



Westford
Massachusetts

2025

Strategic Plan



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Board Members



J. Scott Hazelton
Chair



G. Thomas Clay
Vice Chair



Chris Barrett
Clerk



John H. Cunningham
Board Member



Andrea Peraner-Sweet
Board Member



Message from the Town Manager

On behalf of the Westford Select Board and Town Staff, I am excited to announce the launch of the 2025 Strategic Plan, a comprehensive framework that reflects our community's collective voice and aspirations. Westford is a charming New England community that celebrates its rich history, and cultural and ethnic diversity. This Town has great public services, award-winning schools, and an ideal location, all of which makes it a desirable community to live, raise a family, recreate, and work. This plan is the result of extensive feedback gathered from residents and staff over the past year, and it encapsulates our commitment to being a welcoming and inclusive community that honors its history and traditions. The Westford Strategic Plan is the Town's vision and goals for the future — both achievable and aspirational.

The Strategic Plan aims to align what the community wants Westford to be in the next five to ten years with the work of local leadership and government. Most importantly the Strategic Plan builds upon the qualities residents love about Westford today, while shaping an even brighter and more thriving future.

Community engagement and feedback were a focal point for the development of this plan. The Westford Strategic Plan kicked off in the winter of 2024 through initial engagement with Town Staff and various Board and Committee members. These engagement sessions helped facilitate conversations on the strengths and challenges the Town faces and goals each of these groups have for the Town in the future. In February through April of 2024, the Town participated in the Zencity Community Survey, which asked questions of the community on certain service and topic areas to be later tied into the development of the Strategic Plan. During the late spring, Town Management developed Mission and Values statements for the Town as an organization, crafted from a survey sent to employees earlier in

the year, while the Westford Select Board developed the draft Strategic Outcome Areas. Over the summer these were taken back for further community feedback and engagement. Throughout June, July, and August 2024, the Town issued another survey to residents and Staff volunteers met with various community groups to gather feedback for the Strategic Plan Outcome Areas. The volunteers met with over 85 individuals across 10 different community groups and we received 626 responses from the survey. The Town utilized other methods to engage with residents on the draft Strategic Plan including attending community events like the Farmers' Market and hosting drop-in hours.

The 2025 Strategic Plan is centered around seven key outcome areas, each designed to address the unique needs and values of our community. These outcome areas are: Responsive and Responsible Town Government, Caring and Engaged Community, Opportunities for Recreation and Preservation of Open Space, Commitment to Environmental Sustainability and Climate Action, Diverse and Attainable Housing Options, Intentional and Appropriate Economic Growth, and Quality Educational Opportunities. These Outcome Areas are paired with various specific goals that will help the Town and the community achieve its vision for Westford. The Strategic Plan will also guide the yearly budget process and individual goals of employees to exceed the needs and meet the priorities of Westford residents. I extend my thanks to the residents of Westford, Town Staff, and the Select Board for their participation and engagement in the strategic planning process. This plan represents our shared vision for Westford, and I encourage all residents to engage with us as we implement these strategies over the coming years. Together, we can create a Westford that is not only responsive to today's challenges but also equipped for tomorrow's opportunities.

Kristen Las
TOWN MANAGER

About the Westford Community



Westford offers something for everyone, with a unique blend of past and present in a community that values both tradition and progress.

Incorporated in 1729, Westford is a unique New England town that has a rich history and a strong commitment to preserving its heritage, balanced with modern growth.

The Town is ideally located on the I-495/Route 3 highway network, just 35 miles north of Boston and near the New Hampshire border. Westford's early economy was driven by agriculture, with mills and farms dotting the landscape. During the Industrial Revolution, the Town saw the rise of granite quarries and apple orchards, which became significant local industries.

Today, the Town has evolved from a primarily agricultural settlement into a picturesque suburb with many historic sites and colonial-era buildings still present. In recent years, Westford has become known for its burgeoning tech industry, thanks to its proximity to Boston and Cambridge. This has attracted professionals in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, further developing a highly skilled workforce within the Town.

With a population of 24,543, Westford offers a mix of amenities, cultural experiences, and economic opportunities that make it a great place to live, work, learn, and enjoy. The Town's population is diverse, with 23% identifying as Asian and approximately 20% of residents born outside the U.S., contributing to the Town's multicultural community.

Westford maintains a small-town feel with a strong community spirit. Residents enjoy close-knit neighborhoods and a variety of community events throughout the year. The Town's Apple Blossom Festival is a beloved annual tradition that celebrates Westford's agricultural heritage. The Strawberry Festival is another long-

standing celebration that has taken place for more than 40 years, bringing community members together through food, crafts, and entertainment.

One of the hallmarks of Westford is its highly regarded public school system that is amongst the best in the Commonwealth. Westford Academy, one of the oldest public secondary schools in the United States, is known for its academic excellence. U.S. News & World Report recently ranked Westford Academy as the 25th best high school in Massachusetts and in 2021, Boston Magazine ranked the school as #13 on their list of "Best Public High Schools in Boston." More recently, Westford Public Schools received a 2023-2024 District of Distinction designation from Imagine Nation.

Westford has numerous natural and recreational amenities and offers easy access to Boston, Cape Cod, and New Hampshire's White Mountains. Local offerings range from hiking and biking along scenic trails to enjoying the waters of Nabnasset Lake. The Recreation Department operates two public Town Beaches in the summer as well as a host of activities and programs all year long. The Town has over 4,500 acres of protected open space and over 30 trails available for year-round enjoyment, providing opportunities for active and passive recreation.

Community Demographics



POPULATION:
24,543



TOTAL AREA:
30.2 square miles



MEDIAN AGE:
42.4



RESIDENTS WITH A BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER:
72%



MEDIAN HOME VALUE:
\$796,600*



MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME:
\$174,424



HOMES OCCUPIED BY OWNERS:
88%



HOUSEHOLDS THAT SPEAK A LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH AT HOME:
25.4%

*Average single family home value for FY 2025, from Assessors Tax Classification

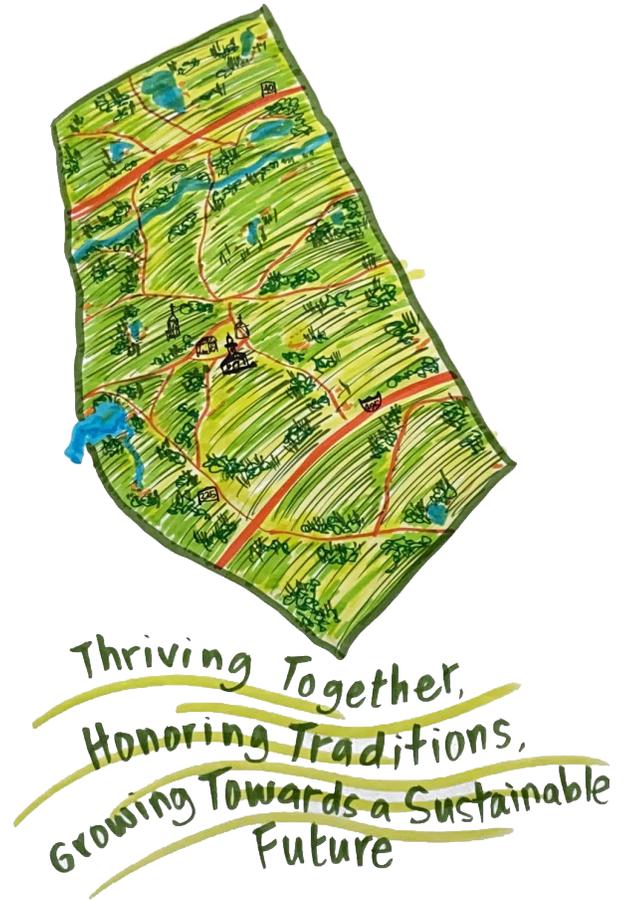


Strategic Planning Process

The strategic framework presented in this document will help guide decision-making, inform resource allocation, and track progress within the Strategic Outcome Areas.

The Town of Westford initiated the strategic planning process to create a vision and roadmap for achieving long-term success. Identifying a clear strategic direction is important, as it serves as a guiding framework to align efforts and resources with long-term goals. A well-defined strategic plan provides clarity and purpose among team members. It creates a shared vision between the community and Town staff, which aligns organization efforts toward unified goals. Through strategic planning, the Town is positioned to address current challenges, seize emerging opportunities, and build a sustainable future for all.

The strategic planning process included robust involvement from internal and external contributors. The Town recognizes the pivotal role that community input and engagement play in developing a townwide strategic plan. By actively seeking involvement from various community members, the Town ensured that the plan reflects the diverse needs and desires of those who call Westford home. Embracing this collaborative approach not only fosters a sense of ownership and empowerment among community members but also cultivates a strategic vision that is both comprehensive and forward-thinking.





Steps in the strategic planning process included:

» COMMUNITY AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

The first question when developing a strategic plan is “what do we know to be true today?” To answer this question the strategic plan development began with community and employee engagement. These efforts provided feedback on the Town’s purpose, strengths, opportunities, and critical issues to inform the development of a Strategic Plan Framework. Town employees also weighed in on the organizational mission and values that guide their work. The Select Board and Town staff sought to ensure community input would serve as the basis for strategic plan development efforts. Input was received through the following engagement opportunities:

- Individual interviews with members of the Select Board
- A focus group with Chairs (or their designees) of Town Boards and Committees
- Workshops with the Town’s leadership team and members of the Select Board
- Workshops with the Town’s leadership team, department heads, and members of the Select Board

» DEVELOPING THE FRAMEWORK

Drawing from the engagement results, Select Board members and Town staff convened to craft the organization’s vision and identify Strategic Outcome Areas. Establishing a long-term vision and developing outcome areas that resonate with community priorities establishes a framework to manage the evolving needs of the organization and community. The initial draft framework was then shared back with the community before finalizing. Community members were able to offer feedback on the framework through the following channels:

- A community survey that generated a total of 626 responses
- Ten in-person engagements throughout the community
- A dedicated strategic plan website operated by the Town

» STRATEGY WORKSHOP AND SELECT BOARD REVIEW

Members of Town staff met to develop specific strategies and initial brainstorming of performance metrics for each outcome area. These strategies set the organizational priorities for advancing progress across each Strategic Outcome Area. This resulted in a comprehensive strategic framework that connects community priorities with organizational goals. The Select Board reviewed and adopted a comprehensive strategic plan in February 2025.

» IMPLEMENTATION

Once adopted, strategic plan implementation work begins. Town staff will champion key strategies and priorities alongside the existing daily operations and service delivery expectations. Organizational work planning helps to ensure adequate capacity to meet current service demands and advance the goals, programs, and initiatives that contribute to progress in each of the Strategic Outcome Areas. Town leadership will use the Strategic Plan to develop performance expectations and organizational goals. This helps ensure Town staff understand and take ownership in the success of the community-driven Strategic Plan.

Westford Strategic Plan

The Town of Westford's vision, mission, and values are as follows:

Vision

A vision statement is aspirational, intended to reflect what the Town hopes to achieve in the future. It captures the desires of the community and provides forward-looking perspective on where the Town aims to be in the long-term.

Westford strives to be a welcoming and inclusive community that honors its history and traditions. We are driven towards innovation and progress, balancing growth with preservation and a commitment to creating a sustainable future.

Mission

While the vision statement provides a forward-looking perspective on where the community aims to be in the future, a mission statement grounds the organization in its purpose, guiding day-to-day operations and decision-making to achieve the vision.

We are a team of dedicated professionals that take pride in fostering a vibrant community by delivering excellent public service.

Values

An organization's values embody its core principles and guide the way that the organization operates and serves the community. The Town of Westford's values are:

- Professionalism
- Dedication
- Collaboration
- Accountability
- Service-Oriented

*Westford: thriving together, honoring tradition,
growing towards a sustainable future*

Strategic Outcome Areas

Strategic Outcome Areas represent the essential components to realizing the community's vision.

Strategic Outcome Areas serve a foundational role for the Strategic Plan. Within each of these outcome areas lies organizational strategies by which progress can be measured. Achieving success within each outcome area leads to realizing the Town's aspirational vision.





Responsive and Reponsible Town Government

Westford's municipal services are delivered by dedicated, professional staff who are responsible stewards of Town resources and responsive to community concerns. Core services are prioritized and balanced against other community demands.

Strategies

- Prioritize Town and school needs for capital planning while considering limited resources and space needs
- Develop and retain employees
- Establish a framework for identifying and prioritizing core services
- Develop and implement a digital records retention policy



» PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Space Utilization and Facilities Assessment

The Town recognizes the importance of responsible use of limited resources in delivering quality services to our residents. Our most critical resource, our employees, rely on a number of other important assets to serve Westford, paramount among these being our buildings and facilities. To get the most from our spaces, it is important to not only take good care of them, but to plan appropriately for their maintenance and upkeep and, when appropriate, replacement, renovation, or disposition to best suit the needs of the community.

In 2023, Westford Public Schools completed a Comprehensive Facilities Assessment to lay out a long-term vision for the community's capital investment in our campuses. To build on this effort, Town buildings and operations launched a Space Needs and Facilities Assessment in 2024 to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of most Town buildings. This effort includes completing an inventory of departmental space needs and developing a plan to ensure staff has the most effective and efficient space in which to provide services to the public.

A key outcome of this effort will be the creation of an expanded Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for our facilities that can eventually be scaled to provide a comprehensive, long-term foundation for ensuring the availability and reliability of mission-critical assets (infrastructure, fleet, technology, and equipment). Having a long-term CIP that prioritizes the maintenance and replacement of essential and mission-critical assets will be an important tool to aid the community in making decisions about future capital investments.



Caring and Engaged Community

Westford is a community that cares for its neighbors and takes pride in local festivals and unique cultural events that celebrate the Town's diversity and history. The Town prioritizes community engagement and promotes volunteerism. Westford is committed to effectively communicating with our residents through a variety of media.

Strategies

- Develop and implement a comprehensive communication plan
- Provide outreach to Boards and Committees on the Town's strategic outcomes to ensure their energy and efforts support key goals and priorities

» PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Westford Police Department's Community Event Team

Through collaborative efforts and partnerships, the Westford Police Department's Community Event Team promotes activities within a positive environment to increase public trust and confidence that fosters stronger community-police relationships. By hosting and participating in personalized, informal meetings, opportunities are created for the Community Event Team to interact with members of the public in a positive, non-enforcement manner. These interactions help to break down personal barriers and allow valuable partnerships to be formed and information shared.



Opportunities for Recreation and Preservation of Open Space

Westford is committed to preserving open space as part of maintaining the Town's rural character. The Town is focused on improving connectivity by developing and maintaining safe routes for walking and cycling. Westford supports a variety of multi-generational recreational opportunities.

Strategies

- Create a sidewalk and trail master plan and needs assessment
- Update the Open Space and Recreation plan
- Develop, promote, and enhance recreational opportunities for all generations

» PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Rehabilitation of the Jack Walsh Courts

As part of Westford's commitment to enhancing recreational opportunities and preserving open space, the rehabilitation of the Jack Walsh Courts and access to the park along Carlisle Road represents a significant investment in our community's well-being. This project will revitalize a popular recreational facility, providing upgraded spaces for tennis, pickleball, basketball, and other activities that serve residents of all ages. The courts' improvements will ensure long-term usability, supporting Westford's goal of fostering multi-generational recreation while maintaining the Town's rural character and promoting active lifestyles through well-maintained, accessible outdoor spaces. The project also includes improvements at the intersection of the park at Carlisle and Texas Roads including the relocation of the driveway, enhancing the pedestrian crossing, and installing a rectangular rapid flashing beacon.



Quality Educational Opportunities

Westford is committed to quality educational opportunities. The Town supports its exceptional public and regional school systems and encourages opportunities that support a life-long endeavor to enrich, grow, and expand residents' knowledge.

Strategies

- Schedule and prioritize recurring collaboration among educational partners to showcase offerings
- Create event opportunities that meet the arc of publicly supported life-long learning
- Optimize shared resources between the Town and Westford Public Schools





» PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Construction of Library Expansion

The J.V. Fletcher Library is currently being designed for a renovation and expansion that will begin construction in early 2025. The library expansion will make the building 50% larger. Specifically, the current building has 22,456 square feet, and was constructed in 1895, with renovations in 1963, 1969, and 1988. The expansion will increase the space to 35,159 square feet. The total projected cost of the expanded and renovated library is \$32.5 million. Of that, the library will receive a construction grant from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) for \$7.9 million. In addition, when the library project meets certain critical benchmarks during construction, the project is slated to receive an additional \$829,263 in grant funding from the MBLC. The J.V. Fletcher Library Foundation is committed to raising \$1.5 million of the total cost. The remaining funding – approximately \$22 million – will be funded by the Town through a debt exclusion approved in 2022. In addition, the library project may be eligible for Community Preservation Act funds, which in part, focus on historic preservation.

The J.V. Fletcher Library is a space where all Westford residents can enjoy and further their education. While more and more information is available online, consumers of that information still need help making sense of it, and that's where the library staff members come in. Patrons of all ages benefit from a dedicated, knowledgeable staff. Residents also need and want adequate, comfortable spaces to gather.

While more people now work from home, residents value having a space to take a break, enjoy a change of scenery, or work alone or in a collaborative environment. Students need safe, public places in which to study. Older residents may rely on the library as either a cooling or warming station, and many residents come to the library to charge devices in the event of a power outage.

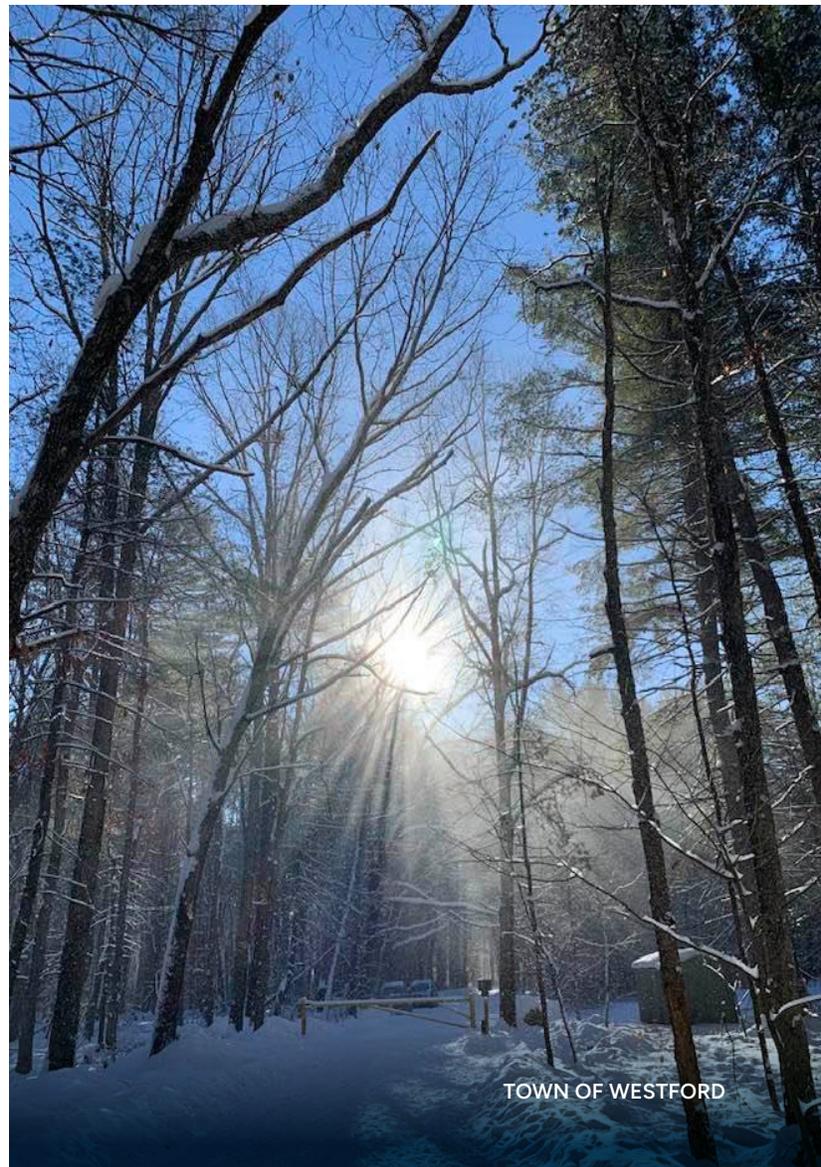
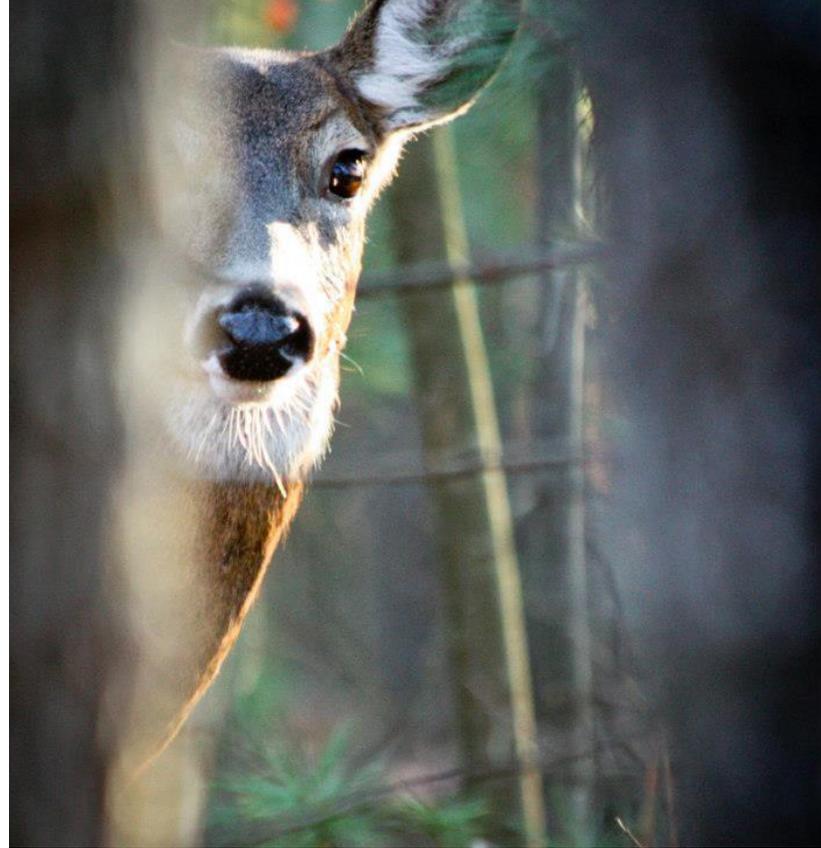


Commitment to Environmental Sustainability and Climate Action

Environmental sustainability goals as envisioned in the Westford Climate Roadmap will guide investments in clean energy and zero-waste initiatives. The Town's efforts to address climate change will consider the need to balance fiscal, operational, and environmental objectives.

Strategies

- Create a Solar Siting Plan utilizing municipal and school properties
- Conduct a portfolio-wide building energy audit and develop a prioritized implementation plan and funding strategy for energy efficiency improvements to Town and School facilities
- Develop a Fleet Transition Plan toward more energy efficient vehicles with supporting infrastructure
- Develop a comprehensive waste reduction strategy to include residential and municipal sectors





» PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Building Energy Efficiencies Projects

The Town continues to pursue cost-effective capital investments in energy efficiency and make progress towards climate goals in incremental steps. To maximize our returns, staff developed a strategy of targeting utility rebates, incentives, and grants for smaller projects over a shorter timeframe allowing the Town to realize the maximum return on investments and still make measurable progress towards our objectives. In FY2024, the Town completed three significant weatherization and energy efficiency projects at Westford Academy, Rita Miller Elementary School, and the Westford Police Department. Using a combination of utility incentives and grants, the Town was able to complete over \$360,000 in work for just over \$85,000. These projects, taken together, will generate almost \$16,000 in annual savings, resulting in a leverage ratio of 75% and a payback in under six years.

We continue to use this strategy in FY2025, as we begin major lighting retrofit projects at Westford Academy and Rita Miller Elementary School. For these projects, staff not only leveraged significant short-term incentives, but also took advantage of another incentive program for 0%

financing on-bill repayment. Due to the rapid response of staff to take advantage of promotional incentives, the Town will complete over \$525,000 in lighting retrofits with no out-of-pocket costs and a positive cash flow after energy cost savings. Further, by using a streamlined Ch. 25A §14 procurement process, the Town will save over 330,000 kWh each year with projects that will go from concept to completion in roughly six months with virtually no disruption to our school operations.

Our FY2025 energy efficiency plan also includes weatherization projects at eight Town and School buildings, which will generate additional energy and cost savings. In keeping with our strategy, staff selected projects to optimize incentives and rebates and minimize payback periods. The full portfolio of FY2025 projects total \$860,000 for an out-of-pocket cost of just over \$90,000 while reducing carbon emissions by over 300 tons annually.

Staff are already working on a slate of projects for FY2026 to continue building on this momentum. Residents will be asked to consider a revolving account at the Spring 2025 Annual Town Meeting to allow reinvestment of cost savings into even greater efficiencies.



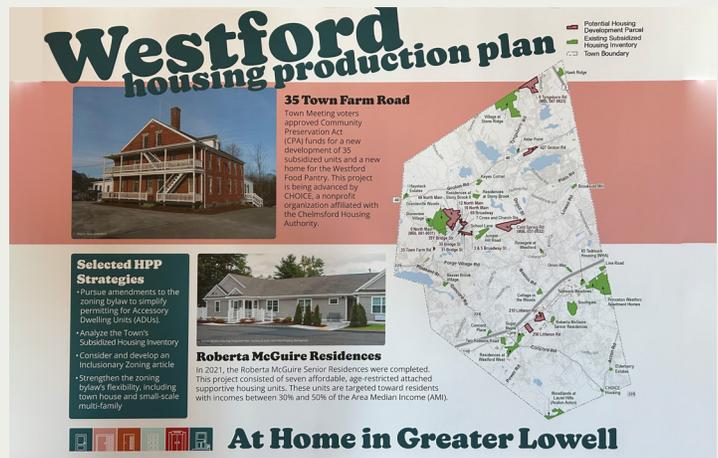
Diverse and Attainable Housing Options

Westford encourages and promotes the development of diverse housing options that meet a broad range of income levels and life stages of our current and future residents. Westford strives to be a community where people both want to and can afford to live.

Strategies

- Identify infrastructure upgrades that will support housing needs
- Review zoning laws and propose changes that support Town housing goals
- Support the development of affordable housing opportunities for future and current residents
- Organize a housing summit
- Develop tax incentives for builders and owners to promote small-home building

Westford strives to be a community where people both want to and can afford to live.



» PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Zoning Outreach and Adoption

In January of 2021, the Town of Westford was designated an MBTA Adjacent Community. At the Town's Strategic Planning Retreat in 2022, the Land Use Management Department initiated a robust planning process together with the Select Board, Planning Board, and the MBTA Communities Multi-Family Housing Advisory Committee to not just fulfill the requirements of the new Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40A Section 3A ("MBTA Communities") but take the opportunity to engage with residents and property owners to identify housing types and features that are currently lacking but needed within the Westford community. The new MBTA Communities Multi-Family Overlay District (MCMOD) will support the creation of new housing in locations that are already developed but currently underutilized. With over 80% of Town Meeting attendees voting to support the MCMOD in April of 2024, the future housing options created within the district will go towards fulfilling Westford's housing needs while also supporting the Town's existing business community by putting more potential customers within close proximity of local retail and dining options.

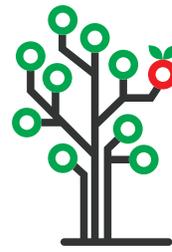


Intentional and Appropriate Economic Growth

Westford is a traditional New England town that preserves its historic Town Center and neighborhood villages. The Town is committed to promoting an environment along our commercial corridors where unique and local businesses can thrive. Westford encourages economic growth and a diverse tax base.

Strategies

- Identify and evaluate locations in the Town that are conducive to economic development
- Review Town policies to identify opportunities to become more business-friendly
- Develop an engagement plan to understand resident preference and balance between growth and preservation
- Explore tax incentive programs and promote existing programs for taxpayers



DISCOVER WESTFORD

A **HUB** for Growth

A **HOME** for Success

» PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Route 40 (Groton Road) Corridor Study

At the 2023 Annual Town Meeting, a resolution was passed by attendees to conduct a study of the Route 40 area.

This resolution was presented following two zoning map change requests – one at the 2022 Annual Town Meeting and one at the 2023 Annual Town Meeting. Since that time, the Town through the Land Use Management Department has sought grants to hire a consultant team to assist with this planning effort. In October 2024, the Town obtained a Housing Choice Grant through the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) for a Route 40 Corridor Master Plan. With EOHLC's financial support, the Town will be able to proceed with this important work and engage with area residents and business owners to identify the kinds of development that make sense to promote while simultaneously preserving and enhancing the character along this important corridor.

Strategic Plan Framework

Strategic Outcome Areas

Vision

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Mission

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Values

- Professionalism
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Caring and Engaged Community

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Commitment to Environmental Sustainability and Climate Action

Environmental sustainability goals as envisioned in the Westford Climate Roadmap will guide investments in clean energy and zero waste initiatives. The Town's efforts to address climate change will consider the need to balance fiscal, operational, and environmental objectives.



Diverse and Attainable Housing Options

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Westford
Massachusetts

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- Develop and retain employees
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- Develop and implement a digital records retention policy



- Develop and implement a comprehensive communication plan
- Provide outreach to Boards and Committees on the Town's strategic outcomes to ensure their energy and efforts support key goals and priorities



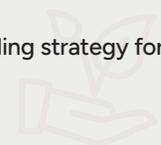
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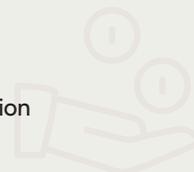
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- Identify infrastructure upgrades that will support housing needs
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- Identify and evaluate locations within the Town that are conducive to economic development
- Review Town policies to identify opportunities to become more business-friendly
- Develop an engagement plan to understand resident preferences and balance growth with preservation
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Realizing the Vision

The outcome areas and strategies within this plan contain a roadmap that will move the Town of Westford toward achieving its vision. Town staff will develop an organizational work plan that prioritizes the strategies within each outcome area and begin to track progress. They will also work with the Board to finalize performance metrics for each outcome area that monitor success. Employees will be essential in carrying out these plans, contributing their expertise and dedication to drive meaningful progress and effective implementation.

The Town is grateful to all the individuals who took the time to provide input during this strategic planning process, and we look forward to sharing our success as we work to achieve our shared goals.



Westford
Massachusetts

Town of Westford

55 MAIN STREET

WESTFORD, MA 01886

This plan was facilitated by:



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