



# Master Plan

#somersetproud



## Acknowledgements

This Master Plan was prepared over an approximately year-long period through a process of extensive public participation and review.

The following members of the Master Plan Steering Committee were responsible for conceiving, administering, and monitoring, as well as participating in the public review process and evaluation of consultant work.

- Richard Brown - Town Administrator
- Holly McNamara - Board of Selectmen
- Tim Turner - Board of Health/Conservation Agent
- Bonnie Davis-Mendes – Retired Library Director
- Gary Simmons – Planning Board Chair
- Nancy Durfee - Town Planner

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# Executive Summary

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## Introduction

The Town of Somerset is situated at the northern end of Mount Hope Bay, on the west bank of the Taunton River and east bank of the Lee's River. Though Somerset is the smallest community in Bristol County geographically, the town has evolved to become one of the most built-out communities in the region after centuries of commercial and industrial development empowered by waterfront resources - most recently the energy production industry - along with population and housing growth associated with local and regional economies.

Somerset is undergoing a similar transition as the overall economy in the South Coast region and beyond, which has slowly shifted from manufacturing to retail and services over the last few decades. In particular, the town lost its largest employment centers and tax revenue generators due to the recent closings of two local power plants, namely Montaup (closed in 2010) and Brayton Point (closed in 2017) Power Plants. This has placed Somerset at a crossroad where the town needs to reevaluate challenges, consolidate resources, and identify new opportunities and strategies in order to renew its economic prosperity, balance development and preservation, and maintain quality of life.

This *Somerset Proud Comprehensive Master Plan* (the Master Plan or Plan) intends to serve as a strategic roadmap to assist the town in charting a new course for its future. The Town of Somerset, acting through the Town Administrator's Office, embarked on an approximately 15-month planning effort that involved an engaging public process where residents, businesses owners, and local stakeholders helped shape this Plan's ideas, vision and goals, and recommendations.

## Process

### What is a Master Plan?

A community-wide master plan is a living plan aiming to document and illustrate where a community is today and where it wants to be in the future. It includes a comprehensive assessment of existing resources and issues, projects future conditions and needs, and considers collective goals and desires. A master plan serves as a policy guide and provides a framework for land use decision-making and the overall development and preservation of a community. It not only addresses buildings and infrastructure, but also addresses important social considerations, natural resources, and the economic values associated with them. A master plan is a method of translating a community's values into specific actions.

A master plan typically covers a timeframe between 10 to 20 years. It is assumed that shorter-term evaluations will help keep it current with changing needs of a community. It is also closely integrated with other municipal plans and initiatives, such as an open space and recreation plan, hazard mitigation plan, etc. It is worth noting that a master plan is not a zoning ordinance, a subdivision regulation, a budget plan, a capital improvement program, or other regulatory document. Rather, it is meant to provide the framework for the development of these implementation tools.

In Massachusetts, a master plan is defined as a comprehensive town-wide plan that addresses the following elements: Land Use; Housing; Economic Development; Public Facilities and Services; Natural, Cultural, and Historic Resources; Open Space and Recreation; Transportation; and Implementation. The *Somerset Proud Comprehensive Master Plan* includes all these elements.

### Stakeholder and Public Engagement

This Master Plan embraced an extensive and inclusive stakeholder and public engagement process. To facilitate the Plan's development, the Town established a Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC) and retained professional planning services from VHB (the Consultants). The MPSC was comprised of six members representing various Town agencies and stakeholders, including the Board of Selectmen, Town Administration, Planning Board, Planning Office, Conservation Commission, Board of Health and Public Library. The MPSC worked closely with the Town Planner and the Consultants throughout the planning process to guide and advise on the development of various Plan components and assist in public outreach.

In addition to the engagement with the MPSC, a wide range of public outreach efforts were conducted. Two public meetings were organized during different phases of the Master Plan process. The first public meeting was held at the beginning of the planning process on November 28, 2018 at the Somerset Berkley Regional High School Cafetiere. It included an arrival Post-it Note exercise focusing on community assets and issues; a formal presentation on baseline conditions of the town, along with a related audience polling activity; and break-out group discussions focusing on community visioning and

goal setting. The meeting closed with another Post-It Note exercise, where participants were asked to elaborate on their vision for the town upon learning more about the Master Plan at the meeting. More than 80 people attended this meeting and provided valuable input.

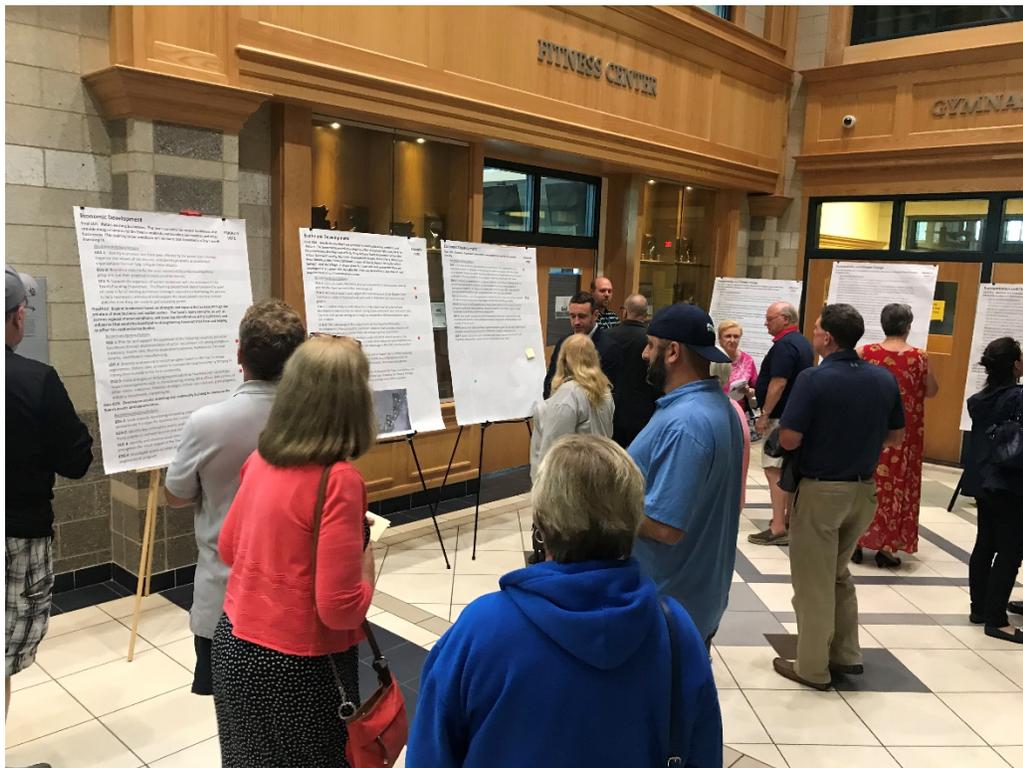


Community Assets Word Cloud from the November 28, 2018 Public Meeting



Participants engaged in the presentation of the town's baseline conditions at the November 28, 2018 Public Meeting

The second and final public meeting was held on July 23, 2019 at Somerset Berkley Regional High School Auditorium. This meeting, held during the later phase of the planning process, intended to offer the public an opportunity to share ideas about potential actions and implementation strategies that would help the town move towards its vision. Approximately 40 participants were at this meeting. An open house format was adopted for this public meeting, where participants were offered the opportunity to roam around eight stations, one for each Master Plan element, to read the draft goals and recommendations and engage in conversations with the MPSC, the Consultants, and other meeting participants. A dot-voting prioritization exercise was incorporated into this format to allow the meeting participants to identify which goals and/or recommendations they considered most important. The results of this exercise will help the Town prioritize implementation actions moving forward.



Participants engaged with the Consultants and Committee Members at an open house event to discuss and prioritize the recommendations at the July 23, 2018 Public Meeting

In addition to the public meetings, the Town conducted two online surveys to gather further input from the community. The first survey, with a total of 261 responses, aimed at soliciting input on the major issues and opportunities faced by the community, as well as identifying a future vision and set of supporting goals for the town. The second survey provided an opportunity for the public to review and react to the draft Master Plan goals and to help prioritize them in terms of their relative importance. A total of 159 responses were collected for this survey.

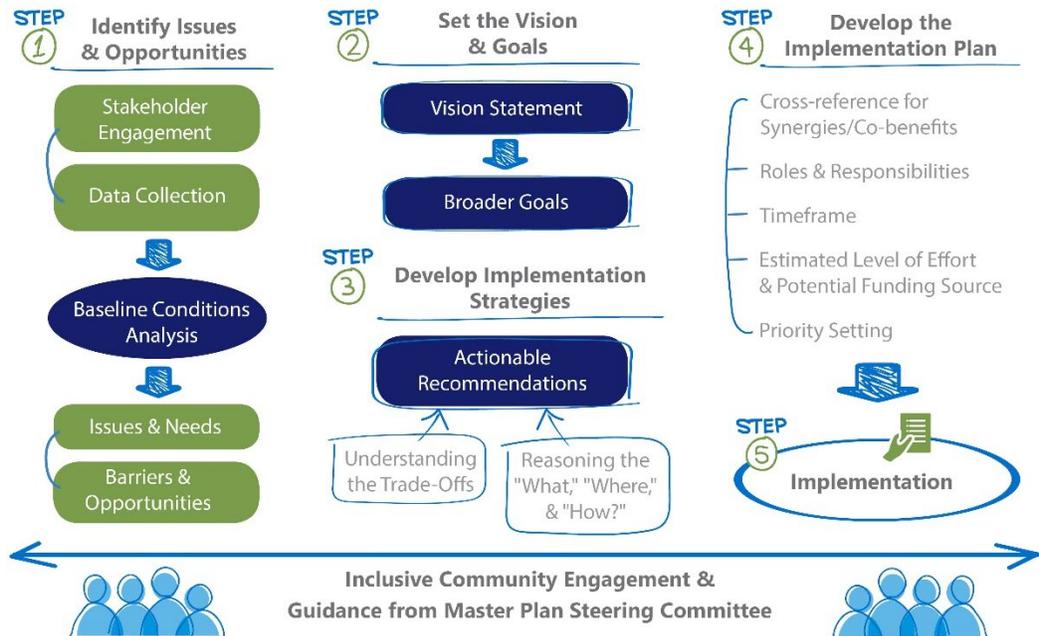
The Town also took extra efforts to engage the public in creative ways, including:

- ▶ Engaging students within the Somerset Public Schools utilizing Padlet (an online engagement tool for students) on what they love most about their town and what their greatest wish for the town is for the next 10 to 20 years.
- ▶ Conducting a Council on Aging (COA) visioning session to have a focused discussion on issues faced by the town's seniors.
- ▶ Displaying "Our Town, Our Future" exhibit boards at public meetings and various town locations aimed to introduce the Master Plan process and present baseline statistics of the community.

All stakeholder and public input collected throughout the planning process was evaluated and integrated into the development of the Master Plan.

## Planning Framework

The mission of the planning process was to produce this Master Plan in a manner that is transparent and open to all stakeholders in an effort to provide a public process that is collaborative, cooperative, and coordinated with the goal of achieving consensus and endorsement of the vision, goals, and implementation strategies. In synergy with the abovementioned public and stakeholder engagement process, the development of this Master Plan undertook a four-step process that started with a comprehensive review of the existing baseline conditions of the community, then moved on to the establishment of a collective vision for the town’s future, and proceeded towards identifying more focused goals and recommendations in support of the vision. The final step was to develop an implementation program to support achieving the Plan’s vision and goals.



Overview of the key steps in the master planning process

### Conduct Baseline Inventory and Analysis

This early step of the planning process involved collecting and analyzing a variety of datasets related to different aspects of the town, such as demographic changes, land use patterns, housing trends, economic indexes, transportation statistics, public facilities conditions, open space and cultural resources inventories, sustainability measures, etc. It helped establish a baseline profile of the community, which supported the identification of issues and opportunities.

## Define Long-term Vision and Goals

Based on a thorough analysis of Somerset's baseline issues and opportunities, a future vision and set of goals were developed through a collaborative process where the public and key stakeholders engaged in open dialogues and exchanged thoughts on where the town should be over the next 10 to 20 years.

## Identify Strategies and Recommendations

With the vision and goals defined as guiding principles, the MPSC worked closely with various Town departments and the Consultants to explore the latest and best planning practices and strategies that suit the unique character and needs of Somerset. These practices and strategies were shared with and validated by the town's residents at a public workshop and were used as the foundation for developing the Implementation Plan.

## Develop an Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan was the last but an important step in the development of this Master Plan. It represents a collective effort between the Town and its residents in detailing the manner by which each of the recommendations should come into action, based on priorities identified through public workshops and who should be the leading and partnering entities. The Implementation Plan will act as a policy and action guide as the town moves forward from the Master Plan planning phase into the implementation phase.

## Master Plan Vision Statement

Somerset is a small New England town, conveniently located along the picturesque and historic Taunton and Lee's Rivers. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Somerset was a leader in the burgeoning shipbuilding and mercantile economy of Colonial America. Thanks to the economic engines of nearby Boston and Providence, our community enjoys city-like amenities and infrastructure, while maintaining the social connections and intimacies of a small town. It is a place that we are proud to call home, where the community comes together in times of need.

Our Vision is to advance the town as a flourishing community, while striving to create an economically sustainable future with thriving businesses, inviting open spaces, and walkable neighborhoods. We seek to build a community that fosters economic development by expanding upon our waterfront roots, while promoting stewardship of our historical heritage and cultural differences.

We will continue to celebrate our small town as a place where families and people of all generations enjoy a safe, affordable, and well-connected community with great schools, accessible recreational opportunities, and quality public services.

We will embrace a creative economy that balances protection of our natural resources, leverages our strengths, and embraces new and innovative strategies to achieve economic growth, while honoring our past. We recognize our future will be stronger by collaborating with neighboring jurisdictions and the private sector to contribute to the common welfare of our town, region, and state

Together, with a shared spirit of ownership, we will maintain a socially, economically, and environmentally conscious culture. Building upon our strengths, Somerset strives to advance our identity as a flourishing small-town waterfront community.

## Somerset's Core Values

As Somerset embarks on implementing this Master Plan, the community's core values of Compassion, Integrity, Vision and Innovation and Collaboration (C.I.V.I.C) will serve as a guide. The following logo captures these values and can be used during the implementation process to reflect upon Somerset's vision, and how this Plan will bring together Somerset's Past and Future in ways that will continue to make Somerset Proud.



# Land Use and Development Patterns

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## Introduction

The Land Use and Development Patterns Element relates to the way various uses, such as residential, commercial, industrial, and recreational, are arranged in balance with natural landscapes such as rivers and streams, wetlands, beaches, and forests or grasslands. Land use patterns are the result of both short and long-term social and economic activities in the context of natural ecological systems.

Land use decisions have lasting impacts on (and are affected by) all other aspects of community development and/or preservation, such as the mix and availability of housing, transportation systems, delivery of public services, and preservation or destruction of natural and historic resources. The Land Use and Development Patterns Element of the Master Plan is intended to provide overarching guidance on how land resources in the Town should be strategically managed to address related community needs.

## Baseline Conditions Analyses

### Historical Land Use

The Town of Somerset is located on the northern end of Mount Hope Bay between the estuaries of the Taunton River on the east and Lee's River on the west. Bounded by the Towns of Dighton and Swansea on the north and west and Fall River across the Taunton River to the east, Somerset has a total area of 11.98 square miles, with 8.11 square miles of land area and 3.87 square miles of surface water. The Town's unique location and its long, narrow profile along the rivers grant the community roughly 11 miles of shoreline along the Taunton River (over 8 miles) and the Lee's River (over 2 miles).

As evidenced by the Native American tunnels and artifacts found in the Pierce Beach and the Bluffs area, Somerset's earliest known history of Native Americans dated back to the early 1600s when many Native American Wampanoags lived in the area known as Sowams, which includes what is now Warren and Barrington in Rhode Island and Swansea and Somerset in Massachusetts. Officially incorporated in 1790, Somerset's early town history revolved around the commercial use of its Taunton River waterfront, which is navigable for large vessels along the entire eastern boundary of the town. Somerset's first economic base was the shipbuilding industry and its role as one of America's chief distribution points for foreign goods in the early to mid-1800's. Somerset Village, located on the Taunton River in the northeastern part of the town, was established during this period as a residential neighborhood with a well-defined commercial function and is responsible for the streetscape of historic homes that line Main Street.

The development of the area between Buffinton and Centre Street began after the War of 1812 when it became a commodities distribution center, particularly for grain. The secondary industry of significance in the early 1800's was the manufacturing of stone and earthenware, located in the center of town. Somerset center became a neighborhood called Pottersville when worker housing developed around large potteries. In the middle of the century, there were seven stoneware potteries in operation in the town.<sup>1</sup> The remainder of the town remained largely agricultural throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

During the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the town's commercial function declined as shipbuilding began to be phased out and potteries gradually ceased operations due to increasing competition and mass production. Somerset Village remained dominant during this period with a moderately growing industrial base, primarily the Mount Hope Iron Works, while residential growth also expanded from these settlements. The Mount Hope Iron Works provided worker housing for the 19<sup>th</sup> century Irish immigrants along Dublin Street. Improvements to the regional transportation system during this time also significantly impacted the economy of the town. The extension of Old Colony & Newport Railroad (also known as the Somerset and Dighton Railroad) brought with it a major coal port in Somerset Village. The opening of the Slade's Ferry Bridge in 1876 enhanced rail connectivity to Fall River.

After the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Somerset acquired a suburban status as the town attracted Fall River residents wishing to relocate. The opening of the Brightman Street Bridge, a four-lane wide drawbridge spanning the Taunton River, served as the more direct pathway for Route 6 and Route 138 to cross the river. Residential neighborhoods began to grow more discretely in town.

The construction of Montaup Electricity Company Plant (1923-1925) introduced the town's next major industry – power generation – and ushered in more residential growth. Increasing suburban development began after World War II, although some areas remained pastoral. The construction of a second major power plant, Brayton Point, began in 1957 at the town's southernmost tip and took advantage of the same deep water that had attracted the power industry to the Montaup site. The presence of these two power

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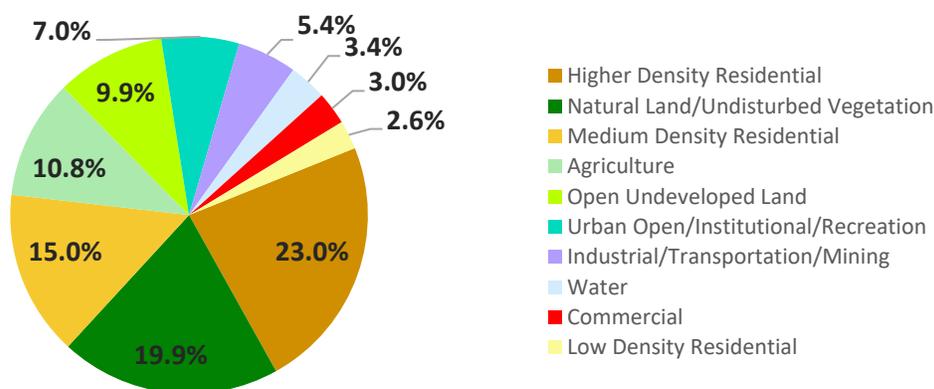
<sup>1</sup> Somerset, MA from Our County and Its People: A Descriptive and Biographical Record of Bristol County, Massachusetts, 1899  
<http://history.rays-place.com/ma/somerset.htm>

plants catalyzed a genuine housing boom in Somerset and allowed the Town to upgrade its municipal services with tax revenue from industrial property valuation. In the 1960's, the construction of Interstate 195 (I-195) connected Somerset with other regional employment centers such as the Cities of New Bedford and Providence, Rhode Island. As a result, suburban tract development in the 60's and 70's largely replaced the town's agrarian landscape.

Early historical land use data from MassGIS,<sup>2</sup> dating back to 1971, reveals a land use pattern in Somerset influenced by these early socio-economic factors. As shown in **Figure 1-1** and **Map 1**, more than half of the town (56 percent) was already developed in 1971, the majority of which (40.6 percent) was residential use, with 5.4 percent industrial use, 3 percent commercial use, and another 7 percent of various institutional (e.g. schools) and recreational uses (e.g. golf course).

The town's residential areas show an outward expansion from earlier neighborhoods at Somerset Village, Pottersville, and along Read Street to the west and south of the town. It is worth noting, that unlike the typical larger residential lots seen in some other suburban communities, the majority of Somerset's residential neighborhoods feature higher densities, with housing on lots smaller than a quarter acre. This indicates not only the close-knit fabric of the early settlements in town, but also later on the demand for workers' housing to support various industries. The 1971 land use map shows the emergence of two commercial corridors in Somerset, one along Route 6 and another one along Route 138/County Street. Industrial uses at that time were primarily limited to the two active power plants and a number of shipbuilding and marina businesses on the Taunton River waterfront. The remaining undeveloped lands in town were mostly in the northern end of the town and in the southern portion between Route 6 and I-195.

**Figure 1-1 Historical Land Use in 1971**



**Residential Uses Definition:**

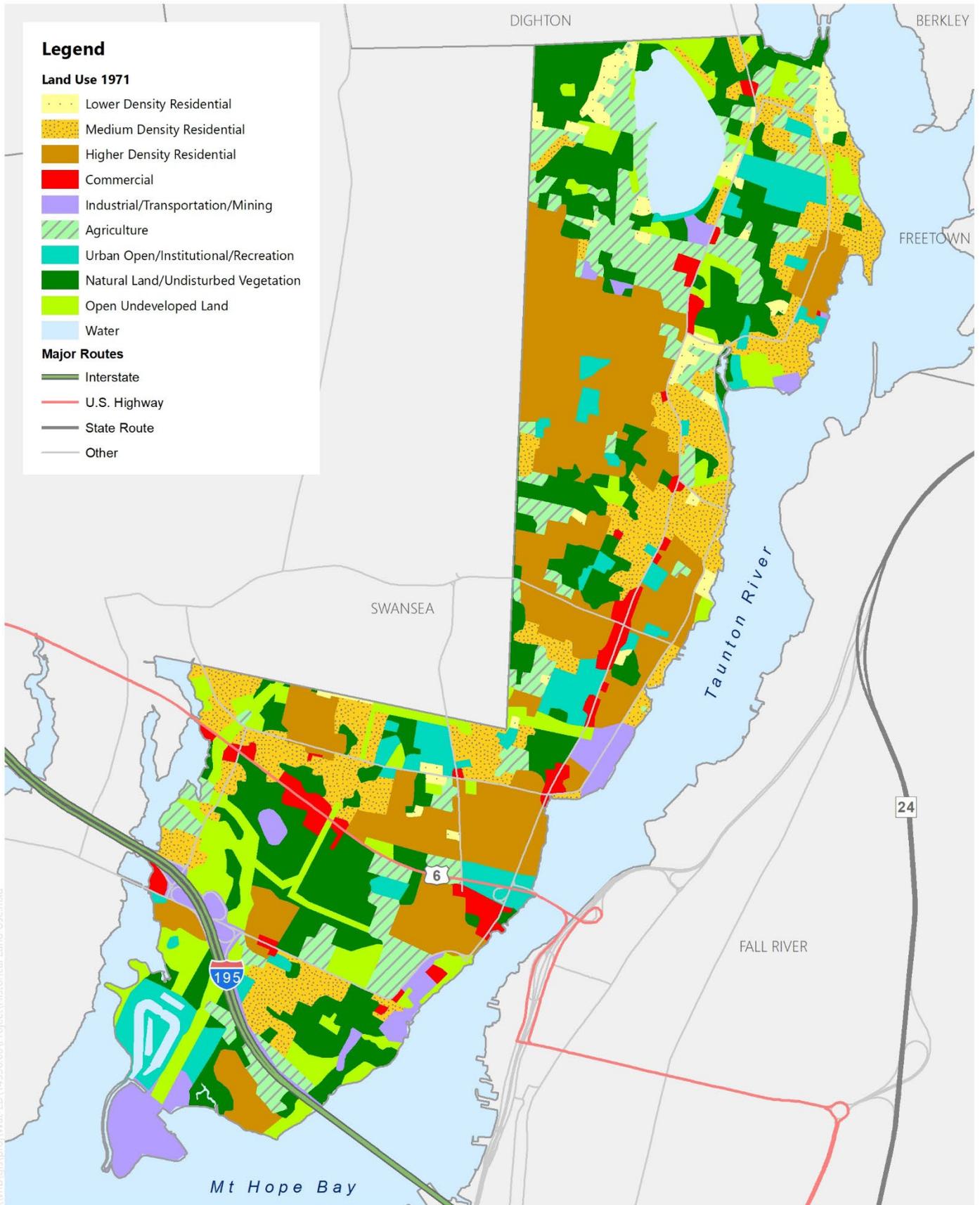
Higher Density Residential: Housing on smaller than 1/4 acre lots

Medium Density Residential: Housing on 1/4 - 1/2 acre lots

Lower Density Residential: Housing on 1/2 - 1 acre lots

Source: MassGIS

<sup>2</sup> MassGIS is the Commonwealth's Bureau of Geographic Information, within the Digital Services Group of the Executive Office of Technology Services and Security (EOTSS). Through MassGIS, the Commonwealth has created a comprehensive, statewide database of geospatial information.



**Town of Somerset Master Plan**

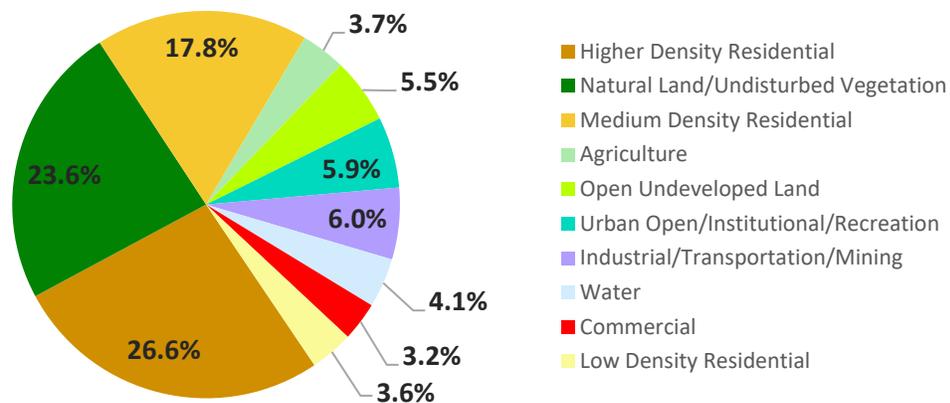
Somerset, MA

Source: MassGIS

**Historic Land Use, 1971**

After 1971, growth was slower than it had been during the housing boom of the 60's. Between 1971 and 2005, another 7 percent of the town was developed, with the most notable changes occurring in the northern end of the town where agricultural uses were converted to residential uses (see **Figure 1-2, Table 1-1, and Map 2**). The two commercial corridors were further established during this period, when the Route 6 corridor began to exhibit the characteristics of an automobile-oriented strip mall/big box retail corridor, while the County Street commercial area became more of a "Main Street" center featuring small-scale shops and restaurants. Industrial uses were still dominated by the two power plants, with smaller examples appearing along Route 6. The town's maritime industrial uses continue to thrive today at various locations along and near the Taunton River waterfront.

**Figure 1-2 Historical Land Use in 2005**

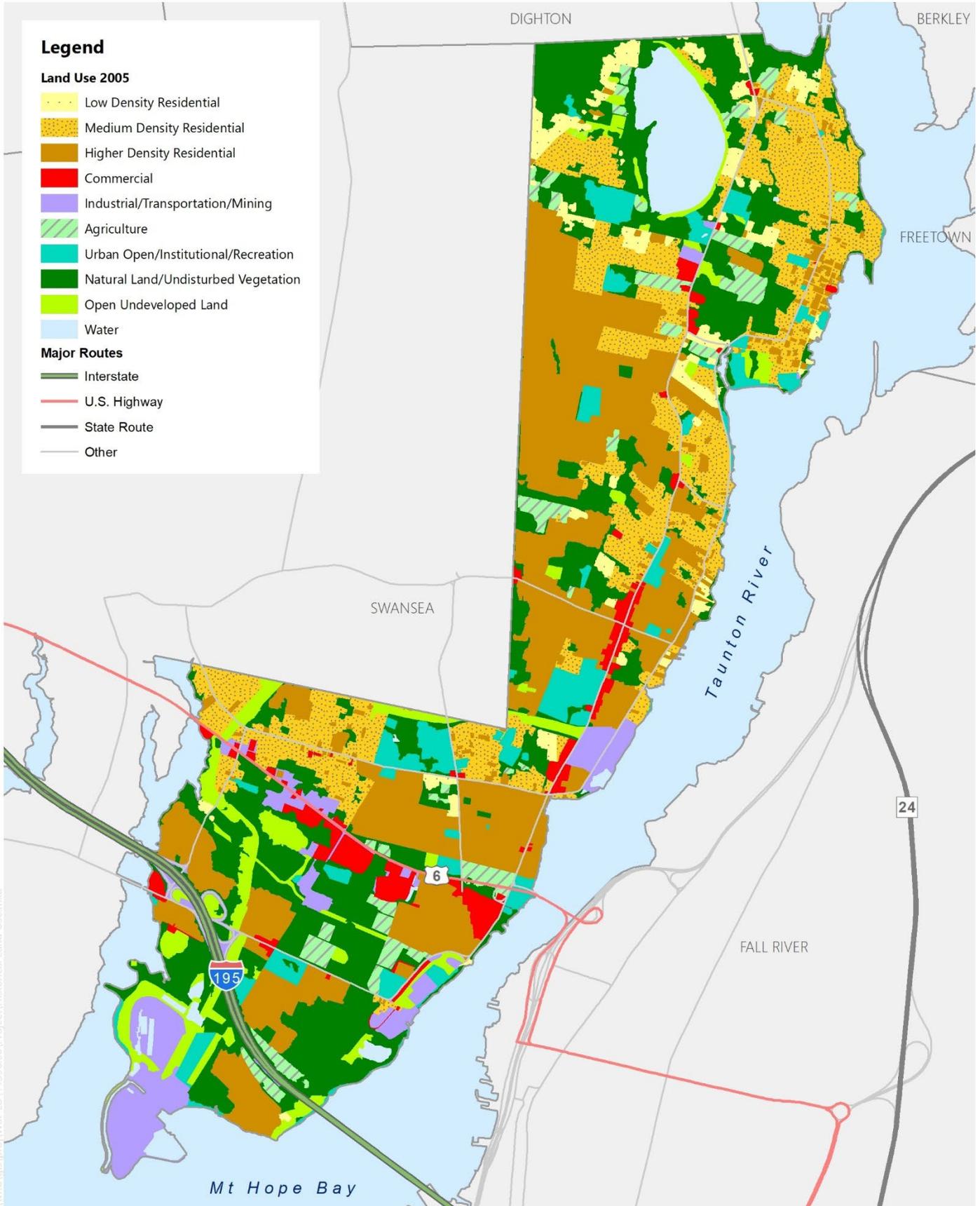


Source: MassGIS

**Table 1-1 Land Use Change, 1971-2005**

	1971 % of Total	2005 % of Total	% Change
Higher Density Residential	23.0%	26.6%	3.6%
Natural Land/Undisturbed Vegetation*	19.9%	23.6%	3.7%
Medium Density Residential	15.0%	17.8%	2.8%
Agriculture	10.8%	3.7%	-7.1%
Open Undeveloped Land	9.9%	5.5%	-4.4%
Urban Open/Institutional/Recreation	7.0%	5.9%	-1.1%
Industrial/Transportation/Mining	5.4%	6.0%	0.6%
Water	3.4%	4.1%	0.7%
Commercial	3.0%	3.2%	0.3%
Low Density Residential	2.6%	3.6%	1.0%

\*Note: The 3.7 percent increase in Natural Land/Undisturbed Vegetation is either due to succession of inactive agricultural and/or open undeveloped land, or the result of different/improved data recording methodology used to create the 2005 land use data, e.g., more detailed delineation of inland wetlands, etc.



\\vhb\bls\proj\Wat\_LDY14336\00\Project\Historical Land Use.mxd



## Existing Land Use Pattern

The latest land use patterns in Somerset were analyzed using the Town’s 2018 Assessor’s database, through a Geographic Information System (GIS) analysis process wherein property records were spatially correlated with parcel maps.<sup>3</sup> The consolidated parcel layer was then interpreted to reveal approximate land use patterns by grouping individual parcels’ Property Type Classification Codes into land use categories.<sup>4</sup> The resulting land use map, shown as **Map 3**, reflects a continuous but slow growth since 2005, with primarily lower density single family residential developments of lots greater than a half-acre in size, as compared to other historically established, denser residential neighborhoods in town. A breakdown summary of existing land use in Somerset is presented in **Table 1-2** below.

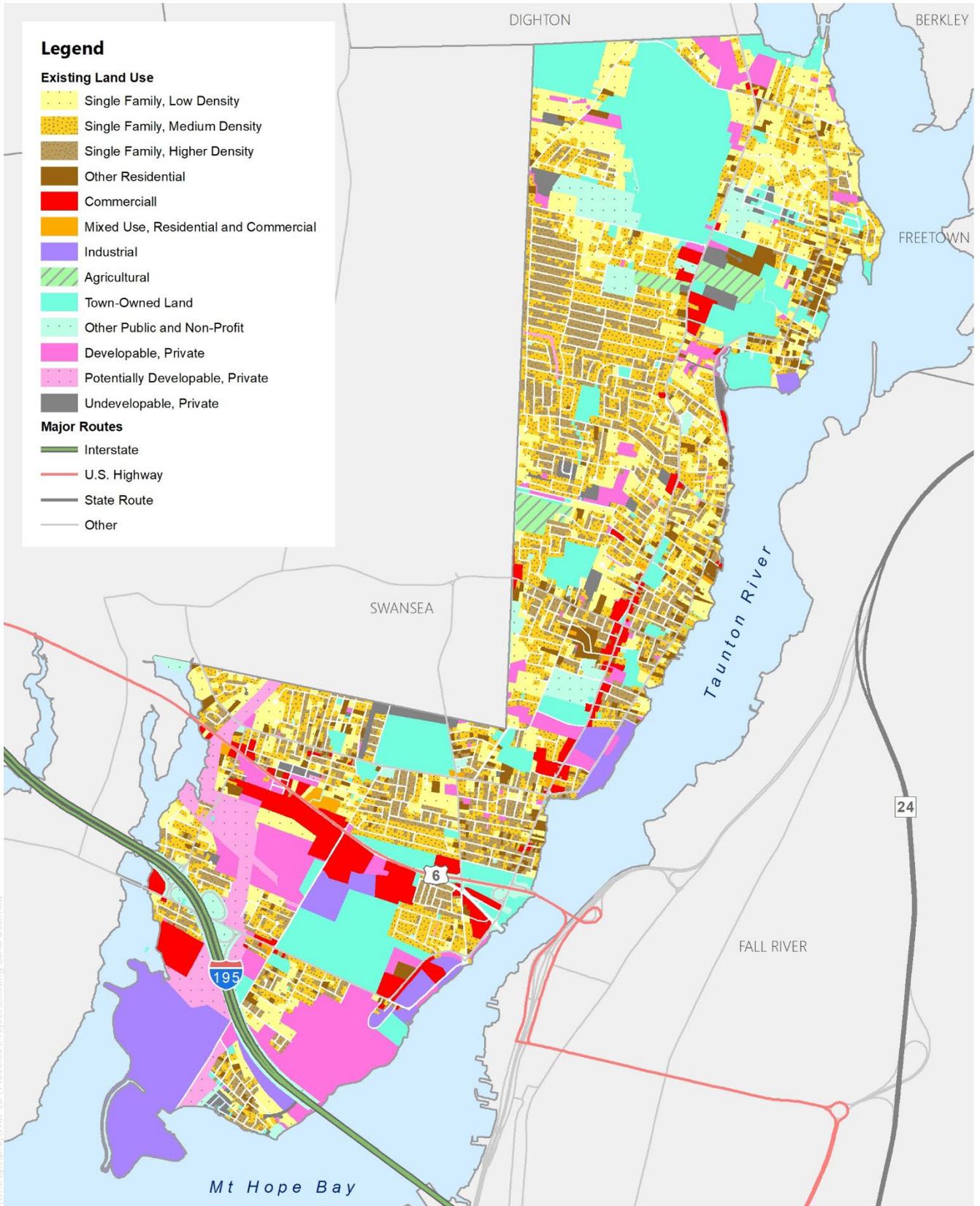
**Table 1-2 Existing Land Use Summary by Parcels and Acres, 2018**

	Parcels		Acres	
	Subtotal	% of Total	Subtotal	% of Total
<b>Residential</b>				
<i>Single Family</i>	6,034	83.7%	2079.0	45.4%
<i>Other Residential</i>	393	5.5%	181.0	4.0%
<b>Commercial</b>	162	2.2%	232.9	5.1%
<b>Residential Commercial Mixed-Use</b>	27	0.4%	19.1	0.4%
<b>Industrial</b>				
<i>Electric Generation Plants</i>	2	0.0%	246.0	5.4%
<i>Other Industrial</i>	15	0.2%	99.3	2.2%
<b>Agricultural</b>	5	0.1%	61.3	1.3%
<b>Public &amp; Non-Profit</b>				
<i>Town of Somerset</i>	231	3.2%	839.9	18.3%
<i>Other</i>	76	1.1%	170.4	3.7%
<b>Private Vacant Land</b>				
<i>Developable</i>	103	1.4%	395.3	8.6%
<i>Potentially Developable</i>	26	0.4%	164.0	3.6%
<i>Undevelopable</i>	136	1.9%	92.3	2.0%
<b>Total Non-Right-Of-Way (ROW) Parcels: 7,210</b>				
<b>Total Non-ROW Acres: 4,580.5</b>				

Source: Town of Somerset Assessor’s Database, October 2018

<sup>3</sup> Due to the lack of current land use data from MassGIS, interpreting the Town’s Assessors’ database represents the best alternative approach to understanding current land use patterns in Somerset. This analysis is based on Assessor’s information provided by the Town in October 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Property Type Classification Code, shown as “LUCODE” in the Assessors’ records, is a three-digit code used by the Board of Assessors in determining the proper classification of properties according to their uses. Since the consolidated Assessors’ data layer is parcel based, this approach is only appropriate in understanding the land use patterns of a community, rather than interpreting the actual land use or land cover units that can vary within individual parcels or across multiple parcels.



**Town of Somerset Master Plan**

Somerset, MA

Source: MassGIS, Town of Somerset Assessor's Database

**Existing Land Use, 2018**

Note: For Single Family residential uses, Low Density represents housing on larger than 1/2 acre lots, Medium Density represents housing on 1/4-1/2 acre lots, and Higher Density represents housing on smaller than 1/4 acre lots.

In total, the town has roughly 4,580 acres of land (excluding any type of Right-of-Way [ROW]) divided into more than 7,000 parcels. Nearly half of these parcels are residential. Single-family is the predominant residential land use, accounting for 45.4 percent of the total non-ROW acres in town, while other types of residential uses comprise about 4 percent. Industrial uses make up 7.6 percent of the non-ROW acres, out of which 5.4 percent are from the two power plants that discontinued operations in 2010 (Montaup) and 2017 (Brayton Point). Commercial uses and mixed-use developments make up 5.1 percent and 0.4 percent, respectively. Agricultural uses decreased to only 1.3 percent or 61.3 acres as shown in **Map 3**, all of which are currently enrolled in the Chapter 61A program.<sup>5</sup>

Based on the Property Type Classification Code, the town has a total of 651.6 acres of land held in private ownership that can be classified as vacant land, among which 559.3 acres are considered developable or potentially developable commercial, residential, and industrial land. In addition, there is a significant amount of land held by public and/or non-profit entities, including 839.9 acres owned by the Town of Somerset and 170.4 acres owned by Commonwealth of Massachusetts and various charitable and religious groups.

## Residential Uses

As indicated, nearly half of the town has been developed for residential use. Over 90 percent of the residential developments are single-family. Newer residential developments tend to have larger lots and be clustered in the northern end of the town. More mature and/or historic neighborhoods tend to have smaller lots, higher densities, and compact subdivision blocks. The density of these more established residential areas is close to that of the City of Fall River. As shown in the existing land use map (**Map 3**), that most of the town's residential areas are to the north of Route 6, while to the south, residential neighborhoods are discrete amongst large tracts of undeveloped open land owned primarily by National Grid and the Town of Somerset.

## Commercial Uses

The existing land use map shows several clusters of commercial areas along Route 6 and Route 138/County Street. The Route 6 commercial corridor continues to be dominated by highway and automobile-oriented businesses that serve both local and regional demands, with larger businesses such as Horner Millworks, Stop & Shop, Ocean State Job Lot, Home Depot, and a number of automobile sales and service shops and smaller businesses including chain and local restaurants, coffee shops, and hair salons, etc. Large parking lots associated with these businesses represent a major visual component of this commercial area. The Town has recently approved a private development project that includes a new Fairfield Inn & Suites by Marriott, to be located on a former Town-owned site north of Route 6 between Brayton Point Road and Brayton Avenue. It is anticipated that this hotel

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<sup>5</sup> Chapter 61 program is a voluntary current use program designed by the Massachusetts Legislature to tax real property in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts at its undeveloped, current use value rather than its highest and best use (development) value if the landowners are willing to commit to keeping some or all of their land undeveloped for a specified period of time. In addition, the municipal government of the town in which the enrolled property is located has a right of first refusal should the landowner put the land up for sale while it is enrolled in the program. There are three different Chapter 61 programs, Chapter 61 for forestry, Chapter 61A for agriculture, and Chapter 61B for open space and recreation.

will serve the region's growing business demand and further reinforce the regional service role of the Route 6 commercial corridor, while at the same time serving as a catalyst for the revitalization of Slade's Ferry Crossing commercial area.

The Slade's Ferry Crossing commercial district, located off Route 6 by the landing of the retired Brightman Street Bridge (closed in 2011), exhibits a markedly different character. This district used to abut Route 6, which connected directly to Fall River via the Brightman Street Bridge. However, with the new Veterans Memorial Bridge opening just north of the Brightman Street Bridge in 2011, the section of the former Route 6 running between Riverside and Brayton Avenue, which is the core spine of this commercial district, no longer serves through traffic. Consequently, the businesses here suffer from a lack of visibility and, as a result, this commercial area has become stagnant. The Town has taken on several planning efforts to help revitalize the Slade's Ferry Crossing district, including the development of a concept plan in 2013 to explore how the district might be redeveloped given its river-front presence. The Town has also established the Slade's Ferry Crossing Overlay District to promote and encourage redevelopment. In addition, a market study was completed in early 2015 to analyze market potential, financial feasibility, and redevelopment strategies.<sup>6</sup>



Concept rendering from the *A Vision for a Revitalized Waterfront* study, 2013

The Route 138/County Street retail corridor between Read Street and Washington Avenue features smaller-scale retail/service-oriented businesses lining both sides of the street with parking in front of and behind buildings. A small triangle-shaped Town Common located at the intersection of County Street and Buffinton Street marks the town center. Compared to Route 6, the smaller size and scale of the commercial buildings on County Street enabled a more human scale built environment that is essential to a vibrant "Main Street" downtown core typically seen in many communities. Despite this, according to comments received from the public during the Master Plan process, the aesthetics of the buildings, signage, and streetscaping of the town center commercial area are in need of improvement.

The second commercial cluster exists on the northern end of Route 138/County Street between South Street and Whetstone Hill Road, near Indian Spring Plaza on the west side

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<sup>6</sup> Slade's Ferry Crossing Market Feasibility Analysis, Stantec Consulting Services, Inc., January 16, 2015

of the street, and restaurants and an equipment rental shop on the east side of the street. Like the town center commercial area, Indian Spring Plaza, which is visually dominated by a typically empty large parking lot, is perceived to be aesthetically lacking. The program of this shopping plaza does not leverage its true capacity as a retail destination, where two of the largest buildings are now used as a church and a self-storage facility.

## Industrial Uses

The sites of the two former power plants are still the largest properties in Somerset of an industrial character. Once major revenue sources for the Town, these plants have closed and are expected to be redeveloped. In 2015, prior to the closure of Brayton Point power plant, the Town of Somerset, in partnership with Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC), undertook a study to identify, assess and analyze potential reuses of the Brayton Point and Montaup Power Plant sites. The study identified three reuse scenarios for Brayton Point, including natural gas conversion, a green energy hub, and marine industrial uses.<sup>7</sup>

In 2016, a subsequent study – Reimagining Brayton Point – was undertaken to further explore the vision for a Clean Energy Hub on the Brayton Point Power Plant site, wherein the site would be redeveloped to include natural gas generation, solar photovoltaics, a food waste digester, and an offshore wind terminal, to take advantage of the existing industrial facilities and the deep water port on Mount Hope Bay. This scenario would provide reliable electricity, promote innovative new technologies, and reclaim the waterfront area from polluting large-scale industrial use.<sup>8</sup> On November 8, 2018, the owner of the former Brayton Point power plant site announced the property will be rebranded as Brayton Point Commerce Center for new and sustainable utilization, primarily in the offshore wind energy sector.<sup>9</sup> A significant amount of resources have been invested to date to transform the site into its highest potential, including asbestos abatement, environmental remediation, demolition permitting work, and extensive redevelopment planning.

The Montaup property was acquired by a private developer in 2014, and a large portion (nearly 11 acres) of the property on the west side of Riverside Avenue was purchased by National Grid in early 2015 with plans for a \$50 million investment to modernize its electricity-switching yard. The 2015 MassCEC study identified two re-use scenarios for the remaining portions of the Montaup site. The first scenario features a break bulk cargo port, while the second scenario features green energy uses. Both scenarios depict a park in the southern waterfront of the site to increase community access to the river. The 2015 MassCEC study also considered some alternative uses such as housing, commercial uses, and rail barge connectivity; however, these considerations were not determined feasible primarily due to the site's physical or regulatory constraints.<sup>6</sup> Reuse of the site has been gradually advanced by the private developer. In early 2018, the remaining 21-plus acres of the parcel were divided into three lots for potential future development.<sup>10</sup> At the time of

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<sup>7</sup> Somerset Power Plants Reuse Study, December 2015, Massachusetts Clean Energy Center

<sup>8</sup> Reimagining Brayton Point: A guide to assessing reuse options for the Somerset Community, Synapse Energy Economics, Inc.

<sup>9</sup> Commercial Development Company, Inc. November 8, 2018 press release, available at <http://www.cdcco.com/press-release/cdc-rebrands-former-coal-power-plant-as-brayton-point-commerce-center/>

<sup>10</sup> 'Interest' in former Montaup plant property, divided into 3 lots, The Herald News, February 14, 2018

this Master Plan, the developer is proposing a regional transshipment terminal for scrap metal on the southern portion of the site.

In addition to the power plant sites, there are three other industrial areas in Somerset, two of which are on the Taunton River waterfront: Bristol Marine, located at the southern end of Main Street, and a cluster of businesses, including Gladding-Hearn Shipbuilding, Fortier Boats, Pearson Pilings, and Industrial Fleet Service, at the southern end of Riverside Avenue near the Town's sewer treatment plant. The third industrial area is located on Brayton Point Road between Wilbur Avenue and Route 6, where National Grid currently operates an industrially zoned facility across the street from the Town's Highway Department. In March 2018, a special Town Meeting approved a rezoning of the 6.7 acres located at 1400 Brayton Point Avenue from business to industrial, allowing a marijuana dispensary owner to locate a licensed medical marijuana dispensing, cultivation, and processing facility under a five-year host agreement.<sup>11</sup> On January 25, 2019, the Massachusetts Cannabis Control Commission approved a license to sell recreational marijuana for this facility.<sup>12</sup> Another notable manufacturing business in town is Horner Millworks located within the Route 6 commercial corridor, which specializes in custom manufacturing of windows, doors, kitchens, and stairs to the residential and commercial markets. Many of these active industrial and manufacturing businesses have long established roots within the community and serve as anchors for the town's economic prosperity.

## Long Term Development Pattern

A community's long-term development patterns, to a large degree, are determined by the regulatory provisions in place such as zoning bylaws, subdivision regulations, and other local or regional development policies and/or priorities.

### Zoning

Somerset has six classes of use districts, as depicted in the Town's official zoning map (see **Map 4**). These include:

- ▶ **Residence District:** primarily allowing for single-family dwellings by-right and other types of residential uses, such as two-family, by special permit.
- ▶ **Business District:** allowing for a wide variety of commercial and business uses, as well as certain residential uses.
- ▶ **Limited Business District:** more restrictive than the Business District in terms of uses allowed, such as certain types of entertainment establishments and automobile-related services, etc.
- ▶ **Industrial District:** allowing for a wide variety of industrial uses; no residential uses permitted.

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<sup>11</sup> Somerset inks medical marijuana host agreement, The Herald News, April 2, 2018

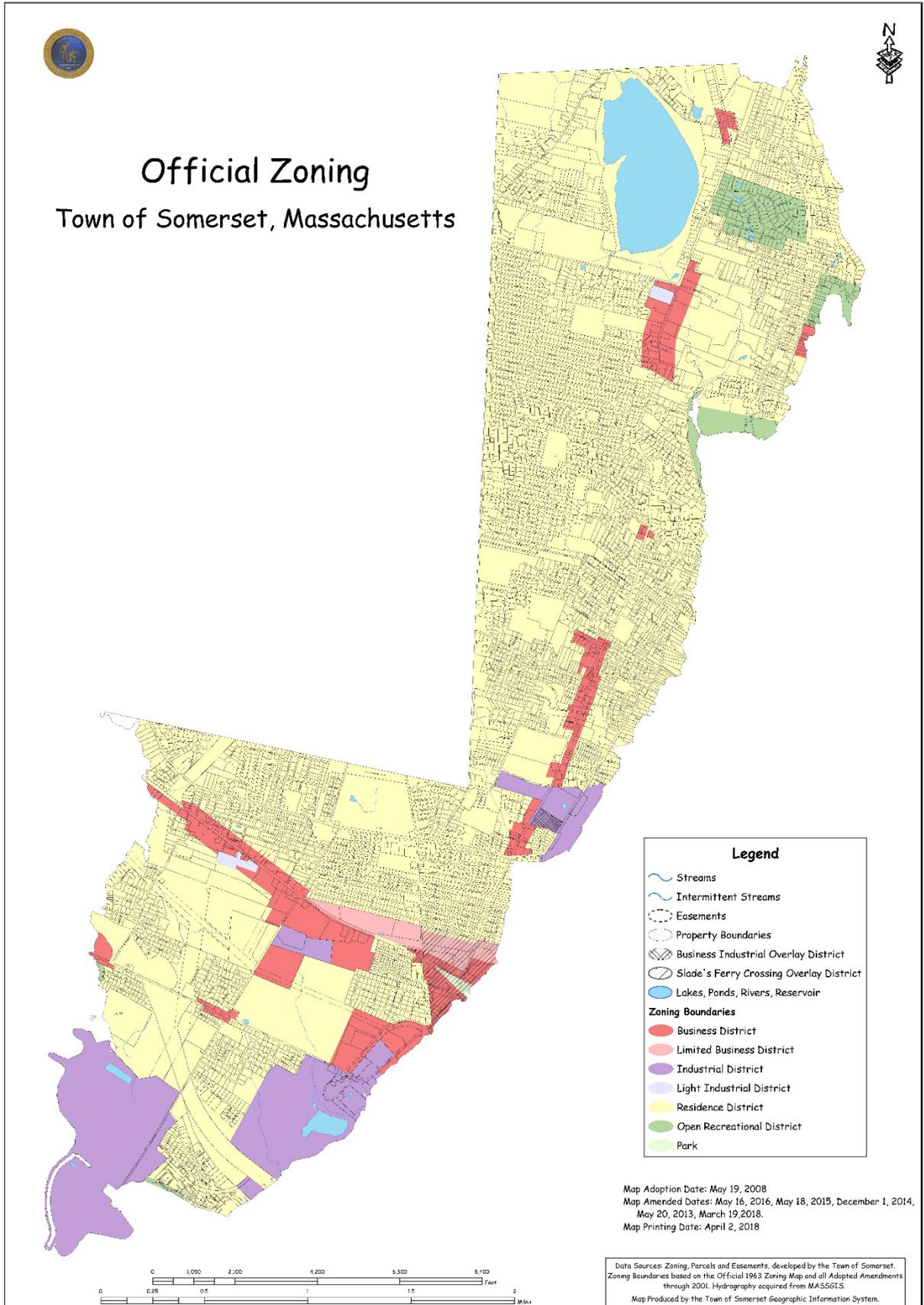
<sup>12</sup> Recreational marijuana license approved for Solar Therapeutics, South Coast Today, February 6, 2019

- ▶ **Light Industrial District:** more restrictive on industrial uses, but more flexible on service-oriented uses than the Industrial District.
- ▶ **Open Recreational District:** primarily allowing for single-family residences and a variety of open space and recreational uses.

The Town also has six Special Districts, including three resource protection districts and three development overlay districts:

- ▶ **Watershed Protection District and Water Resources Protection District:** two overlay districts intended for water resource protection, covering all land in Somerset that is tributary to the Somerset Reservoir.
- ▶ **Water Resource Protection Areas:** protects areas with poorly drained soils via an overlay district.
- ▶ **Floodplain District:** including all special flood hazard areas designated on the Bristol County Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM).
- ▶ **Mixed-Use Development Overlay District:** by Special Permit, intended to encourage a mix of commercial and residential redevelopment and infill development in the areas zoned for business, and to protect and enhance the value of land and buildings by allowing for a variety of business and residential uses in a more integrated way.
- ▶ **Slade's Ferry Crossing District:** intended to promote and encourage redevelopment of the Slade's Ferry/Old Route 6 business area and transform it into a vibrant, attractive, and livable mixed-use location with a sense of place. The goal is to allow for a development, redevelopment, and infill mix of compatible commercial and residential uses and open space more varied than is generally available under conventional zoning, as well as to support and strengthen the development of a riverfront park.
- ▶ **Business Industrial Overlay District (BIOD):** intended to encourage a mix of commercial and industrial redevelopment and infill development in the areas zoned for industrial uses in a way that facilitates development while protecting the public interest. All uses allowed in the Business District are allowed in a qualifying BIOD development by Special Permit.

### Map 4 Town of Somerset Official Zoning Map, 2018



## Priority Development and Protection Areas<sup>13</sup>

In 2008, all thirty-one (31) South Coast Rail Corridor communities participated in a community-driven land use planning process led by three Regional Planning Agencies: Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD), Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), and Old Colony Planning Council (OCPC). The purpose of this process was to identify and designate the areas that were most important for development or preservation in each community. These designated areas can guide municipal decisions about zoning revisions, infrastructure investments, and conservation efforts. In addition, they serve as the foundation for developing Regional and State Priority Area designations and may be priorities for state funding.

The study findings were revisited and updated in 2013 to consider new data and new municipal priorities. The resulting Priority Development Areas (PDAs) and Priority Protection Areas (PPAs)<sup>14</sup> from the update are shown in **Map 5** and described below.

### Downtown Business Corridor [273-01]

- ▶ **Purpose:** PDA - Business development
- ▶ **Future Action:** Development in accordance with existing zoning

### Indian Springs Plaza Redevelopment [273-02]

- ▶ **Purpose:** PDA - Commercial redevelopment
- ▶ **Future Action:** Development in accordance with existing zoning; potential future rezoning of the Light Industrial District to Business District Zoning.

### Montaup Redevelopment [273-03]<sup>15</sup>

- ▶ **Purpose:** PDA - Industrial, office, and business redevelopment
- ▶ **Future Action:** Development in accordance with existing zoning and continued use of the existing deep-water port.

### National Grid Property [273-04]

- ▶ **Purpose:** PDA - Business development
- ▶ **Future Action:** Development in accordance with existing zoning.

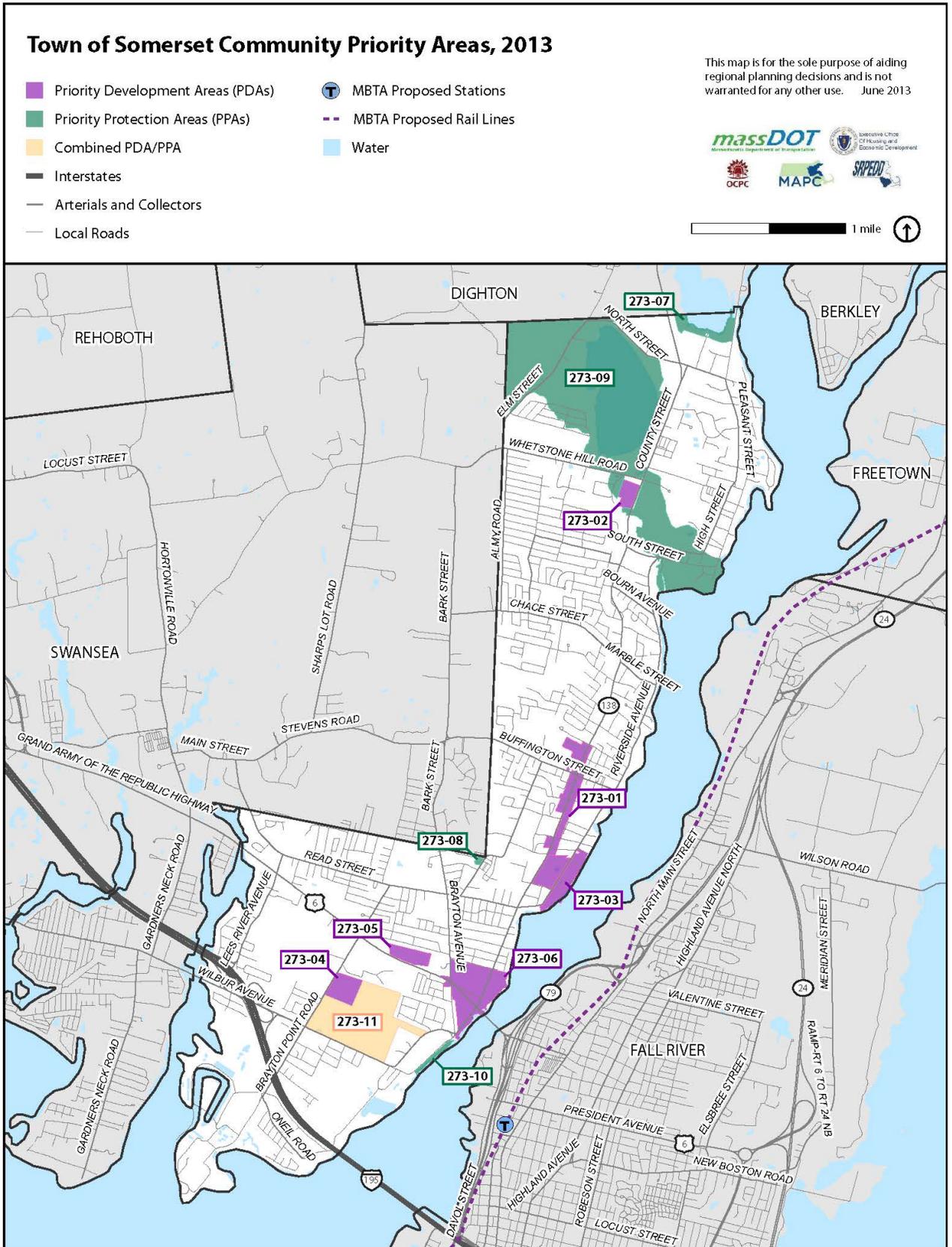
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<sup>13</sup> South Coast Rail Corridor Plan Five-Year Update of Community Priority Areas, Somerset, 2013

<sup>14</sup> PDAs are areas that are appropriate for increased development or redevelopment due to several factors including good transportation access, available infrastructure, an absence of environmental constraints, and local support. PPAs are areas that are important to protect due to the presence of significant natural or cultural resources, including endangered species habitats, areas critical to water supply, historic resources, scenic vistas, and farms.

<sup>15</sup> The site contains an Economic Opportunity Area (EOA). The Economic Opportunity Area Credit (EOAC) is one of the key components of the Economic Development Incentive Program (EDIP). The Massachusetts Office of Business Development manages the EOAC. The EDIP was designed to stimulate job creation in distressed areas, attract new businesses, encourage business expansion, and increase overall economic development in Massachusetts.

Map 5 Priority Development Areas and Priority Protection Areas in Somerset, 2013



#### Route 6 Limited Business District [273-05]

- ▶ **Purpose:** PDA - Business development
- ▶ **Future Action:** Development in accordance with existing zoning.

#### Slade's Ferry Crossing [273-06]

- ▶ **Purpose:** PDA - Mixed-use redevelopment
- ▶ **Future Action:** Development in accordance with the recently adopted (2013) Slade's Ferry Crossing Mixed-Use Overlay District.

#### Broad Cove Passive Recreation [273-07]

- ▶ **Purpose:** PPA - Resource area protection and future development of a public boardwalk.
- ▶ **Future Action:** Continue to investigate and encourage land protection measures and pursue funding for and development of the boardwalk.

#### Quaker Meeting Historic Register [273-08]

- ▶ **Purpose:** PPA - Historic property protection and reinforcing efforts to include it on both the State and National Historic Registers
- ▶ **Future Action:** Continue the process of listing this property on State and Federal Historic Registers.

#### Water Resource Protection [273-09]

- ▶ **Purpose:** PPA - Water resources protection, including Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) Outstanding Resource Waters and High- and Medium-Yield Aquifers
- ▶ **Future Action:** Continue to investigate and encourage land protection measures.

#### Waterfront Multi-Use Path [273-10]

- ▶ **Purpose:** PPA - Use of waterfront parcels for a multi-use path
- ▶ **Future Action:** Pursue funding for and development of the boardwalk.

#### Town-Owned Wilbur Avenue [273-11]

In addition to the above listed PDAs and PPAs, there was one Combined Priority Development and Priority Protection Area (Combined Area) identified. In a Combined Area, developments are welcomed by the community, but are also expected to be sensitive to the surrounding context. The Somerset Combined Area is located at the Town-owned Wilbur Avenue parcel (see **Map 5**, Priority Area [273-11]), with the primary purpose of alternative energy development, particularly solar fields, at the time of the study. However, the actual use of this Town-owned property will need to be further explored as it is considered a priority site with great development potential.

The Brayton Point Power Plant site was still in active industrial use at the time of the SRPEDD study updated in 2013 and hence was not listed as a priority development area. However, with the power plant now closed and redevelopment opportunities being explored, the Town is considering working with SRPEDD to add the Brayton Point site as a Priority Development Area to further spur redevelopment.

## Issues and Opportunities

### Approaching Build-Out

As a suburban community, Somerset is highly developed relative to its neighboring towns, such as Dighton and Swansea, due to its long history of commercial and industrial activity and concurrent residential settlement. In a 2000 state-wide planning effort sponsored by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, SRPEDD prepared a build-out analysis for the Town of Somerset to evaluate the potential maximum amount of development allowed under the zoning regulations at that time.<sup>16</sup> The analysis projected a capacity for approximately 1,157 additional acres of land to be developed throughout the Town, with an associated build-out population projection of 22,281 and household projection of 9,269.<sup>17</sup> In addition, the 2016 Regional Transportation Plan completed by SRPEDD provided updated population and households projections for Somerset into 2040.<sup>18</sup>

**Table 1-3 Population and Household Projections for Somerset**

	2016 Baseline	2040 Projection	Build-Out Projection
Population	18,279	19,107	22,281
Households	6,935	7,616	9,269

Source: 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, SRPEDD projections

As seen in **Table 1-3**, Somerset is projected to gradually approach the full build-out scenario over the next 20 to 40 years. The existing land use pattern analysis in this Master Plan also suggests a limited amount of developable land left in the community, either privately or publicly held. Given these constraints, the Town will need to rethink sustainable land use strategies moving forward, to meet growth and development demands while balancing community needs for open space, conservation, and recreational areas. Priorities should be given to enabling better and higher uses of already developed sites. This could include practices such as repurposing existing structures to the extent feasible, encouraging greater densities where appropriate, and reorienting site uses as market demands. New developments on open land should be mindfully planned and

<sup>16</sup> Somerset Build-out Analysis, Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District and the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs Community Preservation Initiative, 2000

<sup>17</sup> It is important to note that the SRPEDD build-out analysis did not incorporate existing parcel boundaries, therefore the project build-out capacity may well exceed the actual level of development. It represents a way to estimate growth potential.

<sup>18</sup> Traveling into the Future – Destination 2040, 2016 Regional Transportation Plan, SRPEDD, Amended August 21, 2018

designed to be environmentally sensitive, economically viable, and flexible in the long-term.

## Revitalize Commercial and Industrial Areas

In relation to the prospect of approaching full build-out, a significant effort will be needed to revitalize the town's major commercial areas and industrial sites, which are either underutilized or currently vacant, particularly the Slade's Ferry Crossing area and Indian Spring Plaza. Efforts to repurpose the two former power plant sites at Montaup and Brayton Point will also be necessary.

Successful redevelopment depends on synchronized collaboration and partnerships at many levels. It requires a deep understanding of local and regional market demands and opportunities to launch a targeted marketing/branding process. Private developers need to be actively engaged to not only convey the community and regional needs for new businesses and services, but also help the Town understand any potential roadblocks to development. Zoning bylaws in these areas should be carefully examined to ensure that the desired development type, design, visual appeal, and density is enhanced and encouraged. Permitting processes should also be more streamlined and conducive to well-planned developments.

## Beautifying the Town Center

Beautifying the town center is a matter of community pride. During the visioning exercise at the first Master Plan public meeting, participants generally expressed strong desire to see improvements in the town center area along County Street. Many emphasized the lack of overall attractiveness of the area and were concerned about the poor aesthetics of signage, while others wished for more quaint shops and restaurants that would make it a more vibrant town center and a destination for residents and visitors.

When asked about what their visions are for the town center, many residents, including high school students, desired to see a picturesque, vibrant downtown that may resemble Bristol or Barrington, Rhode Island. The downtown areas of these two particular communities share one common characteristic: an intimate and pedestrian-friendly streetscape formed by beautifully landscaped, tree-lined streets and well-designed buildings and signage with storefronts closely aligning the street edges. The absence of storefront parking lots allows the buildings to be in close proximity to the sidewalks and streets, creating a human-scale street envelope that is both pleasant and interesting. Shade trees and landscaping along the street help weave nature into the streetscape, further enhancing the welcoming atmosphere of a downtown district. In addition, higher development densities, a vibrant and diverse array of businesses, as well as mixed uses are also key factors to their successes.

While these characteristics are currently lacking in Somerset's town center, many options could be explored to revitalize and beautify it. Zoning and signage bylaws should be re-examined to identify any gaps and mismatches between what is currently allowed and what is desired. The Town could explore the possibility of developing design guidelines and/or integrating form-based codes into zoning amendments as part of this effort, as

these planning tools are typically more effective and predictable in shaping the type, style, and appearance of developments in a cohesive way compare to conventional zoning.

## Goals and Recommendations

**Goal LU1: Reinforce the Center of Town as the community’s central gathering area by creating a cohesive and welcoming appearance, promoting an active public realm and a sense of place, and stimulating a renewed economic vitality.**

- LU1-1 Develop a Design Guideline for the County Street commercial corridor to regulate and facilitate improvements to the physical characteristics of the Center of Town.
- LU1-2 Conduct a visual preference survey with the community to further determine the desired types and appearances of developments in the Center of Town, while keeping market demands in consideration.
- LU1-3 Develop and adopt an updated sign bylaw for the County Street commercial corridor to ensure aesthetics and consistency of commercial signs.
- LU1-4 Explore opportunities to reconfigure the Town Common triangle, e.g., roadway alignment, circulation, landscape design, lighting, etc., to improve prominence and functionality.
- LU1-5 Seek state funding support to pursue corridor wide streetscape improvements along Route 138, e.g., adding shade trees, seating, planters, ornamental light poles, and burying utilities, etc. in an effort to enhance placemaking and promote pedestrian activities in the Center of Town. Potential funding sources include the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) funding for streetscape elements and lighting, and MassWorks Infrastructure grants for utility burial. More information on transportation funding resources is presented under the Transportation element.
- LU1-6 Identify opportunity site(s) for redevelopment and actively support and collaborate with the owner and/or developer in achieving desired redevelopment scenarios to serve as a catalyst for corridor revitalization.

**Goal LU2: Prioritize the revitalization and redevelopment of key commercial and industrial sites/areas, particularly stagnant and/or underutilized areas, to catalyze strategic growth, provide public benefits, and sustain a healthy local economy. Additional specific economic development strategies are presented under the Economic Development element.**

- LU2-1 Work with the Massachusetts Office of Housing and Economic Development and the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD) to designate the Brayton Point Power Plant site as a Priority Development Area to stimulate marketing and funding opportunities for redevelopment
- LU2-2 Build and strengthen the public-private partnership with the Brayton Point Commerce Center developer and seek opportunities for inclusion of public amenities on or near the site, while striving to offer streamlined permitting and/or enhanced municipal services.
- LU2-3 Maintain a collaborative relationship with the owner of the Montaup Power Plant and seek opportunities to introduce redevelopment resources, e.g., EPA Brownfields Grant Funding, the state Brownfields Covenant Not to Sue Program, etc., and foster redevelopment partnerships with regional, state and/or federal entities.
- LU2-4 Foster collaborations among key stakeholders, e.g., the Town, the Slade’s Ferry Redevelopment Committee, MassDOT, landowners and developers, to advance area redevelopment guided by the Slade’s Ferry Crossing District Vision 2010 Concept Plan (2013) and Market Feasibility Analysis (2015).
- LU2-5 Pursue funding opportunities to design and construct waterfront public amenities to enhance widely distributed water access and boost recreational activities along the Towns coast , including the Slade’s Ferry area and the Village historic area as a means to facilitate and catalyze redevelopment interests and activities.
- LU2-6 Consider opting into the Massachusetts Chapter 43D Expedited Local Permitting program to facilitate economic development for the Wilbur Avenue parcel and take advantage of state funding and technical assistance resources.

**Goal LU3: Preserve and enhance the Town’s unique neighborhoods, rich historic and cultural heritage, and valuable open space and coastal resources.**

- LU3-1 Monitor and review permitting activities to ensure development is consistent with and help enhance existing neighborhood character, and to determine whether the current zoning bylaw is conducive to such developments.

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- LU3-2 Promote maintenance and rehabilitation of the town’s existing housing stock as a critical path towards preserving and enhancing neighborhood characters. (Specific strategies are presented under the Housing element.)

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- LU3-3 Continue to enforce zoning requirements for landscaped buffers or screening where industrial uses abutting residential or commercial uses to enhance visual appearance.

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- LU3-4 Embrace the opportunities associated with the National Register of Historic District for the Village to advance historic resource preservation through wayfinding improvements, branding/marketing, rehabilitation, and events programming. (Specific strategies are presented under the Natural, Cultural, and Historic Resources element.)

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- LU3-5 Promote land use and development practices towards preserving and enhancing the town’s valuable open space and coastal resources, public or private, through town-acquisition, zoning or deed restriction, and enrollment in voluntary preservation tax incentives programs.

**Goal LU4: Ensure the Town’s regulatory framework supports and facilitates sustainable land development and preservation practices in a coherent manner towards achieving the long-term community vision.**

- LU4-1 Consider codifying the Town’s bylaws, including the zoning ordinances, to improve bylaw organization, enhance government efficiency and ease of enforcement, and make it user-friendly towards the public.

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- LU4-2 Review the town’s permitting procedure to identify obstacles to more effective and streamlined permitting process in an effort to improve permitting efficiency and promote community development and growth.

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- LU4-3 Conduct a comprehensive zoning diagnostic to identify barriers to achieving desired development patterns and economic growth outcomes due to inconsistent and/or outdated codes.

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- LU4-4 Systematically rewrite the zoning ordinance and update the zoning map to address issues identified through the Master Plan process and the zoning diagnostic, with primary goals of encouraging desired development outcomes, and improving the cohesiveness and ease of use of the zoning. Preliminary considerations include:
  - LU4-4a Diversify the town’s residential and business zoning districts to differentiate functionality and regulate uses and physical forms accordingly. For example, consider creating new residential districts to encourage more diverse housing developments (as discussed under the Housing element), and creating new, or amend existing, business districts to incorporate desired types of industries, as well as massing and parking regulations to meet current industry standard (as discussed under the Economic Development element).

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  - LU4-4b Reduce building setback from sidewalk and modify parking requirements in the Center of Town/County Street commercial corridor, either by reducing required parking per use, or encouraging shared parking among uses, and/or requiring parking behind buildings, in an effort to create a traditional New England downtown environment desired by the residents.

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  - LU4-4c Amend zoning for the Route 6 corridor to ensure sustainable growth and assess parking and access management in order to create a cohesive business corridor.

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  - LU4-4d Increase the number of residential units per acre allowed for mixed-use development to make these types of commercial/residential development more viable and appealing to developers.

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  - LU4-4e Consider allowing mixed-use development in all of the town’s business districts, either by-right or by Special Permit, to build the community capacity and increase the overall bulk and density standards to allow for more diverse and affordable housing to be created.

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  - LU4-4f Incorporate and promote smart growth zoning tools, such as Inclusionary Zoning and Accessory Dwelling Unit, to facilitate affordable housing development in town, as discussed under the Housing element.

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  - LU4-4g Modify zoning to encourage sustainable industrial and commercial investment above the long-term expected flood and inundation zones, with consideration of the transportation needs of industrial and commerce as low-lying roads come under threat.

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  - LU4-4h Replace the existing Planned Development with a new and improved Site Plan Review process, which would include a wider array of departments key for coordinating the best outcome.

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  - LU4-4i Ensure the updated zoning bylaw and map are well-structured, easy to follow, and internally consistent.

# Economic Development

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## Introduction

Somerset is in the South Coast region of Massachusetts. The region's economy has been undergoing a slow shift in the last few decades from manufacturing to retail trade and services. Generally, the region lags the state in certain economic indicators, including employment and income.

Like the region, Somerset is facing its own economic shift, particularly with the closing of two of its largest employment centers, the Montaup and Brayton Point Power Plants. These closings, along with the larger regional trends, have positioned Somerset to reevaluate its economic development strategy, leverage its assets, including its significant waterfront area, and pave the way for future job growth and economic vibrancy.

## Baseline Conditions Analyses

### Income

Median household income in Somerset is \$77,278, which is comparable to the median household income of \$77,518 in Massachusetts and higher than the median household income of \$63,131 in Bristol County. Income in Somerset is expected to grow 9.4 percent by the year 2023.<sup>19</sup>

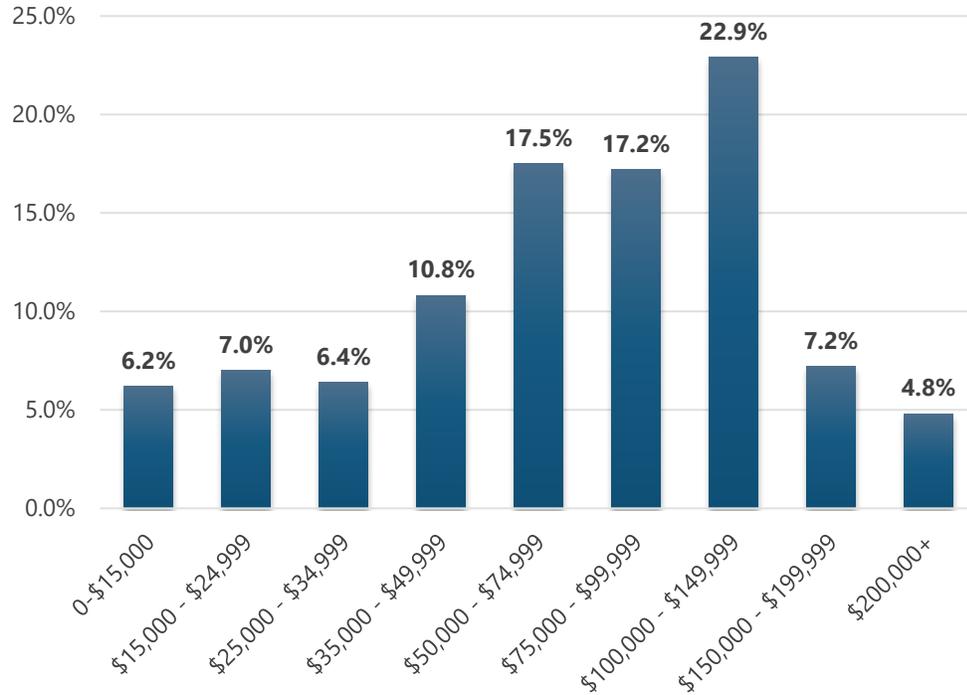
**Figure 2-1** below shows the household income distribution for Somerset in 2018. As shown, almost 35 percent of households have an income of between \$50,000 and \$99,999

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<sup>19</sup> ESRI Business Analyst Online, 2018

and approximately 23 percent make between \$100,000 and \$149,999. The poverty rate in Somerset is 8.0 percent.

Figure 2-1 2018 Household Income Distribution



Source: U.S. Census 2010, ESRI forecasts for 2018 and 2023

Approximately 6 percent of the civilian working population in Somerset is unemployed.<sup>20</sup> In general, the South Coast has had a higher unemployment rate than Massachusetts over the past decade.<sup>21</sup>

## Somerset Businesses and Employment

The business landscape in Somerset has been shifting since 2005, when the Town's last Master Plan was published. **Table 2-1** below compares the number of Somerset businesses and employees by industry in 2005 and 2018. As shown, the number of employees in industries such as construction and manufacturing have decreased, while the number of employees in the retail trade and services industries have increased significantly. Together, the retail trade and services industries employ over half of the employees in Somerset.

<sup>20</sup> ESRI Somerset Community Profile, 2018

<sup>21</sup> SRPEDD Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, 2017, Page 22

Table 2-1 Somerset Businesses and Employees, 2005 and 2018

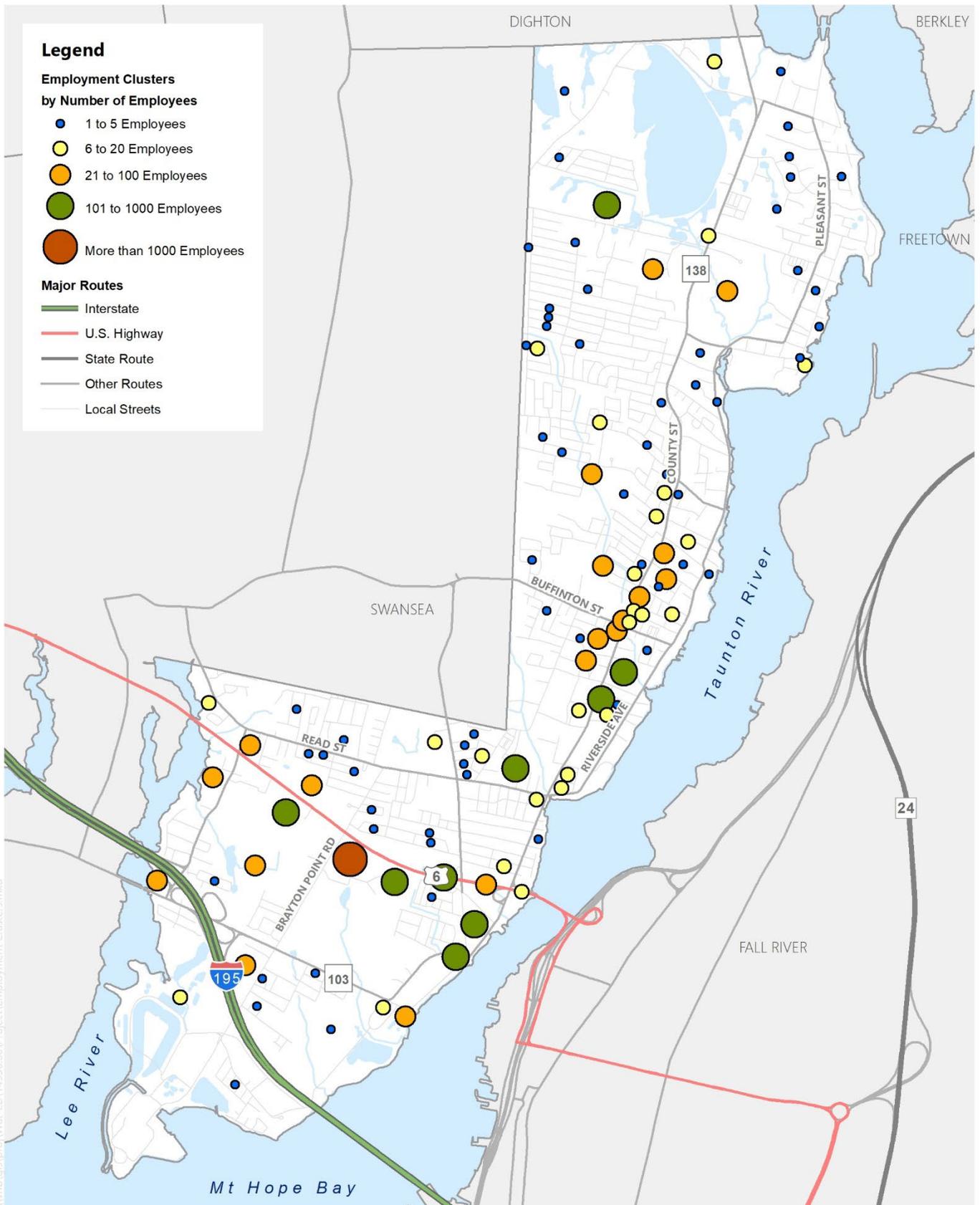
	2005		2018		% Change
	Businesses	Employees	Businesses	Employees	Employees
Agriculture and Mining	n/a	n/a	7	28	n/a
Construction	21	295	32	109	- 63.1%
Manufacturing	17	617	13	165	- 73.3%
Transportation	10	110	8	142	29.1%
Communication	3	30	5	47	56.7%
Utility	3	374	3	338	- 9.6%
Wholesale Trade	17	123	15	73	- 40.7%
Retail Trade	118	1,668	137	2,277	36.5%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	34	343	45	248	- 27.7%
Services Industry	146	1,506	194	1,985	31.8%
Government	21	167	22	181	8.4%
Misc.	n/a	n/a	17	55	n/a
Total	390	5,233	498	5,648	7.9%

Source: Copyright 2018 Infogroup, Inc. All rights reserved. Esri Total Residential Population forecasts for 2018; Somerset Master Plan: Existing Conditions and Trends, December 2006

Some of the Town’s most significant local employers include retail stores and medical businesses such as the Home Depot and Stop & Shop, and healthcare groups including the Clifton Outpatient Rehab Clinic and Assisted Living Community and the Somerset Ridge Center. Certain manufacturing and construction-related companies still employ significant numbers in Somerset, including Horner Millworks, Fortier Boats, Gladding-Hearn Shipbuilding, and Fisher Bus, Inc.

Businesses in Somerset are concentrated in five different business districts:

- ▶ Indian Springs Plaza along County Street (Route 138).
- ▶ The County Street Business District, which runs from Riverside Avenue to Town Hall further south along County Street/Route 138. This is the Town’s primary commercial corridor, which is sometimes referred to as the town center. This area includes the Montaup site.
- ▶ Slade’s Ferry Crossing along County Street/Route 138 between Newhill Avenue and Slade’s Ferry Boulevard.
- ▶ Route 6, which runs east to west from the Taunton River to the Swansea town line.
- ▶ Wilbur/Brayton Point Road.



\\vhb\gis\proj\Wat\_LD\14336.00\Project\Employment Clusters.mxd



Town of Somerset Master Plan

Somerset, MA

Source: MassGIS, MA Labor and Workforce Development, US Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics

### Employment Clusters

**Map 6** shows the employment clusters in Somerset, which overlap with the business districts listed above. As shown, businesses are generally concentrated along County Street and Route 6.

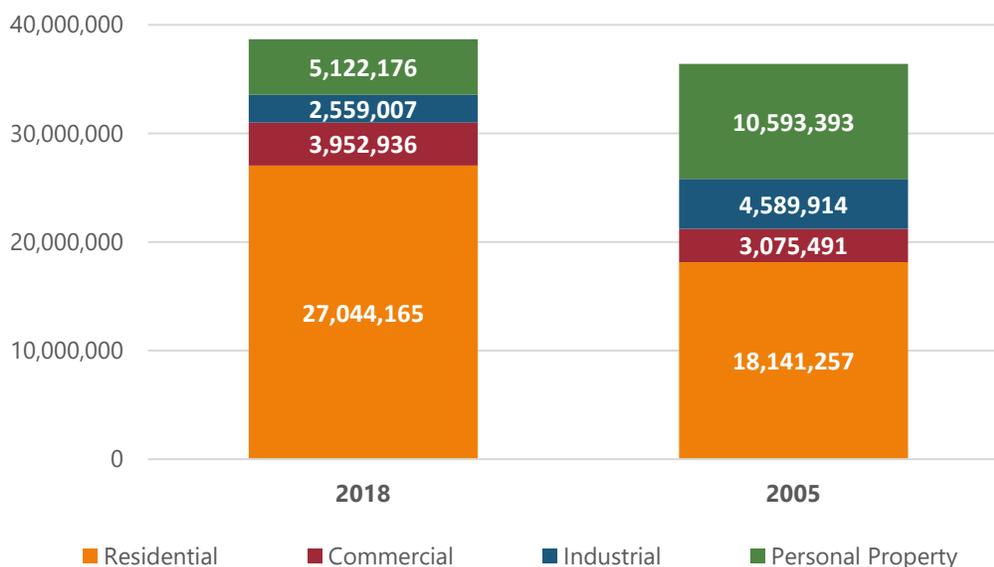
Slade’s Ferry Crossing is the Town’s waterfront business district, which was once centrally located along Route 6. The construction of the Veteran’s Memorial Bridge to the north provided a significant impediment to the success of the district due to a dramatic decrease in traffic past the Slade’s Ferry area. In response, Somerset rezoned the area to allow for increased density and commissioned a concept plan of how the district could be redeveloped, capitalizing on its biggest asset, the waterfront. The concept plan envisions a mixed-use district with residential, office, retail, and hotel uses along with many open space amenities, including a waterfront promenade, a town square, and sports fields. A market analysis completed by Stantec in 2015 showed there is potential to create a viable mixed-use district at Slade’s Ferry Crossing.

Somerset has a significant area of waterfront along the Taunton River, Mount Hope Bay, and the Lee’s River. However, residents and other stakeholders believe this potential asset is underutilized and could be further developed to draw visitors to Somerset and support businesses.

## Somerset Taxes

The total real estate and personal property tax levy for Somerset was \$38,678,284 in 2018, up from \$36,400,055 in 2005. **Figure 2-2** shows the breakdown of the tax levy by tax classification. As shown, the breakdown has shifted since 2005, with residential and commercial taxes composing a greater percentage of the total, and industrial and personal property taxes decreasing. This reflects an increase in both the residential and commercial property tax rates in recent years.

**Figure 2-2 Somerset Tax Levy, 2005 and 2018**



Source: MA Department of Revenue

Within the timeframe from 2005 to 2018, two large employment centers, the Montaup and Brayton Point Power Plants, shut down (in 2010 and 2017, respectively). These closures have had a significant impact on annual revenue for the Town, as well as the loss of nearly 350 jobs. Currently, the Town receives grants from the State to help offset the impacts of these power plant closures. In 2018, the offset was \$3.6 million.

These two large properties, however, provide some opportunities for future growth in Somerset. See the discussion of Industrial Uses under the Land Use and Development Patterns Element above for more information on the history of assessing and actualizing their redevelopment potential.

## Economic Development Policies

### Economic Opportunity Zones

The Economic Opportunity Zones program was enacted as part of the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act to promote economic development in low-income areas. The program encourages investors to invest unrealized capital gains into “Opportunity Funds” dedicated for investment in designated zones.

The southern half of the Town was designated an Economic Opportunity Zone as part of this program, generally including the area south of Buffinton Street. This designation is likely to give Somerset a competitive advantage over areas nearby in terms of attracting investment.

### South Coast Rail Corridor Plan Community Priority Area Five-Year Update

In 2013, SRPEDD completed its South Coast Rail Corridor Plan Community Priority Area Five-Year Update, in which several districts were identified as areas appropriate for future development (PDAs), and others were categorized as areas to be protected (PPAs). Criteria for PDAs included good transportation access, available infrastructure, the absence of environmental constraints, and local support. Of the six Somerset business districts, five were identified as PDAs, including Indian Springs Plaza, Slade’s Ferry Crossing, the County Street Business District, and portions of the Wilbur/Brayton Point Road and Route 6 districts. More details are available in the Land Use and Development Patterns Element of this Master Plan.

### Town Priorities

The Town has reevaluated and identified key areas and sites to focus its economic development efforts and they include:

- ▶ Route 6 Commercial Corridor
- ▶ Wilbur Avenue/Waterfront Industrial Area
- ▶ Brayton Point
- ▶ Slade’s Ferry Crossing

- ▶ Montaup
- ▶ Route 138 North (Indian Springs Plaza)
- ▶ Route 138 South (town center)
- ▶ Somerset Village/Main Street

## Issues and Opportunities

### Redevelopment of Vacant or Underutilized Sites in the Business Districts Through Strategic Development Planning

There are a number of commercial and industrial properties that are either vacant or underutilized such as the Montaup and Brayton Point sites as well as Slade's Ferry Crossing. In addition, there are other properties within the business districts that are underutilized or vacant. Repurposing/redeveloping these properties would provide additional tax base, customers (through residents or employees), and vibrancy to the business districts. Redevelopment of these sites is a goal of this Master Plan that would not only help the local economy, but it will assist in sustaining and retaining the local businesses.

### Revise Zoning to Provide for Additional Uses

The current zoning for the different business districts is limited in its flexibility and ability to change with changing market conditions. Further it separates commercial and residential uses with mixed-use only being allowed by an overly district. The bulk requirements of the overlay are limiting, which further discourages that use. Zoning changes will be required to help provide the flexibility to adapt to changing markets within the business sector.

### Develop Business Friendly Initiatives

An important component of attracting new businesses is to showcase the town's assets to potential businesses. Successful branding and community building will help increase publicity for the town and developing a business-friendly framework helps promote the town as a strong business supporter and partner.

## Create New Opportunities to Increase Commercial Tax Base, Customer Base, and Employment Through Business Retention and Expansion

As a result of Somerset's business districts being in six different areas within the town, the districts are segmented. This prevents cohesiveness amongst the districts. Somerset is home to a wide variety of thriving businesses that provide integral goods and services to the town's residents and residents from the surrounding communities. It is critical for Somerset to retain, support, and strengthen these businesses for the good of the broader community. While the businesses located within the various districts are an integral part of the local economy, many are industrial businesses or provide services primarily to the local community and do not draw many customers from outside the town. Recent closures of the Montaup and Brayton Point sites affected the commercial tax base and employment opportunities. As a result, the expansion of commercial tax base, customer base, and additional employment opportunities is a goal of this Master Plan.

### Goals and Recommendations

**Goal ED1: Retain existing businesses.** The Town currently has several businesses that provide integral services to the Town's residents, surrounding communities and other businesses. This stability in the workforce will reinforce that Somerset is a Town worth investing in.

ED1-1 Become a resource for the small businesses by understanding these programs and their potential to assist small businesses.

ED1-2 Support the expansion of current businesses with the assistance of the Town's Planning Department. The Planning Department should become the point of contact for all existing businesses looking to expand by streamlining the process to help businesses understand and navigate the development approval process until the time they are ready to pull a building permit.

**Goal ED2: Expand businesses based on strengths and expand the tax base through the creation of new business and market sectors. The Town's many strengths, as well as current regional market conditions, will drive the identification of the businesses and industries that would be beneficial to strengthening Somerset's tax base and helping to offset the residential tax burden.**

ED2-1 Plan for and support the expansion of the following industries and other businesses through implementation of active recruitment and zoning changes as necessary:

- Health care,
- Marine-dependent businesses,
- Restaurants, bars and taverns, and
- Modern manufacturing

ED2-2 Develop and execute a tourism program based on the Town's unique experiences, the waterfront, history, sites, or events to increase the local economy by bringing in money from outside of the local community, while at the same time improving retail and cultural experiences of local residents.

ED2-3 Focus energies on helping expand industries that have high tax and low impact developments such as manufacturing, energy, back offices, data centers, or other similar industries. Potential strategies include tax incentives, grant programs, industry recruitment, marketing, and expedited permitting, etc.

**Goal ED3: Develop successful branding and community building to showcase the Town’s assets and opportunities.**

ED3-1 Look towards developing a branding program that would not only demonstrate it is open for business but coincide with efforts to increase tourism.

ED3-2 Continue to support key community events.

ED3-3 Create a plan that is designed to increase, investment in the community, tourism and community building.

ED3-4 Identify and develop visual improvement programs or guidelines to help strengthen the visual appeal of the Town’s business districts.

ED3-4 Investigate grants or other sources of funding to develop a façade improvement program.

**Goal ED4: Unlock the development potential in existing business corridors and clusters. The Somerset Economic Development Plan identified eight sites/areas to focus economic development efforts. They include: Route 6 Commercial Corridor, Wilbur Avenue Property, Maritime Development District, Slade’s Ferry Mixed-Use Area, Montaup Site, Route 138 South (Center of Town), Route 138 North (Indian Springs), and the Village. Strategic plans for these sites will ensure that they are developed in a manner than benefits the Town and its residents. See map on next page for locations of these business areas.**

ED4-1 Conduct market/feasibility analysis and advance a development concept plan for the Town-owned Wilbur Avenue parcel. Consider zoning amendment as appropriate to enable desired mix of uses and building form and massing for this site.

ED4-2 Actively engage in and support the redevelopment of the Brayton Point Commerce Center at the local and state level to stimulate local economy and growth. Encourage complementary industries and services in business zones outside of, but economically linked to, Brayton Point Commerce Center.

ED4-3 Conduct analysis and outreach to understand market potential and development interests for the Indian Spring Plaza commercial area and other sites. Examine and update zoning accordingly to ensure desired redevelopment types are enabled.

ED4-4 Take advantage of the Department of Housing and Community Development’s Massachusetts Downtown Initiative that provides services and technical assistance to communities on revitalizing their downtowns.

ED4-5 Seek to redevelop the multiple underutilized or vacant parcels in the Maritime Development District for commercial or industrial redevelopment that can tie into the existing cluster and take advantage of the site’s marine and land accessibility.

ED4-6 Explore ways to catalyze development in Slade’s Ferry District, including investment in the streetscape and public realm, encouraging businesses to improve the look and feel of their establishments, and achieving a greater consistency of signage and wayfinding.

ED4-7 While the Village is almost entirely developed, the Town should focus on preserving historic structures where appropriate, branding the history through signage and wayfinding, and incentivizing strategic infill where possible.

ED4-8 Cooperate regionally to improve multi-modal links between businesses in Somerset and major regional transportation systems.

ED4-9 Cooperate regionally to improve telecommunication systems.

**Goal ED5: Develop a framework where the Town establishes itself to be business friendly.**

ED5-1 Create a pamphlet that provides an overview of the land development approval process. In addition to describing the approval process, the pamphlet could provide frequently asked questions for businesses from various departments such as the Planning, Building, Conservation, Highway, and Water and Sewer

ED5-2 Conduct a comprehensive update or rewrite of the Town’s Zoning Bylaw to ensure desired business sectors and development types are encouraged at appropriate locations, as discussed under goals ED1 through ED5. More specific zoning recommendations are presented under the Land Use element.

ED5-3 Streamline permitting process to ensure business expansion and/or growth of new business sectors are encouraged and expedited when possible.

**Somerset Proud**

- ED5-4 Become knowledgeable about local, state and federal business incentive programs and help new businesses and developers to use these programs and incentives to promote investment and growth.

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- ED5-5 Give public recognition and/or monetary incentives to businesses who maintain and beautify their properties and/or make other contributions to the quality of life in town.

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- ED5-6 Create and make available a property owner guide on low-cost, high-impact practices and techniques towards commercial property improvements.

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- ED5-7 Build relationship and coordinate with other towns in the South Coast region to promote Somerset as business friendly in the region.

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# Housing

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# 3

## Introduction

Since the mid-1990's, housing has become a major issue in southeastern Massachusetts, where housing demand and high prices have been driven up by low mortgage rates and low availability. The housing crisis over the past decade further resulted in dramatic challenges to maintaining home values and homeownership across the nation, particularly in suburban areas. The more recent post-crisis housing market in the region began to favor the construction of large, expensive single-family homes, which is partly attributable to transit improvements, expansion of large businesses, construction costs, and the migration of more affluent families from the inner suburbs to semi-suburbs and more rural communities. However, this trend is not prevalent in Somerset as the town's housing market continues to be largely modest over the years.



Historic Homes on Main Street

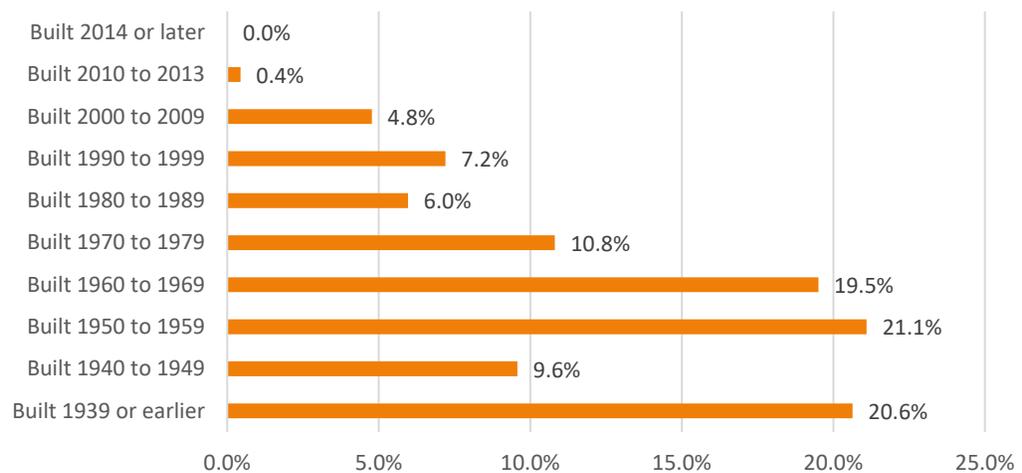
As discussed in the Land Use and Development Patterns Element of this Master Plan, housing is the most prevalent developed land use in Somerset, accounting for nearly half of the town’s entire area. The conditions of the town’s housing stock or supply, along with its cost and availability, are among the most critical components that together define the character of the community. While the types, availability, and costs of housing are not equally distributed within the town, it is critical to identify and bridge gaps between housing demand and supply in order to ensure all residents – current and future – have access to quality and affordable housing options throughout the various stages of their lives. The Housing Element of this Master Plan focuses on three important aspects of housing in Somerset, including the overall conditions of the housing stock, the changing demographics and their housing needs, and housing affordability.

## Baseline Conditions Analyses

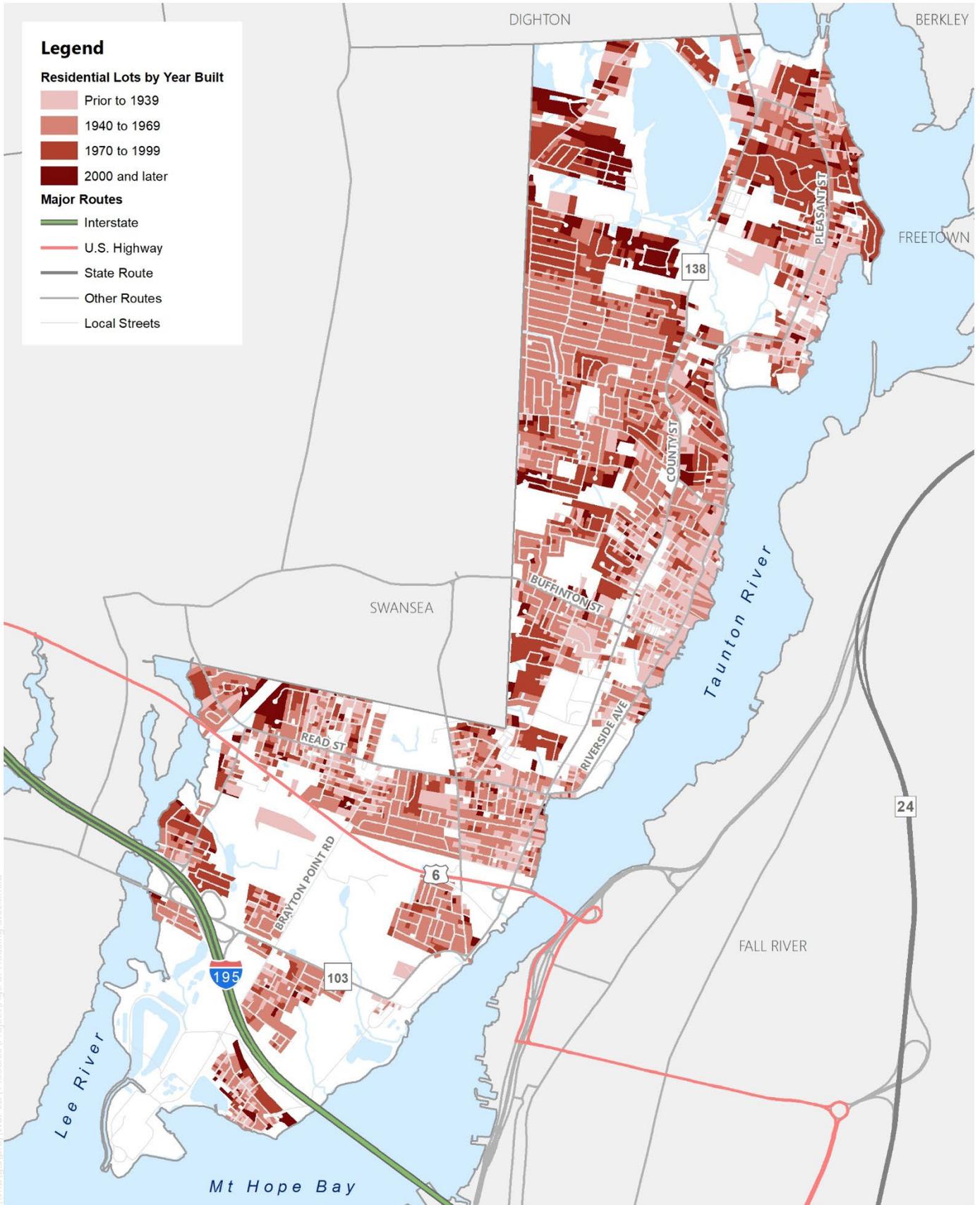
### Housing Supply

Being a long and well-established suburban community, Somerset’s housing supply is faced with issues seen across many historic New England towns, which include the overall aging conditions of the housing stock and the lack of diversity in the types of housing available. According to the 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Somerset had a total of 7,290 housing units in various ages and styles. Slightly over 20 percent of the town’s entire housing stock was constructed prior to 1939. A bulk of the town’s homes, approximately 61 percent, were built between 1940 and 1979. Another 18 percent of the housing stock comprised of homes built between 1980 and 2009. The statistics show a very limited (less than one percent) increase in new housing units constructed since 2010 (see **Figure 3-1**).

**Figure 3-1 Age of Housing Stock**



Source: 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



\\vhb\gis\storage\War-LD\143336.000\Project\Age of Housing Stock.mxd



**Town of Somerset Master Plan** | Somerset, MA

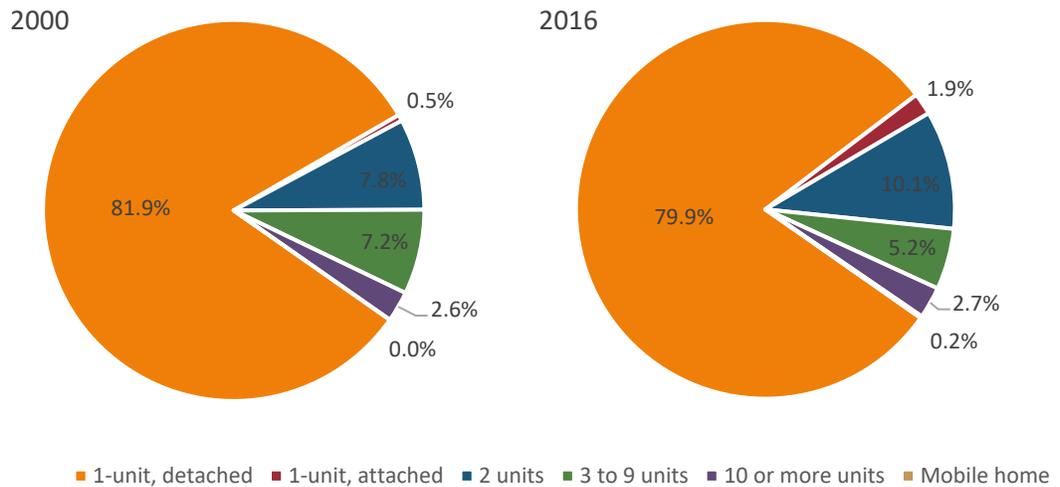
Source: MassGIS, Town of Somerset Assessor's Database

**Age of Housing Stock**

The distribution pattern of the town’s homes shows that neighborhoods consisting of homes built during specific periods tend to cluster (see **Map 7**). This is partly the result of the town’s early settlements that clustered around businesses near the waterfront, but also partly due to the fast-paced suburbanization in the 1960s. As a result, older and more historic homes are widely seen along Main Street and Riverside Avenue, while a large majority of homes built between 1940 and 1970 are located on the west side of County Street and along Brayton Avenue where neighborhood streets are clearly defined by large subdivisions converted from farmland, such as American Terrace - the largest subdivision in Somerset. Newer homes, on the other hand, tend to be in smaller clusters across various parts of the town, primarily in the northern part of the town where more developable land has been available.

In terms of housing types, Somerset’s housing stock is predominantly single-family, which accounts for more than 80 percent of all housing units in town. Two-family homes take up another 10 percent of the housing stock. All other types of housing units combined account for another 10 percent. When compared to 2000 statistics, the town’s two-family housing units have increased by nearly 200 units, while buildings with three to nine housing units have notably decreased by 2 percent (see **Figure 3-2**).

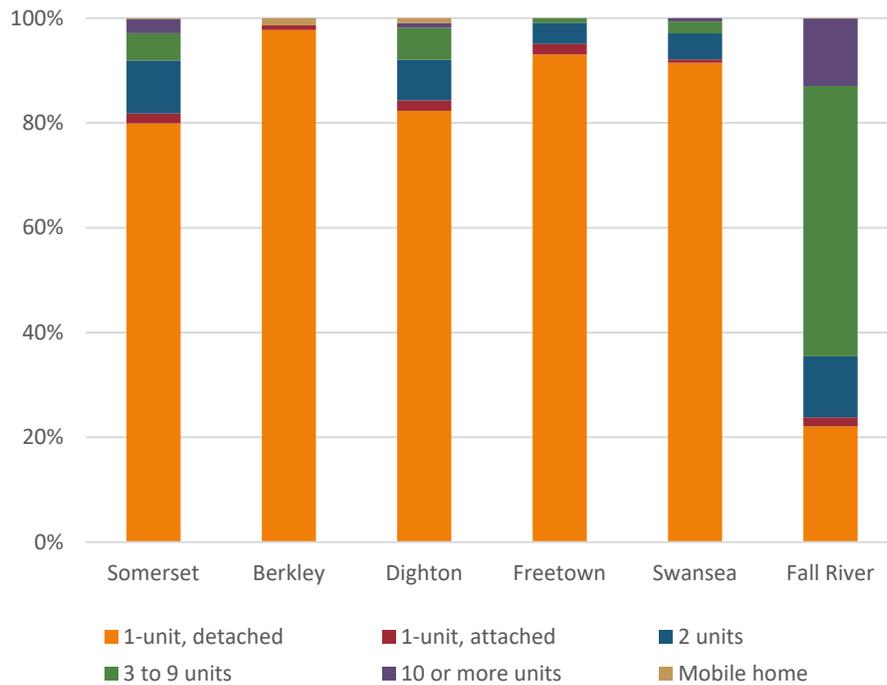
**Figure 3-2 Housing Types by Units in Structure, 2000 and 2016**



Source: 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, U.S. Census 2000

When compared to its neighboring communities with regard to the type of housing, Somerset shares a similar profile with Dighton, in that both towns’ housing supplies are largely dominated by single-family residences, but whose housing supplies also have roughly 10 to 20 percent dedicated to multi-family units. In comparison, Fall River has a much larger supply of higher density multi-unit housing and a smaller percentage of single-family housing, while 98 percent of Berkley’s housing stock are single-family homes (see **Figure 3-3**).

**Figure 3-3 Housing Stock Diversity of Somerset and Neighboring Towns, 2016**

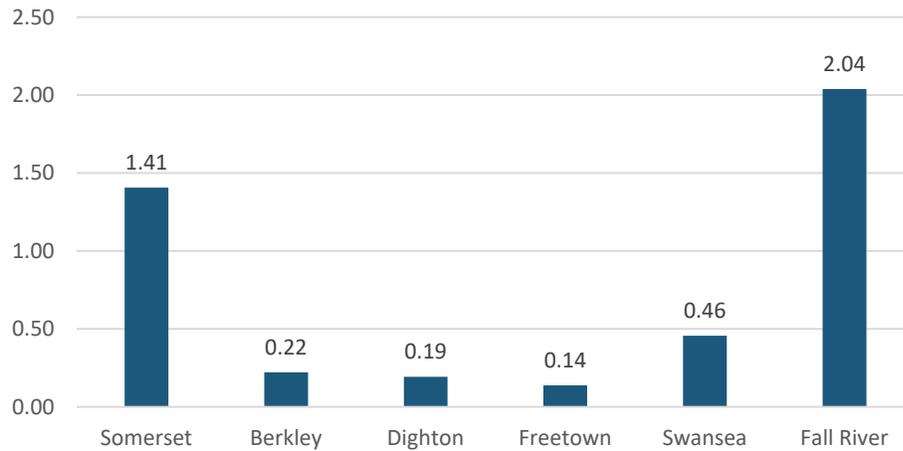


Source: 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

From the perspective of density, however, Somerset arguably shares a similar characteristic of high housing density with the City of Fall River, rather than the other neighboring towns like Dighton or Swansea. While Somerset’s housing density – at 1.41 housing units per acre of land area – is still lower than that of Fall River at 2.04 units per acre, it is much higher than the neighboring Towns of Berkley, Dighton, Freetown, and Swansea, who’s housing density rates are generally below 0.5 units per acre (see **Figure 3-4**).

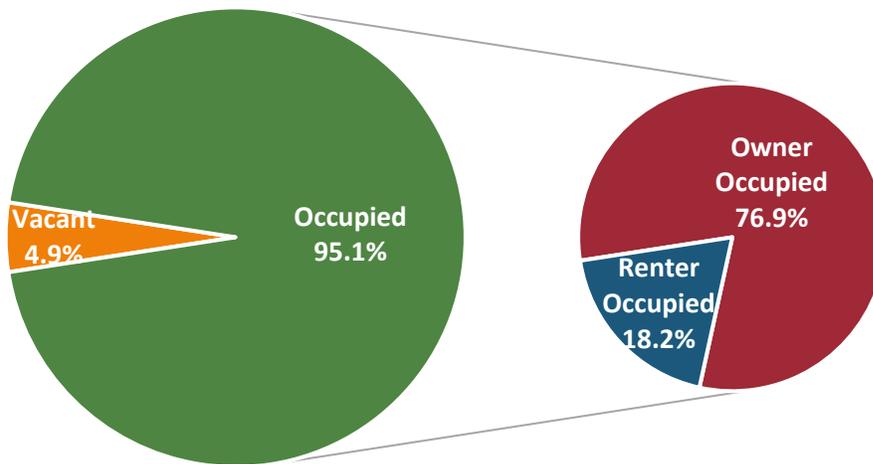
This contrast yet again demonstrates that Somerset is a largely build-out town as compared to its neighboring suburban and rural towns with vast amounts of open land. It also highlights the fact that most Somerset’s residential lots are smaller than that of the neighboring communities. For example, the by-right minimum lot size for a single-family home required by zoning is 20,000 square feet in Somerset, as compared to 35,000 square feet in Dighton and 30,000 square feet in Swansea.

**Figure 3-4 Housing Density by Units per Acre of Land Area**



Source: 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

**Figure 3-5 Housing Units and Occupancy, 2016**



Source: 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

In terms of housing occupancy, the 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates indicate that among all of Somerset’s 7,290 housing units, 6,935 or 95.1 percent, are occupied and the remaining 4.9 percent are vacant (see **Figure 3-5**). This represents a significant increase in the vacancy rate from 2000, when the rate was below 1 percent. Generally, a range of 5 to 7 percent is considered a sufficient vacancy rate to accommodate reasonable housing choices.<sup>22</sup> The increased rate likely indicates that more housing options became available in Somerset over the past decade and that the overall housing supply is largely in balance with demand. **Figure 3-4** also shows that owner-occupied housing units account for roughly 77 percent of all units in Somerset, while renter-occupied units take up roughly 18 percent.

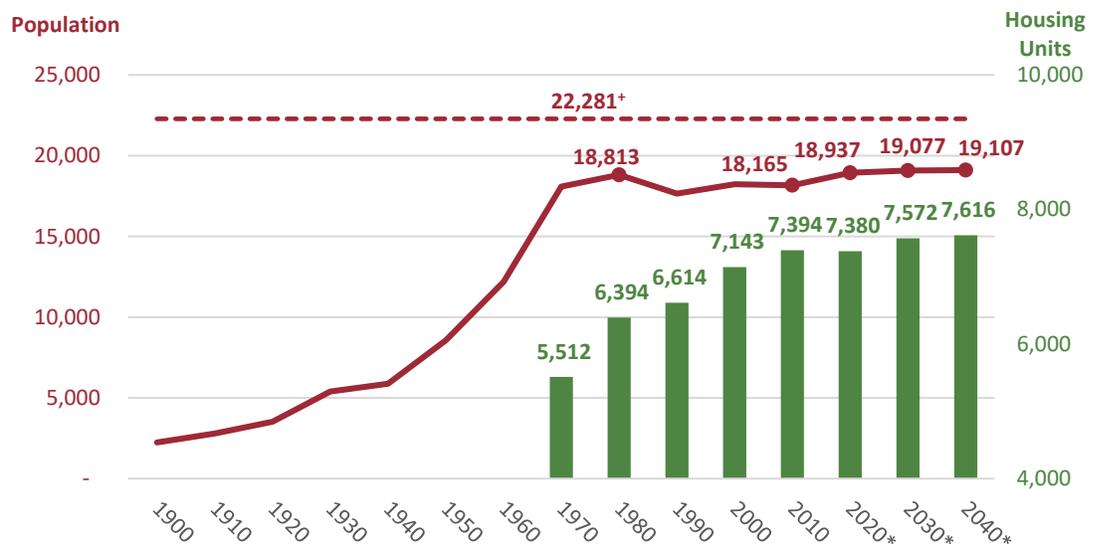
<sup>22</sup> Town of Somerset Master Plan, Volume 1, 2004

## Population and Household Characteristics

### Population Change

As shown in **Figure 3-6**, Somerset experienced rapid population growth throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century due to expansion of its industrial sectors and suburbanization. These trends peaked during the 1980's and have since stabilized as the town approaches full build-out with less land available for new development. According to the latest U.S. decennial census, Somerset had a total population of 18,165 in 2010. This is slightly lower than the population count reported in 2000, 18,234. According to the 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, the town's total population is 18,279, which represents an increase of 114 persons from 2010 and closely resembles its year 2000 level. Over the next 20 years, it is projected by SRPEDD that Somerset's population will remain stable with minor increases. SRPEDD's projection holds that the population will not meet the Town's full build-out capacity of 22,281 people.<sup>23</sup>

**Figure 3-6 Population and Housing Units Change and Projection**



\* SRPEDD 2020-2040 Projection  
+ SRPEDD Build Out Population Projection

Source: U.S. Census, SRPEDD Projections

When compared at a regional level, Somerset is among the most densely populated communities. As shown in **Table 3-1**, data from the 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates indicate that Somerset is ranked in third place among all of the Bristol County municipalities within the SRPEDD region, after the City of New Bedford and Fall River, in terms of per square mile population density. Somerset's population density at 2,311 people per square mile is close to that of the City of Fall River at 2,694 people per square mile.

<sup>23</sup> SRPEDD is in the process of updating the build-out analysis at the time of this Master Plan, therefore the build-out projection will likely change.

**Table 3-1 Population Density among Bristol County/SRPEDD Region Municipalities**

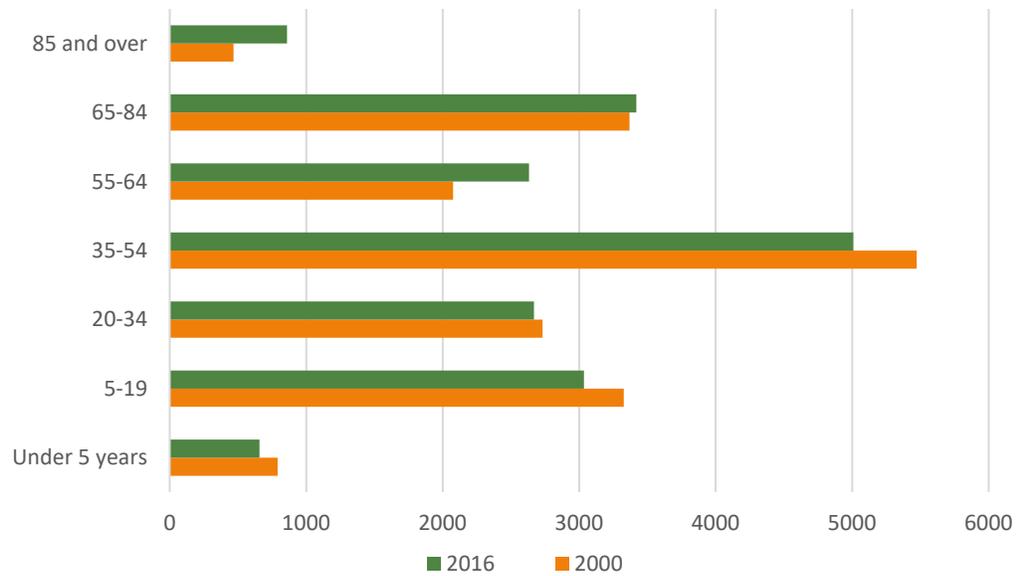
Municipality	Population	Sq. Miles	Population Density (people/sq.mi.)
New Bedford	95,125	20	4,756
Fall River	89,258	33.13	2,694
Somerset	18,257	7.9	2,311
Attleboro	44,326	26.81	1,653
North Attleborough	29,033	18.6	1,561
Fairhaven	16,027	12.33	1,300
Taunton	56,826	46.7	1,217
Mansfield	23,678	20.09	1,179
Seekonk	14,957	18.22	821
Swansea	18,257	23.1	790
Norton	19,515	27.81	702
Raynham	13,845	20.5	675
Acushnet	10,443	18.4	568
Dartmouth	34,341	60.92	564
Berkley	6,630	16.5	402
Dighton	7,438	22	338
Westport	15,810	49.84	317
Rehoboth	11,990	46.5	258
Freetown	9,175	36.6	251

Source: SRPEDD, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Although the 2016 estimated population is roughly equal to the 2000 population count, a closer look at the age structure of the population reveals significant shifts within the town’s demographics. As shown in **Figure 3-7**, between 2000 and 2016, the town’s senior population increased significantly, particularly seniors over 85 years old and between 55 and 64. At the same time, the population under 55 years old in Somerset decreased at all age levels, most notably adults between age 35 and 54 and school age children between 5 and 19 years old. The town’s median age increased from 43 years old in 2000 to 47.2 years old in 2016.

While these demographic shifts are in tune with the national trend of an overall aging population, these changes will likely pose challenges for Somerset in both providing adequate senior housing and providing diverse and affordable housing options to maintain and attract young people and families to Somerset.

**Figure 3-7 Population Change by Age Group**



Source: U.S. Census 2000, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimate 2012-2016

## Household Characteristics

The average household size in Somerset over the past few decades has remained relatively steady with minor declines, from 2.73 persons per household in 1990, to 2.57 in 2000, and 2.53 in 2010, although the 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates reported a slight increase in the median household size at 2.6 persons per household. A stable average household size typically indicates that there are more family households than non-family households in a community, as family households tend to exhibit less change in household structure.

Another notable change in Somerset since 2000 is the age of householders. Between 2000 and 2016, the number of households with members under the age of 55 decreased significantly, while on the contrary households led by people 55 years and older increased (see **Table 3-2**). These changes align with the town's overall demographic shifts and again indicates the need to support senior living in town.

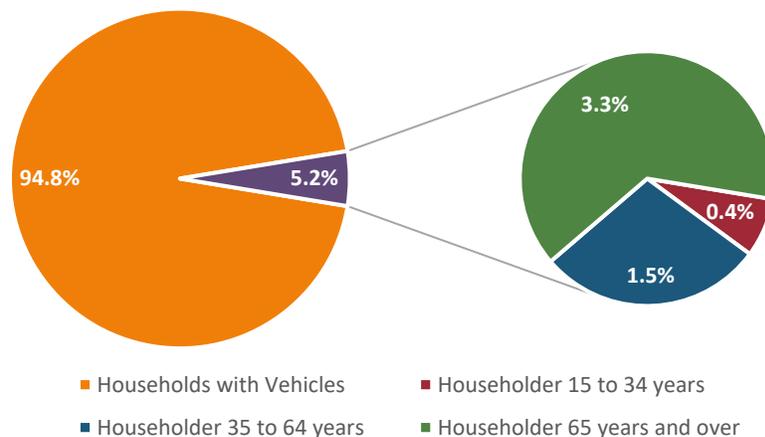
**Table 3-2 Change of Households by Age of Householder, 2000 and 2016**

	2000	2016	% Change
15 to 24 years	55	0	-100.0%
25 to 34 years	733	536	-26.9%
35 to 44 years	1349	1,134	-15.9%
45 to 54 years	1,385	1,315	-5.1%
55 to 64 years	1,156	1,361	17.7%
65 to 74 years	1,135	1,166	2.7%
75 years and over	1,174	1,423	21.2%
Total Households	6,987	6,935	-0.7%

Source: U.S. Census 2000, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimate 2012-2016

The 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates also show that among senior residents 65 years and over who are not living in a nursing home or other type of care facility, 35 percent have some level of disability. Housing needs associated with vision and/or ambulatory difficulties can be addressed by barrier-free housing or housing with elevators, while seniors with self-care and/or independent living difficulties may be in need of supportive services or congregate housing. In addition, while the majority of the town’s households have access to vehicles, among the 5 percent that do not have vehicles, 3.3 percent or 230 households are led by people 65 years and over (see **Figure 3-8**). This indicates potential needs for housing located close to amenities and service centers for seniors.

**Figure 3-8 Household Access to Vehicles by Age of Householder, 2016**



Source: American Community Survey Five-Year Estimate 2012-2016

## Housing Cost and Affordability

The cost of housing and whether it is considered affordable are among the top factors affecting quality of life in a community. There are typically two ways of examining housing affordability in Massachusetts cities and towns. The first relates to the State-issued target of 10 percent affordable housing units, mandated under Massachusetts General Law

(M.G.L.) Chapter 40B, while another approach addresses general housing affordability within a community for people and families who do not otherwise qualify for state or federal housing programs and subsidies.

## Chapter 40B Affordable Housing

According to the state and federal definition, affordable housing is housing for individuals and families earning up to 80 percent of the area median income (AMI). Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) maintains a Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) that tracks affordable housing stock, including deed restricted and subsidized housing units in communities across the state. Under M.G.L. Chapter 40B, in any community where fewer than 10 percent of the total housing units are qualified and included in the SHI, a developer, through a Comprehensive Permit, can build more densely than what the existing zoning bylaw would permit, if at least 25 percent (or 20 percent in certain cases) of the new units are affordable to individuals and families earning less than 80 percent of AMI with long-term affordability restrictions in place.

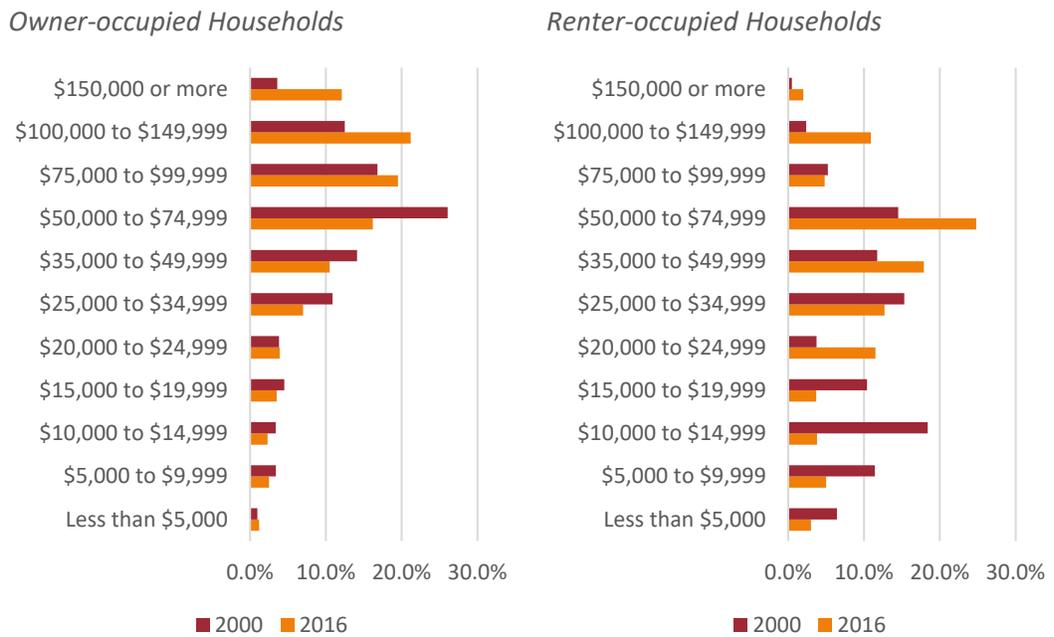
The latest Chapter 40B SHI published by DHCD in September 2017 indicated that 9.7 percent of all housing units statewide qualify as affordable housing and 19 percent of all Massachusetts communities have met their 10 percent affordable housing requirement under the Chapter 40B law. As of September 2017, Somerset had a total of 273 affordable housing units on the SHI list, which accounted for less than 4 percent of the town's entire year-round housing stock. These SHI units include elderly and disabled rental units, family rental units, and special needs housing units managed and operated by the Somerset Housing Authority or by private entities.

The Somerset Housing Authority currently maintains two complexes located on Read Street, including John F. Kennedy Terrace, which is a two-story complex with eight buildings housing 60 one-bedroom units, and Eugene Murphy Village, which consists of 15 buildings housing 75 one-bedroom units. Both facilities are operating at capacity, with waiting lists.

## General Housing Affordability

Beyond the state mandatory affordable housing goal, it is also critical to consider the affordability of housing for Somerset's middle-income residents who are faced with increasing housing prices but who do not qualify for housing programs or subsidies. Between 2000 and 2016, the overall median household income in Somerset increased by 32 percent, from \$52,249 to \$68,900, whereas the income for owner-occupied households increased by 37 percent and income for renter-occupied household increased by 77 percent. A breakdown of household income by tenure, as shown in **Figure 3-9**, demonstrates that while owner-occupied households generally have higher income than renter-occupied households, both types of households experienced a significant increase in household income between 2000 and 2016. Particularly, rental households saw a dramatic decrease in lower income brackets below \$19,999 and predominant increases in higher income brackets above \$35,000.

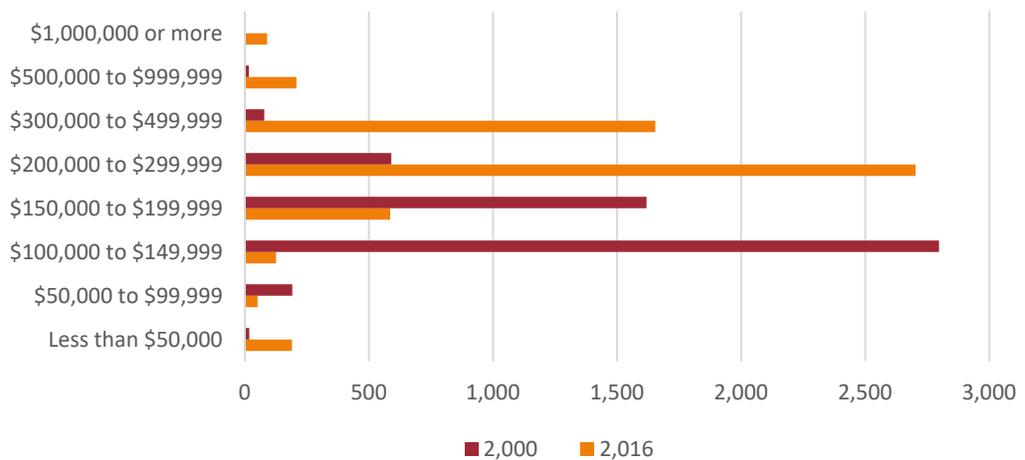
**Figure 3-9 Change in Household Income Distribution, 2000 to 2016**



Source: American Community Survey Five-Year Estimate 2012-2016

In comparison, the median home value for owner-occupied households increased more significantly than their incomes. Between 2000 and 2016, this value increased by 86.5 percent, from \$144,800 to \$270,000. This increase is highlighted in **Figure 3-10**, which shows a dramatic upward shift in home values. Median gross rent, on the other hand, increased by 60.3 percent between 2000 and 2016, which is more consistent with the rental household income increase.

**Figure 3-10 Change in Home Value Distribution, 2000 to 2016**

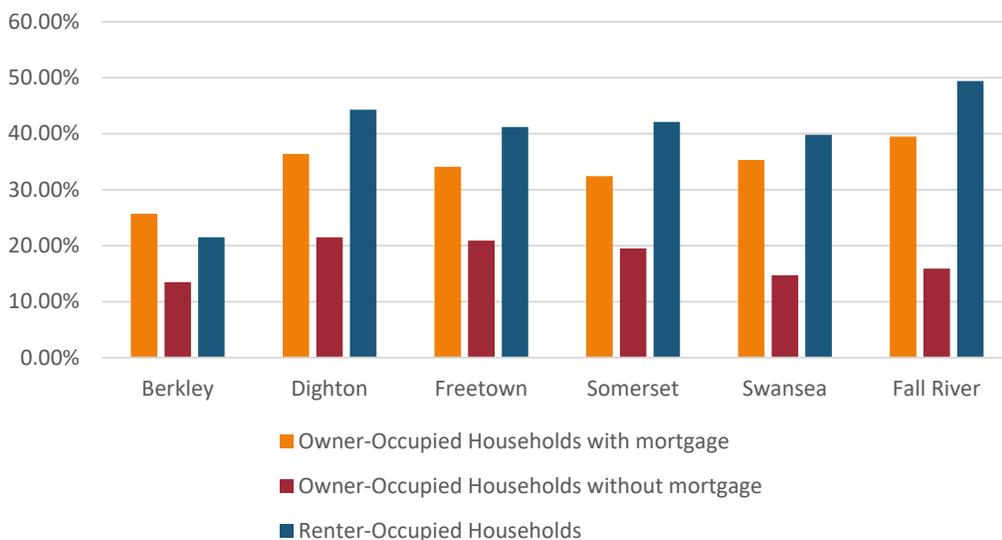


Source: American Community Survey Five-Year Estimate 2012-2016

When assessing housing affordability, it is important to consider the amount that people are spending on housing costs as a percentage of their income. Generally speaking, a household is considered cost-burdened when it is spending more than 30 percent of their

household income on housing. Based on this principle, roughly 32 percent of owner-occupied households with a mortgage were cost-burdened in 2016, whereas 19 percent of owner-occupied households without a mortgage were cost-burdened. On the other hand, 42 percent of renter-occupied households were cost-burdened. **Figure 3-11** compared the percentage of cost-burdened households in Somerset to that of neighboring communities. It shows that Somerset is in the middle range in terms of housing affordability.

**Figure 3-11 Percentage of Cost-Burdened Households by Tenure, 2016**



Source: American Community Survey Five-Year Estimate 2012-2016

## Issues and Opportunities

### Meeting the Growing Demand for Senior Housing

Nationally, more seniors are opting out of elderly care facilities for assisted living or aging in place. As the trend of an aging population continues, there will be growing demand for housing options that are suitable for senior living in Somerset. During the public outreach process for this Master Plan, including the public meetings, online community surveys, and a visioning session at the Council of Aging, the town’s seniors expressed a strong desire to be able to age in place within their community, where they have close networks of families and friends. Many seniors acknowledged that at some point they will no longer be able to maintain their current homes, and therefore, will need to sell and seek other housing options. They were concerned about alternative housing options for them to age in place. Younger residents also noted the importance of having adequate alternative housing options in the community for seniors, especially empty nesters, so that those homes could become newly available to attract younger families to town.

Given that Somerset is largely built out, it is of strategic importance to explore and expand options for senior housing, not only for the benefit of seniors, but also for that of younger

families. Besides the state-subsidized housing programs, additional private-sector senior housing opportunities could also be explored, exemplified by the North Farms Estates, which is a 55 and over condominium community for active senior living, and commercially-operated assisted living facilities serving seniors with limited mobility or independence. Alternatively, the Town could encourage the creation of accessory dwelling units as a means of accommodating seniors living close to their families and relatives.

## Targeting Housing Growth in Key Economic Development Areas

As Somerset gradually approaches build out, the town will be faced with increasingly limited land resources for additional new housing development, along with growing housing prices driven by regional housing markets. When asked about what the biggest challenges are for improving quality of life in Somerset, the respondents of the first online community survey ranked housing affordability as the third biggest challenge, behind a lack of economic strength and lack of visual appeal. Yet, when asked about what types of housing development should be encouraged, a majority emphasized the strong desire to maintain Somerset's small-town feel, characterized by predominately single-family neighborhoods.

The dilemma, therefore, is to balance the community's wish to maintain a small-town feel with the need to explore development opportunities to meet the increasing needs for both senior housing, as discussed above, and affordable ownership and rental housing for families and working professionals alike. One potential strategy that could help address both needs is to encourage the development of more affordable, higher-density or mixed-use housing in targeted, established commercial areas in town, while maintaining the single-family character in other areas of the community. When thoughtfully regulated and designed, this type of housing development could work in synergy with the Town's economic development efforts to revive underutilized or stagnant commercial districts by improving walkability of the commercial areas, incentivizing private investment, supporting a vibrant and healthy business environment, and promoting better and more efficient use of the town's valuable land resources for revenue generation.

## Goals and Recommendations

Goal H1: Facilitate the development of more diverse housing in strategically designated areas, supported by infrastructure and services, to accommodate future growth in Town and improve housing choices and affordability for people and families of varied socio-economic status.

H1-1 Enable mixed-use residential development in key commercial areas in town, such as Center of Town commercial area, Slade's Ferry Crossing, Indian Spring Plaza, Route 6 business corridor, and Route 103/Wilbur Ave area, to promote smaller, non-single family, more affordable market rate housing units for working professionals and starting families.

H1-2 Consider creating "General Residence" zoning districts in certain transitional areas between commercial/industrial districts and single family residential districts to allow the "missing middle" housing types, such as cottage cluster housing, townhouses, and/or multi-family units, either by-right or by Special Permit. These "missing middle" housings

are in keeping with the character of existing single-family neighborhoods while at the same time providing diverse housing options along a spectrum of affordability to support walkable neighborhoods and locally-serving retails.

H1-3 Adopt an Inclusionary Zoning Bylaw to require a certain percentage of affordable housing units in multi-unit residential developments that require a Special Permit. Inclusionary Zoning is a zoning tool that can be used by municipalities to ensure adequate affordable housing is included in the normal course of real estate development. It requires a portion of the housing units in certain real estate developments to be reserved as affordable to low- and moderate-income households.

H1-4 Promote the Accessory Unit zoning bylaw to residents and developers to encourage alternative housing development while monitoring whether and how the current bylaw facilitates or deters the creation of such alternative housing.

H1-5 Create a Housing Production Plan to stay on track towards the state-mandated affordable housing target.

**Goal H2: Provide adequate and appropriate housing options for the Town's growing senior population to enable aging in place in a multi-generational community.**

H2-1 Continue exploring opportunities of reusing vacant municipal or privately owned buildings for multi-unit senior housing conversion.

H2-2 Advocate Accessory Unit to residents as an alternative approach to creating senior housing on existing residential lots to enable seniors aging in place.

H2-3 Explore the possibility of adopting age restricted zoning bylaw in targeted development areas with good access to services and amenities as a means to promote active senior community within the town.

**Goal H3: Enhance the quality and unique characters of various residential neighborhoods by promoting better maintenance, renovation and rehabilitation to the Town's aging housing stock.**

H3-1 Assemble information on public and non-profit housing rehabilitation loans and services and create an easily accessible resource packet for residents in order to facilitate housing repair and rehabilitation in town. Example of resources include MassHousing, Home Modification Loan Program offered by Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, Habitat for Humanity ReStores, Rebuilding Together, etc.

H3-2 Consider establishing a Housing Rehabilitation program, utilizing state Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding, to support rehabilitation of residential properties through financial assistance, especially for low- and moderate- income residents.

H3-3 Ensure permitting and inspection processes are simplified and easy to navigate for housing rehabilitation efforts to encourage homeowners to take on and complete home repair and upgrade projects.

# Natural, Cultural, and Historic Resources

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# 4

## Introduction

To a large extent, a community is defined by its natural environment, as well as the cultural and historical heritage engendered by generations of human interaction with this environment. Somerset's unique location on the Taunton River estuary and its long history revolving around the river has made the town the special place that it is today. As development pressure continues to increase as the town approaches build-out capacity, the preservation and promotion of the town's natural resources and cultural/historical heritage are critical for the pride and sense of place the community cherishes. This element of the Master Plan focuses on the inventory of the town's primary natural, cultural, and historic resources and explores strategies and priorities for resource protection and enhancement.

## Natural Resources Baseline Conditions Analyses

### Landscape, Topography, and Soils

Somerset's natural landscape consists of a mosaic of upland wooded areas; inland streams, ponds, and wetlands; coastal saltmarsh; and saltwater sandy beach - along with the scenic Taunton River coastline. Among its 5,051 acres of land area, Somerset retains over 800 acres of forestland, over 50 acres of salt marsh, and over 100 acres of inland wetland areas.<sup>24</sup> The majority of the town's remaining forested land is made up of hardwoods such as white oak and red maple, with the rest made up of a mix of hardwood and softwood, including Atlantic white cedar and Eastern white pine. The southern half of Somerset is a peninsula with the terrain of the land rising gradually on three sides from the shoreline up

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<sup>24</sup> This acreage information represents a scaled-back estimate based on the latest 2005 land use data available from MassGIS.

to an elevation of approximately 180 feet above the mean sea level. This elevation occurs in the area near Hot and Cold Lane, in the vicinity of the Swansea town line. In the northern section of town, the land slopes gradually westward to the elevation range of 120 to 140 feet above mean sea level. Stony soils prevail in the western part of town, while textured, well-watered loam prevails in the eastern part.<sup>25</sup>

Approximately 25 percent of Somerset's land area in the northern part of town is covered by the Paxton-Woodbridge-Whitman soils that are generally well-drained but also have a firm substratum restricting movement of water and roots development. The central area of town, about 39 percent of the town's land area, is covered by Urban Land soils which have been altered or obscured by structures and development activities. Another 35 percent of the town's land area in the southern part of Somerset below Route 6 is covered by Newport-Urban Land-Udorthents soils consisting of areas of upland hills and ridges. The town's remaining undeveloped areas contain some extensive areas of Class II soils that are considered prime agricultural soils under the Soil Conservation Service's capability classification used to assess the potential of soils for agricultural purposes.

## Water Resources

The majority of Somerset, approximately 83 percent of the town, lies within the Lower Taunton River watershed, which is part of the Taunton River Watershed. A small portion of the town in the southwest drains to the Lee's River sub-watershed, part of the Mount Hope Bay watershed (see **Map 8**). There are a number of narrow and low flow inland waterways draining from the town to the tidal Taunton River. Most of the town's remaining inland wetlands and wooded marsh border these streams. The primary fresh waterbody within the town is the Somerset Reservoir surrounded by Whetstone Hill Road, Elm Street, and North Street. The reservoir has a capacity of 1.4 billion gallons and a watershed of approximately 1.8 square miles, near 50 percent of which is within the Town of Dighton to the north.<sup>26</sup>

To the east of town lies Somerset's most prominent water resource area, the Taunton River coastline. The Taunton River was added to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System by the U.S. Congress and President Obama in March 2009 after years of conservation efforts at many levels.<sup>27</sup> The National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 identifies free-flowing rivers across the United States that possess "outstanding remarkable values" such as scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, and cultural values. The Taunton River flows freely from its formation at the confluence of the Matfield and Town Rivers in Bridgewater to a point forty miles downstream where it empties into Mount Hope Bay.

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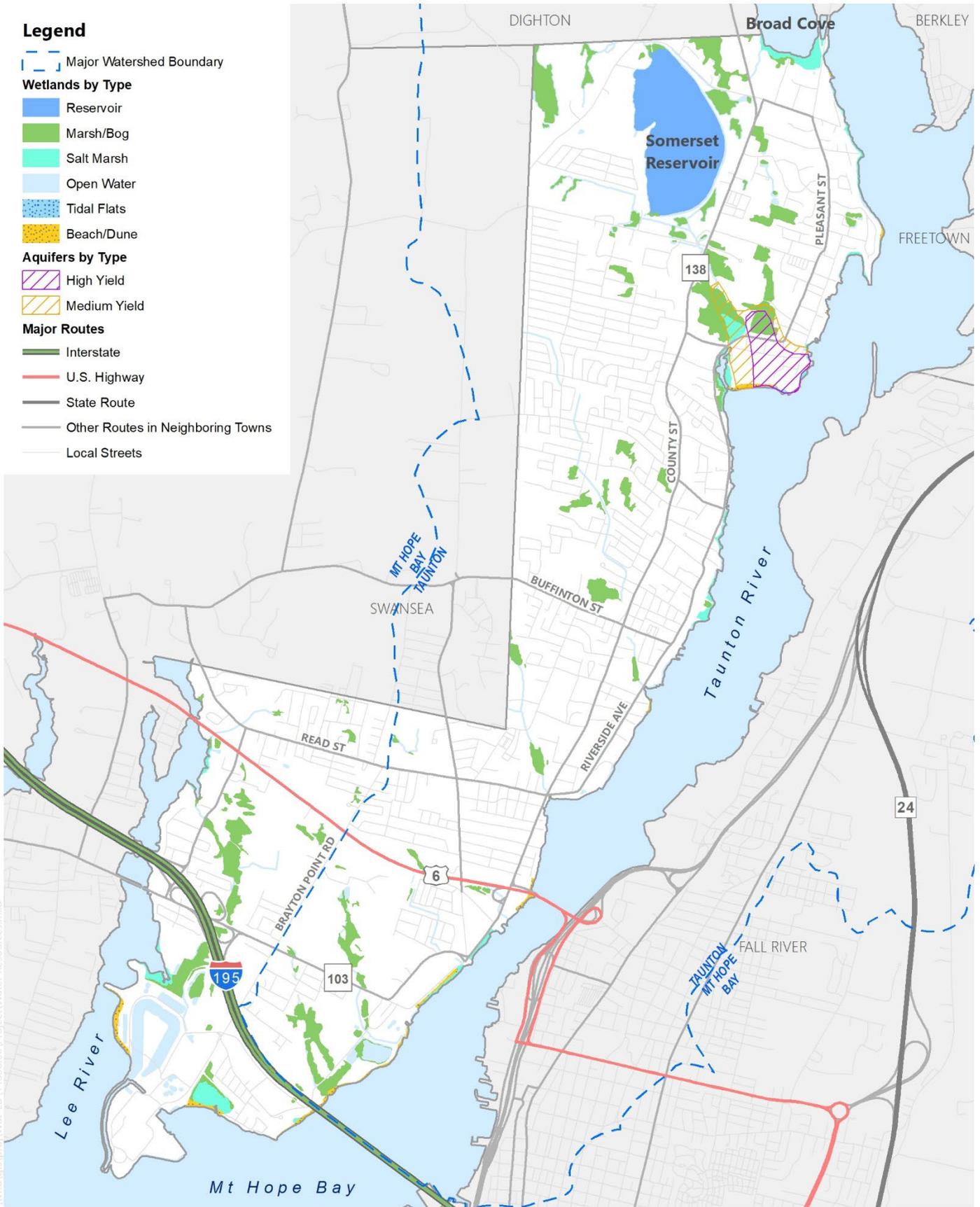
<sup>25</sup> Town of Somerset Master Plan, 2004

<sup>26</sup> Town of Somerset Open Space and Recreation Plan, 2004

<sup>27</sup> Taunton River Watershed Alliance website: <http://savethetaunton.org/wild-and-scenic-taunton-river/>

**Legend**

- Major Watershed Boundary
- Wetlands by Type**
- Reservoir
- Marsh/Bog
- Salt Marsh
- Open Water
- Tidal Flats
- Beach/Dune
- Aquifers by Type**
- High Yield
- Medium Yield
- Major Routes**
- Interstate
- U.S. Highway
- State Route
- Other Routes in Neighboring Towns
- Local Streets



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**Town of Somerset Master Plan**

Somerset, MA

Source: MassGIS

**Water Resources**

Somerset is located on the Taunton River estuary, which is regionally significant for its recreational, scenic, and ecological values. It is a remarkably healthy and intact coastal ecosystem, with tidal influence extending through Dighton and into Taunton, 18 miles from Mount Hope Bay. The extensive estuary resources of the Taunton River system make it significant as a nursery habitat for juvenile fish and shellfish and as a habitat for anadromous fish (i.e., fish that spend their adult life in the ocean and migrate into rivers to spawn).

The Taunton River is part of the larger Narragansett Bay watershed and it contributes a significant portion of that bay's fresh water. As a gateway community to the Narragansett Bay and a point of entry into the upper reaches of its estuary, Somerset boasts over 7 miles of scenic Taunton River coastline, dotted by salt marsh, tidal flats, and sandy beaches. The natural beauty of this spectacular coastline can be appreciated at numerous locations along Riverside Avenue, a scenic drive parallel to the Taunton River, and at other key locations throughout the town.

## Critical Natural Habitat

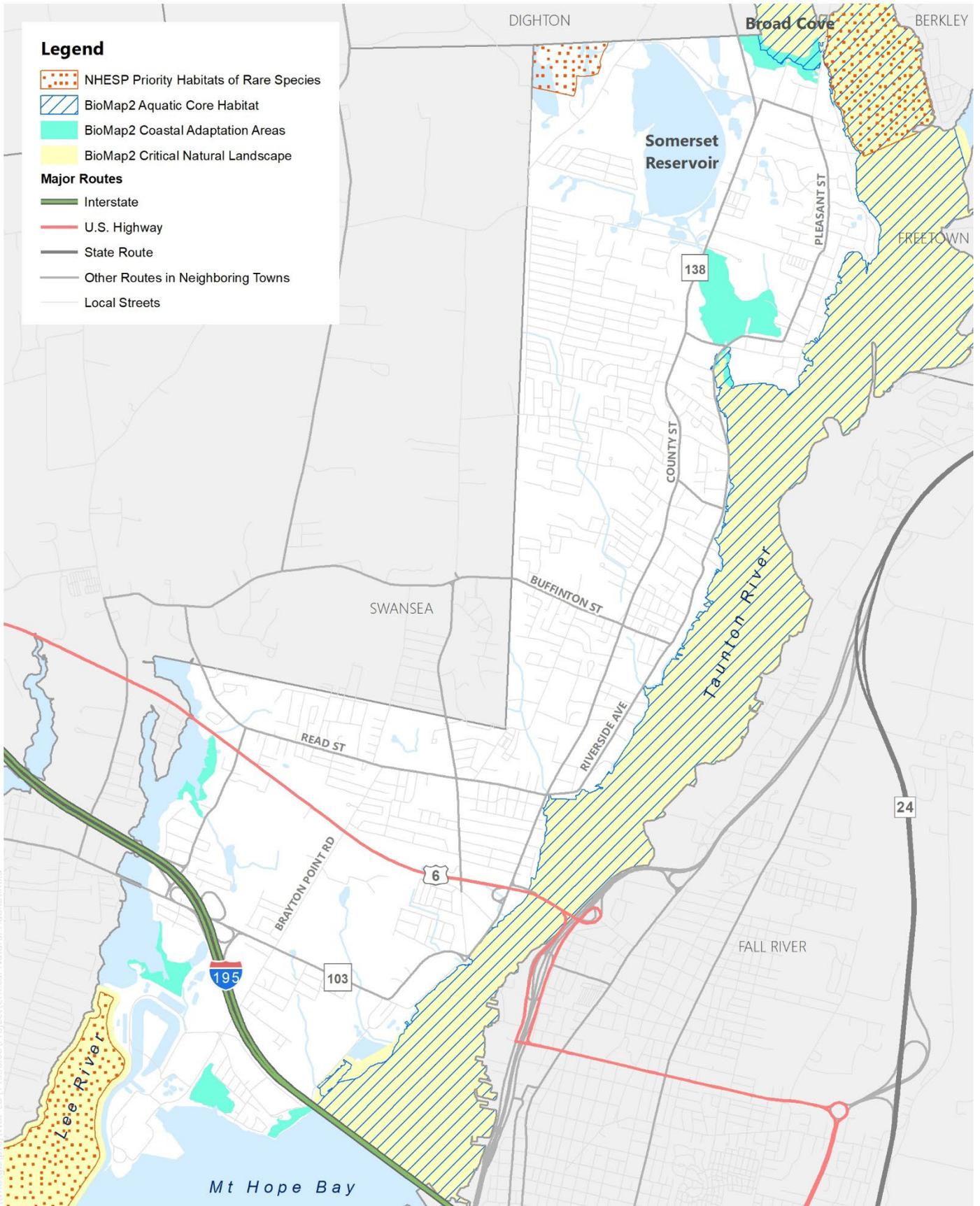
The Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) maintains a Massachusetts Natural Heritage Atlas of all vertebrate and invertebrate species that are endangered, threatened, or otherwise of special concern<sup>28</sup> in the state. The Priority Habitats of Rare Species established under the NHESP represent the geographic extent of habitat of state-listed rare species based on observations documented within the last 25 years in the database of the NHESP. These delineated habitat areas can include wetlands, uplands, and marine habitats and are protected under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA) and the Wetlands Protection Act. Proposed projects or activities within the Priority Habitat areas will trigger MESA reviews to determine impacts on state-listed rare species and their habitats in order to ensure compliance.

The latest 2017 Natural Heritage Atlas shows that there are three Priority Habitats of Rare Species areas in and/or around Somerset. One such area in Somerset is within the northwestern corner of the town covering the Elm Street conservation land and extending into Dighton. Abutting the northeastern corner of Somerset, another Priority Habitat covers the upper Taunton River estuary from Dighton all the way up to Taunton. The third Priority Habitat abutting Somerset exists in the upper Mount Hope Bay where Lee's River meets Cole River (see **Map 9**).

In 2010, NHESP and The Nature Conservancy's Massachusetts Program developed the BioMap2 program as a conservation plan to protect the state's biodiversity. BioMap2 identifies those areas in Massachusetts most in need of protection in order to guide strategic biodiversity conservation for ensuring the long-term survival of rare and other native species and their habitats, exemplary natural communities, and a diversity of ecosystems. BioMap2 Core Habitat consists of the most viable habitats for rare plants,

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<sup>28</sup> The term "Special Concern" indicates that these species could easily become threatened in the near future.



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Town of Somerset Master Plan

Somerset, MA

Source: MassGIS

**Critical Natural Habitat**

animals, and natural communities. Meanwhile, BioMap2 Critical Natural Landscape acknowledges intact landscapes in the state that are better able to support ecological processes and disturbance regimes, and a wide array of species and habitats over long time frames. The entire Taunton River estuary from I-195 upstream and abutting Somerset is identified as both BioMap2 Aquatic Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape. The area of Lee's River estuary next to the Brayton Point Power Plant site is also identified as Critical Natural Landscape.

In addition, there are six BioMap2 Coastal Adaptation Areas in Somerset, spreading around the Broad Cove, along the Labor in Vain Creek, and near the Mount Hope Bay and Lee's River estuary (see **Map 9**). These adaptation areas, which are subcomponents of the Critical Natural Landscape, are undeveloped lands adjacent to and up to one and a half meters above the existing salt marshes. They have high potential to support inland migration of salt marsh and other coastal habitats over the coming century in light of foreseeable sea level rise.

## Heritage Landscapes

In 2005, Somerset participated in the Massachusetts Heritage Landscape Program through a competitive application process. The program was led by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) in partnership with regional organizations serving as liaisons with communities. DCR collaborated with SRPEDD and the Taunton Wild & Scenic River Study Committee to bring the Heritage Landscape Inventory Program to communities along the Taunton River. The primary goal of the program is to identify a wide range of significant landscape resources and to provide communities with strategies for preserving heritage landscapes.

The resulting *Somerset Reconnaissance Report - Taunton River Landscape Inventory* (2005) identified an extensive list of heritage landscapes that contribute to Somerset's identity. These include not only the natural landscapes, but also agricultural areas, cemeteries, industrial sites, institutional sites, residential buildings and neighborhoods, and transportation facilities. The report further identified a sub-list of priority heritage landscapes that were highly valued and contribute to community character (see **Table 4-1**). It is worth noting that while none of the identified priority heritage landscapes were permanently protected or preserved at the time of this study, several have gained permanent protection status since 2005 through various conservation and preservation efforts, such as the Friend's Meetinghouse.

In addition to the heritage landscapes identified in the Somerset Reconnaissance Report, the PPAs designated through the regional planning efforts in 2008 and 2013 represent another significant step forward to preserve the valuable natural and historic landscapes in town. Several heritage landscapes listed in **Table 4-1** were designated as PPAs, such as Broad Cove, Quaker Meetinghouse, and Somerset Reservoir. More details are presented in the Land Use and Development Patterns Element of this Master Plan.

**Table 4-1 Heritage Landscapes in Somerset**

Agriculture	Burial Grounds/ Cemeteries	Industrial	Institutional	Natural Features	Open Space/Parks	Residential	Transportation
<b>Brayton Farm</b>	Bourn Cemetery	Fortier Boats	Churches (various)	Beech Trees (Center St.)	Brayton Point-East End	Brayton Point	Old Colony Railroad Line at Mallard Point
Fisher's Farm	Bower's Cemetery	Gladding-Hearn Boatyard	Fire Barn	Breeds Cove Beach	<b>Buffington Park</b>	Oldest House (2457 Riverside Ave)	Slade's Ferry
Marsden Nursery	Brayton Cemetery	Bristol Marine	<b>Friend's Meetinghouse</b>	Broad Cove	Chace Preserve	Pottersville	
Mello Farm	Brightman Cemetery	<b>Mt. Hope Iron Works</b>	Hood Library	Buffington Brook	Elm Street Acres	<b>Somerset Village</b>	
<b>Nunes Farm</b>	Congregational Church Cemetery	Stone Wharves	Village School	Council Oak	Mallard Point	South End	
Stonewalls	Hathaway Chace Cemetery			Fox Hill Cove	Morris Preserve		
	Nathan Slade Cemetery			<b>Labor-in-Vain Brook</b>	Pierce Beach and the bluffs		
	Palmer Street Cemetery			<b>Linden Trees</b>	<b>Somerset Reservoir</b>		
	<b>Quaker Cemetery</b>			<b>The Marsh</b>	Village Waterfront Park		
				<b>Taunton River</b>			

Source: Taunton River Landscape Inventory - Somerset Reconnaissance Report, 2005  
Note: Priority Heritage Landscapes identified by the town are highlighted in **bold italic**.

## Cultural and Historic Resources Baseline Conditions Analyses

Cultural and historic resources serve many purposes. They act as a tangible link to a town's heritage and provide unique placemaking opportunities at the neighborhood/district level. They inspire pride in a town's heritage, provide solid building stock, and serve as a catalyst for economic development.

Historic resources are more than just buildings - a town's historic built environment consists of its landscapes, streetscapes, and features that help give the town its distinct personality. Most importantly, historic resources can be adapted to serve contemporary uses. This could include an old schoolhouse becoming an apartment building, or a nineteenth century industrial site becoming a twenty-first century multi-use park. Cultural assets help link residents to the past, and to one another. In turn, these shared assets create the unique environment that distinguishes one town from another.

Somerset is a town that is at once rooted in large-scale industrial shipbuilding and cherished for its small-town feel. Somerset's industrial heritage and residential developments are strongly linked through the town's history. The worker housing developed around the ceramics shops in Pottersville and Dublin Street evokes the appeal of the Mount Hope Iron Works among immigrant groups. The Montaup and Brayton Point Power Plants encouraged the development of the residential subdivisions that abut the west boundary of the town. Although constructed on a former patchwork of fields that linked Somerset to its agricultural past, these mid-twentieth-century neighborhoods provide human-scale development along tree-lined streets. The interrelationship between Somerset's manufacturing past and its neighborhood character is a large part of the town's personality. It has also created tension between these two elements, as the industrial sites were – and are – situated along the Taunton River waterfront. While this was greatly beneficial to the companies that relied on the water for transportation and power, it is part of a pattern of land use that effectively cut off today's population from large swaths of the waterfront that defined Somerset's past and could help shape its future. The Town has also historically not pursued the purchase of private land along the waterfront. Cultural entities have envisioned a multitude of uses that could give Somerset a reputation for reimagining its industrial riverfront in unique ways, positioning the town as a destination for all.

Within recent years, the town has a strong record of engagement in preservation advocacy. There is an appreciation for the rehabilitation of older buildings and sites for modern uses. Somerset benefits from an active group of residents who see the potential in the Swansea Friends Meetinghouse and Cemetery and who focus on the future potential of this site. This dynamism demonstrates the important steps that the community has made in preserving and enhancing the town's historic resources and cultural assets. These assets are inextricably tied to economic development, neighborhood scale, and livability.

The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) maintains the Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth (the Inventory). Information about Somerset's historic resources, including those listed in the State and Federal Historic Registers, is publicly available through a database published online by the MHC. Known as the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System, or MACRIS, the database is available online at <http://mhc-macris.net/>. The inventory can also be searched geographically through an online mapping tool at <http://maps.mhc-macris.net/>. The Town should review the database and maps to identify any necessary updates or areas in which a historic resources survey may be valuable for planning purposes.

While the Inventory is the best source for finding and recording historic resources, the list is not exhaustive, having been populated over time through various initiatives, including statewide surveys, identification of historic resources through development planning, local survey programs, and even individual hobby participants. Although the MHC provides a survey manual for filling out the Inventory forms, the amount of information provided on each form – as well as its accuracy – has evolved considerably over the past 40+ years. The slate of properties that are over 50 years old changes every year. Resources that were considered important in early historic survey efforts, such as Colonial era buildings in the years around the 1976 bicentennial, may be disproportionately represented in the Inventory, suggesting that many towns do not have any significant historic resources built

after the turn of the twentieth century. However, the Inventory provides an important foundation for understanding Somerset's historic resources and how its historical development shaped today's neighborhoods.

## By the Numbers

The term "historic resources" covers a broad spectrum of assets. While many people learn about Somerset's history through the stories of individual buildings or homesteads, "historic resources" also include the streetscapes, neighborhoods, views, historic markers, and adaptively reused buildings that residents use every day. While not always recognized, these historic features are some of the town's most valuable resources.

## Architectural Resources

The Inventory of historic resources in Somerset includes buildings, structures, objects, sites, and landscapes that are physical reminders of its expansive heritage. These resources can be documented on an individual basis, such as a building or a farm, or grouped into areas/districts that collectively tell a broader cultural story.

### National and State Registers of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is the official federal list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that have been deemed significant to American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture. Listing in the National Register is an honor, because it identifies historic resources that are particularly worthy of preservation. While a National Register listing conveys little (if any) protection or preservation requirements, it can be an important economic catalyst, forming an important part of a community or business's "brand," and incentivizing rehabilitation in the form of historic tax credits. The Massachusetts State Register includes all properties listed in the National Register, as well as other categories of historic properties such as local landmarks, properties subject to a Preservation Restriction, and resources that have been deemed eligible for National Register listing but have not been formally listed.

Somerset currently has two architectural resources listed in the National Register. The **Swansea Friends Meetinghouse and Cemetery** (also known as the Friends Meeting House) was listed in 2014, recognizing the oldest extant Quaker meetinghouse in Massachusetts. The **Borden Flats Light Station** was listed in 1987, as part of a large nomination for the Lighthouses of Massachusetts. A National Register nomination is currently underway for **Somerset Village**, the historic residential and industrial center of the town. The State Register also includes the **Gardner-Anthony Burial Ground** located off Lee's River Avenue, which entered into a Preservation Restriction in 2018.

### Inventory Summary

As of November 2018, the MACRIS database identified nearly 400 inventoried individual historic resources and historic areas in Somerset, including 23 historic cemeteries. Although these inventoried properties have not received an official historic designation, the collective heritage of the town is conveyed through the recognition and

documentation of these places. Most of the Inventoried resources are grouped into 10 Inventoried areas. More than 200 individual properties are recorded in the Somerset Village/Mount Hope Iron Works Village area alone, while a few more are recorded in smaller areas scattered around the town, such as O'Neill's Beach, Egypt (an area located in and around Pottersville), and the Sandy Point Avenue Streetscape. The Inventory also includes more than 130 individual properties that are not part of inventoried areas, allowing more discrete narratives to be recorded as well.

The MACRIS online mapping tool makes it clear that most Inventoried properties are located in close proximity to the waterfront, echoing the geographic focus of historical development as well as the town's historical survey priorities. However, the Inventory includes an impressive geographic spread of properties, from Ripley Street and Brayton Point on the south, to the Somerset-Dighton Stone Post on the north boundary. Properties along main roads such as County Street and Buffington Street are joined by Inventoried assets on side streets. Small Craftsman-style houses and stone walls are recognized along with "Captains Row" mansions in Somerset Village.

### Heritage Landscapes

In addition to the Inventoried resources listed in MACRIS, a 2005 Heritage Landscape Inventory identified a number of heritage landscapes important to the people of Somerset, as described earlier in the Natural Resources inventory. Since the preparation of this report, Somerset has succeeded in recognizing and protecting several of these landscapes, including listing the Swansea Friends Meetinghouse and Cemetery in the National Register, undergoing a National Register nomination for Somerset Village, protecting the Gardner-Anthony Burial Ground through a Preservation Restriction, and designating the Taunton River as a National Wild and Scenic River in 2009.

### **Archaeological Resources**

Somerset has 31 recorded archaeological sites and is likely home to several more that remain to be discovered. The natural resources that made this area attractive for European settlement benefitted Native American populations as well, and Somerset includes both pre-Contact and post-Contact sites. Unsurprisingly, many of the discovered archaeological sites are located along waterways, expressing their long-term vitality. However, there are large areas that have yet to be subject to archaeological investigation or survey.

One pre-Contact site, known as the Montaup Site, has been deemed eligible for listing in the National Register by the Keeper of the National Register. Although it has not been formally listed in the National Register, this designation means the site is listed in the State Register.

## Historic Resource Entities, Stakeholders, and Bylaws

### Somerset Historical Commission (M.G.L. Chapter 40 s. 8D)

The Somerset Historical Commission's (SHC) mission is to protect and preserve the historical heritage and resources of the Town of Somerset. Responsibilities of the SHC include:

- ▶ Identifying, compiling, and maintaining an Inventory of the Town's historic assets;
- ▶ Identifying resources for nomination to the National Register;
- ▶ Encouraging and promoting interest in Somerset's heritage and preservation, including the positive impact preservation can have on economic development and property values;
- ▶ Advocating for planning that actively incorporates preservation principles in the protection of community character;
- ▶ Advising and working with Town entities on matters relating to historic resources and preservation; and
- ▶ Overseeing the Historically Significant Buildings Bylaw (see below).

The SHC undertakes projects and initiatives that support these responsibilities, such as the MHC-supported National Register nomination of Somerset Village, the restoration of the exterior of Old Town Hall, and a Historical House Marker Program.

### Somerset Historical Society

The Somerset Historical Society (SHS) is housed in the former Village School and operates a museum, archives, and educational programming. The museum's displays cover a wide range of Somerset's heritage, including its military history, a general store, centuries of tools, Native American artifacts, and items donated by the Hathaway family that document domestic life in the 1930's. The SHS's programming schedule is varied as well, including recent events such as genealogy and craft workshops, walking tours, field trips, a live performance, creator talks, and co-sponsored fundraisers. Newsletters feature remembrances from growing up and living in Somerset, illustrated with historic photographs from the SHS's collections.

### Friends of Somerset Historic Preservation

The Friends of Somerset Historic Preservation (FOSHP) formed in 2016 to focus on the stabilization, repair, and reuse of the Swansea Friends Meetinghouse. This non-profit organization's goal is "to identify, commemorate, and preserve our local treasures, not only for today's residents but for future generations of townspeople as well." The FOSHP works with other preservation-minded town entities on advancing preservation initiatives. The FOSHP is supported through fundraising and private donations, and the organization may pursue grant funding for its Friends Meeting House project. In September 2018, the first set of structural repairs to the building was completed.

## Community Preservation Committee (M.G.L. Chapter 44B, s. 3-7)

The Somerset Community Preservation Committee (CPC) administers the Town's Community Preservation Act (CPA) program and includes a designee from the SHC. Responsibilities of the CPC include studying and making recommendations regarding the acquisition, creation, preservation, and support of open space, historic resources, recreational land, and affordable housing. Several of Somerset's recent historic preservation accomplishments have been achieved with the assistance of funding through the CPC, including the preservation of Town records, restoration of the Old Town Hall exterior, and repairs to the roof of the Friends Meeting House.

## Preservation of Historically Significant Buildings Bylaw (Article 39)

This demolition review bylaw is overseen by the SHC and is an important tool for preserving and protecting significant buildings that convey the architectural, cultural, economic, political, or social history of Somerset. Properties over 75 years old are subject to demolition review, and those deemed to be "Significant Buildings" may be subject to a demolition delay of up to six months. Significant Buildings are those listed or eligible for listing in the National Register, or that have association with the historic people, events, or development patterns of Somerset and/or Massachusetts. Significant Buildings may also include those that display important architectural design or stylistic features.

## Major Cultural Organization, Institutions, and Programs

For the most part, the town's cultural organizations, institutions, and programs are the means by which Somerset's culture has been and continues to be shaped and shared. Far from being exclusive to the category of "cultural assets," they act as engagement points across a wide variety of community and neighborhood interests.

### Somerset Cultural Council

The Somerset Cultural Council (SCC) was established to promote the arts, humanities, and sciences through the funding of community-oriented cultural projects. As the local council representative of the Massachusetts Cultural Council, the SCC has administered and distributed grant funding for a variety of projects, including music and dance performances, storytelling and poetry events, art exhibitions, drama, and field trips for youth groups and students. Programs include collaborations with a variety of community groups, including the Somerset Historical Society and Somerset Public Library.

A recent shift in focus at the Massachusetts Cultural Council has provided more tools for local cultural councils to act as a conveyer for cultural activities. This has encouraged local councils like the SCC to support a broader range of programming.

### Southcoast Open Air Market

In 2018, the Southcoast Open Air Market (SOAM) finished its second season, with a rotating roster of 250 vendors. This curated range of artisans offers the community a

variety of products, activities, and performances from regional artists, farmers, and musicians. Designed to be as welcoming to vendors as it is to attendees, this volunteer-operated seasonal market makes a point of creating a supportive network and community for its vendors. Both the 2017 and 2018 markets welcomed more visitors than anticipated.

SOAM demonstrates the economic and community value of spaces that often “fly under the radar,” in this case an open field located off the Route 6 approach to the Veterans Memorial Bridge. It also shows that there is strong support for creative outlets in Somerset, with people seeking cultural hubs and gathering spaces.

## Spirit of Somerset

This annual festival is held at Village Waterfront Park and is Somerset’s signature community event, drawing visitors from around the region. It kicks off with a lobster dinner, and features family-friendly activities such as a soap box race, river cruise, an auto show, fireworks, and an essay and drawing contest for students. Entertainment is provided featuring music and dance performances from students and professional groups. Local businesses are active sponsors, and vendor tents let them interact directly with residents and visitors. The event is organized by a 501(c)(3) entity.

## [RE]Envisioning Somerset and Berkley

This project, conducted through the Somerset Berkley Regional High School’s Advanced Digital Photography Program, encourages students to visually document the cultural and historic landmarks of the town through their unique perspectives and talents. Combining local history and the arts, the program incorporates an educational outreach program that teaches students about local heritage through presentations and tours with local historians and the SHC. The results are used in a variety of ways, including photo-illustrated narratives, interactive maps, a photography exhibit, and displays of selected photos on large-scale banners installed throughout the town.

The program illustrates how multiple community assets can be leveraged together to advance community goals. Spearheaded by an active teacher and local historians, the program relies on the financial support and in-kind services provided by Mass Humanities, local businesses and organizations, and the educational support of the SHS.

## Somerset Musictown Festival

The Somerset Musictown Festival is organized by the Somerset Berkley Regional High School Music Department and its supporting organization the Somerset Friends of Music. This multi-day festival highlights the talent of local students and alumni. In addition to a variety of performances, the program selects a King and Queen based on interviews about the role music plays in students’ lives. The event culminates with a parade and marching band showcase.

## Veterans Services Department

The Veterans Services Department (VSD) assists all of Somerset's veterans and their families. Over 10 percent of Somerset's population are veterans. The VSD supports the needs of veterans and their families with federal entitlement assistance, veterans' disability problems, and claims, both financial and medical. The Veterans Department also determines the eligibility for veterans and their spouses under the Massachusetts Chapter 115 Veterans Benefits. The caseload for federal assistance from the Veterans' Administration continues to increase with respect to prescription drugs and medical benefits. The VSD helps all Somerset veterans with medical and prescription problems, as all veterans are eligible to receive medical and prescription services through the Veterans' Administration.

In addition to these services, the VSD runs a number of programs, activities, and special events throughout the year including: Veteran Day ceremonies, Memorial Day parade services, Veterans annual Appreciation Breakfasts, flag placing on a veterans graves in the cemeteries, and many other fundraisers throughout the year. Citizens can participate in the Meat Pie Supper and a Remembering Veteran 5k, which raises money for veterans in our community.

The Veterans Services Department offers assistance to any person who has served the country in the United States Armed Forces and who may be entitled to receive benefits from either local, state, or federal agencies. The Department of Veterans' Services is a state mandated office that provides information and services to veterans, their spouses and dependents.

## Issues and Opportunities

### Preserving the Natural Landscape and Its Components

The natural landscape, whether it concerns wetlands, forests, streams and ponds, waterfront, or farmlands, is an integral part of what defines the physical environment and character of a community. Different components of the natural landscape play different but equally essential roles in balancing the man-made environment with nature. They provide critical habitat and sanctuary for wildlife, support biodiversity and a healthy ecosystem, and maintain a close connection with nature. Ongoing dedication is needed in preserving Somerset's natural landscape and its wide array of components.

### Somerset Village

Discussed in other chapters of this Master Plan, the future identity of Somerset Village is considered a key economic opportunity and asset for the Town. However, the neighborhood has struggled with developing a distinct identity and personality. The challenge has deep historical roots – unlike traditional village centers, Somerset Village largely comprises a built environment centered on only two major uses, residential and

industrial. It lacks an easily identifiable commercial “main street,” municipal/institutional core, or mixed-use density that reads as a distinct New England village center streetscape.

The nomination of the village to the National Register, currently in progress, is an important early step in mapping out the neighborhood’s future. Understanding how and why it developed, in the way that it did, can reveal unique characteristics important to the village’s identity, and allows future planning efforts to celebrate these characteristics rather than eliminating or obfuscating them. The village’s uncommon homogeneous building type, primarily residential rather than commercial blocks, and dramatic topography sloping down to a partially accessible waterfront can be viewed as an opportunity to create a different type of village center. The town has a chance to explore introducing mixed uses into this built environment, establishing a different type of destination for residents and visitors. Once the historic district is listed in the National Register, it can be advertised as the major gateway to this neighborhood.

## Local Protections

While National Register listing is an opportunity for economic incentives and placemaking, it does not, in itself, convey any protections against alterations and demolition. Protecting historic resources and streetscapes, while supporting development and growth, largely falls to municipalities, which can choose from a variety of tools that help preserve the neighborhood character valued by its residents and businesses. Somerset only utilizes a small number of tools that offer protection to its historic resources, namely the Preservation of Historically Significant Buildings Bylaw and opportunities afforded by the CPA.

Demolition review bylaws can prove difficult to navigate, for both historical commissions and the property owners subject to them. Periodic review of the bylaw can help make them more useful for the community. Measures can be taken to remove uncertainty around how the bylaw is administered, including clarification or reconsideration of what constitutes “demolition,” preparation or update of a procedure guide and application form, and proactive periodic reminders to property owners of buildings over 75 years old about the bylaw and where to get more information. While Somerset’s six-month demolition delay period is fairly short, it can be challenging for municipalities to pass extended delay periods. One successful method of doing so is by laying out procedures and measures a property owner can take to get the delay lifted early, demonstrating that the bylaw is meant for the protection of community character rather than a simple obstacle. For example, if the owner of a Significant Building can demonstrate that the property has been marketed unsuccessfully, is structurally unsound, or that alternatives to demolition have been adequately explored, an overseeing historical commission may waive or shorten the delay period.

Other bylaws that Somerset may consider are:

- ▶ Demolition By Neglect Bylaw (Affirmative Maintenance Bylaw) – This protects historic properties from loss due to lack of maintenance. It can allow the local historical commission to identify threatened buildings and work with property owners to stabilize and secure the buildings. If repairs are not made, the bylaw may stipulate a fine, or allow the Town to make necessary repairs and place a lien on the property.

- ▶ Scenic Roads Bylaw – This bylaw establishes a local review process for alterations to stone walls or the cutting or removal of trees within the public right-of-way along designated roads. It does not affect stone walls or trees located on private property but can help maintain character-defining features of certain neighborhoods.
- ▶ Local Historic Districts/Architectural Preservation Districts (Neighborhood Conservation Districts) – Establishment of local historic preservation districts allows locally-administered protections over alterations, new construction, and/or demolition in designated districts. The scope of the regulations can be flexible and designed to reflect a community’s specific goals. While one community may value the physical integrity of architectural features visible from the public way, another community may require owners to respect the scale, massing, street pattern, setback, or general materials that define the overall character of the neighborhood.

## Identify Preservation Priorities and Roles

Somerset has the benefit of a triad of preservation entities, including the SHC, SHS, and FOSHP. In addition, it is clear that residents are interested and engaged in the town’s heritage. The risk is that there may be a perception of overlap between these groups. People involved in multiple groups may feel strained, initiatives may represent a duplication of efforts, and prospective members and contributors may be confused about the roles of each entity.

The current level of interest in Somerset’s historic resources presents an opportunity to undertake a new Preservation Plan, which was last completed in 1986. Identifying major preservation priorities for the next 10 to 15 years, along with the roles, responsibilities, and growth capabilities of stakeholder organizations can synthesize current efforts into an overall, comprehensive strategy that serves as a role model to other municipalities.

## Placemaking

The need to create community identity and cohesiveness plays a role in each set of issues and opportunities; however, the need to foster, develop, and promote a community identity was expressed throughout the public engagement process. Community identity provides the “elevator pitch” that makes Somerset a destination – both for its residents and for visitors. Outside of Somerset Village, there are other neighborhoods with a distinct heritage which can be developed and showcased to display the multi-faceted makeup of the town. For example, the Pottersville neighborhood can serve as a springboard for the attraction of ceramics makers, teachers, and education about the historical and current manufacture of ceramic goods. Developing the distinct identities of a variety of neighborhoods encourages connections between the neighborhoods, enhancing Somerset’s small-town feel. While the challenges to creating a town-wide waterfront park are daunting, celebrating the accessible portions of the waterfront in the context of their surrounding neighborhoods may fulfill the desire to better utilize this important resource.

Placemaking is also important to community groups as well as neighborhoods and streetscapes. The Somerset Cultural Council, who is currently scheduling one meeting per year, is seeking better meeting locations in order to expand and shift towards quarterly meetings. This would help advance the entity’s goals of generating internal grants, outside

fundraising, and hosting programming including awards and educational events. Similarly, the immediate success of SOAM indicates there is a regional need for a creative center and cultural hub, with more opportunities to connect with customers and provide collaborative and studio spaces. Siting a cultural center in Somerset would provide regional recognition, year-round market opportunities, and a chance to expand non-traditional cultural offerings.

## Goals and Recommendations

**Goal NCH1: Protect and enhance the quality and quantity of Somerset's natural and water resources for ecosystem restoration and public enjoyment.**

NCH1-1 Update the town's Open Space and Recreation Plan to inventory the town's valuable natural resources and identify resource protection needs and strategies.

NCH1-2 Strive to place permanent protection on all of Town-owned open space and conservation parcels to achieve long lasting community benefits as the town approaches buildout.

NCH1-3 Acquire and protect additional natural resource areas that are critical to wetland and floodplain protection, wildlife corridor preservation, and continuity of open spaces, through Town acquisition, grants and/or seeking private donation as opportunities arise.

NCH1-4 Preserve the town's remaining farmland and agricultural landscape by building greater awareness among landowners of the state's Chapter 61, Conservation Restrictions, and Agricultural Preservation Restrictions programs, and encourage participation and enrollment in these programs.

NCH1-5 Continue to enforce local wetlands and water resource protection bylaws.

NCH1-6 Seek opportunities to add natural resources educational signs or exhibits at key open space and waterfront areas in town, e.g. Pierce Beach, Chace Preserve, Elm Street Acres, etc.

**Goal NCH2: Create a vision for the future of the Village, using its historic development and resources.**

NCH2-1 Develop interactive programming around the in-process National Register listing, such as tours, scavenger hunts, creation of a Story Map through ESRI ([storymaps.arcgis.com](http://storymaps.arcgis.com)), and activities using historic maps.

NCH2-2 Use the National Register district to market the use of historic tax credits to existing and potential owners in the district.

NCH2-3 Identify a small number of key historic themes of the historic district, such as shipbuilding, to develop a unique and identifiable "brand" for the Village.

NCH2-4 Develop a set of design guidelines for development in the Village, encouraging its growth while respecting the district's historic character.

NCH2-5 Explore reuse potentials for the Village School building as a hub for a variety of historical, art, and cultural activities.

**Goal NCH3: Develop a historic resources Preservation Plan that establishes priorities, roles, strategies, and milestones.**

NCH3-1 Pursue Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding to prepare a community-wide Preservation Plan, utilizing the Taunton River Landscape Inventory report as a starting point.

NCH3-2 Explore the use of MHC's Survey and Planning Grant Program ([www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/mhchpp/Surveyandplanning.htm](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/mhchpp/Surveyandplanning.htm)) for financial support for the creation of a Preservation Plan.

NCH3-3 Adopt a Demolition-By-Neglect bylaw to help prevent the demolition of buildings due to structural instability.

NCH3-4 Prepare guidance for the Historically Significant Buildings Bylaw, providing owners with an easy reference to understand the reason for the bylaw and the process. Inclusion of a section focused on solutions, such as where to market a historic property and highlighting successful rehabilitations of historic buildings in the region, may prove to be a valuable resource.

NCH3-5 Discuss the establishment of Neighborhood Conservation Districts in neighborhoods concerned about incompatible construction and infill.

NCH3-6 Develop a strategy to assess the needs of the Town's numerous historic cemeteries. Prioritize cemeteries according to significance and threats, and contract specialists in cemetery preservation to map out restoration and maintenance plans.

NCH3-7 Encourage the Historical Commission to pursue a plan for preserving our historic stonewalls

**Goal NCH4: Encourage the creation of year-round cultural activities to support Somerset's creative and cultural communities.**

NCH4-1 Identify short- and long-term spaces as recognizable and known "hubs" for creative and cultural activities. Visit similar spaces in Massachusetts to learn from the experiences of other communities that successfully elevated their cultural presence.

NCH4-2 Develop a network of community partners to allow the expansion of the successful [RE]Envisioning Somerset program for multiple age groups, seasonal themes, and classes through the Council on Aging.

NCH4-3 Explore the use of interns or volunteers to provide grant writing assistance to the SCC and expand the Committee's ability to generate applications and provide educational opportunities in the community.

# Open Space and Recreation

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# 5

## Introduction

The term “open space and recreation” refers to conservation land, agricultural land, parks and recreation areas, and any other open area dedicated to conservation or recreation. Open spaces and recreation areas are essential components of a healthy and livable community. They provide opportunity for participation in a wide range of passive and active recreational experiences, both outdoors and indoors.

Open space and recreation areas provide a focus of community life and enhance the unique and identifiable characteristics of a community. They also offer significant environmental, social, and economic benefits. Natural open areas function as oases for quiet reflection and help enhance the connection to nature. Well-maintained and balanced open space and recreation resources also protect and enhance property values and attract businesses, new residents, and public and private investment.

Conservation land, on the other hand, serves numerous environmental functions, such as providing wildlife habitats and stormwater recharge areas. Impervious areas associated with open spaces can also help reduce runoff and diminish the frequency and severity of flooding while the vegetation helps cool the air and improve air quality.

This element of the Master Plan offers a high-level inventory of the town’s open space and recreation resources, including conservation areas, parks and playgrounds, school facilities, and recreation programs, etc., and explores issues and needs related to their preservation and enhancement for public benefit.

## Baseline Conditions Analyses

### Recreation Facilities

Outdoor recreational facilities in Somerset, for the most part, are outdated relative to current safety and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards, with exception to two new playgrounds recently installed in the spring of 2018. The outdoor playground/mixed use fields overseen by the Playground and Recreation Commission are listed below.

#### O'Neil Field

O'Neil Field includes baseball fields and a playground. Plans are in the works to submit an application for the replacement of the playground within the next two years. There is an old area on this site previously used for basketball and tennis that has been abandoned; this is a suggested location for a makeshift skating area. A softball field at this facility was renovated in 2016 to provide a more efficient surface for allowing play during inclement weather. This field's lighting is old and was only moderately upgraded in 2018; however, plans are in the works to upgrade it to more energy-efficient lighting within the next two to three years. Accessibility may be an issue when site renovation is performed.

#### Leahey Field

Leahey Field includes basketball courts and playground equipment. Plans are in place to replace the existing playground, which is antiquated and non-compliant, by 2020. Accessibility may be an issue when site renovation is performed.

#### South Field Complex

The South Field athletic complex houses two Little League fields for Baseball, one Babe Ruth Field, and two softball fields that are in good condition and maintained in part by the Highway Department. These fields also receive oversight from local baseball/softball leagues which help maintain the fields on a regular basis.

One of fields underwent an upgrade in 2017 with the addition of field lights to enhance the site and promote additional usage. It was a concerted effort between the Town and a local league, and relied upon the use of CPA funding. The complex also has an old, small playground area with a swing set, merry-go-round, and a "digger." This equipment was targeted for replacement in 2019. The basketball court on this site is also in need of replacement. Accessibility is not an issue for this complex.

#### Hillside Playground

The playground at this facility is of the same character/condition as the others in town. Improvements are planned for 2020. The bocce court has been upgraded by a local group who maintains the courts for play. The basketball court needs replacement. Accessibility is not an issue on this site.

#### Pottersville Field

The Pottersville Field site consists a playground, basketball courts, and a baseball field used for baseball, football, field hockey, soccer, and special events. A bocce court is also on site for a private group and seniors and is in very good condition. The three basketball

courts on site were resurfaced in 2019 using CPA funding. Accessibility is not an issue on this site.

#### Ashton Field and Playground

This site has three softball fields in excellent condition. The local league resurfaced one field back in 2013 and the other two fields were resurfaced in the summer of 2018 through CPA funding. The playground on site was inspected earlier this year and is slated to have the swing set, slide, merry-go-round, and digger removed and replaced in 2019. Accessibility is not an issue on this site.

#### Village School Playground

This site has a tee-ball field complex that is in good condition and maintained by the Highway Department. The local baseball league assists the Highway Department in maintaining the fields during the season. In the summer, neighborhood children use the complex for pick-up games. The one basketball court on site has been approved for resurfacing with CPA funding. A playground safety inspection was completed in 2018, and the Playground and Recreation Commission voted to remove the equipment for safety concerns. Accessibility is not an issue on this site.

#### Pierce Beach Park & Recreation Area

This is the most popular recreation destination in Somerset well known for the “Big Red Slide,” a 90-foot long slide with a 30-foot height drop. The slide, which is an iconic symbol of the park, was built in 1988 and is currently in temporary closure, awaiting repairs and possible replacement in 2019. The two playgrounds on site from 1988 were renovated in spring 2018 through CPA funding with state-of-the-art composite materials and ADA-compliant features. Also included at the park is a baseball/softball field, basketball court, and tennis court. The tennis court is not in active use at this time, but efforts are being made to introduce pickleball on it instead.

The beach area of this facility includes a picnic area with grills and picnic tables, a bandstand, and a bath house. The bandstand needs replacement for the popular summer concert series. An improvement plan is in place to reconfigure the stage to include a covering and will be submitted for CPA funding consideration. For the most part, accessibility is not a problem on this site.

#### School Recreation/Athletic Facilities

The Somerset School Department maintains and schedules the use of all school recreation/athletic facilities, which are generally in good condition and well-utilized. In addition to the abovementioned recreational facilities managed by the Playground and Recreation Commission and the School Department, there are a number of recreational areas overseen by the Board of Selectmen, including:

#### The Marsh

The area off of Dublin Street is an open space that was once utilized for outdoor skating during the winter. The area is open to the public for viewing and photography. Parking is available.

### Buffinton Park

Buffinton Park used to host an array of town activities, but in recent years, it has been mainly used by neighborhood residents. Plans are in place to add a dog park and disc golf to the park.

### Village Waterfront Park

This waterfront park has seen a significant upgrade in the past three years, with a new boat ramp installed and the building on site upgraded with new restroom facilities and a roof. This park offers boating, picnicking, playground, viewing, and fishing.

### Town Green

The Town Green is located on a triangular traffic island at the intersection of Buffinton Street and County Street/West County Street. The site was upgraded by the Highway Department in 2016 when the Town held its first annual Holiday Festival. Two more annual holiday festivals have been organized on this site since then, in 2017 and 2018, making it a celebrated community tradition. Buffington Brook, running across County Street from northwest to southeast, resurfaces on the Town Green along its western edge.

Accessibility is not a major issue for this site with various crosswalks connecting the island to commercial blocks across the streets. However, generally speaking, the Town Green is not well-utilized due to its relatively isolated location, except during the Town's Holiday Festival when West County Street is closed off to automobile traffic.

## Recreational Programs

The Playground and Recreation Department runs a number of programs, activities, and special events throughout the year for children, adults, and seniors. Some of the activities include the following: Easter egg hunt; all day summer program; summer concert series; tai chi; yoga; Zumba; babysitting classes; gingerbread house workshop; pitch, hit and run; soap box derby; road races; rentals in the park; and various trips.

These programs are hosted at various indoor and outdoor facilities, such as the school facilities, the Old Town Hall, and the COA Center. Program information is generally published on the Playground and Recreation Department's Facebook page.

## Conservation Land

According to the Town's 2018 Assessors' database, there are approximately 156 acres of public land in Somerset dedicated to conservation purposes.<sup>29</sup> These include some of the recreation/conservation areas overseen by the Board of Selectmen, such as the Marsh described above, water resource protection areas overseen by the Water Department, and conservation land under the jurisdiction of the Conservation Commission.

The Somerset Conservation Commission oversees roughly 98 acres of conservation/passive recreation lands which are mostly maintained by the Highway

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<sup>29</sup> These include all of the parcels classified, under the Massachusetts Property Type Classification Codes, as 932 Municipal Vacant Conservation.

Department and with help from various volunteer groups. The most notable conservation areas are listed below (see also **Map 10**).

Elm Street Acres – approx. 54 acres

Located on the west side of Elm Street, this is the largest contiguous tract of conservation land in Somerset, with woods extending across the town boundary into Dighton and Swansea. This site contains extensive forest land, stream and pond, wetlands, and large rock formations. There are trails for walking, hiking, or cross-country skiing, although trail conditions are rough. There is a parking lot on site, as well as picnic areas.

Broad Cove – approx. 26 acres

The Broad Cove Conservation area is located in the north end of town bordering Dighton. Its pristine marshland and cove conditions offer excellent opportunities for wildlife habitats, bird watching, fishing, vista viewing, and kayaking/canoeing. An on-grade, gravel parking lot is located off Pleasant Street. There is currently passive recreation on site, though people must carry boats a short distance to access the waterfront. A Broad Cove boardwalk over parts of the marshland was envisioned 20 years ago, though it has not come to fruition due the cost of construction.

Morris Preserve – approx. 10 acres

The Morris Preserve Conservation is located on the north side of Whetstone Hill Road along the bank of Somerset Reservoir. It offers opportunities for passive recreation such as hiking and bird watching, though it has limited access and only a small parking area. A wildflower garden located in this preserve is being used and maintained by the Somerset Garden Club.

Chace Preserve – approx. 5 acres

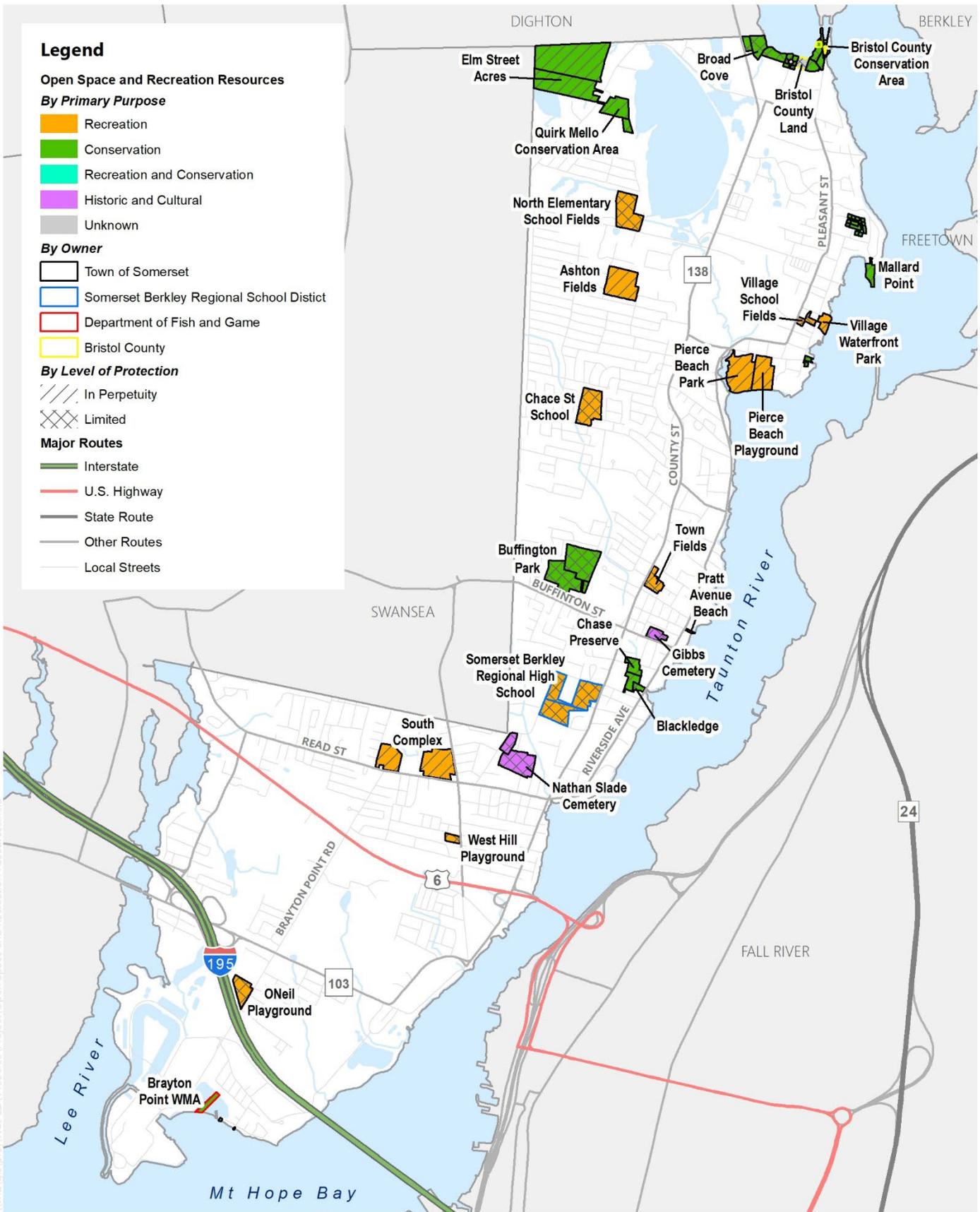
Chace Preserve is nestled among the town center commercial area on County Street and residential areas near Gardner Avenue. Buffington Brook runs through this site from north to south with a footbridge over the brook, which residents living east of the preserve use to cross the brook and access the center of town. There are walking trails, picnic areas, and paved parking spaces on site, though the trail system needs upgrading. The walking trails and area have been completely cleared recently by the Highway Department.

Mallard Point – approx. 3 acres

Mallard Point is a remnant pier of the historic Old Colony Railroad system that crossed the Taunton River between Somerset and Fall River. The farthest point of the pier juts out into the river, making this site an excellent coastal vista on the Taunton River with views up and down the river. It also offers great bird watching and fishing access. There is limited street parking on Pilot Drive. An at-grade trail gives access to benches, vista, and fishing point on site. The pier was ripped around 2005 by the Town to prevent coastal erosion.

Brayton Beach – approx. 0.5 acres

This is a beautiful waterfront vista looking out onto Mount Hope Bay to Tiverton and Bristol, Rhode Island. It is a rocky beach, established picnic site in summer, with access to waterfront walking. Visitors can walk along the rocky beach for fishing. Accessible parking is available with vista viewing and access to the picnic site.



**Town of Somerset Master Plan**

Somerset, MA

Source: MassGIS, Town of Somerset

**Open Space and Recreation**

## Local Recreation and Conservation Stewardship

While many local government entities in Somerset are involved in the protection and enhancement of the town's recreation and conservation resources, such as the Conservation Commission and the Board of Selectmen, the following commissions/departments mainly lead these efforts:

### Playground and Recreation Commission and Department

As described above, the Playground and Recreation Commission, with support from the Playground and Recreation Department, manages the town's recreation resources and work to enrich the lives of Somerset residents through quality programs, events, fields, and facilities. The Playground and Recreation Department currently has a full-time director, a part-time secretary, a part-time special projects employee (10 hours per week), and summer employees for maintenance at Pierce Beach in the summer. The Department receives adequate funding for programs, activities and special events provided to the residents. It also partners with other outside groups and organizations to enhance recreational opportunities in town. For example, the Department works with the following groups and organizations on activities in town, including: the Somerset Baseball League, Somerset Berkley Independent Softball League, Somerset Senior Softball League, Somerset/Swansea Youth Soccer, Somerset Flag Football League, Somerset Recreation Basketball League, Somerset Bocce, Harold Meehan Softball, Team Works, Opportunities for Players to Shine, and Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous.

Funding for upgrades to facilities and support for day-to-day maintenance is sufficient. The Department strives to purchase and install playground equipment that are ADA-compliant and made of sustainable materials to ensure lasting benefit for the community. Additional funding could provide for more staffing for site maintenance. In addition, there is a possible need for a permanent location, such as a recreation center.

### Conservation Commission

The Conservation Commission is an appointed board of six local residents and a conservation agent whose primary charter is to protect the town's natural resources in a regulatory and advisory manner. The Commission is responsible for administering the Massachusetts Wetland Protection Act (M.G.L. Chapter 131, section 40) and Massachusetts Public Waterfront Act (M.G.L. Chapter 91). Conservation Commissioners work to ensure that all construction and development projects (i.e., residential, municipal, and commercial) that may alter any wetlands, floodplains, rivers, streams, ponds, and/or lakes are permitted in compliance with state and local wetland regulations.

The Commission also oversees all conservation land under its jurisdiction with a focus to meet the local needs for multi-purpose open spaces with views, vistas, trails, and wildlife shelter, and to seek waterfront access for fishing, swimming, and boating, etc. Collaborating with the Highway Department, the Conservation Commission is responsible for protecting, preserving, and acquiring important scenic and natural resource areas throughout town. It also partners with the state, local industry, civic groups, and regional

conservation groups in creating opportunities to improve natural resource area holdings both within the town and beyond.

### Community Preservation Committee

The CPC is established in accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 44B, sections 3-7. Consulting with various agencies, organizations and/or individuals, the Committee studies the needs, possibilities, and resources of the town regarding community preservation and makes recommendations at town meeting for the acquisition, creation, and preservation of open space and land for recreational use. It also makes recommendations concerning the acquisition and preservation of historic resources and community housing, and the rehabilitation or restoration of these resources.

## Issues and Opportunities

### Increase Access to Waterfront Recreation

Somerset residents have a personal connection to the rivers and the bay. During the visioning exercise at the first Master Plan Public Meeting, where participants were asked to picture what their visions would be for their town, the majority of attendees emphasized better and more active interactions with the Taunton River waterfront. This general opinion covered direct engagement in waterfront recreation activities such as boating, fishing, as well as participating in waterfront cultural/art events and/or spectator sports such as rowing races, etc. Many residents at this public meeting envisioned Somerset to be a town known for its abundant waterfront recreation opportunities, along with thriving retail activities associated with these recreational areas. Therefore, opportunities could be explored to further increase or enhance public access to waterfront recreational areas, while tying these recreational opportunities to economic development in key commercial areas, particularly Slade's Ferry Crossing.

### Enhance Multigenerational Recreation Opportunities

While many of the town's recreational facilities and programs are popular among families, residents have expressed interest in additional recreation opportunities that would nurture the multigenerational culture in Somerset, where people of all ages and abilities can be brought together. When asked about what recreational facilities/activities are most needed in town, the most popular responses received from the first online community survey included: walking/biking paths and trails, arts and culture events, a dog park, a public swimming pool, small neighborhood parks, additional boating and fishing opportunities, community wellness and exercise facilities, a community center, and an ice skating rink or area.

## Goals and Recommendations

**Goal OSR1: Activate the Wild and Scenic Taunton River waterfront for its untapped recreational potential as a signature destination.**

- OSR1-1 Enhance maintenance and upgrades to the town's existing river access points. Ensure these resources are accessible to the public both physically and informationally.
- OSR1-2 Identify and activate historical access easements to the Taunton River that are currently unrecognized and unutilized across the town's waterfront neighborhoods to provide additional access points to the riverfront. Seek funding and support to clean up, upgrade, and add signage to these river access easements to enhance accessibility to the public. Refer to the Massachusetts Coastal Zone Management Office's *A Practical Handbook for Reclaiming Public Access* for guidance.
- OSR1-3 Seek opportunities to create new riverfront vistas, parks, and access points/areas to enhance recreational attractions and catalyze economic development activities.
- OSR1-4 Actively brand the Taunton River waterfront and pursue opportunities to host aquatic sport events utilizing the river course and public waterfront parks.

**Goal OSR2: Expand and enhance a town-wide network of walking and biking facilities that promotes an active and healthy community lifestyle by interconnecting residential neighborhoods, recreational destinations, retail centers, and municipal service locations.**

- OSR2-1 Identify and bridge critical gaps within the town's sidewalk and trail system, especially from residential neighborhoods to commercial areas, schools, town offices, and waterfront recreation destinations, to promote safe, year-round pedestrian activity and foot traffic.
- OSR2-2 Enhance maintenance of Town-owned parcels that play a key role in bridging the gaps within the town's trail systems for improved trail continuity.
- OSR2-3 Explore possibilities to add on-road bicycle facilities on some of the safe, scenic local streets in town to encourage getting around town on bikes. (Specific strategies are presented under the Transportation element.)
- OSR2-4 Consider improving current trails and/or adding additional walking trails or paths in the town's conservation areas to meet the growing demand for passive recreation opportunities.
- OSR2-5 Pursue funding to advance the design and construction of the long-envisioned Broad Cove boardwalk.

**Goal OSR3: Support and maintain the Town's existing recreational facilities and programs while seeking to provide additional high-demand recreational opportunities.**

- OSR3-1 Update the town's Open Space and Recreation Plan to comprehensively guide resource improvement efforts in town, including, but not limited to, developing an inventory of the town's existing recreational facilities and understanding emerging demands for new and additional recreational opportunities for all ages, particularly for teenagers beyond the indoor activities or school sports currently available.
- OSR3-2 Be proactive in identifying and prioritizing facility and property maintenance needs and ensure adequate Town budget and funds are allocated to recreational facility upkeep.
- OSR3-3 Encourage public involvement in the care and maintenance of the town's recreational facilities.
- OSR3-4 Seek opportunities to identify appropriate locations for additional high demand outdoor recreational amenities, particularly on Town-owned properties.

**Goal OSR4: Ensure the Town's recreational resources and opportunities are accessible to people of all ages and abilities.**

- OSR4-1 Create a resource information list and/or map to inventory and display the town's recreational resources, such as parks and playgrounds, waterfront access points, accessible conservation areas and trails, etc., and make such information available to the public both online and at town offices.

**Somerset Proud**

OSR4-2 Create a community events calendar on the Town's website to organize information on various town events, including recreational events, in a centralized location for easy access by the public.

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OSR4-3 Continue advancing Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) improvements to the town's recreational areas and facilities to improve accessibility for residents with special needs.

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OSR4-4 Continue making progress to add lighting and signage to publicly accessible recreational areas/facilities in a consistent and easily identifiable way, particularly for entrances and parking areas, to encourage public uses of available resources.

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# Community Facilities and Services

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# 6

## Introduction

The Community Facilities and Services Element of this Master Plan should serve as a guide for decision-making about the Town's public buildings, infrastructure, and services. A town's ability to provide adequate services to the community requires both short- and long-term planning. Effective capital planning and asset management policies are often challenged by limited revenue for government operations, which can put long-term investments at risk. Prioritizing and setting goals for short- and long-term investment needs can help a town ensure that it meets the community's expectations for municipal services, which Somerset has always been able to surpass.

With the closings of the Montaup and Brayton Point Power Plants, which used to provide major revenue sources for the Town, Somerset is now facing increasing challenges maintaining the level of municipal services enjoyed by residents and businesses. While new growth and development opportunities, such as those discussed in the Economic Development Element of this Master Plan, can help enhance the Town's tax base and revenue, it is also critical to evaluate and prioritize capital improvement needs to ensure that the Town's limited financial resources are strategically distributed.

## Baseline Conditions Analyses

The municipal services that Somerset provides are typical of most Massachusetts towns. Many local government services qualify as "essential" regardless of whether the state mandates them.

**Table 6-1 Somerset's Municipal Services**

Department	Location	Department	Location
Accounting	140 Wood Street	Library	1464 County Street
Administrator	140 Wood Street	Planning	140 Wood Street
Animal Control	68 Stevens Road	Police/EOC	465 County Street
Assessors	140 Wood Street	Recreation	140 Wood Street
Board of Health	140 Wood Street	School Department	580 Whetstone Hill Road
Building	140 Wood Street	Tree Warden	140 Wood Street
Conservation	140 Wood Street	Town Assessor	140 Wood Street
Council on Aging	115 Wood Street	Town Clerk	140 Wood Street
Emergency Management	1238 Brayton Point Road	Treasurer	140 Wood Street
Fire Department/ Emergency Operations Center (EOC)	475 County Street	Veterans	140 Wood Street
Harbor Master	140 Wood Street	Water Department	3249 County Street
Highway Department	1263 Brayton Point Road	Water Pollution Control Facilities	116 Walker Street

Source: Town of Somerset official website

## Town Hall

The Town Hall building, located at 140 Wood Street, houses most of the Town's offices. This facility has recently been updated with a new boiler and a new roof. The space is adequate to meet current staffing needs; however, the Town of Somerset is generally understaffed. The following departments and administrative staff are housed at the Town Hall:

- ▶ Town Administrator
- ▶ Town Planner
- ▶ Board of Health
- ▶ Building Commissioner
- ▶ Conservation Agent
- ▶ Town Accountant

- ▶ Town Assessor
- ▶ Town Clerk
- ▶ Treasurer
- ▶ Tree Warden
- ▶ Veterans Director
- ▶ Tax Collector
- ▶ Recreation
- ▶ Harbor Master

In addition, there are a few personnel that serve as support staff. However, the number of these support staff is very limited.

## Police Department

The Somerset Police Department operates out of their headquarters at 465 County Street. It has been accredited by the Massachusetts Police Accreditation Commission (MPAC) since 2008 and was re-accredited in March of 2017. Its headquarters building, built in 1965, had an addition constructed in 2003. It houses a community/training room, dispatch area, officers' report area, and five holding cells that currently meet the needs of the department.

The Police Department currently includes the following units: Administration, Patrol Division, Detective Division, and Dispatch/E-911 Operations. There are 32 full time officers, six full time civilian dispatchers, 16 reserve officers, six part-time civilian dispatchers, one full-time civilian custodian, and one part-time records clerk employed as of 2019. The Police Department manages and operates 14 marked police cruisers, six unmarked vehicles, two motorcycles, bicycles, a radar trailer, and a signboard.

Overall, the Police Department is able to meet the current need for services in Somerset. In 2018, the Police Department received 25,818 calls for service. There were 2,328 reportable offenses, 713 arrests, 3,752 motor vehicle citations, and 432 parking citations. Collections that year amounted to \$11,493 from parking citations, \$41,400 from detail cruiser fees, and \$37,855 from administrative fees for companies hiring details.

In 2018, the Police Department provided the following community services: the TRIAD partnership program, which focuses on education of criminal victimization; the Police Athletic League (PAL), which forges positive relationships with the youth; Public Safety Day; the BJ Voss 5K; the Somerset Outreach Program, which reaches out to individuals and families who may have issues with opioids and addiction; the designation of Online Purchase Safety Zones; Rape Aggression Defense classes; the Police Explorer Program, which promotes careers in law enforcement among youths aged between 14 and 20; and the Camera Registry Program. In addition, the Police Department releases a weekly newsletter.

## Fire Department

The Somerset Fire Department operates out of its headquarters that was built in 1964 and is in good condition with recent improvements made to the building shared with the Police Department. The Fire Department currently has 35 full-time firefighters/paramedics that respond to about 3,400 emergency responses per year.

The Fire Department manages and operates the following equipment: three pumpers, one ladder, two ambulances, one forestry unit, three command vehicles, one fire boat, one foam attack trailer (Bristol County), one spill response trailer (MassDEP), and shelter bedding for 100 people. In order to meet current needs, all of the Fire Department's breathing apparatuses are being replaced and additional staff is expected to allow the Town to operate a second ambulance.

In general, while the headquarters station is in good condition, the Fire Department has outgrown this facility. A request has been put on the Town's Capital Plan to construct a storage building on the property sometime in the future to house some of the Department's vehicles and equipment.

## Library

The Somerset Public Library is more than a lending library for books. The community also uses it as a technology center, a resource for small businesses, a source for job seekers, a research center, and community public space. The building where the library currently resides was built in 1974, with a renovation completed in 2011. The Library has the equivalent of six full-time employees and 10 part-time employees.

The Library belongs to the SAILS Library Network and shares resources with other cities and towns. The Library has 93,837 physical items for lending in addition to digital holdings. In 2016, the Library hosted 810 meetings and issues 540 new library cards. The Library and the Friends of the Somerset Public Library provide events and programming on various topics, including a children's summer reading program.

Recent landscaping efforts at the Library have been a showcase. The Library's repurposed Periodical Room has been transformed into a technology training center and flexible meeting space.

## Council on Aging (COA)

An estimated 31 percent of Somerset's population is over the age of 60. The Somerset COA, the focal point of local senior living, provides services such as health insurance counseling, recreational activities, transportation, podiatry, and meals to resident seniors, their families, and caregivers. The COA also partners with the Fire and Police Departments, Housing Authority, and Library to put on programs and events. Over 1,100 seniors are served a year.

Transportation service is available five days a week and on Sunday mornings for medical appointments, religious services, and trips to local pharmacies, banks, grocery stores, and salons within a designated area. In 2016, the service provided 6,152 rides. Three part-time

drivers operate the buses, which are all handicap accessible. The transportation needs of the senior population are currently unmet, however, as this population continues to grow and there will likely be increasing demands on senior transportation services.

The COA building at 115 Wood Street was built in the 1920s and is shared with the Town Nurse. Recent building improvements include new carpet and tiles to cover asbestos flooring in the office, game room, and kitchen; the replacement of the oldest part of the roof; and a new boiler system in 2017. The COA staff includes a full-time Director and Assistant Director, along with several senior volunteers logging over 3,000 hours in 2018.

## School District

Good schools benefit a community and help preserve property values for everyone. Somerset residents have traditionally supported their public schools to ensure that children receive an exceptional educational experience. Somerset takes pride in hiring highly qualified teachers to support teaching and learning.

Somerset operates five public schools that served approximately 2,800 students in 2018.

- ▶ Chace Street School (Elementary)
- ▶ North Elementary School
- ▶ South Elementary School
- ▶ Somerset Middle School
- ▶ Somerset Regional High School

The School District has approximately 454 employees: 16 administrators, 21 administrative assistants, 64 paraprofessionals, 244 teachers, 23 custodians/maintenance workers, 23 cafeteria workers, 44 support services (includes part-time staff), 12 guidance staff, and seven nurses. The K-8 student teacher ratio is 13.2 to 1 and the State ratio is 13:1. The Somerset Berkley Regional High School, opened in 2014, is attended by students from Somerset and neighboring Berkley, Massachusetts. The Town currently has plans to assess the elementary and middle schools for future upgrades. The School District is meeting the current and foreseeable future needs of the community.

## Water Department

The Town of Somerset is served by a groundwater well and a reservoir for drinking water. The Somerset Water Department is staffed by 14 full-time staff and one part-time/seasonal worker. In addition to regular maintenance of the distribution system, the Water Department performs repairs, bi-annual hydrant flushing, and assists with service connections.

Recent improvements to the Town's water supply system include:

- ▶ Replacing 4,150 feet of water main;
- ▶ Replacing 60 service lines;

- ▶ Installing five fire hydrants on Winslow, Alberta, Antrim, Locust, and Ivanhoe Avenues; and
- ▶ Upgrading to variable frequency drives on some electric motors.

The water treatment plant processes and delivers nearly 1 billion gallons of water per year. Meeting future water demands seems to be attainable as long as aging water infrastructure is continually replaced, as needed.

## Water Pollution Control Department

The entire Town of Somerset is serviced by public sewers. Many of the sewers in town were constructed in the mid-1970s and the remainder as new developments were constructed. Significant stormwater inflow and infiltration (I&I) into the collection system has burdened the treatment plant located at 116 Walker Street. The MassDEP has required assessment of I&I and will require a plan for reducing this flow by repair and replacement of sewer pipes.

The treatment plant was last upgraded in the 1990s and is due for modernization and the addition of nitrogen removal treatment technology to meet pending U.S. Environmental Protection Agency permit standards.

## Highway Department

The Somerset Highway Department maintains the Town-owned roads, parks and playgrounds, and town cemeteries. The Department is also responsible for trash, recycling, and yard waste pick-up contracted through a third party. The Vehicle Maintenance Department maintains the Town's fleet vehicles including that of the Police Department, Fire Department, and the Council of Aging, as well as of the Highway Department itself.

The Highway Department, located at 1263 Brayton Point Road, is managed by the Superintendent, and assisted by a Foreman, Clerk, two mechanics, two heavy equipment operators, four truck drivers, and four laborers. There are no current plans to expand the Department's building. The Highway Department is meeting current and anticipated future needs.

## Playground and Recreation Department

The Somerset Playground and Recreation Department strives to offer a variety of affordable community programming that foster play, education, and community growth. Activities generally include baseball, flag football, tennis, basketball, volleyball, yoga, babysitting classes, and various specialty events. See the Open Space and Recreation Element of this Master Plan for further details.

## Town Owned Buildings and Facilities

In addition to buildings and facilities mentioned above that are managed by various Town departments, the Town of Somerset owns and maintains many more assets

throughout the town, ranging from utility and clubhouse buildings, field houses, and garages, to ejectors, sheds, and yard fixtures, etc. A detailed list of Town-owned properties is included as **Appendix A** of this Master Plan. These buildings and facilities serve various purposes and functions that are critical to maintaining the quality of public services the Town provides to its residents and businesses. Planning and budgeting for ongoing care, maintenance, and upgrades to these buildings and facilities are essential to ensure that the Town continues to meet the community service needs in the future.

## Issues and Opportunities

In general, responses from the public about the Towns' public services and facilities have been favorable. As long as critical infrastructure is maintained and replaced when it becomes outdated, the Town should be able to meet current needs of residents and business owners.

### Balance Public Service Provision and Fiscal Constraints

Public service provision is one of the most essential government responsibilities towards its citizens. There will always be demand for the upkeep of public facilities and to maintain a certain level of services for residents in Somerset. For example, the Town's aging water/sewer infrastructure is in need of upgrade; critical public facilities such as the Town Hall need to be evaluated to identify whether electrical back-up generators are needed. The Town could consider creating a priority list of capital improvement projects to ensure strategic use of its budget.

It is equally, if not more, important to ensure the long-term financial capacity and sustainability of the Town in providing these services and upgrades. While the Town's finances are well maintained, a range of funding concerns beyond the control of the Town have impacted local revenues. These issues relate in particular to the closures, within the last decade, of the Montaup and Brayton Point Power Plants, which contributed significantly to the Town's revenue when in operation. These losses have impacted the Town's operating budget and, in turn, increased the share of taxes among the residential and commercial sectors. Additional revenues are needed to maintain the level of municipal services desired by town residents. While targeted economic development would be the top strategy to help improve the local economy and Town finances, alternative funding sources could be explored, such as various grant funding opportunities, use of state and/or regional planning services, technical assistance programs, support from local and regional land trusts for critical land acquisition, and impact fees where appropriate.

In addition, it is widely acknowledged that the Town has been providing public services with a very limited staff. With added financial constraints as discussed above, the Town needs to strategically making sound fiscal decisions moving forward. This could include reviewing services and making smart cuts to avoid unnecessary costs to the community, putting maintenance first and streamlining processes to reuse/repurpose what the Town already has, and actively explore ways to raise revenue.

## Improve Senior Services

Somerset’s aging population is growing and is more active than before. There is a need to expand program offerings for the 55 and over population who work during the day and prefer evening events. In addition, there is a need to extend transportation shuttle operating times to allow for greater rider flexibility.

## Goals and Recommendations

**Goal CFS1: Develop short-and long-term plans to improve Somerset’s capital assets and infrastructure to meet future needs.**

- CFS1-1 Develop and implement a capital improvement plan which includes Somerset’s water and sewer infrastructure and other public facilities.
- CFS1-2 Conduct flood vulnerability assessments, through the State’s Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program, for key public facilities in town, e.g. the Water Pollution Control, Water Department and critical infrastructure.
- CFS1-3 Evaluate publicly owned and managed outfalls and outlets along the shoreline and identify infrastructure that would benefit from the installation of backflow prevention.
- CFS1-4 Incorporate the implications of natural hazards and climate change into the long-term planning of the Town’s capital assets and infrastructure.

**Goal CFS2: Maintain the public safety and service facility needs, and Town-owned infrastructures of the community.**

- CFS2-1 Develop a maintenance and funding plan for Town-owned structures.
- CFS2-2 Identify the electrical back-up generator needs in critical facilities such as Town Hall, and the Council on Aging.
- CFS2-3 Continue to explore opportunities to reuse and/or repurpose vacant or underutilized public facilities and buildings, or expand their uses to accommodate a wider array of social and cultural functions.

**Goal CFS3: Enhance services for Somerset’s senior population.**

- CFS3-1 Evaluate the demand for extended shuttle service to support more flexible ridership.
- CFS3-2 Conduct a community survey to identify gaps in current senior services and explore additional program offerings to accommodate the aging population that works during the day.
- CFS3-3 Encourage accessibility and mobility investments to link the elderly to the wider community.

**Goal CFS4: Maintain current public library facilities and services.**

- CFS4-1 Identify supplemental funding sources to maintain good standing with the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners.
- CFS4-2 Stay current on new technology and programming for library services.
- CFS4-3 Continue to provide a civic space in which residents are encouraged to meet.

**Goal CFS5: Provide a high-quality educational experience.**

- CFS5-1 Identify and implement building upgrades that are recommended from the middle school and elementary school needs assessments.

# Transportation and Circulation

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# 7

## Introduction

Transportation infrastructure serves as the backbone of a community, connecting a Town's residents to its businesses, cultural resources, and neighboring communities. The Transportation Element of this Master Plan provides an overview of the existing transportation network in Somerset, as well as provides a strategy to enhance the existing infrastructure to provide a more cohesive community.



Main Street in Somerset

Somerset's existing transportation network is typical of many coastal New England towns that historically developed with a water-based economy, with a waterfront service road that is lined with residences and small-scale commercial areas, which then connects to a

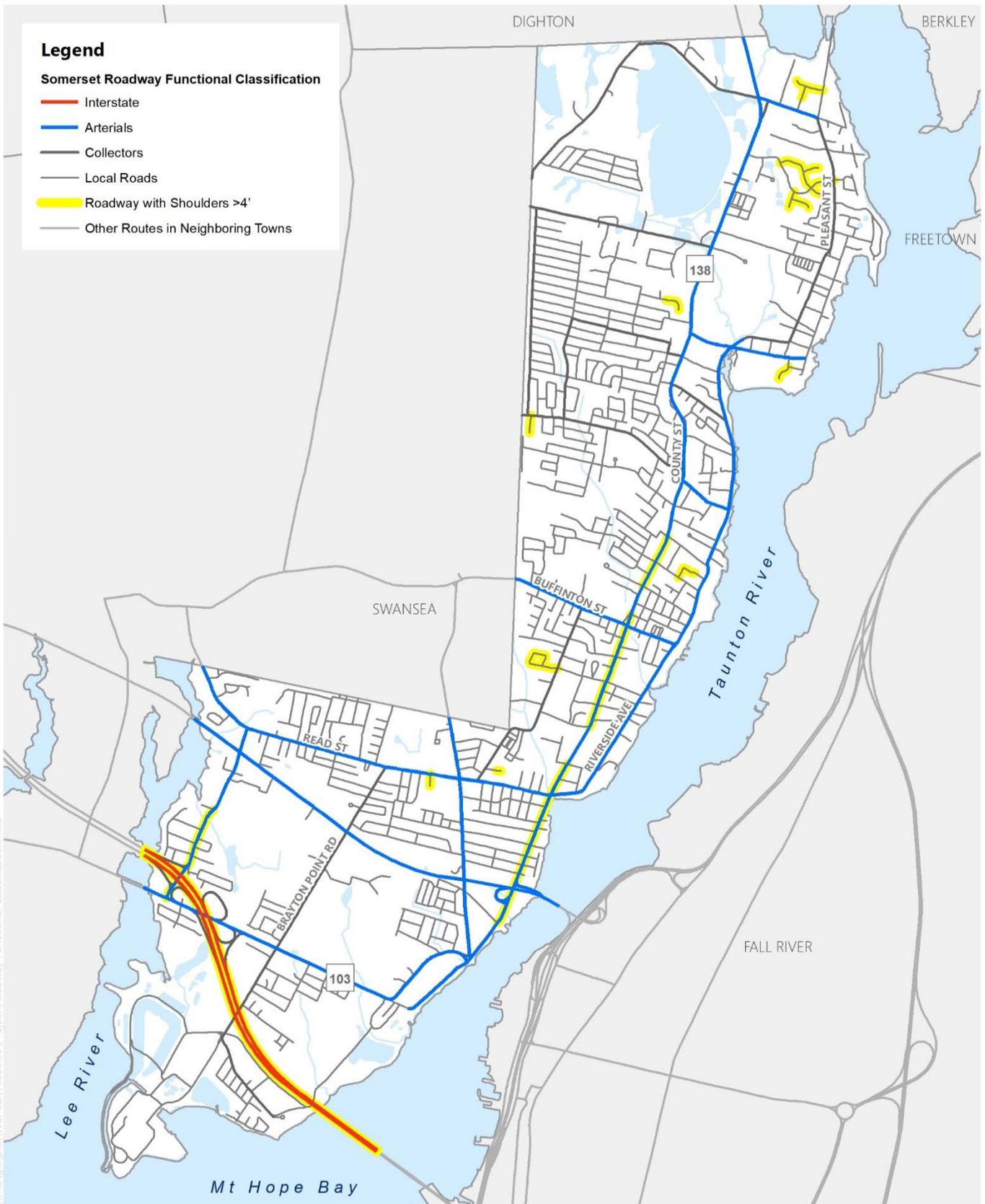
primary large-scale retail corridor. Many of the major roadways in Somerset, such as Wilbur Avenue, Read Street, Riverside Avenue, and Pleasant Street date back to the 1800's or earlier, with numerous spokes having been created as the many residential neighborhoods were developed off the mainline. As the town plans for its future, it has the ability to focus enhancements to its transportation network in a way that takes advantage of the existing infrastructure, as well as provides new and improved connections to the town's numerous natural, cultural, and economic resources. By building around these resources, Somerset aspires to develop and maintain an adequate transportation system that fits within the existing infrastructure and serves the needs of all of its residents.

## Baseline Conditions Analyses

The transportation system within Somerset varies dramatically from tight-knit streets that make up the many residential areas, to the corridors that provide regional connections to other communities and regions. These roadways can be referred to as interstates, arterials, collectors, and local roadways. Each contributes towards creating a street "hierarchy," whereby each type of street should promote a combination of access and/or mobility. **Map 11** provides a graphical view of Somerset's existing roadway network.



Route 138 in Somerset



\\vhb\gis\arcgis\Map11\4336\00\Project\Roadway Functional Classification.mxd



Town of Somerset Master Plan

Somerset, MA

Source: MassGIS

**Roadway Functional Classification and Roadway with Shoulders >4'**

Somerset is within driving distance of Boston (50 miles), Cape Cod (35 miles), and Providence, Rhode Island (20 miles). The town also has central access to many of the regional highways, with I-195 and Route 6 traversing the town, Routes 79 and 24 located to the east, and Route 140 located to the west. The highways in the community offer good regional transportation access and mobility including:

- ▶ I-195: a limited access highway (i.e. there are no driveways opening up to the highway) that provides east-west regional access between Providence to the west and New Bedford to the east. Interchange 4 is located within Somerset and provides access to Route 103, which connects directly to Brayton Point Road and Riverside Avenue, while also providing access to Swansea to the west.
- ▶ Route 6: a principal arterial that bisects the town and provides east-west mobility within the town and the region. This roadway serves as the principal access to the town's retail and commercial areas. Within the town, Route 6 is under Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) jurisdiction.
- ▶ Route 138: a minor arterial of the town that provides north-south mobility between Route 103 and Dighton. Route 138 provides access to many residential neighborhoods, public services, and smaller scale commercial areas. Route 138 is under MassDOT jurisdiction.
- ▶ Riverside Avenue: a minor arterial roadway on the easterly side of town, a portion of which is designated as Route 138, that provides north-south mobility for residents along the Taunton River.

Overall, there are 120 miles of roadway within the town, of which 86 are maintained by the Town, 16 are maintained by MassDOT, with the remaining mileage consisting of private ways.

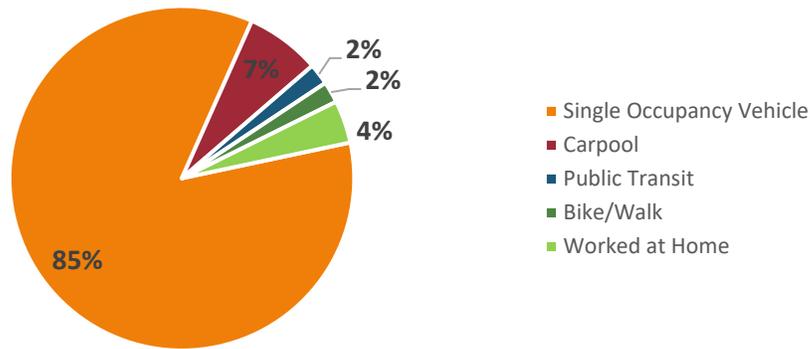
## Modes of Travel

To gain a better understanding of how people move within and through Somerset, the mode share for commuters (or workers) was reviewed. **Figure 7-1** provides a breakdown of the mode split data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau.<sup>30</sup> Based on the available information, the overwhelming majority of Somerset's working age population (95 percent) relies predominantly on the automobile, be it driving alone or carpooling, to get to and from work. Walking makes up the next most popular means of commuting (1 percent combined). Approximately 3 percent of Somerset residents work from home.

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<sup>30</sup> Mode share data based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 American Community Survey (<http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>)

**Figure 7-1 Means of Transportation**



Source: MassDOT Crash Portal

Since the mode share heavily favors the automobile, it is important to also get an understanding of the commuting patterns for both residents of Somerset and for workers of Somerset-based employers. **Table 7-1** presents the information collected as part of the 2010 U.S. Census.

**Table 7-1 Census Journey-to-Work Data for People Who Live in Somerset and People Who Work in Somerset**

Location of Employment <sup>1</sup>	Percent of Residents	Percent of Workers	Location of Residence <sup>2</sup>
Fall River	24.4%	28.8%	Somerset
Somerset	18.9%	27.2%	Fall River
Swansea	6.1%	9.2%	Swansea
Taunton	3.9%	5.8%	New Bedford
Providence	3.9%	3.5%	Westport
New Bedford	3.7%	2.7%	Dighton
East Providence	2.8%	2.3%	Tiverton
Brockton	2.4%	1.4%	Rehoboth
Boston	1.8%	1.3%	Dartmouth
Freetown	1.7%	1.3%	Taunton
73 other Towns/Cities (combined)	30.6%	16.6%	48 other Towns/Cities (combined)

Source: U.S. Census 2010

1 Location where residents of Somerset travel to work

2 Location where people who work in Somerset travel from

Approximately 19 percent of Somerset residents surveyed work in Somerset, while 29 percent of people who work in Somerset, also live within the town (this variance reflects that there are more work-aged residents than employees in Somerset). Given the substantial portion of individuals that both live and work in the Town of Somerset, the

potential exists to substantially reduce the number of commuting trips made via automobile. While the existing mode share within the town leans heavily towards the automobile, targeted transportation improvements could be made that would promote travel by other modes.

## Pedestrian and Bicycle Accommodations

Pedestrian and bicycle mobility are an important part of any transportation plan, as providing better access for non-motorized alternatives and encouraging these modes will help reduce congestion and the overall number of vehicle miles traveled (VMT). In return, environmental benefits can be realized as the number of automobiles on the road is reduced.

### Pedestrian Access

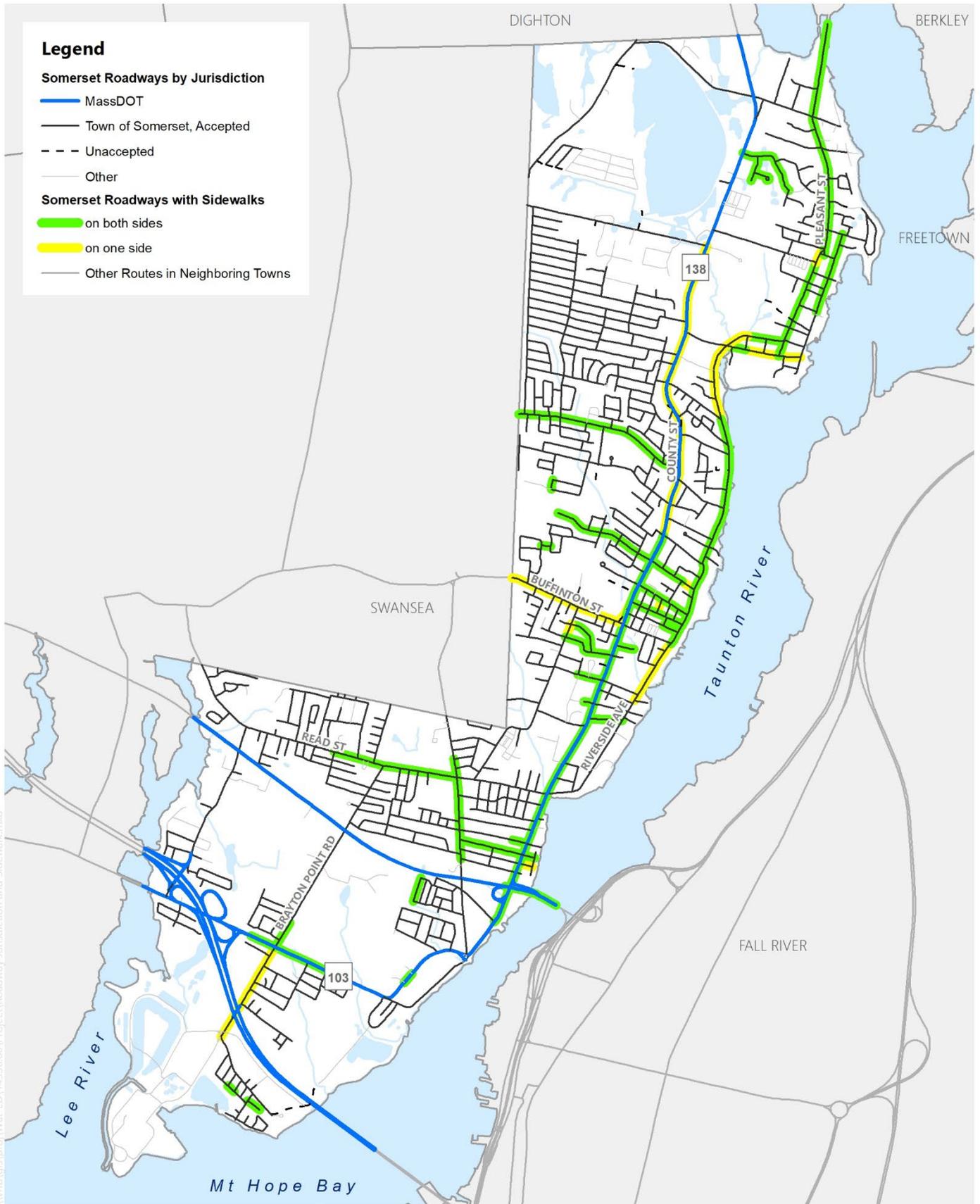
The town has approximately 32 miles of sidewalks, as illustrated in **Map 12**. Most of these sidewalks are located along Route 138 and Riverside Avenue with others scattered throughout the town. The ability of Somerset residents to commute and accomplish other errands via walking is limited due to poor continuity of the existing system. It should also be noted, that while sidewalks may be present, they are not necessarily in walkable condition or ADA-compliant as many are extremely narrow and show signs of significant wear.

It was previously stated that approximately 1 percent of residents in Somerset walk to work; therefore, it is important to maintain and provide new sidewalks so that this number can increase. Maintaining sidewalks is also important to provide increased independence for populations less likely to have access to personal vehicles, including the elderly and at-risk populations. Just as important as sidewalks, pedestrian crosswalks and handicap accessible ramps need to be reviewed.

#### What is Vehicle Miles Traveled or VMT?

A central goal of most sustainable transportation plans is to reduce overall vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in a community or region. This refers to the total number of miles traveled in a vehicle in an area over a certain period of time. VMT is correlated with household density, access to transit, distance to shops/services, proximity to employment, land use and income.

A collection of methods and strategies for reducing vehicle congestion and VMT is called a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program. There are many strategies that can be considered as part of a TDM program, including but not limited to: improved transportation options, incentives to use alternative modes of transportation, parking management, and policy and institutional reforms.



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Town of Somerset Master Plan

Somerset, MA

Source: MassGIS

Roadway Jurisdiction and Sidewalk

According to a 2010 study prepared by the MAPC, the average household in the Commonwealth drive more than 75 miles per day; which is based on data from over 149 cities and towns. This study identified Somerset as a town where residents travel less daily than the average community surveyed. The average daily VMT for residents of Somerset was between 50 and 75 miles per day. Per the same study, residents of Somerset have a round-trip commute of between 15 and 20 miles, on average. Non-commuting trips (errands, pleasure trips, etc.) made by Somerset residents range, on average, from 2 to 4 miles, with the longer trips being concentrated among residents that live on the north edge of the town.

## Bicycling

Bicycle facilities can generally be classified as on-road (e.g., bicycle accommodating shoulders, bike lanes, etc.) or off-road (e.g., bike and/or mixed-use paths). The South Coast Bikeway, a 50-mile path that runs from Rhode Island to Cape Cod, is proposed to travel through Somerset utilizing on-street bike lanes along Read Street between Swansea and Brayton Avenue. At that point, the bikeway connects to an off-road path that travels along the Veterans Memorial Bridge over the Taunton River. The Taunton River Trail is also proposed to travel through Somerset, with on-street bike lanes on Riverside Avenue and Pleasant Street. Beyond these two proposed paths, the longest existing continuous stretch of bicycle accommodations within Somerset are in the form of striped shoulders running along Route 138 between Route 6 and Centre Street, although these are unlikely to be utilized except by experienced riders. Route 103 also offers potential for bicycle connection from Somerset to the East Bay Bike Path in Bristol, Rhode Island.



Veteran's Memorial Bridge

## Roadway Safety

Providing a safe transportation network is critical for multiple reasons beyond limiting injuries and damage to personal property. Unsafe roadways and intersections can result in dividing lines within a community, as well as keeping outside travelers from using town roadways and thus limiting potential tourism and business growth.

### Why Do Crashes Happen?

*Rear-end collisions are often a result of congestion or vehicles stopping to allow vehicles to enter the mainline of traffic from a street or a driveway; also called "courtesy crashes."*

*Angle type collisions typically occur when there are high side-street volumes trying to enter the mainline traffic stream.*

*Sideswipe collisions are often a result of on-street parking or vehicles attempting to pass vehicles attempting to turn into side streets or driveways*

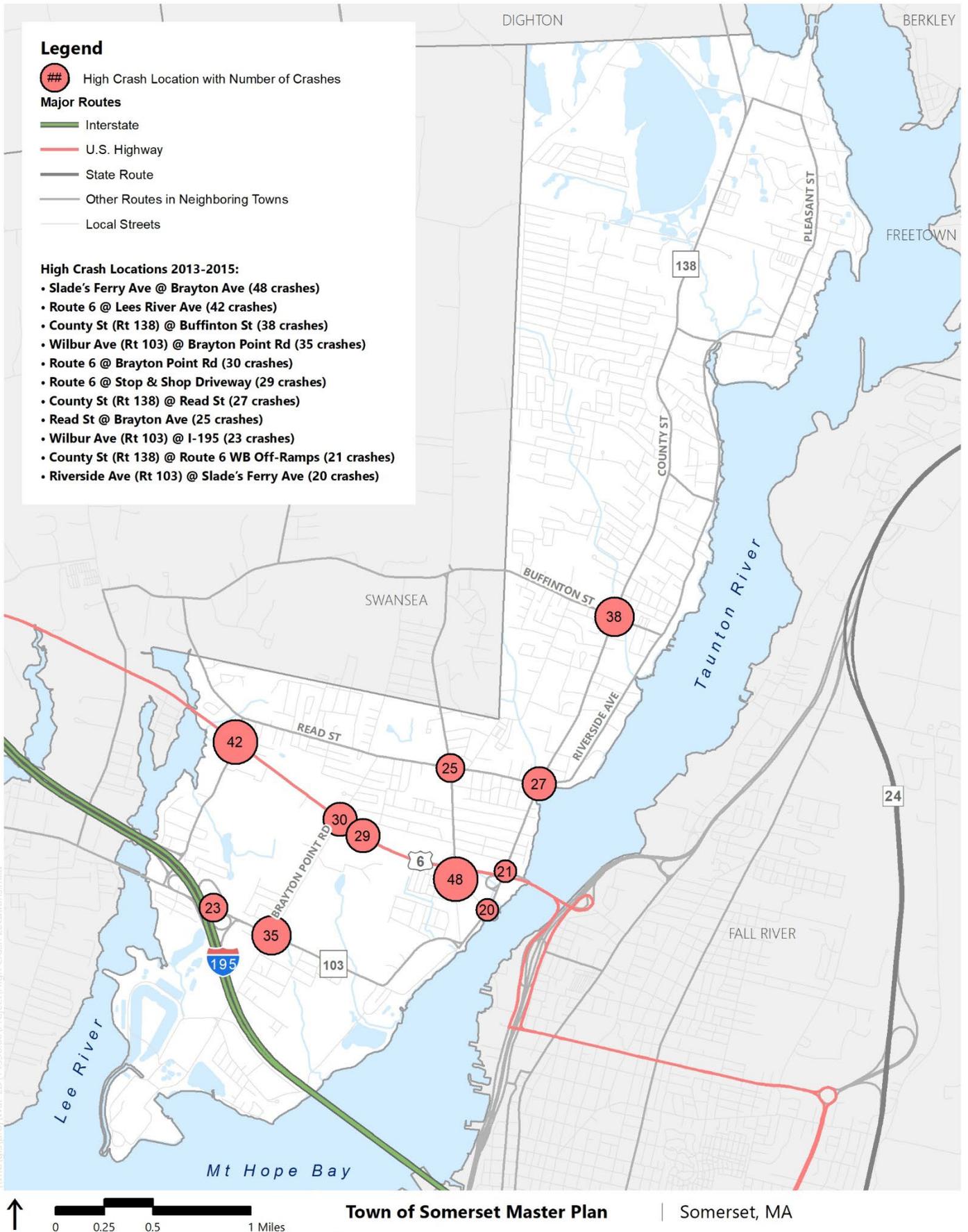
Numerous studies, conducted by both public and private entities, have looked at existing safety concerns at various locations within the town. Most recently, MassDOT has identified areas in Somerset that are high crash cluster locations using data from 2014 through 2016.<sup>31</sup> These clusters have been identified as part of MassDOT's Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)<sup>32</sup> in conjunction with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The following seven locations were identified; which were illustrated in **Map 13**:

- ▶ Slade's Ferry Avenue @ Brayton Avenue
- ▶ Route 6 @ Lee's River Avenue
- ▶ County Street (Route 138) @ Buffinton Street
- ▶ Route 6 @ Brayton Point Road
- ▶ County Street (Route 138) @ Read Street
- ▶ Read Street @ Brayton Avenue
- ▶ County Street (Route 138) @ Wood Street

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<sup>31</sup> MassDOT Top Crash Locations map application [www.services.massdot.state.ma.us/maptemplate/TopCrashLocations/](http://www.services.massdot.state.ma.us/maptemplate/TopCrashLocations/)

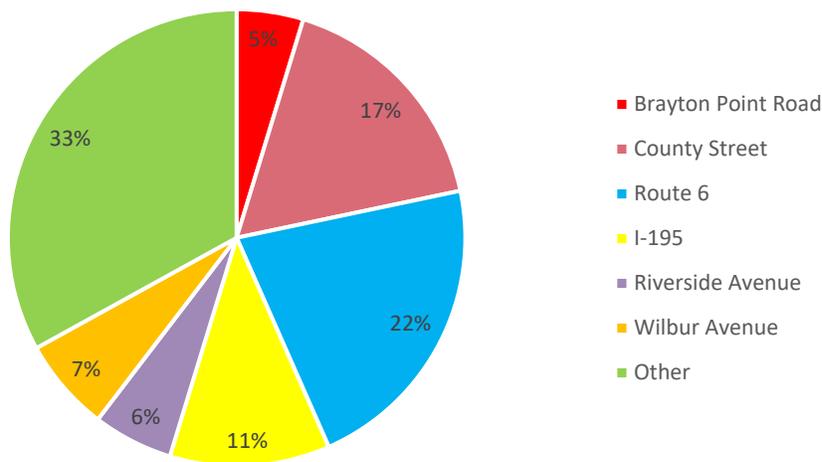
<sup>32</sup> Massachusetts Strategic Highway Safety Plan (<http://www.mhd.state.ma.us/default.asp?pgid=content/traffic/shsp&sid=level2>)



Source: MassGIS, MassDOT

In addition to providing a summary of the high crash locations in town identified by MassDOT, this Master Plan includes a town-wide crash chart (see **Figure 7-2**) to summarize the number of crashes along major corridors. This data was prepared by VHB using the MassDOT database for the most recent five years available (2012 through 2016). Per the MassDOT database, approximately 2,700 crashes occurred on roads within the Town of Somerset between the years of 2012 and 2016. This suggests an average of more than 500 crashes per year that occur within the town. Approximately 67 percent of these crashes occurred on six roadways: Brayton Point Road, County Street, Riverside Avenue, Wilbur Avenue, Route 6, and I-195.

**Figure 7-2 Town Wide Crash Chart**



Source: MassDOT Crash Portal

Some information taken from the review of the available crash data includes:

- ▶ There were 10 fatal crashes during the five years reviewed, five of which occurred on I-195, which is a federal highway and monitored by the state.
  - Of the five fatalities that occurred on non-interstates, four occurred during non-daylight hours.
  - Of the 10 fatalities, three involved pedestrians.
- ▶ There were 21 crashes involving pedestrians and bicycles town-wide, including three fatalities (all pedestrians).
- ▶ Of the three pedestrian fatalities, one occurred at each of the following locations: on I-195 south of Route 103, Read Street in the vicinity of South Elementary School, and on Lepes Road

## Public Transportation

### Passenger Rail Service

There is no direct passenger rail service to Somerset. The Providence, Attleboro, South Attleboro, and Middleborough/Lakeville Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

(MBTA) Commuter Rail stations are each an approximately 25 to 40-minute drive from Somerset. The Middleborough/Lakeville Station is the last stop on the MBTA's Middleborough/Lakeville Line, which provides service to South Station in Boston, with stops in Brockton, Braintree, and Quincy along the way. The other three stops are located on the Providence Line.

MassDOT and the MBTA are currently in the process of restoring commuter rail service to the region, which was discontinued in 1958, via the South Coast Rail Commuter Rail Extension project. Based on a recent Notice of Project Change filed by MassDOT, the project is expected to be phased, with service being restored to the region under Phase I by upgrading the existing rail infrastructure in the area to meet current standards. As part of Phase I, new stations will be constructed in Fall River and Freetown. The Fall River Depot is proposed to be located southeast of the Route 6/Route 79 interchange. As part of Phase II of this project, the MBTA's Stoughton Line will be extended to a new station in East Taunton (also to be constructed under Phase I), which would then connect to the existing lines servicing Fall River. As part of Phase II, a second station will be constructed at Battleship Cove in Fall River.

### Bus and Para Transit Service

The Southeastern Regional Transit Authority (SRTA) operates one primary bus route (Route 14) through the town, which runs between the Fall River Transportation Center and the Swansea Mall SRTA Terminal. This route runs Monday through Saturday, making scheduled hourly stops within Somerset at the Clifton Rehab facility on Route 103 and the Stop & Shop plaza at the corner of Route 6 and Brayton Point Road. The SRTA also operates demand response service for its member communities, as well as a Boston Hospital Shuttle that runs between the SRTA Terminal in New Bedford and 11 Boston hospitals. The SRTA regularly conducts Comprehensive Service Assessments to evaluate its service and consider various options for improving operations and service, of which the most recent was published in 2014. As part of that assessment, it was noted that the local Somerset shuttle (along with those in Swansea, Acushnet, and Mattapoisett) was eliminated at the end of fiscal year 2014 due to poor performance.

## Issues and Opportunities

### MassDOT Coordination

As discussed in previous sections, several of the major roadways within the town are under the jurisdiction of MassDOT. This lack of local control presents a number of challenges but can also unlock funding sources not otherwise available. Having the principal commercial corridors within the town being under MassDOT control adds extra layers of permitting required for any development along these roadways (e.g., Permit to Access State Highway and compliance with the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act for larger developments). These roads are maintained by MassDOT, however, allowing the Town's funds to be allocated elsewhere, either along the corridor or in other locations.

## Bicycle-Related Development

The presence of the South Coast Bikeway provides a number of opportunities for local connections and development. Somerset's portion of the South Coast Bikeway will consist of on-road segments along Read Street and Brayton Avenue and then transition onto the existing Bouthot Memorial Bike Path, following the Veteran's Memorial Bridge into Fall River. Once realized, the Bikeway would not only provide alternatives for commuters to directly access the new Fall River rail station, but also provide alternatives for residents looking to reach the Slade's Ferry Crossing commercial area and the Taunton River waterfront. New spurs would also promote improved pedestrian connectivity, which is currently lacking.

## Transit Use

Current transit options within Somerset are limited to a single roundabout SRTA bus route that runs between various local destination points. With the current mode of transportation dominated by personal vehicle, there is an opportunity for other modes to make inroads with strategic planning. These opportunities will be enhanced by the presence of proposed developments within and surrounding Somerset, including the future Fall River rail station and South Coast Rail Extension. In advance of these developments, there are opportunities for towns and the SRTA to coordinate and explore the potential of long-range shuttles to regional employment centers, such as Boston and Providence.

## Goals and Recommendations

**Goal TC1: Maintain and improve the Town's transportation infrastructure to safely and efficiently connect its neighborhoods with destinations and amenities.**

- TC1-1 Develop and implement an asset maintenance and management plan, including pavement and sidewalks.
- TC1-2 Be aware of and involved in regional efforts with SRPEDD, the SMMPO and other regional stakeholders to improve transportation both locally and regionally for improved commuting, economic growth, public safety, and emergency response.
- TC1-3 Work with MassDOT to rehabilitate and enhance State-owned roadways and infrastructure within the Town, including incorporating recommendations made as part of the on-going I-195 Interchange 4 Transportation Evaluation.
- TC1-4 Identify locations to incorporate streetscape elements to enhance roadside areas and create gateways.
- TC1-5 Work with SRPEDD and MassDOT to identify corridor planning efforts and improvement projects that could be funded using the State Transportation Improvement Program or Highway Safety Improvement Program funding and conduct Road Safety Audits (RSA's) where needed.
- TC1-6 Apply for grants through MassDOT's funding programs to assist in closing gaps in the existing sidewalk system.
- TC1-7 Seek funding and support from MassDOT on improvements and year-round maintenance of state-owned sidewalks, as guided by the state's latest Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plans.
- TC1-8 Work with private developers and employers to identify improvements that focus on economic development and community enhancements.

**Goal TC2: Improve access for all users of Somerset's transportation system and work with partners to explore and enhance transportation safety measures, public transit access, and bike/pedestrian connections.**

- TC2-1 Focus sidewalk and trail maintenance and/or construction in areas to close gaps in the existing system with specific attention being paid to directly connect neighborhoods to destinations such as the trail, schools, and Center of Town. As applicable, adapt Town initiatives to current state and MassDOT priorities, particularly when state funding is available.

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- TC2-2 Explore opportunities within Center of Town to enhance or expand sidewalks in ways that support retail, business activities and arts and cultural events.

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- TC2-3 Work to expand both the existing and proposed trail systems within the town, including exploring opportunities to develop spurs (on-road or off-road) to the South Coast Bikeway and Taunton River Trail, as well as to well-maintained bicycle trails in neighboring Swansea and Dighton, in order to encourage regional cycling on safe trails and roads

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- TC2-4 Work to improve connections for the public to the waterfront and through the town’s existing open space to create pedestrian-friendly opportunities.

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- TC2-5 Identify and sign an on-road bicycle route throughout the town using dedicated signs and bike lanes (where the existing roadway width is adequate), and/or shared-use pavement markings, also known as sharrows (where roadway width is inadequate).

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- TC2-6 Improve pedestrian and bicycle connections to the Commuter Park & Ride Lot along Route 103, as guided by the on-going I-195 Interchange 4 Transportation Evaluation.

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- TC2-7 Evaluate the feasibility of providing landscape buffers, wider sidewalks and/or shared-use paths along collector and arterial roadways, where pedestrian safety concerns currently exist, to improve the comfort of pedestrians and bicycles.

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- TC2-8 Explore possibility to partner with SRTA to increase bus and shuttle services between Somerset and the future Fall River Depot Commuter Rail Station in an effort to enhance public transit access to major employment centers along the MBTA commuter rail line.

**Goal TC3: Continually assess the Town’s transportation needs and opportunities, such as parking demand, as well as emerging trends and technologies.**

- TC3-1 Evaluate the feasibility of implementing a bike-share program to help connect the Center of Town and commercial areas to local and regional trails, such as the South Coast Bikeway.

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- TC3-2 Evaluate the feasibility of partnering with local and regional employers, commercial destinations, SRTA and express commuter buses to reinstate the Somerset Shuttle and/or a local trolley or other new transportation to foster opportunities to link employers and workers together.

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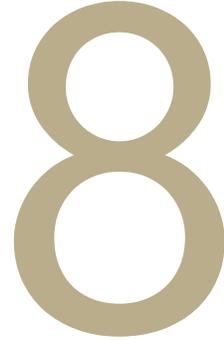
- TC3-3 Encourage the installation of electric vehicle charging stations among the Town’s major employers and destinations, as well as the adoption of electric vehicles among the Town’s fleets.

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- TC3-4 Support training for Town staff and the Highway Department to understand how to plan for autonomous vehicles and advancements in traffic systems.

# Sustainability and Climate Change

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## Introduction

Planning for sustainability can be defined in various ways and measured in relation to a variety of indicators, but for the purposes of this Master Plan, the Town of Somerset has chosen a definition aligned with the American Planning Association (APA) and its Planning Advisory Report 567, *Sustaining Places: The Role of the Comprehensive Plan*<sup>33</sup>. This definition is as follows:

*Planning for sustaining places is a dynamic process through which communities plan to meet the needs of current and future generations by considering the needs of the ecosystems upon which they depend while balancing social, economic, and environmental resources, incorporating resilience, and linking local actions to regional and global concerns.*

This chapter characterizes the Town’s sustainability activities (e.g., policies, programs, and actions) and frames sustainability within the context of related issues and opportunities. It also establishes several goals and recommendations to advance the Town’s sustainability performance over the life of this Plan.

## Baseline Conditions Analyses

Somerset has implemented or explored a variety of sustainability initiatives that address its environmental, social, and economic responsibilities, as well as promote its long-term viability through natural hazard mitigation measures. A selection of these efforts is provided and discussed below by relevant categories.

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<sup>33</sup> Godschalk, David R., and William R. Anderson. (2012). *Sustaining Places: The Role of the Comprehensive Plan (PAS Report 567)*. Chicago: American Planning Association.

## Energy

### Community Choice Aggregation

As a result of electric supply rates increasing by 40 percent between December 2012 and December 2014, the SRPEDD Electric Aggregation Group was created to establish a community electricity aggregation (CEA) program that provides electricity affordably and reliably to residents and businesses throughout Southeast Massachusetts. This program, which started in January 2016, serves approximately 164,000 residential and commercial accounts in 23 municipalities, including Somerset. As of January 2017, the actual residential savings were \$115,699 over the private utility's rates; residents are afforded electric supply costs similar to those available to businesses. Program benefits are able to be realized by generating economies of scale through bulk-purchasing methods.

The CEA program was renewed in September 2018 for 36 months and provides a locked-in rate (\$0.10430 cents/kilowatt hour) that compares favorably to the basic rates of National Grid (up to \$0.14761/kilowatt hour).<sup>34</sup> It does not currently provide for additional clean energy purchase above the Renewable Portfolio Standard.<sup>35</sup>

### LED Street Lighting

As part of its efforts to improve the energy efficiency of its buildings and facilities, the Town, in working with the MAPC, is seeking to perform light emitting diode (LED) retrofits at its nearly 1,700 High Intensity Discharge streetlights. Grants from MAPC and National Grid, the Town's electric utility, are anticipated to offset the total cost of the project; estimated savings would pay back the remainder in 2 to 3 years. The project would reduce the Town's associated electricity costs by an estimated \$130,000 annually.<sup>36</sup>

### Renewable Energy Projects and Support

The Town has demonstrated a commitment to installing and supporting renewable energy projects within its jurisdiction and, in doing so, recognizes the need to reduce its reliance on fossil fuels and the potential economic benefits of such projects. This is exemplified by the Town's Water Department and its plan to install roof- and ground-mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) panels at its water treatment plant facility and at the department-owned old Cordeiro farm property. This project is expected to be made possible through a 2018 grant award from the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources in the amount of roughly \$1.9 million, which is part of a program to assist communities that have experienced lost revenue from coal fired power plant closures.

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<sup>34</sup> MassCEA. (2018). Somerset Electricity Program. Retrieved 4 February 2019, from <https://masscea.com/somerset/>

<sup>35</sup> More information on Massachusetts' Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard, which requires a certain percentage of the state's electricity to come from renewable energy, is available at <https://www.mass.gov/renewable-energy-portfolio-standard>.

<sup>36</sup> Holtzman, Michael. (2019). Somerset voters pass funds for street lighting replacement audit. *The Herald News*. Retrieved 4 February 2019, from <https://www.heraldnews.com/news/20180322/somerset-voters-pass-funds-for-street-lighting-replacement-audit>

The project is estimated to save the department at least 50 percent in its electricity costs.<sup>37</sup>

The Somerset Berkley Regional School District has also endeavored to install solar PV panels on its property. In 2017, the School District, in partnership with Solect Energy and PowerOptions, installed a 348-kilowatt solar energy system on the roof of the Somerset Berkley Regional High School. This installation covers up to 20 percent of the building's annual electricity use.<sup>38</sup> Additionally, the high school earned certification under the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED®) Building Design and Construction (BD+C) rating system in 2016.

Through a competitive bid process, the Town's Board of Selectmen chose BQ Energy LLC to build a solar PV project on a portion of the town-owned closed landfill off Brayton Point Road. Approximately 3.5 megawatts are expected to be generated, about 1.5 megawatts on the nearly 5 acres of town land and 2 megawatts on a connected private parcel. Economic benefits of the proposed project include an annual sum payment to the Town of approximately \$100,000 from a 15-year lease agreement.<sup>39</sup> The proposed project has received post closure permit approval from MassDEP, and the design of the interconnect was approved by National Grid. ISO New England is currently reviewing the project.

Section 11.0 of the Town's Zoning By-law facilitates the creation of large-scale ground-mounted solar photovoltaic installations (projects greater than 250 kilowatts on at least five acres of land) by setting standards for their placement, design, construction, operation, monitoring, modification, and removal. All qualifying facilities, except for municipal facilities, are subject to Site Plan Review through the Zoning Board of Appeals in accordance with Section 6.10 of the by-law. Such facilities may be sited in the area of the Large-Scale Ground-Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Overlay District; underlying districts include the Business District, Limited Business District, Industrial District, Light Industrial District, and Residential District. The Town does not currently provide expedited application or permitting processes for large-scale solar PV projects.

## Montaup and Brayton Point Power Plant Sites

The well-published closings of the Montaup and Brayton Point Power Plants represent economic development opportunities for the Town. As documented in the 2015 *Somerset Power Plants Reuse Study*,<sup>40</sup> the development of clean energy production facilities at these sites are possible. At the Montaup site, this includes 1 megawatt of solar and a 500-kilowatt anaerobic digester. Meanwhile, at Brayton Point, a green energy hub with 9 megawatts of solar, a 500-kilowatt anaerobic digester, and an offshore wind

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<sup>37</sup> Austin, George. (2018). Water Department to receive solar money. *South Coast Today*. Retrieved 4 February 2019, from <https://www.southcoasttoday.com/special/20181017/water-department-to-receive-solar-money>

<sup>38</sup> Solect Energy. (2017). *Partnership with Solect Energy and PowerOptions Provides School with Solution to Successfully Navigate Fiscal Hurdles*. Retrieved 4 February 2019, from <https://solect.com/somerset-berkeley-regional-school-district-installs-348-kw-solar-system-high-school/>

<sup>39</sup> Holstzman, Michael. (2018). National energy company to build arrays on old Somerset landfill. *The Herald News*. Retrieved 4 February 2019, from <https://www.heraldnews.com/news/20180205/national-energy-company-to-build-arrays-on-old-somerset-landfill>

<sup>40</sup> Massachusetts Clean Energy Center. (2015). *Somerset Power Plants Reuse Study*. Retrieved 4 February 2019, from <http://files.masscec.com/SomersetReuseStudy.pdf>

interconnection was envisioned. Similarly, the 2016 *Reimagining Brayton Point* proposes creating a “Clean Energy Hub” that includes large-scale battery storage along with solar PV, a food waste digester, and offshore wind terminal.<sup>41</sup>

As of November 2018, the owners of the Brayton Point site, Commercial Development Company, rebranded it as the Brayton Point Commerce Center. They foresee the property as “world-class logistics port, manufacturing hub, and support center for the emerging offshore wind energy sector.”<sup>42</sup>

## Green Communities Designation and Grant Program

The Town is currently working on obtaining designation status under the State’s Green Communities Designation and Grant Program.<sup>43</sup>The process for obtaining designation involves five criteria:

1. Passing zoning designating locations for the as-of-right siting of renewable or alternative energy generating facilities, research and development facilities, or manufacturing facilities;
2. Adopting an expedited application and permitting of one year at most, under which facilities interested in locating their facility in a designated renewable zone may be sited within the municipality;
3. Establishing an energy use baseline for municipal buildings and facilities, street and traffic lighting, and vehicles, as well as adopting an Energy Reduction Plan (ERP) demonstrating a planned reduction of 20 percent of energy use after five years of implementation;
4. Requiring all departments to purchase fuel-efficient vehicles for municipal use, whenever such vehicles are commercially available and practicable; and
5. Adopting Massachusetts’ Board of Building Regulations and Standards (BBRS) Stretch Code (780 CMR 115.AA) to minimize the life-cycle cost of all newly constructed homes and buildings.

Obtaining designation under this program would afford the Town with funding opportunities for clean, affordable, and resilient energy projects. The Green Communities Grant Program offers monies to implement energy-efficiency measures, construct renewable energy projects, or take other actions to reduce fossil fuel-based energy consumption. Additionally, Municipal Energy Technical Assistance (META) grants can be applied to certain energy audits, feasibility studies for zero-net energy construction, engineering studies, and assistance with solar PV development. The Green Communities

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<sup>41</sup> Synapse Energy Economics. (2016). *Reimagining Brayton Point: A guide to assessing reuse options for the Somerset community*. Retrieved 4 February 2019, from [http://www.synapse-energy.com/sites/default/files/Reimagining\\_Brayton\\_Point\\_15-076.pdf](http://www.synapse-energy.com/sites/default/files/Reimagining_Brayton_Point_15-076.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> *The Herald News*. (2018). Owners rebrand Brayton Point with offshore wind in mind. Retrieved 4 February 2019, from <https://www.heraldnews.com/news/20181108/owners-rebrand-brayton-point-with-offshore-wind-in-mind>

<sup>43</sup> Massachusetts. (2019). Green Communities Designation & Grant Program. Retrieved 4 February 2019, from <https://www.mass.gov/green-communities-designation-grant-program>

Division also provides local technical assistance and support through a designated regional coordinator.

## Waste Management and Recycling

The Town adopted a mandatory Recycling By-law in 1993 and has a single-stream recycling program under which accepted recyclables such as newspapers, cardboard boxes, glass bottles and jars, and plastic bottles (#1-7) are commingled for collection. A recent accomplishment of this program, realized in partnership with the Town's waste contractor (Howland Disposal Service), was the distribution of up to 6,800 recycling carts that are substantially larger than those they replace. To support its recycling program, the Town partnered with the MassDEP on expanding recycling awareness and education within the community to maximize its recycling rate and minimize contamination of the recycling stream (i.e., when trash is placed amongst recyclables or when recyclables are prepared incorrectly such if they contain food residue or are placed in plastic bags). MassDEP provides recycling education at <https://recyclesmartma.org/>.

In addition to a recycling program, the Town collects trash curbside on a weekly basis. It also offers yard waste collection and the collection of large bulk items by appointment for a small fee. Such items can also be taken directly to the Transfer Station at the Somerset Highway Department.

## Community Health and Well-being

### Somerset Open Air Market

An attribute of a sustainable community is the safeguarding and promoting of public health, and a means to this end is the provision of and access to healthy foods. The Somerset Open Air Market, which began in 2017, has grown to over 100 vendors that, in addition to farm stands and food trucks/stands, include artisans, demonstrations, fitness, and children's activities.<sup>44</sup> Farm stands at the Somerset Open Air Market have included the regional Bettencourt Farm, Aquidneck Honey, DaSilva Farms, and Hearts Beet Farm.

### Town Nurse

The Town of Swansea & Somerset share a Public Health Nurse. These services are available to the residents of both towns as a resource on numerous health topics. A sample of the services offered in the office of the public health nurse includes B12 injections, TB testing, blood pressure readings/monitoring, sharps disposal, car seat installations, flu shots, and more.

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<sup>44</sup> Allard, Deborah. (2018). Somerset Open Air Market opens Saturday with more than 100 vendors. *The Herald News*. Retrieved 4 February 2019, from <https://www.heraldnews.com/news/20180530/somerset-open-air-market-opens-saturday-with-more-than-100-vendors>

## Senior Tax Exemptions

Of the Town's population, 23.3 percent are 65 years or older, compared to just 15.1 percent in the State. Among this demographic, 6.9 percent are living with incomes below the poverty line and 20.4 percent are spending more than 35 percent of their income on the costs of home ownership.<sup>45</sup> Recognizing these economic challenges, Somerset offers its senior population several related tax exemptions that reduce all or a portion of their property taxes. These exemptions and their qualifications include:

- ▶ 70 and Older Married – Income less than \$36,785 and assets less than \$40,000;
- ▶ 70 and Older Single - Income less than \$24,523 and assets less than \$38,000;
- ▶ Surviving Spouse – Assets less than \$40,000;
- ▶ Veterans – Must be 10 percent or more disabled, service connected (letter confirming percent disabled from Veterans Affairs) and a copy of DD214 (military service records); and
- ▶ Blind – Registered with Massachusetts Commission for the Blind/Declared legally blind.

In addition, the Town offers a tax deferral options for persons 65 years or older, which allows qualifying persons to defer all or a portion of their taxes at a specified interest rate until they sell their homes or leave the tax bill to their estate. The exemptions and tax deferral option offered by the Town better enable its seniors to stay in their homes, maintain/improve their homes, and generally have a better quality of life.

## Hazard Mitigation and Climate Adaptation

Somerset is a coastal New England town vulnerable to coastal storms, intense rainfall, and extreme wind. It is also vulnerable to climate-related hazards such as extreme heat and cold and geologic hazards such as earthquakes. To identify related risks and vulnerabilities, as well as to develop long-term strategies to protect its people and property from future natural hazard events, the Town completed a multi-hazard mitigation planning process that included opportunities for public input and neighboring community involvement. This process is documented in the *Town of Somerset Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan*, which was completed November 2018. The adoption of this plan enables the Town to seek non-emergency disaster assistance, including funding for mitigation projects, from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

As reported in the Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan, the top ranked hazards in Somerset included:

- ▶ Flooding due to Coastal Storm Surge;
- ▶ Hurricanes/Tropical Storms;

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<sup>45</sup> Tufts Health Plan Foundation. (2018). *2018 Massachusetts Healthy Aging Community Profile: Somerset (Bristol)*. Retrieved 4 February 2019, from [https://mahealthyagingcollaborative.org/wp-content/themes/mhac/pdf/community\\_profiles/MA\\_Towncode273\\_Somerset.pdf](https://mahealthyagingcollaborative.org/wp-content/themes/mhac/pdf/community_profiles/MA_Towncode273_Somerset.pdf)

- ▶ Severe Winter Weather (greater than 10 inches of snowfall; coincident with high winds, cold temperatures, and blizzard conditions); and
- ▶ Failure of the Somerset Reservoir Dam.

The plan recognizes that climate change can affect the risk of severe weather and climate-related hazards (e.g., a flood level that has a 1 percent Annual Exceedance Probability today may have a much higher probability of occurrence in the future due to sea level rise). It notes that in 2050 the Town's average temperature could increase by 2°F and 8°F, the frequency and intensity of rainfall will increase, and there is very high confidence that sea levels near Somerset will increase by 1 foot (relative to the year 2000).

The Town has existing capabilities to mitigate natural hazards such as enforcing the 9<sup>th</sup> Edition of the Massachusetts State Building Code, having a Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, owning emergency generators for its public safety facilities, participating in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), and completing the 2016 *Somerset Dam Emergency Action Plan*, just to name a few. The *Town of Somerset Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan* outlines 24 additional actions, including 10 high priority actions the Town should take to expand its existing capabilities. The high priority actions, which include those that would have benefits that exceed costs, where funding is already secured, or are ongoing projects, are listed below by action category.

### **Multiple Hazards**

- ▶ Implement Local Hazard Mitigation Plan.
- ▶ Identify potential hazards that include climate change to Town-owned facilities before major repairs or the construction of new facilities to minimize future impacts from natural hazards, particularly flooding, storm damage, erosion, and high winds.
- ▶ Review the Water Pollution Control Facility (WPCF) operations and maintenance plan to ensure the plan is up to date and has protocols to keep the plant operations and pumping stations safely running during natural hazard storm events. Conduct a flood vulnerability assessment of the WPCF and identify flood mitigation alternatives for improving the level of flood protection at the WPCF, if needed.

### **Flood Hazards**

- ▶ Use 2014 MA Coastal Infrastructure Inventory and Assessment Report Update as a guide to develop a coastal structures action plan for identifying and prioritizing coastal structure improvements. The 2014 Update includes 13 structures, including 6 bulkhead/seawalls, 6 revetments, and a coastal beach.
- ▶ Participate in reviews of regulatory floodplain maps updates and revisions.
- ▶ Continue to participate in NFIP (or other) training offered by the State and/or FEMA that addresses flood hazard planning and management.
- ▶ Acquire GIS software and mapping technology to create an inventory of water, drainage, transportation, and sewer infrastructure.

### **Severe Weather**

- ▶ Maintain adequate supply of sand other road treatment materials.

### **Secondary Hazards: Dam Failure**

- ▶ Review and update annually Somerset Reservoir Emergency Action Plan and Maintenance and Operations Plans to ensure the plans are up to date and have protocols in place to maintain safe operations of the Dam during natural hazard events.
- ▶ Complete dam repairs (i.e. minor repairs including brush clearing and repair of gates) as identified in the Emergency Action Plan and Phase 1 Report.

## **Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Grant Programs**

The MVP program from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) provides funding for a community-driven process intended to identify a municipality's top hazards, current challenges, and community strengths through a combination of the latest available climate change information (e.g., climate science and data) and local knowledge. The program includes the MVP Planning Grant for the completion of a climate change vulnerability assessment and conducting resiliency planning. Upon completion, certification as an MVP community is awarded by the EEA and MVP Action Grant funding is made available for the implementation of climate adaptation actions to address climate change impacts resulting from extreme weather, sea level rise, inland and coastal flooding, severe heat, and other climate impacts.

The Town of Somerset applied for a Fiscal Year 2019 MVP Planning Grant and has received funding to move forward with creating a plan for the town.

## **Regional Coordination**

Part of being a sustainable community is ensuring that policies, plans, and actions are consistent with and support those of adjacent municipalities and the larger region in which the community sits. Somerset is one of 27 cities and towns within the SRPEDD and works with and through this organization on a variety of regional concerns such as land use planning, transportation, economic development, and natural resource management planning. Examples of such coordination include the SRPEDD's work in electric power aggregation purchases; with South Coast Rail and the now inactive South Coast Rail Task Force that advocated for "environmental justice, economic development, and resource protection as part of South Coast Rail;"<sup>46</sup> and on the 2014 *Southeastern Massachusetts Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan*, among other initiatives. Assistance provided by the SRPEDD also affords the Town with opportunities to realize efficiencies through the delivery of services on a regional basis, as well as to streamline its own operations.

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<sup>46</sup> SRPEDD. (2018). South Coast Rail Task Force. Retrieved 4 February 2019, from <http://www.srpedd.org/scr-task-force>

## Issues and Opportunities

### No additional clean energy purchase in the CEA program

Somerset's fixed electric rate through the CEA program does not include an additional percentage of local renewable energy in the form of renewable energy credits. Further, no options are available to residents to increase this percentage, if so desired.

### Clean energy prospects at the Montaup and Brayton Point

Both the 2015 *Somerset Power Plants Reuse Study* and the 2016 *Reimagining Brayton Point* report identify the sites of these former coal fired power plants as strategies opportunities for the development of clean energy production facilities. Potential related technologies include solar PV, battery storage, anaerobic digestion, and offshore wind.

### The Green Communities Designation and Grant Program

Seeking and earning Green Communities designation would afford the Town with funding opportunities to implement energy-efficiency measures, as well as clean, affordable, and resilient energy projects.

### Risks associated with natural hazards and climate change

Risks identified in the 2018 *Town of Somerset Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan* can adversely impact the Town's social, economic, and environmental capital at the time and in the aftermath of a hazard event or in the longer-term.

### Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Grant Programs

Receipt of an MVP Planning Grant would allow the Town to assess its climate change vulnerabilities and prepare for climate change impacts. Designation as an MVP program municipality would enable the Town to receive MVP Action Grants among other opportunities to implement climate adaptation actions that enhance build community resilience.

### Regional coordination through the SRPEDD

Working with and through the SRPEDD can assist the Town in identifying synergies among the efforts of regional jurisdictions for greater positive effect, as well as advocate regional interests within various levels of government. It can also help the Town streamline its operations through technical assistance and support.

## Goals and Recommendations

**Goal SCC1: Support re-development of the Montaup and Brayton Point Power Plant Sites that establishes Somerset as a leader in clean energy and climate change technologies.**

SCC1-1 Review the Towns' zoning bylaw to identify any barriers to clean energy technologies or businesses focused on climate change and climate adaptation (e.g., oceanographic research, community resilience), and revise the bylaw as necessary.

SCC1-2 Work with partners to explore the feasibility of establishing an Eco-District (<https://ecodistricts.org/>), a formal designation conveying equity, resilience, and climate protection.

**Goal SCC2: Leverage the State's Green Communities Designation and Grant Program, and the Municipal Energy Technical Assistance Grant Program, to advance energy efficiency and renewable energy projects.**

SCC2-1 Continue to pursue Green Community Designation by achieving the five required criteria, including the development and adoption of an Energy Reduction Plan.

SCC2-2 Examine opportunities for greater implementation of on-site renewable energy systems at Town-owned facilities.

SCC2-3 Regularly conduct energy audits at Town-owned facilities, as appropriate, to identify further energy reduction opportunities.

SCC2-4 Coordinate with the Southeast Regional Planning & Economic Development District (SRPEDD) Electric Aggregation Group to explore the potential of offering a renewable energy option in the community electricity aggregation program.

**Goal SCC3: Continue to promote the reduction and appropriate diversion of waste, consistent with the State's Solid Waste Master Plan, in a cost effective and economically prudent manner.**

SCC3-1 Continue to work with MassDEP, as well as the Town's waste service provider, on expanding recycling awareness through RecycleSmartMA.org, as well as through other means of engagement (e.g., curbside conversations, on-cart suggestions for improvement, information post-cards, social media posts, etc.).

SCC3-2 Implement MassDEP's Recycling IQ Kit, beginning with the Assessment Tool, to reduce contamination in the recycling stream (i.e., items that do not belong).

SCC3-3 Seek funding through the State's Sustainable Materials Recovery Program (SMRP) and the Reduce, Reuse, Repair Micro-Grants to improve local waste management.

**Goal SCC4: Implement, and update as necessary, the *Town of Somerset Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan*.**

SCC4-1 Create a local hazard mitigation group to oversee and monitor the implementation of the Hazard Mitigation Plan.

SCC4-2 Leverage the Local Hazard Mitigation Planning Team to identify existing and anticipated local documents and regulations where the recommendations of the Hazard Mitigation Plan could be incorporated to support implementation and ensure consistency in Town policy and action.

SCC4-3 Review and evaluate the Town's Hazard Mitigation Plan on a five-year interval in compliance with federal standards and regulations, and update the Plan as appropriate utilizing the federal Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP).

SCC4-4 Leverage the State's Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program to develop an action-oriented resiliency plan utilizing a community-based workshop process that identifies key climate-related hazards, vulnerabilities and strengths, and prioritizes next steps to address climate change impacts.

SCC4-5 Explore federal and state funding opportunities to support the implementation of the Town's Hazard Mitigation Plan, including FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) Grant Programs and the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs' Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Grant Programs.

SCC4- Create a Debris Management Plan to addresses environmental issues related to the demolition and disposal of  
6 disaster debris and to better position the Town to receive the full level of assistance available from the Federal  
Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other participating entities in the event of a natural disaster.

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# Implementation Program

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## Introduction

While the process of developing this Master Plan brought renewed energy and momentum to our community, it is the actual implementation of its recommended strategies and actions identified through the planning process that will ultimately mark its success. The Implementation Program provided in this chapter aims to guide the Town of Somerset through Plan implementation by balancing near-term needs and long-term goals, focusing energy and efforts on priorities, and bringing key players together to carry out actions that will move us forward.

The Implementation Program organizes a plan of action for the specific recommendations developed for each of the Plan Elements and Goals. The timing for implementation of the recommendations are assigned for Short-Term (1-5 years), Mid-Term (6-10 years), and Long-Term (10-15 years) to assist in suggesting a timeframe for each recommendation to be considered. Some actions are ongoing or have been implemented while the Master Plan was being developed. The leading parties for implementation are listed to clarify leadership roles for each initiative, while implementation partners are suggested to bring support and collaboration into carrying out the actions. An order-of-magnitude cost estimate for each action is provided in the form of \$, \$\$, and \$\$\$, representing low cost, moderate cost, and high cost, in the approximate range of <\$25k, \$25k-\$100k, and >\$100k, respectively. Potential funding sources are listed where applicable. Implementation actions that are of high- or moderate-priority, as identified in coordination with the MPSC and through the public engagement process, are identified in the last column.

It should be recognized that this Implementation Program is meant to be a flexible planning tool. It should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis to reflect progress that has been made while maintaining flexibility in terms of priorities, timelines, funding opportunities and contributing agencies, etc., as informed by emerging needs and opportunities, and the Town's staff and operating capacity.

A list of acronyms used in the matrix is provided below.

### Acronyms List:

AFC	Advisory & Finance Committee
BD	Building Department
BOS	Board of Selectmen
CC	Cultural Council
COA	Council on Aging
ConCom	Conservation Commission
CPC	Community Preservation Committee
EDC	Economic Development Committee
FD	Fire Department
HA	Housing Authority
HC	Historic Commission
HD	Highway Department
HM	Harbor Master
Library	Library
PB	Planning Board
PD	Police Department
PRC	Playground and Recreation Commission
PRD	Playground and Recreation Department
SSC	Somerset School Committee
TA	Town Administrator
TBD	To be determined
TM	Town Meeting
TP	Town Planner
TPL	Trustees of the Public Library
WD	Water Department
ZBA	Zoning Board of Appeals

## Implementation Matrix

#	Recommendations/Actions	Related Elements	Implementation Leadership	Implementation Partners	Timeframe	OOM Cost Estimate	Potential Funding Sources	Priority
<b>Land Use and Development Patterns (LU)</b>								
<b>Goal LU1: Reinforce the Center of Town as the community's central gathering area by creating a cohesive and welcoming appearance, promoting an active public realm and a sense of place, and stimulating a renewed economic vitality.</b>								
LU1-1	Develop a Design Guideline for the County Street commercial corridor to regulate and facilitate improvements to the physical characteristics of the Center of Town.	ED	PB, TP	BD, SRPEDD, MassDOT	Ongoing	\$	SRPEDD	
LU1-2	Conduct a visual preference survey with the community to further determine the desired types and appearances of developments in the Center of Town, while keeping market demands in consideration.	ED, H	PB, TP	Businesses, Residents, ZBA	Short-term	\$	SRPEDD	
LU1-3	Develop and adopt an updated sign bylaw for the County Street commercial corridor to ensure aesthetics and consistency of commercial signs.	ED	PB, TP	ZBA,	Short-term	\$	SRPEDD	
LU1-4	Explore opportunities to reconfigure the Town Common triangle, e.g., roadway alignment, circulation, landscape design, lighting, etc., to improve prominence and functionality.	ED, TC	BOS, PB, TA	MassDOT, HD, BI, ZBA, SRPEDD	Mid-term	\$\$\$	MassWorks, HD Budget,	Moderate
LU1-5	Seek state funding support to pursue corridor wide streetscape improvements along Route 138, e.g., adding shade trees, seating, planters, ornamental light poles, and burying utilities, etc. in an effort to enhance placemaking and promote pedestrian activities in the Center of Town. Potential funding sources include the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) funding for streetscape elements and lighting, and MassWorks Infrastructure grants for utility burial. More information on transportation funding resources is presented under the Transportation element.	ED, TC	PB, HD, Tree Warden	MassDOT, SRPEDD, Utility Co, HD, Water/Sewer, ConCom	Short-term	\$\$\$	State Funding Programs, Town Budget	High

#	Recommendations/Actions	Related Elements	Implementation Leadership	Implementation Partners	Timeframe	OOM Cost Estimate	Potential Funding Sources	Priority
LU1-6	Identify opportunity site(s) for redevelopment and actively support and collaborate with the owner and/or developer in achieving desired redevelopment scenarios to serve as a catalyst for corridor revitalization.	ED	PB, TP	Businesses, Property owners, EOEH	Ongoing	\$	Private Funding	
<b>Goal LU2: Prioritize the revitalization and redevelopment of key commercial and industrial sites/areas, particularly stagnant and/or underutilized areas, to catalyze strategic growth, provide public benefits, and sustain a healthy local economy. Additional specific economic development strategies are presented under the Economic Development element.</b>								
LU2-1	Work with the Massachusetts Office of Housing and Economic Development and the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD) to designate the Brayton Point Power Plant site as a Priority Development Area to stimulate marketing and funding opportunities for redevelopment	ED, SCC	TP	EOEH, SRPEDD	Ongoing	\$	MassDevelopment	High
LU2-2	Build and strengthen the public-private partnership with the Brayton Point Commerce Center developer and seek opportunities for inclusion of public amenities on or near the site, while striving to offer streamlined permitting and/or enhanced municipal services.	ED, OSR	BOS, TA, TP, BI	PB, ZBA	Ongoing	\$\$-\$\$\$	Town	Moderate
LU2-3	Maintain a collaborative relationship with the owner of the Montaup Power Plant and seek opportunities to introduce redevelopment resources, e.g., EPA Brownfields Grant Funding, the state Brownfields Covenant Not to Sue Program, etc., and foster redevelopment partnerships with regional, state and/or federal entities.	ED	BOS	TP, EOEH, EOEEA, UMass Policy Center – Blue Economy	Short-term	\$\$	State and Federal Grants	Moderate
LU2-4	Foster collaborations among key stakeholders, e.g., the Town, the Slade's Ferry Redevelopment Committee, MassDOT, landowners and developers, to advance area redevelopment guided by the Slade's Ferry Crossing District Vision 2010 Concept Plan (2013) and Market Feasibility Analysis (2015).	ED	TP, SFRC	Business, MassDOT, SRPEDD, Taunton Wild & Scenic, Public Access Board,	Ongoing	\$	Town,	High
LU2-5	Pursue funding opportunities to design and construct waterfront public amenities to enhance widely distributed water access and boost recreational activities along the Towns coast, including the Slade's Ferry area and the	ED, OSR	TP, SFRC, TA	MassDOT, HD, Public Access Board, Taunton	Ongoing	\$\$	Public Access Board, Grants	Moderate

#	Recommendations/Actions	Related Elements	Implementation Leadership	Implementation Partners	Timeframe	OOM Cost Estimate	Potential Funding Sources	Priority
	Village historic area as a means to facilitate and catalyze redevelopment interests and activities.			Wild & Scenic, TRWA				
LU2-6	Consider opting into the Massachusetts Chapter 43D Expedited Local Permitting program to facilitate economic development for the Wilbur Avenue parcel and take advantage of state funding and technical assistance resources.	ED	BOS, TA	PB, ZBA, TP	Short-term	\$	Town	Moderate
<b>Goal LU3: Preserve and enhance the Town's unique neighborhoods, rich historic and cultural heritage, and valuable open space and coastal resources.</b>								
LU3-1	Monitor and review permitting activities to ensure development is consistent with and help enhance existing neighborhood character, and to determine whether the current zoning bylaw is conducive to such developments.	H	TP, BD	PB, ZBA	Short-term		Town	High
LU3-2	Promote maintenance and rehabilitation of the town's existing housing stock as a critical path towards preserving and enhancing neighborhood characters. (Specific strategies are presented under the Housing element.)	H	TP, BD	BD, PB, ZBA	Mid-term		Town	Moderate
LU3-3	Continue to enforce zoning requirements for landscaped buffers or screening where industrial uses abutting residential or commercial uses to enhance visual appearance.	ED, H	BD, TP	PB, ZBA	Maintain		Town	Moderate
LU3-4	Embrace the opportunities associated with the National Register of Historic District for the Village to advance historic resource preservation through wayfinding improvements, branding/marketing, rehabilitation, and events programming. (Specific strategies are presented under the Natural, Cultural, and Historic Resources element.)	ED, NCH	TP	HC, CC, Friends of Historic Preservation, MassHistorical, Cultural Council	Mid-term – Long-term	\$	CPA Funds, Cultural Council,	Moderate
LU3-5	Promote land use and development practices towards preserving and enhancing the town's valuable open space and coastal resources, public or private, through town-acquisition, zoning or deed restriction, and enrollment in voluntary preservation tax incentives programs.	OSR	Conservation Agent, RD, TP	BOS, PB, ConCom		\$	CPA Funds, Land Trust, EOEEA	Moderate

#	Recommendations/Actions	Related Elements	Implementation Leadership	Implementation Partners	Timeframe	OOM Cost Estimate	Potential Funding Sources	Priority
<b>Goal LU4: Ensure the Town's regulatory framework supports and facilitates sustainable land development and preservation practices in a coherent manner towards achieving the long-term community vision.</b>								
LU4-1	Consider codifying the Town's bylaws, including the zoning ordinances, to improve bylaw organization, enhance government efficiency and ease of enforcement, and make it user-friendly towards the public.	ED	BOS, TA	TP, BD, PB, ZBA, Consultants,	Short-term	\$\$	Town	High
LU4-2	Review the town's permitting procedure to identify obstacles to more effective and streamlined permitting process in an effort to improve permitting efficiency and promote community development and growth.	ED	TP, BD	PB, ZBA, Consultant	Short-term	\$	Town, Community Compact	High
LU4-3	Conduct a comprehensive zoning diagnostic to identify barriers to achieving desired development patterns and economic growth outcomes due to inconsistent and/or outdated codes.	ED	TP, BD	PB, ZBA, Consultant	Short-term	\$	Town	High
LU4-4	Systematically rewrite the zoning ordinance and update the zoning map to address issues identified through the Master Plan process and the zoning diagnostic, with primary goals of encouraging desired development outcomes, and improving the cohesiveness and ease of use of the zoning. Preliminary considerations include:	ED	TP, BD	PB, ZBA, Consultants, TM	Short-term	\$	Town, Community Compact	High
LU4-4a	Diversify the town's residential and business zoning districts to differentiate functionality and regulate uses and physical forms accordingly. For example, consider creating new residential districts to encourage more diverse housing developments (as discussed under the Housing element), and creating new, or amend existing, business districts to incorporate desired types of industries, as well as massing and parking regulations to meet current industry standard (as discussed under the Economic Development element).	ED, H	TP, BD	PB, ZBA, Consultants, SFRC,	Short-term	\$	Town	Moderate
LU4-4b	Reduce building setback from sidewalk and modify parking requirements in the Center of Town/County Street commercial corridor, either by reducing required parking per use, or encouraging shared parking among uses, and/or	ED, TC	TP, BD	PB, ZBA, Consultants, SFRC	Short-term	\$	Town	Moderate

#	Recommendations/Actions	Related Elements	Implementation Leadership	Implementation Partners	Timeframe	OOM Cost Estimate	Potential Funding Sources	Priority
	requiring parking behind buildings, in an effort to create a traditional New England downtown environment desired by the residents.							
LU4-4c	Amend zoning for the Route 6 corridor to ensure sustainable growth and assess parking and access management in order to create a cohesive business corridor.	ED, TC	TP, BD	PB, ZBA, Consultants	Short-term	\$	Town	Moderate
LU4-4d	Increase the number of residential units per acre allowed for mixed-use development to make these types of commercial/residential development more viable and appealing to developers.	ED, H	TP, BD	PB, ZBA, Consultants	Short-term	\$	Town	Moderate
LU4-4e	Consider allowing mixed-use development in all of the town's business districts, either by-right or by Special Permit, to build the community capacity and increase the overall bulk and density standards to allow for more diverse and affordable housing to be created.	ED, H	TP, BD	PB, ZBA, Consultants	Short-term	\$	Town	Moderate
LU4-4f	Incorporate and promote smart growth zoning tools, such as Inclusionary Zoning and Accessory Dwelling Unit, to facilitate affordable housing development in town, as discussed under the Housing element.	H	TP, BD	PB, ZBA, Consultants	Short-term	\$	Town	Moderate
LU4-4g	Modify zoning to encourage sustainable industrial and commercial investment above the long-term expected flood and inundation zones, with consideration of the transportation needs of industrial and commerce as low-lying roads come under threat.	ED	TP, BD	PB, ZBA, Consultants	Short-term	\$	Town	Moderate
LU4-4h	Replace the existing Planned Development with a new and improved Site Plan Review process, which would include a wider array of departments key for coordinating the best outcome.		TP, BD	PB, ZBA, Consultants	Short-term	\$	Town	High
LU4-4i	Ensure the updated zoning bylaw and map are well-structured, easy to follow, and internally consistent.	ED	TP, BD	PB, ZBA, Consultants	Short-term	\$	Town	High

#	Recommendations/Actions	Related Elements	Implementation Leadership	Implementation Partners	Timeframe	OOM Cost Estimate	Potential Funding Sources	Priority
<b>Economic Development (ED)</b>								
<b>Goal ED1: Retain existing businesses. The Town currently has several businesses that provide integral services to the Town’s residents, surrounding communities and other businesses. This stability in the workforce will reinforce that Somerset is a Town worth investing in.</b>								
ED1-1	Become a resource for the small businesses by understanding these programs and their potential to assist small businesses.		BOS, TA, TP	EOEHD, Chamber of Commerce, SRPEDD, UMass Public Policy	Mid-term	\$	SRPEDD	Moderate
ED1-2	Support the expansion of current businesses with the assistance of the Town’s Planning Department. The Planning Department should become the point of contact for all existing businesses looking to expand by streamlining the process to help businesses understand and navigate the development approval process until the time they are ready to pull a building permit.	LU	BOS, TA, TP	PB, ZBA, Consultant, EOHED	Short-term			Moderate
<b>Goal ED2: Expand businesses based on strengths and expand the tax base through the creation of new business and market sectors. The Town’s many strengths, as well as current regional market conditions, will drive the identification of the businesses and industries that would be beneficial to strengthening Somerset’s tax base and helping to offset the residential tax burden.</b>								
ED2-1	Plan for and support the expansion of the following industries and other businesses through implementation of active recruitment and zoning changes as necessary: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health care,</li> <li>• Marine-dependent businesses,</li> <li>• Restaurants, bars and taverns, and</li> <li>• Modern manufacturing</li> </ul>	LU	TA TP	BOS, PB, ZBA, EOEHD, UMass – Blue Economy, Chamber of Commerce, SRPEDD, SEED	Ongoing Process	\$\$	Town, State, Federal, Private	High
ED2-2	Develop and execute a tourism program based on the Town’s unique experiences, the waterfront, history, sites, or events to increase the local economy by bringing in money	NCH	BOS, TA	TP, CC, HC, Chamber of Commerce, MassHistorical,	Mid-term	\$	Cultural Council, MassHistoric, Taunton River Watershed	Moderate

#	Recommendations/Actions	Related Elements	Implementation Leadership	Implementation Partners	Timeframe	OOM Cost Estimate	Potential Funding Sources	Priority
	from outside of the local community, while at the same time improving retail and cultural experiences of local residents.			Local Volunteers, School Department			Alliance, Wild and Scenic,	
ED2-3	Focus energies on helping expand industries that have high tax and low impact developments such as manufacturing, energy, back offices, data centers, or other similar industries. Potential strategies include tax incentives, grant programs, industry recruitment, marketing, and expedited permitting, etc.	LU	BOS, TA	TP, EOHED, Chamber of Commerce	Short-Mid-term	\$-\$\$	State and Federal	High
<b>Goal ED3: Develop successful branding and community building to showcase the Town's assets and opportunities.</b>								
ED3-1	Look towards developing a branding program that would not only demonstrate it is open for business but coincide with efforts to increase tourism.	NCH	BOS, TA	TP, CC, HC, Tourism Center Chamber of Commerce, businesses	Mid-term	\$	Town	Moderate
ED3-2	Continue to support key community events.	NCH	All	CC, HC, BD, RD, Library, COA, Police, Fire, School Department, COA, Non-profit, Regional Non-profit	Maintain	\$	Town, State, Non-profit	Moderate
ED3-3	Create a plan that is designed to increase, investment in the community, tourism and community building.	LU	TP	All Departments, Non-profit, Regional Cultural Council, residents, businesses	Maintain	\$	Town, State, Non-profit, Cultural Council	Moderate
ED3-4	Identify and develop visual improvement programs or guidelines to help strengthen the visual appeal of the Town's business districts.	LU	TP, BD	ZBA, PB, Businesses, Property Owners, SRPEDD, Consultants	Maintain	\$\$	Private, SRPEDD	Moderate

#	Recommendations/Actions	Related Elements	Implementation Leadership	Implementation Partners	Timeframe	OOM Cost Estimate	Potential Funding Sources	Priority
ED3-4	Investigate grants or other sources of funding to develop a façade improvement program.	LU	TP	Businesses, ZBA, PB, Property Owners	Mid-term	TBD	State Grants	Moderate
<p><b>Goal ED4: Unlock the development potential in existing business corridors and clusters. The Somerset Economic Development Plan identified eight sites/areas to focus economic development efforts. They include: Route 6 Commercial Corridor, Wilbur Avenue Property, Maritime Development District, Slade's Ferry Mixed-Use Area, Montaup Site, Route 138 South (Center of Town), Route 138 North (Indian Springs), and the Village. Strategic plans for these sites will ensure that they are developed in a manner than benefits the Town and its residents. See map on next page for locations of these business areas.</b></p>								
ED4-1	Conduct market/feasibility analysis and advance a development concept plan for the Town-owned Wilbur Avenue parcel. Consider zoning amendment as appropriate to enable desired mix of uses and building form and massing for this site.	LU	TP	EOHED, PB, ZBA, Working Committee	Short-term	\$\$	EOHED	High
ED4-2	Actively engage in and support the redevelopment of the Brayton Point Commerce Center at the local and state level to stimulate local economy and growth. Encourage complementary industries and services in business zones outside of, but economically linked to, Brayton Point Commerce Center.	LU	BOS	TP, TA, EOHED, EOEEA, Port Authorities, Harbormaster, UMass Public Policy – Blue Economy	Short-Mid-Long-term	\$	Private	Moderate
ED4-3	Conduct analysis and outreach to understand market potential and development interests for the Indian Spring Plaza commercial area and other sites. Examine and update zoning accordingly to ensure desired redevelopment types are enabled.	LU	TP	PB, SRPEDD, Consultant, Businesses, Property Owners	Mid-Long-Term	\$\$	Town, State Grant	Moderate
ED4-4	Take advantage of the Department of Housing and Community Development's Massachusetts Downtown Initiative that provides services and technical assistance to communities on revitalizing their downtowns.	LU	TP	EOHED, SRPEDD, MassDevelopment, Chamber of Commerce, Tourism Center,	Mid-term	TBD	State	Moderate
ED4-5	Seek to redevelop the multiple underutilized or vacant parcels in the Maritime Development District for commercial or industrial redevelopment that can tie into the existing	LU	TP	Maritime Businesses, Property Owners,	Short-Mid-Term	\$	Town	Moderate

#	Recommendations/Actions	Related Elements	Implementation Leadership	Implementation Partners	Timeframe	OOM Cost Estimate	Potential Funding Sources	Priority
	cluster and take advantage of the site's marine and land accessibility.			EOHED, UMass Public Policy – Blue Economy				
ED4-6	Explore ways to catalyze development in Slade's Ferry District, including investment in the streetscape and public realm, encouraging businesses to improve the look and feel of their establishments, and achieving a greater consistency of signage and wayfinding.	LU	TP, SFRC	Businesses, Property Owners, BD, PB, ZBA	Short-Mid-Term	\$-\$\$\$	Private, Town	High
ED4-7	While the Village is almost entirely developed, the Town should focus on preserving historic structures where appropriate, branding the history through signage and wayfinding, and incentivizing strategic infill where possible.	NCH	HC	PB, ZBA, Historic Non-profit, MassHistorical, Property Owners	Mid-Long-Term	\$\$	State, Local, Non-profit	Moderate
ED4-8	Cooperate regionally to improve multi-modal links between businesses in Somerset and major regional transportation systems.		TP	MassDOT, SRPEDD, South Coast Bikeway, SCR, SRTA,	Mid-Long-Term	\$	State, Federal	Moderate
ED4-9	Cooperate regionally to improve telecommunication systems.	LU, PFS	BOS	TP, TA	Mid-Long-Term	\$	State, Federal	Moderate
<b>Goal ED5: Develop a framework where the Town establishes itself to be business friendly.</b>								
ED5-1	Create a pamphlet that provides an overview of the land development approval process. In addition to describing the approval process, the pamphlet could provide frequently asked questions for businesses from various departments such as the Planning, Building, Conservation, Highway, and Water and Sewer	LU, CFS	TP, ConCom, BD, HD, Water/Sewer	PB, ZBA, Input from Businesses, SRPEDD, Chamber of Commerce, Consultant	Short-Term	\$	Town, Community Compact	Moderate
ED5-2	Conduct a comprehensive update or rewrite of the Town's Zoning Bylaw to ensure desired business sectors and development types are encouraged at appropriate locations, as discussed under goals ED1 through ED5. More specific zoning recommendations are presented under the Land Use element.	LU	TP, BD	PB, ZBA, Consultants	Short-term	\$\$	Town	High

#	Recommendations/Actions	Related Elements	Implementation Leadership	Implementation Partners	Timeframe	OOM Cost Estimate	Potential Funding Sources	Priority
ED5-3	Streamline permitting process to ensure business expansion and/or growth of new business sectors are encouraged and expedited when possible.	LU	TP, BD	PB, ZBA,	Short-Mid Term	\$	Town	High
ED5-4	Become knowledgeable about local, state and federal business incentive programs and help new businesses and developers to use these programs and incentives to promote investment and growth.		TP, BD	PB, ZBA	Short-Mid Term	\$	Town	Moderate
ED5-5	Give public recognition and/or monetary incentives to businesses who maintain and beautify their properties and/or make other contributions to the quality of life in town.		BOS, TA	BOS, TA, TP	Short-term	TBD	Town, Private	Moderate
ED5-6	Create and make available a property owner guide on low-cost, high-impact practices and techniques towards commercial property improvements.		TP	BD, PB, ZBA, MassDevelopment, Chamber of Commerce, Business Owners	Short-Mid Term	\$	Town, Community Compact	Moderate
ED5-7	Build relationship and coordinate with other towns in the South Coast region to promote Somerset as business friendly in the region.		TP	Chamber of Commerce, Tourism Center, SRPEDD, UMass, BCC	Maintain	\$	Town, Regional, State	Moderate

## Housing (H)

**Goal H1: Facilitate the development of more diverse housing in strategically designated areas, supported by infrastructure and services, to accommodate future growth in Town and improve housing choices and affordability for people and families of varied socio-economic status.**

H1-1	Enable mixed-use residential development in key commercial areas in town, such as Center of Town commercial area, Slade's Ferry Crossing, Indian Spring Plaza, Route 6 business corridor, and Route 103/Wilbur Ave area, to promote smaller, non-single family, more affordable market rate housing units for working professionals and starting families.	LU, ED	TP	BD, PB, ZBA	Short-term	\$	Town	High
H1-2	Consider creating "General Residence" zoning districts in certain transitional areas between commercial/industrial	LU	TP	BD, ZBA, PB	Short-term	\$	Town	High

#	Recommendations/Actions	Related Elements	Implementation Leadership	Implementation Partners	Timeframe	OOM Cost Estimate	Potential Funding Sources	Priority
	districts and single family residential districts to allow the “missing middle” housing types, such as cottage cluster housing, townhouses, and/or multi-family units, either by-right or by Special Permit. These “missing middle” housings are in keeping with the character of existing single-family neighborhoods while at the same time providing diverse housing options along a spectrum of affordability to support walkable neighborhoods and locally-serving retails.							
H1-3	Adopt an Inclusionary Zoning Bylaw to require a certain percentage of affordable housing units in multi-unit residential developments that require a Special Permit. Inclusionary Zoning is a zoning tool that can be used by municipalities to ensure adequate affordable housing is included in the normal course of real estate development. It requires a portion of the housing units in certain real estate developments to be reserved as affordable to low- and moderate-income households.	LU	TP, BD	PB, ZBA, Housing Authority	Mid-Long Term	\$	DHCD, State	Moderate
H1-4	Promote the Accessory Unit zoning bylaw to residents and developers to encourage alternative housing development while monitoring whether and how the current bylaw facilitates or deters the creation of such alternative housing.	LU	TP, BD	PB, ZBA	Mid-term	\$	Town	Moderate
H1-5	Create a Housing Production Plan to stay on track towards the state-mandated affordable housing target.		TP, BD	PB, ZBA, SRPEDD	Short-term	\$\$	SRPEDD, State	Moderate
<b>Goal H2: Provide adequate and appropriate housing options for the Town’s growing senior population to enable aging in place in a multi-generational community.</b>								
H2-1	Continue exploring opportunities of reusing vacant municipal or privately owned buildings for multi-unit senior housing conversion.	LU, CFS	BOS, TA	TP, BD	Ongoing	\$\$	CPA	High
H2-2	Advocate Accessory Unit to residents as an alternative approach to creating senior housing on existing residential lots to enable seniors aging in place.	LU	TP	PB, ZBA	Ongoing	\$	Town	Moderate
H2-3	Explore the possibility of adopting age restricted zoning bylaw in targeted development areas with good access to	LU	TP, COA	BD, PB, ZBA	Mid-term	\$	Town	Moderate

#	Recommendations/Actions	Related Elements	Implementation Leadership	Implementation Partners	Timeframe	OOM Cost Estimate	Potential Funding Sources	Priority
	services and amenities as a means to promote active senior community within the town.							
<b>Goal H3: Enhance the quality and unique characters of various residential neighborhoods by promoting better maintenance, renovation and rehabilitation to the Town's aging housing stock.</b>								
H3-1	Assemble information on public and non-profit housing rehabilitation loans and services and create an easily accessible resource packet for residents in order to facilitate housing repair and rehabilitation in town. Example of resources include MassHousing, Home Modification Loan Program offered by Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, Habitat for Humanity ReStores, Rebuilding Together, etc.		TP, BD, BOH	MassHousing, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, Habitat for Humanity, Rebuilding Together	Mid-term	TBD	Regional, State	Moderate
H3-2	Consider establishing a Housing Rehabilitation program, utilizing state Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding, to support rehabilitation of residential properties through financial assistance, especially for low- and moderate- income residents.		BOH, BD	EOHED	Ongoing	TBD	CDBG	Moderate
H3-3	Ensure permitting and inspection processes are simplified and easy to navigate for housing rehabilitation efforts to encourage homeowners to take on and complete home repair and upgrade projects.	LU	BD, BOH		Short-term	\$	Town	Moderate
<b>Natural, Cultural, and Historic Resources (NCH)</b>								
<b>Goal NCH1: Protect and enhance the quality and quantity of Somerset's natural and water resources for ecosystem restoration and public enjoyment.</b>								
NCH1-1	Update the town's Open Space and Recreation Plan to inventory the town's valuable natural resources and identify resource protection needs and strategies.	LU, OSR	ConCom Agent, RD	ConCom, Rec Commission, TP, SRPEDD	Short-term	\$\$	Town, SRPEDD	Moderate
NCH1-2	Strive to place permanent protection on all of Town-owned open space and conservation parcels to achieve long lasting community benefits as the town approaches buildout.	LU, OSR	BOS, ConCom Agent	ConCom, Assessor	Short-Mid Term	\$	Town	Moderate

## Somerset Proud

#	Recommendations/Actions	Related Elements	Implementation Leadership	Implementation Partners	Timeframe	OOM Cost Estimate	Potential Funding Sources	Priority
NCH1-3	Acquire and protect additional natural resource areas that are critical to wetland and floodplain protection, wildlife corridor preservation, and continuity of open spaces, through Town acquisition, grants and/or seeking private donation as opportunities arise.	LU, OSR	ConCom Agent	ConCom, TP, SRPEDD, EOEEA, Land Trust, Assessor	Short-Mid-term	\$-\$\$\$	Town, EOEEA, Taunton Wild & Scenic	Moderate
NCH1-4	Preserve the town's remaining farmland and agricultural landscape by building greater awareness among landowners of the state's Chapter 61, Conservation Restrictions, and Agricultural Preservation Restrictions programs, and encourage participation and enrollment in these programs.	LU, OSR	ConCom, TP	ConCom, PB, Assessor, TP, Land Trust	Short-Mid term	\$	EOEEA	Moderate
NCH1-5	Continue to enforce local wetlands and water resource protection bylaws.	LU, OSR	ConCom Agent	ConCom	Ongoing	\$	Town	Moderate
NCH1-6	Seek opportunities to add natural resources educational signs or exhibits at key open space and waterfront areas in town, e.g. Pierce Beach, Chace Preserve, Elm Street Acres, etc.	OSR	ConCom Agent, TP	ConCom, Taunton River Non-profits, SRPEDD, HD	Short-term	\$\$	Town, CPA	Moderate
<b>Goal NCH2: Create a vision for the future of the Village, using its historic development and resources.</b>								
NCH2-1	Develop interactive programming around the in-process National Register listing, such as tours, scavenger hunts, creation of a Story Map through ESRI (storymaps.arcgis.com), and activities using historic maps.		HC	MassHistorical, Tourism Center, Friends of Somerset History	Short-term	\$	Town, CPA, State	Moderate
NCH2-2	Use the National Register district to market the use of historic tax credits to existing and potential owners in the district.		HC, TP	Friends of Somerset History	Short-Mid Term	\$	Town, CPA, State	Moderate
NCH2-3	Identify a small number of key historic themes of the historic district, such as shipbuilding, to develop a unique and identifiable "brand" for the Village.	ED	BOS, HC	TP	Short-Mid Term	\$	Town	Moderate
NCH2-4	Develop a set of design guidelines for development in the Village, encouraging its growth while respecting the district's historic character.	LU, ED	HC, PB	ZBA, TP, BD	Short-Mid Term	\$\$	Town, State	Moderate
NCH2-5	Explore reuse potentials for the Village School building as a hub for a variety of historical, art, and cultural activities.	ED	BOS, TA	TP, HC	Short-Mid Term	\$\$-\$\$\$	Town, State	Moderate

#	Recommendations/Actions	Related Elements	Implementation Leadership	Implementation Partners	Timeframe	OOM Cost Estimate	Potential Funding Sources	Priority
<b>Goal NCH3: Develop a historic resources Preservation Plan that establishes priorities, roles, strategies, and milestones.</b>								
NCH3-1	Pursue Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding to prepare a community-wide Preservation Plan, utilizing the Taunton River Landscape Inventory report as a starting point.		ConCom Agent, TP	CPC, HC, Taunton River Non-profits	Short -Mid-term	\$\$	State	High
NCH3-2	Explore the use of MHC's Survey and Planning Grant Program ( <a href="http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/mhchpp/Surveyandplanning.htm">www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/mhchpp/Surveyandplanning.htm</a> ) for financial support for the creation of a Preservation Plan.		HC, TP	MHC, PB	Short-Mid Term	\$\$	State	High
NCH3-3	Adopt a Demolition-By-Neglect bylaw to help prevent the demolition of buildings due to structural instability.	LU						
NCH3-4	Prepare guidance for the Historically Significant Buildings Bylaw, providing owners with an easy reference to understand the reason for the bylaw and the process. Inclusion of a section focused on solutions, such as where to market a historic property and highlighting successful rehabilitations of historic buildings in the region, may prove to be a valuable resource.		HC	MHC, PB, ZBA	Mid-Term	\$	Town, State	Moderate
NCH3-5	Discuss the establishment of Neighborhood Conservation Districts in neighborhoods concerned about incompatible construction and infill.	LU	TP, ConCom Agent	PB, ZBA, residents	Mid-Term	\$	Town, CPA, State	Moderate
NCH3-6	Develop a strategy to assess the needs of the Town's numerous historic cemeteries. Prioritize cemeteries according to significance and threats, and contract specialists in cemetery preservation to map out restoration and maintenance plans.	LU	TC, HC	HD	Short-term	\$	CPA	Moderate
NCH3-7	Encourage the Historical Commission to pursue a plan for preserving historic stonewalls	LU	HC	HD	Short-term	\$		Moderate
<b>Goal NCH4: Encourage the creation of year-round cultural activities to support Somerset's creative and cultural communities.</b>								
NCH4-1	Identify short- and long-term spaces as recognizable and known "hubs" for creative and cultural activities. Visit similar spaces in Massachusetts to learn from the experiences of		TA, TP	HC, BOS	Mid-Term	\$	Town	Moderate

#	Recommendations/Actions	Related Elements	Implementation Leadership	Implementation Partners	Timeframe	OOM Cost Estimate	Potential Funding Sources	Priority
	other communities that successfully elevated their cultural presence.							
NCH4-2	Develop a network of community partners to allow the expansion of the successful [RE]Envisioning Somerset program for multiple age groups, seasonal themes, and classes through the Council on Aging.		SD, COA, Library	COA Board, Library Board, School Board, Superintendent	Short-Mid Term	\$	Cultural Council	Moderate
NCH4-3	Explore the use of interns or volunteers to provide grant writing assistance to the SCC and expand the Committee's ability to generate applications and provide educational opportunities in the community.		SCC	SCC, Superintendent, Principals	Short-Mid term	TBD	TBD	Moderate

## Open Space and Recreation (OSR)

### Goal OSR1: Activate the Wild and Scenic Taunton River waterfront for its untapped recreational potential as a signature destination.

OSR1-1	Enhance maintenance and upgrades to the town's existing river access points. Ensure these resources are accessible to the public both physically and informationally.	LU	ConCom Agent, RD	TP, RC, ConCom, CZM, Taunton River Non-profits	Short-Mid Term	\$\$-\$\$\$	Town, CPA	Moderate
OSR1-2	Identify and activate historical access easements to the Taunton River that are currently unrecognized and unutilized across the town's waterfront neighborhoods to provide additional access points to the riverfront. Seek funding and support to clean up, upgrade, and add signage to these river access easements to enhance accessibility to the public. Refer to the Massachusetts Coastal Zone Management Office's <i>A Practical Handbook for Reclaiming Public Access</i> for guidance.	LU	Same as above		Mid-term	\$\$-\$\$	Town, TBD	Moderate
OSR1-3	Seek opportunities to create new riverfront vistas, parks, and access points/areas to enhance recreational attractions and catalyze economic development activities.	LU, ED	TP	ConCom Agent, RD, RC, ConCom, Taunton River Non-profits, Public Access Board	Short-Mid Term	\$\$-\$\$\$	Town, CPA	High

#	Recommendations/Actions	Related Elements	Implementation Leadership	Implementation Partners	Timeframe	OOM Cost Estimate	Potential Funding Sources	Priority
OSR1-4	Actively brand the Taunton River waterfront and pursue opportunities to host aquatic sport events utilizing the river course and public waterfront parks.	ED	TP, ConCom Agent	Taunton River Non-profits	Ongoing	\$-\$	Town,	Moderate
<b>Goal OSR2: Expand and enhance a town-wide network of walking and biking facilities that promotes an active and healthy community lifestyle by interconnecting residential neighborhoods, recreational destinations, retail centers, and municipal service locations.</b>								
OSR2-1	Identify and bridge critical gaps within the town's sidewalk and trail system, especially from residential neighborhoods to commercial areas, schools, town offices, and waterfront recreation destinations, to promote safe, year-round pedestrian activity and foot traffic.	TC	TP, HD, ConCom	SRPEDD, MassDOT	Mid-Long Term	\$\$\$	Town, State Grants	High
OSR2-2	Enhance maintenance of Town-owned parcels that play a key role in bridging the gaps within the town's trail systems for improved trail continuity.	LU	ConCom, HD	ComCon Agent, HD	Ongoing	\$\$\$	Town, State Grants	Moderate
OSR2-3	Explore possibilities to add on-road bicycle facilities on some of the safe, scenic local streets in town to encourage getting around town on bikes. (Specific strategies are presented under the Transportation element.)	TC	TP, HD	SRPEDD, South Coast Bikeway, Taunton River Bikeway	Ongoing	\$\$\$	Town, State Grants	Moderate
OSR2-4	Consider improving current trails and/or adding additional walking trails or paths in the town's conservation areas to meet the growing demand for passive recreation opportunities.	TC, LU	ConCom Agent, HD	ConCom, PB	Mid-term	\$\$\$	Town, State Grants	Moderate
OSR2-5	Pursue funding to advance the design and construction of the long-envisioned Broad Cove boardwalk.		ConCom Agent, TP	ConCom, CPC, Town of Dighton, Taunton River Non-profits, SRPEDD	Long-term	\$\$\$	Town, State Grants	Moderate
<b>Goal OSR3: Support and maintain the Town's existing recreational facilities and programs while seeking to provide additional high-demand recreational opportunities.</b>								
OSR3-1	Update the town's Open Space and Recreation Plan to comprehensively guide resource improvement efforts in town, including, but not limited to, developing an inventory of the town's existing recreational facilities and understanding emerging demands for new and additional recreational		ConCom Agent, RD	COA, SCC, Superintendent, ConCom, RC, SRPEDD	Short-term	\$\$	SRPEDD	Moderate

#	Recommendations/Actions	Related Elements	Implementation Leadership	Implementation Partners	Timeframe	OOM Cost Estimate	Potential Funding Sources	Priority
	opportunities for all ages, particularly for teenagers beyond the indoor activities or school sports currently available.							
OSR3-2	Be proactive in identifying and prioritizing facility and property maintenance needs and ensure adequate Town budget and funds are allocated to recreational facility upkeep.		TA, BD	Facility Directors	Ongoing	TBD	Town	Moderate
OSR3-3	Encourage public involvement in the care and maintenance of the town's recreational facilities.	NCH	RD	RC, BD, HD	Ongoing	TBD	Town, Recreation Budget	Moderate
OSR3-4	Seek opportunities to identify appropriate locations for additional high demand outdoor recreational amenities, particularly on Town-owned properties.	LU	RD, TP	RC	Mid-term	\$\$	Town, Recreation Budget	Moderate
<b>Goal OSR4: Ensure the Town's recreational resources and opportunities are accessible to people of all ages and abilities.</b>								
OSR4-1	Create a resource information list and/or map to inventory and display the town's recreational resources, such as parks and playgrounds, waterfront access points, accessible conservation areas and trails, etc., and make such information available to the public both online and at town offices.		RD, TP	RC	Mid-term	\$	Town, Recreation Budget	Moderate
OSR4-2	Create a community events calendar on the Town's website to organize information on various town events, including recreational events, in a centralized location for easy access by the public.	CFS	TA	CIVIC-Plus, All Department Heads who do programs, Police, Fire	Short-term	\$	Town	High
OSR4-3	Continue advancing Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) improvements to the town's recreational areas and facilities to improve accessibility for residents with special needs.		TA	HD, BD, TP, ConCom, RC, COA, Library, SRPEDD	Short-term	TBD	State	High
OSR4-4	Continue making progress to add lighting and signage to publicly accessible recreational areas/facilities in a consistent and easily identifiable way, particularly for entrances and parking areas, to encourage public uses of available resources.		TA	RC, BD	Ongoing	TBD	Town	High

#	Recommendations/Actions	Related Elements	Implementation Leadership	Implementation Partners	Timeframe	OOM Cost Estimate	Potential Funding Sources	Priority
<b>Community Facilities and Services (CFS)</b>								
<b>Goal CFS1: Develop short-and long-term plans to improve Somerset's capital assets and infrastructure to meet future needs.</b>								
CFS1-1	Develop and implement a capital improvement plan which includes Somerset's water and sewer infrastructure and other public facilities.		TA, WD	WDC, SD	Short-term		Town	High
CFS1-2	Conduct flood vulnerability assessments, through the State's Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program, for key public facilities in town, e.g. the Water Pollution Control, Water Department and critical infrastructure.		TP	HD, WD, SD, ConCom, BOH, EM	Ongoing	\$	EOEEA	High
CFS1-3	Evaluate publicly owned and managed outfalls and outlets along the shoreline and identify infrastructure that would benefit from the installation of backflow prevention.		HD	ConCom Agent, Consultant	Ongoing	\$\$	Town	High
CFS1-4	Incorporate the implications of natural hazards and climate change into the long-term planning of the Town's capital assets and infrastructure.		TP, EM	TA	Short-Mid Term	\$	EOEEA, Town	Moderate
<b>Goal CFS2: Maintain the public safety and service facility needs, and Town-owned infrastructures of the community.</b>								
CFS2-1	Develop a maintenance and funding plan for Town-owned structures.		TA	BD	Mid-term	\$\$	Town	High
CFS2-2	Identify the electrical back-up generator needs in critical facilities such as Town Hall, and the Council on Aging.		EM, TP	TA, Library, COA, SCC	Short-term	\$\$-\$\$\$	MEMA, FEMA	High
CFS2-3	Continue to explore opportunities to reuse and/or repurpose vacant or underutilized public facilities and buildings, or expand their uses to accommodate a wider array of social and cultural functions.	LU	TA	BD, TP	Mid-term	\$\$-\$\$\$	Town	Moderate
<b>Goal CFS3: Enhance services for Somerset's senior population.</b>								
CFS3-1	Evaluate the demand for extended shuttle service to support more flexible ridership.		COA	SRPEDD, SRTA, SCR	Short-term	\$	MassDOT	Moderate
CFS3-2	Conduct a community survey to identify gaps in current senior services and explore additional program offerings to		TA	COA	Short-term	\$	Town	Moderate

#	Recommendations/Actions	Related Elements	Implementation Leadership	Implementation Partners	Timeframe	OOM Cost Estimate	Potential Funding Sources	Priority
	accommodate the aging population that works during the day.							
CFS3-3	Encourage accessibility and mobility investments to link the elderly to the wider community.		COA	COA, Bristol Elder Services, SRTA, SRPEDD, Coastline Elderly Services, EOEA	Short-Mid term	\$	State, Town, MassDOT	Moderate
<b>Goal CFS4: Maintain current public library facilities and services.</b>								
CFS4-1	Identify supplemental funding sources to maintain good standing with the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners.		TA	Library, LD	Short-term	TBD	State, TBD	Moderate
CFS4-2	Stay current on new technology and programming for library services.		Library	LD, Sail	Short-Mid term	TBD	State, TBD	Moderate
CFS4-3	Continue to provide a civic space in which residents are encouraged to meet.		Library	LC	Short-term	\$-\$\$\$	Town	Moderate
<b>Goal CFS5: Provide a high-quality educational experience.</b>								
CFS5-1	Identify and implement building upgrades that are recommended from the middle school and elementary school needs assessments.		SCC	Superintendent, Middle School Principal	Short-term	\$\$\$	Local, State	High
<b>Transportation and Circulation (TC)</b>								
<b>Goal TC1: Maintain and improve the Town's transportation infrastructure to safely and efficiently connect its neighborhoods with destinations and amenities.</b>								
TC1-1	Develop and implement an asset maintenance and management plan, including pavement and sidewalks.		HD	MassDOT, SRPEDD	Mid-term	\$-\$\$\$	Local, State, SRPEDD	Moderate
TC1-2	Be aware of and involved in regional efforts with SRPEDD, the SMMPO and other regional stakeholders to improve transportation both locally and regionally for improved commuting, economic growth, public safety, and emergency response.		TP, HD	SRPEDD, SMMPO, SRTA, SCR, MassDOT	Ongoing	TBD	TBD	Moderate
TC1-3	Work with MassDOT to rehabilitate and enhance State-owned roadways and infrastructure within the Town,		HD, TP, TA	MassDOT, SRPEDD	Short-Long Term Recommendations	\$\$\$	Town, MassDOT, SRPEDD,	High

#	Recommendations/Actions	Related Elements	Implementation Leadership	Implementation Partners	Timeframe	OOM Cost Estimate	Potential Funding Sources	Priority
	including incorporating recommendations made as part of the on-going I-195 Interchange 4 Transportation Evaluation.							
TC1-4	Identify locations to incorporate streetscape elements to enhance roadside areas and create gateways.	LU	TA, TP	MassDOT, SRPEDD	Mid-Long Term	\$\$\$	Town, MassDOT	Moderate
TC1-5	Work with SRPEDD and MassDOT to identify corridor planning efforts and improvement projects that could be funded using the State Transportation Improvement Program or Highway Safety Improvement Program funding and conduct Road Safety Audits (RSA's) where needed.		TP, HD	MassDOT, SRPEDD	Short-term	\$\$\$	Town, MassDOT	Moderate
TC1-6	Apply for grants through MassDOT's funding programs to assist in closing gaps in the existing sidewalk system.		TP, HD	MassDOT	Ongoing	TBD	MassDOT	High
TC1-7	Seek funding and support from MassDOT on improvements and year-round maintenance of state-owned sidewalks, as guided by the state's latest Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plans.		TP, HD	MassDOT, SRPEDD	Short-term	TBD	MassDOT	High
TC1-8	Work with private developers and employers to identify improvements that focus on economic development and community enhancements.	ED, LU	TA, TP	Private Developers and Employers	Ongoing	\$	Town, Private	High
<b>Goal TC2: Improve access for all users of Somerset's transportation system and work with partners to explore and enhance transportation safety measures, public transit access, and bike/pedestrian connections.</b>								
TC2-1	Focus sidewalk and trail maintenance and/or construction in areas to close gaps in the existing system with specific attention being paid to directly connect neighborhoods to destinations such as the trail, schools, and Center of Town. As applicable, adapt Town initiatives to current state and MassDOT priorities, particularly when state funding is available.	OSR	TP	HD, ConCom Agent, MassDOT, SRPEDD	Mid-term	\$\$\$	SRPEDD, MassDOT, Private, Town	Moderate
TC2-2	Explore opportunities within Center of Town to enhance or expand sidewalks in ways that support retail, business activities and arts and cultural events.	ED, NCH, OSR	TP	Town Center Businesses, MassDOT, SRPEDD	Mid-term	\$\$\$	MassDOT, SRPEDD, Town	Moderate

#	Recommendations/Actions	Related Elements	Implementation Leadership	Implementation Partners	Timeframe	OOM Cost Estimate	Potential Funding Sources	Priority
TC2-3	Work to expand both the existing and proposed trail systems within the town, including exploring opportunities to develop spurs (on-road or off-road) to the South Coast Bikeway and Taunton River Trail, as well as to well-maintained bicycle trails in neighboring Swansea and Dighton, in order to encourage regional cycling on safe trails and roads	OSR	TP	HD, South Coast Bikeway, Taunton River Trail, Taunton Non-profit, SRPEDD, MassDOT, Town of Dighton and Swansea	Ongoing	\$\$\$	MassDOT, SRPEDD	High
TC2-4	Work to improve connections for the public to the waterfront and through the town's existing open space to create pedestrian-friendly opportunities.	OSR	TP, ConCom Agent	ConCom, CZM, Taunton Non-profit, SRPEDD, CPC	Short term	\$\$\$	Town, CPA	Moderate
TC2-5	Identify and sign an on-road bicycle route throughout the town using dedicated signs and bike lanes (where the existing roadway width is adequate), and/or shared-use pavement markings, also known as sharrows (where roadway width is inadequate).		HD, TP	MassDOT,	Mid-term	\$\$\$	Town, MassDOT	Moderate
TC2-6	Improve pedestrian and bicycle connections to the Commuter Park & Ride Lot along Route 103, as guided by the on-going I-195 Interchange 4 Transportation Evaluation.		TP	MassDOT, SCR, South Coast Bikeway	Mid-term	\$\$\$	MassDOT, Town	Moderate
TC2-7	Evaluate the feasibility of providing landscape buffers, wider sidewalks and/or shared-use paths along collector and arterial roadways, where pedestrian safety concerns currently exist, to improve the comfort of pedestrians and bicycles.		TP	SRPEDD, PB, HD	Long-term	\$\$\$	Town, MassDOT	Moderate
TC2-8	Explore possibility to partner with SRTA to increase bus and shuttle services between Somerset and the future Fall River Depot Commuter Rail Station in an effort to enhance public transit access to major employment centers along the MBTA commuter rail line.		TP	SCR, SRTA, SRPEDD, MassDOT	Mid-term	\$	SRPEDD, MassDOT	Moderate
<b>Goal TC3: Continually assess the Town's transportation needs and opportunities, such as parking demand, as well as emerging trends and technologies.</b>								
TC3-1	Evaluate the feasibility of implementing a bike-share program to help connect the Center of Town and commercial	OSR	TP	SRPEDD, Town Center	Mid-term	\$	MassDOT	Moderate

#	Recommendations/Actions	Related Elements	Implementation Leadership	Implementation Partners	Timeframe	OOM Cost Estimate	Potential Funding Sources	Priority
	areas to local and regional trails, such as the South Coast Bikeway.			Businesses, SFRC, MassDOT				
TC3-2	Evaluate the feasibility of partnering with local and regional employers, commercial destinations, SRTA and express commuter buses to reinstate the Somerset Shuttle and/or a local trolley or other new transportation to foster opportunities to link employers and workers together.		TP	Fisher Bus, SRTA, SRPEDD, MassDOT, Private Businesses	Mid-term	\$	Town, State, Private	Moderate
TC3-3	Encourage the installation of electric vehicle charging stations among the Town's major employers and destinations, as well as the adoption of electric vehicles among the Town's fleets.		TA	TP, SRPEDD, EOEEA	Mid-term	\$\$\$	Green Communities, State, Private	Moderate
TC3-4	Support training for Town staff and the Highway Department to understand how to plan for autonomous vehicles and advancements in traffic systems.		TA	TP, HD, Police, Fire	Mid-term	\$	Town	Moderate

## Sustainability and Climate Change (SCC)

### Goal SCC1: Support re-development of the Montaup and Brayton Point Power Plant Sites that establishes Somerset as a leader in clean energy and climate change technologies.

SCC1-1	Review the Towns' zoning bylaw to identify any barriers to clean energy technologies or businesses focused on climate change and climate adaptation (e.g., oceanographic research, community resilience), and revise the bylaw as necessary.	ED	TA	TP, UMass Public Policy – Blue Economy, EOEEA, PB, ZBA	Short-term	\$	Town	High
SCC1-2	Work with partners to explore the feasibility of establishing an Eco-District ( <a href="https://ecodistricts.org/">https://ecodistricts.org/</a> ), a formal designation conveying equity, resilience, and climate protection.		TA	TP, MVP	Short-term	\$	MVP, Town	Moderate

### Goal SCC2: Leverage the State's Green Communities Designation and Grant Program, and the Municipal Energy Technical Assistance Grant Program, to advance energy efficiency and renewable energy projects.

#	Recommendations/Actions	Related Elements	Implementation Leadership	Implementation Partners	Timeframe	OOM Cost Estimate	Potential Funding Sources	Priority
SCC2-1	Continue to pursue Green Community Designation by achieving the five required criteria, including the development and adoption of an Energy Reduction Plan.		TA	TP, SRPEDD	Ongoing	\$	SRPEDD	Moderate
SCC2-2	Examine opportunities for greater implementation of on-site renewable energy systems at Town-owned facilities.	CFS	TA, BOS	BD	Short-term	\$-\$\$\$	State and Federal Grants, Energy Providers	Moderate
SCC2-3	Regularly conduct energy audits at Town-owned facilities, as appropriate, to identify further energy reduction opportunities.	CFS	TA	BD	Ongoing	\$	Town, Energy Providers	Moderate
SCC2-4	Coordinate with the Southeast Regional Planning & Economic Development District (SRPEDD) Electric Aggregation Group to explore the potential of offering a renewable energy option in the community electricity aggregation program.		TA	SRPEDD	Short-term	TBD	SRPEDD	Moderate
<b>Goal SCC3: Continue to promote the reduction and appropriate diversion of waste, consistent with the State's <i>Solid Waste Master Plan</i>, in a cost effective and economically prudent manner.</b>								
SCC3-1	Continue to work with MassDEP, as well as the Town's waste service provider, on expanding recycling awareness through RecycleSmartMA.org, as well as through other means of engagement (e.g., curbside conversations, on-cart suggestions for improvement, information post-cards, social media posts, etc.).	CFS	W/SD	MassDEP, RecycleSmart	Short-Term	TBD	MassDEP	Moderate
SCC3-2	Implement MassDEP's Recycling IQ Kit, beginning with the Assessment Tool, to reduce contamination in the recycling stream (i.e., items that do not belong).		BOS, HD	MassDEP, RecycleSmart	Short-Term	TBD	Town, MassDEP	Moderate
SCC3-3	Seek funding through the State's Sustainable Materials Recovery Program (SMRP) and the Reduce, Reuse, Repair Micro-Grants to improve local waste management.		TA	SMRP,	Short-Term	TBD	Sustainable Materials Recovery Program	Moderate
<b>Goal SCC4: Implement, and update as necessary, the <i>Town of Somerset Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan</i>.</b>								
SCC4-1	Create a local hazard mitigation group to oversee and monitor the implementation of the Hazard Mitigation Plan.		EM	All Departments	Short-term		Town	Moderate

#	Recommendations/Actions	Related Elements	Implementation Leadership	Implementation Partners	Timeframe	OOM Cost Estimate	Potential Funding Sources	Priority
SCC4-2	Leverage the Local Hazard Mitigation Planning Team to identify existing and anticipated local documents and regulations where the recommendations of the Hazard Mitigation Plan could be incorporated to support implementation and ensure consistency in Town policy and action.		BOS, TA, EM	TP, HD, ConCom, BD	Mid-term		Town	Moderate
SCC4-3	Review and evaluate the Town's Hazard Mitigation Plan on a five-year interval in compliance with federal standards and regulations, and update the Plan as appropriate utilizing the federal Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP).		EM	TA, All Departments, MEMA, FEMA, BOS	Mid-term	\$	FEMA, MEMA, MVP, Town	Moderate
SCC4-4	Leverage the State's Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program to develop an action-oriented resiliency plan utilizing a community-based workshop process that identifies key climate-related hazards, vulnerabilities and strengths, and prioritizes next steps to address climate change impacts.		TP	All Departments, TA, EM, SRPEDD	Ongoing	\$-\$\$	MVP	Moderate
SCC4-5	Explore federal and state funding opportunities to support the implementation of the Town's Hazard Mitigation Plan, including FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) Grant Programs and the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs' Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Grant Programs.		EM, TA	TP, FEMA, MEMA, EOEEA, MVP	Short-term	TBD	FEMA, MVP, MEMA, EOEEA	Moderate
SCC4-6	Create a Debris Management Plan to address environmental issues related to the demolition and disposal of disaster debris and to better position the Town to receive the full level of assistance available from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other participating entities in the event of a natural disaster.		EM, TP	National Grid, MEMA, FEMA, HD	Short-term	\$	FEMA	Moderate

