

Town of Southborough Housing Production Plan



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Community Opportunities Group, Inc.

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This report builds on past work, particularly the 2009 Affordable Housing Strategy, the 2008 Southborough Master Plan, and the 2015 Housing Production Plan.

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Southborough Housing Production Plan

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Executive Summary

Southborough's Housing Goals

1. Provide housing options that attract families and enable older adults to remain in Southborough as their needs change
2. Reinforce Southborough's economic goals by supporting local businesses through the provision of expanded housing choices that serves a diverse local workforce
3. Encourage alternative housing styles to single-family homes, such as townhouses, duplexes, and small apartment buildings in contextually appropriate locations to provide residents with a wider range of housing options
4. Maintain Southborough's character by supporting the design of housing development that is compatible with and complementary to the Town's architectural character and wooded landscapes.
5. Minimize impacts of new development on priority areas for open space, conservation, and natural resource protection purposes
6. Maintain and improve the condition of the Town's housing stock and encourage high quality new construction

"Being able to live and own this affordable home has brought tremendous stability to our lives... Being able to have this stability from owning an affordable home has brought immeasurable opportunity to my family--a place to have roots, a place to grow, a place to thrive."

- Southborough Affordable Homeowner

Introduction

Southborough has traditionally been a high value community, in terms of its location, natural beauty, quality of life, and (historically) comparatively affordable home prices. However, due to a scarcity of developable land, environmental constraints, and limited infrastructure, the cost of housing in Southborough is now the highest in Worcester County. Over recent decades most new housing that has been constructed consists of increasingly larger and more expensive single-family homes. Many who work in Southborough cannot afford to live in town, which is exacerbated by half of Southborough jobs paying less than the income required to rent or buy a local apartment or house. Moreover, the housing stock offers relatively few and highly competitive options for young adults, individuals living alone, small households, and seniors.

Nearly 900 of Southborough's roughly 3,400 households today are cost-burdened (paying more than 30% of their income on housing). This includes 1/2 of Southborough's renters and 1/4 of homeowners. Young adults (under age 35) have the highest rate of housing cost burden, while seniors are also disproportionately cost-burdened as many live on fixed-incomes. Housing cost burden is most common among households who earn less than \$100,000; afflicting the overwhelming majority of those with incomes below \$50,000.

Southborough's Priority Housing Needs:

-) Housing affordable to lower income households, with an emphasis those earning less than \$50,000 per year, and to families earning below \$100,000 per year.
-) Housing affordable to low and moderate income households earning \$80,000 per year.
-) Housing designed for and affordable to seniors and/or disabled residents, especially when located in high-amenity areas that promote community health.
-) More diverse housing styles; in particular, rental housing of all sizes, and ownership housing appropriate for smaller households, including condominiums and modest-sized single-family houses.

The “Comprehensive Permit Law” (M.G.L. Ch.40b)

Chapter 40B
Housing Goals

Total Year- Round Housing Units (2010 Census)	3,433
Affordable Housing Units Required (10% of 3,433)	343
Current SHI Units	294
Units needed to reach 40B minimum goal through 2020	49
Annual production target for Housing Certification	17
Projected Year-Round Housing Units (2020 Census)	3,600
Projected Affordable Housing Units Required (10% of 3,600)	360
Projected units needed to reach 40B minimum goal beyond 2020	66
Annual production target for Housing Certification after 2020	18

Massachusetts General Law Ch.40b went into effect in 1969. The law requires every municipality in the state to maintain at least 10 percent of their year-round housing stock (as determined in the decennial census) as “affordable housing” in order to maintain local control over land use decisions involving affordable housing. To count toward this 10 percent, affordable housing units must meet the criteria for inclusion on the State’s Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) (defined on page 39, Affordable Housing Inventory).

Housing Strategies

1. Enhance local capacity to plan, advocate for, develop, and manage affordable housing units.
 -)] Strengthen and expand partnerships to develop housing or provide supportive services
 -)] Secure and coordinate use of funding for affordable housing
 -)] Guide development through establishment of Project Review Guidelines for 40B/affordable housing proposals
 -)] Educate/communicate with the public
2. Identify sites for creation of affordable housing through new development, redevelopment, or preservation.
 -)] Explore or facilitate affordable housing on publicly- and privately-owned sites such as:
 - Properties taken by tax title
 - Municipal buildings, should any become surplus in the future
 - Vacant or underutilized commercial properties, where appropriate
 - Religious, fraternal, or social organizations, if any have surplus property
 -)] Continue to explore wastewater treatment options for Downtown
3. Update zoning to create opportunities for development of affordable housing, and to encourage diversity in housing options.
 -)] Strengthen inclusionary requirements
 -)] Revise zoning regulations to provide for mixed-use buildings including housing where appropriate
 -)] Remove barriers for provision of multifamily housing and provide greater ability to create “lifecycle” housing units
 -)] Ensure that parking requirements are commensurate with the size and type of use
4. Assist Southborough residents to obtain or maintain housing that they can afford.
 -)] Expand utilization of senior tax deferral and work-off programs
 -)] Support first-time homebuyers through a down payment assistance program

Introduction

Since the inhabitants from the southern portion of Marlborough broke away to incorporate as the Town of Southborough in 1727, the town has always maintained some housing support for its poorest residents as dictated by custom and state law. For most of the 19th and early 20th centuries, Southborough housed individuals at the Poor Farm which was located near the former intersection of Breakneck and Woodland Roads.¹ Prior to that, the poor were typically supported by the Town through the practice of boarding individuals and families with other residents. The 20th century saw the formalized involvement of state and federal governments in housing with the introduction of public housing and other social programs. Modern affordable housing programs rely on a mix of local, state, federal, and private funding sources and a wide array of strategies to accomplish housing goals.

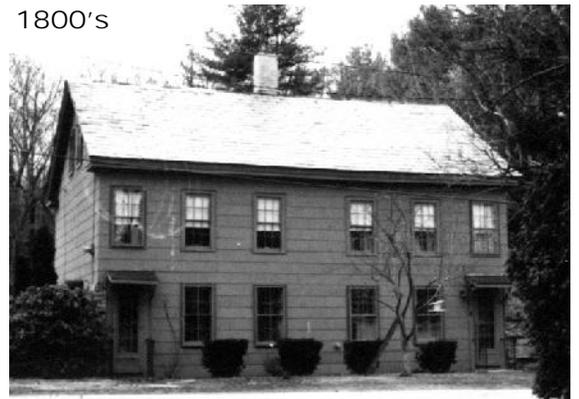
While many housing programs were initially geared toward housing returning GI's and their families or the elderly, the need for affordable housing by many types of households has grown over time. In Southborough, the cost of housing has become out of reach for many workforce households, as well as retirees and young adults. Historically, workforce housing was often provided directly by employers, or working individuals could commonly find rooms for rent as boarders. The owners of industrial mills that produced shoes and boots constructed housing for workers in Cordaville, Fayville, and Southville, creating villages of modest single-family and small-scale multifamily structures. Later in the mid-20th Century, the Federal government generously subsidized loans for veterans and middle-income households to become homeowners in suburban communities, sparking a proliferation of low-density development. In recent decades, a variety of regulatory and market constraints and the scarcity of land have constricted the availability of housing for moderate income residents, while new homes are increasingly high priced.

Reflecting the changing needs and standards for affordable housing and to counteract a trend toward more restrictive zoning, a Massachusetts law went into effect in 1969, widely known as the "Comprehensive Permit" law or "Chapter 40B", that establishes a goal for all communities in the state to dedicate a minimum of 10% of their housing stock to be affordable to lower- income households. To count toward this 10%, affordable housing units must have a permanent or long-term restriction requiring the unit to be sold or rented to households earning less than 80% of the median income in the local area (Area Median Income or AMI). The 10% minimum is based on the number of year-round housing units reported in the most recent decennial Census; for

1700's



1800's



1900's



2000's



18th Century farmhouse; 19th Century Cordaville Manufacturing Company Worker Housing; mid-20th Century single-family home; 21st Century single-family home

Photo Credit: Massachusetts Historic Commission, MACRIS Inventory Forms

¹ Narrative History of Southborough, written in conjunction with the Historic Properties Survey of Southborough, June, 2000

Southborough, this currently means that as of the 2010 Census, 343 year round housing units out of a total of 3,433 would need to be officially designated as “Affordable Housing” and eligible for inclusion on the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) to meet the 10% threshold.

The intent of Chapter 40B is to provide a fair-share distribution of affordable housing throughout the Commonwealth. In order to address zoning and permitting barriers that make it too expensive to build low- and moderate-income housing, Chapter 40B supersedes zoning and other local regulations. M.G.L. c. 40B, Sections 20-23 authorizes the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) to grant a comprehensive permit to qualified affordable housing developers. A comprehensive permit is a single permit that replaces the approvals otherwise required from separate town permitting authorities that would usually be required (such as from the Planning Board or Conservation Commission). The ZBA may approve, conditionally approve, or deny a comprehensive permit, but in communities that do not meet the 10% minimum threshold, developers may appeal to the state’s Housing Appeals Committee (HAC), who may overturn a local denial. Although comprehensive permits may still be granted after a town achieves the 10% minimum, the HAC no longer has authority to overturn a local board’s decision.

As revised in 2008, Chapter 40B encourages communities to be proactive in guiding the development of affordable housing to meet local needs through Housing Certification. To become Certified, communities must prepare a Housing Production Plan that promulgates proactive strategies toward meeting the 10% threshold (if they have not already done so), which may include the provision of affordable homeownership

HOUSING CERTIFICATION

METHODS TO QUALIFY

- J 10% of housing units are listed on SHI
- J 1.5% of land area in use for Affordable Housing purposes
- J Active HPP + Safe Harbor

SAFE HARBOR TARGETS

- 1 Year: 0.5% of Year-Round Housing Units permitted as SHI eligible housing
- 2 Year: 1% of Year-Round Housing Units permitted as SHI eligible housing

units and all rental units that are part of an eligible mixed income development, whether they are market rate or affordable. Where communities have Housing Production Plans approved by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), and implement strategies which result in the creation of affordable housing units equal to 0.5% of their year-round housing units in a calendar year, communities can deny unfavorable Comprehensive Permit projects for a period of one year. If the number of affordable units created in a year is equal to 1% of year-round housing units, the Certification lasts for 2 years.

Southborough has made considerable progress over the past decade to meet its affordable housing obligations under Chapter 40B. Since 2010 the town has added approximately 172 units to its subsidized housing inventory, including Madison Place with 168 rental units, 30 units at Fairfield Green (in Marlborough), three units which the Town created through its Affordable Housing Trust, and several homeownership units created through Comprehensive Permits and Flexible Development Zoning. A 40B development approved in 2016 (The

Residences at Park Central) would add 180 units to the Town’s SHI. The development is currently under appeal, but will bring the Town above its 10% affordability threshold if the appeals are resolved and the project is built. In the meantime, the Town continues to identify strategies to address its local affordable housing needs.

Process

A Housing Production Plan addresses local housing needs, goals, and preferences, along with proposed techniques for implementation. The plan must be adopted by the Board of Selectmen and the Planning Board before it is submitted to DHCD for approval.

This plan was prepared by Community Opportunities Group, Inc. with significant input from the Town Planner, and the Southborough Housing Opportunity Partnership Committee (SHOPC). The consultant facilitated a public input-gathering session at the Senior Center, and conducted interviews with Town staff, members of various committees, and some local real estate and development professionals to learn anecdotally about housing needs and opportunities.

Prior Planning

Over the past decade, Southborough has undertaken two significant planning efforts related to affordable housing. This Housing Production Plan builds on these efforts, and in accordance with requirements for Housing Certification recommends more specific locations and characteristics of affordable housing that would be appropriate for the development of affordable housing.

Housing Production Plan (2015) Strategies:

-) Permit mixed use buildings in the village areas,
-) Improve flexible zoning provisions
-) Ease restrictions on duplexes and multifamily in appropriate locations,
-) Encourage accessory apartments
-) Consider a 40R district near the commuter rail station
-) Permit congregate senior housing
-) Facilitate conversion of Town-owned buildings to multifamily
-) Acquire properties to expand Housing Authority inventory
-) Explore wastewater infrastructure in village center areas
-) Facilitate advocacy and education

Master Plan (2008) Strategies:

-) Ensure that future generations of Southborough citizens and people who work in Southborough are able to remain as residents of the Town.
-) Encourage a more diverse population.
-) Expand the housing choice in Southborough for families.
-) Encourage small lot zoning in villages and other appropriate areas in Town.
-) Encourage multifamily housing in appropriate locations and at an appropriate scale.
-) Maintain Southborough's attractive and aesthetically diverse housing stock and continue to promote quality in future development.

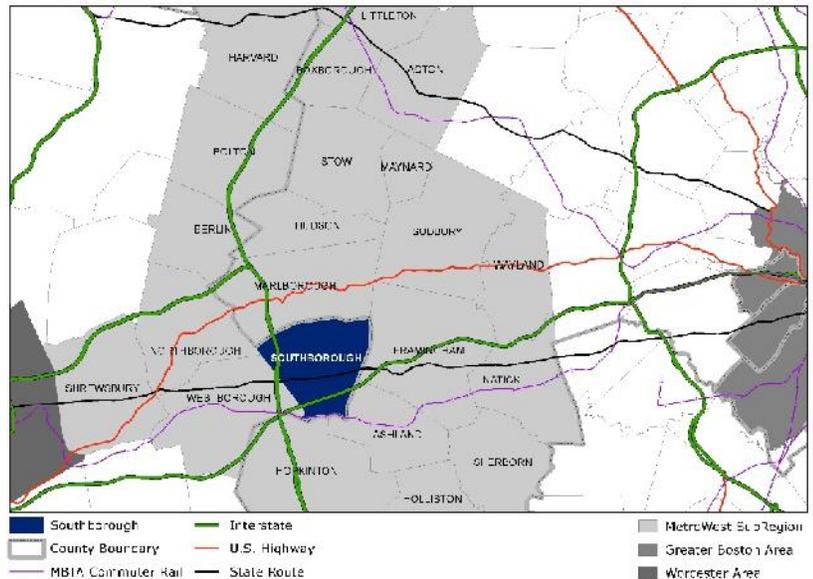
Few of the housing-specific strategies recommended in the Master Plan have been implemented. Some recommendations which have not yet been implemented but may still be relevant include considering zoning initiatives to allow more flexible, diverse, small-scale multifamily and senior housing alternatives, developing a plan for utilizing CPA funding for housing, converting existing homes to affordable units via acquisition or committing tax title properties, and addressing the need for wastewater infrastructure to support affordable housing.

Needs Assessment

The needs assessment takes into consideration the current and projected demographic profile of the community, as well as the existing housing supply, market trends, and projected housing growth over the next two years. A comparison of household incomes and housing costs provides an indication of the gap in affordability for different types of households and forms of housing.

Data for this analysis comes from public sources, including the US Census/American Community Survey (ACS), Town of Southborough Assessor, Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD); as well as proprietary data sources such as The Warren Group.

Southborough Regional Context Map



The Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) establishes income guidelines that are used to define housing affordability and defines median incomes on a regional basis in order to identify households with low and moderate incomes in relation to the communities in which they live. Southborough is located in the Eastern Worcester County, MA Fair Market Rent Area (HMFA). While the analysis focuses on the Town of Southborough, data for larger geographical areas is provided for context. Southborough is an “outer belt” suburban community located in Worcester County at the western fringe of the Boston metropolitan area. It is located within the MetroWest Regional Collaborative (MWRC) sub-region of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC).

Demographic Profile

This Housing Production Plan is grounded in a thorough examination of Southborough’s demographic makeup. An analysis of the current and projected population, household composition, and social and income characteristics provides insight into existing housing need and demand.

Key Findings

- 1) Southborough’s population growth leveled in the past decade, after previously experiencing rapid growth. The rate of growth is expected to tick up again in the next decade.
- 2) Southborough has a high concentration of families with school-aged children; however, the trend has been shifting toward smaller households and a growing senior population.
- 3) While school enrollment has surged over past decades, the population of school-aged children has more recently declined, a trend that is projected to continue.
- 4) Of Southborough’s total households, 77% are families; a large (and growing) share of non-family households are seniors living alone.
- 5) Comparable to some communities in the MWRC sub-region, Southborough’s median household income of \$142,426 is very high compared to the state as a whole and is the highest in Worcester County. However, there is a steep disparity between median incomes for different types of households. For households headed by seniors (over age 65), the median income is \$80,526 compared with \$167,083 for householders between the ages of 45-64. The median income for non-family households (who are primarily seniors, young adults, and people living alone) is only \$50,439 per year.

Population Trends

As of 2017, Southborough’s total population is just over 10,000, with over 3,400 households. Average household size has declined since 2000, and the rate of household growth exceeded population growth.

Southborough’s population climbed by double digit growth rates over the past few decades, but has markedly slowed since 2010. While the population has grown more slowly during the past decade, the implications of a decline in household size while there is growth in the number of households is that it

takes more housing units to house relatively fewer people than have historically been required. A need for smaller housing units is also correlated with a reduction in household sizes.

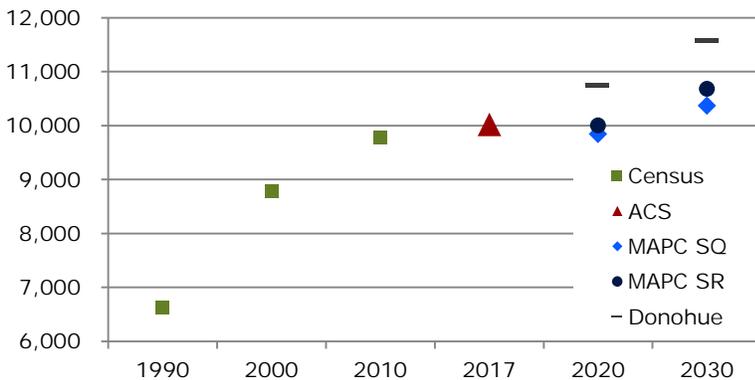
As shown in Figure 1, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) offers two projection scenarios for Southborough: The “Strong Region” projection makes assumptions about development-friendly regulatory changes throughout its region over the coming decade, while the “Status Quo” projection assumes no regulatory changes. Differences between the Status Quo and Strong Region projections are minimal for Southborough, although the Strong Region scenario more closely reflects the actual rate of growth reflected in latest American Community Survey (ACS) estimates. A third projection provided by the University of Massachusetts Donohue Institute does not reflect the slow-down in growth since 2010. All three projections show growth resuming at a higher rate after 2020.

Table 1: Population and Household Growth

	2000	2010	2017
Population	8,781	9,767	10,021
% Change		11%	3%
Households	2,952	3,332	3,403
% Change		13%	2%
Average Household Size	2.97	2.89	2.90

Source: US Census 2000 and 2010; ACS 2013-2017

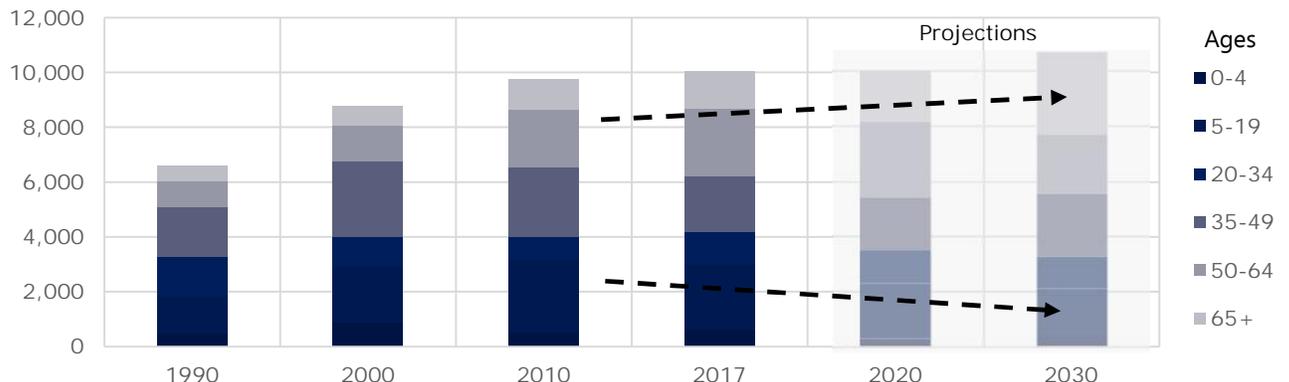
Figure 1: Comparison of Population Projections



Source: US Census, ACS (2017), MAPC Status Quo and Strong Region, Donohue Institute

Figure 2 shows population trends and projections by age. Since 1990, the number of adults over age 50 has grown consistently, and is expected to continue to climb. Comprising 23% of Southborough residents in 1990, 38% of the population is over 50 today. By Status Quo estimates for 2030, it is expected that 48% of the population will be over 50, and of those residents nearly 30% will be over the age of 50. The population of younger adults and children has fluctuated in recent time. In particular, the share of young adults (age 20-34) diminished significantly between 1990 and 2010, but more recently has

Figure 2: Southborough Historic & Projected Population by Age Cohort

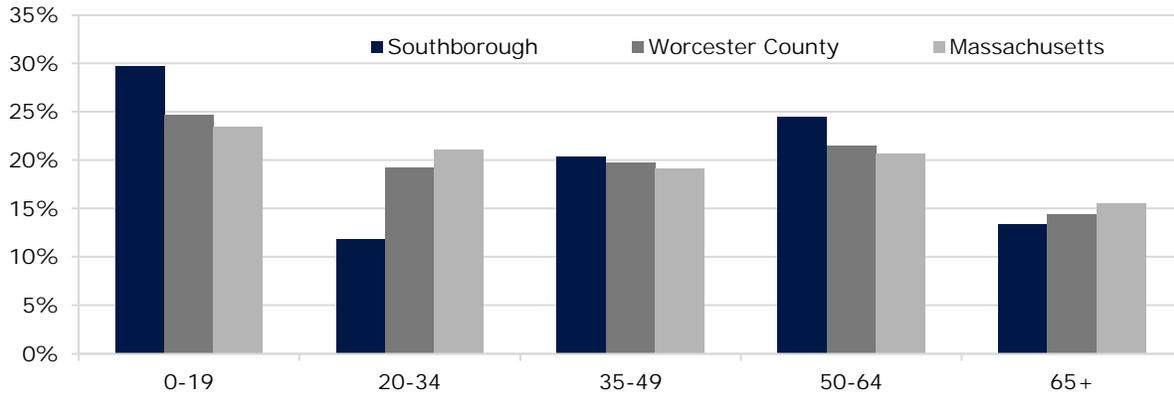


Source: US Census, ACS (2017), MAPC Status Quo Projections

grown. The number of school-aged children increased through 2010, but has since declined and is expected to continue to fall.

As shown in **Figure 3**, The age profile of Southborough residents contrasts with Worcester County and the state as a whole. The town has a larger share of children and middle-aged adults, comparatively fewer young adults, and a slightly smaller share of seniors over the age of 65. The median age of Southborough residents is 42.5 years, compared with 40.1 years in Worcester County and 39 years statewide.

Figure 3: Age Profile Comparison



Just over 8% of Southborough residents have a recognized disability, according to ACS estimates. A disability can be a physical, cognitive, or mental impairment. The incidence rate for disabilities is much higher for seniors than younger residents; about 28% of residents over the age of 65 report a disability, which may include difficulties with hearing, vision, physical mobility, self-care, or the ability to live independently. As the number of older residents grows, the need for safe housing to accommodate people with disabilities, particularly those with mobility challenges, will increase as well as natural consequence of an aging population.

Table 2: Disability Status

	Total Population	With a Disability	% with Disability
Population (Civilian)	10,021	818	8%
Under 18 years	2,758	108	4%
18 to 64 years	5,916	424	7%
65 years and over	1,347	286	28%

Source: ACS 2013-2017

Southborough residents are predominantly white and non-Hispanic, with the largest racial minority group being Asian. The population was too small to report on the proportion of residents who were born outside the United States and/or speak another language besides English at home. Southborough has relatively low social diversity compared Worcester County or Massachusetts as a whole. Southborough residents have a higher level of educational attainment than Worcester County or the state as a whole.

Table 3: Social Characteristics

	Southborough	Worcester County	MA
Race/Ethnicity			
White, not Hispanic	84.2%	77.9%	72.9%
Asian	11.2%	4.7%	6.2%
Black	4.3%	1.1%	6.7%
Other	1.5%	2.3%	2.9%
Hispanic (any race)	2.0%	10.8%	11.2%
Immigration/Language			
Born in US	NA	88.2%	83.8%
Foreign born	NA	11.8%	16.2%
Limited English-Speaking	NA	7.4%	5.8%
Educational Attainment			
High School Graduate or Higher	96.9%	90.3%	90.3%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	67.4%	35.3%	42.1%

Source: ACS 2013-2017 (NA = Not Available)

The characteristics of Southborough households are consistent with population trends. In comparison with Worcester county and the state, Southborough has a higher average household size, and higher proportion of family households. Southborough also has a relatively high proportion of households with children under age 18, while the proportion of households with seniors is below average for the area, but still high overall. A smaller share

of Southborough households are “non-families”, defined as individuals living alone and unrelated people living together. About 20% of Southborough households are individuals living alone. Of these, more than half are seniors (over the age of 65) living alone.

The predominance of families with children has declined since 2010, corresponding to a decrease in average household size, and an increase in nonfamily households and people living alone. At the same time, the proportion of households with seniors over the age of 60 also increased from 32% in 2010 to 35% in 2017. As these trends are projected to continue, the implications of growth in smaller and older households are that the most significant demand on the housing stock will be for smaller, lower-cost, housing units physically designed to maximize the ability to age in place. These types of housing are notably in short supply in Southborough.

Table 4: Household Composition

	Average Household Size	Families	Nonfamily Households	Individuals Living Alone	With Children under 18	With Seniors over 60
Southborough (2017)	2.90	77%	23%	20%	42%	35%
Worcester County	2.58	66%	34%	27%	31%	38%
Massachusetts	2.53	64%	36%	28%	30%	39%
Southborough (2010)	2.98	80%	20%	16%	48%	32%

Source: ACS 2013-2017, ACS 2006-2010

Southborough households have considerably higher median incomes than Worcester County or the state as a whole, just as other communities within the MetroWest sub-region have some of the highest incomes in Middlesex County. Family households have the highest incomes, with an estimated median income of approximately \$160,000 in 2017. Nonfamily households have much lower incomes, with a median of just \$50,000, closer to the county and state medians. As mentioned above, the majority of non-family households are seniors living alone. Overall, in spite of Southborough’s relatively high incomes, household incomes in Southborough have grown at a slower pace than those in Worcester County or Massachusetts as a whole.

Table 5: Median Household Incomes

	Median Income All Households	Median Family Income	Median Nonfamily Income	Change in Household Income since 2010
Southborough	\$142,426	\$160,357	\$50,439	2%
Worcester County	\$69,313	\$88,971	\$36,323	8%
Massachusetts	\$74,167	\$94,110	\$42,119	15%

Source: ACS 2013-2017

As shown in Figure 4, A relatively small proportion of Southborough households have low and moderate incomes. Approximately 544 households (16%) earn less than \$50,000, which falls under the “low income” threshold for all household sizes. (See Table 22 for income thresholds.) Almost half of households have incomes above \$150,000.

Figure 4: Household Income Distribution

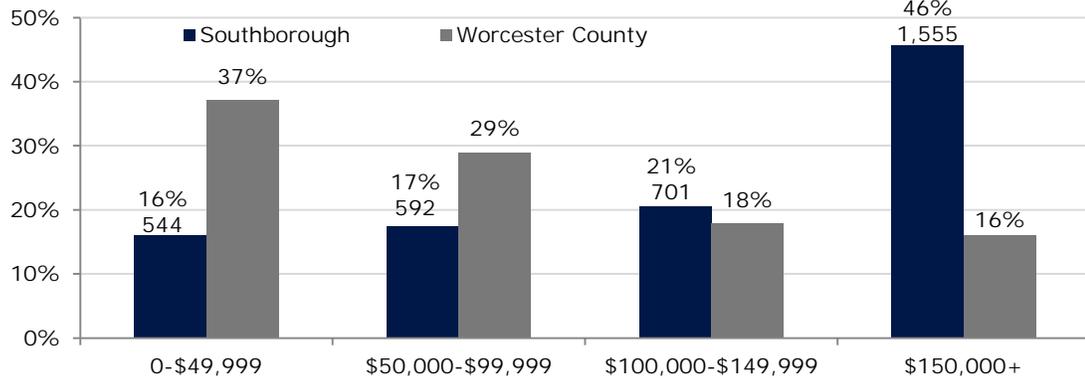


Table 6 shows how incomes vary by the age of heads of household. There is a marked disparity between middle-aged households and seniors and young adults. Householders aged 25-64 have median incomes above \$150,000, while the median income for seniors in Southborough is about half that amount, although still much higher than the median for seniors throughout Worcester County). Across the county, young adults have the lowest median household income. There are too few young adult households in Southborough to be able to disclose household incomes for this group. To a large extent, earning potential follows an arc correlated to age where we see younger households at the beginning of their careers earning less than their more experienced counterparts as well as a dip in income as households age and transition into retirement. The fact that Southborough’s households at all age levels are higher than those of the county and the state, tends to reflect a more educated population.

Table 6: Household Income by Age of Householder

	Southborough			Worcester County	
	Households	%	Median Income	Households	Median Income
15 to 24 years	12	0%	NA	3%	\$32,632
25 to 44 years	834	25%	\$153,125	30%	\$76,950
45 to 64 years	1,731	51%	\$167,083	43%	\$88,490
65 years & over	826	24%	\$80,526	24%	\$39,303

Source: ACS 2013-2017

Among surrounding communities, Southborough bears the most resemblance to Hopkinton and Northborough in terms of size, density, income, and population characteristics. By contrast, Framingham and Marlborough are much larger, have higher population densities, and are less affluent communities with a higher proportion of seniors than households with children.

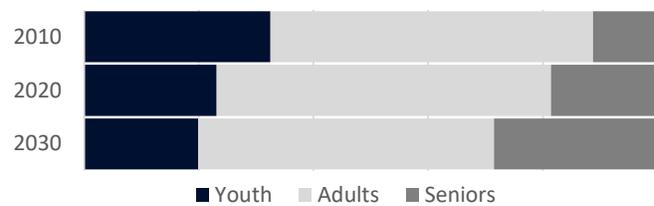
Table 7: Regional Context, Population and Households

	Population	Pop Density (Pop/Mi ²)	Household Size	% Households with Seniors	% Households with Children	Median Income
Marlborough	39,771	1,885	2.52	34%	33%	\$75,418
Framingham	71,232	2,849	2.44	36%	30%	\$73,182
Ashland	17,478	1,410	2.60	38%	34%	\$120,309
Hopkinton	16,720	629	2.96	27%	44%	\$151,357
Westborough	18,836	919	2.74	32%	42%	\$107,604
Northborough	14,918	806	2.79	37%	35%	\$111,875
Southborough	10,021	706	2.90	35%	42%	\$142,426

Source: ACS 2013-2017

Summary of Demographic Trends

Although Southborough has long been an attractive community for families, sustained demographic trends suggest that the Town is attracting younger families with children at a much slower rate than it is attracting seniors. It is anticipated that as existing residents age and senior-specific housing continues to be constructed at a faster rate than family housing, the number of seniors will grow at a faster rate than any other population group.



Southborough Senior Households:

-) Tend to live on incomes that are 1/2 those of local working families
-) Comprise more than 1/2 of Southborough's single-person households
-) Nearly 1/3 of senior residents are disabled

HOUSEHOLDS

77% are Families

42% w/ Children 35% w/Seniors

20% Live Alone

1/2 of these households are Seniors



Economic and Employment Profile

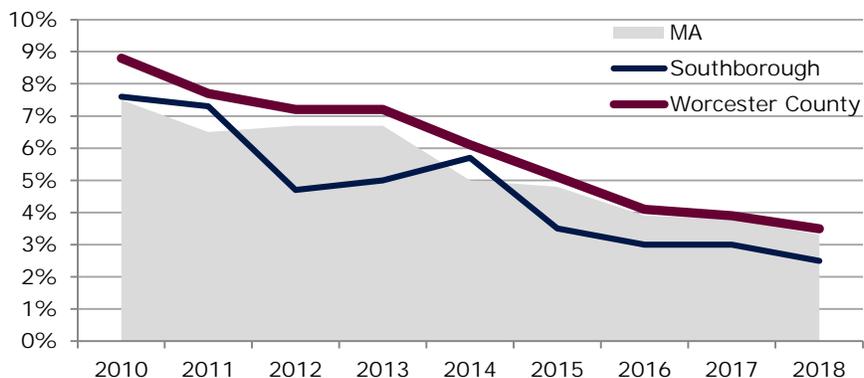
Southborough's housing demand is influenced by economic conditions, including workforce participation, and employment opportunities within the town and region. Southborough's location along major multimodal corridors and proximity to several labor markets increases its desirability.

Key Findings

- Southborough has a sizeable economic base; local establishments employ 1.49 workers for every resident member of the workforce. Yet only 19% of Southborough's workforce is employed in town.
- The rate of participation in the workforce is high, at 82% of residents aged 19-64, while the rate of unemployment is just 2.5%. About 15% of Southborough residents receive retirement income.
- Southborough residents work throughout the region; 19% are employed in town, while 36% work in Worcester County. 35% commute longer than 40 minutes to their jobs.
- Nearly 40% of the jobs in Southborough are in industries where the average wage would be considered low income for a single income household.

As an outer belt suburban community on the border between Worcester and Middlesex Counties, Southborough is located on the edge of multiple economic regions, about 30 miles from Boston, 50 miles from Providence, and 25 miles from Worcester. The US Census identifies Southborough as part of the Boston-Worcester-Lawrence Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA) region, and the Framingham division of the Boston-Cambridge-Nashua MA-NH Metropolitan New England City and Town Area (NECTA) region. The Massachusetts Executive Office of Workforce & Labor Development also places Southborough within the Metro South/West Workforce Development Area (WDA), which includes western portions of Middlesex and Norfolk Counties.

Figure 5: Unemployment Rates



Source: MA Executive Office of Workforce & Labor Development (EOWLD)

Southborough has a large commercial base, with more employment opportunities than members of the workforce, and a jobs-to-workforce ratio of 1.49. About 70% of Southborough residents over the age of sixteen are in the labor force, while 15% receive retirement income.² The majority of Southborough residents work within the Boston-Cambridge-Newton MSA (78%); 36% work within Worcester County, including 3% who work within the Town of Southborough.

The unemployment rate in Southborough was around 2.5% in 2018, having fallen from 7.6% in 2010. The rate of unemployment in Southborough has remained consistently lower than for Worcester County, and in most years below average for the state as well.

Industries are about the type of activity at a place of work — classifying what business, government and nonprofit entities do based on their major products or services, while **occupations** are about what individual workers do — their tasks and responsibilities. About 35% of Southborough residents work in the Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, Professional Services, Management and Administration industries. The Education, Health Care, & Social Services industries employ 22% of Southborough's workforce, and Construction and Manufacturing, employs another 18%. Within these industries, over 60% of Southborough residents are

² ACS 2013-2017

employed in professional, business, and management occupations, compared with 21% in sales and office occupations, and 12% in service occupations.

Table 8: Industry of Employment for Southborough Workforce

Major Industries	Workers
Total Employees	5,061
Construction & Manufacturing	18%
Retail, Restaurants & Hospitality, Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	10%
Finance & Insurance, Real Estate & Leasing, Professional & Technical Services, Management & Admin	35%
Education, Health Care & Social Services	22%
Wholesale trade, Transportation & Warehousing, Information, Other Services	12%
Public Administration	3%

Source: ACS 2013-2017

In addition to the population who currently live in Southborough, the Town’s housing needs are also driven by those who work in the town, and by local employers seeking to attract a quality workforce. As of 2018, there were 459 establishments employing 8,302 workers (year round average). This includes about 715 people employed by the public sector, such as by Southborough’s schools, public safety, public works, and other government services. Average wages for most jobs located in Southborough are significantly lower than median household incomes. Nearly 40% of the Town’s jobs, including retail, restaurants, and hospitality, as well as education and health care, pay an average wage below \$60,000 annually, which would be considered low income for most single-income households. Only 40% of jobs in Southborough are in industries where the average wage is above \$100,000, which is the income required to obtain market rate housing in Southborough. **Only a minority of people who work in Southborough can afford to live in Southborough.**

Table 9: 2018 Employment and Wages in Southborough

Major Industries	Employers	Average Wages	Jobs	% of Jobs
Construction & Manufacturing	50	\$114,461	1,261	15%
Retail, Restaurants & Hospitality, Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	57	\$37,904	573	7%
Finance & Insurance, Real Estate & Leasing, Professional and Technical Services, Management & Administration	181	\$110,835	2,627	32%
Education, Health Care & Social Services	61	\$57,148	2,639	32%
Wholesale trade, Transportation & Warehousing, Information, Other Services	103	\$87,174	\$810	10%
Total Employees	459	\$91,468	8,302	100%
Industries with average annual wage below \$75,000			3,829	46%
Industries with average annual wage above \$100,000			3,345	40%

Source: MA EOWLD, ES-202, 2018

Housing Inventory

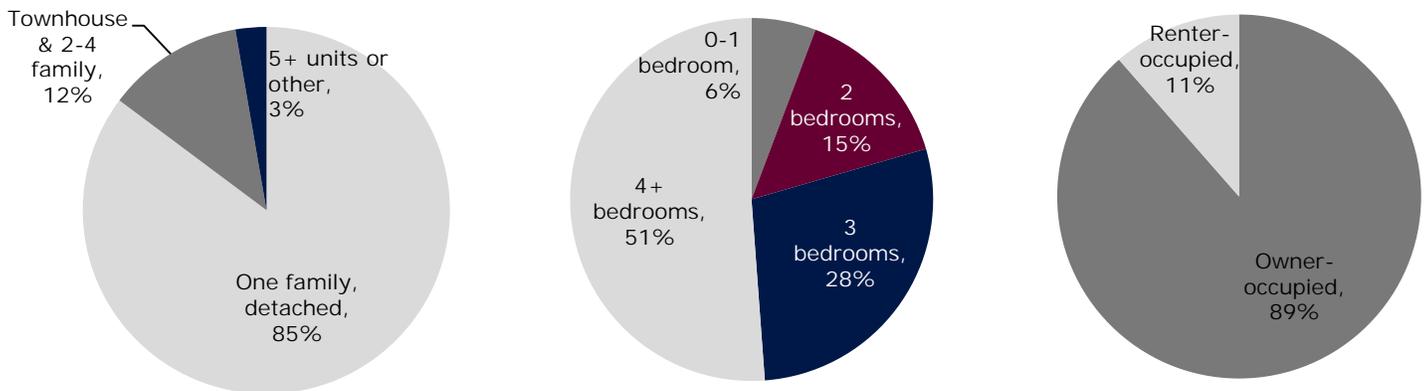
The following section examines Southborough’s current housing supply and how it has changed over time. Identifying the physical characteristics, market, and development trends of Southborough’s existing housing will contribute to an understanding of housing needs.

Key Findings

- Existing housing in Southborough is predominantly larger, owner-occupied, single-family homes.
- Homes are becoming more expensive as the average square footage and lot sizes are growing over time.
- Very little housing has been built that offers an alternative to single-family homeownership.

The Decennial Census in 2010 counted 3,558 housing units, of which 3,403 (96%) were occupied year-round. The majority are detached single-family houses (85%). Most of these housing units (89%) are owner-occupied, and more than half have four or more bedrooms. Southborough has a limited supply of housing that would be suitable for households seeking smaller housing options, such as young households or seniors wishing to downsize. There are also limited housing units that would be suitable for residents with impaired physical mobility, for people who want to have less property to maintain and/or those who are seeking to rent.

Figure 6: Characteristics of Southborough Housing Inventory (ACS 2013-2017)



Vacancy rate provides an indication of the availability of housing for people who are looking to buy or rent. A vacancy rate of 5 percent is considered to be an indication of a healthy level of housing turnover. Currently there is very little vacancy in residential units in Southborough. The American Community Survey estimates that approximately 196 units, or 6% of the Town’s homes were vacant at the time that they were sampled. Common reasons for units to have been vacant are because they were under construction or renovation, on the market for sale or rent, or seasonally occupied, and these units are not typically vacant due to abandonment. The vacancy rate for owner-occupied units is about 1.3%, and for renter-occupied units is higher, at 10.1%. However, it should be noted that due to the relatively small number of rental units and high margins of error for small sample counts with the American Community Survey, the actual observed availability of rental units has been much lower, with only one unit advertised for rent as of the writing of this plan (see Pg. 19).

Table 10. Residential Vacancy

	Units	%
Vacant Units	196	5.6%
Vacancy Rates		
Owner-occupied		1.3%
Renter-occupied		10.1%

Source: ACS 2013-2017

Local Tax Assessor's data provides the most current profile of the housing supply (see Table 11). The Assessor's database identifies 3,707 residential units in Southborough, of which 77% are single-family houses, 8% are condominiums, and 14% are other forms of structures, including multifamily, duplexes and triplexes, etc. Although Southborough has a notable stock of historic residential properties dating as early as 1680, the majority of residential units were built in the late 20th century. One in three single-family homes in Southborough was built between 1980 and 1999, when the town experienced its largest surge in construction. Most of the Town's supply of condominiums are in developments constructed during the 1990's and early 2000's.

Table 11: Residential Properties by Land Use

Use/Year Built	Properties	Average Lot Size (Acres)	Average Value	Average Living Area (Square Feet)
Single-family	2,870	1.21	\$634,470	2,589
1680-1899	167	1.46	\$443,473	2,152
1900-1919	74	1.13	\$507,515	2,439
1920-1939	79	0.94	\$414,363	1,816
1940-1949	59	0.58	\$398,736	1,609
1950-1959	341	0.68	\$398,284	1,503
1960-1969	428	0.83	\$489,941	1,902
1970-1979	325	1.00	\$532,154	2,101
1980-1989	398	1.34	\$667,160	2,793
1990-1999	610	1.70	\$812,435	3,351
2000-2009	261	1.42	\$950,014	3,847
2010-2019	126	1.46	\$986,156	3,796
Condominiums	302		\$501,874	2,087
1900-1959	4		\$274,400	1,698
1990-1999	136		\$471,602	2,097
2000-2009	135		\$556,918	2,165
2010-2019	27		\$412,837	1,708
Other Residential	Properties	Units	Average Year Built	
Two-Family or Duplex	78	156	1916	
Small Multifamily (3-10 units)	12	51	1879	
Large Multifamily	1	170	2013	
Mixed Use	22	48	1904	
Multiple Houses on Single Lot	21	49	1915	
Housing Authority	4	61	1971	

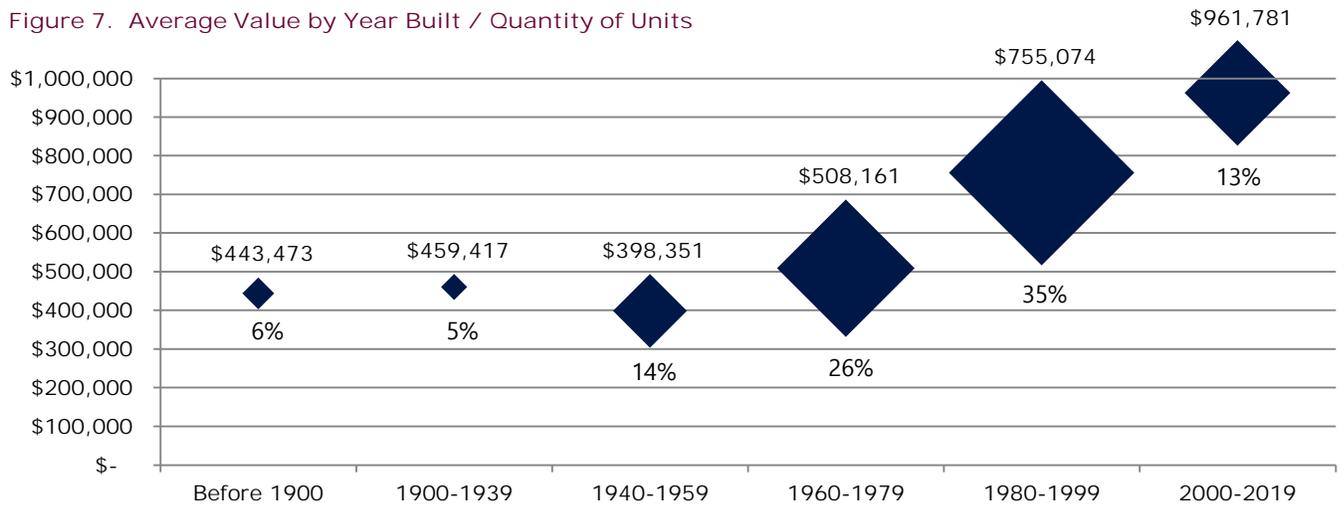
Source: Town of Southborough Assessor's Database, FY2019

This era of construction also corresponds to characteristics that impact housing cost, condition, and suitability for various household needs. Smaller houses on smaller lots were typical of the mid-20th century, while average lot sizes jumped from less than 1 acre in the mid-20th Century to 1.7 acres in the 1990's, and average living area increased steadily through 2010. The increases in lot and building sizes are reflected in average home values for each era of construction. The change in average lot sizes is directly related to zoning, whereas the older village development patterns predated zoning altogether. The Town's early zoning applied a minimum lot size of 15,000 square feet to portions of the town, which was discontinued in 1966, when the Town voted to increase the minimum lot sizes to 25,000 or 40,000 square feet throughout the town. Due to **downzoning** (the practice of requiring larger lot dimensions than previously required), many older homes are nonconforming, meaning that they do not meet current zoning requirements, and there are fewer development opportunities on the same amount of land.

Prior to the mid-20th century diverse housing forms were more common, including small multifamily structures (2-8 units), multiple houses on one lot, and mixed use structures. Housing Authority properties include one multifamily building constructed in 1976, in addition to three 1 to 2 family structures.

Very little housing has been constructed in the past century that offers alternatives to high end single-family homeownership. This is the result of a deliberate effort to homogenize development through local zoning.

Figure 7. Average Value by Year Built / Quantity of Units



Source: Southborough Assessor’s Database 2019

Development Pipeline

Southborough is not generally attracting significant amounts of new development, averaging approximately 135 units a decade since the 1990’s. This slow growth, while unusual for the MetroWest region, is by design as Southborough’s regulations generally do not facilitate the types of development that have been more marketable in Post-Recession years (e.g. smaller units, multi-family, rental units). However, a few major housing development projects are currently under construction or in the permitting pipeline. Recently approved projects include:



Recently built, Madison Place is located on Southborough’s edge

Stonebrook Court (2013): 55+ development with 15 townhouse units and one single-family home.

I la Bella Estates (2015): 10 single-family homes and a duplex consisting of two affordable units.

Cain’s Crossing (2017): 11 single-family and duplex senior housing units (55+)

Chestnut Meadow (2018): 12 single-family homes

Sameron Village (2018): 2 duplexes and 2 single-family homes with open space component

One major project, the Residences at Park Central, was approved in 2016, but is currently under appeal.

The development is to include 180 rental apartments approved under Chapter 40B, as well as 139 market-rate townhouses approved under a variance in 2015. All of the rental units within the development would be eligible for inclusion on the Subsidized Housing Inventory and would contribute toward the Town’s ability to meet its affordability requirements.

Regional Context

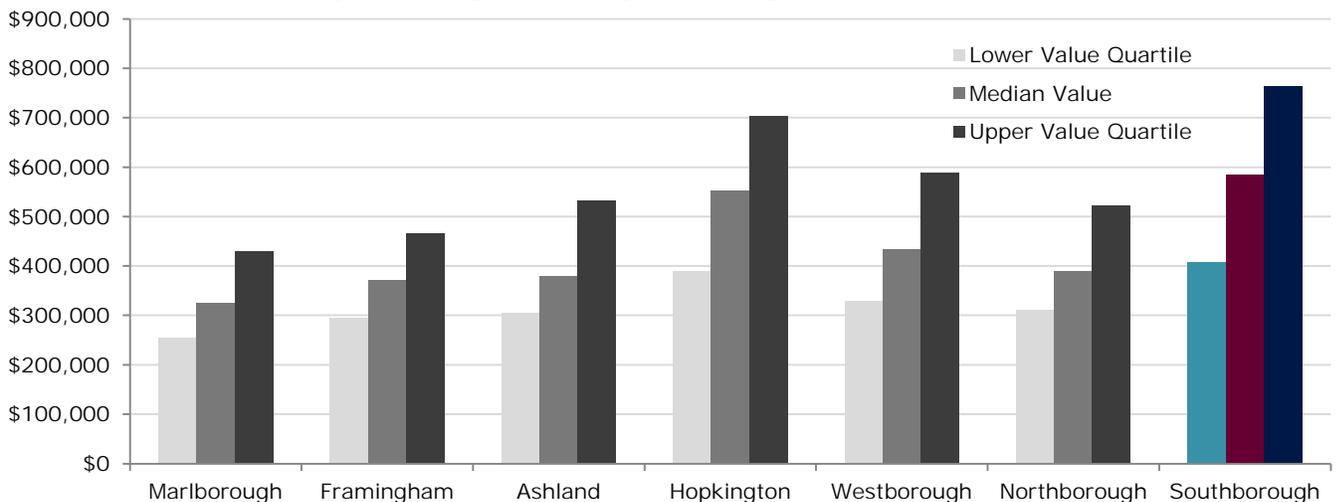
Southborough is surrounded by communities with widely varied development patterns. Marlborough and Framingham are larger communities with higher density development and more diversity in housing types, while Southborough is at the low end in terms of the number of housing units and share of rental housing. Hopkinton and Northborough are most similar to Southborough, while Ashland and Westborough are in the middle of the range. Framingham has the oldest housing stock, by far, with less than 20% constructed since 1980. Half of Southborough’s housing is less than 40 years old, while Ashland and Hopkinton have a larger share of new housing. The majority of housing stock throughout most towns in the region is single-family homes, with the exception of Marlborough. The rental housing in the region is located in Framingham, along with Marlborough and Westborough. Southborough’s home values are highest among surrounding towns, which spans from a median of \$325,000 in Marlborough to \$551,400 in Hopkinton. The range of home values (shown in Figure 7) shows that the nearby towns with the most affordable inventory of housing are Marlborough and Framingham, where the lower quartile median is around \$250-\$300,000, compared with over \$400,000 in Southborough.

Table 12. Regional Context, Housing Inventory

	Housing Units	Average acres per unit	Median Home Value	% Rental	% Detached Single family	% built after 1980
Marlborough	15,529	0.87	\$325,700	43%	49%	39%
Framingham	27,770	0.58	\$432,000	46%	51%	19%
Ashland	6,689	1.19	\$379,000	20%	61%	56%
Hopkinton	5,614	3.03	\$551,400	14%	84%	55%
Westborough	6,682	1.96	\$432,000	39%	54%	41%
Northborough	5,278	2.24	\$389,600	18%	79%	42%
Southborough	3,403	2.67	\$584,500	11%	85%	50%

Source: ACS 2013-2017

Figure 8: Range of Housing Values, Regional Comparison



Housing Cost

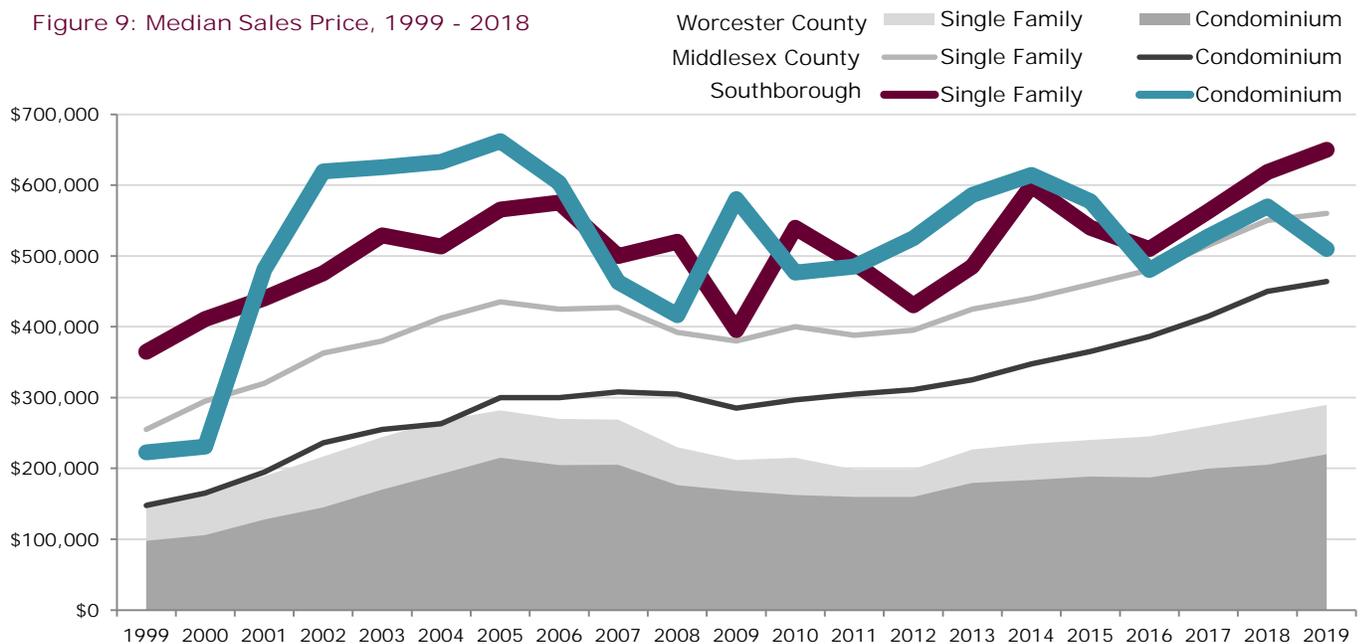
Housing costs within a community reflect numerous factors, including demand and supply. Where there is insufficient housing supply available to meet demand, prices and rents tend to rise. Housing availability and cost have regional impacts; people who might wish to live in Southborough may seek housing in other communities if they cannot find housing they can afford, while higher cost in other communities contributes to demand for housing in Southborough.

Key Findings

- Southborough's home prices are very high compared with the surrounding region.
- Home prices fluctuated between 2005 and 2016, but have general trended upward since the 2010 recession, following regional market trends.
- The cost of entry-level market rate housing in Southborough is affordable to households earning \$90,000 for renters, or \$120,000 for homebuyers.

Housing prices in Southborough are consistently higher than the median for both Worcester and Middlesex Counties. Fluctuation over the past twenty years has generally reflected volatility in the regional market following the economic recession; prices peaked in the mid 2000's, then dipped around 2010-2011, and have climbed since, surpassing previous bubble-era 2005 peaks. Overall, median sales prices for single-family houses rose from \$365,000 in 1999 to \$650,000 in 2019. As a snapshot of current market conditions, the asking price for homes on the market in December, 2019, ranged from \$499,900 to \$3,499,000, with 24 homes available. Of these, 7 homes were priced under \$700,000, 9 homes were priced between \$700-\$1,000,000, and 8 homes were priced over \$1,000,000.³

Figure 9: Median Sales Price, 1999 - 2018



Source: The Warren Group/Banker & Tradesman (2019)

³ Trulia, December 3, 2019.

Sales prices for condominiums, which represent approximately 10-20% of property sales in any given year, have seen steeper fluctuation, surpassing the median price of single-family homes at varying times. Over the 20-year period the median price rose from about \$225,000 to over \$500,000. There are currently 8 condos on the market with asking prices similar to lower cost single-family homes, ranging from \$530,000 to \$630,000.⁴

Given the small supply of rental housing in Southborough, at the time of this writing there was only one advertised listing for apartment rentals in town. The asking rent for one bedroom units in Madison Place starts at \$2,200, while two bedroom units start at \$2,750, which would be affordable to households earning \$90,000 to \$110,000.⁵ There are also a handful of houses for rent ranging from \$2,100 to \$4,800 per month. By contrast, the income needed to be able to purchase the typical entry level house in Southborough (assuming a purchase price of \$600,000 and a 20% down payment) would be about \$120,000.

Despite the high costs, rental housing in Southborough is predominantly occupied by households who earn less than the income needed to be able to afford market rents; 72% of renter households have incomes less than \$100,000. As shown in **Table 13**, renters tend to be less affluent than homeowners, and they are predominantly smaller households (1-2 persons). Young adult households (under age 35) have the lowest rate of homeownership, as they tend to have lower incomes and have not yet accumulated the savings needed for a down-payment. The rate of homeownership peaks for households aged 35-64, and then diminishes, reflecting a preference or a necessity amongst some senior households to downsize and reduce home maintenance responsibilities.

Table 13: Characteristics of Homeowner and Renter Households

	Owner	Renter	Renters as % of all Households
Southborough Households	3,013	390	11%
Less than \$50,000	11%	57%	41%
\$50,000-\$99,999	18%	15%	10%
\$100,000 or more	71%	28%	5%
1-2 person households	42%	76%	19%
3 or more persons	58%	24%	5%
Householder under age 35	6%	26%	35%
Householder age 35-64	69%	53%	9%
Householder age 65 and older	25%	22%	10%

Source: ACS 2013-2017

While sales and advertised rent prices reflect the cost for people seeking housing today, ACS estimates median housing values and median rent based on a sample of all units in the community. The ACS estimate for median gross monthly rent in Southborough from 2013-2017 was \$1,113, which includes affordable units along with market rate units.⁶ The median value of single-family owner-occupied units was \$584,500.

⁴ Trulia, December 3, 2019.

⁵ Zillow, December 3, 2019.

⁶ Affordable units comprise approximately 40% of the Town's total rental housing stock.

Affordability

In the previous sections, Southborough’s population, economic conditions, housing stock, and market conditions were examined. This section assesses affordability of Southborough’s housing for Town residents and employees, which is determined by the intersection of these factors.

Key Findings:

-)] Half of Southborough’s renters and nearly one quarter of homeowners are paying more than they can afford on housing.
-)] Young adults, seniors, and lower income households are all disproportionately cost-burdened.
-)] The supply of housing affordable to households earning less than \$100,000 is very limited. About 29% of homes are valued at less than \$500,000.
-)] Housing prices and rents have increased significantly faster than household incomes since 2000, for both homeowners and renters.
-)] About half of all jobs based in Southborough pay less than the salary needed to be able to afford housing in Southborough. One-third of jobs pay less than \$60,000.

A dwelling unit is considered unaffordable to low- and moderate-income people if their monthly payments for housing – mortgage, property taxes, and homeowner’s insurance for owners; or rent and utilities for tenants – exceeds 30% of their monthly gross income. By definition, when this occurs when they are **housing-cost burdened**. Those whose housing costs exceed 50% of their income are considered to be **severely cost burdened**.

The majority of households in Southborough are homeowners with a mortgage. ACS estimates that 28% of these households pay more than 30% of their income on housing, with 11% bearing a severe housing cost burden. A smaller proportion of those who own their properties without a mortgage are burdened with housing costs. Among renters, half of households are severely cost burdened, with 28% paying more than half of their income on rent.

Table 14: Households by Cost Burden by Tenure

Housing Costs as % of Income	Renters	%	Owners w/ Mortgage	%	Owners w/out Mortgage	%
Less than 20.0 %	68	20%	925	45%	671	70%
20.0 to 29.9%	102	30%	558	27%	135	14%
30.0 to 44.9% (Cost-Burdened)	74	22%	344	17%	115	12%
50.0% or more (Severely Cost-Burdened)	95	28%	221	11%	37	4%
Not calculated	51		0		7	
Total	390		2,048		965	
All Cost-burdened Households	169	50%	565	28%	152	16%

Source: ACS, 2013-2017

As one might expect, households who earn less than \$50,000 per year are far more likely to be cost-burdened and unable to afford their housing costs than those earning more. Still, close to half (45%) of those earning between \$50,000 and \$100,000 pay more than 30% of their income on housing, while nearly 80% households earning less than \$50,000 pay more than they can afford for housing. Young adults (under age 35) have the highest rate of housing cost burden, while seniors are also disproportionately cost-burdened.

Table 15: Cost Burden by Income, Age Householder

Income	Households	% of all Households	Age	Households	% of all Households
Less than \$50,000	426	78%	Under 35 years	126	43%
\$50,000-\$100,000	268	45%	35-64 years	493	22%
More than \$100,000	192	8%	65+ years	267	32%

Source: ACS 2013-2017

According to ACS 2017 estimates, the median income for households in Southborough is \$142,4263. About 24% of residents earn below \$75,000, while 46% earn more than \$150,000. Table 16 provides a comparison of household income distribution and the supply of homes affordable at each income range, based on ACS estimated value of single-family homes. Less than one-third of the Town’s housing stock is valued so that it would be affordable to households earning below \$100,000. In many cases, such lower value houses require substantial improvements to maintain safe, habitable condition, which exceeds what lower income households can afford.

Table 16: Housing Demand and Supply by Income Threshold

Income (ACS)	Households	% of all Households	Affordable Purchase Price*	Housing by Value	% of Housing
<\$75,000	820	24%	up to \$350,000	233	8%
\$75,000-\$99,999	316	9%	\$350,000 - \$449,999	614	21%
\$100,000-\$149,999	701	21%	\$500,000 - \$699,999	1,085	38%
>\$150,000	1,555	46%	\$700,000+	938	33%

Sources: ACS 2013-2017, Southborough Assessor’s Database 2019; Affordable price range calculated by COG.

* Assumes mortgage + property tax + insurance payment = 30% of monthly income with 20% down payment, 3.5% interest rate, and estimated tax and insurance.

Property taxes also contribute to housing cost burden, particularly for seniors who often own homes without a mortgage. In 2019, Southborough’s property taxes averaged \$10,274 for single-family homes, compared to \$5,993 average state-wide (ranking 26 out of 351 cities and towns). While the town makes significant efforts on an annual basis to keep costs low for homeowners, the average property tax bill for single-family homeowners in Southborough has risen by 37% since 2010, with a property tax rate of \$16.66 per \$1,000, compared to \$14.06 per \$1,000 in 2010. One way in which communities lower the tax burden for residents is to apply a “split tax rate”, or a higher tax rate for commercial/industrial/ Personal (CIP) properties. Marlborough and Framingham apply a split tax rate to maximize the valuation of the commercial base, while Southborough and other similar communities have uniform tax rates. **Although Southborough’s commercial tax rate is among the lowest tax rate on commercial property in the area, the lack of sewer infrastructure and other critical municipal services hinders Southborough’s desirability for economic development purposes.** A lack of prior public investment in infrastructure limits Southborough’s present and future ability to significantly increase tax revenues from commercial uses to offset the burden on residential properties to fund municipal necessities.

Table 17. Commercial Tax Base Comparison

	Residential Tax Rate	Commercial Tax Rate	Commercial Tax Base
Marlborough	14.07	24.95	44%
Framingham	15.38	33.61	39%
Ashland	16.28	16.28	9%
Hopkinton	17.17	17.17	16%
Westborough	18.33	18.33	31%
Northborough	17.15	17.15	25%
Southborough	16.74	16.74	19%

Source: ACS 2013-2017

Table 18: Change in Median Housing Costs and Median Income

Median Value Single-family Owner-Occupied Units	\$318,600	\$584,500	83%
Median Gross Rent	\$913	\$1,113	22%
Median Household Income Homeowners	\$110,675	\$150,972	36%
Median Income Renter Households	\$43,348	\$37,250	-14%

Source: Census 2000, ACS 2013-2017

Median household incomes for homeowners and renters have not kept pace with the rising cost of housing. While home values in Southborough have risen by about 83% since 2000, the median income of homeowners has increased only 36% over the same period of time. While this is potentially

beneficial for long-term owners realizing significant increases in the value of their homes, the stagnation in wages and inflation in value makes housing less attainable for first-time homebuyers and downsizers who already own. Meanwhile the median income of renters actually declined by 14%, while median rent increased by 22%, bringing rents even further out of reach than they already were. The increase in median household income – particularly for homeowners - may be a reflection of the income required to be able to obtain housing in Southborough, rather than actual growth in income. It should also be noted that given the high proportion of income-restricted units in Southborough's rental housing supply, the households who can obtain rental housing are more likely to have low incomes. However, despite the relative increase in housing costs vis a vis household income, the proportion of cost-burdened households has declined, from 32% of households in 2000 to 28% in 2017. *The local decline in cost-burdened households is not reflective of a declining regional need for more affordable housing; that need is growing. It simply demonstrates the existence of barriers for low- and middle-income households to access housing in Southborough.*

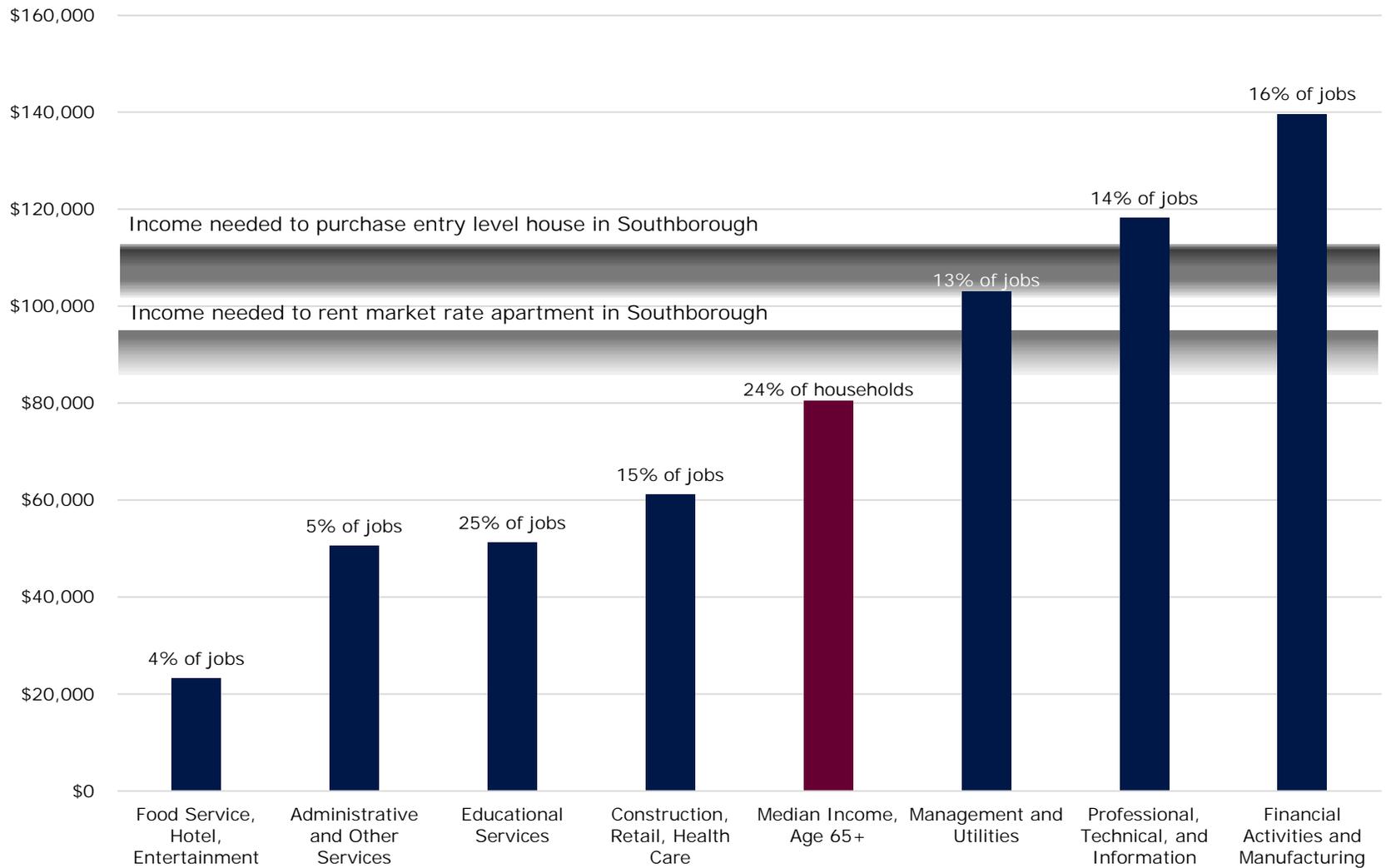
As shown in **Figure 10** on the following page, nearly half of jobs in Southborough are in industries in which the average wages are below the income required to be able to afford housing in town. At the lowest end of the wage scale – including restaurants, hotels, and other services – workers may earn less than half the income required to rent, while those employed in education, the Town's largest employment sector, earn well below the threshold needed to access market rate housing. Jobs that pay enough to comfortably support the cost of housing comprise approximately 40% of employment opportunities in Southborough. *In order to support economic growth and reduce reliance on regional commuting, more affordable housing is needed for people who work locally.*

Table 19: Change in Cost Burden

	2000	2017
Pay More than 30%	32%	26%
Pay 30-49%	20%	16%
Pay 50% or more	12%	10%

Sources: Census 2000, ACS 2013-2017

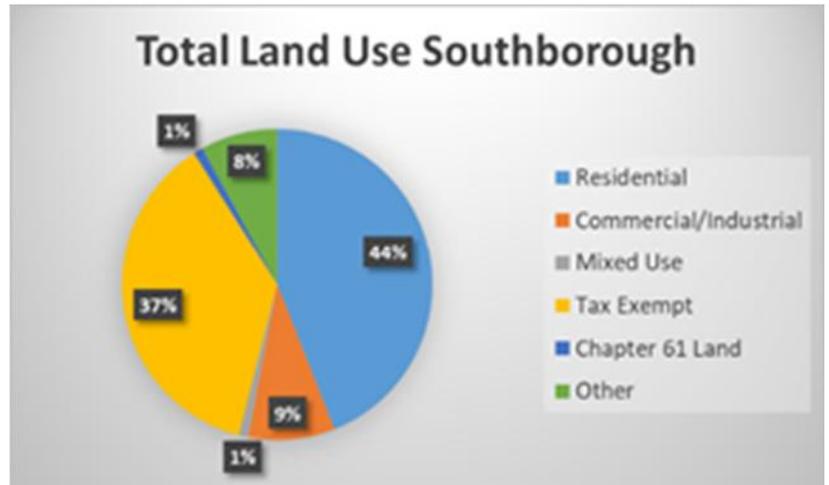
Figure 10: Housing Affordability and Wage/Income Comparison



Average Wages for jobs in Southborough establishments : MA Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) ES202 Data 2018
 Median income for Southborough Households ages 65+ : ACS 2013-2017

Housing Development Framework & Challenges

In its MetroFuture regional plan for greater Boston, Southborough is categorized by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) as a “Maturing Suburb”. This type of community generally has a development pattern of moderate density residential development with diminishing supply of vacant developable land. As previously noted, the town experienced a rapid period of growth during the 1990’s, which has dramatically slowed in the past decade. Compared with similar suburban communities, Southborough has a relatively large commercial base, likely related to its location along major regional highway corridors. Of the total 10,000 acres that comprise the Town of Southborough, about 4,000 acres has been developed. Residential uses comprise 44 percent of the town’s land area (excluding water), while commercial, industrial, and mixed uses comprise an additional 10 percent. Close to 5,000 acres are either water or publicly-owned. The balance, approximately 1,000 acres, has varying degrees of development potential with few remaining “easy” sites.



Physical Conditions

Originally settled as an agricultural community, Southborough’s rivers contributed to the establishment of villages surrounding hydro-powered manufacturing establishments in Southville, Cordaville, and Fayville. Although substantially built out, the town retains some of its agriculture and scenic open space character through the extensive preservation of open space by public and nonprofit entities, including the Town, Commonwealth (Department of Conservation Resources), and land trusts such as the Southborough Open Land Foundation and Sudbury Valley Trustees.

Natural Resources



Deerfoot Road Aqueduct.

Southborough is situated within the Concord River watershed, also known as the SuAsCo watershed (traversed by the Sudbury, Assabet, and Concord Rivers). The Sudbury River flows eastward along the southern boundary of Southborough, then turns northward to join the Assabet and Concord Rivers in Concord, forming a tributary to the Merrimack River. Downstream from Southborough, a segment of the river extending from Framingham to Billerica has been designated by the National Park Service as Wild and Scenic, in recognition of their outstanding ecological, historical, scenic, and recreational values. The Wachusett River flows eastward across the middle of the town into the Sudbury Reservoir.

Covering much of the northeastern quadrant of the town and extending into Marlborough, the Sudbury Reservoir is by far the most significant natural resource feature in Southborough. The reservoir was excavated in the late 19th century to provide water for the City of Boston, and now serves as an emergency backup supply for the Massachusetts Water Resource Authority (MWRA). For this reason, a substantial amount of open

space has been set aside for water resource protection purposes, allowing only passive recreational activities such as hiking, bird watching, and fishing. Nearly 25% of Southborough is reservoir and the surrounding land owned by the Commonwealth for water protection purposes.

Southborough contains approximately 850 acres of wetlands. Wetlands are important because they provide floodwater retention, groundwater recharge, and wildlife habitat. While Massachusetts adopted the Wetlands Protection Act in 1970 (as amended periodically), local municipalities may elect to adopt more restrictive measures. Southborough chose to do so in 2002 in order to further protect these important resources. These regulations included a local 20 foot “no-touch” zone in which no activity can occur at all near a wetland resource, and a 100-foot buffer zone, where work may be approved if certain conditions are met to protect the resource areas. Limited uses on wetlands are regulated under Section 170 of the Town of Southborough Wetlands By-laws and implementing regulations.

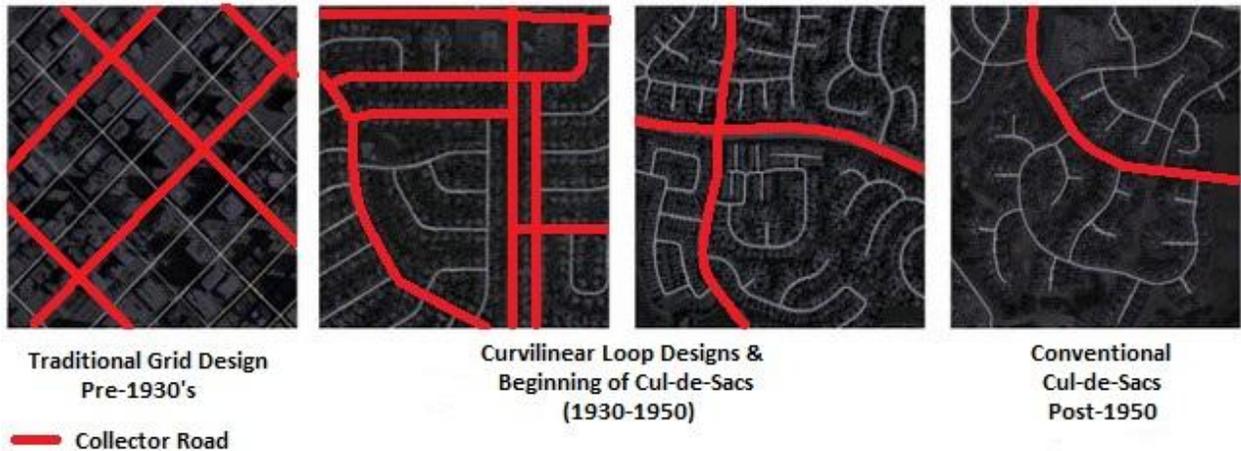
In addition to wetlands regulations, Federal law requires communities to manage stormwater runoff because it carries considerable quantities of nutrients and pollutants from farm fields, lawns, roads, and other sources into waterways. Regardless of size, all municipalities must require applicants for construction sites greater than one acre to file a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan that meets local approval. Southborough approved a Lower Impact Development Bylaw in September 2006 which requires developers to consider stormwater best management principles. These principles encourage the reduction of impermeable surfaces, mimicking the natural system as closely as possible, and relying less on engineered structures to achieve stormwater and erosion control. Examples include the use of native vegetation in buffer strips, open channels and rain gardens to trap and filter pollutants in stormwater runoff. This also helps to reduce stormwater runoff volume through discharge into the groundwater.

Southborough’s Zoning Bylaw includes a Critical Resource District but it is not displayed on the Town’s official Zoning Map so its location may be difficult to discern. However, development proposals within the Critical Resource District are required to consider flexible development provisions to protect scenic views, habitats, fragile natural environments, or other critical environmental resources. The district allows for transfer of development rights by applying land area within the district toward the application of density bonuses to development located outside of the district.

Infrastructure

Roads

Southborough’s location with respect to regional transportation networks has contributed to its economic and residential success. Much of the Town’s commercial and industrial development is located along Route 9, which bisects the town, running east/west. Interstate Route 495 (north/south) and I-90 (east/west) also cross through the town, while State Route 85 runs north/south through the center of town, intersecting with east/west Route 30 at the Downtown. Although there are no interchanges within Southborough, Route 9 intersects with Route 495 just over the border to the west in Westborough, and with I-90 just over the border to the east in Framingham. I-90 and 495 intersect a short distance away in Hopkinton.



Southborough contains 86 miles of roadways⁷, including the aforementioned regional and interstate highways, as well as local roads. Old town roadways are often narrow, winding, and lined with shade trees and stone walls, contributing to the Town's historic character and rural character. These roads are also typically connecting routes, providing for critical circulation routes through the community to disperse traffic volumes. By contrast, newer subdivision roads are typically dead-end spurs or cul-de-sacs, concentrating increased traffic volume on limited existing through-streets.

Traffic congestion due to regional commuting patterns combined with local circulation creates an indirect barrier to housing development, as it is an issue frequently cited by residents when opposing new development. According to the 2008 Southborough Master Plan, the heavy traffic volumes are experienced along major roadways, particularly during commuter, school, and shopping peak periods. Specifically, Route 9 is congested almost entirely along its corridor through Southborough during both the weekday morning and evening peak commute hours. Additional areas of congestion include side streets feeding into and away from Route 9, as well as Route 85 near the Downtown and Route 30 from Parkerville Road to Willow Street.

Public Transportation



Southborough MBTA Commuter Rail Station

For a moderate low-density suburban community, Southborough is fairly well-served by public transportation. The MBTA Commuter Rail Framingham/Worcester Line runs parallel to the Sudbury River along the southern edge of town, with a station located at the historic village center of Cordaville. The MBTA maintains a parking lot at Southborough station with 372 parking spaces which typically fill early during the morning commute.⁸ Although there is ample private parking available adjacent to the commuter rail station, and in spite of the fact that the commuter rail is a regionally funded asset, local zoning does not allow for its use, and attempts to obtain relief from the Zoning Bylaws to provide paid parking to commuters have thus far been unsuccessful. This creates a barrier to those who need housing in an area with transit access.

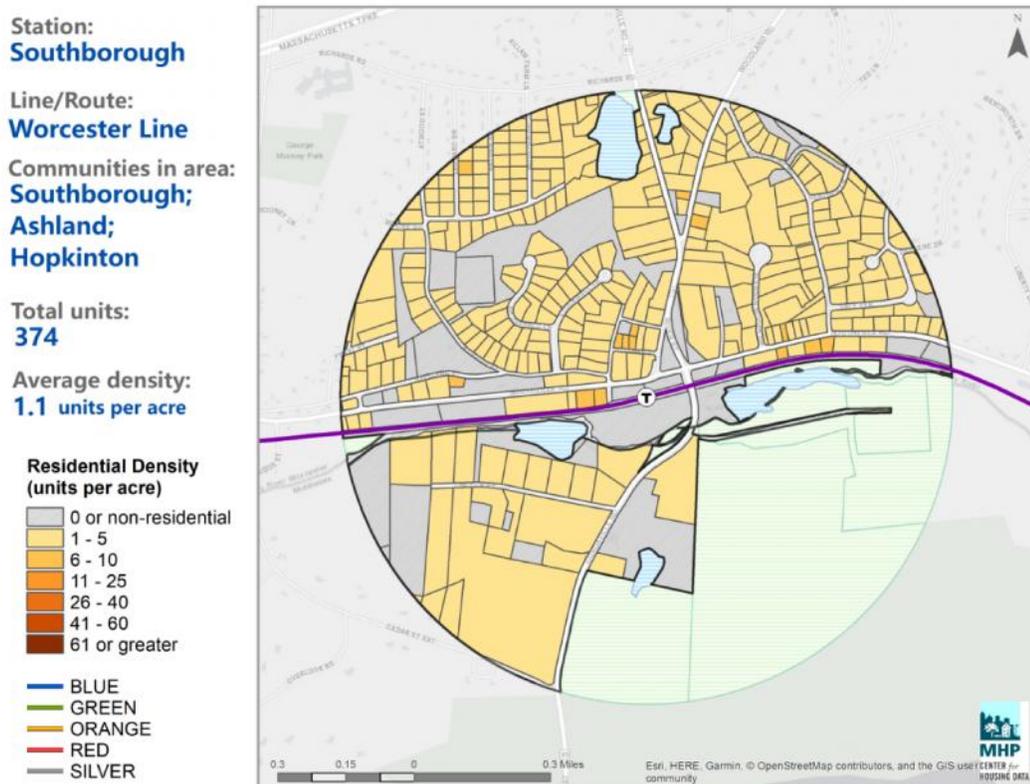
The MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA) operates bus service to Southborough via Route 7, which runs along Route 9/Breakneck Hill Road/Route 30/Route 85 between Marlborough and Framingham

⁷ Massachusetts Department of Transportation, *2018 Massachusetts Road Inventory Year-End Report*.

⁸ MBTA.com

and includes stops at the Southborough Library, Downtown Southborough (Mauro’s Market) and Route 30 at Colonial Garden’s Bus Shelter. Route 7 runs every 1-2 hours between 6: 30 AM and 8: 45 PM on weekdays, and 8:30 AM to 5:30 PM on Saturdays. MWRTA also offers on-call service for seniors and people with disabilities through Dial-A-Ride.

Recognizing that communities in the greater Boston region are simultaneously experiencing housing and traffic crises, state and federal investment in commuter rail transit infrastructure is needed to provide a viable alternative to automobiles for commuting to Boston from suburban locales. For these investments to be sustainable, a sufficient number of passengers need to be able to access the commuter rail via driving or walking to the stations. While parking capacity enables the train to serve a broader area, housing located within ½ mile of a transit station contributes ridership without generating additional traffic associated with the station. The Massachusetts Housing Partnership has developed a tool to evaluate residential densities surrounding every transit station within the MBTA service area. Research on minimum densities to support cost-effective rail service suggests a minimum threshold of 10 residential units per acre for the half-mile area surrounding stations. Outside of the urban core, few stations meet this target, averaging just 2.8 homes per acre for all commuter rail station areas. The Southborough station area falls well below average, with just 1.1 units per acre surrounding the station, in part due to the presence of the Sudbury River.



Water

Southborough purchases water from the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA). About 93% of the Town’s population is connected to the distribution system. Over the last three years, system-wide consumption averaged approximately 1 million gallons per day (MGD) and increased to approximately 2.8 MGD in the summer. Water is withdrawn from the MWRA’s Metro West Water Supply Tunnel at two locations in Southborough: a pumping station located off Northborough Road and in the northeastern part of the town adjacent to the Hultman Aqueduct Shaft No. 3. The Town owns and maintains a distribution system

which includes three water storage tanks, two pump stations, and 86 miles of transmission and distribution piping.⁹

A 2007 Water Distribution System Study prepared for the Public Works Department by H2O Engineering Associates, identified problems with Southborough's water distribution system including unaccounted-for water use that exceeds the MA Department of Environmental Protection's guidelines, inadequate water storage capacity, dead-end water mains, and undersized water mains in some parts of town. The Town commissioned a Water System Storage Tank Evaluation in 2017, prompted by concern that the proposed Park Central development could significantly increase system demand, including land areas that are too high to be served by the existing system storage tanks.

Wastewater Treatment

Southborough provides no public wastewater treatment infrastructure. The town relies on private septic systems for wastewater treatment and private wastewater treatment facilities at Wedgewood, Saint Mark's, the Fay School, and Madison Place. All of Southborough's abutting municipalities (Ashland, Hopkinton, Framingham, Marlborough, Northborough, Westborough, and Wayland) are partially or entirely served by public sewers. A few isolated sites in Southborough tie into neighboring communities' sewer treatment systems, including New England Center for Children (Framingham), EMC (Westborough), and the Harvard Depository (Marlborough).¹⁰

Historically, Town Meeting considered but did not approve funding requests for feasibility studies to determine the cost of developing a municipal sewer treatment plant or becoming a member of the MWRA Sewer District in the late 1970's and again in the 1980's, when it was proposed significant amounts of financial assistance from the state. According to opinion surveys in the 1980's, residents preferred a lack of sewerage as a way to limit development; a decision with far-reaching consequences as any attempts to provide sewerage (to boost economic development opportunities, for example) at this point would come at a significant expense to local taxpayers.

Siting, construction, upgrade, and expansion of on-site sewage treatment and disposal systems must comply with The State Environmental Code, Title 5 (310 CMR 15.000). The local Board of Health is the primary regulatory authority for septic system compliance with Title 5. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection is involved in certain approvals including many innovative/alternative technology approvals, shared systems, large systems, and many variance requests. The Southborough Board of Health adopted local modifications to the Title 5 Code requirements in 2000, 2004, and 2014 that deal with septic tank capacity, construction, outlet filters, percolation testing, trenches, and septic tank pumping.

Septic limitations constrain development opportunities throughout much of the town. Two-thirds of the town is located within the Sudbury Reservoir watershed. Regulatory controls and natural conditions trigger more expensive requirements for septic systems, resulting in higher construction and maintenance costs per residential unit.

As described in the 2009 Southborough Master Plan, septic systems can pose a threat to groundwater quality – particularly older systems from before the 1960s, which were often buried too deeply and lie just inches above the water table. Replacing older systems is very important to avoid groundwater contamination. To help address this issue, the Southborough Board of Health offered funding for a septic system repair loan program. Predating the 2008 Southborough Master Plan, the first two rounds financed the replacement of thirty-eight failing systems. The terms of the loan allowed the Town to lend money to homeowners at below market interest rates to reduce the financial strain on homeowners faced with expensive septic system upgrades. The Town no longer offers this loan program.

Schools

Southborough is part of a regional school district with the Town of Northborough. The communities have separate k-8 school districts and a shared high school (grades 9-12). Southborough's facilities include the

⁹ Southborough Water System Storage Tank Evaluation, 2017, Pare Corporation.

¹⁰ Interview with Paul Pisinski, Town of Southborough Public Health Director, February 3, 2020

Mary E. Finn School (PK-1), Albert S. Woodward Memorial School (Grades 2-3), Margaret Neary School (Grades 4-5), and P. Brent Trottier Middle School (Grades 6-8).

According to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) District Report Card for 2019, Southborough School District is meeting or exceeding the State’s targets for education, scoring 87 out of 100 points attributed to indicators including achievement, student progress or growth, high school completion, progress toward English proficiency for English learners, chronic absenteeism, and advanced coursework completion.

Enrollment in Southborough’s schools surged during the 1990’s and early 2000’s as the Town experienced a boom in new single-family home construction. The number of students enrolled in the Southborough School District peaked in 2005 and has been continuously declining ever since, now enrolling fewer students than at the beginning of the millennium. Due to declining enrollment and capital improvements needed in some of the elementary schools, there has been discussion of consolidating and shuttering one of the schools, which could potentially enable a rearrangement of space occupied by other municipal functions, and surplus of another Town building. The Town continues to evaluate the options for school improvements or consolidation, aiming to establish a preferred scheme by early 2021 in order to submit a statement of interest to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA). Once in the queue for MSBA support (as early as 2021 or 2022), the timeline for funding would be 3-5 years.

Table 20: Historic School Enrollment

	2005 Enrollment	2020 Enrollment	Change in Enrollment	% Change
Mary E. Finn School	381	339	-42	-11%
Albert S. Woodward Memorial School	374	258	-116	-31%
Margaret A. Neary School	360	268	-92	-26%
P. Brent Trottier Middle School	516	415	-101	-20%
Total K-8	1631	1280	-351	-22%
Algonquin Regional High Southborough students	602	513	-89	-15%

Source: MA DESE

Regulatory Context

Zoning Bylaws regulate the type and location of development within a community. In terms of residential development and redevelopment, zoning can be a constraint if the bylaws significantly limit the development of types of housing that would meet community needs. These limitations can occur in many forms ranging from direct prohibitions on non-single-family residential uses to indirect preclusions through outsized minimum lot size and frontage requirements and excessive parking requirements. In Southborough, as-of-right residential development is highly constrained by an outdated Zoning Bylaw that precludes housing and economic development opportunities, particularly those that are scaled to smaller lot sizes and smaller projects. Since a comprehensive zoning rewrite effort was abandoned in 2013, a piecemeal approach has been taken subsequently to address zoning issues.

Residential Zoning

The Town of Southborough is divided into eleven zoning districts (eight of which are currently shown on the zoning map) with residential densities ranging from 10,000 to 43,560 square feet. Residential uses are allowed in most districts either by right or by Special Permit with the exception of the Conservation C district, where residential uses are not allowed. The Zoning Bylaw defines multi-family as any residential use with two or more dwelling units. Due to this low threshold, the opportunities for small-scale multifamily development are substantially limited. Multi-family housing is allowed in any residential district as part of a Major Residential Development (a development consisting of eight units or more), while in the Industrial Park (IP) and Highway Business (HB) zones, multi-family is not allowed within a Major Residential Development. Multi-family uses are generally not allowed outside of a major residential development, except for conversions of existing single-family homes to two-family homes and accessory apartments, which are allowed by Special Permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA).

The light-yellow areas on the map indicated the Res-A Zoning District, while the darker yellow indicates the slightly denser Res-B Zoning District. The lands colored in light, medium, and dark pink and orange are zoned for commercial purposes, while lands shaded green are conservation lands.

SOUTHBOROUGH

MASSACHUSETTS

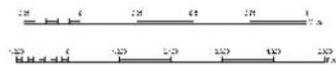
ZONING MAP

Southborough GIS Program

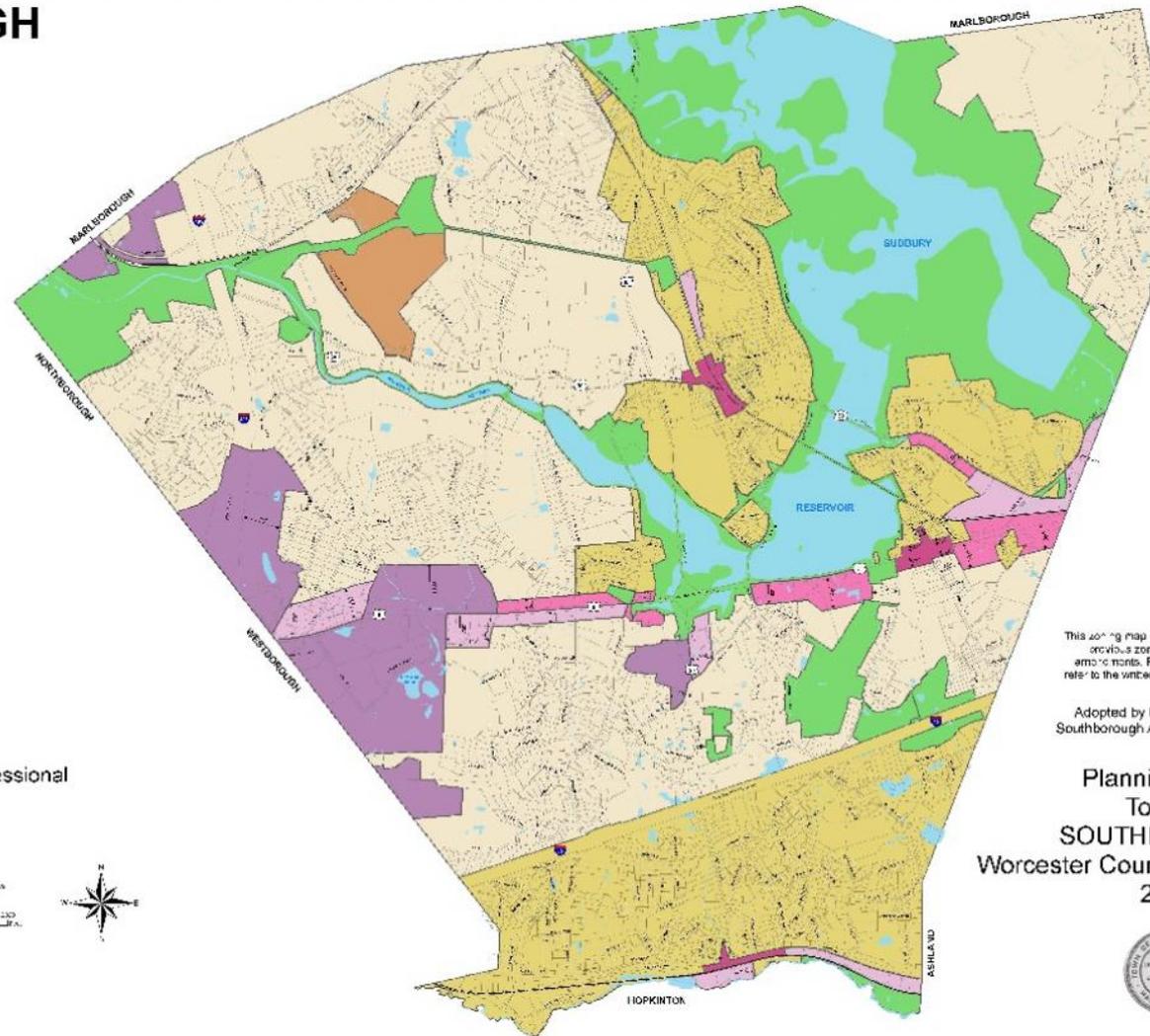


Zoning Districts

- Business Highway
- Business Village
- Conservation
- Industrial
- Industrial Park
- Residence A
- Residence B
- Research, Scientific & Professional Railroad



Created and hosted by GeoView Engineering, Inc.
GeoView
 Engineering & Planning
 1000 Main Street
 Southborough, MA 01771
 508-885-1100



This zoning map has been compiled from previous zoning maps and zoning amendments. For exact descriptions, refer to the written record and said maps.

Adopted by the April 10, 2006
 Southborough Annual Town Meeting

Planning Board
 Town of
SOUTHBOROUGH
 Worcester County, Massachusetts
 2006



Table 21: Summary of Residential Zoning Requirements

District Name	Minimum Lot Size (s.f.)	Type of Residential Uses Permitted:	
		Primary Use By Right:	By Special Permit from: () Planning Board or () Zoning Board of Appeals
Residential A (RA)	43,560 s.f. 20,000 exclusive of wetlands	Single-family Boarding rooms of four persons in single-family	Accessory apartment Conversion of single-family to two-family Mobile home Multi-family for elderly (public or nonprofit) Multi-family within major residential development (8+ units)
Residential B* (RB)	25,000 s.f. 20,000 exclusive of wetlands	Same as RA	Same as RA
Industrial (ID)	43,560 s.f. 20,000 exclusive of wetlands	Same as RA	Same as RA
Industrial Park (IP)	43,560 s.f. 20,000 exclusive of wetlands	None	Same as RA Exceptions: Multi-family within major residential development is prohibited.
Wetland and Floodplain Overlay District (WFP)	Same as underlying district	None, except expansion of existing by not more than 25% lot coverage	Uses as permitted in the underlying district with finding that development will not be unsuitable and increase in 100-year flood levels.
Research, Scientific, & Professional (SP)	Same as RA for residential	Same as RA	Same as RA
Critical Resource Overlay District (CR)	Same as underlying district	Same as underlying district	Major residential developments must meet higher standards for Special Permit regarding impact on scenic views, habitats, and environmental resources – alternatives such as transferring development rights to sites outside of the overlay district may be allowed for density bonuses.
Village Business (VB)	25,000 s.f. for residential uses, 10,000 s.f. for other uses	Same as RA and RB	Same as RA and RB Exception: Multi-family housing for the elderly public or nonprofit.
Highway Business (HB)	Same as RB for residential	Same as RA and RB	Same as RA Exception: Multi-family within major residential development is prohibited.

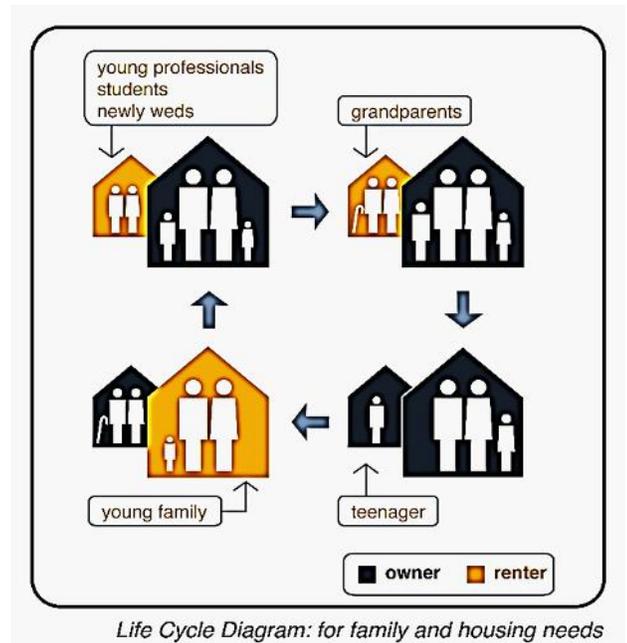
This information is compiled from the Southborough Zoning Bylaw Chapter 174 and may be incomplete. It is to be used for the purpose of this report only. An official Zoning Bylaw may be obtaining through the Town Clerk.

*Note: Residence C district was discontinued in 1966, however lots laid out prior to the discontinuance and that are in Residence B districts may be built with a minimum lot size of 15,000 s.f.

Accessory Apartments

In communities like Southborough that have a housing stock consisting of predominantly single-family houses, accessory apartments provide an avenue to modestly diversify the housing stock with minimal impacts on existing neighborhoods. Accessory apartments are a useful form of housing for households at different life-cycle stages, whether they are starting out or aging-in-place and provide an avenue for Southborough's young people, adults who live in small households, and seniors to remain housed within their community.

Southborough's zoning allows for accessory apartments by Special Permit (ZBA). Accessory apartments occur in many forms and can be interior (e.g. attic or basement apartments), attached (e.g. ell's or additions), or detached (e.g. carriage houses, barns, or garage apartments). Due to statutory provisions regarding the granting of Special Permits that generally limit the ability to deny (rather than conditionally approve) applications that meet bylaw requirements, accessory apartments provide a number of public benefits while presenting fewer regulatory burdens to single-family home owners than unnecessarily restrictive regulations.



Accessory apartments are allowed by Special Permit (ZBA) subject to the following requirements:

- J Habitable floor area must not exceed 35% of floor area of the main dwelling and any other accessory buildings used for accessory dwelling;
- J No other apartment is on the lot;
- J Only minimum alterations to exterior; and
- J Total cumulative number of accessory apartments permitted by the ZBA since 1979 shall not exceed 5% of total number of single-family houses in Southborough.

The approved units are not tracked by the Town. Therefore, the number of accessory units permitted as a percentage of total single-family houses is not available hence the fourth provision is not enforceable. Its removal from the bylaws should be considered.

Major Residential Development¹¹

The Zoning Bylaw allows a Special Permit for **Major Residential Developments**, which are defined as the creation of eight or more lots – or the construction of eight or more dwelling units, within an eight-year period, for projects seeking to utilize “flexible development” provisions. The bylaw also allows smaller projects with fewer than eight units to take advantage of flexible development provisions, provided the applicant seeks a Special Permit. For both project types, the Planning Board is the Special Permit Granting Authority (SPGA). The Town amended the bylaw in 2013 to allow by-right development for conventional subdivisions.

One of the enumerated purposes of the **flexible development** zoning provisions is to “encourage more affordable and diverse housing types.” Toward this aim, the provisions require that at least 12.5% of the total number of permitted dwelling units are provided as Affordable Housing and meet DHCD’s requirements to be included on the Subsidized Housing Inventory. The provisions also require a local preference for 70%

¹¹ The Town amended the Zoning Bylaw's Major Residential Development provisions in 2013 light of the 2008 MA Appeals Court decision regarding the invalidity of Westwood zoning bylaw that required a special permit for a major residential development: WALL STREET DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION vs. PLANNING BOARD OF WESTWOOD 72 Mass. App. Ct. 844: <http://masscases.com/cases/app/72/72massappct844.html>

of the affordable units for Town residents and employees of the Town. There are two issues with this provision of the bylaw: 1) 70% local preference is the maximum percentage the Town may request from DHCD. The request must be accompanied by a justification based on local needs and a granting of 70% local preference is not guaranteed (although it rarely is an issue as most communities have significant unmet local housing needs); and 2) the bylaw establishes preference for only two out of four of the categories of households that are eligible for local preference and further ranks which of those two categories shall receive priority. Prioritization is not allowed amongst local preference categories, and the Town does not have the authority to remove eligibility categories for local preference. A literal enforcement of these provisions would be in conflict with state law.

The provisions allow multi-family housing for up to 2/3 of all units within a major residential development, but the remainder of the units must be single-family homes. This is a significant limitation if one is attempting to build multi-family housing, due to the relatively less efficient spatial needs of single-family houses. Furthermore, each dwelling unit must have its own exterior entrance, effectively enforcing a townhouse standard, and no more than four units may be in any one structure. The regulations are fairly clear in their intent to exclude apartments, regardless of the type and scale of the building they are located within. This preclusion renders most existing small multi-family buildings nonconforming, and in some zoning districts creates an impossible set of standards resulting in an inability to build viable projects under local zoning. For example, the Business Village (BV) District encompasses approximately 40 acres across Downtown Southborough, the intersection of Route 9 and Central Street/Oak Hill Road, and Cordaville Station, wherein the median lot size of parcels throughout the district is 18,730 square feet. Under existing zoning, this is not sufficient to construct even an individual single-family home, much less a project that would be more suitable to a revenue-generating mixed-use village center. As residential dwellings in the BV district must meet the development standards of the RB district requiring a 25,000 foot minimum lot size per residential unit, there are limited opportunities to create housing. Particularly as multi-family dwellings that are not age restricted are only allowed in the BV district as part of a Major Residential Development, which requires a minimum of eight (8) units at 25,000 square feet per unit (4.6 acres), potential sites, if any, are in short supply.

While being largely unbuildable in practice, the Major Residential Development provision is the only vehicle to build multi-family housing in Southborough that is not age-restricted, but the housing it yields does not necessarily suit local housing needs or provide the true diversity that would meet the needs of disparate households. In part, this is because the total units shall not exceed what is allowed in the underlying zoning, and the underlying zoning has fairly high minimum lot size requirements. Although typical of suburban communities, this contributes to visual fragmentation and new development that is incongruous with traditional New England architectural vernacular and spatial organization. In the RA zone, which covers most to the town, the minimum lot size is one (1) acre and more than one in five lots in the district are undersized



Housing created under MRD regulations. Each unit has a private entrance; the development contains a mix of “multi-family” duplexes and single-family homes as required; and units are restricted to market rate buyers aged 55 and up.



Small multi-family houses consistent with the New England architectural style could and currently do “fit in” in Southborough. The requirement for single-family homes limits the potential of the MRD regulations.

and nonconforming. Less than 4% of lots in the RA District meet the minimum lot size necessary to create a Major Residential Development; similarly, only 8% of lots meet the requirements in the RB district. However, the provisions allow for a density bonus of three additional units for each affordable unit offered in addition to those that are required, which can offer some relief. The provisions also allow a further density bonus for middle-income units of up to 140% AMI of one additional unit for each middle-income unit. Onsite development of affordable units is encouraged, but the offsite development of affordable units or cash payments in lieu of providing affordable units is allowed under extreme conditions but severely discouraged in both regulation and practice. The density bonuses are not applicable unless the affordable units are developed onsite.

Senior Housing Provisions

The Zoning Bylaw defines **elderly housing** as “housing with occupancy of each dwelling unit reserved to no more than two persons, one of whom must either be fifty-five (55) years of age or older or handicapped.” This can create issues if an elderly couple requires a live-in home care assistant or becomes guardian of grandchildren, both increasingly common scenarios, that would require the occupants to relocate under this current provision.

The desire to limit housing to older households and restrict the number of bedrooms is typically driven by a desire to limit the number of school children (a discriminatory practice on the basis of familial status that violates fair housing and civil rights laws) and their associated costs more than sincere desire to house seniors. Seeing the housing needs of seniors as being synonymous with the housing needs of everyone is of critical importance. The current bylaws encourage the creation of housing that is age-restricted but otherwise resembles large, expensive, single-family homes; true senior housing should consider and reflect the needs of seniors, such as smaller units with single-floor living floor plans, accessible design, and reduced maintenance requirements. Allowing a range of housing options could enable senior residents with different needs, abilities, and financial circumstances to remain in Southborough, with their life-extending social networks intact. This means housing designed not just for handicap accessibility, which is sorely needed, but also with mobility – a critical element of long-term wellness – and connectivity to social spaces, amenities, and goods and services in mind.

However, Southborough’s provisions for multi-family housing for elderly require that no development exceed and average per site a maximum of three units per acre exclusive of wetlands, leading to an absolute



Constructed in 2002, Carriage Hill Condominiums is a luxury 55+ senior housing community. Condos are 3,200 s.f., 2br/4 bath units with 2020 sales prices over \$700,000 and a monthly condo fee of \$900+ limiting the utility of such developments for Southborough seniors looking to downsize.

maximum of six bedrooms per acre. **The bylaw also limits the total number of units approved under this section (since January 1998) not to exceed 7% of the total number of single-family houses.** This threshold has been reached, and no further housing can be developed under this provision without a significant number of new single-family homes being constructed. The Zoning Bylaw should be revised to either raise or (preferably) eliminate this cap to reflect the current trend that the nearly 30% of Southborough households will be over 65 in 2030.¹²

Affordable Housing

“Inclusionary zoning” is a type of provision requiring a portion of new development be affordable to low income households that is eligible for inclusion on the State’s Subsidized Housing Inventory.

¹² MAPC Population Projections, <http://www.mapc.org/data-services/available-data/projections>

Southborough's Zoning Bylaw includes such a requirement for Affordable Housing under the provisions for Major Residential Developments (projects with eight or more lots or units). Under Section 174-13.2(e), the bylaw requires that at least 12.5% of units be affordable to households earning between 51 and 80% of Area Median Income (AMI). This precludes the provision of affordable housing units to households with incomes below 50% of AMI, while offering a density bonus for "middle-income" units targeted to households who earn up to 140% AMI (it should also be noted that these units would not be eligible for inclusion on the SHI unless they were in a rental development). Further, as previously stated, the local preference regulations are at odds with state law by establishing an order of preference within local preference and excluding two categories of households that are eligible for local preference under state law. While Southborough's Major Residential Development requirements have contributed some affordable units, these provisions result in discrimination and further reduce housing opportunities at a level of affordability that is sincerely needed by many of Southborough's residents.

Mixed Use Limitations

While Southborough's commercial districts have not traditionally been considered for residential or mixed use development, many of Southborough's office, industrial, and retail buildings have significant vacancies, are underutilized, or abandoned. These vacancies can be attributed to a number of factors, including location, infrastructure limitations, and changing consumer tastes. Recently, the demand for single-use office parks has shifted to a preference for amenity-rich mixed-use properties. The ample availability of high quality commercial space and lack of sewer infrastructure make it more challenging to redevelop or adapt buildings that have reached obsolescence for new commercial use. While Southborough needs to work diligently to retain its commercial base, allowing a range of uses including housing might make redevelopment and reuse more attractive and yield more socially and economically valuable reuse projects.



An underutilized commercial building on Rte. 9.

Section 174-8(c)2 of Southborough's zoning reads as follows:

Not more than one principal permitted use shall be located on any lot, provided that a multiple occupancy building used for the same category of use, such as retail sales and services, light manufacturing or offices in a business district or Industrial Park District shall be deemed to be in a single principal permitted use. The Board of Appeals may, by special permit, **allow several different uses if otherwise permitted in the district** or several buildings on the same lot if such uses or buildings are deemed to be compatible, meet the requirements of § 174-9 and result in improved circulation and land use patterns.

The bolded text highlights a critical requirement that the use must be permitted in the district. Although this is a logical requirement, the allowed uses have not been updated since 1993 (and many appear to have simply been carried forward from the previous bylaw), and contain a number of legacy uses like "Newspaper, job printing and publishing" which we are less likely to see in 2020, as well as completely obsolete uses such as "Dwelling on the premises for a night watchman or janitor." With few commercial uses available to choose from, and residential uses generally limited to elderly housing operated by a non-profit, there is limited opportunity to modernize existing commercial complexes and broaden housing opportunities in Southborough's villages, particularly on a smaller scale (such as a project consisting of a retail space with two to three apartments above).

Adaptive Reuse of Historic Structures

In 2017, Southborough amended the Zoning Bylaw to include provisions for the adaptation and reuse of historic structures. While considered a commercial use, apartments and condominiums are allowed with Site Plan Approval, as is the conversion from a single-family home to a single-family home with an accessory apartment. However, there are no provisions to address or reduce minimum lot size requirements for each unit in spite of the fact that the structure and lot already exist, making the necessity for additional land to adequately serve the structure someone what questionable. Due to Southborough's historic development pattern, many of the historic homes are located in Southborough's village areas and are located on small, and frequently undersized lots for even a single-family home. As many of these structures exist within the Residence A and B zones surrounding the villages, these homes would need to be situated on many acres in order to accommodate a multi-family use. Whether this was an oversight in the drafting of the regulations or was left intentionally ambiguous, a lack of reasonable provisions to determine density for reuse projects limits the utility of this particular bylaw.



An historic structure that could be modified to contain residential uses.

Parking Requirements

The parking requirements for a residential dwelling consist of two spaces per each unit containing one or two bedrooms and three spaces for each unit with three or more bedrooms. Such high minimum parking standards contribute toward increasing the cost of residential development, as well as increasing impervious surface area. They also further inhibit the potential for smaller multifamily development or redevelopment.

Summary of Zoning Issues

-) **Housing Diversity:** Many communities treat two-family and three-family structures differently from multi-family apartment buildings, and have reduced lot and dimensional requirements for these types of residential uses. The lack of scaling of uses in Southborough's zoning to allow for smaller projects favors new single-family homes, making redevelopment, infill development, or small-scale multifamily development less feasible. Current zoning also precludes residential development in commercial areas due to unbuildable regulations, and prohibits mixed use buildings. In addition, arbitrary caps on accessory apartments and senior housing limit the Town's ability to meet a broader range of housing needs. Failure to diversify residential uses will continue to lend itself to the creation of housing that serves regional needs in terms of price and product (namely affluent seniors), rather than Southborough's local housing needs.
-) **Development Thresholds:** While Southborough's zoning offers some flexibility for developments with more than eight units (and those with fewer than 8 units by special permit), the requirements for private entrances, no more than four units in a building, and necessity that at least 1/3 of the overall development contain single-family homes helps to ensure that as long the town has not met its affordable housing obligations, multifamily development is more likely to occur via the Chapter 40b Comprehensive Permit process rather than under the local Zoning Bylaws. Due to the desire for design control, in particular, many communities are seeking to adopt zoning that serves as an alternative to Ch. 40b that is sufficiently attractive to developers to incentivize them to build under local zoning regulations rather than bypass them with a Comprehensive Permit.
-) **Density:** Outsized minimum lot size, frontage, and setback requirements preclude most innovative forms of residential neighborhood design. As most of the "good" land in Southborough has been

developed, largely what remains are challenging and expensive sites that without adequate density cannot support housing. Provisions that more adequately address and provide for the creation of smaller scale and creative projects should be considered.

Other Regulations

Lower Impact Development Requirements

The Zoning Bylaw includes provisions for Lower Impact Development (LID) site planning and management of post-development storm water runoff to minimize damage to public and private property and infrastructure, safeguard the public health, safety, environment and general welfare of the public, protect water and aquatic resources, and promote groundwater recharge to protect surface, groundwater, and drinking water supplies. Adopted in 2006, the bylaw applies to all new development and redevelopment and requires a Special Permit from the Planning Board for proposals subject to Major Site Plan Review, any disturbance of one acre or more, and any residential development or redevelopment of five or more acres.

Local Wetland Regulations

Southborough adopted its current Wetlands Bylaw in 1995, as amended periodically. The purpose of the bylaw is to protect the wetland-related water resources and adjacent lands by minimizing activities deemed to have a significant or cumulative effect upon: public or private water supply, flood control, groundwater supply, storm damage prevention, erosion and sedimentation control, wildlife habitat, water pollution control, fisheries and freshwater shellfish, and recreation. As discussed, the bylaw applies to any activities that will create a disturbance within the mandated twenty (20) foot and one-hundred (100) foot buffers as applicable:

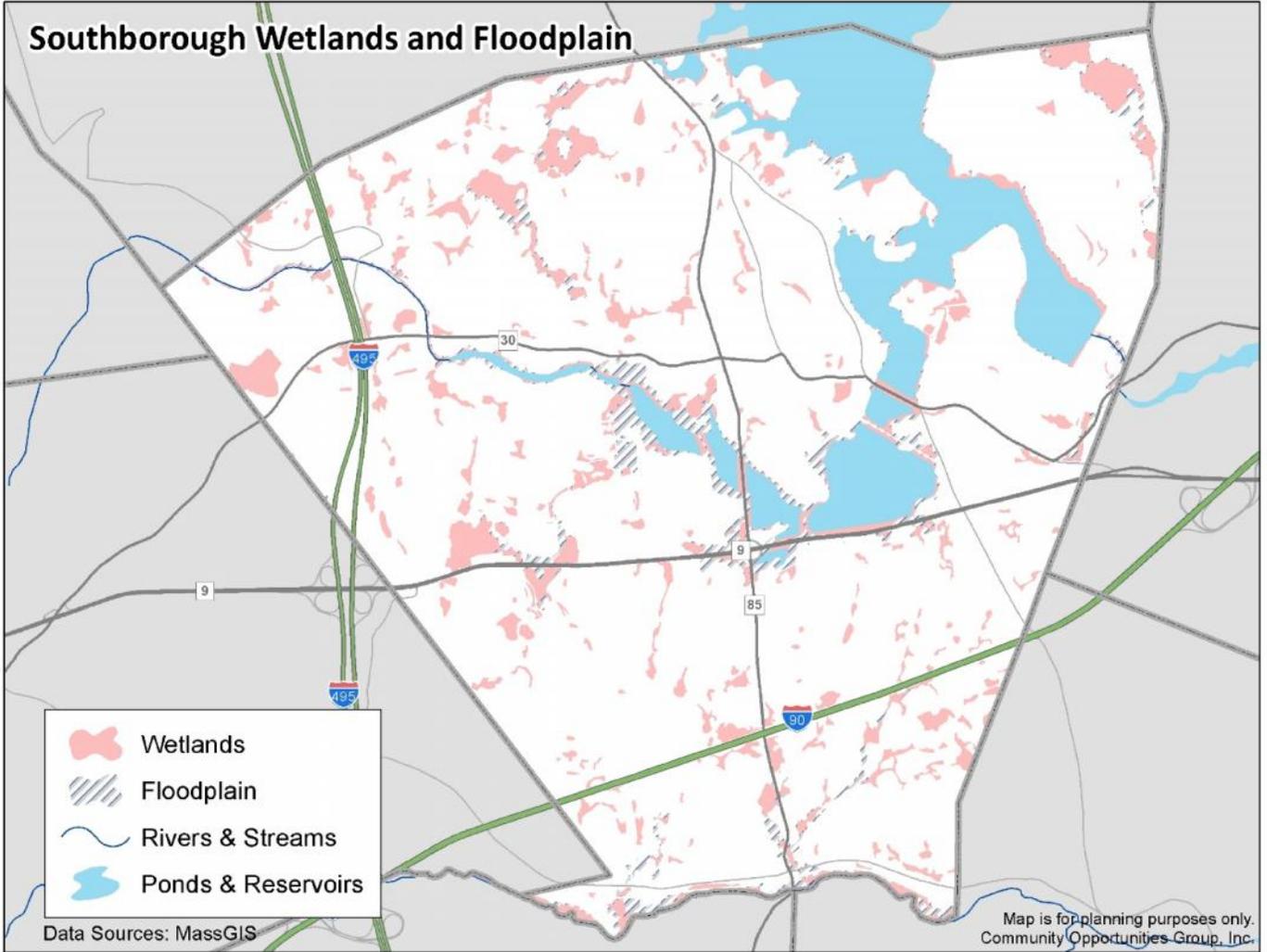
Except as permitted by the Conservation Commission or as provided in this Chapter, no person shall remove, fill, dredge, build upon, degrade, discharge into or otherwise alter the following resource areas or within twenty (20) feet of their borders: any fresh water wetland, bordering vegetated wetland, marsh, wet meadow, bog or swamp, any bank, beach, lake, river, pond, stream or land under said waters, any vernal pool, any land subject to flooding or inundation by groundwater, surface water or storm flowage collectively, "the resource areas". Any proposed work which falls within one hundred (100) feet (the "buffer zone") of the previously mentioned resource areas must be approved by the Commission. - Town of Southborough 1995.

Limited uses on wetlands are regulated under Section 170 of the Town of Southborough "Wetlands Bylaws." Amended by the 1996 Rivers Act, the goals and objectives of the Massachusetts Wetland Protection Act are to preserve the quality of water, maintain quality and quantity of drinking water, provide recharge through infiltration of water into the ground, retain the natural flood storage capacity, sustain fisheries, and protect wildlife habitat.

Wetland & Floodplain District

Within Article III of Southborough's Zoning Bylaws, the Wetland and Floodplain District requires a Special Permit to prevent disruptions to floodplain areas. These restrictions help regulate negative impacts that a 100-year flood would cause. Sections of Route 9, Route 85, and I-90 are located within the floodplain area. Low impact recreation and agriculture are possible uses for these areas. The map below is based on Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data provided by the Commonwealth. The map indicates the relative location of Southborough's hydrological features.

Southborough Wetlands and Floodplain



Existing Housing Resources

Affordable Housing Inventory

To be considered affordable under Chapter 40B, housing must be deed-restricted to be sold or rented for an amount that is affordable to households earning up to 80% of Area Median Income (AMI), and a Fair Housing Marketing Plan must guide tenant or homebuyer selection. “Subsidized” does not always mean the project receives direct financial assistance, such as a low-interest loan or grants from public agencies. Often the “subsidy” is in the form of technical assistance or regulatory oversight by a public or quasi-public agency. A mixed-income development may be privately subsidized by a density bonus because the additional income from market-rate sales or rents helps to offset the cost of the affordable units. Regardless of whether the subsidy is public or private, affordable units eligible for the Subsidized Housing Inventory must be protected by a long-term deed restriction and be offered for sale or rent through a fair and open process that complies with the federal Fair Housing Act of 1968, as amended.

In practice, income limits for subsidized housing typically follow the HUD definition for “Low Income” households.¹³ The town of Southborough is located in the Eastern Worcester County, MA Fair Market Rent Area (HMFA), for which the median family income was \$116,200 in 2019. The “Low Income” definition for a household of four is \$75,500.

Table 22: Income Eligibility Guidelines

Eastern Worcester County, MA HMFA	Extrem. Low (30%)	\$24,400	\$27,900	\$31,400	\$34,850	\$37,650	\$40,450	\$43,250
	Very Low (50%)	\$40,700	\$46,500	\$52,300	\$58,100	\$62,750	\$67,400	\$72,050
MFI: \$116,200								

Source: HUD 2019, Section 8 Income Limits

The Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) maintains a list of the deed-restricted affordable units in each city and town. Known as the Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI), the list determines whether a community has met the 10% minimum. It is also used to track expiring use restrictions, i.e., when non-perpetual affordable housing deed restrictions will lapse. With 8.56% of its housing stock eligible for inclusion on the SHI, Southborough is close to meeting the 40B target. Among neighboring communities in Massachusetts, all have more than 10% affordable units, with the exception of Ashland, which is at 6.2%. In terms of the actual number of SHI units, Southborough has far fewer than any neighboring communities with just 294 units listed.

Table 23: SHI Comparison

	SHI Units	% SHI
Marlborough	1,863	11.4%
Framingham	2,968	10.8%
Ashland	415	6.3%
Hopkinton	725	14.2%
Westborough	960	13.1%
Northborough	606	11.4%
Southborough	294	8.6%

Source: DHCD, May 2020

Table 24 reports Southborough’s Subsidized Housing Inventory as of November, 2019. There are currently 294 units counted on the subsidized housing inventory, including 276 rental units and 18 ownership units. An additional 2 units have been constructed but have not yet been recorded on DHCD’s inventory, while a 180 unit 40B was approved but is under appeal. Not all of the units that count toward the SHI are affordable (i.e., restricted to low income households.) Notably, one large mixed-income rental development, Madison Place, has a total of 168 units which count toward the SHI, even though 75 percent of the units are market rate because DHCD allows all of the units to be counted toward a community’s SHI if 25 percent of the units are affordable. While this helps bring Southborough closer to meet its target, the counting of market rate

¹³ The income and asset limits for specific affordable housing developments may vary, depending on the requirements of the subsidizing program.

rental units simply because they are rental units means there are fewer units actually available to low- and moderate-income households than the SHI reports, and meeting 10% may not mean that local needs have been sufficiently met. In all, there are 140 affordable units in Southborough, of which 75 are reserved for seniors and people with disabilities, while 65 are open to families and residents of all ages.

Table 24: Southborough Subsidized Housing Inventory

Name	Address	Total Development Units	Affordable (1)	Currently Counted on SHI	Affordability Expires
Rental					
Colonial Gardens ⁽²⁾	49 Boston Road	56	56	56	Perpetuity
The Bridge	3 North St.	8	8	8	Perpetuity
Boston Road	Boston Road	2	2	2	Perpetuity
Cordaville	1 Cordaville Road	1	1	1	Perpetuity
DDS Group Homes ⁽²⁾	Confidential		3	3	N/A
DMH Group Homes ⁽²⁾	Confidential		8	8	N/A
Fairfield Green at Marlborough	155 Northborough Road		0	30	Perpetuity
Madison Place	Crystal Pond Road, Madison Place	168	42	168	Perpetuity
The Residences at Park Central	Park Central Drive	180	0	0	Perpetuity
Ownership					
Gilmore Road	Gilmore Road	1	1	1	Perpetuity
Parkerville Road	Parkerville Road	1	1	1	Perpetuity
The Highlands	Stockwell & Fitzgerald Lane	?	4	4	Perpetuity
Meeting House Farm	Middle Road	29	8	8	Perpetuity
Woodland Meadows	Oak Hill Road	16	4	4	Perpetuity
Ila Bella Estates	Lorenzo Dr.	12	2	0	Perpetuity
2010 Year Round Units		3,433	474	140	294 (8.6%)

(1) Includes existing units that currently meet affordability definition and are located in Southborough.

(2) Senior/Disabled housing

Source: DHCD (2-24-20), Town of Southborough, Community Opportunities Group, Inc.

The units listed on the SHI include those owned by the Housing Authority and nonprofit and state agencies, as well as privately-owned affordable ownership or rental units.

- ñ The **Southborough Housing Authority** has an inventory of sites under three public housing programs. Colonial Gardens is a Chapter 667 housing development with 56 units reserved for elderly and disabled residents. The Bridge was developed under State Chapter 689, and provides a group home setting for low income persons with disabilities. In addition, there are 3 units of Massachusetts Chapter 705 Housing for families at two locations at Cordaville and Framingham Roads.
- ñ Southborough has a handful of group homes or congregate-style dwellings that are restricted for occupancy by adults with severe cognitive or mental disabilities. The **Department of Developmental Services** and **Department of Mental Health** report to DHCD the number of bedrooms in group homes to be counted as units on the SHI, but does not disclose the location of these sites.
- ñ Through the **Affordable Housing Trust**, the Town purchased two single-family homes at Cordaville Road and Gilmore Road which it rehabbed and sold to income-qualified buyers with a deed restriction making them SHI-eligible affordable units.

A total of 215 SHI units are located in mixed income developments in which affordable rental or homeownership units are combined with market rate housing.

- Ñ **Fairfield Green at Marlborough** is a 332-unit multifamily development that straddles the border with Marlborough. Permitted under Chapter 40B, 83 units (25%) are affordable. Although the development is situated in Marlborough, access to the site is through Southborough. An agreement was reached that grants credit for 30 SHI units to the Town of Southborough in order to mitigate the traffic impacts from the overall development. The Town of Marlborough claims the remaining 302 units towards its SHI.
- Ñ **Madison Place** is a Chapter 40B development built in 2013, comprising 168 1 to 2 bedroom apartments and 28 two-bedroom rental townhouses, of which 25 percent are affordable (42 apartments and 9 townhouses). The site is located in a commercial area overlooking Route 9.
- Ñ **The Residences at Park Central** is a proposed Chapter 40B development that the Town approved in 2016, but has been tied up under appeal. Also located just off of Route 9, the mixed-income development is slated to have 45 affordable units out of a total of 180 units, all of which will count toward the Town's SHI. Because of the delay in construction, the units have lapsed from the Town's SHI but will be counted again if the project is completed.
- Ñ **Woodland Meadows** is a mixed income 40B development completed in 2016. The complex consists of eight duplexes with 16 two-bedroom units, of which 4 units are affordable.
- Ñ **Inclusionary/Flexible Zoning**. The Town has also created affordable units through inclusionary provisions in its flexible zoning ordinance. To date, 2 affordable homeownership units have been created at Ila Bella estates under these provisions, although the units have not yet been reflected on DHCD's SHI as of November, 2019. Two affordable units were also provided for as part of the Brewer Estates; however, these have been built and operated as a group home by the New England Center for Children.

Organizational Capacity

Southborough and its surrounding communities have limited resources available to help individuals and families with housing affordability problems and other housing needs. Below is a partial overview of the local and regional resources available that serve Southborough.

Southborough Housing Opportunity Partnership Committee

Southborough's Housing Opportunity Partnership Committee (SHOPC) was created at Town Meeting in 2004 and amended in 2009. The Committee's establishment grew from an ad hoc group started in 1986 to respond to affordable housing issues in town. Per the warrant article, SHOPC's purpose is to study, promote, and act as facilitators to create affordable housing in the Town of Southborough.

SHOPC is appointed by the Board of Selectmen, consisting of four at-large members as well as one member each from the following: Planning Board, Board of Selectmen, and the Southborough Housing Authority, for a total committee membership of seven. In its role, SHOPC has overseen the development of the Town's Housing Plans in 2009, 2015, and the current effort.

Southborough-Affordable Housing Trust

The Southborough Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF) was established by Town Meeting in 2005 per MGL C.44 s55C. The purpose of the Trust is to provide for the preservation and creation of affordable housing in the town for the benefit of low- and moderate-income households. The Board of Trustees aka Affordable Housing Trust Fund Committee (AHTFC) which oversees the use of the Trust has the authority to acquire real estate to preserve and create affordable housing.

The Board of Trustees consists of seven trustees that include all the members of the Board of Selectmen (BOS) and the remaining members are appointed by the BOS. The Trust's revenue sources have included CPA funds, affordable housing donations, and developer funds, totaling just under \$1M between FY05 and FY15. To date, the AHTFC initiatives have included:

-) Construction of 26 Gilmore Road, a permanently affordable single-family homeownership unit on a Town-owned parcel of land acquired through tax title.
-) Approval of funds for the Southborough Housing Authority to purchase the home at 1 Cordaville Road to create a permanently affordable rental unit.

Southborough Community Preservation Committee (CPC)

Southborough adopted the Community Preservation Act in 2003, placing a 1% surcharge on property tax bills, which is partially matched with a disbursement from the state's Community Preservation Trust Fund. The town collects approximately \$400,000 in funds per year (combined local revenue and match) which can be spent on open space/recreation, historic preservation, and affordable housing. A minimum of 10% each year must be spent or reserved for each of the three program areas, while the remaining funds may be spent in any of the program areas. To date, the town has raised approximately \$5.8 million CPA funds in total, of which \$582,000 must be earmarked for affordable housing. The CPC currently has \$312,912 in its Housing Reserve which have not yet been committed, as well as \$196,277 which have been appropriated to the Housing Trust but have not yet been transferred.¹⁴

Table 25: CPA Housing Expenditures Summary

Year	Purpose	Amount
2006	To help build an affordable house at 26 Gilmore Road	\$99,976
2007	Appropriation to the AHTF	\$63,251
2008	Appropriation to the AHTF	\$90,000
2010	Appropriation to the AHTF	\$70,000
2011	Appropriation to the AHTF	\$36,276
Total CPA Housing Expenditures to date		\$359,503
Minimum Housing Reserve Total (approx.)		\$582,000
Current Housing Balance		\$312,912
Funds Appropriated to AHT, still with CPC		\$196,277
Source: Community Preservation Coalition CPA Projects Database, Department of Revenue, Town of Southborough		

Southborough Housing Authority

In 1969, M.G.L. Chapter 121B, Section 3, was passed to allow for the creation of housing authorities by cities and towns in Massachusetts. The Southborough Housing Authority (SHA) serves the needs of low-income residents through units it owns or operates.

As described on page 40, the SHA manages 56 units at Colonial Gardens through DHCD's elderly/handicapped housing program (Chapter 667). These units are for elderly householders over the age of 60 and for people with disabilities. Of these units, up to 7 units may be occupied by non-elderly residents with disabilities. None of the two-story walk-up Housing Authority buildings are served by elevators, however three of the first floor units are handicapped accessible, and the Housing Authority makes an effort to prioritize first floor units for households for whom stairs will be a hardship. Another three housing units on Boston Road and Cordaville Road are managed through DHCD's family low-income housing program (Chapter 705), and an eight-unit group home on North Street for people with special needs created under Chapter 689. All of the Housing Authority units were created under state, rather than federal housing programs.

Since the state has implemented a centralized waiting list for public housing, there is no locally based inventory of people who are specifically looking for housing in Southborough. A prioritization schedule allocates available units first to emergency cases, veterans, and then local residents. Given the scarcity of public housing units in the region, the wait for public housing is very long, and the odds for Southborough residents to obtain units in town are very low.

The Housing Authority does not have resources to expand their inventory of housing, although they have, in the past, partnered with the Affordable Housing Trust to assume the ownership and management of units that were created through local initiative.¹⁵

¹⁴ Heidi Kriger, Town of Southborough Accountant, February 2020

¹⁵ Interview with Lynn Moreno, Director of Southborough Housing Authority, February 4, 2020

SMOC

Southern Middlesex Opportunity Council, Inc. is a regional community action agency based in Framingham. The agency provides a range of services and programs to assist low income households, including workforce development, early education, energy programs, nutritional assistance, behavioral health care, housing support, and financial management.

The organization also provides a range of housing services programs to the Framingham region, including Southborough. Services include the Housing Consumer Education Center, Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT), home modification, and supported housing. SMOC also administers MA Rental Vouchers and Federal Section 8 subsidies. The Southern Middlesex non-profit Housing Corporation owns, develops, and manages a portfolio of housing developments in the MetroWest, Worcester County, and western Massachusetts regions.

Housing Support Services

Various town staff are involved in facilitating the development and rehabilitation of the Town's housing inventory by providing administrative support to regulatory boards and commissions, and overseeing inspections and enforcement. Private firms such as MCO Realty Services manage the marketing and lotteries for the Town's small inventory of affordable homeownership units.

The Town provides some support services for residents seeking assistance with housing. The Assessor works with residents seeking tax abatements or deferrals to mitigate the cost burden of property taxes. Seniors (age 65+) who meet the income, ownership, and residency requirements may be eligible for a reduction of their tax bill, to participate in a work-off program, or to delay their tax payment until either the senior either sells the property or passes away. Currently the income level for participation in the tax deferral program in Southborough is \$40,000, and the interest rate on taxes deferred is 4%. A lower income threshold applies for the tax abatement program.

The Council on Aging (COA) and Veteran's Agent provide advocacy for seniors and veterans and their spouses, widow(er)s, and dependents) to access housing that meets their needs, as well as modifying or rehabilitating their homes to enable them to safely age in place. The COA will help residents to apply for programs such as fuel assistance and SNAP, or to connect residents with a range of resources through organizations such as SMOC.

The Council on Aging, Youth Services Department, Public Safety departments and other community partners comprise an Emergency Committee which collaborates to address a range of community needs. In addition to coordinating services, the group oversees the Southborough Community Fund (an offshoot of the Foundation for MetroWest). The fund provides grants for a number of social services needs, such as emergency housing stabilization, fuel assistance, nutritional programs, supplementing transportation or health care assistance.¹⁶

Homelessness

As with most communities, Southborough residents have experienced homelessness or are at risk of losing their housing. Homeless families and individuals include victims of domestic violence, veterans, people with mental illness and substance abuse disorders, and unaccompanied youth, among others. The high cost of housing, scarcity of affordable housing options, and substance abuse are trends contributing to increasing homelessness in the region. There are also many residents in Southborough whose housing is unstable due to doubling up with friends and relatives, or living in motels, substandard habitations, or homes that have deteriorated in condition to the point of being unsafe. Enforcement of health, zoning, and building codes could lead to these residents becoming homeless due to their homes being condemned. There is no available data to quantify the extent of homelessness impacting Southborough residents. As the closest available emergency and transitional shelter facilities are located in Framingham, the issue of homelessness is less visible in Southborough.

¹⁶ Interview with Pam LeFrancois, Director of Southborough Senior Center, December 16, 2019

There are few shelters or services for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness in Southborough. Based in Framingham, SMOC operates a housing services center which provides help for families to access housing stabilization and emergency housing resources. SMOC operates shelters for unaccompanied women and men, young adults, and families throughout the MetroWest region, including Ashland, Framingham, Marlborough, Natick, and Medway. Some of these programs offer treatment for people with substance abuse disorder, HIV/AIDS, support for people in recovery, as well as vocational or life skills training. There are also shelters for families experiencing domestic violence located in Framingham and Worcester.

What does "homeless" mean?

- J An individual or family that lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence;
- J An individual who lived in a shelter or place not meant for human habitation and who is exiting an institution where (s)he temporarily lived (less than 90 days);
- J An individual or family that will imminently lose their nighttime residence due to a court order to vacate, or insufficient resources to remain in a hotel or motel, or is no longer allowed to stay by the owner or renter of the housing with whom the individual or family is staying;
- J Unaccompanied youth or homeless families with children who are considered homeless under any federal law, who have experienced long-term periods without permanent housing, or who have experienced persistent instability and are expected to continue without stability for an extended period; or
- J An individual or family trying to flee domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, or other life-threatening conditions in the person's nighttime residence, who has no other residence, and who lacks the resources to obtain permanent housing.

Housing Needs and Goals

Over the last decade the town has also made considerable progress toward expanding its supply of affordable housing units through the approval of Comprehensive Permit and Inclusionary Zoning projects. However, the Town has continued to add market rate housing without keeping pace with the creation of affordable units. The Town can seek opportunities to expand affordable housing opportunities both to meet its obligations under Chapter 40B, as well as to address critical local needs.

Priority Local Needs

Housing is needed to support Southborough residents and businesses. In order maintain a balanced community Southborough needs to provide housing for residents of all ages and stages in their lives.

-) There is a need for more rental housing to serve households of all sizes and incomes. Rental housing is especially helpful for seniors, younger adults, single parent families, and people who are in transition due to financial distress, relocation, changing jobs, buying/selling home, or change in family status. Many homeowners stay in housing that is not meeting their needs due to the unavailability of appropriate options that would enable them to change their situation.
-) In particular, Southborough seniors who wish to downsize or to reduce the burden of homeownership have few options for housing that meets their needs at a price they can afford. Housing appropriate for seniors would likely comprise 1-2 bedroom condominium or rental units that are stair-free or have ground-floor master bedrooms, bathrooms with walk-in showers, and in-unit laundry if possible. Survey results indicated a strong desire for more housing options for people wishing to downsize.
-) To support economic growth and reduce reliance on long-distance commuting, more local affordable housing is needed to support people who work locally. About half of the jobs based in Southborough pay less than the income required to rent an apartment or buy a house in Southborough. People priced out of other communities are coming to Southborough to live, while many who work in Southborough cannot afford to live in town.
-) By latest estimates, 26% of households in Southborough (nearly 900) are cost-burdened (paying more than 30% of their income on housing). This includes half of Southborough's renters and one quarter of homeowners. Young adults (under age 35) have the highest rate of housing cost burden, while seniors are also disproportionately cost-burdened. Housing cost burden is common among households who earn less than \$100,000, afflicting the overwhelming majority of those with incomes below \$50,000
-) A variety of housing styles (for both ownership and rental) will enhance fiscal balance, as well as contribute toward meeting community needs. Modest-sized homes, single-level units, multifamily buildings with elevators and dedicated outdoor space, handicapped accessible units, larger rental apartments (with more than two bedrooms), single room occupancy units, and congregate housing with support services would provide a range of options suitable for seniors, young adults, families, people with disabilities, and individuals living alone – i.e., community members of all ages and levels of income.

Chapter 40B Numerical Goals

As shown in [Table 26](#), there are currently 294 units in Southborough that qualify to be included on its Subsidized Housing Inventory, about 8.6% of the year-round housing stock based on the 2010 Census. Under Chapter 40B, the Town must have 10% of its housing on the SHI in order to reach the “Safe Harbor” threshold. In 2020 the number of units needed to achieve 10% will increase, as the SHI will be compared to the 2020 decennial Census. Over the past decade the town has added approximately 190 housing units, averaging close to 20 units per year.¹⁷ Based on a projected 2020 housing stock of 3,600 units, the town will then need 360 units on its SHI in order to reach the 10% minimum. Southborough thus needs to add an estimated 66 units to its SHI by 2024.

Table 26: Chapter 40B Housing Goals

Total Year Round Housing Units (2010 Census)	3,433
Units required for local discretion (10% of 4,881)	343
Current SHI Units	294
Units needed to reach 40B minimum goal through 2020	49
Annual production target for Housing Certification	17
Projected new home construction 2010-2020	190
Projected Year Round Housing Units (2020 Census)	3,600
Projected units required to enable local discretion after 2020 (10% of 2,936)	360
Projected units needed to reach 40B minimum goal beyond 2020	66
Annual production target for Housing Certification after 2020	18

Under Chapter 40B, a town can protect itself from unwanted Comprehensive Permit proposals by requesting Housing Certification. To be certified, the town must have an approved Housing Production Plan, and create SHI units equal to 0.5% of its housing stock, granting one year of safe harbor, or 1%, granting two years. Prior to 2020, this equates to 17 units for one year or 34 units for two years. After 2020, the projected annual target would be approximately 18 units.

Southborough Land Use Vision

Needs and Goals

The following housing goals derive from land use and housing goals articulated in Southborough’s 2008 Master Plan and 2015 Housing Production Plan:

-) Reinforce Southborough’s economic goals by expanding housing choice.
-) Create viable options for older adults to remain in Southborough as their housing needs change.
-) Create entry level housing opportunities.
-) Minimize impacts of new development on priority areas for open space, conservation, and natural resource protection.
-) Support design of housing development that is compatible with neighborhood context and enhances the community’s development patterns.
-) Prioritize the production of permanently affordable units.

¹⁷ Southborough Assessor’s Database, units constructed between 2010 and 2019.

Implementation Strategies

Housing Production Plan Requirements

The following strategies would address DHCD's current Housing Production Plan requirements, relying on a combination of local, state, and private resources:

- 1 **Zoning Amendments**
Identification of zoning districts or geographic areas in which the municipality proposes to modify current regulations for the purposes of creating affordable housing developments to meet its housing production goal [760 CMR 56.03(4)(d)(1)];
- 2 **Comprehensive Permits**
Identification of specific sites for which the municipality will encourage the filing of comprehensive permit projects [760 CMR 56.03(4)(d)(2)];
- 3 **Housing Preferences**
Characteristics of proposed residential or mixed-use developments that would be preferred by the municipality [760 CMR 56.03(4)(d)(3)];
- 4 **Town-Owned Land**
Municipally owned parcels for which the municipality commits to issue requests for proposals to develop affordable housing [760 CMR 56.03(4)(d)(4)];
- 5 **Regional Collaboration**
Participation in regional collaborations to address housing development [760 CMR 56.03(4)(d)(5)]

1. Enhance local capacity to plan, advocate for, develop, and manage affordable housing units.

Complex regulatory and financial challenges present barriers to the development of affordable housing. Effective advocacy for affordable housing will require teamwork among various Town departments and boards, as well as coordination with regional and state entities who can provide support and technical assistance to Southborough on housing issues. A number of educational and training resources are available to strengthen the expertise of municipal staff and committee members to address housing concerns, including seminars and conferences offered by DHCD, Citizens' Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA), and the Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP). These agencies also provide direct technical assistance and grants to municipalities, nonprofits, and housing authorities to help with a broad range of activities such as feasibility studies, 40B assistance, developing RFPs for disposition and redevelopment of publicly owned sites, assisting distressed sites, drafting regulations such as Zoning Bylaws, among other helpful activities.

Strengthen and Expand Partnerships

As Southborough has limited capacity to develop housing or provide housing support services, proactive local advocacy will help to ensure that services are available to meet local needs. The Housing Authority, Council on Aging, and other participants in the Emergency Committee should continue to coordinate together with SMOC or other regional entities to share information and to help Southborough residents access resources.

In addition, several successful non-profit developers seek opportunities to develop affordable housing in suburban communities throughout Massachusetts and beyond, such as Habitat for Humanity, Neighborhood of Affordable Housing, Inc. (NOAH), The Community Builders (TCB), and SMOC. Compared with for-profit developers, non-profit housing organizations are generally able to provide a larger percentage of affordable units as well as more deeply affordable units, having access to a variety of housing subsidies. The Town can help to facilitate development through these partnerships by inviting connection and seeking relationships with potential partners, identifying opportunities and desired outcomes, and by leveraging funds, publicly-owned land or waiving permitting or infrastructure fees for specific projects.

Secure Funding to Support Affordable Housing

The Town may be able to increase the potential for successful partnerships through providing direct subsidies to create affordable housing. While the amount of funds the Town generates may be small compared to the cost of constructing affordable housing, local funds can help to leverage funding from other sources which might not otherwise be available to developers in Southborough. For example, some communities choose to leverage housing funds to provide local matches for grants offered through the Commonwealth; MassWorks grants, for example, are more competitive with a local match and can be used to

improve local infrastructure (including sewer, water, and complete streets improvements) to facilitate the development of affordable housing (among other land uses). Local funding can also be particularly important to close funding gaps. Local funding could also be used to facilitate the conversion of existing homes to deed-restricted affordable units, to provide first-time homeownership programs, or other supportive services.

Having adopted the Community Preservation Act and established an Affordable Housing Trust, the Town has taken concrete steps to facilitate the funding of affordable housing initiatives such as these. However, the Trust has been largely inactive toward creating new affordable housing for several years, while the Community Preservation Committee has been holding funds earmarked for affordable housing in reserve.¹⁸ Re-activating the Housing Trust could help to put these resources to work. Expansion of the AHTFC to include members with affordable housing development and finance experience, obtaining board-member training and technical support, and developing an action plan that outlines specific opportunities and strategies for the Trust to pursue, could help the Trust to become more proactive in fulfilling its purpose. Alternatively, SHOPC could undertake similar capacity-building efforts so that SHOPC could more effectively drive initiatives to create affordable housing, partnering with the Trust when funding is needed.

In addition to identifying an action plan for utilizing the Town's affordable housing funds, expanding the resources available to the Trust could enable the Town to support broader, more cost-effective strategies. Coordinating with the Community Preservation Committee to seek annual appropriations of at least 10% of CPA funds would provide a predictable revenue stream, which would enhance the ability to plan for housing initiatives. The Town could also explore additional resources to commit to the Trust, such as payments-in-lieu for inclusionary units required under Major Residential Development, PILOT payments, short term rental fees, or surplus Town-owned land or other property.

The Town could also generate funds to support affordable housing through modification of the Inclusionary provisions under its Zoning Bylaw to ensure that payment-in-lieu fees for affordable housing units reflect the full cost of developing an affordable unit off-site from a development project, and/or to require pro rata payments for fractional units generating less than a whole unit requirement (in other words, if 4.2 affordable units are required, an in-lieu-of payment for 20 percent of an affordable unit that will not be constructed would be required).

Guide Development

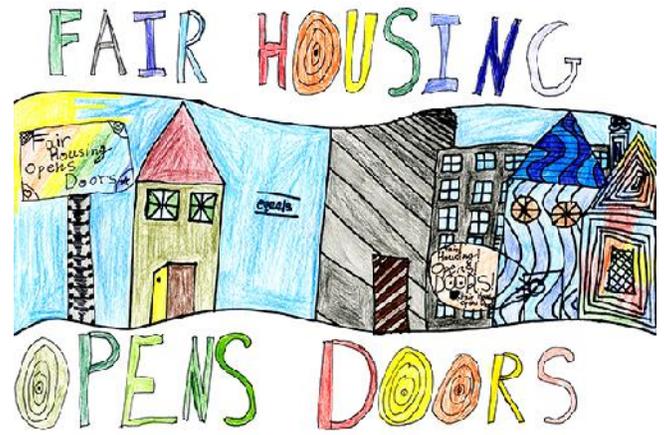
The Town can encourage the development of affordable housing consistent with local land use goals by developing guidelines that articulate the Town's preferences and priorities. Whether projects are developed under Chapter 40B or conventional zoning, proactively communicating what development outcomes the Town is looking for can enable a smoother permitting process by providing developers with guidance on what types housing and in which locations would be preferred. Project review guidelines can also enhance coordination, providing criteria for boards and staff to use when reviewing and commenting on applications. A set of guidelines can unify the Town's approach to permitting and provide clear direction to prospective developers.

Ideally, permitting guidelines should be developed by a working group of board members and staff, in consultation with many other Town boards. Guidelines usually cover matters such as priority housing needs, the scale and density of developments, design review, areas of town that may be suitable for moderate-density development, and areas that would not be suitable because they have high natural resource value or significant physical constraints. Guidelines or Standards (which have different legal definitions) may be incorporated into the Zoning Bylaws, which requires adoption at Town Meeting. Alternatively, guidelines may also be incorporated into the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeal's Rules and Regulations by a vote of those individual boards, but those guidelines would not necessarily be binding for a developer. The Town may also develop guidelines as a marketing technique to attract developers, but again, those guidelines would not be binding. Ultimately, the Town must decide to what end the guidelines would serve and adopt them utilizing the appropriate process for what the Town is trying to achieve.

¹⁸ The AHTFC has worked on ownership unit resales, including purchasing an affordable unit for the purpose of reselling it to avoid losing it from the SHI.

The following preferences for affordable housing development may be incorporated into guidelines:

- Ñ Areas appropriate for higher density housing are those that have access to water (and possibly sewer) infrastructure, and/or have proximity to public transit (i.e., Southborough Train Station or commuter shuttle bus routes), shopping, services, or other amenities.
- Ñ Natural and historic resources should be preserved and protected, encouraging flexible development and adaptive reuse and redevelopment of underutilized sites where applicable.
- Ñ New development should enhance existing development patterns, providing connectivity and reflecting the density, scale, and design characteristics that would complement Southborough’s neighborhoods and village character.
- Ñ Both rental and homeownership opportunities are needed that would be affordable to people who live or work in Southborough in a variety of configurations including small units (1-2 bedrooms), large units (3 or more bedrooms), single room occupancy, handicapped accessible units, and housing that includes supportive services. Deeply affordable housing is encouraged which serves specific disadvantaged groups such as low-income seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities.
- Ñ Housing should support a healthy lifestyle for residents and the community at large, incorporating usable outdoor space both for private and community use, as well as indoor community space. Housing is also encouraged which integrates supportive services for residents such as seniors or people with disabilities.
- Ñ Affordable housing should incorporate green design principles, and optimize energy efficiency to minimize the cost that residents will have to pay for utilities, through application of the Massachusetts Stretch Code and use of onsite renewable power generation.



Poster by Eden Craig (2020).

Educate/Communicate with the Public



It is important for the public to be well informed about local housing needs, initiatives and challenges. Not only do housing initiatives – such as Zoning Bylaw changes – often require local support, an informed public is more likely to participate in the process and provide pertinent information, feedback and suggestions. Education can dispel myths associated with affordable housing about people who need and occupy affordable housing, the impact of affordable housing on real estate values, and local housing needs. Education can also increase awareness of laws and principles pertaining to **Fair Housing**, so that there will be support for policies consistent with state and federal law.

With increased involvement, the Town’s ability to reach households that would be eligible for affordable housing but do not seek it for a variety reasons – they may not know it exists or think they would be eligible, for example – would also increase. This is particularly important as the Town seeks to meet the growing need for more deeply affordable units, more affordable family units, and senior housing of all types. The need to reach different types of households, particularly those that do not traditionally participate in local government, is a perennial challenge in local government but one, that nevertheless, can be overcome with good community relationships and inter-organizational cooperation. These conditions help create an environment whereby the community becomes a partner in the Town’s housing initiatives.

2. Identify sites for creation of affordable housing through new development, redevelopment, or preservation.

Publicly-Owned Properties

Southborough has very few Town-owned properties that could potentially be converted, subdivided, or otherwise used for housing purposes. There may be a small number of tax-title properties that could provide scattered opportunities for small-scale development or rehabilitation to create affordable housing units. Should a Town building become surplus in the future (i.e., because of closing a school and/or reorganization of municipal functions). The feasibility of utilizing these sites for affordable housing will depend on environmental conditions, and septic capacity.

Privately-Owned Development Opportunities

There is further development potential to be found in privately-owned properties that are currently vacant, underutilized, or may be nearing the end of their utility under their current use. Owners of older commercial properties may be willing to engage with the Town in discussions regarding their future plans for improvement or possible redevelopment. In some cases, religious, fraternal, or social organizations have surplus land which might become available for redevelopment. The Town could also identify modestly-priced housing that could be purchased and rehabbed to sell or rent as deed-restricted affordable units. Partnering with an organization such as the Housing Authority or Habitat for Humanity could ensure that the units are marketed, managed, and maintained to preserve their affordability.

The Town could play a pivotal role in helping guide discussions about future reuse and establishing the conditions for complementary redevelopment to occur, such as by drafting and adopting necessary zoning changes. Identifying, inventorying, and prioritizing of underutilized sites for redevelopment would give the Town significantly more ability to incentivize and direct redevelopment to sites that not only would be good for housing, but also are simply in need of revitalization for aesthetic and fiscal reasons.

3. Update zoning to create opportunities for development of affordable housing, and to encourage diversity in housing options.

Southborough's zoning ordinance allows for a range of housing styles and density, including single-family, townhouse, accessory dwellings, and flexible development alternatives to allow for open space conservation combined with smaller lot sizes. But dimensional regulations, use restrictions, inclusionary requirements, and environmental regulations, in addition to high land and materials costs make it difficult to build diverse types of units. Fine-tuning the regulations pertaining to diverse forms of housing would facilitate more opportunities for providing needed housing alternatives, to accommodate more modest housing, or for walkable village character.

) Strengthen inclusionary requirements.

Southborough currently has inclusionary zoning provisions that apply specifically to Major Residential Development seeking flexible development, requiring that 12.5% of the units be affordable. However, as discussed extensively, there are a limited number of sites in Southborough that are sufficiently sized to accommodate at least eight units of housing, the types of housing incentivized by the bylaw do little to diversify the local housing stock, and these provisions are not likely to generate many units as currently written. Should the town be willing to reconsider the mandate that 1/3 of the units be single-family homes (which drive cost and inefficient land use), the preclusion against apartment buildings (with more than four units or common entrances) to allow for small-scale multi-family buildings built at a pedestrian-friendly village scale, and relaxing the base density requirements in certain zoning districts, or any combination of actions thereof, the quality and number of affordable units produced could be increased.

It should also be noted that the inclusionary requirements should be reviewed for conformance with Fair Housing and Civil Rights standards. The preclusion of units serving Low-Income and Extremely Low-Income households from satisfying local affordable housing regulations has a clear exclusionary

effect, and the mandate of 70% local preference, which actually must be justified based on local housing needs and then requested, can create additional fair housing barriers. Removing the local preference mandate and restrictions precluding Low- and Extremely Low-Income households would be advisable.

) Advance local historic preservation and housing objectives by providing a feasible permitting vehicle to allow for the Adaptive Reuse of Historic Structures for residential purposes.

While the town has made some attempt to address the reuse of historic structures for conversion into multi-family housing, the bylaw does not create any mechanism to waive dimensional standards to intensify the use of existing structures – in other words, while an existing lot and structure may be able to support multi-family use given its size and configuration; in the majority of the town, there is a limit of one unit per acre, and as many of these structures are in older areas of town, typically located on smaller lots, the ability to actually utilize the bylaw to create any sort of meaningful project is limited at best. This issue could most easily be addressed by amending the bylaw to address maximum density based on the existing structure and septic capacity, rather than lot size. Particularly as there are already a number of these older structures that were converted prior to the enactment of Southborough’s Zoning Bylaws. Modifying the bylaws to allow for this practice to continue once again would allow for the organic integration of new multifamily housing (albeit in old buildings) that has traditionally existed throughout the town, but can longer be built per regulation.

) Revise Business Village zoning regulations to provide for Mixed-Use buildings including residential uses.

Due to ample discussion regarding a perceived need for mixed-use zoning in Southborough’s downtown, the Town has authorized the Economic Development Committee to obtain grant funds to study that district’s infrastructure capacity and update the zoning. This winter, the EDC put forward an overlay district based on a similar district created for the Town of Grafton but the warrant article was pulled from the warrant. Moving forward, the town may want to formalize its objectives and diagnose the barriers to achieving these objectives within Southborough’s downtown before determining the best zoning strategy. At present, the BV base district zoning is grossly outdated in terms of allowed uses, and the dimensional requirements for residential uses is out of scale for a true village district (due to the requirement for residential uses to follow the dimensional requirements of the RA district). However, the base district has an established board level review process and is generally a functional zoning district. Should residential uses have the same dimensional requirements as other uses in the district, and Section 174-8(c)2 be relaxed to include residential uses for mixed use, these changes could likely yield a handful of village-style apartment units that would be appropriate for some residents.

As Southborough grapples with the issue of mixed use in the downtown, some consideration could be given to a “form-based code” that focuses on the design, site plan, and architectural appearance of the structures, rather than interior uses. Addressing aesthetic issues, rather than focusing on “one size fits all” density and bulk controls, would make the redevelopment of small sites more viable.

) Remove barriers for the provision of true Senior Housing and provide greater ability to create “lifecycle” housing units.

While Southborough’s regulations can be somewhat friendlier toward senior housing (55+), they are not necessarily serving the full spectrum of seniors’ needs. Ranging from active adult to the elderly and infirm – the word “senior” covers forty plus years of life and represents an extremely diverse group of households. Currently the regulations limit the number of household occupants – precluding roommates, caretakers, grandchildren, or other household members that could extend independent living. Such limitations should be removed. Further, the regulations encourage larger single-family homes and duplexes, but do not address nor incentivize accessible units, nor do they authorize apartment buildings that may offer elevators, public common areas, and covered hallways that allow

for socializing and mobility, even in the winter. The physical design of buildings and neighborhoods matter, and some thought needs to be given to serving the needs of more advanced seniors.

For this reason, it is strongly recommended that the town revisit its caps on senior housing units and accessory apartments which limit the number of these types of units as total percentage of the housing stock. Accessory apartments are vital in providing additional life-cycle housing options, and the existing regulations for those are fairly good. However, while there might be a rationale to limit the overall number of senior (55+) housing units as a mechanism to maintain municipal fiscal health, a 7% limit is likely too severe when population projections indicate that one third of Southborough households will be over 65 years of age by 2030. Similarly, a 5% limit on accessory apartments is unenforceable as there is no record of how many of these units have been constructed since 1979. Both provisions should be stricken from the Zoning Bylaw.

- Ensure that parking requirements are commensurate with the size and type of use. The Town's current requirement of three spaces per unit with three or more bedrooms and two spaces per unit with one or two bedrooms is very high. Excessive parking requirements increase the cost of housing development, and in some cases constrain the number of units that a site can accommodate. To reduce development costs and increase the feasibility of the provision of affordable housing, the Town could consider reducing the parking requirements to more commonly used standards that reflect usage and market demand, or adopting a waiver mechanism for some portion of required parking if supported by a Transportation Demand Management Plan.

4. Assist Southborough residents to obtain or maintain housing that they can afford.

Reduce the Property Tax Burden for low income seniors.

A number of exemptions are available to provide tax relief to households who are burdened with property taxes they cannot afford, including seniors, veterans, blind persons, and surviving spouses. Homeowners can apply annually through the Assessor's office for these benefits. While the amount of the tax abatement is small compared with property tax bills, the Senior Tax Deferral (Clause 41A) can enable seniors to defer up to 100% of their property tax payment until the property is sold or the applicant dies. This program can enable seniors to remain in their home at less risk than a private market reverse mortgage. Towns have discretion to set the income limit and interest rate for the deferral program within the parameters of state law; Southborough currently allows participants with incomes up to \$40,000 to defer their taxes at a 4% interest rate. As of 2020, several higher-cost communities have set income limits above \$80,000 for tax deferral, with interest rates as low as 2%.¹⁹ By increasing the income level and promoting the program's availability, Southborough could help more seniors to access property tax relief, making their housing costs more affordable for those on fixed incomes.



The Town can also reduce the property tax burden on single-family homeowners through efforts to shift the local budget toward other sources of revenue. Many communities surrounding Southborough have a split tax rate, charging a higher rate for commercial and industrial properties. A split rate is probably not appropriate for Southborough given the amount of commercial vacancy that exists, and the lack of sewer infrastructure. On the other hand, amending the zoning to create opportunities for improved commercial development or more diverse housing styles can help to offset the tax burden on single-family residences.

¹⁹ Arlington, Acton, Lexington, Somerville, Newton, and Lincoln set 2020 income limits for the 41A Property Tax Deferral Program between \$57,000 and \$88,000, with interest rates ranging from 1.96% to 5%.

Assist first time homebuyers to overcome cost barriers.

With funding through the Housing Trust, down-payment assistance could be provided to income-qualified households. Alternatively, the Town could also establish a “buydown” program, where the Trust subsidizes the cost to purchase a house for an income-qualified buyer in exchange for obtaining a long-term or permanent affordability deed restriction.



Or, in lieu of providing its own programs, the Town could serve as a conduit between prospective first homebuyers and programs aimed at making homeownership accessible to first time homebuyers. These programs range from loans offered through community banks at favorable rates targeted at income eligible households to programs offered through MassHousing (which typically requires the successful completion of an eligible First-Time Homeownership training) and other public and quasi-public agency's range of lending programs. As potential point of first contact, the Town could solicit agencies and lenders for information about these programs and circulate financing resources available to prospective homebuyers.

Rate of Affordable Housing Creation

The Town of Southborough aims to facilitate and encourage the creation and preservation of affordable housing units in order to ensure that the proportion of subsidized housing units reaches and remains over 10% into the next decade. Southborough's SHI is currently just over 8.5 percent. Anticipating an increase in the total number of year-round housing units that will be counted in the 2020 US Census, Southborough aims to facilitate the addition of at least 71 units to the Subsidized Housing Inventory over the next five years through the strategies described above. In order to ensure "safe harbor" in the short term, the Town needs to add 17-18 units to its SHI on an annual basis.

The Town has already approved a Comprehensive Permit for a multifamily development at Park Central, which would create 180 rental apartments. Currently under appeal, if this development moves forward it will bring the Town above the minimum 40B threshold for the foreseeable future. Over five years the Town may obtain another 2-3 units annually through Inclusionary Zoning if recent development trends continue, at an average rate of 20 total units constructed per year. The Town may also add units via the Affordable Housing Trust over the next five years, depending on what strategies or opportunity sites are identified. Given the Town's infrastructure constraints, the most likely opportunities will be small in scale. Without the Park Central project, the Town would likely need to identify alternative sites where a similar type of development would be appropriate in order to meet the Town's affordable housing needs under Chapter 40B.

Appendix 1: 2020 HPP Survey Results

A survey was conducted as part of the Housing Production Plan process to gather input on housing needs and support for the types of strategies that might be considered to meet Southborough's housing needs. The survey was available online, and print copies were provided at the Senior Center. 177 responses were received between January 12 and February 17, 2020. Not all of the respondents answered all of the survey questions.

Part 1: Demographic Information

The first set of questions gathered information about respondents, to gauge how the survey respondents represent Southborough's population overall. It is important to recognize which segments of the population are more or less reflected in the public input received through this planning process.

- Most of the survey respondents are Southborough residents. About 10% are nonresidents who work in Southborough or have some other connection to the town.
- Over half have 1-2 person households, compared to 46% of households in town, according to ACS.
- Survey respondents have a similar household composition to the overall population, in terms of the share of households with children or seniors. The respondents represent a smaller than actual proportion of residents with disabilities.
- Survey respondents were more likely to have middle incomes (between \$50,000 and \$150,000). Very low and very high income households were less represented in the survey responses.
- A comparable share of renters vs. owners responded to the survey.

1. What is your connection to Southborough?

	Responses	% of Responses
I currently live in Southborough.	137	77%
I work in Southborough	20	11%
I live and work in Southborough	16	9%
Other	4	2%

2. How many people are in your household?

	Responses	% of Responses	Actual % of Town ²⁰
1 person	19	11%	19%
2 people	72	41%	26%
3 people	24	14%	19%
4 people	44	25%	26%
5 or more people	16	9%	9%

²⁰ ACS 2017

3. Does your household include any of the following? (select all that apply)

	Responses	% of Responses	Actual % of Households
Children under age 5	18	11%	10%
Children ages 5-17	61	36%	30%
Young adults ages 18-24	24	14%	NA*
Adults ages 25-44	46	27%	NA
Adults ages 45-64	64	38%	NA
Seniors age 65 and over	62	36%	35%
People with disabilities or mobility limitations	10	6%	17%

* ACS does not report whether households include persons aged 18-64, however 8% of residents in town are ages 18-24, 18% are ages 45-64, and 33% are ages 65-64.

4. What income bracket best describes your household?

	Responses	% of Responses	Actual % of Town ²¹
Less than \$50,000	17	10	16%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	20	12	8%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	25	15	9%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	39	23	21%
\$150,000 or higher	68	40	46%

5. Do you rent or own?

	Responses	% of Responses	Actual % of Town
Rent	15	8	11%
Own	157	90	89%
Other	3	2	NA

Part 2: Housing Needs

The following questions are intended to identify your own housing needs relative to housing that is available in Southborough today.

- 25% of respondents indicated that they have unmet housing needs.
- Excessive housing cost and a desire to downsize are most frequently identified as the issues that respondents have with their current housing.
- More than half of the respondents indicated that they anticipate a change in housing over the next 5-10 years.
- A majority of respondents would prefer to own rather than rent, however the share of people who wish to rent is higher than the proportion of rental housing. (25% of prospective home seekers would be renters, compared with 11% of existing housing units). Single-family homes are the most sought after, followed by condominiums or townhouses, while a significant share seek senior housing and/or single level or accessible units. Two bedrooms is the size most frequently desired, followed by three bedrooms.

²¹ ACS 2017

- About two-thirds of the respondents who anticipate changing housing in the next 5-10 years indicate that they cannot find housing in Southborough that meets their needs, with the most frequent reason given that housing too expensive.

6. Does your current housing meet your needs?

	Responses	% of Responses
Yes	127	75%
No	42	25%

7. If you answered no to the previous question, why not? (select all that apply)

Total respondents: 48	Responses	% of Responses
Mortgage/rent/property taxes are too expensive for me	28	58%
House is bigger than I need/hard to maintain	21	44%
House is too small	9	19%
The location is inconvenient – would like to be closer to work, family, or other needs	6	13%
My house is not handicapped accessible	5	10%
House is shared; I or other members of my household would prefer to have separate housing	4	8%
Other (please specify)	4	8%
House is unsafe due to its condition	0	0%

8. Will you be seeking to change your housing situation in the next 5-10 years?

	Responses	% of Responses
Yes	94	56%
No	73	44%

9. If you answered yes to the previous question, what best describes what you be looking for? (check all that apply)

Total respondents: 95	Responses	% of Responses		Responses	% of Responses
Single-family house	50	53%	Rent	10	11%
Condominium, townhouse, or duplex	44	46%	Own	34	36%
Apartment	14	15%	1 bedroom	5	5%
Congregate living or room rental	0	0%	2 bedrooms	28	29%
Single Level or accessible	25	26%	3 bedrooms	19	20%
55+ or senior housing	31	33%	4+ bedrooms	10	11%
Other	6	6%			

10. If you do not currently own or rent a home in Southborough, or anticipate moving away from Southborough, what best describes your experience? (Select all that apply)

Total respondents: 61	Responses	% of Responses
I cannot find housing in Southborough within my price range	39	64%
I cannot find housing in Southborough that is suitable for my needs	16	26%
I have not tried to find housing in Southborough	11	18%
Other	10	16%

Part 3. Housing Goals and Strategies

Please indicate the degree to which you would support goals and policies that address Southborough's housing needs:

- The highest priority among survey respondents is to provide housing for low income residents with incomes between \$50,000-\$75,000 (roughly 50-80% of AMI). Many would also prioritize moderate income households, who may not qualify for SHI housing but cannot afford market rate housing in Southborough. There is weaker support for prioritizing very low income households (with incomes below \$50,000 or roughly 50% of AMI).
- Respondents affirmed all of the suggested housing goals, with the most strongly emphasized goal being to create viable options for seniors to remain in Southborough. There is also strong agreement with minimizing impacts and ensuring compatible design.
- Of the suggested types of strategies to support affordable housing, exploring options to improve wastewater infrastructure in the village center areas receives the strongest support, followed by developing affordable housing on Town-owned property.

11. Do you feel that it is a priority for Southborough to increase the availability of housing that is affordable for people of different income levels?

	Low	Moderate	High	Not Sure	Weighted Average
Low Income (\$50,000 to \$75,000)	19%	23%	50%	7%	2.33
Moderate Income (\$75,000 to \$120,000)	21%	32%	39%	8%	2.20
Very Low Income (below \$50,000)	34%	19%	35%	12%	2.01
High Income (\$120,000 or higher)	66%	17%	8%	9%	1.37

12. Please indicate whether you would support the following housing goals:

	Disagree or Strongly Disagree	Agree or Strongly Agree	Not Sure	Weighted Average
Create viable options for older adults to remain in Southborough as their housing needs change.	7%	89%	5%	3.56
Minimize impacts of new development on priority areas for open space, conservation, and natural resource protection.	15%	77%	8%	3.33
Support design of housing development that is compatible with neighborhood context and enhances the community's development patterns.	6%	84%	10%	3.31
Create entry level housing opportunities.	19%	77%	4%	3.13
Reinforce Southborough's economic goals by expanding housing choices.	16%	71%	13%	3.10
Prioritize production of permanently affordable units.	19%	67%	14%	3.00

13. Would you support the following types of strategies to address Southborough's housing needs?

(Indicate strongly disagree/disagree/agree/strongly agree/not sure)

	Disagree or Strongly Disagree	Agree or Strongly Agree	Not Sure	Weighted Average
Explore wastewater infrastructure improvements in village center areas to promote housing and economic development.	14%	75%	11%	3.13
Facilitate development of affordable housing on town-owned property.	25%	56%	19%	2.82
Modify zoning to allow for more diverse neighborhood-scale forms of housing in appropriate locations.	29%	60%	11%	2.79
Identify areas appropriate for multifamily zoning or Chapter 40B development.	25%	65%	10%	2.76
Acquire existing houses to convert to affordable housing	35%	49%	16%	2.67

Open Ended Responses

9. What best describes the housing you are looking for?

- J Another town with lower taxes and services that Southborough does not offer. Trash pick up for one.
- J Any option that is really affordable for active 80+
- J Better transportation to Boston
- J Lower taxes
- J Not quite sure

10. What best describes your experience seeking housing in Southborough?

- J Closer to Wellesley, where we moved here from
- J downsizing
- J I am unhappy with the increased development and priorities of Town. Now too much traffic, no longer rural or pastoral, taxes too high for services I receive.
- J I lived in Southboro most of my life. I live in Northboro. Location ,location.
- J Outgrew the town, kids will be in college.
- J Retired and moved after living in Southborough since 1972.
- J Tired of the Southborough hassle.
- J We are happy in our house in Southborough.
- J Would like a functional downtown--restaurants, shops, etc.

14. Would you like to share further comments about Southborough's housing needs and priorities?

- J I get many calls from seniors who had previously had affordable rentals in town, then when their home/building changes ownership or for whatever reason, the rent goes up and the senior is left with virtually no options. Senior income based housing now has waiting lists and a new preference system, so people would languish without housing, on the list for as long as two years or more. There is no market rent units available in this area that are affordable for a person on a fixed income such as SS or the like. I have seen a significant uptick in calls looking for housing.
- J Aside from allowing younger people who grew up in Southborough to remain here, I do not see how 40b's have had any positive impact on the town in terms. No visible sign of increased tax revenue that lowers or holds the tax rate, increased traffic and more demand on town services.
- J Build on Strengths. Southborough should not try to be like every other town.
- J Development of the Downtown including mixed use development (retail/residential) would improve the Downtown and create diversity in housing stock. In addition to a lack of viable low-income options, there is also a shortage of "middle-market" homes. Almost all new construction is \$1M+ single homes. I would like to see more housing stock in the \$500-\$600K range to allow for young families to afford to move in.
- J Do not let Eversource run the 16" natural gas pipeline!
- J Get to the statutory minimum and stop. We do not need the drag and increased costs.
- J Housing and the right to housing is important to me. I am glad you are taking this initiative. However I have two comments I'd like to make. First I believe environmental sustainability should be built into any tax payer investment. Additionally I feel that funding these programs through increased taxes is not a sustainable option. With property taxes already high they represent a constraint on housing and affordability. Investments made towards affordable housing should not further separate people or raise the bar for being able to afford to live here. Affordable housing should for some be a long term solution but for younger families it should be a ladder to economic growth. However the ladder can't have a huge gap in the middle.
- J I don't believe it is necessary to keep building to create more diversified housing.

- J I have grown up here in Southborough and was fortunate to have family land otherwise I would never have moved here based on high taxes and lack of services. I do strongly agree that our educational system is the best around and I my children were a product of the fine education. I really think that the town needs more business for taxing purposes without changing the overall appearance of the rural town.
- J I would love to stay in Southborough. We need a facility like the Willows in Westborough.
- J It is virtually impossible for a parent to get divorced in Southborough and then to remain in Southborough on one-income.
- J It's crucial and vital not to turn Southborough into another Marlboro Ashland Framingham and Hopkinton. Why ruin this wonderful and lovely Town of ours. Open space and land Conservation should be the priorities.
- J Less liquor stores. "Mixed use" developments are nice. Downtown is in need of renovation.
- J Maintain the current character of the town-more open space.
- J My husband and I are owners of a (rare) affordable condo here in Southborough. We never could have afforded to own or rent in this town outside of this opportunity that we qualified for. We are a two-earner household with no children and are not low income (under \$45,000) yet we do not earn enough between our three jobs to afford to live in this community (Southborough or surrounding area despite having grown up nearby). There is a lot of fear and distrust from the community about what "Affordable" homes offer, who benefits, and what the upside is to the town (other than compliance with state goals). A campaign to better inform the public about what the added benefit is to having a more diverse economic population would be helpful. People think that affordable homeowners are getting something for "free" (we're not). My impression from Southborough residents is they "worked and earned their way into affording" to live here which is neither welcoming nor appreciative of the contributions that single people, divorced parents (who want to stay near kids), small business owners, teachers, young professionals, teachers, widowers bring to the community. Being able to live and own this affordable home has brought tremendous stability to our lives. It has allowed me to start a 2nd business. It has enabled me to be a caregiver for my 93 year old grandmother who lives alone in the next town. It has allowed me to base my business here in Metrowest and expand it with the confidence that I know where I will be living for the next decade-plus. It has allowed me to make stronger connections to the local area because I was able to establish my business here--not create it here and commute from 90 minutes away. Being able to have this stability from owning an affordable home has brought immeasurable opportunity to my family--a place to have roots, a place to grow, a place to thrive. When I read comments about 40B on MySouthborough.com it is never a comment written in a positive light. Better education about what the benefit to ALL in town of having 40B housing is really needed. Now, we don't have kids (therefore don't use the school system) but I've observed what has happened with the extreme growth of Legacy Farms area in Hopkinton which has brought havoc upon Hopkinton's schools, traffic, resources. Legacy Farms provides hundreds of townhouses (not affordable) and instead of being starter homes for small families, single people, divorced families, it has ended up flooding the system with lots of families with multiple kids per household (and multi-generational families, therefore more people per household than anticipated). I would love Southborough to learn from other Town's challenges and create a clearer vision for what will really work here.
- J Our town is too opposed to bringing in commercial business and taxes and spending is too high. For young families and older folks, affordable housing is hard to come by.
- J Please reduce the tax. need more shopping complexes, need more MBTA parking space, need town buses to connect to Framingham & Boston
- J SB has tried to meet 40B requirements but developers have sought to take advantage of 40B regulators for THEIR advantage not the benefit of SB residents.
- J Seems like there's hardly an open space for building given all the cheap McMansions you've allowed to string up all over town. If you're going to be building affordable housing, please stick to nicely built, attractive condos/ townhomes in the same style as the surrounding neighborhood that are ATTRACTIVE (not overly boxy), or that at least come in different styles and colors unlike the recent construction at the end of Parkerville. We have not been impressed with the cheap, boxy, ugly, cookie cutter McMansions you've allowed to be built all over town. New developments should also be open to existing homes--this is an open, friendly, ungated community.
- J The town desperately needs housing for the empty nesters who either are not yet old enough for 55+ housing or do not want to live in 55 plus housing. Open space developments with reduced frontage and area requirements will definitely be needed in order meet these goals.
- J To reduce cars need sufficient density and trash pickup.
- J Too many lifelong residents are forced to move away because they can no longer afford a place here due to lack of affordable apartments and condos (under \$400,000) and high taxes
- J We are in our 80's and built our home in 1971, almost 50 years! We are in need of lower real estate taxes based on our age and longevity of ownership. Please help us stay in our home without the high tax burden that we have paid faithfully every year for 49 years. We should receive a SENIOR RATE to allow us the privilege of living in our home! Again, PLEASE HELP US AND THANK YOU

- J We need multi-family zoning by right.
- J We need to address not only housing, but the commercial tax base. Increasing the commercial tax revenue will help alleviate any increase to the residential tax base. Encourage commercial development within the Downtown, the villages, and Route 9!
- J While there is a need to increase affordable housing, this town continues to become unaffordable for many with the astronomical increases in property taxes that don't always match up with salary increases. Also, with the introduction of affordable housing, they should be more aesthetically pleasing. The development at Stonebrook is hideous and does not belong where it was built. High density projects should be built along route 9. I also do not think apartment complexes are the answer.
- J Would like to see more affordable middle class-level option but at same time maintain culture of Southborough.

Appendix 2: SHOPC Priority Action Checklist

SHORT TERM ACTIONS

- 1 Address Senior Tax Deferral Program and Other Potential Exemptions.
 - 1. **Meet with assessor to determine locally available property tax reduction programs.** Senior tax deferrals, small business tax exemptions, exemptions for disabled veterans, and other options may be available.
 - 2. **Review eligibility requirements to ensure they are appropriate.** Eligibility requirements for the senior tax deferrals and other exemptions are locally adopted. Annual review to ensure these options are reaching meeting local needs should be conducted.
 - 3. **Market the availability of tax relief programs to their target demographic.** Work with local partners to promote their availability for households who may benefit from it.

- 2 Work with the AHT to develop a 5-Year Strategic Plan to facilitate more predictable funding.
 - 1. **Collect information for core action plan requirements:**
 -) Budgetary Projections, Funding Needs, and Requests
 -) Prioritization of Funding Needs
 -) Prioritization of Affordable Housing Actions
 -) Criteria for Funding Activities
 -) Routine & Long-Term Funding Goals
 - 2. **Determine responsibility for the drafting of the plan.** Most Affordable Housing Trust Action Plans can be done in-house. However, many trusts do utilize a portion of their funds to obtain technical assistance to undertake the strategic planning process and creation of the draft and final plans.
 - 3. **Adopt the plan jointly between the Affordable Housing Trust and SHOPC.** Ensuring local buy-in from both entities is critical in the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

- 3 Increase volunteer training opportunities to augment existing capacity and technical expertise.
 - 1. **Request support from the Town's Planning Staff to increase awareness of training opportunities.** SHOPC could request town staff forward advertisements for trainings and technical support offerings by organizations such as the Citizens' Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA), and the Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP) that are typically advertised through direct emails and listservs.
 - 2. **Request funds to support volunteer training.** While there are many free or low-cost training opportunities, most affordable housing trainings are offered at some cost to the participant, ranging from fairly nominal amounts to several hundred or even thousand dollars. Supporting those who wish to receive training but cannot necessarily afford to do so through scholarships could be considered.

- 4 Develop clear guidance for the development community regarding what types and styles of housing that would be desirable in Southborough to make permitting more predictable.
- 1. **Determine the scope and expanse of the guidelines.** If they are to be heavily architectural in nature, consider whether it might be beneficial to engage the services of an architect or other design professional to help develop, illustrate, or otherwise communicate design concepts.
 - 2. **Set clear standards and guidelines.** The clearer the standards are and the most accessible they are to the development community drastically increases the likelihood that developers will attempt to propose projects that are in keeping with those guidelines.
 - 3. **Support proposals that meet these guidelines.** Where many housing development proposals languish, it is due to a lack of public support. SHOPC could work as a critical voice in fostering an environment that is supportive of affordable housing and increases the reliability in permitting for worthy projects.
- 5 Identify potential partners who have land and/or buildings that could be potential sites for affordable housing and initiate communication with property owners/mangers. Properties that could be potential sites for affordable housing, such as the private schools, religious and fraternal organizations, and underutilized commercial sites could offer opportunities for collaboration.
- 1. **Create a list of sites anecdotally known to potentially be available or have potential for SHOPC'S internal use.** SHOPC members have considerable local knowledge of sites, particularly those that are privately held and have wastewater capacity, that might be of some utility for affordable housing purposes.
 - 2. **Prioritize owners to contact.** Using local knowledge, prioritize which owners to contact based on suitability of sites and perceived willingness for collaboration.
 - 3. **Cultivate relationships with property owners.** Work to understand their needs as well as those of the Town to better understand how to support and facilitate the creation of affordable housing on a case-by-case basis.
- 6 □ Initiate connection with organizations who could be potential partners for affordable housing projects. Habitat for Humanity, Neighborhood of Affordable Housing, Inc. (NOAH), The Community Builders (TCB), and SMOC and other entities could be potential partners. Outreach should include discussion to determine the availability of funding, development opportunities or other Town resources, as the Town's goals and preferences.

ONGOING ACTIONS

- 1 □ Prepare monthly or quarterly (depending on capacity) updates for the Town's website, social media and local news resources. These updates should inform the public about housing goals and initiatives and to dispel misinformation about affordable housing.
- 2 □ Support Zoning Changes that will Facilitate Affordable Housing Development. Coordinate with Town Planner and appropriate boards and committees to encourage and track the implementation of zoning amendments and infrastructure improvements to facilitate housing development.