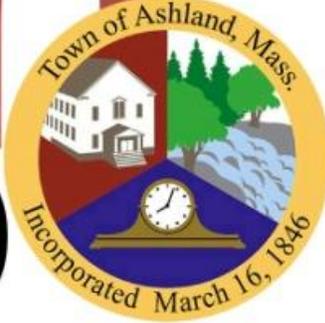


Plan ASHLAND

The seal of the Town of Ashland, Massachusetts, is circular and features a white building, green trees, a blue sky, and a clock face. The text "Town of Ashland, Mass." is at the top and "Incorporated March 16, 1846" is at the bottom.

Comprehensive Plan Community Vision, Goals and Land Use Element **DRAFT**

April, 2016



Acknowledgements

This document was produced with assistance from the Ashland Comprehensive Plan Advisory Group: Kris O. Briggs, Yolanda Greaves, Board of Selectmen; Preston Crow, Chair, Planning Board. ; Michael Herbert, Town Manager; Nathaniel Strosberg, Town Planner; members of many Ashland town departments; elected officials and citizens, as well as the former Ashland Comprehensive Plan Committee: Joel Arbeitman, Kris O. Briggs, Yolanda Greaves, Chair, John P. Kirwan, Sandra Mokey, Margot E. Northam, Janet Platt, Diane T. Roberts, Florence Seidell.

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ASHLAND COMMUNITY VISION STATEMENT

The Community Vision Statement is based on hundreds of comments and suggestions received during the public outreach process. The Ashland Comprehensive Plan Advisory Group adopted the following vision:

The Town of Ashland is a thriving community that we are proud to call home. We are committed to taking charge of our future and proud of our commitment to sustainability. We are a regional collaborator and a leader working across our municipal boundaries to achieve our goals. Our public schools are centers of excellence, drawing in new residents and families. Our community flourishes because engaged residents, business owners, and leaders work together to advance and communicate common values, goals, and priorities of the Ashland Comprehensive Plan. The Town has sufficient resources and strong infrastructure to support our thriving community.



This is a screenshot of the Plan Ashland webpage on Ashland's website

In addition to the general vision above, the Advisory Group drafted supporting vision statements for five topics or elements in a Comprehensive Plan: Land Use, Housing, Economic Development, Transportation and Open Space and Recreation. These are also based on public comments.

Following are the supporting vision statements with the goals for each element.

VISION AND GOALS FOR FIVE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ELEMENTS

Land Use Vision Our downtown, key corridors and neighborhoods are sustainable and vibrant

Land Use Goals

1. Accommodates key development and preservation activities through Ashland's Zoning By-law.
2. Implement land use policies that support and encourage appropriately-scaled and mixed-use developments in key areas of town.
3. Consider form-based code
4. Ensure coordination and alignment among all land use review and permitting entities

Housing Vision Ashland welcomes residents of all ages and socio-economic backgrounds by providing a variety of housing opportunities

Housing Goals

1. Work to preserve and advance affordability in town
2. Maintain high quality of life through sustainable planning and housing production
3. Ensure affordability throughout town and target affordable housing production to designated sites
4. Build community awareness of housing issues and activities
5. Address unmet housing needs through programming
6. Adopt zoning changes to promote affordable housing production and diverse housing typologies
7. Promote healthy housing

Economic Development Vision Ashland maintains a strong economic base and diverse local economy with places for people to live, shop, work and gather. The town provides prime access to key employment centers in our region.

Economic Development Goals

1. Plan for, stimulate and maintain viable, well-designed and vibrant development along key corridors and downtown
2. Provide comprehensive and site specific planning and technical assistance to advance economic development at key locations

3. Plan for and implement public facilities and utility improvements along key corridors and downtown
4. Attract and retain a range of businesses in town's commercial areas
5. Provide and promote incentives
6. Build town's reputation as an energy-efficiency leader
7. Leverage open space, natural resources and recreational opportunities as an economic asset
8. Ensure organizational capacity to lead in and implement economic development activities
9. Leverage regional business leadership and organizations to promote the town and expand resources

Transportation Vision Ashland offers viable walking, biking and public transportation options.

Transportation Goals

1. Commission a parking study and ensure adequate parking is provided downtown, address space availability, management, and accessibility
2. Continue to advocate for and advance roadway improvements along key corridors
3. Create sidewalk connectivity and linkages between neighborhoods and key amenities
4. Advocate for and implement Complete Streets
5. Create safe bicycle and pedestrian options throughout town
6. Provide consistent way finding and signage to showcase and connect people with town amenities
7. Ensure local and regional development does not adversely impact traffic in neighborhoods, along key corridors and downtown
8. Expand and improve public transportation options
9. Ensure adequate resources for Town operations, street and sidewalk maintenance and reconstruction

Open Space and Recreation Vision Ashland stewards open space and recreational opportunities and promotes an array of vital environmental, natural, historical and cultural resources.

Open Space and Recreation Goals **To be Added**

PROJECT CONTEXT

Ashland has a long history of planning. The town developed Master Plans in 1962, 1972 and 1988. The most recent Plan, completed in 2003, updated the 1988 Plan. In 2014, Ashland again embarked on a project to revise its Comprehensive Plan. (Master Plan and Comprehensive Plan are used interchangeably in this report.)

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) was retained by the Town to work with the community to develop a community vision, strategic goals and priorities. In addition, MAPC worked with Ashland citizens, town officials and the Planning Board Advisory Committee to make recommendations for future land use and redevelopment.

Process

The process to revise a comprehensive plan typically includes as many residents, property and business owners as possible. In addition, town officials provide guidance and information. Engaging a large variety and number of people interested and invested in Ashland allows for a wide range of concerns, issues and potential solutions to be identified. Hopefully, participants will remain involved to accomplish the goals and priorities in the Plan.

The planning process began in 2014. Several focus groups were held with town departments, at the senior center, and with mothers particularly interested in the schools. Planners visited a farmer's market to raise awareness about the Plan process. There was a Plan Ashland webpage on the town's website. In the six weeks leading up to the October 27, 2014 public visioning forum, questions were put on the webpage. There were hundreds of responses, via the web, facebook and written comments to these surveys, termed "lightning polls". The Appendix has a complete record of all the public comments received.

Housing Production Plan

At the same time the visioning and goal development were underway, MAPC was also assisting Ashland in writing a Housing Production Plan (HPP). The HPP was approved by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Economic in February, 2016. The main recommendations of the HPP inform the housing vision and goals in this report. In addition, meetings held during the Housing Plan preparation resulted in additional public participation.

Vision and Goals

Communities start the master planning process with a vision statement. The concept is to provide general guidance on the aspirations of the town. Goals are specific targets the town identifies to help achieve the vision. Objectives, priorities and action steps provide additional details about how to realize the goals.

Ashland's vision is inclusive and encompasses the community's values for how it wishes to manage change in the future.

As the rest of the Comprehensive Plan elements are researched and written, it may be prudent to review and revise the goals. This is appropriate as new information, and additional public input, is incorporated in the Plan.

LAND USE ELEMENT

Introduction

The purpose of developing a master or comprehensive plan is to help a community manage change. A comprehensive plan typically includes information about the environment, transportation, housing, open space, capital needs, etc. No topic is more fundamental to managing change than land use. Land use refers, quite simply, to how the land is being used. It includes the alteration of the natural environment because of the development of buildings, transportation corridors, parks, etc. to create the “built environment”. And the term land use also includes open, undeveloped land and natural resources.

Land use is a foundation element in a plan because changes to how, and how intensively, the land is developed (or not) characterize a community’s growth (or lack thereof) over time. Without a land use plan, a community has no guide for where and how it wishes to grow. The land use plan can identify areas for different kinds of housing, making sure the community is welcoming at all stages of life; it can identify opportunities to conserve appropriate amounts of open space and protect treasured views. The land use plan can be a catalyst for economic development by encouraging business and/or industrial uses in appropriate areas of town.

The land use element is organized to provide brief summaries of community history and demographic change, followed by the scenario modeling section. This is the heart of the land use element, allowing the community to compare various alternatives to manage growth and change. Ashland has been the focus of several recent, excellent reports providing guidance for economic development and urban design. Together, they supply encyclopedic reference material on Ashland. There is no need to repeat this information. Rather, MAPC’s scenario modeling provides new information in a different format, and should be the focus of the next Comprehensive Plan Land Use Element.

The scenario modeling is followed by summary information on land use characteristics, and a brief review of other reports. MAPC recommendations for action conclude the report.

Ashland Yesterday, Ashland Today

Ashland, Massachusetts, is 13 square miles and located 22 miles west of Boston. Ashland is bounded by: Framingham on the northeast; Sherborn the east; Holliston on the south; Hopkinton on the southwest and Southborough the northwest.

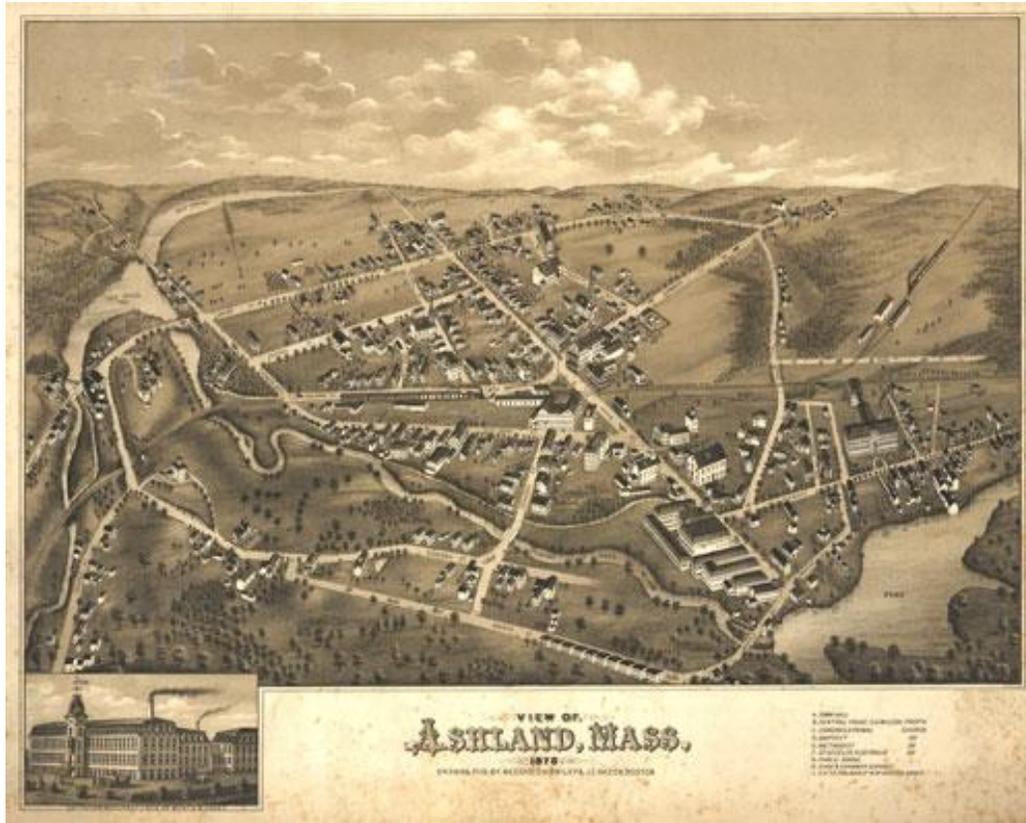
History Informs Land Use

How land is used over time results in land use patterns. These patterns are informed by how inhabitants made their livelihoods, and how people and goods were transported. In many New England towns, the historic land use patterns include farm lands/orchards, mill structures and dams on rivers, railroad rights of ways, and roads connecting to adjacent communities. Ashland was formed in 1846 by combining land from the neighboring communities of Framingham, Holliston and Hopkinton. Formerly called Unionville, the area included the typical settlement pattern of farms and mills, including nearby housing for the mill workers. The Sudbury River bisects the community, and in 1834 rail lines were laid adjacent to the river. Today, the same right of way is used by the Metropolitan Boston Transportation Authority (MBTA) Worcester branch commuter railroad. The current train station, however, is located about a mile from the town center. State routes 135 and 126 pass through Ashland and Interstate Route 90 traverses the northern corner. There is no I-90 direct exit to Ashland, however.

In the 20th century, manufacturing electric synchronous clocks was an important industry in Ashland. The clock mechanism relies on electric current to maintain accurate time and is considered a break-through technology. Manufacturing in Ashland continued until 1979. The Economic Development Element of the Comprehensive Plan will provide more details on current manufacturing and businesses in Ashland.

The land use pattern has evolved from farms and mills to residential suburban development, with commuters going to jobs in Boston and along Interstate Route 495 and the Metro West region. Ashland, unlike many smaller communities, also has allowed construction of multi-family housing. This type of housing provides more choices for residents, allowing empty-nesters as well as first-time renters to remain or locate to Ashland.

The map below, drawn in 1878, includes the railroad tracks, the river, and some of the street layouts that exist today. Note the large manufacturing buildings, as well as houses.

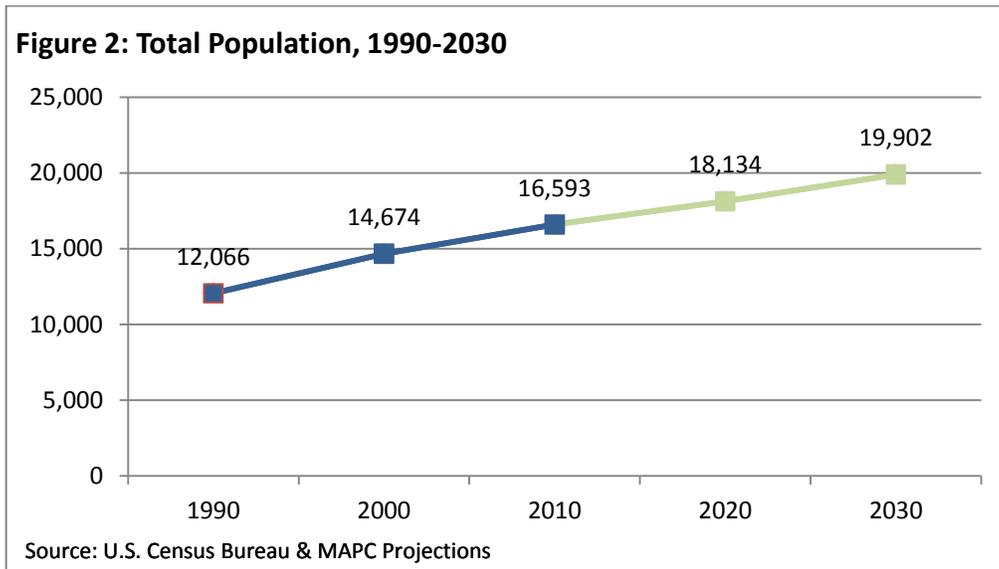


Source: www.worldmapsonline.com

Demographic Profile: Increased Population + Demand for More Housing

Population

Ashland's population has consistently grown since 1990. Between 1990 and 2010, the population increased by more than a third, or 4,547 residents, to 16,593. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council, of which Ashland is a member, developed population estimates as part of writing MetroFuture, the regional plan. These estimates were based on an analysis of changing trends in births, deaths, migration, and housing occupancy. MetroFuture projects that by 2030, Ashland's population will increase almost 18%, adding an estimated 3,374 more people in 20 years, for a total population of 19,902.



The graph above charts the information from the table below.

Table 1: Population by Age

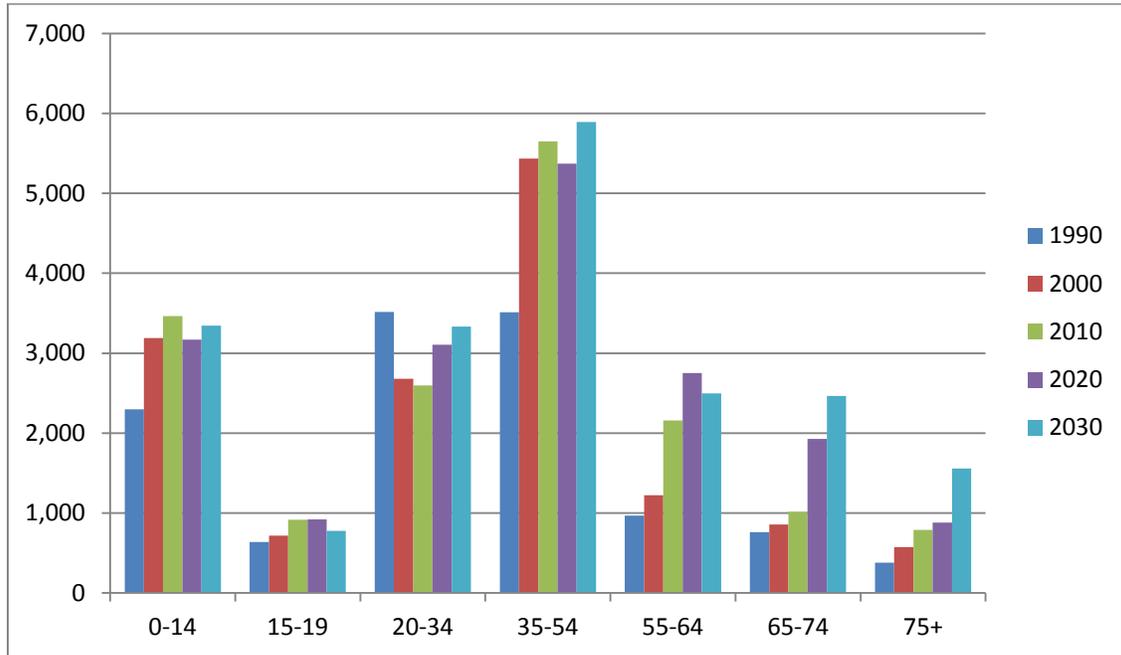
	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030	Change 2010-2030	% Change 2010-2030
0-14	2,299	3,189	3,463	3,168	3,344	-119	-3.4%
15-19	636	719	918	920	778	-140	-15.3%
20-34	3,514	2,678	2,598	3,105	3,333	735	28.3%
35-54	3,510	5,432	5,649	5,372	5,892	243	4.3%
55-64	968	1,224	2,159	2,750	2,498	339	15.7%
65-74	761	856	1,015	1,926	2,465	1,450	142.9%
75+	378	576	791	879	1,557	766	96.8%
Total	14,056	16,674	18,603	20,140	21,897	3,274	17.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau & MAPC Projections

In recent years, Ashland's overall population has aged. While nearly all age groups increased by at least 44% between 1990 and 2010, those age 20-34 decreased by more than a quarter and those age 55 and over increased by 88%. Those age 75 and over increased by 109%. Going forward, this aging of the population is projected to intensify. Between 2010 and 2030, the population under the age of 19 is projected to decline by 19%, while the most significant growth

will be among those aged 65 and up, with a 143% increase in those 65-74 and a 97% increase in residents aged 75+.

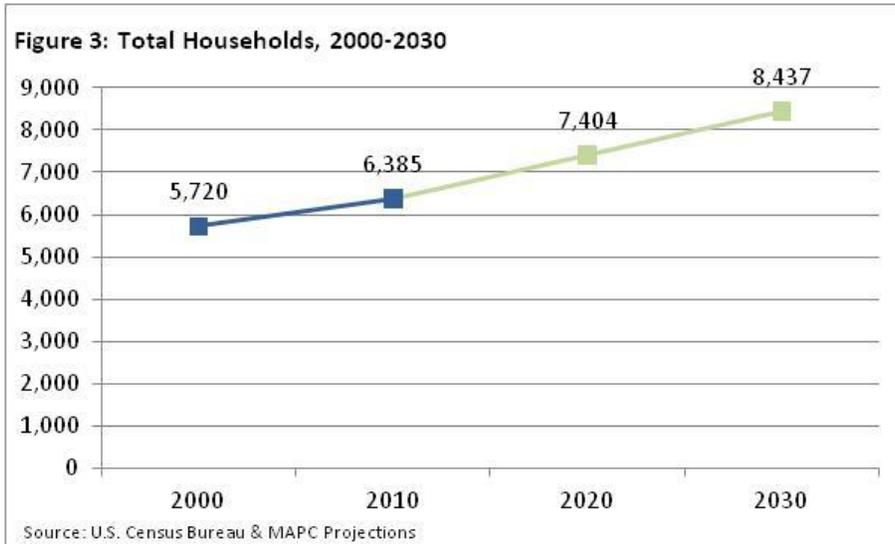
The age distribution of Ashland’s residents from 1990 projected through 2030 is shown in the column chart below. Note the growth in the



Household Composition and Demand for Housing

More than the number of people, or total population, the number and type of households and their spending power within a community correlate to the demand for housing units. Each household resides in one dwelling unit, regardless of the number of household members.

As of the 2010 Census, Ashland is home to 5,720 households. This represents an increase of 12% since 2000. Similar to MetroFuture projections for Ashland’s population, this increase will continue in the future. Within the 20-year timeframe between 2010 and 2030, Ashland is projected to add 2,052 households, a 32% increase.



Household Characteristics are Changing

Ashland experienced a 13% increase in population from 14,674 in 2000 to 16,593 in 2010. While Ashland's younger residents increased in number during that time period, MAPC's MetroFuture projections indicate this will not be an ongoing trend. As is characteristic of many municipalities in the region, the town's population will age dramatically going towards 2030. Between 2010 and then, the population age 0-19 is projected to decrease by 6%, while the population age 65 and older will increase 123%.

Ashland's number of households also increased between 2000 and 2010, by 12% from 5,720 to 6,385. Nearly 40% of households include children under 18 years old, and household size has not shrunk in recent years, as is common throughout the region. Nevertheless, by 2030, the number of households in Ashland is projected to increase by 32% to 8,437. Householders over the age of 60 are projected to increase the most: 94% from 2010. Households comprised of older individuals tend to be smaller. This fact points to the need for a sufficient number of smaller housing units to meet the expected demand.

More than three-quarters of Ashland's 6,609 housing units are single-family homes, and 80% of all housing is owner-occupied. The town's vacancy rate is quite low at 3%, despite the fact that between 2000 and 2013, 850 residential permits were issued, 71% of which were for single-family homes. Home values have been steadily rising since 2011, though they have not yet recovered to their 2005 peak.

Conclusion

The population and housing data indicates the demand for housing, now and in the future. For 2030, MAPC estimates a demand for 877 additional housing units: 514 single-family and 363 multifamily units. Ashland's Housing Production Plan provides strategies to deal with housing needs.

A key issue is providing sufficient housing for all segments of the housing market. Ashland's median household income is \$93,233; however more than a quarter of residents are low income. The current number of subsidized housing units is 241 to meet the needs of 1,635 low income households currently living in Ashland.

The Land Use element of the Comprehensive Plan should address housing strategies in order to coordinate the land use and zoning implementation recommendations.

Scenario Modeling or “Alternative Futures”

To support the land use element of the Ashland Comprehensive Plan, MAPC has prepared a GIS-based land use model of the town. This model estimates the development capacity of each land parcel in the town under current zoning and potential alternative land use regulations. It also estimates the distribution and impacts of new residential and commercial development under various job growth and housing demand scenarios. In consultation with the Comprehensive Plan Committee, MAPC created three scenarios representing “alternative futures” for the Town of Ashland, each representing a different set of land use policies and growth assumptions.

These scenarios can be compared on a variety of metrics related to municipal finances, water, schools, and transportation. While not intended to provide a precise and definitive forecast of future conditions, these scenarios can help the town to compare the relative impacts of development scenarios in relation to community goals and concerns. This section describes the key inputs and assumptions of the land use analysis, followed by a brief description of the three scenarios, a more detailed comparison of development in key parts of town, and finally the town-wide metrics for all three.

Land Use Projections

The land use projections are based on detailed data about the town’s current land use, development history and proposed projects, physical and environmental constraints, likely demographic change, and regional economic trends. Estimates of the impacts of development are based on local examples, municipal trends, and literature research. These datasets and assumptions are linked in an interconnected and responsive model that can be used to quickly generate new scenarios for the town’s future.

The land use analysis is performed in four basic steps:

1. Calculate the developable area of each parcel, after subtracting wetlands and accounting for other constraints;
2. Apply land use assumptions to each parcel and calculate total development potential and net increase over existing square footage;
3. Allocate a specified amount of housing and commercial growth based on development potential, location, constraints, and other factors;
4. Calculate the town-wide impacts of the projected development on a variety of metrics.

For detailed information about how scenario modeling is conducted, including a discussion of key data sources and model functions, including land use assumptions, please see Appendix 2.

Ashland Alternative Futures

In consultation with the Comprehensive Plan Committee, MAPC prepared three different scenarios for the town's land use in 2030: a "Business as Usual" scenario based on current zoning and land use development patterns; an "Economic Emphasis" scenario that represents one possible outcome of efforts to promote more commercial development and to discourage residential development; and a "Focused Growth" scenario that seeks to concentrate growth in selected locations while discouraging development spread out along major corridors and in neighborhoods. These three scenarios are described briefly here. Their different outcomes for development in specific areas of town are described in the next section, and their relative impacts on town-wide indicators are described after that.

Business as Usual involves no major changes in town zoning, housing policies, development decisions, or assumptions about future growth levels. This scenario assumes the following:

- The town maintains current zoning districts, review process, and development policies
- The town maintains current share of MetroWest jobs. Specifically, this scenario assumes the town will capture 3.8% of the 15,000 new jobs projected for MetroWest from 2010 – 2030, or approximately 550 new jobs requiring approximately 300,000 square feet of commercial square footage.
- The town would permit a level of housing development consistent with MAPC projections. Specifically, the Stronger Region scenario anticipates demand for 1,100 single family homes and 1,000 condominiums, apartments, or townhouses in Ashland between 2010 and 2030.
- Development currently "in the pipeline" moves forward. This includes the following developments:
 - Ashland Woods
 - 250 West Union Street
 - 73 Olive Street (subdivision)
 - 133 West Union Street
 - Ashland Rail Transit District Phase 1
 - 21 Main Street
 - 41 Front Street
 - Village of the Americas
 - 466 Chestnut Street
 - 369 Pond Street
 - 83 Nickerson Road
 - Lots 2A & 2B Butterfield Drive

The **Economic Emphasis** scenario is one that might result from policies to promote more commercial development and to discourage residential development. This scenario assumes:

- The town adopts additional incentives for high-value commercial growth such as office and medical development; and public and private sector partners redouble their efforts to aggressively market the area for economic development. Specifically, the scenario assumes MetroWest employment increase by 20,000 by the year 2030 (versus 15,000 in the Business as Usual scenario), and Ashland would be able to capture 8% of all net job growth in MetroWest, for a total of approximately 1,600 new jobs requiring approximately 800,000 square feet of new commercial space.
- The town would place additional limits on housing growth, making multifamily development options more limited, and would expend resources to acquire developable parcels to prevent housing development. Specifically, the result is assumed to be a 30% reduction in total housing production, with 750 single family units and 750 units in multifamily housing or townhouses produced between 2010 and 2030.

Focused Growth emphasizes more growth around Ashland Downtown, near the MBTA Commuter Rail station, and at strategic spots along Pond Street, with less growth spread out along main corridors. This scenario assumes:

- The town would see a more rapid pace of multifamily housing production (two thirds of the net increase), to accommodate preferences of seniors to downsize while staying in Ashland. There would be a corresponding reduction in single family home construction. Overall, the scenario assumes the town would see production of 750 single family homes and 1,450 units in multifamily or townhouse development.
- There would be a substantial increase in residential and mixed use development near downtown and in the rail transit area—including redevelopment of existing industrial parcels.
- The successful revitalization of Ashland Downtown would entice more residents to shop in the area, resulting in less “leakage” out of town, and leading to higher overall economic growth. Specifically, the town is assumed to capture 5% of total MetroWest job growth of 15,000 jobs, resulting in a net increase of 750 jobs in the town.
- The town would take action to discourage development (commercial or residential) spread out along major corridors in town; new land use controls would be put in place to discourage the conversion of residential structures to commercial uses or multifamily housing, especially along Routes 135 (West Union and Waverly Streets) and 126 (Pond Street.)

Key Planning Areas

MAPC’s analysis of land use development focused on the locally-identified Priority Development Areas that were delineated through the 495/MetroWest Development Compact Planning process that concluded in 2012. This section describes projected development in each of these key planning areas under the three scenarios.

Ashland Downtown: Revitalization of Ashland's downtown is a preeminent priority in town, and has been the subject of numerous prior planning and visioning efforts. However, this revitalization has been slow to take root, with only two small-scale retail or mixed use development projects currently underway. Previous studies have identified various possible causes for the slow pace of redevelopment in Ashland Downtown, including complex and overlapping zoning requirements, numerous regulatory authorities, and parking and open space requirements inconsistent with a compact downtown. Retail competition from Pond Street and other commercial areas of town may also make it difficult for businesses in the downtown area to thrive in the absence of a substantially larger resident population nearby and concerted efforts at placemaking and urban design improvements.

The Business as Usual scenario anticipates no changes in the town's planning or regulatory framework in the Downtown. As a result, the area would see steady stream of small-scale redevelopment activities, principally retail with some multistory mixed use development. The Economic Emphasis scenario, with its focus on regionally significant office and retail development, would entail no major deviation from Business as Usual in the Downtown, except for a decrease in the amount of residential development through policies intended to discourage multifamily housing. Meanwhile, the underlying premise of the Focused Growth scenario is that new housing development in and around the Downtown area is a critical strategy to help revitalize the commercial district and provide attractive downsizing options for Ashland seniors. This scenario would see a substantial portion of Ashland's multifamily housing demand met through residential and mixed use development in the Downtown and industrial properties nearby, including Megunko Road.

Ashland Rail Transit District: The Ashland Rail Transit district has been the site of an evolving development proposal for nearly 15 years. Most recently, an application for site plan modification was submitted to the town in October 2015, detailing plans for 398 1- and 2-bedroom apartments west of the MBTA Access Road. This first phase of the rail transit district development was incorporated into all three scenarios. Future phases may bring additional development to this area, and various subdistricts here provide the opportunity for additional residential as well as commercial uses. However, these future phases are not specified in any of the three alternatives.

Pleasant Street: The 0.7 mile stretch of Pleasant Street from the MBTA station to Ashland Downtown was identified as a priority development area. Currently a mix of light industrial and residential (single family and two-family, predominately), this corridor may plan an important role in linking the transit station itself to the Downtown. Existing zoning allows for a wide variety of uses, including warehousing and storage as well as multifamily residential. The Business as Usual scenario anticipates that under the existing zoning the corridor may see a mix of continued commercial as well as some isolated multifamily residential uses. However, the greater the variety of future development on this stretch, the harder it will be to establish a coherent streetscape that provides an inviting and convenient route for residents and visitors intending to walk from the

MBTA station to downtown. The Economic Emphasis scenario would reduce the potential for residential uses on this stretch of roadway, reinforcing its light industrial character. The Focused Growth scenario would entail new zoning with a focus on multifamily development on underused lots closest to the Downtown in the short term, and extending new multifamily and mixed use along the length of the corridor to ultimately replace the light industrial uses by 2030 or 2040.

Pond Street Corridor: A mixed use overlay district for Pond Street was adopted in 2005, and a roadway reconstruction plan is currently being developed for the corridor. However, development potential in this corridor is limited by environmental constraints, complex zoning requirements (e.g., residential uses are only permitted as part of a mixed-use development), and weak market conditions. While there are a handful of development proposals currently being advanced, they are generally limited to low-density and relatively low-value uses such as warehouses, contractor yards, vehicle repair, and ground-mounted solar installations. The only exception is an 80+ bed assisted living facility just south of Eliot Street.

The Business as Usual scenario would see a continued mix of lower-density commercial uses (both light industrial and retail) as well as some multifamily housing spread along the stretch of this corridor from Framingham to Holliston. The Economic Emphasis scenario would leverage the proposed streetscape improvements to attract higher value office and medical development to this corridor, seeking to capitalize on its proximity to Framingham. (Whether or not such tenants would find Pond Street an attractive location, given its lack of nearby highway access, is beyond the scope of this analysis.) In contrast, a Focused Growth approach would substantially reduce development potential along most of the corridor in order to prevent new sprawl and to protect the proposed streetscape improvements from being undermined by new curb cuts and major developments; new growth in the corridor would be focused at the intersection of Pond Street and Eliot Street. A combination of pedestrian-oriented mixed use developments and public realm improvements would be designed to create the sense of a small town center focused here, with the currently vacant Sears property as the first site for redevelopment.

Waverly Street / Wildwood: The area at the intersection of Waverly Street and East Union Street has been designated as the Wildwood Mixed Use District and was identified as local development priority during the 495/MetroWest Community Compact process (though it was not advanced as a regional priority.) MAPC estimates that the parcels around this intersection could accommodate 200,000 square feet of commercial development under the current zoning overlay, in a mix of industrial, office, and retail uses. Under Business as Usual it is not anticipated that this area would see anywhere near that amount of development. An Economic Emphasis approach would aggressively market this junction as a major development opportunity with the goal of attracting office and medical development. The Focused Growth scenario would actively discourage new commercial development in this area with the goal of steering more investment toward the downtown or designated nodes on Pond Street.

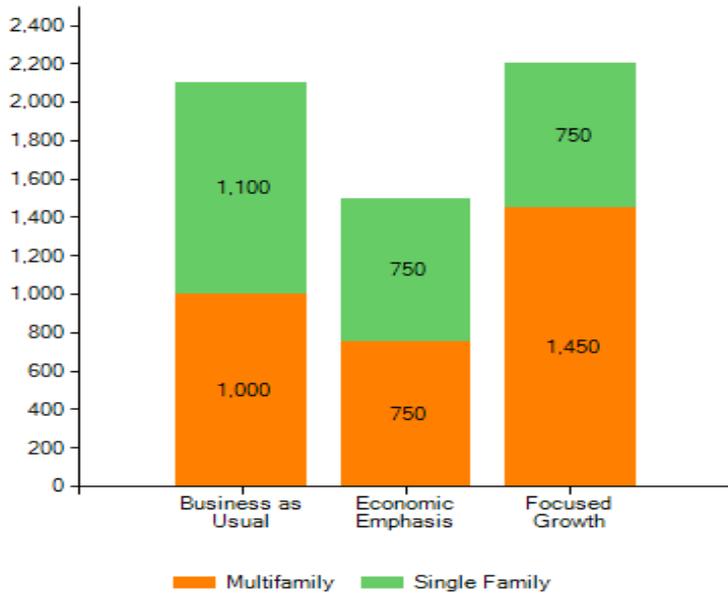
Scenario Summary

MAPC estimated the impacts of each scenario on key indicators relevant to the town's finances, economic competitiveness, and quality of life. These comparative statistics are presented in the table below.

<i>Business as Usual</i>	The <i>Business as Usual</i> scenario involves no major changes in town zoning, housing policies, or development decisions.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintain current zoning districts, review process, development policies• Assume the town maintains current share of MetroWest jobs (3.8%)• Assume the town permits a level of housing development consistent with MAPC projections (approx. 2,100 units)• Assume development currently “in the pipeline” moves forward.
<i>Economic Emphasis</i>	The <i>Economic Emphasis</i> scenario shows the results of policies to promote more commercial development and to discourage residential development.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aggressively market the town for economic development and adopt additional incentives for high-value commercial growth• Place additional limits on housing growth and acquire developable parcels• Assume Ashland is able to capture 8% of job growth in MetroWest• Assume housing development is 30% less than projected by MAPC for 2010 - 2030
<i>Focused Growth</i>	The <i>Focused Growth</i> scenario would see more growth around Ashland Downtown and at strategic spots along Pond Street, with less growth spread out along main corridors.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This scenario assumes a more rapid pace of multifamily housing production (two thirds of the net increase), to accommodate preferences of seniors to downsize while staying in Ashland. There would be a corresponding reduction in single family home construction.• Entails additional residential and mixed uses near downtown and in the rail transit area—including redevelopment of existing industrial parcels.• Assumes actions are taken to discourage strip development and conversion of residential structures to commercial uses along major corridors.

Scenario Comparison

Housing Units by Type

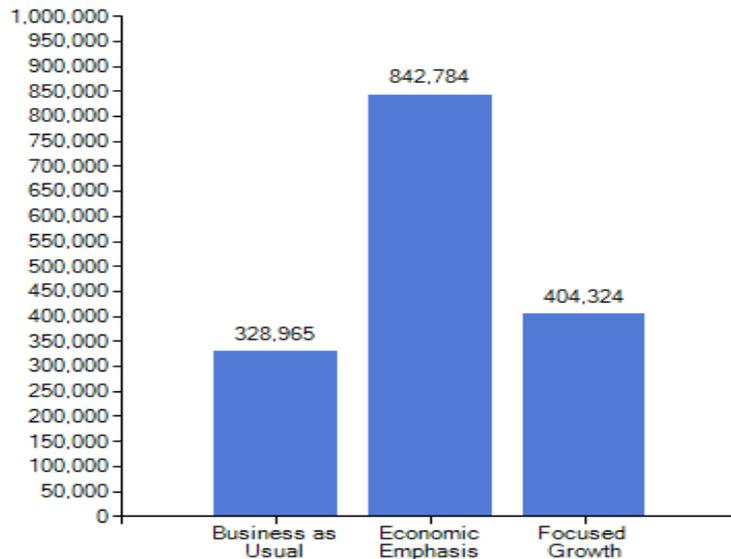


This chart shows the number of new housing units, by type (single family vs. multifamily) projected between 2010 and 2030, under each scenario. The Economic Emphasis scenario would see 1,500 new housing units, versus 2,100 for Business as Usual and 2,200 for Focused Growth.

Benchmark: Ashland added approximately 1,800 housing units between 1990 and 2010.

Additional Commercial Floor Area

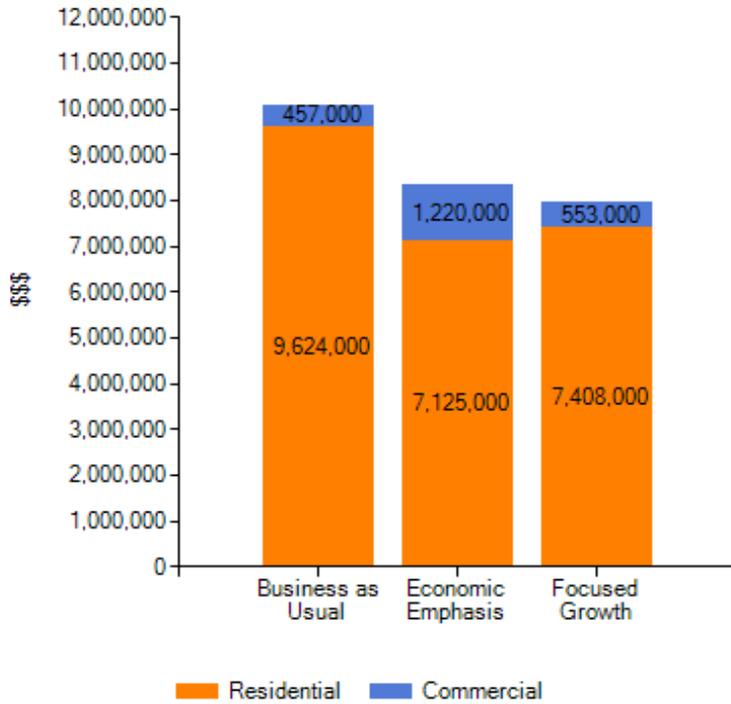
Projected 2010 - 2030



This chart shows the net increase in commercial floor area anticipated under each scenario.

Benchmark: Approximately 220,000 square feet of commercial space was built in Ashland between 2000 and 2012.

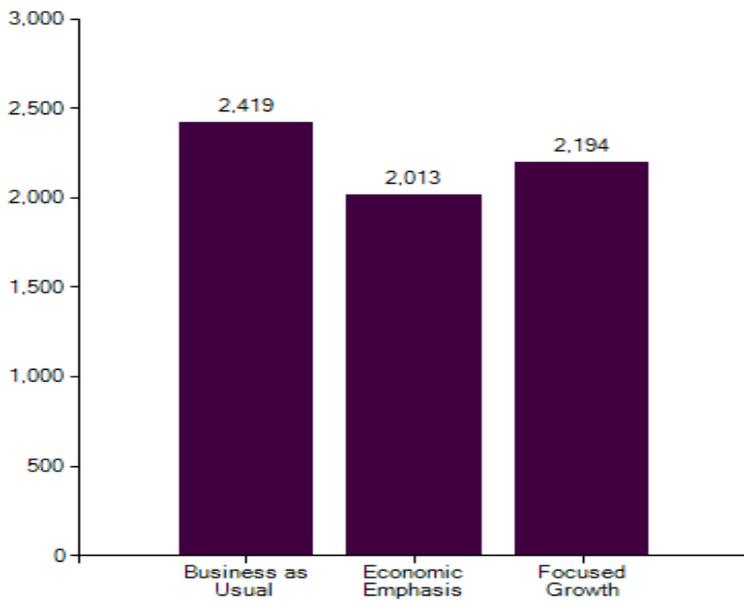
New Growth Tax Revenue by Type



This chart shows the anticipated *net new* tax revenue from each scenario, based on the assessed building values of comparable recent development. Revenue estimates are based on 2013 tax rate and are discounted for existing buildings on redevelopment sites. Under the Economic Emphasis scenario, 14.6% of net new tax revenue would derive from commercial uses, versus 5 – 6% under the other two.

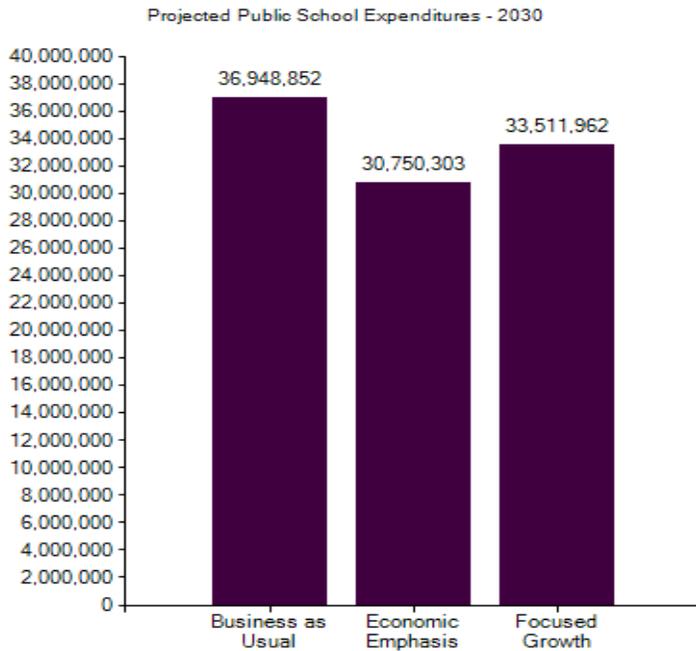
Benchmark: Commercial and industrial properties currently comprise 7% of the towns property tax levy.

Projected Public School Enrollment - 2030



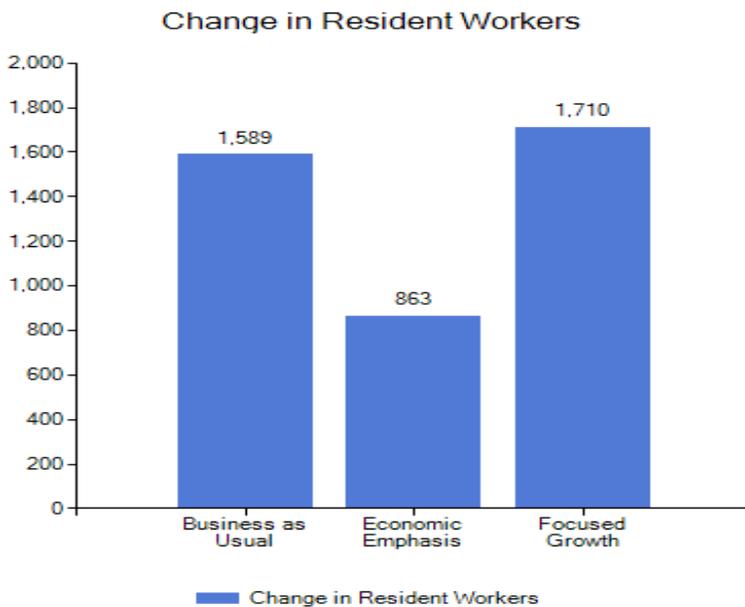
This chart shows projected enrollment in Ashland Public Schools in 2030 based on MAPC projections and expected school-age occupancy new housing, assuming that the out-of-district enrollment stays a steady share of the total. All three scenarios would see declines in enrollment of 9% to 24%.

Benchmark: Ashland Public School enrollment was 2,650 in 2010.



This chart shows projected public school expenditures, based on the projected enrollment and extended growth in per-pupil expenditures. The scenarios see an increase of 30% to 60%

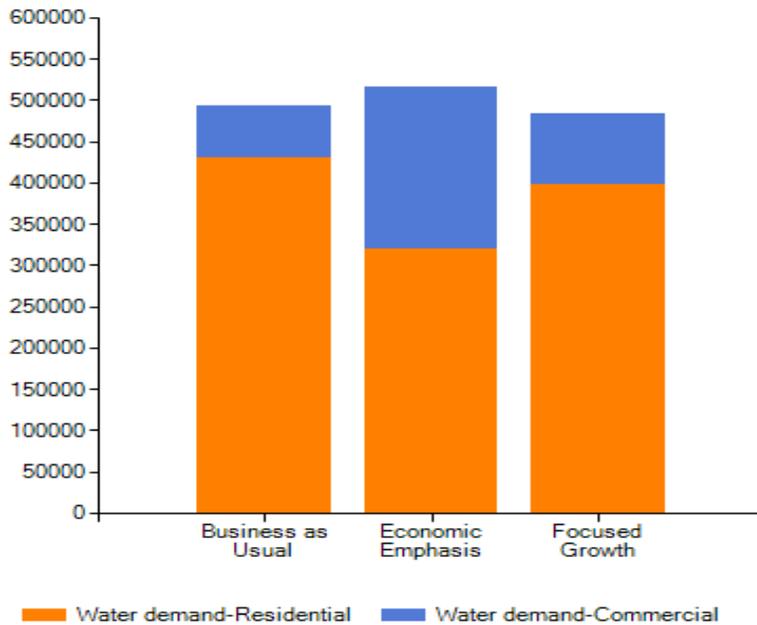
Benchmark: Per-pupil expenses in Ashland rose approximately 3% annually from 2000 to 2013



This chart shows the projected change in the number of resident workers from 2010 to 2030, based on the projected population and demographics. The number of resident workers increases 20% under Business as Usual and Focused Growth, only 10% under Economic Emphasis.

Benchmark: There were an estimated 8,600 resident workers in Ashland in 2010.

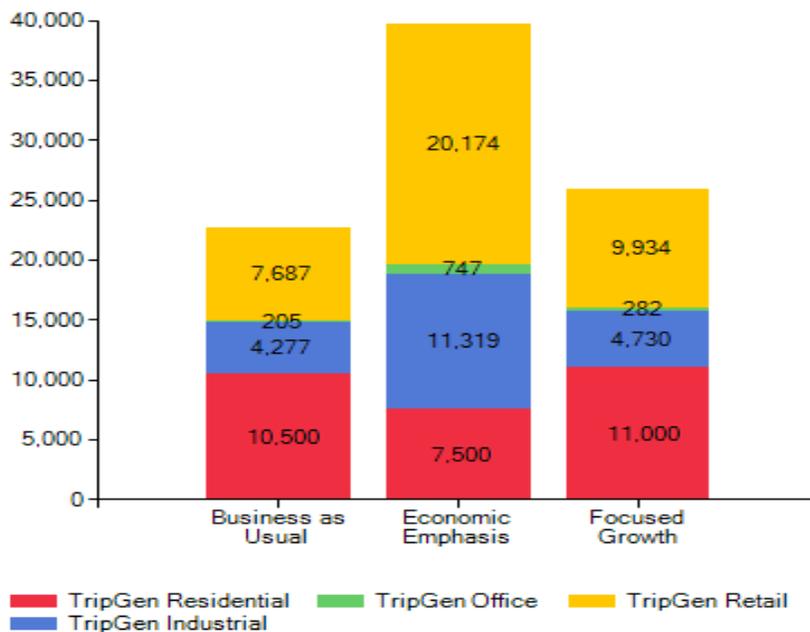
Water Demand



This chart estimates the total new water demand under the three scenarios. Increase in water demand comparable across all three scenarios: approximately 500,000 gallons per day by 2030

Benchmark: The town's water system pumped 1.9 million gallons per day in 2013.

Trip Generation

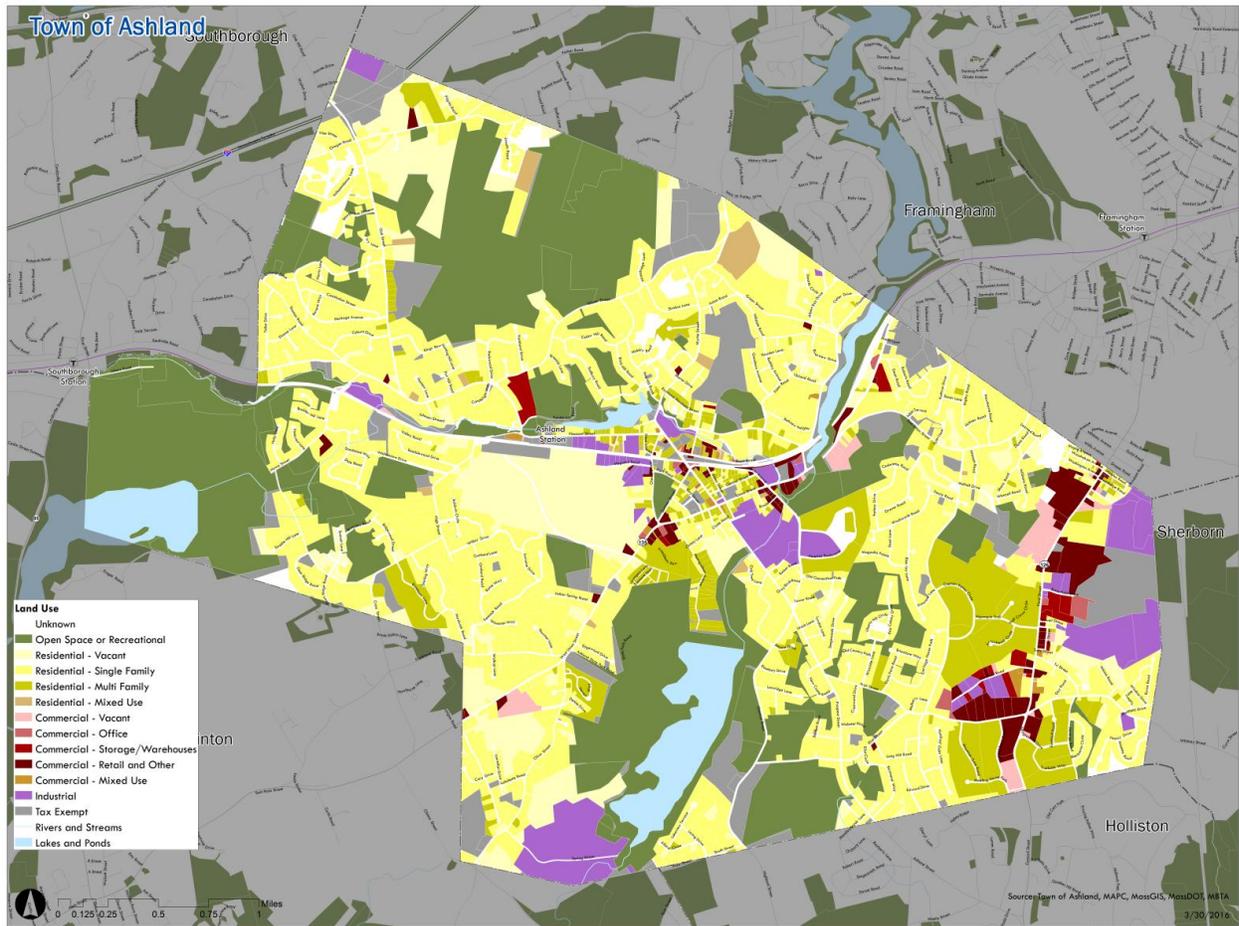


This chart estimates the number of new auto trips generated by various types of development under the three scenarios.

Benchmark: Pond Street was travelled by approximately 12,000 vehicles per day on an average weekday in 2009.

Land Use Characteristics

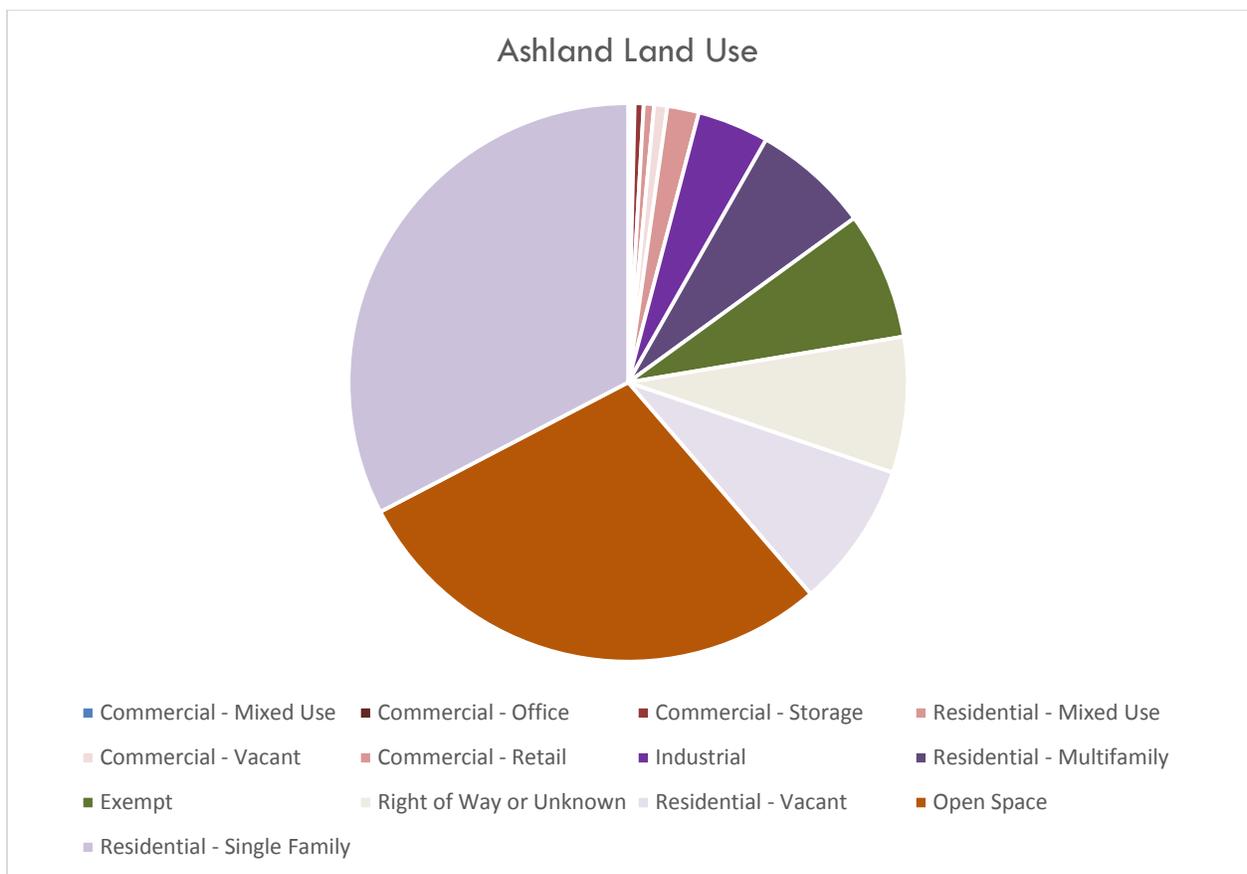
Overview



The map above shows the land uses classified according to the Ashland assessing records and Massachusetts Geographic Information System (MassGIS) data.

The green represents open space in the town. The darker yellow shade denotes single family residential uses, and the lighter yellow vacant, residentially-zoned land. The yellow-green shade shows the location of multi-family housing. Commercial/retail uses are clustered in the downtown, and along Route 126, with some along Route 135. The largest areas of industrial uses are found on the Sherborn border; on both sides of Spring Street, near the boundary with Hopkinton; and an area bisected by Cold Spring Brook, between Main Street and Chestnut Street. There are also industrial uses near the downtown and the Sudbury River.

Open Space/Recreational land accounts for approximately 29% (or 2362 acres) of the 8,239 acres comprising the town of Ashland. Residential uses account for 48%, or 3,944 acres (both developed and zoned for residential development). The various categories of commercial and retail land uses total 273 acres, or 3.3%. Industrially-used land is 341 acres, 4%. The mixed use category, which is broken down by separate residential and commercial components, totals 63 acres, or .8% of the land. Tax exempt land uses (typically municipal uses, churches, etc.) is 608 acres, or 7%. The balance is rights of ways. The pie chart below shows these various categories in detail.



Sources: Town of Ashland Assessing Data; MassGIS; MAPC

Developed Land Summary

Ashland's pattern of land uses, like that of many New England towns, has been influenced by the historic road, water and railroads in town. This section will review land that has been developed, or built on.

The Sudbury River, running east from Framingham to Southborough/Hopkinton on the west, was harnessed for mills as early as the 1730's. Running parallel to the River, the Boston and Worcester (B&W) Railroad had tracks completed as far as Ashland by 1834, commencing service thru to Worcester on July 4, 1835. The route included a stop in the area that would become the town center of Ashland. Unionville, as the area was known at the time, was equal distance from Framingham and Hopkinton, and five miles from Holliston. The B&W carried both passengers and freight from the beginning. The railroad and the Sudbury River physically divide the Town into a northern and southern portion.

State Routes 126 and 135 run generally north/south and are located in the eastern and central portions, respectively of the community, carrying traffic through Ashland, but to the town center. Downtown Ashland is located along Main Street, including the intersections of Main, Front Street and Homer Avenue and Summer Street. The land uses are a mixture of retail, some industrial and residences, including historic structures reflecting the continued evolution of this area.

The same mix of commercial development, industry and housing is found along Route 126/Pond Street. Route 135/Union Street has a small node of commercial uses around the intersection with Cherry and Summer Streets.

Only 49 acres are currently developed as residential/commercial mixed use.

The majority of the rest of the land in Ashland is used for either residences or open space. Single family residences utilize 33% of the land in Ashland. Multi-family dwellings occupy another 7% of the land. The built residential category accounts for 40% of the land. Many of the homes are located on suburban-style cul de sacs, with no connectivity between the different developments.

Undeveloped Land Summary

Undeveloped land includes lands used for conservation, parks, recreation, agriculture, and vacant land zoned for residential, commercial or industrial uses. These lands may be publicly or privately owned. They are important because they also form part of Ashland's land use pattern. The lands zoned for use provide information on the ready availability to expand these uses.

Ashland is fortunate to have almost 29% of its land in open space. The Town Forest in the northeast portion of the community, Hopkinton State Park and Reservoir on the western boundary, and Ashland State Park and Reservoir in the southern part of town provide recreation opportunities easily accessible to most residents. Altogether, these areas comprise ____ acres. There are ___ acres of Chapter 61, 61A, 61B lands. These are properties used for agricultural purposes and they are eligible for local property tax relief as long as they remain in these uses.

According to the assessing data, there are 695 acres of vacant, residentially zoned land and 63 acres of commercially-zoned vacant land. The current data likely includes the large parcel zoned in the Rail Transit District south of Ashland station.

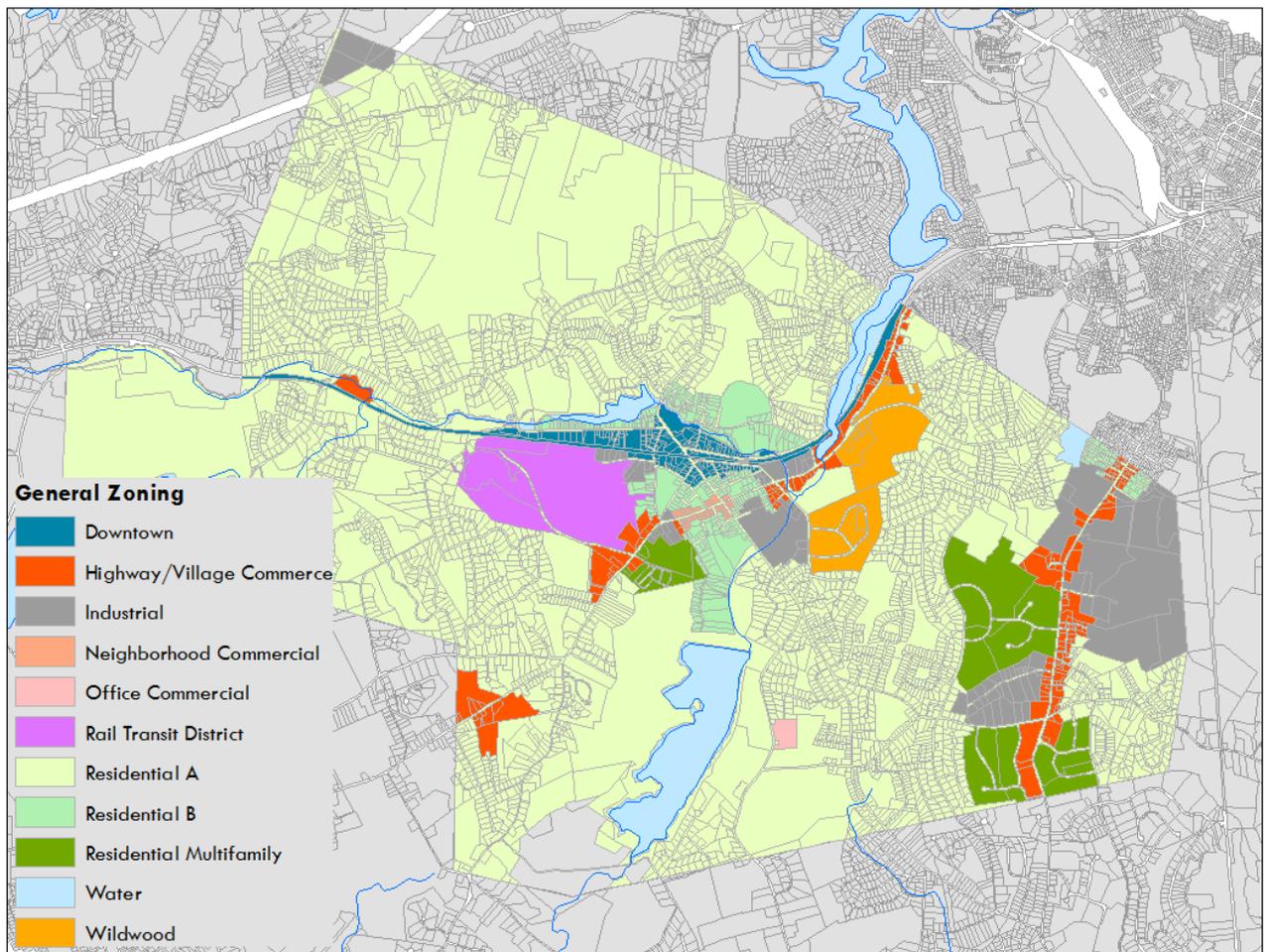
Conclusion

Ashland's land use pattern is based on its 300 year history of development. Rivers and lakes, the terrain, and transportation infrastructure further define a community's character. Changes in these patterns occur when new development or redevelopment takes place. Changes to industrial uses often provide redevelopment opportunities. For areas developed with small lots (such as part of the downtown area), new development may not occur unless there is lot consolidation, either privately or as a result of town action.

If changes in the land use pattern are needed or desirable, the chief mechanism to achieve this is through zoning, the subject of the next section.

Zoning and Other Land Use Regulations

Zoning by-laws regulate the kind, intensity and location of development within a community. Ashland has numerous zoning districts and overlay districts that exist in town. There are three basic Residential zones, but housing is also permitted in most of the commercial districts (except for the Industrial District) and is allowed in specified subdistricts of the Ashland Downtown District, the Pond Street Mixed Use Overlay District, the Wildwood Mixed Use Special District, and the Rail Transit District. Below is a generalized zoning map. The map indicates the zoning districts. Each separate district has regulations about what types of uses are allowed, dimensional standards (such as height limits), and parking requirements.



A summary of the various zoning districts in Ashland follows

Residence A covers three-quarters of the town. It is a conventional district for single-family home development, though Ashland also allows assisted living facilities and senior housing by right. A conforming lot in this district requires at least 30,000 sq. ft. of land (90 percent upland) and 150 feet of frontage with a 40-foot front setback. In addition, lot shape regulations apply in RA and all other zoning districts (Section 4.1.4).

Residence B covers approximately 400 parcels around Downtown Ashland and the north side of Pond Street/Route 126. It allows both single-family and two-family dwellings (new or by conversion) by right. A conforming lot in the RB district has 20,000 sq. ft. of land and 125 feet of frontage, but a two-family home requires 30,000 sq. ft. Further, Ashland imposes a maximum floor area cap of 4,500 sq. ft. on single-family and two-family dwellings in the RB (and other) districts for lots with less than 30,000 sq. ft. in area. The size limit applies unless the Board of Appeals grants a waiver.

Residence Multifamily (RM) is a district designated for multi-family housing - except that multi-family dwellings are allowed only by special permit from the Board of Appeals and only on parcels of five or more acres with at least 300 feet of frontage. There is a density limit of one unit per 5,000 sq. ft. of lot area and 2,500 sq. ft. per bedroom. The design standards clearly favor townhouses over garden-style units (and by default, homeownership developments over rental housing) for Ashland prohibits building entrances that provide access to more than two units and also limits building heights to two stories and twenty-eight feet. By contrast, the maximum height for single-family and two-family homes in all zoning districts is 2 1/2 stories and 35 feet.

Highway Commerce (CH) is a commercial district where single-family dwellings, assisted living facilities, and senior housing developments are permitted as of right. The Board of Appeals has authority to grant special permits for two-family homes and "planned" multi-family developments (a term undefined in the Zoning By-law.) Although not shown in the Table of Principal Use Regulations, mixed uses with residential units are allowed by special permit in the CH district, up to five units per acre (Section 7.7). There is a maximum height of three stories for residential uses (two stories less than allowed for commercial uses.)

Downtown Commerce (CD) is nearly identical to CH, except that two-family homes are allowed by right and mini-storage facilities are prohibited. Dwellings must comply with the same dimensional regulations that apply in the RB district, including maximum height of three stories and thirty-five feet (two stories less than allowed for commercial uses.)

Village Commerce (CV) is a small district east of Route 126 in the Southeast corner of town. In this district, two-family homes require a special permit. The minimum lot requirement is 15,000 sq. ft., with at least 100 feet of frontage; the minimum front setback, twenty feet; and the maximum height, four stories.

Neighborhood Commerce (CN) is the only area in Ashland where the town allows accessory apartments by right and the Board of Appeals can grant a special permit to convert a single-family or two-family home to multi-family units (up to four). There is a very small minimum lot area requirement of 5,000 sq. ft. However, there is a maximum lot coverage rule of 15 percent.

Office Commerce (CO) allows single-family dwellings but is the only commercial district that prohibits two-family dwellings. However, a mixed-use building with upper-story housing units is allowed by special permit.

Ashland Downtown District (ADD) is intended to operate as Ashland's downtown zoning. It consists of three sub-areas, each with different use and dimensional requirements. It is the only district to impose a *maximum* front setback or to regulate use intensity based on gross floor area ratio (FAR.) Parking requirements are 75% of what would typically be required in other districts.

Sub-Area A provides for the highest intensity of use (FAR 2.0); it allows multi-family dwellings and both horizontal and vertical mixed uses by right, together with retail stores, bakeries, ice cream shops, restaurants, theatres, indoor recreation, light industrial uses, Single-family and two-family homes are prohibited. Multi-family density cannot exceed ten units per acre. Permissible building heights vary by class of use.

Sub-Area B is similar to Sub-Area A, but single-family dwellings are allowed by special permit.

Sub-Area C seems to encourage a more residentially oriented mix of uses. Here, the town allows single-family homes by right and limits multi-family dwellings to a special permit requirement. Buildings are limited to three stories regardless of use.

Ashland has placed many expectations on development in the ADD, and some of those expectations imply a desire for larger-scale projects. For example, the town requires construction of sidewalks in front of buildings in the ADD, pedestrian areas and amenities for buildings exceeding 30,000 sq. ft., and connecting walkways with adjacent neighborhoods. These standards would not be difficult for a large-scale project, but for existing properties seeking to evolve toward the goals of the ADD, the cost to provide pedestrian infrastructure could be problematic and may discourage small redevelopment projects.

Pond Street Mixed-Use Overlay District (PSMUOD) allows horizontal and vertical mixed uses, retail development, light industrial uses, and research and development, if a proposed project satisfies eight criteria and five review standards. The maximum building height is five stories, though the Planning Board can approve a height increase. PSMUOD contemplates fairly high-density development, for the district allows multi-family units up to one per 2,000 sq. ft. of lot area (21 units per acre). Any development with ten or more dwelling units is required to set aside at least 10 percent of the units as housing affordable to low- and moderate-income households.

Wildwood Mixed Use Special District (WMUSD) consists of five sub-areas with a combined total of about 150 acres. Wildwood "A" provides for more residential uses and a variety of housing

by right, whereas Wildwood "B," "D," and "E" around the intersection of Waverly, East Union, and Union Streets provide for industrial and office uses, restaurants, banks, and nursing homes by right, and hotels by special permit. Development in the WMUSD requires a minimum tract of fifty acres. The maximum residential density permitted in the district varies by sub-area and class of use. For example, senior housing requires a minimum of 4,000 sq. ft. per unit plus 1,050 feet for two bedrooms, but multi-family units without age restrictions require a minimum of 5,000 sq. ft. per unit and 1,000 sq. ft. per bedroom. The by-law also imposes limits on the percentage of developable land that can be devoted to multi-family dwellings in Wildwood "A," and when proposed in Wildwood "D," multi-family projects have to include a reservation of land for commercial development. As in the PSMUOD, affordable housing is required in Wildwood "A" and "D." This district has remarkably prescriptive site planning requirements and performance standards, and specific application procedures (in addition to Ashland's site plan application requirements) that are intended to document a project's consistency with the WMUSD by-law.

Rail Transit District (RTD) includes nearly 200 acres in the vicinity of the Ashland MBTA station and the Nyanza Superfund site. The RTD concept calls for a mix of industrial, commercial, and residential uses in a planned arrangement that takes advantage of access to commuter rail. It consists of six sub-areas, including three that encourage many types of residential uses and one sub-area (A) limited to age-restricted housing. Rental housing is specifically listed as a permitted use in only one sub-area (D). The maximum allowable density for the RTD as a whole depends on the unit type, with rental housing at a maximum of twenty units per buildable acre (in sub-area E) and ten units per buildable acre for age-restricted units. A Transit Village Community (TVC) composed of "luxury" housing units and accessory services is allowed by right with significantly reduced off-street parking requirements, subject to site plan review by the Planning Board, in two of the RTD's sub-areas.

Specific Zoning Issues

1. Mixed-Use Development

As described above, mixed use development is permitted, generally by special permit, in a variety of zoning districts and overlay districts in Ashland.

2. Accessory Dwellings

Section 7.6 of the zoning by-laws permit Accessory Family Dwelling Units in single family homes by special permit. The by-law limits occupancy of the accessory unit to four persons and requires owner occupancy of the structure (either the principal or accessory unit.) Boarders and lodgers are not permitted. The floor area of the accessory unit may not exceed 800 square feet, or 25% of the floor area of the principal unit, whichever is larger. Occupancy permits for accessory units must be renewed every two years and are not transferrable upon sale or change of occupancy.

3. Conversion of Dwellings

Single family buildings may be converted to two-family dwellings in the Residence B, Residence Multifamily, Downtown Commerce, and Neighborhood Commerce districts as-of-right, and in the Highway Commerce and Village Commerce districts subject to special permit by the Board of Appeals. Conversion to three-or four family structures is permitted only in the Neighborhood

Commerce district by special permit from the Board of Appeals. The zoning by-law prohibits expansion of the principal structure or the creation of additional entrances visible from a street. The lot must satisfy minimum lot area requirements plus 50% of the lot area requirement for each additional unit. Minimum unit size is 700 square feet.

4. Over-55 Housing Developments

Section 7.2 of the Zoning by-law sets forth requirements for “Senior Residential Communities” in Ashland. Units must be owned/occupied by at least one person over 55 and no more than one non-handicapped person under that age, except in case of emergency and for a limited period of time. Maximum density for such developments is five units per acre, with no more than two bedrooms per unit. Only detached or attached single family homes are permitted. Specific site design requirements are specified in the by-law, including a prohibition on through streets, maximum lot coverage of 25%, and a 30-foot separation distance between structures.

5. Parking Requirements

The zoning by-law requires two spaces per residential unit, except in the ADD, where requirements are reduced by 25%. Shared parking and reductions in parking requirements are permitted by special permit in certain districts such as the Village Commerce and Neighborhood Commerce districts.

Other Land Use Regulations

Other regulations pertinent to land use development in Ashland include subdivision control and site plan review, both under the purview of the Planning Board. Site Plan Review applies to all new construction (except single family homes) and substantial alternations to commercial and industrial buildings. Also, the Ashland Wetlands Bylaw and Stormwater Bylaw are both administered by the Conservation Commission. The Historical Commission is responsible for managing the demolition delay bylaw.

Ashland also has a Redevelopment Authority with eminent domain powers that enable it to plan and implement redevelopment of “blighted areas”. Any plans must be approved by the Planning Board, ensuring a coordinated approach to redevelopment in Ashland.

Putting It All Together

The final version of a land use element in a comprehensive plan should be prepared after all the other elements have been completed, so that economic development, housing, transportation and open space goals can all be taken into account, along with municipal space needs. The following are therefore a preliminary set of Land Use Recommendations based on the Vision and Goals, the 2015 Housing Production Plan and MAPC's review of past planning studies completed for the town of Ashland by other consultants.

DRAFT MAPC Recommendations

1. Confirm the Focused Growth scenario, showing more growth around Ashland Downtown and at strategic spots on Rte. 126/Pond Street.
2. Ensure that other plan elements support this scenario.
3. Revise the Ashland zoning by-law to accomplish/implement the land use goals. The by-law is overly complex and difficult to use.
4. Consider including an infill development provision to encourage development of small single-family homes on substandard size lots.
5. Adopt an inclusionary housing bylaw.
6. Strengthen existing commercial/shopping plaza nodes on Route 126 by adding new uses, enhancing walkability and adding open space and landscape amenities.
7. Reinforce safe routes and connections to the Bay Circuit Trail where it crosses Route 126.
8. Strengthen frontages on Route 126 by adding public and private landscaping enhancements in the front yard setback and consolidating the number of curb cuts.
9. Plan for open space paths/trail network and additional sidewalks.
10. Continue to work on relocating the police and fire stations outside of downtown Ashland.

APPENDIX 1
PUBLIC COMMENTS



PUBLIC COMMENTS

Since the PlanAshland process began, the Comprehensive Plan Committee (and their consultant, Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)) have been asking the public to share their thoughts, opinions and concerns with us. Some of you may have spoken with us at the Farmers Market, others of you attended the October 27, 2014 visioning session or responded to our lightning poll questions on Facebook or on the PlanAshland.com website. We also visited the Senior Center and held coffee klatches at residents' homes. We thank you for your interest and active participation. We wanted to share with you the many comments we have received so that you can see what your neighbors are thinking. These comments were used to develop the Community Vision Statement.

These comments are verbatim as recorded by transcribers at meetings and as submitted. We have not edited the content of any comment.

Comments

**Focus Group for Town Staff, Boards and Committees
Land Use, Housing and Development**

August 5, 2014

Strengths

- Rural character – hometown feel; great for families.
- Schools.
- Location.
- Variety and number of people who volunteer.
- Safety.
- Proximity to Boston.
- Public transit.
- State parks.
- All open space – 25% open.
- Public services – water and sewer.
- Nyanza has been remediated.
- Relative affordability.
- Diversity of population.
- Farmers Market.
- Designated a Green Community.

- Responsive town staff.
- History.
- Access to agriculture and employment centers in neighboring towns.
- Good business climate and single tax rate.
- Variety of recreational activities.
- Community pride – Ashland Day, summer concerts.
- Not overly developed compared to surrounding towns.
- Strong local and regional arts scene.
- Library programs.
- Proximity to regional highway network.
- Passionate people.
- Friendly police and fire departments.
- Market Basket.
- New Dairy Queen.
- Mini-golf.
- Two turf fields and fields in general.
- Warren Conference Center.
- Diversity of religions.
- Handicapped accessible beach at the state park (but needs upgrading).
- State legislators live in town.
- Large library.
- Community and senior center.
- Close to YMCA outdoor family center.
- Historic buildings.
- Relationship with Northeastern University.
- Original start of the Marathon and the Marathon itself.
- Upgraded town hall, library and high school.
- Multiple cable vendors and WACA – local cable access channel.

Challenges

- Rail crossings – noise pollution from whistles, traffic back-ups, divides the town.
- Town relies on a single source for water supply.
- Water infrastructure needs updating.
- Water restrictions could hinder economic development.
- The water recharge rate is too slow.
- Cost of being on the MWRA sewer system.
- Disconnected amenities – downtown, the train, the commercial center are nodes that need better connectivity.
- Lack of walkability and safe biking.
- Distance from major highways affects economic development.
- Contaminated sites – Nyanza Super Fund site has been capped but Cadillac Paint needs further remediation and is privately owned.

- Major developments next door have traffic impacts but town has no control – Legacy Farms, Whitney Street.
- Growing student population creating school capacity issues.
- Fire and Police have outgrown their buildings.
- Continuing to work on regional fire with Hopkinton.
- Growing population is a strain on municipal services.
- Tension between maintaining character and new development.
- 40Bs because still below the 10%.
- High property tax rates.
- Commercial competition from Route 9 and proximity to larger commercial centers.
- Inadequate commercial tax base but how much does Ashland want?
- Threat of losing business and industrial base.
- Site constraints and environmental regulations make it difficult for businesses to expand.
- Passionate residents.
- Old vs. new Ashland.
- Younger households aren't always vocal.
- Difficult to build consensus.
- Outdated, ineffective form of government – what form is best for Ashland?
- Poor attendance at town meeting – town needs to do more outreach to get more participation.
- Town meeting is driving the budget.
- Would an elected town meeting change town character?
- Is poor town meeting attendance apathy or lack of faith in the form of government?
- Infrastructure and energy consumption maintenance costs.
- Memory of the Nyanza problem and police scandal – perception of Ashland as “country bumpkins” and need to overcome negative publicity.
- Low per capita funding of library.
- Inaccessibility of the Sudbury River – underutilized asset. Water quality needs treatment by EPA.
- Difficulty of balancing the need to provide good services and education with the tax rate.
- Need more awareness of the cost of services.
- Downtown lacks charm and a consistent look.
- The condition of Route 126.
- Megunko Road industrial area.
- Need more quality restaurants and outdoor eating areas.
- Lack of sidewalks.
- Decisions driven by a minority with agendas and aren't necessarily representative.
- Disconnect between what zoning allows and resident expectations.
- Residents don't understand the zoning and are surprised by new development that's permitted.
- Disconnect as shown by opposition of abutters to mixed-use development.
- Need zoning education for residents (during neutral times), not when part of a development controversy. Need to orient citizens to zoning.

- Potential issue is medical marijuana.
- New Dunkin Donuts on Route 126 is impacting many houses. Silenced voices during the appeal.
- Reactive rather than proactive planning boards and processes.
- Too many boards – not always clear who’s responsible for what. Hard for developers to navigate.
- No mandatory training for board members.
- Elected officials need more clarity on what boards do.
- Lack of communication between boards and town departments – siloed.
- Need more of a regional approach to common problems as happened during the casino proposal.
- Impact of other communities on Ashland – the town can’t control this.
- Town website needs more improvement.
- Lack of bike infrastructure and facilities.
- Lack of on-street and municipal parking downtown (and disconnect).
- Limited CPA funds.
- Limited developable land zoned commercial/industrial to increase the tax base.
- Need to answer the question does Ashland want to be a bedroom community? Need visioning.

Barriers

- Apathy/non-participation/uncontested elections.
- Not sure if this means people are happy with how things are or just apathetic. It seems that the loudest voices carry the day.
- Town meeting attendance is article-based.
- Pond Street had a good turnout because it directly affected so many but when there is lack of progress on a project, it drives people away.
- People are not looking long-term anymore.
- Negativity triggers “never going to happen” thoughts – town needs to look at the cause of apathy.
- People are busy with work, kids, etc.
- Need to explore an idea, not just assume it can’t be done but recognize that it does take effort by people proposing the idea and town staff.
- Don’t classify active people as vocal minority – they bring ideas to the table but there needs to be a place to air/discuss those ideas.
- Need more communication with more residents.
- Discussion about town meeting attendance or form of government could be helpful.
- People spend time on their phones – a distraction as well as a way to reach them.
- Town meeting is embarrassing.
- Town meeting tends to be middle aged.
- Young families don’t attend town meeting. Either they trust the town to do the right thing or they aren’t willing to do work.
- Younger crowd not willing to work.
- Active people have a “twisted” view – but when issues are controversial the average resident more likely to come out. Harder to get turnout on routine issues.

- Land use issues – is it the sense of the room that residents like the development that is going on?
- Community-wide survey to build picture of what residents want. Surveys tend to have a low response rate and self-selected respondents.
- Worth the risk – need to promote – is it worth the time/effort?
- There was a town-wide survey for the 2003 comprehensive plan.
- Survey for the Route 126 project.
- People don't really know the issues – need both sides to write a summary like with statewide ballot questions.
- \$ - lack of dollars or lack of priorities?
- The budget pie is constrained so budget doesn't vary much.
- Tax bills fall in the middle of where surrounding towns are.
- Residents can't always afford tax increases.

Visioning Brainstorm

- Visuals are important.
- Email list from Pond Street.
- Manipulatives.
- Break out by topic areas.
- Hands-on worked better.
- Signs.
- Robo calls.
- Info tents, twitter, canvassing.
- Critical questions: tax vs. services.
- What's the real priority 5, 10, 50 years vision.
- Bring in the larger perspective.
- Would be happy if we met strangers, young people we've never seen.
- School newsletters.
- Provide day care.
- Growth vs. non-growth in a granular way.
- Make an implementation plan.
- Safe Routes to school.
- Open houses at the schools.
- Newsletter approach.

Focus Group for Town Staff, Boards and Committees Open Space, Recreation and Natural Resources

August 14, 2014

Strengths

- Ashland Reservoir.
- Warren Woods/Conference Center.
- Town Forest.

- Community gardens and the Farmers Market.
- Sibson Property and the Weston Nurseries parcel.
- Stone Park.
- Mill Pond.
- Gryncel Park.
- 125 Front Street.
- Marathon Park.
- Community Center playing fields.
- Open Space Committee.
- Riverwalk Trail.
- Sudbury River and adjacent reservoirs.
- Bay Circuit Trail.
- Cluster Development open space at Great Bend Farm Trust – oldest cluster in the state.
- Audubon Trails – Cross Street/Weston Nurseries.
- Boy Scout trail – including camping area at Indian Brook.
- Girl Scout Camp.
- Woods behind Warren School.
- Future open space at Tri Mount Aggregate site.
- Wildwood Cemetery – part of Bay Circuit.
- Devils Den archeological site.
- Hopkinton State Park.
- Ashland Fish and Game – ball field – private but part of Rail Transit District.
- Squares – Green and Montenegro.
- Cold Spring and Chemical Brooks.
- Summer Concerts.
- Skate park.
- Stone Park Pavilion.
- Kidspot.
- Stone Park – sledding – also at Hopkinton State Park.
- Lake Waushakum- swimming.
- Ashland bike club.
- Library has a wide variety of recreation programs.
- Community Center programs.
- Solar Challenge.
- Ashland High School has green features.
- Designation as a Green Community.
- Regulations to prohibit underground sprinklers.
- Rail access.
- Howe Street landfill.
- Parcel off Independence Lane.
- DPW has solar.
- Recycling – one of the first, spurred by Nyanza.
- Ashland Day.

- LED Street lights.
- Green Up Ashland Day.
- Dragonfly festival – arts and the environment.
- Youth Sports.
- Corporate and adult sports leagues.
- Half Marathon.
- No Frills Turkey Trot to raise money for the food pantry.
- Ashland Community Theater.
- Town Manager Forums.
- Ashland Creative.
- Ashland Cultural Council.
- Ashland Garden Club.
- Youth group recreation.
- Lions Triathlon.
- Coalition for Teens.
- Bingo.
- Historical Society Forums.
- Christmas Tree lighting.
- Boy Scouts Super Bowl pancake breakfast.
- Halloween Parade.
- Open Space Committee sponsors walks.
- Tuesday night concerts/movies.
- Ashland Extended Day program.
- Moms Club.
- Safe Routes to Schools.
- ASAP – Middle School.
- ACT.
- SADD: Students Against Destructive Decisions.

- Leos (junior Lions) club at the High School – helps with seniors.
- There are two Lions Clubs in town.
- Ashland Music Association.
- Scouting.
- VFW/American Legion.
- Memorial Day parade.
- Doggie parade.
- 4H Center.
- ARC.
- State representatives are open space advocates.
- Transition Ashland.
- The town's recreation program.

Additional non-open space related strengths.

- MWRTA – Metro West Regional Transit Authority.
- The number of condos.

Challenges

- Open space inaccessible by sidewalk.
- ¼ mile of sidewalk missing on Route 135 between Middle School and the Community Center but this will be fixed in the near future.
- Cluster by-law is deficient.
- Low density in general – lack of complete buildout.
- Cluster needs incentives with more flexibility.
- Zoning isn't allowing what people want.
- There is little open space on the east side of town but there are privately owned wetlands.
- Auto-centric design.
- Bike-ped retrofits needed for health and vitality.
- Keefe Tech area pedestrian access – many people walk there and could use a cantilevered bike/ped path.
- Inter-community pedestrian linkages.
- 126 side – lack of parks and gathering spaces.
- Biking safety.
- Re: buildout – rural character – needs infill development rather than expansion – compact development.
- Intensify use of developed land rather than develop more land.
- Transitional communities – people who move on from started homes versus the people who come and stay.
- Lack of restaurants, vibrant downtown. Need specialty shops like butchers, connective arc “sense of shared recreation” as hook.
- Need more but also better marketing.
- Align zoning with community values.
- Mandate larger commercial biz for revenue.
- Empty storefronts – mixed use developers have pushed Town Meeting but those developers have failed.
- Have design standards and enforce them.
- Be aware of HUD standards for mixed use.
- Disconnect between TM and abutters – part of issue is timing – people arrive after the decisions have been made.
- School facilities (except the HS) are not that great.
- Restaurants are lacking.
- Train station is “hideous”.
- There is no life around the train station.
- Transitional may be ok – ok that people upgrade to other towns as their income increases.
- Don't frame the vision around the people who leave.
- Taxes must be kept affordable for elders.

- Inconsistent approach to assets discourages commercial development.
- Voters may not understand \$ value of open space. Requires education re: value of unimproved open space versus recreation.
- One question is are more jobs needed in town or become more a part of the MetroWest economy.
- Gainer/Rail Transit district T.O.D.
- Plans should sunset after certain period (but this is regulated by state law).
- Best to engage with developers early in the process; i.e. early intervention re: community values.

Visioning Plan

- Interactive works.
- Childcare available and involve children and younger people.
- You are an abutter – way to draw people in.
- Refreshments.
- Clear, colorful visuals even if conceptual.
- Contest between schools.
- Neighborhood engagement; coffees re: specific questions.
- Forums – go to young families – Moms clubs, library.
- Focus specifically on regions within town – neighborhoods.
- Train the trainers for canvassing.
- Five precincts in town – no precinct captains but maybe street captains?
- Strong wording of questions.
- Define open space.
- Education re: pros and cons of issues.
- Specific questions such as should we widen or narrow Route 135.
- Present future scenarios such as full build out, stay rural.
- How much development do people want? Where?
- Sense of services and programs.
- Why move here, why do they stay?
- How do we keep aging people here?
- How to reconcile taxes vs. services?
- What do you want to see in ten years and what will it take to get there?
- What is the price and what are the paths to get there?
- How do you feel about Ashland now: Not enough open space? Not enough commercial space?
- This will shape delivery of services.
- What are the drivers of different populations? (Downtown, schools, town green?)
- Pick the five things that mean the most.
- ARA has found this out.
- Don't be too general or it might seem shallow.
- What are the trade-offs and under what conditions? What are the costs?
- Need to look at it from small to big picture and big picture back to small.

- Website – position papers? What is the cost of services?
- What is the population of elderly vs. young?
- Compare Ashland to other towns with same demographics but that are perceived as being more desirable – i.e. Wakefield.
- Live stream and take questions.
- Have a smaller forum but with meeting televised.

Visioning Session October 27, 2014

Participants placed dots next to public comments made during the session. The dots indicate priority concerns for those attending.



Breakout Group #1

Comment	# of Dots
Develop a clear vision statement and then develop an implementation plan	16
Continue to acquire more open space	13
Improve appearance of downtown commercial development including landscaping	12
Prioritize downtown and Pond Street before other areas of town	12
More options for employment/more services	11
Establish a town green	11
Develop a short and long term traffic plan that addresses current and future population levels (especially on W. Union with school in session)	10
Investigate tax incentive plan to attract new businesses	10
Develop a business marketing plan	10
Improved recreational connectivity for walking and biking	10
Centralized walkable clusters of merchants (including creative economy and eateries (e.g. at the Mall of the Americas	9
Develop business incubation centers to encourage start-ups (e.g. Gamewell)	8
Move forward more quickly with revitalization of Pond Street area	8
Ensure high quality education and use to promote the town	8
Develop high quality affordable/workforce housing plan	6
Library should provide more cultural and educational activities	6
Year round Farmers Market	5
Encourage more employment from light manufacturing and professional services	4
Develop a long term strategic plan for government facilities and infrastructure (e.g. water and sewer)	4
Ensure adequate funding for education	4
Balancing development	4
Develop a plan for high quality affordable/workforce housing and implement plan	3
Team with Framingham on train issues (such as noise, traffic, grade changes to tracks) and incorporate into current planning ideas	2
Require improved quality of residential and commercial development	2
Allow zoning changes to allow more housing variety	2
Add a dog park	2

Expand and improve transit system	2
Route 135 40B should be used for walking trails	1
Mitigate environmental concerns of new businesses	1
Increase in tax base	0
Encouraging residential building that fits in better with neighborhoods	0
Improved train schedule	0
Add professional offices at appropriate locations on Route 135	0

Breakout Group #2

Comment	# of Dots
Need to look at water shortage	24
Make sure affordable housing is developed sensibly	15
Pond Street: want to feel more connected to Ashland	14
Connected rail trail with surrounding area	10
Traffic is getting thicker- morning, afternoon, all day	10
Like the safety	9
Train schedules through downtown; depress the rails (or raise)	8
Need more walk-ability, bike-ability, less auto dependency	8
Need more local jobs	8
Affordable senior housing	8
Town budget needs to be sustainable	8
Potential/appetite for culture/arts	7
Downtown streetscape – fix up coffee shops, local café, bakery	6
Lack of planning between towns (Legacy Place traffic) – need better coordination	6
Benches	6
Empty commercial spaces	5
Development potential on 126	4
More mixed-use; increase non-residential tax base	4
Maintain small town feel	4
State aid is flat or diminishing	4
Historic homes	4
Sense of neighborhood	4
Diversity	4
Ashland: a destination, not a pass-through	3
Take advantage/utilize under-used spaces	3
Library	3
Town green	3
Green atmosphere	3
Starter homes	3
Create a 2 year junior college using existing facilities in off-hours	3
More sidewalks	3
Development versus traffic	3
Value	3
Schools	3
Accessibility to Boston	2
No north/south public transportation infrastructure (limited to Boston)	2
Need more adult education	2

Comment	# of Dots
Number of people at commuter rail has exploded	2
Small enough scale – can interact with government	2
Community involvement	2
Safety for students and seniors	2
Year round Farmers Market	2
Shrubs in my garden survived (H2O)	2
Impact studies for more future buildings (Pond Street)	2
Impacts of new developments	1
Sense of community	1
Recreation	1
Treacherous at 135 and Frankland	1
What if NEU sells conference center?	1
New/improved tennis courts	1
Co-housing; some shared space	1
Intimacy	0
Quality of life	0
Bottleneck at Pleasant Street	0
Schools take 75-80% of budget	0
The people	0
Absentee property owners	0
Need a reason to cross town to 126	0
Streets designed for past use, not for future	0
Connections within town	0

Breakout Group #3

Statement	# of Dots
Downtown: Renovated downtown with design guidelines	12
More open space	11
Rail Transit District: More middle level restaurants like the Ashland Ale House	8
Downtown: Lower RR tracks	8
More bike trails	6
Walkability – sidewalks on Route 135 and other locations	6
Downtown: Mixed-use housing/development/local developers	6
Downtown: Move police and fire and redevelop the space	5
Lower property taxes	5
Less traffic through town	5
Continue and expand Farmers Market	5
Creative housing types	5
Town squares – Pond Street/Butterfield Drive, other locations	5
Library – funding (stack, programs)	4
Pleasant Street: Mixed-use re: development with riverwalk	4
Pond Street: Active recreation i.e. bowling/hockey rink	4
UMASS – like transportation system	4
Rail Transit District: Bike trails	3
Pond Street: Professional buildings	3

Improved water supply – volume (potential MWRA connection)	3
Community theater	3
Access from downtown to train station	3
Downtown: Basic food store	2
Co-housing	2
Ashland a preeminent location for education (buildings and programs)	2
Downtown: Sync traffic lights	2
More support for ACTA (teen programs)	2
Rail Transit District: Preserve it	2
Rail Transit District: Community gardens	2
Downtown parking	1
Control destiny with water/sewer	1
Rehab neighborhood schools	1
Dispose old schools/replacement new	1
Downtown: Medical offices	1
Public open space east of Route 126	1
Ashland a preeminent location for taking care of each other	0
Preservation of historical structures	0
Larger commercial base/more diverse	0
Downtown: Quiet zone for trains	0
Downtown: Coffee shop	0
Downtown: Pleasing to the eye housing and buildings	0
Rail Transit District: Commercial/industrial on the other 130 acres	0
Rail Transit District: Commuter oriented commercial	0
Rail Transit District: Incorporate open space in development	0

Breakout Group #4

Statement	# of Dots
Transportation (Con Rail)	
Country-fy	
Extended sidewalks	
Destination downtown: more places to go/draw	
Road safety (dark and no sidewalks); need a plan, can't do it all at once.	
Bike trails	
Multi-use path	
Lacking goods and services – expand service offerings	
Strong schools	
Commercial focus – not residential	
In-law apartments in single family homes	
Strong community activities	
Incentives for bringing biz in	
Figuring out what businesses we want here and how to get them here	
Farmers Market	
Fixing our water supply issue	
Street lights	
Housing	
Disruptive rail	
Highest Priorities	

Water supply	6
Business draw/goods and services	5
Downtown as a destination – creating historic district	4
Bike/walk path/multi-use	4
Sustainability	4
Farmers Market	2
Population control	2
Redevelop existing buildings	2
Sidewalks	2
School system	2
Finding/defining an image	0
Managing development	0
Housing density	0
Open space	0
Rail schedule	0
Walkability	0
Housing impact on schools	0

Breakout Group #5

Statement	# of Dots
Depress railroad tracks	15
Downtown revitalization that will foster community including retail	14
Rail/trail connection to parks	13
Bike path connect to downtown and other towns (network include schools	12
Theatre/arts/culture downtown	12
Algonquin light/126 int	10
Keep Ashland affordable	10
Stability of taxes	8
Cluster development as opposed to subdivisions	8
Water status/plan	7
Eliminate blight	7
Town green	7
Noise control	7
Scale up municipal services to match growth	7
Maintain sidewalks on downtown and Pond Street	7
Sustainability in water management	6
Aesthetic vision	6
Downtown	6
Retain more attractive industry and appropriately placed	6
Youth activities/center	6
Affordable mixed throughout town	5
Sustainability/resilience	5
Mixed-use development	5
Make train regular stop/hub for commuters	5
Park/public gathering area	5
Retail including woman's clothing stores	5
Water treatment facility/recharge	4
Put trees back	4

Route 126/Pond Street	4
Trees	4
Light retail	4
Community farm	4
Development proportional to locations	3
Professional park/recreational services	2
Increase capacity of roads	2
Better walkability	2
Elder medical services	2
Property owner accountability	2
Kids toy stores	2
Affordable housing strategy	2
Wide variety of housing	2
Technology	1
Town pool	1
Roller skating rink	1
Statement	# of Dots
Infant to 12/tech	1
Dog park	1
Tech start ups	1
Infill	0
Pleasant Street	0
Schools can meet capacity	0
TOD	0
Regional transit	0
Design standards (more power)	0
Historic preservation (more power)	

Senior Center Lunch

November 3, 2014

- Downtown; need bigger draw than "Lunkers". Need new Fire/Police Station. Place supermarket in downtown area. More family restaurants. Water table too high to depress railroad tracks.
- Pond St; stop 3/4 story buildings, need small commercial, make more business area, retail outlets, clothing stores and eliminate need to go to Framingham.
- RTW 135; what will go in old DQ and Marathon Deli? Have buildings blend in with community; have quality not like Fafard! Increase quality of construction and validate.
- Pleasant St.; have 2 families, yes to office buildings. What is going into old Fenwall Building?
- Rail Station; have enough light commercial businesses (cleaner, food etc); Reduce residential tax base by development. Concerned about health issues of Nyanza.
- Youth & Schools; open gyms for kids; repair schools as regular maintenance/little at a time.
- General Townwide; more sidewalks to community center; more sidewalks in town!; address town's water issues and why do we sell to Hopkinton? What will cost be to homeowner for MWRA? Water is always an issue of quality/quantity. Will there be a break for cost to senior citizens ?

This focus group was comprised of stay-at-home mothers whose main concerns were related to the schools and children's activities. Some of their comments included:

- Space limitations and overcrowding in the schools.
- There should be one school building for K-8 so that parents with multiple aged children can make just two trips to drop off and pick up their children.
- Parents with 3 small children who are 3 years apart must currently make 6 trips per day to drop off and pick up their children at different times and at different schools. This is a waste of energy and does not tie into the "Green Community" vision.
- There needs to be sidewalks and bike paths for children to safely walk and bike to schools.
- There is a need in town for a recreation center with a pool for children's activities, gatherings, birthday parties, etc. Currently parents must take their children to Framingham locations, and some children do not like the YMCA.
- Ashland State Park – Include boat rentals like at Hopkinton State Park for recreation.
- Sustainable public transportation is important.
- The current public transportation needs to be expanded and improved.
- There is no direct bus route to the Framingham mall. Passengers must change buses in downtown Framingham and wait for another bus, which takes too long.
- There are no bus stop signs and there should be kiosks for people to wait.
- Routes, timetables and bus stop locations are not properly advertised in town (including at the train station) which discourages people from using public transportation.

Additional Comments

No mixed use on Front street

Eliminate train horns

Change trash routes so that busy streets are not during morning/ Eve commute time

More handicap parking in lot close to Farmer's market for seniors

land encroachment in open space & trails

Transportation for elderly - we are not part of the "Ride"

More decent public transportation. More often.

Town common area have coffee shop affordable to local area

Likes red dress + yoga set up - need more of a draw - no bank

Senior Center

Connect rail trails

An interesting request: many seniors don't drive at night. They are requesting a daytime forum after Oct.27. Best with food.

How can we have input into size of the buildings going up on the Valentine estate??

Downtown Area. If police /fire move? What will be there?

Park Place- Tear down and rebuild w/ highend restaurant stores. Keep Hsg in one area.

pat/med

Quarry

Better town web site. Pot move reporting spot.

Water ponding and quarry entrance Safety issue-> Aggregate plan+ Future downtown common area

Wauasharum well online when comes online
Spring st. well status
Traffic on Rte 135
Sewerage issues
Downtown trail from train area + more bike path
Warren Woods
Algonguin Trail
Townwide composting- Framingham has own.

Lightning Poll Questions

Over the course of six weeks, a different question was posted on the Town's website. This type of survey was termed a "Lightning Poll".

Lightning Poll Question #1: What do we want from commerce in town?

Paper Comments

- Create a more livable town with a well-balanced mix of business, residential & public areas that are well-laid out, maneuverable & that draw excellent people and business to us .partly because of our thoughtful, intuitive commercial development planning, zoning, etc.
- Support tax revenue, but not at the expense of a livable downtown, Don't destroy what heritage we have left.

Facebook Comments

- Yes 100%,it might get the state house to look into towns commercial budget gettings, hope that makes sense, mark [when asked for clarification, Commenter wrote the following:] rte.126 is a state road right? Maybe state commerce dept. could in improving land off it, hope that help

Website Comments

- Elect suitable commerce that will provide good tax revenue
- Think outside the box of attracting retail businesses, restaurants, etc. We need to be thinking about what will drive 'commerce' in the future, i.e. climate change, drought in agrusiness regions. Ashland should be looking to set it's sights on establishing wind and solar farms, and sell energy we generate back to the grid; double down on protecting natural resources and investing in food production, and the like.
- Support small businesses!
- I think we need more commercial development to increase our commercial tax base, but we cannot compromise the character of the community to do it.
- Ashland's downtown area and choices for dining, shopping, etc, pale in comparison to other surrounding communities. It also does not reflect the charm and quaintness found in these neighboring towns.
- Consider what it takes to make ashland center a destination ... culture, community, connection. Once we get people to come into town, make it possible for them to extend their time spent here by creating a cluster of interesting (and locally-owned) businesses, food/drink/coffee shops, and cultural centers. There are so many small businesses, home-based businesses, artisans and artists yet there is no place for people to come together

here. No galleries. No creative spaces except The Red Dress (and it would benefit from company)

- I think all of the above in balance. Not one above the other.
- keep the commercial development along the 126 corridor
- it's got to be a joint proposition.
- Low water use.
- upgrade the school system and provide a better town feel with an aesthetically appealing town and business district to attract higher income families
- Given that we are surrounded by a mecca of commerce (i.e. Framingham/Natick, and Framingham being the largest town in the USA), it's wise to look at challenges to our lives and economy 10-20 years from now. Where to shop and dine, is not as big a problem as strategically planning for clean water, energy and food. How do we develop these?
- Provide more places to shop and dine that are NOT like the places we already have.
- Provide tax and be a good Ashland citizen
- create a vibrancy and purpose besides a bedroom community and drive through community.

Lightning Poll Question #2: Does Ashland have adequate biking and walking facilities?

Paper Comments

- Need to create bike path like Milford. Unsafe to have bikes on roads
- Based on?
- Not very safe at this time. Not enough sidewalks & the sidewalks that we have are falling apart.
- We desperately need more sidewalks throughout Ashland. The neighborhoods are too segmented now
- More sidewalks needed
- I don't know enough existing biking trails to determine if they are adequate
- Need more sidewalks. I am concerned about bikers on narrow road when I drive.
- Lot of streets don't have proper sidewalks
- Finish the rail trail. Have a dedicated biking paths, not share the road.
- Need some place else for the bikers. Own lane
- More bike lanes, friendlier car drivers.
- Sidewalks along Route 135 would be helpful for safer, useful walking
- Sidewalks are beneficial for kids & other people. Oak Street always has accidents.
- Reduce vehicle miles traveled + necessity for the car. Balance of needs in town - work, shop recreate less auto dependence
- Sidewalks; could use.
- no sidewalks
- Depends where you are. Would like more sidewalks.
- Could use more biking. Especially safe biking places.
- Would love to do more biking around here, but its too dangerous.
- Jogging is dangerous.

Facebook Comments

- I am so sorry I missed tonight's forum. I would love to put my vote in for more sidewalks. We live on Cross Street cars tear down the street as if they were in the indy 500 it would be great to have a sidewalk so we can enjoy the lovely wooded street and feel safe
- Would LOVE to see more sidewalks. It's so frustrating that my kids can't safely walk to the rec center because there aren't sidewalks on both sides of the road.
- Rte.135 across from senior center needs sidewalk plus a crosswalk with a crosswalk yield light, biking should be only in off road areas like town forest, state park, stone park, municipal parking lots, east union street after cedar street needs sidewalks to Ashland, Framingham town line.

Lightning Poll Question #3: What are your thoughts on the Downtown?

Online comments

- more parking
- the current restaurants are great, but more diversity (indian, thai, french, tapas, etc) would be nice. new small stores are great - gift shop type places that encourage foot travel would compliment the farmers market crowd nicely
- Shops and restaurants would be fine, but should be balanced. For example, we lost Basket Case in favor of a real estate office. How does that help downtown? More charm. Move the ugly digital sign someplace else. More art and creativity. Accentuate the beauty in our town -- our town hall, post office, and other historic buildings. Downtown should make you feel cozy and welcoming.
- Shops and restaurants would be fine, but should be balanced. For example, we lost Basket Case in favor of a real estate office. How does that help downtown? More charm. Move the ugly digital sign someplace else. More art and creativity. Accentuate the beauty in our town -- our town hall, post office, and other historic buildings. Downtown should make you feel cozy and welcoming.
- downtown town to be more like a center
- A CAFE. Nice, easy and comfortable place for people to meet, work, grab a great cup of coffee in Ashland Center.
- Improve the RR crossing
- like more nice benches to sit on (see Natick), some flowers along main street (see seasonal Holliston)
- Holliston or Hopkinton!!!
- We need a new more easily accessible post office with drive-up mail boxes. Downtown could use a face lift.
- More stores utilizing existing structures. Rehab, don't tear down and build new.
- Landscaping and hedges to screen rail tracks and beautify downtown.
- Bakery cafe where people can gather
- Bakery cafe - ice cream shop - cultural center - gift shop to display farmers market artisans products
- Recruit more white collar professional services to upgrade the town
- Public transport to the Downtown area
- Starbucks

- Post Office Parking
- Local business- ice cream, bakery shop, toy store
- Art gallery, book stores
- I think downtown should be a destination spot for the town. It should be vibrant such as other local towns that have great foot traffic. For example Holliston has great foot traffic and Westwood has fabulous foot traffics.
- Anything to make the area more attractive. I don't know of any other new england town that is as unattractive as ours .
- Boutiques, gift shops, no chains restaurants or stores or mini markets.
- Starbucks, Peets Coffee or other hi end coffee/tea shop.
- More light, walking area, park
- No more apartments, etc.
- Many people, young and old, express the need to have a more vibrant downtown. We have to look at economic realities and our proximity to much larger towns. We should invest in a building, ideally the firestation when a central facility is built, that offers affordable rent to food and crafts vendors, has a safe pleasant environment for citizens to meet, etc. Also, yes, we need a town green and the farmer's market area is ideal.
- More charm, like Holliston
- Performance/artist studios space, more of the Ashland Farmer's Martket, perhaps a covered area for that to be a permanent, all season event.

Paper Comments

- Mixed use development, bakery /café- where residents can get together
- keep it small
- mixed use property
- restaurant in firehouse when it moves
- parking - would love old town feel
- Replace playground structure at Warren School that was taken down and playground structure at mindess.
- less fast food restaurants
- green grocery - not a convenience store

Facebook Comments

- green grocery - not a convenience store
- Would love some more small family-type businesses. Something like Basket Case (remember that lil jem) or how about a place where families can go and do pottery/painting
- I am so sorry I missed tonights forum. I would love to put my vote in for more sidewalks. We live on Cross Street cars tear down the street as if they were in the indy 500 it would be great to have a sidewalk so we can enjoy the lovely woded street and feel safe
- Would LOVE to see more sidewalks. Its so frustrating that my kids cant safely walk to the rec center because there aren't sidewalks on both sides of the road.
- Rte.135 across from senior center needs sidewalk plus a crosswalk with a crosswalk yield light,biking should be only in off road areas like town forest,state park,stone

park,municipal parking lots,east union street after cedar street needs sidewalks to ashland,framingham town line.

Lightning Poll Question #4: Balance between Property Taxes and Services

Paper Comments

- Increased only if it goes to improving infrastructure and schools

Online Comments

- Increased only if it goes to improving infrastructure and schools
- It depends on what it's for.
- A surplus of money seems to have gone into education, allowing Ashland's schools to catch up to their neighbors. We don't want to lessen that funding now that we're competitive. But the downtown area is in dire need of a facelift and there needs to be a bigger draw to attract new dining and shops on the western part of the town (ie, not Pond Street).
- what are the other services? need to upgrade the town to attract more white collar families and businesses
- Develop a strong commercial base to help ease the 'tax payer' burden. Re-evaluate the 'tax' buckets to assure an equitable distribution of existing taxes to all municipal services.
- Need further information on the current spending
- Would pay more for an RDF like Wellesley
- Increase but for schools only
- I would like them to stay the same but if more info was provided as to why an increase/decrease my answer may change. Would like a breakdown of where they are going.
- Depends on which services are needed.
- Our property taxes are high relative to other, non-Rte 9 towns for the services we receive. Our town government admin. is also too big relative to other similar sized towns - we have more administrative overhead than most towns our size or larger. Why do we have a Town Manager and an Asst. Town Mgr? Also, why aren't we subsidizing schools by have solar panels? Ashland has not done a good job of looking outside the box defined by town admin from pre-2000. We need to create a new town management paradigm.
- A balanced and transparent approach to tax spending is required.
- Is there any way to figure out what % of the collected tax is allocated to each service?
- property taxes need to be coming from an increase in Commercial/Industrial development.

Facebook Comments

- Services first more for our fire department, now that i know who on this plan ashland group, is this group really an Ashland growth for out of town business to be built my example is the Needham bank there are some in this groupfor one should you include yourself for them to be a business get sign by-law updated, I could go on but i won't get more services i agree with some of commenters comments,only disagreement is we don't need residential growth
- Ashland needs to keep taxes from getting any higher with a thoughtful balance of mixed use development, new industrial and office space, an emphasis on innovation and

carefully planned residential development so that the services for new development do not cost more than tax revenue.

- No new development for a while -- that would be a good start. We have vacancies and abandoned houses and half-developed sites that look like open sores. Do something with those sites, first, please.

Lightning Poll Question #5: Question: What kind(s) of new development would you like to see in Ashland? Please check all that apply.

Online Comments

- Retail and office along major highways and downtown development
- Independent elder housing (all on one floor) at reasonable cost.
- The poll only allows for one response (not all that apply). Given our available space, I believe the focus should be on single-family residential, new development/redevelopment of downtown, retail and office along 126 and, to a lesser degree, 135, and small scale commercial around the train station. I do not believe Ashland is well situated for major office developments nor do we have the land (to my knowledge) for meaningful industrial development.
- Unable to select more than one - answer: all of the above except single and multi family dwellings.
- Utilization (re-use) of existing structures without compromising town character
- Mixed use developments
- No more housing, condos or apartment complexes. Solicit 'local' retailers and provide services to residents so they don't have to travel to a very congested Rt. 9
- Restaurants, bakery
- preserve old historic buildings - for every new house permit make it mandatory for the builder to restore a historic building, no more tearing down of what little history the town still has.
- Please - no more condos, and large housing developments. We are too congested already!
- High-Tech development. Hopkinton got EMC2 and Perkins, Framingham has Genzyme, Natick MathWorks and Boston Scientific, while Marlborough just got Quest Diagnostics
- There seems to be little thought given to balancing quality of life for the many residents living along Rt. 126 with your desire to bring in any commercial development. I think that we shouldn't be the dumping ground for all things business. If it continues, the value of the condos will depreciate and you will lose significant revenue in taxes. You will also have an eyesore on your hands if you have a mass exodus from the condos because of poor choices made about businesses abutting our homes. We shouldn't be the dumping ground for the town and I'm tired of hearing there's little you can do because of zoning laws. If necessary, adjust zoning so smart decisions can be made that take into account this is a dense residential area.
- Please no more condos!!! Especially cheap, poorly constructed properties by Fafford.
- Eliminate ALL BACKLIT SIGNAGE!
- More open areas for people gathering, walking, small cafe, fountains, nice lighting, music, etc.
- Major highway = Rte 126 entire & Rte 135 only where it now exists & possibly from East Union st. to Framingham line.

- I'd like to see us thinking more strategically in terms of preparing for the future, which may see water and food, as precious commodities that are protected and cultivated locally, because of the problems that are currently mounting with water shortages, industrial pollution, deterioration of Nation's food growth and delivery system. We should start thinking of partnering strategically with other towns in the region to foster economic development that brings sustainability NOT just shopping and restaurant options, these are too short sighted. Plenty of restaurants don't have enough business to sustain themselves - we need to think bigger than this.
- None
- More restaurants and shopping!
- HIGH TECHNOLOGY
- Possibly allowing for housing if a development was 50% or better commercial/industrial taxable.
- More housing or affordable housing if it was done at 50% or better commercial/industrial

Facebook Comments

- More housing or affordable housing if it was done at 50% or better commercial/industrial tax base.
- Technical start ups, medical walk in clinics, my top two

<h4>Lightning Poll Question #6: How much change in Downtown Ashland?</h4>
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Website comments

- Before re-using existing or developing vacant parcels, I think we should solve/resolve the traffic and water problems that exist. Fixing things up, that don't require a lot of money is a good first step. Solving the larger issues should take place in parallel. Then we can decide on usage and development. BTW, the use of the existing bank building, for bank purposes will bring needed tax dollars into Ashland.
- stores and restaurants, coffee shop, something like Hopkinton Drug,
- Provide sufficient parking near businesses.
- Not sure what you mean by low-value buildings.
- Free and open community meeting space to be used by community groups without charge
- Our options for dining and shopping are practically non-existent compared to surrounding towns (Natick, Westborough, Framingham). I am not saying we need to become a retail shopping center but we need more attractive options for dining and shopping within our own town so we don't have to travel elsewhere. Enough with the dunkin donuts and honey due donuts! How about a star bucks or other locally owned coffee shop? Or a dine in option that is not a chain or a tenth pizza option? What we do not need is any type of large apartment or housing complex. You have that intertwined in the above responses but housing should be completely separate from commercial/dining/retail use of space.
- I don't think we should change the character of downtown Ashland. Just spruce it up. We need parking for businesses to thrive, but we need it to be pedestrian-friendly too. But I don't think anyone wants to see it become something "different" from what they remember. Let's think in terms of "grooming", and I think that will go a long way to setting the right expectations. We still want it to look like home, right?
- No more than two stories

- No more than 2 stories high for multistory buildings
- Add a cultural center (Fire station)
- Also a meeting place and cultural center.
- Bookstore -- coffee shop -- how about a barbecue place or something where Burnam's Supper Club is, by the trains?
- Pedestrian-friendly spaces, renovations, businesses, etc. No more heavy-traffic sites.

Facebook comments

- Coffee shop, small bookstore.
- I would love a movie theater like this in town!
<https://www.facebook.com/FineArtsTheatrePlace?fref=nf>
- Mixed office\residential building-walk in medical clinics,needed for commercial ideas

Coffee Katch

November 5, 2014

What will be Ashland's Identity: Next 10 Years

- What will we be known for?
- Will we have the best farmers market in the area?
- How will we provide a decentralized sustainable resident water system?
- How will we maintain high ranking schools?
- What kinds of industry?
- Will be a healthy place to live?
- Will we have options for public transit?
- What will downtown look like?
- What needs to be done to support a bicycle infrastructure?
- How will we be a part of the Charles River Rail trail?
- How will we work with surrounding towns?
- How will we develop/plan a community organic farm?
- How will we decrease dependence on fossil fuels?
- How will we work with ecosystem to solve town problems?
- How will we address bilingual needs?
- How will we achieve a variety of housing options?
- How can zoning give us a variety of housing options?
- How will we have a well-lit side walk network supporting the town?
- How will we encourage culture/arts?
- How can we encourage organizations and businesses to support arts?
- How will we encourage businesses and living engagement coops?
- How will town buildings reflect sustainability priorities (water, electric, solar, etc.)?
- How can we provide fresh produce to the needy in town?
- How can Ashland become a destination?
- What does a sustainable town/community look like?
- What will downtown look like?
- Will there be a railroad through downtown?

- What will the railroad look like downtown?
- Will there be full-day kindergarten paid for by town?
- How will the funding for the schools change?
- What will be the growth in town?
- Will the Gaynor property be developed?
- What will the Gaynor property be?
- Will the town be more walkable and bike-friendly and how?
- Will the town attract young families?
- Will the elders be able to stay in town?
- How will further development of open space impact the town and its identity?
- Will there be co-housing (cross between communal and condos) communities?
- What varieties of housing options will be available?
- What will the traffic be like on Route 135?
- Will we have more commercial property?
- What will the commercial property landscape look like?
- Will we have more public transit?
- How will public transit evolve?
- Will there be a winter farmer's market and how will it grow?
- Will the Warren Center remain undeveloped?
- What will happen with the Warren Center?
- Will there be a trail connection Ashland and Hopkinton State Park?
- Will we have more connectivity in our trail systems?
- Will Route 126 have gotten well into the new phase?
- How will Route 126 evolve?
- Will we have a community coffee shop?
- Will we have more community shops/establishments?
- Are we built out on condos?
- Will more schools need to be built?
- Will downtown have a more bustling night life?
- Will there be more cultural/arts offered in the community?
- Will we have a green town?
- Will there be a gathering spot downtown?

Key data sources

Assessors Parcels: Parcel boundaries and property assessment information (land use type, square footage, ownership, assessed value, etc) was drawn from MassGIS “Level 3” parcels which use standardized information provided by the town’s assessor.

Zoning Boundaries: Data on zoning boundaries was provided by town staff. MAPC reviewed the town’s zoning by-law and other pertinent regulatory documents to determine the dimensional requirements, permitted uses, and parking requirements associated with each zone.

Environmental Resources: MassGIS provided data on the distribution of wetlands, riverfront areas, flood zones, water resource protection areas, steep slopes, historical sites, contamination, protected open space, and other environmental resources that can constrain development potential.

Recent & Proposed Development: MAPC compiled information about recent and planned development from a variety of sources, including the town’s Co-Urbanize site and MAPC’s Development Database (an inventory of development activity across the region.) MAPC also analyzed property assessment data from other MetroWest municipalities to characterize the different types of recent (last 15 years) commercial development in the subregion.

Population and Employment Projections: Base-case population, housing demand, and employment projections are based on MAPC’s 2014 population and housing projections and the employment projections prepared for the recently-adopted Regional Transportation Plan.

Model Functions

The land use model operates in four basic steps:

1. Calculate the developable area of each parcel, after subtracting wetlands and accounting for other constraints;
2. Apply land use assumptions to each parcel and calculate total development potential and net increase over existing square footage;
3. Allocate a specified amount of housing and commercial growth based on development potential, location, constraints, and other factors;
4. Calculate the town-wide impacts of the projected development on a variety of metrics.

Developable area is the parcel area minus wetlands, water bodies, and protected open space. The percent of lot area also constrained by riverfront area, water resource protection areas, steep slopes, and flood zones is also calculated and is used as a discounting factor to arrive at an effective lot area against which density assumptions are applied in the next step.

Land Use Assumptions can take the form of a specific building template (e.g., a 40,000 square foot retail building) or a more generalized “place type” representing the likely mix of development types in a given zone (e.g., 40% retail, 30% office, 30% industrial.) Each building template has a required lot area that must be satisfied, and the place types have a density value (either units per acre or floor area ratio, depending on the land use type) which is applied to the parcels effective lot area to determine development potential. The initial place types were based on the town’s zoning bylaw; additional place types were created to represent different styles of development that could be permitted. It is also possible to assume “no development” where appropriate (cemeteries, certain town-owned parcels) or to discount development potential based on local knowledge.

Growth Allocations are based on a suitability analysis that scores each parcel based on its development capacity, environmental constraints, value of existing development, and location. This ranking is the basis for allocation of projected housing units and commercial square footage. The initial assumptions for growth are based on MAPC projections. Housing growth assumptions are in terms of single family and multi family units needed by the year 2030 (initially set at 1,100 single family units and 1,000 units in multifamily housing.) Economic growth is estimated as a percent of total MetroWest job growth that is expected to locate in Ashland (initially set at 4.0% of 15,000 jobs over the period 2010 – 2030.) These overall growth assumptions are modified for both of the alternative scenarios.

Town-Wide Impacts are calculated based on multipliers applied to the allocated growth, taking into account the characteristics of the assumed land use (e.g., assessed value per square foot of floor area for retail development.) These metrics also take into account current trends (such as the rate of increase in per-pupil expenditure) and projections (such as demographic shifts.) Estimation methods for each of the indicators is described below.

- *Tax Revenue* is a function of assessed value and tax rate. For each building template and place type used in the land use modeling, there is an estimate of future assessed value per square foot of built floor area, based on values for similar recent developments (since 2000) in Ashland and the MetroWest subregion. The total allocated floor area is multiplied by the assessed value per square foot for that type of development, and the existing assessed building value (if any) is subtracted to yield net change in assessed building value. Current year tax rates are applied to the change in value to estimate the net change in tax revenue. Two items are worth noting: first, the model does not assume any change in the assessed value of the underlying land; only the change in building value is estimated. Second, the dollar figures all relate to *assessed value*, which may differ substantially from market value; however, since the focus of the analysis is on future year tax generation and not on sales price, the assessed value is the relevant measure. All tax revenue estimates are in FY 2013 real dollars.
- *Projected Enrollment* is based on MAPC population projections for the town, adjusted to reflect the different housing production forecasts in each scenario. First, the ratio between the “school-age population” (age 5 – 19) and the public school enrollment is calculated. (In Ashland’s case, enrollment in the public school system is approximately 83% of the

population age 5 – 19.) This same ratio is applied to the same age groups in MAPC's Stronger Region projections for 2030 to result in a base-case estimate of school enrollment for that year. For alternative scenarios, enrollment is adjusted up or down to reflect housing production rates higher or lower than the base case, using locally-derived factors for school age residents per housing unit. These factors are calculated for two different housing types (single family & multifamily) and two householder ages (over/under age 55.) If an alternative scenario entails 100 fewer single family housing units than the base case, the enrollment projections would be reduced by 73 students (100 single family homes * 0.88 school-age residents per single family unit with householder under age 55 * 0.83 Ashland Public School students per school age residents = 73 students)

- *Public School Expenditures* are calculated based on projected enrollment (described above) multiplied by projected per-pupil expenditures. MAPC's analysis of Ashland Public School funding estimates that since the year 2000 per-pupil expenditures in Ashland have seen annual increases of 3%, in nominal dollars. This rate of increase (which can be easily modified in the model) is carried forward to the year 2030 and the resulting per-pupil expenditure is applied to projected enrollment.
- *Resident Workers* are projected using a method similar to public school enrollment. Initial estimates are based on MAPC's population projections, with an age-specific labor force participation rate applied to the working age population to derive the number of resident workers. For alternative scenarios, the projected number of workers per household for 2030 is applied to the increase or decrease in housing units relative to the base case, and the future year estimates of resident workers are adjusted accordingly.
- *Water Demand* projections are based on estimated water consumption rates specific to certain residential and commercial land uses, based on literature research and Massachusetts water conservation standards.
- *Trip Generation* is based on rates derived from professional literature for various types of residential and commercial land uses.