

# MASTER PLAN TOWN OF NORTH BROOKFIELD 2022



*My family has lived here for over 30 years. Our town is a beautiful place. My hope is we keep it that way. In today's world it is a blessing to live in such a caring town - Town Resident*

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## **Introduction**

This Master Plan represents a plan for the next 5 to 10 years for the Town of North Brookfield. It is intended as a guide to be used by the town to achieve the plans outlined herein. It contains both overall and detail goals in separate areas that together form a vision of where we are at this moment, what we perceive as what may need to be improved or started, and finally a description what we hope the town will be like in 5 to 10 years. The process has included meetings with all of the major departments and committees within the town, many hours of meetings by the Master Plan Committee, public forums to gather comments, opinions and ideas from interested people in town, and a town-wide survey to record specific opinions about town. All of these activities are invaluable to the town for the following reasons:

- The process of creating and writing a Master Plan provides clarity for the town.
- If capital is needed from outside sources, investors want to see a plan that demonstrates a solid understanding and vision for the town.
- The plan will help prioritize the projects, goals, and priorities that are most important.
- The plan provides a common understanding of the vision for future town leaders.

The Master Plan Committee started in late 2019, worked through all of 2020, 2021 and most of the year 2022. Our plans, and how we carried them out during these times has changed dramatically during this process due to the COVID pandemic. We appreciate the efforts of everyone on the Master Plan Committee and all of those who participated, in person, by email, and by virtual meetings.

In addition to our work on the Master Plan, the committee also worked on developing a new Open Space and Recreation Plan for North Brookfield. It is a separate document with information about wetlands, forest and field areas, recreation areas and rivers and streams, all of which are very important to life and living in North Brookfield.

### **The History of North Brookfield**

Quaboag Plantation was incorporated in 1673. The original settlement suffered severely from Indian raids, and King Philip's War left only one house standing. Brookfield was incorporated in 1718 as a part of Worcester County. Eventually, the growing north precinct petitioned the State legislature for separate town status, due in large part to the distances that were required to participate in town functions, and to attend church. In February of 1812 the Town of North Brookfield was incorporated, with a population of 1,100. The major occupation of the newly formed community was agriculture. Other businesses included gristmills, a tannery, cider mill, gunsmith, and a cobbler.

Rufus Putnam, one of George Washington's chief engineers during the Revolution, served his apprenticeship in the town as a millwright at the Matthews Fulling Mills from 1754 to 1757. The Matthews Mills were themselves a tribute to 18th century engineering, since they included several canals and tunnels which made the natural glacial kettle holes in the area part of a mill ponding complex for the fulling mill. The town avoided the deadly smallpox epidemics of the 1770's by inoculating over 200 people with weakened smallpox virus. People came from as far away as Worcester to receive the inoculations of the experimental vaccine from North Attleborough physicians, Dr. Thomas and Dr. Kittredge, and then to convalesce through a mild form of the disease in small hospitals that the town built on the outskirts of the community.

Along with its neighboring towns, North Brookfield sent 150 Minutemen to the Battle of Lexington and Concord. But they also demonstrated against the government they had helped create when residents of North Brookfield were involved in Shays Rebellion in 1780, holding meetings in town and hiding their weapons at Ayre's Tavern, one of the oldest buildings in town.

In 1810 the manufacture of "factory made" shoes began, starting an industry, which profoundly altered the Town's history. In 1824 Tyler Batchelor also began a shoe factory, which grew rapidly. By the mid 1800's North Brookfield was the largest manufacturer of shoes in the country, shipping products throughout the United States, and provided a large portion of the footwear to the Union Army during the Civil War. Between 1840 and 1880 other companies began the manufacture of lasts, wooden boxes, corsets, pocket books, and other leather goods, but shoe manufacturing remained the major industry. The population steadily increased during this time of prosperity. Agriculture was still a major activity in 1875 there were 175 farms and orchards. North Brookfield was (and to some extent still is) isolated due to its location. In 1876 the North Brookfield Railroad opened, connecting to East Brookfield and the Boston & Albany Railroad. The Town now had a bank, three churches, a library, Town hall, two hotels, and a number of retail establishments. The railroad made the town more accessible and the population increased to 4,587 by the year 1900.

Prosperity ended as management closed the shoe mills in 1900 after a long strike. Population immediately dropped off as workers moved in search of employment, and many houses and tenements were left vacant. Some mills were torn down, and others stood empty for a number of years.

In 1916 Herbert Mason purchased the remaining Batchelor shoe factory buildings and Quabaug Rubber, a manufacturer of rubber soles and heels for shoes. In 1918 the Asbestos Textile Company took over the buildings on Grove and School Street. This was the end of the economic decay in town, and after reaching a population low of approximately 2600, North Brookfield began a slow but steady growth in population that continues to day. In the 1940's the Cooke Optical Company took over a building on Summer Street previously owned by a succession of enterprises, and another optical firm, Optovac, began in 1965. Quabaug Rubber has grown substantially, as the United States manufacturer for Vibram soles; it has become the largest employer in Town.

There were no paved roads in Town until 1910 when the road to New Braintree was paved. Over the years the Town has added 60 miles of pavement, leaving about 10 miles of gravel roads. Both of the Town's hotels (Morrison's on Forest Street and the Batchelor House on North Main Street) were destroyed by fire in the 1920's.

A major change in North Brookfield in the past fifty years (like much of New England) has been the decline of the farming industry. In the 1930's there were three large chicken farms in Town, shipping young chicks all over the eastern United States. The last one closed its doors in 1990. In 1972 North Brookfield had twenty working farms. Today there are eight, several of which are operated on a part time basis. Luckily, while activity has declined or ceased on many farms, most owners have thus far been reasonably successful at maintaining the large tracts of farm and woodlands. However, with agriculture in the northeast still in decline, and large tracts of developable land becoming fewer, they are certainly at risk for development of non-farm uses. The largest agricultural operation remaining in Town is the Brookfield Orchards.

Nineteenth century American poet William Cullen Bryant, lived in North Brookfield when he prepared for college with his uncle, the minister in town for 64 years. Bates Observatory was given to the town in the 1890's and on a clear day, townspeople say, you can see all the way to Boston. George M. Cohan, actor, producer and playwright, was a frequent visitor to town when he came to stay with his grandparents. In the summer of 1934, the town honored both Cohan and Connie Mack, another former resident. The stage of the present Town House was the site of a performance of "Ah, Wilderness," with the original New York cast directed by Cohan. The Philadelphia Athletics played an exhibition baseball game in town against the Quabaug Rubber company team, with Quabaug being the victors as townspeople are quick to note.

## Regional Locus Map

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## Town Government Facilities and Services

This chapter of the Master Plan presents a general description of North Brookfield's town government, municipal facilities and services. For this chapter, each department head was interviewed and information was collected regarding organizational structure, staffing, budget, responsibilities, equipment, facilities, programs offered and future capital needs. Before beginning an in-depth analysis of each municipal department, it is important to understand the source of the Town revenue and the tax implications for North Brookfield households (local tax rate, average single family home tax bill, average single-family home assessed valuation, and local tax levies).

**Table TG-1**  
**Local Tax Rates – Year 2021**

North		East	New		West	
<u>Brookfield</u>	<u>Brookfield</u>	<u>Brookfield</u>	<u>Braintree</u>	<u>Oakham</u>	<u>Spencer</u>	<u>Brookfield</u>
\$15.74	\$17.99	\$14.83	\$17.47	\$13.02	\$14.04	\$14.03

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue. Tax rate is per \$1,000 of assessed valuation.

North Brookfield's 2021 tax rate fell somewhere in the middle when compared to its neighbors. While not nearly as high as Brookfield's tax rate (\$17.99 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation), it was not as low as the Oakham tax rate (\$13.02).

**Table TG-2**  
**Average Single Family Tax Bill - Year 2021**

North		East	New		West	
<u>Brookfield</u>	<u>Brookfield</u>	<u>Brookfield</u>	<u>Braintree</u>	<u>Oakham</u>	<u>Spencer</u>	<u>Brookfield</u>
\$3725	\$4365	\$3559	\$4747	\$2132	\$3797	\$3781

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue.

Again, North Brookfield's 2021 average single-family home tax bill falls somewhere in the middle when compared to its neighbors: not nearly as high as the New Braintree average tax bill, but not as low as the Oakham average tax bill. Worth noting is that North Brookfield's average single-family home tax bill has increased significantly over the last TEN years: the year 2012 average tax bill was \$2,854, and this figure has increased to \$3725 by 2021 (an increase of 30%). The increase when viewed over the last 20 years is even more dramatic,

with the average tax bill **more than doubling** over this timeframe, rising from \$2,213 in 1990 to \$3725 by 2021. North Brookfield’s neighbors also experienced a steady rise in their average single-family home tax bills over the last 20 years.

**Table TG-3**  
**Average Assessed Valuation Per Single Family Home - Year 2021**

North	East		New			West
<u>Brookfield</u>	<u>Brookfield</u>	<u>Brookfield</u>	<u>Braintree</u>	<u>Oakham</u>	<u>Spencer</u>	<u>Brookfield</u>
\$236,673	\$242,616	\$260,249	\$271,743	\$290,069	\$270,422	\$269,490

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue.

North Brookfield’s 2021 average assessed valuation per single family home is the lowest of its neighbors. The Central Massachusetts region and the eastern regions of the State have seen a rise in the average single family home valuation and North Brookfield is no exception. The Town’s average assessed valuation per single family home has changed **very little** in the last fifteen years, rising from \$217,856 in 2006 to \$236,673 in 2021 (an increase of 8%). In the last several years the town started to experience an increase in new home activity, which we have seen increases tax levies, but also increases town services expenses even more.

The following table identifies the source of North Brookfield’s revenue from Local Tax Levies.

**Table TG-4**  
**Local Tax Levies - Year 2021**

	Taxes -	Taxes -	Taxes -	Personal	Res. as % of
<u>Community</u>	<u>Residential</u>	<u>Commercial</u>	<u>Industrial</u>	<u>Property</u>	<u>Total Taxes</u>
<b>North Brookfield</b>	\$6,384,965	\$273,539	\$175,876	\$299,255	89.5%
Brookfield	\$5,085,075	\$188,026	\$51,102	\$153,186	92.8%
East Brookfield	\$3,587,681	\$226,157	\$52,463	\$187,311	88.5%
New Braintree	\$1,944,985	\$91,208	\$9,526	\$50,801	92.8%
Oakham	\$2,855,934	\$73,851	\$16,789	\$169,443	91.7%
Spencer	\$14,957,656	\$887,622	\$615,168	\$748,442	86.9%
West Brookfield	\$5,759,347	\$215,348	\$123,486	\$313,535	89.8%

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue.

The general rule in municipal finance is that towns are considered to be “bedroom communities” if they derive more than 90% of their total tax revenue from residential property taxes. North Brookfield fits this profile, and so do all of its neighbors with the exception of Spencer (which is very close). In terms of actual tax dollars raised Spencer raises the most across the board, largely due to having the largest population of the compared communities.



It should be noted that residential property taxes are covering an ever-larger percentage of the North Brookfield's total tax base. Thus, North Brookfield has increased its dependence on residential property taxes to fund its municipal government and this continues to explain the significant rise in the average single-family home tax bill.



## **Public School System:**

### **Organization:**

North Brookfield Public Schools are a PreK-12 stand-alone system that serves approximately 564 students. There is a five-person elected School Committee that oversees the system and is responsible for setting policy, developing the annual budget, and hiring and evaluating the Superintendent of Schools. The Superintendent of Schools oversees day-to-day operations of the schools and is supported by the Administrative Team including the Director of Student Services, Director of Curriculum, Director of Technology, Facilities Supervisor, and the Principals of the North Brookfield Elementary School and the North Brookfield Jr/Sr High School.

### **Budget:**

The 2019 Fiscal Year Budget was \$8,382,194.00. The funding for the School Department Budget comes from a number of sources, including the State (Chapter 70 Funds), the town in the form of property taxes, Grants (State, Federal, Private), Reimbursements, and Revolving accounts. Each of these sources provides some percentage of the funding. In addition, there are a number of organizations that regularly donate time, money, and talent in support of our schools. They include the PTO, the Special Education Parent Advisory Council, and the Sports Boosters.

The following table provides a financial comparison between North Brookfield and its neighbors:

**Table TG-7  
Per Pupil Expenditures Year**

<b>District</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Per Pupil</b>
North Brookfield	564	\$8,382,194.00	\$14,859.00
Spencer-East Brookfield	1397	\$22,057,041.00	\$15,780.00
Quaboag	1342	\$18,483,918.00	\$13,772.00
Quabbin	2209	\$33,410,621.00	\$15,121.00
Ware	1191	\$17,448,670.00	\$14,647.00

### **Facilities:**

The North Brookfield School System currently consists of two schools: North Brookfield Elementary School and North Brookfield Jr/Sr High School. Both are located on the same 62.5 acre campus located at 10 New School Drive, just off Oakham Road (Route 148) north of the downtown area. In addition to the two school buildings, the campus has a large parking lot with a 156 car capacity and a smaller parking lot with a 48 car

capacity, a playground, athletic fields (softball, soccer, 3 baseball fields (2 little league and 1 full size), 2 tennis courts, an outdoor basketball court, and a high ropes course. A brief description of the two school buildings can be found below:

	<b>North Brookfield Elementary School</b>	<b>North Brookfield Jr/Sr High School</b>
<b>Built</b>	1972	2004
<b>Size</b>	83,000 Square Feet	83,000 Square Feet
<b>Capacity</b>	400 Students	500 Students
<b>Grade Levels Served</b>	PreK - Grade 6	Grades 7 - 12
<b>Space</b>	30 Classrooms, Gymnasium Auditorium, Cafeteria and Kitchen	29 Classrooms, Gymnasium Cafeteria and Kitchen, Presentation Room
<b>Specialty Spaces</b>	Computer Lab, Art Room	3 Computer Labs, Art Room Band Room, Shop
<b>Additional Information</b>	Superintendent's Office Office of Student Services	



#### Capital Needs:

The two school buildings and the campus is in relatively good condition, although the Elementary School is approaching 50 years old and the Jr/Sr High School is 17 years old. With the age of the two buildings, general maintenance and upkeep is necessary and a plan to replace some of the larger systems is needed. The only major work that has been completed on the Jr/Sr High School since its opening is the replacement of the boilers in 2007-2008. The Elementary School has had several large projects over the past 15 years, including the installation of a new roof in 2018-19, windows in 2010-11, boilers in 2006-07, the oil tank in 2008, and the fire alarm in 2009.

Moving forward over the next 10 years there are a variety of capital needs that need to be addressed:

- Repave the parking lot/driveways
- Replace the playground
- Renovate the athletic fields
- Replace the Boiler Burners at both schools
- Upgrade the Jr/Sr High School Emergency Generator
- Repair/Replace the flooring in various locations at the Jr/Sr High School
- Renovate the Auditorium at the Elementary School
- Update the Classrooms and Hallways at the Elementary School
- Various HVAC, plumbing, and electrical needs at both schools
- Replace Buildings and Grounds Equipment including the dump truck, lawn mower, pickup truck, and the tractor.

## **Highway Department:**

### Organization:

The Board of Selectmen appoints the Highway Superintendent, who manages the Department.

### Staff:

The Highway Department consists of six full-time employees, including the Superintendent. The staff is composed of three heavy equipment operators, a mechanic, a driver/laborer and one part-time administrative assistant.

### Budget:

Currently the Highway Department has an annual operating budget of \$626,188, raised locally as part of the general fund. In addition to this, State, Chapter 90 state funds, of approximately \$309,880 are used for road repair and resurfacing, sidewalks, storm-drain repair/maintenance and construction equipment purchases.

### Equipment

2018 Elgin Street Sweeper  
2018 Mack 10-Wheeler  
2017 F450 w/sander  
2010 544K John Deer Loader  
2008 Trackless Sidewalk Plow & Leaf Blower  
2006 Sander/Dumper  
2006 Whacker Vibratory Roller and trailer  
2005 Sander Dump truck  
2003 Backhoe  
2001 1 Ton Pickup Truck  
2000 F350 with Sander  
2000 Sander Dump Truck  
2000 Mower Tractor  
1999 Dump Truck  
1997 John Deere Grader  
1997 Street Sweeper  
1995 Front End Loader

## Facilities:

The Town's Highway Barn is located on School Street. It was converted from an old school in 1957 and has not received any substantial upgrades since the conversion, with the exception of redoing the roof in 2004. There are also two steel containers on the property that are used for storage. The facility is not large enough to house all of the Department's equipment and some it resides outside by necessity. The building is not airtight and loses a lot of heat. The heating system and boiler are in poor shape. The Department also has a salt shed on Donovan Road on town-owned property, which has the capacity to house 500 yards of material.

## Duties:

The Department's primary responsibility is road maintenance for approximately 82 miles of roadways in town, including the State roads that pass thru town (Routes 67 & 148). The Department also clears sidewalks in the downtown area, fixes road signs, mows and trims along roadsides, removes rubbish for town-owned properties and cleans catch basins. The Department oversees the construction of new roads in subdivisions to make sure they will meet the Town's roadway standards. The Department will participate in reviewing large-scale subdivision plans at the request of the Planning Board in conjunction with the Building Inspector and other municipal department heads.

## Issues Facing the Department:

- o The Highway, Water, and Sewer Departments could better improve efforts in coordinating activities and effectively using resources such as manpower and equipment usage.
- o Roadside drainage is a significant problem in town. Ditches scattered throughout town and problem areas identified still suffer severe overflow during heavy rain and storm events.
- o The current location of the Highway Department does not have expansion potential and an alternative highway facility is needed. The town has purchased the building and land next to the salt shed area on the south side of town, previously owned by Hucks. The Department hope to move to the new location some time in 2022. This will provide much needed more modern space.
- o The Highway Department has assumed the work of the tree warden and the past year has been overwhelmed by rain and wind storms damaging tree all over town. The department does hire outside tree companies as needed.

## Upcoming Capital Needs:

The Department will include sidewalk repaving and replacement of signage as part of its roadway repaving projects. The Department would also like to bring stormwater pipes and drains out of yards and into the main roads for better stormwater collection.

The Department would also like to update the drainage systems along several local roads, including extensive work on the catch basins. Lastly, the Department would like to eliminate all open ditches and replace them with underground drainage structures. It is anticipated that Chapter 90 funds will be used to pay for the majority of the work.

## **Water Department**

### Organization:

A three-member Board of Commissioners manages the Water Department. The Commissioners are elected to three-year terms. The Board meets on a monthly basis. The Water Superintendent is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Department and is appointed by the Board of Commissioners.

### Staff:

The Department consists of the Water Superintendent, three Operators and a part-time (30 hours a week-with benefits) Administrative Assistant.

### Budget:

For the 2020 Fiscal Year, the Department had an operating budget of \$921,421, with an offset amount of \$111,534 from the Mass. Water Pollution Abatement Trust. Water customers pay for the system's operation, however, the Water Department is not considered an "enterprise system" in the classic sense. The Department's budget is classified under Chapter 41, Section 69B of the Mass General Laws. The water users fund the entire water budget but the Department is not allowed to keep their earned interest. This interest goes back into the general fund. Any major piece of capital equipment is usually requested through an Article on the Warrant at the annual Town Meeting. Customer billing is done bi-annually.

#### Facilities:

The Department's main facility is located on Bell Road. This facility contains the water treatment plant and a 1.5 million gallon storage tank. The pumping station is located at 4 Oakham Road.

#### Equipment:

The Department's equipment consists of two vehicles: a 2017 F-250 pickup truck (fair condition) and a 2019 F-150 pickup truck (excellent condition).

#### System Description:

The water system makes use of the Horse (North) Pond reservoir as its water supply source. The water treatment plant has the capacity to treat up to two million gallons per day (gpd), but the system typically uses roughly 404,000 gpd. The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has permitted a water withdrawal of up to 433,000 gpd. The reservoir can actually provide a safe yield of 500,000 gpd. Doane Pond can be used as an emergency water supply source, and there is also an interconnection with the East Brookfield water system that can be used in emergencies, but this interconnection only provides for water service to roughly 200 homes in the vicinity of Lake Lashaway. The treatment plant treats for turbidity, color, corrosion control and disinfection. The water distribution system consists of 28 miles of pipes and 228 hydrants. Many of the system's pipes are over 110 years old. A map of the water system's distribution area can be found on the following page.

There are 1299 service connections that supply water to approximately 3900 residents of North Brookfield, around 85% of the town's population. Meters have been in place for the last twenty years and all water customers are metered. The most recent water audit found that the system has 14% of its water unaccounted for. While this is a very high percentage of unaccounted for water, the Department instituted an extensive leak detection program in 2005 that allowed the Department to identify and fix many of the most severe leaks. It is anticipated that the system's percentage of unaccounted for water will decrease substantially during the next water audit, as well as the amount of water the system uses on a daily basis. While the Department fixes pipes as they break, it also has an infrastructure management plan that contains a three-year pipe replacement schedule.

The Department owns a small amount of land around the reservoir and along the North Brook Canal. A portion of the land in the watershed is in the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program that allows the land to be used for farming, but much of the land around the reservoir is not restricted in any way. The Department is working with Massachusetts Rural Water Association and abutting landowners to develop a Source Water Protection Plan and a Water Protection District bylaw that will be brought before voters at a future Town Meeting. The Water Commissioners have not established a definitive service system and are not currently looking for new water supplies. The Department feels it is a priority to work with all town departments to help



establish a Water Protection Plan/District by passing a Town Bylaw. To permanently protect the Horse Pond reservoir from contamination.

#### Upcoming Capital Needs:

The Department would like to obtain more funding for infrastructure replacement and repair, hydrant system repair and hydraulic modeling of the water system. The dam at Horse Pond has been repaired. Other capital improvements identified for the future include a garage at the treatment plant and other renovations at the pump station.

## North Brookfield Water System Map

## **Sewer Department**

### Organization:

A three member Board of Sewer Commissioners manages the Sewer Department. The Sewer Superintendent oversees the day-to-day operation of the Department. The Board of Selectmen appoints the Sewer Commissioners and the Board meets on a monthly basis.

### Staff:

The Department's staff consists of the Superintendent, two full-time certified operators and 30 hours a week of administrative support.

### Budget:

Unlike the Water Department, the Sewer Department operates under the Enterprise System, which means that sewer users pay for the system's operating costs and capital equipment. There is one notable exception: the Town's general fund is helping to pay off the Sewer Department's debt for a major upgrade to the sewage treatment plant that occurred in 1995. The Sewer Department earns additional income for its operating budget by receiving an average of 15,000 gallons per day of septage from other communities, trucked in by private septage haulers. The Department estimates that this practice contributes roughly \$200,000 annually to its operating budget. If the system were to free up additional capacity by addressing its inflow/infiltration problems, the Department could increase the amount of septage it takes from neighboring communities and thus increase the revenue generated by this practice. A small percentage of the Department's operating budget is earmarked for pipe replacement and preventative maintenance. The Department tries to pay for large-scale capital improvements through State and Federal grant opportunities.

### System Description:

North Brookfield constructed its first wastewater treatment plant in 1895, one of the earliest treatment plants in Central Massachusetts. The plant sits on a 16-acre site located off of East Brookfield Road, south of the downtown area. As mentioned above, the treatment plant received a substantial upgrade back in 1995 at a cost of six million dollars. There are currently 870 service connections to the sewer system. The plant is designed to handle up to 757,000 gallons of wastewater per day. Last year, the plant treated an average of 649,000 gallons per day (gpd), but last year can be considered an anomaly because of the high amount of rainfall that ended up infiltrating the system. Last year's extensive

rainfall meant that 85% of the treatment plant's capacity was being used. The Department maintains three pump stations in town: at Bigelow Street, Warren Street and New Braintree Road (Route 67). A map of the Sewer Department's service area can be found on the following page.

North Brookfield's sewer system has serious problems with inflow and infiltration. Inflow is caused by direct connections to the sewer system from roof drains, sump pumps and any other water source directly discharging into a sewer line without the Department's knowledge. Infiltration is essentially groundwater infiltrating into the sewer pipes. Roughly 70% of the system's pipes are over 100 years old and are either broken, have tree roots growing through them, or have some other type of flow restriction. Excessive inflow/infiltration eats up the treatment plant's capacity and endangers the system's ability to service new connections. North Brookfield's inflow/infiltration problems are extremely serious.

The Sewer Department has identified the Municipal Water Treatment Plant and Vibram Corp as the second and third largest source of inflow/infiltration.

In 2020 the facility received and treated over 139 million gallons of wastewater which includes over 5.3 million gallons of septage. During the year the treatment facility removed over 97% of the organics and solid material from the wastewater stream and disposed of 173.7 tons of biosolids. During the year a video inspection program was begun with a goal of performing an updated video inspection of the entire system mains within 10 years. This year we were able to inspect 2.5 miles of the sewer main. Wastewater from the plant receives extended aeration treatment before being discharged into Dunn Brook. The Brook and the effluent discharged into it are tested for toxicity four times a year.

The facilities plan was completed in February of 2020 as planned. This plan creates the outline for the path forward to achieving compliance with several new state and federal discharge requirements. A motion based on this plan was brought to the town to move forward with upgrades to the treatment facility to maintain compliance. We began the process of undergoing a full design upgrade for the treatment facility. This design will incorporate adding new and updated equipment to the facility while utilizing the existing structures to bring treatment levels to the required level. The design is expected to be completed before the end of 2021 with construction of the final design to follow.

#### Issues Facing the Department:

Communication between the Sewer Department and other municipal entities needs improvement. Situations where road reconstruction paves over manholes,

as well as newly repaired roadways needing to be dug up for sewer and water pipe replacement projects must be minimized.

The Department needs to develop a formal policy on treating industrial wastewater. A lack of clear guidelines makes it difficult for new Industry to tie into the system. Vibram Corp has its own permit from DEP to treat its wastewater before it enters the sewer system.

What little excess capacity exists will easily be used up by future residential development. Advanced planning is needed to provide sewer service to new businesses and industries wishing to locate in North Brookfield.

The Department has also identified lateral connections from house to sewer pipes along the street as a major contributor to the inflow/infiltration problem. The Department estimates that roughly 400 households need to have these lateral connections repaired at a cost of roughly \$3,000 per household.

#### Upcoming Capital Needs:

The Department wants to initiate a pipe replacement project for the west side of Town, currently estimated at \$2,000,000. The Department is currently pursuing grant funds and/or low interest loans for this purpose.

The cost of repair of the estimated 400 house to street lateral connections is \$1.2 million. The Department is also relying on acquisition of grant funds and/or low interest loans to cover this cost.

As mentioned above, the sewer treatment facilities will be going through a major upgrade and re-build by state mandate. This work should set the system up for good performance for the next 20 years. However it is important for the sewer system to continue to pursue the replacement of very old pipes and the repair of lateral connections throughout the system.

## North Brookfield Sewer System Map

## Haston Free Public Library



### Organization:

The library is a department of Town Government and is administered by an elected seven-person Board of Library Trustees. Terms of office are three years. The Board's authority is derived from Chapter 78, Sections 10 and 11 of the Massachusetts General Laws. The Trustees meet monthly. The Trustees have delegated the responsibility for the library personnel management, collection development and provision of library services to the Library Director. The director is appointed by and directly responsible to the Board of Trustees and is an employee of the town. The library is open thirty-one hours a week: Mondays 1:00—7:00 pm, Tuesdays 10:00 am—5:00 pm, Wednesdays 9:00 am—7:00 pm, Thursdays 1:00—6:00 pm, and Saturdays 9:00 am—12 pm.

### Staff:

The library staff consists of five part-time employees: The Library Director (30 hours/week), the Children's Librarian (26 hours/week), the Technical Services/Assistant Librarian (15 hours/week), a Library Assistant (4 hours/week), and a custodian (10 hours/week). The library makes extensive use of volunteers who contributed approximately 1,232 hours of service to the library last year.

### Budget:

The library's funding derives principally from municipal appropriations approved at the annual Town Meeting. For the 2020 Fiscal Year, the library has an operating budget of \$117,190. The municipal appropriation is \$108,940. The State Library Incentive Grant (LIG) and the State Municipal Equalization Grant (MEG) monies make up \$8,250 of the FY2020 operating budget.

The library holds several small trust funds that when combined total the principal amount of \$16,574. Only the interest is expendable and is controlled by the Board of Trustees. The library also holds a gift fund that is deposited with the Town. The Trustees control the expenditures from the gift fund.

#### Facility:

Construction of the original library building was completed in 1894 and a major renovation and expansion project was completed in 2007. Plans for the renovation began at the time of the library centennial celebration in 1994. A library long-range plan was written in 1998, and in 1999 a \$20,000 matching State Planning and Design Grant was applied for and awarded. A feasibility study was completed in 2000 and design schematics were prepared. In 2001 the Town voted to approve the proposed project and to apply for the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners Public Library Construction Grant. The Grant was approved, and the library was placed on the waiting list for available state funding. The library spent 3 years on the State Grant waiting list until the grant money became available in late 2004 pending local funding. At a special town meeting in March 2005 the Town voted to approve funding for the Town's share of the building project. The initial addition/renovation project was estimated at \$2,801,191. The State Grant covered \$1,257,173 of the total project cost and the Town approved the remainder (\$1,544,018). The Town utilized a Proposition 2½ debt exclusion to fund its share of the cost. Due to rapidly escalating costs for materials, the project required additional funding which was approved by voters in May 2006. Construction began immediately thereafter.

The Friends of the Hoston Free Public Library, a 501c3 organization dedicated to supporting the mission of the library, organized a very successful fundraising effort which raised approximately \$350,000 in support of the project. A donor plaque next the main circulation desk recognizes all the generous donors.

As a result of the renovation and expansion project the library now has approximately 12,662 square feet of usable space and is fully ADA compliant. Two community meeting rooms on the Lower Level accommodate groups of up to 35. The Upper Level houses the Children's Library and includes a story/craft room.

#### Circulation:

The library has a collection of approximately 26,000 items. The Children's collection holds 9,000 items and the Adult/Young Adult collection contains 1,540 items. The collection comprises books, periodicals and newspapers, DVD's, audio books,



historical materials including some items on microfilm. The library is a circulating member of the Central-Western Massachusetts Automated Resource Sharing service (CW MARS) which provides an online catalog for most public and academic libraries in the central and western regions of Massachusetts. This catalog allows patrons access to a combined collection of over 6 million items from participating libraries. Last year the library processed over 6,000 inter-library loan requests. There are 11 computers available for public use throughout the library.

#### Programs:

The library offered approximately 200 different programs last year, 85% of which were geared toward pre-school and school-aged children. The library hosts an annual themed six-week summer reading program that includes story-times, craft activities, storytellers, and other activities. Ongoing library programs include twice-weekly story times, a monthly book discussion group, arts and crafts workshops, performers, and an annual Friends of the Library Book Sale. The North Brookfield Cultural Council has funded a number of the workshops and performers, and the Friends group raises funds to support Library programs including purchase of passes to local places of interest such as the Tower Hill Botanic Garden.

#### Upcoming Capital Needs:

The library needed repairs to the roof and masonry. At a special town meeting funds were approved \$65,000 to make the repairs. Work began during the summer of 2020. The work completed thus far includes roof repair, repointing of the original facade, and repair of the crickets and copper at the front entrance. Yet to be completed: sealing of precast on façade of the addition, and installation of new tower windows. Some interior cosmetic work (plaster repair and painting) will be required after the exterior work is completed.

Future infrastructure needs may include significant upgrades to the HVAC system software, as well as the fire and building security alarm systems.

### **NORTH BROOKFIELD SENIOR CENTER & COUNCIL ON AGING:**

#### Organization:

The Council on Aging (COA) consists of seven members and one alternate, Each member is appointed by the Board of Selectmen and serves a three-year term.

#### Staff:

The COA has four part-time employees, the Director works 19½ hours per week, the Outreach Coordinator works 18 hours per week, the Receptionist works 15 hours per week, and the Janitor works five hours per week. The COA relies heavily on Volunteers who are willing to contribute many hours of service throughout the year.

#### Budget:

For the 2020 Fiscal Year, the COA had an operating budget of \$61,743. The COA also received a Formula Grant from the State, and these funds, in addition to providing 50% of the Receptionist's Salary, were used for equipment and supplies. The COA also received funds from the Friends of the COA and the General Public.

#### Facility:

The COA bought the existing Senior Center in 2002 from the Knights of Columbus. The facility is an old grocery store built in the 1950s. In 2001 the Town utilized a Community Development Grant (CDBG) to purchase and renovate the facility for use as a Senior Center. The facility contains approximately 4,500 square feet of floor space and is handicapped accessible. It also has a large paved parking area where a small food pantry has been established and a seasonal garden. Between 2018 and 2021 the kitchen underwent a small renovation, and in 2021 the heating and air conditioning system was overhauled.

#### Programs:

The COA offers Outreach, Transportation, Health, Education, and Recreation programs. These programs include home visits and phone checks for seniors living on their own; transportation services to area doctor's offices; a nutrition program; health clinics; exercise programs; assistance with Federal Program forms; and meals at the Senior Center. Program information is communicated in a monthly newsletter and through the social media. Volunteers use their own vehicles and receive a stipend from the COA to cover gas and maintenance when providing transportation services.

#### Upcoming Capital Needs:

Ongoing problems with leaks in the roof of the Senior Center for many years has caused a need for major repair or replacement of the roof. The Senior Center has received a grant from CMRPC to replace the roof, ceiling, and floor. This work is scheduled to commence in 2022.

## **The Town House**

### **Friends of the Town House, Inc.**

The Friends of the Town House (FOTH), a 501(C)3 organization, was established in 2006 at the request of the North Brookfield Board of Selectmen for the purpose of raising funds and promoting public support for the restoration of the historic Town House. The Friends' mission is to preserve the structural integrity of the Town House while retaining the historical character and architectural design of the building in order to reestablish it as the center of civic, political, social and cultural activities of North Brookfield.

#### Staff:

The Friends meet the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of the month at 7:00pm. The governing body of the Friends consists of president, vice president, treasurer, clerk, and board member at large. At the present time, all work of the Friends is done by their 89 members and a large number of volunteers. In the future the Friends will conduct a search for an Executive Director. The Friends have retained fundraising counsel (Financial Development Agency of Amherst, MA) plus historic property developers (Architectural Heritage Foundation of Boston, MA) to help raise funds and seek funding sources for the redevelopment project.

#### Budget:

Funds to support organizational undertakings are generated from donations, membership dues, grants, and other fund-raising activities. Historic Tax Credits are in place from the Federal Government (National Park Service) and the State (Massachusetts Historic Commission), these will be used during the restoration of the building and the Friends will conduct a Capital Fund Drive to support the restoration project.

In 2019, a \$10,000 Grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council was awarded for planning the development of the Great Hall into a multi-functional theatre and auditorium capable of supporting a variety of cultural activities.

Between 2009-2012 North Brookfield received \$160,000 in State(Brownfields) funding to clean up petroleum contamination on the property; in 2014 with funding from the State(MPPF Emergency Grant Fund), the town, the Friends, and a Town insurance claim the Bell Tower was repaired after damage from Tropical Storm Irene; in June 2015 the roof was repaired with State Funding(designated by our State Senator); in 2019 the front and half of the Summer Street side of the building were painted with donations from individuals, local organizations and businesses. Work was led by Selectman John Tripp, with assistance from other residents and the Worcester County Sheriff's Department.

Rental Income from auditorium, the restaurant, the Creative Life Center and other rental spaces will be used to maintain and sustain the interior and exterior of the building as well as looking into the expansion into neighboring properties. The Friends will continually pursue all avenues of funding.

#### Facilities:

The National Register-Listed North Brookfield Town House was built in 1864 on the site of an earlier Town House which was destroyed by fire in 1862. The Town House consists of almost 10,000 square feet and was designed for mix use, for business, Town Offices, political, social and entertainment gathers on three floors. By the 1960's, many of these activities were relocated to other facilities, in part because of the inaccessibility of the Great Hall. Decline of the building continued through the end of the century and in 2002 the building was vacated when structural problems were discovered. Although repairs were made to the building immediately, Town Offices were moved from the building and the Town House was closed.

The Town House has never been fully renovated and modernized. Antiquated electrical, plumbing, and life safety systems are inadequate for the current technological needs. Due to deferred maintenance, the elaborate historic elements require major repairs. The beautiful but steep grand stair way, difficult interior stairs, and no elevator mean the Town House is not accessible to those with disabilities or to many seniors – who constitute 25% of the town's population.

#### Future Plans

The Town owns the building. The Friends have worked with the Board of Selectmen on a Draft 45-year lease of the building, which will be voted on at a Town Meeting. The Friends will renovate the entire building and provide rental space for a restaurant, store front and for the Creative Life Center. The theater will be re-designed into a multifunctional theater and auditorium.

#### Programs:

The Friends in partnership with Bonnie Milner, a resident of North Brookfield and the co-owner of internationally-recognized Long View Farm Recording Studios, are designing programming for a Creative Life Center (CLC), a rural renaissance creative arts and music program, to occupy the renovated Town House. Working with Berklee College of Music and Boston Conservatory at Berklee, the CLC will be focused on creating jobs, attracting investment, inviting tourism, fostering community involvement, building skills and enhancing opportunities for youth, creating a more connected community, and mitigating separation and isolation. The Creative Life Center will also incubate and host regional and touring theater productions, musical performances and creative educational experiences for all ages. The goal is for the Town House to become the region's creative hub and a model of rural rebirth.

#### Upcoming Capital Needs:

As mentioned earlier, the Town House needs a total restoration, all systems in the building need to be updated, as well as, build-outs for the multi-functional theater and auditorium, the restaurant, the CLC space and the other rental area. It is expected that the cost to renovate the building is approximately \$7,000,000. The Friends, with help from their historical advisors (MacRostie Historic Advisors of Boston, MA) will utilize \$900,000 in Massachusetts Historic Tax Credits and approximately \$1,000,000 in Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits. Additional Funds are being pursued through private foundations and government grants as well as corporate and philanthropic donations.

The Town House will stand as a testament to successful collaboration and collective dedication. As the Town House / Community Life Center grows and succeeds, so will the community.

*I love the feel and the passion NB residents show for their town.*

*North Brookfield Resident*

## **North Brookfield Downtown Development Committee:**

### Organization:

The North Brookfield Downtown Development Committee (NBDDC) is currently composed of five members and one alternate. Meetings are held the first and third Monday's of the month at 6:30pm.

The Downtown Development Committee (DDC) was appointed by the Selectmen and acts in an advisory capacity in October of 2018 with the mission to rejuvenate the Town Center, thereby creating a vibrant atmosphere for business and social activities. We work in conjunction with Town Boards and Committees, State and Regional planning and development agencies, and asset owners in the community to identify areas of need and steps to take to move forward. We will rely on existing, pre-approved recommendations and plans to draft the appropriate zoning bylaws to facilitate all manner of activity and transportation within the "Downtown" zone and propose new plans and zoning bylaws as the objectives of our projects require.

The Friends of the Townhouse (FOTH) initially created the idea of this committee to work specifically to obtain the Mass DOT Complete Streets grant to help fix the poor sidewalk conditions in the center of town by the Townhouse. The state has earmarked tax credit funds to help rejuvenate the Townhouse but requested that the Town of North Brookfield show good faith in the rejuvenation efforts by bringing the streets and sidewalks back up to code. Since that initial idea, the NBDDC was created and has become a valuable asset to the Town of North Brookfield.

Since its creation in 2018, the NBDDC has worked closely with many departments and committees in town to create plans both narratively and kinetically. We are honored to list the plans and accomplishments we have achieved thus far:

- 2019 Interactive ArcGIS Map of Downtown North Brookfield Sidewalks (CMRPC)
- 2019 Downtown Strategic Plan (Grant awarded):
  - includes 5 Downtown Actionable Goals (CMRPC)
    - A Walkable Downtown
    - Connected Trail System
    - Town House Revitalization
    - Downtown Development
    - Business Investment.

The Committee is actively engaged in efforts achieve each of these goals.

- 2021 Community Development & Planning Award presented to North Brookfield from the CMRPC
- 2021 T.A.P: (Grant awarded) Assisted the FOTH to create this plan with ULI & Mass Development

- 2021 LRRP (Grant awarded): a rapid recovery plan for downtown and it's business development
- 2020-21 Commonwealth Places (Grant awarded) for Outdoor Movie Screenings
  - Showcased 5 outdoor movie screenings in the Brownfield to the right of the NB Police station for the town to enjoy socially distanced events during the pandemic lockdowns.
- 2021 Complete Street Grant awarded to North Brookfield for \$400,000 for Downtown Sidewalks (Phase 1 of 3)

All of the above documents can be found on the North Brookfield Town website page under the Downtown Development page.

We are the first of this type of committee. Our current success as a Downtown Development Committee in a rural community has inspired the CMRPC to create a presentation for other towns to develop this type of committee in their communities. We are enthusiastic to learn from them as well as encourage other towns to rejuvenate their town center.

The committee is currently working closely with the NB Highway Department, Planning Board and Board of Selectmen to implement the Complete Streets Phase 1 sidewalk upgrade. We are also actively looking to create a Trail Map of the local trails in town that radiate from the center of town, including the recently created Rail Trail. The NBDDC Facebook page promotes local events and has been host to sponsoring 5 minute "Business Bites" which feature local small business owners in an effort to drive traffic from the internet to the streets of North Brookfield.

The NBDDC is committed to actively achieve the goals listed in the current Strategic Plan, TAP recommendations, LRRP recommendations as well as the updated Master Plan. We want to see that all of these plans are used as living documents rather than as static materials. We are happy to know that many of the goals that relate to the downtown area from the original Master Plan have been "check marked" or are close to that status. We strive to rejuvenate the downtown area of North Brookfield for its residents and visitors.

Over the next 10 years we would like to see the 2019 Downtown Strategic Plan put into action with emphasis on the Townhouse Revitalization. The NBDDC is currently committed to work closely with any entities that will help this cause. We know that with the right focus, the Townhouse can become the beacon downtown activity again.

Our vision is to see the downtown area filled with people enjoying the shoppes, restaurants, churches, trails, and artistic and rural activities that can only be experienced here in North Brookfield. We believe the items listed in the Strategic Plan will help to rejuvenate the Downtown area, bring pride to North Brookfield citizens and create a more profitable, business friendly environment in a walkable downtown.



## **Fire Department:**

### Organization:

The Board of Selectmen appoints the Fire Chief annually. The Chief recommends all department officers to the Board of Selectmen for appointment. The Chief is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Department.

### Staff:

Volunteers make up the Department. There are 35 paid on-call fire fighters that serve as needed and are paid by the hour. The Department does not have any clerical support. The Department is part of the District #7 Fire/Ambulance Mutual Aid Compact, which consists of 26 Worcester County communities. The North Brookfield Rescue Squad is operated as a separate independent entity.

The Massachusetts State Police Academy in New Braintree provides dispatch services for the Department. The fire station is fully manned (5 firefighters) for twelve weekends during the summer months. The Department plans to increase the number of weekends to sixteen during the summer of 2006, and ideally would like to slowly expand this initiative to year-round weekend coverage. According to the annual Town Reports, the Fire Department responded to 730 calls in 2020. The fire department received 3 grants, first was for \$9,099 to purchase 13 new



alert pagers and two interoperable radios for cars 1 and 2. Second was for a total of \$5974 regarding fire protect safety grant.

#### Equipment:

- 1 Dive boat with dive gear boat
- 1 14ft aluminum boat
- 1 hovercraft
- 1 Humvee
- 2 Ford cruisers
- 2 Attack engines with 15000 gpm pumps
- 4 Brush trucks
- 1 Ariel Raptor 110' with 1500 gpm pump
- 1 4000 gallon street tanker
- 1 Heavy duty trailer for building collapse and trench rescue supplies
- 3 sets of Jaws of Life
- 2 sets of high angle gear
- 1 set rescue air bags

The Department attempts to replace a piece of equipment after 25 years of service. Large-scale equipment purchases are usually funded through Town Meeting warrant articles. The Department buys equipment outright and does not lease.

#### Facility:

The fire station was built in 1878 and is in poor condition. In terms of housing the Department's equipment, the station is at full capacity and has no additional room for new equipment. The Department stores the hovercraft outside and keeps its rescue boat off-site in a trailer at the elementary school. The roof is too low and leaks water. During the 1990s the Town investigated the possibility of a public safety complex that would house both the Fire and Police departments, but the plan was scrapped due to cost considerations and resistance from the departments. The Fire Department now plans to take over the adjacent Highway Barn once the Highway Department completes the move to the new Donovan Road location. It should be noted that the existing highway department building will need significant re-construction to accommodate the Fire Department and will take time to renovate before it can be used as a new fire station.



The Department also has a training facility located off of East Brookfield Road. This facility was constructed in 2004 and contains a burn building, confined space and other training amenities. The facility was paid for entirely by private donations.

#### Permits Issued:

The Department issues permits for the installation of oil burners, the removal of underground storage tanks, blasting, brush burning, as well as smoke detector certificates. The Department conducts inspections for fire alarms and sprinkler systems for businesses, industries, residences, schools, rest homes, day care facilities and medical facilities.

#### Programs:

The Department offers fire safety programs to a variety of audiences, particularly school-age children. For these efforts, the Department makes use of the District #7 S.A.F.E. mobile education trailer.

The Fire Prevention Division has been very active visiting 34 businesses to develop pre-plans for emergencies and identify any possible hazards. They have also visited local town fire departments, and worked with the Red Cross to help towns people install and test smoke detectors.

#### Other Responsibilities:

The Fire Department is the first line of response for hazardous waste spills. The Department will call in the State's regional hazardous materials response team if the spill is more than it can handle. The Department also provides rescue services for auto accidents, rapid intervention teams, as well as search and rescue operations. The Department provides each fire fighter with close to 50 hours of training per member. The Department also supports a dive team.

#### Upcoming Capital Needs:

As mentioned previously, the current fire station is in poor condition and does not have much life left in it. The Department plans to take over the adjacent Highway Barn once the Highway Department moves to a new facility on Donovan Rd. The Fire Department has not yet prepared any cost estimates regarding renovating the Highway Barn for its use. The Fire Department plans to renovate the old Fire Department building and make it into a museum.



## **Police Department**

### Staff:

The North Brookfield Police Department has six full-time officers (including the Chief of Police), seven part-time officers and 10-hours a week of administrative support. The Department is currently short one full-time officer. The Board of Selectmen appoints the Chief of Police. The entire Department is certified in First Aid and CPR. The Department also services as the Town's Animal Control Officer. There are usually two police officers on duty during the daytime, and with one officer's time often being occupied by meetings and out of town travel. The State Police Barracks in New Braintree provides dispatch service for the Department.

### Equipment:

- o 2006 cruiser (good condition)
- o 2006 cruiser (good)
- o 2004 cruiser (good)
- o 2000 cruiser used for animal control (poor)
- o 19' Starcraft rescue boat (good)

The Department tries to rotate its cruisers every two years, and the two 2006 cruisers are being leased.

### Facility:

The Police station is a new facility completed June of 2010, directly across from the Fire Department. The facility contains a complete conference room facility that is used by many Town Departments and Committees for meetings.

### Programs:

CPR class  
Internet safety class for school-age children  
COVID-19 Protocol Training  
Boating safety class during the summer months  
The Animal Control Officers works with the Wickaboag Valley Veterinary Center to place pets not claimed after pickup.

## Trends and Comparisons:

The New Braintree dispatch center logged a total of 7759 service calls for North Brookfield during 2020, a modest increase from the previous year. The Department made 152 arrests in 2020. The Massachusetts State Police keeps crime statistics that allow for comparisons with other communities. The table below takes a look at North Brookfield's crime statistics for the year 2014 as matched against its neighbors. Please note that the State Police count of total crimes represent the number of actual convictions and not simply the number of arrests.

**Table TG-6**

### **Community Crime Rate - Year 2014**

<b>Town</b>	<b>Nbr of Crimes</b>	<b>Population</b>
North Brookfield	35	4749
Spencer	346	11806
East Brookfield	50	2187
West Brookfield	71	3771

Source: Massachusetts State Police Uniform Crime Report for 2014 (the most recent available full year).

## Issues Facing the Department:

The Department does not have any way to track calls made directly to the police station or the number of citizens that drop by to lodge a concern.

## Upcoming Capital Needs:

The Department would like to add a full-time detective to its staff within the next decade, as well as a school resource/community police officer. Other staff additions may be needed during the next ten years as the town's population continues to grow.

As mentioned above, the Department's practice is to rotate its cruisers every two years, meaning that this practice will occur five times during the course of the next ten years.

The animal control shelter is in dire need of replacement and enlargement. The Animal Control Officer would also like to purchase a van that could hold a cage inside, as the current cruiser does not allow for this.

## **North Brookfield Emergency Management Agency:**

### **Organization:**

The North Brookfield Emergency Management Agency (NBEMA) currently consists of eight members. The Board of Selectmen appoints the NBEMA Director to a one-year term.

### **Staff:**

NBEMA does not have any paid staff; rather, the appointed members handle all tasks.

### **Equipment:**

NBEMA maintains an emergency operations center that consists of the following equipment: a radio dispatch system, three high-band radios, two tabletop computers, one laptop computer, one projector and two desks. NBEMA does not have a mobile command center, nor does it have any vehicles for its use. NBEMA coordinates its activities with the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency through its regional office in Belchertown.

### **Duties:**

NBEMA is responsible for handling the response logistics for large-scale emergencies such as natural disasters and civil emergencies.

## **Board of Health:**

### **Organization:**

North Brookfield has a three-member elected Board of Health. Each member is elected to a three-year term.

### **Staff:**

The Board has a full time Health Inspector, several part-time employees including an office manager (24 hours week), a transfer station manager (20 hours a week), three transfer station monitors, a milk inspector, and an animal inspector that provides services on an as-needed basis. The Board contracts out for Title V septic system inspections, food inspections and housing inspections.

### **Facilities:**

The transfer station and recycling center is located along East Brookfield Road, south of the downtown area. This is also the site of the capped landfill.

### **Programs:**

The Board of Health spent most of the last year coping with COVID-19. We prepared for the epidemic, under guidance from Massachusetts Department of Public Health, meeting with North Brookfield Emergency Management assessing their needs and getting them upgraded to handle the upcoming pandemic emergency. The board was involved in every part of the town educating, recommending, and ensuring that people were acting and living in a safe and protected manner. We organized appointments for vaccinations and provided transportation when needed.

#### **. Other programs and initiatives of the Board of Health include:**

- Transfer station compliance monitoring
- Water quality testing for Lake Lashaway and Brooks Pond Beach
- Annual blood pressure, flu and pneumonia clinics
- Health regulations briefings for local restaurants
- Health inspections for restaurants, retail stores, bakeries, tanning establishments therapy establishments (including message), camping establishments and bathing beaches
- Semi-annual household hazardous waste disposal days  
(in conjunction with neighboring towns)
- Title V inspections (including performing soil percolation tests for new building lots, reviewing septic plan revisions and witnessing the installation of all on-site sewage treatment systems)
- Permits and approves all private drinking water wells
- Health code inspections for all Section 8 housing
- All housing complaints

It should be noted that the Town has an arrangement with the Spencer Savings Bank to offer low interest loans to homeowners with failed septic systems. All of the small cottages along the shorelines of Lake Lashaway and Brooks Pond are all on on-site septic systems.

#### Lake Lashaway:

Both North Brookfield and East Brookfield have a significant amount of frontage on this 274-acre waterbody. Concentrated effluent from the on-site septic systems has led to a degradation of the Lake's water quality. Town planners from both communities have attempted to fund a Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan (CWMP) at a cost of \$350,000, to be split by both communities. While North Brookfield voters approved their share of the funds for the CWMP, East Brookfield voters have defeated the funding proposal three times. However, the numerous small septic systems dotting Lake Lashaway's shoreline still pose a problem to the Lake's water quality and a solution still needs to be implemented.

#### Upcoming Capital Needs:

The Board of Health believes it needs a full-time Health Agent right now, based on its current volume of work. There has been a steady increase in the number of inspections to perform, as well as in the number of items to inspect. It is quite likely that the State's health code will continue to expand rather than contract. More items to inspect means more time needed to complete an inspection. The Board would also like to increase its office support staff to a full-time position. The transfer station will need to replace its plastic baler within the year.



## **North Brookfield Housing Authority:**

### **Organization:**

The North Brookfield Housing Authority's Board of Directors is composed of four elected members and one State appointee, with members serving five-year terms. The Authority's Director is responsible for the day-to-day management of the facilities.

### **Staff:**

The Housing Authority Director is a part-time position (25 hours a week). There is a full-time maintenance manager and a part time maintenance assistant (10 hours a week). The Director handles all of the Authority's administrative paperwork.

### **Budget:**

The Town does not provide any funding to the Housing Authority; rather, the Authority obtains its revenue primarily from rents and the State makes up the remainder. The Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD) pays for large-scale capital equipment through a "Condition Assessment Report

### **Facilities:**

The North Brookfield Housing Authority manages two facilities:

Herard Lane Estates – Located off North Main Street, this elderly housing facility was built in 1978 (DHCD Project #667) The development consists of nine buildings containing 64 elderly/handicapped units, six of which are handicapped accessible. Each unit contains its own kitchen and bath facilities. The facility also contains a community center with laundry facilities, plus an office for the Housing Authority Director. There is a tenant's group that runs activities for the seniors on site. The facility participates in the Tri-Valley Social Service Agency's Meals-on-Wheels program, as well as the Worcester Regional Transit Authority's Elder-Bus transportation program.

Grove Street School Apartments – Located off Grove Street, this single building facility served as the Town's former High School until it was rehabilitated for use as apartments in 1988 (DHCD Chapter 705). This facility is for low-income families and contains 14 two and three-bedroom units, one of which is designed for handicapped persons.

#### Waiting List:

A waiting list is not uncommon for local housing authorities. North Brookfield's Housing Authority currently has a waiting list of roughly 30 households at present, and over 125 families on the family list. The non-local elderly list varies depending upon residency.

#### Group Housing Facilities:

Hillside Meadows on Ward Street – This privately owned and operated facility contains 24 units of low-income family housing.

#### Voucher Program:

The Housing Authority has one voucher for off-site housing made available from DHCD. The Housing Authority hosts one certificate from the Spencer Housing Authority's Alternative Housing Program.

#### Upcoming Capital Needs:

The Housing Authority has identified the following upcoming projects for Herard Lane: roof repairs for Buildings 9 and 10, boiler repair, threshold study, parking lot paving and security camera installation. For the Grove Street School Apartments, the Housing Authority would like to re-point the outside stair treads, repair/replace the outside sidewalk, and security camera installation.

### Land Use Boards:

North Brookfield has four entities that review, approve and monitor new development: the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Conservation Commission and the Building Inspector/Zoning Enforcement Officer. All of the entities keep their applications and forms on file with the Town Clerk's office. A general description of each entity and their major duties is presented below.

### Planning Board:

The Board currently consists of five members that are elected to five-year terms and one alternate that the Board of Selectmen appoints. The Board has a part-time clerk who is paid an annual stipend of \$1602. The Board reviews and endorses Approval Not Required (ANR) plans, which constitute the majority of newly created lots in North Brookfield. The Board also reviews and approves subdivision plans and site plan review applications. The Board has developed a close working relationship with the building inspector/zoning officer, the zoning board of appeals, the conservation commission, and the board of selectmen. They are all discussing current issues and maintaining the integrity of zoning bylaws and developing needed bylaw amendments to protect and improve our town. The board has approved eleven solar projects to date with nine built. For large or complex projects, the planning board uses an engineer for "Peer Reviews". The board has been working closely with the conservation commission in reviewing construction of solar projects. Confirmation of development plans being carried out is reviewed and erosion control issues are monitored. This cooperative effort has been successful in showing solar developers that the town is monitoring their projects and that issued need to be timely

### Zoning Board of Appeals:

The Board consists of three members and one alternate. The Board of Selectmen appoints the Zoning Board members to three-year terms. The Board has a part-time secretary to help with its paperwork. The Board has a minimal budget and has not recently utilized any of its funding for training classes. The Board meets on an as-needed basis. Its primary duties include hearing petitions for variances to the Zoning Bylaw (both use and dimensional variances), non-conforming uses, special use permits and appeals of Planning Board and Building Inspector/Zoning Enforcement Officer decisions. The Board has developed a close working relationship with the building inspector/zoning officer, the conservation commission, and the board of selectmen. They are all discussing current issues and maintaining the integrity of zoning bylaws and developing needed bylaw amendments to protect and improve our town.

### Conservation Commission:

The Commission consists of six members that are appointed by the Board of Selectmen to three-year terms. The Commission has part-time clerical support. The Commission's primary duty is administration of the State's wetland protection and rivers protection acts. The Commission does not have any professional staff and Commission members conduct their own inspections, essentially serving the role as town conservation agent. Having Commission members serve double-duty as conservation agents could potentially create a conflict for the members, as they are being asked to gather data for decisions, render decisions on behalf of property owners and enforce their decisions. The Conservation Commission uses an engineer. "Peer Review" for large or complex projects.

### Building Inspector/Zoning Enforcement Officer:

The Board of Selectmen annually appoints this position, which is budgeted for ten hours a week. The Officer issues building permits, certificates of occupancy and certificates of inspection. The Officer is also charged with enforcing the State Building Code and the provisions of North Brookfield's Zoning Bylaw. The Officer does not have any secretarial support. The Officer speaks regularly with a member of the planning board to co-ordinate on large projects.

## Open Space and Recreation Plan

On January 12, 2023, North Brookfield received approval from the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, Division of Conservation Services (DCS,) of the North Brookfield Open Space and Recreation Plan. Our plan allows North Brookfield to apply for DCS grants through March 2029. These grants include LAND (Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity) and PARC (Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities) grants.

Through the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP), our community has planned the future of its conservation and recreation resources. In the fall of 2020, the Master Plan Committee conducted a survey of town residents 18 and older. On February 4, 2021, a public forum to receive residents' ideas and concerns about conservation and recreation was held. Through these processes, the residents of North Brookfield have outlined our goals and objectives for the next seven years. The new goals reaffirm and enhance those of the original OSRP from 2007. They are:

Goal One. Establish a resilient, connected network of protected lands where natural systems can provide the ecological services that will maintain the health and well-being of North Brookfield residents into the future.

Goal Two. Maintain North Brookfield's rural character.

Goal Three. Preserve and Enhance North Brookfield's Water Resources.

Goal Four. Enhance the Community's Knowledge About Open Space in North Brookfield.

Goal Five. Provide North Brookfield with well-maintained recreational facilities and opportunities.

Through open space and recreation planning, North Brookfield can retain the rural quality that so many of its residents cherish, even as development pressures continue to grow.

## North Brookfield – The Town

In 1810 the manufacture of "factory made" shoes began, starting an industry which profoundly altered the Town's history. In 1824 Tyler Batchellor built a shoe factory which grew rapidly. By the mid-1800's North Brookfield was the largest manufacturer of shoes in the country, shipping products throughout the United States, and provided a large portion of the footwear to the Union Army during the Civil War. Between 1840 and 1880 other companies began the manufacture of shoe lasts, wooden boxes, corsets, pocket books, and other leather goods, but shoe manufacturing remained the major industry. The population steadily increased during this time of prosperity. Agriculture was still a major industry. In 1875 there were 175 farms and orchards.

North Brookfield was (and to some extent still is) isolated due to its location. In 1876 the North Brookfield Railroad opened, connecting to East Brookfield and the Boston & Albany Railroad. The Town now had a bank, three churches, a library, Town hall, two hotels, and a number of retail establishments. The railroad made the town more accessible and the population increased further to 4,587 by the year 1900.

Prosperity ended as management closed the Batchelor shoe factory in 1902. Population immediately dropped off as workers moved in search of employment, and many houses and tenements were left vacant. Some mills were torn down, and others stood empty for a number of years.

In 1916 the Quabaug Corp.(Vibram Corp) was formed with Herbert Mason as President and was located in the old Batchellor shoe factory building on School Street. The other buildings across the street were sold first in 1910 to the Oxford Linen Co. In 1913 it became the Phoenix Linen Co. and in 1920 was sold to the Asbestos Textile Co.

This was the end of the economic decay in town, and after reaching a population low of approximately 2,600, North Brookfield began a slow but steady growth in population that continues today. Vibram Corp has grown substantially as the United States manufacturer for Vibram soles, and has become the largest employer in Town.

A major change in North Brookfield in the past sixty years (like much of New England) has been the decline of the farming industry. In the 1930's there were three large chicken farms in Town, shipping young chicks all over the eastern United States. The last one closed its doors in 1990. While activity has declined or ceased on many farms, most owners have thus far been reasonably successful at maintaining the large tracts of farm and woodlands. However, with agriculture in the northeast still in decline, and large tracts of developable land becoming fewer, they are certainly at risk for development of non-farm uses. In the past several years, large-scale solar development has claimed forest and agricultural land in town. Such development has both positive and negative consequences: an economic advantage to

landowners and the town, coupled with the loss of ecologically important land. The largest agricultural operation remaining in Town is the Brookfield Orchards.

The population of town has very gradually grown from the low of 2,600 to a high of 4,789 today and has leveled off and is holding steady.

In 1864 the most recognized building in town was called “The Town House”. It was a magnificent three-story building built on the corner in the middle of downtown. It contained a large hall with stage for performances and meetings along with separate spaces for retail. However, as businesses closed up and down the length of main street from the economic downturn starting in 1902 in North Brookfield, so did the retail spaces in the Town House. Some space was converted to town office space for a short time, but it was not large enough and the town offices moved out. The Town House was closed and the building fell into disrepair and is not currently ADA compliant. The Town owns the building and property at this point.

### **North Brookfield Today**

There are only a few small farms, many empty store fronts on main street and a few new industrial companies in town. The largest employers are Vibram Corp and Hannaford’s Grocery store and the school and town employees. The town is not on a major state road so people have to go out of their way to come to North Brookfield and most employed citizens commute to out-of-town locations. The only large commercial draw in town is the Hannaford’s Supermarket.

While town costs rise every year and the town has been unsuccessful in attracting much new industrial or commercial businesses, as a result, any increases in town expenses fall primarily to the town residents in the real estate taxes each year. A significant portion of the residents are 65 or older. While some people move away, some new people move to town. With no new growth in commercial or industrial sectors, the economy has become static and the population has become quite stable.

## North Brookfield Zoning Map



## **A Vision to the Future**

A few years ago, a volunteer organization was formed called “The Friends of the Town House. They saw potential in saving the building and trying to make it a beacon of a new North Brookfield. They raised \$500,000 state grant money to get the roof leaks fixed and with town volunteers had the upper exterior façade and bell tower fixed. The town government has supported those efforts. The Friends have raised money to have pollution from years past remedied and an engineering evaluation of the interior was done. At this point the Friends have put together an architectural plan for re-building the interior to bring the building up to a usable state with many ideas of how to best use the building and bring new life to downtown. At the same time the town, seeing the efforts that were made, created a new committee called the Downtown Development Committee. They were charged with, working with the friends, to put together actionable plans for a “new” downtown.

The Downtown Development Committee (DDC) went to work with CMRPC ( Central Mass Regional Planning Commission ) to form plans and working with input from residents and The Friends to craft a path to a dream for a new downtown. Not a downtown with all new modern buildings, but a downtown that was casual, comfortable, walkable and that recognized the history of North Brookfield, featuring the buildings architecture and maintaining the rural country town feel that all of the citizens value very much.

The DDC has applied for grants to help support these goals from many sources. Among them was a for Streets, that is for \$400,000 for the rebuilding of sidewalks and access in the downtown area. The grant was awarded in 2021 and construction begins in 2022. The town has taken part in several other grants such as MVP, LLP, TAP all of which has brought teams of people in to North Brookfield to assess our needs, and our desire, our plans and ideas. They have found that this town is alive and well with a very strong desire of residents to participate and bring energy to a new downtown. The evaluators have suggested changes to our plans and given us very high marks. North Brookfield is on the move and headed forward!



## **North Brookfield: The Vision**

The city of Worcester has come alive as a Bio Technology center, UMass Medical Center in Worcester has become well known for its service to the region and as a huge employer and medical forerunner. The Polar Park has brought the excitement of a baseball team and provided a great new venue in Worcester. The city of Worcester has become known as a great place for dinning out with many, many restaurants to chose from, of every possible choice. The Worcester Airport is now scheduled to have three different airlines flying in and out of the city to large hubs. Of course, the city of Worcester is well known for the highly recognized colleges like, UMass school of Medicine, Worcester Polytechnic, Clark and Holy Cross. People are coming to Worcester to live and work!

The near suburbs to Worcester are filling up with people who have moved here to live and stay. The new people moving here now are moving one more step outside of Worcester. North Brookfield is one of those towns and people will be looking for a quiet, small, rural town to live and raise children in. Many of these people may work from home as is becoming the new norm and will want more access to a variety of things and services.

We want to capitalize on that energy and make North Brookfield a Cultural Center for the west side of Worcester. The Town House will be made ADA compliant and the Grand Hall on the second floor will be a great space for all kinds of performances. The spaces on the main floor will be used for art and music studios/class rooms for young and old. There will be great space for a very nice restaurant for dinning before or after performances and there will be space for arts and crafts stores etc. The Center will be a draw to bring people to town. This will help to bring new shops into the downtown store fronts. Store such as a Bakery, Craft store, coffee shops, restaurants, and on and on. This will bring new sources of energy and revenue into our town.

These efforts will take a sizable investment of money. But the people of North Brookfield believe in it and will do a great deal to make it happen.

The Master plan committee feels that this will happen whether the cultural center comes to fruition or not. If it does not come to fruition, likely candidates for the prime spot, on Main Street includes new town offices, a medical center with parking below it, or even a small store indoor shopping mall. However, we feel the town is not ready for many of the ramifications of any of these choices. It is certain that the town will grow significantly in the course of the next ten years based on the ever-expanding growth of the Worcester Metropolitan area. The current town bylaws, organization and facilities are not prepared for this. The town is excited about the growth and energy but we very badly need to prepare. To that end we have prepared a series of actions that we feel the town needs to undertake so we can keep our rural look and feel, which so strongly want to keep, but manage our growth process.

# Goals and Objectives

**Goal 1 Introduction** – The Master Plan Committee has met to revise the last Master Plan which was completed in the year 2007. We started meeting in the fall of the year 2020 and we will finish in the year 2022. The task has been enormous because it has been so long since it was last done and so much has changed. Due to COVID our meetings were both via zoom and in person. The Public Forums were all done via Zoom. We have been able to accomplish a great deal. Our view is that forming a committee every so many years to make a new plan based upon a review of progress is necessary but does not really do any good unless the proposals are acted upon.

**Objective:** The Master Plan Committee should be a permanent committee that is formed under the guidance of the Planning Board. It should be under the Planning Board because land use in town is governed by the Zoning Bylaws which are overseen by the Planning Board. The Zoning bylaws are primarily added to or updated by the Planning Board.

**Action:** The Planning Board should permanently form a Master Plan Review Committee. It should be composed of representative of the following boards: the Planning Board, the Conservation Commission, the Board of Health, the Finance Committee, the Board of Selectmen, and four volunteers from the community. It will be the responsibility of the Committee to implement the goals in the current active master plan and maintain communication in our town. They should meet at least every two months.

**Responsible Party:** Planning Board, Board of Selectmen

**Goal 2 Introduction** – Town Management - We strongly recommend that the town add a Town Manager to the management structure. This is based on survey responses and evidence from things such as the Town's current financial position. We do not want to change the political structure of the Town, we just feel it is important that someone has a constant eye on who is doing and spending what and guiding the process as a good business manager. This person is not an elected person, but is a Town employee. He/she should act as a business manager for the Town. All of the Town Department heads should report to the Town Manager. The manager should therefore have a management background with excellent financial and communication skills. The town manager should have strong grant

writing skills and be familiar with the complete grant writing process. If this person is strong in grant writing skills, at least half of this person's cost would be taken care of in the first year.

It is very likely that a Town Planner should also be considered, even if it is not a fulltime position, to assist the town in developing and executing many of the things that the committee feels will need to be done in the coming years. This person should have strong management and organizational skills, with experience and previous exposure to small town planning. The Town Manager would be responsible for taking the vision for various projects and having them, quoted, planned and followed through to the finish.

It is also suggested that the Town consider the hiring of an inspector. This would be a multifaceted inspector/engineer who could inspect new and ongoing work for the Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Highway Department and Building Inspector. At any time, representatives of each of these organizations can go along for any inspection. This would be a good addition as all town organizations are made up of volunteers who find it very difficult to fit in site inspections. This person could be part time or shared with another local town.

**Objective:** Structure the top-level management of the Town to be less influenced by political changes from year to year

**Action:** A committee should be formed to evaluate the potential Town Manager position, taking into account what the responsibilities and requirements would be for this person. A report defining the need and requirements was created in 2005 and should be considered in this process. A detail job description should be created including responsibilities and reporting requirements. Once the new Town Manager is hired, one of the first responsibilities would be to determine if the town also needs a Town Planner.

**Responsibility:** Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee, a consultant, volunteers

**Goal 3 Introduction** - The Town bylaws are a living set of rules, many of which were created quite some time ago. Many of the bylaws now do not fit with the current conditions in town and should be considered for revision. These bylaws stretch across a number of different areas when applied to the current activities in town. The bylaws should be re-considered and Proposals made to modify the bylaws for the current and future needs of the Town. This was also mentioned in great detail with a long list in the 2007 Master Plan Report.

**Objective:** Revise sections of the Town and Zoning Bylaws after due consideration to meet the current and future needs as we can envision them. Here is a list we are very aware of but there may be much more. The permanent Master Plan Committee should make this a high priority.

Earth Removal Bylaw: The current Bylaw has never been enforced. It should be rewritten and made a part of the zoning bylaws. Oversight of the bylaw, changed from the Conservation Commission, should be changed. It needs to be completely re-written with enforcement capability and details for both "gravel pit" businesses and individual lot earth removal and fill situations. An inventory needs to be taken of all pits. A licensing structure needs to be implemented and

the responsibility needs to be assigned the Selectmen, town manager or planning board.

Subdivision Regulation: The have never been used, however that day may be coming soon. These regulations are incomplete and may not meet current standards the town requires or would like to follow. These regulations should designate portions of the land to be mentioned for open space, wetlands and land preservation. A subdivision could be described as any project with more than a three-house cluster. This would allow the town to require different house styles if three houses built in close proximity. The Town clearly does not want to see multiple split entry houses in a row, built side by side or as a mini development. Also road construction requirements could be tailored to a semi-rural setting.

Open Spaces and Wetlands: The town survey showed strong support for protecting open spaces and wetlands. Currently the Conservation Commission enforces the Massachusetts State wetland laws. These are far reaching and enforcement is complicated at best. The Town together with the Conservation Commission should consider the creation of additional wetland rules unique to North Brookfield. These should include details for enforcement so the Conservation Commission can set rules and guidelines that are enforceable without having to go through the state.

New Lots: The town uses the term ANR in the creation, approval and acceptance of new lots in town. ANR stands for Subdivision Approval Not Required. Currently the Planning Board checks a new lot to see if the lot line frontage and total square footage meets the zoning requirements. The lot would be approved even if the lot did not have enough dry land on which to build a house.

An option would be to consider an upland soil percent construction, ie. 50+- based on USDA, NRCS mapping and on-site soil evaluation.

**Responsibility:** Planning Board, Town Manager, Conservation Commission

**Goal 4 Introduction - Over 55 Housing** – The survey indicates that there is a high demand for additional Senior Housing in town. There are a number of people in town that are becoming older and the upkeep of a home can be overwhelming. The town should

investigate the best possible way to add new inventory of Senior Housing. There may be a number of ways to do this, particularly through the private sector.

**Objective:** Facilitate the creation of new Senior Housing. A committee should be created to clearly identify the need and then follow through to find the best possible way to begin the process. This could be a partially funded project or a partnership or even a private low and moderate housing units.

**Responsibility:** Town Manager, Finance Committee, Senior Center Director, North Brookfield Senior Housing Volunteers.

**Goal 5 Introduction – Industrial and Commercial Growth –** The quantity of Industrial and Commercial businesses in North Brookfield has remained fairly stable in recent years. There have been a few new Industrial businesses in town, however the inventory of vacant industrial land has remained almost the same for over 15 years. The town has seen some new small businesses move into town. The 2007 Master Plan suggested several different things that could be done to try to encourage growth in both areas. Those suggestions are still viable potential measures for today.

**Objective:** The Town should create a new business growth committee. The committee should consider the following things:

- Create a database of industrial landowners and facilities. This could be used to help promote the potential use and demonstrate to potential buyers the Town's commitment to encourage growth.
- Investigate the vacant land to make sure it is both viable for construction and invest in infrastructure to make the land more appealing.
- Work with a real estate industry people to help promote the town as a good location for growth or expansion.
- The committee should work with owners of vacant Main Street properties to find the best ways to encourage them to invest in upgrades and search for potential grants to assist in that process.
- The committee should recommend to the Planning Board any Zoning Bylaw changes that would assist in growth of both Industrial and Commercial Properties.

**Responsibility:** New Business Growth Committee, Town Manager, Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee, Planning Board

**Goal 6 Introduction** - Downtown Design Standards – The Downtown Development Committee continues working to improve the downtown infrastructure to make it more appealing for both business, residents, pedestrians, shoppers, tourists and investors etc.. New design standards should be considered and developed to “dress up” the look of downtown and make it a more homogenous pleasing “Face” of the Town.

**Objective:** It is a good time to review and approve a new North Brookfield Downtown design standard. These standards which could include, lighting, signage, design styles etc. This could help to put a new face on the downtown area and could limit things such as all black buildings, flashing neon lights, loud music, etc.

**Responsibility:** DDC, Planning Board, Board of Selectmen, Town Manager, Volunteers, Downtown Building owners and Residents.

**Goal 7 Introduction** – Traffic and Parking – Downtown Traffic and Parking has been a problem in recent years. There is not enough parking in downtown and traffic congestion is terrible as truckers stop and unload goods for businesses. In the last year it has been proposed that the unloading zone for downtown is be at the corner of Maple Street, however this has not be successful.

**Objective:** A committee of downtown business owners and town officials should be setup to address relieving the traffic and parking situation in downtown. A plan for new parking and for enforceable loading and unloading areas should be created. The committee should apply for grants for this purpose and work with the town to get these projects going. It will be vital to gain consensus of building owners, Business owners, Town officials, and the public as this could be a large and difficult project.

**Responsibility:** Downtown Development Committee, Highway Dept. Town Manager, Board of Selectmen, Building Owners, Business Owners, volunteers.

**Goal 8 Introduction** - Open Land and Recreation – The Open Space and Recreation Chapter of the Master Plan contains a number of goals regarding Open Space and Recreation for the Town of North Brookfield. This goal is for more of the financial side of Open Space and Recreation. It is vital as the Town grows and more residents live in North Brookfield and there is more Commercial and Industrial growth that we plan for both Recreation and Open spaces. This is not free, it will take donations, grants, and partnership funding in order to be affordable.



Objective – A committee should be formed to investigate all of the options to both preserve open space and to fund the cost of creating new recreational space. This will be a community wide project. We will need the help of volunteers, a robust new town department called Parks and Recreation, and funding and logistic partners like East Quabbin Land Trust. Volunteers will be used to help maintain and create new open space areas. Parks and Recreation Dept will be formed combining Town Forest, Rail Trail, Lashaway Beach Committee, parts of the Highway Department such as the Town Common Maintenance and finally the Cemetery Commission. All of these groups, for the most part, use the same equipment and can benefit from a combination of volunteers and town employees.

**Responsibility:** Conservation Committee, Highway Department, Finance Committee, Town Manager, Downtown Development Committee, Cemetery Commission.

# Appendix



*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*  
*Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs*  
*100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900*  
*Boston, MA 02114*

Maura T. Healey  
GOVERNOR

Kimberley Driscoll  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

Rebecca L. Tepper  
SECRETARY

Tel: (617) 626-1000  
Fax: (617) 626-1081  
<http://www.mass.gov/eea>

January 12, 2023

Ann Hicks  
19 Cider Mill Road  
North Brookfield, MA 01535

Re: Open Space and Recreation Plan

Dear Ms. Hicks:

Thank you for submitting the Open Space and Recreation Plan for North Brookfield to this office for review and compliance with the current Open Space and Recreation Plan Requirements. I'm pleased to write that the plan has received final approval and the town is eligible to apply for DCS grants through March 2029. Please contact me [melissa.cryan@mass.gov](mailto:melissa.cryan@mass.gov) if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

*Melissa Cryan*

Melissa Cryan  
Grant Programs Supervisor

The Master Plan Committee was formed in late 2019 as a committee under the Planning Board. The committee of six residents from town started to meet regularly in a meeting room in the library. We first spent some time reviewing the last Master Plan which was completed in 2007. There is a chapter in the Master Plan which is also published separately called “THE Open Space and Recreation Plan” The OSRP is created and must be approved by the MA Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs for the State of Massachusetts as a stand-alone document. Both the Master Plan as a whole and the OSRP are commonly ask for as a part of grant applications, so it is vital to complete both on a regular basis. After reviewing both existing documents, we came to the conclusion that:

We needed to complete the OSRP first, so it could be included in the Master Plan.

The new Master Plan needed to take a slightly different focus than the Master Plan completed in the year 2007.

We first created a new survey to gather information from everyone in town. We planned a series of Forums to provide an atmosphere where we could share some ideas and directions and gather feedback from residents of North Brookfield. The survey was completed and ready to send out in early 2020. We mailed 3700 surveys to residents in town and also placed the survey on the internet for those who wanted to complete it in that method. We received 745 responses. This was an excellent return based on most standards in the survey business. We have spent hours studying the responses to see how people feel about the questions we asked to help us formulate what the forums should focus on and what direction we should take in creating the Master Plan.

It was at this point that the COVID lockdown took over. We continued our meetings on-line via Zoom and went to work. We planned and held three forums on-line via Zoom in early 2021. The first forum was February 4<sup>th</sup> 2021 and the subject was Open Space and Recreation. The second forum was April 15<sup>th</sup> 2021 and the subject was Downtown North Brookfield. The third forum was June 28, 2021 and the subject was housing and transportation. All three forums were well attended and there was good conversation at each forum.

Part of the team was busy working on the Open Space and Recreation chapter and the rest of the team was busy interviewing town departments and organizations in order to update a body of current knowledge about town facilities and future plans to be used in the rest of the Master Plan.

We have been overwhelmed by the response we received from town residents. There was very positive feedback on the direction our plans were taking and there was very good exchange of ideas about what could be changed for the better and what was very highly valued.

Our thanks to everyone in town for their help and support in this process. We look forward to beginning the executions of the changes and new directions that will come from this process. Recent changes for improvement zoning changes marijuana, etc.

The Master Plan Committee

Ann Hicks, Bob Locatelli, Brandon Avery, Sheila Orsi, John Turner, and Susan Lyons

# North Brookfield 2020 Master Plan Survey

## **RESULTS**

Collected over several weeks in the Fall of 2020

# Q1 Are you a resident of North Brookfield?

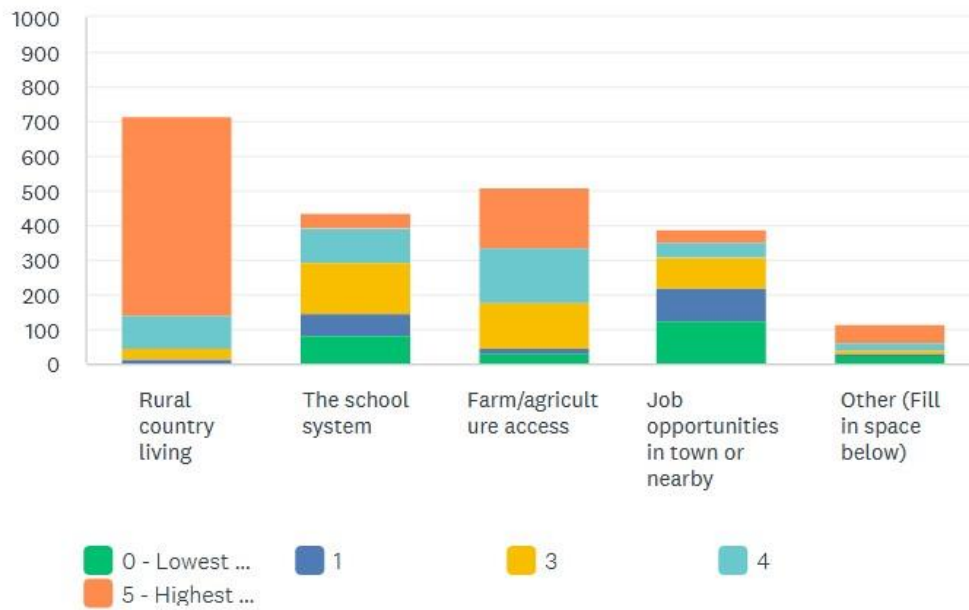
Answered: 746    Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	99.73%	744
No	0.27%	2
Total Respondents: 746		

## Q2 What do you like about living in North Brookfield?

Answered: 746

Skipped: 0



	0 - LOWEST RATING	1	3	4	5 - HIGHEST RATING	TOTAL RESPONDENTS
Rural country living	0.81% 6	1% 9	4.30% 32	89% 96	76.64% 571	745
The school system	11.56% 86	8.33% 62	19.49% 145	13.71% 102	5.91% 44	744
Farm/agriculture access	3.89% 29	2.55% 19	17.83% 133	21.05% 157	23.32% 174	746
Job opportunities in town or nearby	17.07% 127	53% 94	69% 87	6.05% 45	4.57% 34	744
Other (Fill in space below)	9.19% 25	1% 6	4.41% 12	6.62% 18	96% 57	272

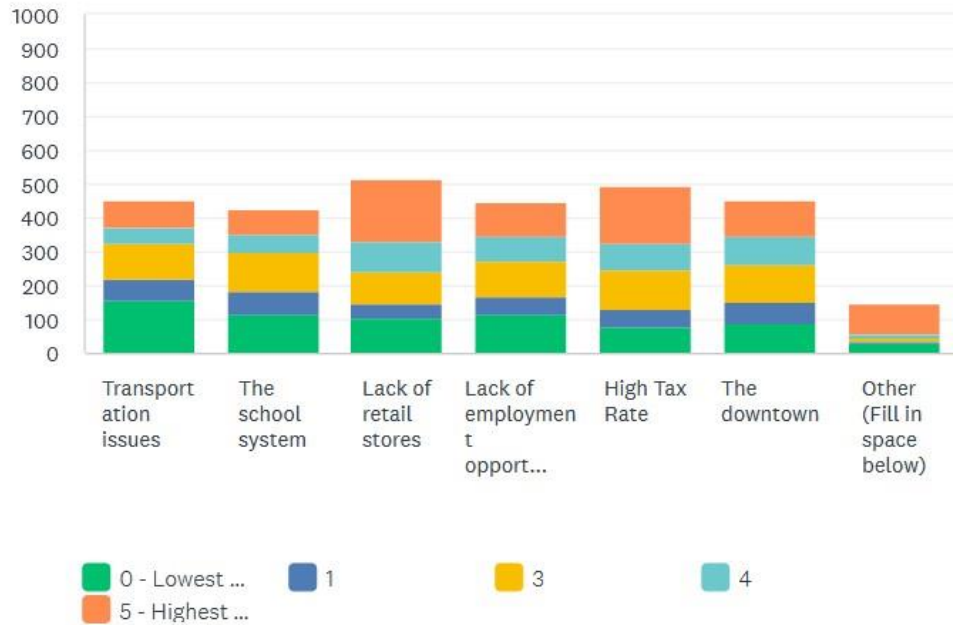


home small family quiet peaceful people town living business

## Quiet community

### Q3 What do you dislike about living in North Brookfield?

Answered: 746 Skipped: 0



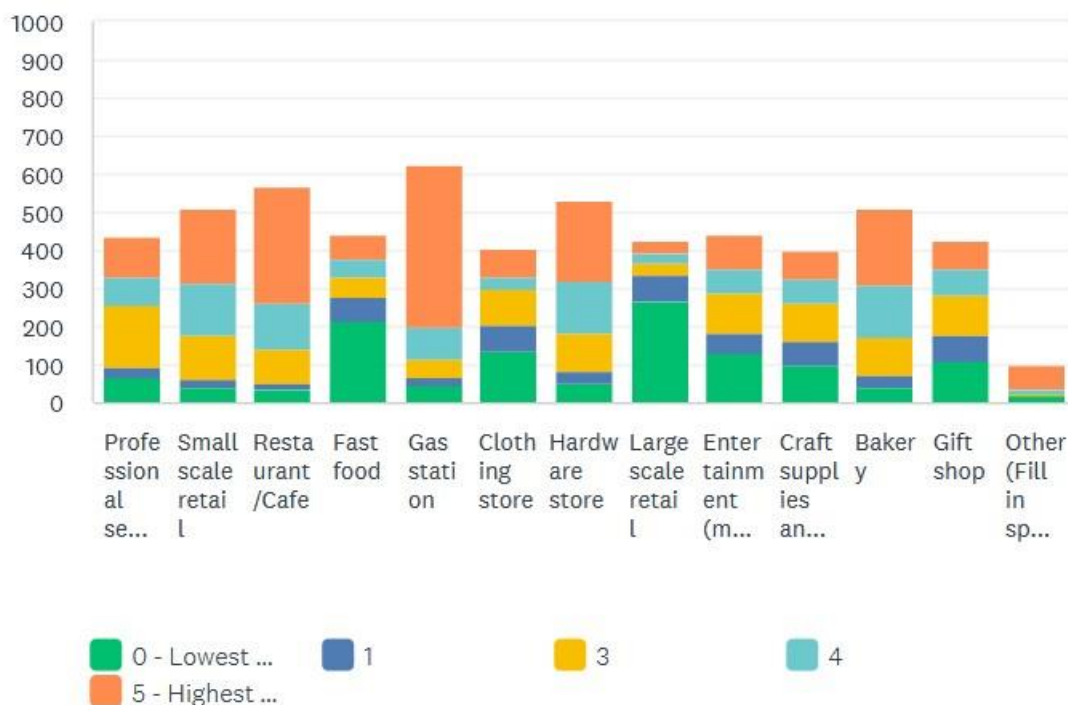
	0 - LOWEST RATING	1	3	4	5 - HIGHEST RATING	TOTAL RESPONDENTS
Transportation issues	21.05% 157	8.85% 66	13.81% 103	6.17% 46	10.59% 79	746
The school system	15.73% 117	9.27% 69	15.59% 116	6.72% 50	10.22% 76	744
Lack of retail stores	13.83% 103	6.17% 46	12.75% 95	12.08% 90	24.16% 180	745
Lack of employment opportunities	15.75% 117	6.73% 50	14.13% 105	10.23% 76	13.46% 100	743

High Tax Rate	10.86%	6.70%	15.95%	10.32%	22.39%	
	81	50	119	77	167	746
The downtown	12.40%	8.09%	14.82%	11.19%	14.56%	
	92	60	110	83	108	742
Other (Fill in space below)	11.50%	2.09%	2.09%	4.18%	31.01%	
	33	6	6	12	89	287

Lack gas station winter better Street Need Main  
gas station roads sidewalks town Lack diversity  
roads dislike Lack town departments nothing high  
houses sidewalks poor Living Road conditions

Q4 What type of new businesses would you like to see most in town?

Answered: 746 Skipped: 0



	0 - LOWEST	1	3	4	5 - HIGHEST	TOTAL

	RATING				RATING	RESPONDENTS
Professional services	8.99%	4.03%	21.48%	10.20%	13.83%	745
	67	30	160	76	103	
Small scale retail	5.64%	3.09%	15.03%	18.79%	25.77%	745
	42	23	112	140	192	
Restaurant/Cafe	4.97%	2.02%	11.83%	16.67%	40.86%	744
	37	15	88	124	304	
Fast food	29.13%	8.46%	7.11%	5.91%	8.99%	745
	217	63	53	44	67	
Gas station	6.43%	2.55%	6.84%	10.72%	57.24%	746
	48	19	51	80	427	
Clothing store	18.66%	8.86%	12.62%	4.70%	9.53%	745
	139	66	94	35	71	
Hardware store	6.99%	4.17%	13.71%	18.55%	28.36%	744
	52	31	102	138	211	
Large scale retail	35.75%	9.81%	4.30%	3.36%	4.17%	744
	266	73	32	25	31	
Entertainment (movies, bowling, etc.)	17.43%	7.51%	13.81%	8.45%	11.80%	746
	130	56	103	63	88	
Craft supplies and courses	13.56%	8.05%	13.96%	8.05%	9.93%	745
	101	60	104	60	74	
Bakery	5.77%	4.03%	13.42%	18.79%	26.17%	745
	43	30	100	140	195	
Gift shop	14.52%	9.41%	14.11%	9.68%	9.68%	

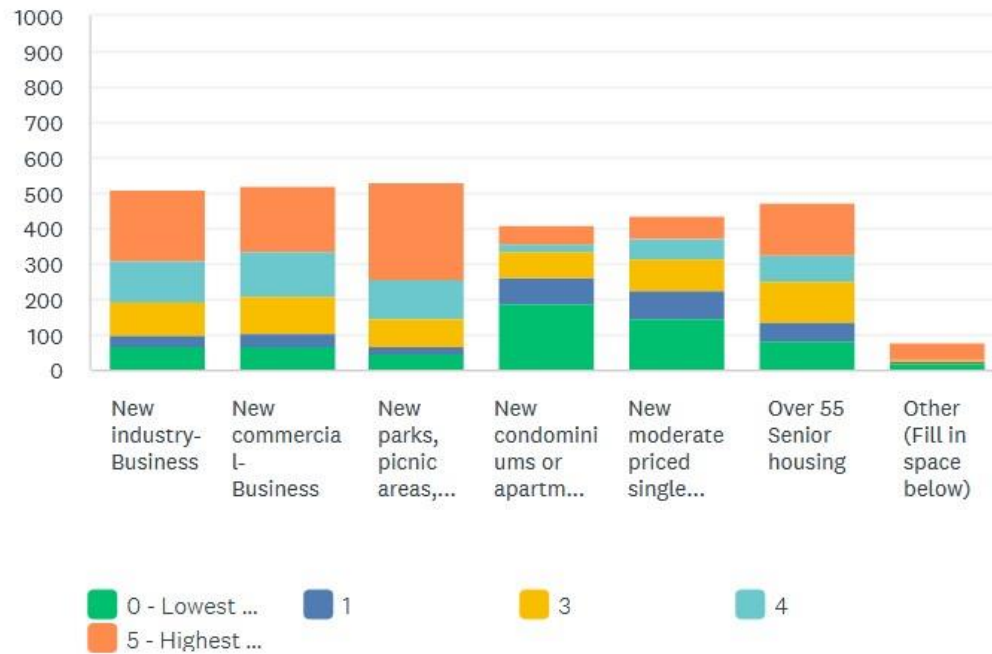
	108	70	105	72	72	744
Other (Fill in space below)	7.75%	0.78%	1.94%	3.49%	25.19%	
	20	2	5	9	65	258

center coffee kids Artisan cumberland farms Local shop  
venue store consignment shop town restaurants  
coffee shop need small None food downtown donut  
Dunkin Donuts

## Q5 What would you most like to see be a part of town?

Answered: 746

Skipped: 0

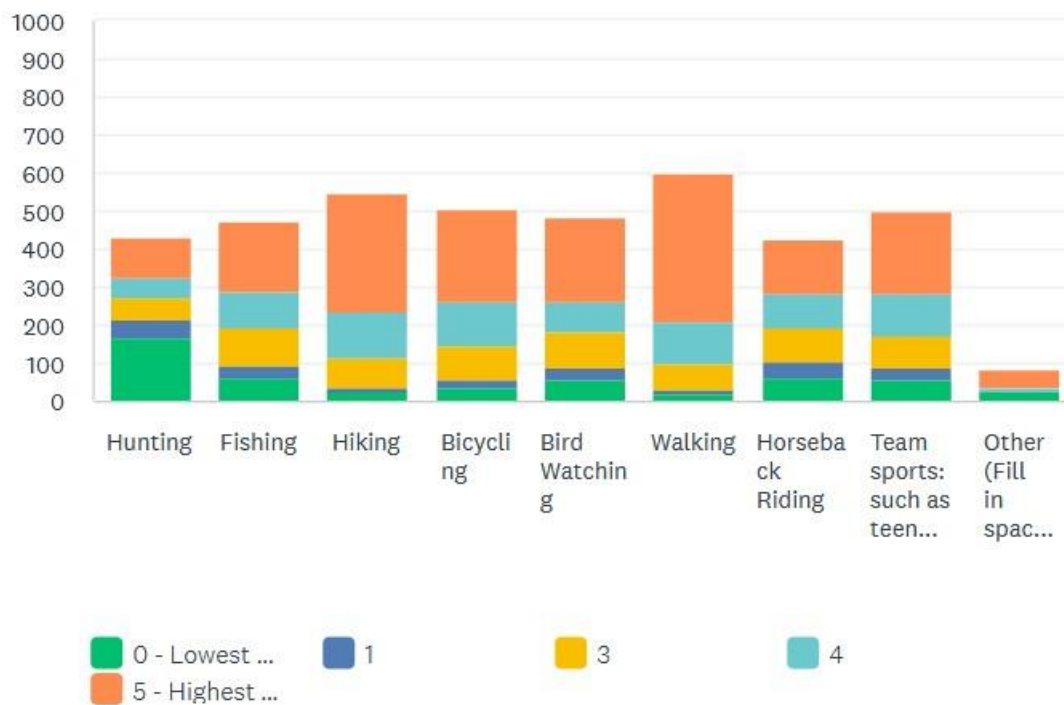


	0 - LOWEST RATING	1	3	4	5 - HIGHEST RATING	TOTAL RESPONDENTS
New industry- Business	8.98% 67	4.16% 31	12.87% 96	15.68% 117	26.94% 201	746
New commercial- Business	9.12% 68	4.69% 35	14.61% 109	16.62% 124	24.80% 185	746
New parks, picnic areas, walking trails - Recreation	6.17% 46	2.95% 22	10.32% 77	15.01% 112	37.00% 276	746
New condominiums or apartments - Residential	25.60% 191	9.38% 70	9.92% 74	3.35% 25	6.97% 52	746
New moderate priced single-family home subdivision - Residential	19.84% 148	10.46% 78	12.33% 92	7.37% 55	8.85% 66	746

Over 55 Senior housing	11.26%	6.97%	15.42%	9.92%	20.11%	
	84	52	115	74	150	746
Other (Fill in space below)	8.97%	1.28%	2.56%	0.85%	20.94%	
	21	3	6	2	49	234

## Q6 What are favorite activities you would like to see encouraged in North Brookfield?

Answered: 746 Skipped: 0



	0 - LOWEST RATING	1	3	4	5 - HIGHEST RATING	TOTAL RESPONDENTS
Hunting	22.39%	6.57%	7.77%	7.24%	14.21%	746
	167	49	58	54	106	
Fishing	8.18%	4.42%	13.27%	13.00%	24.40%	746
	61	33	99	97	182	

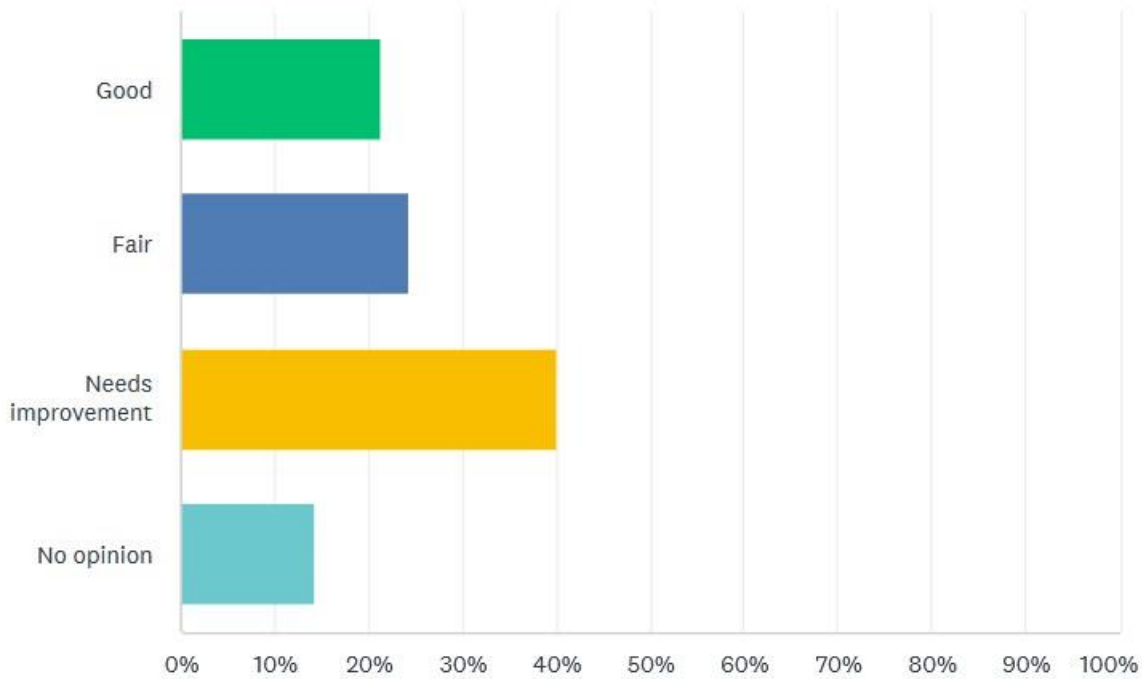
Hiking	3.49%	1.61%	10.46%	16.22%	41.96%	746
	26	12	78	121	313	
Bicycling	4.69%	3.35%	12.06%	14.88%	32.84%	746
	35	25	90	111	245	
Bird Watching	7.51%	4.83%	12.47%	10.72%	29.49%	746
	56	36	93	80	220	
Walking	2.55%	1.61%	8.99%	15.30%	51.95%	745
	19	12	67	114	387	
Horseback Riding	8.46%	5.37%	12.21%	11.81%	19.60%	745
	63	40	91	88	146	
Team sports such as teen, senior, or other age groups	7.64%	4.02%	11.53%	14.75%	29.22%	746
	57	30	86	110	218	
Other (Fill in space below)	9.96%	0.00%	1.66%	2.90%	19.92%	241
	24	0	4	7	48	

events needed fairs golf common makes trail anything  
town food arts ATV sports

## Q7 What is your opinion of your town government?

Answered: 746

Skipped: 0



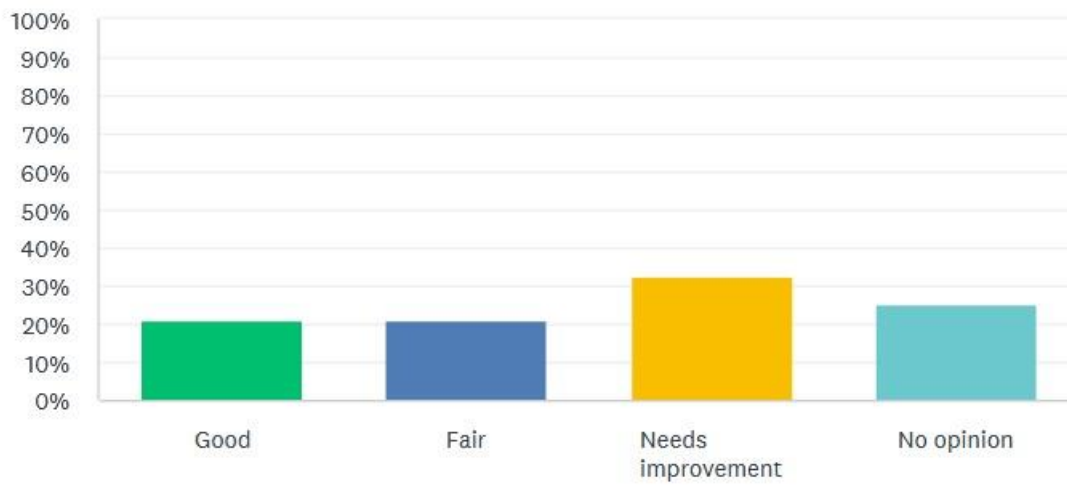
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Good	21.31%	159
Fair	24.40%	182
Needs improvement	40.08%	299
No opinion	14.21%	106
TOTAL		746

## Q8 How do you feel about the school system?

Answered: 746

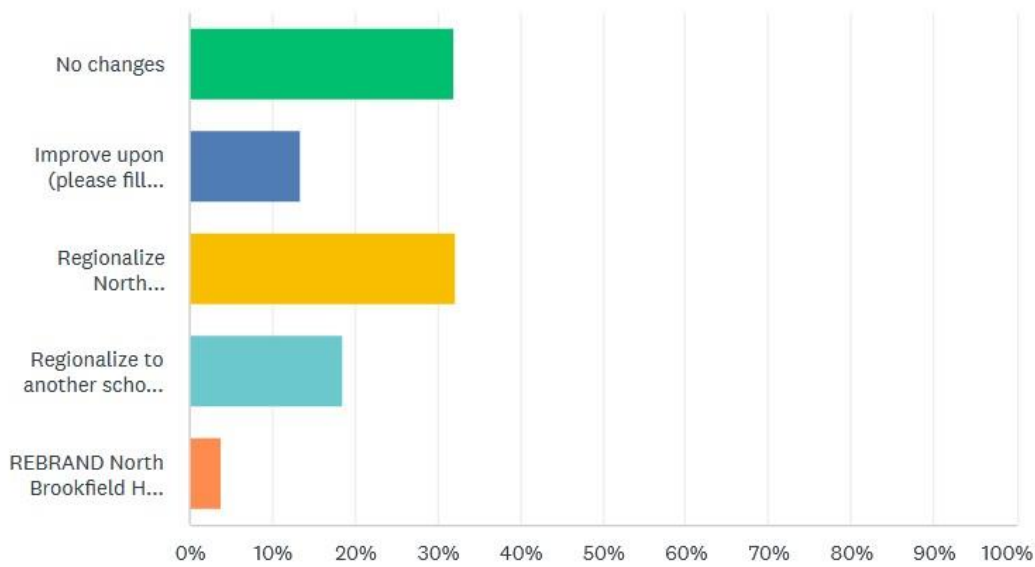
Skipped: 0





ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES
Good	20.91%	156
Fair	21.18%	158
Needs improvement	32.44%	242
No opinion	25.47%	190
TOTAL		746

Q9 What changes would you make to the school system?



Answered: 746

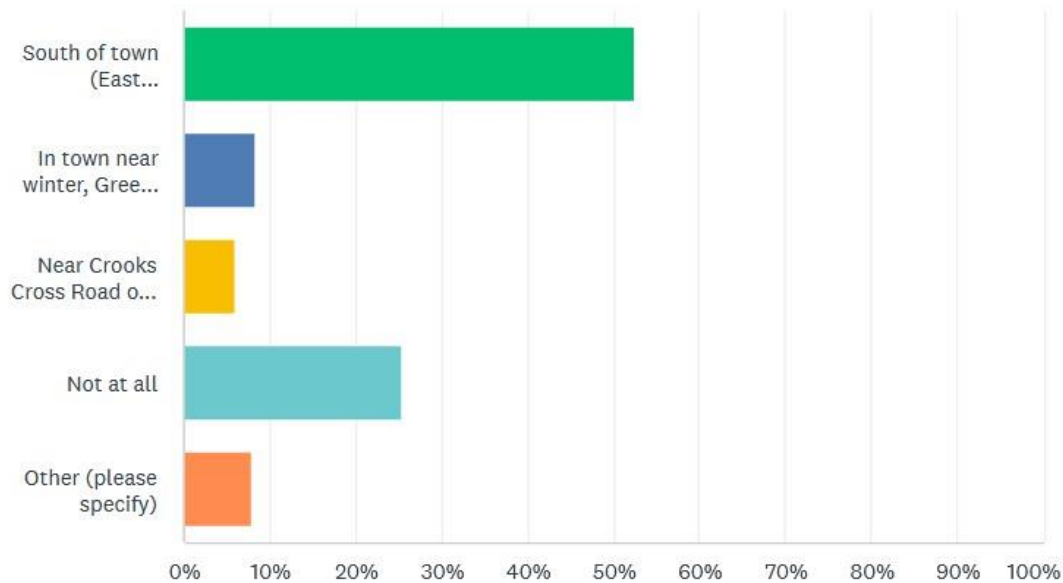
Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
No changes	31.90%	238
Improve upon (please fill out comments field with suggestions)	13.54%	101
Regionalize North Brookfield High, locating IN North Brookfield	32.17%	240
Regionalize to another school system, location OUTSIDE of North Brookfield	18.63%	139
REBRAND North Brookfield High school (such as name and/or logo change)	3.75%	28
TOTAL		746

## Q10 Should the town work to enhance or enlarge its industrial area?

Answered: 746

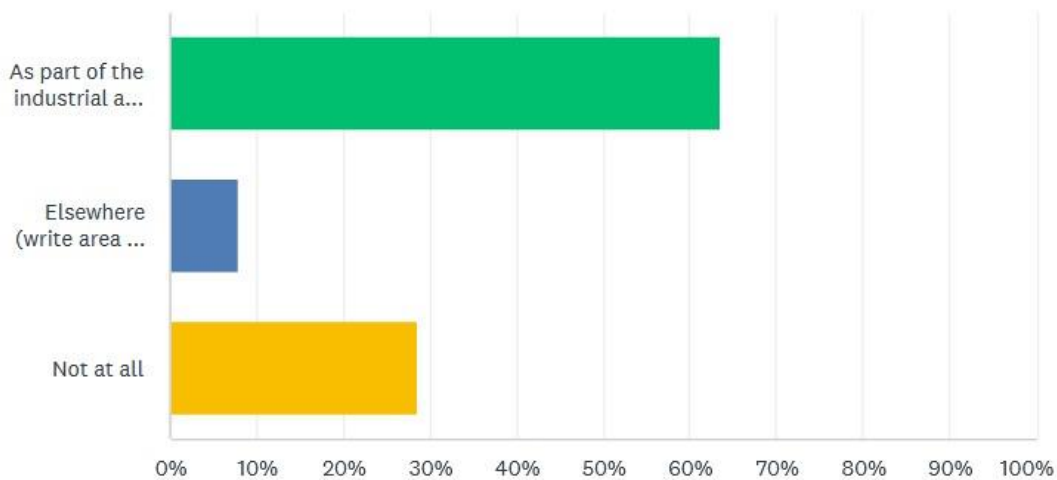
Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
South of town (East Brookfield Road south of Donovan Rd)	52.41%	391
In town near winter, Green, and Prospect Street	8.31%	62
Near Crooks Cross Road on Rt 148	6.03%	45
Not at all	25.34%	189
Other (please specify)	7.91%	59
TOTAL		746

**Q11 Should a new R&D (Research & Development), research, or light industrial business zone area be created in town?**

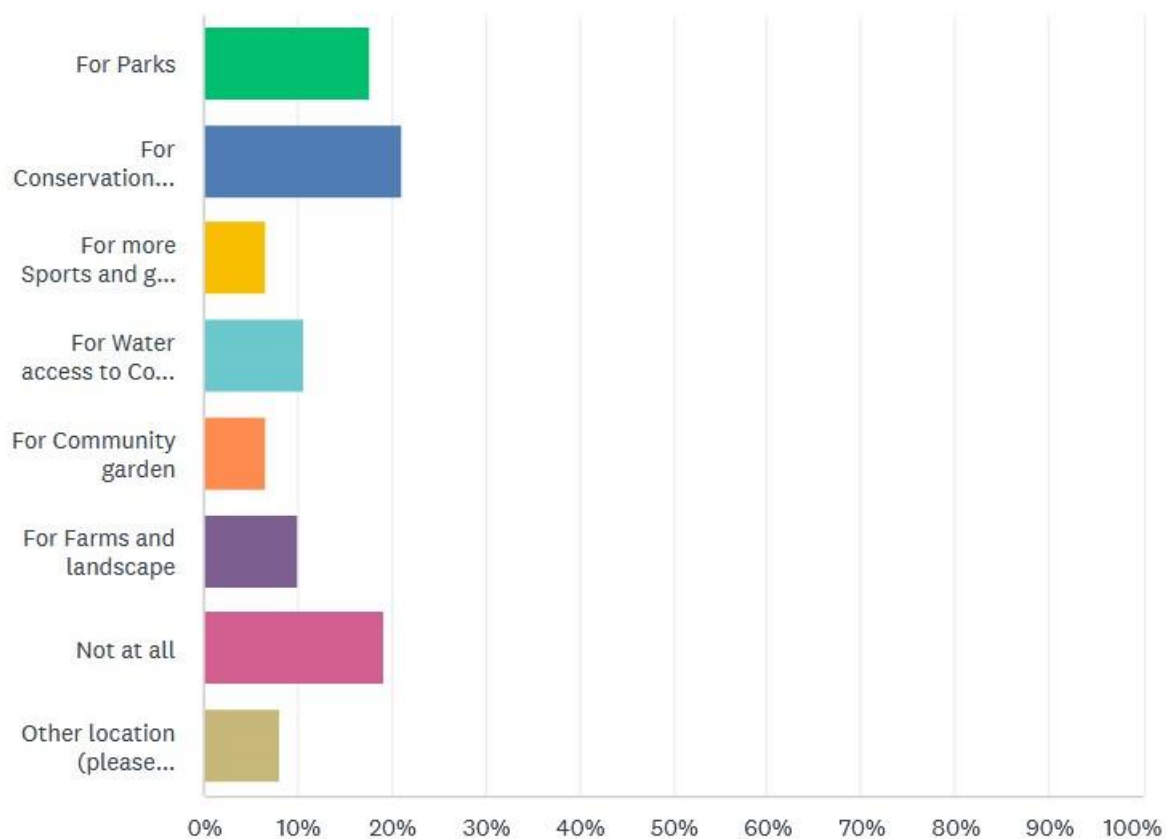
Answered: 746 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
As part of the industrial area south of town	63.54%	474
Elsewhere (write area in comments below)	7.91%	59
Not at all	28.55%	213
TOTAL		746

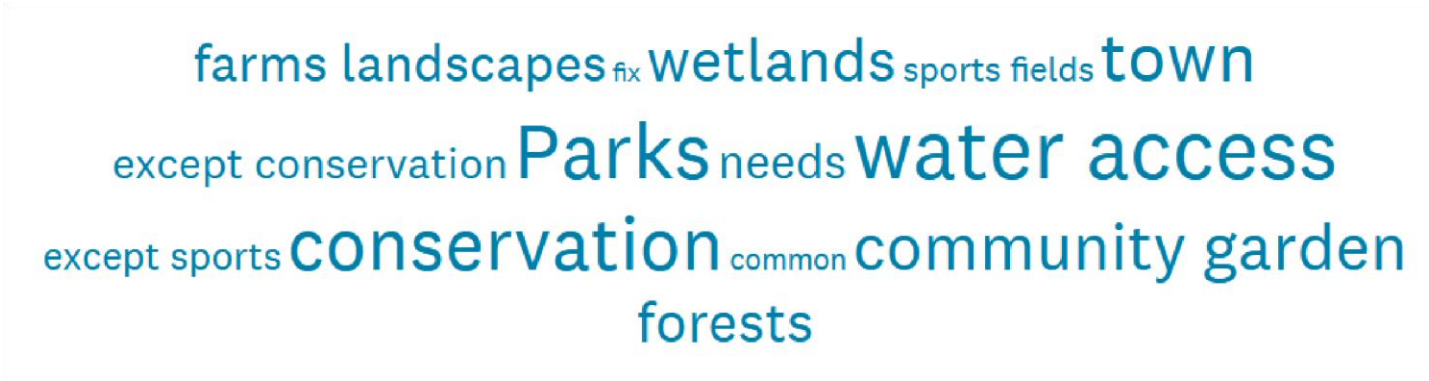
Q12 Should the town work to invest money/grants acquiring land in town?

Answered: 746 Skipped: 0



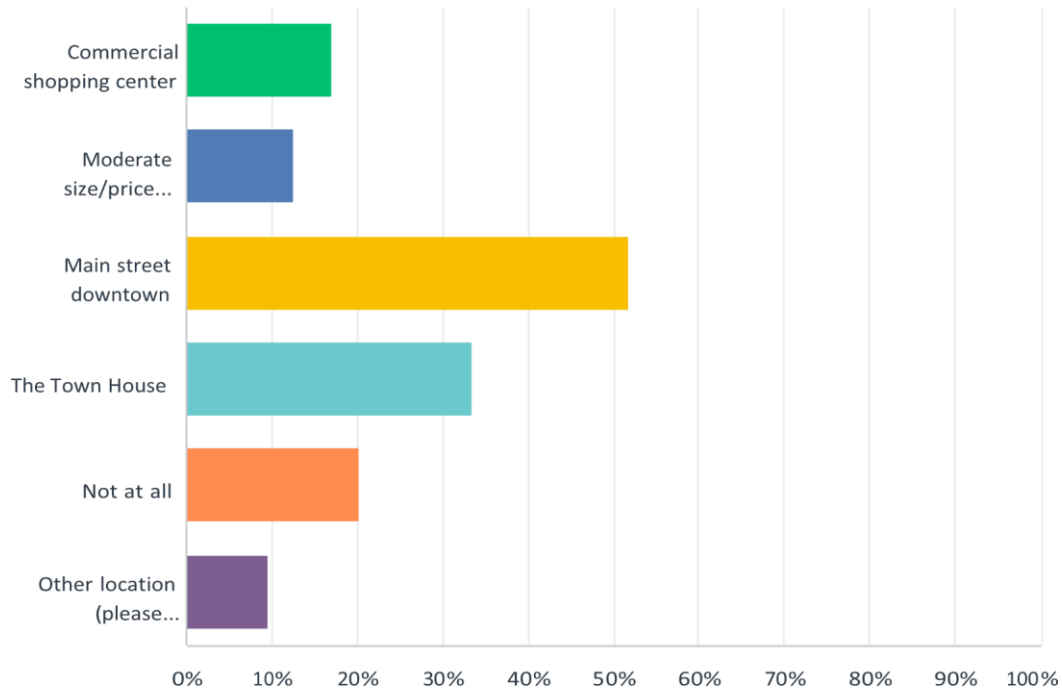
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
For Parks	17.69%	132
For Conservation of wetlands and forest	21.05%	157
For more Sports and game fields	6.70%	50
For Water access to Coy's Brook, Five Mile River, etc.	10.59%	79
For Community Garden	6.57%	49
For Farms and landscape	10.05%	75
Not at all	19.17%	143

Other location (please specify)	8.18%	61
TOTAL		746



# Q13 Should the town work to bring in a new developer to develop or redevelop one of the following? Check off all that apply.

Answered: 746 Skipped: 0

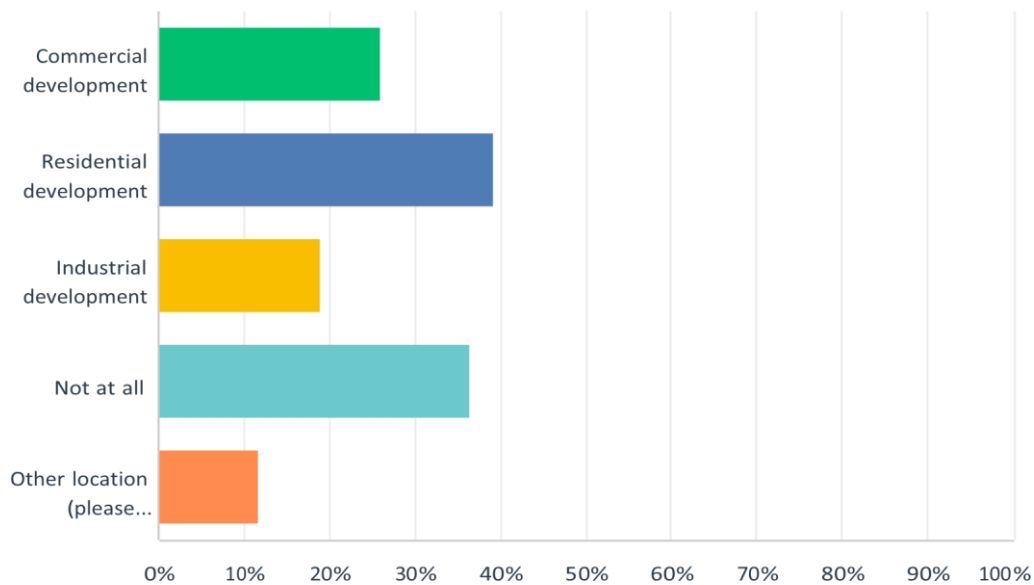


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Commercial shopping center	17.02%	127
Moderate size/price single family home subdivision	12.60%	94
Main street downtown	51.88%	387
The Town House	33.38%	249
Not at all	20.24%	151
Other location (please specify)	9.65%	72

Total Respondents: 746

**Q14 Would you be in favor of updating and expanding the municipal sewer and water systems for one of the following? Check off all that apply.**

Answered: 746 Skipped: 0

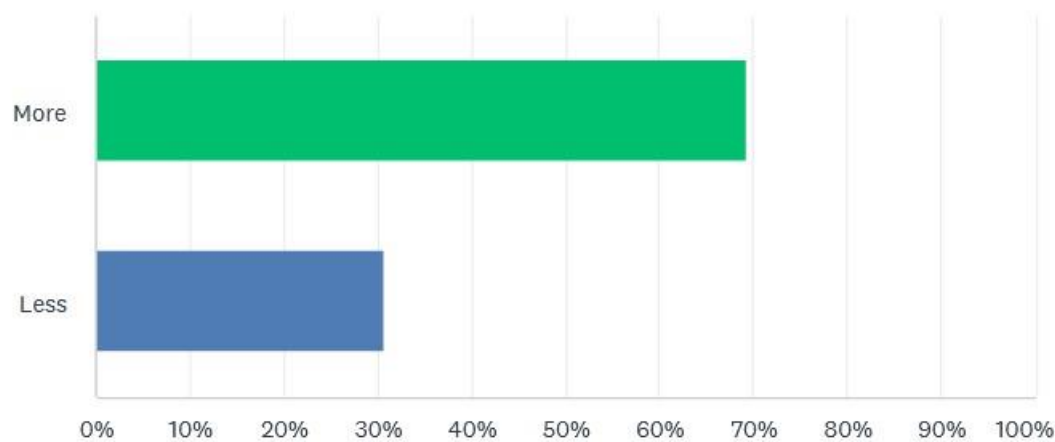


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Commercial development	26.01%	194
Residential development	39.14%	292
Industrial development	18.90%	141
Not at all	36.46%	272
Other location (please specify)	11.66%	87
Total Respondents: 746		



Q15 Do you feel the town should be more or less restrictive of the location of large and medium solar installations in town?

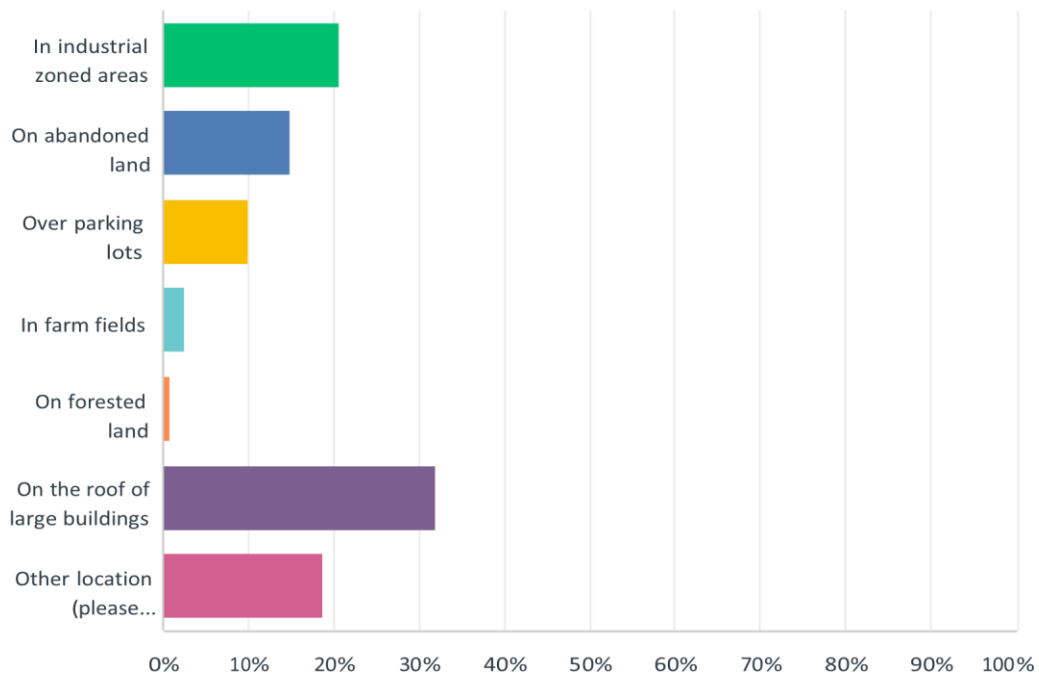
Answered: 746 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
More	69.30%	517
Less	30.70%	229
TOTAL		746

Q16 Where do you think commercial solar installations should be allowed?

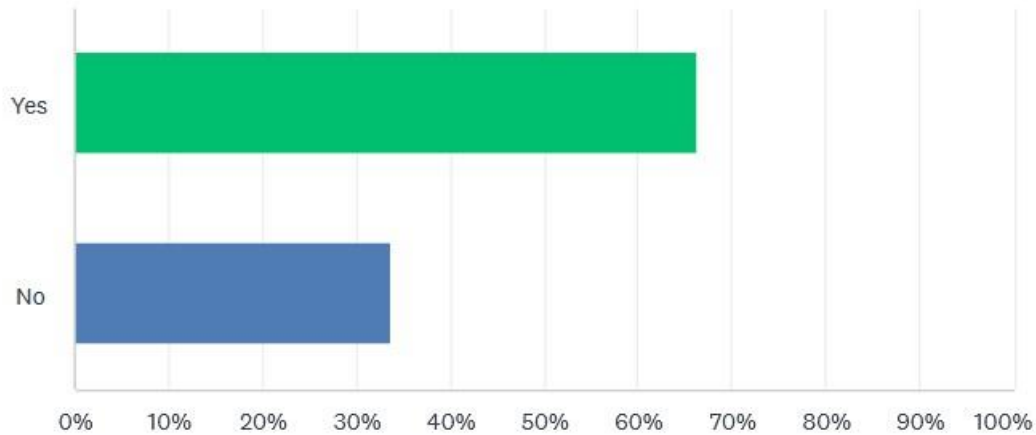
Answered: 746 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
In industrial zoned areas		20.78%	155
On abandoned land		15.01%	112
Over parking lots		10.05%	75
In farm fields		2.55%	19
On forested land		0.80%	6
On the roof of large buildings		32.04%	239
Other location (please specify)		18.77%	140
TOTAL			746

## Q17 Should the town consider having a town manager/administrator?

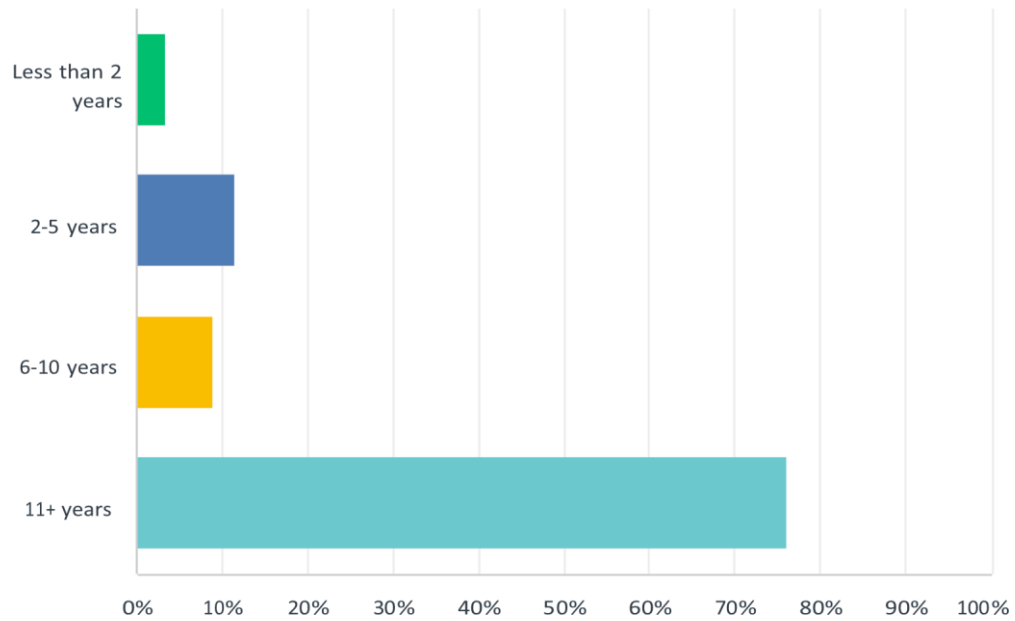
Answered: 746 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	66.22%	494
No	33.78%	252
TOTAL		746

## Q18 How long have you lived in town?

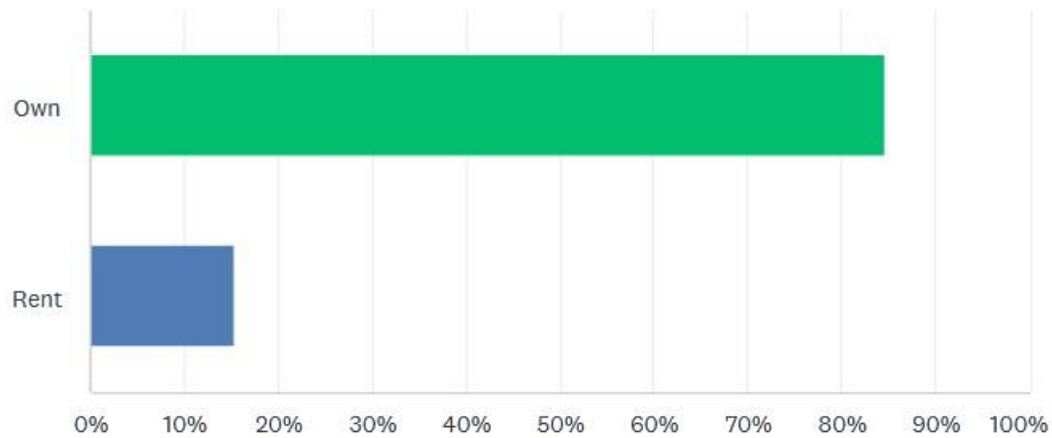
Answered: 746 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Less than 2 years	3.35%	25
2-5 years	11.53%	86
6-10 years	8.98%	67
11+ years	76.14%	568
TOTAL		746

### Q19 Do you own or rent?

Answered: 746 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Own	84.72%	632
Rent	15.28%	114
TOTAL		746

**Q20 Please rate the town services, boards and commissions by choosing the rating that best matches your feelings.**

Answered: 746 Skipped: 0

	EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	TOTAL
Selectmen	12.48% 76 609	32.02% 195	32.02% 195	23.48% 143	
Police Department	48.51% 341	40.26% 283	9.10% 64	2.13% 15	703
Fire Department	56.53% 385	38.47% 262	4.41% 30	0.59% 4	681

Emergency Services	55.52%	36.81%	6.29%	1.38%	
	362	240	41	9	652
Sewer Department	20.86%	50.97%	24.73%	3.44%	
	97	237	115	16	465
Water Department	26.39%	52.20%	18.36%	3.06%	
	138	273	96	16	523
Transfer Station/Recycle center	29.59%	47.64%	17.24%	5.53%	
	182	293	106	34	615
Highway Department	10.57%	33.93%	32.59%	22.92%	
	71	228	219	154	672
Board of Health	16.22%	39.04%	25.85%	18.89%	
	91	219	145	106	561
School System, Board or Superintendent	12.31%	44.92%	30.67%	12.10%	
	57	208	142	56	463
Building/Inspection	17.30%	50.63%	25.32%	6.75%	
	82	240	120	32	474
Library	50.41%	40.80%	7.30%	1.49%	
	304	246	44	9	603
Recreation/Parks	17.22%	46.09%	27.65%	9.04%	
	99	265	159	52	575
Planning Board	12.24%	49.65%	30.35%	7.76%	
	52	211	129	33	425
Conservation Commission	13.72%	54.11%	27.68%	4.49%	
	55	217	111	18	401

Council on Aging/Senior Center	25.77%	54.85%	16.08%	3.30%	
	117	249	73	15	454
Town Office Staff	22.41%	51.52%	20.27%	5.79%	147
	338	133	38	656	
Town Website	8.57%	42.86%	35.63%	12.94%	
	51	255	212	77	595
Veteran Affairs	28.52%	44.92%	22.95%	3.61%	
	87	137	70	11	305