



Town of Ashland, Office of the Select Board

SELECT BOARD MEETING (HYBRID) January 21, 2026 – 8:00 PM Town Hall, 101 Main Street, Ashland, MA

Present at the meeting were: Joseph Magnani (Chair), Claudia Bennett, Yolanda Greaves, Makeda Keegan (Remote), and Brandi Kinsman. Also in attendance were Town Manager Michael Herbert, Assistant Town Manager Katherine Bird, and Executive Assistant Susan Robie.

1. Call Meeting to Order

Mr. Magnani called the January 21, 2026 meeting to order at 8:15 PM; he announced that the Select Board just concluded a Tri-Board meeting and they are now continuing their regular meeting.

2. Citizen's Participation

Mark Dassoni, resident, commented that tonight's Tri-Board meeting was very productive and transparent, which he was glad to see.

Joan Gonfrade, resident, inquired as to whether there has been a response in regards to Mr. Engler's 40B application; Mr. Magnani noted they have not yet received a response, but they will follow-up.

Ms. Gonfrade inquired as to whether a water-sewer study will be conducted that will include all of the proposed projects; Mr. Magnani noted they will follow-up with Doug Small on this.

Tony Quattrone and Susan Thorne, residents, spoke regarding the Frankland Road solar project and the importance of protecting the 1.8-acre Ashland parcel that was designated as Open Space as part of that project's approval. Both the Open Space Commission, and the Conservation Commission, are in support of a coordinated effort by Ashland and Hopkinton for the transfer of the full parcel of Open Space land to the Hopkinton Land Trust. Ashland should have an interest in asking Hopkinton to enforce the conditions that impact land in Ashland; that land is meant to offset deforestation for the solar array, preserve wildlife habitat, maintain trail connections, and protect the watershed and downstream resources. They are requesting the Town monitor the progress and reinforce Ashland's expectation to protect that parcel as Open Space. Mr. Magnani agreed with the need to protect that parcel and that Hopkinton abide by the agreement.

Mr. Magnani will speak with Town Counsel in regards to sending a letter to Hopkinton. Ms. Greaves noted that she spoke with Hopkinton's Assistant Town Manager today and is waiting to hear back from him and will communicate out to the Board to see where we can go; Board Members agreed to have this on the next meeting agenda for further discussion.

3. Old/New Business

- Discuss the Creation of the Citizens Action Group.

Mr. Magnani noted that during the Select Board's last meeting, they discussed appointing a Select Board liaison to Rob Scherer's citizen's group. Mr. Scherer stated that his committee was expecting a Select Board Member or two to be appointed tonight to work out a joint statement or proposal for the Select Board to take action; if they are not willing to work with them, they may go back to their original plan and bring it to the spring Town Meeting. Ms. Keegan offered to be a Board liaison; Mr. Magnani offered to be an alternative. Susan Jensen asked the reason for the change in thinking; Mr. Magnani noted there has not been a change, appointing a liaison is what was agreed during the last meeting. Mr. Scherer thanked the Board and will reach out to the Board liaisons.

- Review No Hunting Bylaw.

Mr. Magnani discussed an incident that occurred at Warren Woods involving an individual hunting at Warren Woods after Warren Woods had come up on a GPS Hunting app. Mr. Magnani noted that the Bylaw states there is no hunting allowed in the Town Forest; he suggested they may want to look at updating the Bylaw to state that there is no hunting allowed on Town-owned property. Board Members discussed having legal counsel contact the hunting app or website to have it updated to remove the reference to Ashland; Mr. Magnani has spoken with Doug Small who will look into updating those GPS maps and coordinates, and adding signage stating that no hunting is allowed. The Board discussed implementing fines, and promoting information on social media that there is no hunting in Town. Board Members agreed to look at working with Conservation and Becca Solomon to update the Bylaw. Bow hunting is currently allowed on private property with the property owner's permission.

- Discuss the Housing Production Plan Meeting.

Board Members discussed the Housing Production Plan Meeting held last night at the Community Center. A Housing Production Plan was last completed five years ago. A Housing Production Plan is a planning tool that is meant to help the Town identify housing needs, set goals, and outline strategies.

Ms. Kinsman attended the Housing Production Plan Meeting, she explained that, assuming the three 40B projects are permitted and built in a certain amount of time, that will get Ashland to the 10% SHI (Subsidized Housing Inventory); between that, and having a certified Housing Production Plan, will put the Town in Safe Harbor. Ms. Greaves noted that the Town was in Safe Harbor but two projects did not go forward; she also noted that Ashland's SHI should be lowered by the State, not increased. Ashland's AMI (Average Median Income) is currently tied to Metro Boston and that is unrealistic. Ms. Greaves noted that Framingham has a number of affordable units which are vacant because the affordable units are not affordable enough. Mr. Herbert suggested that if communities' band together they may have more leverage. Ms. Greaves suggested utilizing JM Goldson, who is working on the Town's Housing Production Plan, to find out which other communities are facing similar issues, and how we can work together to do something about this. Ms. Bennett noted that JM Goldson would look at data for a cost, but it would only give us data.

The Housing Production Plan is on track to be completed by March; it will be ready to be presented to the Select Board and Planning Board, and will then be sent to the State for certification.

Inclusionary Zoning was discussed during the Housing Production Plan presentation; there may be certain strategies the Town can use when negotiating with developers.

Board Members discussed areas of concern pertaining to housing:

- Affordable not being affordable enough;
- Needing housing for seniors, including seniors who want to live in smaller homes, not apartments;
- Having smaller, affordable starter homes;
- Building condominiums rather than rentals;
- Adjusting Ashland's AMI.

Board Members agreed the Housing Production Plan is a good tool towards strategizing some of these key housing issues; and the importance of putting some concentrated time and effort into operationalizing our ideal state of Housing in Ashland, to determine what needs to be done over the next few years to ensure we are driving in that direction.

- Discuss the Select Board Office Hours.

Ms. Kinsman discussed tying in Select Board Office Hours with the Library Book Sale, which is the first Saturday of each month; which she has confirmed is possible, beginning in February and running through May; Board Members discussed holding an alternative Office Hours Day on the third Saturday of the month, at another location, possibly Dulce de Leche. Board Members also discussed trying out some other days, such as a weekday or weeknight, as well as attending the Community Center with Mr. Herbert. Ms. Kinsman will put together a Signup Genius; once the schedule is complete, she will work with Communications team to put it out to the public.

- Update on 40B Projects.

61 Waverly: Mr. Herbert reported that the 20-day appeal period for 61 Waverly Street has passed and there hasn't been an appeal; the Applicant is currently in front of the Conservation Commission and are still months away from completing with them. The applicant has been resistance in regards to replacing a pipe; Mr. Herbert has been informed that the applicant is now willing to replace that pipe. There has also been significant concern regarding groundwater.

10-60 Main Street: Mr. Herbert reported that the Decision for 10-60 Main Street was filed with the Town Clerk; the 20-day appeal period will end on January 30th. They have not yet applied to the Conservation Commission but anticipate doing so before March. Mr. Herbert explained that they will need to do two rounds of air quality testing prior to occupancy.

Ms. Kinsman inquired as to whether Town Counsel is still involved with these projects to support Conservation, now that these ZBA hearings are closed. Mr. Herbert stated that Conservation has requested they be a part of the 61 Waverly Street review, and will do the same for 10-60 Main Street. Mr. Herbert will verify.

55 West Union Street: Mr. Herbert reported that 55 West Union Street is still before the ZBA, they just completed the Stormwater peer review; there are concerns after the Civil peer review regarding the sewer placement. They are looking at doing some test pits. It is also in front of Design Review; Mr. Herbert expressed concern with the appearance of the building.

Ms. Bennett noted there were questions raised during the public hearing for 10-60 Main Street regarding the 40B application from Mr. Engler, as well as requirements pertaining to a previous suspension from MassHousing, and whether the requirements were enforced. Attorney Winner has spoken with an Attorney from EOHLIC; who believes everything was resolved as of January 1, 2026. Ms. Bennett stated that Attorney Winner is supposed to provide an answer this week.

Mr. Herbert stated he is putting together a very comprehensive report on the 10-60 Main Street project, going back many years, such as the 2017 Site Readiness Application, and how hard they pushed back on the demolition of the granite buildings in 2020; he noted it will be an interesting report.

4. Consent Agenda

- Accept the Regular Session Minutes from January 7, 2026.

- Notification of the Town Manager's appointment of Madison Anderson, Public Safety Dispatcher with a request to waive the 15-day waiting period.
- Approve the recommendation from the Council on Aging to appoint Meredith Gingrich to the committee with a term that will expire on 8/31/28.
- Accept the recommendation from the Economic Development Advisory Group, granting Killa Pizza LLC, 9 Homer Ave a reimbursement in the amount of \$25,000.00. The breakdown is rental and equipment totals \$20,000.00 and \$5,000.00 is for sign and façade.

Motion: Ms. Greaves motioned to approve the consent agenda as presented on the agenda; the motion was seconded by Ms. Kinsman.

Vote: 5-0-0. The motion was approved by rollcall vote.

5. Town Manager Report

- MMA Conference – Mr. Herbert reported that he and some Board Members will be attending the MMA Conference which starts tomorrow and goes through Saturday; there will be many peers discussing overrides and housing, similar issues as Ashland. It is always an interesting time.
- Budget Update – Mr. Herbert will have the current FY2026 budget available at the next meeting.
- Citizens Academy – Ms. Bird reported that they held the first session for Citizens Academy for 2026; they have made some changes to the program to make it more interactive and engaging. The first session was a test run with the new program and the feedback they received was all positive; the second session will be held next week. Citizens Academy meets the second and fourth Wednesday of each month; there are 16 residents enrolled, it is a great group of residents. There are some residents who are new to Town, and some who have lived in Ashland for decades. Board Members expressed interest in sitting in; Ms. Bird will share the schedule with the Board. Next week the group will be meeting with the HR and Finance Teams. Mr. Herbert discussed how they were able to make it more engaging, allowing the residents to drive the subjects of the discussions; they then used those opportunities to bring in the workings of local government structure.
- Mr. Herbert discussed a \$25,000 grant received by the Board of Health to cover the Childhood Vaccine Program; Mr. Herbert commended the work of Health Director Rajit Gupta and his Team.

Ms. Keegan inquired as to the Sewer Rehabilitation Project; Mr. Herbert discussed the leaks that occur to the pipes from groundwater. The groundwater gets into the sewer system which impacts our capacity, as well as our cost. The Sewer Rehabilitation Project seals those leaks. Mr. Herbert will ensure that information for residents is put out on social media. Ms. Greaves suggested that the curbs be fixed during the repairs; Mr. Herbert will do his best.

Motion: Ms. Greaves motioned to go past 10:00 PM; Ms. Kinsman seconded the motion.

Vote: 5-0-0. The motion was approved by rollcall vote.

6. Board Reports

Yolanda Greaves: Ms. Greaves discussed attending a MetroWest Regional Collaborative meeting; she will get information for Ms. Keegan pertaining to the discussion on Historical Districts Training. Ms. Greaves will be attending MMA tomorrow through Saturday, she will listen to the Women in Government discussion, which should be interesting. She will attend the WEMO luncheon on Friday, and the Mass. Select Board Association meeting on Saturday which will include a roundtable discussion regarding issues communities are having, and brainstorming ideas.

Makeda Keegan: Ms. Keegan reported attending the Housing Production Plan meeting last evening; she thanked all the residents who came out and participated in the process, there were a lot of great questions. It

has been recorded by WACA-TV, people should watch it and take the survey. Ms. Keegan caught the last of the Conservation Commission's meeting, but missed the Historical Commission's meeting, as she was under the weather, but will circle back with them soon.

Claudia Bennett: Ms. Bennett also attended the Housing Production Plan meeting, and then attended the Conservation Commission meeting online. The Housing Production Plan meeting was well done, there was good information. Ms. Bennett acknowledged the work of the DPW during the recent storms; she also appreciated the assistance of Firefighter Hayes who came out and was very helpful regarding a car issue. Ms. Bennett reached out as liaison to the Stormwater Committee and the Community Preservation Committee; however, they both meet on the first Tuesday, so she may look at switching, or meeting off-cycle.

Brandi Kinsman: Ms. Kinsman, as liaison to the Sustainability Committee, joined their meeting a couple weeks ago. They are considering a Town Meeting Article called 'Skip the Stuff', which encourages restaurants to not include plastic forks and knives, and napkins in to-go orders, to only include upon request. Ms. Kinsman attended both the Conservation and ZBA meetings as liaison as well. Board Members commended Becca Solomon and the great work she is doing for the Town. Ms. Kinsman attended the Housing Production Plan Meeting as well, she has offered to help with the campaign for the Ballot Committee, together with Paul Kendall, School Committee, and John Moore, Finance Committee.

Joseph Magnani: Mr. Magnani discussed attending a Traffic Safety Committee Meeting, they discussed 40Bs and traffic flows, as well as sidewalks. They have had tractor trailers coming from Framingham using Myrtle Street; Framingham does not enforce it, nor do they have signs. Mr. Magnani has a call into the Mayor to discuss. Mr. Magnani noted that at the last meeting with the Board of Health, the Boards discussed the possibility of hearing the voices of the students in Town regarding the Nicotine Free Generation policy being discussed; he put an email out to Berlin Awach, the new Youth Prevention Coordinator; they will be meeting on February 2nd.

Mr. Magnani announced a No Parking Ban between the hours of 1:00 AM and 6:00 AM. If there is a snowstorm, there is no parking at all on the roads, so the plows can do their jobs.

7. Next Select Board Meeting – February 4, 2026.

The Board will next meet on February 4, 2026.

8. Adjournment.

Motion: Ms. Greaves motioned to adjourn; the motion was seconded by Ms. Kinsman.

Vote: 5-0-0. Motion was approved by rollcall vote.

The motion adjourned at 10:19 PM.

Documents Reviewed during the January 21, 2025 meeting:

- Citizens Action Group Proposal
- "No Hunting" - Town Forest Bylaw
- Housing Production Plan
- Draft Regular Session Minutes from January 7, 2026
- Recommendation and Talent Bank Form, Meredith Gingrich
- Recommendation, Economic Development Advisory Group, Killa Pizza

Pro Democracy Ashland Proposal for 1/7/26 SB Meeting

Date: 1/2/26

Background: The adhoc citizens committee known as Pro Democracy Ashland proposed the actions as detailed on the attached Warrant Article for the Fall Special Town Meeting.

During previous discussions with the Selectboard, it was suggested that the Selectboard could take some of these actions. Our committee then agreed to withdraw the warrant article from Town Meeting in order to have these discussions with the Selectboard.

Process Proposal: To facilitate these discussions it is our proposal that the Selectboard appoint a subcommittee of two of their members to meet with three of our members over the next several weeks. The adhoc citizens committee (PDA) plans to meet before the Selectboard meeting to select and propose the three members who will meet with the Selectboard subcommittee.

Tasks and Goals: The task is to review, discuss and formulate the actions the subcommittee will recommend to the Selectboard. The goal is to have mutual agreement as to the specific action the Selectboard will take to address the concerns raised in our warrant article.

Proposed Timeline: Subcommittee meetings from January to March, 2026.
Recommendations to full Selectboard in April, 2026.

**TOWN OF ASHLAND
CITIZENS PETITION FORM**

Received by BOR

We, the undersigned registered voters of the Town of Ashland, do hereby petition the Select Board pursuant to MGL Ch. 39, S. 10 to include the following Article in the Warrant of the next Town Meeting November 19, 2025.

(Each sheet must contain text of Article below.)

Will the Town approve a RESOLUTION requiring that agents of the Town of Ashland to the extent allowable by law, do no future business, including procurements, subsidies or other use of public monies to purchase goods or services from Tesla, SpaceX, X, Starlink, xAI, The Borling Company and any other Musk-owned or controlled business entity.

WHEREAS, Despite Elon Musk's departure from the federal government, he retains the means and Incentives to continue exerting influence on elections, elected officials, and government agencies. The basis of that influence is his personal wealth, derived from these companies.

WHEREAS, It is imperative that local governments take swift action to erode Musk's influence by prohibiting any business arrangements, partnerships, or de facto endorsements that would further enrich or empower Musk to continue doing harm to the American public. Every public dollar invested in Tesla, or other Musk owned entities, or used to procure products and services or to subsidize Elon Musk's business empire may be used later to undercut the welfare of the government and citizens of the Town of Ashland.

WHEREAS, Elon Musk has spread xenophobic and racist disinformation through the use of his social media company X and removed fact-checking and ethics screens from the X platform, actions which are counter to the values of the Town of Ashland.

WHEREAS, in his role at DOGE, Musk has been responsible for actions that many experts believe to be unconstitutional and illegal. DOGE's acts have caused extensive harm and negatively impacted important programs affecting the citizens of Ashland.

NOW THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT:

1. The Selectboard, Town Manager, School Committee and Superintendent of Schools shall ensure to the extent permitted by law, that no Town of Ashland departments shall procure products or services from any Musk-controlled business entity.
2. The Selectboard, Town Manager, School Committee and Superintendent of Schools order that no Town of Ashland departments shall use the X Social Media platform for any official communications.
3. The Selectboard and Town Manager shall urge the County of Middlesex Pension Fund to not make any new investments in Tesla or other Musk-owned entities; and
4. The Selectboard and Town Manager shall urge the Middlesex County Pension Fund to sell any shares that it currently holds in Tesla stock or other Musk-owned entities.

Or act on anything related thereto.

Submitted by Robert Scherer, Charles Lidz, Bethany Robertson, Susan Brostrup Jensen, Richard Oman and others

INSTRUCTIONS TO SIGNERS: For your signature to be certified, you must be a registered voter in the Town of Ashland. SPOUSES MAY NOT SIGN FOR ONE ANOTHER. Signatures are verified through the VRIS (Voter Registration Information System)

	Printed Name (As registered)	Signature (To be made in person, see instructions)	Residential Address (Street, Number & Apt. #)
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2			
3			

	Printed Name (As registered)	Signature (To be made in person, see instructions)	Residential Address (Street, Number & Apt. #)
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CERTIFICATION OF NAMES

At least three registrars names must be signed or stamped below.

Town of Ashland _____

Date _____

We certify that _____

Number of names (Use numbers & words) _____

Above checked are the names of qualified voters for Ashland _____

TOWN OF ASHLAND -- REGISTRARS OF VOTERS

Chapter 153. Forest

§ 153-2. Rules for use.

The rules and regulations are aimed at the preservation and protection of this valuable town resource for the present and future enjoyment of the townspeople.

- A. The forest shall be kept in its natural state and will be maintained for passive recreational use only.
- B. Groups using the forest must be based in Ashland or be sponsored by the Ashland Town Forest Committee.
- C. There shall be no camping in the forest unless authorized by the Town Forest Committee nor shall there be fires without the permission of the Ashland Fire Department.
- D. Trash disposal, littering or other polluting is prohibited.
- E. Hunting and trapping are prohibited. The use of motor vehicles without authorization of the Town Forest Committee is prohibited.
- F. There shall be no removal of soil, live trees or plants, and stone walls are to remain intact.
- G. Selective cutting of firewood will be done under the written permission of the Town Forest Committee. Cutting will be permitted to Ashland residents only. The wood cannot be sold and must be used in Ashland residences only. Cutting will be controlled for the purpose of improving the natural growth throughout the forest.
- H. There will be no unauthorized marking or cutting of trails in the Town Forest.
[Added 11-17-1997 ATM, Art. 20]

Chapter 145. Firearms

§ 145-1. Discharge restricted.

[Amended 5-19-1998 ATM, Art. 31; 11-20-2019 STM, Art. 13]

No person shall fire or discharge any bow and arrow within the limits of any highway, park or other public property, except with the written permission of the Select Board, or on any private property, except with the written consent of the landowner or legal occupant thereof. No person shall fire or discharge any rifle, shotgun or handgun of .22 caliber or larger within the limits of the Town of Ashland, except on a range or in an area designated for such purpose and approved by the Chief of Police in writing.

TOWN OF ASHLAND

HOUSING PRODUCTION PLAN

FY2026-2030

DRAFT 11/24/2025

FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES ONLY

PREPARED FOR:

Town of Ashland
101 Main Street
Ashland, MA 01721

PREPARED BY:

JM GOLDSON LLC
4228 Washington Street
Boston, MA 02131

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CHAPTER 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ABOUT THIS REPORT

The Town of Ashland Housing Production Plan (HPP) for fiscal years 2026–2030 is a guiding document to help the community address its current and future housing needs. Prepared with input from community members, town staff, and town officials, the HPP provides a detailed understanding of local housing conditions and outlines strategies to expand housing choice and affordability while preserving the community's scale and fabric. It is intended as both a policy roadmap and a practical tool for decision-making over the next five years.

This plan is prepared in compliance with the Commonwealth's requirements for Housing Production Plans. The strategies presented are also designed to complement broader local goals including economic vitality, transportation access, open space conservation, historic preservation, and the capacity of municipal services and infrastructure. The plan serves as both a policy guide and a hands-on tool to support local decision-making over the next five years.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Housing affects nearly every aspect of community life, from economic stability and public health to environmental sustainability and social cohesion. Ashland's housing market is shaped by changing demographics, limited housing diversity, and rising costs. This plan identifies the gaps between what residents need and what the market is permitted to provide, enabling the community to respond with targeted actions. Without sustained investment and coordinated planning, Ashland risks missing opportunities to align housing growth with community priorities.

WHAT IS INCLUDED

This Housing Production Plan contains:

- **Chapter 1: Executive Summary:** A high-level overview of the plan, key findings, and direction for next steps.
- **Chapter 2: Five-Year Housing Goals and Strategies:** A forward-looking roadmap outlining priority goals and strategies to guide the community's efforts on local initiatives and policy decisions.
- **Chapter 3: Housing Needs Assessment:** A detailed analysis of demographic, economic, and housing market trends, identifying who lives in Ashland, what housing is available, and where the most significant needs exist.
- **Chapter 4: Development Constraints and Opportunities:** A review of regulations, municipal infrastructure and services, environmental, and market factors that shape where and how new housing can be built.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

- **Ashland is experiencing steady population and household growth, outpacing county and state trends, though housing production has not kept pace.** The town's population is projected to continue increasing through 2050, with smaller household sizes and a more diverse, aging population driving demand for a range of housing types. Expanding compact, accessible, and affordable housing options will be key to meeting future needs.
- **Housing demand continues to outstrip supply, resulting in low vacancy rates, high costs, and limited housing diversity.** Most of Ashland's housing stock was built before 2000, leaving a limited number of energy-efficient and accessible homes available. Strategically encouraging the creation of housing options through a combination of new construction, redevelopment, and/or conversion of existing buildings can offer opportunities to create energy-efficient and accessible homes while accommodating anticipated future growth.
- **While Ashland remains relatively affluent, a growing share of households earn below the regional Area Median Income,** and over 80 percent of extremely low-income households and very low-income households are cost-burdened. Renters and seniors face the highest risk of instability, emphasizing the need for deeply affordable housing options and stronger anti-displacement measures to preserve community stability.
- **Environmental and regulatory constraints limit where new housing can be built.** Nearly half of Ashland's land is zoned exclusively for single-family use, and complex overlay regulations, flood zones, and permanently protected open space further constrain development. Streamlining zoning, reducing parking requirements, and aligning environmental goals with housing production can help unlock more development opportunities in strategic locations.
- **Ashland's infrastructure can support additional residential growth, with water and sewer systems operating below capacity.** However, increasing school enrollment signals pressure on educational facilities, requiring ongoing investments to ensure adequate classroom space as the town continues to grow.
- **The Town has established a solid foundation for housing implementation** through its Planning Department, Affordable Housing Trust Fund, and Housing Authority. **However, limited staffing and a Subsidized Housing Inventory below 10 percent restrict local control.** Strengthening interdepartmental coordination and updating zoning tools will enhance Ashland's ability to guide growth and deliver on its long-term housing goals.

LOOKING AHEAD

To be written

CHAPTER 2: FIVE-YEAR HOUSING GOALS AND STRATEGIES

To be written

DRAFT

CHAPTER 3: HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

FRAMING ASHLAND'S HOUSING NEEDS

Understanding Ashland's housing needs begins with examining closely both the people who live here and the homes they inhabit. This chapter examines key demographic trends and housing stock data to provide a clearer picture of how the community is evolving and what types of housing may be required in the years ahead. A range of factors, including age, household size, and income all influence the type of housing people need and can afford.

By laying a foundation, this chapter helps local officials and community members alike make informed decisions about housing policy and land use. With this understanding, Ashland can move forward with thoughtful planning that meets the needs of residents today and prepares for the future.

To guide this assessment, the chapter answers five key questions:

1. How are Ashland's people and households changing, and what does that mean for housing?
2. Is Ashland's housing production keeping up with demand?
3. Can people afford to live in Ashland? Who is at most risk?
4. How do jobs, wages, and skills relate to housing access?
5. What will Ashland need moving forward?

KEY FINDINGS: A SNAPSHOT OF HOUSING NEEDS IN ASHLAND

1. **Ashland's population and households have grown steadily**, at a faster rate than the county and the state, owing to recent by-right, special permit, and 40B developments. Ongoing 40B developments could add 592 new homes to Ashland, continuing this pace of growth. The community is growing increasingly diverse, and the population is aging, underscoring the continued need for a broader range of housing options, including smaller units.
2. **Housing demand continues to exceed supply**, with low vacancy rates and an aging housing stock limiting affordability. Expanding diverse, energy-efficient, and accessible housing will be essential to meet future needs.
3. Although Ashland remains relatively affluent, **a growing share of households earn below the Area Median Income**, and many low-income renters may be at risk of housing instability. The town could focus on producing deeply affordable housing and protecting residents from displacement.
4. **Most residents commute outside Ashland for work**, revealing a mismatch between local jobs, wages, and housing options. When a community provides housing that's affordable to those who work in schools, public safety, small businesses, and local services, it strengthens

its own fabric. People can live near where they work, which builds deeper connections, boosts volunteerism, and supports everything from school enrollment to downtown vitality.

5. **Ashland's affordable housing metric has dropped below the state's 10 percent benchmark**, and the community has lost its 40B "Safe Harbor" status. Approving the three 40B projects in the pipeline would return the community to Safe Harbor by increasing the Subsidized Housing Units (SHU) percentage from 5.8 to 13.7 percent. Depending on other developments in the next several years, Ashland may maintain Safe Harbor through 2040 if these projects are approved and built.

1. HOW ARE ASHLAND'S PEOPLE AND HOUSEHOLDS CHANGING? WHAT DOES THAT MEAN FOR HOUSING?

FINDINGS

Ashland has experienced steady population and household growth over the past several decades, outpacing Middlesex County and the state overall, though housing production has recently slowed. The population is projected to grow at a moderate pace through 2050; however, household numbers are expected to increase more quickly, which will lead to a decrease in the average household size long-term. However, a mismatch exists between smaller households and the limited supply of smaller units, highlighting the need for more compact, affordable housing options. At the same time, Ashland's aging population will benefit from more accessible and adaptable housing to allow residents to age in the community safely and comfortably. The town has also become increasingly diverse, with over 30 percent of residents identifying as people of color and there are notable income disparities among racial groups. These demographic shifts underscore the benefits of sustaining steady housing production, diversifying the housing stock, improving accessibility, and advancing affordable housing opportunities.

FINDINGS EXPLAINED

RECENT POPULATION GROWTH AND HOUSING PRODUCTION

Ashland's population trends indicate that growth has been steady. According to the 2020 U.S. Decennial Census, 18,832 people live in Ashland, marking a 13.5 percent increase from 2010, faster than the average growth rate of Middlesex County and Massachusetts during this period. The county was lower by almost five percentage points, while the state was lower by over six.¹

During the same period, Ashland's housing stock grew by 886 housing units, totaling 7,495 housing units.² However, over the last few years, Ashland has experienced a significant deceleration in its housing production. Ongoing 40B development proposals will make up for that deceleration to maintain the overall recent average growth rate.



The Village of the Americas is a housing development with 24 homes listed on the Subsidized Housing Inventory.

Source: Key Prime Realty

Ashland's decades of growth has seen the community respond to market demand for new homes and increase the Town's taxable property value.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, T1: Total population (2020 Decennial Census).

² U.S. Census Bureau, T3: Housing units 2020.

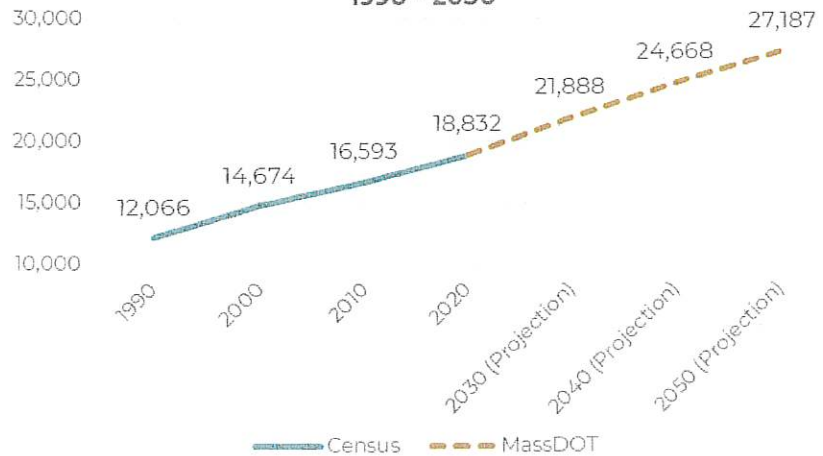
LONG-TERM POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLD TRENDS

Since 1990, Ashland has experienced significant population growth and is expected to continue doing so. The rate of growth declined after 2000, but it is forecasted to grow again by 2030. According to current MassDOT projections, the community's population is expected to reach 21,888 by 2030 and 27,187 by 2050.³

Ashland's household count has grown at a similar rate to population and is expected to grow in the upcoming decades. In 2020, there were 7,241 households, which are projected to grow to 8,792 in 2030 and 11,289 in 2050.⁴

After a dramatic drop between 1980 and 1990, Ashland's average household size has been stable, while household sizes have been falling in Massachusetts overall.⁵ However, projections indicate that the average household size will start to decrease over the coming decades. Along with a growing population, faster growth in households will mean more housing units are needed to meet demographic demand.

Historic and Projected Population in Ashland, 1990 - 2050



Source: US Census (TI), MassDOT Population Projections

Historic Average Household Size in Ashland with Regional Comparison, 1980 - 2020



Source: US Census

³ Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), *UMDI V2022 population projections AgeSexMCD 5yr summary (2023)* <https://www.mass.gov/lists/socio-economic-projections-for-2023-regional-transportation-plans#editable-excel-spreadsheets->

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, *H9: Household size. (2020 Decennial Census)*; U.S. Census Bureau, *H13: Tenure by Age of Householder*; MassDOT, *UMDI V2022 population projections AgeSexMCD 5yr summary*.

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, *T21: Persons in household. (1980 Decennial Census)*; U.S. Census Bureau, *P16: Persons in household. (1990 Decennial Census)*; U.S. Census Bureau, *T26: Average household size. (2000 Decennial Census)*; U.S. Census Bureau, *T64: Average household size. (2010 Decennial Census)*; U.S. Census Bureau, *H9: Average household size.*

Ashland can plan for the needs of future residents by supporting a greater range of housing options, allowing the market to respond to the types of households that are forming and reduce mismatches between the population and available homes.

A MISMATCH BETWEEN HOUSEHOLD SIZE AND HOUSING OPTIONS

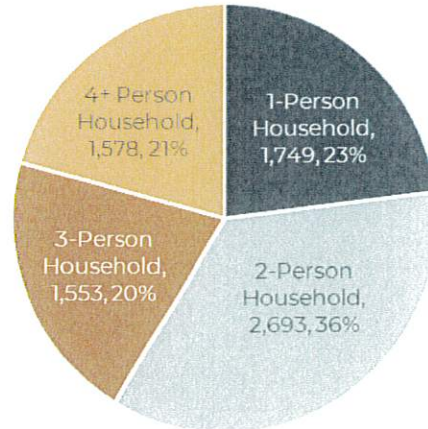
Ashland’s housing composition reveals a mismatch between household size and the available housing stock. While one-person and two-person households account for nearly 60 percent of all households, studio, one-bedroom, and two-bedroom units comprise half of the total occupied units.⁶

Smaller homes, including condos and apartments in two-family, three-family, and multi-family housing, can offer greater freedom of choice. These options often come with lower energy costs, simpler maintenance, and a better fit for the needs of older adults looking to downsize, younger adults just starting out, and anyone seeking housing that aligns with their current lifestyle.

Ashland will continue to need smaller homes like studios and one-bedrooms, to meet the needs of existing and future households.

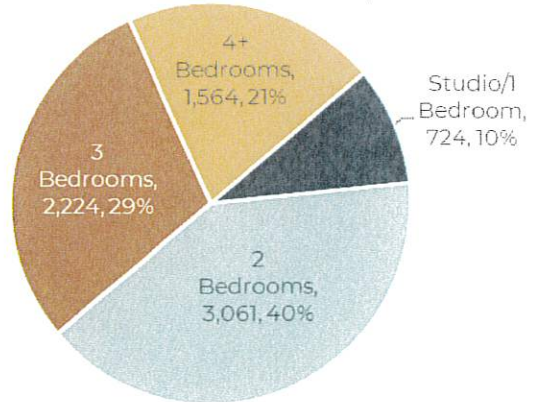
Sixty-one percent of all units in the three 40B projects in the pipeline are studios or one-bedroom units. These projects would help provide the types of units that Ashland residents need.

Housing Units by Household Size Estimate in Ashland, 2023



Source: American Community Survey 2019 - 2023

Occupied Housing Units by Number of Bedrooms Estimate in Ashland, 2023



Source: American Community Survey 2019 - 2023

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, A10024: Housing units by household size (American Community Survey (ACS), 5-year estimates 2019–2023); U.S. Census Bureau, A10050: Occupied housing units by number of bedrooms.

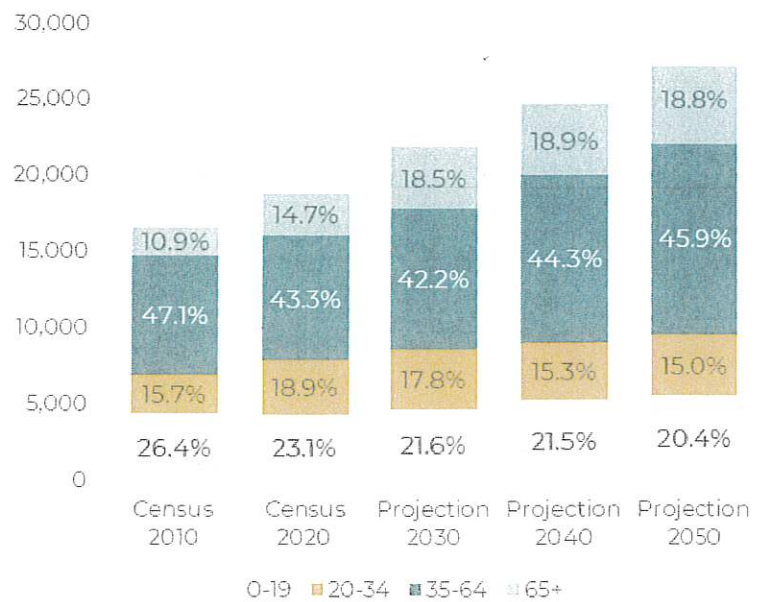
ASHLAND'S RESIDENTS ARE AGING

Ashland's residents are growing older. In 2010, residents aged 65 and older accounted for nearly 11 percent of the population. By 2020, that share had grown to almost 15 percent, and it is projected to reach close to 19 percent by 2050, according to MassDOT projections.

At the same time, the share of children and young adults under 20 is projected to continue its decline from 26.4 percent in 2010 to 20.4 percent in 2050. The working-age population (ages 35–64) is also expected to decrease slightly.⁷

Currently, about 9.5 percent of Ashland residents report having a disability, a figure that is likely to rise as the population continues to age.⁸

Population Projections by Percentage Distribution and Age Groups in Ashland, 2010-2050



Source: US Census, MassDOT

Ashland can benefit from the addition of new accessible homes, such as single-level units, smaller homes, and buildings with elevators or universal design features. These will help allow the growing number of older residents to age in the community.

Accessible homes for aging residents can be created through conversions and renovations of existing homes and buildings, but the addition of new accessible housing options will also be needed to meet the growing population and growing share of older residents.

ASHLAND HAS BECOME MORE RACIALLY AND ETHNICALLY DIVERSE

Ashland has experienced a significant shift in racial and ethnic composition over the past forty years. In 1980, just 1.2 percent of the population identified as a race other than white. By 2020, that number had grown to 31.5 percent. This mirrors broader demographic changes in Massachusetts, where the population that identifies as a race other than white has increased from 6.5 percent in 1980 to 30.4

⁷ MassDOT, UMDI V2022 population projections AgeSexMCD 5yr summary.

⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, B18101: Sex By Age By Disability Status (ACS, 5-year estimates 2019–2023).

percent in 2020. In particular, the Asian⁹ population has grown significantly, increasing from 2.5 percent in 2000 to 13.1 percent in 2020. One in five Ashland residents were born outside the country.¹⁰

As the community becomes more diverse, it is essential to acknowledge that not all residents have equal access to economic opportunities. In 2020, estimates showed that the median household income in Ashland was \$118,348, while the median income for Black households was \$94,212 and \$62,015 for Latinx households. In comparison, White households earned a median \$115,905. The racial income asymmetry is particularly stark.¹¹

This disparity is the result of deeply rooted systemic inequities that are found across the country. Discriminatory public policies, such as redlining, exclusionary zoning, and unequal access to mortgage financing were designed to prevent non-white families from building wealth through homeownership. These historic practices have had lasting impacts that continue to shape housing access throughout the country.¹²

As Ashland's population grows more diverse, the community can take steps to ensure that its housing options support the needs of diverse and multiracial households by providing language-accessible resources and expanding access to both rental and homeownership opportunities, including affordable options.

2. IS ASHLAND'S HOUSING PRODUCTION KEEPING UP WITH DEMAND?

FINDINGS

Ashland's housing production has not fully kept pace with demand, as evidenced by persistently low vacancy rates. Permitting has grown in recent years, adding more by-right and Special Permit

⁹ The U.S. Census Bureau uses broad categories of race and ethnicity, of which Asian is one. This may not accurately reflect how Ashland's residents identify.

¹⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, A07001: *Place of Birth for the Foreign-Born Population* (ACS, 5-year estimates 2019–2023); U.S. Census Bureau, T12: *Race*. (1980 Decennial Census); U.S. Census Bureau, P12: *Race*. (1990 Decennial Census); U.S. Census Bureau, T15: *Hispanic or Latino by race*. (2000 Decennial Census); U.S. Census Bureau, T55: *Hispanic or Latino origin by race* (2010 Decennial Census); U.S. Census Bureau, T6: *Race by Hispanic Status* (2020 Decennial Census).

¹¹ U.S. Census Bureau, A14007: *Median Household Income by Race* (ACS, 5-year estimates 2016–2020).

¹² Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2017).

projects to the pipeline and helping to meet demand. Approval of the three 40B projects under review would fully address the supply gap.

Without the new homes represented by ongoing 40B proposals, Ashland would fall short of projected demand by 444 homes by 2030. Including the ongoing 40B projects, Ashland would meet and exceed the projected local demand, helping to meet regional production goals while capturing the tax revenue for the Town.

While homeownership remains the predominant tenure, rental housing has increased from 19 to nearly 25 percent of occupied units, reflecting shifting preferences and larger-scale development patterns. Both ownership and rental vacancy rates remain below healthy benchmarks, signaling a constrained market where supply struggles to meet demand. When vacancy rates are low, people face competition for available homes, and prices tend to escalate.

Most of Ashland's housing stock was built before 2000, limiting the availability of newer, energy-efficient homes. Similar to the three ongoing 40B applications, production in recent years in Ashland has occurred in sudden bursts rather than through steady, incremental growth that meets the state threshold and satisfies market demand.

FINDINGS EXPLAINED

HOMEOWNERSHIP AND RENTAL TRENDS REFLECT CHANGING HOUSING DEMAND

Ashland has seen a gradual shift toward more available rental housing, although homeownership remains the predominant form of tenure. In 2013, owner-occupied units were estimated to make up 81 percent of all occupied housing units in Ashland. By 2023, that proportion had declined to 75.5 percent.¹³ This trend reflects broader patterns across the region and state, where demand for rental housing has increased due to changing household types, evolving housing preferences, and shifting affordability needs.

In addition, housing experts recommend that residential areas strive for at least 20 percent of the housing stock to be rentals. This can help avoid rental deserts, where populations that are more typically renters, including lower-income households and younger people, are excluded through limited housing choices that reinforce racial and economic segregation.¹⁴

Younger adults, smaller households, and households of color are more likely to rent a home. As these demographic groups comprise an increasing share of the population, the demand for rental housing

¹³ U.S. Census Bureau, *A10060: Tenure* (ACS, 5-year estimates 2009–2013; 5-year estimates 2019–2023).

¹⁴ Whitney Airgood-Obrycki, Meryem Maaoui, and Sophia Wedeen, *Rental Deserts, Segregation, and Zoning* (Working Paper, Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies, 2024), <https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/research-areas/working-papers/rental-deserts-segregation-and-zoning>.

is expected to continue rising. Rental housing tends to offer more flexibility, which is especially attractive to residents in transition, whether starting a new job, recently separated or divorced, aging out of a family home, or downsizing in retirement.

These tenure trends highlight the need for a balanced housing strategy that supports both rental and ownership opportunities.

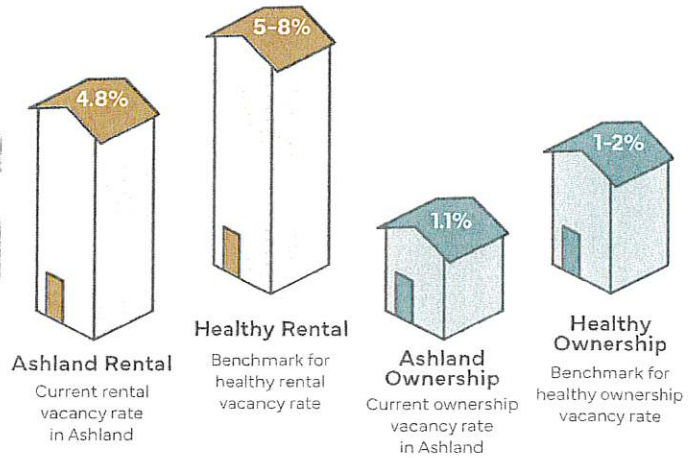
VACANCY RATES REVEAL A TIGHT HOUSING MARKET

Between 2010 and 2020, ownership and rental vacancy rates remained relatively stable and low. The vacancy rate for rental units increased from 4.7 to 4.8 percent, while the rate for ownership units decreased from 1.2 to 1.1 percent.¹⁵

Maintaining balanced vacancy rates is essential for a stable and accessible housing market. Experts note that a healthy homeowner vacancy rate typically ranges from approximately one to two percent, reflecting the lower turnover of owner-occupied homes and the tendency for homeowners to remain in place for more extended periods.

Conversely, a healthy rental vacancy rate is generally between five and eight percent, which allows for sufficient housing availability to support renter mobility without signaling oversupply, thereby helping to stabilize rents and prevent housing shortages.¹⁶

Rental and Ownership Vacancy Rates in Ashland, 2020



Ashland’s current vacancy rates fall slightly below healthy benchmarks. This signals a housing market under some strain.

When supply does not keep pace with demand, prices rise. That dynamic continues to fuel the housing affordability crisis both in Ashland and across the region. Demand for both rental and ownership housing remains strong, continuing to outpace new production even with the addition of

¹⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, *H5: Vacancy* (2010 Decennial Census; 2020 Decennial Census).

¹⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, *Quarterly residential vacancies and homeownership: Second quarter 2025* (2025), <https://www.census.gov/housing/hvs/current/>; Gary Smith, *Calculating and Understanding Your Rental’s Vacancy Rate in 2024* (2023), <https://www.azibo.com/blog/rental-vacancy-rates>; Andrew Hartwell, *Interpreting Rental Vacancy Rates for Small and Midsize Cities* (2024), <https://www.localhousingsolutions.org/analyze/interpreting-rental-vacancy-rates-for-small-and-midsize-cities/>.

new units in recent years. Looking ahead, Ashland will continue to require a steady supply of new homes in various sizes and formats, particularly rental housing. Approving the three 40B projects in the pipeline would add 592 rental units, helping to address the housing supply shortage.

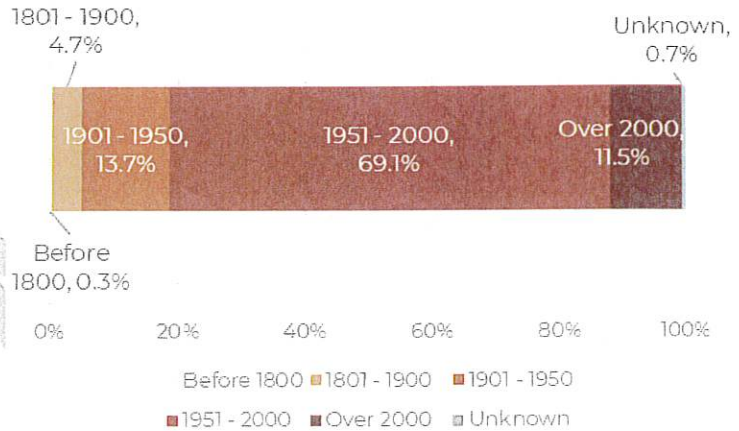
THERE IS A LIMITED SUPPLY OF MODERN HOUSING

Ashland's most significant era of housing growth occurred during the second half of the 20th century. Nearly 70 percent of residential structures were built in that period. Only 11.5 percent of the community's residential buildings were built after 2001.¹⁷ Approving the three 40B projects in the pipeline would increase the number of modern housing units on the market.

As these housing units grow older, several challenges appear:

- Older homes often require more maintenance due to aging systems, materials, and layouts.
- Energy efficiency is typically lower, resulting in higher utility costs.
- Homes built before 1978 may require lead paint abatement, adding significant expense for homeowners.
- Many older homes do not accommodate mobility needs, such as single-level living or barrier-free entries.

Year of Construction of Residential Structures in Ashland, 2024



Source: MassGIS Data: Property Tax Parcels, 2025

A low stock of newer homes can make it harder for residents, particularly lower- and moderate-income households, to find housing that fits their needs and budgets.

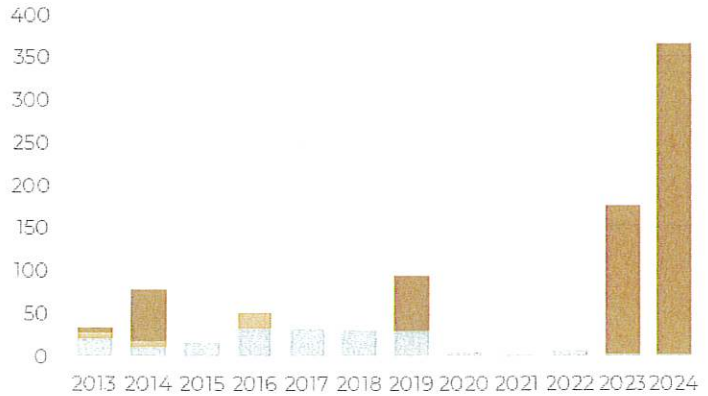
¹⁷ MassGIS (Bureau of Geographic Information), *MassGIS Data: Property Tax Parcels* (2025), <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massgis-data-property-tax-parcels>

RECENT MULTIFAMILY PERMITS ONLY PARTIALLY MEET DEMAND

Since 2021, Ashland has approved 554 new dwelling units across 21 residential buildings, making up 7.4 percent of the housing stock as of the 2020 Census. The majority of new homes (539 units) came in larger multifamily buildings.¹⁸¹⁹

Ashland may benefit from continuing to permit new homes at a rate similar to the last few years, so that its housing supply keeps up with population growth. When demand outpaces supply, housing costs rise.

Issued Building Permits by Units in Structure in Ashland, 2013 - 2024



Source: US Census Building Permit Survey

While controversial, the three 40B projects in the pipeline would significantly support Ashland’s housing market and local control. The addition of 592 new homes will help balance the local and regional supply shortage and reduce some of the upward cost pressure (and susceptibility to Comprehensive Permits) from the rest of the community.

¹⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, *Building Permits Survey* (2013–2024), [https://www2.census.gov/econ/bps/Metro%20\(ending%202023\)/](https://www2.census.gov/econ/bps/Metro%20(ending%202023)/).

¹⁹ Five locally verified development projects were added manually because they were not reflected in the U.S. Census Bureau’s Building Permits Survey. These include: 200 units at 100 Chestnut Street (Village of the Americas), 120 units at 501 Pond Street, 29 units at 9–49 Homer Avenue, 16 units at 12 Pond Street, and one single-family home built by Habitat for Humanity at 487 Main Street.

40B DEVELOPMENT PIPELINE ADDS FUTURE CAPACITY

The following 40B developments have been proposed and are under review by the Zoning Board of Appeals. This snapshot offers a glimpse into potential new housing that could be coming online in Ashland within the next few years.

Name	Address	Description	Units	Affordable Units
The Sanctuary at Ashland Mills ²⁰	10 – 60 Main St	Mixed-use residential/retail	250	63
The Residences at Ashland Crossing ²¹	61 Waverly St	Multi-family development	226	57
55 West Union ²²	55 West Union St	Multi-family development	116	29
Total			592	149

Source: Town of Ashland Planning Department; Current Cases Before the Planning and Zoning Board, 2025

Active 40B permit applications could add 592 new rental housing units to the community, including 149 deed-restricted affordable units, bringing the total SHI to 1,027 units, pending final approvals and construction. **Approving these projects in the pipeline would raise Ashland’s SHI percentage to around 13.7 percent.**

²⁰ Town of Ashland Planning Department, *The Sanctuary at Ashland Mills - 10-60 Main Street* (2025), <https://www.ashlandmass.com/1166/The-Sanctuary-at-Ashland-Mills---10-60-M>.

²¹ Town of Ashland Planning Department, *The Residences at Ashland Crossing - 61 Waverly Street* (2025), <https://www.ashlandmass.com/1262/The-Residences-at-Ashland-Crossing---61->

²² Town of Ashland Planning Department, *55 West Union Street - 40B Comprehensive Permit* (2025), <https://www.ashlandmass.com/1273/55-West-Union-Street---40B-Comprehensive>

HOUSING NEEDS FORECAST

This section presents two scenarios for housing needs forecasts through 2030. Both scenarios use the Census 2020 housing count as a baseline and then build assumptions based on building permits. Each scenario considers healthy vacancy rates of 2 percent for ownership units and 6 percent for rental units.

Scenario 1: Projected gap without ongoing 40B proposals

The first scenario assumes that all building permits issued from 2021 to 2024 have been constructed and then adds the average number of permits from the previous decade in each year. From 2013 to 2024, although many of the new units were part of larger developments, the average was 75 units per year.

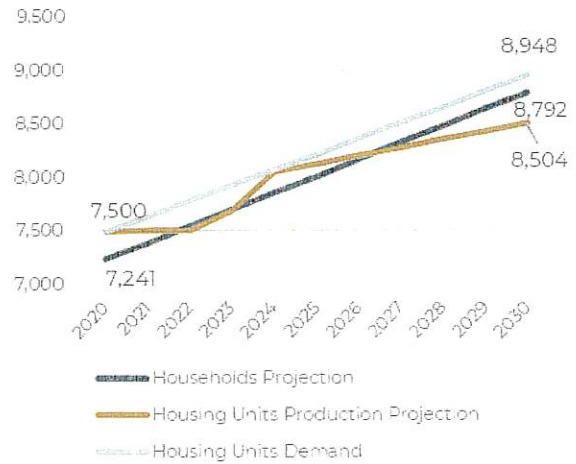
Without the potential new homes added in the pending 40B permits, Ashland would fall short of local housing demand by 444 homes by 2030.

Scenario 2: Assuming approval of ongoing 40B proposals

The second scenario extends the first by assuming the three ongoing 40B projects mentioned above will be approved and built. In this scenario, we assume that construction on the proposed projects will begin in 2026, with 2/3 of new units becoming available in 2027 and the remaining 1/3 in 2028. The completed projects would add 592 new homes and raise the average permits per year to 115, which is included in the projection through 2030.

The approval and construction of the ongoing 40B projects would see Ashland meet projected housing demand by 2030.

Housing Units Demand Estimate
Forecast Scenario 1 in Ashland, 2030



Source: US Census, US Census Building Permit Survey, MassDOT Projections

Housing Units Demand Estimate
Forecast Scenario 2 in Ashland, 2030



Source: US Census, US Census Building Permit Survey, MassDOT Projections

3. CAN PEOPLE AFFORD TO LIVE IN ASHLAND? WHO IS MOST AT RISK OF DISPLACEMENT?

FINDINGS

While Ashland remains a relatively affluent community, income trends show that it is gradually becoming less wealthy compared to its previous standing as wealthier than the average Massachusetts town, with a growing share of households earning below the Area Median Income. Housing affordability has become increasingly strained as single-family home prices have risen from \$718,000 in 2016 to \$740,000 in 2025, condominium prices have increased from \$408,900 to \$639,900, and median gross rent has risen from \$1,890 to \$2,610 (all 2025 inflation-adjusted). These sharp increases make it increasingly difficult for first-time buyers, renters, and low- to moderate-income households to secure stable housing.

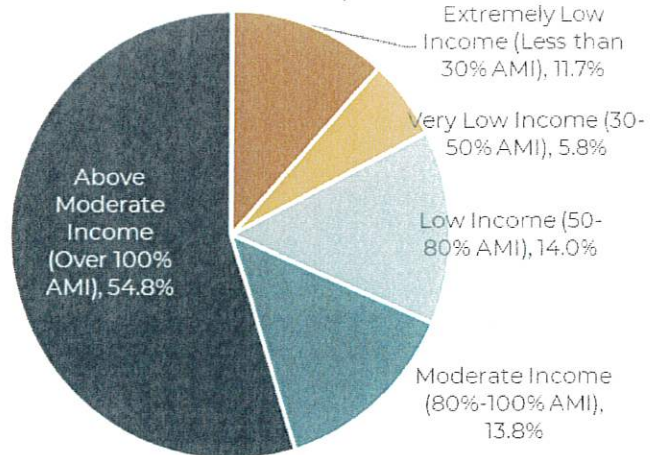
More than 80 percent of extremely low- and very low-income households are cost-burdened, underscoring the need for deeply affordable housing options below the standard 80 percent AMI threshold. Although eviction and foreclosure rates remain low, ongoing population growth and housing pressures may heighten displacement risks in the future. To improve affordability and community stability, Ashland can focus on producing deeply affordable homes, preserving existing affordable units, and implementing policies that ensure economic diversity remains a core feature of the town's identity.

FINDINGS EXPLAINED

MEDIAN INCOME IS FALLING

Ashland residents span a wide range of incomes. An estimate of 43.6 percent of households earn more than \$150,000, while 14.7 percent earn less than \$50,000. In 2021, over half of all households earned more than the Area Median Income (AMI).²³

Household Income Distribution Estimate in Ashland, 2021



Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS)

²³ Office of Policy Development and Research (PD&R), *Consolidated Planning: CHAS Data (2024)*, <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/cp.html>.

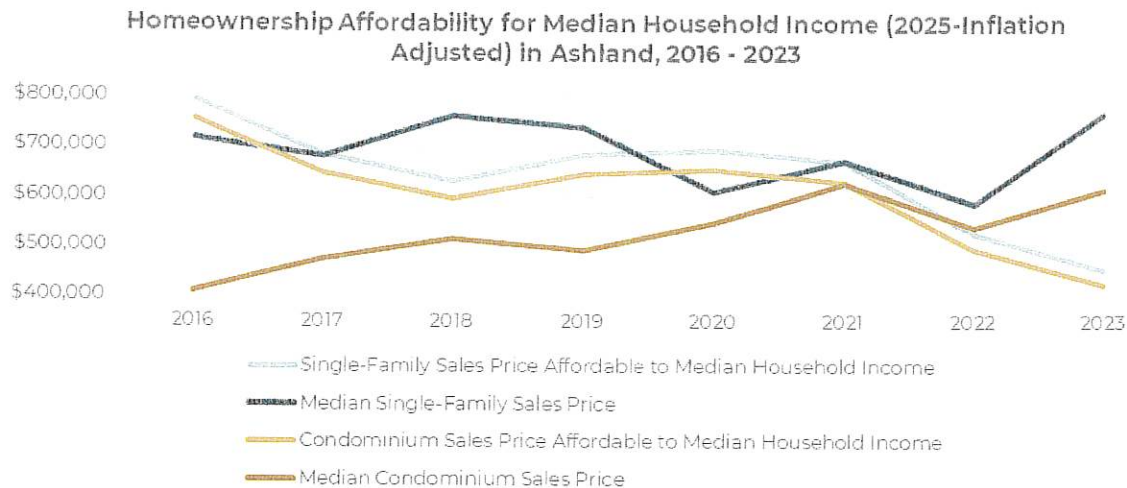
Ashland's median household income used to be higher than the region's area median income. Now, it's lower, even as housing costs continue to rise. This makes it harder for many residents to keep up.

In addition, the percentage of households earning less than the AMI grew from 35.8 percent in 2010 to 45.2 percent in 2021. Over the same period, the percentage of households earning above the AMI shrank from 64.2 percent in 2010 to 54.8 percent in 2021, indicating increasing economic diversity in Ashland.²⁴

HOUSING SALES COSTS ARE INCREASING

Housing costs in Ashland have risen sharply over the past decade, outpacing inflation and creating growing affordability challenges. The median single-family home price increased from \$718,000 in 2016 to \$740,000 in 2025 (inflation-adjusted), while the median condominium price surged even more dramatically, from \$408,900 in 2016 to \$639,900 in 2025. Meanwhile, the median gross rent rose from \$1,890 in 2016 to \$2,610 in 2023, further straining the budgets of renters and first-time homebuyers. These patterns suggest that without targeted interventions, Ashland may continue to see widening gaps between income levels and housing costs, limiting access for young families, essential workers, and long-term residents.²⁵

Addressing affordability will require the community to pair its strong civic momentum with policies that ensure housing remains accessible to all who wish to be part of Ashland's future.



Source: Massachusetts Association of Realtors, MA Department of Revenue Division of Local Services, Freddie Mac Mortgage Rates, ACS (A14007)

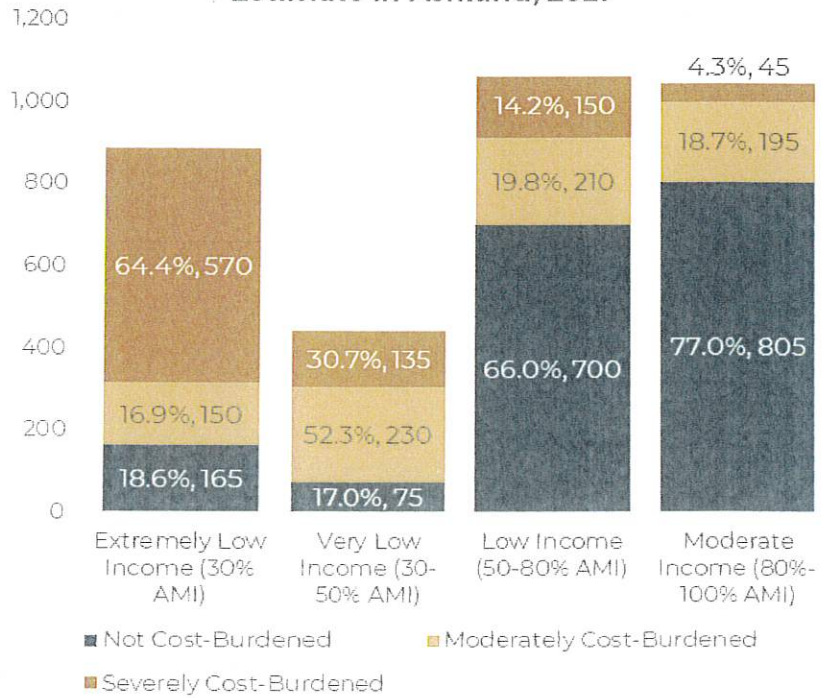
²⁴ Office of Policy Development and Research (PD&R), *Consolidated Planning: CHAS Data*.

²⁵ Massachusetts Association of Realtors, *Towns Condominium Data* (Market Data, 2016 - 2024), <https://www.marealtor.com/market-data/#1606169791920-c4b3f12f-d6d9>; Massachusetts Association of Realtors, *Towns Single-Family Data* (Market Data, 2016 - 2024), U.S. Census Bureau, A18009: *Median Gross Rent* (ACS 5-year estimates 2019–2023).

DEEPER AFFORDABILITY IS URGENTLY NEEDED

When housing production declines over decades, as it has in Ashland, the most disadvantaged groups often experience the greatest housing pressures. In 2021, about 720 households were extremely low-income (earning 30 percent or less of the AMI) and cost-burdened, meaning they spent more than 30 percent of their income on housing. Meanwhile, 365 households were very low-income (earning between 30 and 50 percent of the AMI), and 360 were low-income (earning between 50 and 80 percent of the AMI). This shows that there is a significant need for more affordable units priced at extremely low-income levels.²⁶

Cost Burden by Household Income Estimate in Ashland, 2021



Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS)

The standard 40B affordability threshold of 80 percent AMI does not fully address the needs of existing Ashland residents. Units that are affordable to households earning below 30 percent AMI are the most critical need.

Additionally, an estimated 12.5 percent of households in Ashland are occupied by householders aged 65 or older living alone, and 59.5 percent of households with residents aged 65 or older earn less than \$99,999.²⁷ The AMI Low Income Limit (80 percent) for a one-person household is \$92,650. This means approximately 7 percent of householders aged 65 or older living alone earn below 80 percent of the AMI.

²⁶ Office of Policy Development and Research (PD&R), *Consolidated Planning: CHAS Data* (2024).

²⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, *A10025: Housing Units by Household Type (Including Living Alone) and Age of Householder* (ACS 5-year estimates 2019–2023); U.S. Census Bureau, *B19037: Age Of Householder By Household Income In The Past 12 Months (In 2023 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars)* (ACS 5-year estimates 2019–2023).

To provide greater stability for seniors, families, and other lower-income households, Ashland can focus on:

- Creating deeply affordable units aimed at the lowest-income households.
- Converting existing homes into long-term affordable housing.
- Incentivizing or requiring new development to include deeply affordable units.

The goal is not just more housing, but the right kinds of housing that truly meet the community's needs. More deeply affordable housing can be secured through several means, and there is no one-size-fits-all approach.

Ashland could explore inclusionary zoning with tiered requirements for larger-scale developments, a commonly used zoning tool for creating deed-restricted affordable housing. The Pond Street Overlay District does include affordability requirements for special permits that create more than ten units, offering an existing model that the Town could build upon. To maintain market feasibility for these projects and ensure that needed housing is produced, deeper affordability could be tied to specific bonuses such as reduced parking requirements or relaxed dimensional standards, each of which was suggested in Ashland's last Housing Production Plan as supportive of market feasibility. Further study is recommended to update these findings before advancing an inclusionary zoning bylaw.

RENTERS FACE CHALLENGES IN BUILDING WEALTH

Income and wealth are not the same. A household may have a modest income but still benefit from the long-term security that comes with homeownership and accumulated assets. Renters, especially those in newer households or early in their careers, are less likely to have a financial cushion. In 2021, over one-third of Ashland renter households were cost-burdened, compared to just one in five homeowners.²⁸

Renters are also more vulnerable to housing instability because their costs can change unexpectedly. Unlike homeowners with fixed-rate mortgages and more predictable housing expenses, renters face the risk of rising rents beyond their control. And while housing assistance is based on income, limits on household assets also determine who qualifies and who doesn't.

²⁸ Office of Policy Development and Research (PD&R), *Consolidated Planning: CHAS Data (2024)*.

MONITORING DISPLACEMENT PRESSURES

So far, Ashland's population at large has not seen significant measurable effects from displacement pressures. In 2020, an estimated 8.7 percent of households moved out during the previous year, a rate lower than that of Middlesex County and the state as a whole.²⁹

However, the local housing market has nonetheless shifted dramatically in the years following the COVID-19 pandemic. Since 2020, the town has seen a notable decline in the price of a home that would be affordable at the community's median income. Adjusted for inflation, a household earning the median income could afford a \$670,000 home in 2021, a \$527,000 home in 2022 and a \$455,000 home in 2023.³⁰ This has occurred while average home sales prices have risen, widening the gap between what residents can afford and the price of homes on the market.

According to Ashland's SHI records, a significant number of housing units in the community are not permanently deed-restricted. The expiration dates of these units vary, but if they are not "preserved" with a source of funding that extends or makes permanent their affordability, they will revert to market rate and be removed from Ashland's SHI count.³¹ These projects are listed below.

Project Name	Type	Number of SHI Units	Expiration Year
Ashland Commons	Rental	96	2037
Ashland House	Rental	66	2027
Village of the Americas	Ownership	4	2054

When affordable homes lose their deed-restricted subsidy, the risk of displacement is high. Existing tenants may not be able to afford market-rate rent and could be pushed out when the units lose their subsidy.

The upcoming expiration of the Ashland House homes in 2027 is a key concern for existing residents and Ashland's SHI status.

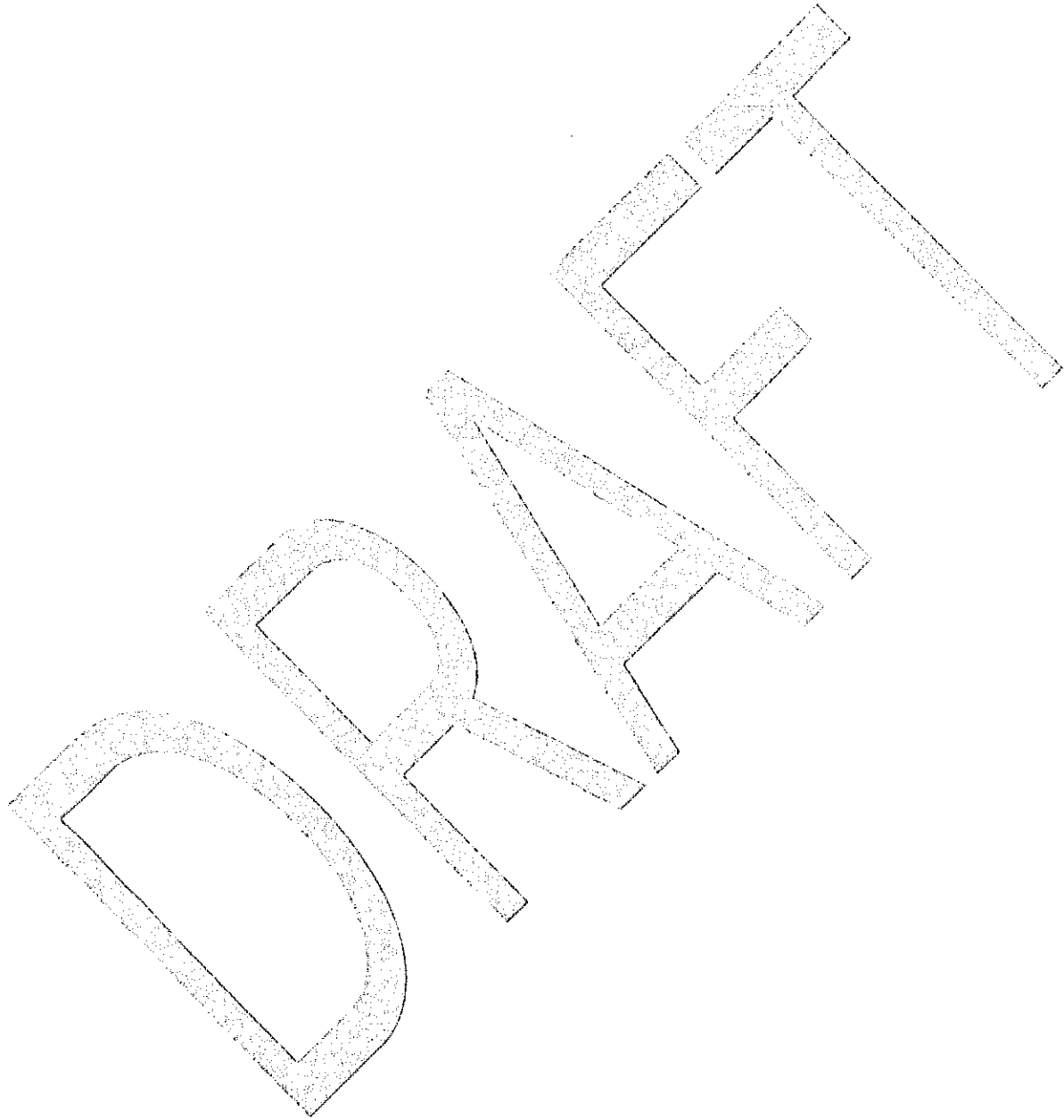
Declining local incomes and unpredictable markets may lead to future conditions that threaten housing affordability and increase displacement pressures.

²⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, B25038: Tenure By Year Householder Moved Into Unit (ACS 5-year estimates 2019–2023).

³⁰ These estimates were made by JM Goldson using our Affordability Calculator, which considers property taxes, mortgage rates, inflation adjustments, and assumes that 28 percent of income is spent on housing costs each month.

³¹ Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, *Subsidized Housing Inventory: Ashland* (2025).

Protecting residents from displacement requires both preserving existing affordable homes and expanding the supply of deeply affordable rental options. Policies and strategies such as inclusionary zoning, affordability covenants, and mobilization of Community Preservation and Affordable Housing Trust Fund monies can help Ashland proactively address these concerns and maintain its long-standing values of inclusion and community.



4. HOW DO JOBS, WAGES, AND SKILLS RELATE TO HOUSING ACCESS?

FINDINGS

Ashland’s location between Boston and Worcester make its an accessible place to live within the regional economy. Most residents commute out for work, and few local employees live in town, reflecting Ashland’s primarily residential development context, and indicating a disconnect between local jobs, wages, and available housing.

While Ashland’s leading employment sectors, such as wholesale trade, professional services, and construction offer salaries above regional low-income thresholds, many essential workers in lower-paying industries face barriers to affording local housing.

The community’s high educational attainment strengthens residents’ access to higher-wage opportunities, but the limited diversity of local jobs and housing options constrains who can afford to live and work in Ashland. Aligning housing development with workforce needs will be key to promoting economic inclusivity and reducing the commuting burdens on residents.

FINDINGS EXPLAINED

IN THE HEART OF THE REGIONAL ECONOMY

Ashland is situated in a strategic location within the regional economy. Located between Boston and Worcester, with easy access to I-90 and I-495, the community offers proximity to significant regional job centers.

In 2022, the community supported an estimated 4,664 jobs, yet only 7.2 percent of those workers also lived in Ashland. At the same time, 92.8 percent of Ashland’s employed residents commute to jobs outside the community.³²

This imbalance between local jobs and local residency does not point to one clear cause. It may reflect a mismatch between the types of jobs available and residents’ qualifications, skills, or

Commuting Patterns in Ashland, 2022

Employed in Ashland, Live Outside: 3,977

Live and Work in Ashland: 687

Living in Ashland, Employed Outside: 8,841

Source: Census OnTheMap

³² U.S. Census Bureau, *OnTheMap. Longitudinal Employer–Household Dynamics* (2022), <https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>.

preferences. It may also be related to housing affordability, lifestyle factors, regional housing dynamics, or commuting preferences.



Note: This map shows the municipalities that account for more than 0.1 percent of the home locations of Ashland's workers, which comprise 44.1 percent of them. The remaining 55.9 percent are distributed among municipalities that represent less than 0.1 percent of the home locations.

Source: MassGIS

TOP EMPLOYMENT SECTORS AND SALARIES

In 2024, the Massachusetts Department of Economic Research estimated that Ashland's top three sectors by salary were Wholesale Trade; Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services; and Construction.³³

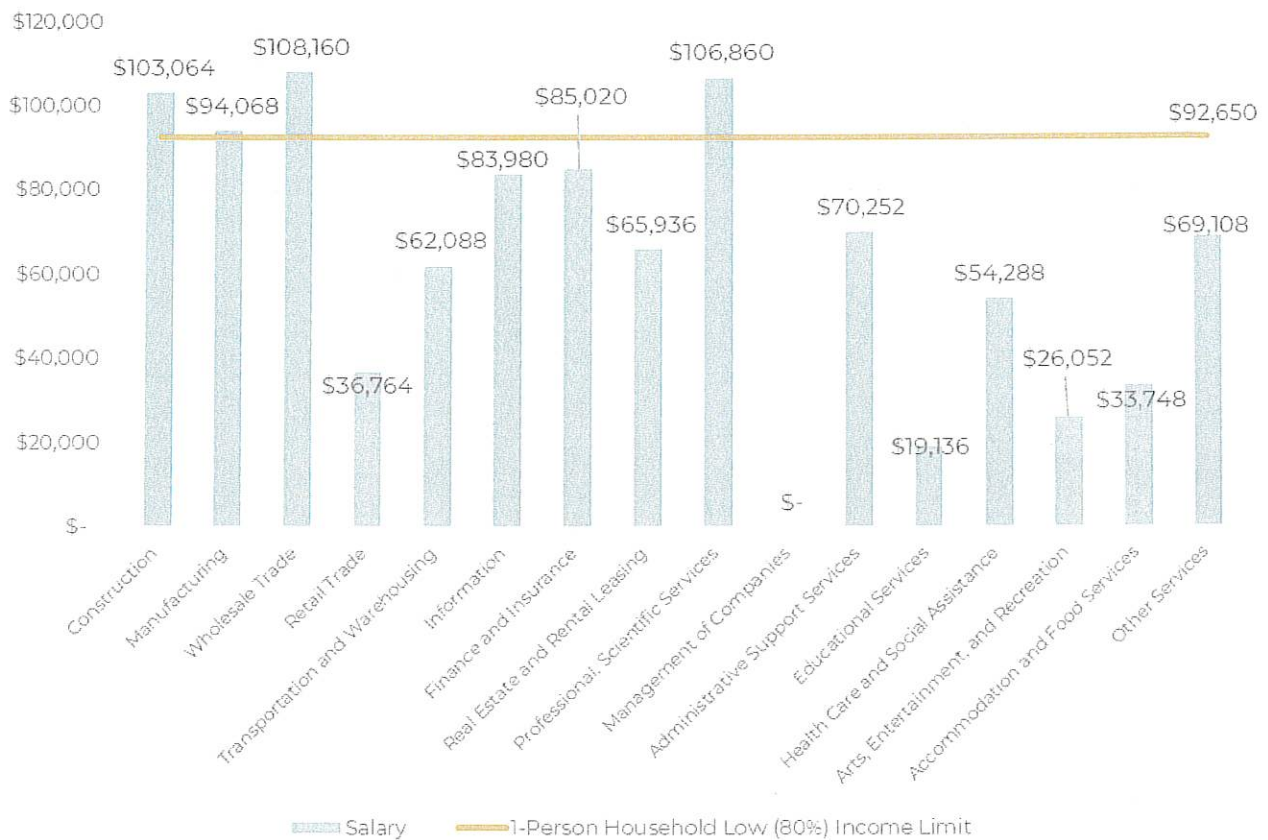
Sector	Average Salary (2024)
Wholesale Trade	\$108,160
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	\$106,860
Construction	\$103,064

Source: Massachusetts Department of Economic Research

³³ Massachusetts Department of Economic Research, *Employment and Wages (ES-202)* (2024), <https://lmi.dua.eol.mass.gov/LMI/EmploymentAndWages>.

Wage data alone only tells part of the story, since we do not know an earner’s household size or the number of earners in the household. However, these salaries are higher than the low-income threshold for a one-person household (\$92,650 for FY2025 for the Boston region).³⁴ Single earners in many other essential sectors, such as food services and educational services, are more likely to be eligible for deed-restricted affordable housing.

Salary by Sector in Ashland, 2024

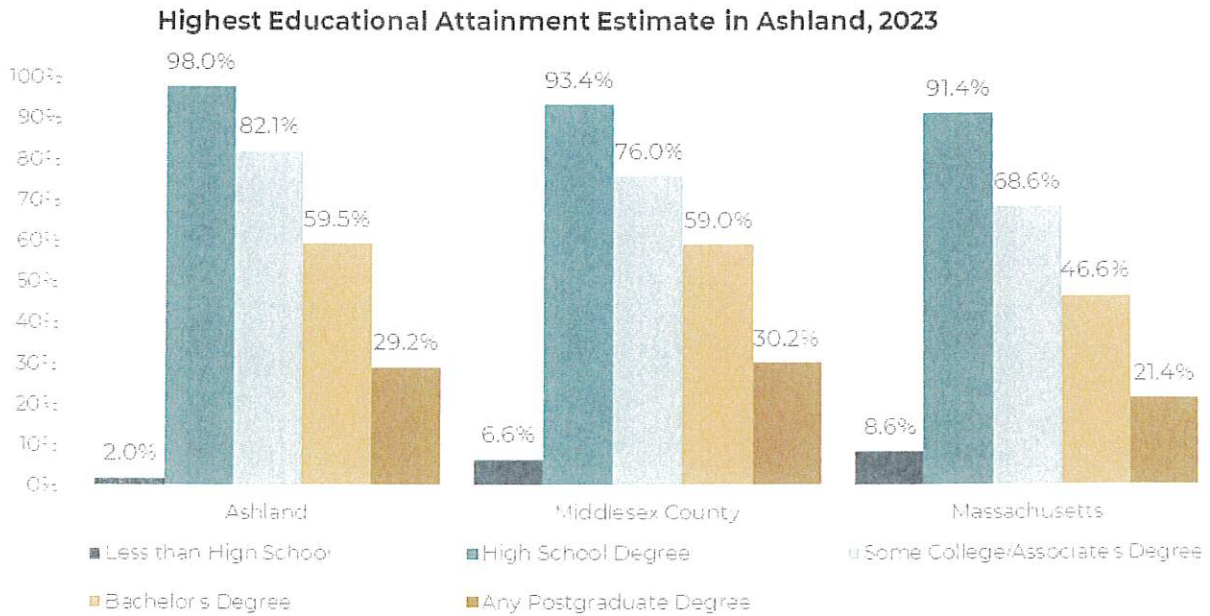


Source: Massachusetts Department of Economic Research, Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Income Limits

³⁴ Office of Policy Development and Research (PD&R), *Income Limits: FY2024 Income Limits (2024)*, <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/il.html>.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IS HIGHER THAN THE COUNTY AND THE STATE

Almost every adult resident has earned a high school degree, and 59.5 percent have completed an undergraduate or graduate degree.³⁵ More highly educated residents have greater access to higher-paying work. This is a trend that Ashland could continue, as lower educational attainment can limit access to higher-paying work, which in turn affects housing choices and affordability.



Source: ACS

5. WHAT WILL ASHLAND NEED TO ACHIEVE AND MAINTAIN SAFE HARBOR?

FINDINGS

Ashland’s share of affordable housing has fallen below the 10 percent state benchmark, leaving the town without “Safe Harbor” under 40B since 2023 and making it more vulnerable to Comprehensive Permits that override local zoning to help meet regional housing needs. The development pipeline of ongoing 40B Comprehensive Permits could result in the addition of up to 592 new rental homes, including 149 affordable units. In this case, all newly constructed rental units would be counted in the SHI, enabling Ashland to meet Safe Harbor, potentially even through 2040.

³⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, *A12001: Educational attainment for population 25 years and over* (ACS 5-year estimates 2019–2023).

If all three pending 40Bs are approved and constructed and Ashland regains Safe Harbor, prioritizing inclusionary zoning could promote more consistent development while avoiding the often sudden “ruptures” of large 40B developments in the evolution of the community’s built environment.

Expanding housing production, particularly multifamily and mixed-use projects that support Ashland’s economy and provide housing choice to residents, will be crucial to closing this gap and strengthening both economic vitality and fiscal sustainability.

FINDINGS EXPLAINED

ASHLAND WAS IN “SAFE HARBOR” UNTIL 2023

As of 2025, Ashland has 435 units on its Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI), representing 5.8 percent of the Census 2020 housing unit count.³⁶ This percentage is below the 10 percent benchmark set by the Massachusetts Chapter 40B law.

Previously, Ashland had a “Safe Harbor” designation that was in effect until August 3, 2023³⁷. This was achieved by the development of the Arbella at Ashland, which added 180 units to the Town’s SHI and was certified as consistent progress toward meeting the goals set out in Ashland’s 2021 Housing Production Plan. Since the community’s SHI remained below 10 percent, this status was only temporary, and low production of affordable units meant that it expired.

Subsidized Housing Units (SHI) in Ashland, 2025

SHI Units	435
2020 Housing Units	7,495
Percentage Subsidized	5.80%

Source: Subsidized Housing Inventory

Since Ashland’s Safe Harbor designation expired, the Town has seen multiple 40B Comprehensive Permit applications, indicative of strong housing demand.

When a Massachusetts municipality is not in 40B safe harbor, it can be subject to the full provisions of the Chapter 40B law, meaning the local Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) can deny a comprehensive

³⁶ Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, *Subsidized Housing Inventory: Ashland (2025)*.

³⁷ Massachusetts Department of Housing & Community Development, *RE: Housing Production Plan – Certification Approved (2021)*, <https://www.ashlandmass.com/DocumentCenter/View/9203/Ashland-HPP-Certification-Approval-Ltr-102621?bidId=>.

permit for an affordable housing project. However, their decision can still be overruled if it is deemed to have been based on criteria not aligned with local needs.³⁸

The SHI is an indicator for the amount of affordable housing in a community, but it is an imperfect calculation. It does not reflect “naturally occurring” affordable housing that is not deed-restricted, and also counts ownership and rental units differently. Three listings on Ashland’s SHI are rentals built with 40B Comprehensive Permits, which only require 25 percent of the units to be affordable while counting all units on the SHI. This means that while the SHI currently records around 5.8 percent of Ashland’s total housing as affordable rental, only a portion of those units are likely actually deed-restricted affordable homes.

ONGOING 40B PERMIT APPLICATIONS WILL LIKELY PUT ASHLAND BACK IN SAFE HARBOR IF APPROVED

If approved, Ashland’s three ongoing 40B projects will add 592 total units to the community’s housing supply, which could provide 149 income-restricted affordable units over the next few years. These projects would represent a seven percent increase in Ashland’s total housing supply (based on the total unit estimate provided by the ACS in 2023). They would **more than double Ashland’s current SHI**.

The approval and construction of these larger developments would likely put Ashland in Safe Harbor at least through the 2030 Census (when SHI percentages are recalculated with updated housing unit counts).

If Ashland regains Safe Harbor through the approval and construction of pending 40B applications, it will reorient the community’s approach toward providing for housing needs away from a focus on future 40B proposals and toward production that can be achieved through local zoning.

It is important to note that the affordability of 66 units at Ashland House is set to expire in 2027, after which they will be removed from the SHI. If the three 40B developments are permitted and built, Ashland will regain Safe Harbor **even if the homes at Ashland House lose their affordability**. However, obtaining “credit” on the SHI is not the only reason to prioritize the preservation of subsidized units; when affordability expires, residents may face displacement if they are unable to afford market-rate rents.

³⁸ Katelyn Gagalis and Mina Makarious, *Appeals Court Interprets 40B ‘Safe Harbor’ Requirements* (2025), <https://andersonkreiger.com/appeals-court-interprets-40b-safe-harbor-requirements/>.

CHAPTER 4: DEVELOPMENT CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

FRAMING ASHLAND'S DEVELOPMENT CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Understanding the constraints and opportunities for development in Ashland requires a close examination of the policies, physical conditions, and market forces that influence where and how new housing can be built. This chapter examines both the barriers that restrict housing production and the local strengths that can be leveraged to create more homes of the types and in the places that could serve the community best.

Several factors, such as rising construction costs and higher interest rates, are part of national and regional market conditions. Others, including zoning laws, environmental rules, infrastructure capacity, and historic resources, are specific to Ashland. These local regulations and physical conditions can either restrict or promote the type, scale, and location of new development.

The analysis also examines the capacity of local systems, including utilities, schools, and municipal services, to support new housing. This broader view helps illustrate how these parts interact and where challenges may intersect with potential solutions.

By identifying these constraints and opportunities together, Ashland can strategically plan for housing production that aligns with community goals. The goal is to ensure that new developments support economic vitality, protect important environmental and historic assets, and create housing that meets the needs of residents now and in the future.

To guide this assessment, this chapter answers five key questions:

1. What national trends influence residential development in Ashland?
2. What internal regulatory factors impact development potential?
3. What environmental factors impact development potential?
4. Can Ashland's existing infrastructure and services support new residential growth?
5. What is Ashland's capacity to implement new housing initiatives?

KEY FINDINGS: A SNAPSHOT OF DEVELOPMENT CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN ASHLAND

1. **National economic trends are increasing the cost of housing development**, with material prices up more than 60 percent and labor costs up nearly 46 percent over the past decade.

Rising land prices and higher interest rates further limit new construction, making it harder for developers to finance and complete projects.

2. **Zoning regulations in Ashland restrict where and how new housing can be built**, with most land zoned for single-family use and few areas allowing multifamily or mixed-use housing as-of-right. Non-conforming lots, high parking requirements, and overlapping overlay districts add complexity for residents seeking to understand their property options.
3. **Environmental constraints limit development while preserving natural resources**, including flood zones covering nearly one-quarter of the town and 23 percent of land permanently protected as open space. Contamination at the Nyanza Superfund Site also restricts nearby development, underscoring the need for balanced planning that prioritizes both public health and environmental protection.
4. **Ashland's water and sewer systems have the capacity to support future growth**, but its schools face mounting enrollment pressures despite recent renovations. Continued investment in educational facilities will be necessary to align infrastructure capacity with the growing population.
5. **Ashland has a strong foundation for implementing housing initiatives** through its Planning Department, Affordable Housing Trust Fund, and Housing Authority. However, limited staffing and a Subsidized Housing Inventory below 10 percent hinder progress, making stronger coordination and updated zoning essential to achieve future housing goals.

1. WHAT NATIONAL TRENDS INFLUENCE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN ASHLAND?

FINDINGS

National trends such as rising material, labor, and land costs are significantly increasing the expense of residential development, particularly in high-cost regions like the Northeast. Construction material prices have surged by over 60 percent and labor costs by nearly 46 percent in the past decade, while limited land availability and restrictive zoning further constrain supply. At the same time, higher interest rates have made financing new projects more difficult, reducing developers' capacity to build and slowing overall housing production.

FINDINGS EXPLAINED

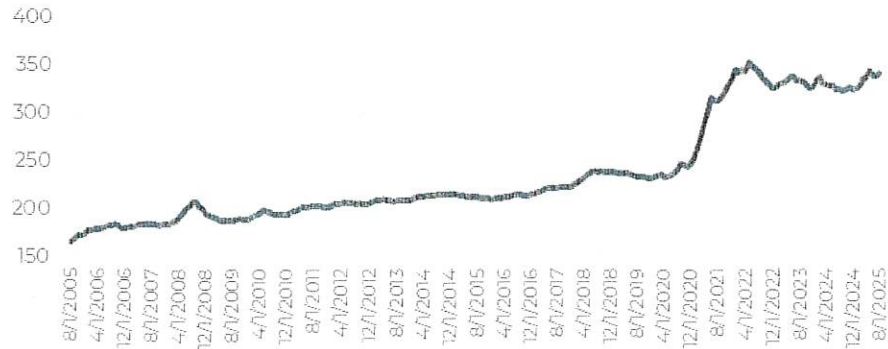
RISING MATERIAL, LABOR, AND LAND COSTS

According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, the price of construction materials has increased by 60.2 percent over the past decade, which directly raises the cost of building new homes.

Additionally, hourly wages for construction workers have increased by 45.7 percent during the same period, from \$27.44 in August 2015 to \$39.98 in August 2025.³⁹

Land prices in the northeast, including Massachusetts, are the highest in the nation.⁴⁰ Limited supply and zoning dimensional requirements, such as large minimum lot sizes, make land even more complicated to procure, driving up costs.

Producer Price Index by Commodity: Construction Materials, 2005 - 2025

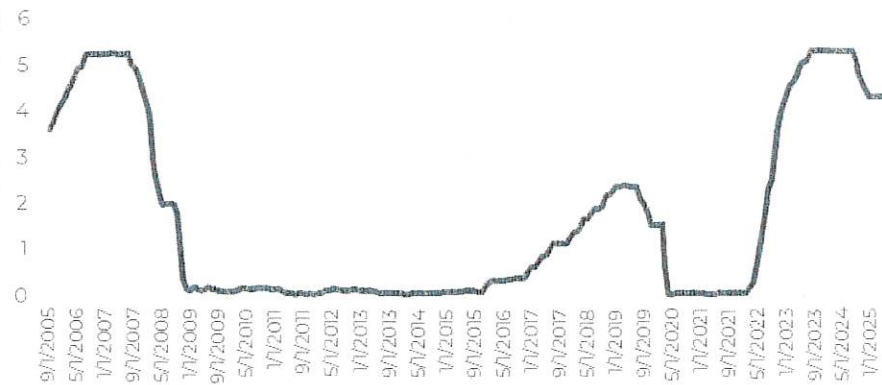


Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

RISING INTEREST RATES AND LENDING CHALLENGES

Higher interest rates make borrowing money more expensive. As borrowing becomes more costly, fewer developers take out loans for new projects. While a decade ago saw unusually low rates, the current trend reflects a return to levels from two decades ago.⁴¹

Federal Funds Effective Rate, 2005 - 2025



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

³⁹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Producer Price Index by Commodity: Special Indexes: Construction Materials [WPUSI012011]* (FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, 2025), <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/WPUSI012011>; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Average Hourly Earnings of All Employees, Construction [CES2000000003]* (FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, 2025), <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/CES2000000003>

⁴⁰ U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service, *Land Values 2024 Summary* (USDA–NASS Report No. 08-02-2024, August 2, 2024), <https://esmis.nal.usda.gov/sites/default/release-files/pn89d6567/vh53zm770/sf269z18h/land0824.pdf>.

⁴¹ Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System (US), *Federal Funds Effective Rate [FEDFUNDS]*, retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/FEDFUNDS>, October 29, 2025.

2. WHAT INTERNAL REGULATORY FACTORS IMPACT DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL?

FINDINGS

Zoning regulations in Ashland significantly influence where and how new housing can be built. Nearly half of the community's land area is zoned exclusively for residential uses, while 32 percent allows multifamily or mixed-use developments, and 16.5 percent of that permits them as-of-right.

Most residential and commercial parcels (63 percent) are non-conforming with current minimum lot size or frontage requirements, meaning redevelopment often requires special permits or variances that add cost, time, and uncertainty even for projects that would otherwise be by-right. High parking minimums (two spaces per dwelling unit) further restrict compact or transit-oriented housing forms that are increasingly common in other Massachusetts communities and add cost to new homes.

Ashland's overlay districts are designed to provide targeted opportunities but also introduce significant regulatory complexity. For example, while the Downtown (ADD-A) and MBTA Communities overlay districts support multifamily housing, overlapping restrictions from the Floodplain Overlay (FPOD), Groundwater Protection (GPOD), and Photovoltaic Installations (PIOD) districts limit where development can occur and add complexity.

Intersecting and overlapping regulations, combined with the prevalence of non-conforming lots due to zoning more restrictive than Ashland's historical built environment, create fragmented development conditions that can discourage investment.

To support future housing growth, Ashland could benefit from streamlining and simplifying its zoning bylaw, modernizing dimensional and parking standards, and better aligning overlay districts to encourage diverse, mixed-use, and transit-accessible development in alignment with the Comprehensive Plan.

FINDINGS EXPLAINED

WHAT IS ZONING?

Zoning is a system of land use regulation used by local governments to control how land and property within their jurisdiction can be used and developed. Zoning

KEY ZONING PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS:

Two essential terms define how a property owner gets permission to build:

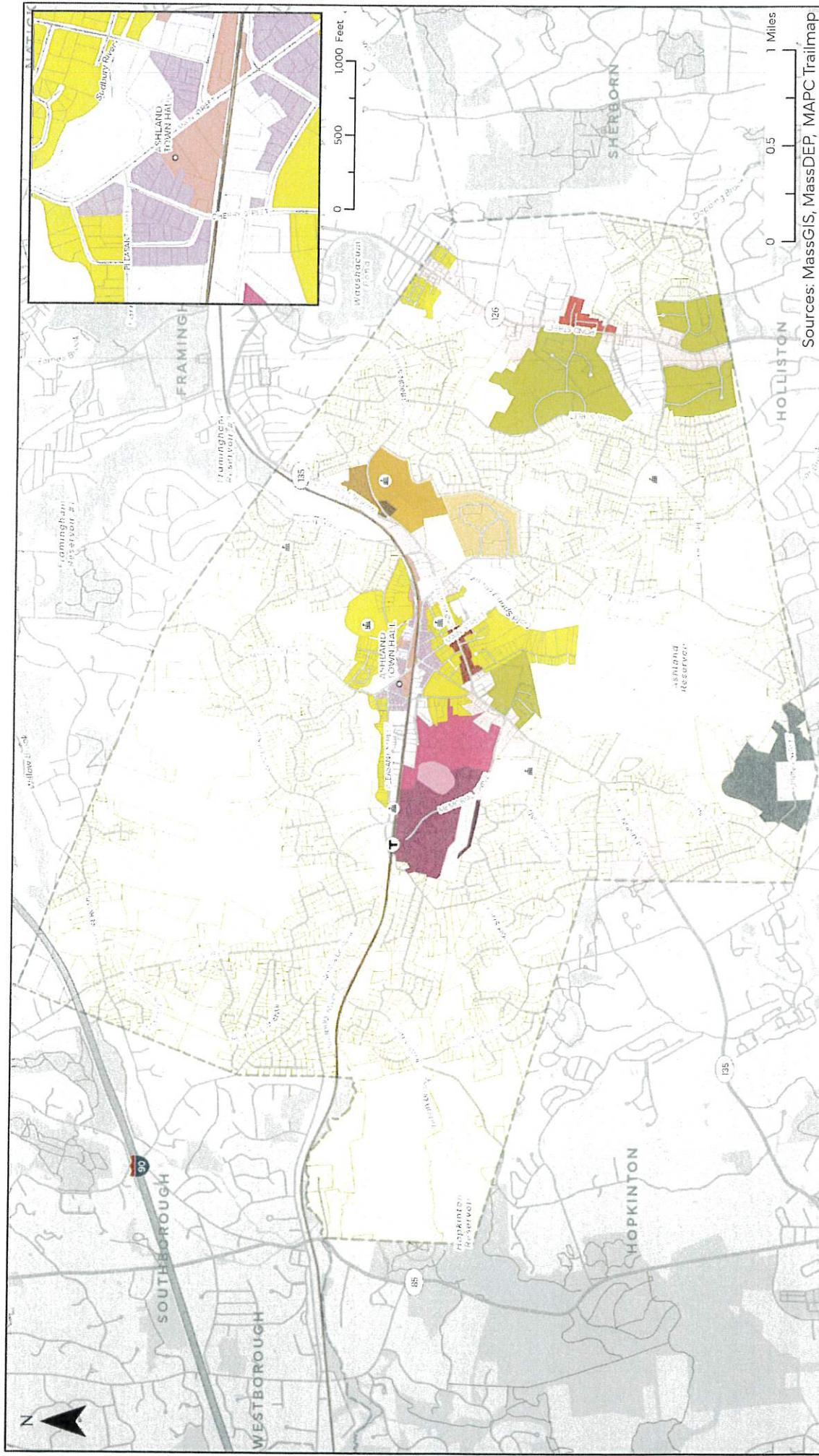
- **As-of-right** means that only a building permit is required to begin the project.
 - A **special permit** requires an application, a public hearing, and approval by a town entity. Additionally, a lawyer is often required for this process, which can be costly. Generally, the special permit process is associated with high costs, lengthy timelines, and uncertain outcomes.
- In Ashland, projects seeking one or more special permits must be approved by the

regulations divide areas of a community into different zones or districts, each with specific rules and requirements regarding the types of land use, building size and height, density, and other factors.

ASHLAND'S BASE ZONING DISTRICTS

Nearly half of Ashland (47 percent) is zoned as residential districts which do not permit commercial uses.

Zoning District	Abbreviation	Area (Acres)	Percentage (%)
Residential Districts			
Residence A	RA	7,609.51	36.7%
Residence B	RB	1,260.69	6.1%
Residence Multifamily	RM	870.68	4.2%
Commercial Districts			
Highway Commerce	CH	1,178.59	5.7%
Downtown Commerce	CD	584.39	2.8%
Village Commerce	CV	639.50	3.1%
Neighborhood Commerce	CN	530.40	2.6%
Industrial	I	1,292.35	5.9%
Special Districts			
Wildwood Mixed Use Special District			
Area A	WMUSD A	654.73	3.2%
Area B	WMUSD B	95.74	0.5%
Area C	WMUSD C	597.70	2.9%
Area D	WMUSD D	22.20	2.9%
Area E	WMUSD E	584.12	0.1%
Buffer Zone	WMUSD BUFFER	600.00	2.8%
Rail Transit District			
Area A	RTD A	555.38	2.7%
Area B	RTD B	110.63	0.5%
Area C	RTD C	91.03	0.4%
Area D	RTD D	692.32	3.3%
Area E	RTD E	737.60	3.6%
Area F	RTD F	45.70	0.2%
Ashland Downtown District			
Area B	ADD B	570.85	2.8%
Area C	ADD C	551.61	2.7%
Quarry Remediation District	QRD	921.94	4.4%
Total		21,927.08	100.0%



Sources: MassGIS, MassDEP, MAPC Trailmap

- | | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------------------|--|---|--|-----------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| | Residence A (RA) | | Industrial (I) | | WMUSD Area E | | RTD Area E |
| | Residence B (RB) | | Quarry Remediation District (QRD) | | WMUSD Buffer Zone | | RTD Area F |
| | Residence Multifamily (RM) | | Wildwood Mixed Use Special District (WMUSD) | | Rail Transit District (RTD) | | Ashland Downtown District (ADD) |
| | Highway Commerce (CH) | | WMUSD Area A | | RTD Area A | | ADD Area B |
| | Downtown Commerce (CD) | | WMUSD Area B | | RTD Area B | | ADD Area C |
| | Village Commerce (CV) | | WMUSD Area C | | RTD Area C | | |
| | Neighborhood Commerce (CN) | | WMUSD Area D | | RTD Area D | | |

PERMITTED RESIDENTIAL USES

In Ashland, some non-residential zoning districts also permit residential developments. Commercial zoning districts and some of the labeled Special Districts, particularly the WMUSD, RTD, and ADD districts, also do.

The table on the next page shows all the permitted residential uses for each zoning district that allows at least one residential use. The uses are labeled as follows: **Y = Allowed as-of-right**, **N = Not allowed**, and **SP = Allowed through a special permit**.⁴² Additionally, the highest and best use of land is highlighted. The "highest and best use of land" is a concept defined as "the reasonably probable and legal use of vacant land or an improved property that is physically possible, appropriately supported, and financially feasible and that results in the highest value."⁴³



Habitat for Humanity Home located at 399 Main St

Source: Town of Ashland



⁴² Town of Ashland, *Zoning* (2021), <https://ecode360.com/13018250>.

⁴³ Joseph Panknin, *How to Determine the Highest and Best Use in Commercial Real Estate* (2023, parr. 3), <https://www.altusgroup.com/featured-insights/property-development-feasibility/part-6-highest-and-best-use-real-estate/>

Zoning District	Single-Family Dwelling	Two-Family Dwelling	Multifamily Dwelling	Mixed-Use Development
RA	Y	N	N	N
RB	Y	Y	N	N
RM	Y	Y	SP	N
CH	Y	SP	N	SP
CD	Y	Y	N	N
CV	Y	SP	N	N
CN	Y	Y	N	N
WMUSD A	Y	Y	Y	Y
WMUSD B	Y	Y	N	Y
WMUSD D	SP	SP	SP	SP
WMUSD E	SP	SP	SP	SP
RTD A ⁽ⁱ⁾	Y	N	Y	N
RTD C ⁽ⁱ⁾	Y	N	Y	N
RTD D ⁽ⁱ⁾	Y	N	Y	N
RTD E	Y ⁽ⁱ⁾	N	Y ⁽ⁱⁱ⁾	N
ADD B	SP	SP	Y	Y
ADD C	Y	Y	SP	SP

Note: (i) Only age-restricted residential uses; (ii) admits non-age-restricted multifamily.

Source: Town of Ashland Zoning Bylaws

Out of 17 zoning districts, all permit single-family residential, 12 permit two-family residential, 9 permit multi-family residential, and 7 permit mixed-use developments.

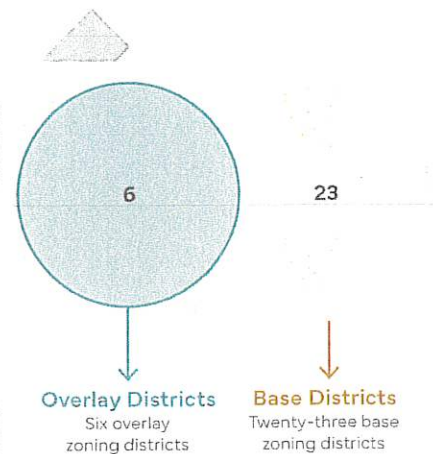
Among the 17 zoning districts that permit residential uses:

- Seven identify mixed-use development as the highest and best use of land; however, only three of these can be built as-of-right.
- Five districts designate multi-family housing as the highest and best use, with four permitting it as-of-right.
- Three designate two-family residential as the highest and best use.
- One designates single-family residential as the highest and best use.

The 12 zoning districts that permit multi-family or mixed-use developments represent 32.1 percent of Ashland’s land. However, only 16.5 percent permit them as-of-right.

OVERLAY ZONING DISTRICTS

In addition to the 23 base zoning districts described above, Ashland also includes six overlay zoning districts. The table on the following page provides an overview of these overlays. Among them, three districts present significant opportunities for unlocking Ashland’s potential to meet future housing demand:



1. **Ashland Downtown District Area A Overlay District (ADD-A):** This overlay allows multi-family dwellings and applies to portions of the Downtown Commerce (CD) and Industrial (I) districts. Given its location and permitted uses, it presents meaningful opportunities for new housing production.
2. **Pond Street Mixed-Use Overlay District (PSMUOD):** Intended to encourage mixed-use and economic development, this overlay largely overlaps with the Photovoltaic Installations Overlay District (PIOD), which prohibits residential uses. It also coincides with the Highway Commerce (CH) district, where mixed-use is already allowed by special permit. Consequently, its actual development potential lies primarily in the areas where it overlaps the Downtown Commerce (CD) district, which does not otherwise permit mixed-use development. However, there are few mixed-use developments, and most are non-compliant.
3. **MBTA Communities Multi-Family Overlay District (MCMOD):** This overlay allows multi-family dwellings as-of-right. However, much of the designated area encompasses parcels that already contain newly built residential developments or overlap with the ADD-A district, which provides similar as-of-right permissions. As a result, its capacity to generate additional housing beyond current projects may be limited.⁴⁴

Intersections and overlapping regulations among Ashland’s overlay districts may impede housing production by creating regulatory complexity and discouraging developer investment in the community.

⁴⁴ Town of Ashland, *Zoning map* (2018) <https://www.ashlandmass.com/DocumentCenter/View/3857/Zoning-Map-2018-with-disclaimer>; Town of Ashland, *Zoning*; Town of Ashland Planning Department, *MBTA Communities* (2024), <https://www.ashlandmass.com/1092/MBTA-Communities>.

Overlay District	Purpose	Is residential allowed?	Affordability Requirement	Percentage of total land area
Ashland Downtown District Area A (ADD A)	Promote mixed-use developments.	Multi-family dwellings as-of-right		40.68 acres 0.19 percent
Floodway Overlay District (FPOD)	Protect residents and their properties from flood hazards.	No		
Groundwater Protection Overlay District (GPOD)	Protect sources of drinking water.	No		341.63 acres 1.56 percent
MBTA Communities Multi-Family Overlay District (MCMOD)	Allow multi-family dwellings as-of-right.	Multi-family dwellings as-of-right	For developments that create more than 10 units, 12.5 percent of the units in sub-districts A, B, C, and D, and 10 percent of the units in sub-district E must be affordable.	56.30 acres 0.26 percent
Photovoltaic Installations Overlay District (PIOD)	Promote the creation of solar photovoltaic installations.	No		592.06 acres 2.70 percent
Pond Street Mixed Use Overlay District (PSMUOD)	Promote economic development and mixed-use at the Pond St corridor.	The Planning Board can grant a Special Permit to allow dwelling units adjacent to non-residential uses.	For developments that create more than 10 units, 10 percent of the units must be affordable.	424.54 acres 1.94 percent

Source: Town of Ashland Zoning Bylaws

TOWN OF ASHLAND - OVERLAY ZONING DISTRICTS

Prepared by JM Goldson LLC

JM GOLDSON



Sources: MassGIS, MassDEP, MAPC Trailmap

- Schools
- Buildings
- Parcels
- Trails
- Water bodies
- Open space
- Ashland Downtown District Area A Overlay District (ADD A)
- Groundwater Protection Overlay District (GPOD)
- MBTA Communities Multi-Family Overlay District (MCMOD)
- Photovoltaic Installations Overlay District (PIOD)
- Pond Street Mixed Use Overlay District (PSMUOD)

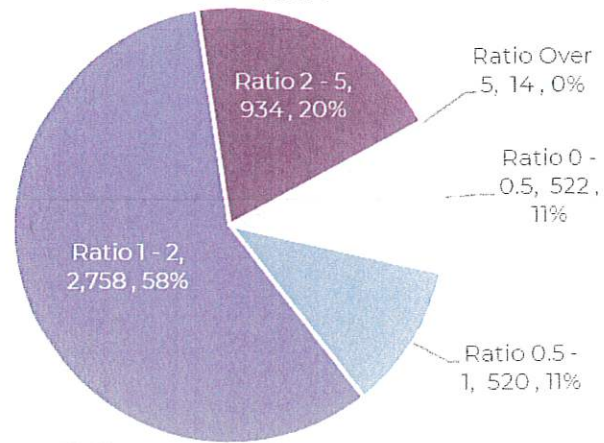
UNDERSTANDING ASHLAND'S REDEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

One way to get a rough sense of where future redevelopment might be more likely is to look at the *improvement-to-land value ratio*.

This analysis excludes all parcels with open space land use, whether protected or unprotected. Then, it calculates the improvement-to-land ratio by dividing the value of improvements (structures) by the land value (the land beneath the structures).

As the parcel's ratio approaches zero, it means the land is worth significantly more than the building.

Parcels Likely to be Redeveloped (Improvement-to-Land Ratio) in Ashland, 2024



Source: MassGIS Data: Property Tax Parcels, 2024

When the land of a parcel is worth more than the building(s) on it, it may mean the property is underutilized and could see greater taxable value for the community if redevelopment were permitted.

In Ashland, approximately 21.6 percent of non-open space parcels have land values exceeding the value of their improvements (see page 40). It is essential to note that this analysis does not mean that all of these parcels will be redeveloped. It is simply a tool planners use to help identify areas where redevelopment interest may exist if market conditions and local regulations align.

Several factors, including zoning, environmental constraints, infrastructure, market demand, and property owner interests, determine whether redevelopment will actually occur.

This metric is important because it helps the community identify areas where opportunities may exist to encourage investment, target zoning changes, or support revitalization.

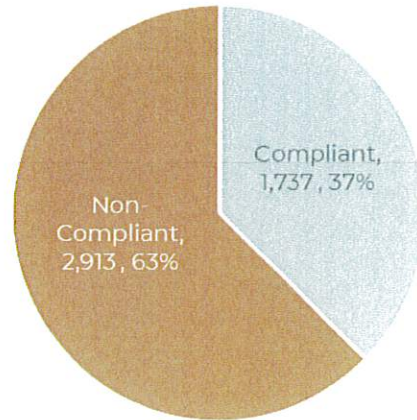
Used in conjunction with other information, this analysis can provide a more comprehensive picture of Ashland's development potential.

NON-CONFORMING LOTS

Non-conforming lots are parcels that do not dimensionally comply with Ashland's zoning code requirements, such as minimum lot size or street frontage, and were likely built prior to current zoning requirements. Non-compliance is often a result of zoning changes over the years, which have frequently increased lot sizes and frontages, making historic houses built on smaller lots noncompliant.

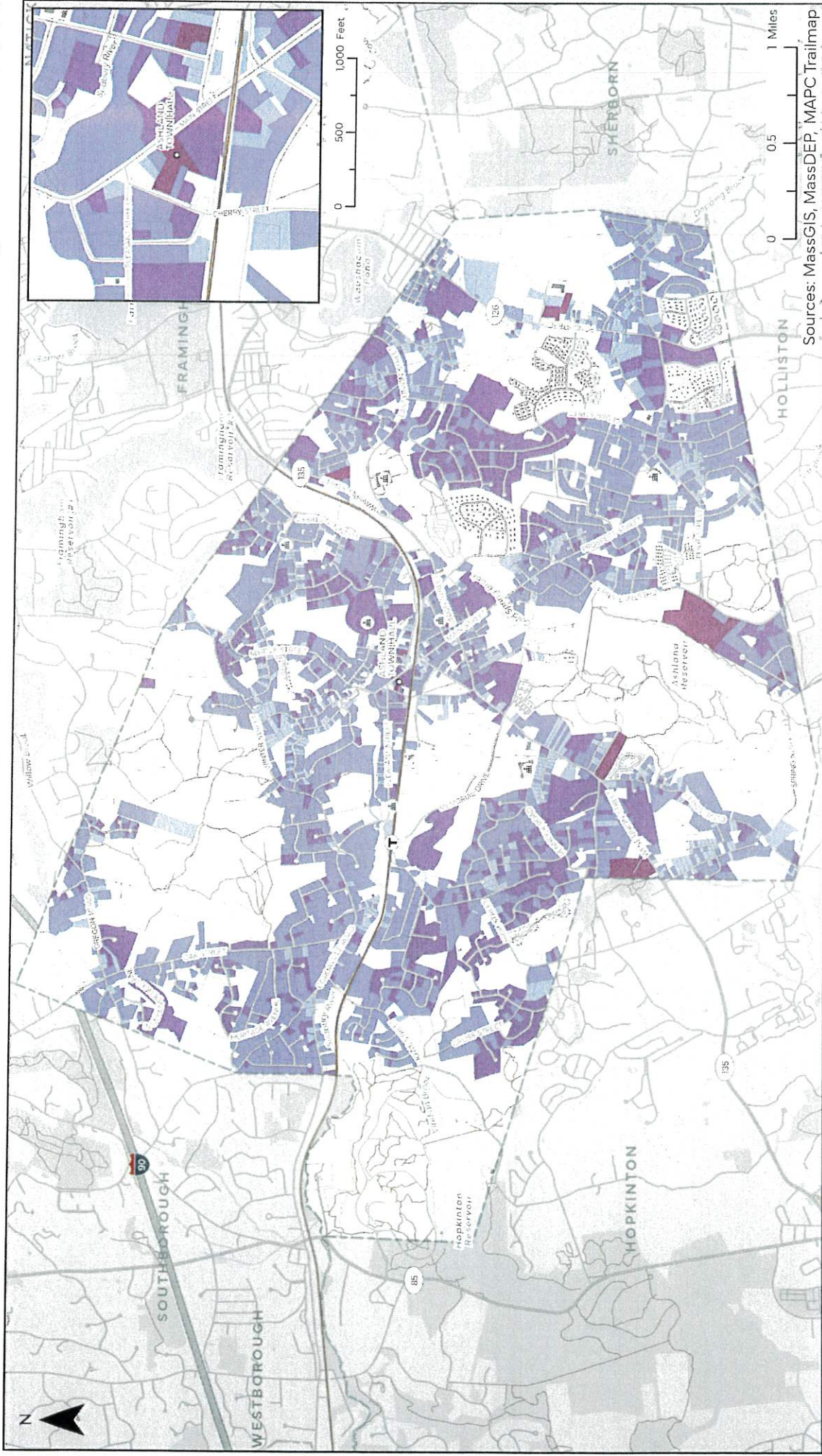
Larger lot sizes can make housing less affordable by requiring buyers to purchase more land with the building. For pre-existing noncompliant homes, it can disincentivize renovations or updates (like accessibility upgrades) because the permitting requirements can be greater.

Residential and Commercial Zoning Districts Dimensional Compliance in Ashland, 2025



Source: MassGIS Data: Property Tax Parcels, 2024

Sixty-three percent (63 percent) of all residential and commercial parcels were non-conforming with current zoning in some way. Only 2.7 percent of the parcels in the zoning districts that permit two-family structures as of right are compliant (see page 41).



Improvement-to-Land Ratio (Structures Value / Land Value)

- Ratio 0 - 0.5
 - Ratio 0.5 - 1.0
 - Ratio 1.0 - 2.0
 - Ratio 2.0 - 5.0
 - Ratio Over 5.0
- Schools
 - Buildings
 - Parcels
 - Trails
 - Water bodies
 - Open space

Sources: MassGIS, MassDEP, MAPC Trailmap

TOWN OF ASHLAND - RESIDENTIAL ZONING DISTRICTS DIMENSIONAL COMPLIANCE

Prepared by JM Goldson LLC

JM GOLDSON



Sources: MassGIS, MassDEP, MAPC Trailmap

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

PARKING REQUIREMENTS ADD COST TO NEW HOMES

Parking requirements play a significant role in determining development patterns and housing affordability by influencing the amount of land and cost dedicated to accommodating private personal vehicles. Compared to many communities in Massachusetts, and especially in relation to best practices in transit-oriented or compact development planning, Ashland's parking requirements tend to be on the higher side.

Ashland always requires two parking spaces per dwelling unit, which is higher than the regional average.⁴⁵

Many communities aiming to encourage TOD are shifting to 1 space per unit or letting the market determine parking needs by eliminating minimum parking requirements. Instead, they:

- Allow developers to determine parking supply based on market demand.
- Pair the policy with parking management strategies (shared parking, unbundled parking costs from rent, on-street management).
- Ensure accessibility and ADA-compliant spaces are still provided.⁴⁶

Eliminating minimum requirements not mean that no parking will be built alongside new buildings, it just means that the provision of parking is more flexible to how the developer (or homeowner) understands the needs of their property and who will be using it.

For example, in 2025, Denver's City Council abolished parking requirements, projecting that the change would enable the construction of hundreds of additional housing units per development.⁴⁷ New Jersey's Transit Village Initiative encourages communities with transit access to redevelop and densify areas around existing train stations, leading to many participating cities and towns reducing their parking requirements by 25 or 50 percent.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Metropolitan Area Planning Council, *Metro Boston Perfect Fit Parking Initiative: Phase II Executive Summary* (2019), <https://perfectfitparking.mapc.org/assets/documents/Perfect%20Fit%20Executive%20Summary.pdf>.

⁴⁶ Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE), *Parking Generation Manual*, 5th ed. (Washington, DC: ITE, 2019).

⁴⁷ Samantha Chavez-Norgaard, James C. Greenfield, Katherine M. Sims, and Alexander Casey, *Examining Relationships Between Eliminating Parking Minimums and New Housing Construction Using a Turner Housing Simulator Tool* (Rocky Mountain Land Use Institute; Scrivner Institute of Public Policy; TurnerLabs, 2025), <https://www.law.du.edu/sites/default/files/2025-07/Examining%20Relationships%20between%20Eliminating%20Parking%20Minimums%20and%20New%20Housing%20Construction%20Using%20a%20Turner%20Housing%20Simulator%20Tool%20-%20August%202025%20r2.pdf>.

⁴⁸ *The Transit Friendly Planning Newsletter*, "Rethinking TOD Parking" (NJ TOD, 2020).

Reducing parking requirements, among other restrictions and requirements, can help support the financial feasibility of adding additional subsidized units in a development.

HISTORIC RESOURCES

The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) maintains records of historic properties in the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS). This database includes two types of inventories: **inventory points**, which document individual buildings, objects, or structures, and **inventory areas**, which encompass larger parcels or districts. In total, Ashland contains 235 inventoried point resources and 4 inventoried area resources listed in MACRIS.⁴⁹



Ashland Town Hall
Source: Town of Ashland Photo Gallery website

Massachusetts recognizes several levels of historic designation. **Local Historic Districts** and **Massachusetts Historic Landmarks** provide the highest degree of legal protection, while properties listed in the **National Register of Historic Places** receive recognition but limited regulatory safeguards. **Inventoried properties**, by contrast, have no formal protection but often represent the first step toward more significant designation.

Of Ashland's 235 inventoried point resources, three are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, while the remainder are classified solely as inventoried properties. The town's four inventoried areas account for only 0.7 percent of Ashland's total land area, and all are also designated as inventoried properties (see page 44).

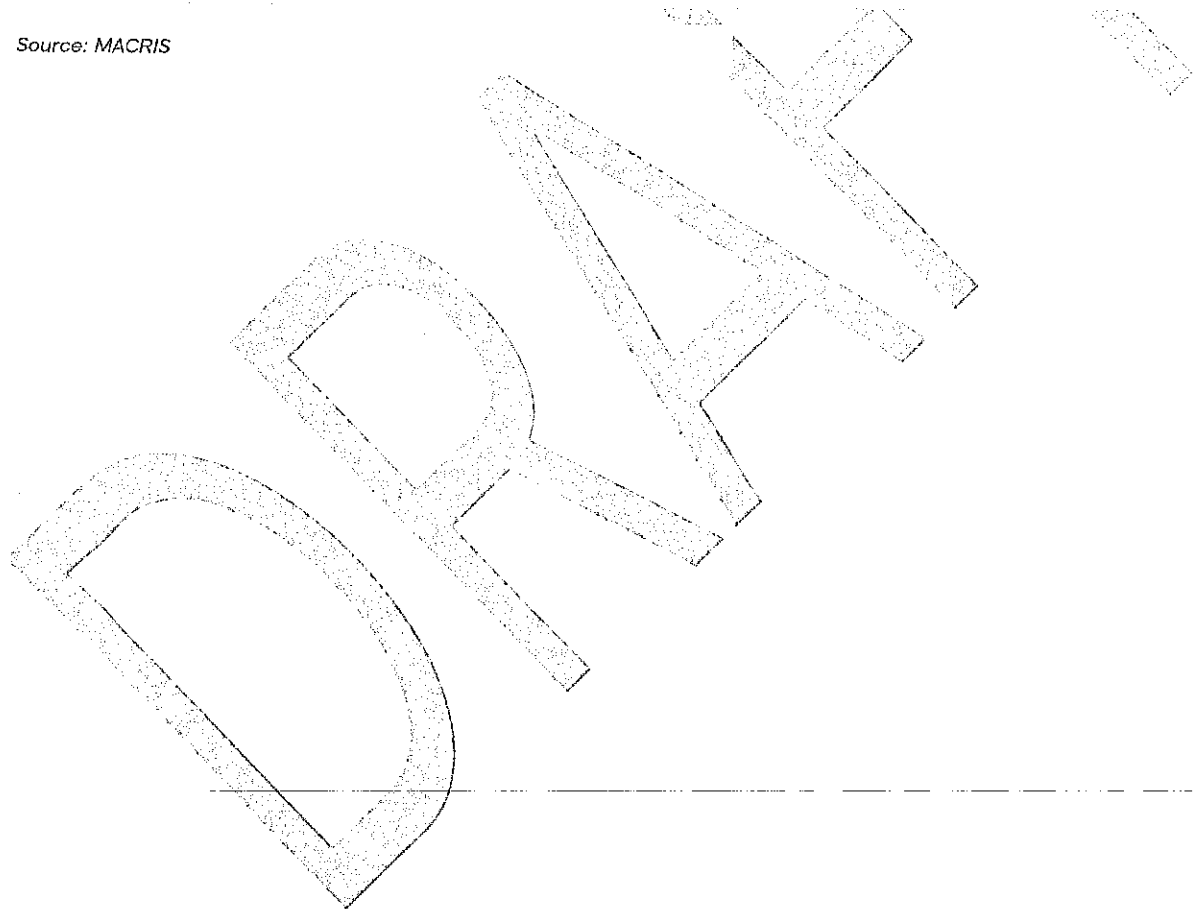
Although Ashland does not have any Local Historic Districts that restrict new development, its Historical Commission reviews projects involving the adaptive reuse of historic buildings. These

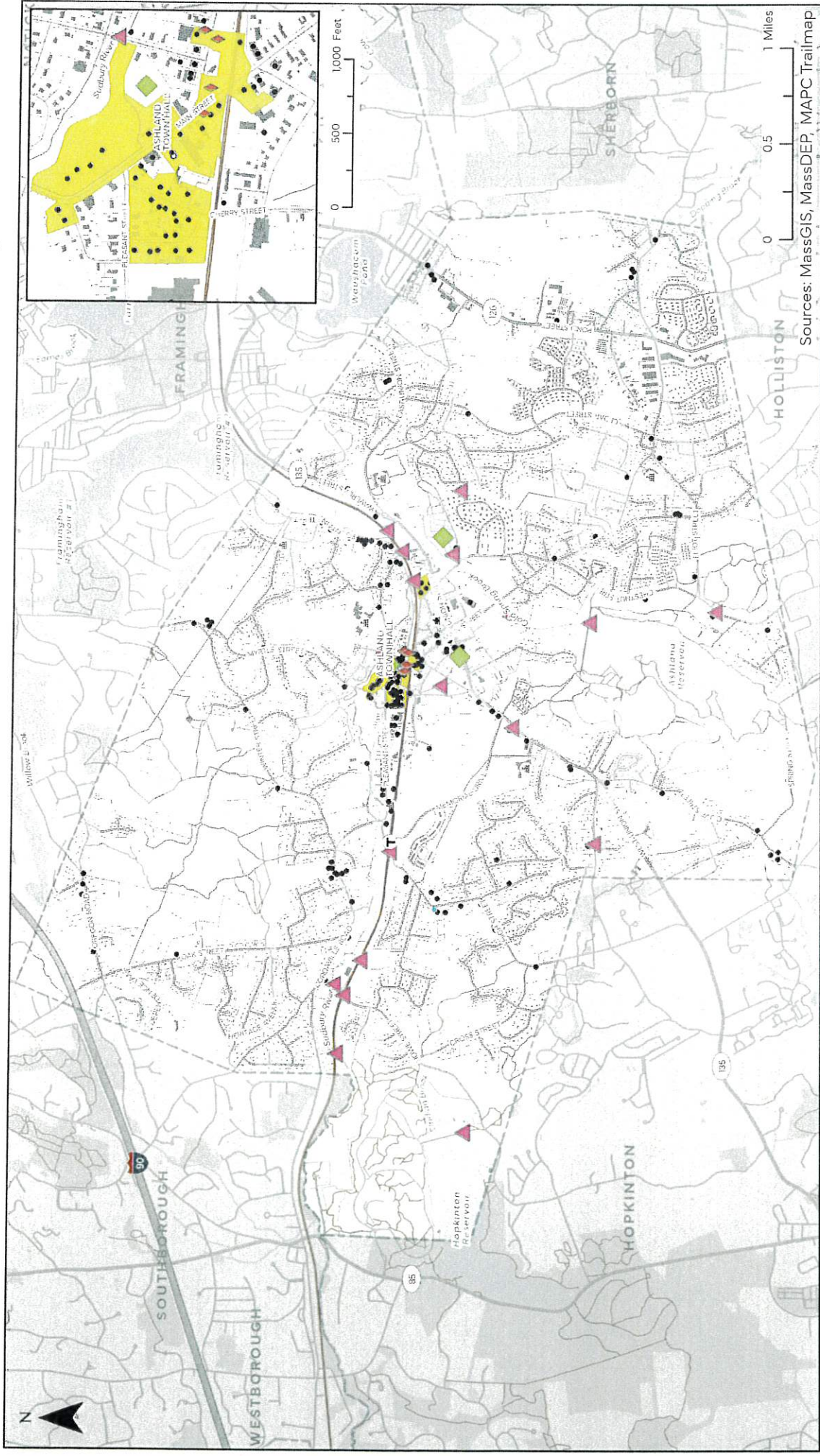
⁴⁹ MassGIS (Bureau of Geographic Information), *MassGIS Data: MHC Historic Inventory (2024)*, <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massgis-data-property-tax-parcels>.

resources are primarily concentrated in the downtown area, with additional historic structures dispersed along major roadways throughout the town.

Legal Historic Designation	Site Examples
<i>National Register of Historic Places</i>	Hopkinton Dam and Spillway, Ashland Dam and Spillway, Ashland Town Hall
<i>Inventoried Areas</i>	Ashland Center, Tilton Ave (Cherry St Worker Housing Area), Dwight Printing (Lombard Governor Plant), Warren Telechron Company Plant
<i>Oldest Inventoried Points</i>	Josiah Burnham House (1740), Col. John Jones Ocean House (1748), Mendon Road Remnants (1750), Sir Henry Frankland Terraced Landscape (1750), Capt. John Wenzel House (1760)

Source: MACRIS





Sources: MassGIS, MassDEP, MAPC Trailmap

MassHistoric Commission Inventory (Points) **MassHistoric Commission Inventory (Areas)**

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

- Resource Type**
- Building
 - Burial Ground
 - Object
 - Structure

- Legal Historic Designation**
- Inventoried Property

3. WHAT ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS IMPACT DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL?

FINDINGS

Environmental factors play a significant role in shaping Ashland’s development potential. Nearly one-quarter of the community’s land is constrained by flood hazards, and over 23 percent is permanently protected open space, limiting new development but safeguarding vital natural resources. Although this level of protection falls short of sustainability goals, ongoing updates to the Open Space and Recreation Plan will help clarify future conservation boundaries. Additionally, historic contamination at the Nyanza Superfund Site restricts development in affected areas due to the long-term remediation and groundwater monitoring requirements. Together, these environmental factors underscore the need for thoughtful land-use planning that strikes a balance between development and environmental protection, as well as public health.

FINDINGS EXPLAINED

PROTECTED OPEN SPACE LIMITS DEVELOPABLE LAND AND PRESERVES KEY PLACES

In Massachusetts, open space refers to “outdoor recreational lands and conservation space.” Land that is **Protected in Perpetuity** is legally safeguarded forever and documented in a deed or other official record. This includes property owned by a municipality’s conservation commission or, in some cases, water department or other municipal entities; land with a permanent conservation restriction; property owned by state conservation agencies (covered under Article 97); land held by non-profit land trusts; or property acquired or improved with federal or state funds.

Private land may also qualify if it has a perpetual deed restriction, such as an Agriculture Preservation Restriction or Conservation Restriction. **Limited Protection** land is most often privately owned and maintained, as outlined in Chapters 61, 61A, and 61B of the Massachusetts General Laws.⁵⁰ These state programs offer reduced property tax assessments for landowners who maintain their land for designated uses such as forestry, agriculture and horticulture, and recreation or open space. In exchange for tax benefits, participants commit to managing their land in accordance with program guidelines, helping to preserve open space and natural resources. This category also includes land expected to remain open space for other reasons, such as cemeteries or municipal golf courses. Any proposed changes to these lands may require approval by a majority vote at the municipal level.

⁵⁰ Massachusetts General Court, *Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 61: Classification and Taxation of Forest Lands and Forest Products* (Boston: Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 2024), <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleIX/Chapter61>.

Most of Ashland's open space is permanently protected. Twenty-three percent (23.4 percent) of its land, or 90.2 percent of its open space, is protected in perpetuity (see page 49).⁵¹

This is below some sustainable land use benchmarks, which recommend that 30 percent of local land be permanently protected.⁵² These best practices were articulated after a significant era of suburbanization in the United States that saw low-density car-oriented development patterns consume significant land area per person, which occurred in Ashland like neighboring communities and throughout the nation. Traditional village land use patterns (like those found in Ashland's downtown, and popular village destinations throughout the region) make a more efficient use of land, allowing more to be preserved outside developed areas.

The Envision Ashland Comprehensive Plan states that "Ashland will promote land use policies and initiatives that honor open space and ecological conservation while expanding the supply of affordable and diverse housing types."

Ashland is in the process of updating its Open Space and Recreation Plan, which will be crucial when establishing protected open space boundaries. Future development could avoid encroaching on land with significant conservation value.

FLOOD ZONES CONSTRAIN DEVELOPABLE LAND

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has designated three zones of flooding hazards: the 1 percent annual chance flood hazard, the 0.2 percent annual chance flood hazard, and the regulatory floodway. The **1% annual chance flood hazard**, also known as the base flood or 100-year flood, represents areas with a 1 percent chance of flooding in any given year; these zones determine where flood insurance and elevation requirements apply. The **0.2% annual chance flood hazard**, or 500-year flood, identifies areas with a 0.2 percent chance of flooding in any given year, indicating a moderate risk beyond the regulatory floodplain. The **regulatory floodway** is the channel of a river or stream, along with the adjacent land areas, that must remain open to discharge the 1% annual chance flood without causing more than a designated increase (usually one foot) in water surface elevation. Development in this zone is strictly limited to prevent obstruction of flood flows.

⁵¹ MassGIS (Bureau of Geographic Information), *MassGIS Data: Protected and Recreational Open Space* (2024), <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massgis-data-protected-and-recreational-openspace>.

⁵² Nigel Dudley and Sue Stolton, eds., *Best Practice in Delivering the 30x30 Target*, 2nd ed. (The Nature Conservancy and Equilibrium Research, October 2022).

Almost one-fourth of Ashland's land (23.2 percent) is under flooding hazard. Eighteen percent (18.2 percent) under a 1 percent annual chance flood hazard, and 5 percent under 0.2 percent (see page 50).⁵³

To address this issue, the Town is debating a zoning amendment on the Floodplain Overlay District (FPOD; Section 8.1 of the Zoning Bylaws). Additionally, it has also established a Stormwater Management Bylaw and associated regulations requiring development projects to submit detailed stormwater plans and long-term operation and maintenance commitments to control runoff and protect surface water quality.

DRAFT

⁵³ MassGIS (Bureau of Geographic Information), *MassGIS Data: FEMA National Flood Hazard Layer (2024)*, <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massgis-data-fema-national-flood-hazard-layer>.

TOWN OF ASHLAND - OPEN SPACE BY PROTECTION & OWNERSHIP
 Prepared by JM Goldson LLC

JM GOLDSON



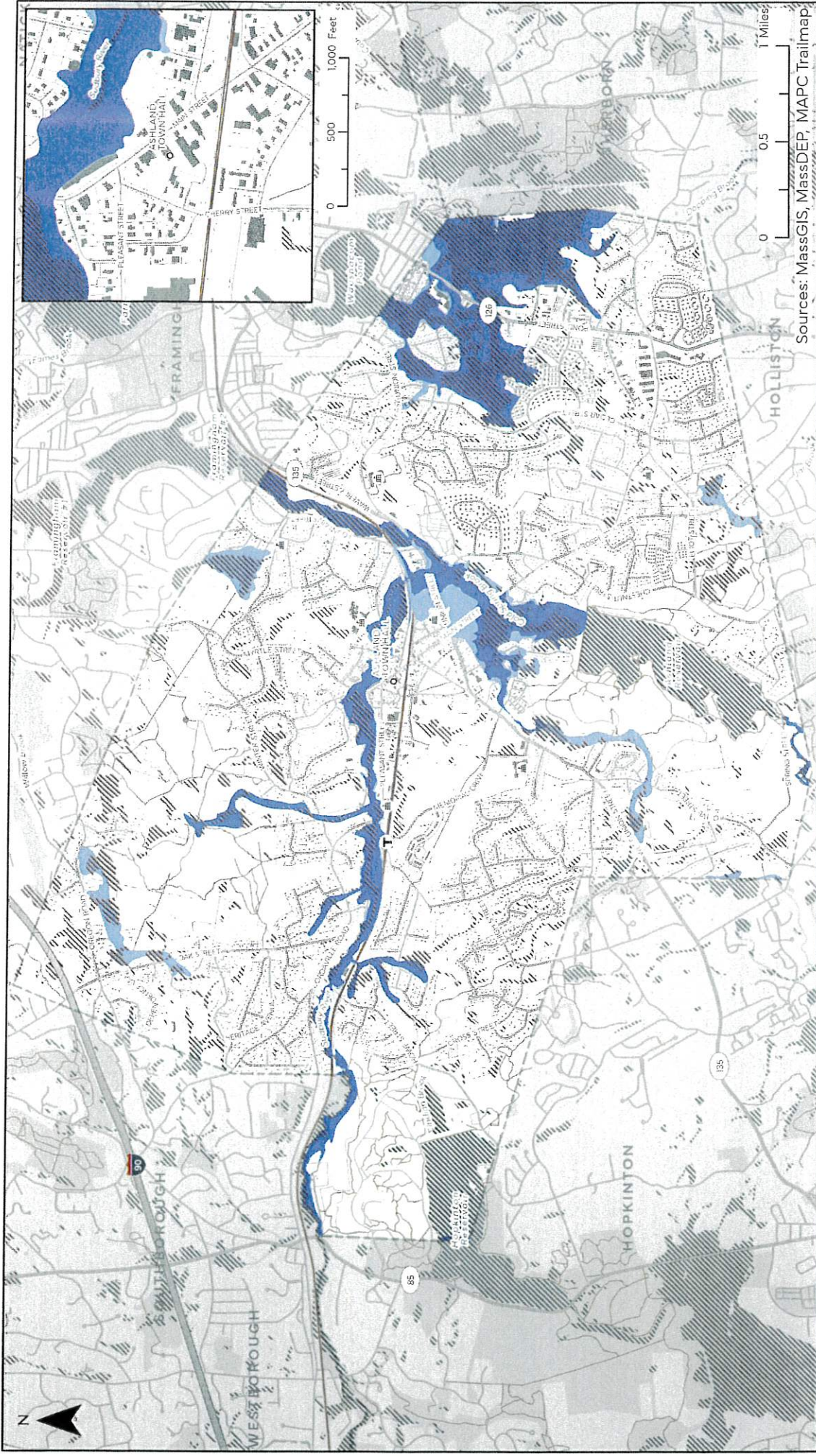
Sources: MassGIS, MassDEP, MAPC Trailmap

	Schools		Protected in Perpetuity		Massachusetts-Owned
	Buildings		Limited Protection		Town-owned
	Parcels		Unknown		Private
	Trails		Unprotected		Other
	Water bodies				
	Open space				

TOWN OF ASHLAND - FLOOD HAZARD

Prepared by JM Goldson LLC

JM GOLDSON

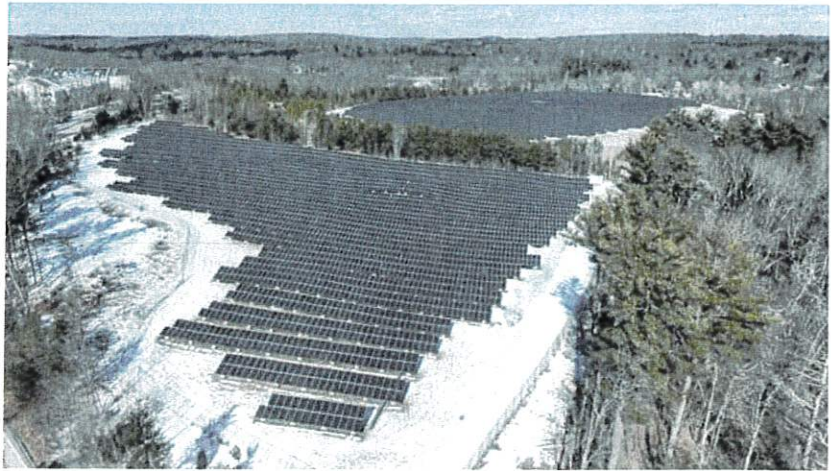


Sources: MassGIS, MassDEP, MAPC Trailmap

- Schools
- Buildings
- Parcels
- Trails
- Water bodies
- Open space
- Wetland
- FEMA Q3 Flood Hazard**
 - 1% Annual Chance Flood Hazard
 - 0.2% Annual Chance Flood Hazard
 - Regulatory Floodway

HISTORIC POLLUTION HAS CONSTRAINED DEVELOPABLE LAND

The Nyanza Chemical Waste Dump site is a 35-acre area near downtown Ashland where chemical manufacturing and dye production occurred from 1917 to 1978. The facility produced textile dyes, acids, and other chemicals, discharging waste directly into nearby wetlands and the Sudbury River. These practices contaminated soil, groundwater, and sediments with mercury, chromium, lead, and volatile organic compounds (VOCs), causing significant ecological damage and public health concerns.



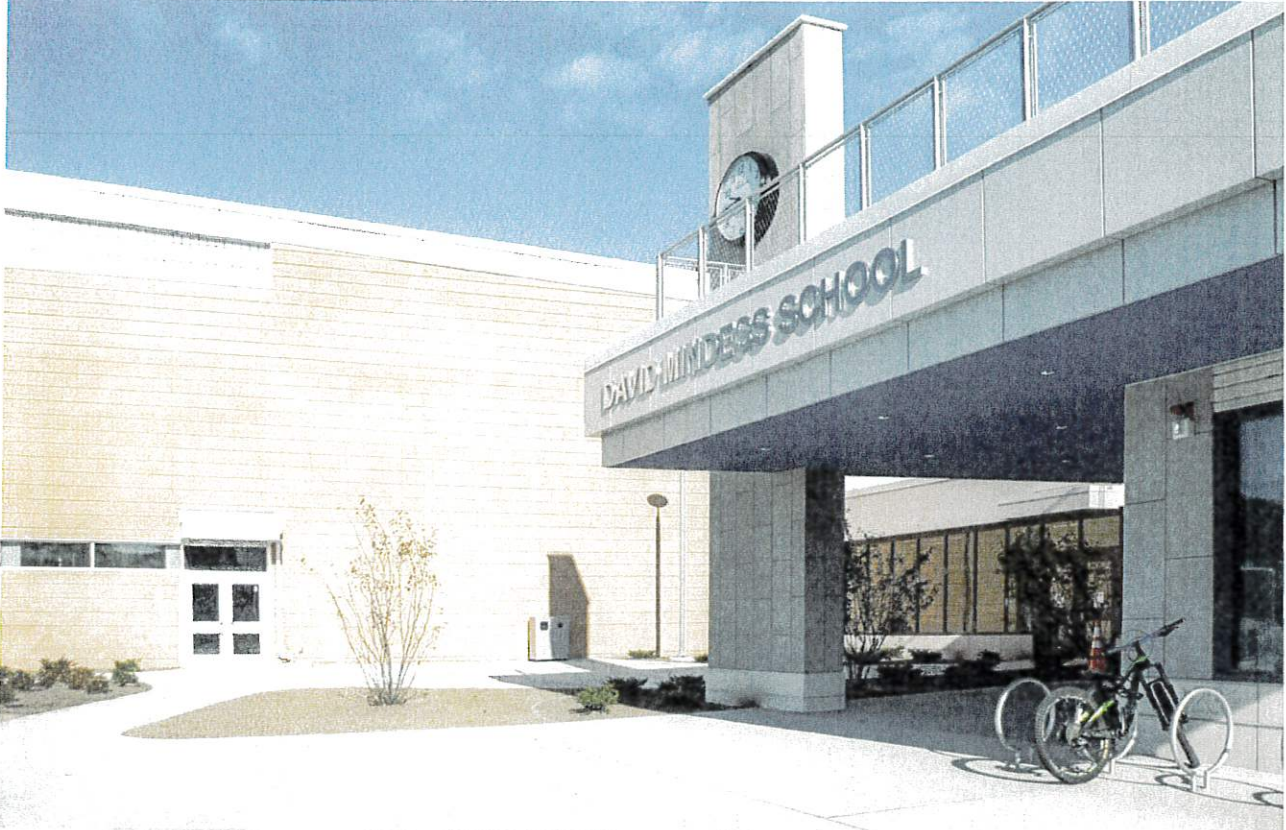
Nyanza Chemical Waste site

Source: WCVB, retrieved from <https://www.wcvb.com/article/ashland-massachusetts-superfund-site-20-million-investment-epa/46890940>

The EPA listed the site on the National Priorities List in 1983 and initiated cleanup measures, including the removal of contaminated soils, the construction of a groundwater treatment system, and the capping of waste disposal areas. Long-term remediation continues through groundwater monitoring and floodplain restoration, while much of the property has been redeveloped for commercial and municipal uses adjacent to the Sudbury River.

The Nyanza Superfund Site poses health and environmental safety concerns. For that reason, it requires ongoing groundwater monitoring and land-use to constrain housing development by limiting construction on or near contaminated land.

4. CAN ASHLAND'S EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES SUPPORT NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT?



David Mindess Elementary School

Source: Ashland Public Schools, retrieved from: <https://ma50000581.schoolwires.net/Page/2763>

FINDINGS

Ashland's water and sewer systems have sufficient capacity to support future residential and commercial development within existing regulatory limits, with both infrastructure networks operating well below their permitted thresholds. This capacity provides flexibility for accommodating new growth while maintaining compliance with state and MWRA requirements. However, rising school enrollment, which is now at its highest level in decades, signals growing pressure on educational facilities, with several schools already exceeding or nearing capacity despite recent renovations. Continued school expansion and facility upgrades will be necessary to ensure that Ashland's infrastructure keeps pace with its projected population growth.

Ashland is also located along the MBTA's Worcester-Boston commuter rail line, which is planned for half-hour bidirectional service within the coming year. The community is also served by two fare-free bus routes offered by the MWRTA. Encouraging compact, transit-oriented development can

further support affordability, reduce vehicle dependency, and help meet recommended residential and commercial thresholds for thriving suburban communities with active villages.

FINDINGS EXPLAINED

ASHLAND'S WATER AND SEWER SYSTEMS HAVE THE CAPACITY TO SUPPORT FUTURE GROWTH

Ashland's water and sewer infrastructure is well-positioned to accommodate additional residential and commercial development. The Town's water supply meets 100 percent of the local demand under normal conditions, and is drawn entirely from groundwater through five municipal wells that tap into a local aquifer system.⁵⁴ These wells pump to the Town's water treatment and distribution network, which includes approximately 80 miles of water mains, two booster pump stations, two storage tanks, and the Water Treatment Plant.⁵⁵ The system has a combined capacity of 6.9 million gallons and a total pumping rate of 4,000 gallons per minute, serving the entire community without reliance on private wells.⁵⁶

As of mid-2025, the Town has roughly 190,000 gallons per day of available capacity under its Water Management Act registration and permit limits, ensuring that anticipated new growth can be supported within the existing regulatory allocation.⁵⁷

Ashland's wastewater collection system similarly demonstrates ample reserve capacity for continued development. The Town operates a sewer network comprising about 66 miles of sewer mains, 2,000 manholes, roughly 5,300 service connections, and 9 pump stations. Wastewater is conveyed to the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) system via the City of Framingham under an Inter-Municipal Agreement (IMA). Under this arrangement, Ashland is limited to an Inter-Basin Transfer of 3.2 million gallons per day (MGD), with a combined maximum daily limit of 5.3 MGD across its two major pump stations on Chestnut Street and Brackett Road. In recent

⁵⁴ Town of Ashland, *Annual Water Quality Report* (2024), <https://www.ashlandmass.com/DocumentCenter/View/15230/2024-Annual-Water-Quality-Report>.

⁵⁵ Town of Ashland Department of Public Works, *Water & Sewer* (2025), <https://www.ashlandmass.com/166/Water-Sewer>.

⁵⁶ Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, *Public Water System Annual Statistical Report* (2015), <https://www.ashlandmass.com/Archive/ViewFile/Item/111>.

⁵⁷ Haley Ward, Inc., *RE: "Sanctuary at Ashland Mills 10-50 Main Street – Comprehensive Permit* (2025), <https://www.ashlandmass.com/DocumentCenter/View/15282/374-Mill-water-and-sewer-peer-review-1-Received-6-4-2025>

years, the Town’s actual flows have averaged well below its permitted cap, ranging from 1.26 to 1.47 MGD, resulting in an estimated 1.8 MGD of unused capacity.⁵⁸

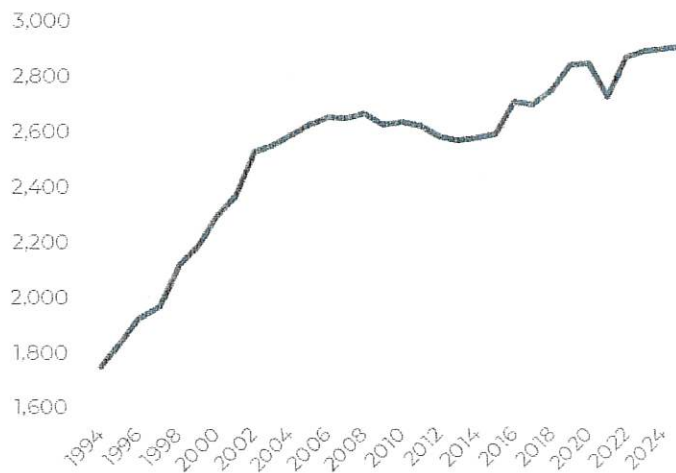
The available margin in Ashland’s water and sewer capacity provides flexibility to serve new residents while maintaining compliance with regulatory thresholds.

SCHOOL ENROLLMENT ON THE RISE AFTER YEARS OF DECLINE

Ashland has five public schools in its district, serving students from preschool through high school. School enrollment has been steadily increasing for decades, reaching a peak of 2,909 students in 2025.⁵⁹ Additionally, 79 percent of Ashland high school graduates go on to attend four-year colleges or universities, and 9 percent attend two-year colleges.⁶⁰

The growing student population has led the Town to renovate some of its schools. The Mindess Elementary School was built in 1954, last renovated in 1994, and had a capacity of only 590 students, which was too few for the 670 students enrolled in 2024. That same year, the school’s renovation was completed, and it was designed to accommodate 635 students.⁶¹ This is still not enough to fully accommodate Ashland’s projected population, meaning that other Ashland schools may require renovations to accommodate more students.

School Enrollment in Ashland, 1994 - 2025



Source: School and District Profiles

⁵⁸ Haley Ward, Inc., *Wastewater Capacity Report* (2025), <https://www.ashlandmass.com/DocumentCenter/View/15272/2025-Wastewater-Capacity-Report-2025527-Received-6-4-2025>.

⁵⁹ *School and District Profiles: Ashland* (2024), <https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/general/general.aspx?topNavId=1&leftNavId=100&orgcode=02200000&orgtypecode=5>.

⁶⁰ Ashland Public Schools, *2023–2024 Annual Report* (2024), <https://www.ashland.k12.ma.us/about-us/about-ashland-public-schools/annual-report>

⁶¹ Massachusetts School Buildings Authority, *David Mindess Elementary School Project Scope and Budget Board Memo* (2020), https://www.massschoolbuildings.org/sites/default/files/edit-contentfiles/About_Us/Board_Meetings/2020_Board/10_28_20/Ashland_David%20Mindess%20ES_PS%26B%20Board%20Memo_Final.pdf

With the overall population expected to grow, the total number of children and young adults is projected to rise even as their share of the population shrinks.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONTINUED TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

Ashland has made concerted efforts to design land use and housing regulations that focus development opportunities around downtown, the MBTA station, and Pond Street, all of which are accessible via MWRTA fixed route bus services. Examples in the Zoning Bylaw that are designed for these purposes are the MBTA Communities Overlay District, the Ashland Downtown District and subdistricts, and Pond Street Mixed-Use Overlay District.

The overlay districts sit atop areas that already allow or contain mixed-use/multifamily residential or have recent proposals for development. Ashland's approach is consistent with 3A's unit capacity framing (zoning that *enables* capacity, not a construction mandate).

The focus on downtown corridors (Main, Pleasant, Chestnut), Pond Street, and the Rail Transit District aligns with the goals laid out in Ashland's 2025 Comprehensive Plan, *Envision Ashland*, which lays out goals to revitalize downtown, broaden housing choices, use existing infrastructure near transit, and maintain open space throughout the community.

There is no universal density formula for transit-oriented development (TOD), but some sources converge on certain units per acre measurements. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) *Planning for Transit-Supportive Development Guide* lists 17.4 housing units per acre⁶² for thriving suburban transit-oriented communities. Conversely, Boston Indicators and Transit Matters indicate a minimum of 6 housing units per acre is required to support moderate transit services,⁶³ such as the Worcester Commuter Rail line.

The MBTA plans to increase frequency on the Worcester line, which will soon offer Ashland trains to Boston and Worcester more often throughout the day.

For higher-frequency commuter rail service like the MBTA is planning through the regional rail transformation, the same report by Boston Indicators and Transit Matters sets 16 units per acre as the threshold density necessary to support service.

⁶² Carl L. Santasieri, *Planning for Transit-Supportive Development: A Practitioner's Guide* (FTA Report No. 0057, U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration, 2014), https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/FTA_Report_No._0057.pdf.

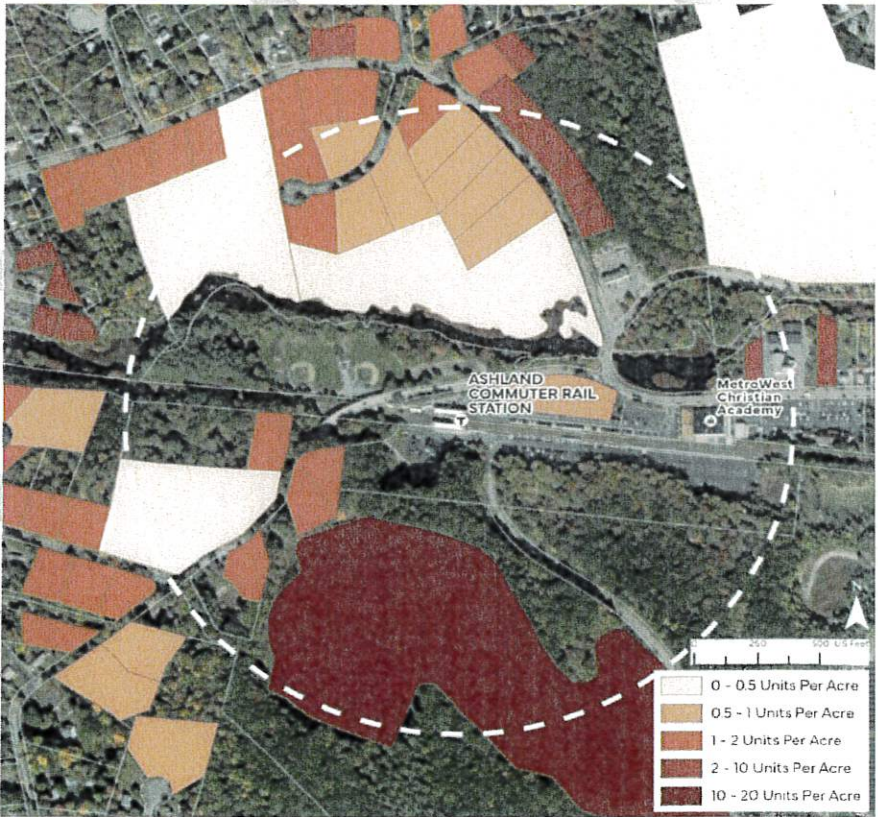
⁶³ Lauren Munson, Lily Schuster, Jenna Johnson, and Kyle Calandriello, *Transit-Supportive Density in Greater Boston* (Boston Indicators & TransitMatters, January 30, 2025), https://www.bostonindicators.org/-/media/indicators/boston-indicators-reports/report-files/transit-supportive-density-report-2025_01_30.pdf.

According to the Massachusetts Housing Partnership tool Residency,⁶⁴ there are 403 housing units within a quarter-mile radius of the Ashland Commuter Rail station. This translates to about 3.1 housing units per acre, which is significantly lower than the thresholds cited above.

In time, Ashland can continue to explore zoning amendments that deepen the focus of new development in transit-oriented locations, densities, and land use patterns.

Ashland has continued opportunities to align housing, transportation, and economic development planning. Increased frequencies on the Worcester line can help support Ashland’s residents and workers traveling along the line and beyond.

Increasing transit frequencies linking Ashland to Worcester, Boston, and other communities along the Worcester line are an asset to Ashland, and may increase future market pressure for development as the service makes Ashland an even more desirable place to live.



Source: MassGIS, Residency

⁶⁴ Massachusetts Housing Partnership. (2024). Residency [Online tool]. <https://residency.mhp.net/>

5. WHAT IS ASHLAND'S CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT NEW HOUSING INITIATIVES?

FINDINGS

Ashland has established a framework to support housing production through coordinated entities, including its Planning Department, Affordable Housing Trust Fund, and Housing Authority. The Town demonstrates its commitment through the development of a new Housing Production Plan, transparent development review processes, and active Planning and Zoning Boards.

However, limited staffing and a Subsidized Housing Inventory below the 10 percent benchmark constrain local capacity to shape housing outcomes proactively. Strengthening collaboration between the Planning Department, Housing Authority, and Affordable Housing Trust, alongside zoning modernization that better facilitates diverse and affordable housing, can enhance implementation capacity and meet future housing goals.

FINDINGS EXPLAINED

LOCAL HOUSING PARTNERS AND RESOURCES

Ashland maintains a growing but still modest local housing production and implementation capacity. On the positive side, the Town maintains an Affordable Housing Trust Fund, tracks its Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI), and has adopted a Housing Production Plan. However, the community's capacity is constrained by the fact that its SHI remains below the 10 percent benchmark required under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40B to avoid Comprehensive Permit projects that override local control in favor of progress toward regional housing needs.

ASHLAND PLANNING DEPARTMENT

The Ashland Planning Department plays a central and multifaceted role in supporting the town's housing production, land-use regulation, and implementation of its Housing Production Plan. It currently has two staff members: a Director of Planning & Economic Development, and an Assistant Town Planner.

- The Department coordinates the development review process for the Ashland Planning Board, including site plan reviews, special permits, and subdivision applications, ensuring that development proceeds in accordance with applicable local and state rules.
- It is responsible for updating and maintaining the town's key regulatory frameworks. These efforts help ensure that housing development opportunities align with community standards and planning objectives.
- The Department maintains transparency and accessibility for current development proposals, with a webpage listing ongoing cases before the Planning Board and the Ashland Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), enabling public input and oversight.

- The Planning Department works directly with the Planning Board. It reports to the Director of Planning & Economic Development, thereby providing institutional continuity and leadership in housing and economic development matters.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST FUND

The Ashland Affordable Housing Trust Fund (established under the Town's by-law) is explicitly authorized "to provide for the preservation and creation of affordable housing in the Town of Ashland for the benefit of low- and moderate-income households."

- The Trust is composed of five trustees appointed by the Select Board, including at least one member of the Select Board.
- It has the authority to acquire or manage real or personal property, to covenant, lease, sell or transfer assets, and to borrow up to a specified limit (subject to town meeting approval).
- At present, there are no properties listed as "available" through the Trust.
- The Affordable Housing Trust can draw on state enabling legislation (such as the Affordable Housing Trust Fund statute) to secure financing for affordable housing.

The existence of a dedicated housing trust is a key strength for Ashland's implementation capacity, providing a precise mechanism for local intervention in the creation and preservation of affordable housing.

ASHLAND HOUSING AUTHORITY

The Ashland Housing Authority is a state-aided public housing agency that provides housing for low-income elderly and persons with disabilities in Ashland.

- The Ashland Housing Authority (AHA) is an agency that provides safe and sanitary housing for low and moderate-income Elders and persons with disabilities.
- The Authority serves as a key institutional entity for affordable housing delivery, ensuring that Ashland has publicly-supported housing stock and rental assistance mechanisms that complement the town's housing production goals.
- Currently, the AHA website only provides information about one property located on Park Road, which has 40 one-bedroom units.

For continued housing production and preservation efforts, strengthening coordination between the Housing Authority, the Affordable Housing Trust, and the Planning Department will support alignment of land-use, funding, and tenant services.

ASHLAND PLANNING BOARD

The Ashland Planning Board serves as the principal local land-use board charged with subdivision approval, site plan review, and implementation of the town's planning and zoning standards.

- The Planning Board occupies its responsibilities under the Town of Ashland's Subdivision Regulations (Chapter 344), which require that all plans must have either formal approval or endorsement of non-subdivision status before recording.
- The Planning Department's website indicates it "works to update other guiding documents, such as the local Subdivision Regulations and the Design Review Guidelines, which also guide the Board's development review processes."
- The Planning Board routinely publishes agendas and posts public hearings for zoning bylaw amendments, which demonstrates an active role in advancing housing-friendly regulatory changes.
- To bolster housing production, the Board's ongoing review of accessory dwelling unit (ADU) zoning, overlay districts, and site-plan review standards presents a strong opportunity to align regulatory practice with the town's Housing Production Plan goals.

The Planning Board is a critical lever for housing production in Ashland, as it sets the regulatory framework that can facilitate or constrain the development of both affordable and market housing.

ASHLAND ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS (ZBA)

The Zoning Board of Appeals in Ashland is the municipal body that hears and decides applications for zoning variances, appeals of administrative zoning decisions, and special permits (including under the Comprehensive Permit law, M.G.L. c. 40B). The Town's "Current Cases" page lists several 40B comprehensive permit cases (for example, 10-60 Main Street, 61 Waverly Street, 55 West Union Street) under the joint remit of the Planning Board and the ZBA.

The ZBA's function is important in Ashland's housing production system because when the community's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) is below the 10 percent threshold (currently 5.8 percent), ZBA's review powers are significantly limited for Comprehensive Permits by Chapter 40B.

To support the community's goals of housing affordability, thoughtful land use, and avoiding 40B Comprehensive Permits, the ZBA could coordinate with the Planning Board and the Affordable Housing Trust to ensure new affordable projects align with the local Housing Production Plan's requirements.



Town of Ashland, *Office of the Select Board*

SELECT BOARD MEETING (HYBRID) January 7, 2026 – 7:00 PM Town Hall, 101 Main Street, Ashland, MA

Present at the meeting were: Joseph Magnani (Chair), Claudia Bennett, Yolanda Greaves, Makeda Keegan, and Brandi Kinsman. Also in attendance were Town Manager Michael Herbert, Assistant Town Manager Katherine Bird, and Executive Assistant Susan Robie.

1. Call Meeting to Order

Mr. Magnani called the January 7, 2026 meeting to order at 7:17 PM; he announced that the meeting was being recorded and broadcast live by WACA-TV and livestreamed on Facebook. Remote participation is available using the Zoom Video Conferencing platform. Any disruption with the Video Conferencing Platform will result in the platform being shut down. In the event of a disruption, broadcasting will continue on WACA-TV and livestreamed on Facebook.

Mr. Magnani recognized the retirement of Ed Burman from the Wayland Police Department; Ms. Bennett thanked Mr. Burman for all of his efforts during Covid to keep Ashland Schools open and safe.

2. Citizen's Participation

None.

3. Scheduled Appointments

a. Rajit Gupta, Public Health Director and Dr. Zachary - Discuss Nicotine-Free Generation Proposal Jointly with the Board of Health.

Dr. Zachary Rich discussed his background as a lung and critical care physician; he shared a slide presentation that overviewed the Nicotine-Free Generation policies.

What: Policies target those born after a certain birthday, rather than age. It has been a global effort, with Brookline becoming first to implement the policies in 2020. There are currently 21 communities in Massachusetts that have passed Nicotine-Free Generation. Dr. Rich discussed this being a bipartisan issue, much of this work stems from the Tobacco-21 work; which Ashland was a leader in.

Why: 70% of people wish they never started. 90% of adults started by age 18. Dr. Rich discussed the impact on school-aged children; he encouraged having a forum with high school students in attendance.

How: Dr. Rich shared proposed language from the Public Health Advocacy for creating a Nicotine-Free Generation policy for Ashland.

Ms. Kinsman noted that there is a 21+ age restriction before anyone can purchase tobacco products in Ashland. It becomes a slippery slope when telling adults what they can and cannot do; she expressed concern

that it will not dissuade people from using tobacco products, only from purchasing it in the Town, which will hurt Ashland's business owners. She would prefer the State to take action, not town-by-town implementation.

Ms. Bennett expressed concern with children who are exposed to tobacco use in schools, who worry about their friends who are vaping. Ms. Bennett inquired as to the impact on businesses who have implemented this policy; Dr. Rich noted that in Brookline there are no retailers who have had to shut down their stores.

Ms. Keegan noted it is an interesting proposal but believes the net effect makes it impossible for people of legal age to make a choice to smoke or not; she expressed concern with the implementation, particularly the impacts to small business owners; Ms. Keegan inquired, and Dr. Rich responded, that they are having similar conversations with the surrounding towns; many towns take a wait and see approach to see what their neighboring towns are doing.

Ms. Greaves recognized Ashland's leadership role in passing Tobacco-21 laws, and voting to not allow marijuana; she would be interested in obtaining more information regarding what other communities are doing.

Professor Katharine Silbaugh of Brookline, MA, noted that it was not until 151 towns passed Tobacco-21 before the State acted and implemented it.

Mr. Magnani discussed his career as a Police Officer and his experience dealing with youth issues; Ms. Keegan would like to hear from the youth in Town as they are the ones being impacted; Mr. Magnani agreed and stated that he will send an invitation up to the High School.

Alex Wetheral, is a convenience store owner in Sherborn, MA, and was in attendance tonight to lend support to his peer retailers in Ashland. Mr. Wetheral spoke of the accelerating decline in tobacco sales. He feels that NFG demonizes retailers and stated that less than 5% of Massachusetts Towns have implemented this policy.

Steven Helfer, Cambridge resident, stated that he is a part of Cambridge Citizens for Smokers Rights; and stated that according to the CDC and FDA, the teenage smoking rate is the lowest it has been on record, it is a form of total prohibition over time.

Rick Lopez, Member of the Reading Board of Health, discussed passing NFG in June 2024 after a two-hour hearing. They received 200 emails, and pros and cons communications from residents, it was a very active process which they decided to move forward; he noted that no retailers have gone out of business. Mr. Lopez said they have an 8-12% of students use nicotine products in Reading; any decline in use would be helpful.

Paul Kendall, resident, discussed the need to be careful when implementing policies, not to restrict freedoms and choices; he stated that when it comes to public health, smoking is one of the reasons why our health care system is strained, which impacts us all. Mr. Kendall encouraged the Boards to continue the conversation, to seek more information; to make a sound decision.

Ken Elstein, Member of the Belchertown Board of Health, discussed passing NFG one year ago; he noted the retailers have adapted. Mr. Elstein noted that Amherst is the latest community to pass NFG.

John Byrnes, Ashland Board of Health Vice Chair, explained that during their December 16th meeting, the Board Members agreed that this is more of a personal health / personal choice issue; it is interesting to hear from Members of other Health Boards from around the State. Mr. Byrnes stated that the Board felt this is

more of a personal choice issue, and for it to have a true democratic process, would be through a Citizens Petition, and ultimately to Town Meeting, to let the residents vote on it. If it were to pass, the Board of Health would implement the measures that would need to be put in place.

Ms. Kinsman agreed, noting she may not be comfortable with making that decision for the entire community without having the community being able to weigh in on it.

Ed Burman, Ashland Board of Health Chair, explained that the Board discussed this in length, and noted that the Members did not feel it should be left to the five Board Members to make this kind of decision for the whole Town; therefore, they asked that the Health Director, Rajit Gupta, bring it to the Town Manager, to discuss with the Select Board.

Mr. Magnani inquired as to the Board of Health's availability for a public forum; Mr. Burman agreed they can be available. Mr. Magnani inquired, and Dr. Rich responded, that of the 21 communities that have passed this, 19 were passed by Boards of Health.

Susan Jensen, resident, discussed her personal experience with cigarettes and tobacco, and the impact it had on her life; she feels this is a public health issue under the Board of Health's purview.

Amy Turncliff, resident, public health policy advocate, spoke in favor of the NFG policy and discussed the harmful effects of nicotine, and the tobacco industry's development of addictive products that appeal to young people who become lifelong customers; she believes this policy will impact adolescent perceptions in a positive way.

Scott Francis, resident, stated he works for MOAR (Massachusetts Organization for Addiction Recovery) which is in support of the Nicotine-Free Generation legislation; he said of all the addictions, tobacco is the most difficult to overcome. Mr. Francis discussed the negative impacts of tobacco use, and second-hand smoke.

Chuck Lidz, resident, explained how he has been impacted personally by tobacco use by others.

Jonathan Leopold, Cambridge, Smokers' Rights volunteer, stated that he finds smoking enjoyable.

Mr. Magnani said this will be taken under advisement; he does not disagree with it being brought to Town Meeting and having the people vote on it; Ms. Greaves recommended the Board of Health hold a public forum, at a time where high school and middle school students, and others who may be impacted by this, may attend.

b. Rob Scherer – Discuss creation of a sub-committee to craft a resolution regarding Elon Musk Companies.

Mr. Magnani explained that Rob Scherer is here representing a group of individuals who are proposing the creation of a subcommittee regarding Elon Musk.

Mr. Scherer explained that their ad hoc citizens group had proposed a Citizen's Petition at Special Town Meeting regarding the Town not doing business with Elon Musk, not using the X platform, and writing a letter to the Middlesex County Board of Retirement regarding investments. They are here tonight to discuss the formation of a subcommittee to come up with a set of recommendations.

Mr. Magnani discussed being a member of the Middlesex County Board of Retirement, and noted he would need to recuse himself from any and all of those discussions. Mr. Scherer noted being a member of the State Retirement System; Ms. Bennett noted getting clarification on the ethics, as it could affect her as well. Ms. Keegan suggested a working group to look at, not an individual, but rather guidelines around areas such as purchasing. Ms. Greaves noted that people are in business to be profitable, we want them to be profitable so they can donate that money to nonprofits. What we can look at is ethical procurement. Ms. Kinsman discussed the Select Board and Town Management Guiding Values and Principles; they may be able to include in there, their guiding principles and include other specific things like procurement and how taxpayer dollars are spent.

Mr. Scherer stated he wants to focus on Elon Musk and billionaires; he asked that two Select Board Members be appointed to a subcommittee. Susan Jensen said their hope is to see meaningful progress.

Mr. Magnani stated they will need to speak with Town Counsel to ensure they stay within the guidelines, and policies that are going to be worked on; they cannot target individuals, only ideologies, and try to change it for the betterment of everyone. Mr. Herbert agreed that there needs to be a conversation with Town Counsel. Mr. Herbert suggested one Member could be the point person for the group; if there were two, they would need to be formally appointed, it would become a subcommittee, and would be subject to the Open Meeting Law. Ms. Keegan stated she would prefer a subcommittee rather than a working group; a subcommittee will allow more transparency. Board Members agreed to vote on this at the next meeting, and if approved, appoint subcommittee Members.

4. Old/New Business

a. Vote to Open the Annual Town Meeting Warrant.

Ms. Bird reviewed the Warrant guidance and schedule.

- February 27th: Deadline for the Notice of Intent to submit proposed Articles.
- February 27th through April 24th: Select Board presentations and discussions.
- February 28th through April 24th: Any public hearings will be held.
- March 23rd: Deadline for finalized proposed Articles.
- April 1st: The Board may vote and close the Warrant; the Warrant can be posted.
- April 27th: The Board will receive Finance Committee recommendations.
- April 29th: The Warrant will be posted.
- May 6th: Annual Town Meeting will be held.

Ms. Greaves inquired as to whether they can get Finance Committee recommendations sooner, possibly by April 22nd, so that it could possibly be posted a week earlier; the clearer and sooner the community can see the Warrant, the better. Ms. Bird noted her goal is to have it posted early; Mr. Herbert noted that once the Warrant is posted, changes cannot be made.

Motion: Ms. Greaves motioned to open the Annual Town Meeting based on the current guidelines, this will be for the Annual Town Meeting happening on May 6, 2026; the motion was seconded by Ms. Kinsman.

Vote: 5-0-0. Motion approved.

b. Discuss the Project Matrix.

Downtown: Mr. Herbert reported they are still in the process of making those underground connections, working with Daigle Electric and Eversource. Eversource has informed us that as soon as those connections are made, Verizon Comcast should be ready to start taking the wires down, and then the poles will immediately start coming down. The holes will be filled in with concrete or brick, and they will do some power washing, before a final unveiling.

Pond Street: Mr. Herbert reported that they found that some substandard concrete had been used on one of the sidewalks, they will be redoing that in the Spring. There is some utility pole work remaining, as well as old streetlights, signs, manholes, and other adjustments. Mr. Magnani inquired as to a letter received regarding snow removal of the sidewalks, whose responsibility it is. Mr. Herbert noted that the State is responsible but the Town has been picking up the slack; Mr. Herbert will inquire as to a reimbursement from the State.

Mr. Herbert reported that the Middle School Field Lighting Project has been completed; some of the traffic-calming measures planned, including street signs, have been completed; sidewalk plan designs on a section of Cedar Street have been completed, and for High Street as well. The Union Street/Fountain Street underground work has been completed. Mr. Herbert noted they are still in the engineering/design phase for the Cordaville Road bridge.

Ashland Arboretum is in great shape; framing will soon be starting at the Warren Barn. The Dog Park is moving along, there were some challenging aspects of that; Beth Reynolds has been doing a great job working on those issues.

c. Wednesday February 4, 2026 - Open Meeting Law Training from 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm.

Mr. Magnani reminded all about the Open Meeting Law Training, which will be held in-person and online, on Wednesday, February 4th at 6:00 PM.

d. Update on 40B Projects.

10-60 Main Street: Mr. Herbert reported that this project is expected to be closed out at the ZBA meeting this coming Tuesday; some draft conditions have been completed, but there are still some questions on some of the conditions within the Decision. They are anticipating filing with Conservation soon. Once the ZBA closes their hearing and issues a Decision, and there is no appeal, it would be clear to go. If there is an appeal by the applicant or the Town, or an outside party, that process would go to the Housing Appeals Court, as an administrative procedure. The Conservation Commission will be hearing the applicant in relation to the Wetlands Protection Act, not the Town Bylaw.

61 Waverly Street: The applicant has their Decision from the ZBA, and has filed with the Conservation Commission; the Conservation Commission and DEP have very serious concerns with their stormwater system due to the degraded condition of the culvert on Waverly Street, they have asked that they redesign it.

55 West Union Street: This project also has significant concerns from the Conservation Commission, as well as DPW and DEP; one issue is the location of the sewer line, they want to do a significant amount of work and install it very deep, due to easements on the property.

5. Consent Agenda

- a. Accept the Regular Session Minutes from December 3, 2025.
- b. Notification of the Town Managers Appointment of Jeffrey Tucci, Local Building Inspector in the Department of Inspectional Services with a request to waive the 15-day waiting period.
- c. Notification of the Town Managers Appointment of Hannah Bowlby, Recreation Administrative Assistant with a request to waive the 15-day waiting period.
- d. Appoint Elizabeth Byrnes to the Stormwater Advisory Committee with a term that will expire on August 31, 2026.
- e. Approve the Parade Permit Request from the Boston Athletic Association for the 130th Boston Marathon to be held on Monday April 20, 2026.
- f. Accept the Donation from GreenUp Ashland to the Sustainability Department in the amount of 466.00 to purchase holiday light recycling bins.
- g. Accept the Emergency Medical Dispatch Grant in the amount of \$22,107.40 for training.
- h. Accept the Emergency Medical Dispatch Grant in the amount of \$55,758.00 for cost associated with 911 dispatching.
- i. Accept the Emergency Medical Dispatch Grant in the amount of \$25,000.00 for cost associated with Certified EMD Resources.
- j. Accepted the revised BAA Grant and Select Board Community Grant Policy to include a 12-Month Sunsetting Clause.
- k. Release \$4,041.70 in Ashland Day Funds to the Ashland Day Committee.

Motion: Ms. Greaves motioned to approve the Consent Agenda as presented; the motion was seconded by Ms. Kinsman.

Vote: 5-0-0. Motion approved.

Motion: Ms. Greaves motioned to go past 10:00 PM; the motion was seconded by Ms. Kinsman.

Vote: 5-0-0. Motion approved.

6. Town Manager Report

a. Budget Update - Discuss Next Tri-Board Meeting.

Mr. Herbert reported that potential dates for the next Tri-Board meeting have been sent out; we need to figure out if there are any refinements the Board would want to make in regards to Option #3. Jim Adams is looking at how they can restructure the budget to make it more sustainable moving forward, and it is an opportunity for us to really look for efficiencies and zero-base our budget, as he explained to Department heads today. Mr. Herbert noted that he will be looking at having a budget meeting with the Department heads and will invite the Select Board, and Finance Committee. It may be a longer meeting and more of a question-and-answer format; he has asked Department heads to be ready to speak on the implications of a level-funded budget.

Board Members discussed the communication aspect, the importance of public forums, allowing time for the community to ask questions, and showing quantifiable measures. Mr. Herbert noted the importance of understanding the goals, with transparency being the ultimate aim; he expressed concern that some members of the community feel intimidated to take a certain position in a public forum, that they may be afraid of being targeted online or in some other way; Board Members agreed it is important to establish ground rules to ensure

that people feel safe and know that they can express their opinions in a civil way. Board Members discussed submitting comments and concerns anonymously. Ms. Kinsman noted that it is important for clarity surrounding the budget, to show the breakdowns (cost of insurance, retirement, what employees are doing to provide services to the community, how much is negotiable).

b. Update on State Aide.

Mr. Herbert reported that the State had their consensus revenue hearing, they are looking at projections for 2027 for tax collections to be 1.7% to 3.1% more, which does fall in our projections, a potential 2% increase over last year. GIC is looking at an 11% increase. Mr. Herbert will do one round of overall budget revisions at the end of January when the Governor's budget comes out, and see where we are with GIC, and then we will lock that in.

c. MMA Conference

Mr. Herbert reported the MMA Conference coming up in a couple of weeks, which some Board Members have registered for; MMA has asked that he assist in the setting up of the affinity meeting for MetroWest at the Conference.

7. Board Reports

Yolanda Greaves: Ms. Greaves discussed an upcoming MetroWest Regional Collaborative Meeting on January 15th, and will attend the MMA Conference. Ms. Greaves is looking to set up a meeting regarding the Upper Charles Trail.

Makeda Keegan: Ms. Keegan discussed attending Illuminate Ashland, and the Holiday Stroll; it was beautiful to participate in those events. It was great to see many local shoppers. Ms. Keegan attended a Historical Commission meeting last month, they are in the process of redrawing their map for Downtown Historical District.

Claudia Bennett: Ms. Bennett agreed Illuminate Ashland was very special; she noted being very honored to attend the Employees Recognition Luncheon, it was nice to see the employees come out together and be recognized.

Brandi Kinsman: Ms. Kinsman will be attending a Sustainability Committee meeting tomorrow; she has reached out as Select Board liaison to ZBA, Conservation, and Sustainability. The Committees seem happy to see that we are taking this initiative to connect. Ms. Kinsman acknowledged the release of \$4,000 from the Select Board Gift Account to the Ashland Day Committee; it is great that they were able to put on Ashland Day, and still have \$4,000 to kick off this upcoming year. Ms. Kinsman expressed her gratitude to Diane Mortensen, Cindy Cincotta, and Stephanie Pemberton, who came through in a great way with a compressed time schedule, they were fantastic to work with. Ms. Kinsman noted that Illuminate Ashland was amazing.

Joseph Magnani: Mr. Magnani discussed having the opportunity to sit in with the Affordable Housing Trust during the lottery for the Habitat for Humanity house at 487 Main Street. There were four applicants that met the criteria; the selection was made and hopefully we will hear next week who the individuals were. Mr. Magnani enjoyed being Santa during the Ride around Town; he loved to see the faces of the people. Mr. Magnani and Ms. Bennett discussed meeting with the representative from the Donnelly Property who was signing the Deed over to the Town.

Board Members agreed it was a great and busy year.

8. Next Select Board Meeting – January 21, 2026.

9. Adjournment.

Motion: Ms. Greaves motioned to adjourn; the motion was seconded by Ms. Kinsman.

Vote: 5-0-0. Motion approved.

The motion adjourned at 10:15 PM.

Documents Reviewed during the January 7, 2025 meeting:

- House Pending Legislation, Senate Pending Legislation, NFG
- Sub-committee Proposal, Elon Musk
- 2026 Town Meeting Warrant Guidance
- Draft Meeting Minutes, December 3, 2025
- Recommendation of Elizabeth Byrnes, Stormwater Advisory Committee
- Parade Permit Request from the BAA
- GreenUp Ashland Donation to Sustainability Department
- Emergency Medical Dispatch Grants for: Training, 9-1-1 Dispatching, and, Certified EMD Resources
- Revised BAA Grant and Select Board Community Grant Policy
- Ashland Day Funds – Spreadsheet

New member

1 message

Donna Rombauer <drombauer@gmail.com>
To: Susan Robie <srobie@ashlandmass.com>

Thu, Jan 8, 2026 at 4:45 PM

Susan,

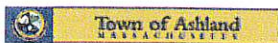
Happy new year!

I am pleased to tell you that Meredith Gingrich was voted to become a member of the Council on Aging at today's meeting.

Please be in touch with her regarding the oath and training requirements. Also, please update the website, add her to the distribution list and inform Michael H. that we are no longer in need of 1 member, as has been noted in his newsletters.

Best regards,

Donna Rombauer



Susan Robie <srobie@ashlandmass.com>

Online Form Submittal: Talent Bank Form

1 message

noreply@civicplus.com <noreply@civicplus.com>

Tue, Aug 26, 2025 at 9:46 AM

Reply-To: noreply@civicplus.com

To: srobie@ashlandmass.com

Talent Bank Form

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TALENT BANK FORM

Please note that current vacancies can be found by looking at "Volunteer Opportunities". As vacancies become available we update the website to reflect the opening(s). If you apply for groups that doesn't have an opening your Talent Bank Form will be shared with the chair of the group. The Select Board, the appointing authority will be unable to appoint you if there is no vacancy. Each committee or position has a different level of commitment and the Select Board requests that everyone attend a meeting or two prior to seeking appointment. This allows you to understand what the group is working on and what the actual commitment would be. Most committees meet on a regular schedule, typically once or twice a month in the evening. Committee chairs and or staff are happy to provide additional information or answer any questions you may have about a particular group.

Upon receipt, your Talent Bank Form will be reviewed and shared with the chair and the Select Board. We will not be able to proceed if no matches exists between your request and our openings. Your application will be added to the list of volunteers who have expressed an interest in serving. We thank you for your interest in serving the Town of Ashland and returning this application.

Please remember that all meetings are open to the public, so even if you are not a member it does not exclude you from getting involved.

Name	Meredith Gingrich
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Email Address	
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Address	
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City	Ashland
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State	MA
Zip Code	01721
Home Phone	
Cell Phone	<i>Field not completed.</i>

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I am interested in serving the Council on Aging
Town in the following
positions:

Other: *Field not completed.*

Finance Committee is
appointed by the Town
Moderator *Field not completed.*

BACKGROUND:

Employer Self employed and at Clear Guidance Care Management

Position Occupational Therapist

Education BS

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Please describe any training/experience you possess

An Occupational Therapist (OT) with a specialization in neurocognitive disorders and dementia provides comprehensive home-based assessments and interventions to support individuals living with cognitive impairments, such as Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. I have a commitment to person-centered care and over two decades of experience in the field since 1998. I play a role in enhancing quality of life, promoting independence, and supporting caregivers, family care partners and healthcare professionals within the community.

Please describe other skills and interests

Yoga , hiking and cooking.

Please describe your government or community volunteer experience (Ashland or elsewhere)

N/a



Town of Ashland *Office of Economic Development*

January 12, 2026

Select Board Members:

The Economic Development Advisory Group met on Monday, January 12, 2026 to review business incentive applications submitted for review. The Economic Development Incentive Program was created pursuant to Chapter 240 of the Acts of 2018 (the "Act") to provide assistance to private business and individuals in order to encourage and facilitate economic growth and development, including creation of jobs, improvement and enhancement of buildings and infrastructure and increase the value of the real estate tax and general tax base.

The advisory group voted to recommend the following business for the incentive program.

1. Killa Pizza, LLC is looking to open a business at 9 Homer Ave. Owner, Davi Ribeiro, has applied for the Business Incentive Program for rental and equipment assistance. Killa Pizza, LLC is a modern, high-quality pizzeria currently undergoing extensive remodeling for the reopening in January 2026. They are currently redeveloping the existing pizza shop, Pizza Mine, to re-open under new ownership as Killa Pizza, LLC. They are requesting \$20,000 for the business incentive grant for rental and equipment costs in total and \$5,000 from the sign and façade program. The applicant met all requirements listed in the rules and regulations set forth by the Select Board. The advisory group recommends that the applicant receives a total reimbursement in the amount of \$25,000.00.

Best regards,

Economic Development Advisory Group

Members: Julia Chase, Garrett Quinn, Pam Bathen, Dennis Ahern, Liam O'Shea