

PHASE 1 EXISTING CONDITIONS

APRIL 26, 2023

REPORT

This Report was prepared for the Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC) and details the findings of Phase One of the Master Plan Existing Conditions analysis for the Town of Topsfield, Massachusetts.

JM GOLDSON LLC



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Welcome to Topsfield Sign, located on US-1 (2022).

INTRODUCTION

Phase I of the Topsfield Master Plan 2023 focuses on understanding Topsfield's cultural, demographic, environmental, and physical conditions: What was the community like in the past? How has it developed and changed over time? What are the key issues and opportunities to address in Topsfield?

A master plan is a way to respond to change over time. It is a long-range (10-year) visionary plan for the community's physical evolution. This Plan helps the community imagine – and create – a better future. The existing conditions component of the planning effort helps the community understand trends, issues, and key opportunities both in the municipality and region to lay a foundation for the Plan itself.

Topsfield's last Master Plan was written in 1980 when the population was 5,709.¹ In 2003/2004, the Town's Planning Board was able to update some elements of the 1980 Master Plan through a

¹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 1980 Summary File 1, "P1: Total Population," *American FactFinder*, <http://factfinder.census.gov/>.

state grant² though the bulk of the Plan has remained untouched since 1980. This report details Topsfield's recent growth and changes over time, particularly highlighting the last two decades.

REGIONAL CONTEXT

Topsfield is a 12.8 square mile inland town in Essex County, Massachusetts. The Town sits roughly 22 miles north of Boston, Massachusetts, and under ten miles from the Atlantic Ocean coastline in multiple directions. Topsfield shares its borders with six municipalities – Boxford to the northwest, Ipswich to the northeast, Hamilton and Wenham to the east, Danvers to the south, and Middleton to the southwest. Topsfield is easily accessible by car with the Newburyport Turnpike (US R-1) running through the Town's longitude, interstate 95 (I-95) passing through the southwest corner of the Town, and MA Route 97 from the northwest corner of the Town to the southeast corner. The now-abandoned Newburyport Branch Rail line running through Topsfield has been converted into the Topsfield Linear Common Rail Trail, connecting the Town to other Northeast Massachusetts communities through the "Border to Boston" trail.



Regional context map. Source: Wikipedia.

LOCAL HISTORY

Topsfield was originally stewarded by the Agawam tribe of the Algonquian people, who called the land Shenewemedy, or "the pleasant place by the flowing waters." Chief Masconomet, the sagamore of the Agawam tribe and Masconomet Regional High School's namesake, welcomed English settlers to Salem in 1630. By 1638 had deeded all the Agawam's land to Governor John Winthrop, including "NewMeadows," or modern-day Topsfield. In 1648, just two years before the Town's incorporation, the General Court of Massachusetts renamed the land Topsfield, likely after the parish Toppesfield in England. The new Town of Topsfield comprised parts of Ipswich and Salem, with the Ipswich River bisecting the settlement. For the Puritan settlers, town and church were the same, and the economy was almost exclusively agricultural.³

Topsfield was intertwined with the Salem Witch Trials due to its proximity to Salem Village. While the causes of the Salem Witch Trials remain under great historical debate, religiosity, land disputes,

² "Executive Order 418 of January 21, 2000, Assisting communities in addressing the housing shortage," *Massachusetts Executive Orders 400-499*, (2001), <https://www.mass.gov/executive-orders/no-418-assisting-communities-in-addressing-the-housing-shortage>.

³ Dow, George Francis. *History of Topsfield, Massachusetts*. The Topsfield Historical Society, 1940. <http://archive.org/details/historyoftopsfie00dowg>.

and economic rivalry are widely considered factors – including in the cases of Topsfield’s Sarah Cloyce, Mary Esty, Sarah Wildes, and Elizabeth Howe, the last three of whom were executed.⁴

By the early 1800s, Topsfield’s agricultural economy had diversified with shoe factories, stores, and inns. The arrival of the railroad and the Newburyport Turnpike connected Topsfield to other communities and allowed residents to visit and work out of town. At the same time, immigrants from Ireland and Italy moved to town to work on farms and help build estates and summerhouses across Essex County. With the separation of Church and State in 1823, the original Puritan/Congregational Church was joined by other denominations with their places of worship. An inclusive Town Meeting became a form of community governance.⁵ In 1910, Topsfield became the permanent home for the Essex Agricultural Society’s annual Fair, now dubbed the "Topsfield Fair."⁶

In the post-World War II era, especially with the widespread ownership of automobiles, Topsfield’s population grew as many farms were subdivided for housing. Topsfield became essentially a bedroom community that retains its historic and rural character.⁷

PLANNING PROCESS AND APPROACH

Additional Planning Initiatives

Other planning studies and reports conducted in Topsfield are important for this Master Plan effort. The Town has undertaken a variety of effective planning efforts in the recent past, including:

- 2013 Town Building Assessment Study & Capital Master Plan
- [2019 Downtown Revitalization Plan](#)
- [2019 Open Space & Recreation Plan](#)
- [2021 Hazardous Mitigation Plan](#)

⁴ Topsfield and the Witchcraft Tragedy. Topsfield Historical Society, 1992.

<http://archive.org/details/topsfieldwitchcr00unse>.

⁵ Dow, George Francis. History of Topsfield, Massachusetts. The Topsfield Historical Society, 1940.

<http://archive.org/details/historyoftopsfie00dowg>.

⁶ Topsfield Fair Timeline. "Topsfield Fair Timeline." Essex Agricultural Society. Accessed January 8, 2023.

<https://topsfieldfairhistory.org/>.

⁷ Dow, George Francis. History of Topsfield, Massachusetts. The Topsfield Historical Society, 1940.

<http://archive.org/details/historyoftopsfie00dowg>.

Project Phases and Schedule



Report Organization

This report is organized into eight chapters, separated by aspects that contribute to quality of life in a community; each chapter provides an inventory of existing conditions and highlights key trends or challenges with respect to that topic.

- **LIVE** – This chapter describes Topsfield's demographics and housing stock.
- **WORK** – This chapter describes Topsfield's economic conditions.
- **PLAY** – This chapter describes Topsfield's recreational amenities and cultural resources.
- **CONNECT** – This chapter describes Topsfield's transportation conditions and access.
- **PROTECT** – This chapter describes Topsfield's historic and natural resources.
- **ADAPT** – This chapter describes Topsfield's vulnerability and resiliency to climate change.
- **SERVE** – This chapter describes Topsfield's local government, facilities, and services.
- **LAND USE** – This chapter describes Topsfield's development patterns and zoning regulations.

Cross-Cutting Topics

A meaningful and effective plan recognizes that these elements cannot be divided into silos; they instead are integrated systematically to consider and reinforce one another – while collectively supporting the regional planning framework. The structure and flexibility of the planning process are critical to reaching a substantive understanding of the system it is planned for.

Sustainability & Resilience

Recognizing the importance of promoting a long-term livable, and resilient Topsfield community, sustainability practices are woven throughout the chapters as is best practice in planning. These practices are present in each section, with special emphasis in the *Protect* and *Adapt* chapters. The Living Community Challenge is a framework for master planning, design, and construction⁸.

⁸ International Living Future Institute, Living Community Challenge, <https://living-future.org/lcc/>.

Sustainability practices for a livable community, as inspired by the Living Community Challenge, include:

- Providing nurturing places that promote healthy lifestyles for everyone and supporting nature-based climate solutions.
- Contributing more than it takes concerning water, soil, and energy — focusing on energy conservation and generation, collecting and retaining soil nutrients, and water capture and treatment.
- Designs and develops multi-functional properties, understanding that nothing needs only a single purpose — that everything can offer multiple benefits to the community and environment.
- Providing regenerative, resilient, and connected spaces for people and natural ecosystems to thrive, even in the most developed portions of the community.
- Promotes equity by creating walkable and bikeable places, offering affordable housing options, and sustaining and growing public transportation options.

Vulnerable Groups

Planning for vulnerable groups requires recognizing previous planning practices that have had a disparate impact on certain communities and actively working with affected residents to create a better community for all. Health, income, mobility, and other inequities are institutionalized in policies and systematic practices that disproportionately limit opportunity and assign undue burden to individuals and groups based on their race, age, gender, sexual orientation, immigration status, religion, disability, or any intersection of marginalized identities.

The American Planning Association AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct describes this principle: "People who participate in the planning process shall work to achieve economic, social, and racial equity." The association also calls on planners to "incorporate equity principles and strategies as the foundation for preparing plans and implementation programs to achieve more socially just decision-making."

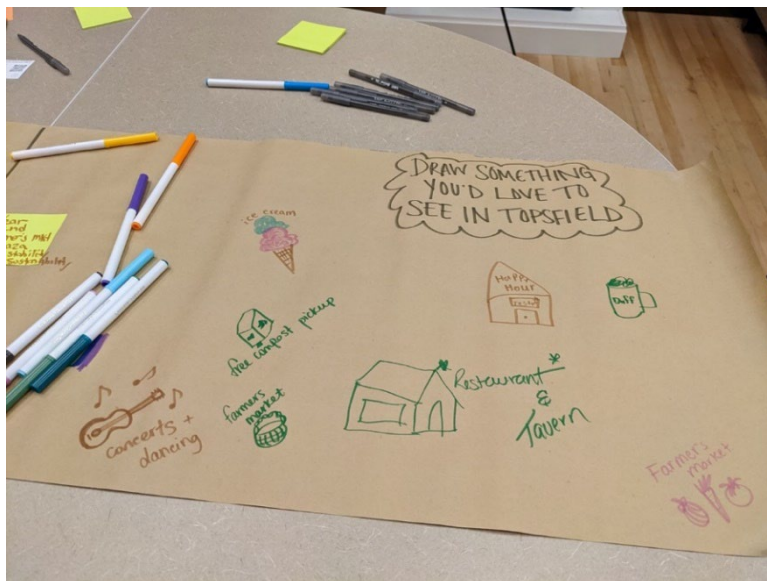
Planning principles aimed at including vulnerable groups are woven throughout each element and will continue to be present in every part of this planning process.

WHAT THE COMMUNITY SAID

The project team's approach to the Topsfield Master Plan process is rooted in the belief that facilitating a meaningful, accessible, and inclusive process is as — or arguably more — important than the final plan report itself. Each element of this report will include a "*What the Community Said*" section to highlight community input received during Phase I of this process and community input from previous planning efforts on related topics.

Facilitating collaborative and highlighting interactive community engagement that utilizes various outreach tools to solicit the highest level of participation is critical to this planning effort.

Throughout Phase I, the consultant team hosted several engagement opportunities to hear from local experts and community members on various topics. These engagement opportunities included running activities at the Master Plan Steering Committee meetings, setting up interactive boards at Topsfield's 2022 Holiday on the Green celebration, hosting focus groups with local experts, and interviewing key municipal staff. Complete summaries of these engagement tools are included in the Appendix and the Community Engagement Report (a separate document).



Source: *Topsfield Holiday on the Green Interactive Master Plan Activity (2022).*

TRENDS AND ISSUES

Live

Topsfield's population growth has risen steadily during the past forty years. Older adult and smaller household populations are expected to grow over the next twenty years, and the current rate of housing development may need to grow to meet projected demand. Most housing units (90 percent) are owner-occupied and single-family homes, which is a much higher percentage than in Essex County and across the state. Recently, more mixed-use, multi-family, and rental units have been created. More than half of all homes (57 percent) have four or more bedrooms. Despite most residents living with family, there are generally fewer people living in a housing unit and a greater number of bedrooms in that unit. Demographic shifts toward smaller households and preferences for more walkable neighborhoods are combined with regional population growth to cause a mismatch between housing supply and demand. This suggests a continuing need for smaller housing options.

Work

Massachusetts municipal governments, especially smaller communities like Topsfield, depend heavily on property taxes for their operating revenue and thus consider the structure of their tax bases critical to long-term financial sustainability. This influences which land uses the Town emphasizes and in which areas development is encouraged. A balance of commercial, industrial, and residential land uses in a town is critical to determining the functionality of the built environment and the provision of other needed or desired services. Topsfield's historic and natural resources, wedding destinations, and the Topsfield Fair present economic development opportunities.

Play

Topsfield has a variety of public and private recreation areas, including parks, athletic fields, walking paths, and equestrian and nature trails. Topsfield is enriched by several events and experiences throughout the year, most notably the Topsfield Fair in October. The Town has access to water recreation at Hood Pond and the Ipswich River, such as boating, fishing, and swimming. Open space in Topsfield features a mix of private and public spaces. The Town's major recreation and open space facilities include Pye Brook Park, Klock Park, the Topsfield Fairgrounds, Bradley Palmer State Park, Willowdale State Forest, Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary, local school fields, Topsfield Common, and the Topsfield Linear Common Rail Trail. These resources play an important role in contributing to the quality of life of Topsfield residents. Some Topsfield residents desire more programming and family-friendly events, but Town funding and staffing are limited. The current events and programming are predominantly volunteer-led and privately funded.

Connect

Topsfield has a robust local transportation system with strong regional highway access and regional access to the commuter rail via the Hamilton/Wenham Commuter Rail station. Topsfield's roads are generally safe. However, MassDOT road safety data identified two crash locations ranked in the highest five percent for the region (2017-2019) at the intersection of Route 1 and Route 97 (13 crashes) and the intersection of Central Street and Route 1 (8 crashes). Due to the lack of other transportation options, a car is necessary for most daily activities in Topsfield. The Public Works Department reports that there are approximately 25 miles of local sidewalks. Aside from the multi-use Topsfield Linear Common Rail Trail, there is little bike infrastructure. Topsfield adopted a Complete Streets policy in 2016, created a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan in 2017, and received a \$400,000 grant to fund replacing sidewalks on Main Street to High Street in 2020. These funds can help Topsfield create transportation improvements to better prioritize safe and accessible transportation for all travel modes and people.

Protect

As one drives through Topsfield, the combined views of rolling hilltops, meadows, meandering brooks, marshes, fields, and forests are remarkable, making the Town's visual character one of its most priceless assets. The Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS) data maintained by the Massachusetts Historical Commission reports 420 Historical Resources in Topsfield. Twenty percent of Topsfield's overland land area is categorized as agricultural, forest, open land, recreational use, or water⁹. Approximately one-third of the total land area is owned by state or local governments, regional conservation non-profits, or have conservation restrictions placed on the land by private individuals¹⁰. Out of the total land area categorized as open space, 85 percent is protected from development¹¹. For comparison purposes, Massachusetts has approximately 20 percent of its land protected from future development. The Town's wealth of

⁹ MassGIS Land Use 2016 dataset.

¹⁰ Topsfield Open Space and Recreation Plan, 2019.

¹¹ MassGIS Data: Protected and Recreational Open Space.

natural resources, active agriculture, and a significant amount of protection are a strength to be celebrated.

Adapt

There is a strong community movement to increase environmental sustainability and climate change adaptation in the community. Topsfield created a Hazard Mitigation Plan in 2021, alongside support from MAPC as part of their Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program. The Town is designated by the state as a Green Community and has used grant funds to improve energy efficiency in the library. Topsfield plans to use its 2022 Green Communities grant to improve energy efficiency in two local elementary schools and install variable frequency drives in the schools as well. The Green Communities Grant also indicated that further energy efficiency tools would be put into place in other areas of the administrative buildings. The Town recently purchased its first all-electric police cruiser and installed solar downtown street lighting, a solar-powered bench, and two electric vehicle charging stations at Town Hall.

Serve

Municipal

The Town of Topsfield has a total of ten municipal buildings and two elementary school buildings located in Topsfield. There are also two regional school buildings (including administrative offices), which are in Boxford, Massachusetts. In 2019, Topsfield underwent a Facility Condition Assessment (FCA), which evaluated the Town's ten municipal sites. Sites with the greatest improvement needs include the Water Pump Stations, the Park and Cemetery Building, the Old Highway Garage, and the Police Station. The schools maintain in-house facilities staff, whereas the Town does not have a full-time in-house facilities maintenance staff. Topsfield also currently has no internal information technology (IT) staff but does have staff support for website and social media communications. In 2021, the Select Board approved a Memorandum of Understanding for an inter-municipal agreement among nearby towns as the first step in creating the North Shore Regional IT Collaborative, which is intended to leverage shared IT resources as well as the purchasing power of a collaborative.

Schools

Topsfield's Public School district serves 628 students (2022-23)¹² in grades Preschool through Sixth Grade. Students matriculate to Masconomet Regional School District for grades Seven to Twelve. After about seven years of growth between 2000 and 2007, Topsfield public schools have seen a steady decline in enrollment over the last ten years. Recent enrollment projections indicate the decline will not continue but rather plateau or slightly increase. The school district is at the beginning of a strategic planning process, which will include a study of whether the towns want to explore regionalization at the elementary level. Interviews with the Facilities Director and Superintendent of Schools indicate that no new school facilities or additions are needed in the immediate future.

¹² Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Topsfield School and District Profile data (2023), <https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/>.

Revenues and Spending

In Fiscal Year 2020,¹³ Topsfield received 78.6 percent from personal property and real estate taxes (\$26.1 million). Topsfield's Capital Improvement Planning for FY2023-FY2027 projects total spending needs of \$22,572,800 across all five years, \$14,841,700 of which are projected to be needed for the Water Enterprise fund. Large water capital projects in future years include water storage tank replacement, water treatment upgrades, pump station and well rehabilitation, and water main replacements.

Land

Topsfield exhibits a land use pattern seen in many small, rural New England towns. It has a compact and walkable town center with a town common. Topsfield's *Downtown Revitalization Plan* envisions a welcoming downtown village where Topsfield residents of all ages can live, gather, and shop while also providing new job opportunities. Residential neighborhoods expand outward with decreasing density the further one gets from the Town Center. Residential areas are the most prominent land use in the Town. The neighborhoods are mostly low-density, single-family homes. Topsfield is an "adjacent small community" per the new MBTA Communities Law and therefore expected to zone for allowing a capacity of 118 multi-family units as a right.

Topsfield has seven primary zoning districts and six overlay districts. Each zoning district has specific use and dimensional regulations, including building and area requirements and parking requirements. Zoning districts include one commercial district, three residential, and three mixed-use districts. Overlay districts allow for elderly housing, medical marijuana, or regulate scenic or environmentally sensitive areas. Per the Town's website, Topsfield is "currently engaged in a comprehensive bylaw codification project and is working on updating the records of current bylaws and associated documents to ensure accuracy and completeness."

¹³ Town of Topsfield, Annual Town Report (2021), https://www.topsfield-ma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf5086/f/uploads/2021_annual_report_final_final_4.13.2022.pdf.



Recently sold Topsfield home, Source: realtor.com.

LIVE: DEMOGRAPHICS & HOUSING

Topsfield’s population growth has risen steadily during the past forty years. Older adult and smaller household populations are expected to grow over the next twenty years. Most housing units (90 percent) are owner-occupied and single-family homes, a much higher percentage than in Essex County and across the state. Recently, more mixed-use, multi-family, and rental units have been created. More than half of all homes (57 percent) have four or more bedrooms. Despite most residents living with family, there are generally fewer people living in a housing unit and a greater number of bedrooms in that unit. Demographic shifts toward smaller households and preferences for more walkable neighborhoods are combined with regional population growth to cause a mismatch between housing supply and demand. This suggests a continuing need for smaller housing options, especially one-bedroom and studio units.



TOPSFIELD

THEN AND NOW

2000

2020

Population:

6,141

+6.9%

Population:

6,565

Racial Makeup:

97.8% WHITE

-7.9%

Racial Makeup:

90% WHITE

% aged 65+

15.4%

+42.8%

% aged 65+:

22%

Population Density per square mile:

482.1

+6.4%

Population Density per square mile:

512.8

Median price of a single-family home:

\$366,500

+103.3%

Median price of a single-family home:

\$745,000

(August 2020)

Household income:

\$96,430

(Same buying power of
\$147,370.52 in 2020)

+49.6%

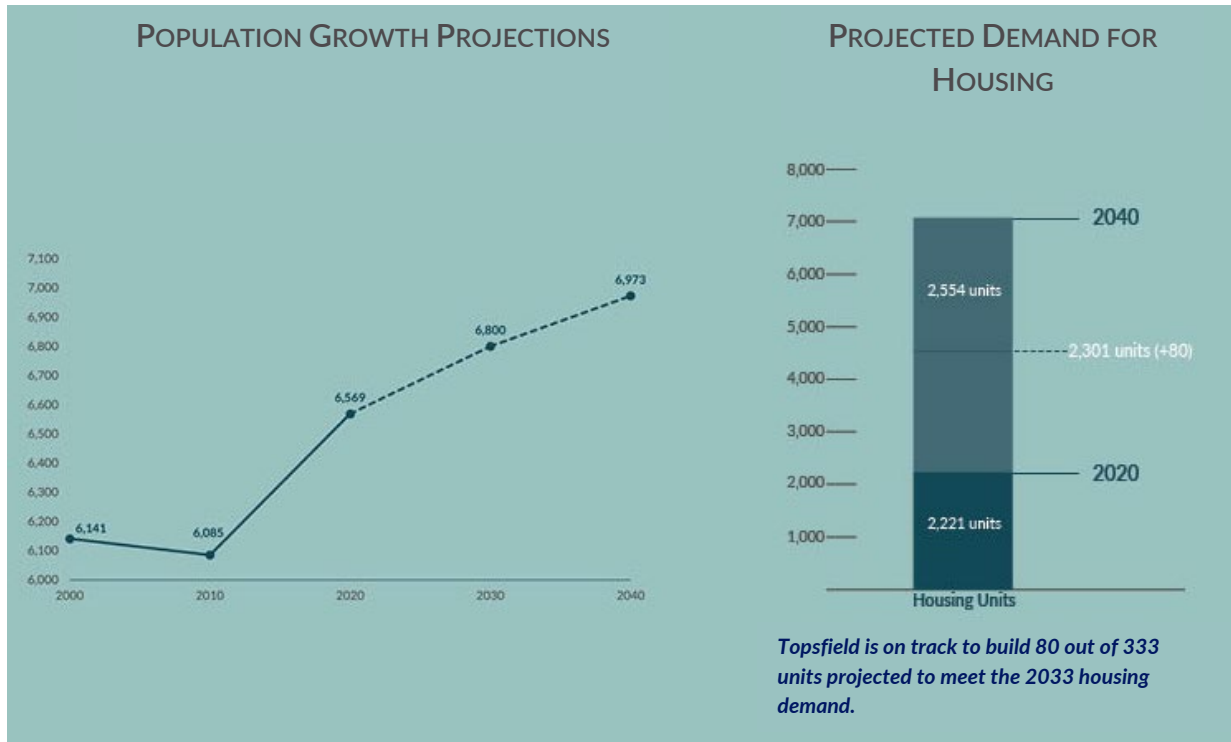
Household income:

\$144,258

Positive and negative percents listed in the center of the above image denote percent change between 2000 and 2020.

POPULATION AND HOUSING GROWTH

After a decrease in population between 2000 and 2010, Topsfield's population growth has risen steadily over the last ten years. Between 2010 and 2020, Topsfield's population grew eight percent, between the County and state rates of nine and seven percent, respectively.² If Topsfield's population continues to increase at about the same historical rate, the population will be 6,800 in 2030.³ The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) predicts Topsfield's population will be 6,973 in 2040, an increase of 12 percent from the 2020 U.S. Census calculated population of 6,234.⁴



Source: Population records 2000-2020: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020, 2010, and 2000 Census of Population and Housing, updated every ten years. Decennial Census by Decades; Population projections for 2030 and 2040: MassDOT Socio-Economic Projections for 2020 Regional Transportation Plans; Projected demand for housing: JM Goldson LCC analysis of projected demand for housing (see following page).

² U.S. Census Bureau, 2020, 2010, and 2000 Census of Population and Housing, updated every 10 years. Decennial Census by Decades.

³ This number represents a 3.52% increase in population between 2020 and 2030. This percentage was calculated by taking an average of Topsfield's population growth rates between 2000 and 2010, and between 2010 and 2020.

⁴ MassDOT Socio-Economic Projections for 2020 Regional Transportation Plans, <https://www.mass.gov/doc/projections-final-for-rtps/download>, accessed September 2022.

DEMAND FOR HOUSING

The U.S. Census indicates that in the past twenty years, Topsfield's household growth has been lower than that of households at the County and state levels. Between 2000 and 2020, Topsfield saw a three percent increase in total households. At the same time, the household growth rate for both the County and the state was eight percent.⁵ Topsfield has a higher person per household ratio than the County and state (2.99 PPH versus 2.5 PPH⁶), which may explain the lower growth of households. If we assume the population reaches 6,973 in 2040,³ Topsfield can expect an increase in 739 residents over its 2020 Census population numbers. If household proportions were the same in 2040 as in 2020,⁵ there would be a demand for 333 new housing units.

Population Increase	Household Size	Housing Units
111 residents	1-person: 15%	111 units
207 residents	2-person: 28%	103 units
163 residents	3-person: 22%	54 units
258 residents	4-person: 35%	65 units
Total: 739 residents	Total: 100%	Total: 333 units

From 2011 to 2020, Topsfield issued a total of 146 residential building permits, all of which were for single-family homes.⁷ If the same amount of housing were produced between 2020 and 2040, it would be less than half as much as the projected demand.

TOPSFIELD, MA RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PERMITS ISSUED 2011-2020

Year	Single-Buildings	Single-Units	2-Fam Buildings	2-Fam Units	3 + 4 Buildings	3 + 4 Units	5 + Buildings	5 + Units
2020	13	13	0	0	0	0	0	0
2019	9	9	0	0	0	0	0	0
2018	18	18	0	0	0	0	0	0
2017	13	13	0	0	0	0	0	0
2016	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
2015	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
2014	6	6	0	0	0	0	0	0
2013	31	31	0	0	0	0	0	0
2012	27	27	0	0	0	0	0	0
2011	23	23	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	146	146	0	0	0	0	0	0

⁵ Topsfield Household Growth, 2000 - 2020. Source: US Census (T20, T58, T68, T155) ACS (A10001, A10008).

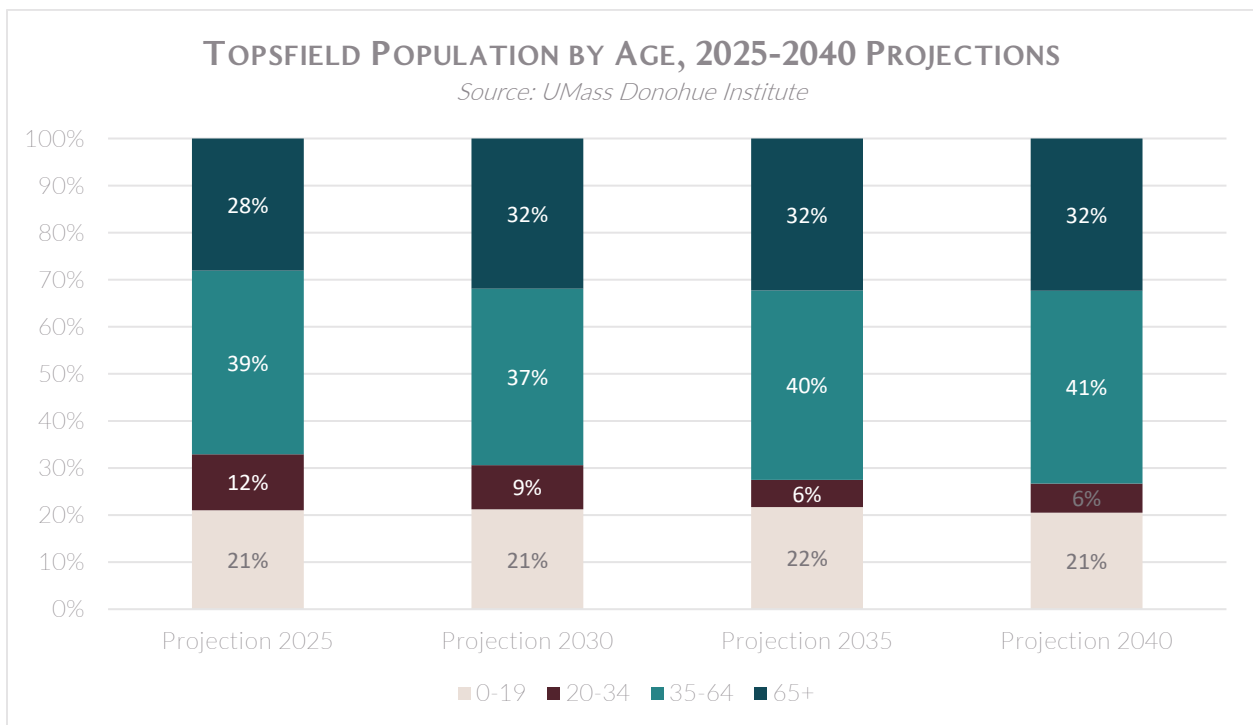
⁶ Topsfield Family Household Composition, 2020. Sources: US Census (T58, T59, PCT18)/ACS (A10008, A10009, A10025).

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, Manufacturing and Construction Division, Residential Construction Branch, <http://www.census.gov/construction/bps/>, for Topsfield 2010 to 2020.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND CHANGE

Currently, most of Topsfield’s residents (41 percent) fall between the ages of 35 and 44, like County and state age trends. Children (under age 18) make up 21 percent of the overall population and are not expected to increase proportionally to the overall population or impact school capacity. Young adults, ages 18 to 34, comprise the smallest age bracket in Topsfield at 11 percent, falling below County and state trends of 22 and 24 percent, respectively. Topsfield’s percentage of older adults, ages 65 years and above, is 22 percent, five percent higher than the County and state.⁸

Older adult populations are expected to grow over the next twenty years and plateau at 32 percent of the total population in 2030, up from 17 percent in 2010. This follows larger regional and national trends. Since older households tend to be smaller, this will add additional demand for housing units, especially smaller units.



Topsfield Population by Age 2025 – 2040 Projections. Source: UMass Donohue Institute.

Topsfield is becoming more diverse, but most residents identify as White.

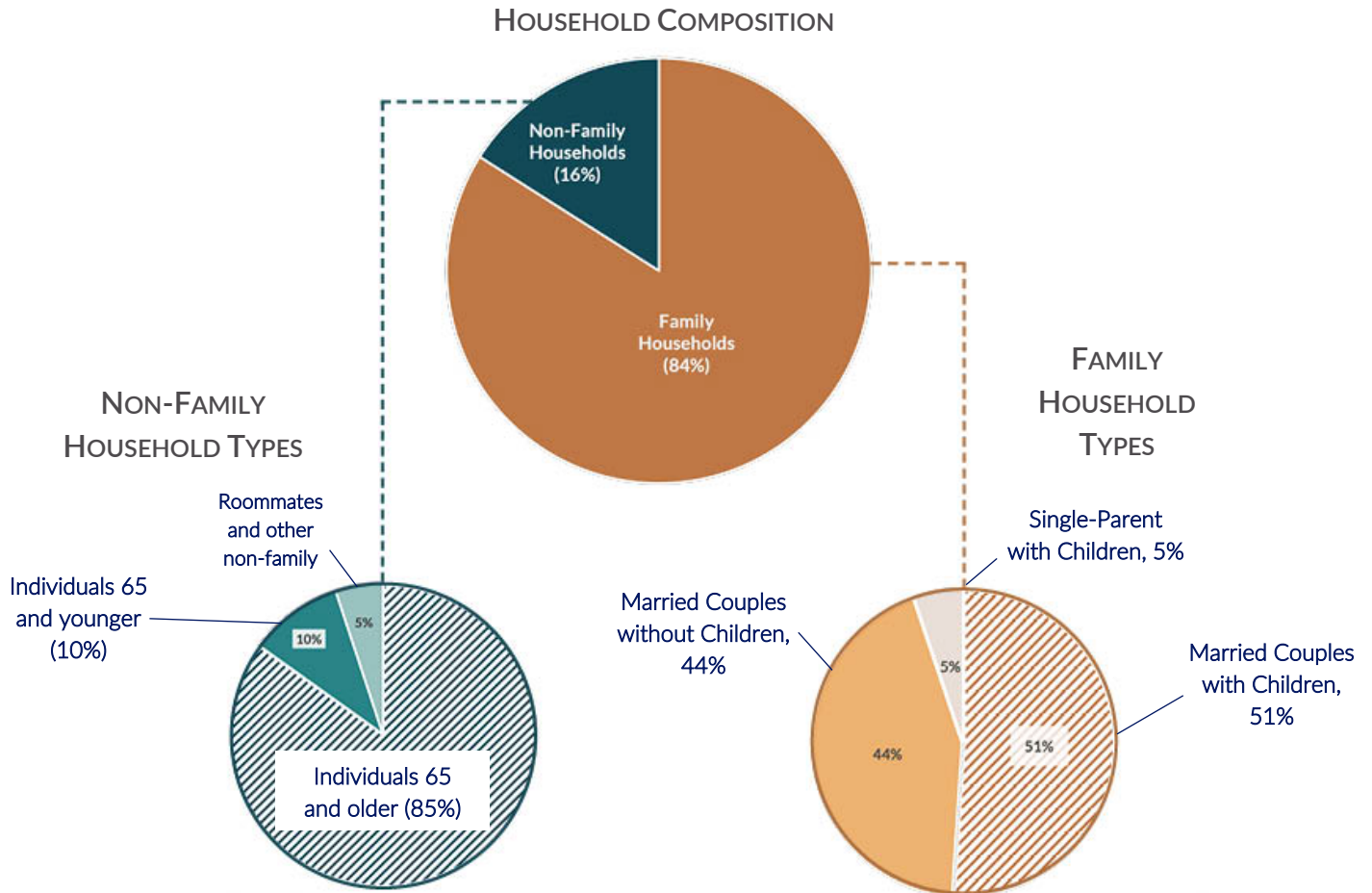
While Topsfield percentage of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color grew significantly between 2010 and 2020 (an increase of 133 percent), though numerically, this was only an addition of 375 individuals; the community remains predominantly white, with 90 percent of residents identifying

⁸ US Census (T11) and ACS (B01001).

as such. This growth rate is rapidly outpacing the County and state, whose BIPOC communities have increased by 53 percent and 46 percent, respectively.⁹

Most Topsfield residents (84 percent) live with family.

Within family households, 48 percent of Topsfield residents are married couples with children, 41 percent are married without children, and five percent are single-parent households with children. For non-family households, 85 percent are individuals ages 65 and older living alone; ten percent are under 65 years old, living alone, and five percent of non-family households live with roommates or others.^{10 11}



⁹ US Census (T15, T55, T003).

¹⁰ US Census (T58, T59, PCT18)/ACS (A10008, A10009, A10025).

¹¹ US Census (T58, T59, PCT18)/ACS (A10008, A10009, A10025).

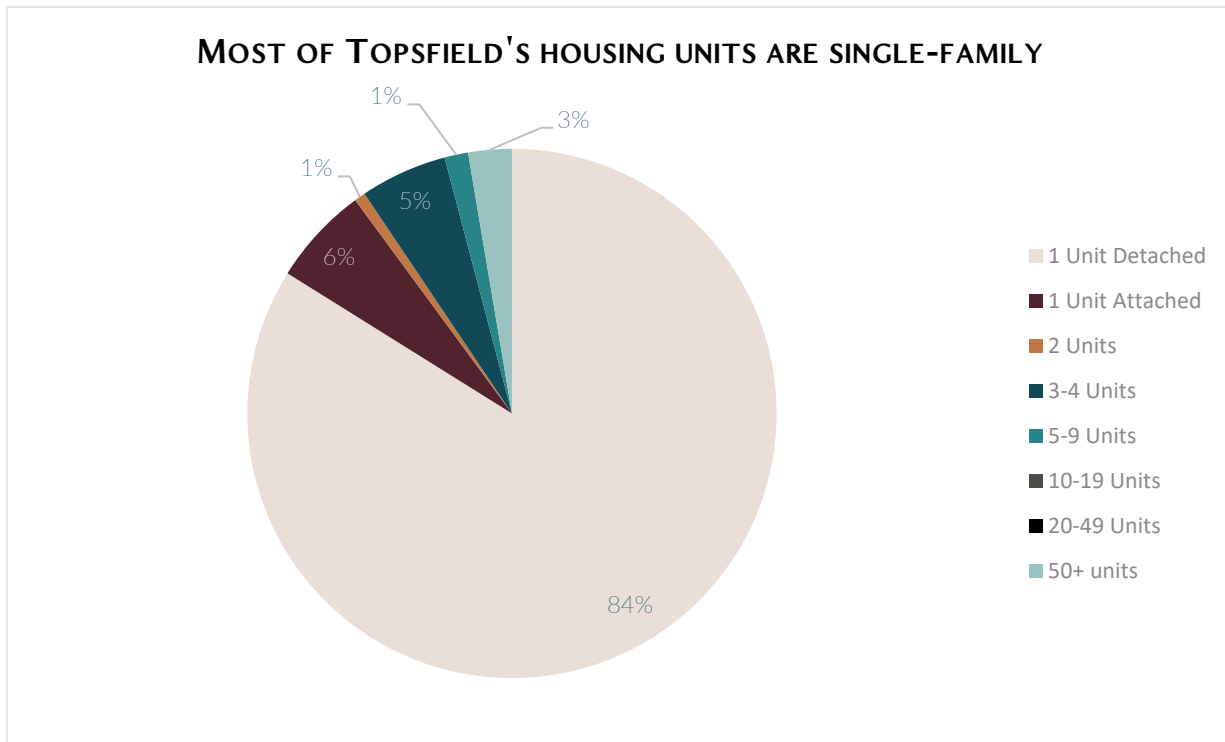
WHAT DOES TOPSFIELD'S HOUSING LOOK LIKE?

Most housing units (84 percent) are single-family homes (one-unit detached). The second highest group is one unit attached (six percent).

Eighty-nine percent of housing units in 2020 were owner-occupied, much higher than the 64 percent share in Essex County and 63 percent in the state.¹² In contrast to Essex County as a whole, Topsfield's share of renter-occupied units (11 percent) is on par with the neighboring communities.¹³ Boxford has the lowest percentage of renter-occupied housing units at three percent, while Danvers has the highest rate of renter-occupied households at 30 percent.

Topsfield has seen a 21 percent growth in renter-occupied units between 2010 and 2020. This is significantly higher than the County and state at four and three percent, respectively.¹⁴

The Harvard University Joint Center for Housing Studies "America's Rental Housing 2022" report develops the concept of a rental desert as one with 20 percent or less housing available for rent.¹⁵ Despite the recent increase in rental availability, the Harvard University Joint Center's threshold would consider Topsfield a "rental desert."



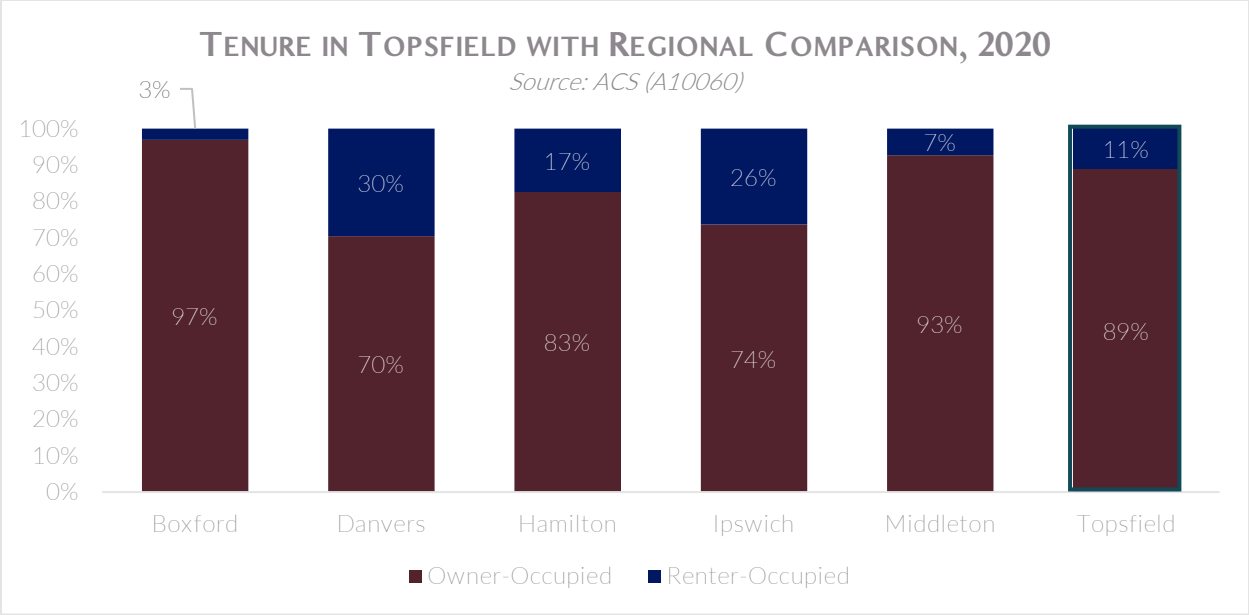
Topsfield Housing Units by Type, 2020 Source: ACS (B25024).

¹² US Census (T69) / ACS (A10060).

¹³ Neighboring communities used for this analysis include Boxford, Danvers, Hamilton, Ipswich, and Middleton.

¹⁴ US Census (T11) / ACS (B01001).

¹⁵ Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, America's Rental Housing, 2022.

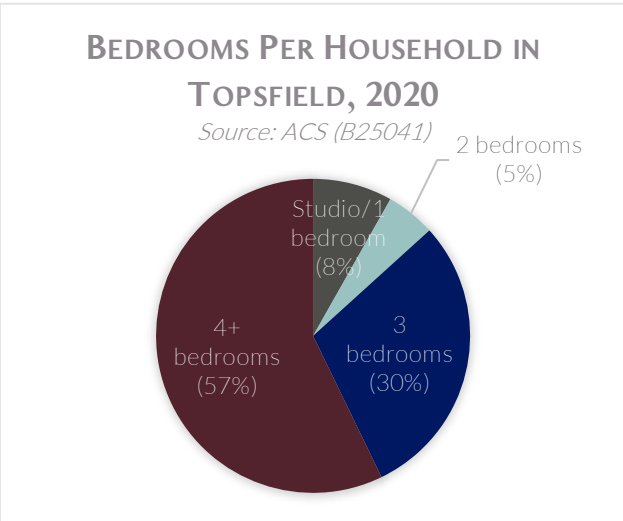
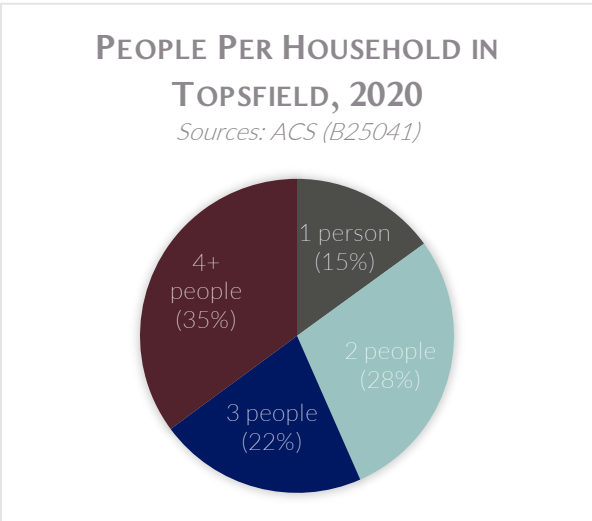


Tenure in Topsfield with Regional Comparison, 2020. Source: ACS (A10060).

Most Topsfield homes have four or more bedrooms.

Studio or one-bedroom units comprise only eight percent of Topsfield’s housing units. Two- and three-bedroom units make up 35 percent of the Town’s housing units, while 57 percent of housing units have four or more bedrooms. Fifteen percent of households are one-person households, 49 percent of households are two- to three people, and 35 percent are four or more people.

There is a mismatch between the number of people living in a housing unit and the number of bedrooms in that unit, suggesting a need for smaller housing options, especially one-bedroom and studio units.



Side-by-side comparison of People per Household in Topsfield 2020 and Bedrooms Per Household in Topsfield 2020. Source: ACS (B25041).

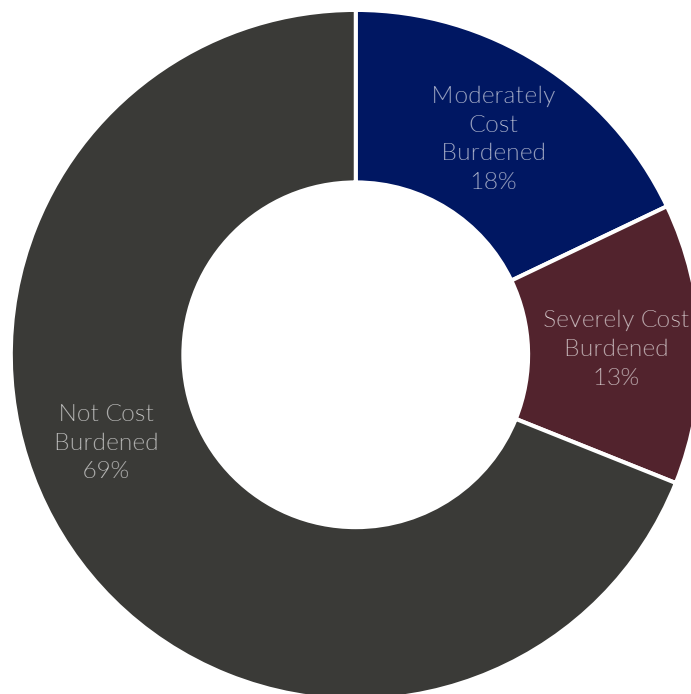
HOUSING COSTS

Incomes have not kept up with housing costs.

2020 ACS estimates list Topsfield's median household income at \$144,258, slightly higher than the 2020 HUD (Department of Housing and Urban Development) Area Mean Income of \$119,000, which covers Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA-NH (HUD Metro Fair Market Rent Area). Incomes have increased by 49.6 percent from 2010 to 2020.¹⁶ However, household income in 2010 (\$96,430) had the same buying power as \$147,370 in 2020 dollars, indicating that income buying power has not increased in ten years. Meanwhile, the Massachusetts Association of Realtors (MAR) reported that the Median Sales Price Year-to-Date in August 2022 was \$749,000; in August 2020, it was \$745,000 for single-family properties, an increase of 103.3 percent since 2010.¹⁷ Condominium property data varies dramatically from month to month with minimal sales. Median gross monthly rents have increased from \$380 in 2011 to \$1,109 in 2020 (+192 percent).¹⁸

Housing Cost Burden

One measure of housing affordability in a community is cost burden. A cost burden occurs when a household pays more than 30 percent of its gross monthly income on housing expenses. In Topsfield, 69 percent of households do not experience a cost burden, while 31 percent of households do experience it. For those that are cost-burdened, 18 percent of households are moderately cost-burdened, while 13 percent are severely cost-burdened (spending more than 50 percent of their gross monthly income on housing expenses). The chart on the next page shows that most moderately cost-burdened households in Topsfield earn 80 percent or more of the Area's Median Income. Meanwhile, the most severely cost-burdened households are extremely low-income, earning 30 percent or less of the Area Median Income.



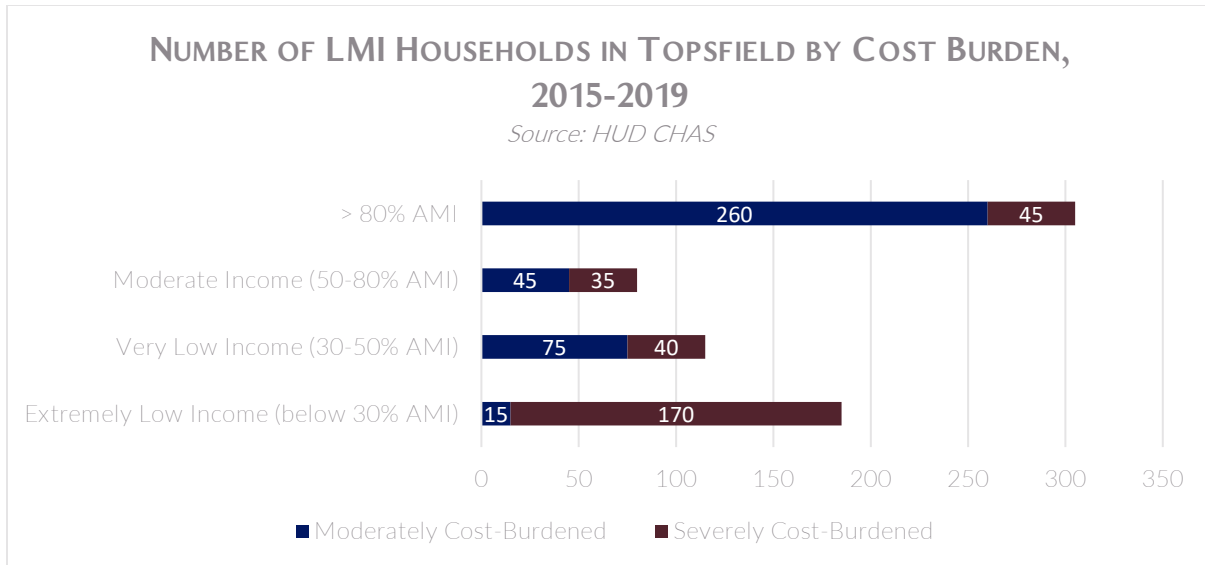
Almost one-third of Topsfield households are housing cost-burdened.

Topsfield Cost Burden Overview, 2015-2019 Source: HUD CHAS.

¹⁶ ACS (A14015).

¹⁷ Massachusetts Association of Realtors, Market Data.

¹⁸ ACS (A18009).



Number of LMI Households in Topsfield by Cost Burden, 2015-2019. Source: HUD CHAS.

Topsfield is close to meeting the state’s ten percent subsidized housing goal.

According to the latest DHCD Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) from December 2020, Topsfield has 187 qualifying units, making up 8.7 percent of its 2,157 occupied housing units counted on the 2010 Census.¹⁹ Topsfield needs an additional 29 SHI units to meet the state’s ten percent subsidized housing goal according to the 2010 Census numbers. Topsfield has at least 380 cost-burdened residents earning less than 80 percent area median income indicating that more affordable housing will be necessary to meet the projected needs of the community.

The [Topsfield Housing Authority](#) is an elected board that administers a housing complex for the elderly and people with physical handicaps.

WHAT THE COMMUNITY SAID

While engagement surrounding housing was limited, Topsfield residents identified a need for more housing options in Town. The *Topsfield Downtown Revitalization Plan* included adding housing to the Business Village District to increase the customer base as a strategy. Similarly, one community member called for more mixed-use and multi-family properties in Town, suggesting the Fairgrounds and overflow lots, the police building, and the Downtown area as potential locations for housing development – through recognized septic/water capacity would be challenging. Anecdotally, a few participants at the Community Forum agreed with the increase in housing costs over the past decade.

¹⁹ The U.S. Census Bureau is slated to release the full 2020 Census data in May 2023 at which point DHCD will update their SHI requirements for each municipality. Until DHCD announces this update, municipalities are only responsible for reaching ten percent of their 2010 year-round housing units. Early 2020 Census data suggests Topsfield had 2,358 housing units. Assuming all currently listed SHI units remain affordable and the 44 units at 10 High Street are accepted on the SHI, estimates suggest Topsfield’s SHI will total 9.7 percent. The Town will need to add an additional five units to the SHI to reach the state’s ten percent goal.

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U.S. Census Bureau, 2020, 2010, and 2000 Census of Population and Housing, updated every 10 ten years. Decennial Census by Decades.

U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), ACS (A14015), Median Household Income 2010-2020.

U.S. Census Bureau, Manufacturing and Construction Division, Residential Construction Branch, for Topsfield 2010 to 2020 <http://www.census.gov/construction/bps/>.



Looking north on Main Street, Topsfield, MA, Source: Kindra Clineff, via Topsfield Community Partnership <https://www.topsfieldcommunitypartnership.org/about-us>.

WORK: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic Development supports overall town improvement and increased quality of life for residents. Businesses and organizations consider many factors when choosing where to locate — including local amenities, access to a talented workforce, tax rates, and the quality and capacity of existing and planned infrastructure. Massachusetts municipal governments, especially smaller communities like Topsfield, depend heavily on property taxes for their operating revenue and thus consider the structure of their tax bases critical to long-term financial sustainability. This influences which land uses the Town emphasizes and in which areas development is encouraged. A balance of commercial, industrial, and residential land uses in a Town is critical to determining the functionality of the built environment and provision of other needed or desired services.

Topsfield residents are eager to see the Town grow and expand its business base, especially in its downtown area. This chapter provides a detailed inventory of existing conditions for those living and working in Topsfield, offering empirical evidence of the socioeconomic makeup of the Town’s citizens and trends in the labor force. This analysis also covers businesses operating in the Town, providing an overview of tax levies, industry patterns, and existing employers, as well as commuting patterns and Town zoning ordinances.

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES MAP

This map summarizes opportunities for Economic Development identified in previous planning efforts.

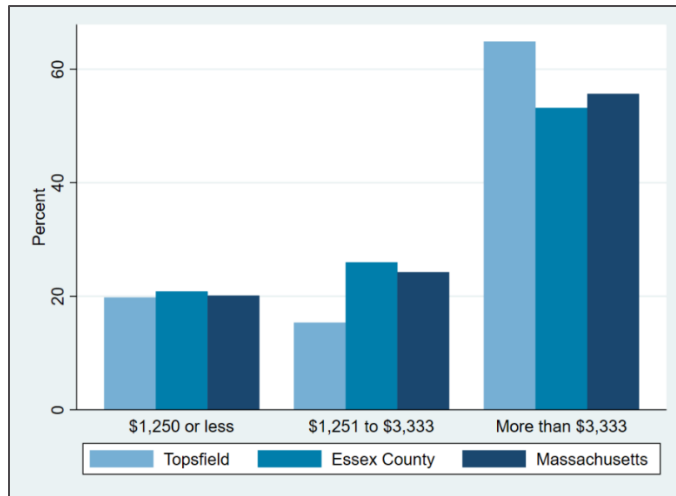


*Development area on the southern portion of Route 1 is limited due to wetlands and protected open space.

SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS AND LABOR FORCE

Please see the Appendix for more socioeconomic and labor force information.

TOPSFIELD RESIDENTS TEND TO HAVE HIGH MONTHLY EARNINGS



Source: *Monthly Earning Comparison between Topsfield, Massachusetts; Essex County, Massachusetts; and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts*. Source: U.S. Census Bureau Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, *On the Map Area Profiled, 2019*.



Topsfield has a highly educated population.

Nearly 100 percent of Topsfield's population over 25 has earned a high school degree or higher. Sixty-six percent have earned a bachelor's degree or higher.¹



Topsfield has a relatively small share of younger adult residents.

The median age in Topsfield is 44, compared to under 40 in Massachusetts. Additionally, only nine percent of Topsfield residents are aged 20-34, compared to 22 percent statewide.²



Topsfield residents have a low rate of unemployment.

Topsfield's 2021 labor force totaled 3,581, with four percent unemployment. Essex County and Massachusetts' unemployment rates were 6.4 percent and 5.7 percent, respectively.³



The "health care and social assistance" sector employs the most Topsfield residents.

In 2019, Topsfield residents were most likely to work in *Health Care and Social Assistance* (14 percent), *Educational Services* (11 percent), and *Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services* (ten percent).

¹ Data for the Town of Topsfield are based on the ZCTA 01983, which closely resembles the Town borders. The sample population includes residents 25 years of age and older. Source: US Census Bureau, 2020 5-year ACS. Accessed through Manson, Steven et al.

² US Census Bureau, 2020 5-year ACS.

³ Commonwealth of Massachusetts, ELOWD, Labor Market Information (LMI).

BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITY⁴

Please see the Appendix for more business and economic development information.



Topsfield is, first and foremost, a residential town.

Roughly 1,800 people worked in Topsfield in 2020, yielding a job-to-population ratio of 0.27. This is like surrounding towns but much lower than the County and state.



Topsfield properties' assessed values took longer to recover from the Great Recession.

Like most communities, the total value of properties declined during the Great Recession. Topsfield's total value of properties did not exceed its 2008 value until 2017.



Topsfield's commercial and industrial tax is in line with other towns in the area.

Topsfield charges a single tax rate for residential and commercial entities at \$16.65 per \$1,000 in assessed value, accounting for six percent of Topsfield's annual revenue.



Most of Topsfield's new growth development comes from residential and personal property.

There is relatively little investment in commercial and industrial properties in Topsfield. Growth in residential property development varies substantially from year to year.



Workers in Topsfield earn relatively high wages.

Employers in Topsfield pay their employees higher weekly wages than surrounding towns, wherein wages in surrounding towns range between \$800 and \$1,200 per week; Topsfield employers average \$1,300 per week. These higher earners reflect the professional and high-skilled jobs available in Town.



The "health care and social assistance" sector has high employment but relatively low wages.

While the "health care and social assistance" sector accounted for a large portion of employment in Topsfield in 2021, it made up a smaller portion of establishments and wages, suggesting the sector has a higher number of employees at each establishment, but the workers are paid relatively lower wages.



Topsfield has a relatively high share of employment in the "professional, scientific, and technical services," "construction," and "wholesale trade" sectors.

The "construction," "wholesale trade," "arts, entertainment, and recreation," and "professional, scientific, and technical services" sectors yield location quotients of over 1.5, indicating high local employment in the industry.



The industry mix in Topsfield has evolved over time.

The "health care and social assistance" sector had a spike in employment in 2015 but dropped in 2019. Alternatively, the "professional, scientific, and technical services" and "construction" sectors saw steady growth during that period.



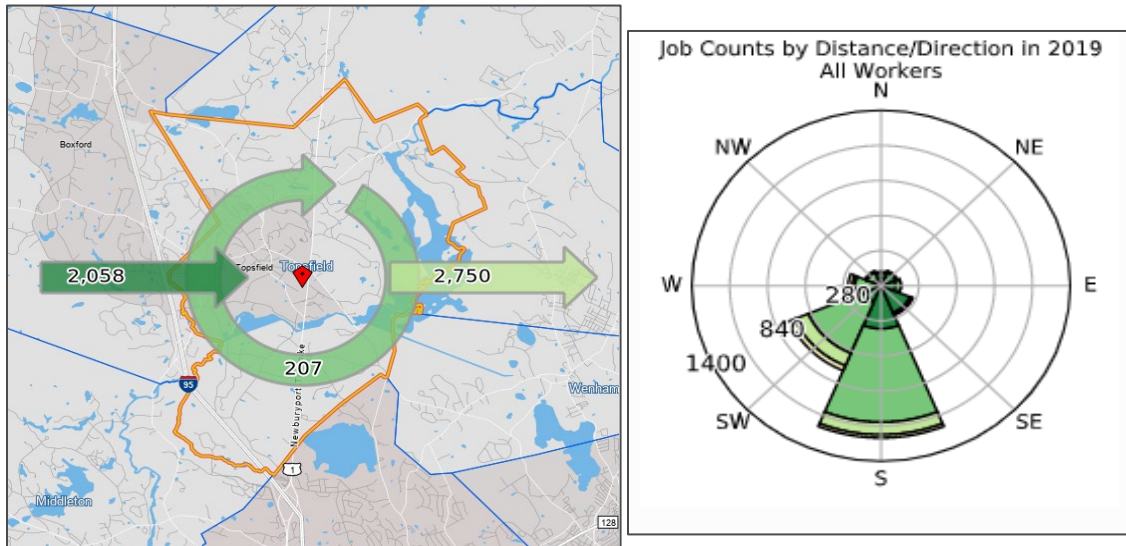
The largest employer in Topsfield is Weddings at the Topsfield Fair.

The largest employer in the Town is Weddings at the Topsfield Fair, an event venue on the Topsfield Fairgrounds that employs between 250 and 499 workers. Many of these employees are likely to be seasonal and part-time. (www.topsfieldfairweddings.com)

⁴ All data in the section is derived from Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Labor Market Information and Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services unless otherwise stated.

COMMUTING PATTERNS

TOPSFIELD HAS A NET OUTFLOW OF WORKERS EACH DAY



Source: US Census Bureau Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, *On the Map Inflow/Outflow Analysis*, 2019.

Each day, the Town of Topsfield sees a net outflow of about 700 workers. About 2,750 residents commute outside of the Town for work, while about 2,050 people commute into Topsfield. Another 200 people live and work in the Town. Most of those traveling from Topsfield to other areas head south or southwest for their daily commutes. About 16 percent of these workers travel to the city of Boston, and another six and five percent travel to Beverly and Danvers, respectively. Those commuting into Topsfield for work come from a variety of nearby towns, none accounting for more than six percent of the employment concentration.

Remote work is increasing in Topsfield. A 2022 economic development community survey revealed that 41 percent of survey respondents expect to work more days from home than before the pandemic.⁵

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

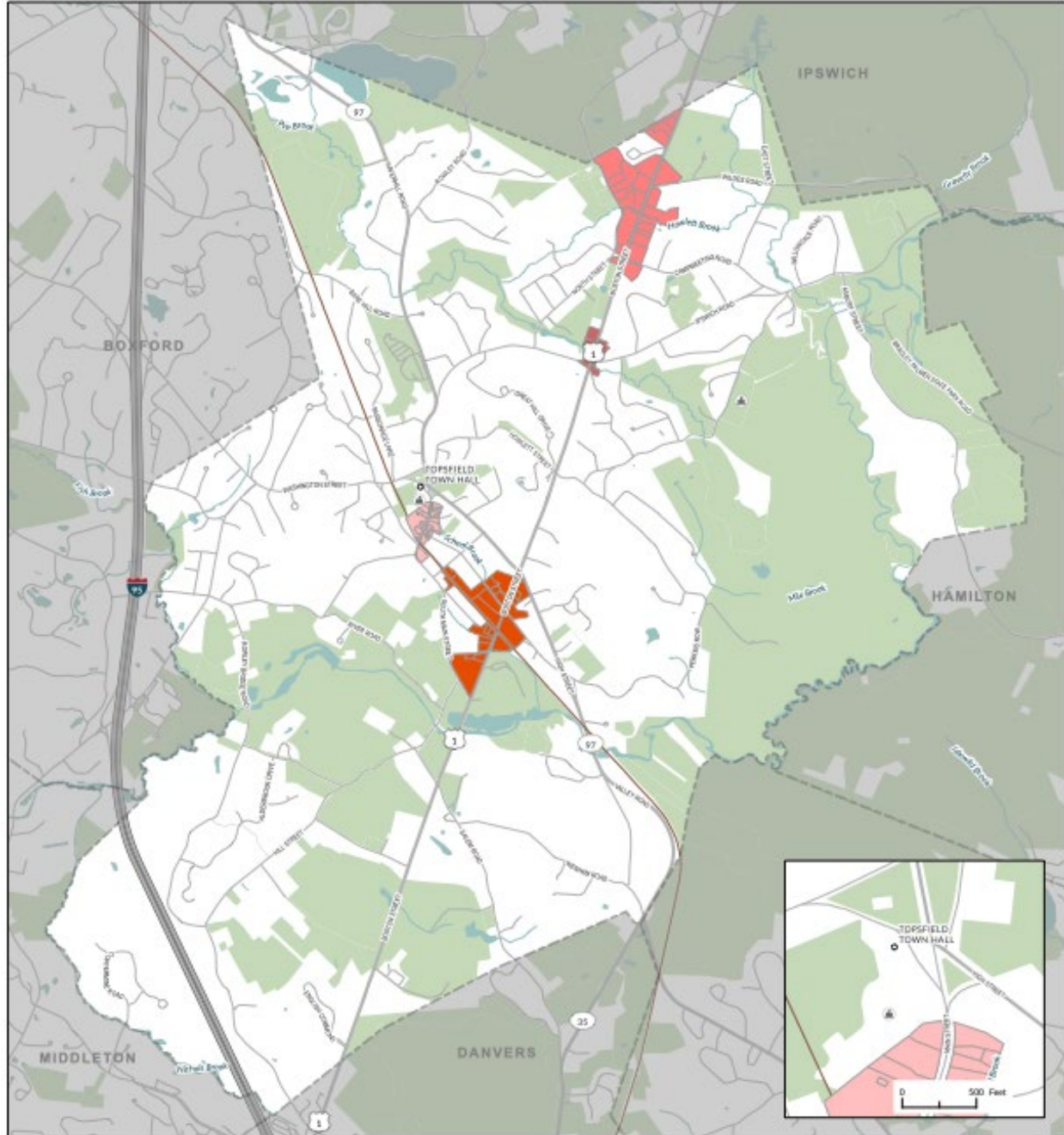
Commercially zoned areas in Topsfield include two highway business districts, one business park, and one village business district. Aside from the village business district, which constitutes the downtown, each area is situated along Route 1. These districts along the highway are home to Topsfield Business Park, New England Business Park, an office park, and other individual businesses. These areas host a variety of businesses, ranging from manufacturing and beauty services to technical support and medical research.

⁵ Town of Topsfield, 2022 Topsfield Community Survey for Business Showcase.

TOWN OF TOPSFIELD -COMMERCIALLY ZONED AREAS

Prepared by JM Goldson LLC

J M GOLDSON



- ▲ Schools
- Buildings
- Parcels
- ~ Trails
- Water bodies
- Open space

- Topsfield Zoning Districts**
- Business District-Highway
 - Business Highway District North
 - Business Park District
 - Business District-Village



Sources: MassGIS, MassDEP, MAPC Trailmap

The downtown village is located about one mile from Route 1. Patrons to the area can find public amenities, such as a Town hall, library, and post office. Several churches in the area host events, services, and functions. The downtown also provides access to the Topsfield Linear Common Rail Trail and a commuter bus stop located off Main Street.⁶ Visitors to the downtown area can also find several businesses, including eateries, beauty services, boutiques, banks, retail, and hardware stores. Some of these businesses are in the Town’s shopping center, which provides parking (and shopping) for the downtown.

Zoning bylaws were overhauled many years ago to allow for a wide variety of desired commercial uses, but there has been no corresponding redevelopment. Topsfield Zoning Bylaws are discussed in detail in the LAND chapter, and the Town does allow for multi-family and mixed-use in many business districts. Additionally, the Town once had a Community Development Coordinator who could meet with potential business owners and developers, but the position no longer exists. The Town website has a “How to Do Business in Topsfield” document.

WHAT THE COMMUNITY SAID

Interviewees

Cambridge Econometrics interviewed 11 stakeholders in Topsfield to understand local perspectives on economic development – what aspects of the economy are working well and where there is an opportunity for development. Interviewees included local officials, business owners, and other stakeholders (see table below). Interviewees were happy to share their perspectives and were passionate about the Town’s future.

Person(s)	Organization/Affiliations
Kevin Harutunian	Town Administrator
Josh Rownd	Planning Board
Marshall Hook	Select Board Chair
Rosalee DiScipio	Economic Development Committee
Zillie Bhujju	Economic Development Committee and local business owner
Tom Capano	Local business owner
Maureen Richard-Saltman	Local business owner
Joe Geller	Local business owner
Chris Bendreck	Local business owner
Alex Qirjazi	Local housing developer
Jim O'Brien	Topsfield Fair

Town Context

People who live and work in Topsfield are invested in the Town’s economic success and motivated to help the Town prosper. When we asked stakeholders what they love about Topsfield, the response almost always included the people. Interviewees cherish the tight-knit community and

⁶ Commuter bus service has been suspended at the time of this document.

feel supported by their neighbors. The Town hosts a series of community events each year, including parades, farmers' markets, and festivals. These events, which have expanded and been enhanced in recent years, are most held downtown, helping to activate that area of the Town. Beyond the people, the Town's other assets include rich history and abundant recreational opportunities both in the Town's plentiful green space, the Ipswich River, and the rail trail that cuts through Topsfield. Residents of the Town are also environmentally conscious and enthusiastically promote sustainable initiatives.

Economic Development Momentum

Topsfield residents are eager to see economic development. In 2022, Topsfield conducted an Economic Development Community Survey with 264 responses from a good cross-section of residents by household size and age. This survey revealed that about 86 percent of respondents support increased business activity, and another 13 percent responded "maybe." Topsfield recently hosted a business development showcase to demonstrate progress, illustrate the Town's vision, and engage developers and stakeholders in investment opportunities. Highlighted in this presentation was a Town-owned highway garage near downtown that Topsfield has rezoned and positioned as a potential restaurant location. The Town put an RFP out for the redevelopment of this property but received no responses.

Topsfield has capitalized on this momentum to make measurable progress in recent years. Two new businesses, a gift shop, and a café have opened downtown. Placemaking and branding have been a focus for Topsfield as the Town grows. The Town also now hosts summer farmers/artisan markets and an ice rink on the common. Topsfield is also moving away from its perception as a "dry town," providing liquor licenses at local events. Interviewees also made note of the Town beautification efforts. For example, about two years ago, Topsfield installed solar-powered streetlights downtown with decorative flower baskets and improved wayfinding with new signage.

Opportunity Areas

Building on recent momentum, Topsfield can continue economic development. Interviewees expressed the desire to rehab, repurpose, and redevelop existing structures to better serve the Town. Besides the highway garage, other existing structures with redevelopment potential include the old Santander Bank building downtown, some vacant spaces in the business and office parks, and other vacant or abandoned buildings along Route 1. Many interviewees saw Route 1's lack of retail shops with frontage to the road as a missed opportunity to attract business from the thousands of drivers that pass through and help provide local retail options for residents (instead of leaving Town to shop). However, developable area on the southern portion of Route 1 is limited due to wetlands and protected open space.

The Town also attracts hundreds of thousands of people yearly for the famous Topsfield Fair. Without a hotel or restaurant in Topsfield, fairgoers lodge and dine in surrounding towns, and Topsfield misses out on their business.⁷ Although without data on how many visitors require overnight accommodation, the exact monetary loss is impossible to quantify. However, this is not

⁷ Topsfield Fair, Accommodations.

only a missed opportunity during the 11 days of the fair (which attracts about 400,000 visits) but also because the fairground hosts many other events throughout the year, including conferences, weddings,⁸ horse shows, and antique shows.⁹

Of course, residents of Topsfield do not just want a restaurant to serve visitors. Interviewees almost unanimously agreed that Topsfield would benefit from one or more sit-down restaurants to serve the local community. According to the 2022 community survey, 55 percent of residents travel more than 20 minutes to dine out, and more than 70 percent of respondents dine out four or more times each month. Other businesses with community support include retail, pharmacy, and grocery. In addition, some residents hope to see more spaces for community members to gather, such as a community center downtown.

Challenges to Development

Interviewees discussed some of the key challenges to development in Topsfield. One common complaint was the lack of effective communication between the Town and entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs interested in doing business in Topsfield struggled to determine where to start. Interviewees stated that unless you already live or do business in the Town, it is not clear whom to speak with about development opportunities, as the Town does not have a Business Coordinator or Town Planner. In late 2019, Kevin Harutunian became the Town Administrator in Topsfield. With a background in real estate development, he has helped coordinate and advance economic development efforts. While Kevin's position has addressed some of these communication concerns, it takes time to overcome past perceptions, and his job inherently covers many areas, not just economic development.

For those who did get in touch with the right people, interviewees described miscommunication across local government offices that delayed progress. Some interviewees also felt that local government offices made processes easier for people or businesses they were familiar with and gave newcomers a harder time. Ultimately, multiple interviewees complained that issues with the local government slowed down progress and lost them and their businesses' money.

Infrastructure deficiencies and local land policies/regulations can also pose hurdles to local developers. Wetland setbacks and other topographical limitations restrict much of the Town's land from development. The downtown area lacks sewer infrastructure, deterring some businesses and limiting overall future growth in areas like downtown. Further, there is the perception that zoning laws are not conducive to multi-family residential development or supportive of business growth, particularly downtown. The zoning restrictions limit residential structures to single-family homes in most of the Town and restrict building density. A few interviewees feel that some local boards and committees related to zoning and development are resistant to change and do not reflect the sentiment of the citizenry.

⁸ Weddingwire, Topsfield Wedding Venues.

⁹ Topsfield Fair, Events.

Another key hindrance to development is local resistance to change. This resistance comes from both current landlords or building owners and Town residents. Interviewees explained that building owners downtown and on Route 1 are not incentivized to renovate or sell their properties, leaving residents frustrated with the outdated or dilapidated state of many structures. In some cases, the relationship between landowners and the Town has historically been strained, limiting the opportunity to find a collaborative resolution. Interviewees explained that Town residents also oppose development and change in some cases, citing concerns about losing the culture and small-town feel of the Town. While residents generally support business development, they often disagree about where it should take place and what type of development is best suited for the Town.

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Source: 2022 Topsfield Fair, Courtesy of topsfieldfair.com.

PLAY: RECREATION & CULTURAL RESOURCES

Topsfield has a variety of recreation areas, including parks, athletic fields, walking paths, and equestrian and nature trails. Several events and experiences also enrich Topsfield throughout the year, most notably the Topsfield Fair in October. The Town has access to water recreation at Hood Pond and the Ipswich River, such as boating, fishing, and swimming. Open space in Topsfield features a mix of private and public spaces, including spaces owned by the Massachusetts Audubon Society, Essex County Greenbelt, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, Nutter Farm LLC (former), and several individual private owners. The Town's major recreation and open space facilities include Pye Brook Park, Klock Park, the Essex County Fairgrounds, Bradley Palmer State Park, Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary, Willowdale State Forest, local schools, Topsfield Commons, and the Topsfield Linear Common Rail Trail. These resources play an important role in contributing to the quality of life of Topsfield residents. Other aspects of open space related to natural resources, climate change resiliency, and land use are discussed in the subsequent chapters PROTECT, ADAPT, and LAND.



Source: Topsfield Linear Common/Rail Trail, Courtesy of Essex County Trail Association.

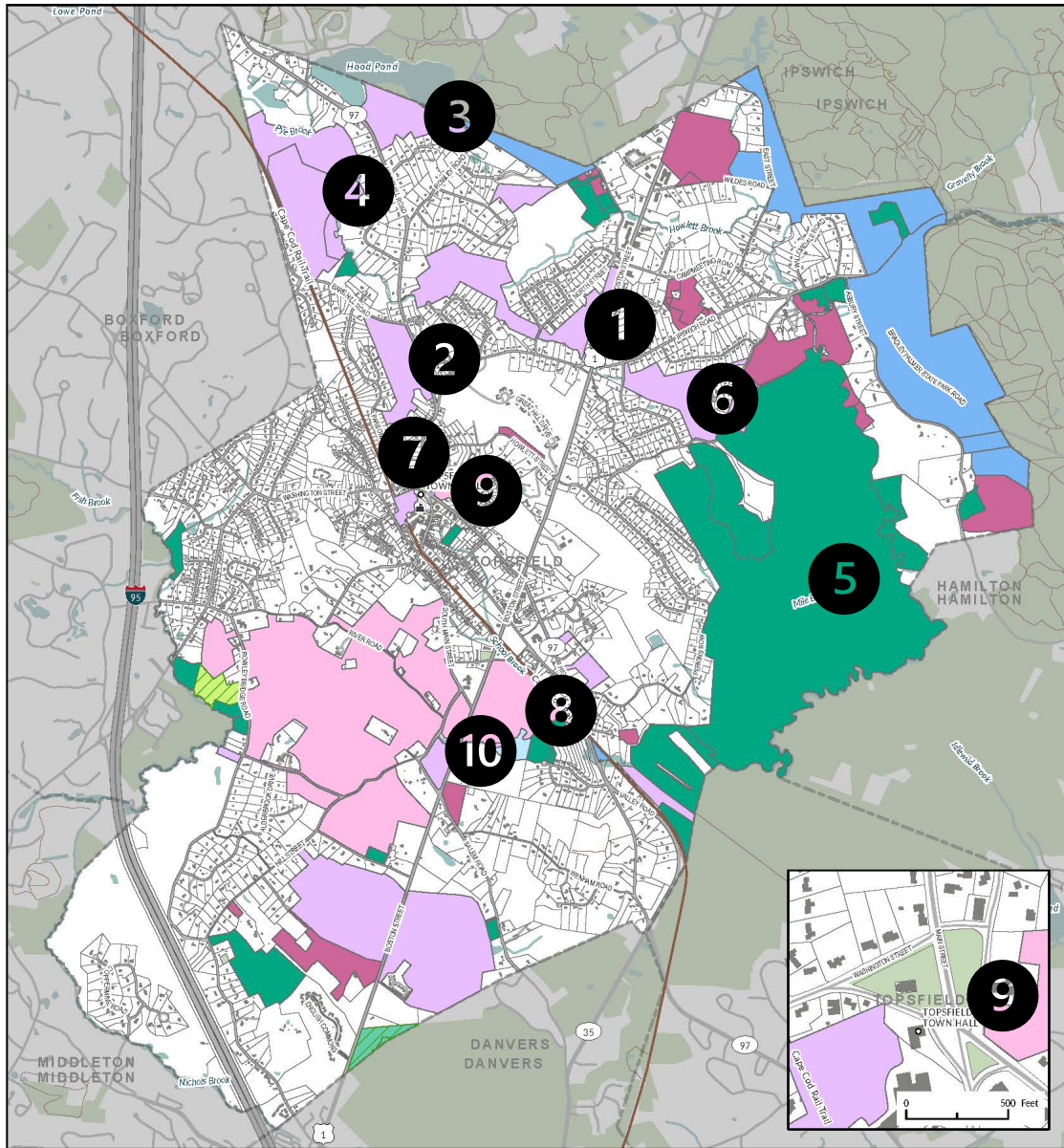
OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION AREAS

Topsfield's open space and recreation opportunities are varied and extensive, with over a third of land (36.7 percent) dedicated to that purpose. The most recent *Open Space and Recreation Plan* (approved in 2019) includes goals and objectives and a seven-year action plan for achieving them. Much of this chapter is adapted and excerpted from the findings of the plan and outlines several of its goals, including:

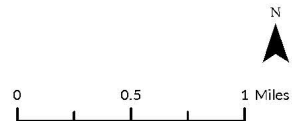
- Connecting, enhancing, and expanding trails (especially the regional network)
- Enhancing ADA accessibility for Topsfield open space and recreational facilities
- Public outreach and education



TOPSFIELD OPEN SPACE BY OWNERSHIP



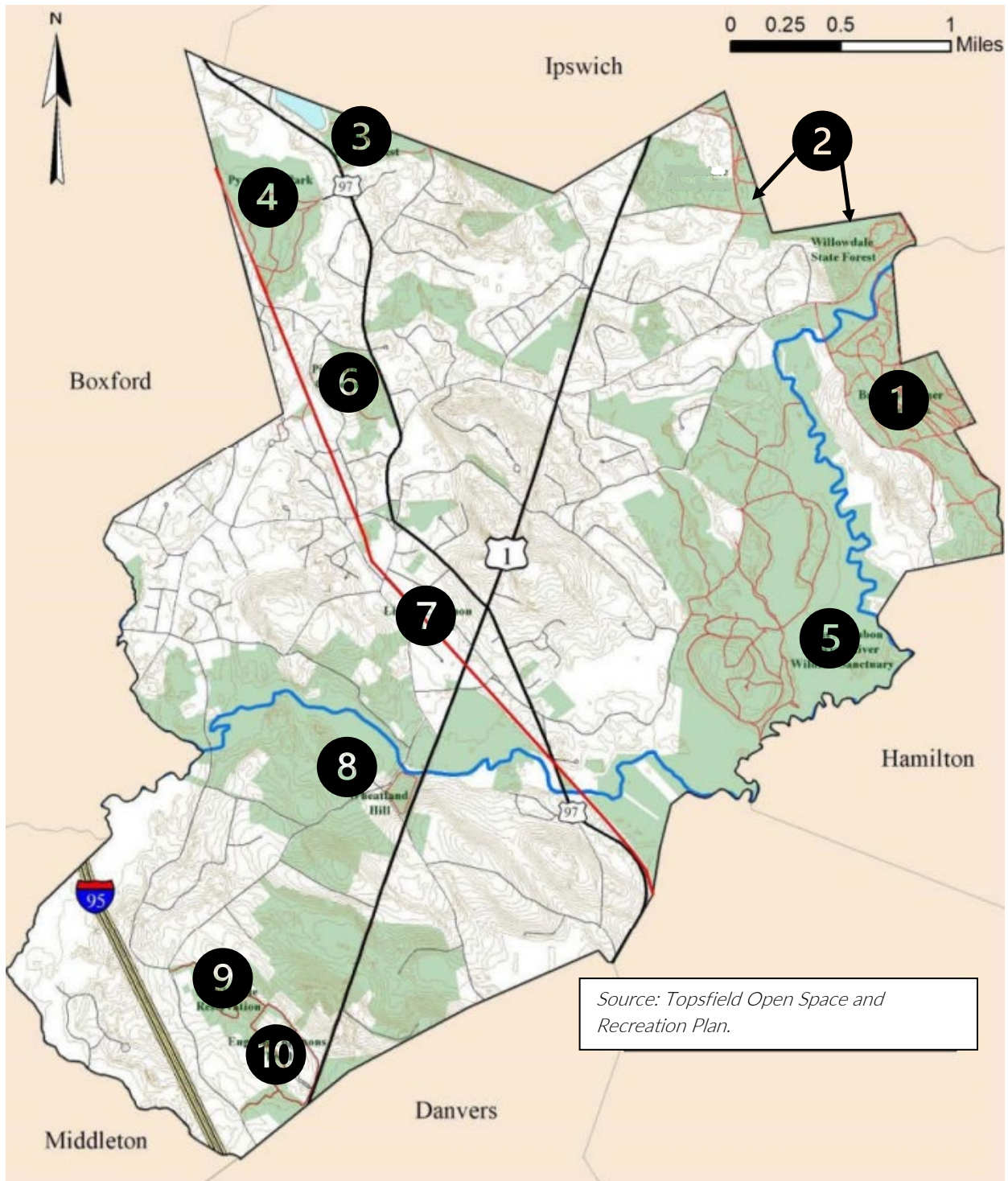
- | | | |
|--------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Schools | Owner Type | Private Nonprofit |
| Buildings | County | Land Trust |
| Parcels | Land Trust | Private for Profit |
| Trails | Municipal | State |
| Water bodies | | Other |
| Open space | | |



Sources: MassGIS, MassDEP, MAPC Trailmap

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Klock Park (soccer, lacrosse, football) | 6. Steward School (baseball, tennis, playground) |
| 2. Pine Grove Cemetery (nature trail) | 7. Topsfield Common Rail Trail |
| 3. Hood’s Pond (swimming boating, fishing) | 8. Essex County Fairgrounds |
| 4. Pye Brook Park (baseball, soccer, disc golf, horse riding, nature trail) | 9. Proctor School and Commons (baseball, soccer, football, playground, tennis, ice skating) |
| 5. Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary (canoeing, fishing) | 10. Wheatland Sledding Hill (sledding) |

TOPSFIELD TRAIL MAP



- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Bradley Palmer State Park | 6. Pine Grove Cemetery |
| 2. Willowdale State Forest | 7. Topsfield Linear Common Rail Trail |
| 3. Hood's Pond | 8. Coolidge Estate Conservation Land |
| 4. Pye Brook Park | 9. Donibristle Reservation |
| 5. Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary | 10. English Commons Trail/ Putnamville Reservoir |

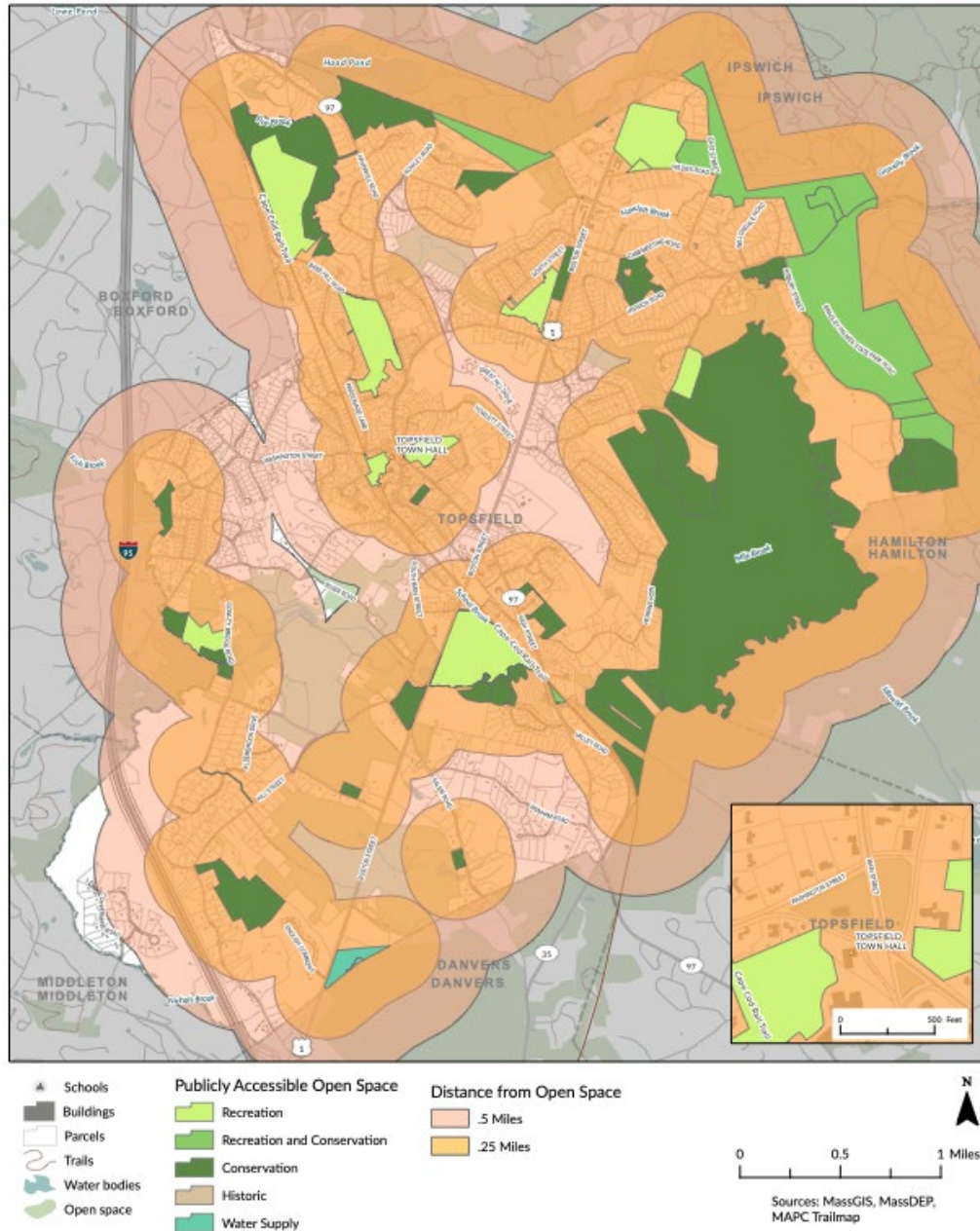
PARK ACCESSIBILITY

Most of Topsfield's residential areas (81 percent) are within a quarter mile of publicly accessible open space, and many are accessible to people with disabilities. Pye Brook Park and the Topsfield Linear Common (Rail Trail) were created with people with disabilities in mind. Klock Park, Proctor School, and Steward School playgrounds are all accessible. Areas with limited to no accessible access include the Pye Brook Park disc golf course and walking trail, Hood Pond, Bare Hill Trail, and Sledding Hill. Topsfield hopes to expand the accessibility of its recreational areas to more areas.

TOWN OF TOPSFIELD - DISTANCE TO OPEN SPACE

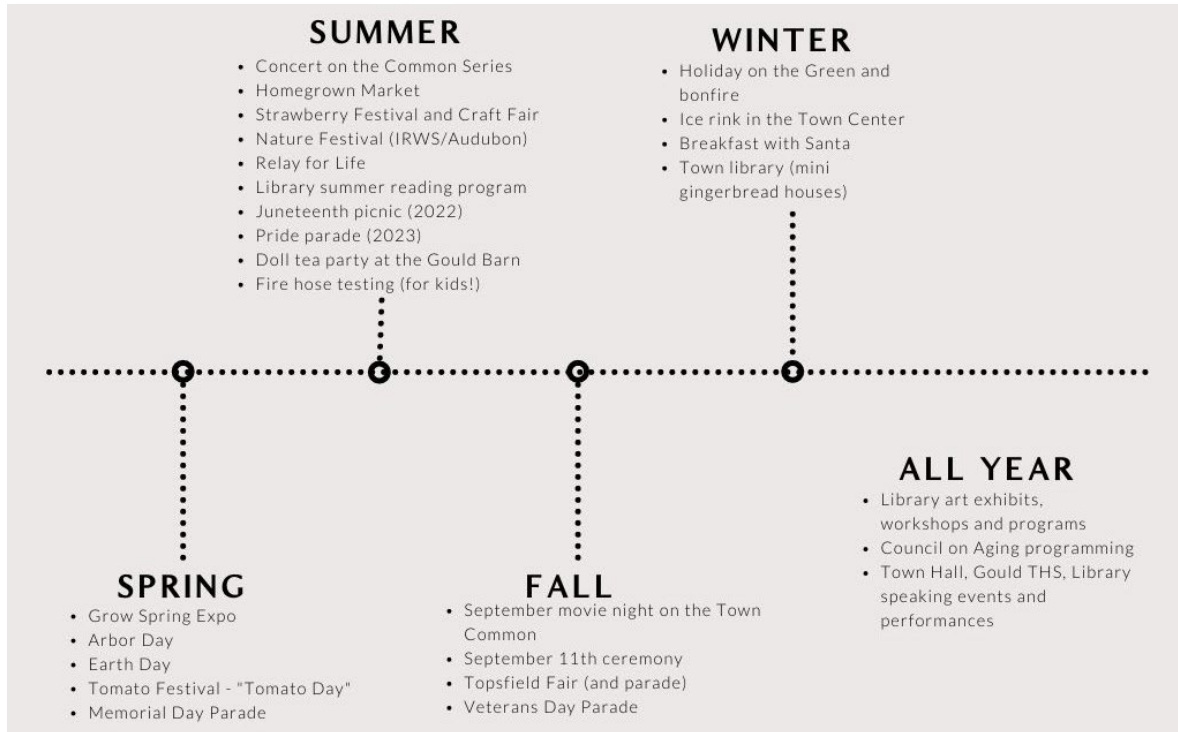
Prepared by JM Goldson LLC

J M GOLDSON



Source: Map of Distance to Open Space Source: MassGIS, MassDEP, MAPC Trailmap

SAMPLE ANNUAL TOPSFIELD EVENTS



Topsfield Fair

Perhaps the most famous Topsfield event is the Topsfield Fair – the Country's oldest county fair. The Topsfield Fair began as a one-day cattle show in 1820 and has since expanded. In the 204 years since its inception, the Essex Agricultural Society has only canceled three times during the Spanish Flu Pandemic, World War II, and most recently during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The fair runs for 11 days, ending on the second Monday in October. Between 450,000 and 500,000 visitors attend the fair each year. Four parades occur during the fair and welcome various celebrities, local youth groups, and political candidates. The grandstand and picnic area stage host musical performances each evening, ranging from local music groups to celebrity musicians.

Several barns and exhibition halls display local animals, produce, art, and inventions on the grounds. Exhibitions include the Essex County Beekeepers Association Beekeeping and Honey Hall, the Cattle Barn, the Goat and Sheep Barn, the Flower Barn, the Fruit Barn, the Rabbits and Cavies Barn, Coolidge Hall (the arts and crafts exhibition hall), and the Poultry barn. The fair is complete with rides, carnival games, and plenty of options for fair food, with attractions and vendors who largely return to the same location each year. Weddings at the Topsfield Fair is the largest employer in Topsfield (see WORK chapter).



Topsfield Fair Sign (2022).

Strawberry Festival

Each year, the Topsfield Historical Society hosts the Topsfield Strawberry Festival. This 53-year-long festival takes place on the second Saturday in June at the Topsfield Town Common.¹ The event includes tours of the Capen House, live music, local artisans, family-friendly activities, local food vendors, and Strawberry Shortcakes in the Emerson Center of the Congregational Church. Both admission and parking for the event are free.

Tomato Festival

The most recent festival held in Topsfield is their Tomato Festival. With its inaugural appearance in 2021, the Tomato Festival celebrates the Town's agricultural heritage. This community event, hosted on the Proctor School grounds, includes music, games, educational exhibits and demonstrations, tomato art, a homegrown tomato contest, and a tomato-tasting contest. The event follows the Proctor School's "Big Tomato Day," during which the Topsfield Garden Club educates the fifth-grade classes about the history of tomatoes.² Students are gifted tomato plants and seeds as well as planting instructions.



Source: *Topsfield Tomato Festival Advertisement, Topsfield Community Partnership Website.*

Concert on the Common Series

Throughout the summer, the Topsfield Town Library hosts a summer concert series on the Common. These events are funded by the Gould Trust and sponsored by the Topsfield Library Music Committee for the community to enjoy performances from local musicians.³ In 2022, the series included a Beatles tribute band and two Masconomet Regional High School alumni: one contestant was featured on 'The Voice,' and the other was featured on 'American Idol.'⁴

HomeGrown Market

Between June and September, Topsfield Recreation and the Topsfield Council on Aging host the HomeGrown Market on the third Thursday of every month. The HomeGrown Market, Topsfield's Farmer's Market, is held on the Town Common and features live music, local vendors, food trucks, and lawn games.⁵



Source: *HomeGrown Market Advertisement, Topsfield Facebook Page.*

¹ Topsfield Garden Club, Strawberry Festival.

² Martha Morrison, Fun facts to get you ready for the Topsfield Tomato Festival.

³ Topsfield Town Library, Scenes from the July 30th Concert on the Common: 4EverFab.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Town of Topsfield, HomeGrown Market.

Holiday on the Green

Holiday on the Green is a community-sponsored holiday celebration held annually in December. This volunteer-driven event is supported by the Town Hall, the Department of Public Safety, and the Cultural Council.⁶ This full-day event includes musical performances, a tree-lighting ceremony, and a bonfire. The event also hosts the annual presentation of the Maryellen McGee "Pillar of the Community" Award, which is given to a Topsfield resident who has made significant contributions of time and service to the community.⁷

RECREATIONAL CAPACITY AND RESOURCES

- The **Topsfield Athletic Association (TAA)** runs team-oriented community athletic programs for children through sixteen, including Topsfield Youth Soccer, Topsfield Little League, and Women's and Men's Softball.
- The **Town Park and Cemetery Commission**⁸ maintains the facilities the teams use.
- **Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and 4-H clubs** are active, youth-oriented organizations in Topsfield.
- The **Topsfield Fair** provides an arena in the winter, rented to outside club sports.
- The **Topsfield Beach Association** manages the swimming beach at Hoods Pond with lifeguards, a sand beach, docks, a swimming raft, bathroom facilities, pedal boats, boat racks, picnic tables, ice cream, parking, nature trails, a boat launch, and Wi-Fi.
- The **Rail Trail Committee** works to build and maintain the Topsfield Linear Common (TLC).
- The **Topsfield Playground Committee** is a nonprofit organization that raises funds to improve Topsfield's playgrounds and recreational areas. They are raising funds to create a Pump Track at Bare Hill Park.
- The **Open Space and Recreation Committee** is responsible for writing, maintaining, and implementing the Open Space Plan.
- The volunteer-led **Holiday on the Green Committee** plans the Town's annual winter holiday celebration.
- The **Topsfield Community Partnership** funds a group of volunteers who provide programs, including the Holiday on the Green, the Memory Tree, and the Mary Ellen McGee Pillar of the Community award ceremony.
- The **Topsfield Cultural Council** provides small grants to local arts and culture initiatives, such as the summer concert series.
- **Topsfield Garden Club** throws an annual EXPO in March,⁹ stewards local gardens, provides floral arrangements for the Council on Aging Meals-on-Wheels program, organizes the Arbor Day Celebration and Agricultural Heritage program at the Proctor School, holds a plant sale at the Strawberry Festival, has a feature exhibit at the Topsfield Fair in the Flower Barn, and provides holiday decorations for the Town Hall, the gazebo on the Commons, and Holiday on the Green.

⁶ Topsfield Holiday on the Green, About.

⁷ Topsfield Holiday on the Green, The Maryellen McGee Award.

⁸ Now part of the Department of Public Works.

⁹ On hold due to COVID-19 Pandemic.

- The **Recreation Department** has one part-time staff member. Recent programs include a seasonal ice rink in the Town Center and a farmer's market throughout the summer.
- The **Police Department** hosts a September movie night, and events on the Town Common.
- The **Fire Department** does some hose-testing "sprinkler" fun on the Town Common in the summer for fun, educational programming, and fundraising.
- The **Health Department** collaborates on various community programs with other departments and organizations.
- The **Council on Aging**, located in the Town Hall, offers a variety of services and programming to residents. Weekly programs include art classes, exercise and movement classes, book groups, and other guided activities. The COA also hosts day trips around the North Shore and overnight trips with transportation included. The COA releases The Scoop every two months, their free newsletter sent to Topsfield residents aged 60 and older.
- **Topsfield Town Library** coordinates monthly programming for Topsfield residents of all ages. While special events vary monthly, the Town Library regularly hosts career fairs with MassHire, Mahjongg, and kids activities. The library also sponsors live music, storytime, and classes on topics ranging from estate planning to Impressionism every month.¹⁰ The library helps to run the summer concert series, sponsors art exhibits, provides a gathering place for teens, and much more. More on the Library's services can be seen in the SERVE chapter.
- The **Public Schools** will also host events periodically, particularly music, arts, and drama. Parent-student organizations (Masco Music Parents, TESPTO and TEF, MEF and PAC) are heavily involved in these events.

CULTURAL COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS AND BUSINESSES

- Topsfield Cultural Council (TCC)
- Essex County Beekeepers Association
- Topsfield/Boxford Community Club and Box Top Shop
- League of Women Voters
- Garden Clubs
- Tri-Town Council on Youth and Family Services
- Essex County Youth Foundation
- Essex County Co-Operative Society
- Essex Agricultural Society
- Topsfield Community Partnership
- Local Farms have apple picking, holiday trees, and more
- Creative Co-op
- The ArtRoom Studio

¹⁰ Topsfield Town Library, Calendar.

WHAT THE COMMUNITY SAID

Topsfield community members had differing opinions on the status of play opportunities in Town. On one hand, some residents felt there were ample activities and organizations for people to get involved in, including active play spaces (Disc Golf and recreational bicycling), church events, scouts, and youth sports and arts programs. Others felt there was potential for greater recreation programming, specifically asking for youth and young adult opportunities. There are limited options for the "Young Professionals" age range and single adults. Community members expressed interest in additional community events, sharing that the Town Commons is a great, central location for such events. Municipal-led recreation in Topsfield is limited, with a new part-time Recreation Director working only 19 hours per week on a small budget. That said, the Town is making a lot with a little. Most cultural events are hosted in collaboration with local organizations and depend on volunteers. The Recreation Department is looking toward the future and hoping to hire independent contractors to bring additional programming to Town.

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Source: Looking south on US Route 1, Topsfield, MA. John Phelan, CC BY 3.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons.

CONNECT: TRANSPORTATION

Transportation and land use are inextricably linked and directly impact each other. Topsfield was primarily an agrarian community and remained this way through the 18th century. In 1804, the Newburyport Turnpike began construction, running through the center of the Town. This roadway improved transportation in Topsfield, increasing connectivity to Boston and allowing farmers to expand the market to transport and sell their products.¹

The introduction of railroads again transformed transportation opportunities in Topsfield. In 1854, a railroad route running through Topsfield was opened to the public, servicing two lines — one from Boston to Newburyport and the other from Boston to Haverhill, with the lines splitting in Georgetown. The railroad was discontinued and now serves as the Topsfield Linear Common Rail Trail. While the railway and turnpike increased the mobility of Topsfield residents, the advent of the automobile and the creation of Route 128 had the greatest impact. Intersecting with the Turnpike, it became the most direct route from Topsfield towards Boston.²

¹ Gretchen G. Schuler and Anne M. Forbes, "The early history of Topsfield," National Register of Historic Places Documentation.

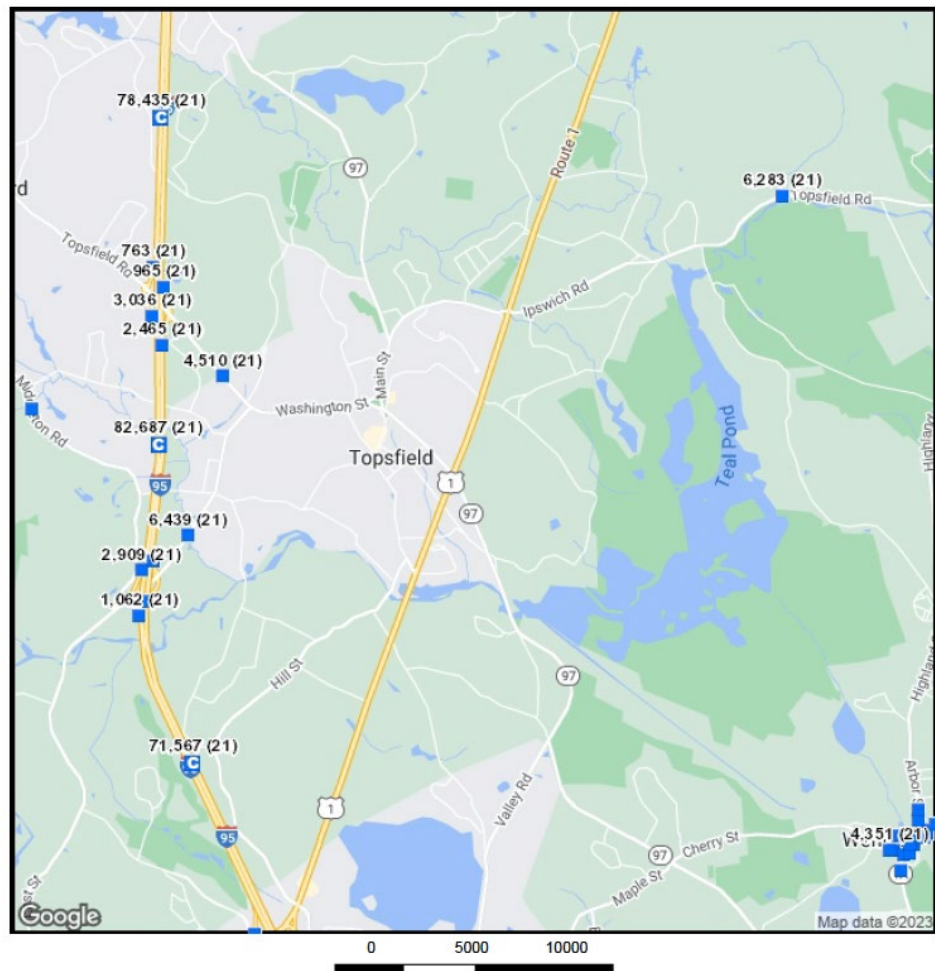
² "Topsfield, Massachusetts," accessed on November 18, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Topsfield,_Massachusetts.

VEHICULAR CIRCULATION AND SAFETY

Topsfield has a robust local transportation system with strong regional highway access and regional access to the Commuter Rail via the Hamilton/Wenham Commuter Rail station.

Most of Topsfield's 60 miles of roadways connect the downtown area and residential neighborhoods. Topsfield's roads include a large network of old County roads connecting to larger thoroughways like Route 97, Route 1, and Route I-95. These roads connect Topsfield to surrounding towns, the Boston Metropolitan Area, and the Route 128 corridor. Route I-95, Route 1, and Route 97 are the main north-south connectors in the Town. East-west connectors include Washington Street, High Street, and Ipswich Road Town roads. Topsfield also has established a scenic highway along Route 1 between Ipswich River and the Danvers border using a zoning by-law to create a Scenic Overlay Zone. Definitions of road types can be found in the Glossary.

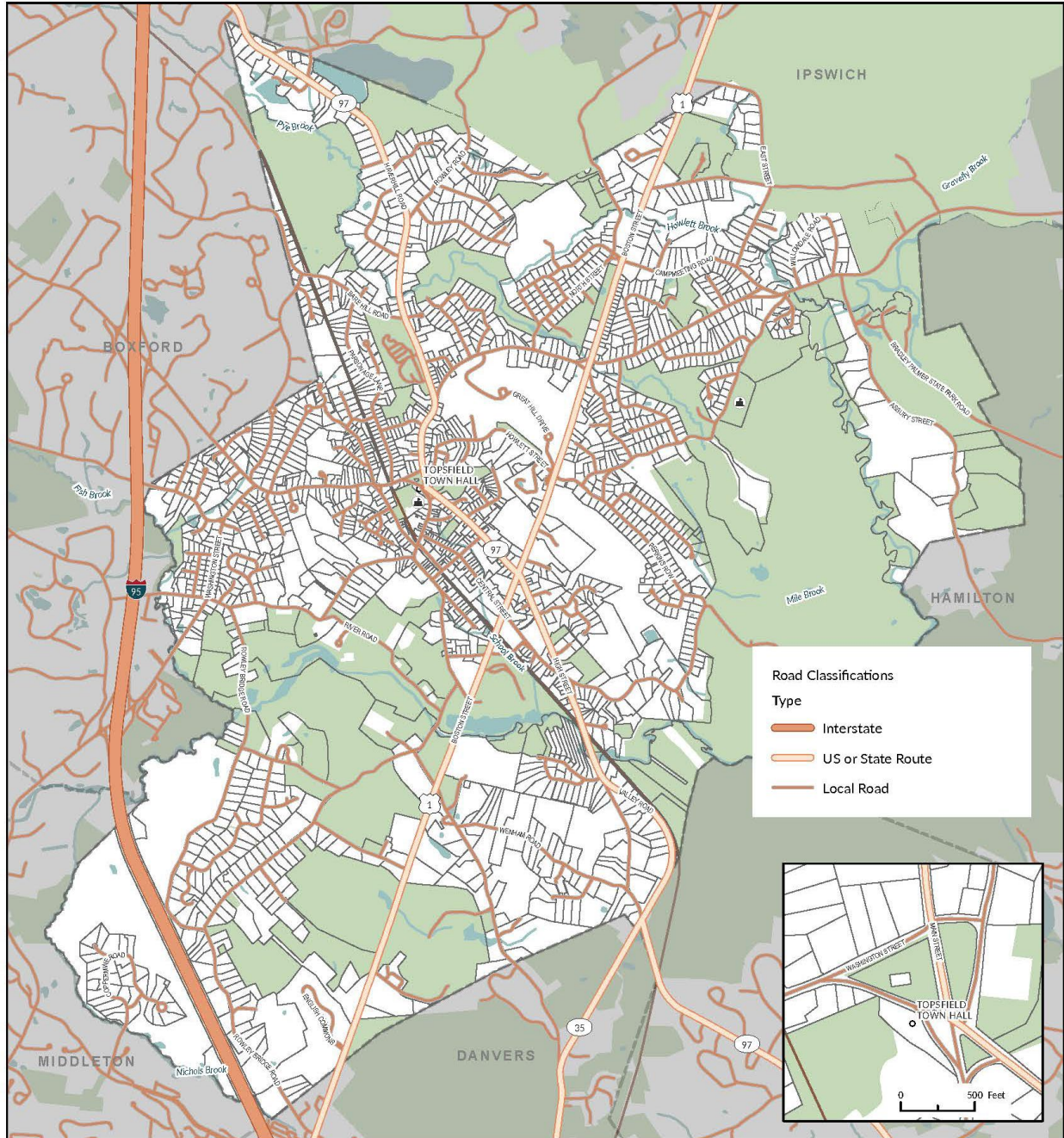
REGIONAL TRAFFIC VOLUMES 2021



Source: MassDOT Highway Division.

Route 1 serves as an important roadway in Topsfield as it is located one mile from Topsfield's downtown. The Town's Downtown Revitalization plan notes that most travel to and from downtown occurs via car.

TOPSFIELD ROADWAY CLASSIFICATION

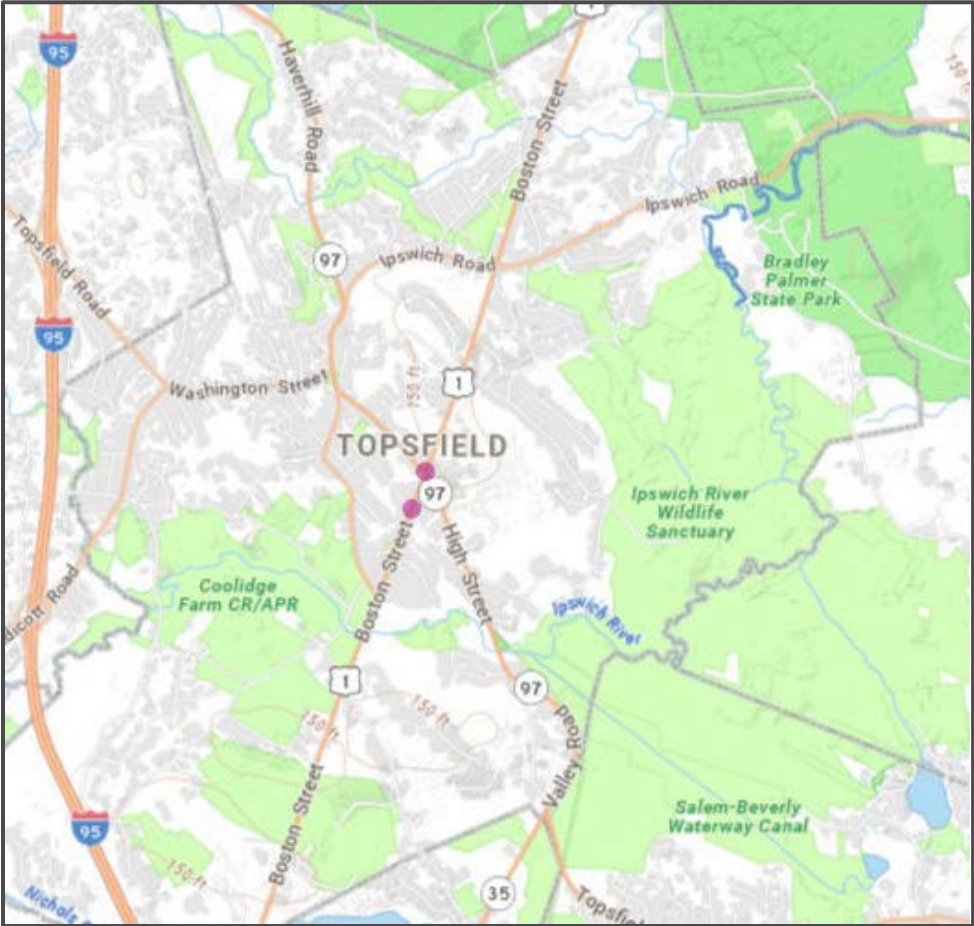


Source: MassGIS data, 2023.

Roads are fairly safe³

The MassDOT road safety data identified two Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) clusters in Topsfield (2017-2019), at the intersection of Route 1 and Route 97 (13 crashes) and the intersection of Central Street and Route 1 (eight crashes). An HSIP-eligible location is a crash cluster that ranks within the top five percent of each Regional Planning Agency. The MassDOT safety portal also concluded that 5:00 PM was the most common time for crashes, possibly from commuters driving home. Further, most reported crashes only involved motorists, with only one crash involving a pedestrian reported and no crashes that involved a cyclist. These reported crashes were mostly non-fatal or only resulted in property damage.

TOPSFIELD HIGHWAY SAFETY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (HSIP) CRASH CLUSTERS (2017-2019)



Source: MassDOT HSIP data.

Most Topsfield residents rely on cars⁴

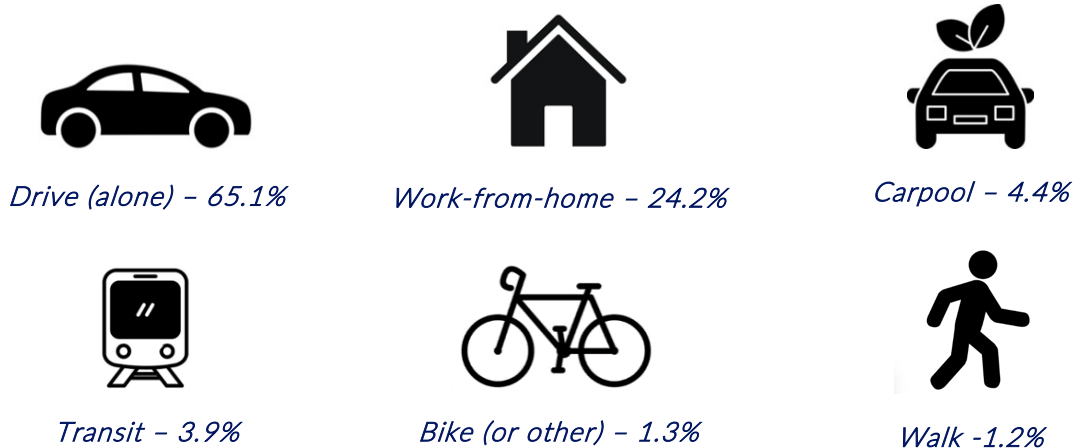
Due to the lack of other transportation options, a car is necessary for most daily activities in Topsfield. Almost all residents in Topsfield have at least one car (98.9 percent), and almost all

³ Massachusetts Department of Transportation, Traffic Safety Dashboard.

⁴ DataUSA, Topsfield: About.

households in Topsfield have two cars or more (93 percent), which is much higher than the national average of 40.5 percent of households having two cars. Further, the most popular mode of transportation for commuters is driving, and 65 percent of commuters drive alone⁵. The second most common way to get to work is not to commute but to work from home (24 percent).

HOW DID TOPSFIELD RESIDENTS GET TO WORK IN 2021?



Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates, Means of Transportation to Work, 2021.

MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION

Currently, there are few public transportation options in Topsfield.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the commuter bus service was suspended and has not yet resumed. This bus route connected Topsfield to Boston and was operated by the Coach Company. The bus traveled to the towns of Topsfield, Peabody, Georgetown, and Boxford. A Park and Ride lot is located adjacent to the commuter bus stop. The lot has a capacity for 60 cars, has 24/7 access, and is free. Residents can access the commuter rail regionally at the Hamilton/Wenham station.

Transportation for Elderly and Disabled Residents

The Topsfield Council on Aging provides a bus service by appointment for Topsfield seniors Monday-Friday. This service requires prior scheduling, up to a month in advance, and provides transportation to and from medical appointments. This service has a suggested donation fee of between two and four dollars.⁶



Source: Topsfield, MA Council on Aging website.

⁵ American Community Survey 5-year estimates, Means of Transportation to Work data, 2021.

⁶ Town of Topsfield, Council on Aging, Transportation.

The MBTA also provides paratransit that is available to eligible Topsfield residents. The RIDE provides door-to-door public transportation for those with a temporary or permanent disability, preventing them from using other public transit services. The MBTA also has a new RIDE Flex service, subsidizing on-demand transport through Uber and Lyft.⁷

Sidewalks, Bikeways, and Connectivity

The Public Works Department reports approximately twenty-five miles of local sidewalks. Aside from the multi-use Topsfield Linear Common Rail Trail (described in the Play chapter), there is little bike infrastructure. Further, MassDOT concludes that most roads in Topsfield are local roads, with only 1.43 miles of roads classified as interstate. Multi-modal transportation is a priority for Topsfield, as they joined the MAPC's North Shore Coalition, which in 2019 released a vision statement supporting diversifying transportation systems across the North Shore.⁸ A complete local dataset on all Topsfield pedestrian facilities, including subdivisions ones, is unavailable.

TOPSFIELD PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES



Source: ESRI, HERE, Garmin, SafeGraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc., METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USDA, 2020 data.

⁷ Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, The RIDE Flex.

⁸ Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Transportation Vision for the North Shore Coalition.

Topsfield adopted a Complete Streets policy in 2016,⁹ created a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan in 2017, and received a \$400,000 grant to fund the construction of replacement sidewalks along High Street to Main Street in 2020.¹⁰ These funds can help Topsfield create transportation improvements to better prioritize safe and accessible transportation for all travel modes and people.

TOPSFIELD’S TOP FIVE COMPLETE STREETS PRIORITIZATION PLAN PROJECTS

Rank	Project Name	Project Description	Project Limits
1	South Main Street / Main Street Pedestrian / Bicycle/ ADA Upgrades	Replacement of non-compliant cement concrete sidewalks, removal and resetting of granite curbing, Installation of ADA-compliant curb ramps, curb extensions, crosswalks, MUTCD-compliant signage, wayfinding signage, and sharrows for bicycle accommodation in the downtown area as part of roadway mill and overlay project.	South Main Street / Main Street from Prospect Street to South Common Street
2	Main Street Pedestrian / Bicycle/ ADA Upgrades	Install ADA-compliant curb ramps, crosswalks, MUTCD-compliant signage, wayfinding signage, and sharrows for bicycle accommodation in the downtown area as part of the roadway mill and overlay project.	Main Street from South Common Street to Washington Street
3	Rail Trail Advanced Warning Sign Upgrades	Installation of warning signage on Boston Street for Rail Trail Crossing.	Rail Trail Crossing @ Boston Street
4	Washington Street / Parsonage Lane Intersection Upgrades and Rail Trail Crossing Enhancements	Upgrade intersection with ADA-compliant curb ramps, crosswalks, sidewalks, wayfinding, and an RRFB for existing rail trail crossing.	Washington Street / Parsonage Lane Intersection
5	Main Street @ Grove Street Intersection, Trail Crossing, and Pedestrian Improvement Project	Realignment of rail trail approaches to Main Street, traffic calming including curb extensions and RRFB for trail crossing, ADA-compliant wheelchair ramps, and advance warning and wayfinding signage.	Main Street at Grove Street / Trail Crossing

Source: *Topsfield Complete Streets Prioritization Plan, 2017.*

Topsfield’s Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) also outlines some of the planned and ongoing efforts the Town has made regarding transportation. It states that the Town received a state grant of one million dollars in 2015 to repave the Topsfield portion of Route 97.¹¹ They mention that the

⁹ Smart Growth America, Complete Streets Policy Adoption.

¹⁰ Massachusetts Complete Streets, Funding Program Participation.

¹¹ Town of Topsfield, Capital Improvement Plan (FY2018 – FY2022).

Town’s Highway Department has also purchased a “hot box” and a dump truck with a sander that allows them to make roadway repairs in colder weather. The CIP plan also outlines planned improvements in repaving Topsfield’s roads and sidewalks and allocated more than one point seven million dollars from the Town’s budget. This would include repaving and evaluating roadways for potential annual renewal.

Parking

In 2019, Stantec conducted on-site research to evaluate the current parking conditions and other forms of transit access. Stantec found that the available parking spots were never more than 55 percent occupied during the times studied. They also found that the demand for parking on Main Street is consistent and that the spaces on Main Street present 40 to 50 percent utilization. Finally, they found that fewer than 15 percent of cars parked on Main Street are parked all day.

TOPSFIELD DOWNTOWN VILLAGE PARKING INVENTORY



Source: Stantec Downtown Parking Study, 2019.

WHAT THE COMMUNITY SAID

In interviews with the Fire Chief and Council on Aging Director, it was emphasized that Topsfield has no public transportation, and an individual really needs a car to be able to do things. The Senior Center offers a weekday shuttle to those over the age of 65 or residents with mobility disabilities. However, it can't meet the needs of other individuals who are unable or unwilling to drive – who are not elderly or disabled. There is a perceived service gap for medical and behavioral health appointments. Also, there is a desire for a more comfortable bus than the one the Council on Aging has. There are also some concerns about the shared parking between the school, Town Hall, and Council on Aging events. There were no public comments on transportation at the Community Forum.

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Gretchen G. Schuler and Anne M. Forbes, "The early history of Topsfield," National Register of Historic Places Documentation, April 2005, <https://historicipswich.org/history-of-topsfield/>.

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John Phelan, Looking south on US Route 1, Topsfield, MA. CC BY 3.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons

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Parson Capen House, Historic Landmark, Source: Town of Topsfield.

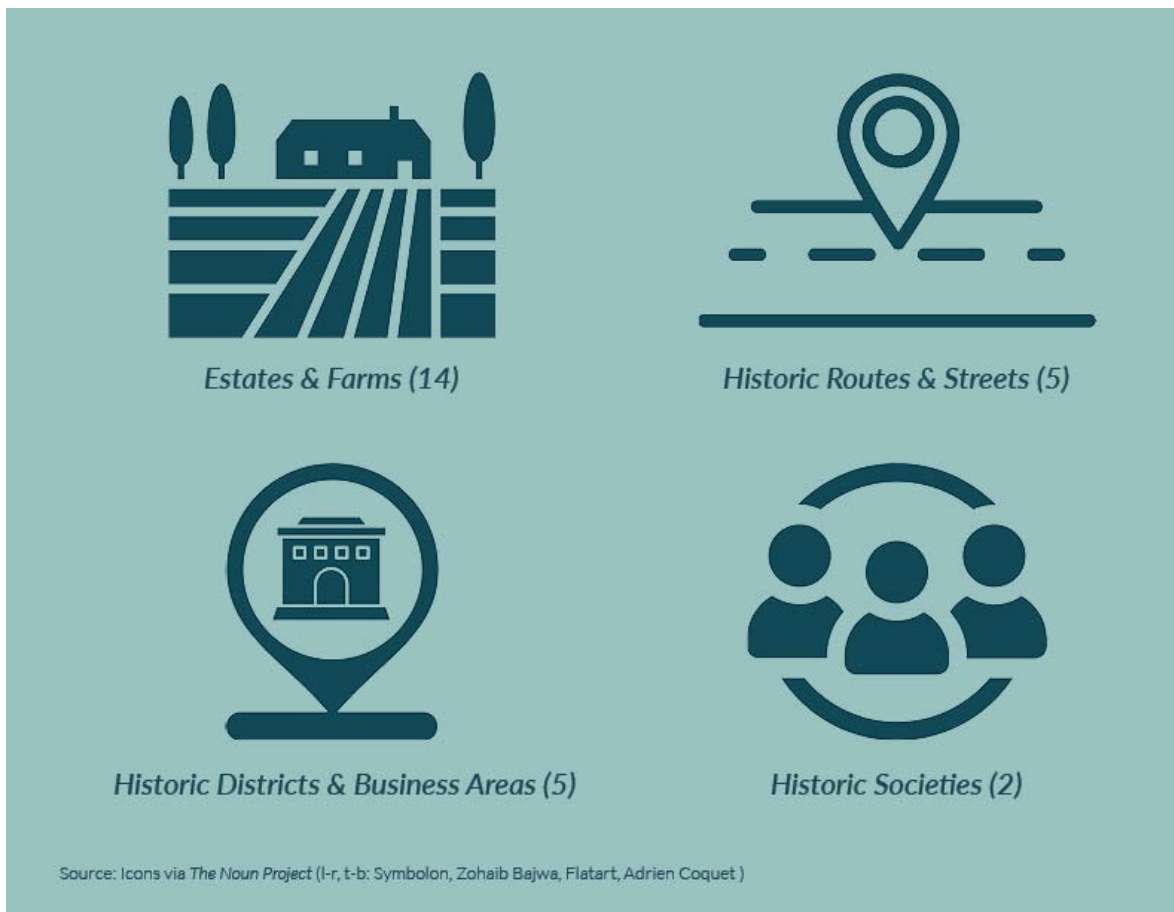
PROTECT: HISTORIC & NATURAL RESOURCES

Topsfield's historic and natural resources provide community social, economic, and environmental value. However, these resources can be at risk of disinvestment, development, or lack of resources to sustain them, and therefore, they need to be protected, strengthened and maintained. As one drives through Topsfield, the combined views of rolling hilltops, meadows, meandering brooks, marshes, fields, and forests are remarkable, making the Town's visual character one of its most priceless assets.

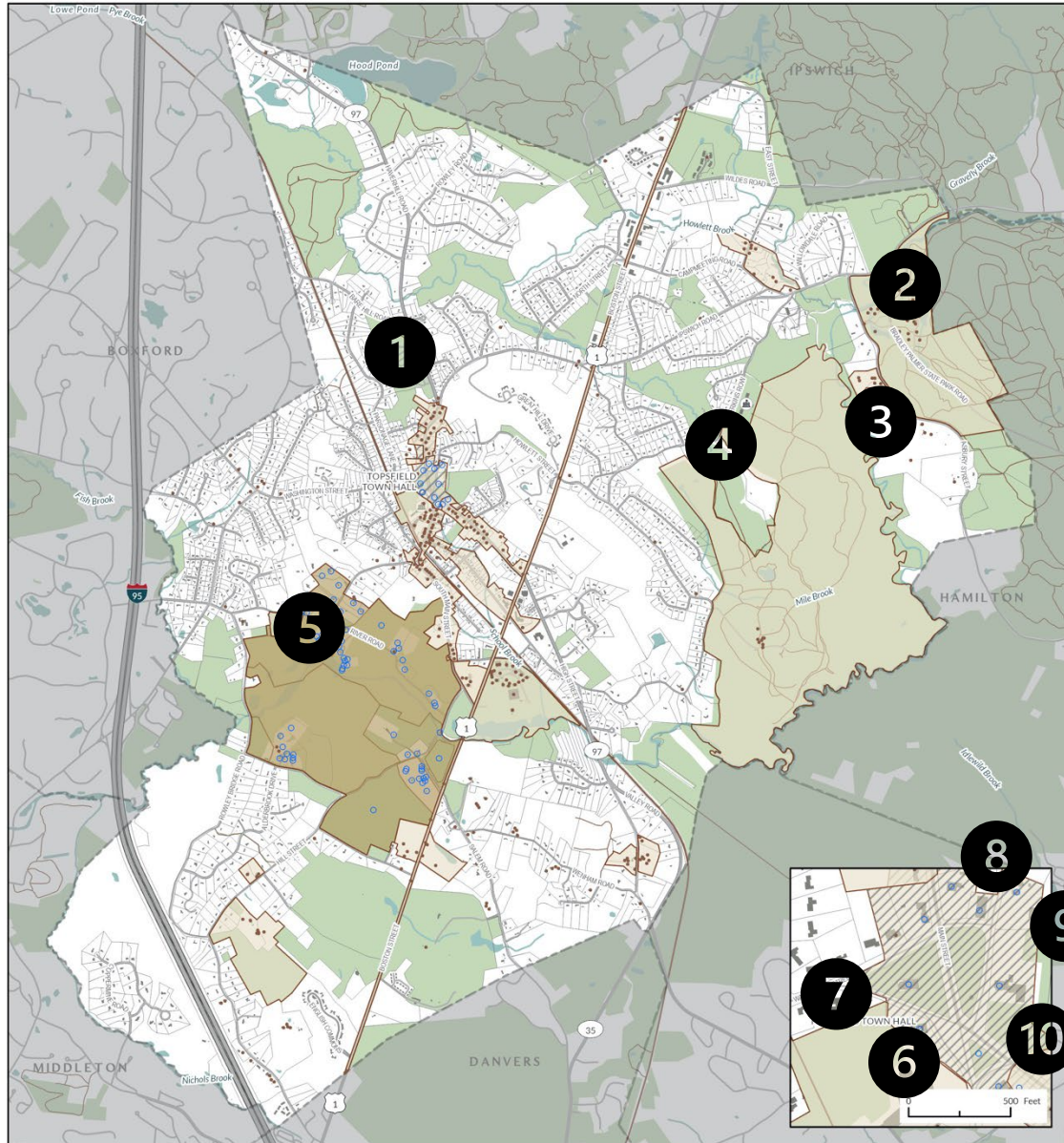
HISTORIC RESOURCES

The Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS) data maintained by the Massachusetts Historical Commission reports 420 Historical Resources in Topsfield. These include 26 historic areas, 346 historic buildings, three historic burial grounds, six historic objects, and 39 historic structures. Roughly half of these historic resources (187) are dated earlier than the 20th century, with the remaining (193) dated after 1899.

Topsfield values its history and is home to a National Register Historic District that is also a local Historic District. The Topsfield Town Common, one of the best-preserved town commons in New England, features historic municipal and private structures from several eras of American architecture surrounding an open green area, including the Veterans' Memorial Green with commemorative war memorials. Among the structures around the Common are the Parson Capen House, a National Register Landmark maintained by the Topsfield Historical Society, the 1842 archetypal white steepled meetinghouse, and the Federal-style Emerson Center belonging to the Congregational Church. The Town's Victorian Gothic Town Hall, Georgian Revival Library, and Proctor School¹ surround the Green. Topsfield is also home to the River Road/Cross Street National Register Historic District.



¹ Town of Topsfield, Open Space and Recreation Plan 2019



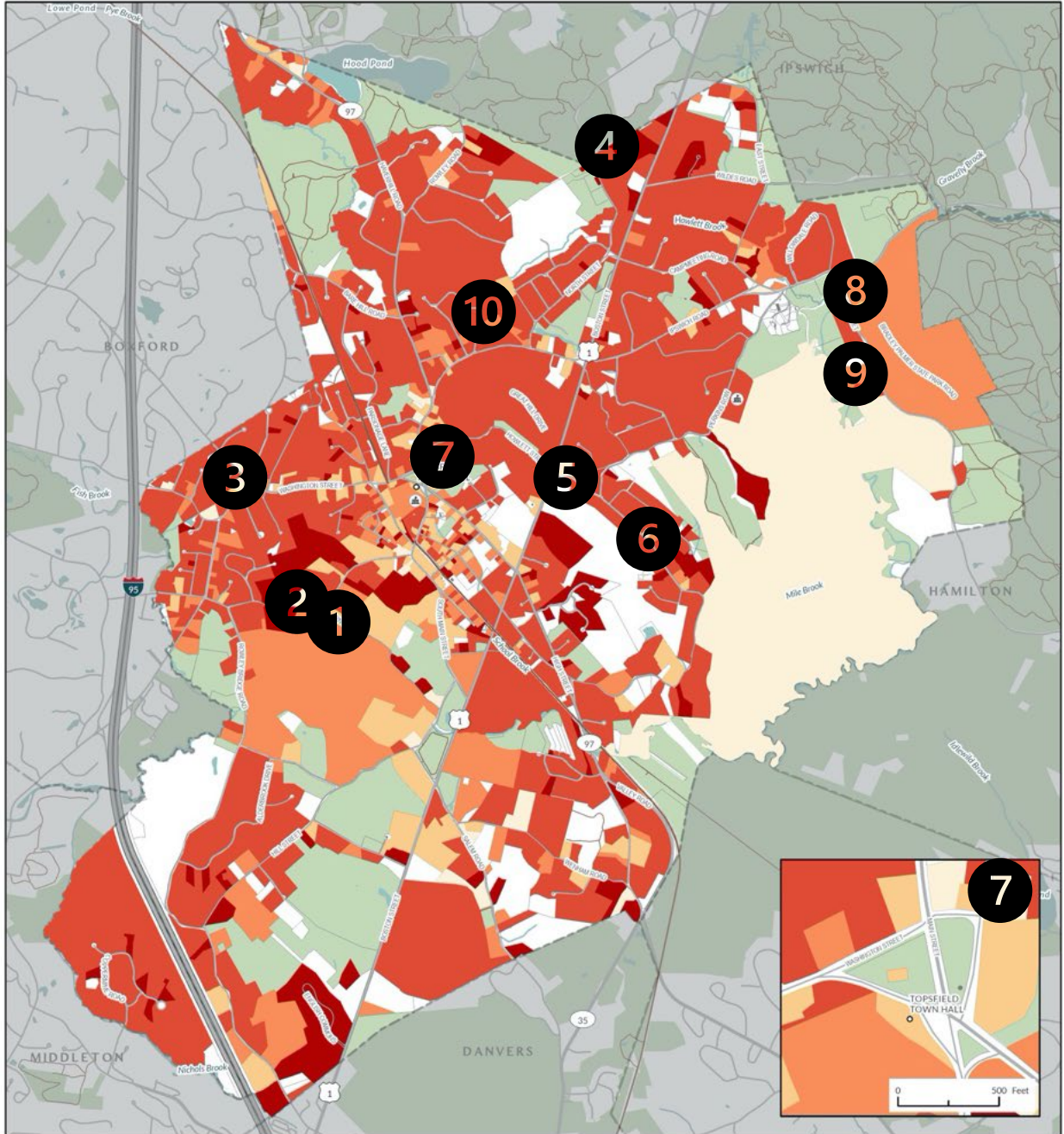
- Schools
- Buildings
- Parcels
- Trails
- Water bodies
- Open space
- National Register Site
- Inventoried Historic Site
- Legal Historic Designation**
- National Register District
- Local Historic District
- Inventoried Historic Area



Sources: MassGIS, MassDEP, MAPC Trailmap

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pine Grove Cemetery 2. Willowdale Estate/Bradley Palmer State Park 3. Cummings Burial Ground 4. Mile Brook Bridge | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Topsfield Town Hall and Town Commons 7. Congregational Church of Topsfield 8. The Commons 1854 9. Parson Capen House/ Gould Barn 10. Emerson Center |
|---|--|

TOPSFIELD HAS MANY HISTORIC HOMES BUILT BEFORE 1800.



Schools	Year Built	
Buildings	Pre - 1799	
Parcels	1800 - 1899	
Trails	1900 - 1949	
Water bodies	1950 - 1999	
Open space	2000 +	

Note: While not an exhaustive list, this map includes 84 properties built on or before 1800.

Sources: MassGIS, MassDEP, MAPC Trailmap

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Zaccheus Gould House, c. 1670 | 6. Deacon Solomon Dodge house, c. 1769 |
| 2. Staneley-Lake House, ca. 1690s | 7. Parson Capen house, c. 1682 |
| 3. Captain Joseph Gould House, ca. 1700 | 8. Arthur Lamson house, c. 1680 |
| 4. Peabody-Stephen Foster house, ca. 1685 | 9. Cummings house, c. 1710 |
| 5. French-Andrews House, ca. 1718 | 10. Thomas Baker mansion, c. 1710 |

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Historic Commission

Topsfield's Historic Commission is an appointed, five-member board responsible for preserving Topsfield's historical character in the Town's Historic District and beyond. The Commission is responsible for administering the Town's Demolition Delay Bylaw and the state and National Registries of Historic Places nomination process.² The Commission also maintains the Town's inventory of historic structures and offers educational programming.³

Topsfield Historical Society

The Topsfield Historical Society is a volunteer-led organization committed to studying history and historic preservation in Topsfield. ⁴ The Historical Society hosts monthly talks on historical topics and runs regular educational programming for children and adults.⁵ The Topsfield Historical Society is also responsible for the Town's annual Strawberry Festival.

REGULATIONS

Demolition Delay Bylaw

Topsfield Town Meeting adopted its Demolition Delay Bylaw in 2002 to preserve and protect significant and historically relevant buildings outside the Town's local historic district. While this bylaw cannot prevent demolition, it does delay demolition by six months, providing the opportunity to seek alternative preservation solutions. Additionally, this six-month period allows the Topsfield Historical Commission time to document historic and architectural resources before demolition properly.

This bylaw only applies to *significant structures* otherwise defined as something listed on the National Register of Historic Places, determined to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places by the Massachusetts Historical Commission, or recorded on the Town's inventory of historic properties.

Historic District

The Historic Commission oversees Topsfield's local Town Common Historic District. Property owners within the District must comply with the Commission's rules, regulations, and guidelines and secure a Certificate of Appropriateness to make any property alterations visible from the street. The Commission's rules, regulations, and guidelines can be found on the Town Website under 'Historical Commission' under the 'Documents and Forms' section.

² The Town of Topsfield, Historical Commission.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Topsfield Historical Society, Sharing the Love of History.

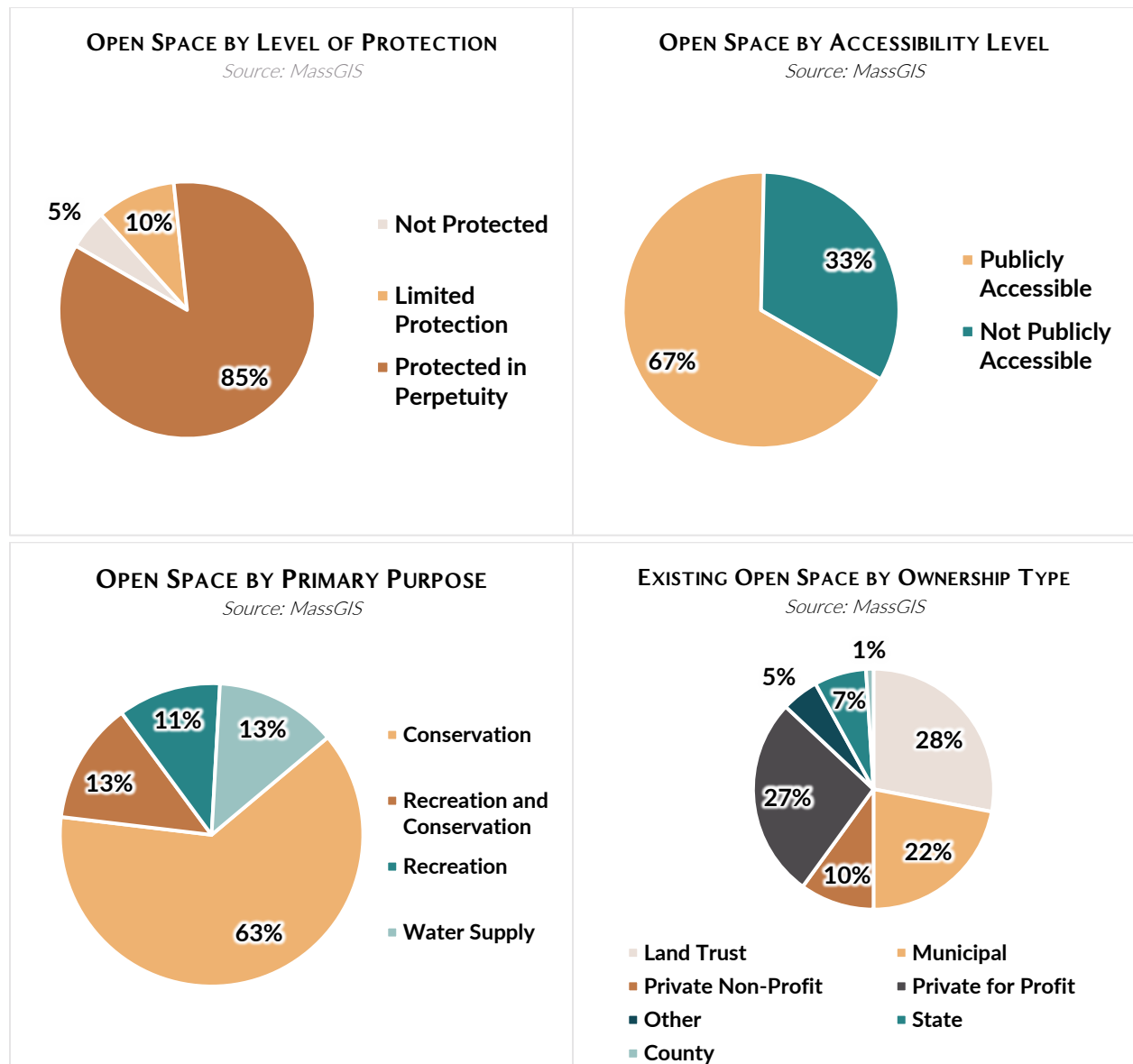
⁵ Ibid.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Natural features such as wetlands, forests, groundwater, and ponds are all essential aspects of Topsfield. They add aesthetic and scenic values to the community, offer opportunities to experience nature and provide clean air and drinking water.

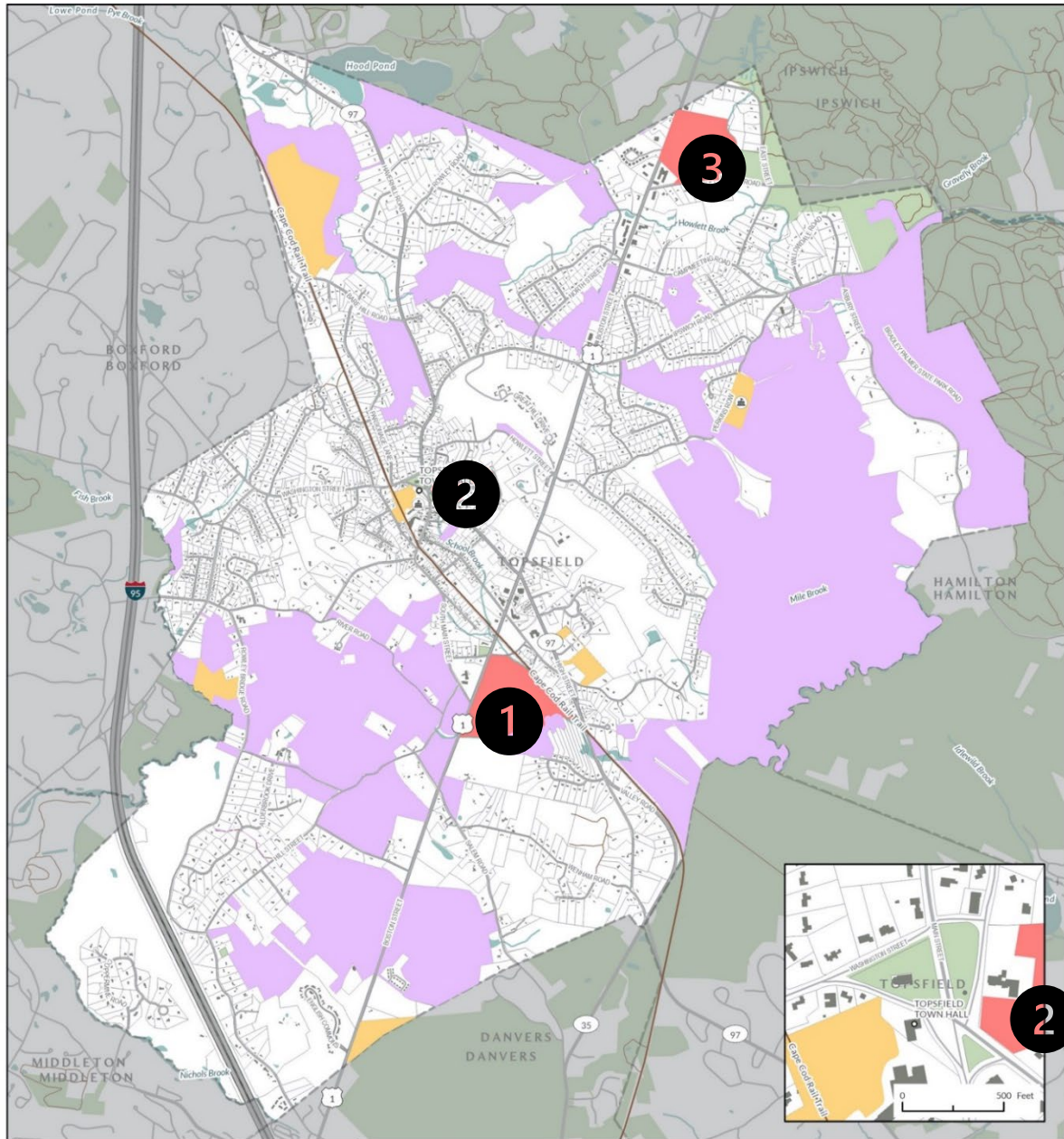
Topsfield currently has permanently protected 85 percent of its open space⁶.

For comparison purposes, Massachusetts has approximately 20 percent of its land protected from future development, and 30 percent of the land area is used in open space planning globally to reduce species extinction threats and carbon emissions. The Town's wealth of natural resources and significant protection are a strength to be celebrated.



⁶ MassGIS data.

85.4% OF TOPSFIELD'S OPEN SPACE IS PROTECTED



- Schools
- Buildings
- Parcels
- Trails
- Water bodies
- Open space
- Open Space Protected in Perpetuity
- Limited Protection Open Space
- Non-Protected Open Space



Sources: MassGIS, MassDEP, MAPC Trailmap

1. Topsfield Fair Grounds
2. Emerson Center
3. New Meadows Golf Course – New Meadows under current ownership is categorized as unprotected, though an agreement exists that should the Golf Course close, the land will be permanently protected conservation land.

Topography, geography, and soils⁷

Topsfield's soils and glacial landscapes are more varied than the average coastal town. One can find many different soil types, each with slightly different drainage and engineering qualities. Future development should recognize these differences, particularly regarding siting septic system absorption fields and high environmental risk businesses where drainage could easily contaminate water from shallow, unconfined aquifers. Topsfield's public water supply comes from outwash plains with well-sorted, medium-grained sand. This type of soil covers approximately 40 percent of Topsfield. Topsfield has developed a map of Areas of Severe Soil Limitations on its website.

Habitat Resources By the numbers⁸



Agricultural

Topsfield has several properties listed as Chapter 61A and other properties on which agricultural activities are conducted (not designated Chapter Land) (see Chapter Land map). Essentially passive agricultural uses are found in some of the tree farms and other hay, grain, or cropland open space within the Town. Valley View Farm, Holiday Tree Farm, Connemara House Farm, Alfalfa Farm, Iron Ox Farm, Pierce Farm, and Greywood Farm represent active farming.



Alfalfa Farm Winery, Source: Alfalfa Farm Winery Facebook, Donna Lyons.

⁷ Topsfield Open Space and Recreation Plan, 2019.

⁸ MassGIS data and Open Space and Recreation Plan, 2019.

According to the Topsfield Agricultural Commission, approximately nine percent of Topsfield's land is used for some form of agriculture, both commercially and by hobbyists.

These farms are dedicated to various agricultural and horticultural operations, including cheese, honey, and maple syrup operations, apple orchards, berries, organic vegetables, a winery, and Christmas trees. Richardson's Dairy, based in Middleton, previously utilized Topsfield land to grow corn that supported its herds of dairy cattle.

Topsfield Agricultural Lands

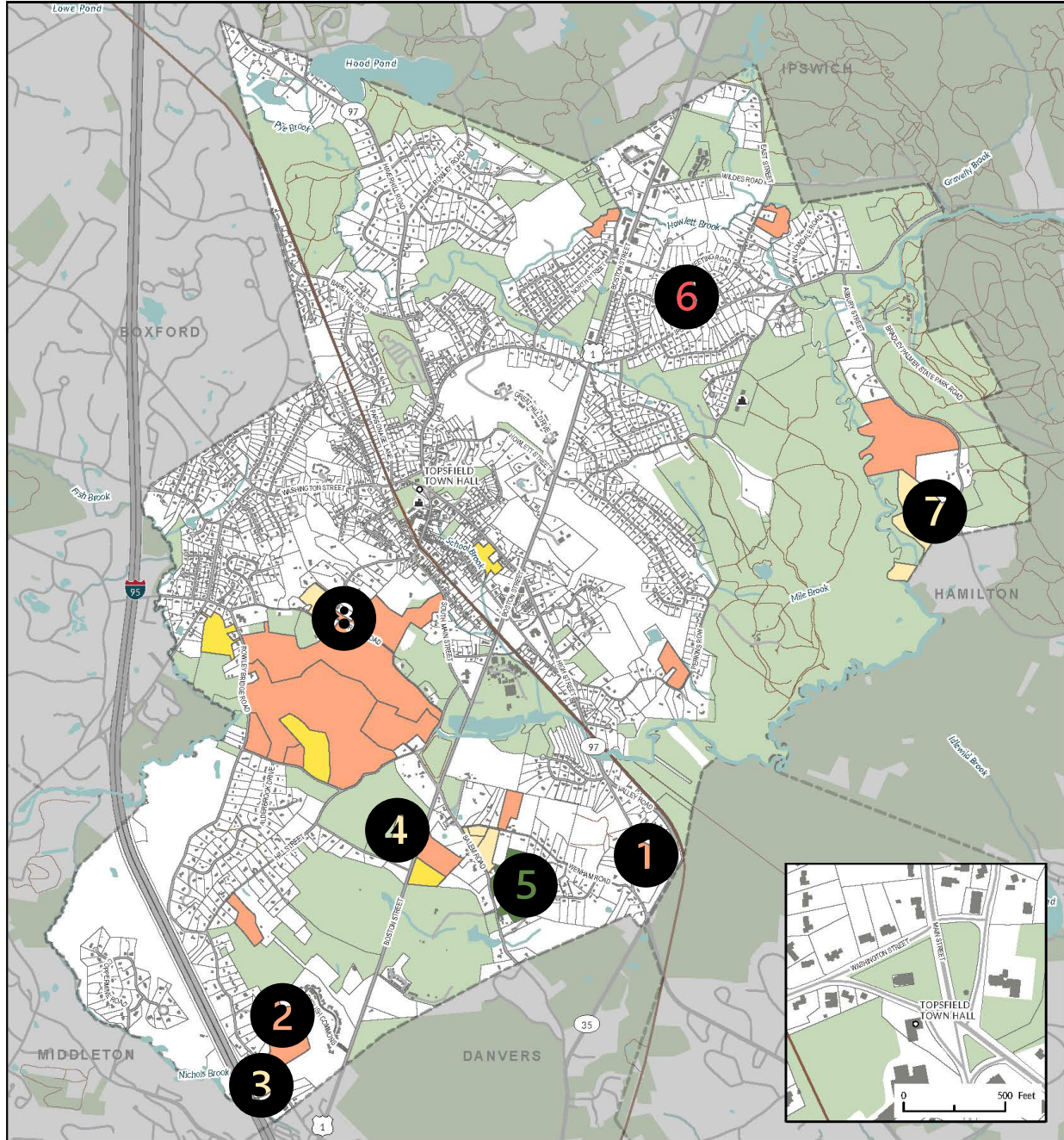
Agricultural Lands	Area (acres)	Percent of Total
Chapter Land - Residential	478.0	72.4%
Chapter Land - Commercial	16.4	2.5%
Chapter Land - Christmas Trees	31.5	4.8%
Chapter Land - Hay/Grain	51.9	7.9%
Farms Not in Chapter Lands	82.58	12.4%
Total	660.4	100%

Source: Topsfield Assessor's Data.

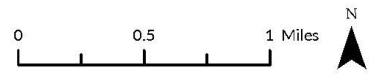
TOWN OF TOPSFIELD - CHAPTER LANDS

Prepared by JM Goldson LLC

J M GOLDSON



- | | |
|--------------|---------------------------|
| Schools | Residential |
| Buildings | Commercial |
| Parcels | Christmas Trees |
| Trails | Hay/Grain |
| Water bodies | Farms not in Chapter Land |
| Open space | |



Sources: MassGIS, MassDEP, MAPC Trailmap

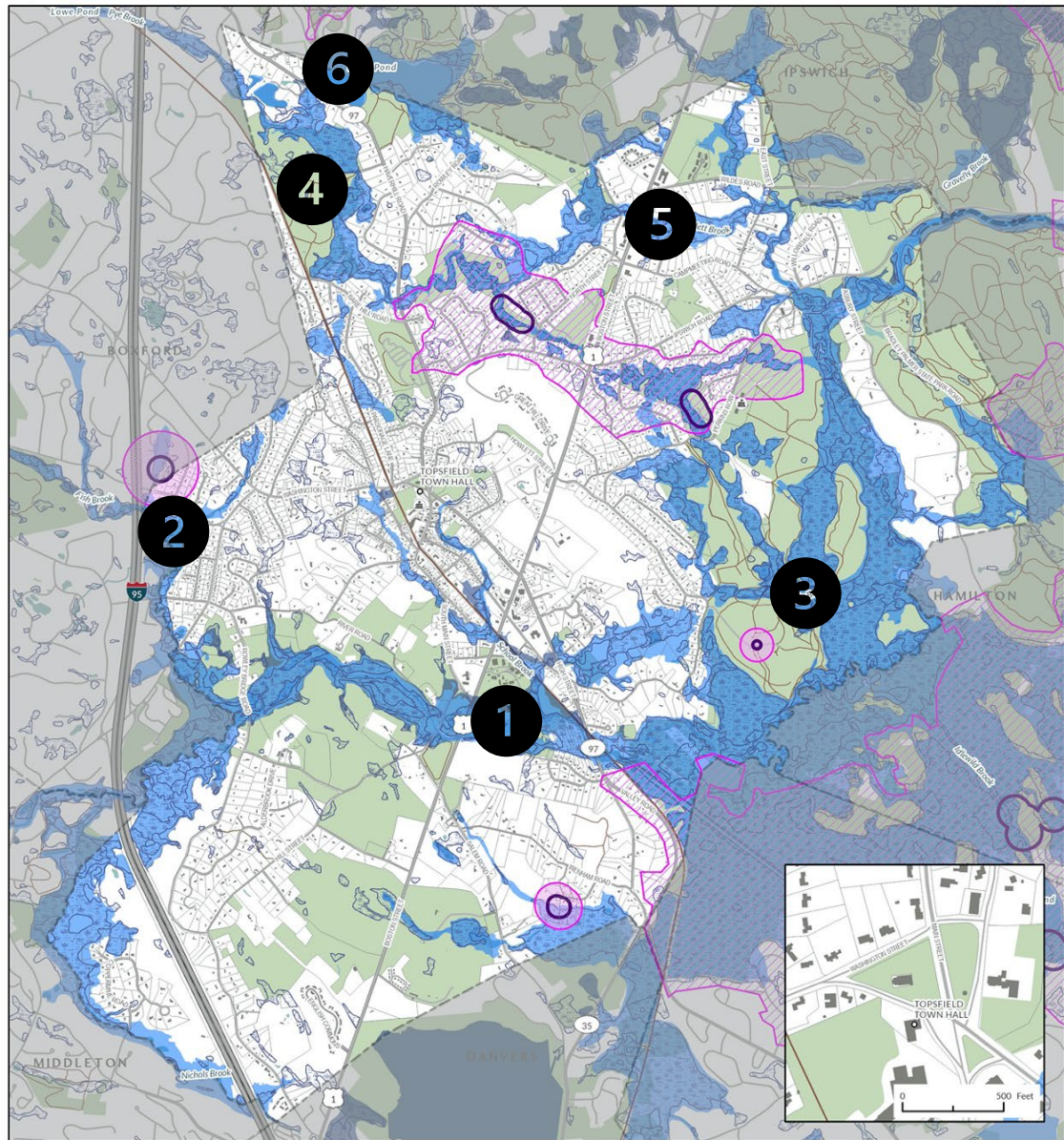
- | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Valley View Farm | 5. Holiday Tree Farm |
| 2. Connemara House Farm | 6. Nutter Farm (formerly) |
| 3. Alfalfa Farm | 7. Iron Ox Farm |
| 4. Pierce Farm/ Witch Hill | 8. Greywood Farm |

Water Resources

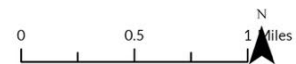
There are two principal sources of surface water in Topsfield: the Ipswich River(1) (and several of its tributaries, namely, Fish (2), Mile (3), Pye (4), and Howlett Brooks(5) and Hood's Pond (6)(See Water Resources Map). Topsfield is one of several Towns on the North Shore that share the Ipswich River as a regional recreation source. The Ipswich River Watershed Association (IRWA) oversees the protection and management of the Ipswich River and its underlying aquifer.

TOWN OF TOPSFIELD - WATER RESOURCES
Prepared by JM Goldson LLC

J M G O L D S O N



- | | | |
|--------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Schools | Flood Zone Designations | DEP Approved Zone II |
| Buildings | 100 yr. flood zone | Interim Wellhead Protection Area |
| Parcels | 500 yr. flood zone | Wetlands |
| Trails | DEP Approved Zone I (Town wells) | |
| Water bodies | | |
| Open space | | |



Sources: MassGIS, MassDEP, MAPC Trailmap

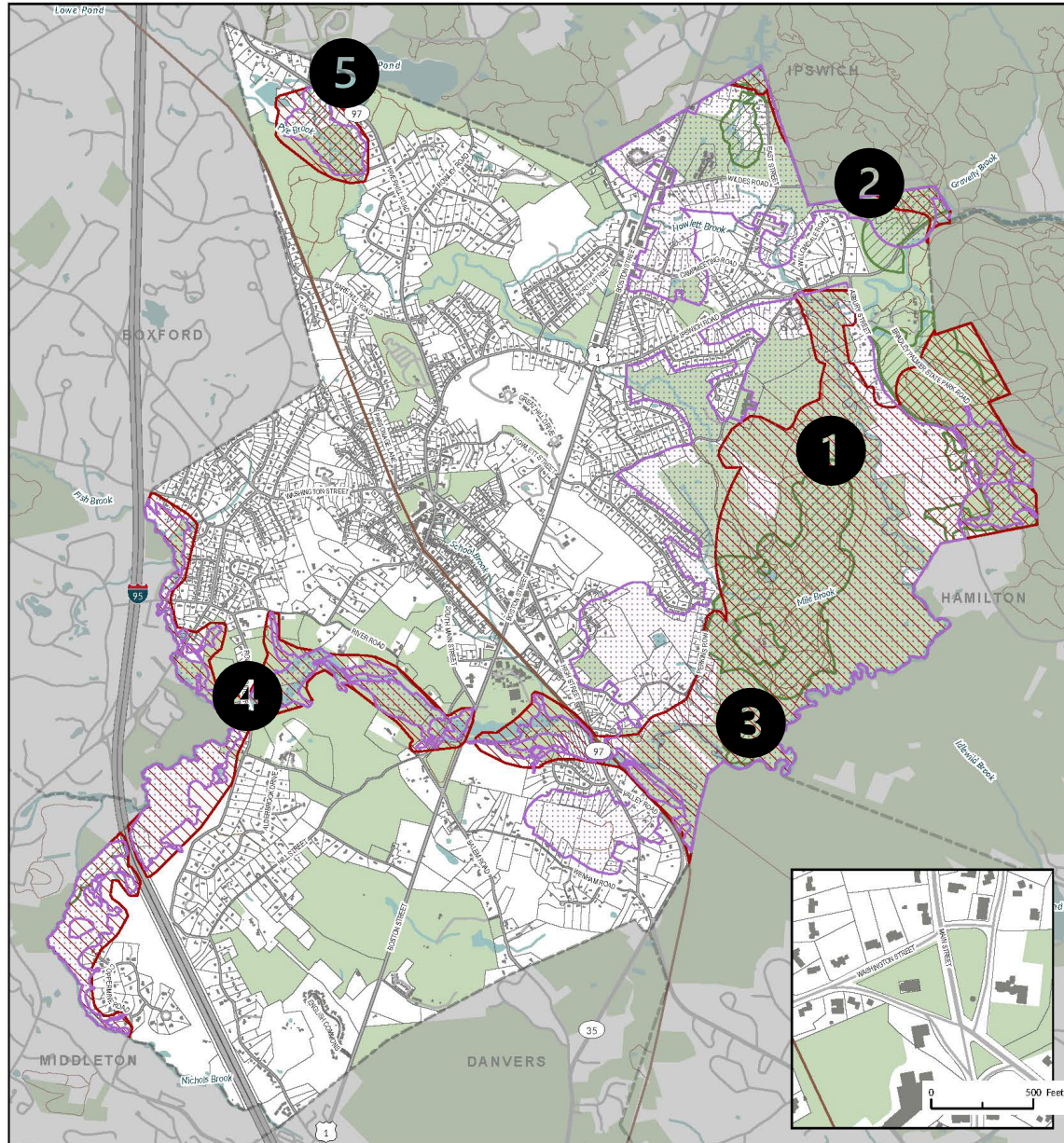
CORE HABITAT

Core Habitat identifies areas critical for the long-term persistence of rare species, exemplary natural communities, and resilient ecosystems. Topsfield's core habitat can be found at Bradley Palmer State Park (1), Willowdale State Forest (2), Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary (3), along the Ipswich River (4), and Hood Pond's (5).

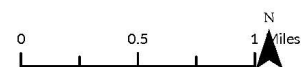
TOWN OF TOPSFIELD - HABITAT RESOURCES

Prepared by JM Goldson LLC

J M G O L D S O N



- Schools
- Buildings
- Parcels
- Trails
- Water bodies
- Open space
- Biomap2 Core Habitat
- Biomap2 Critical Natural Landscape
- Priority Habitat of Rare Species



Sources: MassGIS, MassDEP, MAPC Trailmap

COMMUNITY BOARDS, COMMITTEES, AND ORGANIZATIONS

- The Agricultural Commission, Topsfield Garden Club, and Historical Society promote the agricultural history and the grow-local movement through school programs, participation in the Topsfield Fair, and other educational activities. The Essex Agricultural Society has partnered with Northeast Harvest to promote locally-grown products.
- The Open Space Committee is responsible for writing, maintaining, and implementing the Open Space and Recreation Plan.
- The Conservation Commission administers the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and the Topsfield General Wetlands Bylaw.

REGULATIONS

Wetlands

- Massachusetts Wetland Protection Act (M.G.L. Ch. 131, Section 40) prevents development in a wetland resource area, stream, river, body of water, or land subject to flooding.
- Topsfield General Wetlands Bylaw (Ch. 62) states that any activity within 100 feet of any wetland resources area or 200 feet of a perennial stream requires review and may require a permit from the Conservation Commission.

Tree Removal: Topsfield Conservation Commission Tree Removal Policy is intended to prevent tree removal within Conservation Commission areas of jurisdiction, except when a compromised tree threatens a dwelling, structure, or a public facility.

Stormwater: Topsfield is designated as having a Small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES). In an ongoing effort to manage stormwater within Topsfield, the Town has submitted a Notice of Intent (2018) and Stormwater Management Plan (2018) as required for MS4 communities and regularly submits reports (2019, 2020, and 2021). Topsfield developed the Illicit Discharge Bylaw in 2010 to protect water quality and the Stormwater and Erosion Control Regulations to control the adverse effects of post-development stormwater runoff in 2013.

Scenic Roads: Topsfield has an extensive network of roads designated as "Scenic Roads" per the Scenic Roads Act of the Massachusetts Legislature (MGL 40 Section 15C). These Scenic Roads are protected by State and Town regulations. Alteration of the stone walls or removing trees requires a permit from the Planning Board and the approval of the Tree Warden. The Town maintains a map of scenic roads on its website.

Zoning

- Groundwater Protection District: This zoning overlay district regulates development in and near the Town's well sites to prevent potable water pollution through waste or hazardous materials disposal .
- Scenic Overlay Zone: This zoning overlay district regulates development along the southern portion of Route 1 in Topsfield to maintain the scenic and rural character of the southern entryway to the Town. Development is shaped to lessen visual impact, preserve open space, preserve existing trees, and provide additional landscaping.

- Floodplain District: This overlay district regulates areas in Topsfield subject to seasonal or periodic flooding. These regulations help protect public life and property from the hazards of periodic flooding, preserve natural flood control characteristics, and maintain the flood storage capacity of the floodplain.
- Ipswich River Protection District: This overlay district regulates areas near the Ipswich River to provide flood control, water supply, and the preservation of scenic and natural wildlife habitat areas.

WHAT THE COMMUNITY SAID

Topsfield's Historical Society is actively grappling with how to remain relevant in an ever-changing social landscape. Recently, the organization has begun to host events exposing community members to various historic perspectives, including Indigenous history in Topsfield and Black/African American history in the United States Armed Forces. The Society and many other historic organizations rely on the work of volunteers, something they reported to be dwindling in the recent past. Despite Topsfield's traceable long history, ideas and challenges related to history/historic preservation were few and far between in public engagement opportunities.

On the other hand, open space and natural resources were discussed in nearly every engagement opportunity. For many, access to open space drew them to and continues to keep them in Town. Resources like the Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary and Topsfield's vast network of trails (including the Rail Trail) were just a few popular mentions of green spaces community members love. Community members raised concerns about the need for more structural maintenance of these open spaces, noting that users in their own capacity often assist with these efforts.

The vision of the Open Space and Recreation Plan remains to preserve the Town's rural and historic characteristics and maintain the high quality of life that rolling hills, agricultural landscapes, and riparian environments provide to the Town Residents. Topsfield envisions a Town that includes an expanded offering of passive and active recreational opportunities that allows all residents access to nature walks, linked trails, and historical sites. Achieving this vision includes:

- Preserving the Rural and Historic Character of the Town
- Keeping Open Space available
- Enhancing and Expanding Recreational Trails and their connectivity
- Protecting Water Resources
- Protecting Critical Habitats
- Increasing ADA Accessibility for Topsfield Open Space and Recreational Facilities
- Public Outreach and Education
- Achieving Greater Energy Efficiency
- Reducing public and private water consumption

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Dow, G. F. (2016). The History of Topsfield Massachusetts. The Topsfield Historical Society. <https://archive.org/details/historyoftopsfie00dowg/page/n1/mode/2up> (Original work published 1940) History. (2018, August 28). *Topsfield Town Library*.

<https://topsfieldlibrary.org/about/history/>

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Town of Topsfield. *Open Space and Recreation Plan 2019*. Prepared by the Topsfield Open Space and Recreation Committee. Accessed November 9, 2022. https://www.topsfield-ma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf5086/f/uploads/topsfield_open_space_recreation_plan_-_2019_final.pdf.



Solar-powered bench, Source: Topsfield-ma.gov.

ADAPT: SUSTAINABILITY & RESILIENCE

A strong community movement exists to increase environmental sustainability and adaptation to climate change. Topsfield created a Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) in 2021, alongside support from MAPC as part of their Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program (MVP). In 2022, Topsfield was officially awarded a Green Communities Grant from the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources. It will improve energy efficiency in two local elementary schools and be allocated for installing variable frequency drives. The Green Communities Grant also indicated that additional energy efficiency tools would be put into place in other areas of the administrative buildings. The Town recently purchased its first all-electric police cruiser, installed solar downtown street lighting, a solar-powered bench (featured above), and two electric vehicle charging stations at Town Hall.

Based on its location and demographics, Topsfield is vulnerable to inland flooding, severe storms, drought, and to some extent, extreme heat.

FLOOD HAZARD AREAS

Essex County experienced 40 significant flood events from 2006 to 2020, and the total property damage was over 20 million dollars. Based on Topsfield inland location, the impacts of flooding are less severe than in surrounding areas. According to data obtained from Topsfield HMP/MVP core team, eight local areas in Topsfield are susceptible to flooding. Based on past events using the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) HAZUS-MH program, damages from a one percent Annual Flood Event (100-year Flood) to be \$3.03 million, and a 0.2 percent Annual Flood (500-year Flood) to be valued at \$6.74 million.

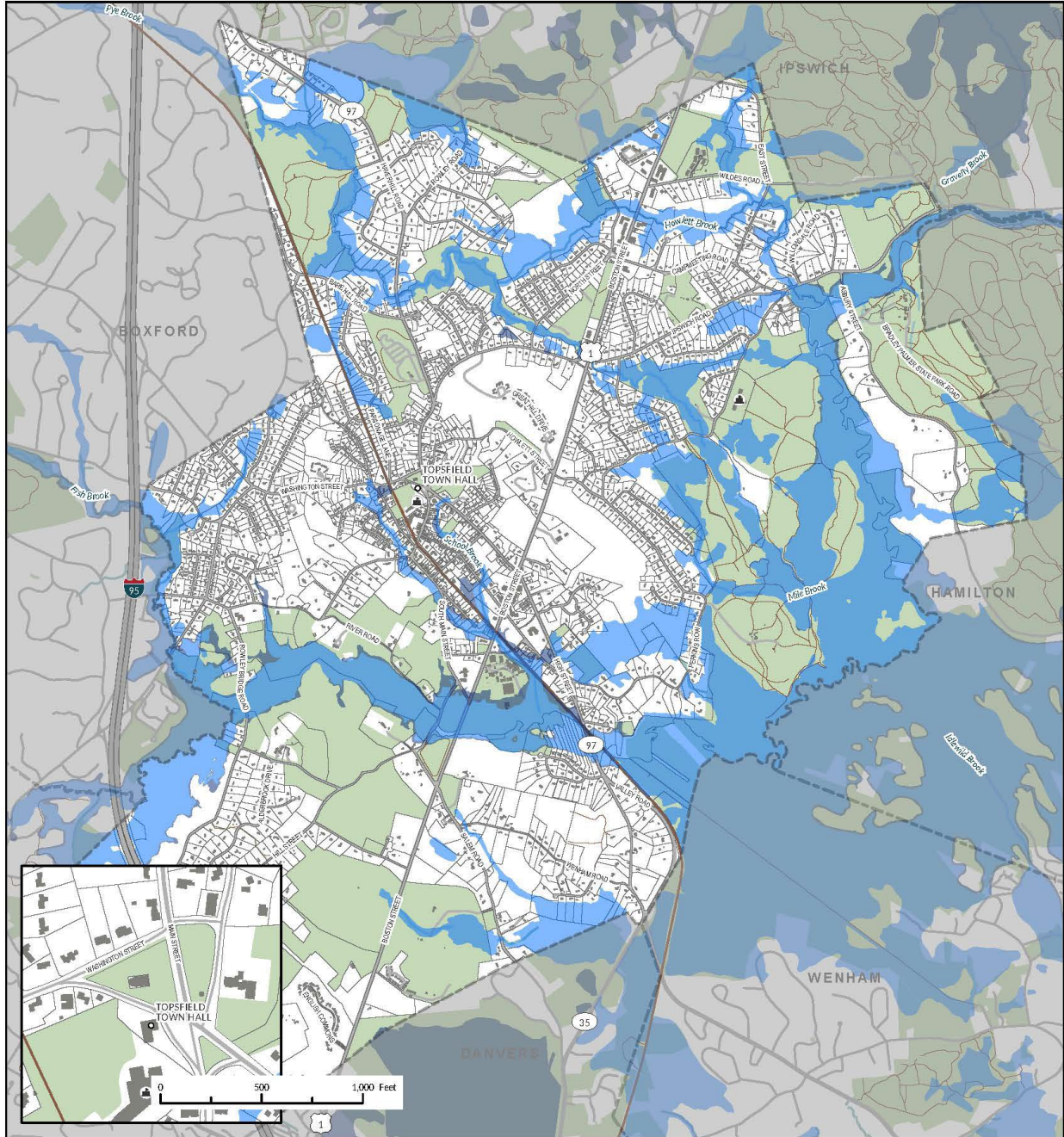


Topsfield Locally Identified Areas of Flooding. Clockwise from the top left: Asbury Street, Howlett Brook at Ipswich Road, South Main Street at Route 1, Route 1 Source: Jim MacDougall.

TOWN OF TOPSFIELD - FLOOD RISK

Prepared by JM Goldson LLC

J M GOLDSON

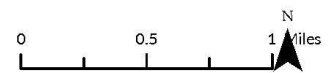


- Schools
- Buildings
- Parcels
- Trails
- Water bodies
- Open space

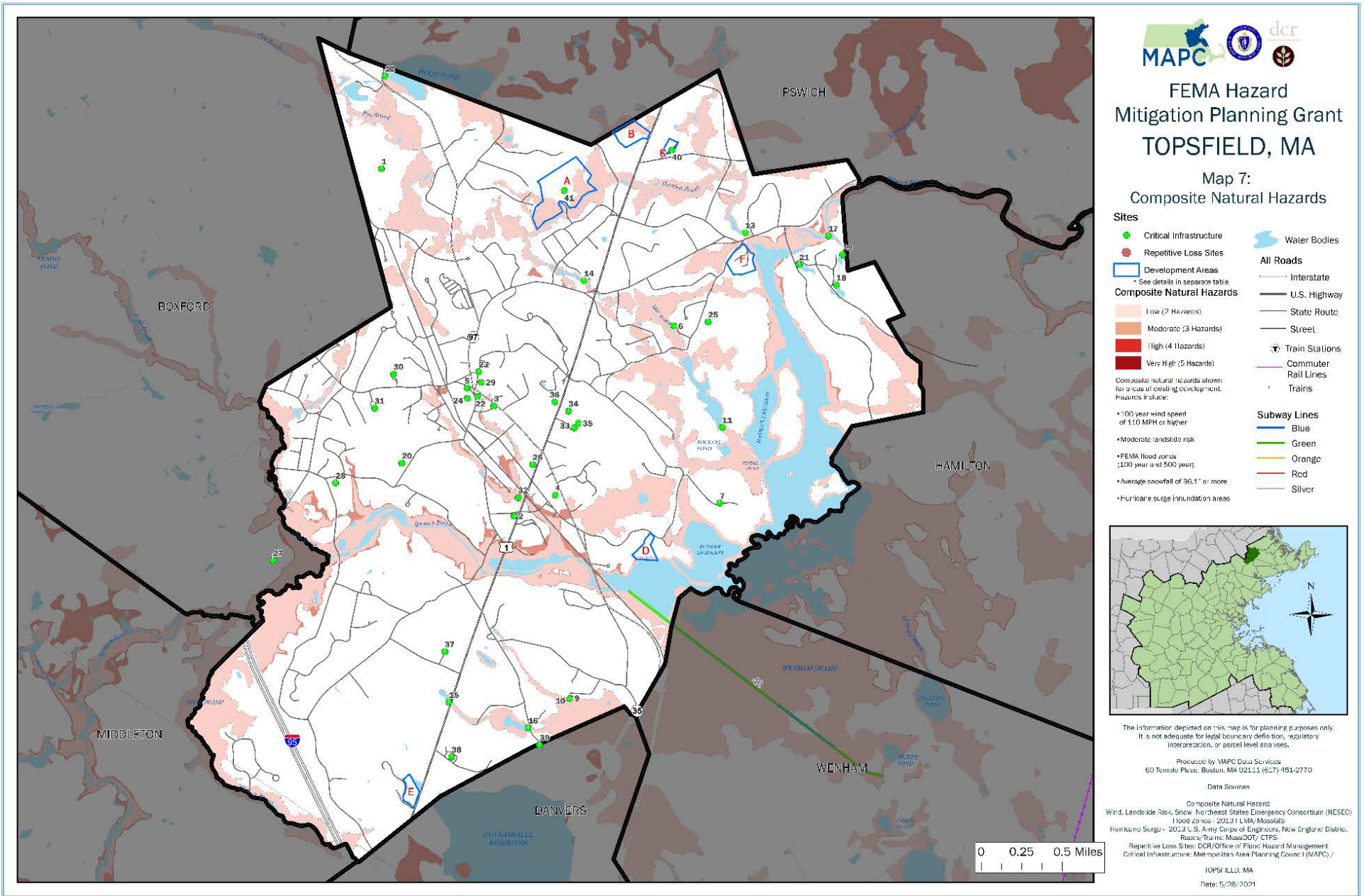
FEMA National Flood Hazard Layer

Flood Zone Designations

- 100 yr. flood zone
- 500 yr. flood zone



Sources: MassGIS, MassDEP, MAPC Trailmap



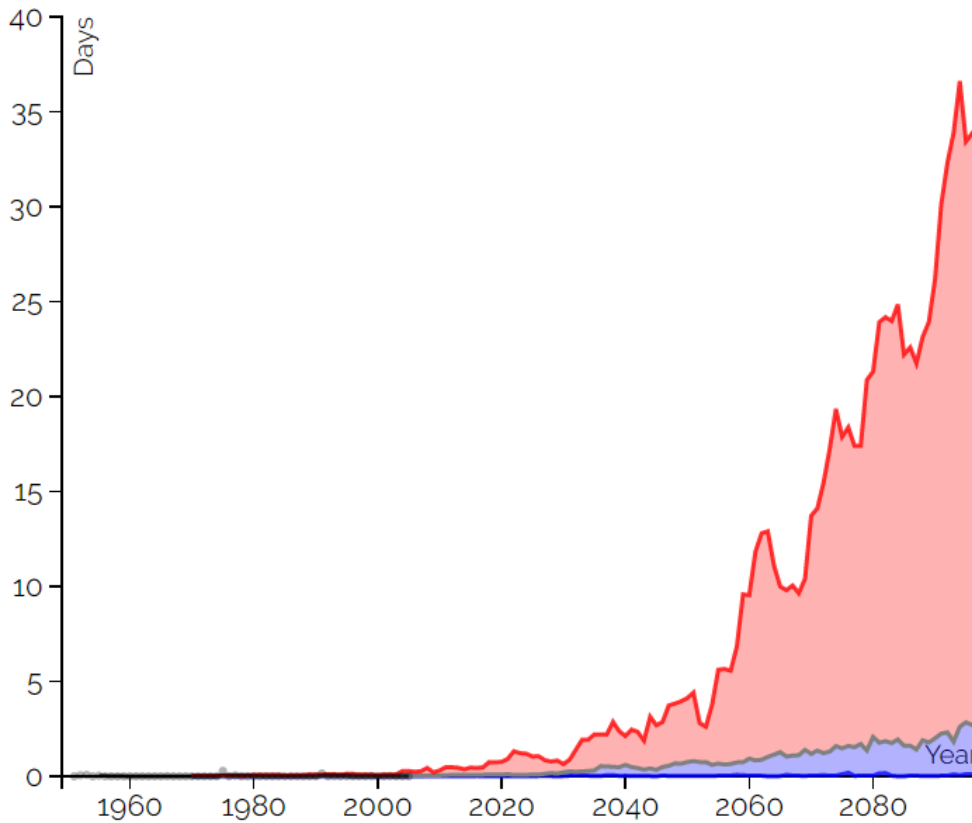
Natural Hazard Areas in Topsisfield, Source: Topsisfield Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2021

Heat Island Effect and Rising Temperatures

Climate projections include an increase in average temperature and the number of extreme heat days. Intense cold days are projected to decrease in number. The Northeast Climate Adaptation Science Center (NECASC) projects that average temperatures in Massachusetts will increase by five degrees Fahrenheit by mid-century and nearly seven degrees Fahrenheit by the end of the century.

By 2070, up to 15 days of the year may have temperatures above 100 degrees.

Annual Days with Maximum Temperature Above 100°F Massachusetts



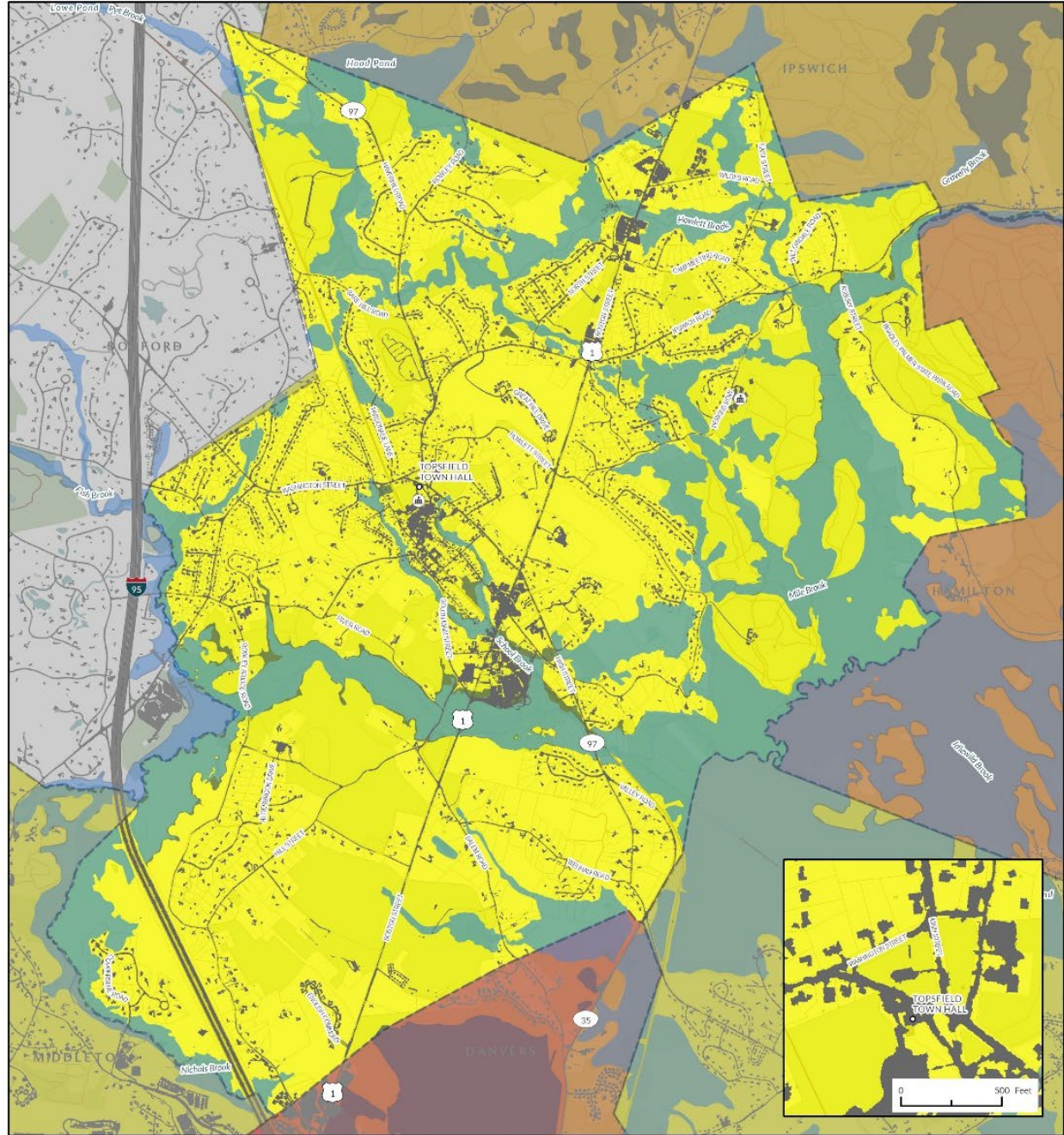
*Massachusetts Annual Days with Maximum Temperature Above 100°F,
Source: Topsfield Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2021.*

Due to Topsfield's large percentage of forested area (see PROTECT chapter), it can mitigate the effects of flooding and urban heat island effect more successfully than other towns with more impervious surfaces. As pictured below, the vulnerability to extreme heat is mainly low.

TOWN OF TOPSFIELD - CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Prepared by JM Goldson LLC

J M GOLDSON



- Schools
- Buildings
- Parcels
- Trails
- Water bodies
- Open space

- Impervious Surfaces
- Flood Zone Designations**
- 100 yr. flood zone
- 500 yr. flood zone

- Vulnerability to Heat Islands**
- Low
- Medium Low
- Medium
- Medium High
- High



Sources: MassGIS, MassDEP, MAPC Trailmap

ENERGY POLICIES AND RESILIENCY EFFORTS

Energy Efficiency

Topsfield completed five Green Communities projects in FY22. Three of the projects focused on improvements at the Topsfield Fire Department. The Fire Department lighting systems were converted to LED in December 2021. A weatherization project, including installing weather stripping, sealants, fiberglass insulation, and foam board throughout the fire station, was completed in January 2022. The heating system pipes at the fire station were also insulated with fiberglass pipe insulation in January 2022.



The fourth Green Communities project was converting the lighting at the main cemetery building to LED with integrated daylight/motion sensors, completed in December 2021. The cemetery building reduced its electricity use by 3,210 kWh from FY21 to FY22, with 65 percent of this reduction occurring during the second half after the lighting project was completed.

The final Green Communities project was converting lighting at the public works building to LED with integrated daylight/motion sensors, completed in December 2021. Overall, the DPW garage saw a three percent increase in electricity from FY21 to FY22.

Topsfield was awarded a Green Communities grant from the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources to improve energy efficiency in two local elementary schools and was also allocated for installing variable frequency drives in the schools by December 2022.

Overall Energy Use

- **Municipal:** Energy use increased three percent between FY21 and FY22, but decreased six percent from the baseline year (FY09). Topsfield opened a new Water Treatment Plant (WTP) in March 2019. For FY22, the Water/Sewer use and total municipal use will be high due to the FY22 energy use at the WTP. Excluding the WTP energy use from FY22, total energy use results in a ten percent decrease from the baseline.
- **Schools:** Energy use is up slightly due to the full reopening of schools in FY22.
- **Street/Traffic Lights:** has held steady over the past several years and is down eight percent from the baseline. The Town is in the preliminary stages of a streetlight retrofit to LED.
- **Vehicle fuel:** remained steady over the past few years and is down six percent from the baseline.
- **Water/sewer:** shows an increase of 91 percent from the baseline, and this is due to the addition of the WTP accounts.

Largest Energy Users

The three municipal buildings with the most significant energy consumption in Topsfield for FY22 are the Steward Elementary School (EUI 69.6), the Proctor Elementary School (EUI 69.3), and the Library (EUI 55.7).

Renewable Energy

Topsfield has started its renewable energy integration with small pilot projects such as the charging solar bench in the downtown area, solar streetlights, and electric vehicle charging stations at the renovated Town Hall. These projects are part of the larger Downtown Revitalization Project.



*Town Hall Electric Vehicle Charging Stations,
Source: Wicked Local 2021.*



*Topsfield Solar Powered Streetlights,
Source: Topsfield MA, 2021.*

WASTE REDUCTION AND WASTE DIVERSION

Reducing waste and diverting waste through reuse or recycling captures valuable resources, saves energy, reduces greenhouse gas emissions, and lessens Topsfield’s reliance on landfills and incinerators. Topsfield has a “pay-as-you-throw” waste program, where residents pay more depending on how much they throw away. The Town has weekly trash and bi-weekly recycling pickup and takes compost and yard waste at the composite site facility. They also offer hazardous waste collection events.

LOCAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE GROUPS

Sustainability Advisory Committee: The mission of the Sustainability Advisory Committee (the “Committee” or “SAC”) is to identify and promote environmental sustainability initiatives in Topsfield focused on waste diversion and renewable energy, reducing the Town’s carbon footprint, preserving and protecting our ecosystems, and performing environmental education and outreach.

Green Topsfield: This subcommittee of TESPTO (Topsfield Elementary School Parent Teacher Organization) seeks to promote consistent, sustainable practices and environmental literacy in the Topsfield schools and community.

WHAT THE COMMUNITY SAID

While community members identified the Town as generally environmentally conscious, there was some discussion on differing priorities regarding sustainability. Several attendees of the Master Plan Community Forum shared their hopes for sustainability and conservation initiatives in Town. However, focus group participants felt sustainable actions would need to make economic sense and be presented as cost-effective to gain community support and be implemented. Community members expressed interest in solar energy, alternative de-icing methods, reducing light pollution from the Topsfield Fairgrounds, proactive work to reduce vulnerabilities, and interventions to protect the Town's water quality.

The top three highest priority actions from the Community Resilience Building workshop (2021):

1. Address impacts of intense winds on powerlines, including tree maintenance (dead and diseased) and pole replacement and maintenance. Prepare the tree canopy for increased pests or other new hazards. Consider tree inventory, and emphasize native specifics.
2. Tackle Ipswich River flooding issues. Work with state and federal officials to find a watershed-wide solution to Ipswich River water withdrawal issues.
3. Road elevations and culverts need to be addressed as a system. Identified areas include Rt. 1, Salem Rd., Rowley Bridge Rd., East St., Pond St., and Wildes Rd. We need to find solutions to flooding caused by beavers.

REFERENCES

Jim MacDougall, Topsfield Locally Identified Areas of Flooding, Photograph.

Resilient MA Climate Change Clearing for the Commonwealth, *Annual Days with Maximum Temperature Above 100degrees Massachusetts*

<https://resilientma.mass.gov/datagrapher/?c=Temp/state/tx100/ANN/MA/&c=Temp/state/maxt/ANN/MA/>

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Town of Topsfield Town Hall, Source: Elana Zabar, 2022.

SERVE: PUBLIC FACILITIES & SERVICES

The *Public Facilities and Services* element of the Master Plan identifies and analyzes existing and forecasted needs for facilities provided by the Town of Topsfield – including local government and municipal departments such as public safety, schools, the Council on Aging, recreation, public library, and public infrastructure. The Topsfield Master Plan aims to ensure that Town facilities and assets (buildings, roads, water infrastructure, etc.) are equipped to support the current population and allow for future growth. Planning for facilities, assets, and infrastructure needs is critical in providing equitable, safe, and dependable essential public services to improve the quality of life for all Topsfield community members.

TOWN GOVERNMENT

Topsfield operates through an Open Town Meeting government system in which all registered voters in the community are eligible to vote on Town decisions, including Town budget, capital expenditures, and adjustments or additions to the Town Bylaws. Topsfield's Annual Town Meeting is held on the first Tuesday of May, with the potential for Special Town Meetings throughout the year. In addition to Town Meetings, Topsfield is governed by a five-member elected Select Board and Town Administrator.



26 Municipal Departments Departments

- Accountant
- ADA Coordinator
- Animal Control
- Building
- Clerk
- Conservation
- Council on Aging
- Emergency Management
- Fire
- Health
- Highway
- Human Resources
- Library
- Parks and Cemetery
- Planning and Economic Development
- Police
- Public Works
- Purchasing
- Recreation
- Sealer of Weights and Measures
- Storm Water
- Town Administrator
- Trash and Recycling
- Treasurer/Collector
- Tree Warden
- Water



31 Boards and Commissions Boards and Commissions

- Agricultural Commission
- Alcohol Advisory Committee
- Board of Assessors
- Board of Health
- Board of Library Trustees
- Boards of Registrars
- Cable TV Advisory Committee
- Commissioners of Trust Funds
- Computer Technology Committee
- Conservation Committee
- Council on Aging
- Cultural Council
- Economic and Community Development Committee
- Fence Viewers
- Finance Committee
- Government Review Committee
- Historical Commission
- Mapping Committee
- Masconomet Regional District School Committee
- Memorial Day/Veterans Day Committee
- Open Space Committee
- Planning Board
- Rail Trail Committee
- Renewable Energy/Green Communities Committee
- Select Board
- Stormwater Management Committee
- Sustainability Advisory Committee
- Town Hall Committee
- Traffic Advisory Committee
- TRIAD Council
- Zoning Board of Appeals



2 Local & 2 Regional Schools

PUBLIC FACILITIES

The Town of Topsfield has ten municipal buildings, two elementary school buildings, and two regional school buildings. The regional school buildings and administrative offices are in Boxford, Massachusetts.



10 Municipal Buildings



2 Elementary Schools
(Pre-K to 6th Grade)



2 Shared Regional Schools
(Middle School & High School)

Town Facilities

In 2019, Topsfield underwent a Facility Condition Assessment (FCA), which evaluated the Town's ten municipal sites: (Water Treatment Plant, Fire Station, Old Highway Garage, DPW Building, Water Pump Station on Perkins, Water Pump Station on North, Park and Cemetery Building, Town Hall, Police Station, and the Library). This report evaluated the physical conditions of each site using a Facility Condition Index (FCI) – defined in the report as "the ratio of the cost of current needs divided by the current replacement value (CRV) of the facility – wherein the lower the FCI, the better the facility's condition. The table below summarizes the individual findings for this FCA, with the darker colors representing the greatest need.

Facility (Year Built)	Total SF	Cost/SF	Replacement Value	Current (2019)	3-Year (2022)	5-Year (2024)	10-Year (2029)
DPW Building (2000)	10,800	\$231	\$2,492,964	0.6%	4.7%	7.8%	17.6%
Fire Station (1969)	10,210	\$217	\$2,217,306	0.4%	1.7%	9.7%	25.5%
Library (1935)	14,916	\$215	\$3,203,211	2.0%	3.0%	9.1%	17.6%
Old Highway Garage (1941)	3,969	\$130	\$514,621	24.2%	24.5%	40.7%	41.6%
Park & Cemetery Building (1978)	1,600	\$231	\$369,328	1.9%	7.0%	15.0%	47.4%
Police Station (1930)	5,912	\$301	\$1,782,113	2.4%	8.0%	11.1%	31.8%
Town Hall (1873)	19,364	\$216	\$4,186,303	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	6.4%
Water Pump Station – North (1960)	616	\$157	\$96,749	14.9%	15.0%	34.0%	54.1%
Water Pump Station – Perkins (1960)	768	\$157	\$120,622	14.3%	17.1%	18.1%	45.9%
Water Treatment Plant (2019)	7,500	\$231	\$1,731,225	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.1%

Source: Topsfield Facility Condition Assessment, 2019 (EMG).

Facility Maintenance and Improvements

The Tri-Town School Union office has a Director of Facilities who ensures local school buildings are proactively maintained for the schools in all three districts: Boxford, Middleton, and Topsfield. This includes two campuses in each of the three Towns, six school buildings, and one administration building in Boxford. Likewise, the Masconomet Regional School District (serving Boxford, Middleton, and Topsfield) has a Facilities and Grounds Department with multiple staff to maintain the regional middle and high school.

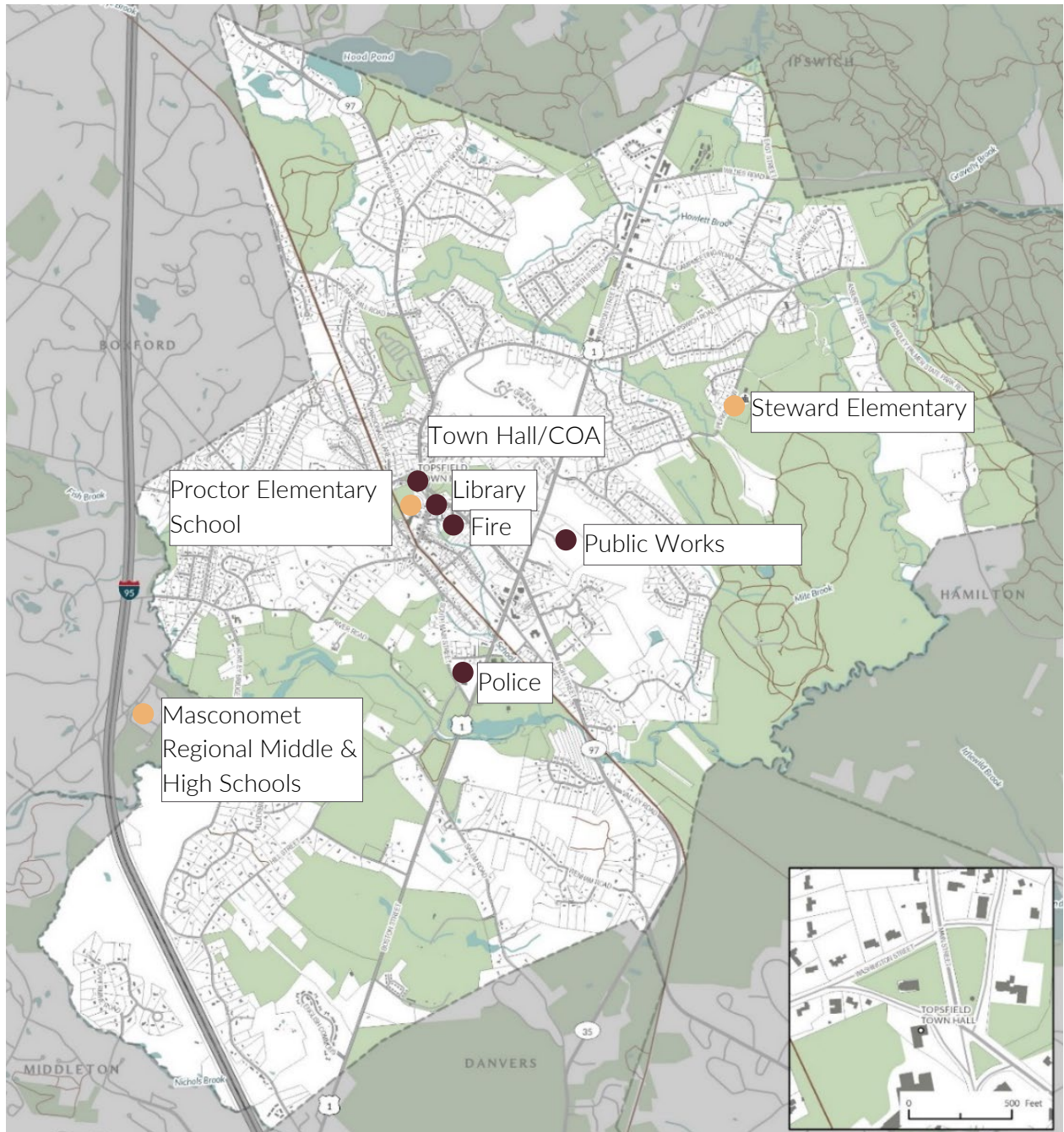
Interviews with the Facilities Director and Superintendent of Schools indicate that no new school facilities or additions are expected to be needed in the immediate future. Previous facility improvements include redoing the school roofs and windows and energy-efficiency improvements such as LED lighting. In the next ten years, facility improvements include overhauling boilers and mechanicals, assessing and refreshing ADA conditions, and improving the parking and sidewalks. Funding an ADA feasibility phase is included in the existing capital plan.

In contrast, the Town does not have a full-time, in-house facilities maintenance staff but relies on Department Heads to manage maintenance in their facilities. The Town does have a part-time facilities coordinator. Department Head interviews indicate a desire for a full-time, in-house municipal facilities manager to manage proactive maintenance issues for municipal buildings.



Proctor School, Source: Wikipedia.

TOPSFIELD MUNICIPAL FACILITIES AND REGIONAL SCHOOL LOCATIONS



Source: MassGIS, MassDEP, MAPC TrailMap

MUNICIPAL SERVICES

Topsfield's historic Town Hall was constructed in 1874. It recently went through a significant renovation and addition process, which received the 2019 Massachusetts Historical Commission Preservation Award.

Administration, Permitting, and Finance

Departments responsible for administration, finance, and permitting are in Town Hall. These departments include the Accounting, Assessors, Conservation, Health and Inspectional Services, Personnel, Planning Board, Purchasing, Town Administrator, Town Clerk (appointed), Treasurer/Collector, Veteran services, and Zoning Board. Town employees interviewed consistently reported feeling understaffed but took pride in providing excellent service despite capacity issues and tight budgets. Topsfield's devoted volunteer community benefits from many quality professionals who lend their time to Topsfield Boards and Committees. Town permitting functions rely on volunteer boards, as the Town has no Town Planner or Town Engineer. The Town has a full-time Conservation Administrator and a Health Director. The Town Clerk department's responsibilities have increased in recent years due to expanded in-person early voting and mail-in voting.



*Topsfield Town Hall,
Source: Wikipedia.*

Recreation

The Recreation Department in the Town Hall is relatively new to Topsfield, supported by a part-time Recreation Director. The Recreation Department handles field and facility reservations, organizes the HomeGrown Market (a seasonal weekly farmer's market), creates a seasonal ice rink on the Town Common, and recently completed a *Topsfield Recreation Department Needs assessment 2021-22*. Key findings are described in the PLAY chapter "What the Community Said" section. The Department is planning on offering more community programming soon.



Town Common Ice Rink, Source: Topsfield Recreation

Council on Aging and Senior Center

The Council on Aging, with a Senior Center in the Town Hall, provides programs and services to the 60+ population and caregivers. These programs include nutrition, transportation, social and educational programs, information and referral services, elder protection programs, volunteer opportunities, wellness programs, support services, and outreach. The Council of Aging participates in Dementia Friendly Topsfield, whose mission is to make Topsfield a dementia-friendly town by empowering businesses, organizations, municipal employees, and residents to advocate for and assist those community members with dementia. More on the Council on Aging is in the PLAY chapter.



Games at the Senior Center, Source: Council of Aging.

Fire



Fire Station, Source: John Galia, firenews.org.

The Fire Department has one station located near the Town Center. The Fire Department is a full-service organization, including fire suppression, extrication, search and rescue, Haz-Mat, fire prevention, car seats, education, and emergency medical services. The Fire Chief runs the Department with six full-time and 20 on-call firefighters. Staffing has recently increased for the first time in almost 20 years, but in the opinion of the Fire Chief, it still needs to be more staffed for the community needs. The Department continues to struggle to assemble enough firefighters to respond to emergencies at night and particularly during peak family vacation times. Call volumes have doubled since 2004, and emergencies increase in numbers and complexity each year, especially after the 2020 pandemic. Additionally, the age and size of the building present challenges, such as ordering custom fire trucks to fit in the station. There is a desire to explore a joint Public Safety building in the next ten years, and the Chief is pursuing a feasibility study.

Police

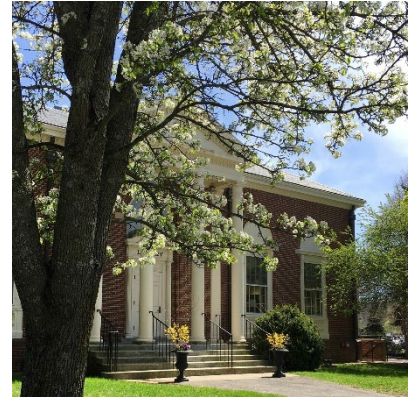
The Police Department has one station along Route 1 and serves the Department's detention, personnel, vehicle storage, property, and records storage needs. The Police Department has several divisions: Traffic, Criminal Investigation, and Training. The Department is run by the Police Chief, with eleven full-time police officers, ten reserve officers, three special police officers, and one civilian staff member. In 2021, they purchased the first all-electric police cruiser. Essex County Regional Dispatch Center functions as Topsfield's public safety and dispatch center. Like the Fire Department, the age and size of the current police station present challenges, and discussions have started around a joint Public Safety building.



Police Station, Source: Police Department.

Library

Topsfield's first library was founded in 1794 and is now located in a 1935 building near the Town Commons, serving as an essential cultural and informational resource for the community. The Library recently completed a *Strategic Plan for FY2023-FY2028* in 2022. Their goals include offering collections offering books and media (many online), providing programs and access to technology, making spaces available for meetings and collaboration, increasing community awareness of resources available, providing opportunities for lifelong learning, maintaining the notable art collection, and creating a welcoming environment with excellent service. The Library receives funding from the Gould Trust, which provides a significant portion of its budget. More on the Library is described in the PLAY chapter.



Topsfield Library, Source: Library webpage.

Department of Public Works

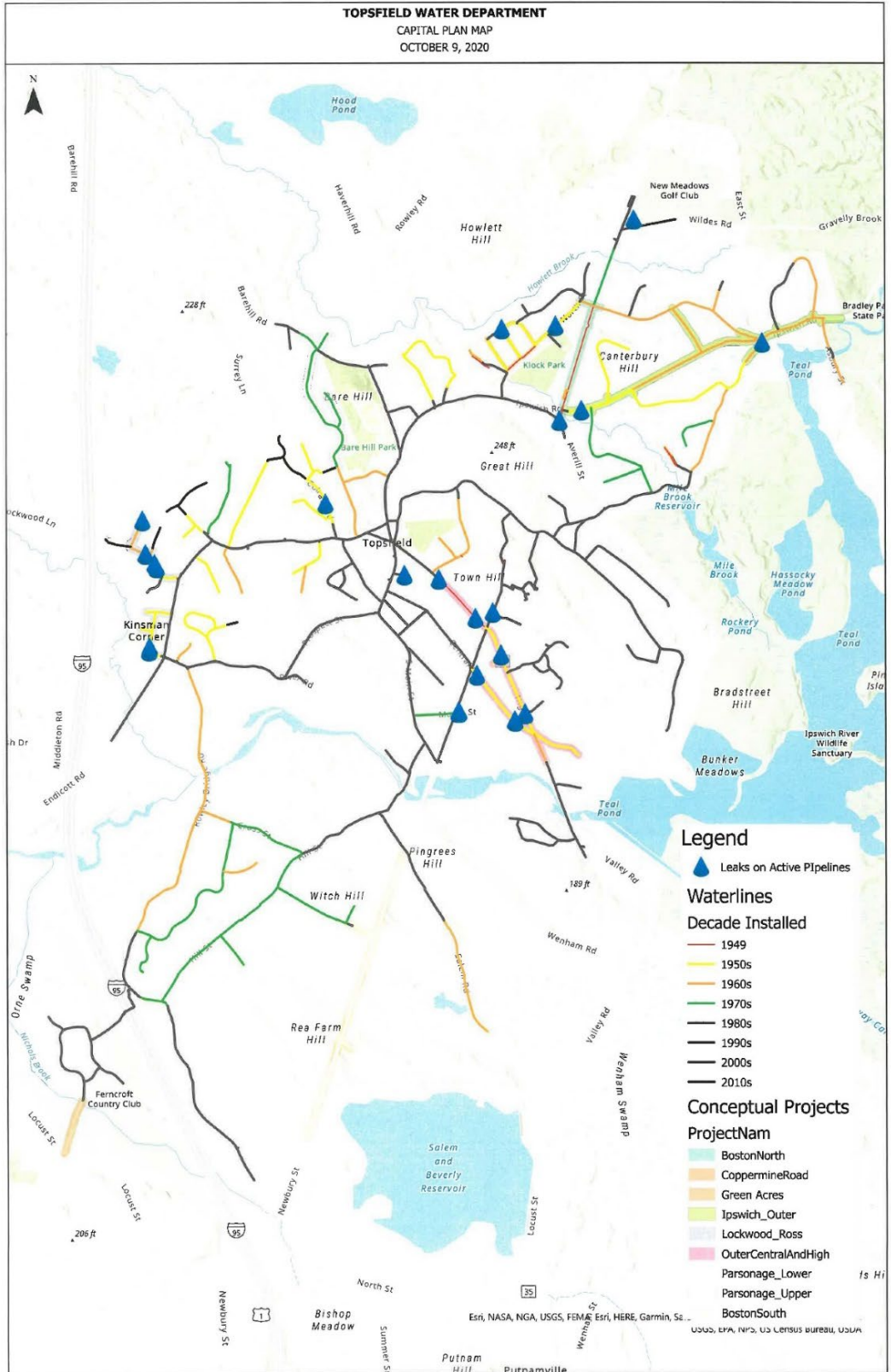


Topsfield water treatment, Source: Public Works

The Topsfield Department of Public Works is located along Route 1 and includes a Parks and Cemetery Building, two pumping stations, and a new water treatment plant. The old Highway Garage is in the Town Center (vacant) and is undergoing a disposal process of municipal property. The Department has several responsibilities, including water treatment and quality, snow, and ice removal, composting (drop off), sports and recreational field maintenance, and stormwater. Topsfield relies on on-site septic systems for sewage disposal. Republic Services and JRM Hauling and Recycling provide weekly trash and recycling. One hundred and fifty-two million gallons of water were withdrawn from Topsfield's two wells during FY20. In 2021, the Town approved funding for replacing the Boston Street Water Storage Tank, and many large water capital projects are projected to be needed in the next five years.

Information Technology (IT) Improvements

Topsfield currently has no internal IT staff. In 2021, the Select Board approved a Memorandum of Understanding for an inter-municipal agreement among Danvers, Middleton, Essex, Hamilton, Wenham, and Manchester-by-the-Sea. This was the first step in creating the North Shore Regional IT (Information Technology) Collaborative, which is intended to leverage shared IT resources as well as the purchasing power of a collaborative. Topsfield has a part-time employee responsible for the website and the Town's Twitter and Facebook accounts.



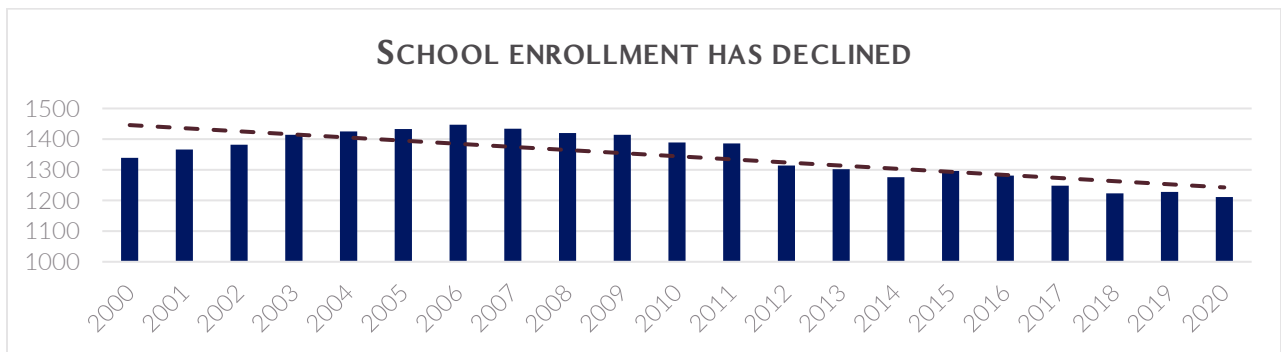
Source: Topsfield Water Department.

SCHOOLS SERVICES

Topsfield's Public School District serves 628 students (2022-23)¹ in preschool through sixth grade. Students matriculate to Masconomet Regional School District for grades seven to 12. The primary school, Steward School, serves preschool to third grade; Proctor School houses students in fourth through sixth grades. Administrative offices are in Boxford.

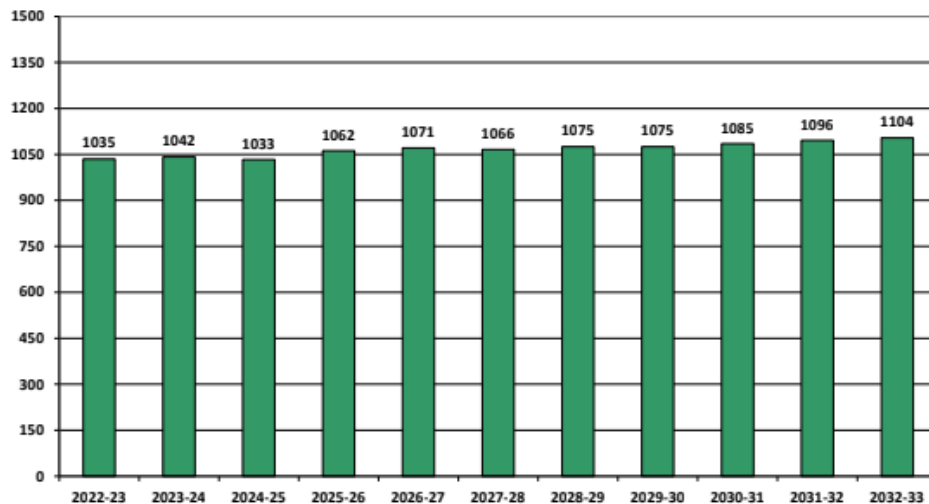
Enrollment

After about seven years of growth between 2000 and 2007, Topsfield public schools have seen a steady decline in enrollment over the last ten years. However, Topsfield's school enrollment is projected to remain mostly flat and slightly rise during the next ten years.² According to the Superintendent, the school district is at the beginning of a strategic planning process, including a study of whether the towns want to explore regionalization at the elementary level.



School Enrollment Trend Data, Source: MassHousing Partnership DataTown.

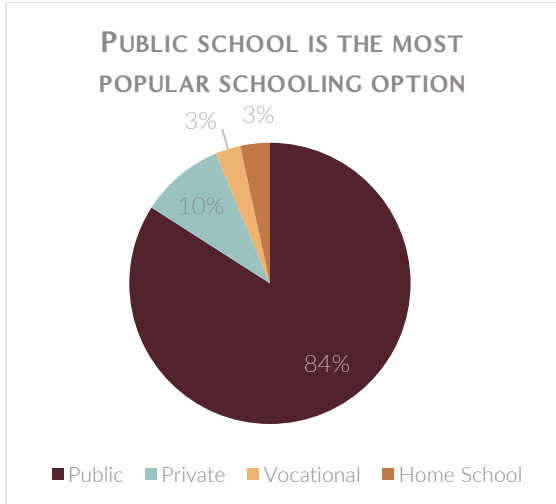
SCHOOL ENROLLMENT IS PROJECTED TO INCREASE SLIGHTLY IN THE NEXT TEN YEARS



New England School Development Council, Source: Topsfield, MA Masconomet Regional School District 2022-23.

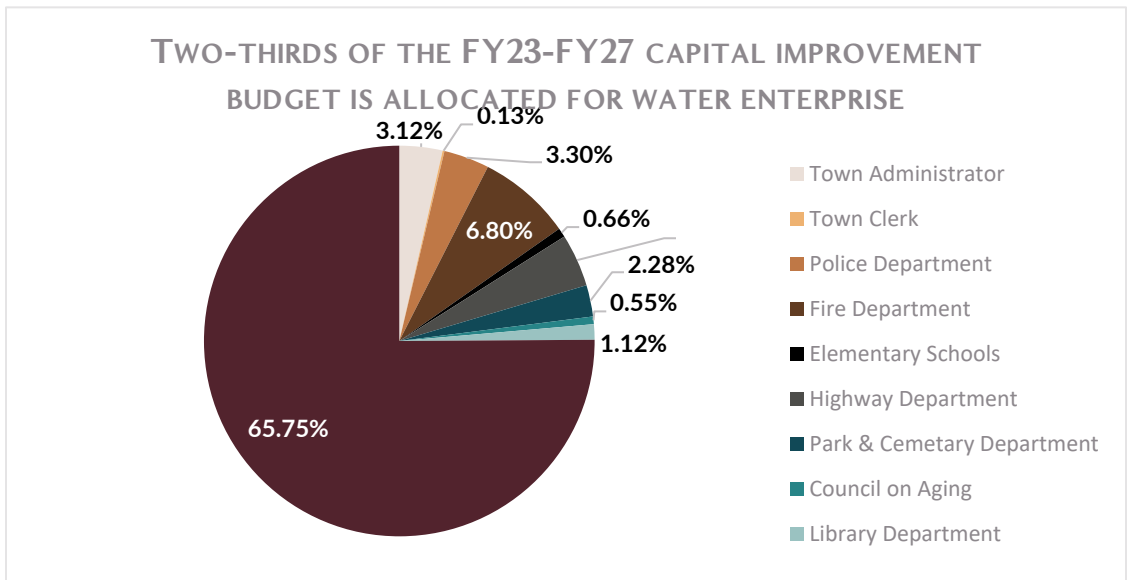
¹ Massachusetts School and District Profile data, 2023.

² New England School Development Council, Topsfield, MA Masconomet Regional School District 2022-23 Enrollment Projection Report.



School Enrollment by Type, Source: MassHousing Partnership DataTown.

REVENUES AND SPENDING



Topsfield Capital Improvement Budget, Source: Town of Topsfield.

In Fiscal Year 2020,³ Topsfield received 78.6 percent from personal property and real estate taxes (\$26.1 million). The remaining revenues came from tax liens (0.01 percent), motor vehicle excise tax (3.53 percent), other local receipts (4.24 percent), Cherry Sheet receipts (6.16 percent), and the water enterprise fund (7.39 percent). Topsfield's Capital Improvement Planning for FY2023-FY2027 projects total spending needs to be \$22,572,800 across all five years, \$14,841,700 of which are projected to be required for the Water Enterprise fund. Large water capital projects in future years include water storage tank replacement, water treatment upgrades, pump station and well rehabilitation, and water main replacements.

³ Town of Topsfield, Annual Town Report 2021.

WHAT THE COMMUNITY SAID

Topsfield's Recreation Department Needs Assessment survey showed the community would like improvements to existing recreational spaces (fields, parks, playgrounds) and excitement about having a Recreation Department. The community also enjoys family-friendly town events and would like more programming options, keeping affordability in mind. Finally, there is a desire to use multiple media outlets to promote recreational programming and events. This was reiterated at the Community forum (December 2022), where residents expressed their desire for more activities for kids and younger generations.

The Library Strategic Plan survey showed that approximately half the respondents visit the Library at least monthly and use online resources similarly. Survey participants would be most interested in attending library events related to author talks, history, and Friends of the Library events.



Topsfield Holiday on the Green, Source: topsfieldholidayonthegreen.com.

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Town of Topsfield, *Topsfield Town Hall (2022) Photograph*.

Town of Topsfield, *Town of Topsfield Classification Plan & Non-Union Positions Titles by Grade*, September 2019, https://www.topsfield-ma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf5086/f/uploads/classification_plan_updated_sept.2019.pdf.



Topsfield Downtown, Source: MAPC.

LAND: DEVELOPMENT & ZONING

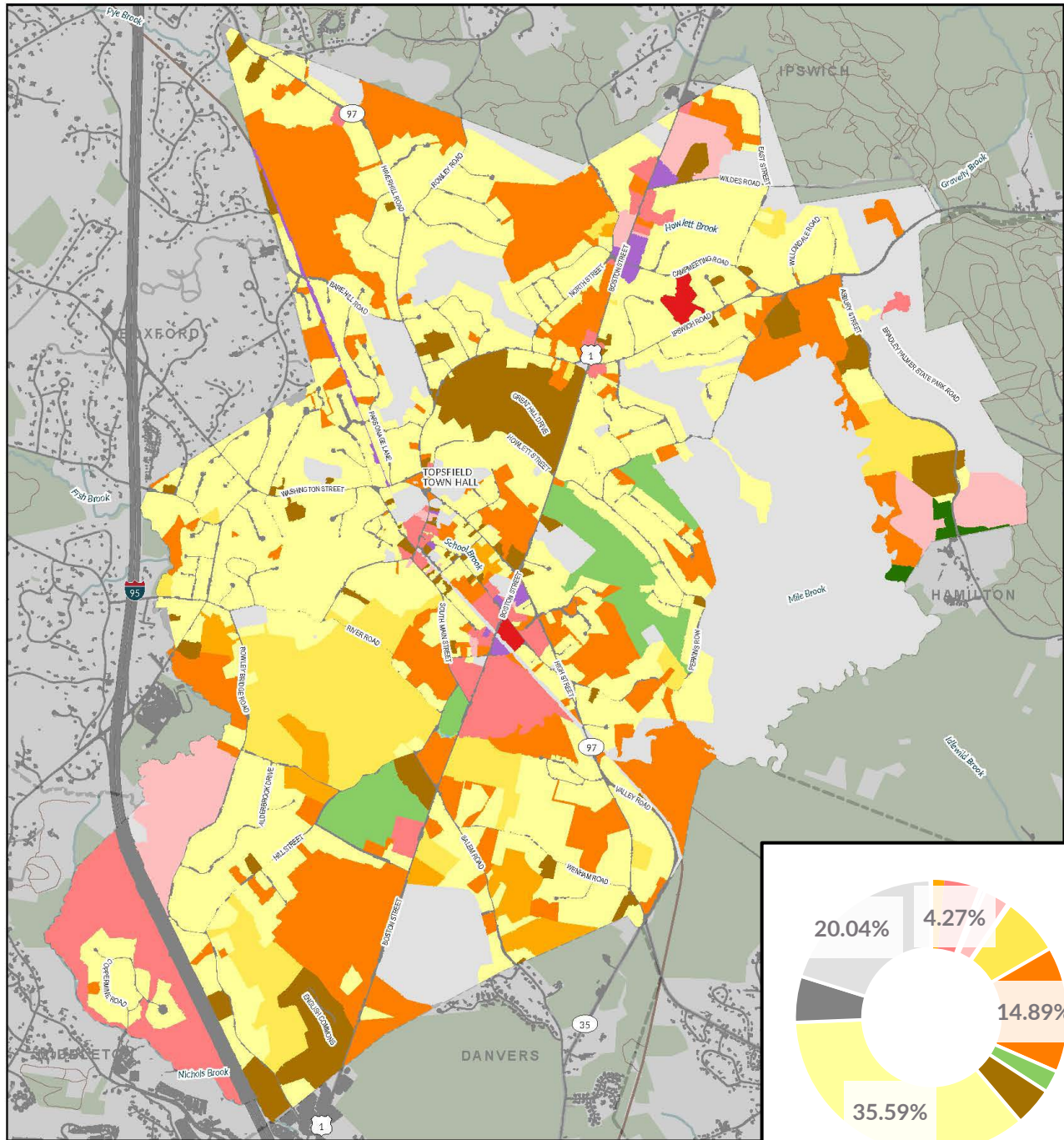
Land use can refer to how space is used in specific neighborhoods, the types of retail stores in the central business district, the use of open space and natural resources, or the placement of specific industrial uses. How land is used can shape people’s perceptions of a place, its desirability, and its economic value. Land usage changes and grows over time. Zoning provides the regulatory framework to develop or preserve land, guiding how the land can be used, building height and placement, the interface with the transportation network, and more. A community’s zoning rules and regulations impact how land is used in that community, regulating both the natural and the built environment. This chapter will summarize land usage in Topsfield and zoning regulations that have shaped the Town’s development.

40 PERCENT OF TOPSFIELD'S LAND USE IS RESIDENTIAL.

TOWN OF TOPSFIELD - LAND USE

Prepared by JM Goldson LLC

J M G O L D S O N

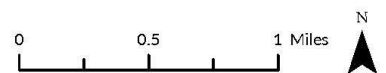


Land Use

- Agriculture
- Commercial
- Forest
- Industrial

- Mixed use, other
- Mixed use, primarily commercial
- Mixed use, primarily residential
- Open land
- Recreation
- Residential - multi-family

- Residential - single family
- Right-of-way
- Tax exempt
- Unknown
- Water



Sources: MassGIS, MassDEP, MAPC Trailmap

LAND USE PATTERNS

Topsfield exhibits a pattern of land uses and built form seen in many small, rural, New England towns. It has a compact and walkable town center with a town common. Residential neighborhoods expand outward with decreasing density the further one gets from the town center. Residential areas are the most prominent land use in the town. The neighborhoods are mainly low-density, single-family homes, and the taxes from this development constitute the bulk of the Town's revenue.

CURRENT LAND USE COMPOSITION¹

Land Use Type	Total Area (acres)	Percent of Total Area
Agriculture	122.91	1.50%
Commercial	349.74	4.27%
Forest	15.07	0.18%
Industrial	37.71	0.46%
Mixed-Use	838.78	10.24%
Open Land	1,220.02	14.89%
Recreation	214.20	2.61%
Residential	3,293.65	40.20%
Right-Of-Way	447.30	5.46%
Tax Exempt	1,642.13	20.04%
Water	1.27	0.02%
Other	9.59	0.12%
TOTAL	8192.36	

Source: MassGIS Land Use/Cover 2016 and 2005 datasets.

VEGETATION AND LAND COVER²

Much of the protected land in Town is forested. Willowdale State Forest and the Town Forest are exclusively forested, while Bradley Palmer State Park is primarily forested in the portion that lies within Topsfield. The Massachusetts Audubon lands contain fields but are mostly comprised of wetlands, rivers, forested wetlands, and forested uplands. The Salem and Beverly Water Board land is predominantly wetlands. The primary vegetative cover type in Topsfield is woodland. White pine is the predominant softwood, while maple is the dominant hardwood, with lesser volumes of white and red oaks. The rare River Bulrush is found in Topsfield, while a Silver Maple floodplain forest is located on the Topsfield Fairgrounds along the Ipswich River, and a stand of white cedar, unique to the Atlantic seaboard, can be found near Hood Pond. Proper forestry practices are needed to maintain and protect the Town's open space from overgrowth and invasive plant life.

¹ There are differences in how various databases code and account for land use, land cover, and property types. More details on open space and agricultural lands can be found in the PROTECT chapter.

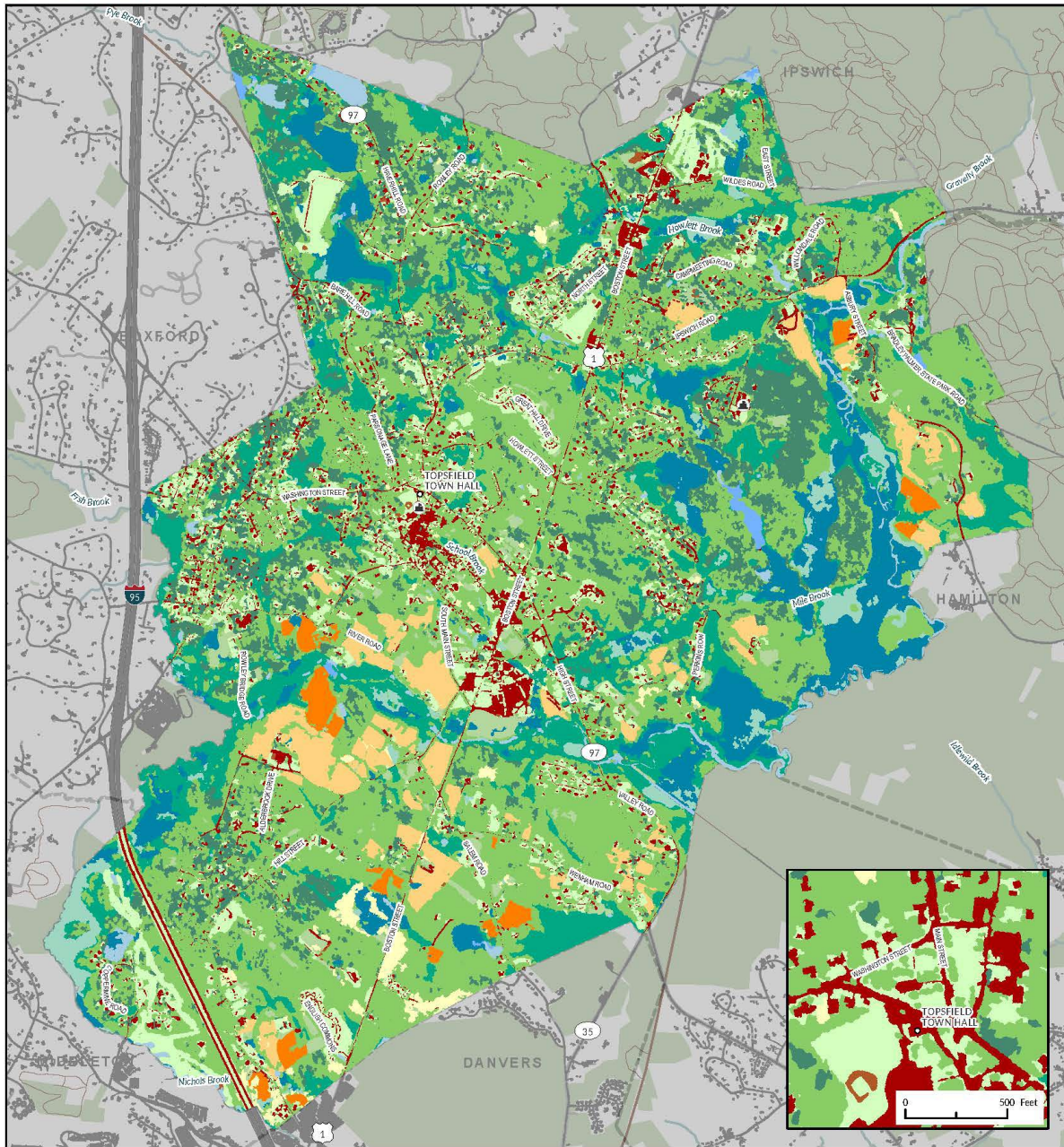
² Topsfield Open Space and Recreation Plan, 2019.

FORESTS MAKE UP MORE THAN HALF OF TOPSFIELD'S LAND COVER

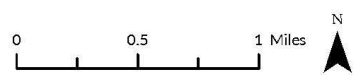
TOWN OF TOPSFIELD - LAND COVER

Prepared by JM Goldson LLC

J M GOLDSON



Land Cover Type	
	Bare Land
	Cultivated
	Deciduous Forest
	Developed Open Space
	Evergreen Forest
	Grassland
	Impervious
	Palustrine Aquatic Bed
	Palustrine Emergent Wetland
	Palustrine Forested Wetland
	Palustrine Scrub/Shrub Wetland
	Pasture/Hay
	Scrub/Shrub
	Unconsolidated Shore
	Water



Sources: MassGIS, MassDEP, MAPC Trailmap

TOPSFIELD LAND COVER

Cultivated	90.42	1.1%
Deciduous Forest	3347.88	40.9%
Developed Open Space	660.30	8.1%
Evergreen Forest	992.97	12.1%
Grassland	133.42	1.6%
Impervious	596.76	7.3%
Palustrine Aquatic Bed	23.56	0.3%
Palustrine Emergent Wetland	592.56	7.2%
Palustrine Forested Wetland	1087.16	13.3%
Palustrine Scrub/Shrub Wetland	182.95	2.2%
Pasture/Hay	315.97	3.9%
Scrub/Shrub	76.78	0.9%
Unconsolidated Shore	0.01	0.0%
Water	85.08	1.0%
Total	8,192.37	

ZONING REGULATIONS

Topsfield has seven primary zoning districts and six overlay districts. Each zoning district has specific use and dimensional regulations, including building, area, and parking requirements. The map on the following page shows the current zoning designations in the Town. There are three residential, three mixed-use, and one commercial district. Overlay districts allow for elderly housing and medical marijuana or regulate scenic or environmentally sensitive areas. Per the Town’s website, Topsfield is “currently engaged in a comprehensive bylaw codification project and is working on updating the records of current bylaws and associated documents to ensure accuracy and completeness.”

Residential

Topsfield’s Zoning Bylaw includes three residential districts: **Outlying Residential and Agricultural (ORA)**, **Inner Residential and Agricultural (IRA)**, and **Central Residential (CR)**. Across these three zoning districts, single-family dwellings are the only residential use allowed by right. Two or more multi-family dwellings are prohibited apart from the Elderly Housing Overlay District (see the Overlay District section below for more information). Topsfield’s Bylaw also includes provisions for temporary accessory apartment dwellings and lodging and boarding houses by special permit.

Mixed Use

Topsfield’s Zoning Bylaw has three mixed-use districts: **Business Village (BV)**, **Business District Highway (BH)**, and **Business District Highway North (BHN)**. Most every by-right use allowed within the residential zones hold the same rights within Topsfield’s mixed-use districts except for farm stands on less than five acres, with requires a special permit in each district, accessory structures, and unregistered motor vehicle/trailer/boat storage both of which are not permitted in the BHN district. Retail and service are primarily allowed by-right or special permits throughout these districts.² Trades, Wholesale, Transportation, and Industrial uses are essentially not permitted in any

community, with some exceptions highlighted in the below sections.

Commercial

Topsfield has one commercial zone, the **Business Park District (BP)**, which runs along Route 1 from the Campmeeting Road intersection to the town's northern border, including all land between Route 1 and North Street. Single-family dwellings and temporary accessory apartments are BP's only residential uses permitted as a right.

This district limits retail and service more strictly than BV, BH, and BHN; the only by-right retail and service uses within BP are florists and veterinary hospitals. Small-scale (less than 500 ft²) ground-mounted solar installations and alternative/renewable energy research and development facilities are also permitted by right. All accessory uses are permitted as a right apart from outside storage for the operation of principal use, which requires a special permit.

Temporary Accessory Apartments

Temporary accessory apartments are allowed by special permit in every underlying zoning district in accordance with Article VII, 7.03 Temporary Accessory Apartment Special Permit By-Law. Temporary accessory apartment dwellings must be attached to or located within the main dwelling and are to be occupied by family members or individuals filling caretaker roles. Dwellings with temporary accessory apartments must remain as a single-family residence by way of singular entrance to the property, onsite parking, and single-service utilities.

OVERLAY DISTRICTS

Elderly Housing District

Topsfield has established four Elderly Housing Districts within this overlay: Great Hill, English Commons of Topsfield Elderly Housing District, New Meadows Golf Course Elderly Housing District, and the Rolling Green Elderly Housing District. Within these overlay districts, only by-right uses of the underlying zoning apply. These districts were established to dedicate land for non-profit or town-built multifamily elderly housing. Construction is limited to sites of ten or more acres with a maximum of five units per acre and a thirty-five-foot height restriction.

Groundwater Protection District

The Groundwater Protection District was established to preserve and protect Topsfield's groundwater against planned and unplanned (hazardous) waste disposal resulting in contaminated well water. This overlay has 20 permitted uses, so long as they align with the underlying zoning, nine prohibited uses, and six require special permits from the Planning Board.

Floodplain District

This overlay district includes all special flood hazard areas designated by the Essex County Flood Insurance Rate Map issued by FEMA to administer the National Flood Insurance Program.

Ipswich River Protection District

The Ipswich River Protection District encompasses all land within a two-hundred-foot buffer of the Ipswich Riverbank and was established as an area with an additional need for preservation and protection. Building and structures are strictly prohibited within this area aside from temporary farming structures, irrigation systems, recreation spaces, and shelters connected to wildlife conservation, management, or agriculture.

Medical Marijuana Cultivation/Processing Overlay District (MMCPOD)

Topsfield adopted the MMCPOD to assign locations in Town suitable for marijuana cultivation and processing facilities. This overlay falls within the Business Park Zoning District and one additional lot. Facilities must adhere to underlying zoning requirements (including signage limitations). They may not be located within five-hundred feet of any K-12 public or private school, childcare facility,

library, playground, public park, youth center, or similar space intended for the congregation of minors. Facilities must include a fifty-foot buffer between adjacent uses.

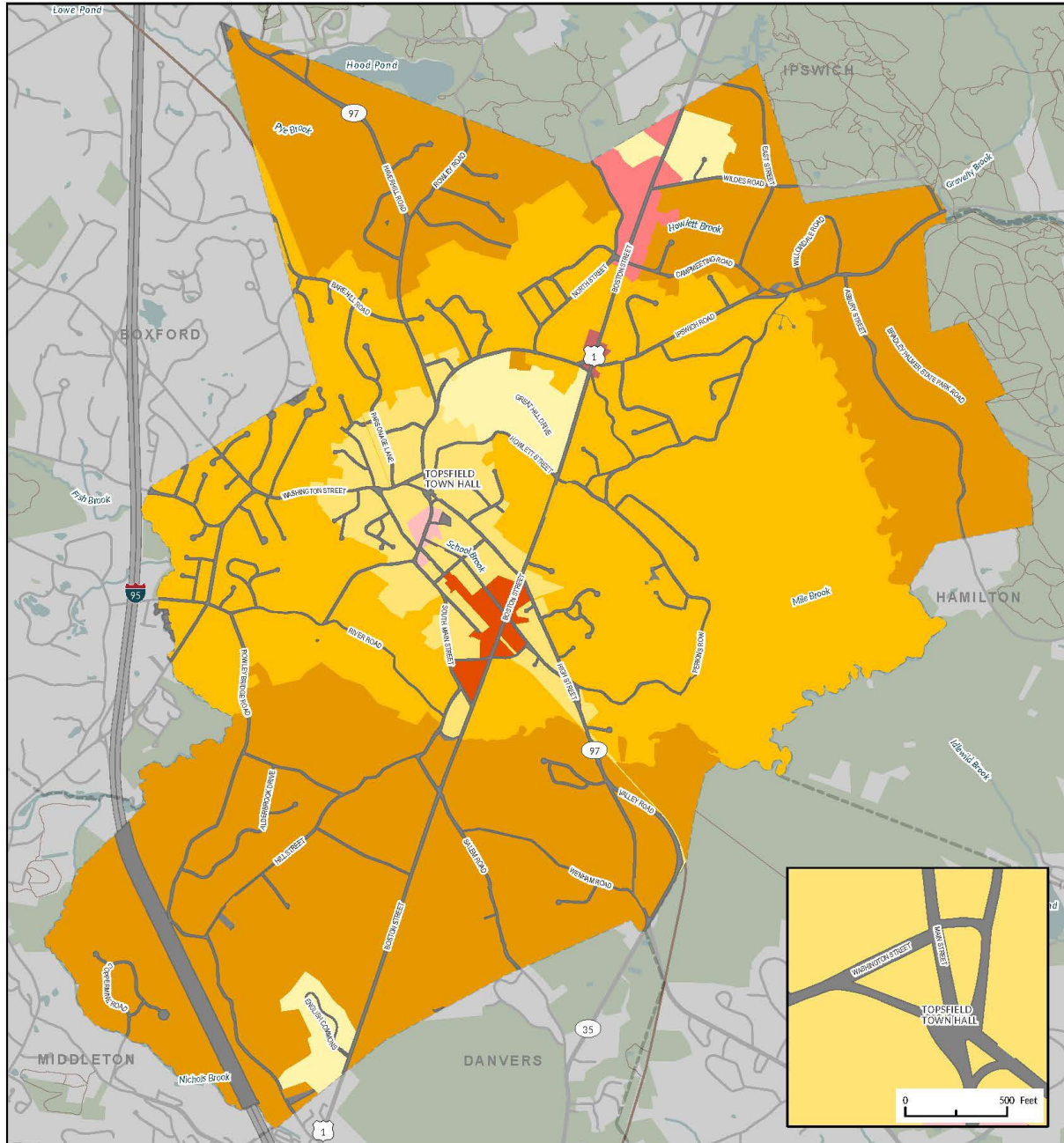
Scenic Overlay Zone

The Scenic Overlay Zone runs parallel to Route 1 to preserve the scenic and rural character of the southern entryway to Topsfield. This overlay is superimposed solely on the part of the Outlying Residential and Agricultural Districts and is pursuant to underlying zoning regulations. Additional development standards include increased setback to a minimum of one-hundred feet, mitigation of natural vegetation, screened parking, screen waste collection and mechanical equipment, tree retention, and specifications for tree plantings for building screening. Development should be designed in such a way as to complement the aesthetic of the area.

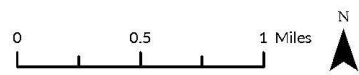
88.9 PERCENT OF TOPSFIELD'S LAND IS ZONED FOR LOW-DENSITY SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENCES.

TOWN OF TOPSFIELD - ZONING
Prepared by JM Goldson LLC

J M GOLDSON



- | | | |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| Schools | Topsfield Zoning Districts | Central Residential District |
| Buildings | Business District-Highway | Elderly Housing District |
| Parcels | Business Highway District North | Inner Residential and Agricultural District |
| Trails | Business Park District | Outer Residential and Agricultural District |
| Water bodies | Business District-Village | Right of ways |
| Open space | | |



Sources: MassGIS, MassDEP, MAPC Trailmap

TOPSFIELD ZONING DISTRICTS

Zoning District	Acreage	Percentage of Total Land
Business District – Highway	118.2	0.8%
Business Highway District North	12.7	0.1%
Business Park District	117.3	0.8%
Business District – Village	24.6	0.2%
Central Residential District	884.9	5.8%
Elderly Housing District	537.3	3.5%
Inner Residential and Agricultural Districts	6,287.3	41.2%
Outer Residential and Agricultural Districts	7,283.4	47.7%
Total	15,265.72	

DIMENSIONAL AND DENSITY REGULATIONS

Most of Topsfield (88.9 percent) is zoned for Outer- and Inner- Residential Agricultural Zones (I-R-A and O-R-A). These zones require a minimum lot size of 2 acres (87,120 square feet) and 200 square feet of frontage. The Business Park District similarly requires two acres minimum lot size. The Business Highway zone requires about a one-acre minimum lot size. In contrast, the Central Residential (C-R) and Business Highway District North (B-H-N) require half-an-acre minimum lot sizes. Commercial use zoning comprises 1.9 percent of Topsfield's land area.

TOPSFIELD ZONING DIMENSIONAL AND DENSITY REGULATIONS

District	Use	Minimum lot area (sq. ft.)	Minimum lot frontage (ft.)	Minimum lot depth (ft.)	Minimum yards			Maximum height (ft.)	Maximum stories (No.)	Maximum building area (%)	Minimum open space (%)
					Front (ft.)	Side (ft.)	Rear (ft.)				
O-R-A	Any permitted use	87,120	200	200	20	20	40	35	2.5	15	50
I-R-A	Any permitted use	87,120	200	150	20	15	40	35	2.5	25	50
C-R	Any permitted use	20,000	100	120	20	10	30	35	2.5	40	40
B-V	Any permitted use	20,000	100	100	40	30	30	35	2.5	40	30
BHN	Any permitted use	20,000	100	100	40	30	30	35	2.5	40	30
B-H	Any permitted use	40,000	200	175	75	40	40	35	2.5	40	30
B-P	Any permitted use	87,500	350	250	75	50	50	45	3	25	25

EHD See Standards Section 3.16 for Dimensional and Density Regulations.

1. See Section 1.52 for the definition of Open Space
2. Except where adjacent to residential use or district, in which case the yard will increase to 50 Feet.
3. Except where adjacent to residential use or district, in which case the yard will increase to 100 feet.
4. Except for O-R-A uses permitted under Section 3.06.
5. Unless as provided for in an Open Space Development Plan under Article 4.09.

MULTI-FAMILY ZONING REQUIREMENT FOR MBTA COMMUNITIES

This new law requires that an MBTA community have at least one zoning district of reasonable size in which multi-family housing is permitted as of right and meets other criteria outlined in the statute:

- Minimum gross density of fifteen units per acre
- Located not more than half a mile from a commuter rail station, subway station, ferry terminal, or bus station, if applicable
- No age restrictions and suitable for families with children
- Meet the required capacity threshold.

Topsfield is an adjacent small community per the new MBTA Communities Law and therefore expected to zone for allowing a capacity of one hundred and eighteen multi-family units as a right. This is not a production requirement, only a zoning requirement. Because Topsfield is a small adjacent community, no transit station locations or minimum size requirements exist.

WHAT THE COMMUNITY SAID

Participants in various focus groups discussed land use more generally, with many agreeing that Topsfield is built out. Given the high percentage of wetlands, protected open space, and acreage that buffers between land use types, Topsfield will need to focus development efforts on creative reuse practices. Buffers were identified as an essential part of Topsfield's landscapes. One participant suggested creating educational materials for new property owners covering the importance of wetland protections and buffers with information on what they can and cannot legally do on their land. More generally, others noted disinterest in further development to bring more activity to Topsfield. The community takes pride in its landscapes and hopes to remain largely rural, with some leniency to increase economic activity along Route 1 and downtown areas to support the local tax base.

Topsfield's *Downtown Revitalization Plan* envisions a welcoming village where Topsfield residents of all ages can live, work, gather, and shop. Community members would like to see more types of businesses downtown, especially restaurants and retail. These sentiments were also echoed at the Community Public Forum in December 2022.



Topsfield Highway Garage, Source: Topsfield Town Website.

The Town wants to reuse the 10 School Avenue property (former Highway Garage) near the Town Center.

REFERENCES

MassGIS, Land Use/Cover 2016.

Metropolitan Area Planning Committee (MAPC) *Topsfield Downtown Revitalization Plan, December 2019*. https://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Downtown-Topsfield-Revitalization-Plan_Full.pdf

Multi-family Zoning Requirement for MBTA Communities website, <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/multi-family-zoning-requirement-for-mbta-communities>.

Topsfield Request for Proposals for Reuse of the 10 School Avenue Property, 2022.

Topsfield Zoning Bylaws.

KEY DEFINITIONS

This list of key definitions is intended to assist the reader and not to replace applicable legal definitions of these terms. The following definitions are for key terms used throughout the document, many of which are based on definitions in statutes and regulations.

Adaptation – a retroactive approach to climate resilience that responds to events that have occurred in the past and alters processes and infrastructure based on lessons learned or damage done.

Area Median Income (AMI) – the 2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimate lists Topsfield’s median household income at \$144,258, slightly higher than the 2020 HUD Area Median Income of \$119,000 covers Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA-NH. Incomes have increased by 49.6 percent from 2010 to 2020¹.

Chapter Lands – Commonwealth of Massachusetts land classification and tax program that incentivizes landowners to maintain their property as forest, agriculture, or recreation areas in exchange for reduced property taxes and provides the town a right of first refusal but do not guarantee conservation. Chapter 60 applies to forestry land; Chapter 61A applies to agricultural and horticultural land; and Chapter 61B applies to recreational land, including golf courses, horseback riding, hiking, and nature study and observation.

Climate Resilience – the ability to anticipate, prepare for, and respond to hazardous events, trends, or disturbances related to climate. Improving climate resilience involves assessing how climate change will create new or alter current climate-related risks and taking steps to better cope with these risks.²

Complete Streets – “Streets designed and operated to enable safe use and support mobility for all users. Those include people of all ages and abilities, regardless of whether they travel as drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, or public transportation riders.”³ MassDOT offers a program through which registered municipalities can apply for funding towards eligible projects prioritized by the community.

Cost-Burdened Household – a household that spends 30 percent or more of its income on housing-related costs (such as rent or mortgage payments). Severely cost-burdened households spend 50 percent or more of their income on housing-related expenses.

Demolition Delay Bylaw – a regulation that protects historically significant buildings (75 or more years old) by requiring a demolition permit subject to a 12-month waiting period if the Historical Commission determines the structure to be historically significant and preferably preserved.

Educational Attainment – the highest level of formal education achieved, as documented by the US Census American Community Survey.

Elderly Non-Families – a household of one older person as defined by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) data.

¹ Source: ACS (A14015).

² Center for Climate and Energy Solutions.

³ U.S. Department of Transportation. *Complete Streets*. <https://www.transportation.gov/mission/health/complete-streets> (accessed June 2021).

Green Community – A designation from the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources recognizing municipalities that have adopted clean energy and energy-efficiency policies according to the following criteria:

1. Adoption of zoning allows as-of-right siting of renewable or alternative energy generating facilities, Research and development facilities, or manufacturing facilities in designated locations.
2. Adoption of expedited application and permitting for renewable energy facilities.
3. Establish a baseline inventory and Energy Reduction Plan (to reduce energy use by 20 percent) for energy use in municipal buildings, facilities, and vehicles.
4. Adopting a fuel-efficient vehicle policy, developing a vehicle inventory, and planning to replace non-exempt vehicles with more energy-efficient options.
5. Adoption of “Stretch Code” that minimizes energy use in new homes and buildings.⁴

Heat Wave – In Massachusetts, it is defined as three or more consecutive days above 90° Fahrenheit (F). The National Weather Services will issue a heat advisory when the heat index is forecast to exceed 100°F for two or more hours and an *excessive* heat advisory when the forecast predicts temperature to rise above 105°F.

Historic Resource – a building, structure, document, or artifact listed on the state Register of historic places or National Register of Historic Places or determined by the Topsfield Historical Commission to be significant in the history, archeology, architecture, or culture of the Town.

Household – all related or unrelated people who occupy a housing unit. It can also include a person living alone in a housing unit or a group of unrelated people sharing a housing unit as partners or roommates.

Family Household – Family households consist of two or more individuals related by birth, marriage, or adoption, although they may also include other unrelated people.

Non-Family Households – Non-family households consist of individuals living alone and with roommates who are unrelated by birth, marriage, or adoption.

Income Thresholds – the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) establishes income thresholds that apply to various housing assistance programs. These thresholds are updated annually and are categorized by household size. Topsfield is part of the Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA, HUD Metro FMR Area. For FY 2022, the Median Family Income is \$140,200.

Extremely Low-Income (ELI) – the FY 2014 Consolidated Appropriations Act changed the definition of extremely low-income to an individual or family whose annual gross income is at or below the greater of 30/50ths (60 percent) of the Section 8 very low-income limit or the poverty guideline. The FY2022 ELI income limits for a household of one is \$29,450 and for a household of four is \$42,050 (the 30% AMI limit).

Very Low-Income (VLI) – an individual or family whose annual gross income is at or below 50 percent AMI. The FY2022 VLI income limits for a household of one is \$49,100 and for a household of four is \$70,100 for the Boston MSA.

⁴ MassDOER Green Communities Division. Becoming a Designated Green Community.

Low/Moderate income (LMI) – an individual or family whose annual gross income is at or below 80 percent of the area median income (AMI).⁵ The FY2022 LMI income limits for a household of one is \$78,300 and for a household of four is \$111,850.

Labor Force – all residents within a community over the age of 16 who are currently employed or *actively* seeking employment. It does not include students, retirees, discouraged workers (residents not actively seeking a job), or those who cannot work due to a disability.

Location Quotient – a metric that reveals the concentration of industries. It is a ratio that compares employment by industry between a community—Topsfield—and a comparison geography— the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Mitigation – a proactive approach to climate resilience that looks ahead to predicted or potential risks and plans accordingly to reduce or eliminate foreseen threats.

Open Space – land to protect existing and future well fields, aquifers and recharge areas, watershed land, agricultural land, grasslands, fields, forest land, meadows, wetlands, rivers, streams, lake and pond frontage, scenic vistas, wildlife, or nature preservation, or land for recreational use.

Road Categories:

Arterial Roads – Arterials are roadways that provide the highest level of mobility at the greatest vehicular speed for the longest uninterrupted distances and are not intended to provide access to specific locations.

Collector Roads – funnel traffic from local roads to arterials and provide an additional layer of access to abutting properties compared to arterials, which usually have limited access points.

Local Roads – provide access to abutting lands with little or no emphasis on mobility. These local roadways offer direct access to properties along them, have slower posted travel speeds, and feed local traffic onto collector roads.

Subsidized Housing Inventory – a list of housing units in each municipality that counts towards the affordable housing stock under Chapter 40B.

Unemployment Rate – the percentage of the labor force who is not employed but actively seeking employment.

Vacancy Rate – The percentage of residential, commercial, office, or industrial properties not currently occupied by a household or business.

Wetlands Protection Bylaw – Topsfield’s local bylaw provides additional protections for wetlands, water resources, and adjoining land beyond the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act, including a twenty-five-foot no-disturb zone. Activities within these resource areas are subject to approval by the Conservation Commission.

⁵ For purposes of MGL c.40B, low/moderate income is defined as up to 80 percent AMI.

ACRONYMS

40B	Comprehensive Permit, per MGL Chapter 40B
ACS	US Census Bureau's American Community Survey
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
AMI	Area Median Income
CHAS	Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy
CIP	Capital Improvement Program
COA	Topsfield Council on Aging
COVID-19	Coronavirus known as SARS-CoV-2
DCR	Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation
DEP	Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection
DHCD	Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development
DOE	Massachusetts Department of Education
DOR	Massachusetts Department of Revenue
DPW	Topsfield Department of Public Works
EV	Electric Vehicle
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FIRMs	Flood Insurance Rate Maps
FY	Fiscal Year(s)
GIS	Geographic Information Science
HAMFI	Areawide Median Family Income set by HUD
HSIP	MassDOT Highway Safety Improvement Program
HUD	United States Department of Housing and Urban Development
MACRIS	Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System
MAPC	Metropolitan Area Planning Council
MassDOER	Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources
MassDOT	Massachusetts Department of Transportation
MassGIS	Massachusetts Bureau of Geographic Information
MBTA	Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority
MGL	Massachusetts General Laws
MHC	Massachusetts Historical Commission
MOE	Margins of Error
MPSC	Master Plan Steering Committee
MS4	Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System
MSA	Metropolitan Statistical Area
MVP	Topsfield Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program
OSRP	Topsfield Open Space and Recreation Plan
SHI	Massachusetts Subsidized Housing Inventory
UMDI	University of Massachusetts at Amherst Donahue Institute, also UMass Donahue
USDA NRCS	U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service