include rare and protected species such as the Least Tern, River Herring, and Diamondback Terrapin.

Cape Cod's coastal waters are particularly susceptible to nitrogen loading from existing wastewater discharges from septic systems, landscaping practices, and stormwater run-off. Failed septic systems may also result in elevated bacterial counts. Harwich's ocean resources provide important habitat for coastal wildlife, recreation opportunities, commerce, and are valuable aesthetic assets to the Town's character. The protection and conservation of these resources is paramount to both the Town and the region.

Groundwater

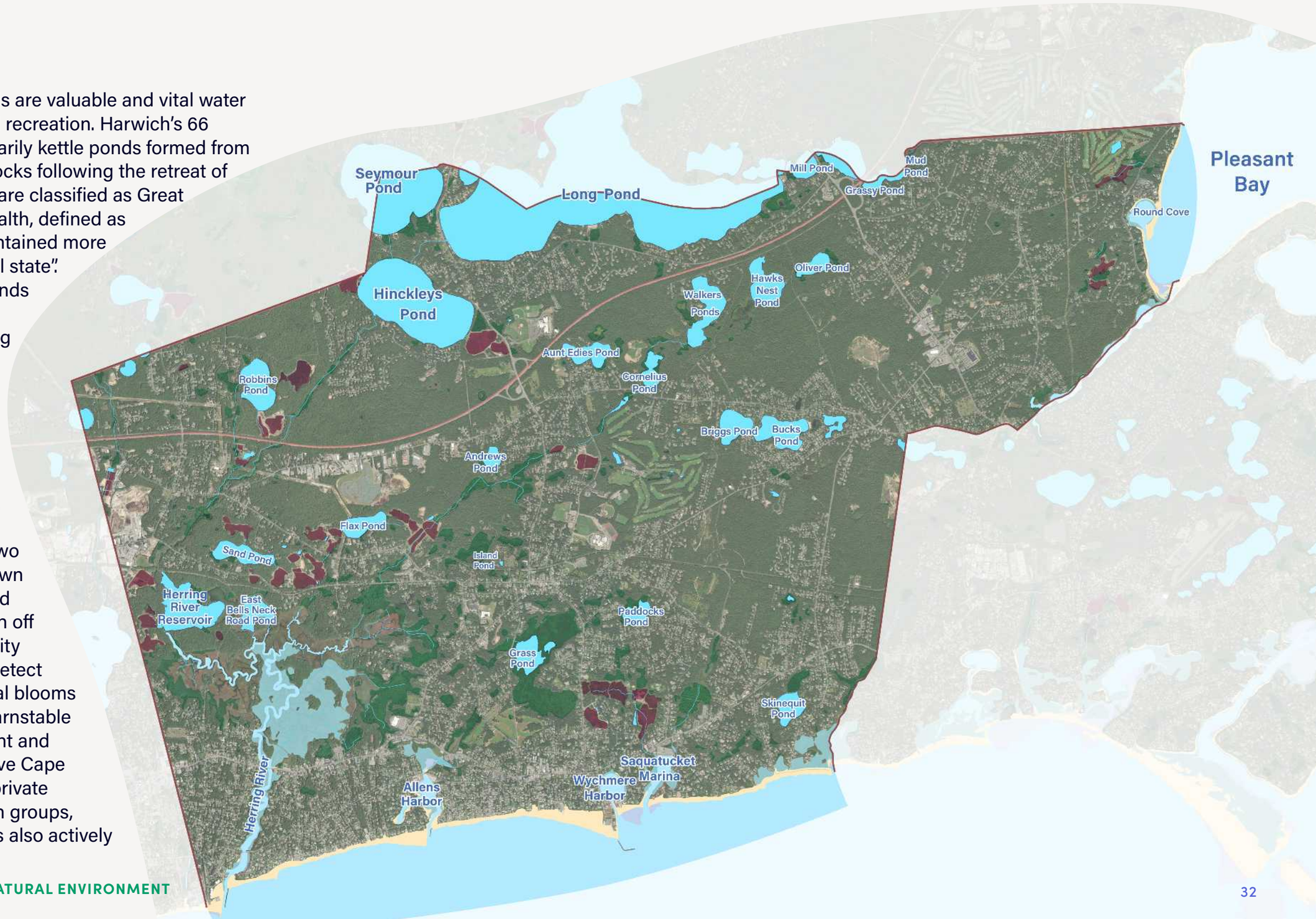
The Town of Harwich relies on groundwater from the Monomoy Lens as its primary source of drinking water. This lens is one of six that together form the Cape Cod Aquifer, a federally designated sole source aquifer. Groundwater is extracted from 14 gravel-packed wells located in South, East, and North Harwich, all of which are protected by state and local regulations due to their designation as Zone II Wellhead Protection areas. These 14 wells are distributed across five well fields. The Chatham Road well field consists of seven wells, treated onsite and filtered at the Bruce Cahoon Water Treatment Plant on Depot Road. The Depot Road well field contains three wells treated onsite, the Bay Road well field has two wells treated onsite, and both the Pleasant Bay Road and North Westgate Road well fields each have one well, treated onsite. The Town operates two water treatment plants to remove iron and manganese, which naturally occur in the soil on Cape Cod.

The 2023 Annual Town Report shows that the Water and Wastewater Department operation consists of approximately 400 acres of well fields/watershed protection areas, 5 corrosion control facilities, 2 elevated and 1 ground level water storage tanks, 2 Greensand filtration Water Treatment facilities which provide service to 10,187 metered accounts, 131 fire sprinkler accounts, and 1,397 fire hydrants. According to the town's Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan (CWMP), approximately 7% or 250 properties use private onsite wells, while the rest of Town is dependent on Town water supply. In 2023, the Water Department pumped 800,371,746 gallons of water from the wellfields in Town which is an increase of 114 million gallons from 2022. Most of the water was withdrawn from the Chatham Road and Depot Road wells. The influx of seasonal residents and vacationers to Cape Cod during the summer months increases the daily the volume of water pumped from approximately 1 million gallons per day (MGD) in the winter season to around 5 MGD in the summer. The Town's proximity to the coast as well as its dependence on the Monomoy Groundwater Lens for drinking water make water quality and natural resource protection a priority.

Water Resources

Lakes and Ponds

Harwich's lakes and ponds are valuable and vital water resources for tourism and recreation. Harwich's 66 ponds and lakes are primarily kettle ponds formed from depressions left by ice blocks following the retreat of the glaciers. Of these, 23 are classified as Great Ponds of the Commonwealth, defined as "any pond or lake that contained more than 10 acres in its natural state". Several of these Great Ponds are shared with adjacent communities such as Long Pond, which is divided between Harwich and Brewster. Long Pond is the largest of the Great Ponds at 743 acres and is the largest freshwater Great Pond on Cape Cod. Long Pond has several access points including two boat ramps, one at the Town Beach off Long Pond Road and the other at the beach off Cahoon Road. Water quality monitoring programs to detect harmful bacterial and algal blooms are conducted by both Barnstable County Health Department and the Association to Preserve Cape Cod, respectively. Some private Homeowner's Association groups, such as Great Sand Lakes also actively



Water Resources

Lakes and Ponds

monitor water quality. These efforts, combined with public education and awareness campaigns, are vital to ensuring continued public health and safety in a future where climate change is expected to impact these resources.

According to the Cape Cod Commission's online pond viewer, 37 of Harwich's ponds are named ponds. The newly formed Harwich Ponds Coalition hosts a list of Harwich ponds on its website: *https://www.harwichwaters.org/list-of-harwich-ponds/*. The Ponds Coalition intends to expand its pond information content with mapping and detailed pond profiles.

The Six Ponds District of Critical Planning Concern (DCPC), which was designated by Barnstable County in 2000, includes Aunt Edie's, Black, Cornelius, Hawksnest, Olivers, and Walkers Ponds. The area covers 114 acres of pond surface, 5 miles of pond shore, and 400 acres of conservation land. The goal of the DCPC is to protect these ponds and other critical natural resources and manage growth in the area. Of these ponds, all but Black Pond are considered Great Ponds.

Wetlands

Based on MassDEP wetlands data, approximately 18% of Harwich's total land area of land area is wetlands greater than ¼-acre in size (2,650 acres). There are additional wetlands less ¼ acre in size; however, the acreage of these smaller wetlands has not been quantified. Approximately 805 acres of the 2,650 acres contain saltwater wetlands – primarily in the Herring River and Red River marsh systems. Both fresh water and saltwater wetlands are important resources that help maintain water quality, protect against flood hazards, and provide important habitat for a broad range of wildlife. Wetland ecosystems include Coastal Plain Ponds, White Cedar Swamps, Vernal Pools, and Salt Marshes – all of which provide specialized environmental value and are considered critical habitats that are susceptible to environmental and human impacts such as climate change and development. Cranberry bogs, a unique asset to Harwich's industry, are, by definition, wetlands. However, they are composed of artificially established vegetation for agricultural purposes.

One of the region's important natural resources is our natural wetlands, which harbor a



Credit: Zillow



Ponds included in Six Ponds DCPC

Water Resources

Wetlands

diversity of plants and animals. Healthy wetlands help buffer coastal communities from storm surges, absorb flood waters after heavy rainfall, provide wildlife habitat, help improve water quality and bolster resilience to climate change.

However, over the last 250 years, more than 28% of wetlands have been lost to development in Massachusetts.

Harwich is home to two scenic river corridors – the Herring River and Muddy Creek. These areas offer significant value, both ecologically and recreationally. The Herring River bisects the Bells Neck Conservation area which includes over 320 acres of forests, water, and wetlands. Within Bells Neck, located south of Great Western Road, is the West Reservoir and East Reservoir. The Bells Neck conservation area, in which the town began acquiring land in 1966, plays a key role in protecting the Herring River, as cited in the Bells Neck Land Management Plan.

The Muddy Creek Headwaters Preserve, a 17-acre parcel owned by the Harwich Conservation Trust, serves a similar goal to Bells Neck in preserving the 1,400 feet of shoreline on Muddy Creek within its boundaries. Muddy Creek is located along the boundary of Chatham and Harwich and is approximately 1.5 miles long running from Queen Anne Road in Chatham to its mouth in Pleasant Bay. Muddy Creek is also part of the Pleasant Bay ACEC.



Credit: Alex Hackman

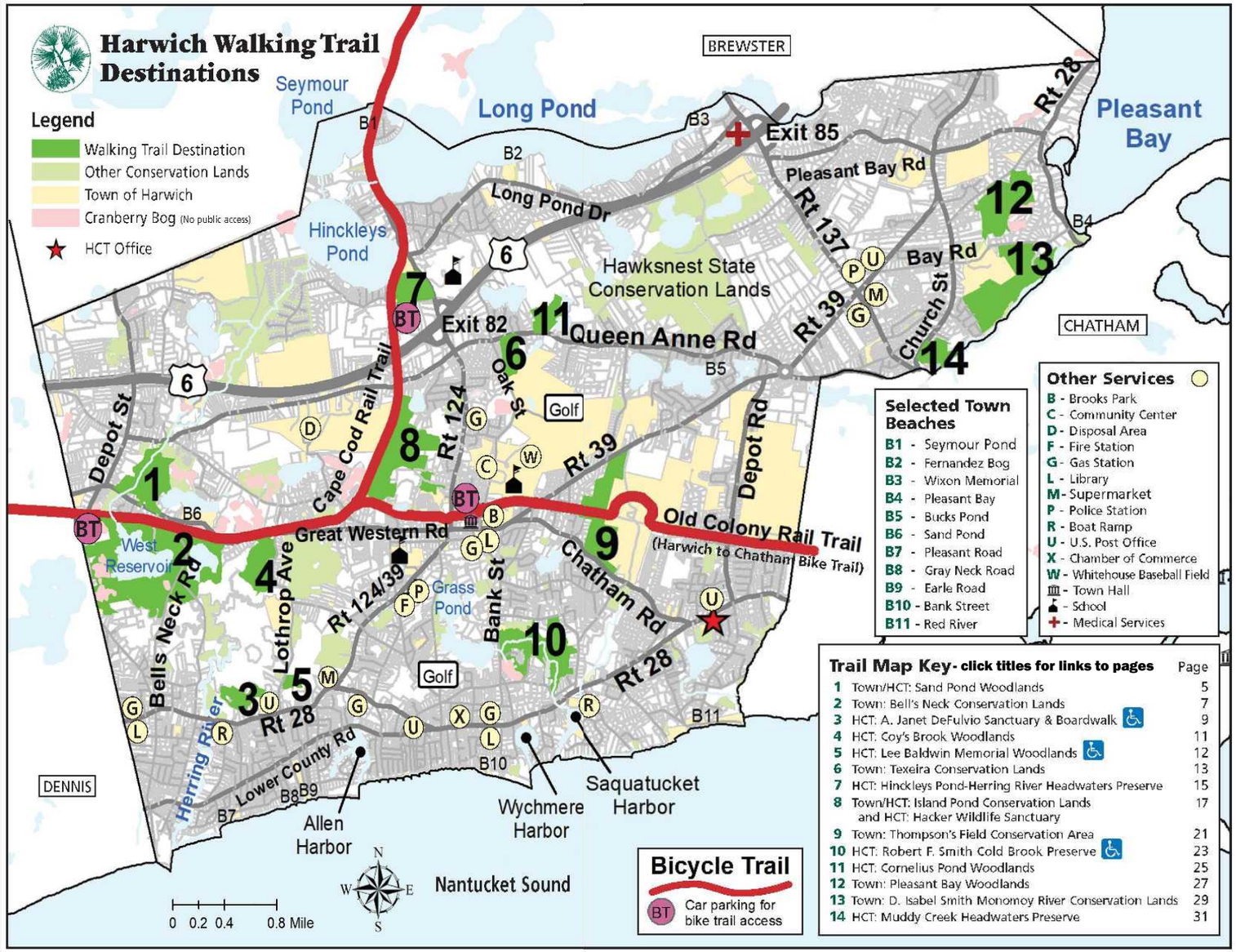


Long Pond

Wildlife and Plant Habitat

The abundance of both wildlife and plant species in Harwich and across the Cape contribute to the area's unique ecological value. Two major wildlife corridors in Harwich are the Bells Neck and Coy's Brook areas in West Harwich. Other important wildlife corridors include land in North Harwich connecting to the Punkhorn Parklands in Brewster, the Six Ponds Special District (including Hawksnest State Park), Thompson's Field and the adjoining Town Water Department lands, and the Monomoy River corridor leading to Pleasant Bay. These areas provide a wide variety of wildlife and plant habitats.

Habitats such as the Atlantic White Cedar swamp, notably at Coy's Brook Woodland (#4 on the map), are home to native trees including Red Maple, Pitch and White Pine. The swamp supports nesting birds, mammals, and provide breeding habitat for amphibians. Salt marsh habitats are key in protecting shellfish and fisheries and also support a wide array of wildlife. These include the rare and protected Northern Harrier, River Herring, and Diamondback Terrapin. Salt marshes provide nursing grounds for vital aquatic species such as White Shrimp, Blue Crab, Redfish, and Flounder. Saltwater habitat variation is, in part, defined by the vegetation present. Low marsh and high marsh are defined by the presence and location of coarse, broad-leafed salt marsh cord grass and salt meadow grass. Where high marsh meets upland vegetation, plant species such as goldenrod, blackrush, marsh elder, groundsel brush, and panic grass are commonly present.



Harwich Conservation Trust walking trail map

Wildlife and Plant Habitat

Hawksnest State Park provides essential habitat for box turtles, painted turtles, black racer snakes, and common mammals such as coyotes and star nosed mole. Bells Neck conservation area reports sightings of ospreys and black-crowned night heron in the spring and summer as well as herring swimming upstream along the herring ladder each April.

Harwich has four native diadromous fish species: Atlantic Tomcod, Atlantic Eel, Alewife, and White Perch. Diadromous fish runs in Harwich are located in the Herring River in West Harwich, Cold Brook in Harwich Port, Andrews River in Harwich Port/South Harwich, Red River in South Harwich, and Muddy Creek in East Harwich.

The temperate environment and soil types in Harwich support several plant communities, some common only to Sandplains, such as kettle pond shore vegetation with many rare species, sandplain grasslands, specialized communities of white cedar swamp, dunes, and pine-oak forests. Harwich also supports plant communities associated only with salt water, salt marshes and eel grass communities. The natural vegetated areas play an important role in preserving the rural character of Harwich. In addition, these areas provide habitat for wildlife and serve as water supply and recharge areas for the town. Oak Woodlands and pitch pine forests are the dominant woody vegetation in town. Under story vegetation is generally comprised of shrubby vegetation such as black huckleberry and low bush blueberry.

The Harwich Conservation Department, with assistance from the Harwich Conservation Trust, AmeriCorps Cape Cod, Harwich Natural Resources Department, and the Harwich Department of Public Works, have made several efforts to restore rare sandplain grassland/heathland field habitat. This habitat type is a globally rare type that dominated much of Harwich and other Cape towns after much of the land was cleared. Through these partnerships, Thompson's Field Conservation Area and Muddy Creek Headwaters are two properties that the Harwich Conservation Department has focused on to maintain and expand the existing sandplain grassland/heathland habitat. Maintaining these areas provides diverse habitat for small mammals, birds, and insects that would not otherwise be found in forested areas.

With continued development, some habitats have ceased to function for species such as deer, pheasant, fox, and coyote. Roads and development continue to create challenges when it comes to linking existing wildlife areas. Development is the largest threat to wildlife and plant habitats. These species can still be seen within developed areas in search of food and breeding grounds and several large tracts of undeveloped land do exist which support an abundance of species such as the Town Forest, well fields, Hawksnest State Park, and Herring River marsh. Though fragmentation created by development creates challenges for wildlife, Harwich remains a vibrant habitat for a host of wildlife and plant species.



Harwich pond habitat

Open Space & Conservation Lands

Previous iterations of the Town's Local Comprehensive and Open Space and Recreation Plans (OSRP) focused heavily on land acquisition to bolster Town open space. As a result of these successful efforts, later versions of these plans include a focus on land management to maintain and protect the acquired lands, in addition to pursuing new acquisitions.

Based on the 2025-2035 OSRP, Harwich has approximately 3,351 acres of town-owned land and other protected or unprotected open space which accounts for approximately 21.8% of the total land area in town. Unprotected open space includes agricultural lands (232 acres), forest land and private recreation lands (133 acres) which are managed by public and private agencies and individuals, such as the Island Ponds Conservation Lands.

In addition to public and unprotected open space, Harwich includes land managed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This land accounts for approximately 296 acres in East Harwich including Hawksnest State Park. The Harwich Conservation Commission controls or holds a conservation restriction on 211 parcels totaling 1,053 acres. The Harwich Conservation Trust holds 163 parcels totaling approximately 882 acres.

The Harwich Conservation Trust (HCT) continues to spearhead and support initiatives for further property acquisition. The HCT's website details three recent acquisitions:

- In 2023, the HCT purchased 85 acres of the Six Ponds Great Woods property to further protect the DCPC area.
- HCT supported the Town's passage of Article 24 at the 2023 Annual Town Meeting to appropriate funds to preserve 2.87 acres in the Herring River watershed on Bells Neck Road.
- In early 2024, the HCT raised $4.25 million for the purchase of 12.34 acres in the Red River Valley. This acquisition will create the Red River Valley Preserve, a portion of which will serve as expanded HCT office space and the site of a new learning center. Additional anonymous donations were received for this project that will fund the creation of public parking, trailhead access, and electric vehicle parking stations.

Examples of HCT projects over the last decade include Pleasant Bay Woodlands, Muddy Creek Headwaters Preserve, Cornelius Pond Woodlands, Six Ponds Great Woods Preserve, Sand Pond Woodlands, Bell's Neck Road-Herring River Watershed Project, Red River Valley Preserve, and the Cape Cod Rail Trail Land Project.

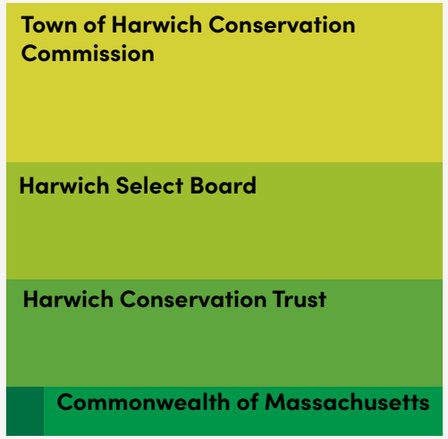
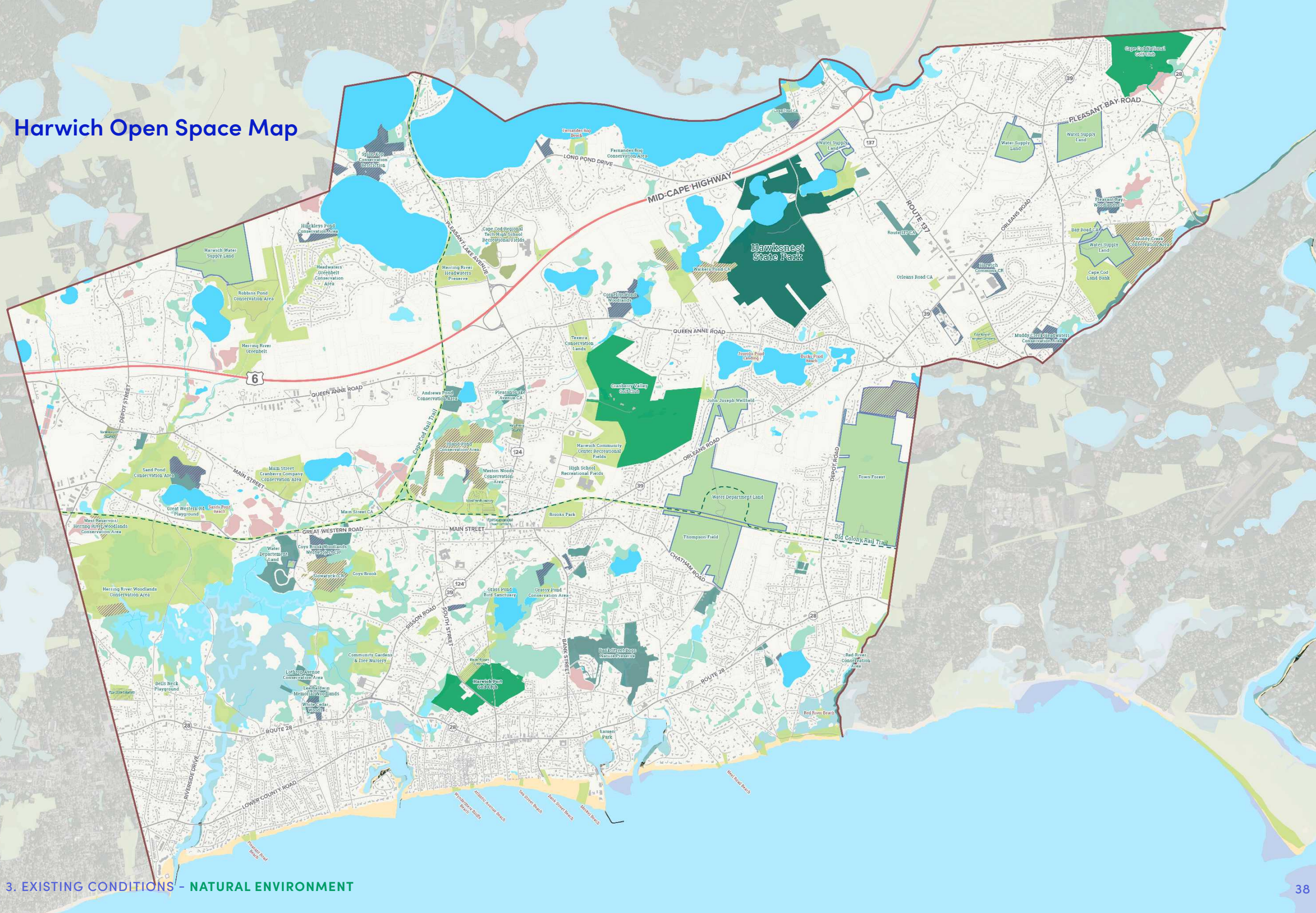


Table 3.2 | Open Space Ownership

Owner	Parcels	Acreage
Town of Harwich Conservation Commission	211 parcels	1,053 acres
Town of Harwich Select Board	234 parcels	777 acres
Harwich Conservation Trust	163 parcels	882 acres
Commonwealth of Massachusetts	38 parcels	296 acres
Town of Harwich Parks & Recreation	4 parcels	28 acres

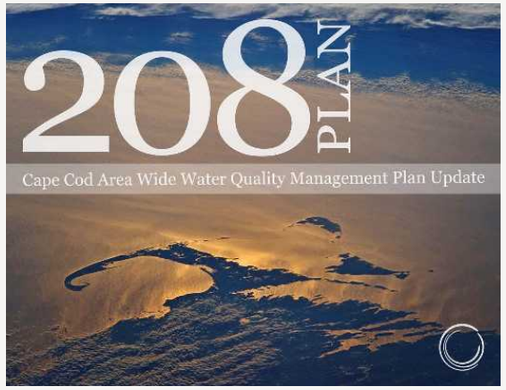
Harwich Open Space Map



Recent Actions by the Town

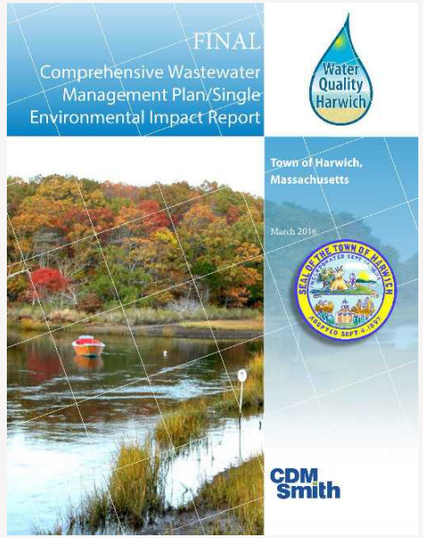
Marine Water Quality

Contaminants such as nitrogen and phosphorus are impacting coastal water quality. The 208 Cape Cod Area Wide Water Quality Management Plan (2015) states that about 80% of the nitrogen that enters Cape Cod's watersheds is from septic systems. In addition, the 2021 Annual Report of the Water and Wastewater Department indicated that nitrogen and phosphorous in fertilizer were the greatest concern to water quality.



In response to these challenges, Harwich developed a Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan (CWMP) in 2016. The Town's Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan (CWMP) plays a crucial role in mitigating nitrogen loading in estuaries and embayments. The CWMP reflects the Town's dedication to addressing wastewater management needs, protecting water sources, and restoring valuable water quality over the next 40 years.

With significant population growth in recent decades, Harwich recognizes the importance of addressing water quality issues to maintain the community's quality of life and economic wellbeing. In collaboration with the Pleasant Bay Alliance and neighboring towns, the Town has further committed to mitigating nitrogen loading in the Pleasant Bay watershed, which spans 21,600 acres across Orleans, Chatham, Harwich, and Brewster, and faces water quality challenges posed by nitrogen pollution. The Bay is a designated State Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). The partnership is guided by a MassDEP Watershed Permit, facilitated by the Pleasant Bay Alliance, and reflects the collaborative working relationship among the towns and regulatory agencies. The permit outlines strategies to address nitrogen pollution over a 20-year period using traditional and innovative/alternative technologies.



Harwich's participation in this endeavor underscores its commitment to preserving shared resources and environmental sustainability. The Wastewater Implementation Committee and Board of Selectmen, amongst others, coordinated efforts to complete the CWMP. Implementation of the plan involves the Town Administrator, Town Engineer, Water and Wastewater Superintendent, Board of Water and Wastewater Commissioners, Select Board, Health Director, and consulting services on behalf of the Town. The plan detailed priority wastewater management recommendations for the Town to meet nitrogen and phosphorus management goals at the local, regional, and state levels. The CWMP recommends an 8-phase approach to correct Harwich's water quality concerns, including implementation of municipal sewer systems to reduce contaminants in the groundwater believed to be from onsite wastewater systems.

In the past several years, the Town has completed phases one and two and is in the design phase for phase three. The first three phases are as follows:

Recent Actions by the Town

Marine Water Quality

Phase 1

This phase focused on the restoration of Muddy Creek. The goal of the restoration project was to increase the opening of the creek at Jackknife Point by 24 feet to increase flushing and restore ecological habitat. Monitoring is ongoing by both the town of Harwich and the town of Chatham, with whom the area is shared. This phase was completed in 2016 and was funded by both Harwich and Chatham. At present, the results of the restoration have seen return of near tidal exchange between Muddy Creek and Pleasant Bay has increased tidal range by approximately 2 feet. That change is expected to expand the tidal flats.

Phase 2

This phase involves sewer system construction in the Pleasant Bay Watershed area to remove significant nitrogen to meet the Pleasant Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) thresholds set by MassDEP. According to the CWMP, the Pleasant Bay watershed is the largest watershed with the highest percentage of septic system nitrogen removal required. This phase provides protection to some of the Harwich drinking water supply wells and allows the town to work with Chatham in creating a regional approach to wastewater treatment. The town issued an order to connect to residents in early 2022 with the connection date extended to March 2025. The phase 2 system consists of 11.5 miles of gravity sewer, 1.2 miles of force main, 6 pump stations, and 400 linear feet of pressure sewer.

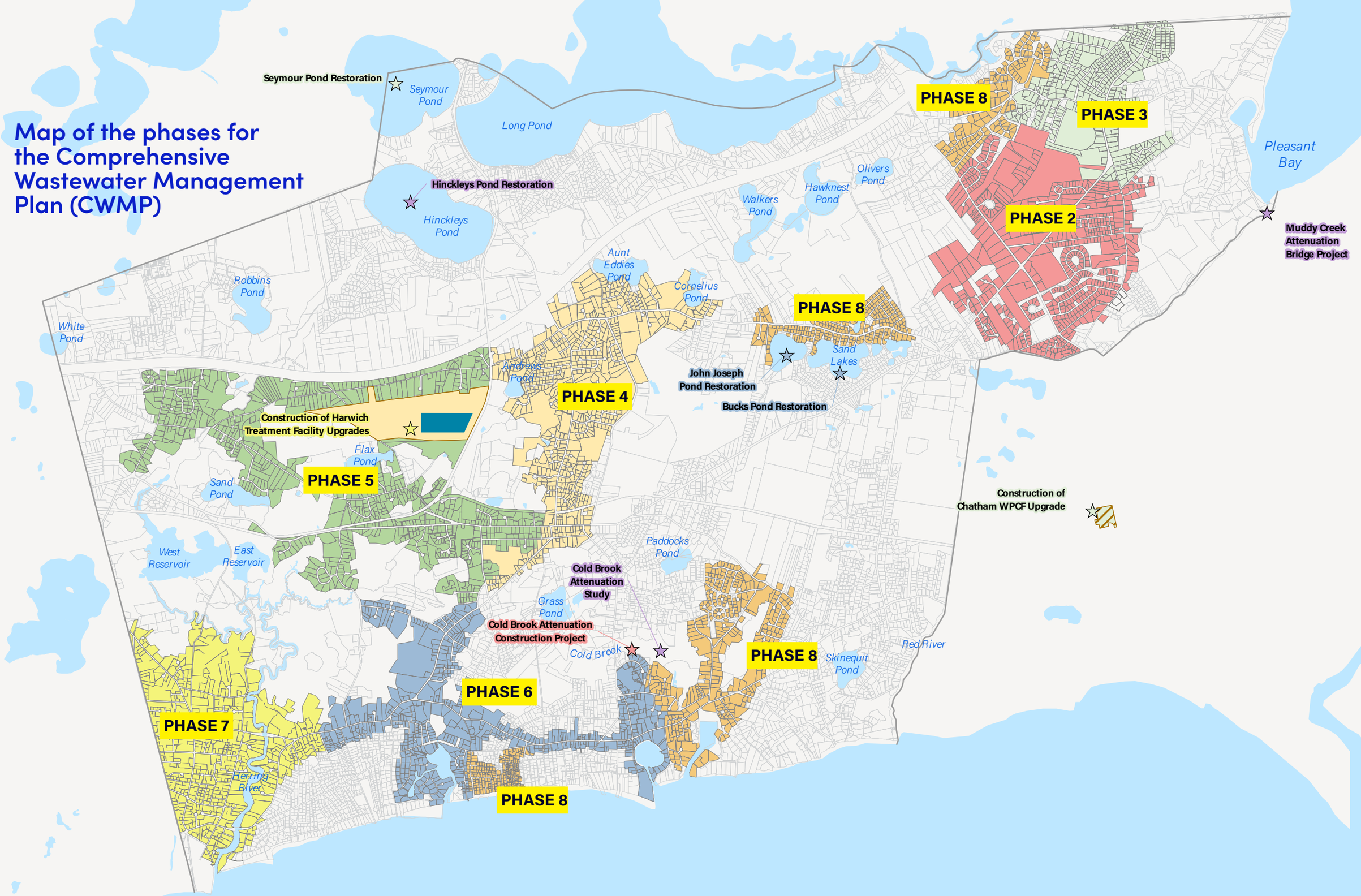
Phase 2 also included bog restoration and the purchasing of wastewater treatment capacity at the Water Pollution Control Facility (WPCF) in neighboring Chatham. The purpose of the restoration of Cold Brook Bog was to increase water attenuation. This project is ongoing and in partnership with the Harwich Conservation Trust, though design and permitting were completed from 2015-2022. The agreement to purchase wastewater treatment capacity at the Chatham WPCF was executed in 2017 and implemented in 2021. The WPCF utilizes an oxidation ditch treatment process to treat influent wastewater to a total nitrogen level of 3 mg/l.

Phase 3

Phase 3 is a continuation of the sewering implementation across town. The designated phase 3 area encompasses the area north of the Harwich Village Commercial District. The phase 3 collection system is intended to address nitrogen impacting the Round Cove and Pleasant Bay sub-watersheds. Phase 3 construction is underway and anticipated to span approximately 2.5 years and will serve over 600 parcels. In addition, Phase 3A - focused on the Great Sand Lakes Sewer Extension Project, is pending upon State Revolving Fund (SRF) financing is secured.

In addition to progress on the phased plan, the Town voted at the 2021 Special Town Meeting to create a Wastewater Special Purpose Stabilization Fund to provide a funding source for wastewater efforts moving forward by redirecting 25% of the room tax revenue from the General Fund to the new fund.

Map of the phases for the Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan (CWMP)



Recent Actions by the Town

Pond Water Quality

The Association to Preserve Cape Cod's annual State of the Waters report for 2024 states that more than a third of Cape Cod's ponds have "unacceptable" water quality. The report considers water clarity, cyanobacteria growth, and other health indicators. The APCC also states that Cape Cod's bays and ponds are polluted by excess nitrogen and phosphorus from lawn fertilizer, stormwater runoff, and untreated wastewater from septic systems. These nutrients feed the growth of toxic algae and invasive weeds, which can destroy ecosystems, contribute to coastal erosion, and impact tourism.

A 2006 report from the Cape Cod Commission based on monitoring data from volunteers found that all 13 of Harwich's monitored ponds had water quality concerns, with Sand, Cornelius, Hinckleys, John Joseph, and Skinequit being the most impaired.

For the last two decades citizens have volunteered to collect water quality data from the Herring River, three harbors, and many freshwater ponds in Harwich on behalf of the Natural Resources Department. The data is vital to supporting aquatic and estuarine reports and studies completed for the town. The Cape Cod Pond and Lake Stewardship program (PALS), which was formed following a Cape-wide concern raised by the Cape Cod Commission regarding the status and health of pond ecosystems, consistently samples up to 17 locations annually in sixteen of Harwich's ponds. The Harwich Conservation Department also tests for cyanobacteria when pond water quality is questionable, and the Town contracts with APCC to test ten ponds annually.

Review of recent water quality data as shown in the CWMP, indicates that alterations to the environment has resulted in dramatic changes in water quality. These include noxious and potentially harmful algal blooms – particularly in Hinkleys' Pond and Skinequit Pond. In 2023, the Natural Resources Department, working with the Association to Preserve Cape Cod (APCC), sampled many water bodies for cyanobacteria levels and were able to respond to blooms.
For example, the 2023 Annual Report for the Department noted that a subsurface phosphorus inactivation treatment using aluminum sulfate and sodium aluminate was administered by a contracted group in the Skinequit Pond, which was successful.

According to the Harwich Conservation Trust (HCT) Website, the HCT, Town, State agencies and non-profits have been partnering to improve the quality of existing ponds through proactive ecological restoration of retired cranberry bogs.

The HCT acquired approximately 31 acres of retired cranberry bog and upland to preserve Hinkleys' Pond and Herring River Headwaters. Jenkins cranberry bogs, adjacent to Hinkleys' Pond is part of the preservation operation completed in 2025 and was the focus of ecological restoration efforts. A 2021 article in the Harwich Chronicle notes that Hinkleys' pond suffered environmental setbacks which can be attributed to nutrients used on the bogs and other adjacent bogs. Ecological restoration of these bogs revitalizes important wetland and stream habitats in Town and can provide opportunities to enhance visitor experiences.

Cold Brook Eco-Restoration Project

Recent Actions by the Town

Pond Water Quality

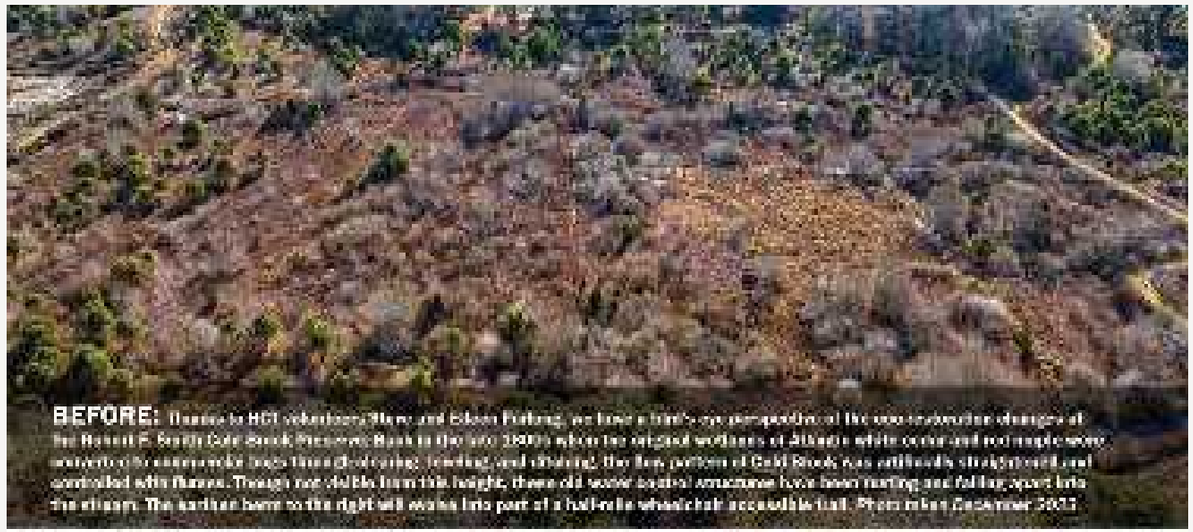
The Harwich Conservation Trust (HCT) and its partners (Town of Harwich, Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service) completed a comprehensive ecological restoration of Cold Brook and bordering wetlands at the Robert F. Smith Cold Brook Preserve in Harwich Port in 2024 for the purpose of attenuating nitrogen and reducing the amount of potential sewering needed in the Saquatucket watershed. Originating from its spring-fed headwaters at Grassy Pond, Cold Brook flows through HCT's 66-acre Preserve, and ultimately into Saquatucket Harbor on Nantucket Sound. The project will enhance nearly a mile of stream and over 44 acres of adjacent wetland habitat, resulting in improved fish passage, habitat diversity, wetland function, water quality, and ecological resiliency amidst climate change. The Town contributed $2 Million dollars towards this restoration effort.

Wetlands

The indigenous Wampagnoag have long since harvested the native cranberry that grows in wet dune swales. In the 1800s, settlers converted naturally occurring wetlands into commercial cranberry farms. Over the last few decades, much larger off-Cape bogs produced an extra supply of cranberries that caused the price to fall. This shift in the industry made it more difficult for some local growers to continue farming.

Farmers looking to exit the industry are faced with difficult decisions. One option is to convert the upland to a subdivision, which would impact water quality and close off public access. Another option would be to sell the property to a local nonprofit land trust like Harwich Conservation Trust (HCT). In turn, working with HCT and the town creates the possibility for ecological restoration that can rewild retired bogs into native habitats as well as provide trails to enjoy the new views and wildlife watching opportunities.

Eco-restoration is a way to turn back the clock and bring wetlands back to life. The town and HCT are on the pioneering edge of this innovative field with the Cold Brook Eco-Restoration Project and the Hinckleys Pond — Herring River Headwaters Eco-Restoration Project.



This composite photo shows HCT's Robert F. Smith Cold Brook Preserve before, during and after the eco-restoration project. Aerial photos by Steve and Eileen Furlong. Graphic: HCT

Key Issues Moving Forward



When the hydroseed is applied, there's a brighter green contrast along the trail edge before the seeds start growing. On the left is the Cape Cod Rail Trail. Photo: HCT

Recognizing the contribution of lakes and ponds to the region's identity whose health is increasingly threatened by human activities in and around them led the Cape Cod Commission to launch a Freshwater Initiative in 2021. The Freshwater Initiative is a data-driven planning process designed to engage stakeholders and enable action to protect and restore Cape Cod's freshwater resources.

Through this initiative, the Cape Cod Commission and its partners, completed an update to the Cape Cod Pond and Lake Atlas in 2022. The updated Atlas examines the Cape's freshwater bodies, covering pond ecology, water quality, and strategies to restore pond health. It provides a current assessment of the importance of ponds on Cape Cod, the threats they face, and demonstrates the need for action to improve and adequately manage these valued and unique resources. The updated Cape Cod Pond and Lakes Atlas includes a Pond Atlas Viewer an online map-based tool that allows users to view available data on all the ponds and lakes on Cape Cod as a planning and communication resource. this initiative will define a path forward for improving freshwater quality across the region.

Pond profiles have been completed for each town including Harwich. Data compiled by the Harwich Conservation Commission indicates that of the 62 ponds in Harwich, 20 ponds have been monitored for at least one year, with only five ponds, including Aunt Edie's, Bucks, Hinckleys, John Joseph, and Skinequit having three or more consecutive years of recent monitoring data. In addition, a total of 1,341 acres or 9% of the Town's total land area is within 300 feet of a freshwater pond. Pond strategies have been implemented for 12 ponds/watersheds, including several in the Six Ponds DCPC. Additional data collection and monitoring is needed to improve the overall health and water quality of these vital resources.

In addition, Harwich residents recently organized to establish the Harwich Pond Coalition, whose mission is to coordinate the efforts of stakeholders to protect the quality of freshwater resources in Harwich, especially ponds, through data-driven advocacy, education, and public outreach.

The Town's commitment to sustainable practices, regional collaboration, and adaptive management positions Harwich at the forefront of ensuring long-term water quality improvement and natural resource protection. Ongoing efforts include monitoring for emerging contaminants (such as pharmaceuticals and personal care products), stormwater management, developing land management plans for conservation lands and pursuing further land acquisitions for conservation purposes.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Background

Settled around 1665 and officially incorporated in 1694, Harwich is a community with a long and rich coastal New England history. Originally thriving on agriculture and maritime industries, the town experienced fluctuating fortunes, adapting from whaling to cod fishing as the primary industry by the early 19th century. This transition led to the development of distinctive coastal architecture, characterized by sturdy fishing cottages and warehouses to complement the Captains' houses of the previous era. As noted in the Harwich Today section, the fishing industry began to decline, a shift towards cranberry cultivation and tourism took root. Alongside Portuguese immigrants, residents developed resorts to cater to summer visitors, marking the emergence of Victorian-style guesthouses dotting the coastline. Today, remnants of Harwich's maritime past blend with quaint seaside resorts, shaping the town's diverse architectural landscape.

Built Environment

Community Design
- Current Built Environment
- Village Character
- Site Plan Review
- Architectural Review
- Development Trends

Coastal Resiliency
- Background
- Current Trends

Community Facilities
- Background
- Town Facilities
- Community Facilities
- Non-Profit & Religious Orgs

Waste Management

Water Supply

Recreational Facilities
- Analysis of Community Facility Needs

Transportation
- Background
- Roadways
- Traffic Count Data

Energy
- Background
- Recent Trends

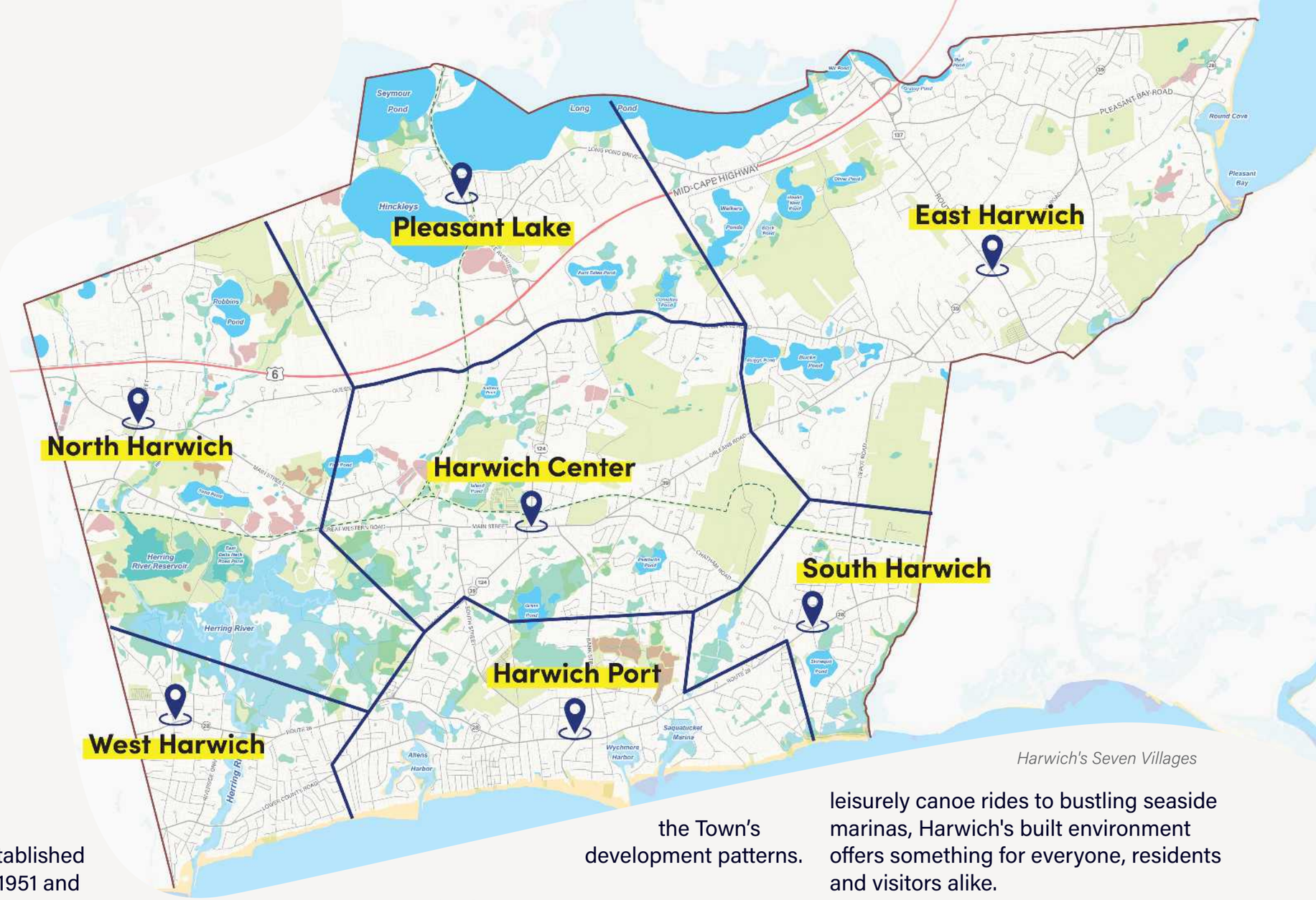
Community Design

Current Built Environment

The 2018 Cape Cod RPP adopted a conceptual framework for regional planning and regulation by identifying areas with similar natural and built characteristics called Place types. Harwich is comprised of many Placetypes identified in the 2018 RPP, including: small-scale Activity Centers characterized by the seven villages in Harwich; Historic Areas; Maritime Areas; and significant Natural Areas. These varied Placetypes help define the Town's natural and scenic character.

The 2024 LCP community survey identified the community's top values as natural environment and open space, Harwich as a home for its townspeople, and individual village identity. In addition, the importance of maintaining community character featured prominently in comments relating to the vision for Harwich's future. Respondents were also concerned about overdevelopment and the loss of village character.

The built environment reflects Harwich's heritage and diverse economic history. This includes many buildings representing various time periods in the Town's history. Zoning regulations, established in 1951 and subsequently amended, have defined the basic land use patterns, with commercial areas along Route 28 and residential and agricultural zones elsewhere. Amendments introduced districts like the Conservancy District and Highway and Shopping District, further influencing the Town's development patterns.



Harwich's Seven Villages

Each of the seven villages in Harwich contain historic buildings, churches, scenic roads, and natural resources. Beyond these historic hubs, Harwich's scenic landscapes, including tidal shorelines, harbors, and cranberry bogs, offer residents and visitors alike a myriad of recreational opportunities. From leisurely canoe rides to bustling seaside marinas, Harwich's built environment offers something for everyone, residents and visitors alike.

Community Design

Village Character

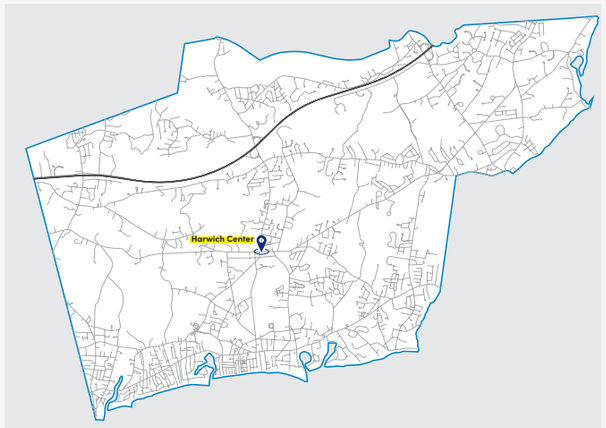
Harwich Center

Harwich Center is characterized by historic buildings and landmarks such as the First Congregational Church and cemetery, Brooks Academy and the Old Recreation Building (former middle/high school and current home of the Cape Cod Theater Company Arts Center), and Town Hall. Brooks Academy Museum was originally known as Pine Grove Seminary. Built in 1844 by Sidney Brooks, it was the first school to teach navigation in America. In 1870 Brooks sold the building to the town and it served for many decades as the High School. Now the home of the Harwich Historical Society, this historic building is in the middle of a multi-year renovation and preservation project. The First Congregational Church was built in 1832 with an addition in 1854 of the 100-foot spire that still graces the village today. The Harwich Historic District encompasses portions of Harwich Center the only historic district in Town, features a concentration of Greek Revival and Italianate architecture. The village's character is defined by its winding tree-lined roads and clusters of buildings lining the street edge. Brooks Park serves as a central gathering place for community events, while Island Pond Cemetery provides a serene reflection of the town's past. The Community Center and Monomoy Regional High School are just half a mile from Harwich Center. The Cape Cod Rail Trail bike path runs directly through Harwich Center.

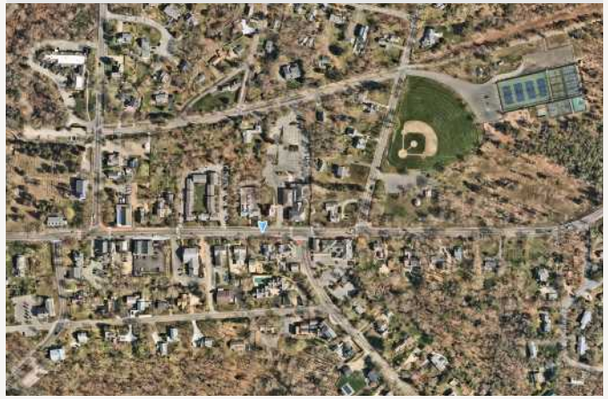
The Harwich Center Historic District encompasses the heart of Harwich Center, featuring a concentration of Greek Revival and Italianate architecture stretching from the First Congregational Church, Brooks Academy Museum and the “Old Recreation Building” on the west end of the village center to Brooks Free Library and Oak St/Brooks Park on the eastern side of the village center.

The Harwich Center Historic District is the only federal and state-approved historic district in town and has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1975. The District is also an approved Massachusetts “Local Historic District,” a lesser known designation than the National Register of Historic Districts, but one that comes with more restrictions on properties that are intended to preserve the historical integrity and aesthetic appeal of the historic district.











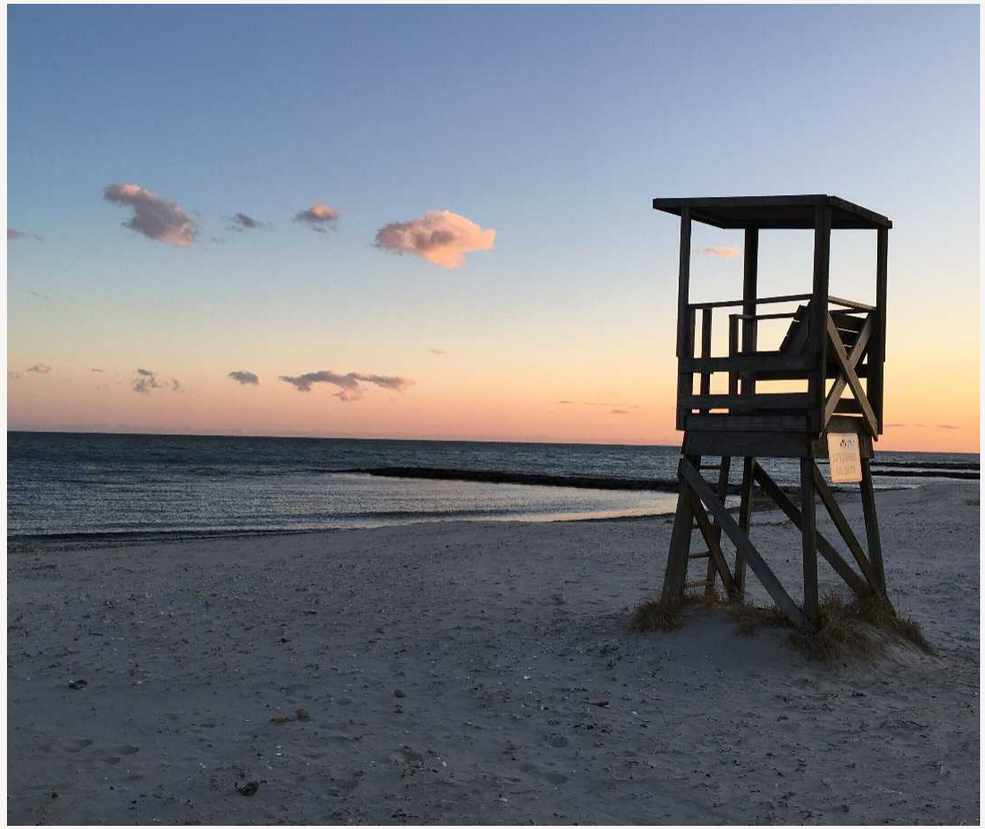


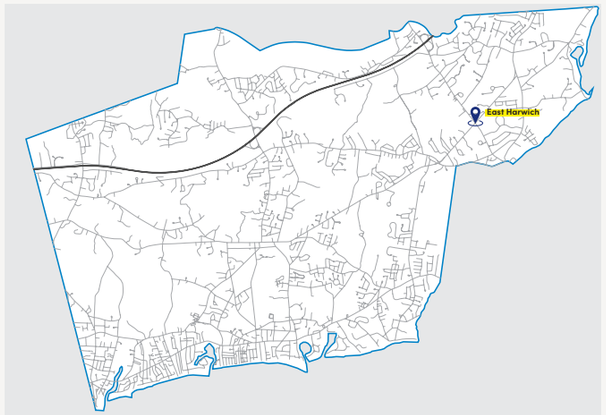
Community Design

Village Character

East Harwich

East Harwich boasts scenic roads and a concentration of pre-1900 homes along Pleasant Bay Road/Route 39 and Church Street. Evergreen Cemetery and Methodist Church Cemetery add to the village's historic character, blending with significant structures in the area. The East Harwich intersection of Route 39 and 137 contains a commercial center with larger retail uses, including a supermarket, national chain pharmacy, lumber yard, hardware stores, post office, drive-thru banks and infilled with smaller boutique shops and restaurants. East Harwich has experienced perhaps the most commercial growth in recent years compared to the other villages although Harwich Center and Harwich Port have both seen infill development and redevelopment. A comprehensive planning initiative from 2005 outlined strategies for a compact, pedestrian-friendly village center while safeguarding open spaces, and included proposed zoning measures to enhance village character and infrastructure improvements, such as bike lanes and concrete sidewalks along Route 137.











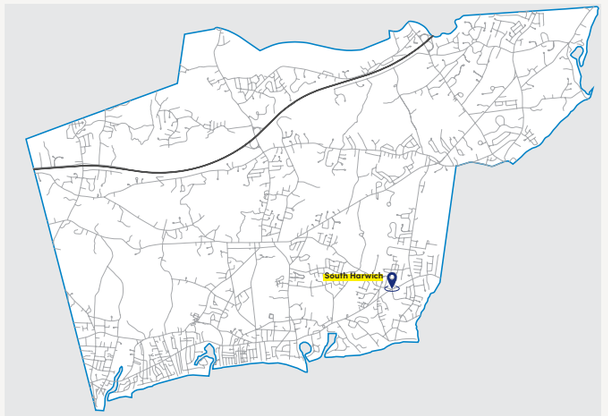
Community Design

Village Character

South Harwich

South Harwich's contains residential neighborhoods along with commercial establishments some of which are housed in pre-1900 structures along the length of Route 28. The South Harwich Meeting House and cemetery further define the village's historic character.











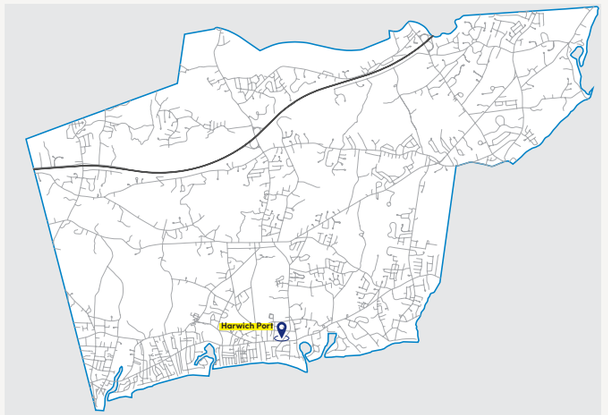
Community Design

Village Character

Harwich Port

Harwich Port features a vibrant mixed-use village center along Route 28, blending commercial businesses with residential structures in a classic New England “main street”. Focused and thoughtful planning efforts, including zoning changes to encourage mixed-use redevelopment while protecting historic properties, has enlivened this former maritime village to allow restaurants and shops. The Pilgrim Congregational Church, located in the heart of the village, frequently hosts civic and musical events. Participants in the LCP community survey and visioning workshops noted that additional sidewalks, parking and wastewater infrastructure are needed to support increased activity in the Village. Improvements to nearby Saquatucket Harbor have made the Harbor more accessible and inviting to both residents and tourists with an ADA-compliant boardwalk structure, snack shack, and artist shanties.









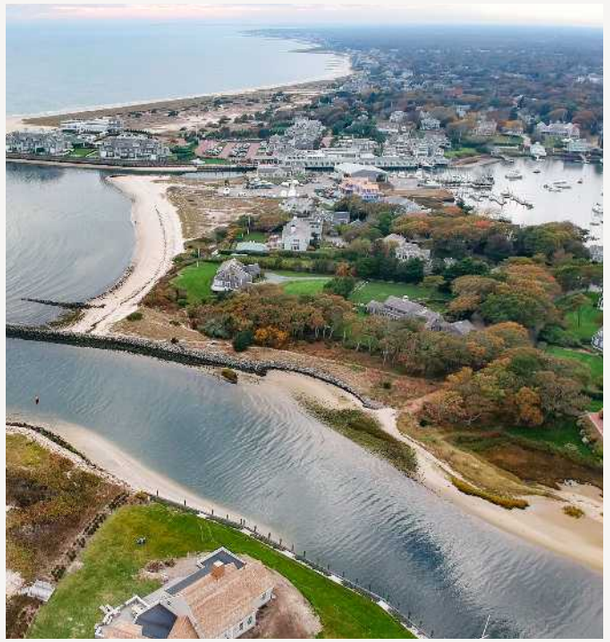


Photo: DelMar

Community Design

Village Character

West Harwich

West Harwich largely retains its historic character, with stately homes set back from Route 28 and businesses operating within them. Cottage-lined roads leading to saltwater beaches characterize the vacation home atmosphere, while historic structures along Depot Street and Riverside Drive reflect the village's history as it evolved from Crook's Neck into Captains' Row. These features are carefully preserved and guided by the "West Harwich Special District Site and Architectural Design Guidelines," which serve as the regulatory framework for both historic structures and new construction within the area. These guidelines were developed to complement the zoning regulations established by Town Meeting in 2020, aiming to preserve the area's significant historic and architectural resources while guiding development to align with its distinctive character. Additionally, the guidelines seek to foster small-scale businesses consistent with the area's character.



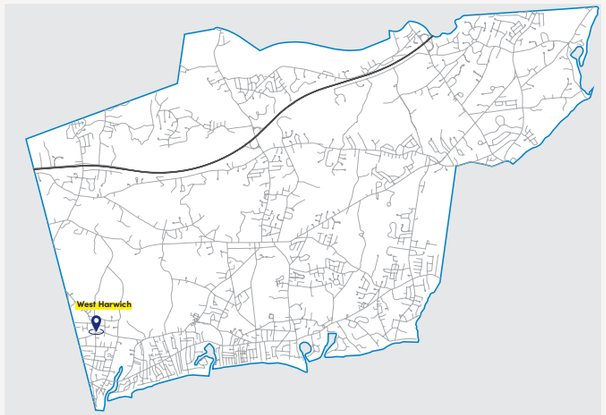








Photo Credit: Zillow (top)

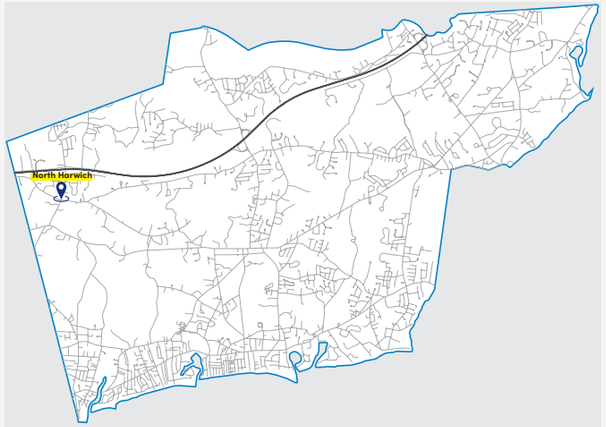
Community Design

Village Character

North Harwich

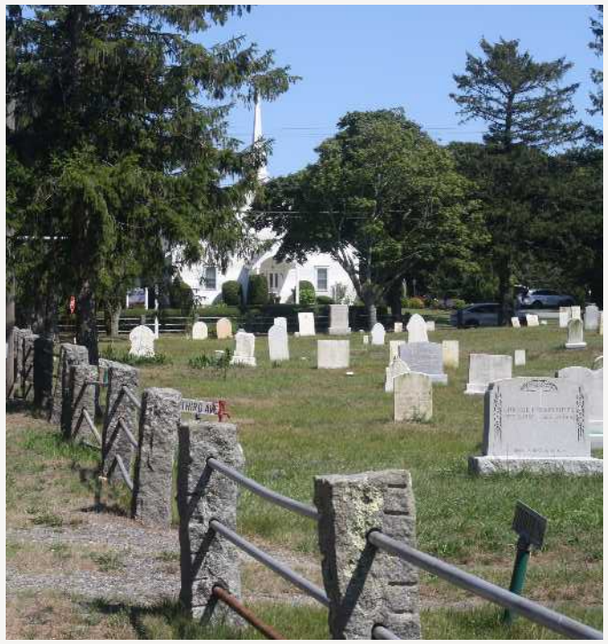
North Harwich proudly reflects the contributions of our Cape Verdean community members with historic structures on Depot Street, Main Street, and Queen Anne Road. The village's rural heritage is enhanced by active cranberry bogs and clusters of pre-1900 structures amidst open spaces and woodlands.











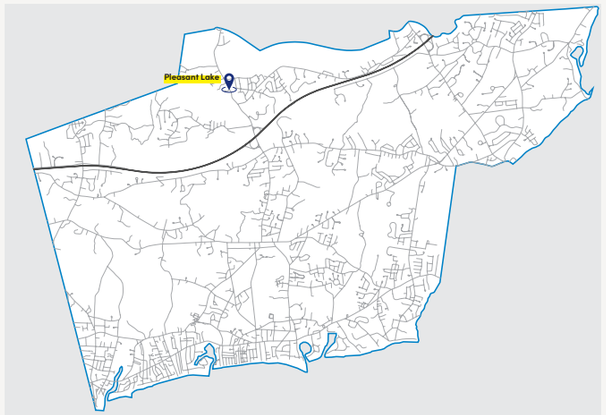
Community Design

Village Character

Pleasant Lake

Pleasant Lake's character is defined by its natural resources, with fewer than twenty-five pre-1900 homes scattered along Pleasant Lake Avenue and Queen Anne Road. The old railroad layout, now a bike path, provides stunning views of surrounding ponds, while the Pleasant Lake General Store remains a centerpiece of the village.











Community Design

Site Plan Review

The Site Plan Review (SPR) process in Harwich plays an important role in shaping the town's development consistent with local zoning and the community's vision. A site plan special permit from the Planning Board is necessary for the following activities as required by the Harwich Zoning Bylaw:

- Any floor area expansion of any structure or expansion of exterior space, other than parking, serving any of the following: a commercial, industrial, multifamily, educational or municipal use, or personal wireless service facility; or the creation of a drive-up or drive-through window.
- Expansion or reconfiguration of an existing parking lot and/or driveway(s) in connection with a commercial, industrial, multifamily, educational or municipal use, or personal wireless service facility.
- Establishment of any new commercial, industrial, multifamily, educational, municipal, fast-food/ takeout restaurant or personal wireless service facility.
- Establishment of any new retail use(s) in the Industrial (IL) Zone.

Procedurally, Site Plan Review follows the statutory requirements of a Special Permit process, where a public hearing is held before the Planning Board. The Planning Board's deliberations, guided by local regulations and state statutes, aim to strike a balance between development aspirations and the preservation of Harwich's unique character.

Conditions of approval, if granted, are carefully crafted to mitigate impacts on adjacent uses and the environment. From implementing screening measures to enhancing traffic flow and ensuring proper drainage, these conditions underscore the town's commitment to responsible development. By addressing concerns such as visual aesthetics, vehicular and pedestrian safety, and environmental sustainability, Harwich seeks to ensure that development is not only functional but also harmonious with the existing fabric of the community.

Architectural Review

In Harwich, the preservation and enhancement of historic properties are overseen by the Harwich Historic District Commission and Historical Commission (Commission). Their guidelines notebook serves as a comprehensive resource for property owners, offering insights into historical appropriateness and recommendations for preservation, repair, and restoration efforts.

The Commission operates under Chapter 40C of the Massachusetts General Laws and the Harwich Historic District by-law, ensuring that all proposed exterior alterations within the historic district are reviewed and approved. Harwich has an 18-month demolition delay bylaw, effective in spring 2025, which applies to historically significant buildings and is intended to help preserve historic properties by drawing attention to demolition proposals and encouraging renovation and reuse over demolition. The Town's Historic District and Historical Commission reviews proposal for the demolition or alteration of buildings 100 years or older within the Harwich Center Historic District, and can impose a delay of up to one year to explore alternatives to demolition.

The Commission, comprised of volunteer Harwich residents appointed by the Selectmen, conducts design reviews and grants approval through three types of certificates: certificate of appropriateness, certificate of hardship, and certificate of non-applicability.

Community Design

While providing flexibility for unique circumstances, the Commission emphasizes early consultation with property owners to streamline the approval process. Applications for approvals are submitted well in advance of planned exterior work and are subject to public hearings, with notices posted at Town Hall and abutters notified in writing.

Applications must include thorough documentation, including photographs and scaled drawings detailing proposed changes. The Commission reviews applications during public hearings, considering input from property owners, abutters, and professional consultants. Approved applications result in the issuance of certificates, which are necessary for obtaining building permits.

The Commission ensures compliance with approved plans, conducting inspections to verify adherence to conditions set forth in the certificates. Property owners are expected to complete approved work within a specified timeframe and obtain appropriate permits before commencing any alterations.

Development Trends

Harwich's development trends demonstrate a commitment to preserving historic structures while meeting contemporary housing needs. For instance, the ongoing renovation of the former West Harwich Schoolhouse, built in 1871, into seven apartments is an example of adaptive reuse of an existing historic structure. The redevelopment effort is dedicated to maintaining the building's historic character, coupled with modern amenities like solar panels, showcases a balance between heritage preservation and sustainability. Additionally, the planned construction of a new building adjacent to the schoolhouse underscores efforts to expand housing options in the area. This multifaceted approach not only addresses housing shortages but also revitalizes the village, contributing to its economic and cultural vibrancy.

Recent Efforts by the Town

In 2011, the Cape Cod Commission assisted the Town and the East Harwich Village Center Collaborative in preparing the East Harwich Village Center Handbook to guide development in East Harwich to create a pedestrian-oriented mixed-use village center with a traditional main street. The plan for East Harwich Village also encompassed adjoining residential neighborhoods with a mix of unit types (including affordable housing) and viable commercial corridors along Routes 137 and Route 39. Concerns about potential traffic impacts to surrounding neighborhoods resulted in a lack of support for the initiative.

Multiple “Harwich Center Initiatives” re-vitalization efforts have occurred in the last 25 years. Several new restaurants, shops and businesses are now attracting residents and visitors to Harwich Center, and some traffic calming and pedestrian safety improvements have been made, but much of the economic development, traffic and sidewalk infrastructure work remains to be done to create the vibrant, walkable village center envisioned over the multiple Harwich Center Initiative planning efforts.”

The Saquatucket Harbor improvement project and the plans for a sidewalk to Harwich Port exemplify the Town's dedication to enhancing its infrastructure and promoting connectivity for residents and visitors alike. The Saquatucket Harbor improvement project modernized the harbor facilities, making the waterfront more accessible and visitor friendly. The project was engineered to ensure compliance with current FEMA

Community Design

Recent Efforts by the Town

flood code design requirements and elevating buildings above the Design Flood Elevation (DFE) to withstand potential flooding. The addition of an ADA-compliant boardwalk structure further enhances accessibility and enjoyment of the waterfront area.

A 2014 Harwich Port Parking Study completed for the Town evaluated the operation and capacity of the current municipal lot in Harwich Port and to develop options to improve parking at this location and in the immediate area. Similarly, the plan for a sidewalk connecting the Harwich Port business district with Saquatucket Harbor demonstrates the Town's commitment to pedestrian safety and connectivity. Through collaboration with MassDOT and strategic design considerations, including drainage upgrades and minimal impact on historic properties, the project represents a significant investment in enhancing community infrastructure.

Key Issues Moving Forward

As noted in the Housing section, determining appropriate locations for future development where infrastructure exists or is planned will be key to addressing Harwich's housing needs. Feedback from visioning workshops conducted to support this Comprehensive Plan update provided useful insight as to participants' favored housing locations and styles. Participants were asked to select preferred housing types and locations within Town for future housing. The workshop results indicated that residents see village centers as ideal locations for new housing development. The preferred housing types in these locations are mixed-use developments followed by duplexes and multiplexes or historic conversions. Identifying parcels suitable for these housing types in those ideal locations would meet the needs identified by the community. Zoning changes should balance residential and commercial growth with the community's vision for each of the village centers. Site Plan Review criteria could be supplemented with the development of design guidelines to help applicants understand the desired vision for the Town and further define appropriate design for buildings and sites proposed within the Town based on context to preserve the Town's scenic and historic character. In addition, infrastructure improvements such as additional sidewalks, parking, and wastewater will be needed to support additional growth in village centers.

Only one of Harwich's seven villages (Harwich Center) is designated as a National Register Historic District and a Local Historic District. Five of the remaining six villages are inventoried in Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS), but only West Harwich has been evaluated for listing as a National Register District. The Town should evaluate other local or National Register historic districts in other villages to offer additional protections for their historic resources.

Finally, maintaining appropriate scale and character in residential areas to be sewered will be an important consideration for the Town. Therefore, identifying scatter-site housing opportunities while utilizing existing zoning, via special permit, for two-family and multi-family development throughout town can be a reasonable option. Scatter-site housing development can be accomplished with minimal impact to the environment and local infrastructure, including roads and Town water, while blending in with the surrounding neighborhood and maintaining community character.

Coastal Resiliency

Background

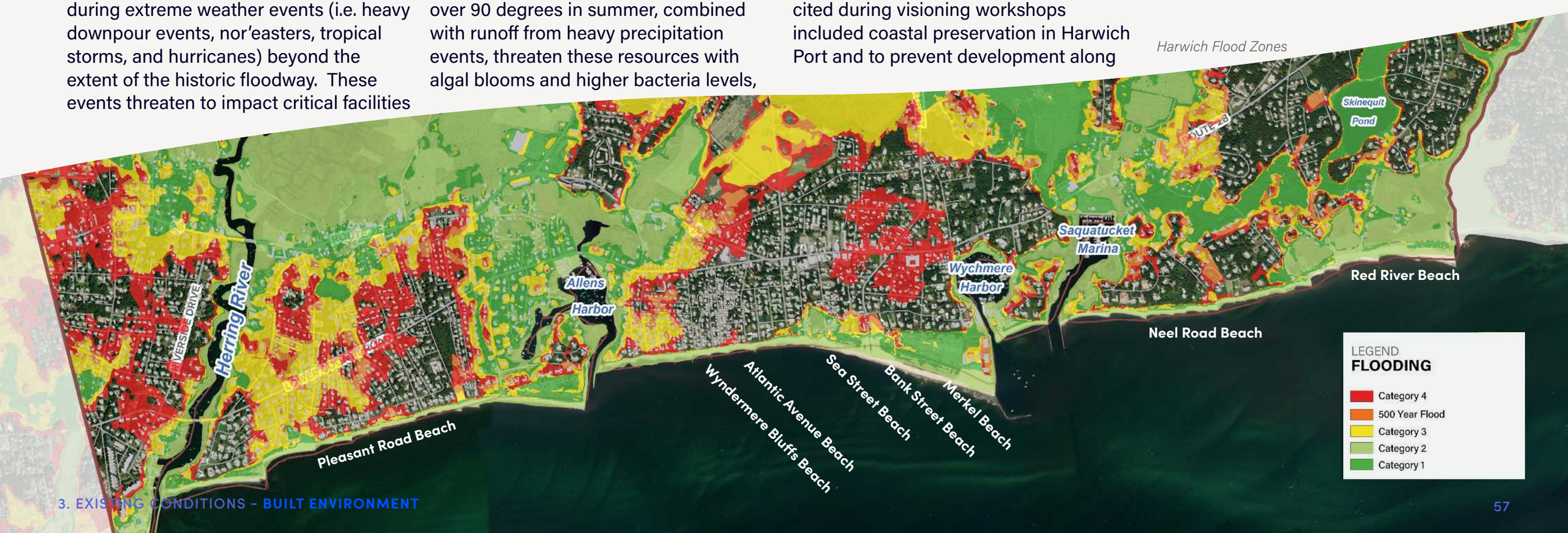
Harwich has 11 miles of tidal shoreline along Nantucket Sound containing three harbors, and two miles with one harbor along Pleasant Bay at Round Cove. Significant portions of the Town along Nantucket Sound have properties in or adjacent to Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHA), as identified on the Town's Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM). Adjacent to these areas are low-lying land and roadways that are subject to storm inundation and coastal flooding during extreme weather events (i.e. heavy downpour events, nor'easters, tropical storms, and hurricanes) beyond the extent of the historic floodway. These events threaten to impact critical facilities and infrastructure and further exacerbate coastal erosion of town beaches, parking areas, as well as private property.

In addition to the Town's treasured coastal resources, Harwich has 62 freshwater ponds, 20 of which are designated great ponds comprising more than 10 acres. These natural assets are important for their swimming, boating, fishing, and scenic value. Increasing air temperature trends, including more days over 90 degrees in summer, combined with runoff from heavy precipitation events, threaten these resources with algal blooms and higher bacteria levels, compromising public health and limiting recreational use.

Environmental concerns, including the negative impact of climate change were among common themes from early postcard outreach for the LCP update. Coastal erosion at public beaches and Sea Level Rise were among key environmental concerns voiced by residents in visioning workshops held on the LCP update. Improvement priorities cited during visioning workshops included coastal preservation in Harwich Port and to prevent development along beaches. Over 38% of respondents to the LCP survey cited coastal resiliency as a top challenge facing the Town.

While climate change poses a threat to every aspect of the Cape's natural, built and community systems, thoughtful land use planning, resource management, and infrastructure investment can build resiliency across these systems to help ensure the Town can adapt to the impacts of a changing climate.

Harwich Flood Zones



Coastal Resiliency

Current Trends

Coastal communities are accustomed to storm events, but in recent years storm frequency and intensity have increased, a trend projected to continue under future climate change scenarios. Vulnerable coastal properties—including some of the most expensive in town—are threatened by flooding and coastal storms which could impact the Town's future tax base.

Coastal erosion has impacted beaches, the parking lots that serve these beaches, and numerous private properties. Maintaining access to local beaches and harbors is important for the community, particularly with its seasonal and tourist-driven economy, but some of the potential strategies for protecting these assets may also present natural resource and funding challenges.

Several roads, bridges, and culverts in Harwich currently flood during storm events. Many key roads are low-lying, including: portions of Route 28, Red River Beach and Saquatucket Harbor areas, Lower County Road, Shore Road, North Road, Bell's Neck, Lothrop Avenue, and Bay Road. Culverts and stormwater systems associated with these roadways were highlighted in the Town's Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) workshop as being particularly vulnerable. In addition, the stormwater systems associated with these roads may be inadequate to handle more frequent and intense precipitation events.

Most of Harwich is served by above-ground utilities for power, internet, and phone service, which can become incapacitated during and following storm and high wind events. The vulnerability of both the power supply and delivery infrastructure, as well as telecommunications, has been evident during recent storm events and is of particular concern during the busy summer season. Seasonal visitors and workers are likely to be unfamiliar with the town's emergency planning and may be unaware of what to do during a hazard event.

While the Town's coastal resources (i.e. beaches, dunes, and salt marshes) are vulnerable to climate change, they are also natural assets that provide a significant draw to residents and visitors in Harwich and provide buffering from storm events. Nature-based strategies to protect these natural assets can lead to enhanced community resiliency.



Coastal Resiliency

Recent Actions by the Town

The Town of Harwich has begun taking steps to increase its resiliency to climate change. In 2020, the Town held a Community Resilience Building Workshop as part of the Massachusetts MVP Program, a state program designed to increase municipalities' resilience to natural hazards exacerbated by climate change. The charrette-style public workshop utilized the Community Resilience Building (CRB) Framework developed by The Nature Conservancy. The workshop and the subsequent listening session identified the Town's top hazards, vulnerabilities, and strengths, and recommended actionable next steps the Town could take over a 5-year planning horizon to increase resiliency.

The Route 124 Culvert Restoration project identified in the MVP report received a MVP Action Grant ($89,913) in FY24 to conduct public outreach, existing conditions assessments, and an alternative analysis for the initial phase of the restoration of the Route 124 culvert that serves Long Pond as it flows into the Herring River in Harwich. In addition, a viewing platform and educational signage will be installed where the culvert intersects the Department of Conservation and Recreation's Cape Cod Rail Trail. The overall goal of this project is to replace the existing culvert with a structure that is compliant with Massachusetts Stream Crossing Standards, and to replace the existing upstream concrete channel with a natural channel design and banks bio-stabilized with native vegetation.

The Town has also received a $240,000 Natural Resources Conservation Service grant to study and design a new culvert under Bank Street to allow for improved flow and fish passage up to Grassy Pond.

The Town is in the process of updating the 2017 Hazard Mitigation Plan, expected to be completed in 2026. The Community Development and Emergency Management departments oversee the plan update process, which is a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) planning tool that assists in disaster preparedness, with funding opportunities following storm events to implement priority actions. Public outreach and education are important components of the plan and provide opportunities to inform residents and visitors of the Town's emergency preparedness. Vulnerability to climate change hazards are assessed as part of the planning process.

As noted in the Harwich Today section, in 2023, the Town amended its Floodplain District zoning overlay to be consistent with FEMA's requirements for communities that are a member of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). This action ensures flood insurance policy holders within the floodplain maintain access to the lower-cost premiums only available through the NFIP.

In 2018, the Town completed improvements to the Saquatucket Harbor and Marina that replaced floating docks, most of the supporting pilings, and the electrical, fire-suppression and other aging infrastructure. Landward improvements included a new harbormaster's office, garage/maintenance building, snack shack, and artist shanties. Additionally, the project included an ADA-compliant boardwalk structure running parallel to the shoreline with a future sidewalk improvement plan to connect the harbor to Harwich Port.

The landward structures are located in an AE Flood Zone and were designed to conform to FEMA flood code design requirements, with the ground floor levels built above the designated Design Flood Elevation (DFE). The temporary or removable structures that house the snack shack and artist shanties are a good representation of the types of land uses compatible with these vulnerable, yet highly desirable locations. The Town received a $1 million grant from the Seaport Economic Council to support construction of the project. Town meeting voters backed the remaining cost of the infrastructure improvement project.

Coastal Resiliency

Key Issues Moving Forward

As noted in the Natural Resources section, only 15 of 62 Harwich's ponds have been monitored with only six ponds having three consecutive years of recent monitoring data. **The Town should continue monitoring the water quality of ponds and lakes in partnerships with local and regional government and non-profit organizations and develop strategies to build the resilience of these natural assets.**

Additional pond monitoring for water quality as well as potential erosion/sedimentation due to increased runoff from increased storm events is a key issue of concern in order to assess the overall health of these resources and improve ponds' resilience to climate change.

Based on data from the Harwich 2017 Hazard Mitigation Plan, the value of buildings in hazard areas is over $272 Million dollars. The majority of the building value (over $256 Million dollars) consists of multifamily and single-family dwellings (Table 3.4).

Supported by funding from the US Economic Development Administration, the Cape Cod Commission developed design guidelines to review the main strategies available for reducing or eliminating hazards from sea level rise and storm surge to life and the built environment while also protecting the region's distinctive character and historic resources, both in the short term and the long term. The guidelines examine building retrofit, relocation, and elevation, as well as neighborhood and site strategies such as barriers and floodwater parks, with special considerations for historic structures. The guide also includes Context Case Studies that recommend appropriate designs for unique neighborhood types and specific building types, taking sustainability and possible sea level rise projections into account. The Town should consider adopting design guidelines to provide review boards and property owners with specific guidance on new development and redevelopment in these hazard areas.

The Town should also identify nature-based strategies to enhance coastal assets (beaches, dunes and marshes) to continue to provide protection during storm events and enhance public education and awareness around preparedness for storm events, particularly for summer workers and visitors.

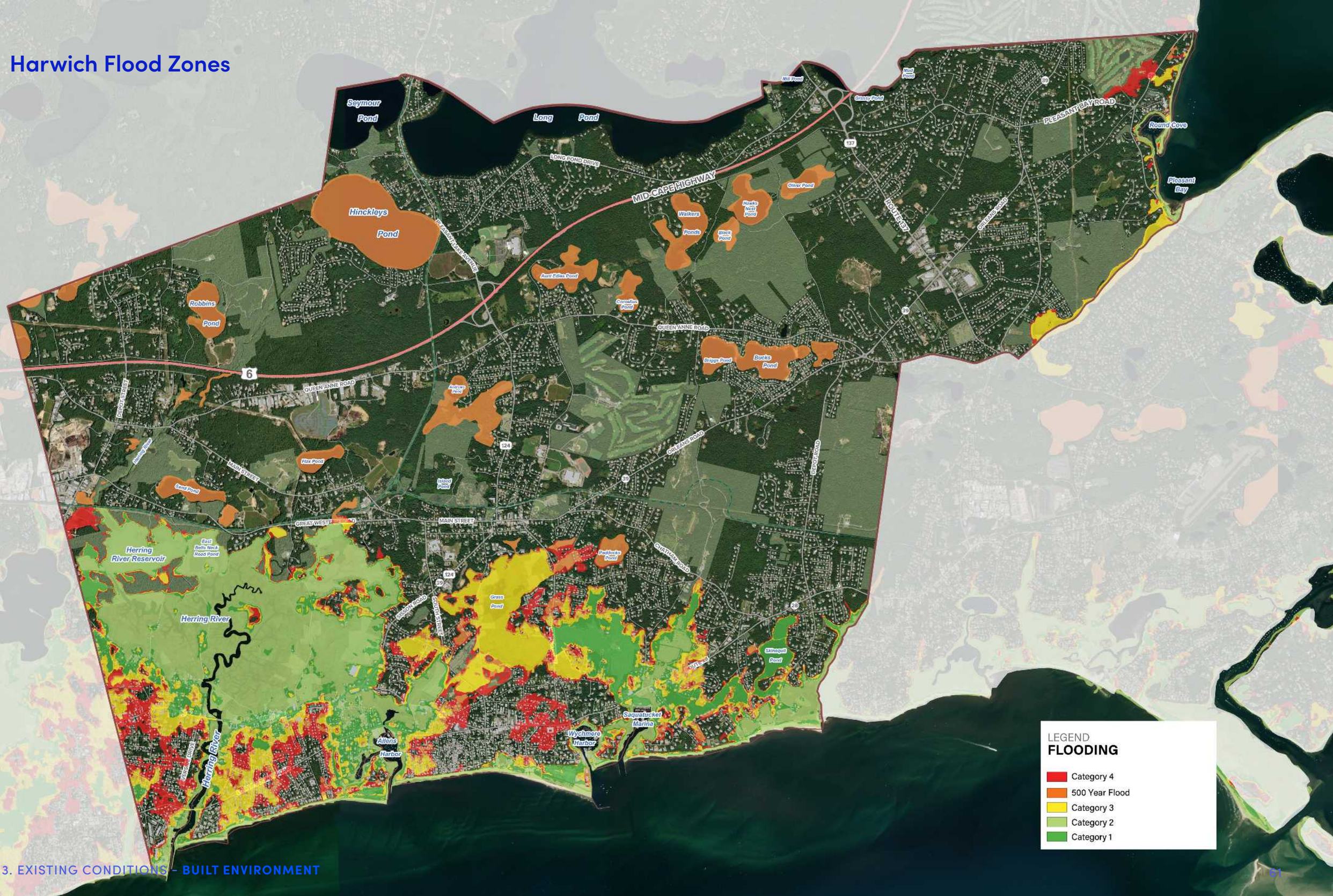
The Town should continue to assess progress on actions identified in the 2019 MVP Summary of Findings and 2025 HMP, including vulnerability assessments and implementation of strategies to address the Town's vulnerable low-lying roads, as identified by the Cape Cod Commission Low Lying Roads project, culverts and stormwater infrastructure to ensure public safety particularly during severe storm events and improve the resilience of key infrastructure. The Town should continue to utilize planning frameworks, such as the Center for Coastal Studies Storm Tide Pathways project, to assess location-based risk and vulnerability to coastal flooding and storm surge on critical infrastructure and municipal facilities. The Town should also consider adopting higher standards for properties in Hazard Areas as detailed in the Cape Cod Commission's model bylaw for Coastal Floodplain Resiliency.

Table 3.4 | Buildings in Hazard Areas (A Zone)

	Number of Parcels			Value of Buildings		
Type of Structure	# in Town	# in Hazard Area	% in Hazard Area	$ in Town	$ in Hazard Area	% in Hazard Area
Entertainment and Recreation	48	4	8%	$1,830,700	$1,392,900	76%
General Services	102	4	4%	$1,830,700	$116,200	0%
Multi-family Dwelling	375	25	7%	$36,071,700	$133,786,400	0%
Single Family Dwelling	8,560	185	2%	$319,261,600	$123,015,400	6%
Temporary Lodging	15	3	20%	$2,079,169,300	$13,714,300	72%
Wholesale Trade	46	1	2%	$19,045,500	$16,500	0%
COLUMN TOTAL	**9,450**	**300**		**$11,168,000**	**$272,041,700**	

Buildings in Hazard Areas, 2017 HMP

Harwich Flood Zones



Community Facilities, Services and Infrastructure

Background

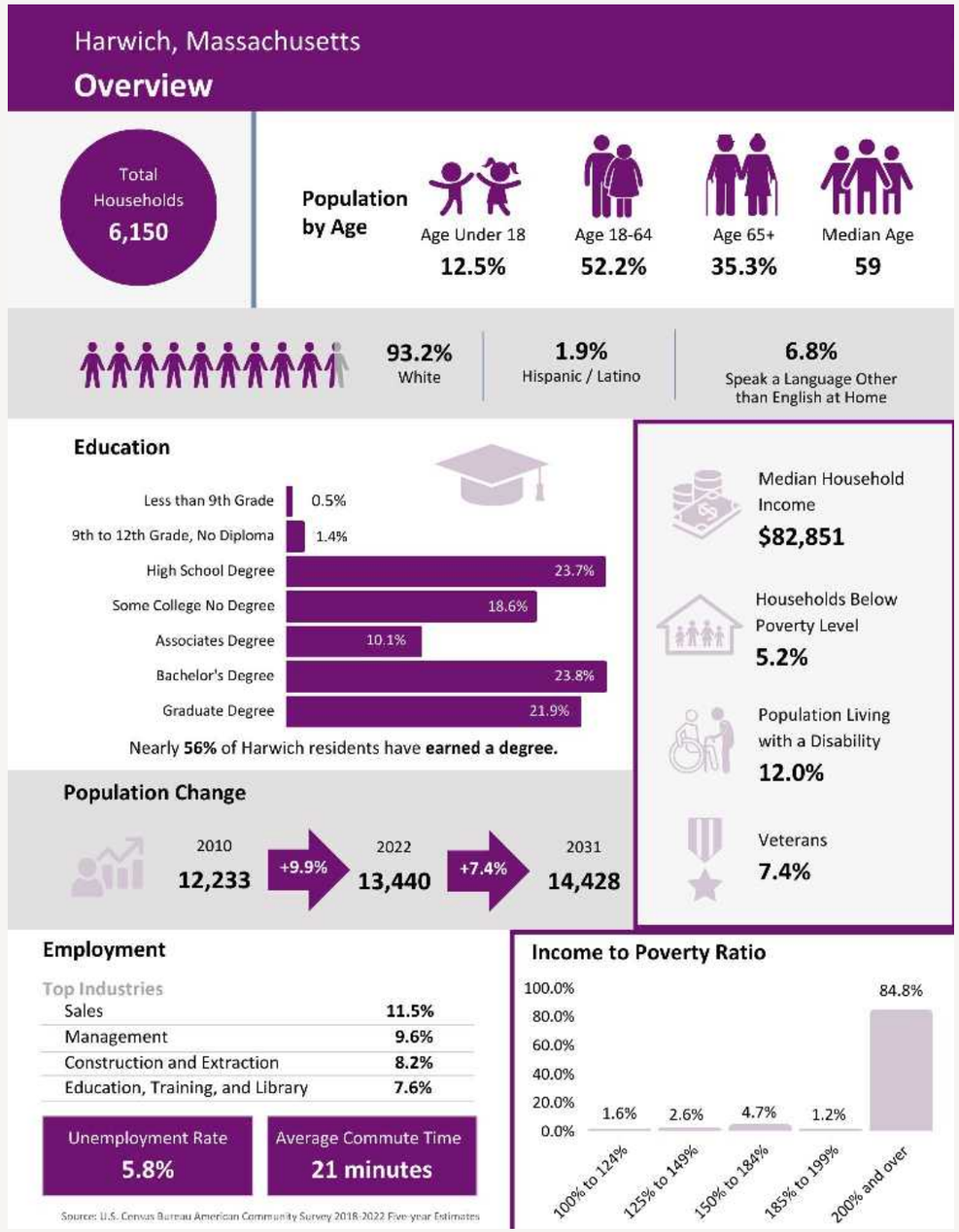
Community facilities and services play a vital role in the everyday lives of Harwich residents, business owners, and visitors by providing public safety and emergency services, educational facilities, and recreation, as well as critical infrastructure including drinking water, solid waste, wastewater, and transportation. This section provides an overview of Town-owned facilities, infrastructure and related services in Harwich, and identifies future needs.

Town Facilities

Public Schools

The public schools in Harwich and our youngest community members are important contributors to the community character that makes Harwich a special place to live. Harwich is enriched by the town's investments in the considerable cultural productivity of its vibrant school system, including sports, arts and cultural programing. The Monomoy Regional School District serves the towns of Chatham and Harwich, with schools including Harwich Elementary School, Chatham Elementary School, Monomoy Regional Middle School, and Monomoy Regional High School, located across the street from the Community Center in Harwich Center, and provides comprehensive K-12 education for students from Harwich and Chatham. In addition, Cape Cod Regional Technical High School, situated on approximately 67 acres in Pleasant Lake, offers specialized, vocational programs for grades 9-12.





Harwich overview from the Community Health Needs Assessment

Community Facilities, Services and Infrastructure

Town Facilities

Emergency Services

The Harwich Fire Department consists of two firehouses, including the recently completed (2018) facility in East Harwich. With 40 personnel, the department provides Fire and EMS protection for all seven villages.

The Harwich Police Station is a 21,900 square foot modern facility. Essential features include a 2-bay sally port, maintenance garage, spacious training room, fitness and locker rooms, evidence lab, archive storage, and separate cell areas for male and female prisoners.

Community Facilities

The Town has invested in providing a variety of community spaces for residents and visitors. In Harwich Center, key landmarks like the First Congregational Church, The 204, Town Hall, and Brooks Academy Museum and Old Recreation Building form the heart of the Town. Town Hall serves as a central hub for municipal operations. Brooks Free Library was established by Col. Henry Brooks in 1880 and was the Town's first public library. The historic "Brooks Block" building forms the main section of the Library. In 1972 the Library was expanded and connected to neighboring 1855 building, which had been constructed as the original home of the Cape Cod Five Savings Bank and the Cape Cod National Bank. The historic buildings were renovated and an addition added on the east side of the Library in 1998, creating the current 20,000 SF library.

Today, Brooks Free Library is a full service, modern public library, with a large collection of books, audiobooks, feature films and documentaries, newspapers and magazines as well as access to e-Books, downloadable audiobooks, online newspapers and magazines and other electronic resources. Computers, printers, scanners and 24/7 wireless Internet access are provided. Staff members assist community members by providing reference service and assistance with technology and electronic resources. The Vision Impaired Technology Assistance at the Library (VITAL) program provides access to assistive technology as well as one-on-one instruction in the use of assistive technology to patrons with vision loss.

Brooks Park and Old Colony bike trail, part of the Cape Cod Rail Trail system, provide easily accessible recreational opportunities, including tennis, basketball and bocce courts, playground, and bandstand for summer concerts in the park.

The Harwich Community Center (HCC) is a 32,000 square foot multi-purpose facility and serves as the hub for recreational, social, educational, cultural, and governmental activities in Town. With facilities managed by the Council on Aging and the Recreation and Youth Department, the HCC Community Center offers a range



Community Facilities, Services and Infrastructure

Community Facilities

of programs catering to all age groups, fostering self-confidence and promoting mental and physical health. From hosting Town meetings to providing spaces for elections, flu clinics, passport and visa services, and emergency management training, the HCC plays a vital role in civic life. Guided by its mission statement, the HCC aims to provide inclusive opportunities that enrich the lives of residents and enhance community cohesion.

The 204 Cultural Arts Municipal Building is a 77,000 square foot multi-use facility and serves as the hub for municipal department programming, creative education, recreation, cultural services, and programs. With facilities managed by the Department of Cultural Affairs there is a wide range of programs offered to the community and all ages. The facility has hosted a variety of housing fairs through the Housing Advocacy Department; wellness and environmental fairs through the Department of Health; and, a variety of community organizations and events such as the Harwich Climate Action Network, the Harwich Cranberry Festival, Cape Cod Commission, Lighthouse Charter School, and various other small dance studio companies and groups within the Harwich Community. The facility has also hosted external community members through regional relationships and attracted Cape Cod residents from all over the Cape and beyond. The 204 aims envsions a vibrant, connected community engaged in discovering, exploring and creating. The supportive power of extended family in all of its definitions is embraced, as is the belief that the spirit and energy of community and our participation in it empowers and transforms.

The heartbeat of the Harwich Cultural Districts, the 204 nurtures the voices of artists, and creative works to cultivate leaders who lift up our people and work to attract individuals and organizations to provide community programs and resources that will drive the community forward. The warmth, enthusiasm, and unity of our cultural hub echoes throughout Harwich, and serves as an example of inclusive art making, kinship and cultural expression. The 204 is a place where art happens, business happens, life happens, and community grows. It starts a dialog and social infrastructure is fostered.

The Cape Cod Theater Company/Harwich Junior Theater is a arts and cultural institution founded in 1951 is a vibrant center for the arts in Harwich.







Photo credit: (top) Bob Tucker, Focal Point Studio

Community Facilities, Services and Infrastructure

Non-Profit & Religious Organizations

Harwich is truly blessed to have the richness of a vibrant non-profit community addressing the many needs and challenges of Harwich residents. Founded in 1989 by volunteers from the St. Vincent De Paul Society of Holy Trinity Church, The Family Pantry of Cape Cod began as a small food assistance initiative. The Family Pantry has since expanded into a significant non-profit organization based in Harwich, operating from a large warehouse on Queen Anne Road. The pantry offers essential services including a mobile pantry, a satellite location at Cape Cod Community College, and a distribution hub for 28 local food pantries and soup kitchens. The Family Pantry provides food, clothing, SNAP application assistance, fuel assistance support, and health services like blood pressure and blood sugar testing, emphasizing community support and wellness.

In addition, several non-profit organizations provide substantial social support to Harwich residents including:

- **Harwich Ecumenical Council** (HECH) addresses housing insecurity
- **WECAN** focuses on empowering women as they face address challenges and explore opportunities in their lives
- **Harwich Children's Fund** and the Friends of the Council on Aging provide services to our children and seniors.
- **Homeless Prevention Council** (HPC) provides housing stability services.
- **The Harwich Conservation Trust** (HCT)
- **Friends of the Brooks Free Library**
- **Harwich Historical Society**
- **Cape Cod Theatre / Harwich Junior Theatre** (CCT/HJT)
- **Hands of Hope Food Pantry and Outreach Center in West Harwich**
- **Cape Cod Chamber Orchestra** and **Guild of Harwich Artists** add to the richness of cultural life in Harwich.

Harwich also benefits from several foundations such as the Caleb Chase Fund and the Harwich Fund of the Cape Cod Foundation which provides support across a spectrum of needs.

Harwich is also quite fortunate to have several churches with an active presence in the Harwich community. The First Congregational Church in Harwich Center dates back to 1747, while the Pilgrim Church in Harwich Port dates back to 1854. The South Harwich Meeting House dates back to 1836 and still serves the Harwich community through a variety of civic and cultural events. Although considerably newer from a historical perspective, the Holy Trinity Catholic Church in West Harwich serves the needs of Harwich and Dennis along with other churches in Harwich, including Saint Peters Lutheran and Christ Episcopal church. Other libraries that continue to be well supported and are public centers of community life include Harwich Port Library and Chase Library.



Albro House - Harwich Human Services

Community Facilities, Services and Infrastructure

Waste Management

The Harwich Transfer Station serves as a central facility for waste management and recycling efforts in the Town and the lower Cape region. Open seven days a week from 8 am to 4 pm, 362 days a year, it handles household waste, recyclables, and construction debris. Household waste, known as municipal solid waste (MSW), is transported to ABC Disposal in Rochester, Massachusetts. The drop-off Recycling Center accepts paper, plastic, glass, and metal, while the Construction and Demolition (C&D) pad manages wood waste and construction debris. Staffed by volunteers, the Treasure Chest is open weekends for Harwich residents and taxpayers to drop off or pick up useful items in good conditions. A resident/taxpayer Treasure Chest sticker is required. In addition, the Garden Club of Harwich, working with the Department of Public Works, initiated a food waste collection and composting program at the Harwich Transfer Station in 2024, reducing the amount of solid waste that otherwise would be trucked off Cape for incineration.

In addition to regular waste management operations, the Transfer Station also hosts household hazardous waste (HHW) collections. These collections aim to protect the local drinking water by safely disposing of toxic chemicals that cannot be thrown away in regular trash. Open to town residents and accessible to residents and visitors to the Lower Cape, the collection service is crucial in keeping hazardous materials out of the water supply.



Harwich Transfer Station

Water Supply

The Board of Water & Wastewater Commissioners, along with the Water & Wastewater Department, is responsible for overseeing and managing the town's water supply. This includes the production of potable drinking water for domestic and firefighting purposes, operation & maintenance of the municipal water system, and ensuring the continued conservation and protection of the town's groundwater resources. Groundwater from the Monomoy Lens, the source of Harwich's drinking water, is pumped from 14 gravel packed wells distributed across 5 wellfields in South, East, and North Harwich. These 14 wells pumped approximately 800 million gallons of water in 2023, that said, annual water use can fluctuate over 100 million gallons due to seasonal and weather-related impacts. The Harwich Water & Wastewater Department manages 14 pump stations, approximately 400 acres of well fields/watershed protection areas, 5 corrosion control facilities, 2 elevated and 1 ground-level water storage tanks and 2 Greensand Water Treatment facilities which provide service to 10,187 metered accounts, 131 fire sprinkler accounts and 1,397 fire hydrants for fire protection. The most recent MassDEP inspection conducted in 2022 found no violations or deficiencies requiring corrective action. In addition, the **Harwich Water Department received the 2024 Public Water Systems Award for Outstanding Performance & Achievement** in the medium and large community water system category, the tenth consecutive year that Harwich has been selected to receive this award.

Water System Improvements

- Phase 3 sewer construction
- Route 28 Water Main Replacement Project
- New Well Source Exploration & Development in North Harwich
- Installed 3 New Backup Generators at Chatham Road, Depot Road, and Bay Road Wellfields
- Distribution System Improvements including improvements to the Pleasant Lake Storage Tank, Water Main Extensions, Valve Repairs, and Water Service Renewals
- Bruce Cahoon WTP Backwash Lagoon Media Replacement

Community Facilities, Services and Infrastructure

Recreational Facilities

Public and Private Beaches

Harwich boasts 14 public saltwater beaches on Nantucket Sound, along with numerous private ones. These beaches are a vital resource, attracting many visitors to the Town. However, they face threats from erosion, overuse, debris, and an invasive seaweed species affecting the south shore.

Six Ponds Special District Ecosystem

In addition to its coastal beaches and recreation areas, Harwich is home to the Six Ponds Special District. This area of freshwater ponds, encompassing Aunt Edies, Black, Cornelius, Hawksnest, Olivers, and Walkers Ponds, represents the largest and most ecologically significant undeveloped land and pond shore on Cape Cod. Recognized for its natural, cultural, and recreational significance, the Six Ponds District of Critical Planning Concern (DCPC) is the focus of a community-based planning effort led by the Harwich Conservation Trust (HCT). The initiative aims to deepen understanding of this fragile ecosystem and develop strategies for its protection. With 400 acres of conservation land, 114 acres of pond surface, and 5 miles of globally rare Coastal Plain Pond Shore habitat, the area is a haven for rare wildlife and contributes to protection of the public water supply. HCT's recent acquisition of the Six Ponds Great Woods property further strengthens conservation efforts in this area. From comprehensive assessments to the preparation of a resource management plan, the initiative aims to safeguard this natural treasure for future generations.

Marinas

The Town owns and operates marina facilities at Saquatucket Harbor, Wychmere Harbor, Allen Harbor, Round Cove, and Herring River. These facilities are overseen by the Harbormaster and Harwich Waterways Committee. An existing conditions assessment prepared in 2009 identified capital planning improvements for each of these facilities and informed recent improvements to Saquatucket Harbor.

Harwich Recreation Lands

The Harwich Recreation and Youth Commission manages around 60 parcels totaling over 100 acres, including beaches, parks, and memorial squares, and organizes year-round youth programs. The Cranberry Valley Golf Course, a 200-acre public course, is also Town-owned.



The 2025 - 2035 Open Space & Recreation Plan survey highlights key recreation needs in Harwich, particularly acquiring land adjacent to existing walking/hiking trails and bike trails to improve trail conditions and access to public open space and park lands. Other needs include land conservation efforts and acquisitions, accessibility improvements throughout Town public facilities, and beach/park amenity enhancements. These priorities align with the Massachusetts 2023 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), which calls for projects that facilitate trail connections to existing or proposed park and recreation areas in Harwich, increase the trail networks with accessibility in mind, and improve access to beaches and other water-based recreation facilities.



(left to right) Saquatucket Harbor Marina; Cranberry Valley Golf Course

Community Facilities, Services and Infrastructure

The Town strives to invest in recreational improvements across all its villages, enhancing trail systems, and prioritizing sidewalk and bicycle facilities. The Town also intends to focus on regulatory best practices that would improve open space conditions and connectivity between recreation facilities. The Town is conscious that it needs to meet the diverse needs of its residents, including its senior population, which constitutes 35.3% of residents.





Analysis of Community Facility Needs

Harwich recognizes the importance of conducting a thorough analysis of community service needs to guide future planning and investment decisions. In the past, the Town examined alternatives and costs associated with development of new and upgraded marina and harbor facilities, as well as successfully repurposing existing facilities, such as the former middle school renovation into The 204 Cultural Center. As reflected in our LCP community visioning workshops, citizens understand the challenges of a very expensive housing market and the threats this poses to a healthy town, including challenges in hiring and retaining essential members of the community like teachers, fire and police personnel and municipal staff. Wastewater infrastructure planning and investment, in addition to water quality improvement initiatives showcase the Town's ongoing commitment to plan for and invest in the necessary and desired community services for its residents and visitors, both today and tomorrow.

Community Facilities, Services and Infrastructure

Analysis of Community Facility Needs

The LCP community visioning workshops revealed a number of areas for new community services and/or facilities, including:

- Improved strategies to create and protect affordable and attainable housing.
- Improved parking strategies and facilities in Harwich Port and Harwich Center.
- Shuttle buses to address seasonal demands for parking.
- Potential for a community swimming pool.
- Additional sidewalks, crosswalks, and traffic calming measures.
- ADA accessibility for town buildings and facilities
- Construction of sewers in Harwich Port and/ or other water quality improvement strategies
- Transfer station improvements, including textile recycling and community composting program.
- Pedestrian amenities in villages, such as benches, bike lanes, bike racks, and bus stops.
- Ensure continued public access to beaches, waterways, and ponds

Visioning workshop participants also expressed support for additional utilization and programming of The 204 and elementary school maintenance. The Town is continuing to examine repurposing existing buildings for other uses to ensure efficient utilization of resources. The Town should consider conducting a townwide community facilities needs inventory and assessment to determine the overall capacity of existing facilities and programs and to plan and fund future facility needs.

Between April and July 2024, Crescendo Consulting Group ("Crescendo") worked in collaboration with the Barnstable County Department of Health and Environment and the Health Departments of Brewster, Chatham, Harwich, and Orleans ("the Lower Cape") to conduct a **Community Health Needs Assessment**. A combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods was used to evaluate perspectives and opinions of community stakeholders.

This Community Health Needs Assessment, supported by the Massachusetts State Action for Public Health Excellence (PHE) Grant, provides a critical process that examines prevailing issues and conditions related to health and basic needs, including the social determinants of health, while identifying resources and opportunities to meet specific community needs.

The Community Health Needs Assessment establishes a profile of a community, determines needs that can be addressed for the population most impacted, includes quantitative and qualitative data to assist in identifying needs, and assists agencies in determining outcomes and strategies.

Key priorities identified in the Lower Cape Health Community Needs Assessment has identified critical health and social challenges, emphasizing the importance of addressing the social determinants of health to improve community well-being. Key priorities include enhancing access to healthcare, particularly for the aging population, increasing affordable housing options, and strengthening mental health and substance use services.

Community Facilities, Services and Infrastructure

Analysis of Community Facility Needs

The **2025-2035 Open Space and Recreation Plan Survey** identified a need for Harwich to continue to support and diversify its recreation programming, offering more program types and programs aimed at specific groups, notably young families and children/teenagers. Dedicating a space to administer indoor programming events was recommended as well. Additionally, the Harwich Council on Aging's Strategic Plan suggests tailored programs for different senior age groups. Various community and recreation facility upgrades were identified in the survey for the Town to consider, which led to various objectives in the 2025 - 2035 OSRP focusing on such improvements. Proposed additions suggest ADA access improvements, new and reconfigured parking spaces, water refilling stations, shower and changing stations, landscape and outdoor lighting, and sanitary facilities at popular open space and beach areas. The Town will continue to support the Harwich Community Center, 204 Cultural Center, and Brooks Library as passive and active recreation and programming spaces for residents.

The **2017 Hazard Mitigation Plan** highlights several community facilities and services vulnerabilities in Harwich due to natural hazard events. These include Saquatucket Harbor, the Department of Natural Resources, and the Harbormaster office, all susceptible to flooding in designated SLOSH and flood hazard areas. Additionally, Allen Harbor Town dock and the Allen Harbor Yacht Club face flood risks exacerbated by sea level rise within the SLOSH area. Pine Oaks Village 1 is also vulnerable to flooding during Category 4 storms in the SLOSH area, while the Herring River bridges at Lower County Road and Route 28 are similarly at risk in flood hazard zones. Beach nourishment to ensure continued existence of Town beaches threatened by erosion is also recommended. Finally, the cell tower located at the Harwich Port golf course is exposed to flooding from rising sea levels, underscoring the pressing need for resilience strategies in these areas.



Saquatucket Harbor Marina

Transportation

Background

Transportation infrastructure in Harwich, like other Lower Cape communities, is defined by the need to accommodate both local and regional seasonal traffic demand within its network of highways, streets, trails, and pathways, while maintaining the distinct scenic, historic, and cultural character of its villages. Two of the Cape's three primary east-west aligned roadways bisect Harwich (US Route 6 and Route 28), with US Route 6 as a two-lane highway with a center lane divided by plastic stanchion delineators, and Route 28 as a local access arterial roadway. Chatham is located east of and wholly borders Harwich; as a result, traffic to Chatham from the Mid and Upper Cape, as well as traffic from Chatham to the Outer Cape, travels through Harwich. US Route 6 provides access to Harwich through interchanges at Route 124 and Route 137. US Route 6 and MA Route 28 are under MassDOT jurisdiction; the remaining roadways in Harwich are under Town jurisdiction, including state numbered routes 39, 124, and 137.

Roadways

Harwich has approximately 171 total miles of varying functional classification; 45 miles of arterial roadways, 11 miles of collector roadways, and 115 miles of local roadways. Roadways are also divided by jurisdiction, with approximately 13 miles of roadway under MassDOT jurisdiction; 141 miles of Town-owned accepted roadways; and approximately 17 miles of private or unaccepted roadways. Harwich has minimum standards for snow removal of unaccepted roadways, establishing a minimum travel lane width of 10 feet and minimum offsets to roadside obstacles. The Department of Public Works annually inspects unaccepted roads and alerts property owners of repairs required to bring the roadway into compliance with Town policy.



South Orleans Road/Queen Anne Road Roundabout



RTA Fixed Route Bus Service

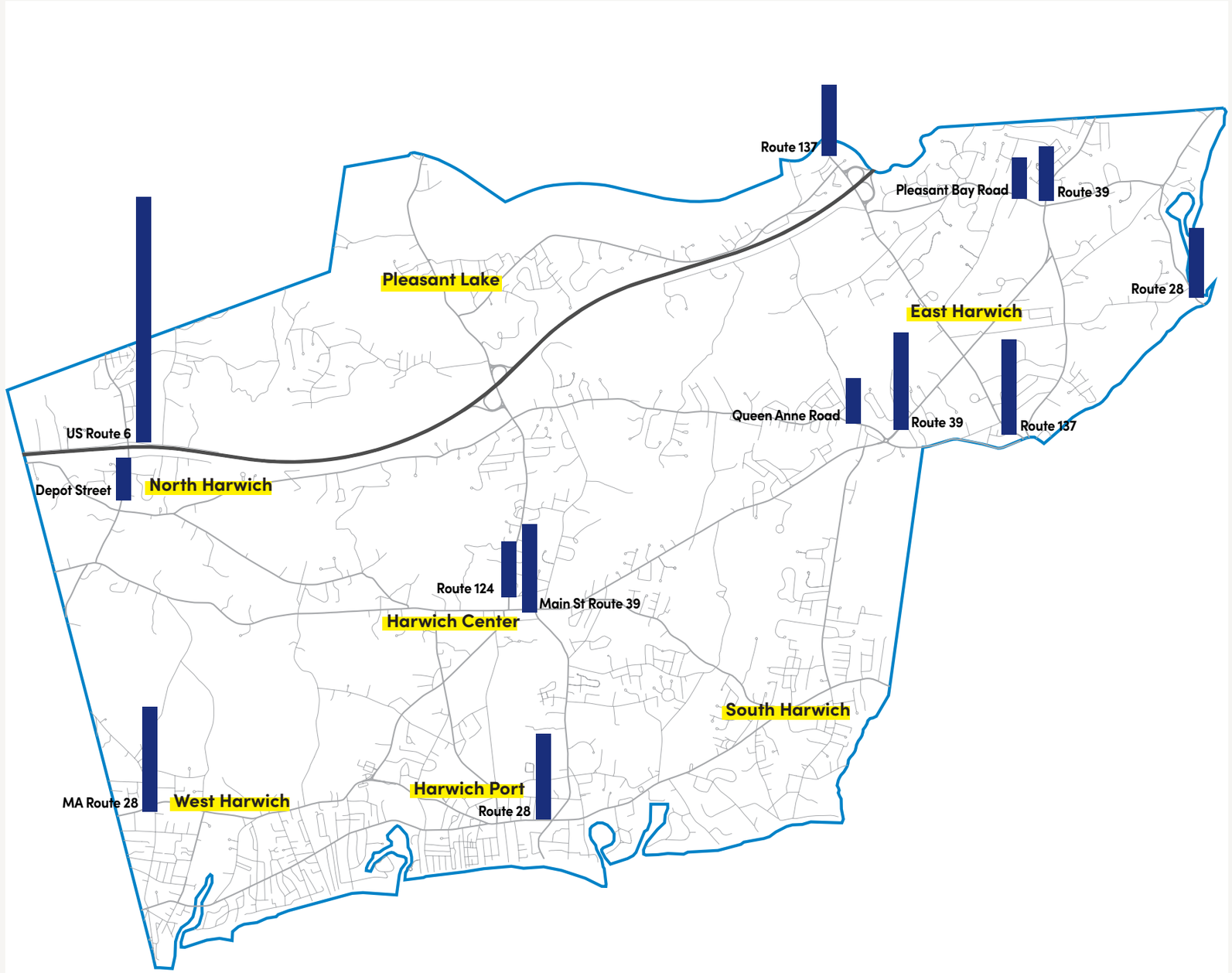
Transportation

Traffic Count Data

The Cape Cod Commission and MassDOT maintain a public database of traffic count data across the Cape. The following table summarizes vehicular traffic volumes for key roads within Harwich and the date of data collection. Locations are summarized by village.

Table 3.5 | Major Intersection Traffic Counts

Roadway	AADT	Date
US Route 6 (east of Route 134)	29,702	August 2023
West Harwich		
MA Route 28 (east of Dennis T/L)	12,686	August 2013
Harwich Center		
Main St Route 39 (east of MA 124)	10,633	July 2019
Route 124 (north of Main St)	6,728	July 2022
Harwich Port		
Route 28 (west of Bank St)	10,367	June 2013
East Harwich		
Route 39 (east of Queen Anne Rd)	11,728	July 2014
Route 137 (north of Queen Anne Rd)	11,520	July 2017
Queen Anne Road (north of MA 39)	5,531	July 2019
Route 39 (north of Pleasant Bay Rd)	6,566	July 2016
Pleasant Bay Road (west of MA 39)	4,983	August 2018
South Harwich		
Route 28 (at Chatham T/L)	8,404	July 2019
North Harwich		
Depot Street	5,173	July 2014
Pleasant Lake		
Route 137 (north of US 6)	8,596	July 2019



Traffic Volumes at Major Intersections

Transportation

Traffic Count Data

This data was collected prior to the COVID-19 global health pandemic, which had a measured impact on traffic volumes in 2020. General Cape transportation trends from 2019 to 2023 indicate traffic volumes near but slightly lower than pre-pandemic levels. As consistent conclusions cannot be drawn from various available data sources, existing conditions data collection is recommended to support future infrastructure improvements in Harwich. Roadway and intersection design should evaluate a peak condition, but should not consistently design to peak demand, as this would result in overbuilt facilities incongruent with the character of the Town and of the region.

Public Transportation

Public transportation on Cape Cod is served by local and regional bus service; CapeFLYER train service from Hyannis to South Station in Boston; ferry service from Harwich to Nantucket and from Hyannis and Falmouth to Martha's Vineyard and/or Nantucket, as well as from Provincetown to Boston; and airports in Barnstable, Chatham, and Provincetown.

Locally within Harwich, the Cape Cod Regional Transit Authority (CCRTA) operates the Hyannis to Orleans "H20" with daily service approximately hourly between downtown Hyannis and Orleans Center via Route 28 and Route 39, excluding Sunday; and the FLEX, operating daily from Harwich to Provincetown, excluding Sunday. The FLEX will "flex" up to ¾ mile off its route to service people who have difficulty getting to a regular bus stop, with reservations required for off-route stops. CCRTA also provides a daily general public demand response service called Dial-A-Ride Transportation (DART) as a door-to-door, ride by appointment service six days a week, with limited service on Sunday.

(left) Queen Anne Road/Route 137 Intersection
(right) RTA Bus Service in East Harwich





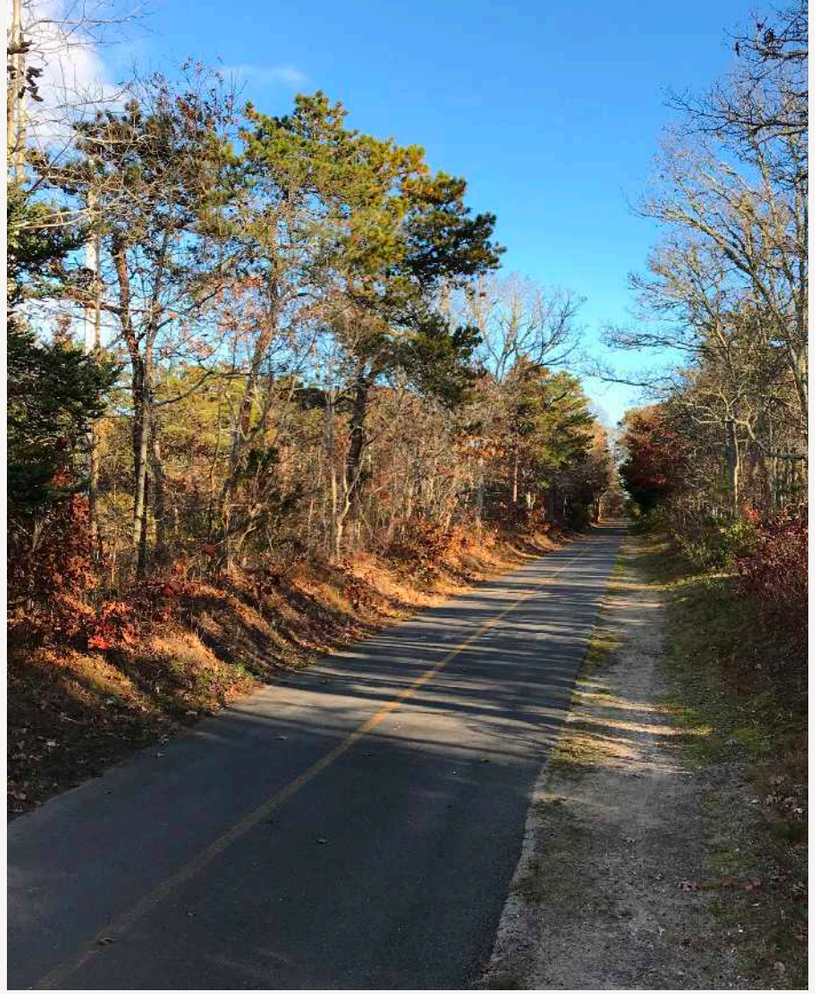
Transportation

Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

The presence of consistent, accessible pedestrian and bicycle facilities supports last mile connectivity, spurs commercial development, and encourages mode shift by giving residents and visitors a viable alternative to vehicle trips. The Cape Cod Rail Trail (CCRT) provides a continuous path for cyclists from Yarmouth to Wellfleet and makes an alignment change from an east/west path to a north/south path in Harwich. The CCRT features a bicycle rotary intersection in Harwich with the Old Colony Rail Trail, which continues east to the Chatham Airport. The CCRT has primary at-grade crossings of Great Western Road, Lothrop Avenue, Queen Anne Road, Headwaters Drive, and Route 124 at two locations, with an underpass under Main Street and an overpass over US Route 6. The Old Colony Rail Trail has primary at-grade crossings of Route 124, Oak Street, Route 39, and Depot Road.

Sidewalks are limited in Harwich, generally provided in the village centers but inconsistently provided elsewhere due to a lack of available roadway right-of-way and a desire to limit the built environment's impact on Harwich's natural and cultural resources. The Town has established a crosswalk policy through its Select Board which describes the criteria for provision, installation, and signage associated with pedestrian crosswalks. The Harwich Bikeways Committee has been established to make recommendations regarding the allocation of funds to be used to ensure safety on Harwich's bikeways. The Town and MassDOT have construction projects currently planned which will construct sidewalks on Route 28 in West Harwich and on Route 28 from Bank Street to Saquatucket Harbor in Harwich Port.

The Town has designed a 3,300-foot sidewalk and roadway improvement project connecting the Harwich Port business district with the recently improved Saquatucket Harbor. The project was funded under the regional Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), and once out to bid, MassDOT will oversee the project through construction, expected to begin in the 2025–2026 off-season. This important amenity provides pedestrian-friendly access between the business district and harbor, as well as several critical facilities in between, including the new Outer Cape Health Services center.



(top) Cape Cod Rail Trail in North Harwich
(bottom) Crosswalk Improvements in Harwich Center



Transportation

Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

Complete Streets

Complete Streets is a fundamental concept of modern infrastructure development and maintenance that, per Massachusetts General Law (MGL) C.90I § 1, "provide safe and accessible options for multiple travel modes for people of all ages and abilities including, but not limited to, walking, cycling, public transportation, automobiles and freight." It confirms a critical need to accommodate users regardless of their age, ability, or income level.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts established a Complete Streets funding program in 2016 to provide grants to municipalities to encourage them to routinely include complete streets design elements during roadway construction or reconstruction. **The Town of Harwich registered for the program but has not developed a Complete Streets Policy or developed a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan.** Up to $50,000 in State funding is available in technical assistance to work on the complete Streets Prioritization Plan and up to $500,000 for project construction. The Complete Streets policy can be a guiding principle for the Town which encourages pedestrian and bicycle accommodation to the greatest extent practical in future infrastructure improvements, provided that community character considerations can be incorporated into the Complete Streets Policy.

Safety

An evaluation of transportation infrastructure Town-wide must consider safety for all users. A review of crash data compiled from local and State police reports indicates 825 crashes in Harwich for the three-year period from 2018 to 2020, with 24 serious and/or fatal injury crashes. Nine of the 825 crashes were pedestrian related, and 21 were bicycle related.

A review of the top 50 crash intersections on Cape Cod reveals three intersections in Harwich: Route 39 (Orleans-Harwich Road) at Pleasant Bay Road; Route 124 at Route 39/Main Street; and Route 137 at Orleans Road. Route 39 at Pleasant Bay Road has the highest crash rate of all Cape intersections based on 2018 to 2020 data. A Road Safety Audit (RSA) was conducted by the Cape Cod Commission in 2016 at this intersection; the Town should continue to pursue improvements recommended by the RSA, including changes to posted speed limits and/or traffic control at the intersection. The Vision Zero Action Plan recently completed by the Cape Cod Commission includes specific statistics and key Town actions to address safety issues.



Harwich Center Crosswalk Improvements

Transportation

Key Issues Moving Forward

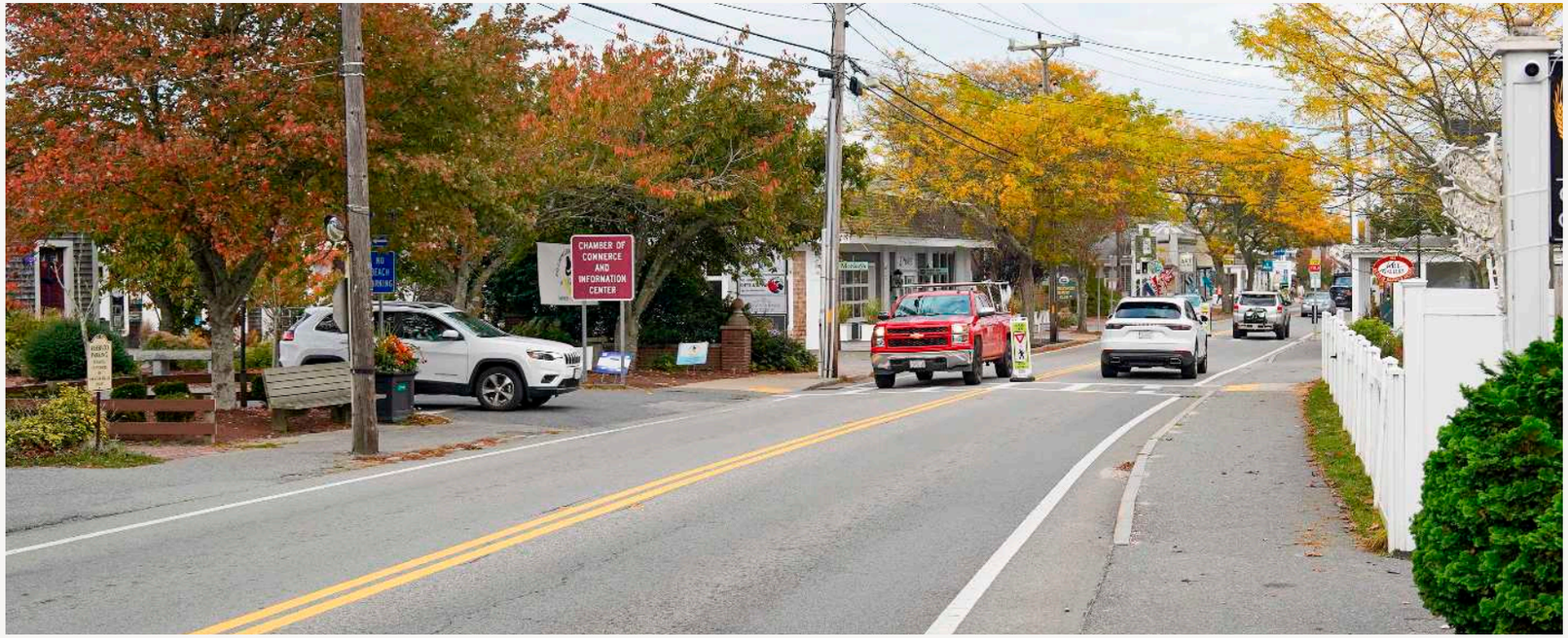
As noted in the Community Facilities, Services and Infrastructure section, participants in LCP visioning workshops identified a number of transportation improvements, particularly in villages:

- Improved parking facilities in Harwich Port and Harwich Center.
- Shuttle buses to address seasonal demands for parking.
- Additional sidewalks, crosswalks, and traffic calming measures.

In addition, LCP survey responses indicated strong support for public transportation alternatives and additional bicycle infrastructure, as well as the need for improved/widened sidewalks and additional sidewalks in Town. Respondents also indicated the desire for improved walkability, particularly in villages.

The US Department of Transportation has adopted a Safe System Approach as the guiding paradigm to address roadway safety. MassDOT through its 2023 Strategic Highway Safety Plan has developed a data-driven strategic plan that integrates the four E's: engineering, education, enforcement, and emergency medical services (EMS) using the Safe System Approach. The Safe System Approach prioritizes the elimination of crashes that result in death and serious injuries by focusing on both human mistakes and human vulnerability, designing a system with many redundancies in place to protect all users. The Town should consider adopting the guiding principles of the Safe System Approach in all infrastructure-related planning and engineering efforts.

In conjunction with the Safe System Approach, improvements in sustainable mobility can address community equity challenges. Block group 3 of Census Tract 112 in Harwich, generally located between and including parts of Harwich Port and Harwich Center, is identified as an Environmental Justice population under the income criteria. Identifying and mitigating risks faced by underserved community members can improve safety for all users. On-demand and fixed route services provided by CCRTA and the help to support this population and lead to improved equitable outcomes across the community.



Harwich Port Village Center

Energy

Background

The impacts of climate change pose a threat to the lives of people, plants, and animals both globally and locally. While global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are the primary driver, requiring macro-scale decarbonization solutions, local communities can also take steps to reduce their emissions and achieve greater energy independence from fossil fuels. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has set a statewide net-zero carbon emissions target for 2050, including a 50% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030.

While Town-wide data regarding Harwich's contribution to GHG emissions are not yet available, according to the 2021 Cape Cod Climate Action Plan (CCAP), the region's 2017 GHG emissions equal 3,564,875 MTCO2E, or approximately 4-5% of Massachusetts state emissions. The CCAP identified the major sources of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) as being from transportation and stationary energy sources (homes and businesses), with transportation (55.5%), and stationary energy sources (39.2%) accounting for 95% of the region's GHG emissions. On-road vehicles account for 43% of the region's emissions and nearly 80% of transportation emissions. Cape Cod is highly residential, with only 2-3% of the reported commercial and industrial building square footage in the state. Residential development is predominantly single-family homes, resulting in the residential subsector being the highest single contributor of stationary energy emissions. Offsetting these overall emissions, forested land captures an equivalent of 9% of the region's carbon emissions. Incorporating energy efficiency in new construction through installation of solar panels or other energy efficiency measures was identified as a top-ranked priority by respondents to the LCP community survey.

The CCAP sustained policy scenario assumed current policies meet their intended goals, however; total regional emissions in 2050 are projected to be approximately 1 million metric tons above the 2050 target, with the transportation sector continuing to be the largest source of emissions through 2050. The CCAP also included four decarbonization scenarios to understand what types of changes would be necessary to meet the Massachusetts GHG emissions reduction goals. All four scenarios show that significant growth in the share of new vehicle sales that are light-duty EVs, and in the use of heat pump systems for both retrofits and whole home systems will be needed to meet emissions reductions goals.

Recent Trends

As discussed in the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) report, most of Harwich is served by above ground utilities for power, internet, and phone service, which can become incapacitated during and following storm and high wind events, the latter of which can cause significant disruptions to the power grid. Downed trees and limbs can also impede access to residents and businesses; cause property damage; and place a strain on public safety resources and personnel. The vulnerability of both the power supply and delivery infrastructure, as well as telecommunications has been evident during recent storm events. This issue is of particular concern during the busy summer season when visitors and workers are likely unfamiliar with the town's emergency planning programs and may be unaware of what to do during or after a hazard event. The Town should continue efforts to support education and awareness for residents and seasonal visitors and workers about the Town's emergency planning programs around these outage events.

Energy

Recent Actions by the Town

Harwich has a dedicated Energy and Climate Action Committee (ECAC) charged with considering all energy-related issues that could affect the Town and its residents. The ECAC recently engaged the Cape Cod Climate Action Network (CANs) members in Eastham on a residential solar energy workshop that drew up to 90 participants. The ECAC is also active in identifying electric vehicle (EV) charging sites throughout Town and advocating for private installations like those that the retail supermarket Stop and Shop has installed at other New England locations. There are currently 11 Level 2 charging stations in Harwich, including 7 free stations.

As noted in the Transportation section, the Town should consider adopting a Complete Streets policy to help plan for and fund future sidewalk and roadway improvement projects to reduce dependency on the automobile.



Solar panels at Harwich Transfer Station

The Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources, home to the Green Communities Division (GCD) provides grants, technical assistance, and local support to help municipalities reduce energy use and costs by implementing clean energy projects in municipal buildings, facilities, and schools. The Town took steps to become designated a Green Community under the program in 2018, including adoption of the State's energy "Stretch Code", a more energy-efficient alternative to the Base Energy Code of the building code for new buildings. In 2022, the Town was awarded grant funds from the program for energy conservation measures at the Brooks Free Library ($152,910) and the Community Center ($160,913). Continuing to identify opportunities and pursue grants under the GCD is an important energy and climate mitigation strategy.

As noted in the Climate Resilience section, in 2020 the Town prepared a report under the Massachusetts Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program, which identified actions the Town could take to enhance infrastructure resiliency. In FY24, the town received a MVP Action Grant for the Route 124 Culvert Restoration project ($89,913).

Since 2010, the Town has worked with the Cape and Vineyard Electric Cooperative (CVEC) to install municipal solar projects at the Harwich elementary school, the capped landfill, and Cranberry Valley Golf Course. The Town should also work with electrical power providers to ensure the electrical grid is upgraded to meet increased demands.

Energy

Key Issues Moving Forward

As previously discussed, the 2021 CCAP established a baseline inventory that identified the need to reduce emissions as a whole and specifically within the transportation and building sectors. The Town could consider completing a town-wide GHG inventory and climate action plan to support the Town's climate goals. Advancing decarbonization initiatives, such as siting additional EV charging stations and pursuing additional energy reduction and efficiency measures in public buildings, such as those at the Brooks Free Library and Community Center, are actions the Town should continue as priority initiatives. The Town could also work with the Cape Light Compact to complete additional energy assessments of public buildings to support additional grant funding from the Green Communities program.

Through the Energy and Climate Action Committee, the Town could continue to sponsor annual, small-scale home solar and heat pump informational events and develop a tracking system for electrical permits for installation of these technologies as a way to both educate the public and document emissions reductions efforts in the stationary residential subsector.

The Town should continue to work with regional partners, such as CVEC and the RTA, to identify locations for different levels of EV charging stations, such as the Park and Ride lot located at Route 6 and 124. This type of location may be ideal for Level 1 charging stations, while other locations are more suited to Level 2 or 3 charging stations.

As noted in the Climate Resilience section, updating the Town's Hazard Mitigation Plan (2017) will help inform the Town's risk and vulnerability to natural hazards exacerbated by climate change, and perhaps improve resilience to recent natural hazard events, such as the 2019 tornado that touched down in Harwich Center. Documenting the impacts from these types of local events from the public safety officials who responded to them, and who are the primary experts involved in updating local hazard mitigation plans, is valuable information to capture. Understanding the infrastructure impacts, such as downed power lines, trees, and power outages, and how long it took to clear debris and recover these systems can help with emergency preparedness and resiliency to future events.

As a region, over 80% of Cape Cod's land area is already protected or developed, with over 90,000 acres of protected open space. Between 2001 and 2011, however, the Cape lost more than 2,300 acres of forest cover, with 70% of the loss replaced by development (buildings, driveways, parking lots, etc.). Preserving tree canopy, including but not limited to possible tree cutting limitations, was identified by LCP survey respondents as the top-ranked step the Town could take to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Focusing future development in village centers including housing, economic activity and services and away from areas that are undeveloped can also help maintain the Town's ability to sequester carbon.

COMMUNITY NETWORKS

Background

As noted in the 2018 RPP, Cape Cod's community systems, which include the culture, people, and economic activity of the area, are critical for fostering and maintaining vibrant communities and social networks that serve and support the people who live, work, and play in the region. Community systems are intricately tied to the environment. Impacts to natural systems, such as those related to climate change or water quality, will present challenges with respect to protecting cultural heritage, community character, and the economy.

Community Networks

Cultural Heritage
- Background

Local Economy
- Background
- Regional Economy
- Local Economy
- Local Demographics

Housing
- Background
- Population and Household Trends
- Housing and Market Affordability
- Priority Affordable Housing Needs
- Regulatory Barriers and Challenges
- Community Perceptions

Harwich Port Village Center



Cultural Heritage

Background

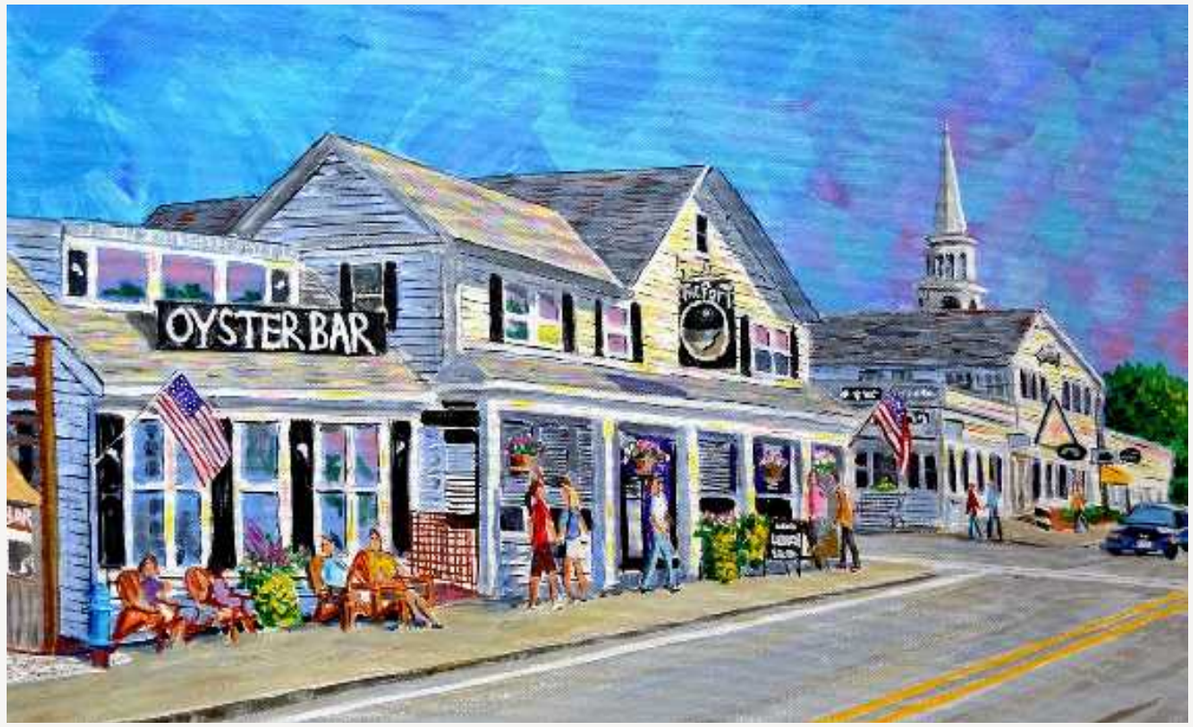
As in other Cape communities, Harwich's rich cultural heritage and historic character stem from its Native American beginnings to its maritime industrial growth and success as a resort destination. Harwich's character is deeply rooted in its historic and cultural districts, each offering a unique blend of heritage, arts, and natural beauty. The Harwich Center Cultural District, nestled in the town's historical core, serves as a hub for creative expression and cultural exchange. Repurposing the former middle school into a cultural center has catalyzed a dynamic arts scene, offering a space for local talents to flourish and contribute to the region's economic and cultural vitality.

Meanwhile, the Harwich Port Cultural District celebrates the town's maritime legacy, with a vibrant arts and music scene drawing visitors in the summer and shoulder seasons. Thoughtful zoning changes and infrastructure projects have helped reinvigorate the village with artisan shacks at the Seaside Marketplace and live music events and outdoor dining. These districts not only preserve Harwich's rich history but also foster a sense of community and belonging, where residents and visitors alike can immerse themselves in the town's artistic and cultural tapestry.

As noted in the Community Design section, each of Harwich's seven villages contain historic buildings, churches, scenic roads, and natural resources that help define their unique character. Over 57% of LCP community survey respondents felt it was extremely important to preserve the historic character of the Town, with preservation of historic structures ranked as the most important characteristic to retain.

(Left) Vendors set up on the lawn in front of The 204 for the weekly Thursday farmers market. Photo: Merrily Cassidy, Cape Cod Times.
(Right) Painting by BixDeBaiseArt of Harwich Port.





Cultural Heritage

Recent Actions by the Town

The 204 Cultural Arts Municipal Building on Sission Road was formerly a middle school building. The heartbeat of the Harwich Cultural Districts, the 204 provides a central venue for artists and creative activities and is an example of innovation and investment by the Town to support arts and culture. The 204 provides rental space to community members, visitors, and alike to use for events, programs, workshops, and conferences. The 204 provides valuable “launch space” where individuals can use their creative gifts and contribute to the local economy.

Recently, CPA funds have been sought for the preservation of the nearly 200-year-old Baptist Church in West Harwich. Plans for the historic church include preservation of the exterior while converting it into a cultural and community center. The Town's consideration of preservation projects reflects a broader commitment to leveraging historical assets for community benefit. As Harwich continues to evolve, these development trends ensure that its rich cultural heritage remains at the forefront, attracting residents and visitors alike to be a part of its unique blend of history, art, community engagement and coastal charm.



First Baptist Church in Harwich is prioritized for restoration. More recent changes and fixes are evident on its facade.. Photo credit: John Carey

Key Issues Moving Forward

Continued use of historic districts to protect historic resources to ensure that historic resources are protected. As noted in the Community Design section, only one of Harwich's seven villages (Harwich Center) is designated as a National Register Historic District and a Local Historic District. Five of the remaining six villages are inventoried in Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS), but only West Harwich has been evaluated for listing as a National Register District. The Town should evaluate other local or National Register historic districts in other villages to offer additional protections for their historic resources.

Throughout the Cultural District Assessment conducted as part of the Mass Cultural Council’s effort to approve Harwich, several items were detailed throughout Harwich Center and Harwich Port where efforts could be enhanced or focused on for future improvements. Those items were: wayfinding signage, lighting, and pole banner signage. A larger focus was placed on street and sidewalk materials and pedestrian safety.

Local Economy

Background

Participants of the Local Comprehensive Planning Committee's 2024 Harwich LCP workshops identified several priorities that they would like to see to support the Town's local economy. The three most important priorities were:

- Better support for small businesses that serve local needs.
- Better access to health services including mental health services.
- Support for local retailers and restaurants

Respondents to the LCP survey expressed strong support for both affordable and attainable housing as the type of growth the town should focus on in the future with affordable homes/rentals and support services for young families and children.

Participants in the visioning workshops further expressed a desire for more businesses and services such as improved internet access, affordable childcare, and availability of electric vehicle charging stations. The participants made clear their care and appreciation for local and small businesses and acknowledged the need for a greater support system for these businesses to better serve the local economy.

Regional Economy

As stated in the 2024 Cape Cod Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) draft update, the region has a rich economic history with beginnings as a small, subsistence-based economy, transitioning to a maritime industry in the 1800's, to today's tourism-driven economy. Dominant industries presently include accommodation and food services, healthcare and social assistance, retail trade, construction, and educational services. These top five industries comprise 63% of the average monthly employment in the region. However, those industries only account for approximately 30% of the region's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The largest contributor to the region's GDP is real estate and rental and leasing. According to the 2024 draft CEDS, the region had a GDP of just over $16 billion in 2022 – though this number decreased by 7% between 2019 and 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As stated in Cape Cod Commission's 2023 Land Use Planning for Economic Resilience Plan, COVID-19 exacerbated existing economic trends and heightened pre-existing challenges that exist for the region's industries that rely on tourism.

Barnstable County provides strong educational opportunities that contribute to the region's economy such as Cape Cod Community College, Bridgewater State College, Massachusetts Maritime Academy, two Regional Technical high schools, and K-12 schools. One of these two technical high schools, Cape Cod Technical high school, is located in Harwich. According to 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) data, the County's labor force makes up 59.8% of the population, with approximately 96.2% of the population holding a high school degree and over; 50.1% holding a bachelor's or more advanced degree (compared with approximately 91.3% of all Massachusetts residents holding a high school degree; and about 46.6% holding a bachelor's degree or higher).

Based on the 2017 Cape Cod Housing Market Analysis, the cost of the housing stock is unobtainable to approximately half of Cape Cod's population because of low wage growth. Average wages in all the top seven Cape Cod sectors—accommodation and food



Source: Housing Cape Cod: The Regional Strategy, Cape Cod Commission, 2024

Local Economy

services, retail trade, healthcare, professional and technical services, construction, local government, and administrative/waste services—are below the amount of household income per year required to afford a median priced house in the region. (The US Department of Housing and Urban Development defines housing affordability as paying 30% or less of a household's income on housing).

Local Economy

Like so many communities across the globe, Harwich's local economy was significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Cape Cod Commission and Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce issued surveys from 2020 – 2022 to better gauge the effects of the pandemic across the communities in Barnstable County. Survey results indicated increased costs in the summer of 2021 for several businesses were predominantly related to cleaning and sanitation, wages and hazard pay and moving operations online. The highest operational impacts were a decline in customers, clients, and sales as well as having to enforce social distancing and mask regulations and increase cleaning and sanitation. Survey results also indicated that the highest percentage of resources used to mitigate the negative impact of these increased costs were personal savings and retirement followed by federal loan/grant funding. Despite the challenges, results indicated a strong rebound in the second year of the pandemic. Respondents reported that the months of operation in 2021 more closely resembled pre-pandemic levels compared to 2020 and 2019.

According to DataCapeCod, the Cape Cod Commission's online decision support tool with economic and other data, Harwich's top three employment sectors are in accommodation and food services (20%), retail trade (17%), and construction (15%). Harwich is also fortunate to have the Cape Cod Healthcare Fontaine Medical Center and Outer Cape Community Healthcare conveniently located in Harwich, offering local advantages to residents. Of Harwich's total labor force of 6,943 persons, Harwich had an annual unemployment rate of 6.1% in 2022 compared to 4.5% for Barnstable County as a whole. US decennial census data shows the median household income in Harwich is $82,851 with 5.2% of Harwich's population are at or below the poverty level.

Assessor's Data shows the tax rate for FY24 is $5.91 which is 61 cents less than the FY23 rate of $6.64. The 2022 Town of Harwich Annual Comprehensive Financial Report indicates that the principal taxpayers are Eversource and Wequasset Inn LLP. However, real estate tax is a major funding source for Town operations. For 2022, the Town collected $53,511,334 total tax collections for property tax.

The 2022 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report further identifies that seasonal employment accounts for a large portion of the local employment base, supplemented by full-time employment. The economy in Harwich continues to be dependent on second-home owners and summer visitors. As of 2022, ACS data shows that Harwich has 10,527 total housing units. While second-homeowners provide a substantial contribution to the tax base, 38% of the total units are vacant for seasonal or recreational use, further adding pressure to local housing demand.



Harwich Port Village Center

Local Economy

Local Demographics

Like many Cape Cod communities, Harwich is populated by a mixture of working families and individuals, retirees, and seasonal residents and visitors. According to 2020 ACS data the median age in Harwich is 59.9, compared to 55.7 for Barnstable County as a whole. Thirty-five percent of Harwich's year-round population is aged 65 years or older. Of Harwich's residents, forty-five percent have a bachelor's degree or higher while 77.1% of the school enrolled population are enrolled in kindergarten to 12th grade.

As indicated in 2020 US Census Data, 93% of Harwich's population are white alone, 1.9% are Hispanic or Latino, .3% are Asian alone, .9% are black or African American alone, and 3.5% are two or more races. ACS data shows 12% of the population have reported a disability. The highest three disabilities are ambulatory difficulty, hearing difficulty, and independent living difficulty.

Recent Actions by the Town

According to the 2022 Town of Harwich Annual Comprehensive Financial Report, the Town has experienced significant economic growth over the past 3 years. In 2022, the Town supported more than $19.2 million in new commercial mixed-use and residential development projects, which are either completed or in various stages of design and development.



Harwich Port Commons; photo credit: Stony Point Development Group

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the United States government rolled out The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES Act), and, in conjunction with other federal legislation, created federal funding opportunities for state and local governments to address COVID-19. The Town of Harwich received CARES Act relief in addition to FEMA funding and Medicaid funding for eligible expenses that combat the unanticipated costs accrued from the pandemic. According to the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report, Harwich received $1.069 million from the CARES Act which was crucial to relieving the cost of pandemic response. These funds also contributed to the Town's ability to sustain services for residents throughout the pandemic such as meal programs through the Council on Aging for their target populations, funding for emergency operation, and for recreation enforcement personnel to administer safety protocols.

Local Economy

Key Issues Moving Forward

Harwich's vibrant culture, unique character, and charm are, in part, attributed to the Town's local economy. As discussed in various sections of the LCP, local businesses, the presence of retail and service industries, and the presence of recreational, educational and health facilities help to strengthen and diversify the Town's economic base. Supporting existing businesses and encouraging development and redevelopment in key districts will help promote further economic growth and continue to attract visitors and residents alike.

Harwich is fortunate to have a good bond rating and large percentage of second homeowners contributing to the Town's tax base. Investments in municipal infrastructure, such as municipal sewer service, are important to meet local housing needs and support commercial business. Furthermore, implementation of the 2024 Housing Production Plan will be a priority to retaining and attracting working families that will support Harwich's tourism and recreational opportunities. Given the high costs of rental housing and home ownership, development of housing types beyond single-family homes, particularly encouragement of mixed-use development, will be required to meet the needs of existing and prospective residents, especially those in the local workforce. Community survey respondents indicated a growing need for health services. With 12% of the population experiencing disabilities and a growing elderly population, attracting these services will be key to retaining and sustaining Harwich's year-round population.

Harwich should consider utilizing technical services offered by the Cape Cod Commission and Commonwealth of Massachusetts to support economic growth. The District Local Technical Assistance Program (DLTA) is funded by the Commonwealth and executed by the Cape Cod Commission to help municipalities with sustainable development. The Year 3 Annual Report produced by the Cape Cod Commission includes an initiative to advance the Land Use Planning for Economic Resilience effort to facilitate vibrant, compact mixed-use downtown areas across the region and improve the stability and resiliency of the local economy. The Best Practices portion of the study details context-specific best practices for commercial and mixed-use types as well as a mixed-use model bylaw. The Town has an opportunity to engage with the Commission to review and revise local bylaws to meet its economic and community development goals.

Economic development in Harwich is also impacted by the lack of reliable high-speed Internet. Residents and businesses alike would benefit from "last-mile" infrastructure improvements, making high-speed broadband infrastructure more accessible and affordable.



Harwich Port Village Center

Housing

Background

Housing is discussed in more detail in Section 6, Housing Production Plan Summary. However, key elements of existing housing conditions in Harwich are described below.

The Town of Harwich is known for its small-town character, extensive shoreline, historic and cultural traditions, and scenic beauty. It is an attractive com munity for summer visitors, second-home owners and residents seeking a Cape Cod lifestyle. Housing affordability over the past decade has become increasingly challenging and further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and escalating land and home values.

Population and Household Trends

- Harwich has seen a **9% population increase over the last decade.** The Town last saw modest population loss between 2000 and 2010 when population declined from 12,386 to 12,243 residents. According to US Census Data, the population as of April 2020 was about 13,440 with estimates for 2022 reaching 13,647.
- The town has seen a **rise in older populations**, which reflects the aging of the baby boomers. Population projections indicate a continuation of this trend.
- Harwich has seen an **increase in non-family households containing only single individuals** – in 2021 about 70% of these single occupants were 65 years of age or older.
- Due to escalating living expenses and the types of jobs needed to match those expenses, **Harwich is seeing significant declines in younger adults.** Population projections indicate a continuation of this trend.
- The **minority population is small but increasing**. According to 2021 US Census estimates, approximately 5.4% of the population is classified as a minority.
- **Median household income has increased from $54,958 in 2010 to $79,641 in 2021**. However, this income is below the 80% Area Median Income (AMI) for Barnstable County for a 3-person household.

Housing

Housing and Market Affordability

- The State's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) for the Town of Harwich revealed **4.98% of year-round housing units designated as affordable** as of June 2023. Of the existing SHI eligible units, 264 are rental units and 64 are homeownership units.
- **Market prices for homes and rentals have increased over the past decade**. These prices have risen faster than incomes, which is making the market less affordable.
- Median single-family home values have increased, with the **median home value standing at $650,000 in 2023**.
- **Median condominium sales price was at an unprecedented high of $339,500** as of August 2023.
- **Owner occupied units increased by 8.7% between 2010 and 2021 with renter occupied units decreasing by 26%** between the same time period. According to the 2024 Housing Production Plan, this loss could be attributed to the conversion of seasonal or part-time units to owner occupancy units during the pandemic.
- **Market rents are increasing**, posing challenges for existing and prospective renter population, particularly lower-income residents. As of 2023, rent for a typical 2-bedroom apartment is approximately $2,400.
- Harwich is facing **challenges in providing affordable housing** for low- to moderate-income groups, particularly individuals who have claimed some type of disability.

Priority Affordable Housing Needs

Considering the trends identified above, Harwich will look to address the following priority needs:

- **Create/expand rental housing opportunities**, particularly for low- and moderate- income individuals and families.
- Provide a **diversity of affordable housing options** that include first-time homeownership opportunities for young families, as well as empty-nesters looking to downsize.
- Integrate **more supportive housing services**, such as handicapped-adaptable or accessible, into all new housing development to support those with disabilities and a growing population of seniors.
- Establish **programs to support necessary home improvements**, including lead abatement and septic repairs for low- and moderate-income households, particularly the elderly living on fixed incomes.

Housing

Regulatory Barriers and Challenges

Like many Massachusetts towns, Harwich's historic regulatory practices pose challenges to producing affordable housing and include some of the following:

- **Infrastructure limitations**, particularly the lack of sewer services, and the cost factor for infrastructure to support new development.
- **Environmental protection concerns** and land use constraints from protected lands.
- **Zoning characteristics** such as large minimum lot sizes, density restrictions and a lack of inclusionary zoning policies, which would require a percentage of units in any new development be affordable or attainable.
- **Reduction in financial resources to subsidize affordable housing** preservation and production and rental assistance as a result of other priority spending areas, such as water/wastewater infrastructure.

Community Perceptions

In 2024, a community Survey and visioning workshops were conducted to better inform this Comprehensive Plan update. Residents expressed concern for the current and future status of housing options in Harwich and indicated preferred options for mitigating these concerns. Of those identified, housing affordability and a more diverse housing stock were consistently within the top 3 concerns and challenges, particularly as they relate to the community's desire for a year-round, working community, rather than a resort or retirement community lifestyle. Other concerns included overdevelopment and water quality issues.

Residents recognize the limited housing availability in the community and indicated that they'd like to see more housing options for Harwich's year-round workforce and for young families or first-time homebuyers. The high cost of housing is a prevalent concern, as it impacts residents' disposable income. Escalating home prices pose significant challenges for both prospective buyers and renters.

There's a growing apprehension about the prevalence of short-term rentals and vacation homes. Several respondents indicated they would not like to see turnover in the housing stock go towards these purposes and would, instead, prefer these houses return to the market as long-term rentals or purchases to attract young families. The higher demand for short-term rentals further compounds the challenges of housing availability. Respondents also noted a desire for a diverse range of housing to meet the needs of the growing senior population; particularly those who grew up in Harwich and may not be able to afford to stay in the community.

Understanding these concerns, Harwich is committed to mitigating housing challenges and has undertaken efforts to address affordability.

Housing

Recent Actions by the Town

The Town has actively taken steps to provide opportunities and mitigate challenges related to housing. According to the 2023 Annual Town Report, the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) allocated funds to the Harwich Affordable Housing Trust for community housing projects and for the Community Development Partnership to support the Lower Cape Housing Institute. In addition to CPC's actions, the Planning Board amended the Accessory Apartment Bylaw at the 2023 Annual Town Meeting. Amendments included changing the use from special permit to a by-right permit, which removes some regulatory barriers and streamlines the application and approval process for this important housing type.

Harwich added a full-time Housing Advocate position in December 2022 who reports to the Town Administrator. The Housing Advocate is available to community members who have requests for assistance, housing questions, comments, or ideas about community housing. The Housing Advocate has helped the Town make progress on community outreach and education on housing assistance funding programs (rental and homeownership), and Accessory Dwelling Unit permitting.

The FY2024-2028 Affordable Housing Trust Strategic Plan details the charge and purpose of The Harwich Affordable Housing Trust, which was established through Town Meeting in 2019. The purpose of the Trust is to provide for the creation and preservation of affordable housing to benefit low- and moderate-income households. The mechanism through which the Trust achieves this purpose is through project initiation and facilitation, real estate or property acquisition, and project funding. The Trust is working on an affordable housing development of up to 90 bedrooms, with rental units targeted to a wide range of income levels, from 30 percent to 100 percent of the area median income, on the 12-acre Marceline property on Pleasant Lake Avenue between Queene Anne Road and Route 6 that is owned by the Harwich Affordable Housing Trust.

The Trust has also been facilitating local discussion of a private affordable housing development, Pine Oaks Village IV, which would expand the existing Pine Oaks Village I through III properties. In addition, the Trust and the CPC allocated funds to Habitat for Humanity of Cape Cod which helped to build six (6) one- to three-bedroom affordable homes on Murray Lane. These units are included in the State's Subsidized Housing Inventory and will help the Town to meet the 10% affordability requirement stipulated under MGL Chapter 40B.

Other recent projects included the conversion of the Old Bank Street Firehouse to include three rental units as well as the redevelopment of the West Harwich Schoolhouse into 10 rental units. All these units will be eligible for inclusion on the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI).

Key Issues Moving Forward

Given the current needs of the community, determining appropriate locations for future development where infrastructure exists or is planned will be key to addressing Harwich's housing needs. Feedback from visioning workshops conducted to support this Comprehensive Plan update provided useful insight as to participants' favored housing locations and styles. Participants were asked to select preferred housing types and locations within Town for future housing. The workshop results indicated that residents see village centers as ideal locations for new housing development. The preferred housing types in these locations are mixed-use developments followed by duplexes and multiplexes or historic conversions. Identifying parcels suitable for these housing types in those ideal locations would meet the needs identified by the community. Zoning changes should balance residential and commercial growth with the community's vision for each of the village centers.

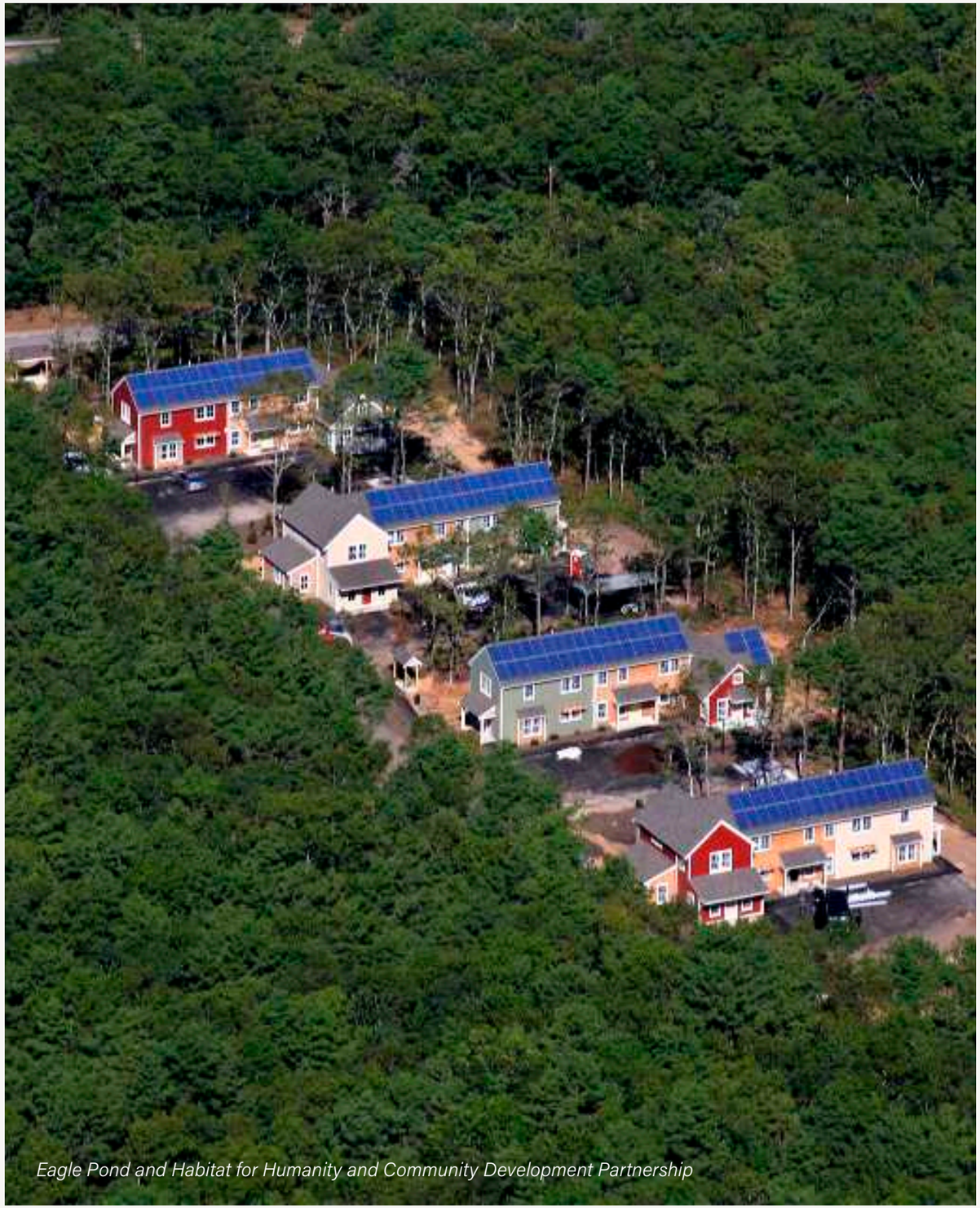
In addition to identifying housing locations and forms, respondents of the visioning workshops acknowledge that infrastructure improvements will be needed to support future housing development and demographics. For

Housing

Key Issues Moving Forward

example, improvements to sewer services and transportation will need to occur to accommodate housing development. Participants also stressed that environmental considerations should be taken into account when planning for housing development and infrastructure improvements – specifically considerations for water quality protection and improvement and preservation of natural resources. This planning process also identified a preference for small-scale, scattered, infill development in existing neighborhoods.

Increasing and diversifying Harwich's housing stock will help meet the need of existing and future workers and families, as well as the needs of the aging population. Through careful planning and policy development, Harwich will continue to take the steps necessary to support a strong community system.



Eagle Pond and Habitat for Humanity and Community Development Partnership

Section 4

COMMUNITY GOALS, OBJECTIVES, & ACTIONS

This section identifies planning and land use goals for the Town of Harwich that are consistent with those contained in the Regional Policy Plan.

NATURAL SYSTEMS

The following goals are put in place to protect and restore the quality and function of the region's natural environment that provides clean water and healthy ecosystems upon which life depends.

Natural Systems

Water Resources

Ocean Resources

Wetland Resources

Wildlife and Plant Habitat

Open Space



Water Resources

Goal

To maintain a sustainable supply of high-quality drinking water and to protect, preserve, or restore the ecological integrity of Harwich's fresh and marine surface water resources for present and future community needs.

Water Resources Objectives

- Improve water quality in marine watersheds through public education, regulation, and mitigation measures.
- Protect existing public drinking water supply areas and acquire lands for future water supply development.
- Increase monitoring of freshwater ponds and lakes to document their condition and develop management recommendations and priorities for water quality improvement.

Water Resources Actions

- Continue to acquire open space in existing and future public water supply areas.
- Continue to work with the Cape Cod Commission to complete pond profiles and expand monitoring for all ponds in Harwich.
- Continue to require new private wastewater treatment systems to be designed for future connection to a larger public system.
- Continue to monitor for emerging contaminants of concern including PFAS, plastics, and other physical and chemical contaminants in the Town's public water supply wells. Develop a management plan to address future challenges related to PFAs and other contaminants.
- Develop a resource management plan for the Six Ponds DCPC and review existing regulations for the District to ensure that the Special District is effective in achieving stated goals.
- Implement the Town's Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan (CWMP), including continued participation in the Pleasant Bay Alliance.
- Review potential amendments to the CWMP to encourage additional housing opportunities and coordination with other Town goals and plans.
- Pursue implementation of pond/watershed strategies for all freshwater ponds to improve their overall health and water quality, reduce hard surface drainage, and potential erosion/sedimentation due to increased runoff from increased storm events.
- Adopt a town-wide fertilizer management bylaw.
- Continue to implement the Town's MS4 permit and annual plans for stormwater management.
- Adopt landscaping best practices for buffers to lakes and ponds based on the Cape Cod Commission's pond buffer guidelines.
- Encourage low-impact design for stormwater control measures to optimize removal of nitrogen in areas that contribute to coastal waterbodies and removal of phosphorus in contributing areas to fresh waterbodies.

Ocean Resources

Goal

To protect, preserve, or restore the quality and natural values and functions of ocean resources.

Ocean Resources Objectives

- Actively participate in regional and multi-town efforts to protect, preserve and/or restore the quality and natural values and functions of ocean resources. Work with Town boards, other communities, and regional agencies and organizations to support coastal resiliency efforts.
- Expand public access to the coastline where appropriate through acquisitions or donations.
- Improve coastal water quality to allow shellfishing and/or swimming in coastal waters.
- Protect and promote tidelands for water-dependent uses.
- Allow marsh migration where feasible to help protect the Town from storms and to provide other environmental benefits.
- Prioritize beach nourishment to preserve existing beaches

Ocean Resources Actions

- Continue to implement the Town's Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan (CWMP) to improve water quality in the Round Cove and Pleasant Bay watersheds.
- Develop town policies on coastal rebuilding standards that are incorporated into bylaws.
- Pursue funding for implementation of priority actions in the 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Wetland Resources

Goal

To protect, preserve, or restore the quality and natural values of both freshwater and saltwater wetlands and their buffers to support the important functions they provide for the environment and the community.

Wetland Resources Objectives

- Prevent the loss or degradation of wetlands, vernal pools, and cedar swamps.
- Restore existing degraded wetlands and their buffers.
- Pursue conservation restrictions/easements to permanently protect wetland resource areas.
- Promote and/or incentivize restoration of altered or degraded wetlands, buffer areas and ponds such as fallow commercial cranberry bogs, including removal and management of invasive plant species.

Wetland Resources Actions

- Amend wetlands regulations to restrict the use of fertilizer and pesticides in wetland resource areas and buffer zones.
- Adopt landscape guidelines for restoration of wetland buffer zones.

Wildlife and Plant Habitat

Goal

To protect, preserve, or restore wildlife and plant habitats in Harwich to promote natural diversity.

Wildlife and Plant Habitat Objectives

- Increase percentage and quality/connectivity of land required to be preserved for open space in residential subdivisions.
- Ensure a meaningful contribution of land to be preserved for open space to provide wildlife habitat corridors.
- Develop guidelines for habitat assessment, determination of significant impact of development on rare wildlife and plant habitats, habitat maintenance and restoration in proposed development.
- Maintain wildlife patches and corridors of existing heterogeneous habitat types.
- Promote native landscape practices in the review of proposed development projects.

Wildlife and Plant Habitat Actions

- Amend the zoning bylaw to increase regulatory requirements for new development to preserve or create meaningful percentage of the site as native habitat that creates or expands wildlife corridors.
- Amend the zoning bylaw to develop requirements for replacement of lawn and/or introduced landscape materials with native species in proposed development.

Open Space

Goal

To conserve, preserve, or enhance Harwich's open space network to promote natural and community well-being and quality of life.

Open Space Objectives

- Utilize town and private organizations to develop and execute land management plans for existing open space resources.
- Manage open space to enhance biodiversity, resiliency, and viable corridors.
- Enhance the network of public trails for use and enjoyment.
- Continue to acquire open space with significant natural resource values.
- Place restrictions on municipal land that is appropriate for conservation purposes.
- Encourage stronger cluster provisions in areas such as the Six Ponds Special District to protect high-quality open space.

Open Space Actions

- Revise the Open Space Residential Development section of the zoning bylaw to provide incentives to encourage its use in proposed development projects.
- Pursue key land acquisitions for conservation purposes included in the 2024 – 2031 OSRP.
- Develop land management plans for conservation lands as described in the 2024 – 2031 OSRP.
- Develop a tree protection and/or land clearing bylaw or integrate tree protection and land clearing regulations into appropriate existing regulations to protect forest resources beyond wetland buffer zones.
- Pursue title research on remaining owners unknown lands with the goal of protecting lands with natural resource value and acquiring suitable lands for affordable housing and other needed municipal facilities.
- Identify parcels for acquisition by the town that would contribute to the town's open space goals and objectives. Encourage acquisition of parcels that abut existing conservation and open space land. Particular emphasis should be placed on:
  - Zones of contribution to public water supply wells.
  - Potential public water supply areas.
  - Recharge areas to nitrogen-sensitive marine embayments, marine areas susceptible to flooding.
  - Rare species habitat and other critical habitat and natural communities, including the state's BioMap and Living Waters Map, Diadromous fish runs, unfragmented forest habitat adjacent to previously protected open space.
  - Parcels that need restoration.
  - Extensions of existing public trails.

BUILT SYSTEMS

The following goals are put in place to protect and enhance the built environment and infrastructure necessary to support the Town with vibrant town centers.

Built Systems

Community Design

Coastal Resiliency

Community Facilities, Services and Infrastructure

Transportation

Energy

Waste Management



Community Design

Goal

To protect and enhance the unique character of Harwich's built and natural environment based on village context.

Community Design Objectives

- Honor historical development patterns associated with Harwich's seven distinct villages.
- Guide future development towards established village and commercial centers or new locations with village design, adequate pedestrian and vehicular access, and suitable infrastructure.
- Encourage the development and redevelopment of affordable housing at a size and scale compatible with its surroundings.
- Accomplish quality community design via regulatory design standards and/or advisory design guidelines.

Community Design Actions

Harwich Port and Harwich Center

- Update existing regulations including historic districts and mixed-use bylaws to protect historical village design and to encourage integration of affordable housing.
- Address the character of highway routes that bisect village centers, notably Route 28 in Harwich Port and Route 39 in Harwich Center. Provide streetscape improvements including traffic calming, wayfinding that are compatible with each village's environment and that encourage pedestrian and vehicular connections, improve public safety and support continued revitalization of historic Harwich Center.

West Harwich

- Provide streetscape improvements along Route 28 that are compatible with a village environment and encourage pedestrian and vehicular connections to the abutting Dennis Port village center.
- Seek funding opportunities and use regulatory controls to protect historic buildings along Route 28.
- Develop design guidelines to ensure compatibility of new development with existing historic buildings.
- Review existing regulations including DCPC provisions to enable development of affordable housing.

Community Design

Community Design Actions

East Harwich

- Modify zoning bylaws and adopt design guidelines to encourage mixed-use development with a pedestrian-friendly design in the CH 2 District.
- Incentivize the development of affordable housing within the CH 2 District.
- Balance higher-density development in the CH 2 District with development controls in the Six Ponds District and other outlying areas in East Harwich. Review revisions to the Open Space Bylaw and explore opportunities for public acquisition of important open space resources.

General Actions

- Consider development of a master plan and revision of zoning bylaws to enable redevelopment of existing properties on Route 28 for affordable housing and mixed-use.
- Reinstate the Tree Warden position to improve protection of existing street trees and planting of additional trees where missing and needed in Harwich.
- Create neighborhood study groups to discuss land use opportunities and design guidelines in the smaller villages of South Harwich, North Harwich and Pleasant Lake.
- Review the need for and ability to expand existing commercial/industrial areas on Queen Anne Road and Great Western Road.
- Compare and adopt zoning bylaws such as Form Based Codes and/or advisory design guidelines to enhance historic development patterns in established village centers and to achieve quality design in other locations.

Coastal Resiliency

Goal

To prevent or minimize human suffering and loss of life and property or environmental damage resulting from storms, flooding, erosion, and relative sea level rise, including but not limited to that associated with climate change.

Coastal Resiliency Objectives

- Update the Town's Hazard Mitigation Plan every 5 years and pursue funding for implementation of priority actions.
- Plan for sea-level rise, erosion and flooding by participating in the State's Municipal Vulnerability Planning (MVP) 2.0 planning process and pursue funding for implementation of priority actions.

Coastal Resiliency Actions

- Provide support for certification of Town Staff as certified Floodplain Managers.
- Pursue adoption of Flood Area Design Guidelines developed by the Cape Cod Commission for low-lying coastal and upland areas to reduce vulnerability of the built environment to coastal hazards.
- Pursue actions identified in the 2019 MVP Summary of Findings and 2025 HMP, including vulnerability assessments and implementation of strategies to address the Town's low-lying roads, culverts and stormwater infrastructure to ensure public safety particularly during severe storm events and improve the resilience of key infrastructure.
- Continue to utilize planning frameworks, such as the Center for Coastal Studies Storm Tide Pathways project, to assess location-based risk and vulnerability to coastal flooding and storm surge on critical infrastructure and municipal facilities.
- Enhance public education and awareness around preparedness for storm events, particularly for summer workers and visitors.
- Work with neighboring towns and regional agencies on nature-based strategies to enhance coastal assets (beaches, dunes and marshes) to continue to provide protection during storm events.
- Develop a community-wide policy statement to incorporate climate resiliency across all aspects of governance.

Community Facilities, Services and Infrastructure

Goal

To maintain and enhance existing community facilities, services and infrastructure prioritizing accessibility, sustainability, and inclusivity, catering to diverse resident needs while fostering community connectivity and well-being.

Community Facilities and Services Objectives

- Enhance existing community facilities to improve functionality, accessibility, and inclusivity.
- Ensure that major capital facilities and infrastructure projects are being designed and sited with resilience to extreme weather events, climate change impacts, and other natural or man-made hazards.
- Ensure that major capital facilities and infrastructure projects are being designed and sited with resilience to extreme weather events, climate change impacts, and other natural or man-made hazards.
- Evaluate availability and suitability of Town properties to meet future needs.
- Evaluate opportunities to enhance recreational facilities and programs for all seasons.
- Better utilize available parking in Harwich Port and Harwich Center.
- Develop and improve safe bicycle and pedestrian facilities between and within villages to residential areas, recreation facilities, and beaches.
- Enhance support for families with children through continued/expanding subsidies for childcare, improved after-school activities, and other initiatives.
- Investigate expansion of recycling facilities at the Transfer station to include composting and textiles.
- Enhance accessibility of public facilities and programs for individuals with disabilities, including the installation of resting benches along trails and sidewalks and ensuring compliance with universally accessible regulations.
- Coordinate with neighboring jurisdictions to regionalize recreational resources, including the promotion of regional coordination for inter-town resources.
- Maintain and adequately equip Town facilities in a cost-effective manner.

Community Facilities, Services and Infrastructure

Community Facilities and Services Actions

- Review utilization and current resources, services and programming of municipal departments, and identify additional resources, services and program needs and opportunities to support community members at various stages of their lives, enhance their well-being, learning and quality of life and create a sense of connectedness and community for residents.
- Prioritize middle school and elementary school improvements and invest in Monomoy Regional High School improvements.
- Invest in services that support young residents, including the Monomoy Regional School District and the Harwich Recreation Department.
- Support ongoing community efforts to make childcare/after school services available.
- Implement ADA accessibility improvements for town buildings and facilities.
- Review the Harwich Comprehensive Water Management Plan (CWMP) for potential amendments to achieve greater housing choice in village centers.
- Conduct a feasibility study of the potential for a community swimming pool and explore collaboration with neighboring towns and local organizations.
- Conduct a townwide community facilities inventory and assessment to determine the overall capacity of existing facilities and programs and to plan and fund future facility needs.
- Revisit past studies of parking facilities utilization in Harwich Center and Harwich Port with recommendations for improvements to existing parking and circulation.
- Prioritize sewer installation in areas designated for higher density housing development.
- Ensure coordination of infrastructure improvements to align project construction with other planned or needed infrastructure work such as roadway improvements

Transportation

Goal

To provide and promote a safe, reliable, and multi-modal transportation system consistent with community character goals to meet present and future needs.

Transportation Objectives

- Develop a Complete Streets Policy consistent with community character goals to be eligible for Tier 2 Prioritization Plan and Tier 3 construction funding opportunities through the MassDOT Complete Streets funding program that includes healthy and safe transportation options for all users.
- Promote sidewalk construction to improve village connectivity. Existing sidewalks should be repaired and/or improved to conform with ADA compliance where feasible as part of routine roadway maintenance as funding allows.
- Design traffic improvement measures with sensitivity to seasonal variations in traffic patterns.
- Design roadway improvements to reflect year-round traffic demands and develop other management strategies to address peak seasonal traffic flow such as shuttle buses.
- Continue to pursue all opportunities to extend bicycle infrastructure through both on-road, buffered on-road, and off-road facilities by the greatest extent practicable to make connections from the CCRT (Old Colony Rail Trail) to commercial, recreational, and natural resource areas.
- Identify funding opportunities through The US Department of Transportation Safe System Approach program and other alternative sources of funding.
- Pursue implementation of the Vision Zero Action Plan referencing USDOT Safe System approach.

Transportation Actions

- Adopt a Complete Streets Policy and Prioritization Plan to help plan for and fund future sidewalk and roadway improvement projects to reduce dependency on the automobile.
- Develop plan for additional sidewalks, crosswalks, improved parking facilities and traffic calming measures in Harwich Port and Harwich Center.
- Investigate costs of providing shuttle buses to address seasonal demands for parking.
- Develop wayfinding signage for Harwich facilities, services, and points of interest.
- Participate in the Cape Cod Commission's traffic counting program to support future transportation infrastructure improvements.
- Participate in the Old Colony Rail Trail Modernization Project to resurface the OCRT and upgrade roadway crossings.

Energy

Goal

To provide an adequate, reliable, and diverse supply of energy to serve the needs of Harwich residents, businesses, and visitors.

To reduce the Town's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions

Energy Objectives

- Provide incentives/ pursue zoning changes to encourage future development and redevelopment including housing in Harwich village centers.
- Prepare a townwide greenhouse Greenhouse Gas Emissions inventory and climate action plan.
- Explore electrification of the municipal vehicle fleet and installation of electric vehicle public charging stations to promote low or no carbon transportation technologies.
- Continue to work with regional partners to identify additional, appropriate locations for municipal solar projects on existing municipal parking lots and/ or municipal buildings.
- Continue to pursue grants to enhance energy reduction and efficiency measures in public buildings.
- Create incentives for private development to install solar on greyfields (commercial or retail sites) and avoid undisturbed or wooded lands.
- Encourage alternatives to single-occupancy vehicles and encourage connectivity where appropriate between village centers and residential areas with additional sidewalks, bikepaths and/or shared use paths.
- Adopt tree planting policies to sequester carbon.
- Explore tree protection policies to provide shade and reduce surface temperatures.

Energy Actions

- Work with the Cape Light Compact to complete additional energy assessments of public buildings to support additional grant funding from the Green Communities program.
- Designate staff responsible for planning and implementing energy use and sustainability goals as set by the State.
- Pursue development of a tree protection/tree clearing bylaw to help sequester carbon.
- Continue to work with regional partners, such as Cape & Vineyard Electric Cooperative (CVEC) and the Regional Transit Authority (RTA), to identify locations for different levels of EV charging stations.
- Complete a town-wide greenhouse gases (GHG) inventory and climate action plan.
- Support the Energy and Climate Action Committee, continue to sponsor annual, small-scale home solar and heat pump informational events and develop a tracking system for electrical permits for installation of these technologies as a way to both educate the public and document emissions reductions efforts in the stationary residential subsector.
- Identify areas suitable for location of solar installations and battery storage.
- Pursue additional energy reduction and efficiency measures in public buildings.

Waste Management

Goal

To promote a sustainable solid waste management system that protects public health, safety, and the environment and supports the economy of Harwich.

Waste Management Objectives

- Continue to support improvements to the Town's transfer station to facilitate new and improved programs to reduce, recycle and reuse solid waste.

Waste Management Actions

- Develop educational materials for homeowners on the benefits of composting.
- Continue to support volunteer staffing of the Town's Treasure Chest by defining the skills needed and developing a system for receipt of donations.
- Expand the food scrap collection program to include municipal facilities such as schools, the community center and the cultural center.
- Encourage use of the food scrap collection program by private and non-profit entities such as restaurants, nursing homes and residential complexes."
- Implement transfer station improvements, including textile recycling and community composting program.

COMMUNITY SYSTEMS

The following goals are put in place to protect and enhance the linkages between society, the natural environment, and history vital to the way of life in Harwich by supporting development of amenities and life opportunities necessary to support vibrant and diverse communities. As noted in the Harwich LCP Vision Statement, in 2050 Harwich is a vibrant and sustainable community that honors its natural beauty, historic charm and village character while meeting the needs of our residents for attainable housing to support economic and community growth.

Community Systems

Cultural Heritage

Economy

Housing



Methodist Church, South Harwich

Cultural Heritage

Goal

To protect and preserve Harwich's significant cultural, historic, and archaeological values and resources.

Cultural Heritage Objectives

- Protect and preserve forms, layouts, scale, massing, and key character defining features of historic resources, including traditional development patterns of the seven villages.
- Protect historic resources by updating local historical inventory forms into the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS) database.
- Pursue traffic calming measures, parking and pedestrian improvements in all villages, with particular attention to the Harwich Center and Harwich Port cultural districts.
- Support additional programming at public and private cultural venues.
- Continue thoughtful investment in services that support our young residents, including the Monomoy Regional School District and the Harwich Recreation Department.
- Continue thoughtful investment in services that support our elderly and disabled community members.
- Protect and preserve archaeological resources and assets from alteration or relocation.
- Protect and preserve traditional agricultural and maritime development and uses.
- Continue to recognize the contributions of the Cape Verdean community to the Town.

Cultural Heritage Actions

- Update historic inventory forms on MACRIS database.
- Work with the Harwich Historical Commission to develop design guidelines that protect and preserve forms, layouts, scale, massing, and key character defining features of historic resources, including traditional development patterns of the seven villages.
- Evaluate creation of additional historic districts or zoning protections for historic resources.
- Support additional programming at The 204, Harwich Community Center, Brooks Free Library, Brooks Academy and Brooks Museum.
- Enact traffic calming measures, parking and pedestrian improvements in all villages, with particular attention to the Harwich Center and Harwich Port cultural districts.
- Develop a land clearing bylaw that includes protection of archaeological resources and assets from alteration or relocation.

Economy

Goal

To promote a sustainable local economy that consists of a broad range of businesses providing employment opportunities to a diverse workforce.

Economy Objectives

- Protect and build upon the Town's and Region's natural resource assets.
- Use resources and infrastructure to support local businesses and residents through revitalization of existing development and wastewater infrastructure.
- Encourage businesses and industries that provide living wage jobs to a diverse workforce.
- Provide support for local businesses that serve local needs, including tradespeople to support construction of affordable and attainable housing.
- Review the availability of existing industrially-zoned land for remaining development potential to support local tradespeople.
- Build upon Harwich's cultural strengths to support economic growth and provide adequate infrastructure including seasonal transportation infrastructure to support cultural activities.

Economy Actions

- Review existing zoning for potential amendments to encourage adaptive reuse and redevelopment of commercial property, including dimensional and/or parking relief for mixed-use development.
- Work with the Cape Cod Regional Transit Authority to establish and promote a seasonal shuttle service with connections to beaches and cultural activities.
- Pursue infrastructure improvements including expansion of Fiber Optic broadband access by working with OpenCape to upgrade network capacity to businesses and municipal operations in Harwich.
- Conduct a buildout analysis of vacant industrially-zoned land for its remaining development potential.
- Seek technical assistance from the Cape Cod Commission and Commonwealth of Massachusetts to develop master plans to support economic development in Harwich's village centers.

Housing

Goal

Promote the production and preservation of a wide range of ownership and rental housing that is attainable for diverse levels of incomes and needs.

Housing Objectives

- Locate areas and sites in Town that are suitable for locating dense housing near services and transportation. Build local capacity to better promote affordable and attainable housing through additional resources and other local actions while respecting traditional forms and layouts.
- Pursue zoning and other regulatory changes to provide incentives and remove barriers to the development of affordable and attainable housing in appropriate locations at a size and scale that is compatible with the character of the community.
- Better define various local housing entity roles and responsibilities.
- Partner with housing developers and service providers to address unmet housing needs on suitable public property as well as privately-owned sites, focusing on redevelopment, mixed-use, and infill opportunities.
- Preserve the existing housing stock to ensure the continued affordability of Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) units and provide support for important property improvements to correct health and safety problems.

Housing Actions

- Evaluate the adoption of the Seasonal Community Designation under the Massachusetts Affordable Homes Act.
- Ensure that all affordable units, current and future, remain a part of the Town's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) to the greatest extent possible.
- Move forward on the 456 Queen Anne Road project under the guidance of the Harwich Affordable Housing Trust (HAHT).
- Support the Board of Assessors to grant tax relief for property owners who rent to income qualified renters on a year-round basis.
- Review, evaluate and consider revising the two-family; multi-family; and mixed-use zoning bylaw with the aim to incentivize density development opportunities, as appropriate, in exchange for affordable and attainable housing.
- Foster relationships with experienced non-profit and for-profit developers to secure sources of public and private financing and to create new affordable and attainable housing units.
- Explore potential housing programs, opportunities, and funding for those earning 81% to 120% or 81% - 150%, or 81% - 200% of Area Median Income (AMI).

Housing

- Further capitalize the Harwich Affordable Housing Trust (HAHT) to enable its mission to provide affordable housing. Potential sources include annual CPA funding, the Affordable Housing Stabilization Fund, potential inclusionary zoning payments in lieu of units, and state and federal funding.
- Consider bylaws that have been created in other communities to regulate Short Term Rentals, to better address such issues as public safety, water quality and noise. Determine staffing needs for administration of such bylaws.
- Monitor the State list of short-term rental units. Consider whether to pursue a local effort to identify units not identified on the State list.
- Collaborate with existing local and regional groups to conduct public forums educating the general public on what affordable and attainable housing is and why it is important in Harwich
- Encourage conversions and infill development in developed areas, including village centers and along Route 28. Changes from commercial to residential use and increases in residential density may be permitted subject to considerations of infrastructure, environmentally sensitive areas, and community character.
- Prioritize and incentivize the adaptive reuse of existing buildings for attainable and affordable housing.
- Maximize opportunities to use Accessory Dwelling Units. Review financing barriers to such use.
- Consider programs and regulatory amendments to allow for and support seasonal workforce housing.
- Provide funding resources to support housing rehabilitation programs such the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) TRI Housing Rehabilitation Program for income qualifying homeowners that are unable to make necessary but critical home repairs such as roof, windows, hot water heater, or septic system.
- Support creative funding and collaborative partnerships (public/private) in the development of affordable and attainable housing, including subsidies for permanently restricted rental units
- Encourage affordable and attainable housing by thoughtful design that is compatible with community character for each of Harwich's separate villages as mentioned in the Community Design section.
- Consider adoption of a variety of specific zoning strategies from the Massachusetts Affordable Homes Act that could include a 40Y Starter Home District, incentive /inclusionary zoning options, or cottage style cluster housing.
- Evaluate the use of Town-owned properties for creative housing solutions, including reuse of Town owned buildings for housing such as Coldbrook Preserve / Fire Museum/ 3 Affordable Housing Rental Units on Bank Street.
- Work with the Harwich Assessing Office and the Real Estate & Open Space Committee to develop an inventory of publicly available land that could be suitable for affordable housing.
- Increase funding sources for rental assistance programs such as rental vouchers. Review marketing efforts, education and administration of such programs.

Section 5

HOUSING PRODUCTION PLAN SUMMARY

HOUSING PRODUCTION PLAN SUMMARY

A. Purpose of Project

The Town prepared Housing Production Plans (HPPs) in both 2010 and 2016, and this HPP represents an opportunity to provide another update to accomplish the following purposes:

- Obtain a current understanding of the housing dynamic in Harwich based on updated U.S. Census Bureau figures, market information, and other important indicators of housing need.
- Reflect on what has been accomplished towards meeting local housing needs since the 2016 Housing Plan was approved.
- Reflect on what housing strategies have worked to promote housing diversity and affordability, what actions should be taken to expand and/or modify these approaches, and what new actions should be introduced.
- Review what other comparable communities have done with respect to housing policies, regulation, programs, and projects that Harwich might consider adapting.
- Obtain approval from the state under Housing Production regulations and guidelines that offer communities greater local control over housing development, including the potential to deny inappropriate comprehensive permit projects that can override local zoning.[1]
- In light of limited resources and other local constraints to development, determine the most effective avenues for addressing the wide range of local housing needs, charting the Town's housing agenda for the next five years.
- Help establish better communication and coordination among Town boards and committees with updated information and guidance from this document. For example, recent work by the Harwich Affordable Housing Trust in developing a Strategic Plan is an important contribution to this HPP.

1. Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 40B, 760 CMR 56.03 (4).

The Town is preparing this HPP as part of efforts to update its Local Comprehensive Plan (LCP) with housing being an important component of the community's focus on better understanding current municipal needs and priorities and a vision for the future. The Town selected the firm, Tigue & Bond, to undertake the LCP under the oversight of a special Local Planning Committee with Karen Sunnarborg Consulting hired to prepare the HPP[2].

While this HPP focuses on the creation of Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) units to meet annual housing production goals, the Town is also interested in creating housing opportunities for those who may earn above the 80% AMI limits but are still priced out of the local housing market. This can be accomplished through various approaches that are highlighted in this HPP, including establishing different income tiers within new development, whether it be for rental or homeownership.[3]

2. *The Town of Harwich has adopted a Housing Production Plan concurrent with preparation of the Harwich LCP. An Executive Summary is provided in the LCP Appendix and the complete report can be found on the Town's website.*

3. "Affordable" housing is defined in this HPP as units that meet state requirements under Chapter 40B. The term "attainable" housing is used to define those units that are targeted to those with incomes above the 80% AMI limits but still priced out of the local housing market, up to 100% or 120% AMI. There is also a growing recognition that even those with incomes above these limits, including some essential workers, are challenged to find housing they can afford in Harwich and should be considered in developing new housing units.

B. Affordability Challenges[4]

Demographic Changes

Demographic shifts are occurring which have a bearing on housing needs. Data indicates that gains in the proportion of older residents and declines in younger people will likely continue. For example, those under age 18 declined by 27% between 2000 and 2021 while older adults 65 years of age and older increased by 27% during a time when the overall population grew by 7.6%. The aging of the population is also reflected in the increase in median age, from 48.8 to 58.4 years during this period.

Older adults will continue to be better able to move into Harwich, as they are more likely to possess the significant equity needed to participate in the local housing market, which is increasingly dominated by owner-occupied units. A complicating factor over the years has been the high housing demand from second homeowners and retirees that, while boosting the community's economy, have typically had the means to afford the community's increasingly high housing costs. With the median income of Harwich residents at $79,651, based on 2021 census estimates and $51,786 for renter households, current opportunities for first-time homeownership are more a dream than a reality. The growth in Short Term Rentals has also removed units from year-round use as owners can earn about the same amount on temporary rentals while still being able to use the units themselves, also with less wear and tear on the property.

Despite a growing population of seniors, buoyed by the baby group to relocate further away. boom generation and the community's desirability as a retirement destination, housing for younger people is critically needed because of the ongoing losses from the younger age groups and the expected continued prevalence of homeownership among seniors. For example, there were significant declines in those between the ages of 25 and 34 who are entering the labor market and beginning to form their own families, thus reducing the pool of entry-level workers and service employees.

These trends suggest that the Town continue to foster a community that protects the elderly and attracts young families, thus promoting the creation of starter homes as well as options for downsizing. To attract a more stable labor force, it is important to work towards providing more affordable and appropriately-sized housing opportunities. Consequently, the Town will largely target its affordable and attainable housing efforts on the development of year-round rental options for younger households. There are also pragmatic considerations including that almost all government financing programs are targeted to rental development.

The Town recognizes that homeownership opportunities for first-time purchasers and empty nesters are also a part of its housing agenda. Even those with incomes above 120% of area median income, including those needed to fill essential jobs in education, health, and public service, are being shut out of the housing market. Moreover, because Harwich has a relatively high level of residents who claim a disability (13.5% of all residents) as well as an aging population, another housing need is the promotion of handicapped accessibility and support services in new housing development. This Housing Plan also recognizes the significant need for resources that will enable owners to make important property improvements, especially for health and safety purposes.

4. This Housing Production Plan provides the most current information available, often offering historical data to demonstrate important demographic or housing trends. The 2020 decennial census data is offered when actual counts are available, also providing updated 2021 census estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey.

B. Affordability Challenges

Rising Affordability Gaps and Cost Burdens

The Town of Harwich, like much of Cape Cod, continues to have a pressing need for more attainable housing, particularly in the context of rising housing values for both homeownership and rentals. The median single-family home price was $650,000[5] based on Banker & Tradesman data as of August 2023, up from $352,500 in 2010. This represents an 84% increase, more than twice the 41% rate of inflation during this period. To afford this median price, a household would have to earn an estimated $191,200 based on 95% financing. This income is more than twice Harwich's median household income per 2021 census estimates of $79,641 as well as considerably more than the 2023 HUD area median income level for a family of four of $123,400. If the calculations were based on 80% financing with a 20% down payment, the estimated required income would be reduced to about $160,200, about twice the town's median household income and requiring the purchaser to come up with about $135,000 in upfront cash for the down payment and closing costs, a significant challenge for many.

The median income earning household could likely afford a single-family home of about $286,500 based on 95% financing.[6] The affordability gap would then be about $363,500 - the difference between the price of the median priced single-family home ($650,000) and what a median income household could afford ($286,500).[7] In the case of 80% financing, requiring a 20% down payment, a purchaser would need to borrow less and therefore could afford a home of about $331,300, and thus the affordability gap would decrease to $318,700, still very high.

First-time home purchasers are also challenged by high interest rates as well as stringent lending criteria in response to the recession that occurred more than 15 years ago that precipitated high down payment requirements and rigorous credit standards. Some homeowners lost their homes to foreclosure while others have found that rising energy, flood insurance, and other housing-related costs are much more challenging to afford. Moreover, of the 1,835 owner households with incomes at or below 80% of median income for Barnstable County, 1,234 or two-thirds were spending too much on housing costs (more than 30% of income) including 644 or 35% who were spending more than half of their income on housing.

The situation is challenging for renters as well. More affordable rentals are urgently needed in Harwich, based largely on the concentration of service-sector and seasonal jobs and the related high degree of job turnover. While a median income-earning renter household ($51,786) could afford a rent of approximately $1,045 based on spending no more than 30% of income on housing and average monthly utility costs of $250, median market rents are closer to $2,400. Even the median income-earning household in Harwich ($79,641) would be hard-pressed to pay more than $1,741 in rent. No wonder an estimated 42% of renters with incomes at or below 80% AMI were paying too much for their housing.[8]

Rentals also exact high up-front cash requirements, often including first and last month's rent and a security deposit. Credit checks and other references also place barriers to securing housing for some. Information from the Harwich Housing Authority further suggests that there are hundreds of applicants for their subsidized units which rarely turnover.

As would be expected from a community in a tourist area, seasonal housing use remains high and, consequently, in the summer months Harwich's population increases substantially, putting considerable demands on local services but bolstering the town's economy. Having about 40% of units unavailable for year-round occupancy further limits the supply of affordable housing for year-round residents. Nevertheless, more housing is also needed in the summer months to house seasonal workers which are essential to the community's economy but, given low wages and a lack of available inventory, struggle to find places to live.

5. The Warren Group's Banker & Tradesman as of October 2023 based on actual sales data.

6. Figures based on 95% financing, interest of 6.5%, 30-year term, annual property tax rate of $6.64 per thousand, and insurance costs of $6 per thousand. Also based on the purchaser spending 30% of gross income on mortgage, taxes, and insurance.

7. Private mortgage insurance (PMI) was not included in these calculations assuming that the purchaser earning at Harwich's median income could qualify for a subsidized mortgage program such as the ONE Mortgage Program or a MassHousing program for example.

8. Defined as spending more than 30% of total income on housing costs.

B. Affordability Challenges

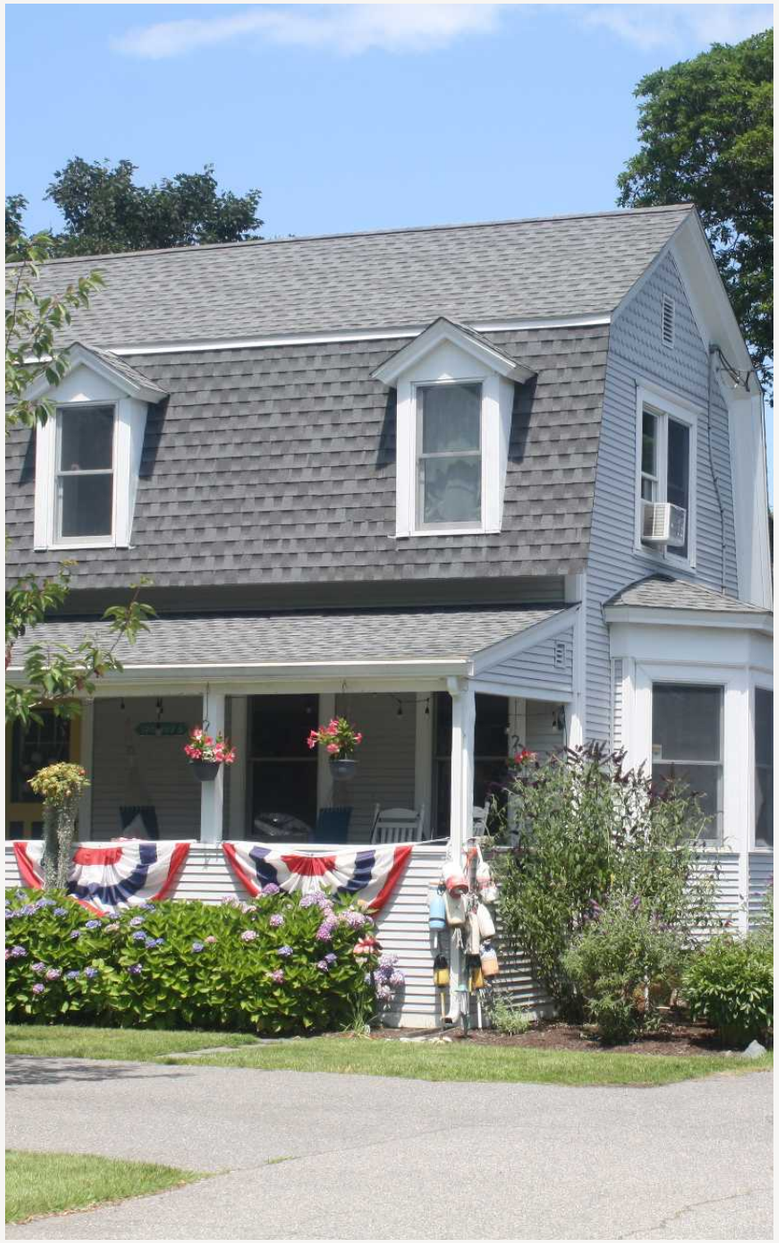
Rising Affordability Gaps and Cost Burdens

While seasonal and occasional units increased over prior decades, COVID-19 reversed this trend when off-Cape residents moved to Harwich and other Cape communities in search of a safer place to ride-out the pandemic. This surge in housing demand in tandem with limited housing production drove up prices.

To further aggravate local and regional housing and economic challenges is the mismatch between what jobs are available and the housing that is affordable. The Housing Assistance Corporation (HAC) hired The Concord Group to study and report on the Cape's regional economy and housing market and provide solutions for addressing the housing crisis and increasing affordability gaps.[9]

The report claims, "Continuing to build "capital A Affordable" housing is critically important, however, focusing too heavily on strictly affordable efforts will not fully solve resident displacement. The housing crisis will only be fully corrected when municipalities make legislative efforts (zoning to make building legal and offering density bonuses by adding capital A units) to incentivize denser multi-family development. It is not feasible to strictly continue to deliver capital A affordable housing as the costs of doing so does not allow for the scalability of this product type. This will never significantly reduce the imbalance of supply and demand. The development of more market-rate rental units is a necessity to give current and future community members a chance for residency on the Cape." The report also identified 28,789 households on the Cape earning $50,000 or less as of 2020 and only 1,789 "capital A Affordable" SHI units.

The state currently lists 328 affordable housing units in Harwich's state-approved Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI), representing 4.98% of the total year-round housing stock of 6,581 units. This is up from 261 units and 4.5% in 2009 but down somewhat from 333 units and 5.4% in 2016 (based on 2010 census count of 6,121 year-round units). The town still would need to produce at least 330 more affordable units to reach the state's 10% goal based on the existing year-round housing count from the 2020 census. Because the number of year-round units is based on the decennial census figure, it will change again when the 2030 census figures are released, and thus the 10% state threshold is a moving target.



9. The Concord Group, Housing Market Overview and Economic and Fiscal Benefits of Housing Development in Barnstable County, MA, prepared for the Housing Assistance Corporation, October 2022.

B. Affordability Challenges

Based on these trends and further documentation in the Housing Needs Assessment (Section III.C), this Housing Plan suggests the following priority housing needs:

1. Households with very limited incomes

Priority Need #1: Given the high costs of rental housing (at least $2,400 for a two-bedroom unit), high cost burdens (42% of all renters earning at or below 80% of area median income were spending too much for their housing), and limited public housing stock which rarely turns over; more subsidized rental housing is necessary. The goal for affordable units created should be at least 80% rentals given additional considerations including the need to target resources to some of the most vulnerable residents in the community, to better leverage local resources as almost all state subsidies are for rental development, to make up for some of the loss of year-round rentals, and to provide greater diversity of housing types and choice for example. The 80% goal also reflects the current percentage of rental units on the SHI.

2. Widening affordability gaps and exodus of younger residents

Priority Need #2: Create a wider range of affordable and attainable housing options, including first-time homeownership opportunities, particularly for younger households entering the job market and forming their own families and some empty nesters looking to downsize. The goal for affordable units created is about 20% for homeownership given that there is only very limited state and federal financing for homeownership which means that it is very challenging to create projects at any scale, particularly given such wide affordability gaps that lead to large per unit subsidy needs. The 20% goal also reflects the current percentage of homeownership units on the SHI.

3. Senior and special needs housing

Priority Need #3: Harwich has a relatively high proportion of residents with disabilities at 13.5% of the noninstitutionalized residents in comparison to 11.7% for the state. Some amount of new housing should be built handicapped-adaptable or accessible to those with disabilities, including increasing numbers of seniors, and more supportive housing services should also be integrated into new development. Goal of 10% of all new family units created, 20% for senior housing units or those for younger individuals.

4. Housing conditions

Priority Need #4: About 61% of Harwich's housing stock was built before 1980 and is more likely to include units with lead-based paint that is hazardous to children, septic system problems, as well as deferred maintenance issues. Programs to support necessary home improvements that correct code violations for units occupied by low- and moderate-income households should be reintroduced if possible, particularly for the elderly living on fixed incomes and properties tenanted by qualifying households. Goal of about half of the ownership units.

B. Affordability Challenges

Summary of Development Challenges

Continuing a proactive housing agenda to promote affordable and attainable housing remains a significant challenge in Harwich for various reasons. Like many coastal and seasonal communities, the town's resources for absorbing growth are limited given significant physical constraints. In addition to the considerable extent of the town's preserved open and recreational space as well as its sensitive environment, Harwich lacks sewer services in several prime developed and potentially redevelopable areas of town. Even though municipal water is available throughout the town, there are a few isolated areas not yet served. That said, the aging water infrastructure may require upgrades to support increases in development density, making denser development more costly and difficult. This raises concerns among residents about water supply and water quality impacts of any new development. It should be noted that requirements in Harwich's municipal sewer agreement limit development to no growth above current zoning levels which will limit the Town's ability to connect higher-density housing to municipal sewer.

In addition to again water infrastructure and limited sewer, the Town's roadways are a concern to continued year-round and seasonal population growth causing overall increases in traffic volumes. Balancing growth and development while preserving community character and natural resources is a key priority for Harwich. The Town is committed to analyzing its roadways and water/sewer infrastructure needs and deficiencies in order to make upgrades and changes as appropriate.

Additionally, local zoning presents obstacles to dense workforce housing development. Current regulations would have to be amended to overcome these barriers. Zoning for accelerated growth raises local questions concerning capacity and changing the very nature of the community with its small coastal town distinctions. Zoning changes to allow and incentivize greater density and economies of scale for development in "smart" locations is key to this HPP. Therefore, identifying scatter-site housing opportunities while utilizing existing zoning, via special permit, for two-family and multi-family development throughout town can be a reasonable option. Scatter-site housing development can be accomplished with minimal impact to the environment and town infrastructure, including roads and town water, while blending in with the surrounding neighborhood and maintaining community character.

Moreover, the Town needs to continue to promote more affordable and attainable development by effectively managing the Town's limited assets as a whole and directing growth for the overall environmental and social health of the community.

In addition to Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds, Harwich has established the Harwich Affordable Housing Trust Fund (HAHTF) in 2018. The HAHTF has been creatively capitalized from rental proceeds of a cell tower on Town property and the sale of a Town-owned property. It should also be noted that the Town has created an Affordable Housing Stabilization Fund to receive 25% of the revenues from the Rooms Occupancy/Short Term Rental tax. When created, it was estimated that this fund would initially receive $500,000. In FY2024, the Stabilization Fund revenue is estimated at $1,590,936 (unaudited).

While state rental financing, such as Low Income Housing Tax Credits, requires projects of at least 30 units, there are limited opportunities to build housing at this scale in Harwich. Additionally, the Town has a strong preference for smaller, scattered-site, infill projects. The Town will work with project sponsors and the Seasonal Community Committee to advocate for both public and private financing to make such smaller scale projects financially feasible.

Because the Town has limited commercial and industrial uses, it relies predominantly on property taxes raised through its residential base. Nevertheless, commercial and industrial uses are not needed to keep property taxes down where extensive high-priced residential property exists. Moreover, commercially-zoned land, excluding all Industrial zoning districts, and outdated commercial buildings, should be primary targets for residential conversions and new residential development. While tax revenues are increasing based on rising property values, Harwich, like other nearby communities, has a relatively low tax rate of $6.64 per thousand[10] as opposed to more than $15.00 per thousand in quite a few other communities in the Boston region.

10. For fiscal year 2023.

D. Summary of Production Goals

The state administers the Housing Production Program that enables cities and towns to adopt an affordable housing plan that demonstrates production of 0.50% over one year or 1.0% over two-years of its year-round housing stock (6,581 year-round housing units according 2020 Census) eligible for inclusion in the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI). If this is accomplished in any calendar year, the Town will have 12 months or 24 months, respectively, for safe harbor status which will enable the Town toto deny Chapter 40B comprehensive permit applications that it deems do not meet local needs.[11] To achieve safe harbor status, Harwich would have to produce at least 33 affordable units (o.5% of the year-round housing stock) annually to meet these annual production goals.[12]

While developing 33 affordable housing units annually is a goal based on the State's Comprehensive Permit Law, the Town desires development that includes housing at various income levels from 30% - 120% AMI. The Town supports development projects that benefit and respect Harwich's environment and natural resources, transportation and road infrastructure, budget constraints, and thoughtfully designed projects that reflect and enhance the town's historic and coastal community character.

A major goal of this HPP is to enable the Town to meet the state's 10% affordability goal under Chapter 40B; however, the Town's primary goal is to serve a wide range of rental and homeownership housing needs for affordable and attainable income levels. This includes the promotion of accessory apartments, two-family dwellings, and multi-family, housing that benefit a broad segment of the population.

E. Summary of Housing Strategies

The strategies summarized below are based on previous plans, the Housing Needs Assessment, the Housing Trust's Strategic Plan, community input, and the experience of comparable communities in the area and throughout the Commonwealth. Many of the strategies reflect a continuation of efforts that have proven effective in promoting affordable housing in Harwich over the past decade or so. The strategies are grouped according to the type of action proposed – Housing Production, Implementation, Regulatory Strategies, and Housing Preservation and Direct Assistance – and categorized according to priority as those to be implemented within Years 1 and 2 and those within Years 3 to 5. The strategies also reflect state requirements that ask communities to address a number of major categories of strategies to the greatest extent applicable.[13] This Housing Plan also includes Appendices that summarize resources that can be helpful in implementation.

11. If a community has achieved certification within 15 days of the opening of the local hearing for the comprehensive permit, the ZBA shall provide written notice to the applicant, with a copy to EOHLC, that it considers that a denial of the permit or the imposition of conditions or requirements would be consistent with local needs, the grounds that it believes have been met, and the factual basis for that position, including any necessary supportive documentation. If the applicant wishes to challenge the ZBA's assertion, it must do so by providing written notice to EOHLC, with a copy to the ZBA, within 15 days of its receipt of the ZBA's notice, including any documentation to support its position. EOHLC shall review the materials provided by both parties and issue a decision within 30 days of its receipt of all materials. The ZBA shall have the burden of proving satisfaction of the grounds for asserting that a denial or approval with conditions would be consistent local needs, provided, however, that any failure of the EOHLC to issue a timely decision shall be deemed a determination in favor of the municipality. This procedure shall toll the requirement to terminate the hearing within 180 days.

12. The state's subsidizing agencies have entered into an Interagency Agreement that provides more guidance to localities concerning housing opportunities for families with children and are now requiring that at least 10% of the units in affordable production developments that are funded, assisted, or approved by a state housing agency have three (3) or more bedrooms with some exceptions (e.g., age-restricted housing, assisted living, supportive housing for individuals, SRO's. etc.).

13. Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40B, 760 CMR 56.03.4.

Housing Strategies Table

Strategies	Priority for Implementation			
	In Years 1-2	In Years 3-5	# SHI Units	Responsible Party**
A. Housing Production Strategies				
1. Continue to make suitable public property available for housing	X		59	SB/HT/HC
2. Partner with developers of privately-owned property	X		122	SB/HT/PB/ZBA
B. Implementation Strategies				
1. Capitalize the Harwich Affordable Housing Trust	X		*	HC/HT
2. Conduct ongoing community education	X		*	SB/HT/CPC
3. Monitor Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI)	X		*	HC
C. Regulatory Strategies				
1. Adopt an Affordable Housing Tax Exemption	X		*	Assessor
2. Better promote village development	X		*	PB
3. Adopt inclusionary zoning		X	*	PB
4. Explore a Starter Home Zoning District under Chapter 40Y		X	*	PB
5. Integrate affordable housing in the OSRD by-law (cluster development)		X	*	PB
6. Consider Short-term Rental regulations		X	*	PB
7. Allow housing for seasonal workers under proper conditions		X	*	PB
D. Housing Preservation and Direct Assistance Strategies				
1. Establish Housing Preservation Initiatives	X		*	HC/HT
2. Expand the Rental Assistance Program	X		*	HC/HT/CPC/HHA

*Indicates actions for which units are counted under other specific housing production strategies, have an indirect impact on production, do not add to the Subsidized Housing Inventory, or cannot be counted towards production goals.

** Abbreviations
Affordable Housing Trust = HT
Housing Committee = HC
Select Board = SB
Planning Board = PB
Zoning Board of Appeals = ZBA
Harwich Housing Authority = HHA

Section 6

ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

ACTION PLAN DESCRIPTION

Your Vision, Your Voice, Your Harwich captures the spirit of community guiding the development of the Local Comprehensive Plan (LCP) update. By incorporating results from several community outreach initiatives, this LCP seeks to demonstrate its commitment for inclusivity and transparency in reflecting residents' needs.

One recurring aspect of the community response was the request for a sustainable mechanism that addresses transparency of LCP implementation over time. Recognizing that the Select Board has direct responsibility and authority to implement town policy, it is anticipated that changes to key LCP assumptions will impact Select Board decisioning and thus may likely result in adjustments to the LCP project activities and timelines. Given the design of the LCP as living and morphable inside a framework of multi-year execution, formation of an LCP complement function that will track, align, and publish LCP execution over time is recommended.

LCP Implementation Tracking and Transparency

Overview

The Planning Board plays a significant role in the management of Town planning, under the direction of the Select Board, with extended administrative support from the Town Administrator. It is through the collaborative efforts of these governing entities that the LCP implementation tracking and transparency system would prove successful.

Beginning with goal initiatives and associated actions outlined in the LCP, the tracking function would generate information on project activities, status, and changes affecting established timelines.

Results of these findings would be communicated on a quarterly and annual basis to Select Board and community specifying individual reporting criteria that would satisfy the balance between management responsibilities and community awareness of the LCP implementation process.

Tracking

- The Planning Board, in its visible relationship with both Select Board and community, is a central position that best serves the tracking and reporting responsibilities of the LPC implementation progress.

- Key progress indicators of the LCP implementation are compiled by the Planning Board, with results of these findings communicated to the Select Board through the Town Administrator.

- The Town Administrator would be responsible for aligning Select Board project related decisions to the LCP Project Timeline given reference to project status due to refinements to scope, resources and/or dependencies.

- Periodically, the Town Administrator would provide progress updates to the Select Board on the LCP Project Timeline.

- Annually, the Town Administrator would provide a re-calibrated LCP Project Timeline which aligns to the Capital Budget through a review of projects/activities (scope, resource, dependencies) with emphasis on that which is being worked over the coming 12-24 months.

ACTION PLAN DESCRIPTION

Transparency

While the LCP Project Timeline is managed by the Town Administrator, ultimate responsibility for maintaining transparency to the Harwich community belongs to the Select Board.

To ensure community involvement, the Planning Board would facilitate two reporting processes on both a quarterly and annual basis:

1. A quarterly update of key progress indicators and project status published to a dedicated Town webpage would support continuous community awareness of LCP implementation.
2. Once a year, in a manner and timeframe deemed most appropriate and effective by the Select Board, the community would be welcomed to participate in an open forum to provide comments and/or questions regarding LCP implementation.

Upon Select Board discretion, additional sources of communications for town staff and the community-at-large are:

- A report written and supported by user-friendly graphics (e.g. timelines with changes/adjustments)
- Posted articles on a dedicated town webpage
- Supplemental community notices through local newspapers/media and various social media resources

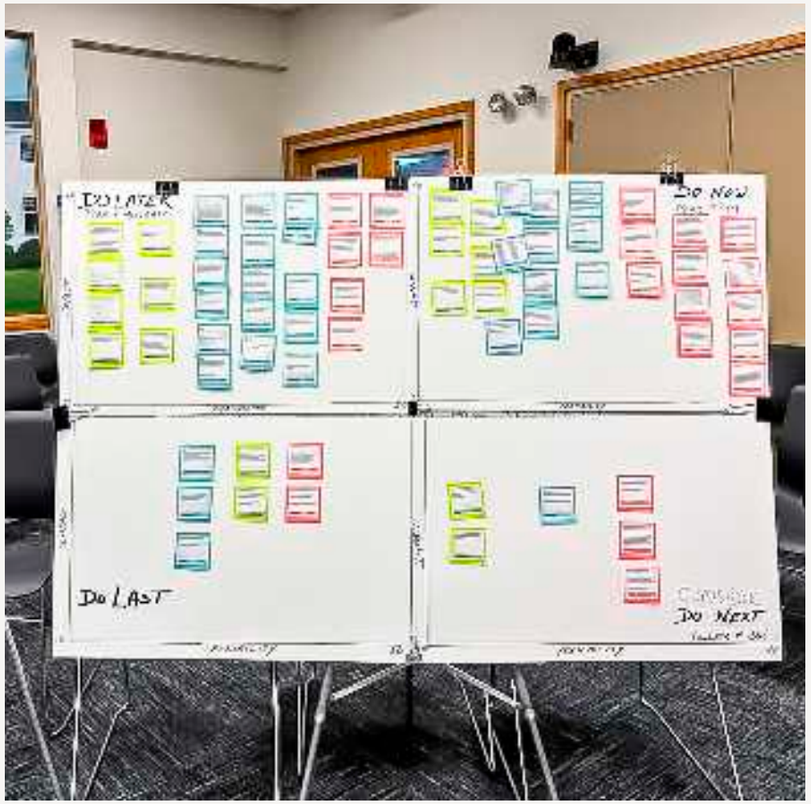
Summary

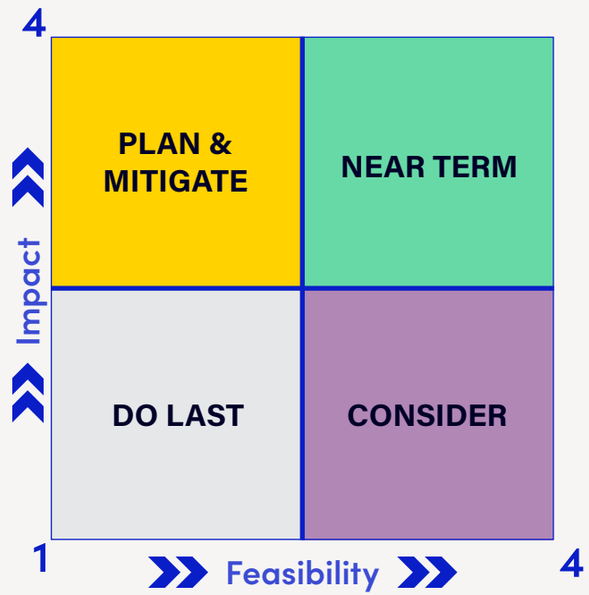
The LCP Tracking function serves as an administrative support to the Select Board in order to aid the decision-making processes and policy alignment, as well as enhance additional trust and confidence for the community through clear and concise communications. Town staff may meet annually with CCC staff to discuss LCP implementation progress. No budget nor direct authority would be attributed to the administration of this function as services are within an advisory capacity only.

Through the Town of Harwich's commitment to transparency and inclusiveness, use of a complementary LCP Tracking function to support Select Board with LCP Implementation is a tangible reflection of the spirit to which the Local Comprehensive Plan was formed: Your Voice, Your Vision, Your Harwich.

LCP Action Plan Prioritization

The Harwich LPC developed a dual criteria evaluation process using a 2x2 matrix with the relative Impact on the Y axis, versus the relative Feasibility on the X axis to prioritize each action item. Based on their collective knowledge and understanding gained through community visioning, surveys, and other outreach conducted for this LCP, the LPC ranked each action item. More information on the Prioritization process carried out by the LPC can be found in Appendix C.





ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Issue Area	Goal	Related Actions	Lead	Impact	Feasibility	Feasibility x Impact
Water Resources	**To maintain a sustainable supply of high-quality drinking water and to protect, preserve, or restore the ecological integrity of Harwich's fresh and marine surface water resources for present and future community needs.**	Continue to acquire open space in existing and future public water supply areas.	Natural Resources Department Conservation Department / Commission Water / Wastewater Department Real Estate & Open Space Committee	4	4	Near Term
		Continue to work with the Cape Cod Commission to complete pond profiles and expand monitoring for all ponds in Harwich.	Natural Resources Department Conservation Department / Commission	4	3	Near Term
		Continue to require new private wastewater treatment systems to be designed for future connection to a larger public system.	Department of Health Water / Wastewater Department	3	4	Near Term
		Continue to monitor for emerging contaminants of concern including PFAS, plastics, and other physical and chemical contaminants in the Town's public water supply wells. Develop a management plan to address future challenges related to PFAs and other contaminants.	Department of Health Water / Wastewater Department	3	3	Near Term
		Encourage low-impact design for stormwater control measures to optimize removal of nitrogen in areas that contribute to coastal waterbodies and removal of phosphorus in contributing areas to fresh waterbodies	Conservation Department / Commission Natural Resources Department of Public Works	3	3	Near Term
		Develop a resource management plan for the Six Ponds DCPC and review existing regulations for the District to ensure that the Special District is effective in achieving stated goals.	Conservation Department / Commission Natural Resources Department Harwich Conservation Trust	4	2	Plan & Mitigate
		Implement the Town's Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan (CWMP), including continued participation in the Pleasant Bay Alliance.	Select Board Water / Wastewater Department	4	2	Plan & Mitigate
		Review potential amendments to the Town's Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan (CWMP) to encourage additional housing opportunities.	Select Board Water / Wastewater Department	4	2	Plan & Mitigate
		Pursue implementation of pond/watershed strategies for all freshwater ponds to improve their overall health and water quality, as well as potential erosion/sedimentation due to increased runoff from increased storm events.	Natural Resources Department Conservation Department / Commission	3	2	Plan & Mitigate
		Adopt a town-wide fertilizer management bylaw.	Select Board	3	1	Plan & Mitigate

TABLE KEY: PLAN | NOW | LAST | CONSIDER

Action Plan Implementation

Issue Area	Goal	Related Actions	Lead	Impact	Feasibility	Feasibility x Impact
Water Resources	To maintain a sustainable supply of high-quality drinking water and to protect, preserve, or restore the ecological integrity of Harwich's fresh and marine surface water resources for present and future community needs.	Continue to implement the Town's MS4 permit and annual plans for stormwater management.	Select Board Department of Public Works Planning Capital Outlay Committee	2	4	Consider if can
		Adopt landscaping best practices for buffers to lakes and ponds based on the Cape Cod Commission's pond buffer guidelines.	Conservation Department / Commission Planning Board Natural Resources Department	2	3	Do Last
Ocean Resources	**To protect, preserve, or restore the quality and natural values and functions of ocean resources.**	Continue to implement the Town's Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan (CWMP) to improve water quality in the Round Cove and Pleasant Bay watersheds.	Select Board Water / Wastewater Department Pleasant Bay Management Alliance Tech Resource Committee	4	3	Near Term
		Develop town policies on coastal rebuilding standards that are incorporated into bylaws.	Planning Harbormaster Conservation Department / Commission Natural Resources Department Building Department	3	3	Near Term
		Pursue funding for implementation of priority actions in the 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan.	Planning Harbormaster Conservation Department / Commission Natural Resources Department	3	2	Plan & Mitigate

TABLE KEY: PLAN | NOW | LAST | CONSIDER

Action Plan Implementation

Issue Area	Goal	Related Actions	Lead	Impact	Feasibility	Feasibility x Impact
Wetland Resources	**To protect, preserve, or restore the quality and natural values of both freshwater and saltwater wetlands and their buffers to support the important functions they provide for the environment and the community.**	Amend wetlands regulations to restrict the use of fertilizer and pesticides in wetland resource areas and buffer zones.	Conservation Department / Commission Natural Resources Department	4	2	Plan & Mitigate
		Adopt landscape guidelines for restoration of wetland buffer zones.	Planning Natural Resources Department Conservation Department / Commission	2	3	Consider if can
Wildlife & Plant Habitat	**To protect, preserve, or restore wildlife and plant habitats in Harwich to promote natural diversity.**	Amend the zoning bylaw to increase regulatory requirements for new development to preserve or create meaningful percentage of the site as native habitat that creates or expands wildlife corridors.	Planning Natural Resources Department Conservation Department / Commission	3	3	Near Term
		Amend the zoning bylaw to develop requirements for replacement of lawn and/or introduced landscape materials with native species in proposed development.	Planning Natural Resources Department	2	2	Do Last
Open Space	**To conserve, preserve, or enhance Harwich's open space network to promote natural and community well-being and quality of life.**	Revise the Open Space Residential Development section of the zoning bylaw to provide incentives to encourage its use in proposed development projects.	Planning	4	3	Near Term
		Pursue key land acquisitions for conservation purposes included in the 2024 – 2031 OSRP.	Natural Resources Department Conservation Department / Commission Harwich Conservation Trust Real Estate & Open Space Committee Community Preservation Committee	4	3	Near Term

TABLE KEY: PLAN | NOW | LAST | CONSIDER

Action Plan Implementation

Issue Area	Goal	Related Actions	Lead	Impact	Feasibility	Feasibility x Impact
Open Space	To conserve, preserve, or enhance Harwich's open space network to promote natural and community well-being and quality of life.	Identify parcels for acquisition by the town that would contribute to the town's open space goals and objectives. Encourage acquisition of parcels that abut existing conservation and open space land. Particular emphasis should be placed on: • Zones of contribution to public water supply wells. • Potential public water supply areas. • Recharge areas to nitrogen-sensitive marine embayments, marine areas susceptible to flooding. • Rare species habitat and other critical habitat and natural communities, including the state's BioMap and Living Waters Map, Diadromous fish runs, unfragmented forest habitat adjacent to previously protected open space. • Parcels that need restoration. • Extensions of existing public trails.	Real Estate & Open Space Committee Harwich Conservation Trust Conservation Department / Commission	4	3	Near Term
		Pursue title research on remaining owners unknown lands with the goal of protecting lands with natural resource value and acquiring suitable lands for affordable housing and other needed municipal facilities.	Assessors Real Estate & Open Space Committee Affordable Housing Trust	4	2	Near Term
		Develop land management plans for conservation lands as described in the 2024 – 2031 OSRP.	Conservation Department / Commission Natural Resources Department Harwich Conservation Trust	3	3	Near Term
		Develop a tree protection and/or land clearing bylaw or integrate tree protection and land clearing regulations into appropriate existing regulations to protect forest resources beyond wetland buffer zones.	Planning Natural Resources Department Conservation Department / Commission	4	2	Plan & Mitigate

TABLE KEY: PLAN | NOW | LAST | CONSIDER

Action Plan Implementation

Issue Area	Goal	Related Actions	Lead	Impact	Feasibility	Feasibility x Impact
Community Design	**To protect and enhance the unique character of Harwich's built and natural environment based on village context.**	**Harwich Port and Harwich Center**				
		Update existing regulations including historic districts and mixed-use bylaws to protect historical village design and to encourage integration of affordable housing.	Planning Historic District & Historical Commission	3	3	Near Term
		Address the character of highway routes that bisect village centers, notably Route 28 in Harwich Port and Route 39 in Harwich Center. Provide streetscape improvements including traffic calming, wayfinding that are compatible with each village's environment and that encourage pedestrian and vehicular connections, improve public safety and support continued revitalization of historic Harwich Center.	Planning Department of Public Works Historic District & Historical Commission Traffic Safety Committee MassDOT	3	2	Plan & Mitigate
		West Harwich				
		Provide streetscape improvements along Route 28 that are compatible with a village environment and encourage pedestrian and vehicular connections to the abutting Dennis Port village center.	Planning Department of Public Works MassDOT	3	3	Near Term
		Seek funding opportunities and use regulatory controls to protect historic buildings along Route 28.	Planning Historic District & Historical Commission	3	2	Plan & Mitigate
		Develop design guidelines to ensure compatibility of new development with existing historic buildings.	Planning Historic District & Historical Commission	3	2	Plan & Mitigate
		Review existing regulations including DCPC provisions to enable development of affordable housing.	Planning Affordable Housing Trust	4	2	Plan & Mitigate
		East Harwich				
		Modify zoning bylaws and adopt design guidelines to encourage mixed-use development with a pedestrian-friendly design in the CH 2 District.	Planning	3	2	Plan & Mitigate
		Incentivize the development of affordable housing within the CH 2 District.	Planning	4	2	Plan & Mitigate

Action Plan Implementation

Issue Area	Goal	Related Actions	Lead	Impact	Feasibility	Feasibility x Impact
Community Design	To protect and enhance the unique character of Harwich's built and natural environment based on village context.	Balance higher-density development in the CH 2 District with development controls in the Six Ponds District and other outlying areas in East Harwich. Review revisions to the Open Space Bylaw and explore opportunities for public acquisition of important open space resources.	Planning	4	2	Plan & Mitigate
		Other Villages/Town-Wide				
		Consider development of a master plan and revision of zoning bylaws to enable redevelopment of existing properties on Rte 28 for affordable housing and mixed-use.	Planning Affordable Housing Trust	4	3	Near Term
		Reinstate the Tree Warden position to improve protection of existing street trees and planting of additional trees where missing and needed in Harwich.	Natural Resources Department Conservation Department / Commission Department of Public Works	4	3	Near Term
		Create neighborhood study groups to discuss land use opportunities and design guidelines in the smaller villages of South Harwich, North Harwich and Pleasant Lake.	Planning Historic District & Historical Committee Real Estate & Open Space Committee	3	3	Near Term
		Compare and adopt zoning bylaws such as Form Based Codes and/or advisory design guidelines to enhance historic development patterns in established village centers and to achieve quality design in other locations.	Planning Historic Commission	3	2	Plan & Mitigate
		Review the need for and ability to expand existing commercial/ industrial areas on Queen Anne Road and Great Western Road.	Planning Chamber of Commerce	2	2	Do Last

TABLE KEY: PLAN | NOW | LAST | CONSIDER

Action Plan Implementation

Issue Area	Goal	Related Actions	Lead	Impact	Feasibility	Feasibility x Impact
Coastal Resiliency	**To prevent or minimize human suffering and loss of life and property or environmental damage resulting from storms, flooding, erosion, and relative sea level rise, including but not limited to that associated with climate change.**	Provide support for certification of Town Staff as certified Floodplain Managers.	Building Commissioner Conservation Department / Commission Zoning Compliance Officer	4	4	Near Term
		Pursue adoption of Flood Area Design Guidelines developed by the Cape Cod Commission for low-lying coastal and upland areas to reduce vulnerability of the built environment to coastal hazards.	Conservation Department / Commission Planning Building Department Cape Cod Cooperative Extension	4	3	Near Term
		Pursue actions identified in the 2019 Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Summary of Findings and 2026 Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP), including vulnerability assessments and implementation of strategies to address the Town's low-lying roads, culverts and stormwater infrastructure to ensure public safety particularly during severe storm events and improve the resilience of key infrastructure.	Conservation Department / Commission Department of Public Works Police Department	4	3	Near Term
		Continue to utilize planning frameworks, such as the Center for Coastal Studies Storm Tide Pathways project, to assess location-based risk and vulnerability to coastal flooding and storm surge on critical infrastructure and municipal facilities.	Natural Resources Department Harbormaster Planning Department of Public Works	4	3	Near Term
		Enhance public education and awareness around preparedness for storm events, particularly for summer workers and visitors.	Emergency Management Chamber of Commerce	3	3	Near Term
		Work with neighboring towns and regional agencies on nature-based strategies to enhance coastal assets (beaches, dunes and marshes) to continue to provide protection during storm events.	Natural Resources Department Conservation Department / Commission Planning Pleasant Bay Management Alliance Tech Resource Committee	3	2	Plan & Mitigate
		Develop a community-wide policy statement to incorporate climate resiliency across all aspects of Town policies and activities.	Select Board Planning Energy & Climate Action Committee	2	2	Do Last

TABLE KEY: PLAN | NOW | LAST | CONSIDER

Action Plan Implementation

Issue Area	Goal	Related Actions	Lead	Impact	Feasibility	Feasibility x Impact
Community Facilities, Services & Infrastructure	**To maintain and enhance existing community facilities, services and infrastructure prioritizing accessibility, sustainability, and inclusivity, catering to diverse resident needs while fostering community connectivity and well-being.**	Review utilization and current resources, services and programming of municipal departments, and identify additional resources, services and program needs and opportunities to support community members at various stages of their lives, enhance their well-being, learning and quality of life and create a sense of connectedness and community for residents.	Cultural Affairs Department Cultural Council Library Department Departments associated with specific facilities	4	4	Near Term
		Invest in services that support young residents, including the Monomoy Regional School District and the Harwich Recreation Department.	Select Board Recreation Department Youth Services Committee	4	4	Near Term
		Prioritize middle school and elementary school improvements and invest in Monomoy Regional High School improvements.	Schools Capital Outlay Committee	4	4	Near Term
		Invest in services that support young residents, including the Monomoy Regional School District and the Harwich Recreation Department.	Select Board Recreation Department Youth Services Committee	4	4	Near Term
		Support ongoing community efforts to make childcare/after school services available.	Schools Recreation Department Youth Services Committee	4	3	Near Term
		Prioritize sewer installation in areas designated for higher density housing development.	Water / Wastewater Department Planning	4	2	Near Term
		Implement ADA accessibility improvements for town buildings and facilities.	Planning Department of Public Works	3	3	Near Term
		Ensure coordination of infrastructure improvements to align project construction with other planned or needed infrastructure work such as roadway improvements.	Department of Public Works Planning Water / Wastewater Department	3	3	Near Term
		Review the Harwich Comprehensive Water Management Plan (CWMP) for potential amendments to achieve greater housing choice in village centers.	Select Board	4	2	Plan & Mitigate
		Conduct a feasibility study of the potential for a community swimming pool and explore outside collaboration.	Schools Capital Outlay Committee	4	2	Plan & Mitigate
		Conduct a townwide community facilities inventory and assessment to determine the overall capacity of existing facilities and programs and to plan and fund future facility needs.	Select Board Capital Outlay Committee Administration	3	2	Plan & Mitigate

Issue Area	Goal	Related Actions	Lead	Impact	Feasibility	Feasibility x Impact
Community Facilities, Services & Infrastructure	To maintain and enhance existing community facilities, services and infrastructure prioritizing accessibility, sustainability, and inclusivity, catering to diverse resident needs while fostering community connectivity and well-being.	Revisit past studies parking facilities utilization in Harwich Center and Harwich Port with revommendations for improvements to existing parking and circulation.	Planning Department of Public Works	2	3	Plan & Mitigate
Transportation	**To provide and promote a safe, reliable, and multi-modal transportation system consistent with community character goals to meet present and future needs.**	Adopt a Complete Streets Policy and Prioritization Plan to help plan for and fund future sidewalk and roadway improvement projects to reduce dependency on the automobile.	Department of Public Works Traffic Safety Committee MassDOT	3	3	Near Term
		Investigate costs of providing shuttle buses to address seasonal demands for parking.	Chamber of Commerce Administration Department of Public Works	3	3	Near Term
		Participate in the Old Colony Rail Trail Modernization Project to resurface the OCRT and upgrade roadway crossings	MassDOT Department of Public Works Traffic Safety Committee			
		Develop wayfinding signage for Harwich facilities, services, and points of interest.	Chamber of Commerce Administration Planning MassDOT	3	2	Plan & Mitigate
		Develop plan for additional sidewalks, crosswalks, improved parking facilities and traffic calming measures in Harwich Port and Harwich Center.	Planning Department of Public Works	3	2	Plan & Mitigate
		Participate in the Old Colony Rail Trail Modernization Project to resurface the OCRT and upgrade roadway crossings	MassDOT Department of Public Works Traffic Safety Committee	2	3	Plan & Mitgate
		Participate in the Cape Cod Commission's traffic counting program to support future transportation infrastructure improvements.	Department of Public Works Traffic Safety Committee	1	4	Consider if can

Issue Area	Goal	Related Actions	Lead	Impact	Feasibility	Feasibility x Impact
Energy	**To provide an adequate, reliable, and diverse supply of energy to serve the needs of Harwich residents, businesses, and visitors.** **To reduce the Town's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions.**	Work with the Cape Light Compact to complete additional energy assessments of public buildings to support additional grant funding from the Green Communities program.	Department of Public Works Cape Light Compact	3	3	Near Term
		Designate staff responsible for planning and implementing energy use and sustainability goals as set by the state.	Planning Building Department Conservation Department / Commission	3	3	Near Term
		Pursue development of a tree protection/tree clearing bylaw to help sequester carbon.	Planning Natural Resources Department Conservation Department / Commission	4	2	Plan & Mitigate
		Continue to work with regional partners, such as Cape & Vinyard Electric Cooperative (CVEC) and the Regional Transit Authority (RTA), to identify locations for different levels of EV charging stations.	Department of Public Works Energy & Climate Action Committee	3	2	Plan & Mitigate
		Complete a town-wide Greenhouse Gases (GHG) inventory and climate action plan.	Energy & Climate Action Committee	3	2	Plan & Mitigate
		Support the Energy and Climate Action Committee, continue to sponsor annual, small-scale home solar and heat pump information events and develop a tracking system for electrical permits for installation of these technologies as a way to both educate the public and document emissions reductions efforts in the stationary residential subsector.	Energy & Climate Action Committee	2	3	Do Last
		Pursue additional energy reduction and efficiency measures in public buildings.	Energy & Climate Action Committee Select Board Town Manager	2	2	Do Last
		Identify areas suitable for location of solar installations and battery storage.	Energy & Climate Action Committee Real Estate & Open Space Committee	1	2	Do Last

TABLE KEY: PLAN | NOW | LAST | CONSIDER

Issue Area	Goal	Related Actions	Lead	Impact	Feasibility	Feasibility x Impact
Waste Management	**To promote a sustainable solid waste management system that protects public health, safety, and the environment and supports the economy of Harwich.**	Develop educational materials for homeowners on the benefits of composting.	Planning Department of Public Works	4	4	Near Term
		Continue to support volunteer staffing of the Town's Treasure Chest by defining the skills needed and developing a system for receipt of donations	Planning Department of Public Works	3	3	Near Term
		Expand the food scrap collection program to include municipal facilities such as schools, the community center and the cultural center.	Board of Health Department of Public Works	4	2	Plan & Mitigate
		Encourage use of the food scrap collection program by private and non-profit entities such as restaurants, nursing homes and residential complexes.	Board of Health	4	2	Plan & Mitigate
		Implement transfer station improvements, including recycling and community composting program.	Department of Public Works	3	2	Plan & Mitigate

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Issue Area	Goal	Related Actions	Lead	Impact	Feasibility	Feasibility x Impact
Cultural Heritage	**To protect and preserve Harwich's significant cultural, historic, and archaeological values and resources.**	Update historic inventory forms on MACRIS database.	Select Board Recreation Department Youth Services Committee	4	4	Near Term
		Work with the Harwich Historical Commission to develop design guidelines that protect and preserve forms, layouts, scale, massing, and key character defining features of historic resources, including traditional development patterns of the seven villages.	Historic District & Historical Commission	3	3	Near Term
		Support additional programming at The 204 Cultural Arts Municipal Building, Harwich Community Center, Brooks Free Library, Brooks Academy and Brooks Museum.	Cultural Affairs Department Cultural Council Library Department	3	3	Near Term
		Evaluate creation of additional historic districts or zoning protections for historic resources.	Historic District & Historical Commission Planning	3	2	Plan & Mitigate
		Enact traffic calming measures, parking and pedestrian improvements in all villages, with particular attention to the Harwich Center and Harwich Port cultural districts.	MassDOT Department of Public Works Planning	3	2	Plan & Mitigate
		Develop a land clearing bylaw that includes protection of archaeological resources and assets from alteration or relocation.	Planning Natural Resources Department Conservation Department/Commission	3	1	Plan & Mitigate

TABLE KEY: PLAN | NOW | LAST | CONSIDER

Action Plan Implementation

Issue Area	Goal	Related Actions	Lead	Impact	Feasibility	Feasibility x Impact
Economy	**To promote a sustainable local economy that consists of a broad range of businesses providing employment opportunities to a diverse workforce.**	Review existing zoning for potential amendments to encourage adaptive reuse and redevelopment of commercial property, including dimensional and/or parking relief for mixed-use development.	Planning Board Town Planner Zoning Compliance Officer Chamber of Commerce Zoning Board of Appeals	3	3	Near Term
		Work with the Cape Cod Regional Transit Authority to establish and promote a seasonal shuttle service with connections to beaches and cultural activities.	Regional Transit Authority Chamber of Commerce Administration Department of Public Works	4	2	Plan & Mitigate
		Pursue infrastructure improvements including expansion of Fiber Optic broadband access by working with OpenCape to upgrade network capacity to businesses and municipal operations in Harwich.	Department of Public Works Planning	4	2	Plan & Mitigate
		Conduct a buildout analysis of vacant industrially-zoned land for its remaining development potential.	Planning	2	3	Consider if can
		Seek technical assistance from the Cape Cod Commission and Commonwealth of Massachusetts to develop master plans to support economic development in Harwich's village centers.	Chamber of Commerce Planning Harwich Cutural Districts Cultural Director Cape Cod Regional Tech High School	2	2	Do Last

TABLE KEY:

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LAST	CONSIDER

Issue Area	Goal	Related Actions	Lead	Impact	Feasibility	Feasibility x Impact
Housing	**Promote the production and preservation of Affordable and Attainable Housing that includes both year-round ownership and rental housing opportunities at various income levels and needs.**	Evaluate the adoption of the Seasonal Community Designation under the Massachusetts Affordable Homes Act.	Planning Affordable Housing Trust Administration Select Board	4	4	Near Term
		Ensure that all affordable units, current and future, remain a part of the Town's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) to the greatest extent possible.	Town Planner Assessing Director Affordable Housing Advocate Administration	4	4	Near Term
		Move forward on the 456 Queen Anne Road project under the guidance of the Harwich Affordable Housing Trust (HAHT).	Affordable Housing Trust Administration Planninng Zoning Board of Appeals	4	4	Near Term
		Support the Board of Assessors to grant tax relief for property owners who rent to income qualified renters on a year-round basis.	Planning Assessing Administration	4	4	Near Term
		Review, evaluate and consider revising the two-family; multi-family; and mixed-use zoning bylaw with the aim to incentivize density development opportunities, as appropriate, in exchange for affordable and attainable housing.	Planning Zoning Board of Appeals Affordable Housing Trust Select Board	4	3	Near Term
		Foster relationships with experienced non-profit and for-profit developers to secure sources of public and private financing and to create new affordable and attainable housing units.	Affordable Housing Trust Planning Barnstable Regional Housing Services Lower Cape Community Development Corporation (CDC)	4	3	Near Term
		Explore potential housing programs, opportunities, and funding for those earning 81% to 120% or 81% - 150%, or 81% - 200% of Area Median Income (AMI).	Planning Affordable Housing Trust Barnstable Regional Housing Services Lower Cape Community Development Corporation (CDC)	4	3	Near Term
		Further capitalize the Harwich Affordable Housing Trust (HAHT) to enable its mission to provide affordable housing. Potential sources include annual CPA funding, the Affordable Housing Stabilization Fund, potential inclusionary zoning payments in lieu of units, and state and federal funding.	Planning Affordable Housing Trust CPA Committee	4	3	Near Term

Issue Area	Goal	Related Actions	Lead	Impact	Feasibility	Feasibility x Impact
Housing	Promote the production and preservation of Affordable and Attainable Housing that includes both year-round ownership and rental housing opportunities at various income levels and needs.	Consider bylaws that have been created in other communities to regulate Short Term Rentals, to better address such issues as public safety, water quality and noise. Determine staffing needs for administration of such bylaws.	Planning Zoning Board of Appeals Building Department Health Barnstable Regional Housing Services	4	3	Near Term
		Monitor the State list of short-term rental units. Consider whether to pursue a local effort to identify units not identified on the State list.	Planning Zoning Board of Appeals Building Health	3	4	Near Term
		Collaborate with existing local and regional groups to conduct public forums educating the general public on what affordable and attainable housing is and why it is important in Harwich	Affordable Housing Trust Planning	3	4	Near Term
		Encourage conversions and infill development in developed areas, including village centers and along Route 28. Changes from commercial to residential use and increases in residential density may be permitted subject to considerations of infrastructure, environmentally sensitive areas, and community character.	Planning Natural Resources Department of Public Works Historic Commission	3	3	Near Term
		Prioritize and incentivize the adaptive reuse of existing buildings for attainable and affordable housing.	Planning Zoning Board of Appeals Affordable Housing Trust	3	3	Near Term
		Maximize opportunities to use Accessory Dwelling Units. Review financing barriers to such use.	Lower Cape Community Development Corporation (CDC) MA Regional Services	3	3	Near Term
		Consider programs and regulatory amendments to allow for and support seasonal workforce housing.	Lower Cape Community Development Corporation (CDC) Barnstable County Regional Housing Services MA Regional Services	3	3	Near Term
		Provide funding resources to support housing rehabilitation programs such the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) TRI Housing Rehabilitation Program for income qualifying homeowners that are unable to make necessary but critical home repairs such as roof, windows, hot water heater, or septic system.	Planning TRI Affordable Housing Trust Barnstable Regional Housing Services	3	3	Near Term

Issue Area	Goal	Related Actions	Lead	Impact	Feasibility	Feasibility x Impact
		Support creative funding and collaborative partnerships (public/ private) in the development of affordable and attainable housing, including subsidies for permanently restricted rental units	Planning Affordable Housing Trust Barnstable Regional Housing Services Lower Cape Community Development Corporation (CDC)	3	3	Near Term
		Encourage affordable and attainable housing by thoughtful design that is compatible with community character for each of Harwich's separate villages as mentioned in the Community Design section.	Planning Affordble Housing Trust Historic Commission Building	3	2	Plan & Mitigate
		Consider adoption of a variety of specific zoning strategies from the Massachusetts Affordable Homes Act that could include a 40Y Starter Home District, incentive /inclusionary zoning options, or cottage style cluster housing.	Planning Affordable Housing Trust Zoning Board of Appeals	3	2	Plan & Mitigate
		Evaluate the use of Town-owned properties for creative housing solutions, including reuse of Town owned buildings for housing such as Coldbrook Preserve / Fire Museum/ 3 Affordable Housing Rental Units on Bank Street.	Planning Real Estate & Open Space Commission Natural Resources Conservation Commission Affordable Housing Trust	2	3	Consider if can
		Work with the Harwich Assessing Office and the Real Estate & Open Space Committee to develop an inventory of publicly available land that could be suitable for affordable housing.	Planning Administration Real Estate & Open Space Committee Assessing	2	3	Consider if can
		Increase funding sources for rental assistance programs such as rental vouchers. Review marketing efforts, education and administration of such programs.	Affordable Housing Trust Lower Cape Community Development Corporation (CDC) Barnstable County Regional Housing Services	2	2	Do Last

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Section 7

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Town's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) included in this LCP will support and advance the LCP Vision, Growth Policy, Goals, and Actions. This section includes a description of existing capital facilities and infrastructure systems and planned capital expenditures programmed over the next five years in the Town's Five-Year Capital Outlay Plan (COP) that is presented in each year's Annual Town Meeting warrant. The current COP is for FY 2025 to FY 2029. The Town also annually publishes in the May Town Meeting Warrant Booklet a summary of the capital outlay plan, identifying all proposed capital expenditures for the next 5 years estimated to cost $100,000 or more.

Best practices for LCP implementation involve incorporating key capital facilities and infrastructure needs identified in the LCP into the CIP. The Capital Improvement Program established through this LCP will provide the Town with priority needs that will be considered during the Capital Outlay process. The CIP is offered for planning purposes and is not intended as a thorough financial tool. A more accurate forecasting tool is the Town's COP. Capital facilities and infrastructure needs included in this section were informed by Town Departments and Committees as well as input received from Harwich residents at visioning workshops and the LCP community survey.

Due to the potential for costs to fluctuate over time and as projects are prioritized and de-prioritized, costs for projects identified in the LCP have been simplified into three categories:

$ - Less than $100,000
$$ - $100,000 - $500,000
$$$ - $500,000 or more

Grant programs to support capital expenditures have also been identified. Municipal finance strategies, such as debt exclusion or use of local stabilization funds, will be evaluated and determined on a project-by-project basis once the scope and extent of the project cost has been determined.

Not every item in the Town's COP is included in the CIP; however, many Town initiatives and projects appear in the CIP. The Select Board and Town Administrator will determine the fiscal priorities and financing strategies during COP development with Town Departments. The CIP represents ongoing or proposed capital projects related to the LCP Action Plan that might advance to the COP for implementation over the life of the LCP.

The Town of Harwich will work diligently to ensure that the LCP is aligned to inform long-range Capital Improvement Planning and the 5-year COP to be responsive to community needs and future growth. Through community consensus, the COP and LCP collectively provide an implementation framework to support achieving the community's LCP vision.

Existing Infrastructure Systems, Challenges or Constraints

Infrastructure System / Name	Address	Description	Challenges or Constraints	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	Five Year Total
Public Buildings									
Harwich Community Center	100 Oak Street	Harwich Community Center/Recreational Facilities	Facilities Maintenance	$ -	$653,000	$ -	$ -	$ -	$653,000
Harwich Channel	100 Oak Street	Same as Above	Facilities Maintenance	$26,000	$45,000	$17,000	$35,000	$29,000	$152,000
Athletic Complexes	75 Oak Street	Same as Above	Facilities Maintenance	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$80,000	$80,000
Cranberry Valley Golf Course	183 Oak Street	Public Golf Course	Facilities Maintenance	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$2,500,000	$2,500,000
Public Safety Complex	183 Sisson Road	Police & Fire Station	Facilities Maintenance	$ -	$ -	$135,000	$ -	$360,000	$495,000
Old Middle School	204 Sission Road	204 Cultural Center	Facilities Maintenance	$265,000	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$265,000
DPW Complex	209 Queen Anne Road	DPW Facility	Facilities Maintenance	$100,000	$9,177,000	$ -	$ -	$ -	$9,277,000
Transfer Station	273 Queen Anne Road	Transfer & Recycling Facility	Facilities Maintenance	$ -	$ -	$ -	$545,000	$ -	$545,000
Albro House	728 Main Street	Harwich Human Services	Facilities Maintenance	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$100,000	$100,000
Town Hall	732 Main Street	Town Offices	Facilities Maintenance	$ -	$ -	$275,000	$350,000	$ -	$625,000
Brooks Free Library	739 Main Street	Pubic Library	Facilities Maintenance	$ -	$40,000	$814,000	$ -	$ -	$854,000
Brooks Academy	80 Parallel Street	Museum	Facilities Maintenance	$1,300,149	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$1,300,149
Harbor Complex	715 Route 28	Harbormaster	Facilities Maintenance	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Fire Department	175 Sisson Road	Fire Department. Headquarters	Facilities Maintenance	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$550,000	$550,000
Harwich Elementary School	263 South Street	Public School	Facilities Maintenance	$ -	$65,000	$54,000	$1,115,000	$ -	$1,234,000
Water Department	196 Chatham Road	Water Departement	Facilities Maintenance	$ -	$ -	$1,500,000	$ -	$ -	$1,500,000
Transportation									
Department of Public Works	Various Locations	Town roadways	Road Maintenance	$700,000	$700,000	$700,000	$700,000	$700,000	$3,500,000
Water/Wastewater									
Water Department	196 Chatham Road	New Well Construction	Well construction	$ -	$3,500,000	$ -	$ -	$ -	$3,500,000

Existing Infrastructure Systems, Challenges or Constraints

Infrastructure System / Name	Address	Description	Challenges or Constraints	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	Five Year Total
Stormwater Management	Townwide	Stormwater Control Measures	Inadequate sizing for more frequent storm events						
Water Department	196 Chatham Road	Pipe Discontinuity upgrade	Water Distribution System Improvements	$100,000	$2,200,000	$ -	$ -	$ -	$2,300,000
Sewers	Phase 3A CWMP	Great Sand Lakes Sewer Design & Construction	Sewer Construction	$35,000,000	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$35,000,000
Recreation									
Cranberry Valley Golf Course	183 Oak Street	Irrigation Update	Improvements to Existing Irrigation System	$2,500,000	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$2,500,000
Cranberry Valley Golf Course	183 Oak Street	Bunker Renovation	Bunker Improvements	$ -	$ -	$ -	$900,000	$ -	$900,000
Coastal Infrastructure									
Harbormaster	Harwich Port	Allen Harbor Jetty	Jetty Improvements	$ -	$2,350,000	$ -	$ -	$ -	$2,350,000
Harbormaster	213 Long Pond Drive	Herring River Ramp Replacement	Public Boat Ramp Replacement	$ -	$300,000	$ -	$ -	$ -	$300,000
Harbormaster	715 Main Street	Saquatucket Bulkhead Replacement	Bulkhead Replacement	$770,000	$ -	$9,915,000	$ -	$ -	$10,685,000

Capital Facilities and Infrastructure Projects Needed to Support Growth or Redevelopment

Glossary of Terms:

SRF	State Revoloving Fund Program	Mass DEP
UPWP	Unified Planning Work Program	Cape Cod Commission/MPO
DLTA	District Local Technical Assistance	Cape Cod Commission
EVIP	Electric Vehicle Incentive Program	MassDEP
SMRP	Sustainable Materials Recovery Program	MassDEP
WRIG	Waste Reduction Innovation Grant	MassDEP
MVP	Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness	Mass
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program	MassDOT
CPA	Community Preservation Act	Harwich CPC
COP	Capital Outlay Plan	Harwich COP

Project Name	Description	Funding Sources & Strategies	Action Plan Priority Ranking	Anticipated Capital Cost ($/$$/$$$)	How Capital Investment Supports LCP Vision, Goals, Objectives and Action Plan
Water Resources Goal: To maintain a sustainable supply of high-quality drinking water and to protect, preserve, or restore the ecological integrity of Harwich's fresh and marine surface water resources for present and future community of high-quality drinking water and to protect, preserve, or restore the ecological integrity of Harwich's fresh and marine surface water resources for present and future community needs.					
Sewers	Wastewater collection system expansion in East Harwich w/11.5 miles of gravity sewer, 1.2 miles of force main, 6 pump stations, and 400 linear feet of pressure sewer	MassDEP SRF	Near Term (Housing) Plan & Mitigate (Community Facilities & Services)	$$$	Supports Housing/Redevelopment in Villages Housing, Community Facilities & Services, Community Design Priority Actions
Sewers	Bog restoration/puchase of sewer capacity from Chatham to address nitrogen loading to Pleasant Bay watershed	CPA	Plan & Mitigate (Water Resources) Near Term (Ocean Resources)	$$$	Achieves Water Resources Goal to Preserve Marine Water Resources
Transportation Goal: To provide and promote a safe, reliable, and multi-modal transportation system consistent with community character goals to meet present and future needs.					
Route 28 Sidewalk Improvements	3,300-foot sidewalk and roadway improvement project connecting the Harwich Port business district	UPWP, MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces	Plan & Mitigate (Community Design)	$$$	Supports Community Design Goal and provides connectivity in village centers
Route 39 at Pleasant Bay Road	Intersection safety improvements	UPWP, TIP, Complete Streets	Transportation Priority Action	$$$	Supports Transportation Goal
Low-Lying Roads	Roadways identified in the Town's MVP plan and/or Hazard Mitigation Plan vulnerable to severe storm events	MVP Action Grant, Hazard Mitigation Grant	Near Term (Coastal Resiliency)	$$$	Supports Coastal Resiliency and Transportation Goals

Capital Facilities and Infrastructure Projects Needed to Support Growth or Redevelopment

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DLTA	District Local Technical Assistance	Cape Cod Commission
EVIP	Electric Vehicle Incentive Program	MassDEP
SMRP	Sustainable Materials Recovery Program	MassDEP
WRIG	Waste Reduction Innovation Grant	MassDEP
MVP	Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness	Mass
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program	MassDOT
CPA	Community Preservation Act	Harwich CPC
COP	Capital Outlay Plan	Harwich COP

Project Name	Description	Funding Sources & Strategies	Action Plan Priority Ranking	Anticipated Capital Cost ($/$$/$$$)	How Capital Investment Supports LCP Vision, Goals, Objectives and Action Plan
Stormwater	Stormwater infrastructure identified in the Town's MVP Plan and/or Hazard Mitigation Plan vulnerable to severe storm events	MVP Action Grant, Hazard Mitigation Grant	Consider if Can (Coastal Resiliency)	$	Supports Coastal Resiliency and Transportation Goals
Parking	Harwich Port/Harwich Center Improved parking strategies	UPWP	Plan & Mitigate (Community Design)	$	Supports Community Design Goal and provides connectivity in village centers
Sidewalks/Crosswalks/ Traffic Calming	Various Locations to improve pedestrian safety in villages	UPWP, MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces	Near Term (Community Design)	$$	Supports Community Design Goal and provides connectivity in village centers
Bicycle Improvements	Town-wide Bike lanes/bike racks	UPWP, DLTA, Complete Streets	Near Term (Community Design)	$	Community Design Priority Action
Seasonal Shuttle Buses	Seasonal shuttle buses to beaches/other locations	UPWP, DLTA	Near Term (Transportation)	$$	Supports Transportation Goal Transportation Priority Action
Intersection Improvements	Route 39 at Pleasant Bay Road safety improvements	UPWP, TIP, Complete Streets	Near Term (Transportation)	$$$	Supports Transportation Goal Transportation Priority Action
Community Facilities and Services Goal: To maintain and enhance existing community facilities, services and infrastructure prioritizing accessibility, sustainability, and inclusivity, catering to diverse resident needs while fostering community connectivity and well-being					
Monomoy Regional High School Improvements	Building Improvements	Town COP	Near Term	$$	Community Facilities & Services Priority Action
ADA access improvements, parking, restrooms, water stations, shower and changing stations	Town-wide @ existing open space/beaches	MassMOD	Near Term	$$	Community Facilities & Services Action

Capital Facilities and Infrastructure Projects Needed to Support Growth or Redevelopment

Glossary of Terms:

SRF	State Revoloving Fund Program	Mass DEP
UPWP	Unified Planning Work Program	Cape Cod Commission/MPO
DLTA	District Local Technical Assistance	Cape Cod Commission
EVIP	Electric Vehicle Incentive Program	MassDEP
SMRP	Sustainable Materials Recovery Program	MassDEP
WRIG	Waste Reduction Innovation Grant	MassDEP
MVP	Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness	Mass
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program	MassDOT
CPA	Community Preservation Act	Harwich CPC
COP	Capital Outlay Plan	Harwich COP

Project Name	Description	Funding Sources & Strategies	Action Plan Priority Ranking	Anticipated Capital Cost ($/$$/$$$)	How Capital Investment Supports LCP Vision, Goals, Objectives and Action Plan
Energy Goal: To provide an adequate, reliable, and diverse supply of energy to serve the needs of Harwich residents, businesses, and visitors.					
EV charging stations	Park & Ride lot at Route 6 and 124	MassEVIP	Plan & Mitigate	$	Supports Energy Goal Energy Priority Action
Waste Management Goal: To promote a sustainable solid waste management system that protects public health, safety, and the environment and supports the economy of Harwich					
Composting and textiles recycling facilities	Transfer Station	MassDEP SMRP and WRIG	Near Term (Community Facilities & Infrastructure)	$	Supports Waste Management Goal

Section 8

SUPPORTING PLANS & REPORTS

Supporting Plans & Reports

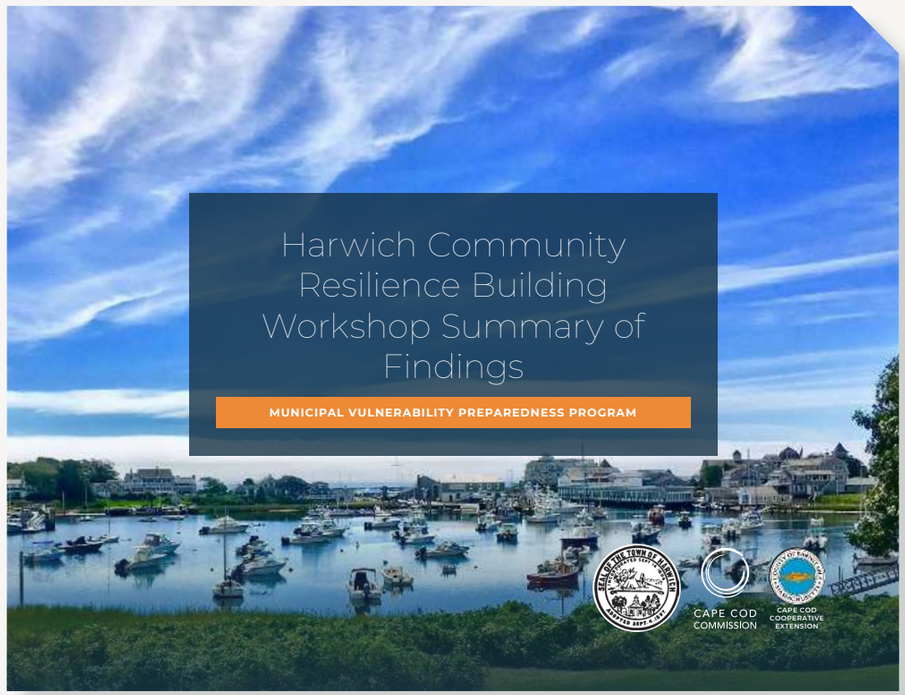
2025 Harwich Hazard Mitigation Plan

Read it here:
https://content.civicplus.com/api/assets/ma-harwich/d5cdb4fd-4a1f-4356-92fa-661774699cc0?cache=1800



Harwich 2019 Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program Summary of Findings

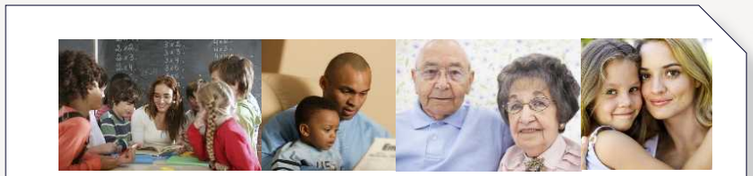
Read it here:
https://content.civicplus.com/api/assets/d107cd81-6489-4f01-9edf-04c9d1396dc0



Supporting Plans & Reports

Town of Harwich 2025 Housing Production Plan

Read it here:
https://content.civicplus.com/api/assets/ma-harwich/d576a8b2-2df9-4697-971f-bdb6d82de067?cache=1800



HOUSING PRODUCTION PLAN

Prepared for the

TOWN OF HARWICH

www.harwich-ma.gov

Prepared by the Local Planning Committee (LPC)
Garrett Curran, Vice Chair
Margo Fenn
Peter Gori
James Knickman
Joyce McIntyre, Chair
Ed McManus
Barbara Nickerson
Brian Scheld
David Spitz
Bernadette Waystack
Mary Jones
Karen Sunnarborg, Consultant
Sharon Rooney, Project Manager, Tighe & Bond
Christine Flynn, Harwich Town Planner

March 2025



Town of Harwich 2025 – 2035 Open Space & Recreation Plan



Town of Harwich

Open Space and Recreation Plan **2025-2035**

Tighe&Bond

Supporting Plans & Reports

Full List of Plans & Reports

1. Lower Cape Cod Community Health Needs Assessment (August 2024)
2. Harwich Consumer Confidence Report (2023)
3. Harwich Accessory Apartment Zoning Bylaw Amendment Memorandum (February 2023)
4. Harwich Zoning §325-42.L Amendment (February 2023)
5. Harwich Zoning §325-160 Amendment (February 2023)
6. Harwich Zoning §325 Article V Section 14.T Amendment (February 2023)
7. Harwich Zoning Article XVII §325 Amendment (February 2023)
8. Harwich Zoning Article XXII §325-149 – §325-157 Amendment (February 2023)
9. Harwich Wastewater Projects GHD Update (March 2023)
10. Protecting a Hidden Gem – Six Ponds Resource Management Initiative (March 2023)
11. Harwich Annual Town Report (December 2023)
12. Cold Brook Eco-Restoration Project Update (May 2022)
13. Housing Market Overview and Economic and Fiscal Benefits of Housing Development in Barnstable County, MA (October 2022)
14. Cape Cod Regional Policy Plan Barnstable County Ordinance #19-01 (January 2021)
15. Cape Cod Commission Climate Mitigation Technical Bulletin Draft (January 2021)
16. Cape Cod Commission Energy Technical Bulletin Draft (2021)
17. Harwich Annual Town Meeting Warrant with Recommendations (September 2020)

Supporting Plans & Reports

18. Harwich Community Resilience Building Workshop Summary of Findings	(2019)
19. Cape Cod Commission Local Comprehensive Plan Regulations	(July 2019)
20. Cape Cod Commission Local Comprehensive Plan Guidance	(August 2019)
21. Cape Cod Regional Policy Plan	(December 2018)
22. Harwich Hazard Mitigation Plan	(2017)
23. Draft Harwich Hazard Mitigation Plan	(2025)
24. Harwich Open Space and Recreation Plan	(May 2017)
25. Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan/ Single Environmental Impact Report	(March 2016)
26. Harwich Housing Production Plan	(December 2016)
27. Cape Cod Area Wide Water Quality Management Plan Update	(June 2015)
28. Harwich Port Parking Study	(September 2014)
29. Harwich Local Comprehensive Plan	(May 2011)
30. Harwich Local Comprehensive Plan	(May 2000)
31. Harwich Local Comprehensive Plan	(November 1993)
32. Harwich Master Plan Summary	(January 1968)
33. Harwich Master Plan	(December 1967)

Section 9

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Glossary of Terms

ACEC	Area of Environmental Concern
ACS	American Community Survey
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
APCC	Association to Preserve Cape Cod
AMI	Area Median Income
CAN	Climate Action Network
CARES Act	Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act
CCAP	Comprehensive Climate Action Plan
CCCAP	Cape Cod Climate Action Plan
CCC	Cape Cod Commission
CCRT	Cape Cod Rail Trail
CCT	Cape Cod Theatre
CCRTA	Cape Cod Regional Transit Authority
C&D	Construction and Demolition
CEDS	Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
CPA	Community Preservation Act
CPC	Community Preservation Committee
CRB	Community Resilience Building
CVEC	Cape and Vineyard Electric Cooperative
CWMP	Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan
DART	Dial-A-Ride Transportation
DCPC	District of Critical Planning Concern
DFE	Design Flood Elevation
DLTA	District Local Technical Assistance Program
ECAC	Energy and Climate Action Committee
EOHLC	Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities
EV	Electric Vehicle
EMS	Emergency Medical Services
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FIRM	Flood Insurance Rate Map
FY	Fiscal-Year
GCD	Green Communities Division
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GHG	Global Greenhouse Gas
HAC	Housing Assistance Corporation
HAHTF	Harwich Affordable Housing Trust Fund
HCC	Harwich Community Center
HCT	Harwich Conservation Trust
HECH	Harwich Ecumenical Council for the Homeless, Inc.
HHA	Harwich Housing Authority
HHW	Household Hazardous Waste
HJT	Harwich Junior Theatre
HMP	Hazard Mitigation Plan
HPC	Homeless Prevention Council
HPP	Housing Production Plan
HT	Affordable Housing Trust
ILL	Inter-Library Loan
LCP	Local Comprehensive Plan
LCPC	Local Comprehensive Planning Committee
LIP	Local Initiative Program
MAPC	Metropolitan Area Planning Council
MassDEP	Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection
MassDOT	Massachusetts Department of Transportation
MGD	Million Gallons Per Day
MGL	Massachusetts General Law
MSW	Municipal Solid Waste
MS4	Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System
MVP	Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness/ Planning

Glossary of Terms

NFIP	National Flood Insurance Program
OSRP	Open Space and Recreation Plan
PALS	Cape Cod Pond and Lake Stewardship Program
PB	Planning Board
PFAs	Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances
PHE	Public Health Excellence
QR Code	Quick Response Code
RPP	Regional Policy Plan
RSA	Road Safety Audit
RTA	Regional Transit Authority
SB	Select Board
SCORP	Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan
SFHA	Special Flood Hazard Areas
SHI	Subsidized Housing Inventory
SLOSH	Sea, Lake, and Overland Surges from Hurricanes
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
SPR	Site Plan Review
TIP	Transportation Improvement Plan
TMDL	Total Maximum Daily Load
WPCF	Water Pollution Control Facility
WTP	Water Treatment Plant
ZBA	Zoning Board of Appeals

Section 10

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A | Harwich LCP Survey Results

APPENDIX B | Survey Theme Breakdown

APPENDIX C | Local Comprehensive Plan - Actions Prioritization

APPENDIX D | LCP 2025 - Looking Forward: A Few Notes. Notes from the presentation to the LCP Committee on July 1, 2025. By Duncan Berry

APPENDIX E | Answers to frequently asked questions regarding the topic of land preservation related to the town tax rate, cost of municipal services and wastewater infrastructure costs

Section 10

APPENDIX A

HARWICH LCP SURVEY RESULTS



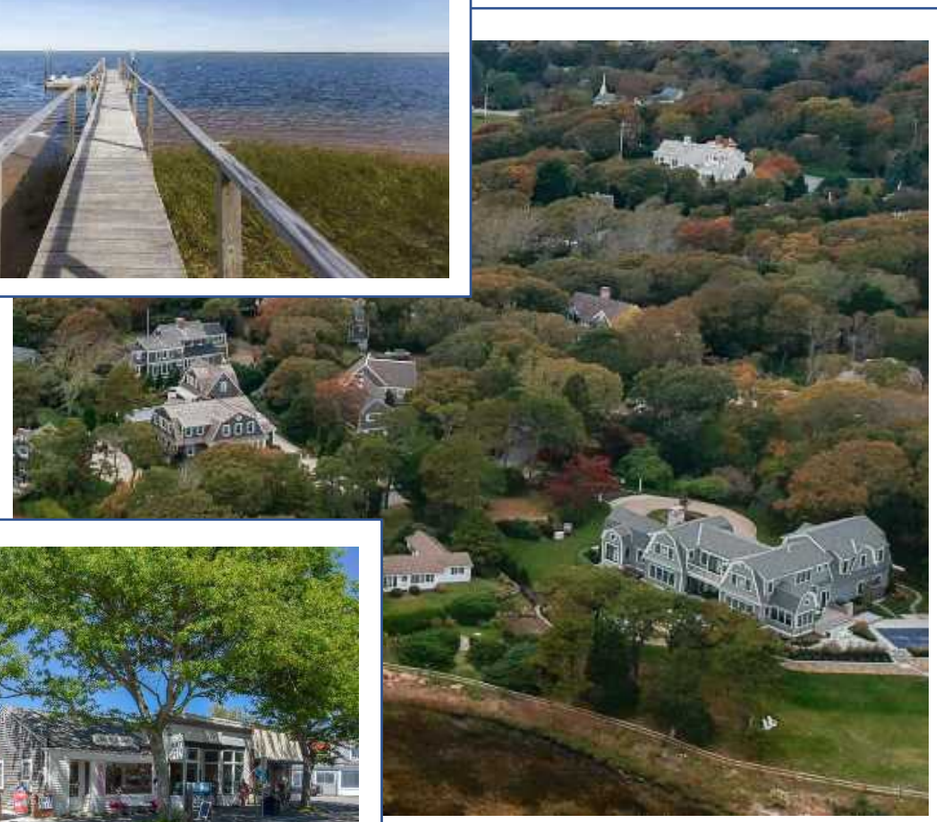
Harwich's Comprehensive Plan Input

2024 SURVEY RESULTS

Purpose of Survey

Input on overall community vision and key issues for the Town's Comprehensive Plan update







Contributors

- Town Staff
- Harwich LCP Committee
- Tighe & Bond; LCP consultant



Survey Structure + Outreach



Survey Structure

- Use of Survey Monkey online platform
- Convenience sample of Town residents and non-residents
- 31 questions total
- Mix of multiple choice, ranking, and open-ended questions

Survey Outreach Campaign

- Town Website
- Printed posters in Town Hall w/ QR code
- Holiday Stroll postcards w/ QR code
- Social Media

Survey Responses
A Snapshot

- Opened November 17, 2023; Closed March 16, 2024

- 997 Total Respondents (n=977)

- Response numbers remain generally consistent through to the final part of the survey, with some reduction in open ended (fill in) question responses – consistent with typical response patterns



Data Analysis

Overview of Process

- Review for recurring themes
- Analysis of open-ended comments
- Additional analysis through word clouds for frequently used words/phrases





Respondent Demographics

Relationship to Town:
(check all that apply question)

- 80% Full-time Harwich resident
- 15% Part-time Harwich resident
- 10.5% Worker in Harwich
- 2% Visitor to Harwich
- 4% Other

Ownership (home & apt/condo):

- 95% Property-owning residents
- 5% of respondents rent in the Town

Respondent Demographics

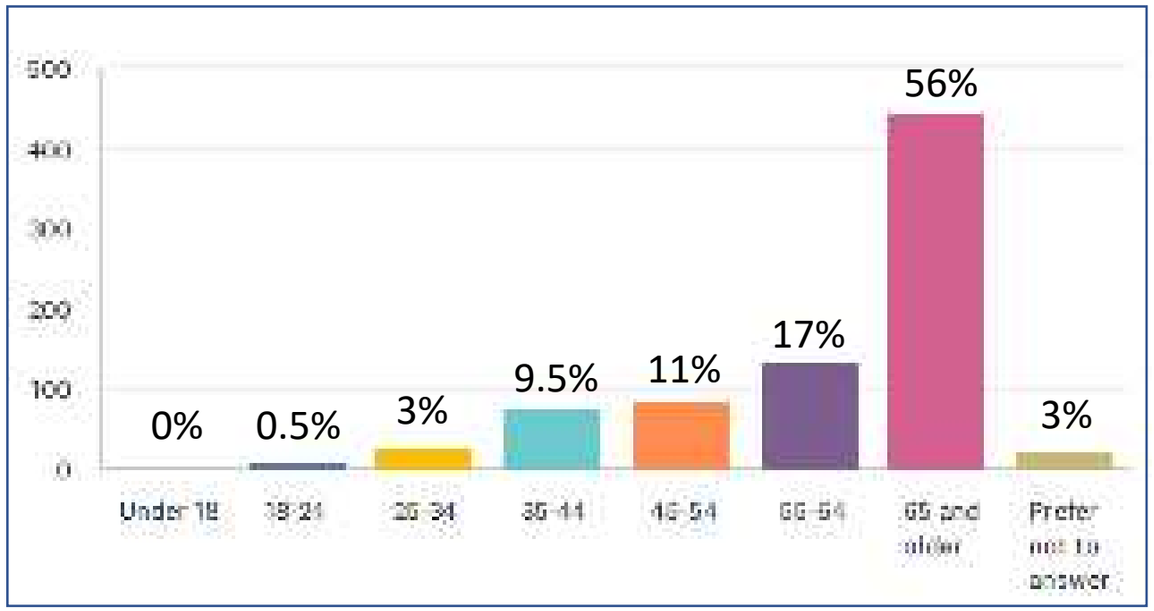
N=788

55 & over = 73%
Under 55 = 24%

N=788

28% reside in East Harwich
21.5% reside in Harwich Port
14% reside in Harwich Center
9% reside in West Harwich
8% reside in South Harwich
6.5% reside in Pleasant Lake
6.5% resident in North Harwich
5% Don't live in Harwich
1% Not sure

Age N=788

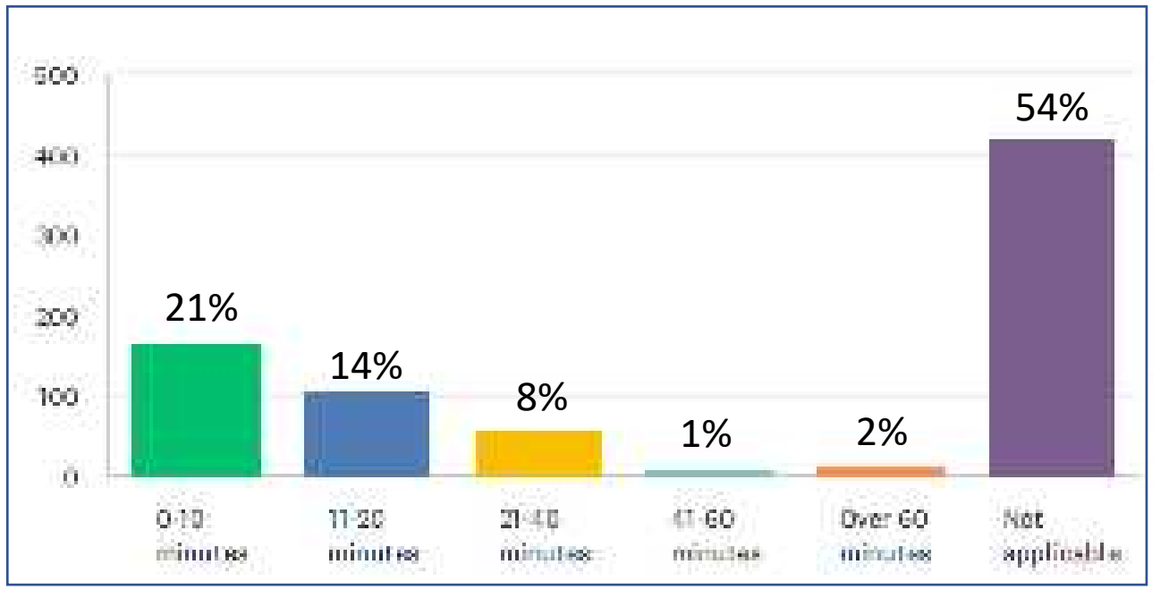


Respondent Demographics

N=787

50% Retired
34% Work on Cape Cod
11% Work from home
6% Work off Cape Cod
5% Hybrid work location
1% Student
0.3% Unemployed

Average Commute Time to Work Each Day N=772





Survey Review:

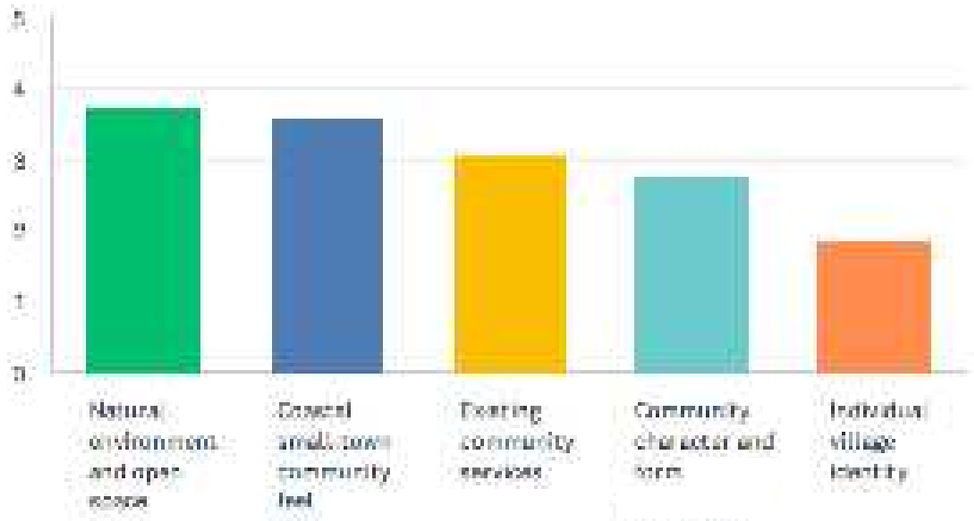
Part 1 – Community Vision
Part 2 – Housing
Part 3 – Open Space & Recreation
Part 4 – Transportation/Mobility
Part 5 – Infrastructure
Part 6 – Education
Part 7 – Art & Culture
Part 8 – Community Village/Historic Character
Part 9 – Climate Change/Sustainability
Part 10 – Economic Development
Part 11 – Community Services
Part 12 – Open-Ended Vision Responses



Part 1
Community Vision

What do you value most about Harwich? (1=most important, 5=least important)*

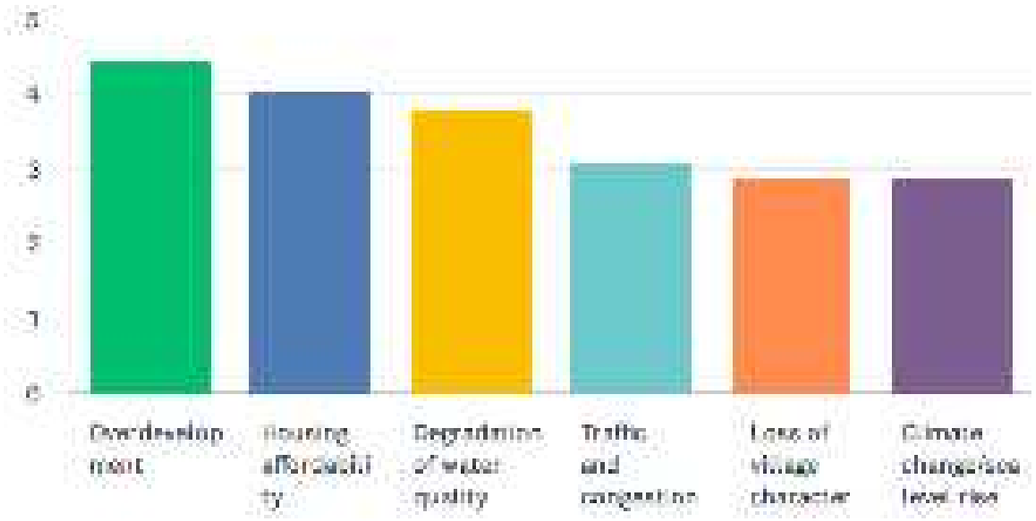
N=956



	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	SCORE *
Natural environment and open space	34.83% 333	28.56% 273	17.68% 169	12.03% 115	6.90% 66	956	3.72
Coastal small town community feel	30.44% 291	26.46% 253	20.61% 197	16.11% 154	6.38% 61	956	3.58
Existing community services (e.g. education, healthcare, small businesses)	22.38% 213	19.67% 188	21.44% 205	16.95% 162	19.67% 188	956	3.08
Community character and form (e.g. quality and character of buildings and streetscape)	9.00% 86	16.84% 161	20.71% 270	31.49% 301	13.91% 133	956	2.70
Individual village identity	3.45% 33	8.47% 81	11.51% 110	23.43% 224	53.14% 508	956	1.86

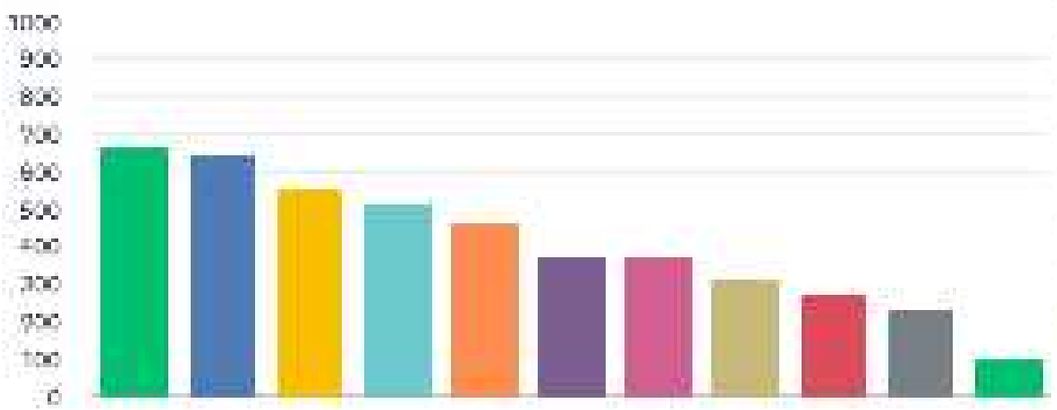
*Please note, SurveyMonkey displays data by providing a weighted score, and the top ranked option is shown as the highest rated. As a result, the chart displays data swapped, where “most important” is shown closer to 5 as opposed to 1 as expressed in the question.

# What most concerns you about Harwich's future? (1=most concerned, 6=least concerned)
N=939



	1	2	3	4	5	6	TOTAL	SCORE
Overdevelopment	36.63% 344	20.66% 194	14.38% 135	12.57% 118	8.20% 77	7.56% 71	939	4.42
Housing affordability	20.66% 194	17.15% 161	13.31% 125	12.46% 117	14.70% 138	11.71% 110	939	4.01
Degradation of water quality	11.40% 107	23.96% 225	24.17% 227	19.49% 183	14.80% 139	6.18% 58	939	3.79
Traffic and congestion	6.92% 65	14.06% 132	16.09% 151	18.53% 174	24.71% 232	17.78% 167	939	3.07
Loss of village character	6.82% 64	11.93% 112	15.65% 147	18.21% 171	20.45% 192	26.94% 253	939	2.86
Climate change/sea level rise	7.56% 71	12.25% 115	14.48% 136	18.74% 176	17.15% 161	29.82% 280	939	2.86

# What are top challenges facing the Town of Harwich: (Choose your top five)
N=944



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Water quality (drinking water, ponds, and estuaries)	70.97%	670
Affordable and/or varied housing types	60.22%	644
Managing growth	57.94%	547
Infrastructure improvements (e.g. roadway improvements, sewer collection and treatment)	54.13%	511
Devoting more land to open space (for recreation or natural resource protection)	48.62%	459
Educational and recreational opportunities for youth	39.19%	370
Climate Change/coastal resiliency	38.77%	366
Economic opportunity for residents	32.84%	310
Preserving Town culture (e.g. arts, heritage and diversity)	28.08%	265
Health and recreational opportunities for seniors	24.79%	234
Other (please specify)	10.49%	99
Total Respondents: 944		

What are top challenges facing the Town of Harwich:

Other (please specify) Responses:

"Preserving Cape Cod character"

"More transparency and caring about current residents from the town boards."

"Cost of living. Restaurant prices, gas & groceries here opposed to over the bridge"

"Preserving our past – save the sea captains homes and other historic structures"

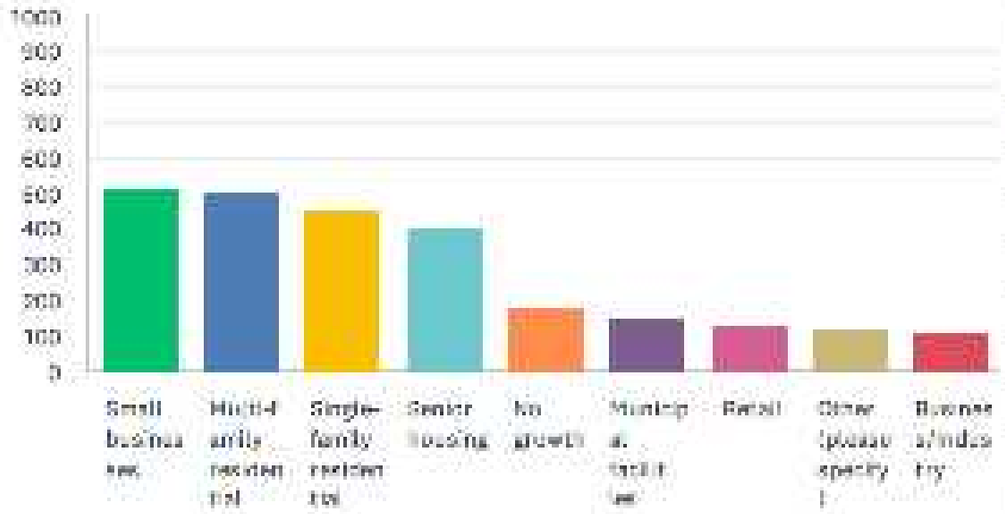
"Youth programs (sports, clubs, weekend community center)."

"We have to go to surrounding communities for toddler programs."

"I am concerned about the departure of town employees/department heads"

"Affordable housing for young families"

# What type of growth should be the Town focus on in the future? (Choose your top three)
N=946



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Small business	53.91%	510
Multi-family residential	53.38%	505
Single-family residential	47.31%	448
Senior housing	42.28%	400
No growth	18.92%	179
Municipal facilities	16.78%	159
Retail	13.85%	131
Other (please specify)	12.26%	116
Business/Industry	11.31%	107
Total Respondents: 946		

What type of growth should be the Town focus on in the future?

Other (please specify) Responses:

"Recreational opportunities for YOUTH"

"Various forms of multi-family: ADUs, condos, apartments, mixed use development"

"Specifically, smaller/more affordable single-family residential"

"Affordable workforce housing"

"Community spaces (indoor & outdoor) with youth/families in mind"

"A pool, ice skating rink"

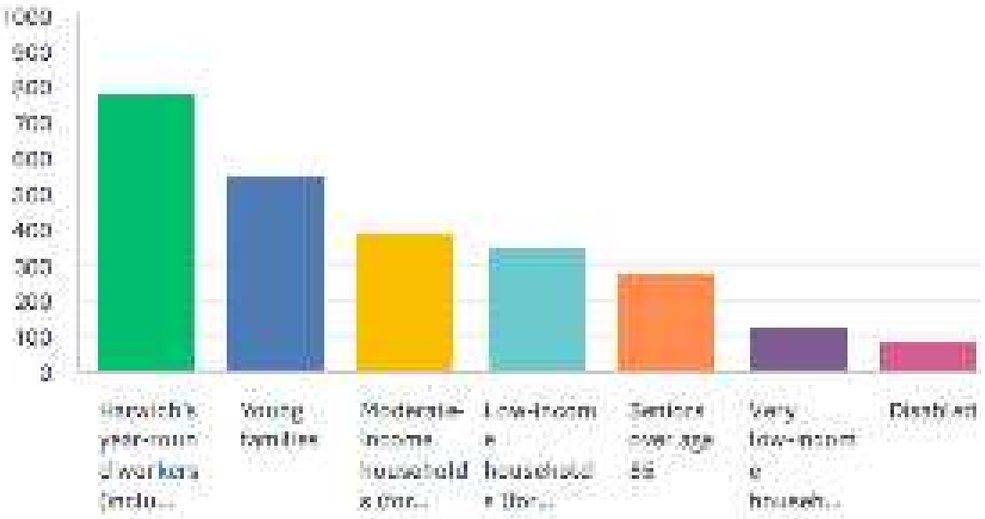
"Affordable housing apartment facilities"

"Fields, indoor athletic spaces"



Part 2
Housing

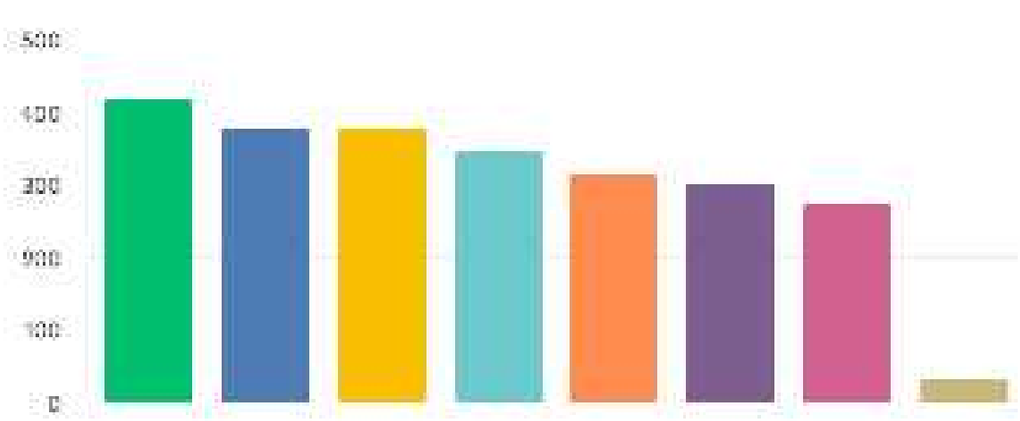
# If the Town is able to set a preference for prioritized housing, what type of people would you like to see have such preference? (Choose your top three)
N=863



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Harwich's year-round workers (including but not limited to teachers, firefighters, police, nurses, etc.)	90.15%	778
Young families	63.38%	547
Moderate-income households (for example, a household of four earning between 81% and 100% of area median income or between $69,051 and $86,314,300)	44.96%	388
Low-income households (for example, a household of four earning between 51% and 80% of area median income or between $57,511 and $992,050)	39.80%	346
Seniors over age 65	32.44%	280
Very low-income households (for example, a household of four earning less than 50% of area median income or $54,350)	14.14%	122
Disabled	9.73%	84
Total Respondents: 863		

If the Town is able to set a preference for prioritized housing, on what types of housing units should the Town focus? (Choose your top three)

N=860



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Small cottage-style homes on small lots	48.49%	417
Mixed-use properties (housing and commercial together)	44.19%	380
Accessory dwellings units (ADUs) or in-law apartments	43.72%	376
Single family, detached homes	40.12%	345
Two family properties or duplexes	36.28%	312
Assisted living (for seniors or people with disabilities)	35.00%	301
Multi-family buildings	32.09%	276
Other (please specify)	3.72%	32
Total Respondents: 860		

If the Town is able to set a preference for prioritized housing, on what types of housing units should the Town focus?

Other (please specify) Responses:

"Affordable first-time homeowner residences, that can in turn be sold as such, not to be sold as vacation/Airbnb homes."

"Small cottage style with full town sewer system."

"Increase restrictions on short term rentals so that it isn't as appealing to people who don't live here to own a home so that the homes go back on the market affordably."

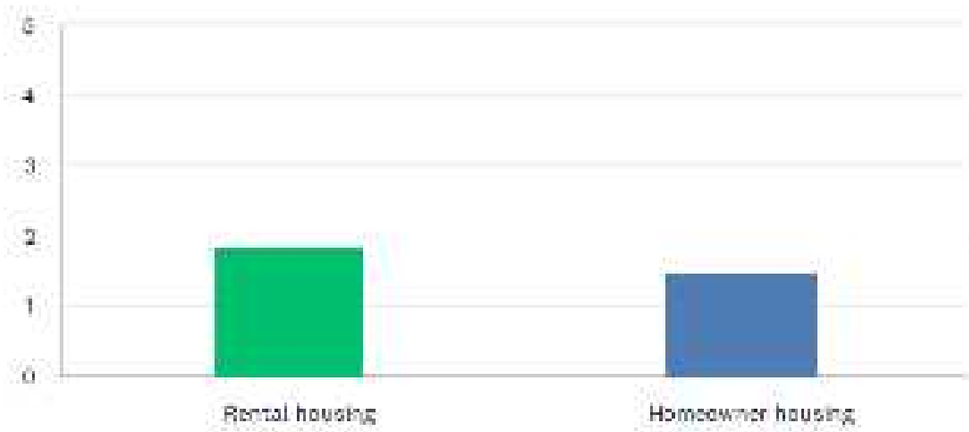
"Historic retention and reuse."

"Tiny homes on single family dwellings."

"Multi-family buildings for seniors."

In setting Town priorities, how important is homeowner vs. rental housing?

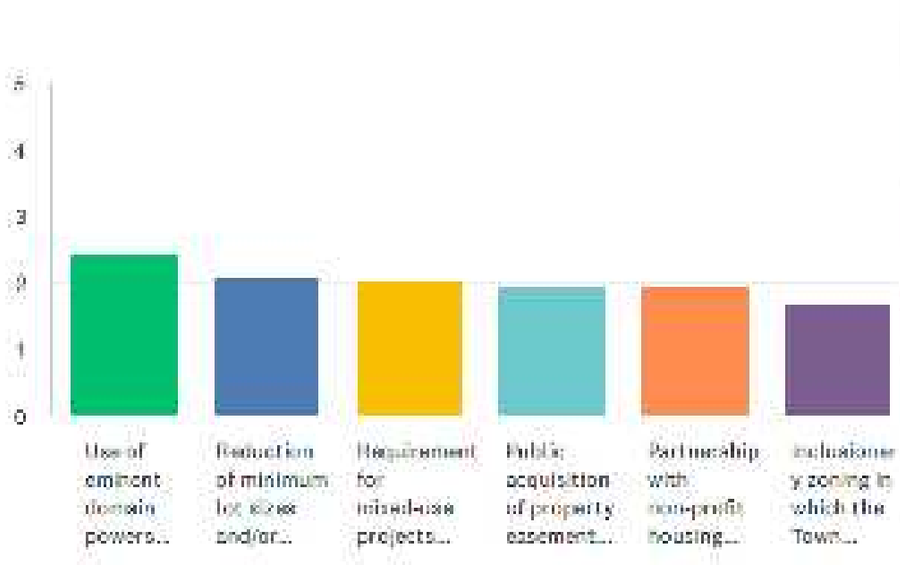
N=867



	EXTREMELY IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	NOT IMPORTANT	NO OPINION	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Rental housing	36.84% 312	48.29% 409	10.61% 90	4.37% 37	847	1.82
Homeowner housing	64.07% 551	29.30% 252	4.30% 37	2.33% 20	860	1.45

Various tools are available to support a town's efforts to implement its housing priorities. Please rate the importance of each of the following:

N=862

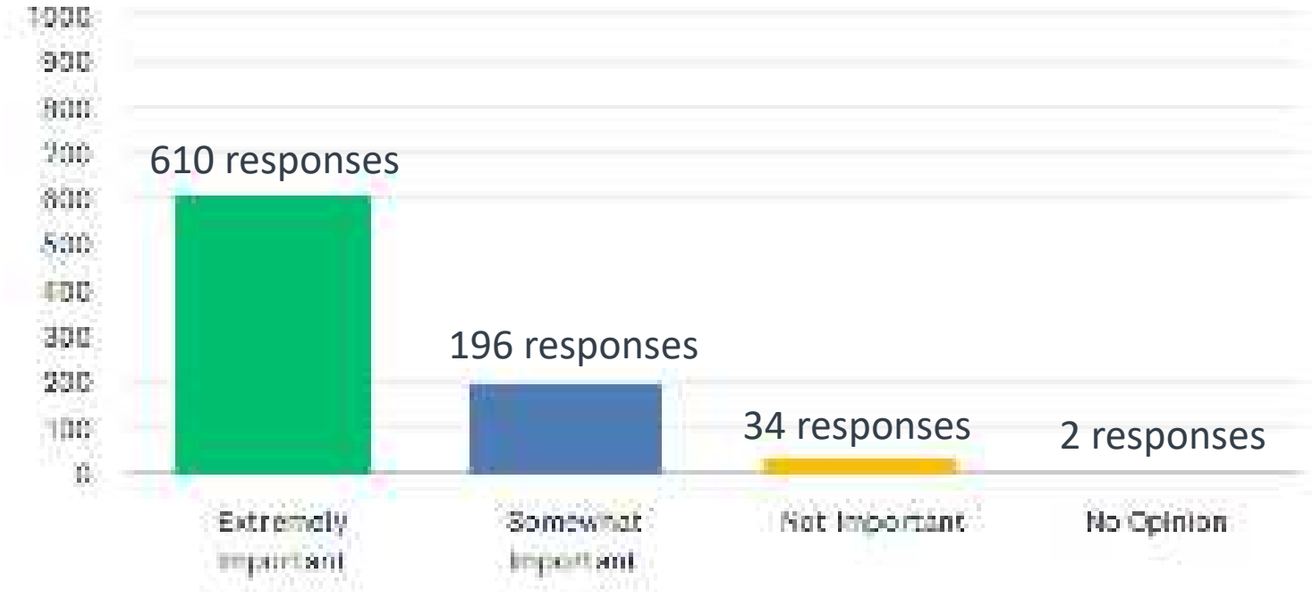


	EXTREMELY IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	NOT IMPORTANT	NO OPINION	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Use of eminent domain powers (government power to take private property for public benefit) to purchase land for the development of affordable housing.	15.38% 129	31.50% 265	45.17% 379	7.87% 66	839	2.46
Reduction of minimum lot sizes and/or increase in density to facilitate development of affordable housing.	30.69% 259	36.88% 311	27.93% 236	4.62% 39	845	2.07
Requirement for mixed-use projects with both commercial and residential development.	29.30% 247	46.67% 306	19.61% 166	6.52% 55	842	2.02
Public acquisition of property easements to require use of the property by year round residents rather than for short-term rentals.	42.43% 359	30.38% 257	19.74% 167	7.46% 63	846	1.92
Partnership with non profit housing groups that develop deed-restricted ownership housing.	40.00% 339	37.40% 316	13.69% 117	8.76% 74	846	1.91
Inclusionary zoning in which the Town requires a percentage of units to be affordable for projects over a certain size.	52.50% 447	32.31% 276	12.09% 100	2.47% 21	851	1.65



Part 3
Open Space & Recreation

# How important is it for the Town to continue to acquire and preserve open space and natural areas in Harwich?
N=842

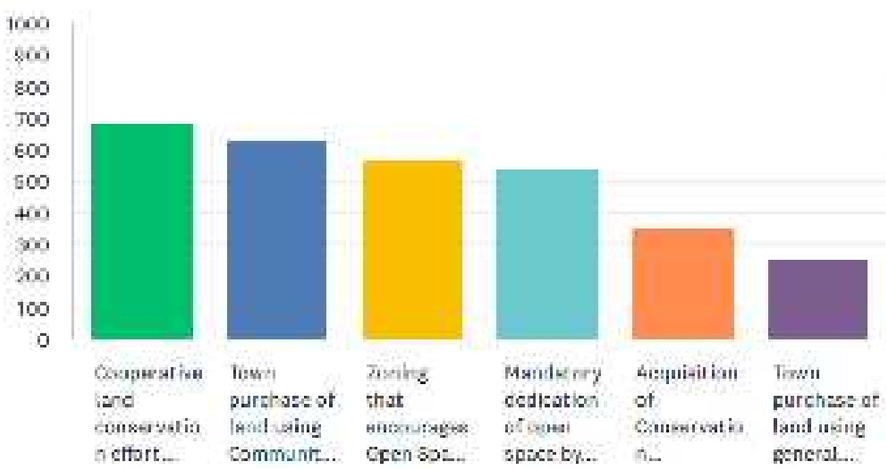


# How important is it to acquire and/or preserve:
N=841



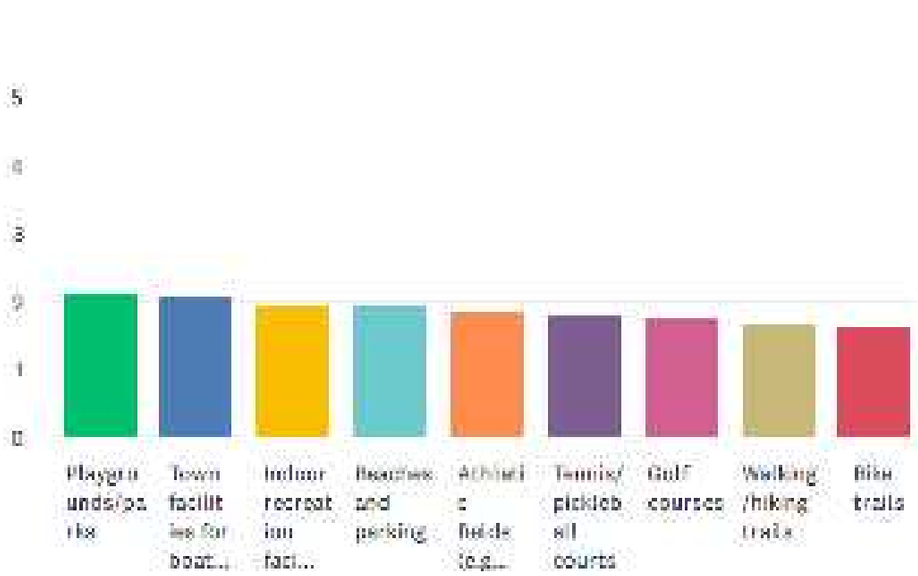
	EXTREMELY IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	NOT IMPORTANT	NO OPINION	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Land for active recreation including parks and athletic fields	38.08% 316	47.70% 396	13.25% 110	0.94% 7	830	1.77
Agricultural land	41.61% 347	44.36% 370	11.99% 100	2.04% 17	834	1.74
Land for passive recreation including walking trails	51.14% 428	41.94% 351	6.57% 55	0.36% 3	837	1.56
Land for habitat protection	68.83% 574	27.10% 226	3.96% 33	0.72% 6	834	1.36
Areas around ponds and lakes	73.33% 613	22.73% 190	3.59% 30	0.36% 3	836	1.31
Land for water supply protection	89.09% 745	9.09% 83	0.96% 8	0.36% 3	839	1.13

# What Town actions do you favor to protect open space? (Please check all that apply)
N=829



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Cooperative land conservation efforts between public and private entities	82.30%	681
Town purchase of land using Community Preservation funds	75.03%	620
Zoning that encourages Open Space Conservation	68.28%	566
Mandatory dedication of open space by developers	65.14%	540
Acquisition of Conservation Restrictions/Easements	41.98%	348
Town purchase of land using general funds	30.76%	255
Total Respondents: 829		

# How do you rate the quality of the following existing recreational facilities?
N=834



	EXCELLENT	GOOD	AVERAGE	POOR	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Playgrounds/parks	22.30% 170	50.06% 389	22.06% 176	5.62% 44	797	2.11
Town facilities for boating and fishing	21.36% 163	53.47% 408	23.20% 177	1.97% 15	763	2.06
Indoor recreation facilities including the Community Center	33.21% 267	42.91% 345	19.03% 153	4.85% 39	804	1.96
Beaches and parking	25.48% 241	50.73% 419	18.92% 149	1.59% 13	819	1.92
Athletic fields (e.g. soccer, football, baseball)	34.51% 274	50.13% 398	13.48% 107	1.89% 15	794	1.83
Tennis/pickleball courts	37.66% 291	47.48% 367	13.46% 104	1.42% 11	773	1.79
Golf courses	41.92% 308	45.03% 333	12.43% 92	0.95% 7	740	1.73
Walking/hiking trails	43.20% 358	47.94% 395	8.50% 70	0.36% 3	824	1.66
Bike trails	46.15% 372	45.16% 364	7.82% 63	0.87% 7	806	1.63

# What are the Town's most important recreational program needs?
N=840



	EXTREMELY IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	NOT IMPORTANT	NO OPINION	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Summer activities for seniors	24.12% 192	58.80% 468	13.07% 104	8.92% 71	796	2.07
Year-round swimming facility	37.69% 323	38.88% 333	16.58% 142	6.85% 59	857	2.02
Programs and activities for adults	27.20% 223	62.37% 512	7.68% 63	2.74% 22	820	1.90
Crafts and non-sports activities for children	47.14% 388	39.00% 321	6.80% 56	7.06% 58	823	1.74
Year-round activities for seniors	46.14% 382	46.02% 381	5.31% 44	4.95% 41	828	1.68
Summer all-day camps for children	55.66% 461	38.31% 272	4.83% 40	8.19% 51	824	1.61
Summer swimming lessons	50.27% 409	29.58% 244	5.58% 46	5.58% 46	825	1.67
Seasonal sports programs for children	62.09% 511	26.92% 230	3.16% 26	5.83% 48	823	1.53
After-school activities for children	63.57% 527	28.47% 236	2.53% 21	5.43% 45	829	1.50

What are the Town's most important recreational program needs?

Other (please specify) Responses:

"Winter indoor swimming facility would be really nice. There are not enough public pools here."

"Get a pool and ice rink."

"We need to prioritize CHILDREN to maintain families on the Cape."

"Preteen and teen activities."

"Need more youth programs. Recent momentum is good, seems driven by parents and volunteers rather than rec dept. Need more youth access to gyms, fields, etc."

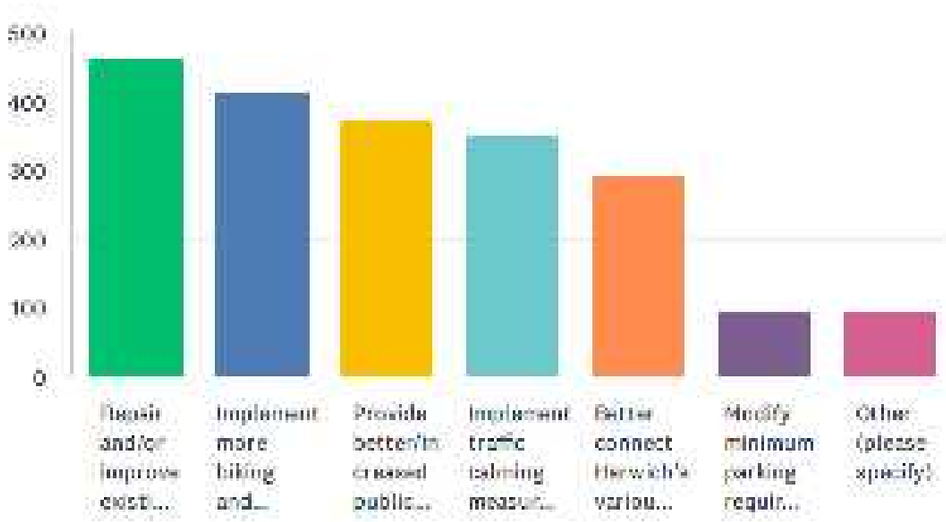
"We have stepped things up, however, the recreation program needs some work still. Other towns have great programs, (ice skating) swimming/ sailing. And we do not."

"Rowing, swimming pool."



Part 4
Transportation/Mobility

# What are the most important transportation-oriented actions that the Town should pursue? (Choose your top three)
N=802



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Repair and/or improve existing streets	57.48%	461
Implement more biking and walking paths/trails for transportation and/or recreation	51.50%	413
Provide better/increased public bus services and infrastructure (e.g. improve and make bus stops more accessible)	46.38%	372
Implement traffic calming measures to slow driving speeds (e.g. speed humps, crosswalk bump outs)	43.52%	349
Better connect Harwich's various communities/villages	35.03%	281
Modify minimum parking requirements	11.97%	96
Other (please specify)	11.97%	96
Total Respondents: 802		

What are the most important transportation-oriented actions that the Town should pursue?

Other (please specify) Responses:

"More parking for Harwich Port access."

"Sidewalks need to be a priority"

"Fast charging EV chargers in public locations, e.g. Brooks Library, Town Hall, Chamber of Commerce."

"Bike paths along major streets/ double yellow line roads to be able to safely travel by bike to stores, restaurants, and family/friends home."

"Bike lanes on roads."

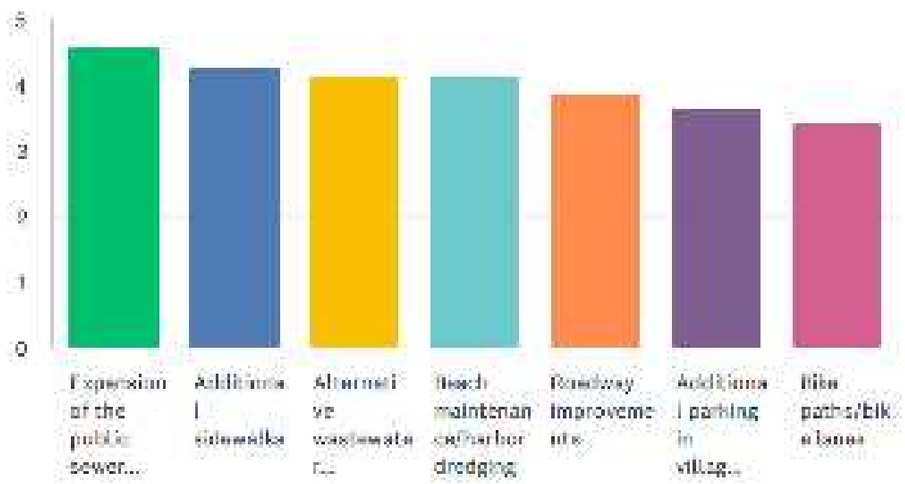
"Put speed humps at entrance to ALL beaches especially Red River Beach."

"Harwich center: rt 124 and Main Street intersection is terrible!"



Part 5
Infrastructure

# What infrastructure improvements are a priority in the Town? (1=highest priority, 7=lowest priority)
N=805

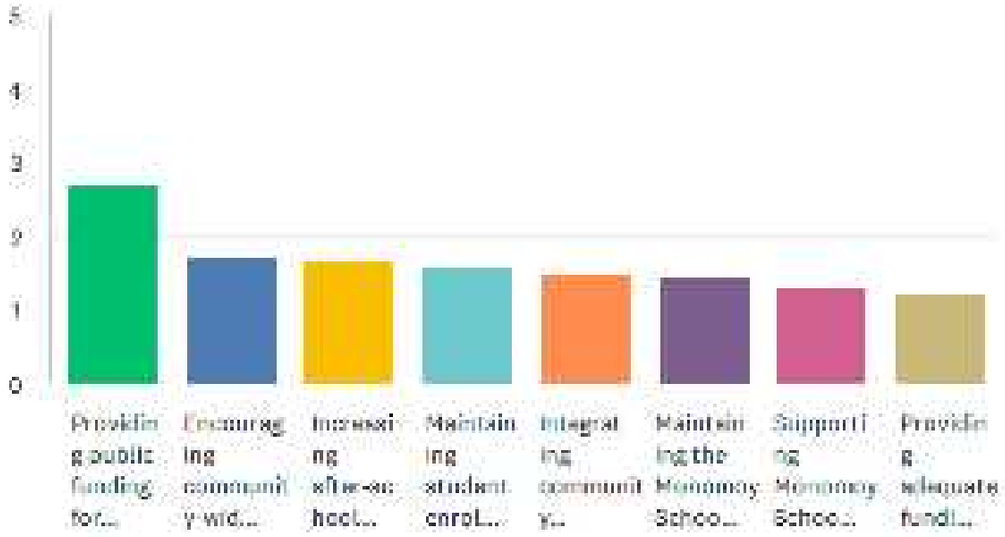


	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	TOTAL	SCORE
Expansion of the public sewer system	30.42% 245	20.15% 162	9.94% 80	8.45% 68	9.07% 73	12.80% 103	13.17% 106	805	4.53
Additional sidewalks	17.14% 138	17.14% 138	14.53% 117	13.91% 112	14.66% 118	10.81% 87	11.80% 95	805	4.29
Alternative wastewater treatment options	13.91% 112	19.25% 155	15.78% 127	12.80% 103	10.19% 82	13.66% 110	14.91% 120	805	4.13
Beach maintenance/harbor dredging	11.43% 92	15.03% 121	19.50% 157	15.53% 125	15.53% 125	12.42% 100	10.56% 85	805	4.12
Roadway improvements	10.31% 83	10.80% 87	14.53% 117	19.75% 159	17.14% 138	16.27% 131	11.18% 90	805	3.84
Additional parking in villages and/or near beaches	12.55% 101	10.43% 84	11.30% 91	13.66% 110	16.65% 134	16.40% 132	19.01% 153	805	3.63
Bike paths/bike lanes	4.22% 34	11.06% 89	14.91% 120	16.90% 136	16.77% 135	17.76% 143	19.38% 156	805	3.33



Part 6
Education

# How important are the following actions relating to school facilities and education?
N=813

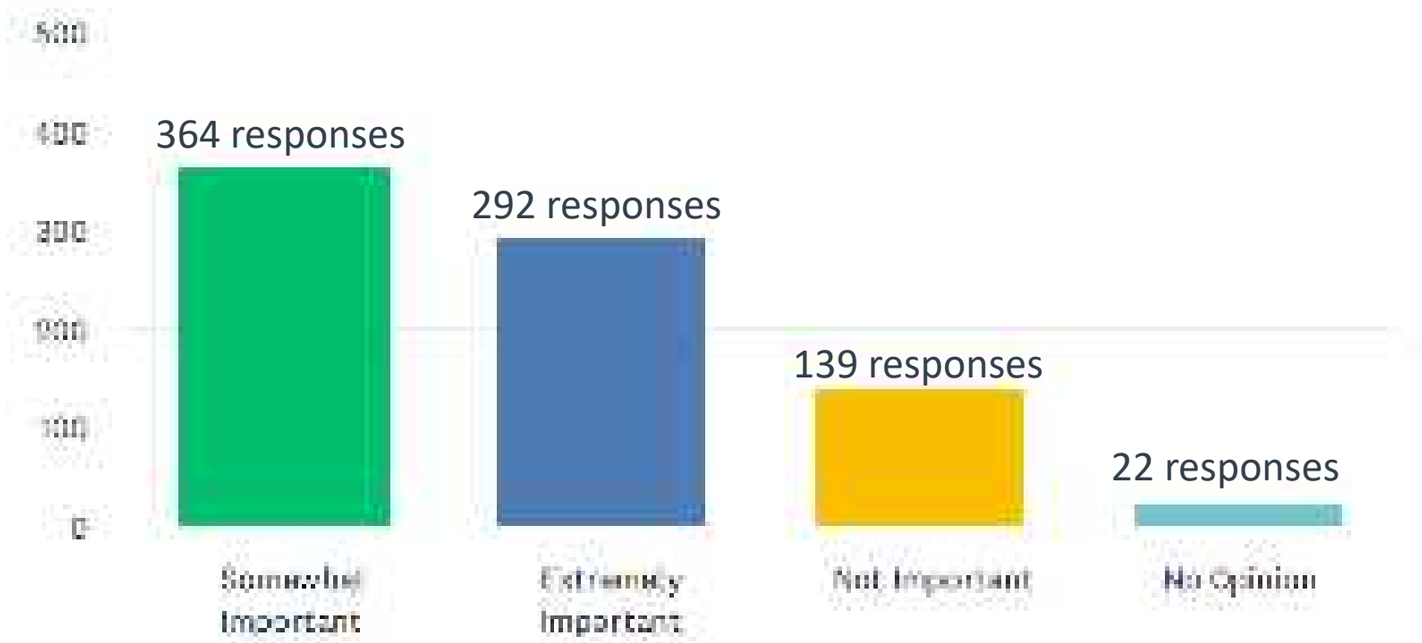


	EXTREMELY IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	NOT IMPORTANT	NO OPINION	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Providing public funding for home-schooling	9.97% 79	20.32% 164	62.21% 502	7.91% 63	807	2.60
Encouraging community-wide access to school programs and facilities	48.20% 389	40.40% 326	5.08% 41	6.32% 51	807	1.70
Increasing after-school student activities	50.68% 409	39.28% 317	3.35% 27	6.69% 54	807	1.66
Maintaining student enrollment in the Monomoy School District	61.09% 493	28.87% 233	3.97% 32	6.07% 49	807	1.55
Integrating community resources to strengthen school programs, support families, and enhance student learning and development	61.54% 496	30.15% 243	4.22% 34	4.09% 33	806	1.51
Maintaining the Monomoy School District's reputation in the community	67.29% 543	24.41% 197	3.35% 27	4.96% 40	807	1.46
Supporting Monomoy School District's efforts to recruit teachers and educators to work and live on Cape Cod	78.49% 636	16.19% 131	2.60% 21	2.72% 22	809	1.30
Providing adequate funding levels for public education	82.63% 667	13.72% 111	1.73% 14	2.72% 22	809	1.25



Part 7
Art & Culture

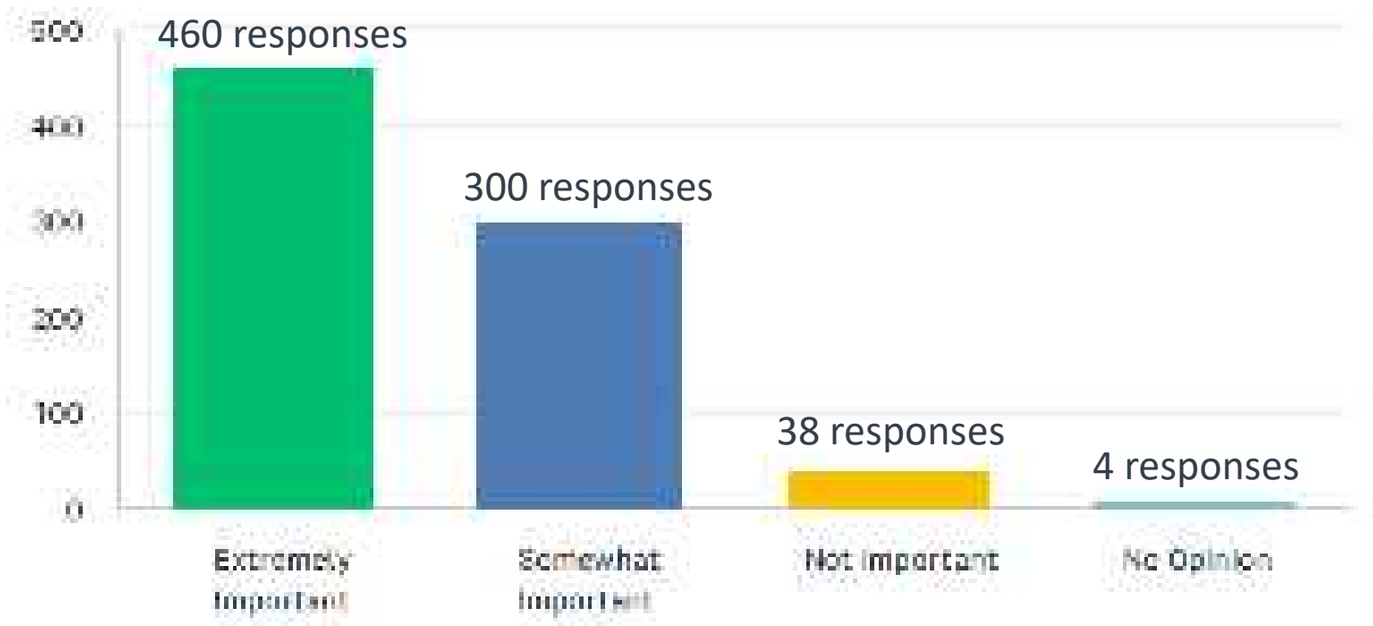
# How important is it to you that the Town supports more public and performing art opportunities?
N=818





Part 8
Community Village/Historic Character

# How important is it to preserve the historic character of the Town?
N=802



# What are the most important characteristics that should be preserved and/or enhanced in Harwich's seven villages? (1=most important, 4=least important)
N=742



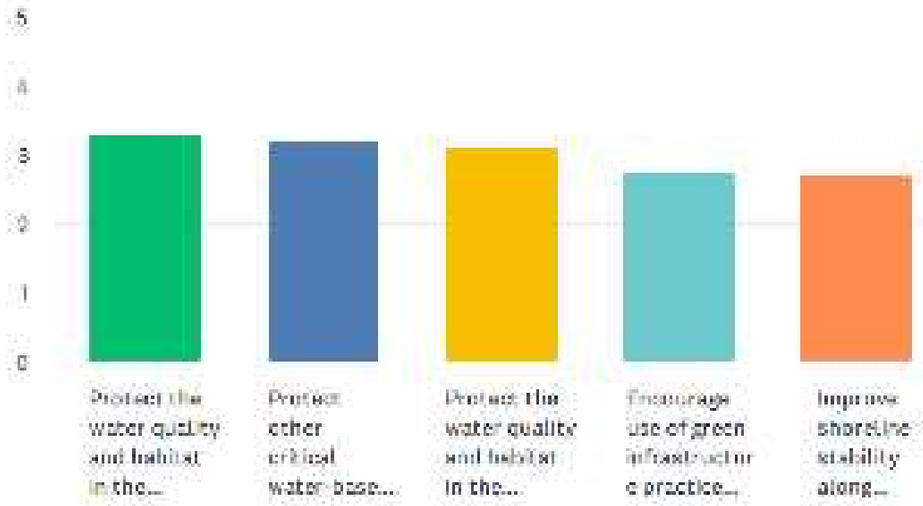
	1	2	3	4	TOTAL	SCORE
Historic structures (buildings 50 years and older)	38.01% 282	19.81% 147	19.68% 146	22.51% 167	742	2.75
Sidewalks and street lights	20.08% 149	28.17% 209	28.17% 209	23.58% 175	742	2.46
Local businesses	22.64% 168	26.01% 193	22.24% 165	29.11% 216	742	2.42
Vegetation and street trees	19.27% 143	26.01% 193	29.92% 222	24.80% 184	742	2.40



Part 9
Climate Change/Sustainability

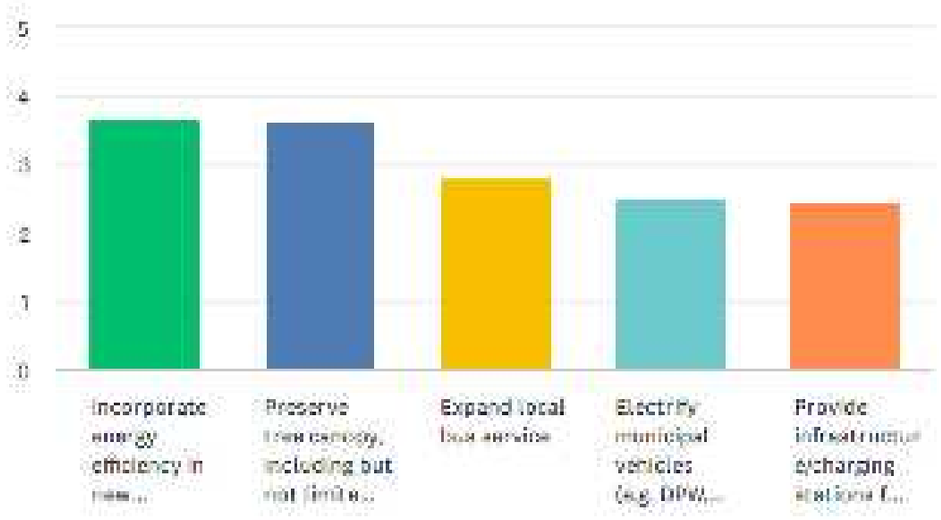
Rank the importance of the Town taking the following steps to maintain the natural environment. (1=most important, 5=least important)

N=720



	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	SCORE
Protect the water quality and habitat in the Pleasant Bay Watershed	28.47% 209	23.33% 169	20.69% 149	20.69% 149	11.81% 85	720	3.26
Protect other critical water based habitats (e.g. coastal plain ponds, salt marshes, barrier beaches)	18.31% 139	25.00% 180	25.28% 182	18.19% 131	12.22% 88	720	3.21
Protect the water quality and habitat in the Herring River Estuary	15.69% 113	23.61% 170	26.25% 189	22.64% 163	11.94% 86	720	3.08
Encourage use of green infrastructure practices, including but not limited to the use of rain barrels and rain gardens, to treat and manage stormwater runoff	20.14% 145	14.03% 101	14.17% 102	21.53% 155	30.14% 217	720	2.78
Improve shoreline stability along Nantucket Sound	21.53% 155	14.03% 101	15.83% 99	16.94% 122	33.89% 244	720	2.72

Rank the importance of the Town taking the following steps to mitigate the impacts of climate change. (1=most important, 5=least important)
N=744

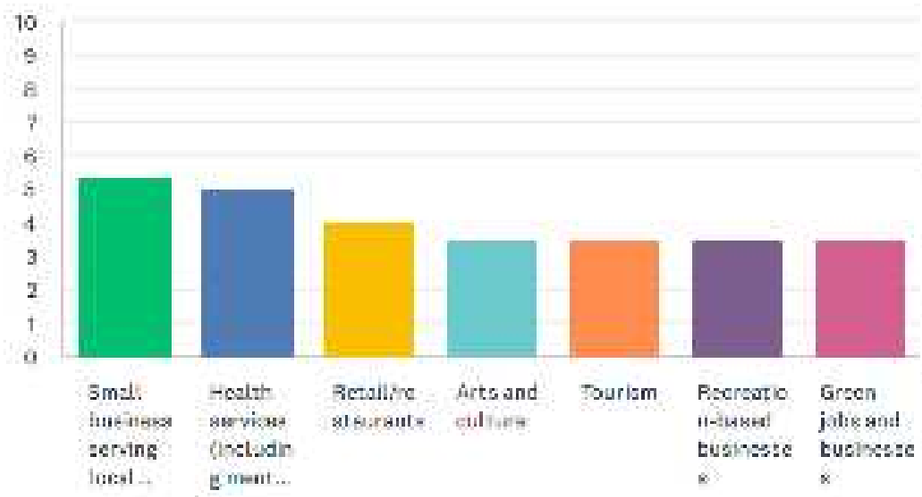


	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	SCORE
Incorporate energy efficiency in new construction (e.g. solar panels)	51.05% 357	29.44% 219	21.10% 157	9.14% 68	8.47% 63	744	3.67
Preserve tree canopy, including but not limited to, possible tree cutting limits	38.17% 284	22.04% 164	16.13% 120	12.63% 94	11.02% 82	744	3.64
Expand local bus service	15.32% 114	18.82% 140	22.18% 165	16.67% 124	27.02% 201	744	2.79
Electrify municipal vehicles (e.g. DPW, school buses, etc.)	5.65% 42	15.86% 118	22.45% 167	31.45% 234	24.60% 183	744	2.47
Provide infrastructure/charging stations for electric vehicles	9.01% 67	13.04% 103	18.15% 135	30.11% 224	29.90% 215	744	2.44



Part 10
Economic Development

What do you think the economic development priorities of the Town should be? (1=highest priority, 7=lowest priority N=770



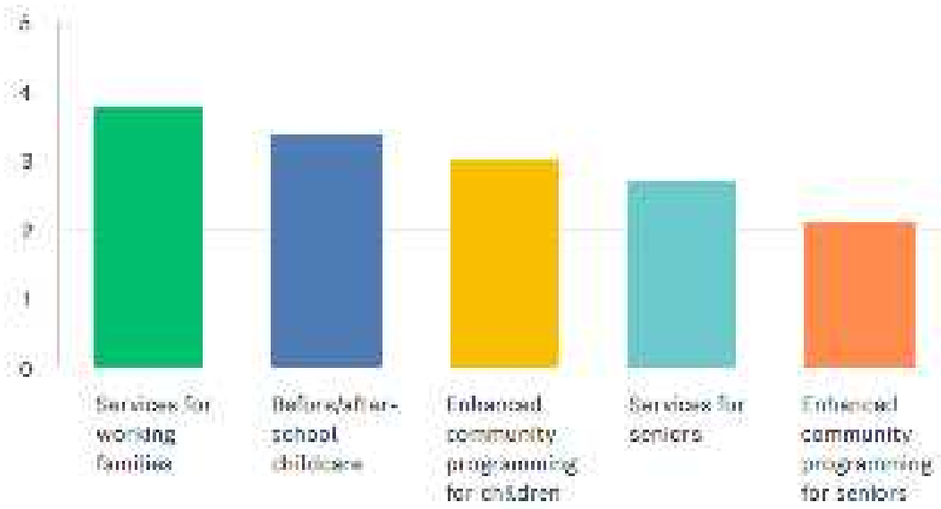
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	TOTAL	SCORE
Small business serving local needs	30.52% 235	27.66% 213	16.04% 123	10.26% 79	6.88% 53	5.19% 40	3.64% 28	770	5.35
Health services (including mental health)	30.78% 237	17.27% 133	14.42% 111	12.08% 93	10.52% 81	8.70% 67	6.23% 48	770	4.95
Retail/restaurants	7.92% 61	16.23% 125	18.44% 142	16.49% 127	16.75% 129	13.90% 107	10.26% 79	770	3.99
Arts and culture	4.68% 36	10.39% 80	13.38% 103	17.66% 136	19.74% 152	18.61% 143	14.55% 112	770	3.48
Tourism	10.91% 84	10.91% 84	10.78% 83	11.95% 92	12.99% 100	17.92% 138	24.55% 189	770	3.43
Recreation-based businesses	4.55% 35	7.66% 59	15.32% 118	18.05% 139	21.17% 163	18.44% 142	14.81% 114	770	3.47
Green jobs and businesses	10.65% 82	9.87% 76	11.82% 91	13.51% 104	11.95% 92	16.23% 125	25.97% 200	770	3.41



Part 11
Community Services

What do you believe are the top community service priorities for the Town? (1=highest priority, 5=lowest priority) *

N=723



	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	SCORE
Services for working families	40.88% 295	21.16% 153	22.27% 161	7.19% 52	8.50% 62	723	3.78
Before/after-school childcare	22.33% 160	29.74% 215	22.54% 163	13.42% 97	12.17% 88	723	3.36
Enhanced community programming for children	15.69% 113	20.06% 145	29.88% 216	20.89% 151	13.55% 98	723	3.00
Services for seniors	13.00% 94	18.53% 134	14.66% 106	33.47% 242	20.33% 147	723	2.70
Enhanced community programming for seniors	8.44% 61	10.51% 76	10.66% 77	25.03% 181	45.37% 328	723	2.12



Part 12
Open-Ended Vision Responses

Describe your ideal Harwich in the next 10 – 20 years.

Respondents Preferences Word Cloud

Affordable Rents/Income Restricted Housing Options was mentioned 102 times.

Cape Cod Character/Charm & Small-Town Feel was mentioned 66 times.

Municipal Sewer System & Septic Planning was mentioned 31 times.

Support/Services for Young Families & Children was mentioned 50 times.

Preserved Natural Resources & Land Conservation was mentioned 58 times.

Year-Round Jobs was mentioned 36 times.

Improved/More Sidewalks was mentioned 27 times.



Describe your ideal Harwich in the next 10 – 20 years.

"Find the balance between providing affordable home ownership for families and preservation of natural spaces. Prioritize sewer for the Great Lakes region to help protect the health of the ponds."

"Completely connected to municipal sewer system that improves pond water quality."

"Can provide more for young families with children in the school system. Have more programs and events for children, maybe even a youth center. The current community center doesn't seem to fit the needs for youth - as it is more geared towards seniors.

"Maintain character and small-town appeal."

"Clean, reliable water, waste treatment. More affordable housing/ expanded retail, housing development."

"Sewer system to minimize pollution of harbors, waterways."

"Living in a community with many sidewalks, paths and cleaned up beaches for walking."

What concerns (if any) do you have for your village/neighborhood?

Respondents Preferences Word Cloud

Lack of Affordable Homes/Rentals was mentioned 75 times.

Loss of Cape Character/Charm & Small-Town Feel was mentioned 25 times.

Lack of Preserved Natural Resources & Land Conservation was mentioned 25 times.

Water Quality was mentioned 39 times.

Speeding/Lack of Pedestrian Safety was mentioned 50 times.

Lack of Support/Services for Young Families & Children was mentioned 24 times.

Harwich Municipal Leadership was mentioned 23 times.



What concerns (if any) do you have for your village/neighborhood?

"I am worried about algae on Paddock's Pond. I am worried about enforcement of existing rules to protect open spaces and water."

"Construction of large homes that remain vacant the majority of the time. The removal of trees. The use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides!

"I worry about leadership in Harwich. It appears that qualified candidates leave quickly because they are not listened to. Citizens also feel not heard."

"Sidewalks in disrepair, aggressive drivers making roads unsafe, lack of moderate priced housing, lack of community feel.

"All communities need diversity to thrive. We cannot simply cater to senior citizens and tourists or else we will end up in a place of failure. Young families are needed and we need to attract and provide for them."

"Deep concerns about: over-development, particularly the continued building of large, uber expensive homes… Also, the lack of stability in Town gov't positions as people shuffle in and out of important Dept Heads."

Summary of Findings

Key needs & concerns:

- Enhance walkability
  - Reduce traffic
  - Accessibility
  - Sidewalk conditions/additions
  - More crosswalks
  - Pedestrian Safety
- Housing affordability
  - Need smaller, affordable housing types
- Retaining local businesses serving residents
- Preserve natural resources
- Programming opportunities for youth and young families



Anything else??

- Collaboration between Town municipal leadership and residents
- An efficient municipal sewer system
- People feel strongly about the historic and small-town character of the Town

Section 10

APPENDIX B

SURVEY THEME BREAKDOWN

Survey Results

Friday, February 16, 2024 4:59 PM

Q3 - What are the top challenges facing the Town of Harwich?

More Housing	I
Sewer	II
Responsive/transparent Town Gov	IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII I
Limit seasonal rental housing/airbnbs	II
Convenience store	I
Coastal water quality	I
Drinking water quality	IIII
More jobs/industry	II
Youth programs	IIIII I
Protect growing commercial fishing industry	I
Traffic and congestion	IIII
Lack of sidewalks	II
Over development	II
Green energy need	I
Shoreline/waterway over-restrictions	IIII
Taxes	IIII
Inadequate emergency planning	I
Dredging/beach nourishment	I
Diversity	I
Affordability/ Affordable housing	IIIII I
Preserving historic properties/community character	IIIII I
Better enforce roads	III
Lap pool	I
Education	II
Street trees along major roadways	I
Homelessness	I
Harwich resident golf course	I
Immigration	II
Healthcare services	I
Reviving Harwich center	I
Litter	I
Poor Zoning allowing large lots/homes	II
Mixed use dev.	I
Small business longevity	I
Beach parking	I

Q4 - What type of growth should the Town focus on in the future?

Long-term Housing (no airbnb)	IIIII II
Protecting shoreline	I
Classic Cape style	III
No big box entities	I
Affordable housing ADUs Starter homes Workforce housing	IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII III IIIII II I II
Conservation Nature preservation/restoration	III II
Park & Rec (for all ages) Pool/ ice rink Fitness facility	IIIII IIII I I
Limit New development	IIIII I
Small Board commercial fishing	II
Youth center/opportunities	III
Limit large single-fam homes	III
Residential program	I
Good management	III
Enhance existing facilities/vacant buildings	IIII
Cluster housing development	III
Mixed use dev	IIIII II
Smart growth	I
Community spaces	II
Climate resiliency	I
Sidewalks/bike lanes	II
Restaurants	II
2010 E Harwich Village Center Initiative	I
Transportation Infrastructure	I
Parking	II

Q6 If the Town is able to set a preference for prioritized housing, on what types of housing units should the Town focus?

Affordable homes for first time owner residences	III
Mixed use dev (retail/res)	II
Senior housing	II
Reduce short term rentals (e.g., VRBO, Airbnb)	II
Affordable housing (various configurations)	II
Co-housing	I
Retrofitting existing buildings	II
Entry-leveling worker housing	I
Cluster zoning	I
Historic revitalization/reuse	I
Independent living facility	I
Reduce ADUs	I
Low density housing	II
Townhomes	I
Cottage style homes/tiny homes	II
Net zero building	I

Q12 How do you rate the quality of the following existing recreational facilities?

Facility	**Quality**	**Count**
Brooks Park playground	Poor	IIII
Boat ramps	poor	I
Harwich elementary school playground	poor	II
Brooks Free Library	Excellent	I
Harwich gold course	poor	I
Pickleball courts (204 Sisson Rd)	average	I
Passive recreation	Average to poor	I

Requests for new **pool**, youth facilities, indoor turf field, sidewalks, indoor gym, rowing, bike lanes on state roads

Q13 What are the Town's most important recreational program needs?

Facility	Importance level	Count
Have Community/cultural center offer their own programs		I
Offer programming for children	Extremely important	IIIII IIIII I
YMCA at old exit 10		II
Town pool (indoor)	Extremely important	IIIII III
Year-round swimming	Somewhat important	I
Ice rink		II
Comprehensive fitness center		I
More accessible moorings & slips		I
Pre-teen and teen activities		III
Indoor turf field		I
After school childcare	Extremely important	I
Year round sports/activities for children	Extremely important	I
More than one playground		I
Adult daycare programs		I
Sailing/rowing program		II
Free after school activities		I
Kayak racks		I

Q14 What are the most important transportation-oriented actions that the Town should pursue?

Add/improve Sidewalks	IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII
More Harwich Port parking	IIIII II
Roundabouts/rotary (at Rt 137, 39, 124; Queen Anne and Rt 137; Church & Queen Anne; Depot Rd/Rt 128)	II
Remote parking with beach shuttles	III
Traffic calming	IIIII
Roadway bike lanes	IIII
Implement a "no left turn" at Rt 124 and Rt 39 in Harwich Center	I
Timed stop lights at Rt 124/39 & Main/Rt 124	I
Convert School house back to a road not a parking lot	I
Congestion reduction	III
Traffic lights in "dangerous intersections" (e.g., Queen Anne Rd/Oak St) & for pedestrian crossings	III
Crosswalks	II
Stop signs	I
Commercial St/beach seasonal trolleys	I
Boston hospital/medical appt transportation	II
EV charging stations	IIIII
Enforce "no parking" areas	I
Allow private driveway widening	I
No flashing speed road signs	I
Dangerous intersection improvement (e.g., at Rt 124/Main St; Depot St/Great Western)	II
Add more speed indicator Rt 39	I
Vehicle noise reduction guidelines	II
Commuting public bus service	I
Shared parking in underutilized lots	I
Improve road bumps	I
Enforce cycling stop signs	I
More general parking	I
Commuter Rail	II

Q24 Describe your ideal Harwich in the next 10-20 years.

Housing/density	
First time ownership	II
Affordable rents, income restricted housing options	IIIII II
Controlled density/managed growth (reuse vacancies)/Smart dev	IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII II
Increase density	IIII
Diverse community	IIIII IIIII II
More housing (e.g., apartment building, single-fam)	IIIII IIIII III
Reduce large, $$$ single-family homes	IIIII IIIII IIIII IIII
Reduce short-term rentals	IIIII IIIII IIIII
Restrict permits for second homes	IIIII IIII
Smaller res building lots/structures	IIIII IIII
Mixed use dev	IIIII
Character	
Historic Preservation	IIIII IIIII IIIII III
Expand local businesses/maintain retail/more restaurants (Reduce chain stores)	IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIII
More Third Spaces	I
Vibrant arts community	IIIII
Cape character/charm, small-town feel, Quiet	IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII I
Unified architecture master/community plan	III
Beautification	IIIII IIII
Infrastructure	
Improved Water Quality	IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII II
Municipal sewer system, septic updates/planning	IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII I
Improved waste management (e.g., composting)	II
Resident services	
Balanced programs/facilities among age groups (e.g., children, 18-64, 65+)	IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII I
Quality school system	IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII
Support/services for young families & children	IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII
Retain the youth	IIIII IIIII IIIII
Support/services for the	IIIII IIIII IIIII III

Q25 What concerns (if any) do you have for your village/neighborhood?

Housing/density	
Not enough affordable homes/rentals	IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII
Too much overdevelopment (e.g., E Harwich, Eastward, multi-fam)/ uncontrolled growth	IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII
Too dense/avoid density	IIIII IIIII III
Not dense enough	IIIII I
Not enough diversity	I
Too many large, $$$ single-family homes (nonconforming & unregulated)	IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII
Too many short-term rentals (loss of oversight)	IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII
Too many *second*/vacation homes	IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII
Poorly developed mixed use properties	III
Lack of year round residents (esp. in winter)	IIIII IIIII IIIII II
Character	
Need more/improved historic preservation	IIIII II
Vacant buildings/ buildings in disrepair (lack of beautification)	IIIII IIII
Improve West Harwich village	III
Improve South Harwich village	I
Improve East Harwich village	III
Loss of Cape character/charm, small-town feel	IIIII IIIII IIIII
Loss of small local businesses/ retail/restaurants	IIIII III
Too much commercial dev	IIIII II
Environment	
Not enough focus on preserving natural resources/shoreline/land conservation	IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII
Conservation efforts too rigid	III
Loss of green spaces/parks (e.g., to commercial & res overdev, etc)	IIIII IIIII IIIII III
Lack of adequate active/passive recreation	IIII
Carbon emissions/climate change	IIIII IIIII I
Poor pond/beach access	I
Tree/habitat clearing & maintenance	IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII III
Infrastructure	

Q26 Please check all that apply. Are you a…?

Landowner	I
Family lives in town	I
Non-resident	I
Harwich volunteer	III
Lives in neighboring Cape town	IIIII IIIII
Former resident	I
Shop/use Harwich amenities	II
Business owner	I

Full-time Harwich Resident	IIIII IIII
Part-time Harwich Resident	II
Worker in Harwich	IIIII
Visitor to Harwich	II

Retain the youth	IIIII IIIII IIIII
Support/services for the workforce	IIIII IIIII IIIII III
Healthcare access	IIIII IIIII IIIII
Support for seniors	IIIII IIII
Swimming pool	IIIII III
More boat/mooring slips	I
Support for seniors	IIIII IIII
Swimming pool	IIIII III
More boat/mooring slips	I
Improve broadband	IIII
Environment	
Preserved natural resources/shoreline/env./ land conservation	IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII III
More green (open) space/ parks, Pocket parks	IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII
Outdoor/passive recreation (e.g., sport fields, trails)	IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII III
Actions that reduce carbon emissions/climate change	IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII
Improve pond/beach access	I
Reduce clearing trees/habitats	IIIII IIIII I
Management/Regulation	
Oppose lawlessness/increase safety	IIIII IIIII II
Share functions/services with neighboring towns	III
Reduce tourism	IIIII
Promote healthy tourism to support the community	IIIII I
More town gov. responsiveness	IIIII IIIII IIIII III
Year round jobs (e.g., industry)/residents	IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII I
Keep taxes low	II
Higher taxes for seasonal homes	II
Improve villages	IIIII IIIII II
Noise Policy	IIII
Improve light pollution	IIII
Ban pesticide/herbicide use	III
Transportation	
Public transportation alternatives	IIIII IIIII IIII
Bike infrastructure	IIIII IIIII II
Improved/widened/more sidewalks	IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII II
Walkability/pedestrian friendly	IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII II
Roundabouts/rotary	II

Infrastructure	
Water Quality (e.g., septic systems, pesticide/herbicide use)	IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIII
Municipal sewer system, septic update needs	IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII III
Cost of community sewer & hook ups	IIIII II
Municipal sewer system, septic update needs	IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII III
Cost of community sewer & hook ups	IIIII II
Title 5 septic systems	II
Municipal water improvement needs	III
Lack of streetlights	IIIII
Transportation	
Too much automobile/truck traffic	IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIII
Too much foot traffic	III
Not enough sidewalks/Improve and widen sidewalks	IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII I
Not walkable enough	IIIII IIIII
Lack of crosswalks/dangerous road crossings	II
Not enough parking (e.g., off-street, beach)	IIIII IIIII I
Not enough alternative public transportation methods	IIIII
Not enough bike infrastructure	IIIII IIIII II
Speeding/lack of Ped safety (stop signs, traffic calming)	IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII
Improve degraded roads	IIIII IIII
Resident services	
Not enough balanced programs/facilities among age groups (e.g., children, 18-64, 65+)	II
Lack of support/services for (exodus of) young families & children	IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIII
Lack of support/services for the workforce	IIIII I
Lack of senior support	I
Year-round activities for kids/teens	IIIII
Youth flight	III
Poor/maintain school system	IIII
Not enough healthcare services	II
Public toilets	I
Litter/waste management	IIIII

EV charging stations	I
Less traffic/congestion management	IIIII IIIII I
Better beach/Rec parking	IIIII

Litter/waste management	IIIII
Management/Regulation	
Harwich municipal leadership (not enough transparency/public listening, dysfunctional)	IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII III
Home/land owner restrictions (e.g., in law restrictions)	IIIII
Too much noise pollution	II
Noise ordinance (e.g., lawn tools/leaf blowers, bars, vacationers)	IIIII IIIII
Too much light pollution	I
Misuse of non-regulated signage/postings	IIIII
Improved immigrate management	III
Unsafe, crime, drugs	IIIII I
Loss of industry & Long-term Jobs (e.g., commercial fishing)	IIIII IIII
Opportunities for hunters	II
Taxes going up, not enough year-round tax breaks	IIIII

Section 10

APPENDIX C

LOCAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN - ACTIONS PRIORITIZATION

Local Comprehensive Plan – Activities Prioritization

2x2 Prioritization Framework for a Local Comprehensive Plan

Impact vs. Feasibility

- **Impact:** Degree to which the initiative improves quality of life, sustainability, economic development, or infrastructure.
- **Feasibility:** Practicality of implementation based on budget, legal constraints, community support, and technical capacity.

Quadrant Interpretation (for Impact vs. Feasibility)

A. **High Impact, High Feasibility (Quick Wins)** – Prioritize and implement immediately.
B. **High Impact, Low Feasibility (Strategic Initiatives)** – Requires planning, funding, or partnerships to overcome barriers.
C. **Low Impact, High Feasibility (Low-Hanging Fruit)** – Consider if they support broader goals.
D. **Low Impact, Low Feasibility (Avoid or Defer)** – Likely not worth pursuing now.

Local Comprehensive Plan – Actions Prioritization

Scoring Definitions

Impact … How beneficial is the initiative?

Assesses the degree to which a project advances the municipality's goals and benefits the community.

Score	Definition
1 (Low Impact)	Minimal benefits: • Limited alignment with community goals, or • Serves only a small portion of the population.
2 (Moderate Impact)	• Addresses an issue but has limited reach, or long-term benefits; • Minor improvements to infrastructure, economy, or livability.
3 (High Impact)	• Significant improvements to economic growth, sustainability, public health, safety, or livability; • Serves a large portion of the population.
4 (Transformational Impact)	Game-changing for the municipality; • addresses multiple high-priority goals • major long-term benefits for equity, resilience, or economic development.

Feasibility … How realistic is the implementation?

Considers financial, technical, political, and regulatory feasibility.

Score	Definition
1 (Very Low Feasibility)	Major barriers: • high costs • strong political opposition • legal obstacles • lack of expertise or technology
2 (Low Feasibility)	Challenges exist- solutions possible with: • additional funding • policy changes • external partnerships
3 (Moderate Feasibility)	Some barriers (funding, staffing) - project achievable with: • current municipal capabilities and • external support.
4 (Highly Feasible)	Easy to implement: • well-funded • broad stakeholder support • aligns with existing policies and resources

Local Comprehensive Plan – Activities Prioritization

Evaluation Matrix

Feasibility → Impact ↓	1 (Very Low)	2 (Low)	3 (Moderate)	4 (High)
4 (Transformational)	🚧 Complex but potentially game-changing	🔎 Needs major planning & resources	📈 Worth prioritizing with effort	✅ Do it now (high ROI)
3 (High)	🚧 Big benefits, but challenging	🔎 Could work with some adjustments	📈 Prioritize in near term	✅ Quick win, easy to implement
2 (Moderate)	❌ Likely not worth pursuing	🔎 Possible if resources allow	📈 Consider for long-term strategy	✅ Low-hanging fruit
1 (Low)	❌ Ignore or defer	❌ Not impactful enough	🔎 Only if no better options	✅ Easy but not a priority

Section 10

APPENDIX D

LCP 2025 - LOOKING FORWARD: A FEW NOTES. Notes from the presentation to the LCP committee on July 1, 2025. By Duncan Berry

LCP 2025 — Looking Forward

A Few Notes

Duncan Berry

West Harwich

The following notes are drawn from a fifteen-minute presentation to the LCP Committee that took place on Tuesday, July 1, 2025 in Harwich Town Hall. It is submitted in lieu of the illustrated deck.

FOLLOWING a consideration of the different "customers" for the LCP, the purpose of this presentation was set forth: how the LCP can be kept "top of mind" in the months and years following its adoption by the Town.

Various LCP objectives were mentioned — the first and foremost being qualification for state funding. Civic "hygiene" — routinely updating the inventory of town assets, demographics, and trends — is essential to maintaining a sound fact-base for political and administrative action in Town, as well as for the public benefit in general.

My central observation was that the Commonwealth's interest focused on *quantitative* reckoning of "things and numbers" while the Town's demand seemed to revolve around accurate *qualitative* knowledge concerning "people and experience." This is a difficult bridge to build under the very best circumstances.

I sketched four levels of thinking needed for balanced analysis — starting with well-defined collection of quantitative data, followed by a synthesis of this data with reasonable inferences about past and future states of affairs. These two steps are just the start. Sound strategy then demands due consideration of *non-metric considerations* such as sensory factors, historical context, local wisdom, and image-driven behavior. Robust planning requires a deliberate, thoughtful braiding of qual and quant issues. Without both issues, strategy tends to emphasize whatever can be proven mathematically at the expense of: (1) common sense about human behavior, (2) beloved traditions that endow life with meaning across generations, and (3) the recognition of what's beautiful and valuable despite provisional factors like price or cost.

A brief discussion of "Future Considerations" was intended to bring to the fore how the LCP can be brought to bear on immediate and medium-range decisions facing the town. The first matter involved embracing AI as an obvious game-changer for monitoring quantitative factors in real time as Harwich evolves, smoothly or discontinuously. Having witnessed the eruption of the COVID "black swan event" five years ago, we would do well to integrate a continuously self-updating fact base so the difference between potentially voluble qualitative concerns can be "dash boarded" for policymakers and decision-makers in Town Hall.

A second "future consideration" involved developing a village-based level of analysis, both for comparison between villages but also to be able see how town-village interactions shape outcomes in both directions. It will be easy enough to disaggregate the metric data into separate buckets, but it will require a more deliberate approach to capturing and defining the ethos of each village.

Essential to the task ahead is filling a gaping hole in our collective self-knowledge. The first draft of Paine's *The History of Harwich* was penned over 130 years go, and the completed volume ends at the year 1800.

This means we have a 225-year void in our knowledge of how the town came to be and look as it does!

From the emergence of the Cape in global maritime trade to the industrial revolution, from the rise and decline of local industries like herring and cranberry culture to the advent of tourism, Harwich lacks the basic factual toolkit to explain why the town came to look as it does! (I must also mention that this includes utter blindness to our archeological past; we have physical evidence of continuous human habitation in the Herring River watershed dating back 1,500 years *before* the pyramids in Egypt.) Despite periodic exceptions, for almost half a century the Harwich Historical Society has failed in its singular duty to fill in the record, to educate our children, and to participate at the front line in defining and preserving the unique culture of Harwich town life. Without adequate attention and funding here, no amount of *ad hoc* qualitative insight will enable us to develop a well-considered, attractive, and coherent future that sensibly connects to our amazing, if largely unknown, past.

The fourth consideration involves embracing the amazing headway made in planning theory and practice in the last twenty years *via* the Behavioral and Human Sciences. Neuroscience has made enormous strides helping to orient design toward understanding and honoring human well-being. The basics are now available in a handful of books with important research studies appearing in the periodical literature daily.

The final consideration was to avoid the temptation to refract our concerns through the wider lens of urban planning — *town planning*, due to scale and economics, is a different creature and we would do well to connect our growth plans to appropriately calibrated objectives.

Suggested Reading

Human Well-Being, Neuroscience, *and* Planning

Nir Buras, *The Art of Classic Planning: Building Beautiful and Enduring Communities* (Harvard University Press, 2020).

Ann Sussman and Justin Hollander, *Cognitive Architecture: Designing for How we Respond to the Built Environment*. 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2021).

Justin Hollander and Ann Sussman (eds.), *Urban Experience and Design Contemporary Perspectives on Improving the Public Realm* (Routledge, 2020).

Sarah W. Goldhagen, *Welcome to Your World. How the Built Environment Shapes our Lives* (Harper, 2020).

Planning Continuity — Using *the* Past *for the* Future

Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Fiftieth Anniversary Edition (Modern Library, 2011).

James Howard Kunstler, *The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America's Man-Made Landscape* (Free Press, 1994).

Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, *Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream*. Tenth Anniversary Edition (Northpoint Press, 2010).

Charles L. Marohn, Jr. *Strong Towns* (Wiley, 2019).

Bie Plevoets and Koenraad Van Cleempoel, *Adaptive Reuse of the Built Heritage* (Routledge, 2019).

Section 10

APPENDIX E

Answers to frequently asked questions regarding the topic of land preservation related to the town tax rate, cost of municipal services and wastewater infrastructure costs

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions Regarding the Topic of Land Preservation Related to the Town Tax Rate, Cost of Municipal Services and Wastewater Infrastructure Costs

(Information provided by the nonprofit Harwich Conservation Trust. For more information about Harwich Conservation Trust, visit harwichconservationtrust.org or email info@harwichconservationtrust.org)

1. What is the effect of land preservation on the town tax rate and property tax?

Summary:

Preserving land for conservation purposes including to protect the public water supply, coastal waters, ponds, walking trail opportunities, scenic views, wildlife habitat and a range of other environmental elements is imperative for maintaining and enhancing our shared quality of life.

When a municipality or nonprofit land trust acquires property for conservation purposes, the property becomes exempt from property tax (i.e. real estate tax) in the following fiscal year. The question sometimes surfaces about the effect of real estate tax exemption on the town tax rate and/or the effect on property taxes in general.

In summary, the financial impact of preserving land to the average property tax bill is a fraction of a penny. To understand the negligible effect of property tax exemption on a property tax bill, it's essential to understand the process by which a property tax bill amount is generated.

Overview of Property Tax Assessment Process:

Property taxes are paid by owners of real estate (i.e. property) located in the town to the town's tax collector. Property taxes are an essential source of local revenue to support important community needs such as schools, emergency services, roads and other infrastructure, and a wide range of municipal expenses.

The amount of property tax paid by any particular property owner is determined by the town's tax rate. The town's tax rate is generated by a process including a valuation of the town's total taxable base (i.e. total town assessed value comprised of the sum of all assessed property values) and the town's budgetary expense needs as determined by town government decision-making. An individual property's assessed value is determined by the town assessing department through a selected valuation method.

The tax rate is usually expressed as a rate per $1,000 of a property's assessed value. Because the town's total taxable value and budgetary needs change year to year, the town's tax rate also changes annually. The ultimate goal of this property valuation and tax rate process is to allocate a fair distribution of property tax responsibility throughout the community while meeting the town's budgetary needs.

Effect on the town tax rate when a property becomes real estate tax exempt as a result of acquisition for conservation purposes:

To illustrate the effect on the town tax rate and therefore property tax, here is an actual case study.

Case study property:

2.24 acre (Harwich assessor map 35, lot E5) property located at 0 Rt. 28, Harwich on the border with Chatham

The FY23 property assessment valuation of the 2.24 acres located at 0 Route 28, Harwich was $355,000.

At the FY23 property tax rate of $6.64 per $1,000 in value, the property tax was estimated at $2,272.

This property is located in the public water supply recharge for municipal wells serving approximately 10,000 households and within the Red River Valley with groundwater flowing to Red River Beach. The nonprofit Harwich Conservation Trust acquired this property for conservation purposes. The land became property tax exempt. The estimated increase to the tax rate for that fiscal year was $ 0.00028465 (or 1/5,000 of a penny increase).

To arrive at the estimated $ 0.00028465 increase to the tax rate, please see the following calculations:

Take the FY23 tax levy amount of $54,988,268 and divide by the original tax base of $8,281,365,700 (this figure includes the 2.24 acre case study property). Multiply that $8,281,365,700 x $1,000 = tax rate of $6.63999997 (VALUE A) per $1,000 of assessed property value.

Now let's remove the 2.24-acre case study property from the FY23 taxable value of $8,281,365,700, which means $8,281,365,700 minus $355,000 = $8,281,010,700.

Take the FY23 tax levy amount of $54,988,268 and divide by the tax base without the 2.24-acre property, which is $8,281,010,700.

Multiply that $8,281,010,700 x $1,000 = tax rate of $6.64028462 (VALUE B) per $1,000 of assessed property value.

Subtract VALUE A from VALUE B (B minus A) as shown here:

$6.64028462 (VALUE B) minus $6.63999997 (VALUE A) = $0.00028465.

The estimated tax rate increase is $0.00028465 or 1/5,000 of a penny, which is insignificant especially when considering the likely growth in the town's overall taxable base by tens of millions or hundreds of millions of dollars in the following fiscal years. In summary with this example, by preserving 2.24 acres to protect the public water supply for 10,000 households, protect the health of Red River and Red River Beach downstream, protect the scenic experience along Rt. 28, and protect wildlife habitat, the tax rate increased by an estimated 1/5,000 of a cent.

2. What is the effect of preserving natural land on the cost of municipal services?

Meanwhile, the preservation of natural land can have a dampening effect on the tax rate (i.e. conserving land can help lower the town tax rate) by reducing the need for municipal services and therefore the cost of municipal services like emergency response, highway services, school services and other town services. We also know that the cost of those services continues to rise. In other words, when you add more development, you also increase the need for and cost of town services for that development.

Reducing the Cost of Municipal Services:

(Source: How Conserving Open Space Provides Economic Benefits to Massachusetts Communities, Prepared by Primrose Research Group for the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition, March 2022)

> "Often, since developed land has a higher assessed value than undeveloped land, people think increased development will enable a city or town to provide better services.[1] This focus on assessed value is understandable with Massachusetts municipalities relying on property taxes for a majority of local revenues. However, new development brings not only more revenue, but also more expenses, particularly for residential development. In Massachusetts, education accounts for nearly half of municipal spending, on average.[2] Undeveloped land is frequently beneficial to communities because it may bring in more revenue than it uses in services.
>
> Communities across Massachusetts and the country have used cost of community services studies to analyze the ratio of tax revenues to public service expenditures for different land uses. A recent study of four towns in Massachusetts (i.e., Great Barrington, Whately, Upton, and Haverhill) showed lower expense to revenue ratios for open space and commercial land than residential land. This means, for example, that for every dollar of tax revenue collected from open space in Great Barrington, $0.35 is spent providing services for that land, while every dollar of tax revenue collected from residential development requires $1.12 in municipal expenses.[3] The ratios calculated in this study are similar to previous cost of community services research. American Farmland Trust found that across 151 communities nationwide (including 13 in Massachusetts) residential development is a net fiscal loss for communities.[4] That is, for every $1 in property tax revenues it generates, residential development requires $1.16 in services (median value), while working and open lands require $0.37 in services. A meta-analysis of 125 cost of community services studies across the country again found that residential land uses tend to have ratios greater than one, while commercial/industrial and agricultural/open-space land uses tend to have ratios less than one.[5]"

1. Murray, H., and C. Paul, 2019. Fiscal Impacts of Land Use in Massachusetts: Up-to date Cost of Community Services Analyses for 4 Massachusetts Communities. University of Massachusetts Amherst Extension
2. Massachusetts Department of Revenue Division of Local Services. Municipal Databank Revenue and Expenditure Data Fiscal Year 2021. Accessed January 28, 2022, https://www.mass.gov/service-details/revenue-and-expenditure-data
3. A recent University of Massachusetts study of four towns found that for every dollar of revenue brought in from open space the following is spent providing services for that land: Great Barrington $0.35; Whately $0.46; Upton $0.34; and Haverhill $0.74.
4. Farmland Information Center. 2016. Cost of Community Services Studies. Partnership between the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service and American Farmland Trust.
5. Kotchen, M. and S. Stacey. 2009. A Meta-Analysis of Cost of Community Services Studies. International Regional Science Review 32(3):376-399.

3. How does land preservation and ecological restoration help reduce the cost of town wastewater infrastructure?

As described in the state's Massachusetts Estuaries Project (MEP) analysis, there are total maximum daily load (TMDL) thresholds of nitrogen in nitrogen sensitive embayments such as estuaries, harbors and other coastal water resources for municipalities to address through wasterwater management planning.

The following excerpt from the state's website provides more background about the MEP (source: The Massachusetts Estuaries Project and Reports | Mass.gov)

> "Nutrients are essential to the vitality of our coastal ecosystem. Nutrients, in particular phosphorus and nitrogen, support the growth of aquatic plants, which in turn provide food for the fish, shellfish, and other organisms that live in our coastal waters. An excess of nutrients can result in a decline in aquatic plants and wildlife, negatively impacting these coastal ecosystems. Nutrients come from a variety of sources, including natural and anthropogenic sources. Anthropogenic sources can include septic systems, fertilizer application, and stormwater runoff.
>
> In 2001, the Massachusetts Estuaries Project (MEP) was created to help determine current nitrogen loads to southeastern Massachusetts estuaries and evaluate reductions that would be necessary to support healthy ecosystems. The MEP is a collaborative effort between MassDEP, UMass Dartmouth, and southern Massachusetts communities. MEP evaluations will be completed for approximately 70 coastal embayments in southern Massachusetts.
>
> The MEP uses a linked model to evaluate nitrogen inputs to estuaries. This information is used by MassDEP to develop Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for each estuary studied. TMDLs calculate the maximum amount of a pollutant (nitrogen in this case) that a waterbody can assimilate and still support a healthy ecosystem (i.e., meet surface water quality standards and support public health). The MEP also provides technical guidance to support appropriate wastewater, watershed, and embayment management techniques to reduce nitrogen loading. This technical guidance is being used by communities to support the development of Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plans (CWMPs)."

Accordingly, the Town of Harwich completed a CWMP which includes a section on the nitrogen attenuation potential of ecological restoration of the approximately 66-acre site known as theRobert F. Smith Cold Brook Preserve within the watershed of Cold Brook/ Saquatucket Harbor. The 66-acre site was acquired by the nonprofit Harwich Conservation Trust in 2001. In 2016, a Cold Brook Eco-Restoration Nitrogen Attenuation Feasibility Study contracted by the Town with the Town's wastewater planning consultants CDM Smith and the School of Marine Science & Technology (SMAST) at UMass Dartmouth was completed. The study and subsequently the CWMP described a projected $6 million savings to taxpayers in reduced wastewater infrastructure costs by naturally reducing nitrogen through eco-restoration of the 66-acre site.

In 2017, the Town's Water Quality Task Force through the CWMP recommended that Town Meeting voters approve $2 million toward the eco-restoration to reduce nitrogen in the Cold Brook/Saquatucket Harbor watershed, and thereby save taxpayers up to $6 million by reducing the need for costly wastewater treatment infrastructure. In 2017, Town Meeting voters approved $2 million to help fund the eco-restoration implementation.

Completed in 2024, the Cold Brook Eco-Restoration Project transformed the 66-acre site by restoring nearly a mile of stream and 44 acres of healthy nitrogen-reducing wetlands as well as creating four new ponds. The partnership project achieved goals of improved water quality, coastal climate change resilience, habitat diversity, and a new wheelchair accessible All Persons

Trail with four bridges to enhance this recreational opportunity for all abilities and ages in Harwich Port.

On March 21, 2025 the statewide Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition gave its inaugural Conservation Excellence Award for the Cold Brook Eco-Restoration Project thanks to the collaboration between Harwich Conservation Trust, the Town of Harwich, state Division of Ecological Restoration, and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service as well as numerous consultants and scientists.

On April 7, 2025, the Cold Brook Eco-Restoration Project partners including most notably Inter-Fluve, the specialty engineering firm with the technical expertise and experience to create the innovative design, was honored with the prestigious 2025 Grand Conceptor Award, presented by the American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) of Massachusetts.

The ACEC Grand Conceptor Award was presented at the Engineering Excellence Awards event held in Boston's Seaport District. The Cold Brook Eco-Restoration Project finished first in a field of 37 projects from throughout the state and Northeast region, as well as an entry from

Saudi Arabia. Other notable projects included major engineering feats at highway interchanges, bridges, entire buildings, and the international terminal of Logan Airport.

There is also the historic preservation and affordable housing benefits that were provided through the partnership between the Harwich Conservation Trust and the nonprofit Harwich Fire Association. The historic preservation and affordable housing improvements were funded in part through Community Preservation Act funds and Affordable Housing Trust funds to renovate the town's first firehouse into new community accessible space and create three affordable apartment rentals on the second floor.

Land preservation and eco-restoration, both of which help protect water quality, scenic views and trails for all abilities, are directly linked to the local and regional economy because it's the unique Cape Cod environment that draws thousands of visitors every year. In other words, from an economic standpoint, land preservation and ecological restoration make practical business sense to continue attracting people who vacation and shop in Harwich and on Cape Cod. Land preservation in nitrogen sensitive embayments also reduces the extent of wastewater treatment infrastructure and therefore provides savings to taxpayers.

Inside Cover

