



Blandford,  
Massachusetts

2021-2028

# BLANDFORD

## OPEN SPACE & RECREATION PLAN UPDATE

PREPARED FOR THE TOWN OF BLANDFORD



**JUNE 2021**

Prepared by Wildscape Design with support from the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Town of Blandford is very grateful to the Open Space and Recreation Plan Advisory Committee for their work overseeing the development of Blandford's Update to the Open Space and Recreation Plan.

### OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Colleen Doyle, Conservation Commission  
Dick Gates, Conservation Commission  
Nathan Maynard, Conservation Commission  
John Piper, Conservation Commission

Joshua Garcia, Town Administrator



The Open Space and Recreation Plan Advisory Committee thanks the residents who participated in the plan development process, completing surveys, and attending community meetings.



Thanks to the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Action Grant program for funding assistance to support the development of Blandford's Open Space and Recreation Plan.

## MANY THANKS

TO WILDSCAPE DESIGN AND THE PIONEER VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION  
FOR THEIR ASSISTANCE FACILITATING DEVELOPMENT OF THIS IMPORTANT PLAN.





## Section 1: Plan Summary

Blandford's updated Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) is built upon an analysis of the Town's diverse open space and recreational assets, its complex conservation needs, and the goals of the community as they relate to the Town's character and its rich landscape. Blandford is a rural and predominantly forested Hilltown community, nestled in the foothills of the Berkshires and spanning roughly 53 square miles, with regionally significant drinking water resources and a over half of its land area conserved in perpetuity; the largest landowner in town—the City of Springfield—owns roughly one-third of Blandford's land, which is protected permanently as watershed conservation, and substantially off-limits to public access.

Blandford's original Open Space Plan was first completed in 1983, revised for the first time in 1988, and most recently updated in 2004. Ideally the plan should be reviewed and revised every five years, as a periodic review will keep the Town aware of its natural and recreational resources and actionable priorities for protecting and enhancing them. Since the development of the last OSRP in 2004, the Town has made progress toward some of its “wish-list” items for recreational needs and resource protection; since that time, new opportunities and challenges in open space preservation and land use have emerged, such as the burgeoning cannabis farming industry taking root, commercial ground-mounted photovoltaic (PV) development, and unforeseen housing and economic issues associated with the COVID-19 global pandemic. This plan, through an involved process of community engagement—which ran adjacent with the Town's development of its first Master Plan—and analysis of newly developed spatial datasets and emerging science in the fields of conservation and climate change, seeks to bring Blandford's plans for its open space and recreation assets into the 21st century. As developmental pressures continue to rise across the region encompassing the Hilltowns west of the Connecticut River valley, the protection of Blandford's open space is vitally important to the preservation of the Town's rural character, agriculture, forests, watersheds, and wildlife habitat; all factors with particularly importance to Blandford's residents, which combine to shape the natural quality of life in Town.

Accomplishing the goals of this OSRP requires a wide array of action steps. This plan aims to help the Town develop a clear direction regarding recreational needs, areas where open space conservation is needed, and maintenance of these resources. Ultimately, the goal for the plan is to ensure that Blandford remains a clean and safe environment for its residents. While many factors were reviewed and considered in the plan update process, key goals and objectives emerged through community engagement and meetings with the OSRP Advisory Committee which merit particular emphasis and follow through in Section Nine – Five-Year Action Plan:

- **Preserve Blandford's small-town atmosphere and character, while protecting vital water resources, upland buffers, and large blocks of contiguous forests.**
- **Conserve and steward Blandford's mosaic of forests and farms—its working landscapes—for the benefit of all present and future residents, visitors, and wildlife alike.**
- **Enhance existing recreational opportunities and access within Blandford, while expanding access to recreational opportunities currently unavailable in town.**

Finally, this plan defines open space as both land in a relatively natural state, and land used for active outdoor recreation. These resources range from publicly owned town greens and large State Forests, to privately held recreation areas and watershed protection lands. These open spaces are home to an



assortment of native plants and wildlife, biodiverse wetlands, prized water resources, public parks and playgrounds, scenic roads and vistas, deep woods, and are a pivotal contribution to the Town's charming character.



## Section 2: Introduction

### A. Statement of Purpose

This Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) serves as an update to the last OSRP, completed in 2003 and revised in 2004. This OSRP aims to provide those interested in Blandford's environmental future with the information necessary to adequately visualize the Town's current resource structure, to identify areas and issues of special concern, and produce a methodology for protection of those areas.

The authors of the plan, along with the Town of Blandford's Open Space and Recreation Plan Advisory Committee, and the community of Blandford, have included updated environmental research and theory to develop a progressive and resilient conservation philosophy which seeks to balance human needs with those of natural resource and wildlife protection in a regional (or macro) context as well as a local (or micro) context. This includes an exploration of emerging themes such as climate change and new land uses, such as solar fields, and their relationship to open space, and a revisitation of issues presented in previous plans, such as watershed ownership concerns and open space access.

An OSRP helps to guide a municipality in maintaining and improving the beneficial aspects of open space—which taken together make up much of the character of the community—and protecting the “green infrastructure” of a town or city. Planning for the protection and maintenance of this “green infrastructure,” like drinking water reservoirs, working farms and forests, viable wildlife habitats, parks, recreation areas, and trails, is just as important to the economic vitality of a community as planning for schools, roads, water, and wastewater infrastructure. Once completed, an OSRP is a powerful instrument to effect community goals. OSRPs establish the community's aspirations for open space and recreation (see Section Six – Community Vision) and support community-based advocacy for open space needs.

Finally, the OSRP is a requirement when applying and acquiring certain State grants, such as Self-Help Funding, Land and Water Conservation Funds, and other grant programs administered by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, Division of Conservation Services. OSRPs also provide a foundation for the coordination of long-term acquisition efforts with state environmental agencies and local and regional land trusts (adapted from the State's OSRP Workbook, 2008).

### B. Planning Process and Public Participation

The development of the original OSRP was initiated by the Blandford Conservation Commission. The Recreation Committee and the Planning Board were consulted during development, particularly regarding the listing of the Town's original goals and objectives.

In 2020 the Town of Blandford was awarded a grant through the Massachusetts Municipal Vulnerability Program (MVP) to create a master plan and update their OSRP with support from the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC); PVPC then subcontracted Wildscape Design, LLC., to author the final draft of the new plan, provide feedback on the required maps (updated by PVPC's GIS technician), and facilitate the OSRP Advisory Committee meetings and the community visioning process.

This planning process unfolded concurrently with the development of Blandford's Resilient Master Plan (RMP), and there is considerable overlap between the two. The Committee trusts that environmental issues will continue to be a primary factor in planning the Town's future, and that the OSRP will be an excellent resource for the Planning Board to rely on to inform future planning and zoning issues.



Table 1: Parties Involved in the 2021 Blandford OSRP Update		
Name	Representative of	Project Role
Joshua Garcia	Town of Blandford	Town Administrator
Colleen Doyle	Conservation Commission	OSRP Advisory Committee
Dick Gates	Conservation Commission	OSRP Advisory Committee
Nathan Maynard	Conservation Commission	OSRP Advisory Committee
John Piper	Conservation Commission	OSRP Advisory Committee
Kenneth Comia	Pioneer Valley Planning Commission	Author of RMP Section on Open Space and Natural Resources
Rowan Cignoni	Wildscape Design, LLC.	Author of OSRP Update
Cara Montague	Wildscape Design, LLC.	Author of OSRP Update
Jacob Dollinger	Pioneer Valley Planning Commission	GIS Technician, Required Maps

As part of the RMP, a public survey was sent to all households in town via both paper mailers and digital mailing lists. The survey included specific questions regarding open space, recreation, and natural resources, and was open to the public between December of 2020 and February of 2021, garnering 170 total responses, 130 of which were returned by mail. A complete breakdown of the community survey results is available in the Appendices.

Wildscape Design began reviewing and revising the previous OSRP's sections on Community Setting, Environmental Analysis, and Inventory of Lands using data from the survey results and updated GIS data supplied by PVPC's GIS specialists; updates for Sections Six through Nine were guided primarily by collaboration with the OSRP Advisory Committee, engagement with the community through both the RMP planning process and the OSRP visioning session, and community survey results. Wildscape Design and PVPC solicited the Open Space Committee's input during three Committee meetings which were also open to the public, by attending and participating in multiple RMP meetings (the RMP Visioning Session, RMP Committee Meetings, and Natural Resources & Open Space Focus Groups), and a through an OSRP-specific community visioning session held on March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021, via Zoom digital conferencing (due to COVID-19 pandemic travel and gathering restrictions). Information and feedback from these meetings and visioning sessions outlined the Blandford resident's current priorities around Open Space and shaped the Action Plan presented in Section Nine. A comprehensive breakdown of committee input and the community vision is included in Section 6 – Community Vision.

To ensure continued progress on agreed-upon goals and objectives, the authors of this plan recommend that OSRP be held by the Town Administrator and reviewed every three years through consultation with one member each of the Conservation Commission, Recreation Committee, and the Planning Board. The TA, with consultation from the Town's boards, should review the plan and make recommendations of proposed changes to the residents at Town Meeting. The Town Administrator should also report on the progress of meeting the current goals and objectives.



## Section 3: Community Setting

### A. Introduction

The Town of Blandford lies in Western Massachusetts' Hampden County, and is a beautiful rural, mountaintop community. The Town boasts stunning vistas, large forests, and natural landscapes which are enhanced by a diverse range of plants and wildlife. Blandford is considered a "Hilltown" and a part of the Highland Communities defined by the Trustees of Reservations. Blandford shares resources such as watersheds, public forestlands, and a regional school system. Many business and cultural nodes such as Lenox, Stockbridge, Pittsfield, Lee, Westfield, Northampton, and Springfield surround the Town. The metropolitan regions of Hartford and Albany are within a short commute, and New York City is just two-and-a-half hours away.

Blandford faces development pressure given its proximity to the larger communities of Westfield, Springfield, and communities in Connecticut. Residents take pride in their community and seek to strike a balance between retaining its small-town and rural identity while navigating new pressures related to climate change and post-COVID-pandemic life. This Open Space and Recreation Plan is an effort to plan for potential future change and development such that Blandford can retain the characteristics that its residents value most.

### B. Regional Context

Blandford sits nestled within the eastern foothills of the Berkshire Mountains, which originate in the Green Mountain Range in Vermont. The Town is a part of Hampden County in southwestern Massachusetts. Blandford is bordered by Chester on the north, Huntington on the northeast, Russell on the east, Granville and Tolland on the south, and Otis and Becket on the west. The Town covers approximately 53 square miles, and recent surveys indicate the Town's population at roughly 1,105—or approximately 21 persons per square mile.

Blandford is part of the Gateway Regional School System; however, it lacks any schools within town. Students in sixth grade and above, along with children from Russell, Chester, Huntington, Montgomery, and Middlefield, are bussed to Gateway Regional School District in Huntington, MA. Since 2011 elementary students in grades pre-school through fifth grade have attended Chester Elementary with children from Chester and Middlefield.

By far, the most noteworthy unique feature of Blandford is its abundant supply of clean water. Most major brooks in Blandford drain into the Little River Watershed, which feeds the Cobble Mountain Reservoir, the major source of water for the city of Springfield and several other cities and towns. The adjoining town of Russell own extensive watershed lands in Blandford. Blandford's public water supply is drawn from the Long Pond Reservoir that lies entirely within the town's boundaries.

### C. History of the Community

Blandford is situated in the eastern foothills of the Berkshire Mountains and is crisscrossed by streams. It is a rural hill town on the historic western corridor between Connecticut and the Housatonic Valleys, located on an early route of travel from Springfield to Albany. This was an important military highway from New York during the revolution as is testified by the number of taverns that were recorded on the post road servicing travelers. The Town was originally cut up into lots and sold to Scotch-Irish Presbyterians who immigrated from Hopkinton and created an agricultural and grazing-based economy.

There were some early tanneries, paper, and cardboard mills, but the major emphasis in the 19th century was dairy farming. Blandford led the county in cheese production in 1845 and then again in 1870. Where the town once was a favored summer resort where people came to improve their health with the clean mountain air, now most of the summer homes have been converted into year-round residences. The town continues to support a private country club and the White Church, a historic church owned and maintained by the Blandford Historic Society for cultural and community events.

Prior to First Contact, the land now called Blandford was Mohican and Pocumtuc Territory, and members of the Woronoco Tribe were probably the area's earliest inhabitants (*Figure 1*). The Mohicans spoke Eastern Algonquin and lived primarily by the Hudson and Housatonic rivers. They used the name Muh-he-ka-neew or 'people of the continually flowing waters.' The Mohican were pressured to relocate to Wisconsin during the Federal Indian Relocation Act signed by Andrew Jackson in 1830. The Pocumtuc spoke a dialect of the Algonquin language family and lived by the Connecticut and Deerfield River confluence (De Forrest, 1852), but also further west into current-day Hampden and Hampshire counties. The Pocumtuc were decimated by intertribal conflict with the Mohawk, as well as exposure to smallpox brought by European settlers. According to the 1982 Massachusetts Historical Commission's *Reconnaissance Survey Town Report*,

"There were no reported Contact period native sites. The area's rugged upland terrain and general absence of agricultural land suggests Blandford was primarily the site of small, seasonal fishing and hunting camps established through the town's uplands in the early spring, fall and winter months. Particularly promising locations would be in the vicinity of Blandford's several natural ponds and larger streams including Long and Blair Ponds and Wheeler and Bedlam Brooks and the scattered marshlands. (p.2)"

Recently, on Birch Hill's eastern facing slopes, near the old General Knox Road and early east-west American Indian trails, several ceremonial stone landscape structures and potential burial sites have been discovered and authenticated by local scholars. Legends about Chief Grey Lock, of Woronoco/Pocumtuck ancestry, state that he was born around 1675 in Westfield, MA, and as a young man he likely spent his summers hunting and fishing Blandford's forested hillsides and surface waters.



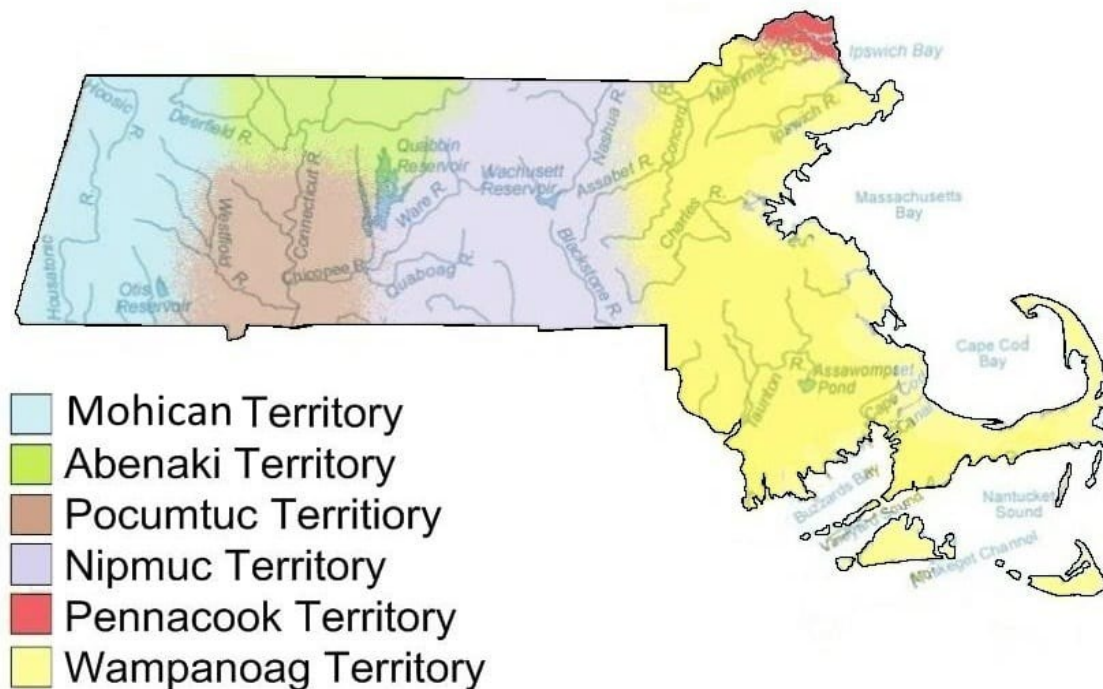


Figure 1: 2021 Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism

Blandford was purchased in 1735 by Scotch-Irish settlers from Hopkinton and divided into lots known as the New Glasgow plantation. Uniform, rectangular houses were constructed along both sides of North Street and Haight/Sperry Road. The community began as an agricultural and grazing-based economy. In 1741, the name was changed from New Glasgow to Blandford and incorporated as a Town.

Blandford was located on a major east-west traveling route known as the General Knox - Otis Stage Road (Route 23). This route provided direct access to larger nearby communities such as Westfield, West Springfield and Springfield in Massachusetts and Albany in New York. Due to its location along this route, it was reported that there were an unusually high number of taverns for a town of this size. Russell Stage Road served as the primary route to the Westfield River in Russell from Blandford Center. Because of its location along these routes, the population grew dramatically in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. From 1776 to 1790, the population nearly doubled from 772 to 1,416 and reached a peak in 1800 of 1,778. Route 23 remains the major east-west thoroughway in the town.

The economy focused on agriculture, specifically livestock and dairy products. The production of crops was limited due to the lack of fertile lowlands. Blandford's woodlands also supported lumber operations. In 1807, a Connecticut merchant by the name of Amos Collins convinced the Blandford farmers to switch from the cultivation of wool to the manufacturing of butter and cheese. The Town's primary market was in Hartford, Connecticut and much of their business was with Connecticut communities. In 1845, Blandford reported the highest cheese production of any town in the county and, by 1865, was responsible for producing 30 percent of Hampden County's cheese.

The first tannery was constructed in 1760 near Blandford Center. By 1837, there were a total of three tanneries whose production represented one-quarter of all the leather tanned in Hampden County. A

woolen factory that made satinets (a thin silk satin) was also constructed around this time. A small paper mill that manufactured coarse wrapping paper was established in 1832. A “card-board” (boards used for cleaning everything from cattle and horses to silk hats) factory was built in 1845, along with several turning mills and a bedstead factory. There was regular traffic between North Blandford and Chester to haul these products to the rail line.

In 1842, with the development of the Western Railroad (later to be known as the Boston & Albany railroad), travel primarily followed the Westfield River south of town. Blandford’s population began to decline and, in 1870, it was reduced to 1026. During this period, however, the Town continued to excel in the tanning industry. There were now four tanneries and, in 1855, the production of these tanneries represented 27 percent of the county value for leather. By the 1870s most of the manufacturing industries had left Town and Blandford was becoming known as a summer resort for people who lived in Springfield and Westfield, with five hotels to provide lodging.

In 1880, a layer of kaolin was discovered near the center of Town. This discovery led to the formation of the Blandford Brick and Tile Company. The clay was transported to the company’s yard in Russell for processing. The amount of available kaolin appears to have been insufficient as the pit was closed by 1900.

Over the course of the two years from 1909 to 1910, the City of Springfield constructed a water supply source along the Blandford/Granville Town line. The reservoir was created on Borden Brook and subsequently named the “Borden Brook Reservoir”. The City claimed large portions of the watershed by buying many structures along the brook’s tributaries.

The population continued to decline, down to 623 in 1915. That year the Berkshire Street Railway constructed an interurban trolley line between Lee and Huntington, which passed through North Blandford. The trolley line had little impact on settlement and, consequently, was abandoned in 1918. Local roads were improved as auto routes, with the primary east-west route remaining Route 23, as it is currently known. The Mass Pike (I-90) cuts east-west through the north part of Blandford, but there is no exit located within the town borders.

The City of Springfield constructed the Cobble Mountain Reservoir from 1928 to 1930 by damming the Little River. The reservoir flooded several farmsteads along the Little River valley and had a total capacity of 22.5 billion gallons. As with the construction of the Borden Brook Reservoir, the City again claimed large portions of the watershed.

The Massachusetts Turnpike (Interstate 90) opened in 1957 and currently bisects the town with no direct entrance or exit. Today these factors present preservation, land use, and transportation challenges in Blandford.

Today, the built history of Blandford coexists with newer development and the Town’s highly valued rural and agricultural landscape. The Main Street and North Village areas maintain a sense of a traditional New England village, including traces of mill buildings and worker housing; Native American Ceremonial Landscapes remain extant on privately owned property, and colonial and later residents, including African and Euro-Americans, are honored in local burial grounds and remaining vernacular architecture. Agricultural landscapes, along with residences and outbuildings, remain prevalent and knit together Blandford’s past, present, and future. Buildings constructed more than 100 years ago remain with some adaptive reuse by local organizations such as the Historical Society, or in continuous use as a library, town store, fairground buildings, club houses, residences, and agricultural outbuildings.

#### D. Population Characteristics

Since the late 1970’s the population in Blandford has seen only slight increase, from 1038 persons in 1980 to 1233 in 2010, and seniors (age 65 and up) are the fastest growing segment of Blandford’s



population. Because of Blandford's rural setting and slow growth rate in recent years, protecting open space while it is available and affordable should be a primary focus of the open space plan; maintaining and improving open space for all-ages public access is also important.

Blandford occupies roughly 53 square miles, with a population of 1,105 at a density of 21 persons per square mile. The town has maintained its rural character since it was settled by Europeans in 1741, since its rural location and rugged terrain have constrained any significant development activity. Blandford's population has experienced minimal growth over the past twenty years and is projected to grow only slightly by 2040. Residential development is slowly rising; from 2010 to 2019, the number of housing units grew from 557 units to 610 units, or almost 10% (*see PVPC, Jan 21 RMP presentation*). People moving into town are looking for a quiet country setting within an easy commute to the surrounding cities and towns, especially as many "exurban migrants" have begun moving out of metropolitan areas during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Town's senior (65+ years old) has grown most substantially over the past ten years, from 9 percent of the population to 25 percent, now outweighing the population of children and young adults, who comprise 20 percent of the Town's population. Senior residents have unique needs and require additional provisions, such as transportation, deliveries, and programming to maintain social connections. With a growing population of seniors, a lack of any schools, and a dearth of economic development opportunities, Blandford should carefully consider how to support its growing senior population, attract younger residents and families, and provide a high quality of life for all its residents. The quality, quantity, and accessibility of a Town's open space and recreation resources plays an important role in supporting quality of life.

Table 2: 2010 Census Population Size, Households, and Density		
	Blandford	Massachusetts
2010 Population	1,233	6,349,097
Total households	456	2,443,000
Average Household Size	2.66	2.51
Population density	23.5 persons per sq. mile	810 persons per sq. mile

According to the most recent information, Blandford does not currently have any Environmental Justice populations within town. **(REQUIRED MAP 2)**.

Blandford's residents embody a strong and consistent environmental constituency. Residents responding to a 2021 Resilient Master Plan (RMP) survey report their number one reason for living in Blandford is its open space, followed by its small-town atmosphere. Residents surveyed also said that the top use of land should be for forests and wildlife, followed by farms and farmland, then water quality and water resources. Although nearly half of Blandford's open space is protected, the survey shows that approximately ninety percent of residents consider this "just right" or "not enough". This is a consistent attitude from the 2003 OSRP. The results and implications of the community survey are explored in further detail in *Section Six: Community Vision*.

## E. Growth and Development Patterns

Residential housing units have increased only slightly in the past decade, indicating very little new residential development, most of which are owner-occupied along existing roads and frontage. However, new forms of land use—such as the development of photovoltaic (PV) solar fields on agricultural or forested parcels—have been on the rise in Blandford, resulting in the loss of scenic views and forested landscapes.

### Patterns and Trends

Originally, Blandford developed along a trail from the New York border to Westfield and the towns of the Connecticut River valley. This was later known as the Albany Road and was traveled by General Knox and his troops on their journey from Fort Ticonderoga to Boston to deliver cannons to General Washington. Houses and taverns were built along this “highway,” now known as Route 23. Today, this road still sees the greatest amount of new residential development, in the form of frontage lots, often subdivided from larger parcels with no neighborhood clustering. Increased home building permits may lead to an increased need for public water, sewer or septic, and new roads, which may impact the Town’s valued character if planning is inadequate.

As with many other rural towns where there are large tracts of open land, solar developers are seeking to site megawatt-scale solar developments (“solar fields”) requiring 20-30 acres of land per project, and Blandford is no exception; within the past few years, several solar developers have submitted permits to construct solar fields in Blandford, three of which have proceeded to construction and have been built or are currently under construction. The Town is open to hosting solar projects which support the Commonwealth’s clean energy goals, while also remaining cautious about balancing concerns for climate resilience, erosion control, increased run off, and the permanent loss of agricultural or forested landscapes to new solar development.

During the 2000’s, Blandford experienced very slight growth. The greatest population change has come in the number of seniors. The percentage of the population in Blandford that are seniors (those 65 and older) has risen from nine percent in 2010 to twenty-five percent in 2020. During the same time, there have been declines in the numbers of working age adults and children. Senior residents have unique needs and require additional provisions to access and enjoy open space, such as transportation, universally accessible amenities, and programming to maintain social connections and physical activity.

## Infrastructure

### Transportation

Blandford’s transportation system is consistent with that of other rural communities in Western Massachusetts, in that Blandford’s residents are reliant on automobiles for almost all activities. Blandford’s rolling terrain and elevation (approximately 1,450 feet) creates an opportunity for the user to experience scenic beauty while traversing the transportation system. These same features can also create difficulties for those trying to navigate the transportation system using other modes of transportation, such as walking or bicycling. The few non-automobile related amenities in Blandford are found in the town center due to its higher density of development. Because most open spaces are accessed primarily by vehicle, providing clear parking and signage is vital to encouraging ongoing public use.

State Route 23 is the principal highway serving Blandford, bisecting the town from east to west and through the node where the town center is established. This heavily traveled road is a winding, mountainous travel route for residential traffic and tourists. It is a main route to Otis Reservoir, which supports a large recreational community. The Town by itself does not have any major trip generators but traffic volumes are comparatively higher on some major roads because of commuter traffic patterns,

which use local roadways to access Route 23, North Road and Russell Stage Road. According to PVPC in the Town's Resilient Master Plan (RMP), most local trips are destined for the Town Center at the convergence Otis Stage Road, North Road, Russell Stage Road and Woronoco Road. Destinations in this area include the Post Office, Town Offices, Porter Memorial Library, Watson Park, and Blandford Country Store. This section of Blandford has the highest density of residential dwellings. In the transportation visioning session during the master plan development process, residents expressed concerns related to the lack of pedestrian amenities in the Town Center.

According to the 2020 PVPC *Pavement Management Report*, fifty percent of paved roads are in good condition, twenty-seven percent are in fair condition and twenty-four percent are in poor or failed conditions; At the time of completion of the Pavement Management Report Blandford was estimated to have over 40 miles of non-paved roadways. Non-paved roadways not only cost more to maintain on a yearly basis but also lack storm water management infrastructure. This makes non-paved roadways more vulnerable to weather related impacts.

The Massachusetts Turnpike runs through the town, but there is no entrance or exit available within the Blandford. The construction of a turnpike entrance, which is discussed periodically, would undoubtedly increase residential development. MassDOT was commissioned to study the feasibility of a new interchange along the 30-mile section of interstate 90 between Exit 2 (Now Exit 10) and Exit 3 (Now Exit 41), which crosses through Blandford. The primary goal of the study was to improve access to Interstate 90 at or near the midpoint and to mitigate traffic accessing I-90 at Exit 2 and Exit 3. The study was published in 2020 and suggested two alternative locations for a new interchange in Blandford, either at the Blandford Maintenance Facility on Chester Road, or at Blandford Service Plaza on North Road; The Town of Blandford—in a non-binding Town Meeting vote—rejected the proposed addition of one of these proposed interchanges, indicating the project does not have local support at this time. Similarly, no funding has been identified at this time by MassDOT for either the design or construction of this project.

Steep and winding Hilltown roads are notoriously difficult to traverse during New England winters, and they are therefore salted liberally. Mass DOT plows and salts the I-90 Turnpike, Route 23, and North Street, while the Town services the rest of Blandford's roads. Town has little control over the State's policies for road salt, which has been shown to degrade and damage vegetation and water (both ground and surface) quality:

“Application of road salts—and the accompanying seepage into groundwater, and eventually surface waters—not only has toxic effects on water quality but can also result in deleterious effects on the physical and chemical properties of soils...Effects are associated with areas adjacent to salt depots and roadsides, especially in poorly drained depressions. Effects include impacts on soil structure, soil dispersion, soil permeability, soil swelling and crusting, soil electrical conductivity and soil osmotic potential. These can have, in turn, abiotic and biotic impacts on the local environment.”

-Environment Canada, *Priority Substances List Assessment Report*

Though there are no public transportation routes actively running in town, the Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA) operates a twice-weekly Demand Response transport van for residents 60 years old and over, nursing home residents, and disabled veterans. In addition, the Council on Aging received a donated vehicle in 2019 and coordinates volunteers to provide rides to seniors. The Town currently provides fuel for this service. Seniors in town prefer to use this service over the FRTA shuttle due to the expanded availability, however this vehicle is not equipped with a wheelchair lift. During the RMP planning process, participants in the Transportation Focus Group expressed interest in improving the viability of the Town's free shuttle service.

### Water Supply



The Blandford Water Department, overseen by a three-member Board of Water Commissioners, is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the water supply and distribution system including providing adequate volume, pressure, high quality water and overall compliance with the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act.

The adjacent Town of Russell and the City of Springfield own extensive watershed lands in Blandford. Most major brooks in Blandford drain into the Little River Watershed, which feeds the Cobble Mountain Reservoir, the major source of water for the city of Springfield and several other cities and towns. In addition, the Cobble Mountain reservoir and its feeder streams are designated an anti-degradation segment, which constitutes an outstanding natural resource and requires that the water quality be maintained and protected. Most of the Cobble Mountain reservoir and watershed lands are off limits to the public, and the restricting of public access has been tightened and enforced even more by Springfield Water and Sewer (SWSC) since September 11th, 2001, through the closing of the Cobble Mountain Road in its entirety. Many townspeople and town staff would like to expand public access to Spring Watershed lands where the existing Conservation Restrictions allow for public access, and they are committed to collaborating with SWSC to identify and manage publicly accessible parcels for passive, low-impact recreation (see *SWSC Conservation Areas* map in appendices). Town staff are currently seeking a transfer of ownership of the road from Route 23 to the Town line, to be managed for passive recreation along the road, beyond the first gate to the Town line. The Town is committed to investigating further means for re-opening Cobble Mountain Road as an important travel corridor, and identifying parcels where public access may be legally permitted.

Blandford draws its public drinking water from the Long Pond Reservoir, which lies entirely within the Town's boundaries. The 65-million-gallon-capacity reservoir is approximately 1 mile long by one-quarter mile wide at its widest point, with a surface area of 81 acres. The reservoir is fed by numerous intermittent streams and sheet run off from the surrounding drainage area, including lands in neighboring Otis. The State Water Assessment Program (DEP, 2002) recommends "working with neighboring municipalities [Otis] to include the watershed in their protection controls." As the sole public water source for the town, this reservoir is an invaluable asset that is protected by an overlay district which restricts development that may impinge on the water resource (outlined in **REQUIRED MAP SIX – WATER RESOURCES**).

A masonry and earthen embankment dam constructed in 2004 on the northern shore discharges to Wheeler Brook. Wheeler Brook is part of the Cobble Mt Reservoir tributary watershed. Public water from Long Pond serves about 50 percent of Blandford's households, or 237 homes and 9 commercial accounts, including the McDonald's at the I-90 Turnpike rest stop. The Blandford Water Department has jurisdiction over the 245 protected acres of Long Pond Reservoir water supply lands, which is closed to the public. In 1985, the Blandford Conservation Commission helped to protect 229 additional acres within the watershed by assisting the Town's acquisition of land northeast of the reservoir using self-help funding, now called the Long Pond Conservation Area. The Long Pond Conservation Area is ideal for passive recreation such as hiking, cross-country skiing, and bird watching.

After failing several coliform tests, the Town was mandated by the Department of Environmental Protection to install a filtration system. This filtration plant went online in July 2007. According to the 2017 Annual Drinking Water Quality Report, the Blandford Water Department reported no violations for coliform or E. coli (Blandford Water Department, 2017). In recent years Blandford has been working to upgrade a major portion of the water distribution system.

The remaining homes in Town pump their water from private wells.

Blandford plans to continue to protect their watershed, while balancing the desire for recreational access to the forested lands, in the hopes that their stewardship of drinking water resources *and* commitment to passive recreational access could be a role model for opening access to SWSC lands.

### Waste & Stormwater Service

Blandford does not have a public sewer service or wastewater treatment. Development in town uses on-site septic systems to store and process sewage. The wastewater from the McDonalds franchises on the east and westbound Massachusetts Turnpike is pumped to the Russell Sewage Treatment Plant.

Stormwater management is also handled on-site although in most cases stormwater management and erosion control have not been addressed formally, unless related to a site plan approval process or a wetlands-related development application.

### Long-Term Development Patterns

Because of Blandford's steep landforms, protected watershed land, wetlands, and somewhat remote location, the Town's zoning has thus far been adequate. However, long-term population and growth trends indicate that new development is occurring on land previously thought to be "self-protecting," and may pose a threat to the rural character of the town; this is especially evident in the loss of farmland to megawatt-scale solar energy development, which is ideally suitable for lands which are also ideal for agriculture (e.g., south-facing, gently sloping hillsides, and open land with deeper, well-drained soils).

Zoning regulations and other land use laws constitute a town's "blueprint" for its future. Land use patterns over time will continue to look more and more like the town's zoning map, until the town is fully built out (i.e., no "developable land" remains). Importantly, the Town should focus not on the current use and physical build-out of today, but on its potential future uses and build-out allowed under the Town's zoning map and bylaws. Zoning regulations and districts are a primary land use tools used to manage development and direct growth to suitable and desired areas, while also protecting critical resources and ensuring that development aligns with a town's character.

There are three zoning districts which govern development in Blandford: Agricultural, Residential and Business Districts. Additionally, two overlay districts—known as the Floodplain and Long Pond Watershed Protection Overlay Districts—comprise floodplain areas within the Town designated as Zone A or AE on the Hampden County Flood Insurance Rate Map, and lands lying adjacent to Long Pond, respectively. Over 97 percent of Blandford is zoned agricultural, with a small area (484 acres) defined residential and a very small strip along Main Street (five acres) zoned for business & commercial development (**REQUIRED MAP 3: ZONING**).

In the Zoning By-laws, areas zoned for agriculture provide as-of-right development of agricultural, single-family residential, and some municipal uses or worship, and require a minimum of 2-acre lots with 300 feet of frontage along an accepted road, with 30-foot setbacks from the right of way and 15 feet from abutting properties. More intense uses, such as convalescent dwellings, solar, or cannabis facilities, are allowed by Special Permit from the Planning Board. Subdivision regulations permit the creation of new frontage by road building, but the subdivision driveways may not be shared between units.

Lots in the residential district provide single-family residential use, and recreational, municipal, and places of worship by Special Permit, and require a minimum of 30,000 square feet with 150 feet of road frontage. Two-family homes are allowed in both districts, but open space residential development is not permitted under current zoning.

The uses permitted in the residential/agricultural zones are extensive, though some require a special permit. No use, however, may create offensive odors, noise, or unsightly appearance noticeable off the premises. Size and placement of signs is also regulated.

The most recent amendment to the zoning by-law regulates the placement of telecommunication cell towers. While these structures cannot be banned in a town, control of their placement allows the town to preserve historic and scenic sites.

Historically, Blandford has not been perceived as a prime location for industry or commerce on a scale that would be useful to the tax base. It is, however, suitable for renewable energy development, which is often a financial boon to farm- and landowners who are no longer willing or able to maintain the current use of a working landscape. Blandford also continues to be suitable for residential development, and this is evident in the growing number of building permits. During the 1990s, there was an average of two new home building permits issued per year. The number of building permits issued per year doubled in 2000 and tripled the following year. A 2019 I-90 Interchange Study Draft Report published by the Department of Transportation (DOT) recommended two possible locations for future I-90 interchanges in the region; both of which are in Blandford. The 2003 *Community Development Plan* suggested that Blandford could host as many as 6,000 new homes at maximum build-out, which would undoubtedly impact much of the Town's open space and character; however, this study was evidently based mostly on slopes and topography and failed to acknowledge some of the Town's existing constraints to development, such as passable percolation tests for septic and wetlands permitting. While wetlands and percolation tests do pose a constraint to development, they are not an absolute restriction; Blandford still has plenty of parcels suitable for future development, where prime agricultural soils, gentle slopes, and no existing protections where subdivision into single-family residential lots—or renewable energy development—might make financial sense for the town, landowners, and developers. But without thoughtful planning for the ongoing preservation of land as open space or recreational areas, these types of spaces slowly and quietly become relegated only to the places deemed unsuitable for houses, lawns, driveways, and solar fields.



## Section 4: Environmental Inventory and Analysis

An inventory of Blandford's environmental and cultural resources, as well as an analysis of historical, present, and future environmental conditions, will inform the Town's open space goals and objectives and thereby help to protect the Town's existing biodiversity, restore degraded ecosystems, and maintain ecological integrity. This section references 2016 Land Use and Land Cover data—developed through cooperation between MassGIS and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and obtained via aerial LiDAR surveys—to inventory and track changes in both land use and land cover across Massachusetts. Land use and land cover can be viewed and interpreted separately, which is helpful in tracking the changes in specific types of land use or, say, forest cover over time; however, it can also be viewed in combination to identify, for instance, forested landscapes that are currently in residential use, or wetlands within commercial or industrial land use areas.

*Land Cover* (Table 3) is the thematic classification of what covers the surface of the earth, based on satellite imagery, LiDAR terrain data, 2-D building data, and ancillary GIS data such as MassDOT roads and MassDEP wetlands (MassGIS, 2019). Classifications include land covers such as impervious surface, deciduous forest, or open water.

Table 3: 2016 Land Cover Data		
Land Cover Name	ACRES	PERCENT
Impervious	433.29	1.27%
Developed Open Space	564.18	1.65%
Cultivated Land	31.19	0.09%
Pasture/Hay	598.78	1.75%
Grassland	496.19	1.45%
Deciduous Forest	14722.08	43.04%
Evergreen Forest	14196.36	41.50%
Scrub/Shrub	63.42	0.19%
Palustrine Wetlands	1803.42	5.27%
<i>Forested</i>	<i>1013.32</i>	
<i>Scrub/Shrub</i>	<i>195.53</i>	
<i>Emergent</i>	<i>594.57</i>	
Palustrine Aquatic Bed	41.84	0.12%
Bare Land	96.75	0.28%
Open Water	1175.66	3.44%
TOTAL	34204.15	100%

*Land Use* (Table 4) is the thematic classification of land by property parcel and type of tax designation, based on standardized tax parcel data from the Mass Department of Revenue, such as Agricultural, Residential (single-family), or Commercial.

Table 4: 2016 Land Use Data		
Land Use Name	Acres	Percent
Agriculture	696.28	2.04%
Commercial	46.95	0.14%
Forest	4013.41	11.73%
Industrial	9.00	0.03%
Mixed use, other	467.02	1.37%
Mixed use, primarily commercial	729.60	2.13%
Mixed use, primarily residential	2564.76	7.50%
Open land	17044.51	49.83%
Recreation	308.55	0.90%
Residential - multi-family	577.87	1.69%
Residential - other	234.49	0.69%
Residential - single family	4215.33	12.32%
Right-of-way	771.88	2.26%
Tax exempt	2459.61	7.19%
Unknown	64.91	0.19%
TOTAL	34204.15	100%

Blandford is fortunate in having a wide range and variety of natural resources. Land in a relatively natural state (forests, wetlands, scrublands – not including lawns and cultivated farmlands) comprises approximately 90 percent of the Town's total *land cover* (2016 Land Use/Land Cover data), with woods, fields, wetlands, lakes, ponds, streams, and hills providing a variety of healthy and pleasant environments for Blandford's residents and visitors to enjoy, and a rich assortment of wildlife habitats. However, of Blandford's land in a "natural state" (land cover classifications like deciduous/evergreen forest, emergent wetland, pasture/hay, and scrub/shrub), over 8,700 acres are classified as residential, commercial, or mixed use (non-open space or recreational land use). Blandford's status as a Hilltown community with remaining development potential makes the protection and enhancement of existing open space particularly important.

#### A. Geology, Soils, and Topography

Blandford is situated on the border of the Berkshire Transition and the Lower Berkshire Hills Ecoregions. The Berkshire Transition Zone ecoregion ranges in elevation from 400 to 1,400 feet, and the underlying geology is diverse, consisting of a mix of limestone and other calcium-rich bedrock, schist,

quartzite, and some gneiss. Some areas have dense glacial till, but the presence and amount of till is inconsistent. Variation in bedrock creates changes in terrain as well as soil type and stream alkalinity.

Soils formed on glacial till tend towards poorly drained (EPA, *Ecoregions of New England*, 2009). Most of Blandford's slopes range from 8 percent to 15 percent (10,109 acres), although 9,573 acres comprise slopes of 15 percent or greater. Slopes more than 15 percent grade are considered a natural constraint to development. See **REQUIRED MAP – SOILS AND GEOLOGIC FEATURES**.

Blandford is made up of four major soil associations:

<b>Peru-Marlow Association</b>	<b>12,496</b>	<b>27%</b>
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This soil type is extremely stony, moderately well-drained and well-drained glacial till with hardpans. This general soil type occurs on gently to moderately steep upland areas. It consists of about 55% Peru soils and 40% Marlow soils. The remaining 5% consists mostly of similar well-drained soils without hardpans. Peru soils are deep, moderately well-drained loams developed in compact, stony glacial till. They are underlain at a depth of about 18 to 30 inches by hardpan. Marlow soils are well-drained and are like Peru soils with hardpan at 24 to 36 inches.

This general soil area has moderate to severe limitations for most uses due to stones and slope.

<b>Lyman-Berkshire Association</b>	<b>6,690 acres</b>	<b>20%</b>
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This soil type contains extremely rocky, shallow soils and extremely stony, deep soils without hardpan. It occurs on steep hills and ridges. It consists of about 76% Lyman soils and 20% Berkshire soils. The remaining 5% consists of small areas of other similar soils. Lyman soils are somewhat excessively drained loams. These soils developed in thin deposits of soil material over bedrock. Lyman is underlain by bedrock at a depth of about 20 inches. Bedrock outcrops range from less than 30 feet to 100 feet apart. Berkshire soils are well-drained loams that developed in deep deposits of glacial till.

This soil type has severe limitations for most uses due to the steep slopes and shallow depth to bedrock.

<b>Ridgebury-Muck-Whitman</b>	<b>5,069 acres</b>	<b>15%</b>
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This general soil type is extremely stony, poorly drained, mineral soil with hardpans, and very poorly drained organic soil. This soil type is found in nearly level to gently sloping depressions and drainage channels. It comprises about 65% Ridgebury soils, 10% Muck, and 5% Whitman soils. The remaining 20% consists mainly of similar mineral soils without hardpans. The Ridgebury soils are poorly drained mineral soils that formed in extremely stony, compact glacial till. They have a hardpan within two feet of the surface. Muck consists of thoroughly decomposed organic deposits over mineral soil material. The depth of these deposits varies from 16 inches to more than three feet. Whitman soils are very poorly drained mineral soils that formed in materials like those at the Ridgebury soils.

This general soil type has severe limitations for commercial, industrial, and residential development due to extreme wetness. Large areas have moderate to severe limitations for wetland wildlife habitat development, especially shallow water impoundments.

<b>Merrimac-Sudbury Association</b>	<b>290 acres</b>	<b>1%</b>
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This soil type contains well drained and moderately well-drained, sand, and gravelly soils. Most of this type occurs on gentle to moderate slopes on old gravelly terraces. It consists of about 40% Merrimac soils and 40% Sudbury soils. The remaining 20% consists of similar sandy and gravelly soils that are excessively drained to well-drained. Merrimac soils are well-drained, fine sandy loams and sandy loams. They are underlain by stratified sand and gravel deposits at depth of 24 to 30 inches. Sudbury soils are moderately well-drained and similar to Merrimac soils.



This soil area has moderate to severe limitations for commercial and industrial uses, and slight to moderate limitations for residential and farming uses. This area has severe limitations for wetland wildlife habitat development. Groundwater contamination may be a problem in areas used for sewage disposal fields and sanitary landfills.

The soils in Blandford occupy level to very steep slopes, ranging in gradient from 0 percent to over 35 percent. Slope gradient can be a limiting factor for many uses. There is a relationship between slope and development costs of roads, homes, or industrial parks; as the slope of the land increases, the development of necessary infrastructure also increases, as does the risk of detrimental degradation to the surrounding landscape and watersheds. Initial costs for grading and landscaping on steeper slopes are higher and establishment and maintenance of lawns is more difficult. These higher costs, as well as the presence of hardpan and bedrock so close to the surface, constrain the potential of development in many areas of Blandford. However, steeper costs to development should not be considered barriers in the place of thoughtful planning and zoning.

## B. Landscape Character

Blandford's elevation ranges from 650 to over 1,700 feet above sea level. It is on the border of the Berkshire Transition Zone & the Lower Berkshire Hills ecoregions, which are characterized by forest types of transition hardwoods (maple-beech-birch, oak-hickory) and northern hardwoods (maple-beech-birch, hemlock-white pine). The Town's surface waters drain to the Westfield and Farmington River basins, and eventually the Connecticut River.

Blandford, like much of New England, has a rich agricultural history that has been on the decline in recent decades. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, its dairy herds supported an important cheesemaking industry. The miles of old stone walls and the composition of today's forests testify to the vast areas of cultivated land that once supported the families of Blandford. In comparison, by 1990 less than 4 percent of Blandford land remained in agricultural use. As of 2016, just over 2 percent of Blandford's area remain in agricultural use (2016 Land Use/Land Cover data).

Today, the hillsides of Blandford support several blueberry farms—such as Walnut Hill Farm, Cross Farm, Pinsley Farm (formerly Blueberry Joe)—as Blandford's acidic soils are ideally suited to this crop. Hay farming is Blandford's second-largest agricultural activity, which provides fodder to livestock in the town and surrounding communities. Sheep farming is also visible in town. A sheep farm and woolen handcraft store, Sheepgate, thrived on Route 23 for many years until it closed in 2018, and many other farms support herds of goats, Scottish highlander cattle, and sheep.

Though Blandford is modest in terms of large-scale agricultural activity, there is still a vibrant small-scale farming community. Many households boast small vegetable gardens, fruit trees, or both. The numerous local exhibitors in the traditional Blandford Fair attest to the interest of residents in growing, selling, and trading fruit, produce, and flowers.

Since large parcels of Blandford are forested, there is a considerable amount of commercial and personal logging. Christmas tree farms are also present in the town and maple sugaring continues to be practiced within the community.

Around the time of the 2003 OSRP update, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts had undertaken a project to identify and map the areas of the Commonwealth most in need of protection to conserve biodiversity for future generations. The project, then called *BioMap*, identified 7,000 acres of core habitat in Blandford, as well as 16,968 acres of supporting landscape, 6,097 acres of riparian corridor land and 5,900 acres of natural lands within the riparian corridor. In 2010, Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, in collaboration with The Nature Conservancy (TNC), as part of the State's Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP), authored an update to *BioMap*, entitled *BioMap2: Conserving*

*the Biodiversity of Massachusetts in a Changing World*. *BioMap2* is an “enhanced and comprehensive biodiversity conservation plan for Massachusetts...built on cutting-edge conservation biology principles, rigorous data collection, and sophisticated GIS analyses,” and the plan incorporates climate change adaptation strategies for conserving biodiversity (*BioMap2*, pg. 3).

*BioMap2* integrates the State’s Division of Fisheries & Wildlife’s 2005 *State Wildlife Action Plan* (SWAP)—which identified and mapped rare species and habitats—into TNC’s assessments of large, well-connected, and intact ecosystems throughout the Commonwealth, and presents two primary types of landscapes where conservation could be prioritized to bolster ecological resilience and address the anticipated impacts of climate change: **Core Habitat** and **Critical Natural Landscape**. These landscapes are considered in further detail in *Part E. Fisheries and Wildlife Habitat* and illustrated in **REQUIRED MAP – UNIQUE ENVIRONMENTS**.

### C. Water Resources

The Town of Blandford is situated in both the Westfield and Farmington River basins, with 32,692 acres (roughly 96 percent of the Town) draining to the Westfield River, and 1,535 acres draining to the Farmington River. According to Mass. DEP, Blandford has 23,503 acres of watershed land draining to Outstanding Resource Waters, a classification under the Massachusetts Surface Water Quality Standards of 1995. According to 314 CMR 4.00: “Certain waters shall be designated for protection under this provision in 314 CMR 4.06. These waters include Class A Public Water Supplies (314 CMR 4.06(1)(d)1.) and their tributaries, certain wetlands as specified in 314 CMR 4.06(2) and other waters as determined by the Department based on their outstanding socio-economic, recreational, ecological and/or aesthetic values. The quality of these waters shall be protected and maintained” (March 1, 1995). Most of the Town’s protected open space is dedicated for watershed protection, which ensures an enduring legacy of clean water and protected forestland buffers, and simultaneously constrains the public’s direct recreational enjoyment of such resources. The issue of public access and agency surrounding the ownership of watershed lands in Blandford has been tenuous and ongoing for decades. See **REQUIRED MAP – WATER RESOURCES**.

#### Watersheds & Water Supply

Blandford’s numerous water resources—including mountain streams, lakes, ponds, wetlands, and reservoirs—and its high elevation in the Westfield River watershed make the town a reliable water supply resource for several nearby communities. Over 11,893 acres, or approximately 35 percent of the Town, is dedicated to drinking water protection. The City of Springfield owns over 30 percent of the Town, comprising the Cobble Mountain Reservoir and surrounding lands under protection. This reservoir supplies water to the communities of Springfield, Agawam, and East Longmeadow. The Towns of Russell, and Huntington also own watershed properties in Blandford.

The Long Pond watershed provides roughly 240 homes—approximately one-third of the Town—with public drinking water, and nearly all the over-400-acre Long Pond watershed lies within town boundaries; 88 acres lie within the adjacent Town of Otis, which presents an opportunity to work collaboratively with the neighboring town to ensure Blandford’s public water supply remains protected.

#### Surface Waters

Blandford is resplendent with lakes, ponds, streams, and wetlands, many of which are protected in perpetuity as drinking water resources. Blandford’s largest surface waters—Cobble Mountain Reservoir, Borden Brook Reservoir, and Blair Pond—are all encircled by inaccessible land owned by the City of Springfield; Russel Pond and Long Pond also serve as drinking water sources for the Town of Russel and the Blandford, respectively, and are similarly protected. Smaller surface waters, such as Cochran Pond, Hayden Pond, and others, fall on private or otherwise protected and inaccessible parcels. Numerous

wetlands and mountain creeks are accessible for passive recreation and public enjoyment, such as the beaver ponds at Knittel Conservation area or Sanderson Brook Falls in the Chester-Blandford State Forest.

#### Aquifer Recharge Areas

There is one medium-yield aquifer recharge area identified by MassGIS in Blandford, near the junction of Blair and Gore road, where the Wheeler and Pixley Brooks flow into Peebles Brook. This land is currently owned by the City of Springfield and preserved in perpetuity as watershed protection land.

#### Flood hazard areas

Updated in 2017, the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) National Flood Hazard Layer (NFHL) dataset assesses current effective flood risk, based on Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) and Flood Insurance Studies (FISs), as well as floodplain mapping. Flood risk boundaries are classified using the 1-percent-annual-chance (formerly the "100-year") flood event, the 0.2-percent-annual-chance (formerly the "500-year") flood event, and areas of minimal flood risk (MassGIS, 2017).

Due to Blandford's steep terrain and largely uninterrupted drainage system of brooks, ponds, and streams, FEMA Flood Hazard Maps show relatively few areas of 100-year flooding concern, and no areas of 500-year flood concern. Most areas prone to flooding are existing wetlands, and even in extreme circumstances suggest little threat other than light flooding of low-lying secondary roads. Cobble Mountain Reservoir has a virtually fail-safe spillway that limits the water level within the reservoir, so infrastructure and residential development closest to the reservoir are beyond the designated Zone A flood hazard zone.

#### Wetlands

Inland wetlands are areas where water is held at or just below the surface of the ground; while they may appear dry in some seasons, they contain enough water to create hydric soils which support unique arrays of plants. Inland wetlands in Massachusetts include marshes, wet meadows, bogs, and swamps (MA DEP).

Wetlands offer a host of benefits to both human and wildlife communities by acting as natural filters for drinking water supplies, attenuating flooding and storm damage, and supporting a wide variety of plants and animals. Wetlands supply water to streams during periods of low flow and help control sedimentation and pollution by trapping organic and inorganic sediments from street runoff. Wetlands also function like a sponge, holding water during rain events and slowly releasing it during dry periods, thereby reducing the "flashiness" of floods and preventing streambank erosion. In addition to improving water quality and reducing flood hazards, wetlands provide excellent wildlife habitat, a resource interest which was included in the State's Wetlands Protection Act, MGL Ch. 131, Sec 40, the nation's very first wetland protection law, adopted in the 1960s.

While many communities now acknowledge the benefits of wetlands, that recognition has come too late to much of New England. Across Massachusetts, nearly one-third of the State's wetland resources have been irreplaceably destroyed since Colonial times. Most of Blandford's largest wetlands are afforded additional protection since their parcels are under watershed protection, like the wetlands around Beaver Pond, much of Peebles Brook, Henry Brook, Russel Pond, and Case Brook (south of South Otis Road); however, many of Blandford's landscapes comprising wetlands are either temporarily protected under current conservation use or entirely unprotected, such as sections of Miller Swamp and other wetlands in the southwest corner of Town (near the Otis Reservoir), the wetlands along Lloyd Brook and Case Brook (north of South Otis Road), and the headwaters of Goldmine Brook west of John Knox Road. These areas are considered by *BioMap2* as Core Habitat and are protected only through State and local wetlands protection laws and may be disturbed or degraded in unique circumstances through Special Permitting. Wetlands are vital to maintaining the ecological integrity of aquatic and terrestrial habitat and human

infrastructure, therefore vulnerable wetlands should be identified and prioritized for additional protections.

#### Public Access to Recreational Waterways

The nearby towns of Otis, Tolland, Huntington, and Chester also have many surface waters which are publicly accessible for recreational purposes, like the Otis Reservoir, Big Pond, and the west branch of the Westfield River. Since most of Blandford's 1,200 acres of open water is protected and considered off-limits, most residents must travel outside of Town to enjoy water-based recreational activities (like fishing, paddling, or swimming); conversely, Blandford lacks water-based recreational activities which might attract economically stimulating tourism into town (e.g., kayak put-ins, public swimming, or guided fishing tours).

#### D. Vegetation

As with many other Hilltowns, Blandford is primarily composed of maturing second-growth forest, which have been rebounding since New England's widespread agricultural decline in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Forest cover in the Berkshire Transition Ecoregion is typically diverse; dry to mesic north-facing slopes and ravines support northern hardwoods-hemlock-white pine forests. Mesic mid-slopes support a transitional forest with northern red oak and sugar maple, beech, sweet birch, and some white pine and hemlock. Warmer sites support oak-hemlock-white pine forest, with white oak, chestnut oak, northern red oak, hickory, sweet birch, black cherry, and red maple, with some hemlock and white pine. Some of the driest ridgetops may support scrubby growth of pitch pine, northern red oak, black oak, and scarlet oak. Slopes along streams and adjacent terraces support red maple, silver maple, American elm, basswood, sugar maple, shagbark hickory, and black cherry (EPA, *Ecoregions of New England*, 2009).

Along with the variety of forest canopy species are the associated plants found on the forest floor, such as fringed gentian, pink and yellow ladyslipper, trillium, wild begonia, skunk cabbage, false Solomon's seal, goat's beard, goldenrod, mountain laurel, nightshade, and wood anemone. The Conservation Commission has a record of hundreds of occurrences of wildflowers that Harold Vermes published in March of 1978, for further reference.

As in many other towns, opportunistic and aggressive exotic plant species, often called "invasive species," such as purple loosestrife, barberry, Japanese knotweed, Asiatic bittersweet, exotic honeysuckles, and buckthorn have been observed in Blandford; most often along roadsides or in areas where disturbances, such as forest clearing for logging or development, have recently occurred. The presence of these species poses an existential threat to the ecological health of forests, riverine habitats, and wetlands, through the displacement of native plants and the disruption of the biological communities which they underpin. Invasive insect pests, such as the Hemlock wooly adelgid (HWA), Asian longhorn beetle (ALB), emerald ash borer (EAB), spotted lantern fly, and the spotted wing drosophila fly, pose immediate and alarming threats to both native forests and perennial fruit farming in the Northeast. Many, if not all, of these exotic and invasive species have been—and will continue to be—introduced inadvertently, oftentimes through interstate networks of non-native landscape plant and material trade. Blandford should consider taking immediate action to discourage or prohibit the use of exotic plant species with invasive potential in residential and municipal landscaping projects, and explore ecological restoration projects where invasive species are established or spreading, especially near vital water resources.

#### E. Fisheries and Wildlife Habitat

Blandford has a considerable amount of forest land, open fields and unpolluted ponds and streams, which support a diversity of fisheries and wildlife. The populations of animals like wild turkeys, black bears, beavers, and coyotes have been on the rise in recent decades. Other charismatic fauna such as



moose, fishers, birds of prey, and bobcats have also been observed. It is also important not to forget the array of native and migratory songbirds, as well as coldwater fish, and their enigmatic primary food sources of native terrestrial and aquatic insects—especially in their larval or nymph stages—upon which most songbirds and nearly all coldwater fish depend, which are under threat nationwide.

Increasingly, landscape ecologists and conservationists recognize the shortcomings of trying to protect biodiversity one-species at a time; rather the key is to protect the ultimate drivers of biodiversity. A 2010 study, *Conserving the Stage: Climate Change and the Geophysical Underpinnings of Species Diversity*, found that protecting a diversity of geophysical settings—conserving the stage, as it were—would maximize the protection of current and future biodiversity. Maintaining and protecting wildlife diversity means conserving geophysical conditions upon which biodiverse landscapes thrive.

## BioMap2 – Understanding Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscapes

New England has a rich biological legacy and is home to a wide array of plants and animals, some of which are unique to our state, others that have their largest, most stable populations here, and yet others that are still relatively common. Massachusetts, through the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) has mapped **Core Habitat** and **Critical Natural Landscapes** throughout the Commonwealth that are significant for conserving biological diversity. This project, called BioMap2, classifies these landscapes as:

**Core Habitat (CH)** consists of 1,242,000 (statewide) acres that are critical for the long-term persistence of rare species and other Species of Conservation Concern, as well as a wide diversity of natural communities and intact ecosystems across the Commonwealth. Core Habitat includes:

- Habitats for rare, vulnerable, or uncommon mammal, bird, reptile, amphibian, fish, invertebrate, and plant species;
- Priority Natural Communities;
- High-quality wetland, vernal pool, aquatic, and coastal habitats; and
- Intact forest ecosystems.

**Critical Natural Landscape (CNL)** consists of 1,783,000 (statewide) acres complementing Core Habitat, including large natural Landscape Blocks that provide habitat for wide-ranging native species, support intact ecological processes, maintain connectivity among habitats, and enhance ecological resilience; and includes buffering uplands around coastal, wetland and aquatic Core Habitats to help ensure their long-term integrity. CNL, which may overlap with Core Habitat includes:

- The largest, intact Landscape Blocks in each of 8 ecoregions; and
- Adjacent uplands that buffer wetland, aquatic, and coastal habitats.

Blandford contains 1,650 acres of core habitats (CH), which are located primarily along the riparian edges of the brooks and wetlands south of Route 23 and west of Cobble Mountain Reservoir, including Bedlam Brook, Pond Brook, Case Brook, Lloyd Brook, Henry Brook, and Miller Pond; a large forest core extends south from Henry Brook out of Blandford and along the boundary between Granville and Tolland. To the north, the land immediately around Blair Pond, Beaver Pond, Sanderson Brook, and Goldmine Brook are also considered CH. The entire length of Peebles Brook between Beaver Pond and Route 23 is considered Priority Habitat of Rare Species. These landscapes, taken on the whole, provide vital habitat for species such as the Bridle Shiner, a small minnow and Species of Concern found in the clear water of still streams, rivers, lakes, and ponds; the Little Bluet, a very small damselfly which inhabits ponds and sparse aquatic vegetation and sandy substrate; and the Endangered American Bittern, a heron-like bird which nests primarily in large cattail, tussock, or shrub marshes, and is very sensitive to disturbance (*BioMap2*, 2012).

Furthermore, Blandford boasts a sizeable 23,584 acres of Critical Natural Landscapes (CNL), comprising pieces of two of the State's 20 largest CNLs, which are bisected by the Interstate 90 (Mass Pike) corridor and Blandford's Town Center. North of I90, CNL extends into Chester and Huntington along the Westfield River's West Branch, the longest free-flowing segment of river in the State and a remarkable scenic, geological, historical, recreational, and ecological resource. South of I90, beginning roughly at Peebles Brook and the Cobble Mountain Watershed land and extending southwest, is the northernmost extent of a 179,293-acre CNL featuring Aquatic Core Buffer, Wetland Core Buffer, and Landscape Blocks. Landscape Blocks, the primary component of Critical Natural Landscapes, are large areas of intact and predominantly natural vegetation, consisting of contiguous forests, wetlands, river, lakes, and ponds...pastures and power line rights-of-way, which are less intensively altered than most developed areas, are also included since they provide habitat and connectivity for many species," ((*BioMap2*, 2012). These large, forested landscapes provide invaluable wildlife habitat and a host of other ecosystem values, including clean drinking water, carbon sequestration, and more. See **REQUIRED MAP – UNIQUE ENVIRONMENTS** for more.

190 species of vertebrate and invertebrate animals and 258 species of native plants are listed as endangered, threatened, or of special concern in Massachusetts and tracked by the NHESP. According to NHESP data from the original *BioMap* study, Blandford may support seven species that are considered either endangered, threatened, or of special concern (Table 5). *BioMap2*, published in 2012, further identified that Blandford's landscape comprises ideal habitat for the Bridled Shiner minnow (special concern), the Little Bluet damselfly (special concern), and the endangered American Bittern.

Table 5: Federally Listed Species Observed in Blandford				
Type	<i>Scientific Name</i>	Common Name	Federal Rank	Most Recent Observations
Reptile	<i>Clemmys insculpta</i>	Wood Turtle	SC	1995
Bird	<i>Bartramia longicauda</i>	Upland Sandpiper	E	1901
Bird	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	Northern Harrier	T	1923
Bird	<i>Cistothorus platensis</i>	Sedge Wren	E	1982
Vascular Plant	<i>Gentiana andrewsii</i>	Andrews' Bottle Gentian	E	1997
Vascular Plant	<i>Rhododendron maximum</i>	Great Laurel	T	1946
Vascular Plant	<i>Sisyrinchium mucronatum</i>	Slender Blue-Eyed Grass	T	1919

## Wildlife Corridors

As the global climate continues to shift into the future, human communities seek to mitigate the harmful effects of climate change by curbing greenhouse gas emissions or adapt to the impacts by developing energy-efficient heating/cooling systems or preparing their communities; plants and animals must also adapt to a changing climate, however for most other lifeforms adaptation means migration.

In 2016 The Nature Conservancy (TNC) published a report, *Resilient and Connected Landscapes for Terrestrial Conservation*, which seeks to ensure that the Eastern North American landscape continues to:

- support its botanical diversity and iconic wildlife,
- provide the wealth of materials, food, medicines, and clean water humans depend on, and
- provide future generations with experiences directly linked to distinctive American ecosystems.

The report provides comprehensive analysis and mapping to identify landscapes of Eastern North America that are best able to support plants and animals in a changing climate, specifically by identifying *connected landscapes* which meet five criteria of existing site resilience, landscape permeability, biodiversity, resilient and connected conservation networks, and conservation strategies. Landscapes which met the TNC's criteria were mapped to identify areas of prime regional conservation significance for sustaining ecological resilience and the climate-related migration of plants and animals ("climate flow").

Blandford contains large swaths of resilient landscapes and natural areas critical to climate-related migration; contextually, Blandford is one of many towns in southwestern Massachusetts which comprise a bottleneck in south-to-north climate flow toward the more resilient and connected landscapes of Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, and New Brunswick in Canada (**See Map: Resilient and Connected Landscapes**). The I-90 Turnpike, like many other interstates, functions as a major break in the regional south-north wildlife corridor, and non-open space development along this and other major highways functions to further fragment and isolate wildlife habitat; any actions Blandford could take to protect or restore connectivity between the TNC's identified Climate Flow Zones should be identified and pursued, especially considering the growing interest in developing a new I-90 interchange.

## F. Scenic Resources and Unique Environments

Blandford hosts a variety of landscapes considered important to its residents. They include: historic features such as the trolley line and old school house; facilities that contribute to the traditional rural Town Center such as the library, Watson Park, and the First Congregational Church (the White Church); scenic viewsheds towards Mount Monadnock in New Hampshire; recreational resources such as Sanderson Brook Falls, Knittel Conservation Area, Shepard Farm, Long Pond Conservation Area, Blandford Fairgrounds, the Blandford Country Club, and the now closed Blandford Ski Area; and scenic roads such as Cobble Mountain Road (which has been closed by the State since the early 2000s). These features are described further in this section and in *Section 5-Inventory of Lands of Conservation and Recreation Interest*.

With over 29,900 acres of forest—roughly 87% of the Town's total land cover—Blandford has the largest forest cover acreage of any municipality in the Westfield River Watershed. The Harvard Forest, in their 2005 report *Wildlands and Woodlands*, outlines helpful terminology in describing the forested landscape in the context of conservation in a changing climate:

**Wildland** reserves would be large, "unmanaged" lands (5,000 to 50,000 acres) situated predominantly within existing public land parcels. Wildlands should be selected to accomplish five objectives:

- To promote natural landscape-level processes, ecological patterns, and biodiversity across the region's range of forest and environmental conditions,
- To protect water supplies,
- To protect, connect, and enhance existing old growth forests,
- To provide opportunities for the scientific study of natural processes and reference for the changes occurring in actively managed forests; and
- To afford special educational, recreational, aesthetic, and spiritual experiences.

**Woodlands** would comprise the remaining state-owned forests and conservation land *and an* additional roughly 1.5 million acres of currently unprotected land largely in private ownership. Woodlands would be selected to accomplish four objectives:

- To support biodiversity by reinforcing the Wildlands, providing habitat variation, and supporting assemblages of plants and animals that do not occur on the reserves,
- To enable sustainable resource production such as timber, wildlife, and clean water,
- To provide ecosystem services that sustain life and generate many direct and indirect economic benefits, including productive soils, clean air, and natural flood control; and
- To provide extensive recreational, educational, aesthetic, and spiritual experiences.

In this report, landscape ecologists present a case for the regional preservation of large Wildland reserves, with the intent of designating “large areas that can operate without human intervention in order to encourage natural characteristics, processes, and species to thrive.” Furthermore, *Wildlands and Woodlands* outlines that these Wildland reserves should span a range of 5,000 to 50,000+ acres to protect dynamic ecological systems and processes, and that publicly owned lands (such as state- and- municipally owned forests, parks, and watershed management areas) are ideal starting points for Wildland designation due to their distribution, blend of natural, cultural, and environmental features, ownership status, and current management as a public good.

In Blandford, there are no individual parcels over 5,000 acres in size and publicly owned; however, one landowner—Springfield Water and Sewer—owns 10,163 acres of nearly contiguous watershed management land in Blandford, and more in the neighboring Towns of Granville and Russell, making Springfield Water and Sewer lands the only lands *within Blandford* eligible for designation as Wildland reserve, per Harvard Forest's guidelines. However, this does not take into consideration contiguous parcels of mixed ownership—such as the mostly forested landscape block along Blandford's northern border comprising State conservation lands, privately owned Chapter 61 land, and municipally owned watershed land—or publicly owned parcels within Blandford which connect to publicly owned parcels outside of Blandford, in neighboring Towns like Granville, Russell, Huntington, Tolland, Otis, Becket, and Chester.

Hull Forest Products, a commercial logging business, is the next largest individual landowner in Blandford, with 3,354 acres in current use as logging and woodland resource management. Woodlands are economically important resources, providing sustainable sources of lumber and firewood, when managed according to Massachusetts' Forestry Best Management Practices; forests also provide an opportunity to produce non-timber forest products, such as maple syrup (and emerging markets around birch syrup), and gourmet mushrooms. The economic value of forests barely scratches the surface of all the ways in which ecologically stable forests sustain our lives. Blandford's woodlands offer vital cultural, spiritual, and scenic services for people, providing recreation along official and private trails, including walking and hiking, cross-country skiing, bicycling, and running. Forests naturally enhance the quality of life for people by improving air and water quality, controlling erosion, providing shade and moderating air temperatures, absorbing atmospheric carbon, reducing road noise, screening unpleasant views (i.e., of highways or parking lots), and the presence of forests and open space increases the property value of homes and neighborhoods. Furthermore, large blocks of forests and woodlands play an essential role in mitigating the impacts of climate change, by sinking and storing atmospheric carbon in tree tissue and

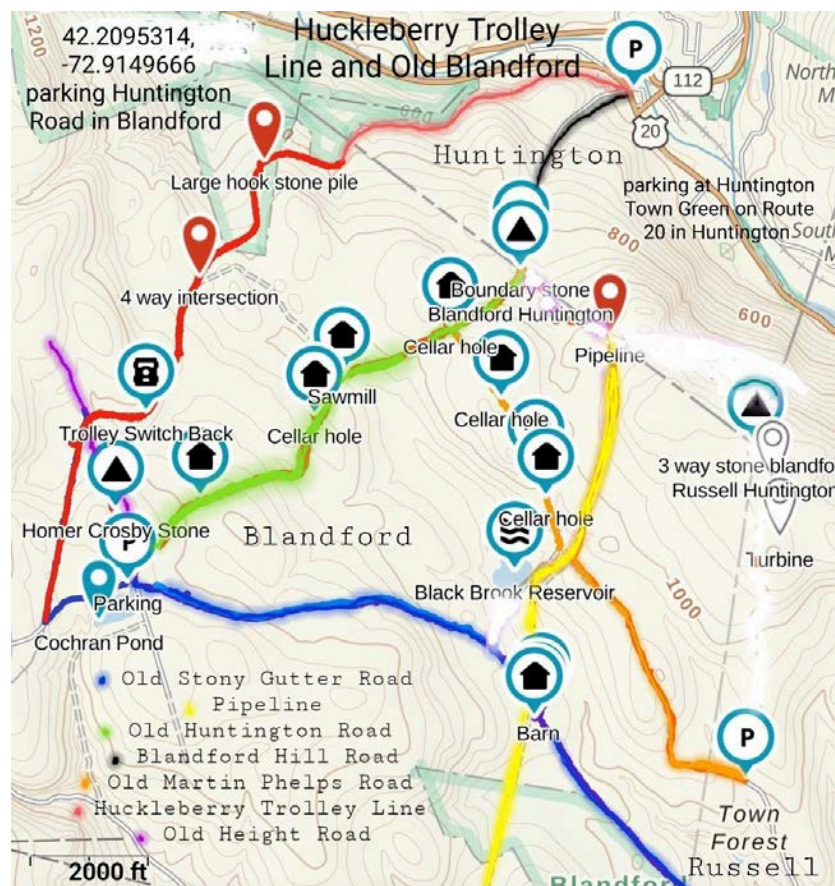


soils, controlling erosion during flood events, filtering air, providing a renewable source of biofuel, and providing wildlife habitat and corridors to support climate-related species migration (Toensmeier, 2016).

Small towns like Blandford face challenges in enforcing regulated logging and cutting activities due to low staffing and tight budgets; Blandford should seek to provide thorough oversight for logging plan approval, documentation, monitoring, and assessment to ensure Blandford's logging business adhere to strict best-practices, state mandates, and protect vital natural resources as much as possible.

### Scenic Roads, Views, and Visual Corridors

The Lee to Huntington trolley line, known as the Huckleberry Line during its first season of operation in 1917, was constructed by the Western Massachusetts Contracting Company for the Berkshire Street Railway in response to demand from nearby Hilltowns, where farming operations were declining due to an inability to efficiently transport goods to market. The Hilltowns also hoped to increase tourism to the region. The line was constructed and ran for only two seasons, from 1917 to 1918. The tracks were torn up between 1921 and 1928, and artifacts along the old trolley line—including culverts and steel tie-downs—can be accessed today in from a parking lot near Cochran Pond. A local hiker's group, the Western Mass Hilltown Hikers, has inventoried and mapped much of the publicly accessible trolley routes in and around Blandford (Figure 2), and the Blandford Recreation Committee could work with this group to improve the quality of their mapping and formally inventory the site, as ownership and public access points are still somewhat uncertain. The old Huckleberry Trolley Line is a classic rail trail with potential for ongoing use as a pedestrian or cycling route, connecting Blandford to nearby Beckett, Lee, Huntington, and Russel; the now-retired MA DCR Commissioner, Leo Roy, had expressed interest in developing the rail trail into a formal bike path, but the project was constrained by concerns from abutting landowners (Hilltown Hikers, 2020). The trolley line remains a historical and recreational asset with plenty of potential for improvement and development as an open space and recreational resource.



According to MGL Chapter 40, Section 15, *Scenic Roads Designation; Improvements; Fines*, “the planning board, conservation commission, or historical commission of any town may designate any road in said town, other than a numbered route or state highway, as a scenic road; provided, however, that a numbered state route may be designated by a town as scenic if its entire length is contained within the boundaries of said town, and no part is owned or maintained by the Commonwealth.” The Scenic Road designation protects the historic character of roads by controlling the cutting or removal roadside trees and disturbance of historic stone walls. While Blandford does not have any roads listed in MGL Chapter 40, Sec 15C as Scenic Roads, the following roads were noted as particularly scenic by the Hampden County Natural Resources Technical Team. These indicate roadways that could benefit from additional maintenance, such as brush cutting or zoning protection.

- **Chester and George Millard Roads and South Street** offer excellent views of the valley and mountain;
- **Nye Brook Road** provides a cool, steep ride with numerous vistas of whitewater in the rocky bed of Gibbs Brook;
- Along **Gibbs Road**, motorists can see the valley and mountains with a foreground of farmland;
- Along **North Street** by the Blandford Club, motorists are offered excellent views of the mountains to the east and the northeast. On a clear day, one can see as far as Springfield;
- **Blair Road** provides vistas of the Blandford church steeple and Cobble Mountain Road offers many excellent views of the Cobble Mountain Reservoir.

In the early 2000s The Hampden County Natural Resource Technical Team (NRTT) assessed several roadsides for their potential as rest areas. They identified eight sites as having potential: on Chester road near open farmland; the triangle at the junction of North Street and the Massachusetts Turnpike; the north side of Route 23 west of Pond Brook; General Knox Road near the junction of Birch Hill Road; a hilltop near Jackson Hill; Route 23 at the junction of Shephard Road; a large site off Route 23 between Pond Brook and Lloyd’s Road; and a site off Cobble Mountain Road, with adequate park policing.

#### Passive Recreational Access

The NRTT also identified several sites that have access to recreational activities. These include: Sanderson and Beulah Land Roads, which provide access to the Chester/Blandford State Forest for hiking and hunting (with restrictions); John Knox Road, which also provides access to the Chester/Blandford State Forest for passive recreation; North Blandford Road, which provides access to parts of the old trolley line right-of-way for hiking and horseback riding; Jethro Jones Road, which is suitable for horseback riding and hiking along Walnut Hill Ridge; Blair, Birch Hill, Hiram Blair and Hall Roads, which are suitable for hiking and horseback riding; and Beech Hill Road, which provides access to trails leading to Pudding Hill; and Warfield Cemetery and edges of Cobble Mountain Reservoir, which are suitable for hiking and hunting with written permission. Some of these roads travel through private property, which should be respected and may require landowner permission.

In 2020 The Town of Blandford, collaboratively with Healthy Hampshire, published a walking map highlighting the best routes and loops in town for walking, with levels ranging from easy to challenging and terrain that includes sidewalks, roadside shoulders, dirt paths and dirt roads. With funding from the Massachusetts Attorney General’s Office and Healthy Hampshire, the map was created as part of an effort to support people of all ages and abilities to take advantage of one of the easiest and most accessible forms of exercise: walking. The map features historical, cultural, and ecological points of interest in addition to the walking routes. The **Blandford Walks** brochure (available in the Appendices) includes routes such as:

- **Hill Cemetery and Church Loop:** Accessed from the parking lot across from the Blandford Historical Society, this walk crosses North Street, passes the bicentennial oak, loops through the Hill Cemetery, and circles around Blandford’s White Church.
- **Watson Memorial Park Loop:** Accessed by roadside parking near the park gate, this walk loops around Watson Park.
- **Kaolin Road Loop:** From the parking lot at the Post Office or Blandford Country Store, this walk loops around the Town Center on a lightly trafficked sidewalk and street.
- **Herrick Road Route:** From the parking lot at the Knittel Conservation Area, visitors can enjoy a pleasant stroll to and from the Town Center, and access more trails around Knittel.
- **Knittel Conservation Area Trails (Western and Eastern Trails):** Accessed from the parking area on Herrick Road, this 1.8-mile trail system straddles Herrick Road and offers views of beaver ponds, great sunsets, foot bridges along Falls Brook, and unique bedrock outcroppings.
- **Cobble Mountain Road Loop:** Accessed by parking at the intersection of Cobble Mountain Road and Birch Hill Road, this route runs along lightly trafficked paved and dirt roads.
- **Sanderson Brook Falls Trail:** From a small parking area on Sanderson Brook Road, the two- to three-foot-wide trail offers pleasant stream crossings, and views of Sanderson Brook Falls (after repairs to a footbridge are completed).
- **Dynamite Box Trail:** Part of the Chester-Blandford State Forest and accessed from the parking lot on Beulah Land Road, the moderately difficult trail takes walkers past remains of a stone chimney and lodge.
- **Observation Hill Trail:** Also part of Chester-Blandford State Forest, and accessed from Beulah Land Road, walkers hike up the road to Observation Hill Road, then up Mica Mine Road to the top of Observation Hill for beautiful views of neighboring hills.

## G. Environmental Challenges

### Climate Change

Climate change is happening now, and its impact will continue to intensify over the next century and beyond. Predictions vary over the amount of change that the warming of the planet will bring, but there is no doubt that change will come. Blandford’s 2021 *Resilient Master Plan* enumerates two major risks that Blandford, like much of New England, is facing: rising temperatures and increased frequency and severity of storm events. And although housing reports predict very little population growth in Blandford in the coming decade, the entire Northeast may be contending with unpredictable growth in population, as quite possibly tens of millions of Americans migrate out of high-risk coastal cities—like Boston and New York—towards inland cities like Worcester and Springfield or smaller residential communities.

Globally, 150 million people are projected to be displaced from their homes, by rising sea levels alone, by 2050, primarily out of Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America (World Bank, *Groundswell*, 2018). New coastal digital elevation modeling (DEM), produced by NASA’s Shuttle Radar Topography Mission (SRTM), predict that 190 million people currently occupy global land below projected high tide lines for the year 2100 under low carbon emission scenarios (250 million at present emissions projected) (Kulp & Strauss, 2019). Depending on future warming and population growth, another 1 to 3 billion people are projected to be living outside of the climate conditions which have been humanity’s temperature niche for longer than 6,000 years; “absent climate mitigation or migration, a substantial part of humanity will be exposed to mean annual temperatures warmer than nearly anywhere today.” (Xu, et al, 2019). As Pulitzer-Prize-nominated environmental reporter Abrahm Lustgarten states, “there is no more natural and fundamental adaptation to a changing climate than to migrate.”

In Massachusetts, climate-related risk to coastal properties is evident in the MA Property Insurance Underwriting Association (MPIUA); State regulations—called Fair Access to Insurance Requirements

(FAIR)—force insurers to provide affordable coverage, while the State subsidizes the cost of underwriting the policy (and in some cases provides the policy itself), obscuring the reality and liabilities of insuring homes in high risk of climate-related disaster. While this does function to protect some vulnerable and marginalized communities, FAIR regulations also “satisfy the demands of wealthier homeowners who still want to be able to buy insurance” (Lustgarten, 2020). At least 30 other states have adopted similar programs, which are designed to prevent an exodus from high-risk communities and continue economic growth, without acknowledging clear signs and scientific evidence of climate change vulnerabilities.

Importantly, Blandford itself is not a high-risk community. Blandford does not carry a heavy vulnerability to climate-related disasters. Its waters are abundant and relatively pristine; its steep hillsides comprise largely intact forestlands, and its farmland soils still produce reliably. Blandford is not a fragile community by nearly any metric of climate change risk; the Town is a certified Green Community and a certified Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Community, and the Town has an up-to-date Hazard Mitigation Plan. However, through the development of the Town’s *Resilient Master Plan* (RMP), town officials did identify climate change-related challenges to be addressed, such as: the uneven distribution of snow/rain; transportation infrastructure and accessibility; downed trees blocking roadways; dirt roads washing out during flash thaws; and the vulnerability of pole-based electricity and communication lines. The Town’s RMP further details ways in which Blandford is planning and preparing to adapt their infrastructure to the regional effects of climate change, and monitor and reduce the Town’s emissions to mitigate the effects wherever possible.

Importantly, the protection and improvement of open space in Blandford plays an important role in climate change mitigation and adaptation. Conserving forest cover ensures carbon is kept sequestered in plant material and soil structure, and large forest blocks function to retain water and buffer the effects of drought and flooding (EEA, 2015). Open space also functions not only as wildlife habitat and migratory corridors, but the development of greenbelts can also encourage more people to engage in pedestrian life—this is especially important in rural communities like Blandford, where most people are dependent on fossil fuels for transport and acquiring essential goods and services. Furthermore, as global temperatures continue to rise, biodiversity is increasingly threatened; for example, sugar maple trees—already near the southern extent of their range in Massachusetts—are predicted to decline in most of their US range by 2100 (USGS, 2015). Climate change also facilitates the spread and establishment of many invasive species by reducing the resilience of native communities to disturbance; invasive species can further reduce the resilience of native plant communities and habitats, agricultural systems, and urban environments to climate change (IUCN, 2021). As a Town with largely intact, forested landscapes and regionally vital watersheds, Blandford must continue to safeguard the existing ecological health and resilience of its landscapes.

### Water Resource Challenges

Healthy mountain streams are essential for the health of fish, amphibians, and macroinvertebrates, as well as being a clean water source for Blandford and other communities. The presence of aquatic life, pool and riffle structure, stable channels, and gravel substrates are all indicators of a healthy mountain stream. The water that makes up mountain streams, and indeed entire watersheds, must first pass through the adjacent terrestrial ecosystem; when those ecosystems are healthy—having healthy vegetation and soil structure—the terrestrial ecosystem functions as a filter which buffers extremes in flow, attenuates erosion, and removes some contaminants from reaching the water body. Activities which degrade the health of mountain streams have compounding effects downstream; several types of disturbance may lead to increased peak flows and erosion, including deforestation, soil compaction, and the creation of impervious surfaces like roofs and roads. Stream channels adjust to high flow events by incising or widening, which causes stream banks to fail over time (Shanley & Wemple, 2002). Sediments from



impervious surface runoff combines with sloughing stream bank materials, causing stream pools to fill in and fine-textured materials to deposit on the gravel stream bed, thus degrading critical stream structure and fish spawning habitat.

Increased homebuilding and commercial logging have the potential of changing the balance of land habitat types, through soil disturbances and habitat fragmentation. Fragmented blocks of forest comprise more “edges” than largely intact forests, and while edges are known to create niches for more native biodiversity—such as understory trees and meadows, along with accompanying fauna like raptors and owls—edges also facilitate the establishment of invasive species such as Asiatic bittersweet, bush honeysuckle, or goutweed, which thrive in the sunny and disturbed soils along forest edges. Logging and building can also increase siltation of ponds and streams, resulting in the consequent loss of fish populations and loss of potential drinking supplies such as Gibbs Pond and Dunlap Pond. Siltation, or the introduction of an aquatic invasive species such as Eurasian milfoil, in Long Pond—Blandford’s present source of public drinking water—would present an almost insurmountable problem to town residents.

Blandford has installed a new water main and has had to replace water and sewer lines at a cost of \$6,000,000 because of asbestos issues. Currently, there are also road problems such as siltation and road salt, lack of adequate catch basins, and inadequate culverts. As Mass Highway has jurisdiction over Route 23, it is an area of future discussion to limit the use of road salt to protect the outstanding water supply.

### Land Resource Challenges

Blandford, like most rural communities, wants to maintain its rural character while also strengthening its economy. Residents and town officials seek to manage new growth in a way that promotes prosperity yet is sustainable in the long run, while preserving character-defining open space and natural resources. As a result, many rural communities encourage low-density development in the belief that it will maintain rural character; however, the US EPA notes in a 2012 study that 2- to 10-acre lot sizes pose a host of problems that often undermine rural character and make protecting natural and fiscal resources difficult, namely:

- Infrastructure and services are more costly and inefficient to provide,
- Residents demand services, such as road maintenance and recreational facilities, but the supporting tax base (especially with large amounts of land in Chapter 61 tax abatement programs) is inadequate to provide these services,
- Productive agricultural lands and sensitive ecological zones become fragmented, which makes farming more difficult and disrupts interconnected wildlife habitats and corridors,
- Domestic animals, refuse, and vehicular (on- and off-road) are introduced into agricultural areas and wildlife habitat,
- These lots often rely on septic systems, which can fail and impact water supply quality,
- Directing growth to existing towns uses infrastructure in which public money has already been invested; development outside of these areas does not take full advantage of those taxpayer investments,
- And large, spread-out lots make it difficult, if not dangerous and impossible, to walk or bike to destinations, forcing residents to drive everywhere, increasing air pollution and carbon emissions, and making it less convenient for people to integrate regular physical activity into a daily routine.

But density of development, in large part, shapes the character of a community (US EPA, 2015). Multi-story condominiums are typical of urbanized landscapes; single-family subdivisions feel in many ways like the sprawling suburbs of eastern Massachusetts. Farms, villages, and towns with intimate, walkable Main Streets evoke rural settings. Rural communities, especially those in gateway regions between larger metropolitan areas, often allow land development patterns that are not dense enough to provide cost-effective services and infrastructure, and yet are too dense to maintain a truly small-town

feel. These development patterns can fragment wildlife habitat and agricultural lands (indeed, single-family residential development represent the greatest threat to permanent loss of New England's farms and forests), thereby damaging a Town's economic and environmental health. As a rural community situated in a gateway between larger cultural and urban hubs, such as Springfield, Pittsfield, and Great Barrington, Blandford could benefit from the adoption of new zoning strategies which encourage the preservation of open space while conforming to the community's desire to maintain its rural charm.

### Wildlife Habitat Challenges

Forests across Massachusetts face relentless development pressure. Until very recently, forest vegetation had been rebounding and maturing since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and despite its large population, Massachusetts hosts more forested land today than it has at almost any time in the last three hundred years. In 2000, Massachusetts was over 60 percent forested, ranking eighth nationwide in percent forest cover (Alerich, 2000); however, the return of the New England forest creates a deceptive sense of human accomplishment and security:

“Just as forest recovery a century ago was an inadvertent consequence of decisions made by thousands of independent individuals, uncoordinated human activity in the absence of a regional conservation plan now threatens these forests. Currently, Massachusetts loses approximately 40 acres of open space daily to development (MAS, *Losing Ground*, 2003).”

- David Foster, et al, *Wildlands and Woodlands*, 2017

Currently, roughly 27 percent of Massachusetts is protected from development, more than of which is publicly owned, thereby providing a strong foundation for ongoing conservation efforts. However, organizations such as the Mass Audubon Society (MAS), in their ongoing report *Losing Ground* (2020), and the Harvard Forest in their 2017 report *Wildlands and Woodlands*, are boldly and urgently calling for permanent conservation of **50% of all land in Massachusetts by 2050**. In *Losing Ground*, the MAS notes that between 2012 and 2017, approximately 24,700 acres of natural land were converted to development, with a new category of land use—large-scale, ground-mounted solar (PV) arrays—representing roughly 6,000 acres, or one-quarter, of all development in that five-year period (MAS, 2020). Interestingly, while development increased during that time, so too did acres of wetlands and acres of open lands (increasing by 2,221 acres and 6,763 acres, respectively); however, nearly 30,000 acres of forest were lost during this time (MAS, 2020). In the Harvard Forest's *Wildlands and Woodlands*, landscape ecologists further propose that to reach the target of half of Massachusetts—or 2.5 million acres—in permanent conservation, 250,000 of those acres should be preserved as **Wildland** reserves, with the remaining 2.25 million acres conserved as managed **Woodlands**.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in their first-of-its-kind Resilient and Connected Landscapes study, maps climate-resilient sites, confirmed biodiversity locations, and species movement areas across all Eastern North America. See **RECOMMENDED MAP – RESILIENT AND CONNECTED LANDSCAPES**. Blandford is part of a large regional network of wildlife habitat and corridors whose existence and integrity is essential to support the climate-related migration of plant and animal species; any actions Blandford could take to protect or restore connectivity between the TNC's identified Climate Flow Zones should be identified and pursued, especially considering the growing interest in developing a new I-90 interchange, which currently bisects the TNC's mapped climate flow and regional biodiversity areas.

The introduction and establishment of invasive and exotic plant and animal species poses an existential risk to the health of New England's ecosystems. This is a global issue with regional and local significance, and Blandford should take every action possible to curtail the introduction of invasive species to its forests and waterways, monitor the spread of established invasive species, and plan for the restoration of native ecological communities in ways that do not compromise the health of existing

ecosystems (such as the wanton use of toxic herbicides, insecticides, and fungicides). Furthermore, as Blandford explores ways to increase public recreational access to its waterways, the Town should place a high priority on limiting the exposure to aquatic invasive species, which are notoriously hard to remove and would present an almost insurmountable threat to Blandford's (and surrounding city's and town's) public water supply.

Many insects and pollinators are also in decline throughout North America, including many species of native bees, butterflies, and migratory birds. These insects and birds are important to the health of Blandford's natural ecosystems, providing pollination services and form vital links in the food web, and they are particularly threatened by habitat loss, climate change, and pesticide use on a hemispheric as well as local scale. Blandford could consider adopting a Town-wide ban on the use of foliar pesticide chemicals, such as Round-Up™, which pose deleterious health risks to both ecosystems and humans. Furthermore, by encouraging the use of native perennials, trees, and shrubs in residential and municipal landscaping projects, Blandford could begin taking small steps toward restoring the diverse native plant communities necessary to support insects in all stages of their life cycle, which play a foundational role in the food web.

#### H. Summary

Blandford's rich mosaic of working landscapes on rolling hillsides, deep forests cores, steep ravines and rocky outcroppings, mountain creeks and wetlands, and pristine surface waters all contribute to its much-desired community character as a hardscrabble Hilltown; its landscape also supports a diverse rural economy of small farms, productive woodlands, and passive recreational opportunities, while also a retaining a web of thriving, interconnected ecosystems that extend well-beyond the Town's borders. Blandford's small-town atmosphere is directly tied to its ecological legacy, and its residents—while they may disagree on the details of some local issues—almost unanimously share those core values of environmental stewardship; Blandford is therefore well-positioned to continue planning for the preservation of its intact ecosystems and surface waters, the conservation and ongoing stewardship of its working landscapes, and the expansion of its passive recreational opportunities for residents and visitors into the future.

## Section 5: Inventory of Lands of Conservation and Recreation Interest

### Overview

This inventory describes ownership, management agency, current use, condition, recreation potential, public access, type of public grant accepted, zoning, and level of protection for each parcel. The inventory includes public, nonprofit, and privately owned properties, some of which may already be protected open space dedicated to conservation or recreational use, while other parcels may be identified for further acquisition or protection measures. The section is divided into two subsections, the first being publicly owned and nonprofit lands, and the second on privately owned lands. This information is also included in map and matrix form with an accompanying narrative. All municipally owned conservation and recreation facilities and programs have been evaluated for accessibility to people with disabilities, included in the Appendices. The inventory is categorized using the following key:

**Map Parcel ID:** Numeric ID corresponding to the Assessor's Maps.

**Parcel Name:** The name of parcel, if applicable.

**Owner (Manager):** The Fee Owner of the parcel, (and the management agency, if applicable).

**Owner Type:**

- F- Federal
- S - State
- C - County
- M - Municipal
- N - Private Nonprofit
- P - Private for profit
- B - Public Nonprofit
- L - Land Trust
- G - Conservation Organization
- O - Other / None of the above (e.g., joint ownership)
- X – Unknown

**Size:** Land area in acres

**Current Use:** Primary purpose code

- R - Recreation (activities are facility based)
- C - Conservation (activities are non-facility based)
- B - Recreation and Conservation
- H - Historical/Cultural
- A - Agriculture
- W - Water Supply Protection
- S – Scenic (official designation only)
- F - Flood Control
- U - Site is underwater
- O - Other (explain)
- X – Unknown

**Condition:** Current known condition of the parcel.



**Recreation Potential:** High = existing recreation or high perceived potential; Medium = some existing recreation, moderate perceived potential; Low = no existing recreation, low perceived potential.

**Public Access:** The legal (not physical) level of public access.

Y – Yes (open to public)

N – No (not open to public)

L – Limited (membership only)

X - Unknown

**Zoning:** How the parcel is currently zoned, based on Blandford’s 2021 zoning districts and overlay districts:

AG – Agricultural District

R – Residential District

B – Business District

WPO – Watershed Protection Overlay District

FO – Floodplain Overlay District

**Level of Protection:** Level of legal protection (See *Levels & Forms of Open Space Protection* below)

## A. Levels & Forms of Open Space Protection

### **In Perpetuity (“P”):**

Lands are considered protected in perpetuity when legally and permanently protected as recorded in a deed or other official document. Private land is considered protected in perpetuity if it has a deed restriction in the form of a Conservation Restriction, an Agricultural Preservation Restriction, Historical Preservation Restriction, or Watershed Preservation Restriction. Public lands used for conservation or recreation purposes may be protected under the MA Constitutional Article 97, outlined below.

**Deed restrictions** provide legally binding language that prohibits development of lands in perpetuity and carries over through the land deed even if the land is sold to another owner. Blandford and/or the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) have protected multiple public and private properties with **Conservation Restrictions** (CRs) to date. An **Agricultural Preservation Restriction** (APR) is a deed restriction that protects private land used for agriculture from development in perpetuity.

### **Article 97 (“Art 97”):**

Article 97 protects certain lands acquired for natural resource purposes. These lands cannot be converted or developed for other uses, *except by*: 1.) a unanimous vote of the local Conservation Commission; 2.) a vote from the Parks Commission if it is parkland in question; 3.) voted on at a town meeting and passed by a two-thirds majority; 4.) an Environmental Notification Form with EOEEA’s MEPA Unit; and 5.) voted by both branches under the Massachusetts Legislature and passed by a two-thirds majority. Lands protected under Article 97 are typically owned by municipal Conservation Commissions, Parks and Recreation Departments, Water Departments, or State Conservation agencies (OSRP Workbook, 2008 pg. 34).

### **Temporary/Limited (“L”):**

This category includes land that is legally protected for a defined period of time (e.g. a thirty-year Conservation Restriction), or protected through strong but limited open space designations, but could be developed for other uses at the end of their temporary protection or when they no longer serve a conservation or recreation function. Limited protection is protection by legal mechanisms other than those stated above. These lands might be protected by a majority municipal vote or are lands likely to remain open space for other reasons (e.g., cemeteries). Oftentimes, publicly owned land designated for public use purposes, such as parks and conservation areas, are protected under Article 97 of the MA Constitution.

### **Massachusetts Chapter 61:**

The Chapter 61 tax programs provide a financial incentive for private landowners to manage their properties for forestry, agricultural, and recreational purposes under reduced property taxes under three distinct special taxation programs: Chapter 61 covers forested lands, Chapter 61A covers agricultural lands, and Chapter 61B covers open space and recreation lands (DCR Chapter 61 Programs). Not all Chapter 61 lands are required to be open to the public. Chapter 61 properties must be managed for forestry, agriculture, or open space and recreation purposes. If these properties are sold, converted to non-Chapter uses, or otherwise removed from Chapter 61 before the time limit expires, the community is afforded the Right of First Refusal to purchase the land—or the ability to assign its right to a nonprofit—and the landowner must pay accumulated back taxes (OSRP Workbook, 2008 pg. 36). 9,203 acres of Blandford are taxed under Chapter 61 programs. While tax abatement programs such as MA Chapter 61 provide strong financial incentives for conservation or recreational uses, and hold consequences for converting to non-chapter uses, these programs are *not considered* a form of legal open space protection, but rather a *temporary incentive against development*.

### **None/Not Protected (“N”):**

Lands that are totally unprotected by any legal or functional means, which are usually privately owned, and could be sold for non-conservation or recreation uses at any time (e.g. Scout camps, private golf courses or recreation areas, or private woodlands). Some publicly owned properties may be considered unprotected if they are not explicitly and clearly dedicated to public use purposes, such as conservation and recreation.

## **B. Public & Nonprofit-Owned Parcels (Tables 6, 7, and 8)**

Most of Blandford’s land, protected in perpetuity as open space, recreational, and conservation areas, are owned by public entities. The City of Springfield is the largest individual landowner in Blandford, owning nearly 8,900 acres (nearly 26 percent of the land Town) of watershed land considered as protected in perpetuity. The Town of Russell owns another 2,768 acres, the State of Massachusetts (under the supervision of both the DCR and Department Fish & Game) own another 2,517 acres, and the Town of Blandford itself owns over 992 acres. These publicly owned lands include unique landscapes such as:

### **The Chester/Blandford State Forest**

Located north of Chester Road, comprising 2,297 acres with roughly 1,630 acres in Blandford. A scenic forest of deep woods, with moderate to steep slopes, and rough, stony landscapes. The forest offers stream fishing, hiking, horseback riding, hunting, and State Forest woodland management. Destinations for visitors include views of streams and waterfalls, a mica mine, and a gold mine. Sanderson Brook Falls has breathtaking views of whitewater dropping over precipitous ledges, within view of Sanderson Brook Road. This state forest has a few wheelchair-accessible roads, but no accessible trails.

An abandoned goldmine located on Goldmine Brook, one mile south of the Chester-Blandford State Forest access road, is suitable for geologic study. A 20-minute hike along Goldmine Brook is rather

scenic, with glimpses of whitewater in the rocky streambed. The mine consists of a vent shaft with wood retaining walls, drill holes in the ledge, tailings, etc. A short distance downstream lies the remains of a foundation and a canal that were apparently connected with the mine. An impoundment site on Goldmine Brook, about 1 ½ miles upstream from the Chester Town line, is also associated with the abandoned mine. This has the potential to become a 53-acre lake with a maximum depth of 18 feet at the dam. The Springfield Hiking Club has initiated many trips to this area in the past. This area is not accessible.

#### Tolland State Forest

Located in Otis on the border of Blandford, consists of approximately 730 acres of woodland and hardwood swamp land. South Otis Road and Otis Tolland Road provide access to the forest, which offers hiking, horseback riding and hunting opportunities. The State Forest has accessible restrooms, but no accessible trails.

#### Long Pond Conservation Area

In 1985, the Town of Blandford purchased 234 acres surrounding Long Pond Reservoir to protect drinking water. A beaver pond along the edge of North Blandford Road attracts an abundance of wildlife. In the past, the Boy Scouts have worked on trails around the beaver pond and have added wood duck boxes to this area. This parcel was purchased with assistance from a Self-Help Grant; therefore, the public is encouraged to use the area for passive recreation such as hiking, ice skating, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, birdwatching, photography, etc. In 1999, an additional 69 acres was purchased by the Town to continue efforts to protect the watershed and filtration plant. Currently there are no accessible trails or amenities.

#### The Wigwam Brook Conservation Area

In May 2003, the Valley Land Fund (VLF) assisted the Town of Blandford in purchasing 150 acres, located on the corner of Russell Road and Nye Brook Road, from the Letourneau family. This property has a conservation restriction on it. Wigwam Brook is a tributary of the Westfield River. This property has access through a deeded right of way which can be accessed by the driveway leading to the Letourneau farmhouse. The area is open to the public for passive recreation. The VLF requests that this land not be logged, encouraging old growth (how large is this area? Does it make sense ecologically to encourage “old growth” on a parcel of this size/context?). An old logging road helps hikers navigate the diverse property.

There are three Town-owned parcels near Freeland Brook. The three parcels total 145 acres: parcel 28-68 acres, parcel 26- 57 acres, and parcel 25- 20 acres. Parcel 25 is privately owned and is landlocked because of the Massachusetts Turnpike. This 26-acre tract would be a nice addition to the land already owned by the Town.

This area is suitable for passive recreation. There are forests of oak and hemlock, which surround the remains of an old dam once used for municipal water. One of the branches of Freeland Brook is rock lined with ledge outcropping and rock waterfalls, which makes a good setting for hiking, fishing, and geology. Currently there are no accessible trails or amenities.

#### The Town Common

Located by the Town garage and between two cemeteries, contains approximately nine acres of Town-owned land. The Common is partially wooded with large, well-pruned white pines and oaks. This area is suitable for limited picnicking and hiking, and contains a Bicentennial Oak planted in 1935, along with a plaque marking the site of the first church in Town. It is a nicely landscaped public space with a circular rock planter in the center and a large shade tree; several raised perennial and shrub beds; paving stones; and a bench. Access is very easy for those with disabilities (further detailed in the Appendices) The Town Common and surrounding landscape are in the early stages of a redesign and rehabilitation

project, which began in early 2021 with support from the Franklin County Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG).

#### Watson Memorial Park

Located north of Blandford Center on Blandford Road, Watson Park an excellently maintained 11-acre park with an extensive network of roads and paths, a tennis court, a horseshoe pit and a baseball diamond. The park is well-landscaped with many interesting flowers and shrubs, and has several picnic facilities, great views of the Connecticut and Westfield valleys, and roads suitable for jogging and hiking. The park features a metal playground with several swings, two slides, jungle gyms; a little league ball field; several picnic tables with BBQ grills; extensive and well-maintained, rolling open lawn area; a single lane, 5 mph loop road with some mature Rhododendrons, other shrubs, and large shade trees; and a small gazebo in good conditions. There are also two historic barns on the property. In the past, parts of the park have been purposefully flooded in the winter to accommodate ice skating. There are no curb issues and good access to all areas. The Town has been funding ongoing work with a professional arborist to identify, prune, and upgrade the trees, shrubs, and perennial flowerbeds. In fiscal year 2022, the Town will be reconstructing and re-paving the whole loop road with Watson Park.

#### Veteran's Park at Town Common

At the corner of Route 23 and North Blandford Road, next to Highway Dept. Garage, Veteran's Park contains five commemorative stones honoring veterans of the Civil, Spanish, WW1, WWII, Vietnam, and Korean Wars, and seven flag poles. It is a memorial erected by the Commonwealth in 1927 to commemorate General Knox's march from Fort Ticonderoga to Boston to fight the British. General Knox came through Blandford during the winter of 1775-76 carrying canons and arms that were used to liberate Boston. The park is very accessible (further detailed in the Appendices).

#### Shepard Farm (Formerly Dover Trust Land)

The Shepard Farm property at 246 Otis Stage Road was granted to the Town of Blandford by the Springfield Water and Sewer Commission in 2009 for historic preservation and land conservation. This property is located within the General Knox Historic Trail Area and is locally significant due to its history, architecture, and landscape, as well as for agricultural and recreational potential. The current conservation restriction coupled with major deterioration of the residential building present barriers to reactivate even a small portion of this underutilized property.

A grant application to the Commonwealth was submitted to fund a study of Shepard Farm showing existing natural and built conditions and present feasible options for a land exchange, housing and/or agriculture and/or recreation in addition to conservation. This project is ongoing at the time of this OSRP update and would represent a first phase in renovating this underutilized Town-owned resource.

#### Miller's Swamp

The swamp, while not actually one parcel, is located partially on State Forest land and partially on private land and comprises approximately 50 acres of hardwood swamp in the southwest corner of town. The area hosts small patches of open water and emergent wetlands, ferns, blueberries, and other native vegetation. There has been limited residential development in this area of town, with five new residences along the road. The Town could explore purchasing some parcels contiguous to the State Forest land for conservation or working with a Land Trust to ensure the ongoing protection of this landscape as open space.



### C. Private Parcels (Tables 9, 10, and 11)

The Town of Blandford spans 34,228 acres—roughly 54 square miles—of which 9,203 (26.8 percent) acres are afforded temporary, or “limited,” protection under MGL Title IX Chapter 61 “Classification and Taxation of Forest Lands and Forest Products.” These programs provide property tax relief to landowners who retain their land for farming, forestry, or recreation. The Chapter 61 program taxes the properties based on their current use rather than their market value (based upon the property’s “highest and best use,” or its development value, outlined in MGL Chapter 59). Of the privately owned lands in Chapter, 4,958 acres are taxed under Chapter 61 for forestry, 2,709 acres taxed under Chapter 61A for agriculture, and 1,535 acres taxed under Chapter 61B for recreation and open space. Since the previous OSRP update, the amount of Blandford’s land in Chapter 61 programs has increased dramatically, rising 116 percent from the 4,249 acres under Chapter in 2003; Chapter 61 (forestlands) are up roughly 40 percent from 3,535 acres, Chapter 61-A (agricultural) lands are up nearly 385 percent from 559 acres, and Chapter 61-B (recreation and open space) lands are up over 890 percent from 155 acres since 2003.

The Blandford Conservation Commission has historically worked with private landowners to place **conservation restrictions** on private parcels where possible and will continue to do this as noted in the updated Action Plan (Section Nine).

#### Blandford Ski Area

The country’s oldest club-owned ski area, which sold in 2017 to Jeff Murdock of Ski Butternut. Blandford Ski Area had been in operation for eighty years, with 465 feet of vertical elevation gain, twenty-two trails, three chairlifts, one surface lift, two lodges, a terrain park, and a half pipe. The resort closed permanently in 2020 after failing to reopen in the 2019/2020 season due to equipment maintenance issues and the rising COVID-19 emergency, though it had been struggling financially since the Springfield Ski Club sold it in 2017. Just before closing, the new owner had made major renovations to the snowmaking system, chairlifts, and terrain park (MassLive, 2020). The status of the Blandford Ski Area as an open space and recreation resource remains unknown; its long history as a skiing destination, established infrastructure, and Chaptered tax status offer an enormous recreation potential, and the Town could pursue collaboration with the current or future owners to incentivize the property’s ongoing use as public open space, in perpetuity.

#### Blandford Club

Offers a nine-hole golf course and tennis courts that are open to the public, for a fee, in the summer. Members are offered discounts, as well as access to a boathouse on Russell Pond.

Table 6: State of Massachusetts Owned & Managed Parcels										
Map Parcel ID	Parcel Name	Owner (Manager)	Owner Type	Size (Acres)	Current Use	Condition	Recreation Potential	Public Access	Zoning	Level of Protection
418-0-1	Chester-Blandford State Forest	State of MA (Division of Conservation and Recreation)	S	1637.56	B			Y	AG	P
407-0-18										
407-0-10										
408-0-43										
408-0-31										
408-0-18										
407-0-9										
401-1-5	Tolland State Forest	State of MA (Division of Conservation and Recreation)	S	731.46	B			Y	AG	P
401-1-7.1										
421-0-5.1	Stage Brook WMA	State of MA (Department of Fish and Game)	S	148.32	C					

Table 7: Municipally Owned & Managed Parcels										
Map Parcel ID	Parcel Name	Owner (Manager)	Owner Type	Size (Acres)	Current Use	Condition	Recreation Potential	Public Access	Zoning	Level of Protection
414-0-15	Cobble Mountain Reservoir Land	City of Springfield (Water Department)	M	55.27	W			N	AG/FO	P
421-0-46				58.74						
414-0-15				2996.97						
410-0-12				348.92						
410-0-9.3				4.66						
410-0-8				5.42						
414-0-15				0.43						
413-0-25				7.44						
422-0-34				240.83						
404-0-1				271.54						
406-0-1				29.55						
406-0-4				10.49						
406-0-3				14.63						
406-0-2				3.79						
405-0-1				1089.79						
404-0-38				114.77						
404-0-19				70.63						
408-0-44				8.39						
408-0-40				33.65						
404-0-25				20.99						
404-0-30				94.67						
409-0-48				59.88						
403-0-6.1				11.18						
403-0-7				200.65						
402-0-21.1				140.54						
410-0-1				993.31						
412-0-6				130.26						
412-0-4				10.66						
412-0-17				270.60						
411-0-10				387.59						

411-0-7				678.54							
Map Parcel ID	Parcel Name	Owner (Manager)	Owner Type	Size (Acres)	Current Use	Condition	Recreation Potential	Public Access	Zoning	Level of Protection	
414-0-12	Cobble Mountain Reservoir Land	City of Springfield (Water Department)	M	38.26	W			N			
414-0-11				0.32							
410-0-9.9				8.64							
410-0-9.8				8.10							
415-0-4				19.24							
415-0-1				0.86							
422-0-14				151.63							
422-0-4				46.85							
422-0-2				1.82							
422-0-3				4.45							
415-0-8				47.50							
401-1-5				Bliss		186.60			X		
401-1-7.1											
404-0-45				Long Pond Conservation Area		Town of Blandford (Conservation Commission)	M	213.73	C		
404-0-41	15.74										
404-0-40.1	70.83										
416-0-26	Conservation Area (Mass Pike?)	55.28									
416-0-25	Conservation Area (Mass Pike?)	19.51									
414-0-4	Herrick-Knittel Conservation Area	112.32									
414-0-5.1		136.22									
414-0-6		4.32									
404-0-28	North Blandford Cemetery	Town of Blandford		2.09	H			Y	AG	L	
403-0-5	Long Pond (Blandford Water Supply)			245.99	W			X	WPO	P	
402-0-22	General Knox Trail Historical Area			116.72	H			Y	AG	P	
417-0-5	Russell Water Supply Land		M	2768.47	W			X	AG/FO	P	
420-0-10											



418-0-3		Town of Russell (Water Department)								
417-0-3										

Table 8: Nonprofit Owned & Operated Parcels										
Map Parcel ID	Parcel Name	Owner (Manager)	Owner Type	Size (Acres)	Current Use	Condition	Recreation Potential	Public Access	Zoning	Level of Protection
107-0-7	Arms Acres Memorial Forest	New England Forestry Foundation	L	104.02	C			Y	R	P
107-0-3										
402-0-8	Gibbs Road Conservation Area	Winding River Land Conservancy		29.08					AG/WPO	

**Table 9: Privately Owned Chapter 61 (Forestland)**

Map Parcel ID	Parcel Name	Owner (Manager)	Owner Type	Size (Acres)	Current Use	Condition	Recreation Potential	Public Access	Zoning	Level of Protection
416-0-5.2	HAIGHT ROAD (REAR)	BENSON CHARLES E.III, MONROE H.	P	12.11	Ch. 61	Unknown	Low	X	AG	L
420-0-5	HAIGHT ROAD			62						
420-0-7	HAIGHT ROAD			37						
115-0-7	80 RUSSELL STAGE ROAD	BERGLAND, GREGROY KURT		7.55	Ch. 61					
115-0-8	RUSSELL STAGE ROAD			9						
421-0-15	SPERRY ROAD	BERGLAND, JAMES W		12.8	Ch. 61					
421-0-33	SPERRY ROAD			31						
409-0-22	GORE ROAD	BERRY BROOK FOREST LLC		64	Ch. 61					
409-0-23	GORE ROAD			8.06						
102-0-11	MASS PIKE			4.5						
101-0-6	CHESTER ROAD			47						
114-0-12.1	RUSSELL STAGE ROAD (OFF)	CARPENTER, DONALD P.		79	Ch. 61					
418-0-2	CHESTER ROAD	DANDY REALTY LLC		651	Ch. 61					
416-0-9	HUNTINGTON ROAD	GARLO, LOUIS E. & MARY		1.1	Ch. 61					
416-0-8	HUNTINGTON ROAD			3.42						
416-0-5	HAIGHT ROAD REAR	HAIGHT, KJD		41.81	Ch. 61					
420-0-6	HAIGHT ROAD			75.02						
416-0-4	HAIGHT ROAD REAR			43.1						
418-0-3	CHESTER ROAD	HULL FORESTLANDS, LP		260	Ch. 61					
404-0-26	JETHRO JONES ROAD			43						
404-0-27	JETHRO JONES ROAD			25						
404-0-24	JETHRO JONES ROAD			19						
421-0-7	RUSSELL STAGE ROAD			42						
420-0-11	STONY GUTTER HILL ROAD			223						
418-0-8	JOHN KNOX ROAD			43						
418-0-4	HUNTINGTON T.C. S/S (OFF)			16						
409-0-49	BLAIR ROAD			48						
403-0-8	GIBBS ROAD			6.9						
421-0-14	RUSSELL STAGE ROAD			25						

**Table 9: Privately Owned Chapter 61 (Forestland)**

Map Parcel ID	Parcel Name	Owner (Manager)	Owner Type	Size (Acres)	Current Use	Condition	Recreation Potential	Public Access	Zoning	Level of Protection
421-0-43	WORONOCO ROAD			2.2						
421-0-18	SPERRY ROAD	HULL FORESTLANDS, LP	P	41	Ch. 61	Unknown	Low	X	AG	L
421-0-21	SPERRY ROAD (OFF)			58						
421-0-39	MASS PIKE			71						
422-0-8	SOUTH ST	KEENAN, JOSEPH P		53.72	Ch. 61					
421-0-52.1	SOUTH ST			93.58						
404-0-37	NORTH BLANDFORD RD	KELLEY, JAMES AND JANIS		1.9	Ch. 61					
404-0-7	NORTH BLANDFORD RD			9.6						
404-0-6	NORTH BLANDFORD RD			20.5						
404-0-11.1	NORTH BLANDFORD RD			38.03						
406-0-13	CHESTER ROAD	KUSNIERZ, MAX E.		6.05	Ch. 61					
406-0-14	CHESTER ROAD			86.18						
411-0-17	OTIS STAGE ROAD	LLOYD, BENJAMIN J		158	Ch. 61					
111-0-32	GLASGOW ROAD	LOOMIS, SCOTT		8.5	Ch. 61				AG	
110-0-6	HERRICK ROAD			4.4						
407-0-8	SANDERSON BROOK ROAD	ORLUK, JO-ANN MARIE		48	Ch. 61					
402-0-32	SHEPARD ROAD (OFF)	OTTEN, RUSSELL J.		43.18	Ch. 61					
402-0-43	OTIS STAGE ROAD	PHILIP D BRENT LLC		187	Ch. 61					
412-0-12	BEECH HILL ROAD	RIPLEY, LEON K.		161	Ch. 61					
413-0-9	SCHOOLHOUSE ROAD			57.87						
421-0-26	SPERRY ROAD (OFF)	RUNYON, BETH ELLEN		59	Ch. 61					
412-0-7	STANNARD ROAD	RUSZALA, PETER A.		116	Ch. 61					
412-0-8	STANNARD ROAD			14.6						
412-0-3	SHEPARD ROAD (OFF)			272						
416-0-5.01	HAIGHT ROAD REAR	VOGEL, DAVID L.		18	Ch. 61					
420-0-13	NYE BROOK ROAD			252						
420-0-19	NYE BROOK ROAD			29						
420-0-17	NYE BROOK ROAD	WZOREK, CARL J.		130	Ch. 61					

**Table 9a: Privately Owned Chapter 61 "Mixed Use"**

Map Parcel ID	Parcel Name	Owner (Manager)	Owner Type	Size (Acres)	Current Use	Condition	Recreation Potential	Public Access	Zoning	Level of Protection
420-0-3	11 HAIGHT ROAD REAR	BENSON, CHARLES E. III	P	64.41	Ch. 61 (Mixed Use)	Unknown	Low	X	AG	L
408-0-11	BEULAH LAND ROAD	BEULAH LAND FOREST PRODUCTS LLC	P	55.72						
403-0-1.2	35 GIBBS ROAD	BROWN, SCOTT D	P	61.65						
411-0-3.2	157 OTIS STAGE ROAD	BURKOTT, FRANCIS	P	64.4						
114-0-12.2	36 RUSSELL STAGE ROAD	CARPENTER, DONALD P. TRUSTEE	P	5.6						
416-0-6	44 HUNTINGTON ROAD	GARLO, LOUIS E. & MARY	P	50						
422-0-37	21 HAYDEN ROAD	GREEN, KEVIN T.	P	54.5						
409-0-47	NORTH BLANDFORD RD	HULL FORESTLANDS LP	P	204						
404-0-23	BLAIR ROAD			144						
404-0-2.11	NORTH BLANDFORD RD	SLAYTON, BRIAN C.	P	127.03						
409-0-51	44 BLAIR ROAD	STEVENS, BYAM K. III	P	113						
412-0-9	52 HIRAM BLAIR ROAD	TABERMAN, HEIDI	P	33						

**Table 10: Privately Owned Chapter 61 (Agricultural)**

Map Parcel ID	Parcel Name	Owner (Manager)	Owner Type	Size (Acres)	Current Use	Condition	Recreation Potential	Public Access	Zoning	Level of Protection
412-0-11	72 BEECH HILL ROAD	CASE, ARLOW	P	2.4	Ch. 61-A	Unknown	Low	X	AG	L
114-0-6.21	RUSSELL STAGE ROAD	HENTNICK, PAUL J.		31.35						
408-0-7	CHESTER ROAD	MARTIN, LLOYD JAMES		15.42						
402-0-30	SHEPARD ROAD	OTTEN, RUSSELL J.		7.3						
413-0-7	BEECH HILL ROAD	RIPLEY, LEON K.		5						
413-0-10	BEECH HILL ROAD			32						
402-0-10	OTIS STAGE ROAD	STEVENS, DAVID		3.49						
402-0-9	GIBBS ROAD			3.48						
402-0-12	OTIS STAGE ROAD			5.02						
402-0-13	OTIS STAGE ROAD			5.02						
402-0-14	OTIS STAGE ROAD			5						
402-0-15	OTIS STAGE ROAD			4.85						
406-0-15.2	CHESTER ROAD	TERRY, HOWARD P.		5.77						
406-0-15.1	CHESTER ROAD			336.43						
406-0-15.4	CHESTER ROAD	TERRY, HOWARD P.		2.02						
406-0-15.5	CHESTER ROAD		2.53							
406-0-15.3	CHESTER ROAD		8.6							
405-0-3	MASS PIKE		5.8							
409-0-42.1	NORTH BLANDFORD RD	UTZINGER, HENRY A.	10.12							
409-0-42.2	NORTH BLANDFORD RD	VAN WERKHOOVEN, LINDA S. AND ANTHONY TRUSTEES	80.76							
409-0-43.2	NORTH BLANDFORD RD		3.66							
409-0-6	NORTH BLANDFORD RD		36							
409-0-5	JOSH CROSS ROAD		22							



Table 10a: Privately Owned Chapter 61-A “Mixed Use”										
Map Parcel ID	Parcel Name	Owner (Manager)	Owner Type	Size (Acres)	Current Use	Condition	Recreation Potential	Public Access	Zoning	Level of Protection
403-0-1.3	GIBBS ROAD	BROWN, SCOTT D.	P	44.19	Ch. 61-A (Mixed Use)	Unknown	Low	X	AG	L
412-0-10	STANNARD ROAD	CASE, ARLOW & DORIS		181						
412-0-2	33 SHEPARD ROAD	COACH, JOSEPH P. JR		39						
408-0-12	2 BEULAH LAND ROAD	COOPER, BRUCE		34.75						
415-0-5	146 OTIS STAGE ROAD	COSTELLO, ROBERT & MAUREEN A.		23						
403-0-6.2	54 GIBBS ROAD	FONTAINE, ROBERT J		559						
414-0-4.1	39 HERRICK ROAD	GATES, EILEEN		9						
421-0-54	1 BEAGLE CLUB ROAD REAR	GEARY, NEIL		18.93						
407-0-1	124 CHESTER ROAD	GLINIAK, HENRY C		63						
421-0-34.1	55 WORONOCO ROAD	HOPSON, DAVID B.		60.54						
408-0-19.1	8 CHESTER ROAD	MARTIN, LLOYD JAMES		37.03						
409-0-24	17 GORE ROAD	MILLER, CHARLES AND DALE		61					R	
402-0-33	24 SHEPARD ROAD	OTTEN, RUSSELL J.		158					AG	
402-0-31	SHEPARD ROAD			17						
421-0-34.9	45 WORONOCO ROAD	OUELLETTE, GEORGE L.		11.15						
422-0-9.22	3 SOUTH ST	PATRUNO, ANDREA		20.16						
413-0-5	BEECH HILL ROAD	RIPLEY, LEON K.		15.1						
413-0-8	BEECH HILL ROAD	RIPLEY, LEON K.	P	30.4	Ch. 61-A (Mixed Use)	Unknown	Low	X	AG	L
409-0-43.12	12 GEORGE MILLARD ROAD	STETZ, JOSEPH		48.3						
402-0-16	270 OTIS STAGE ROAD	STEVENS, DAVID		117.64						
402-0-6	GIBBS ROAD	TEMPLEMAN, JAMES G.		26.93						
406-0-21.1	160 CHESTER ROAD	TERRY, HOWARD P.		218.44						
406-0-16.1	167 CHESTER ROAD	UTZINGER, HENRY A.		13						
410-0-13	25 GEORGE MILLARD ROAD	VAN WERKHOOVEN, LINDA S. AND ANTHONY TRUSTEES		269						

**Table 11: Privately Owned Chapter 61-B (Open Space and Recreation)**

Map Parcel ID	Parcel Name	Owner (Manager)	Owner Type	Size (Acres)	Current Use	Condition	Recreation Potential	Public Access	Zoning	Level of Protection
413-0-1	BEECH HILL ROAD	BECKMAN SUSAN A.	P	92	Ch. 61-B	Unknown	Moderate	X	AG	L
105-0-1	NORTH STREET	THE BLANDFORD CLUB		9.04		Open, nine-hole golf & country club		L	R	
105-0-3	NORTH STREET			15					R	
105-0-4	NORTH STREET (REAR)			15					R	
105-0-16	NORTH STREET			26.6					R	
416-0-16	NYE BROOK ROAD	BLANDFORD PROPERTIES LLC		10.5		Closed ski resort	High	X	AG	
422-0-10	SOUTH ST	GIRARD GREGOIRE		11.7		Unknown	Moderate			
422-0-15.1	CROOKS ROAD			27						
422-0-13	CROOKS ROAD			2						
402-0-1	OTIS STAGE ROAD	HITT JOHN J		8.6						
402-0-3.2	GIBBS ROAD			9.89						
103-0-1	NORTH STREET	PINSLEY FAMILY TRUST		13						
402-0-36.3	OTIS STAGE ROAD	VEPRAUSKAS, JOANNA M.		24.75						

**Table 11a: Privately Owned Chapter 61-B "Mixed Use"**

Map Parcel ID	Parcel Name	Owner (Manager)	Owner Type	Size (Acres)	Current Use	Condition	Recreation Potential	Public Access	Zoning	Level of Protection	
406-0-5	CHESTER ROAD	BAILLARGEON, LOUIS J	P	20	Ch. 61-B (Mixed Use)	Unknown	Moderate	X	AG	L	
416-0-22	39 NYE BROOK ROAD	BARNARD, RICHARD C. SR. TRUSTEE		66							Open, nine-hole golf & country club
105-0-2	17 NORTH STREET	THE BLANDFORD CLUB		12.6		Closed ski resort			Moderate		
416-0-23	BLANDFORD SKI RESORT (FORMER)	BLANDFORD PROPERTIES LLC		132		Unknown	Moderate				
421-0-56.11	BEAGLE CLUB ROAD	BLOOD, BRENDA: HOWE, DONNA		40.51							
402-0-24	3 SHEPARD ROAD	BOCON, JOHN M.		16							
421-0-34.7	41 WORONOCO ROAD	CARRINGTON, JOHN		10.3							

116-0-8	WORONOCO ROAD	DEVENO, THOMAS JR.		12.35						
422-0-15.2	15 CROOKS ROAD	GIRARD, GREGOIRE		8.9						
421-0-61	8 BEAGLE CLUB ROAD	HEETER, JARED L.		8.89						
421-0-57	6 BEAGLE CLUB ROAD	HOWE, DAVID W.		12.79						
413-0-11	51 BEECH HILL ROAD	JEMIOLO, STEPHEN M.		37						
402-0-41	245 OTIS STAGE ROAD	LAPLANTE, EDWARD J.		33						
116-0-11	25 WORONOCO ROAD	MIKUSKI, WILLIAM A.		20.08						
404-0-2.12	NORTH BLANDFORD RD	NOWAK, JOHN E.		68.41						
102-0-17	45 NORTH STREET	PINSLEY FAMILY TRUST		204.2						
422-0-61	25 SOUTH ST	STEBBINS, DENNIS		17.39						
420-0-9	NYE BROOK ROAD	TAUDEL, JOSEPHINE		37.5						
420-0-8	32 NYE BROOK ROAD			114						
402-0-7	GIBBS ROAD	TEMPLEMAN, JAMES G. AND RITA		15						
402-0-5.1	GIBBS ROAD			94						
402-0-3.1	GIBBS ROAD			22.43						
421-0-58	4 BEAGLE CLUB ROAD	TODESCO, GAVIN B		13						
403-0-1.1	39 GIBBS ROAD	VENNE, JOHN A		111						
406-0-20	168 CHESTER ROAD	WERTELET 2010 REVOCABLE TRUST		143						

## Section 6: Community Vision

### A. Description of Process

In 2020, the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) was contracted to complete Blandford's first Master Plan, entitled the Resilient Master Plan (RMP), and simultaneously update the Town's 2003 Open Space and Recreation Plan. PVPC subsequently hired Wildscape Design, LLC., a Vermont-based landscape design and planning firm, to author the final draft of the OSRP, with mapping and GIS analysis completed by PVPC. The RMP planning process and the update to the OSRP ran concurrently within the Town; to make community engagement more straightforward for the Town's residents, some of the community engagement processes were combined, such as the Community Survey. The Open Space and Natural Resources section of the RMP substantially overlaps with this OSRP update, and both plans are meant to complement each other and support Blandford's vision and goals.

As part of the development of the Resilient Master Plan, PVPC and Barrett Planning Group initiated a community survey. The survey results are included in full in Appendix (X). Many of the questions were tailored toward both the RMP's section on Open Space and Natural Resources, and the OSRP. 170 residents responded to the survey, representing a roughly 14 percent sample size of the Town's population.

Beginning in November of 2020, PVPC and Barrett Planning Group began hosting a series of workshops and visioning sessions as part of the Resilient Master Planning process, to define a Vision and Mission Statement, and outline preliminary goals for the Town. The full Vision Statement, and Town Mission, as proposed in the RMP are:

#### Vision

Blandford's 2030 Resilient Master Plan continues to honor Blandford's historical roots, small-town charm, and rural beauty while welcoming opportunities for positive change, sustainable growth, and climate change resilience.

#### Mission

We embrace the unique strengths that set Blandford apart, including our sense of community, open space resources, recreational opportunities, level of civic engagement, and dedicated Town staff and volunteers. Through the implementation of this Resilient Master Plan, we will balance planning for the manageable evolution of the Town with protecting all that we treasure about our community and reducing vulnerability of our community to extreme weather events. We will achieve this vision through open dialogue, local and regional partnerships, responsible fiscal management, and the democratic process.

In March of 2021, PVPC and Barrett Planning Group began hosting "focus groups," one of which dovetailed with the OSRP update: The Cultural, Historic, Natural, and Open Space Resources Focus Group. Some highlights presented in this focus group included:

- Residents want White Church, fairgrounds, open space, and rural character preserved.
- *Blandford Walks* map was well-received as a resource for recreation activity.
- Springfield Water and Sewer Commission land is highly contentious – the Town should work to reclaim public spaces it was once afforded prior to 9/11.
- Turnpike exit remains contentious, and it will continue to be an issue, but possibly an opportunity.
- More communication between town boards is critical.

- Library and Historical Society’s resources are strong and remain an asset.
- Town doesn’t want to compete with other regional draws but also doesn’t want to be a “cultural wasteland.”

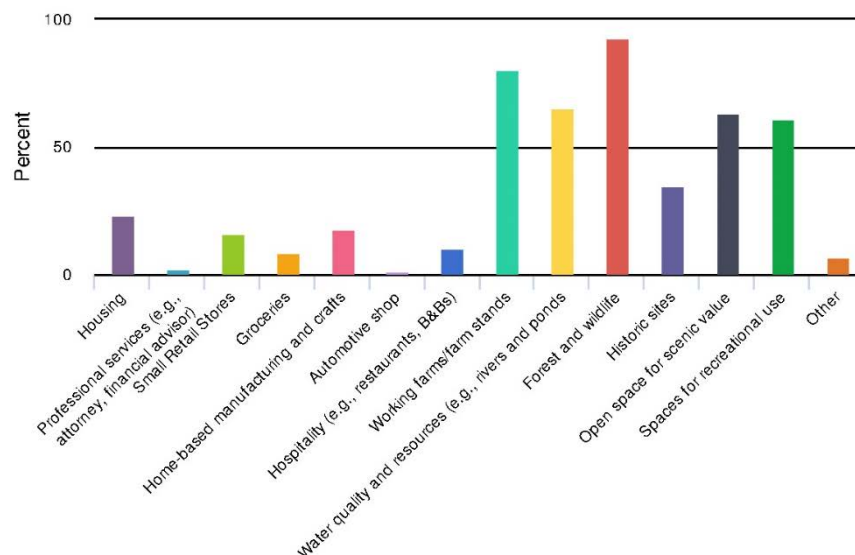
In November of 2020, an OSRP Advisory Committee was formed to assist Wildscape Design in updating the OSRP by providing feedback and guidance on the OSRP draft. The Committee, comprising three members of the Blandford Conservation Commission, the Town Administrator, with assistance from Colleen Doyle, met three separate times throughout the process, culminating with a final meeting on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021 to provide feedback on the final draft. By May 30<sup>th</sup>, PVPC released the final draft report to the public for a public comment period, before submitting the 2021 OSRP Update to the State for approval.

In April of 2021, Wildscape Design and PVCP, with the help of the OSRP Advisory Committee and support from Barrett Planning Group, facilitated an OSRP-specific Community Visioning Session, aimed at identifying open space and recreation needs within Blandford, understanding the community’s perception of existing threats, and setting attainable, actionable goals for the preservation and stewardship of Blandford’s variety of open space resources. The meeting, held virtually due to COVID-19 travel and gathering size restrictions, was attended by roughly seventeen residents, and included polling activities for both the previous OSRP’s “Wishlist items,” and each proposed goal and accompanying objectives, and included smaller breakout sessions where residents discussed possible actions the Town might take to work towards each goal’s objectives. Finally, the proposed OSRP goals and objectives were posted for public comment—for two weeks following the meeting—on the Town’s website, Facebook groups, and mailing lists.

## B. Community Survey Summary

For Blandford’s residents, open space ranks as the second-most important reason people choose to live here, following closely behind its small-town atmosphere—a character due in part to its natural setting—which ranks as number one. When asked to rank their “top five land uses,” Blandford residents overwhelmingly chose “forests and wildlife,” “working farms/farm stands,” “water quality and resources (e.g., rivers and ponds),” “open space and scenic value,” and “spaces for recreational use.” Forests, farms, surface waters, scenic open space, and outdoor recreation; clearly, Blandford’s residents place a high premium on preserving the quantity and quality of local open space and natural resources.

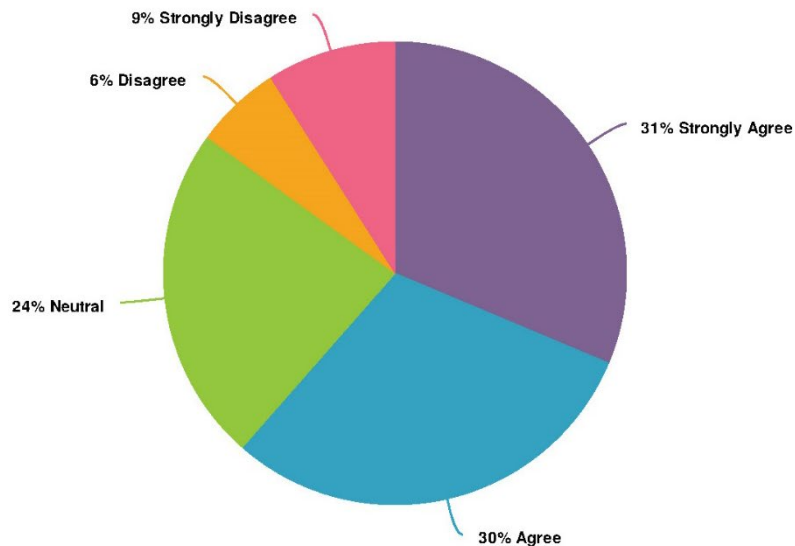
2. Please choose the TOP FIVE land uses you view as important.  
(Additional items can be added under “Other”)





61 percent of Blandford respondents also agreed with the broad statement that the Town should “prioritize energy efficiency, reducing emissions, and responding to the impacts of climate change.” Considering the previous OSRP update did not mention climate change as a threat to Blandford in the context of open space and natural resources, this question is a testament to the growing need, and urgency, for municipalities, regions, and nations to address climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies through their planning efforts.

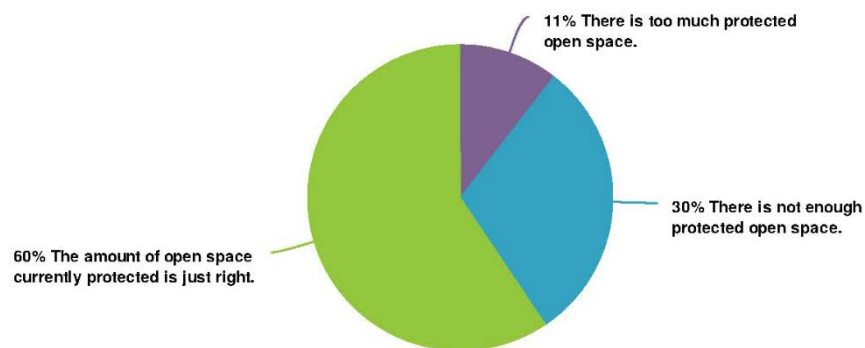
4. The Town should prioritize energy efficiency, reducing emissions, and responding to the impacts of climate change



When asked “what type of strategies should the Town adopt to address future growth?” 80.5 percent of respondents supported adopting zoning to protect agricultural lands, 74.2 percent supported continuing to educate landowners about options for permanently protecting land and preserving open space in perpetuity (e.g., through a conservation restriction, not Chapter 61), and 69.9 percent supported creating new active recreational resources such as horseback riding trails, etc. Interestingly, 76 percent of respondents opposed adopting zoning for high density development, and (similarly) 57.6 percent opposed adopting clustered homes development zoning bylaws. These types of housing and zoning conversations present a host of complicated and often conflicting concerns from residents, but thoughtful and community-driven land use planning and policy is a vital tool for smaller, rural communities to maintain agency and control in the face of ongoing pressure to develop.

Nearly 88 percent of Blandford is forested—according to 2016 Land Cover data—and taking into consideration Blandford’s additional pastures and cultivated agricultural land, its grasslands, its wetlands of all types, and its surface waters, a whopping 96.8 percent of Blandford’s land cover remains in a relatively “natural” state. Roughly 46 percent of that land in a natural state is protected in perpetuity through conservation restrictions, watershed protection, or a similar form of legal protection. When asked how they felt about the protection of open space in Blandford, 59 percent of residents felt that the amount of open space currently protected was just right; another 30 percent felt there is not enough protected open space, and the remaining 11 percent felt that there is too much protected open space.

33. Choose the statement that most closely reflects how you feel about the protection of open space in Blandford.



Protecting open space in perpetuity is vital to maintaining the character of rural communities in the face of development pressures and changes in land use, and it also permanently safeguards essential ecological processes. Protected open spaces also generate very little tax revenue for Towns—and in Blandford, 30 percent of that protected open space is owned by the Springfield Water Department and off-limits to residents—it is easy to understand why opinions on open space protection may differ in Town. But protected open spaces, especially lands for passive recreation and conservation, also cost little to maintain; on the other hand, residential development is often touted to reduce tax rates by adding to the tax base, but the costs of development may be underplayed or overlooked. Public costs, such as educating children, constructing and maintaining new water and sewage facilities and roads, providing public safety services, and administering local governance all increase with new development (Caputo, 1979).

### C. Statement of Open Space & Recreation Goals

In addition to the RMP’s Vision and Mission statements, outlined in the Description of the Process section of this chapter, the RMP’s Open Space and Natural Resources Section also includes goals which may be appropriately adapted into the OSRP update, including:

- Conserve our flora and fauna.
- Make sustainable land use and preservation decisions that support housing and transportation in harmony with open space and natural resources.
- Increase cultural, agricultural, commercial, and entertainment options particularly our cottage and home-based industries.

- Enhance our Town Common to promote a sense of place.
- Plan for climate change resiliency that enable us to respond to and recuperate from extreme climate events.
- Remove barriers for our disabled community members.
- Ensure that our community is welcoming, accessible, and inclusive to all.

On March 30th, 2021, residents met for the OSRP Community Engagement Session—held virtually due to COVID-19 travel and gathering size restrictions—where they provided feedback on newly proposed open space and recreation goals, as developed by Wildscape Design and the OSRP Advisory Committee, and proposed attainable objectives to be outlined in Section Nine – Seven-Year Action Plan. The Open Space and Recreation Goals include:

**Goal One: Preserve and Protect**

Preserve Blandford’s small-town atmosphere and character, while protecting vital water resources, upland buffers, and large blocks of contiguous forests.

**Goal Two: Conserve and Steward**

Conserve and steward Blandford’s mosaic of forests and farms—its working landscapes—for the benefit of all present and future residents, visitors, and wildlife alike.

**Goal Three: Enhance and Expand**

Enhance existing recreational opportunities and access within Blandford, while expanding access to recreational opportunities currently unavailable in town.

## Section 7: Analysis of Needs

### A. Overview

The Blandford Conservation Commission, as well as contributing residents, acknowledge several needs within the Town that relate to open space, recreation, and natural resource conservation. The following Section serves as a systematic examination of what is needed to achieve the community's stated goals of open space preservation and protection, conservation and stewardship, and enhancement and expansion.

Since Blandford's 2004 *Open Space and Recreation Plan*, the role of open space in a changing climate has become more important than ever. Open space must be properly preserved and stewarded to aid in resilience to climate change. This OSRP has aimed to address how changing climatic conditions will affect open space, as well as reflect the Town's desire to better steward its open space resources and maintain its charming rural character, for the benefit future generations. The role of open space in a changing climate is also complicated. Conserved forests and farms help communities to both mitigate climate change—by sequestering carbon—and adapt to the impacts by passively cooling homes, supporting resilient local food systems, and buffering the impacts of severe flooding; however, the nationwide push to quickly transition to renewable energy systems drives one of the greatest emerging threats to New England's forested and agricultural landscapes, as megawatt-sized solar fields are installed on prime agricultural and forested lands. Although climate change is a global issue, local conservation efforts are important to both mitigate and adapt to its impacts, as well as guide the development of renewable energy projects—while desperately needed—in a way that protects valuable open space.

Blandford is also a keystone for the preservation of regionally important drinking water resources, but many of the Town's residents feel disconnected and discouraged after decades of being restricted access to the Town's most prized resources—its bountiful and clean surface waters and terrestrial buffers—and condemn the City of Springfield's management of such large tracts of land within the Town. An OSRP is not a rulebook, but an instrument to effect community goals; it establishes the community's aspirations and recommends patterns of development and courses of action that will support them. This OSRP alone will not remedy resident's opposition to the City of Springfield's ownership of 30 percent of the Town's land, but it may provide insight into how to chart a path forward to meet the community's needs for ongoing conservation, stewardship, and improvement of existing open space assets and community character.

### B. Summary of Resource Protection Needs

Blandford boasts an impressive inventory of Outstanding Resource surface waters, a rich landscape of fields, large forests and wetlands, and an abundance of wildlife which all contribute to its beloved rural community character. Blandford is roughly 87 percent forested—the largest forest cover of any town in the Westfield River Watershed—comprising over 1,650 acres of Core Habitat supporting threatened and endangered species, and 23,584 acres of Critical Natural Landscape (*BioMap2*, 2012). Additionally, with over 23,000 acres of Outstanding Resource Waters and 12,000 acres of protected watershed lands, Blandford's natural resources play a critical role in sustaining both regionally vital human needs and critical ecological processes.

The OSRP Advisory Committee and participating community members agree that Blandford should:

- Continue to protect and preserve the quality of Blandford's surface and ground water supply,

- Explore expanding the community's agency as it relates to access and passive recreational opportunity on watershed lands,
- Continue to safeguard the vitality of the Town's farms, woodlands, and wildlands,
- Support the health of Blandford's working landscapes and wildlife habitats.

### C. Summary of Community's Needs

Like many of Massachusetts's rural communities, Blandford attracts and maintains its residents not by offering outstanding school systems or lucrative career opportunities, but by providing the quietness, solitude, and natural setting that urban and even suburban communities lack. People choose to live in Blandford for its small-town character, its expansive natural landscapes, and its generous offering of open space. Blandford's relative lack of primary schools in Town, commerce or industry to provide local job opportunities, and largely (95 percent) owner-occupied housing market all contribute to its population trends: a 36 percent increase (from nine percent in 2010 to 25 percent in 2019) in the population of seniors ages 65 and up, and a corresponding decline in young people and families. Proactive planning, not only around open space, is needed to accommodate an aging population within Blandford; however, the Town should also remain vigilant for opportunities to welcome younger people and families. Open space and recreational resources present great opportunities for improving the quality of life, and enjoyment of one's hometown, for people of all ages and abilities.

Survey results indicate that Blandford provides a wide range of accessible and enjoyable passive recreational opportunities within Town, such as bird/nature watching, walking, snowshoeing, and hunting; however, Blandford's residents also enjoy several activities out of Town because such activities are either unavailable or inconvenient within Town. Such activities include swimming, motorized boating, non-motorized boating, ice skating, and active recreational team sports. These top activities which take place outside town are nearly all water-based, and team playing sports are often associated with school sports or adult intramural leagues, which are all lacking in Blandford. Therefore, Blandford's open spaces offer seasonal, passive recreational opportunity, but lack water-based recreational and active recreational (sports) activities.

Blandford's participating residents and the OSRP Advisory Committee agree that Blandford should:

- Reinforce the Town's wealth of passive recreational activities through improvements and maintenance,
- Ensure areas for passive recreation are adequately accessible, especially around the Town Center,
- Expand access and opportunity for passive, water-based recreational activities, where feasible, within Blandford.

### D. Management Needs, Potential Change of Use

Over 50 percent of Blandford's land area is permanently protected under various forms of protection, from State agency's conservation land and municipally held watershed properties, to private conservation restrictions; conserved land owned by nonprofits or government agencies is typically tax exempt and may only provide payments in lieu of taxes (PILOT), which impacts municipal fiscal health. According to the MA Department of Revenue, PILOT payments account for roughly 6 percent of the Town's revenue (\$284,103 in 2020, which may or may not include PILOT payments from SWSC). Additionally, roughly one-quarter of the remaining privately owned land in Blandford is enrolled in Chapter 61 "current use" tax abatement programs, representing a 116 percent increase in Chaptered lands since the 2003 OSRP update.



Furthermore, while life may seem to move slowly in a small town like Blandford, new types of land use are emerging which may reshape the fabric of its local economy and the character of its landscape. Blandford's hillside fields and forests, once working landscapes characteristic of New England's idyllic setting, have become attractive locations for new natural resource-based businesses such as photovoltaic (PV) solar developments and cannabis growing and processing operations. In the past few years, the Town has seen six proposals for solar developments—three of which are now operational and occupying 173 acres—and two proposals for cannabis facilities, one of which may be permitted in fiscal year 2021. These new land uses, while challenging to consider from a community character and open space conservation perspective, do represent an economic opportunity for the Town. For instance, ground mounted solar arrays occupy only one-half percent (0.5%) of Blandford's land area, yet they generate \$247,459 in estimated PILOT payments (Blandford Board of Assessors, 2020)—nearly the same PILOT revenue as all of Blandford's tax-exempt conservation lands. Additionally, revenues from a 3 percent tax on cannabis profits are estimated at \$800,000 annually (RMP, 2021). These emerging land uses—in conjunction with the installation of broadband, a greater emphasis on rural living and working from home during the pandemic, the potential for a new I-90 exit, and even an east-west rail stop in nearby Chester—all add to the mix of forces bringing about change.

The OSRP Advisory Committee and engaged residents agree that Blandford should work to maintain its most cherished asset: its small-town atmosphere. But economic development and land use changes need not run contrary to that aim; in fact, the top five elements residents want to see more of in Blandford—recreation, musical events, restaurants, neighborhood stores/boutiques, and art in public spaces—all integrate well with small-scale rural economic development and open space conservation. Blandford has an excellent set of existing cultural and recreational assets, documented in the 2017 *Gateway Hilltown Economic Development Strategy*—including its village center (**Figure 1** below) and newly expanded business zoning district, as well as a wealth of passive recreational areas and the dormant Blandford Ski Area—which could be managed toward creating a more robust rural economy, with interconnected outdoor recreational opportunities, while maintaining and even celebrating the small-town sense of place cherished by Blandford's residents. Collaboration with adjacent towns—collectively the Gateway Hilltowns—seems essential to this work.



Figure 1: The Blandford Village Center and all of its related infrastructure and elements. Taken from the Resilient Master Plan, Economic Development Section (2021).

## Section 8: Goals and Objectives

### Overview

With this update of the Open Space and Recreation Plan, the Town of Blandford commits to protecting, stewarding, and enhancing its open space and recreational assets as accessible and publicly beneficial resources to further improve quality of life, maintain ecological health and biodiversity, enhance resiliency to climate change, and connect its community.

The goals and objectives outlined below were informed by an analysis of existing conditions and town planning documents conducted by the Wildscape Design consultant team with support from the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, meetings with—and feedback from—the OSRP Advisory Committee, comments and responses to the Community Survey, and discussions during community meetings and focus groups. Three primary themes emerged through the process of developing this update of the OSRP:

- **Preserve and Protect:** Maintain what Blandford already has regarding its protected open space, pristine surface waters, and cherished community character.
- **Conserve and Steward:** Thoughtfully care for and encourage the ongoing use, or creative reuse, of Blandford’s working landscapes, for the benefit of present and future residents, visitors, and wildlife.
- **Enhance and Expand:** Continue exploring opportunities to improve access to recreational opportunities within Town, expand programming, and fill the gaps in the open space and recreational inventory where appropriate.

Goal One: Preserve Blandford’s small-town atmosphere and character, while protecting vital water resources, upland buffers, and large blocks of contiguous forests.

### Objectives

- 1A. Continue safeguarding the quality and ecological integrity of Blandford’s surface waters, upland stream corridors, riparian areas, and wetlands.
- 1B. Explore ongoing development of the Village Center as a vibrant and walkable community hub, surrounded by a generous interweaving of open space.
- 1C. Identify and protect scenic roadways, historical stone walls, vistas, and roadside trees, while addressing priority maintenance needs which mitigate climate-related hazards.

Goal Two: Conserve and steward Blandford’s mosaic of forests and farms—its working landscapes—for the benefit of all present and future residents, visitors, and wildlife alike.

Objectives

- 2A. Maintain the vitality and support the expansion of Blandford’s remaining working farms.
- 2B. Identify unprotected parcels, including large, intact forests or farmlands, adjacent to existing protected open spaces, whose permanent protection would preserve the quality of water resources, wildlife habitat and corridors, and human recreation; explore tools for permanently protecting such parcels.
- 2C. Encourage forms of zoning for residential development which permanently protect open space, agricultural and forestlands, and other natural resources.

Goal Three: Enhance existing recreational opportunities and access within Blandford, while expanding access to recreational opportunities currently unavailable in town.

Objectives

- 3A. Expand multi-use trail systems and connections to existing trails, parks, and cultural destinations; designate trail uses appropriately based on the proximity to core habitats and critical natural landscapes.
- 3B. Form new—and strengthen existing—partnerships between town boards and committees, and with outside recreational organizations (including surrounding Gateway Hilltowns), to explore new programming opportunities.
- 3C. Continue engaging the City of Springfield on the topic of public access to Cobble Mountain Reservoir, Borden Brook Reservoir, Blair Pond, and other watershed lands.

## Section 9: Seven-Year Action Plan

GOALS - OBJECTIVES - ACTIONS	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	PARTNERSHIPS	RESOURCES
<b>GOAL: PRESERVE &amp; PROTECT -- PRESERVE BLANDFORD'S SMALL-TOWN ATMOSPHERE AND CHARACTER, WHILE PROTECTING VITAL WATER RESOURCES, UPLAND BUFFERS, AND LARGE BLOCKS OF CONTIGUOUS FORESTS.</b>				
<b>Objective 1a: Continue safeguarding the quality and ecological integrity of Blandford's surface waters, upland stream corridors, riparian areas, and wetlands.</b>				
Action (1a1): Ensure strict protection of wetlands and waterways from development encroachments inside of wetland buffer zone.	High	Con Comm	Zoning Board, Planning Board	MA DEP, EPA
Action (1a2): Require adequate vegetated buffers next to wetlands, streams, and rivers to filter stormwater runoff and to allow room for river migration and expansion during heavy storms.	Medium	Con Comm	Zoning Board, Planning Board	EPA BMPs for buffers and filter strips
Action (1a3): Assess stormwater management policies to protect and improve the health of surface and ground waters.	Medium	Highway Dept., Con Comm, TA	Con Comm, PVPC	EPA "Smart Growth Self-Assessment for Rural Communities
Action (1a4): Evaluate the potential for a performance-based stormwater management bylaw.	Medium	TA, Zoning Board	PVPC	
Action (1a5): Explore and consider reduced road salt areas under Town management.	High	Highway Dept., TA	Con Comm, PVPC	
Action (1a6): Educate applicators of roadway snow/ice management products about alternative products to minimize environmental impact, their use, and the equipment associated with their use.	Medium	Highway Dept., TA	MassDOT	DEM, EPA, MVP from EOEEA
Action (1a7): Use technology, green infrastructure, and best management practices to reduce stormwater and pollution	Medium	Highway Dept., TA, Con Comm	PVPC	



GOALS - OBJECTIVES - ACTIONS	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	PARTNERSHIPS	RESOURCES
runoff from roads (especially Gibbs Road) into surface waters.				
Action (1a8): Work with the Town of Otis to ensure Long Pond watershed lands outside of Blandford are adequately protected.	High	Con Comm	Town of Otis Con Comm, PVPC	
<b>Objective 1b: Explore ongoing development of the Village Center as a vibrant and walkable rural community hub, surrounded by a generous interweaving of open space.</b>				
Action (1b1): Pursue a Blandford Center Cultural District zoning designation for the Main Street area around the General Store, Blandford Country Club, and Watson Park.	Medium	Blandford Cultural Council	Blandford Arts Council, Historical Society, Porter Memorial Library, Fair Committee, Blandford General Store & Cafe, Blandford Country Club, Recreation Comm.	
Action (1b2): Incorporate pedestrian friendly and accessible architecture into Watson Park upgrades.	High	Planning Board, Recreation Committee		
Action (1b3): Form a CPA Committee to explore how CPA funds might support Blandford's goals and objectives.	High	Town of Blandford	Community Preservation Coalition, PVPC	
Action (1b4): Consider adopting the Community Preservation Act (CPA) for locally sourced and state-matched funding would help to allow residents to control and support other Action Items.	Medium	CPA Committee*	Community Preservation Coalition, PVPC	PVPC, other towns with CPA, Community Preservation Coalition
Action (1b5): Pursue adoption of a local Complete Streets Policy and identify opportunities to develop a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan as part of the Massachusetts Complete Streets Program.	Medium	TA	Recreation Committee, Planning Board, PVPC	MassDOT Complete Streets Funding Program
Action (1b6): Explore a Site Plan Review Bylaw and coordinate it with Design Guidelines that ensure that development and redevelopment are consistent with the size, scale, and	High	Zoning Board, Planning Board, TA	PVPC	EPA "Smart Growth Self-Assessment for Rural Communities

GOALS - OBJECTIVES - ACTIONS	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	PARTNERSHIPS	RESOURCES
character that the Town is trying to achieve with its buildings				
Action (1b7): Proactively work with developers to develop projects that are a visual asset to the community and promote Blandford's small-town New England rural character.	High	TA, Zoning Board, Planning Board, Selectboard	Historical Commission, Con Comm, PVPC	
<b>Objective 1c: Identify and protect scenic roadways, historical stone walls, vistas, and roadside trees, while addressing priority maintenance needs which mitigate climate-related hazards.</b>				
Action (1c1): Consider applying for scenic roads designation	Low			
Action (1c2): Ensure shade trees and stormwater management are incorporated throughout new designs.	High	Planning Board, TA, Con Comm	PVPC, Recreation Committee	
Action (1c3): Conduct a parcel-by-parcel deed investigation into which Town-owned parks are explicitly protected under Article 97; update deed language to confer explicit protection under Article 97 where it is absent or consider CRs or APRs.	High	Con Comm, TA	Assessor's office, PVPC	MA EOEA "Article 97 Disposition Policy"
Action (1c4): Consider adopting the DRAFT Green Infrastructure & Climate Resilience Policy included in the Blandford Resilient Master Plan	High	Selectboard, TA	TA, RMP Committee, PVPC	
Action (1c5): Work with PVPC through the current Green Communities program funding to develop a net-zero action plan.	High	Town Administrator	RMP Committee	Volunteers, PVPC, DOER funding
<b>GOAL: CONSERVE &amp; STEWARD -- CONSERVE AND STEWARD BLANDFORD'S MOSAIC OF FORESTS AND FARMS—ITS WORKING LANDSCAPES—FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL PRESENT AND FUTURE RESIDENTS, VISITORS, AND WILDLIFE.</b>				
<b>Objective 2a: Maintain the vitality and support the expansion of Blandford's remaining working farms and explore alternative methods to adaptively reuse old farms as open space and recreational resources.</b>				

GOALS - OBJECTIVES - ACTIONS	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	PARTNERSHIPS	RESOURCES
Action (2a1): Formally investigate feasible reuse of Shepard Farm; Apply to the Rural and Small Town Fund for a feasibility study for the best use of the Town-owned Shepard Farm Area.	High	Town of Blandford	Historical Commission, Historical Society, Conservation Comm, Recreation Comm, Friends of Shepard Farm	PVPC, OneStop for Growth (Rural & Small Town Fund), EEA, Preservation MA
Action (2a2): Encourage and promote specialized agricultural activities that create “value-added” products for the wholesale and retail markets.	Medium	Town of Blandford	Healthy Hampshire, local farmers and growers, USDA, American Farmland Trust	
Action (2a3): Reinvigorate existing opportunities for local farmers markets and pop-up mobile markets, such as the Health Hampshire’s “Hilltown Mobile Market.”	High	Town of Blandford	Healthy Hampshire, local farmers and growers, Blandford Council on Aging	<a href="https://www.hilltownmobilemarket.info/">https://www.hilltownmobilemarket.info/</a>
Action (2a4): Map and manage for the removal of aggressive, non-native invasive species in natural areas.	Medium	Con Comm	Planning Board, TA, Town Arborist, Land Trusts	
Action (2a5): Ensure funding for native planting projects and habitat restoration projects, especially on Town-owned parcels.	Medium	Con Comm	Planning Board, TA, Town Arborist, State Forester	
Action (2a6): Continue to explore the feasible reuse of Shepard Farm as a passive recreation asset, including a visitor center, trails, picnicking.	High	Con Comm, TA	Planning Board, Historical Society, Land Trusts	
<b>Objective 2b: Identify unprotected parcels, including large, intact forests and farmlands, adjacent to existing protected open spaces, where permanent protection would preserve the quality of water resources, wildlife habitat and corridors, and human recreation; explore tools for permanently protecting such parcels.</b>				
Action (2b1): Work with current owner/manager of the Blandford Ski Area to plan for adaptive reuse of the property as an open space and recreational resource.	High	Con Comm, TA	PVPC, Ski Blandford	
Action (2b2): Collaborate with conservation groups to develop site-specific management plans for the town’s largest privately owned, intact, forested parcels in proximity to, or	High	Con Comm	Kestrel Land Trust, New England Forestry Foundation, Winding River Land Conservancy,	

GOALS - OBJECTIVES - ACTIONS	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	PARTNERSHIPS	RESOURCES
contiguous with, existing conserved open space.			Wild & Scenic Westfield River Committee	
Action (2b3): Engage private golf club owners in a “handshake agreement,” or memorandum of understanding, to declare intent to sell or convert 6-12 months in advance, to allow for town-wide planning and community engagement.	Low	TA, Con Comm	Blandford Country Club, PVPC	
Action (2b4): Consider parcels for enrollment in the federal Forest Legacy Program, specifically large blocks of contiguous forest which may be vulnerable to changes in land use.	Medium	Con Comm	MA DCR; The Nature Conservancy	(Lindsay Nystrom, Forest Legacy Program Director)
Action (2b5): Explore how the Conservation Commission can expand oversight and monitoring of permitted cutting on private lands to ensure adherence to BMPs, good stewardship, and protection of sensitive habitats.	High	Con Comm	MA DEP, PVPC	MA DCR “Forestry Best Management Practices Manual”
<b>Objective 2c: Encourage forms of zoning for new development which permanently protect open space, agricultural and forestlands, and other natural resources; steward natural areas to promote biodiversity and native species habitat.</b>				
Action (2c1): Consider requiring the planting of native plants in new residential, commercial, or agricultural developments; eschew non-native species with the potential for invasive spread.	High	Con Comm, Planning Board, Selectboard	PVPC, Native Plant Trust, Nasami Farm	The Native Plant Trust
Action (2c2): Ensure new multi-family residential, commercial, and industrial developments adhere to “no net loss” and “net gain” principles, to create new public open space where possible.	Medium	TA, Zoning Board	PVPC	EPA “Smart Growth” initiatives
Action (2c3): Explore permitting mechanisms which require the stabilization and regeneration of degraded habitat (loss of habitat, slope disturbance, etc.) with plant species which support biodiversity, and green infrastructure to limit stormwater impacts, for	High	TA, Zoning Board, Planning Board, Con Comm	Town Arborist, Land Trusts, Town volunteers and action groups	

GOALS - OBJECTIVES - ACTIONS	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	PARTNERSHIPS	RESOURCES
all commercial solar projects; Enforce & monitor said actions.				
<b>GOAL: ENHANCE &amp; EXPAND --ENHANCE EXISTING RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND ACCESS WITHIN BLANDFORD, WHILE EXPANDING ACCESS TO RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES CURRENTLY UNAVAILABLE IN TOWN.</b>				
<b>Objective 3a: Expand multi-use trail systems and connections to existing trails, parks, and cultural destinations; designate trail uses appropriately based on the proximity to core habitats and critical natural landscapes.</b>				
Action (3a1): Expand the Blandford Walks initiative to include other existing trails and trail systems, working towards a Town-wide trails inventory with accompanying maps.	Medium	Town of Blandford	WalkBoston, PVPC	MassDOT Complete Streets Funding Program
Action (3a2): Promote existing trails and maps by posting them on the Town's website, social media, and regional networks.	High	TA, Recreation Committee	PVPC	
Action (3a3): Utilize the results of WalkBoston's Walk Audit to advance improvements to improve pedestrian safety and encourage more pedestrian activity.	Medium	Town of Blandford	WalkBoston, Recreation Committee	WalkBoston Audit
Action (3a4): Improve publicly available bike/pedestrian maps and wayfinding measures.	Medium	Town of Blandford	PVPC, WalkBoston, Hilltown Hikers	
Action (3a5): Increase native plant diversity along trails in areas with significant invasive species.	Medium	Con Comm	Nasami Farm/Native Plant Trust	
Action (3a6): Ensure new trails and paths in conservation areas or near wetlands preserve ecological communities.	High	Con Comm, Planning Board, TA	Recreation Committee, PVPC	
Action (3a7): Create user-friendly and welcoming public open space trails through consistent mapping and signs.	Medium	Con Comm, TA	Recreation Committee	MA SCORP
Action (3a8): Ensure adequate funding for trail maintenance.	Medium	Con Comm, TA	Recreation Committee, PVPC	EOEAA

GOALS - OBJECTIVES - ACTIONS	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	PARTNERSHIPS	RESOURCES
Action (3a9): Provide ADA accessibility where topography allows.	High	Planning Board, TA	Council on Aging	
<b>Objective 3b: Form new—and strengthen existing—partnerships between Town boards and committees, and with outside recreational organizations (including surrounding Gateway Hilltowns), to explore new programming opportunities.</b>				
Action (3b1): Ensure a collaborative relationship with users, volunteer stewards, Friends groups and conservation organizations.	High	Town of Blandford	PVPC,	MA SCORP
Action (3b2): Strengthen coordination between Conservation Commission, community groups, and private landowners to ensure the protection and stewardship of privately held parcels abutting valuable land and water resources.	High	Town of Blandford	RMP Committee, OSRP Advisory Committee, Hilltown Hikers, Healthy Hampshire/Mass in Motion, regional Land Trusts	
Action (3b3): Expand opportunities for institutions and individuals to help care for open spaces through Adopt-A-Space groups and Volunteer Stewards program	Medium	Town of Blandford	Con Comm, Recreation Committee, Historical Commission	MassDOT “Shared Streets and Spaces” Grant Program
Action (3b4): Form an OSRP Review Committee, including the TA, plus one member of each commission (conservation, recreation, planning) to review the OSRP every three years until the next update.	High	TA	OSRP Advisory Committee, Con Comm, Planning Board, Zoning Board, Recreation Committee	MA SCORP, OSRP Workbook
<b>Objective 3c: Continue engaging the City of Springfield on the topic of public access to Cobble Mountain Reservoir, Borden Brook Reservoir, Blair Pond, and other watershed lands.</b>				
Action (3c1): Continue working with to transfer ownership of Cobble Mountain Road, from Route 23 to the Blandford-Russell town line	High	TA, Con Comm, Selectboard	SWSC, MassDOT, EOEA	
Action (3c2): Study ways to compensate the Town for providing and protecting natural resources that are vital to health and prosperity of the region	High	TA, Con Comm, Selectboard	SWSC	



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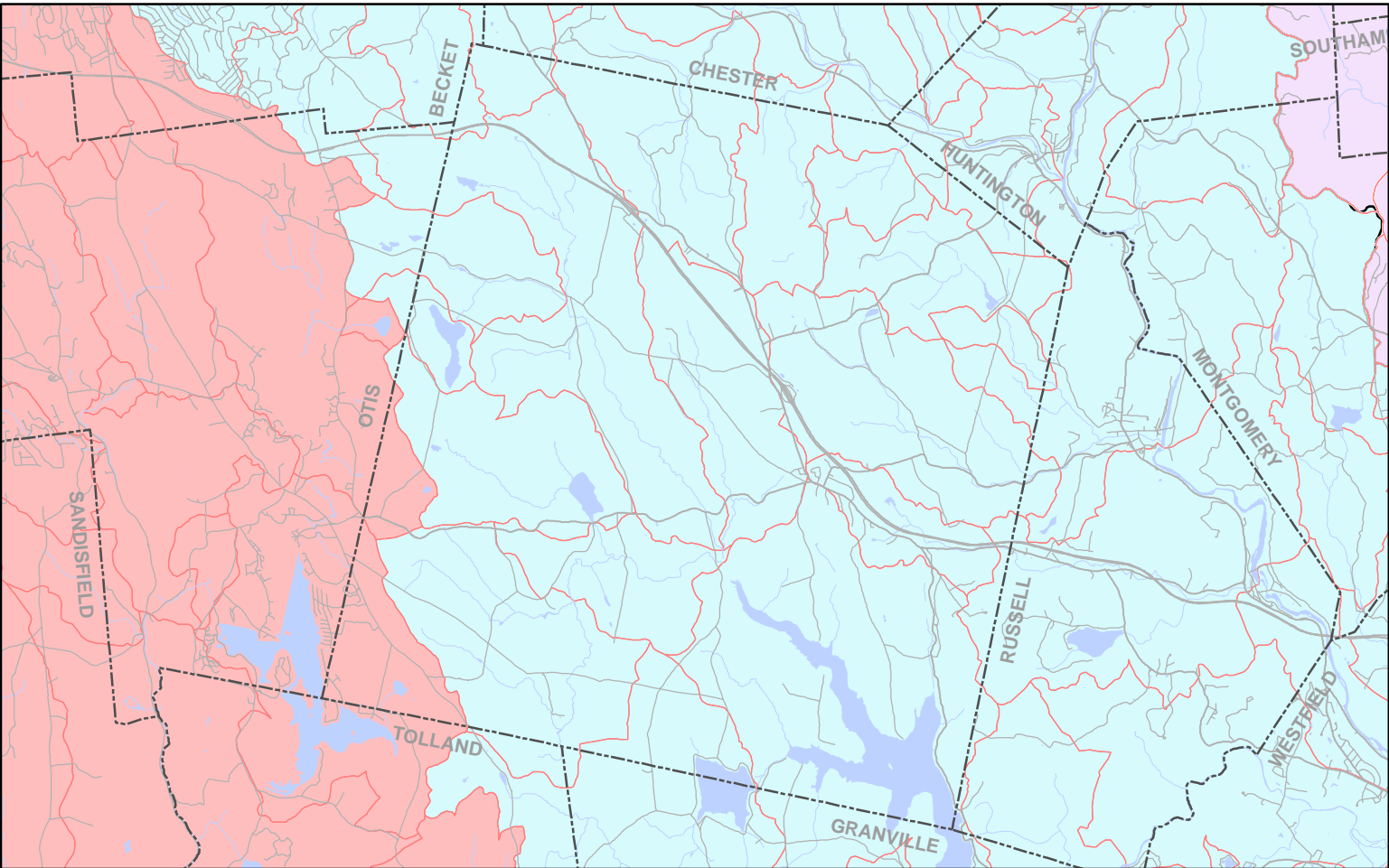
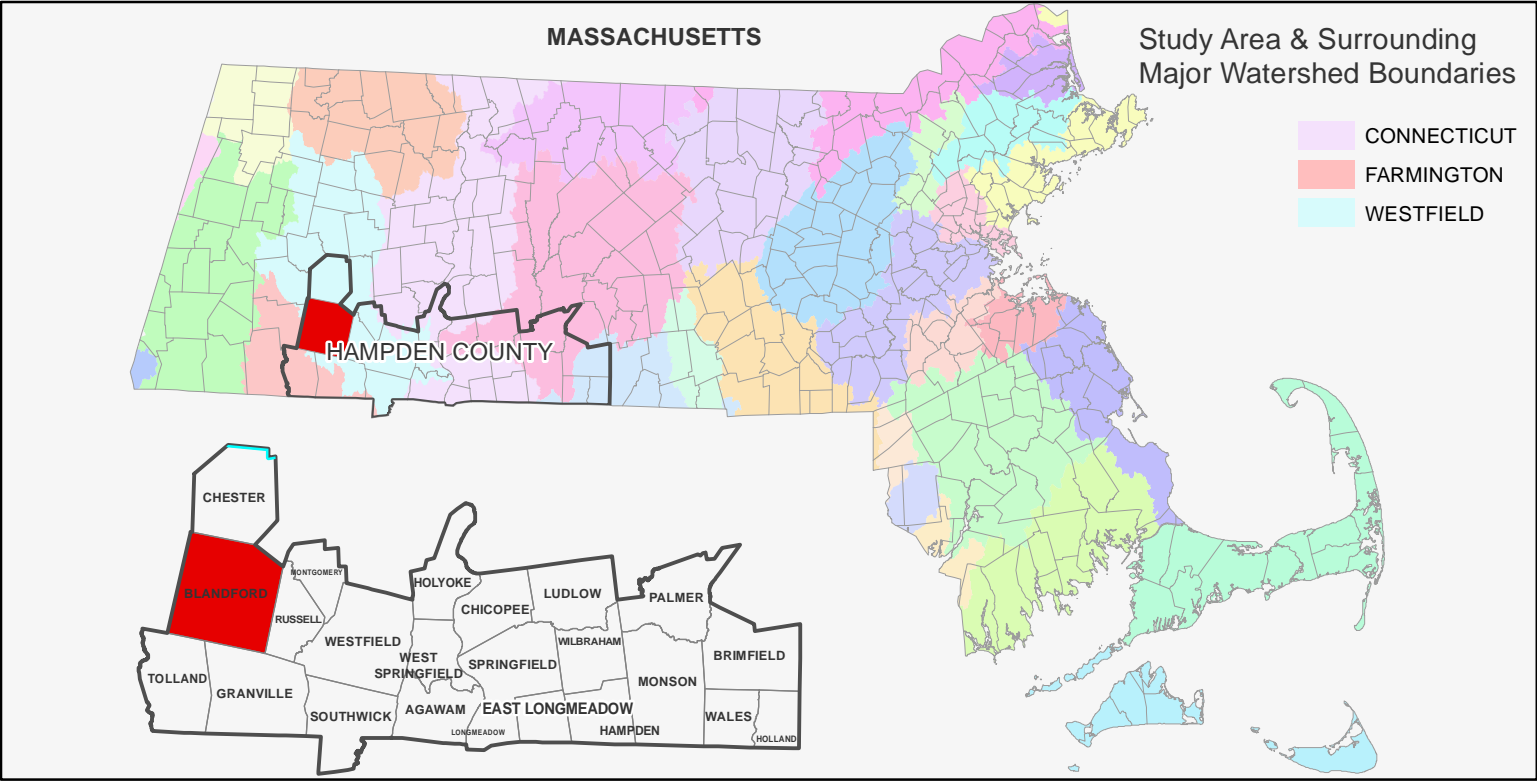
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## Appendix B: Required & Recommended Maps



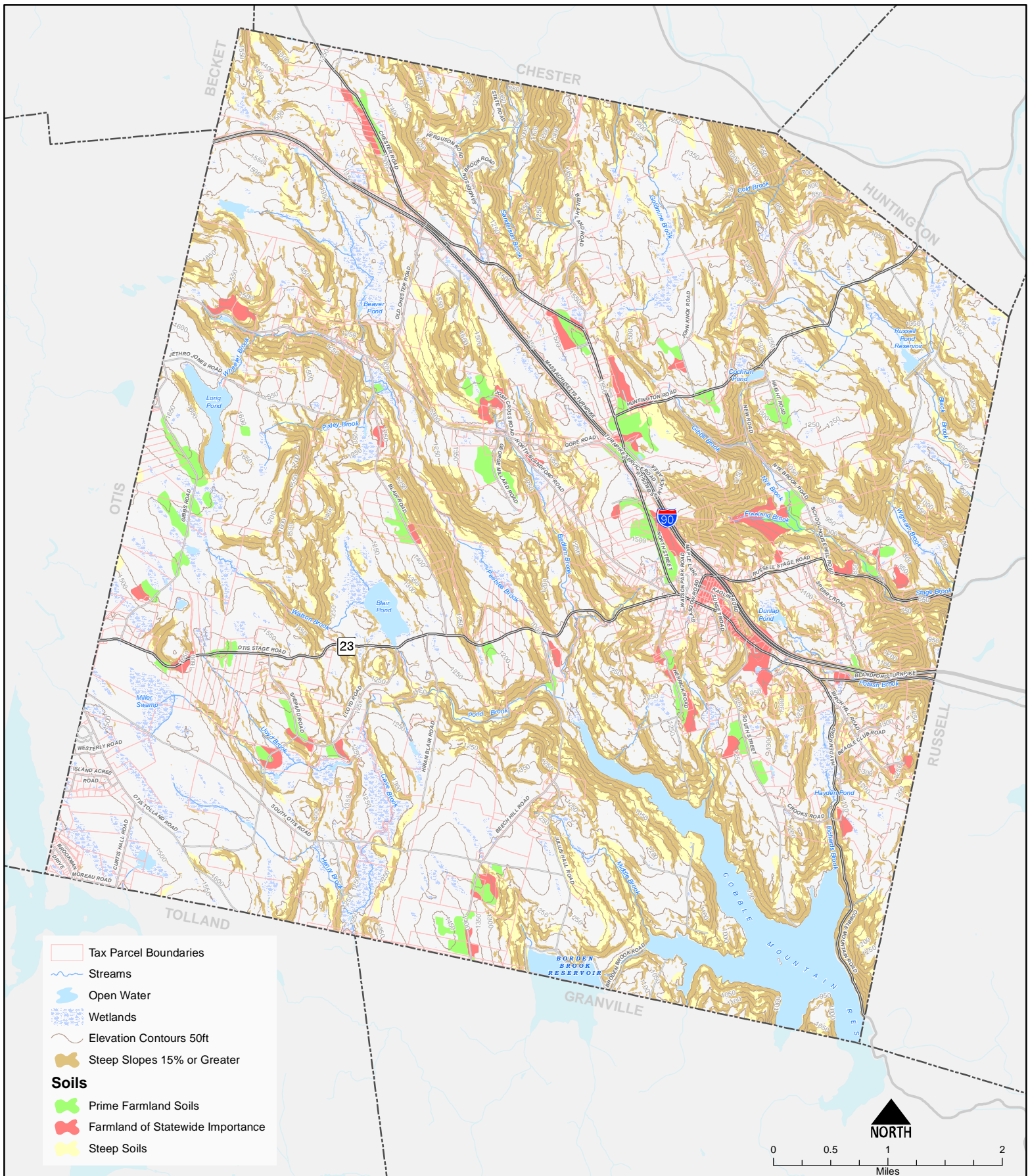


**REGIONAL CONTEXT**  
**2021 Open Space & Recreation Plan**  
**BLANDFORD, MA**



DATA SOURCES:  
MassGIS, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission.  
This map is based on the best available data.  
All information is subject to field verification.





## SOILS & GEOLOGIC FEATURES

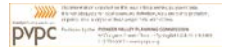
### 2021 Open Space & Recreation Plan

# BLANDFORD, MA

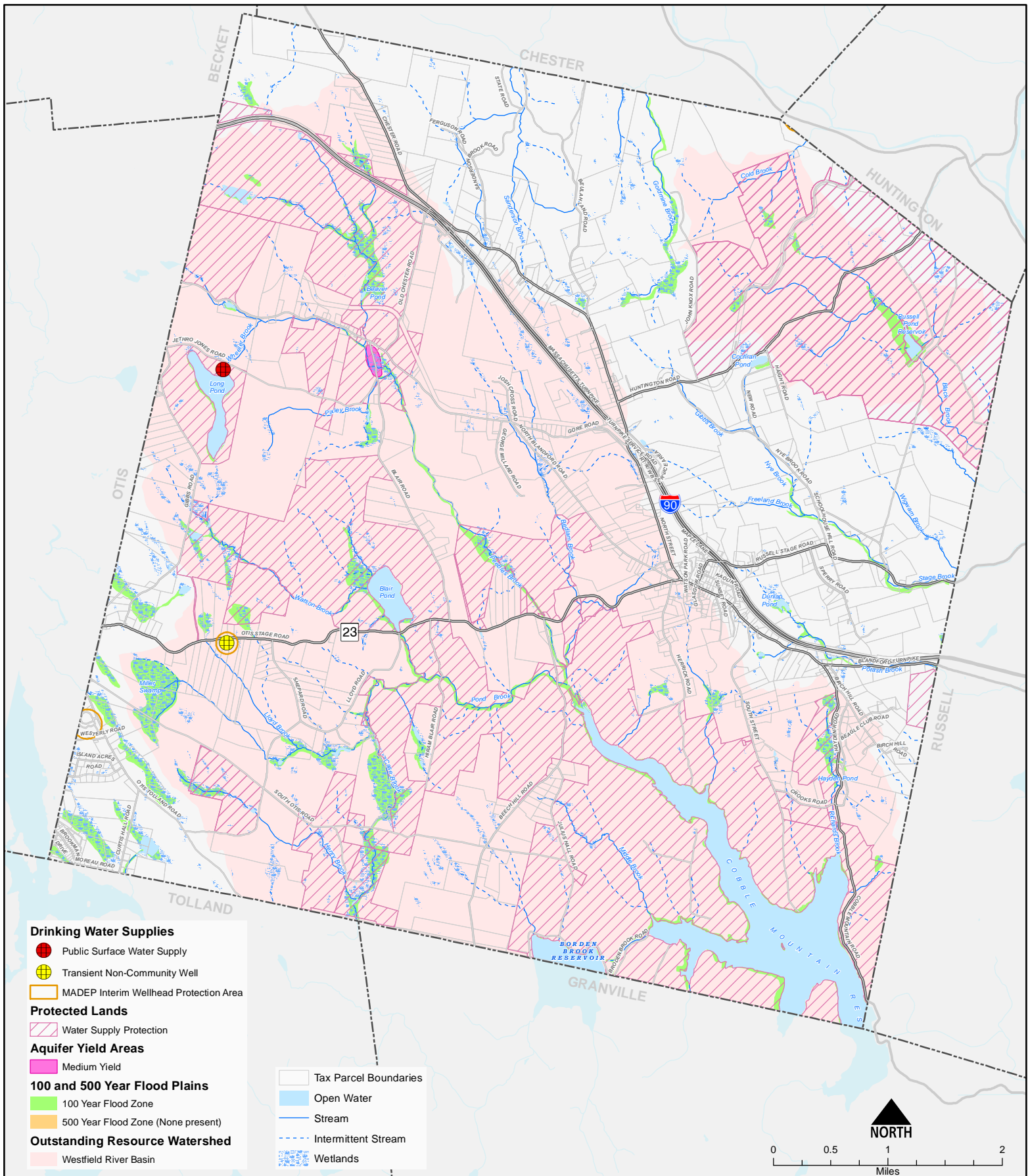
This Soil Survey Geographic (SSURGO) data base was produced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service and cooperating agencies for the Soil Survey of Hampshire County, MA (Central). The soils were mapped at a scale of 1:5,000 with varying acre minimum size delineation. Enlargement of these maps to scales greater than that at which they were originally mapped can cause misunderstanding of the detail of mapping. If enlarged, maps do not show the small areas of contrasting soil that could have been shown at a larger scale. The depicted soil boundaries and interpretations derived from them do not eliminate the need of on-site sampling, testing, and detailed study of specific sites for intensive uses. Thus, this map and its interpretations are intended for planning purposes only. Digital data files are periodically updated. Files are dated, and users are responsible for obtaining the latest version of the data.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service,  
451 West Street, Suite 1, Amherst, MA 01002

**DATA SOURCES:**  
MassGIS, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission.  
This map is based on the best available data.  
All information is subject to field verification.

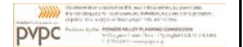


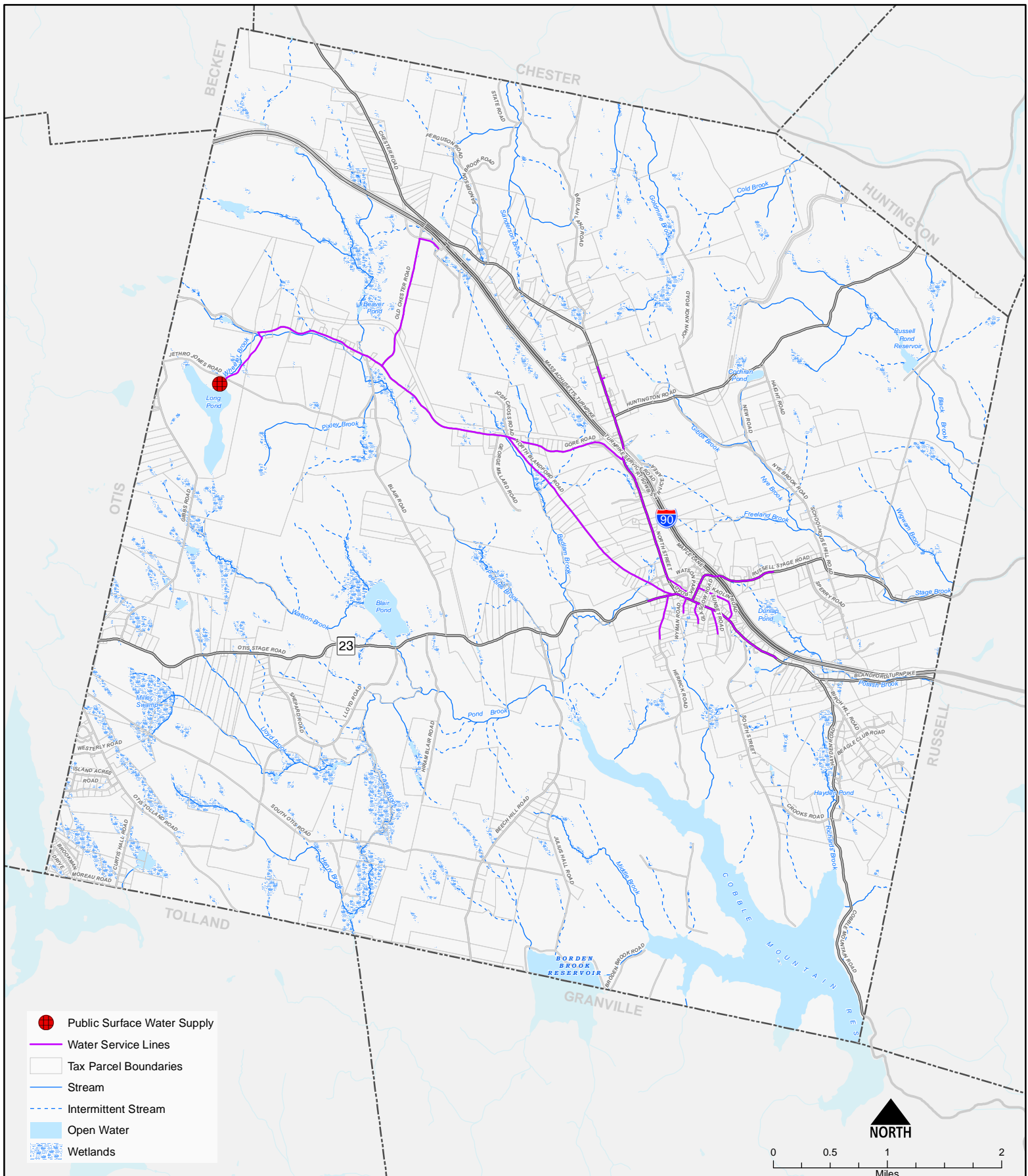




# WATER RESOURCES 2021 Open Space and Recreation Plan **BLANDFORD, MA**

DATA SOURCES:  
MassGIS, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission,  
This map is based on the best available data.  
All information is subject to field verification.





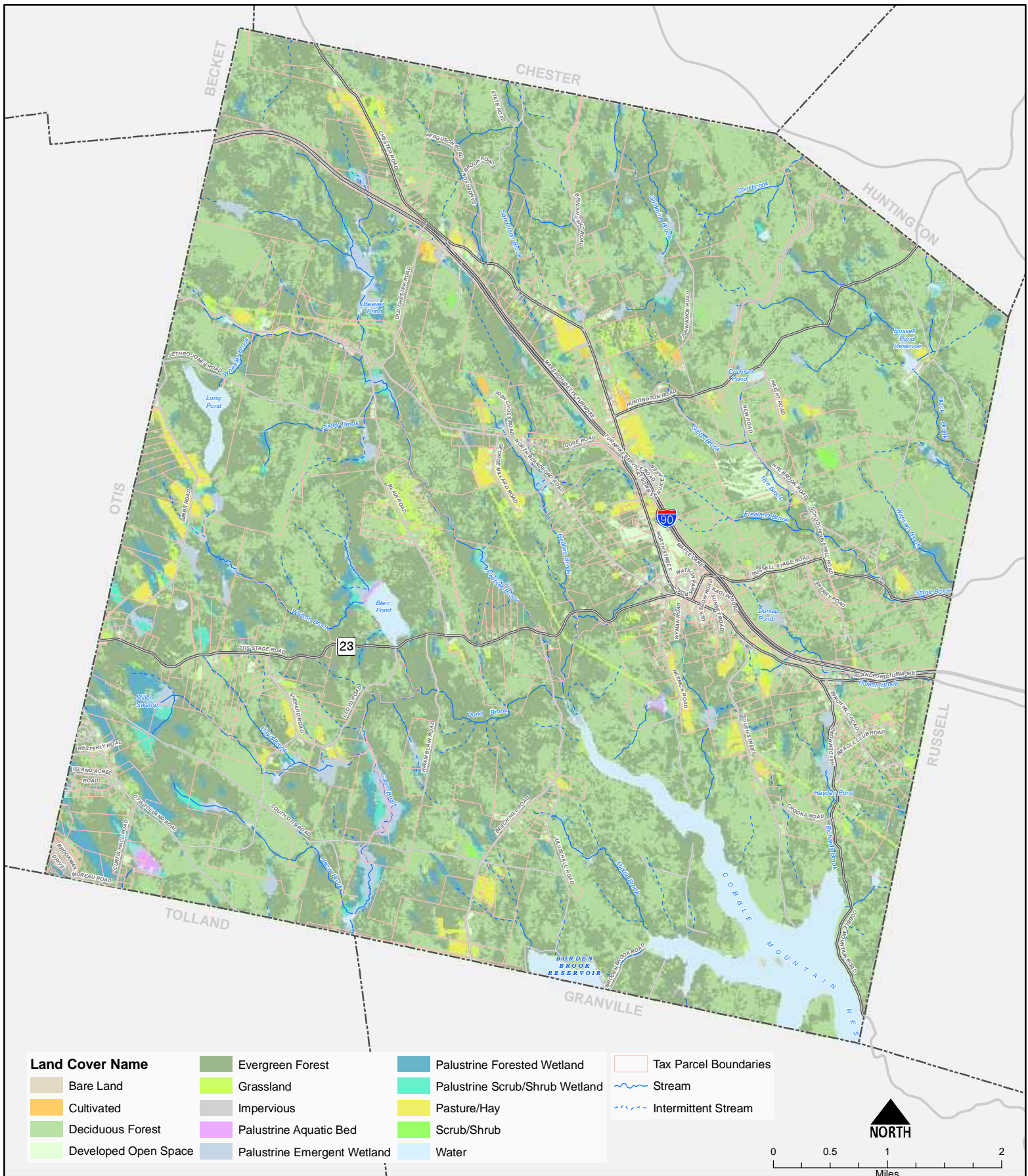
## TOWN INFRASTRUCTURE 2021 Open Space & Recreation Plan

**BLANDFORD, MA**

DATA SOURCES:  
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All information is subject to field verification.

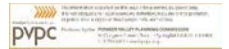




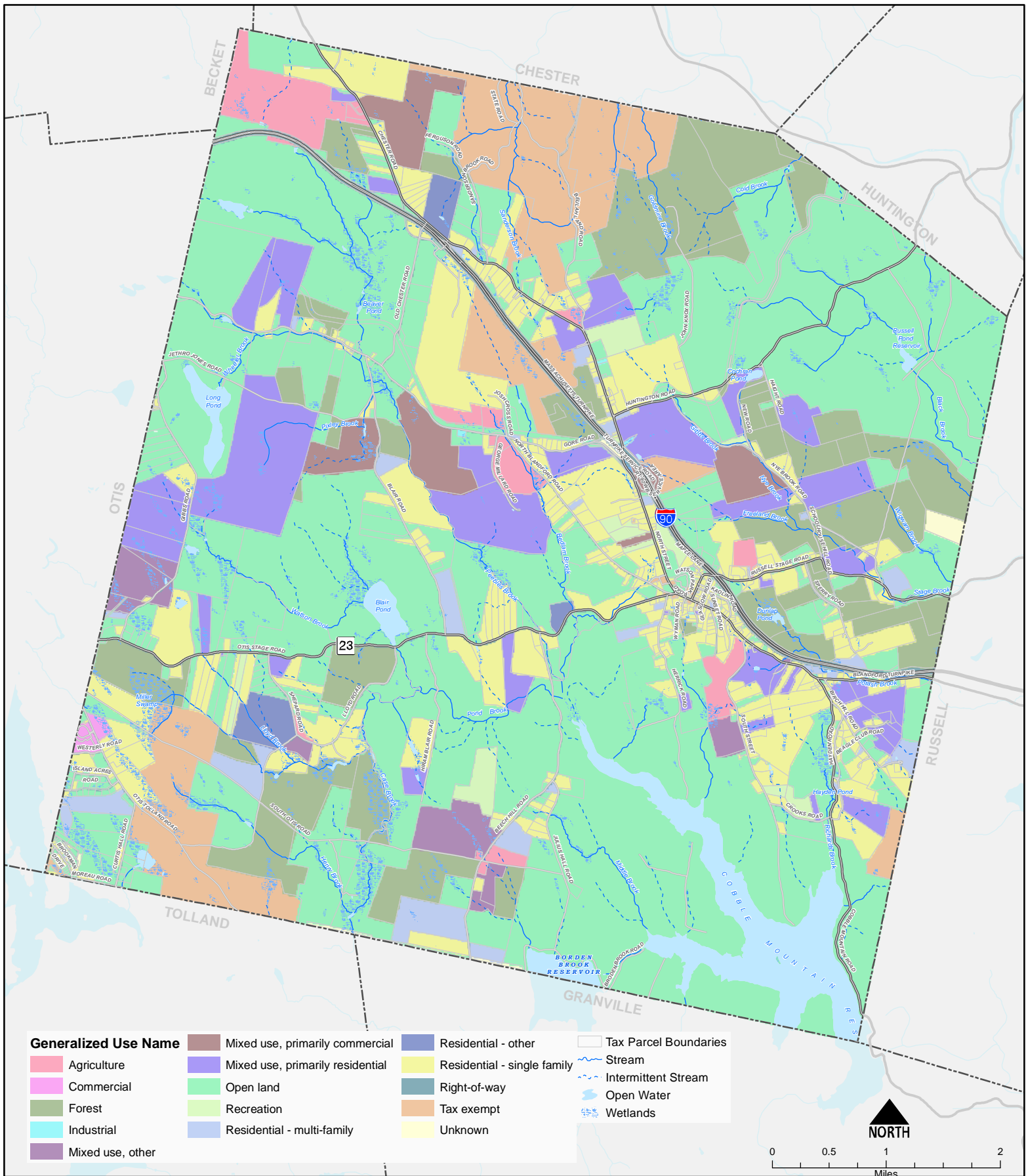


# LAND COVER 2016 2021 Open Space & Recreation Plan **BLANDFORD, MA**

DATA SOURCES:  
MassGIS, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission,  
This map is based on the best available data.  
All information is subject to field verification.



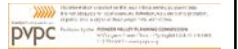




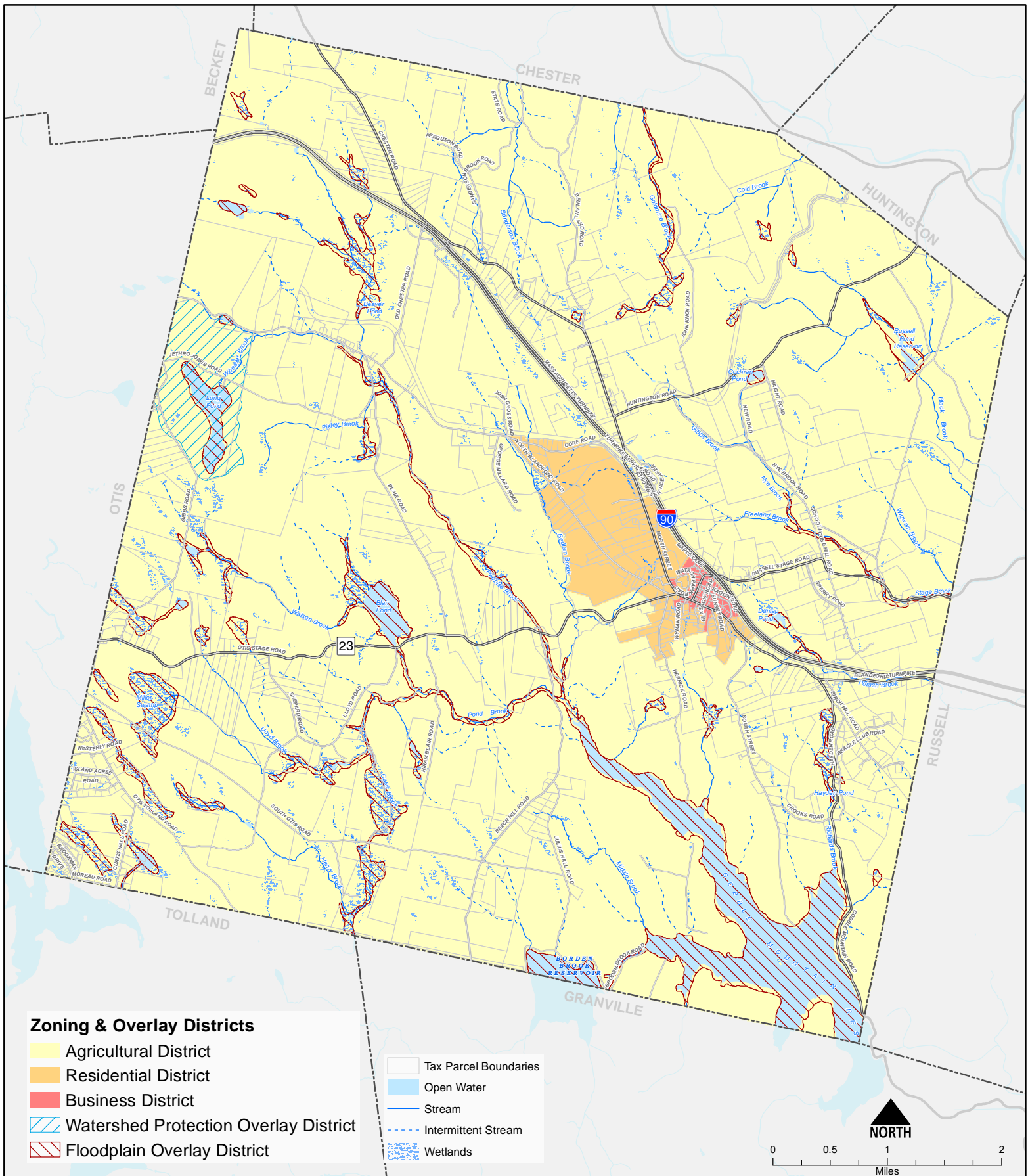
## LAND USE 2016 2021 Open Space & Recreation Plan

**BLANDFORD, MA**

DATA SOURCES:  
MassGIS, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission.  
This map is based on the best available data.  
All information is subject to field verification.







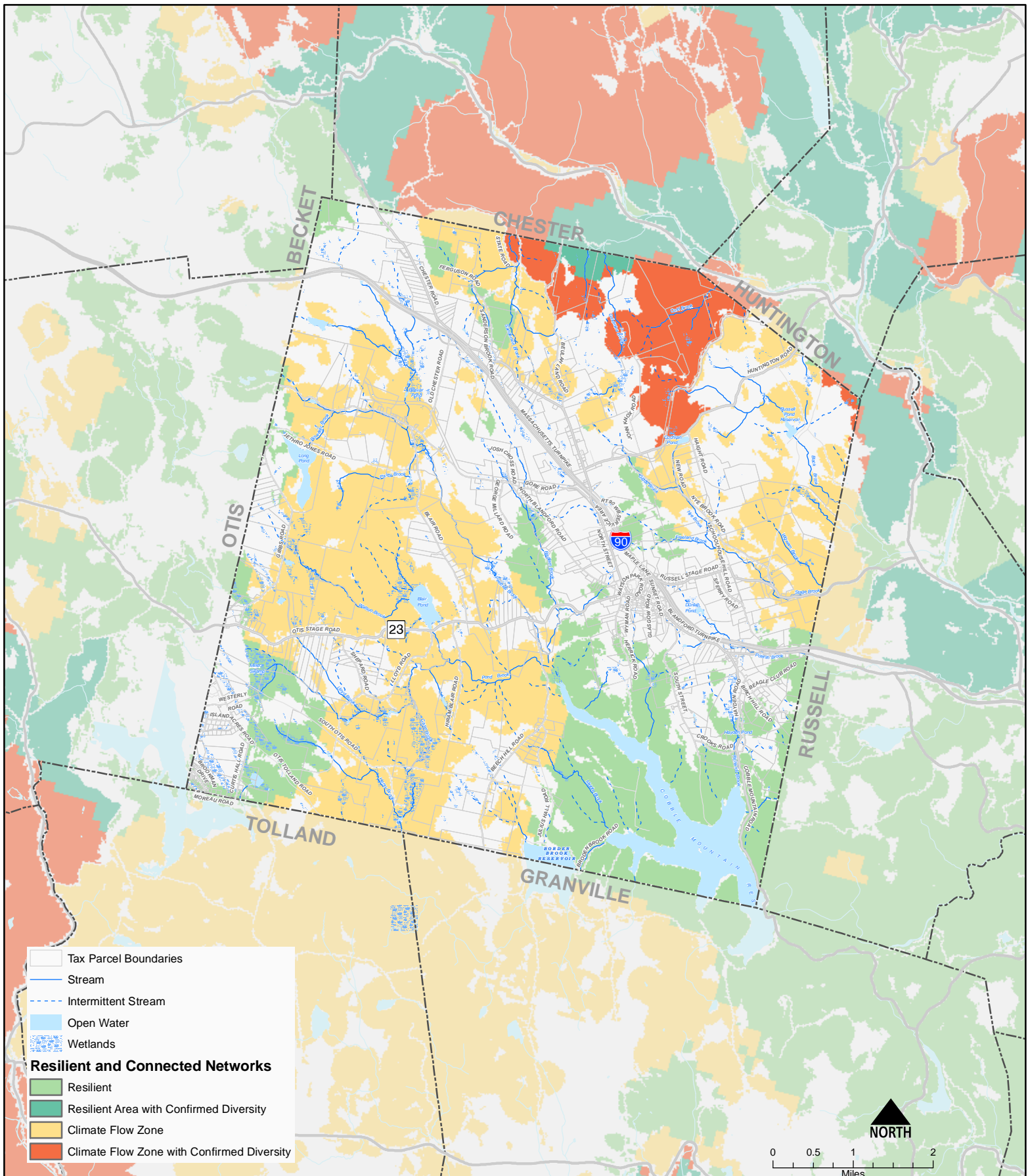
# **ZONING** **2021 Open Space & Recreation Plan** **BLANDFORD, MA**

DATA SOURCES:  
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 This map is based on the best available data.  
 All information is subject to field verification.







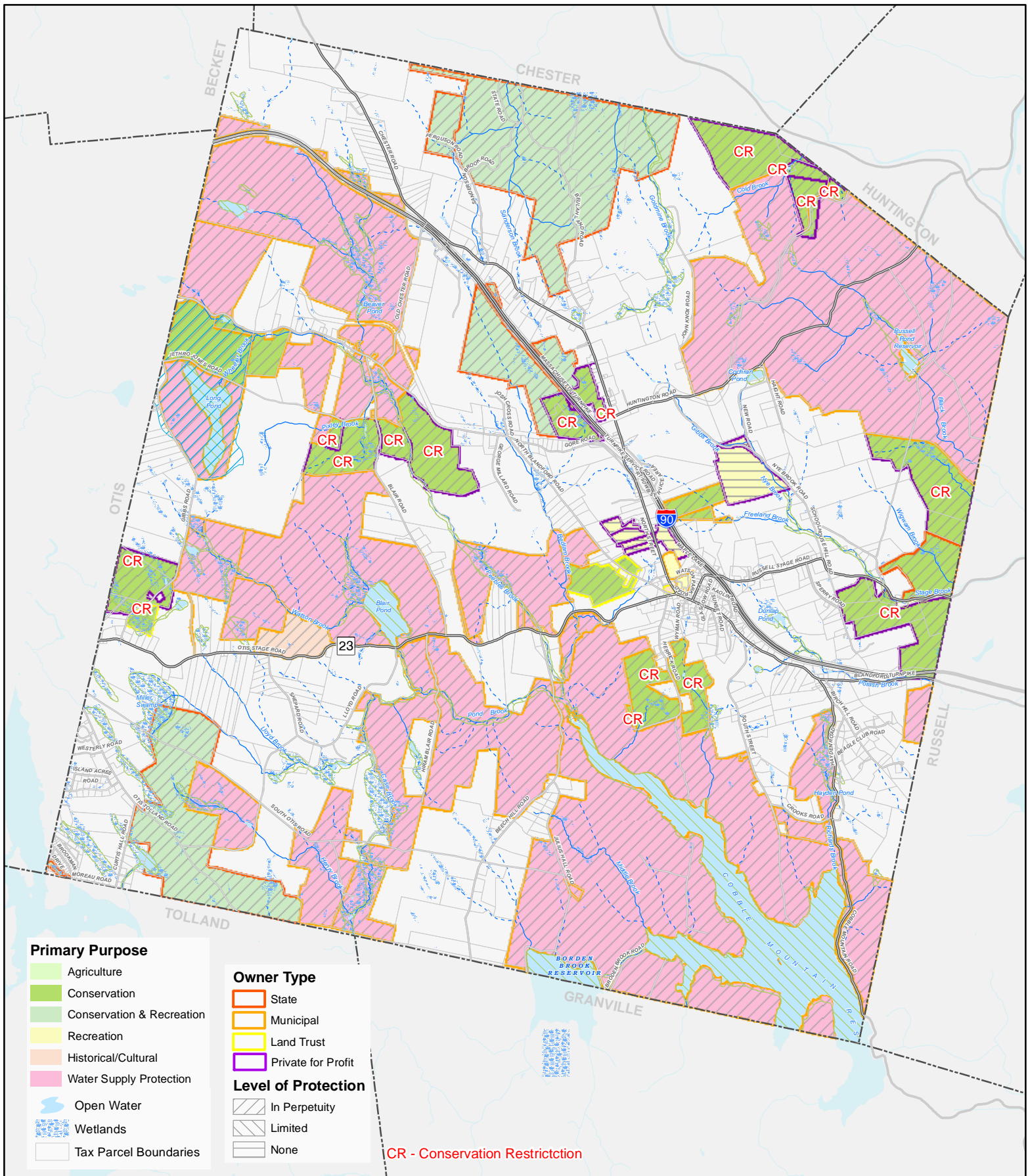


The Nature Conservancy  
Resilient & Connected Landscapes  
2021 Open Space and Recreation Plan

**BLANDFORD, MA**

DATA SOURCES:  
MapGIS, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission,  
The Nature Conservancy.  
This map is based on the best available data.  
All information is subject to field verification.



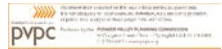


## PROTECTED & RECREATIONAL OPEN SPACE

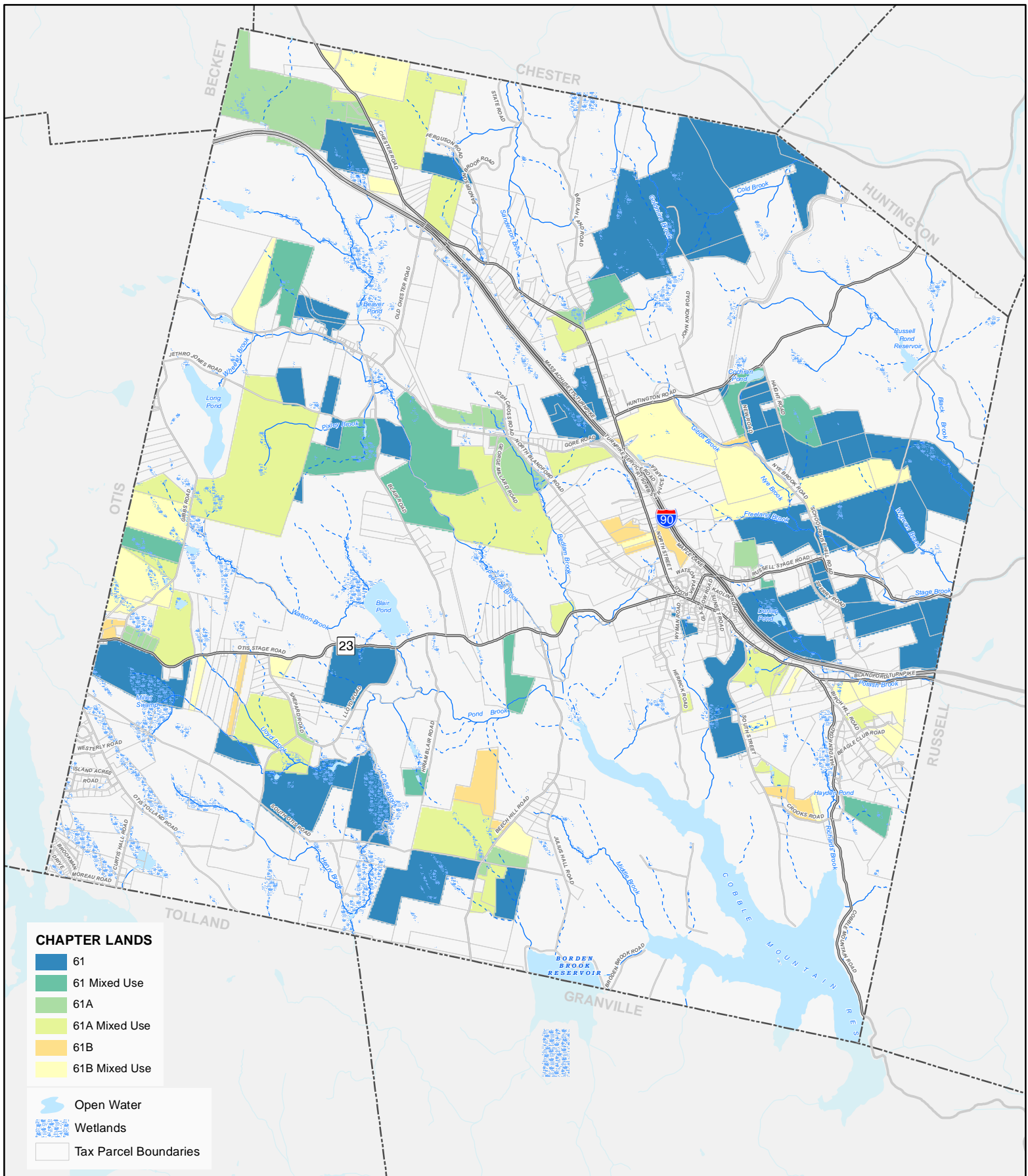
### 2021 Open Space and Recreation Plan

## BLANDFORD, MA

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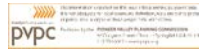




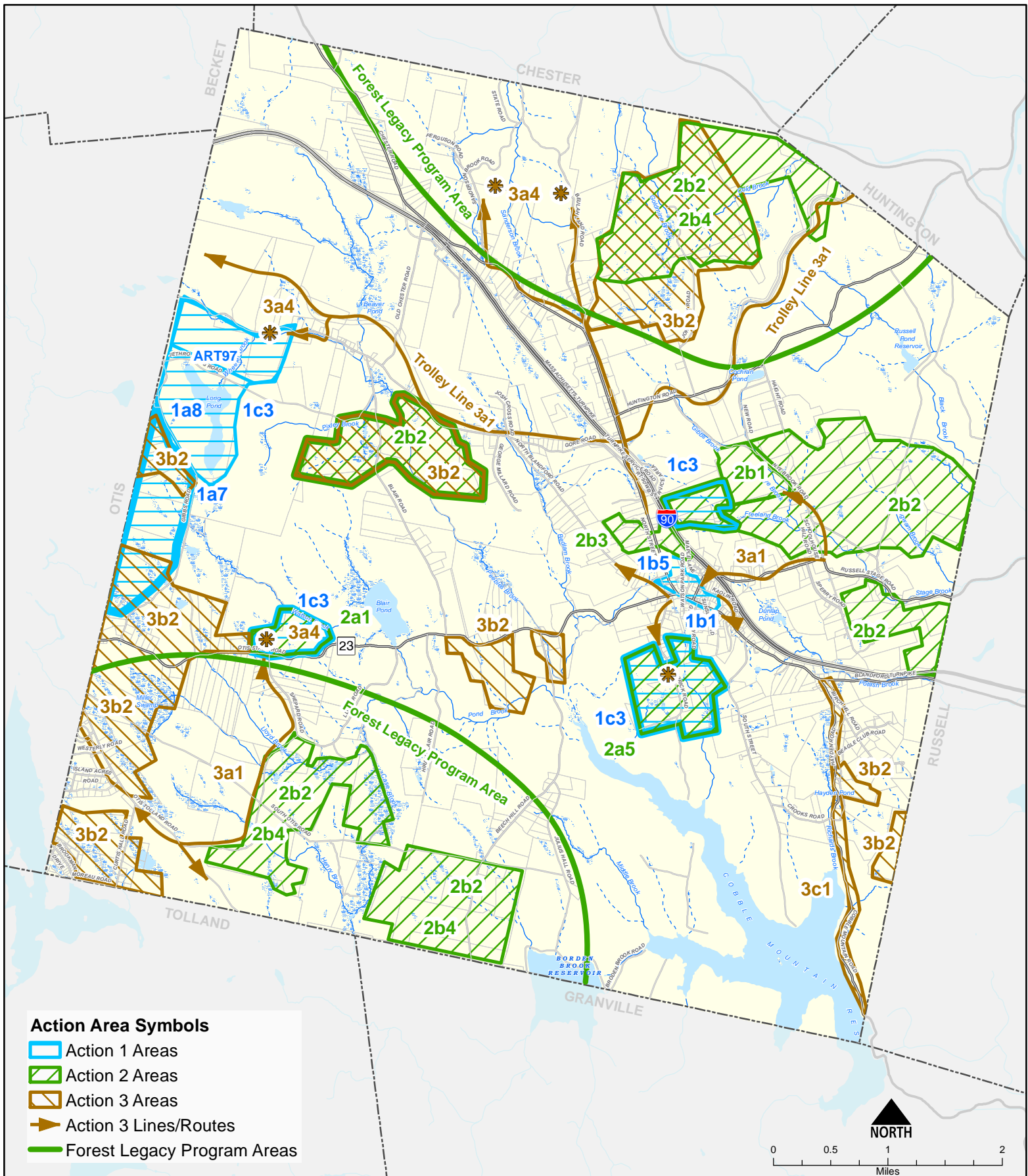


# CHAPTER LANDS 2021 Open Space and Recreation Plan **BLANDFORD, MA**

DATA SOURCES:  
 MassGIS, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission,  
 This map is based on the best available data.  
 All information is subject to field verification.







# ACTION PLAN 2021 Open Space & Recreation Plan **BLANDFORD, MA**

DATA SOURCES:  
MapGIS, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission,  
Wildscape Design, LLC.  
This map is based on the best available data.  
All information is subject to field verification.



## Appendix C: Documentation of Public Engagement

## **Agenda**

### **First OSRP Committee Meeting**

**February 17<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 PM**

*The purpose of this meeting is to introduce the consultant team to the OSRP Committee and vice versa, review the 2004 update of the OSRP and assess progress toward the goals and action plan since then, explore new directions for the latest OSRP update, and schedule future Committee meetings and community visioning events.*

**6:30-6:40:** Introductions

**6:40-6:50:** Overview of 2004 *Open Space and Recreation Plan*

- Purpose
- Goals
- Themes

**6:50-7:10:** Review of Section Nine: Five-Year Action Plan

- 2003 *Community Development Plan*
- Check Action Items as Completed, In-Progress, or Not Started

**7:10-7:20:** Explore suggestions for new directions in the OSRP

- Climate change & open space
- New types of land use (solar fields, zoning districts, multi-family housing, etc.)

**7:20-7:30:** Next steps & wrap up; scheduling Visioning Session.

- Suggested dates: **Between March 29<sup>th</sup> and April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021? TBD during meeting.**

### **Join Zoom Meeting**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81624144289?pwd=d3FSU096dy9hVnFOdVF6cDNXYmtUZz09>

**Dial by your location (for phone):**

+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

Meeting ID: **816 2414 4289**

Passcode: **412822**

## **Agenda**

### **Second OSRP Committee Meeting**

**March 16<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 – 8:00 PM**

*The purpose of this meeting is to review and obtain feedback on the first drafts of the OSRP update, Sections 2 through 6 (Introduction, Community Setting, Environmental Inventory & Analysis, Inventory of Lands, and Community Vision, respectively), discuss an outline of the Community Visioning Session, and schedule future Committee meetings and community visioning event.*

**6:30-6:35:** Welcome. Review notes from previous (02/17/2021) meeting.

**6:35-7:00:** Review and comments, requested revisions on Sections 2 – 4.

**7:00-7:30:** Review and comments, requested revisions on Section 5 (Inventory of Lands).

**7:30-7:45:** Review and comments on Section 6.

**7:45-8:00:** Next steps – outlining community visioning session; scheduling visioning session and last committee meeting.

- Suggested Visioning dates: **Between March 29<sup>th</sup> and April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021?**
- Suggested Final Committee Meeting: **Early May?**

### **Join Zoom Meeting**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86964613082?pwd=aURob2c3b25kZ2JGdktsdndGa2VPdz09>

**Meeting ID:** 869 6461 3082

**Passcode:** 390647

**Dial by your location** +1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

## **Agenda**

### **Third OSRP Committee Meeting**

**May 4<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 – 8:30 PM**

*The final meeting between the OSRP Advisory Committee and the OSRP consultant, Wildscape Design, LLC. The purpose of this meeting is to review and obtain feedback on the second drafts of the OSRP update, and work to fill in the gaps in Section Nine: Seven-Year Action Plan.*

**6:30-6:35:** Welcome. Review notes from Community Visioning Session.

**6:35-7:00:** Review and comments on Section Two through Section Six.

**7:00-7:30:** Review and comments on Sections Seven and Eight.

**7:30-8:15:** Review and comments on Section Nine: Seven-Year Action Plan.

**8:15-8:30:** Closing and next steps.

- Final edits due to PVPC: **May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021.**
- PVPC Public Comment Period: **TBD**
- Final OSRP Update Submitted to State: **June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

### **Join Zoom Meeting**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89305045932?pwd=eVF4NitFVW5lZzFtditUZFFbXfVUT09>

Dial by your location

+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

Meeting ID: 893 0504 5932

Passcode: 170502



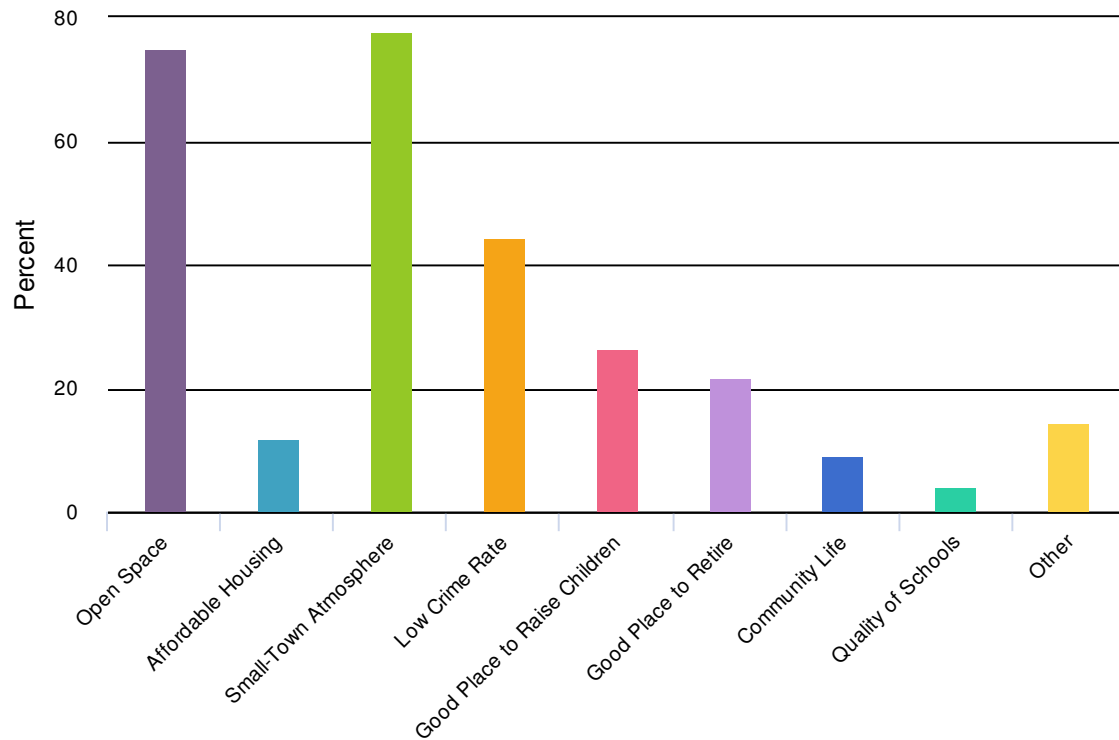
# Report for Blandford Resilient Master Plan Survey










## Response Counts

Completion Rate:	100%	<div></div>	
	Complete	<div></div>	170

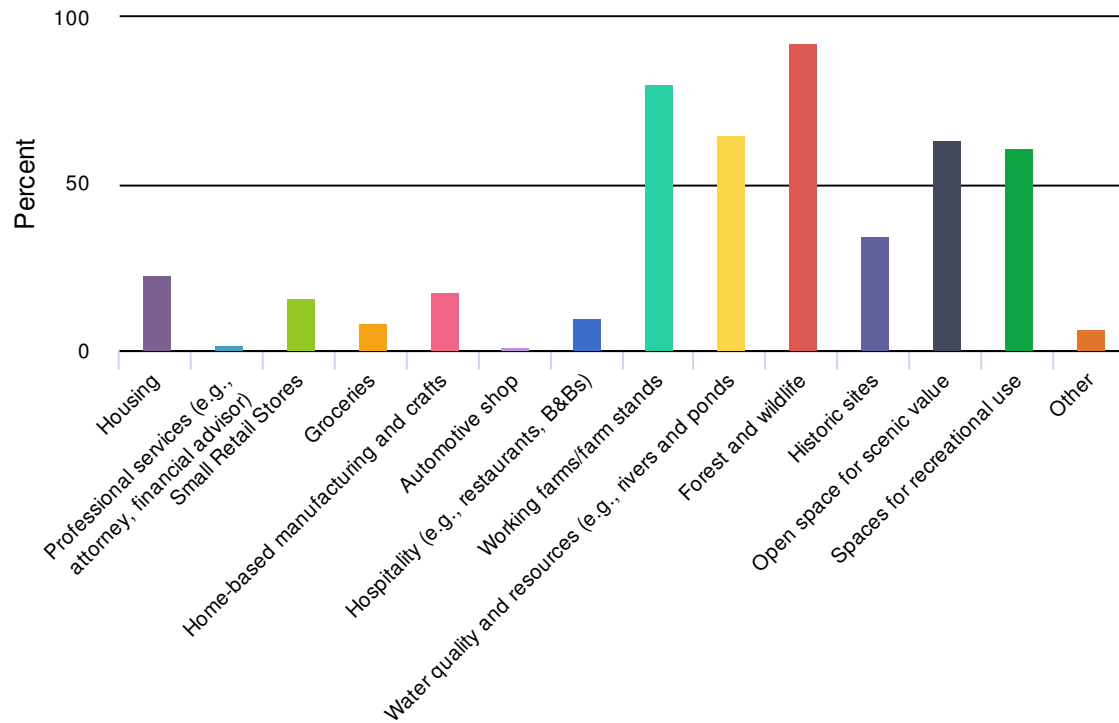
Totals: 170

1. Please choose the TOP THREE reasons why you live in Blandford.  
(Additional items can be added under “Other”)

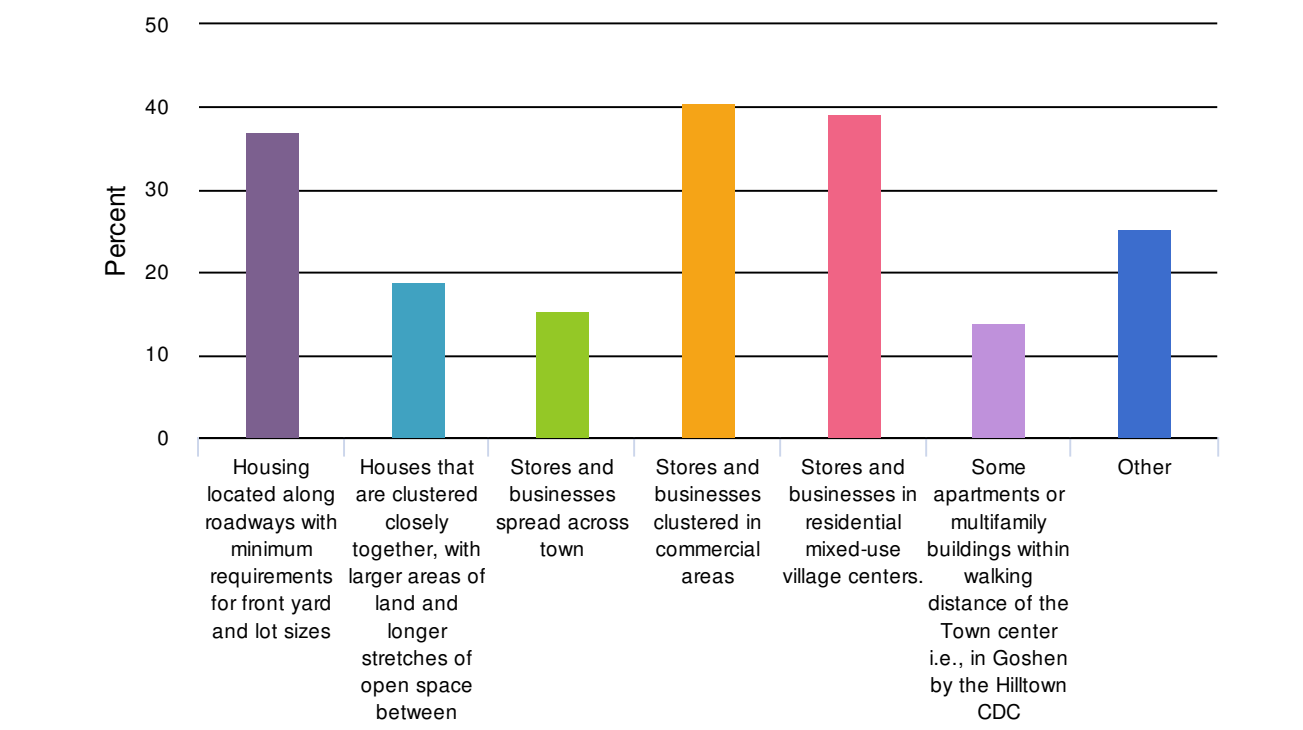


Value		Percent	Responses
Open Space		74.9%	125
Affordable Housing		12.0%	20
Small-Town Atmosphere		77.8%	130
Low Crime Rate		44.3%	74
Good Place to Raise Children		26.3%	44
Good Place to Retire		21.6%	36
Community Life		9.0%	15
Quality of Schools		4.2%	7
Other		14.4%	24

2. Please choose the TOP FIVE land uses you view as important.  
(Additional items can be added under “Other”)



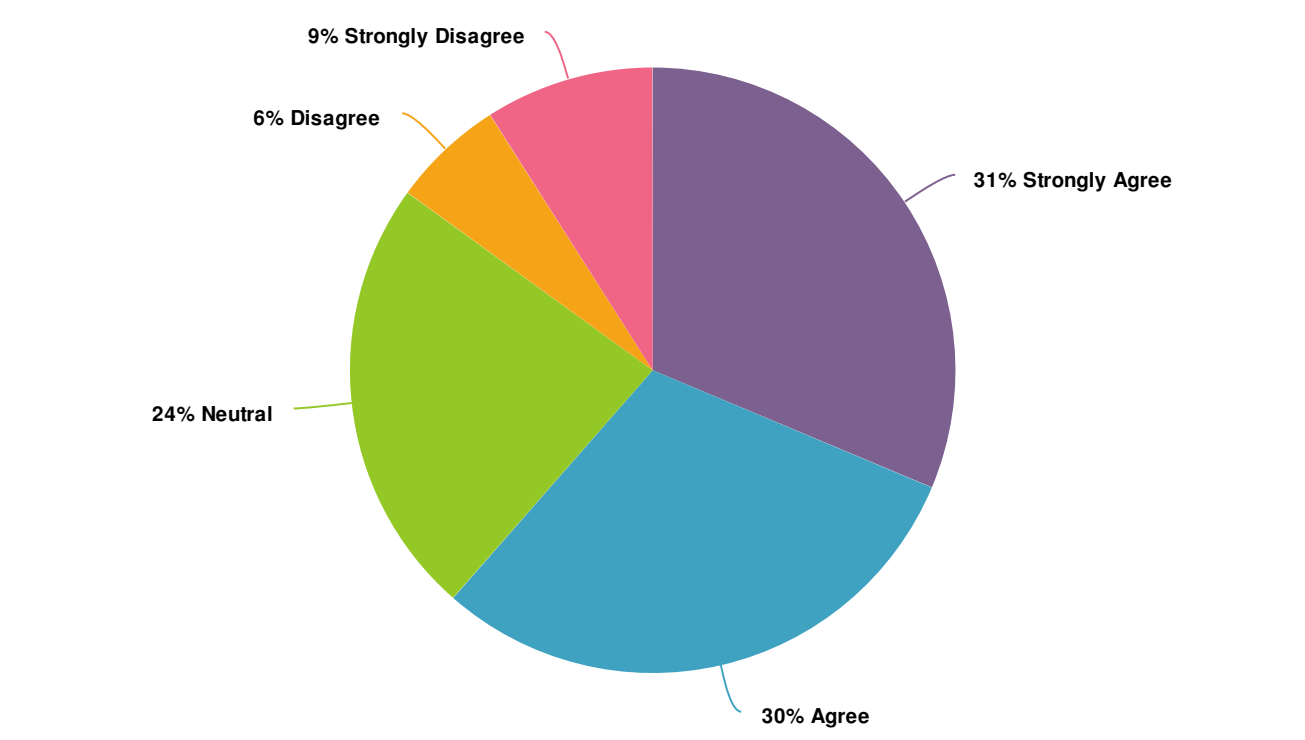
3. Please check ALL that you agree with. (Additional items can be added under “Other”). If development occurs in Blandford, I would like to see:



Value		Percent	Responses
Housing located along roadways with minimum requirements for front yard and lot sizes	<div><div></div></div>	37.1%	53
Houses that are clustered closely together, with larger areas of land and longer stretches of open space between	<div><div></div></div>	18.9%	27
Stores and businesses spread across town	<div><div></div></div>	15.4%	22
Stores and businesses clustered in commercial areas	<div><div></div></div>	40.6%	58
Stores and businesses in residential mixed-use village centers.	<div><div></div></div>	39.2%	56
Some apartments or multifamily buildings within walking distance of the Town center i.e., in Goshen by the Hilltown CDC	<div><div></div></div>	14.0%	20
Other	<div><div></div></div>	25.2%	36

Other	Count
Totals	36

4. The Town should prioritize energy efficiency, reducing emissions, and responding to the impacts of climate change

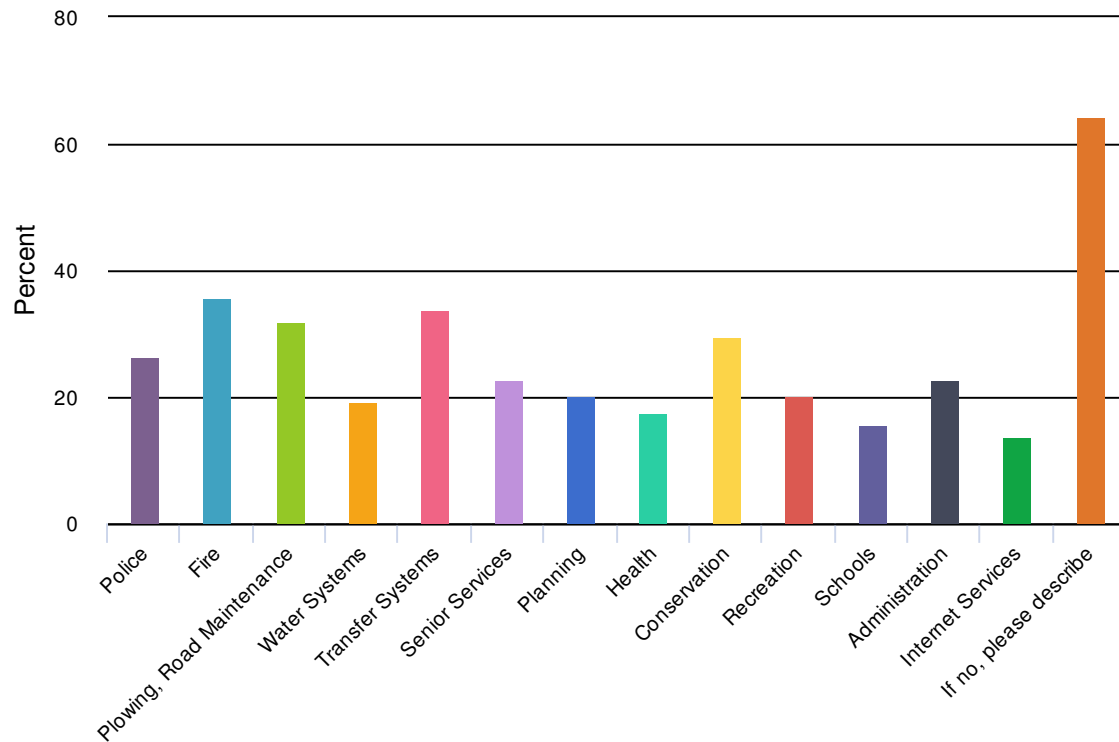
















Value		Percent	Responses
Strongly Agree	<div><div></div></div>	31.3%	52
Agree	<div><div></div></div>	30.1%	50
Neutral	<div><div></div></div>	23.5%	39
Disagree	<div><div></div></div>	6.0%	10
Strongly Disagree	<div><div></div></div>	9.0%	15

Totals: 166



5. Are you satisfied with the level of services provided by the Town for the following:



Value		Percent	Responses
Police		26.6%	29
Fire		35.8%	39
Plowing, Road Maintenance		32.1%	35
Water Systems		19.3%	21
Transfer Systems		33.9%	37
Senior Services		22.9%	25
Planning		20.2%	22
Health		17.4%	19
Conservation		29.4%	32
Recreation		20.2%	22
Schools		15.6%	17
Administration		22.9%	25
Internet Services		13.8%	15
If no, please describe		64.2%	70

If no, please describe	Count
yes	3
"Police, Plowing, Administration=No" See attached word document for comment	1
Conservation/Recreation: I believe these are linked. We should aggressively expand and link walking and biking trails throughout blandford and all the property the water companies own.	1
Covid-19 has impacted some of these great services	1
Highway inconsisten care and materials. Rarely see workers out around town other than plowing; rarely out of their trucks. Lots of trucks for small crew. Manage the highway accountability better	1
Totals	69

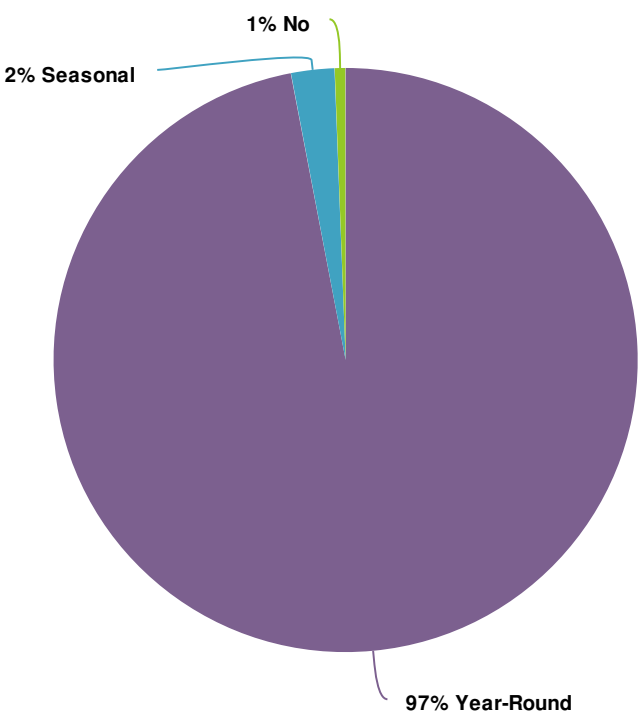
6. What would you like to see most in Blandford over the next decade? Please briefly explain:



## ResponseID Response

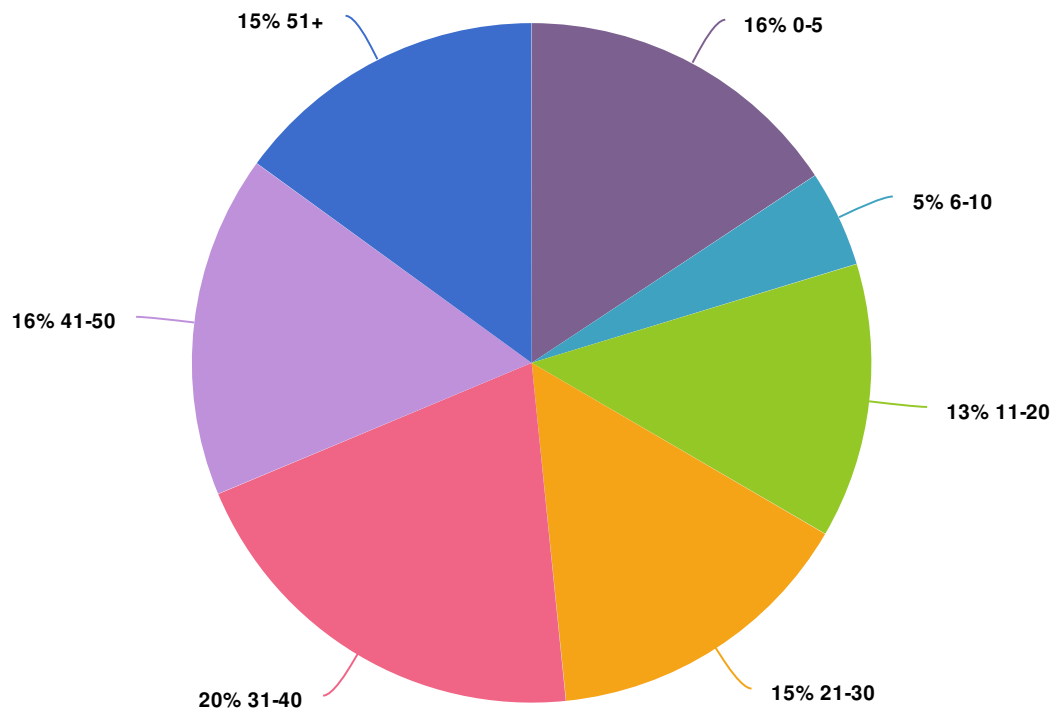
1	More small business. Trail systems for hiking. A Town friendly to business and responsive to citizens.
2	more small locally run businesses/farm stands maintaining level of forest/wildlife resources for recreational use (hiking, snowshoeing, fishing, etc.) as opposed to development uses (ex. logging, clearing land for large commercial development) maintaining water quality and resources for recreational activities and drinking water safety
3	Internet, cable, Town water to all residents, Trash service, Better schooling, Busing is too long
4	More services for our tax dollars and excellent internet service.
5	Maybe a couple of business, refocusing on farms and agricultural areas.
6	A turnpike exit
7	Better internet and fewer people
9	housing growth
10	Our taxes have increased over the years for little return. Instead of finding more ways to tax us, how about using our tax money more appropriately.

7. Are you a resident of Blandford?



Value		Percent	Responses
Year-Round	<div></div>	97.0%	163
Seasonal	<div></div>	2.4%	4
No	<div></div>	0.6%	1
			Totals: 168

## 8. If yes, how many years have you been a resident?

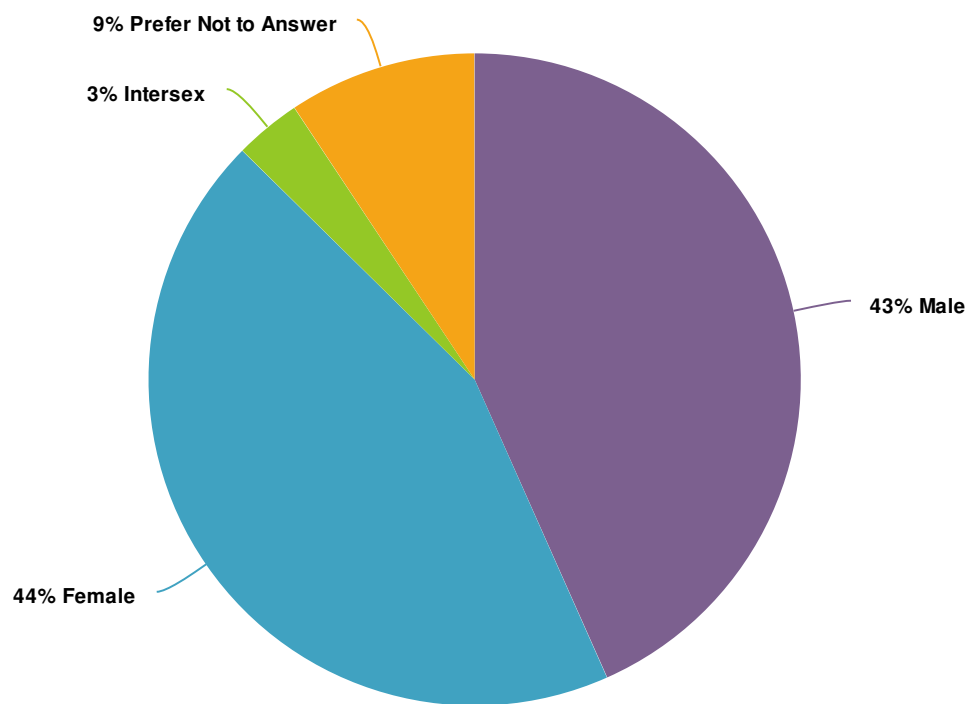


Value		Percent	Responses
0-5	<div><div style="width: 15.7%;"></div></div>	15.7%	24
6-10	<div><div style="width: 4.6%;"></div></div>	4.6%	7
11-20	<div><div style="width: 13.1%;"></div></div>	13.1%	20
21-30	<div><div style="width: 15.0%;"></div></div>	15.0%	23
31-40	<div><div style="width: 20.3%;"></div></div>	20.3%	31
41-50	<div><div style="width: 16.3%;"></div></div>	16.3%	25
51+	<div><div style="width: 15.0%;"></div></div>	15.0%	23

Totals: 153



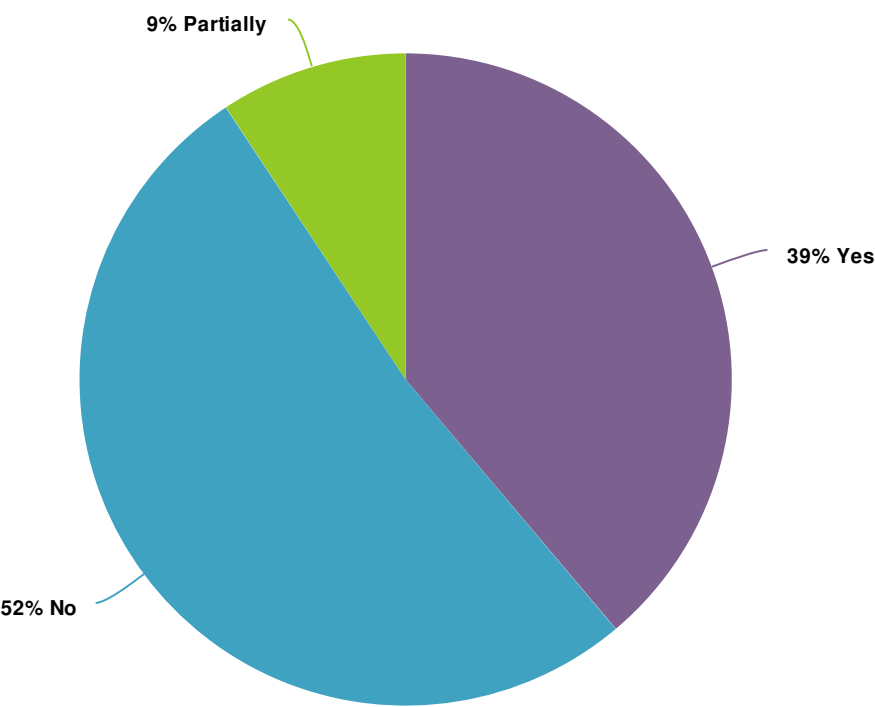
9. What is your sex:



Value		Percent	Responses
Male	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	43.3%	65
Female	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	44.0%	66
Intersex	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	3.3%	5
Prefer Not to Answer	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	9.3%	14

Totals: 150

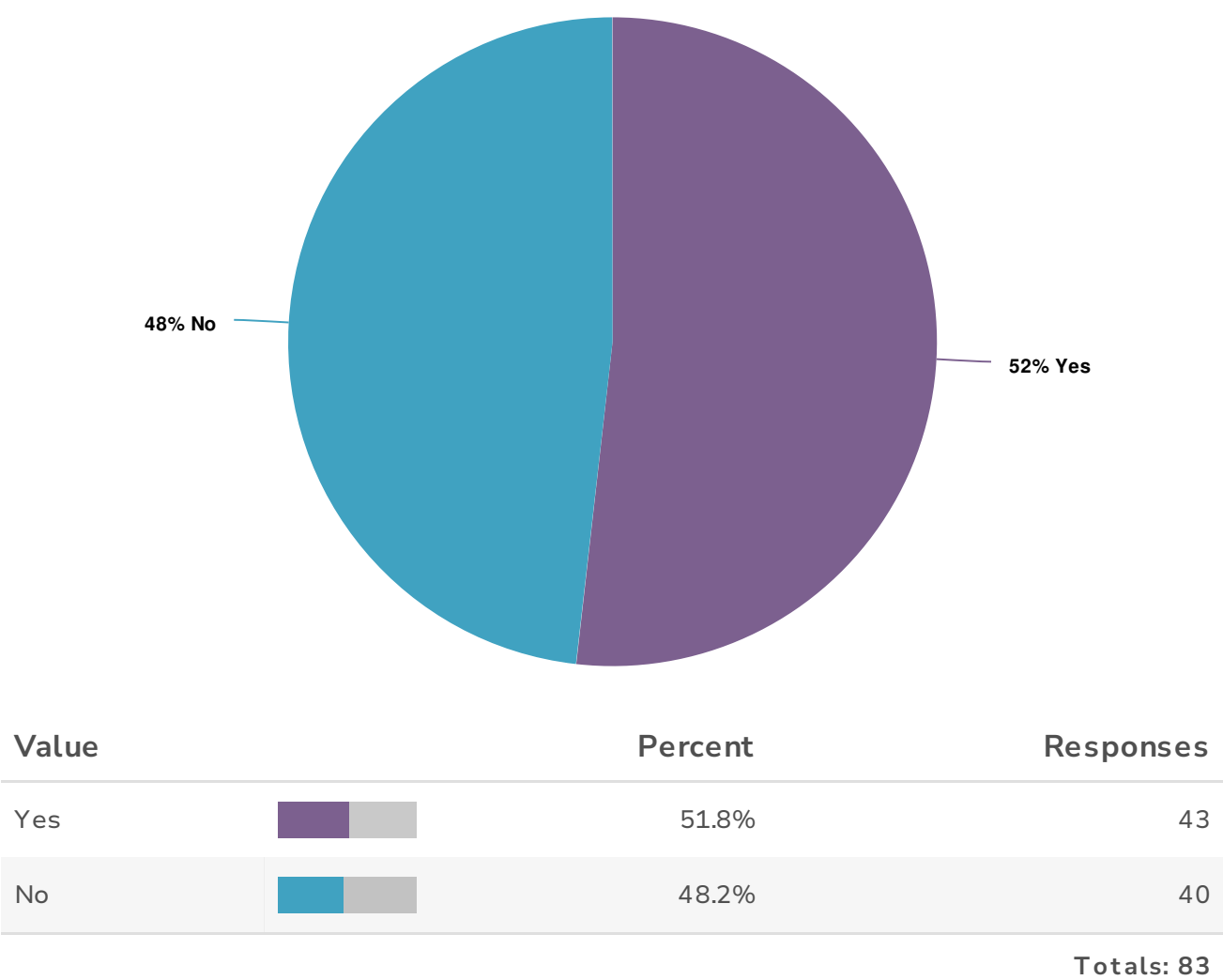
10. Are you retired?



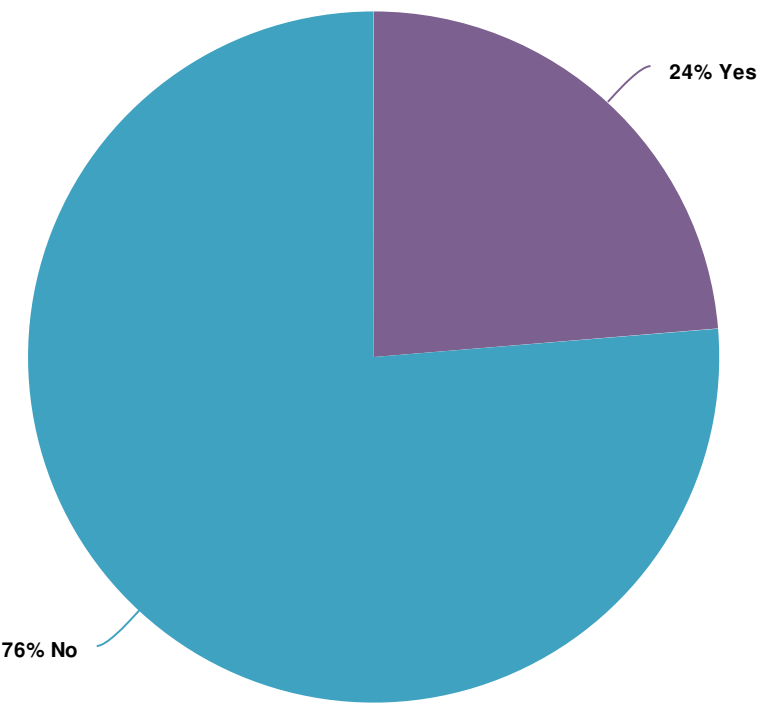
Value		Percent	Responses
Yes	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	38.9%	63
No	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	51.9%	84
Partially	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	9.3%	15

Totals: 162

11. If not, do you work in the area?



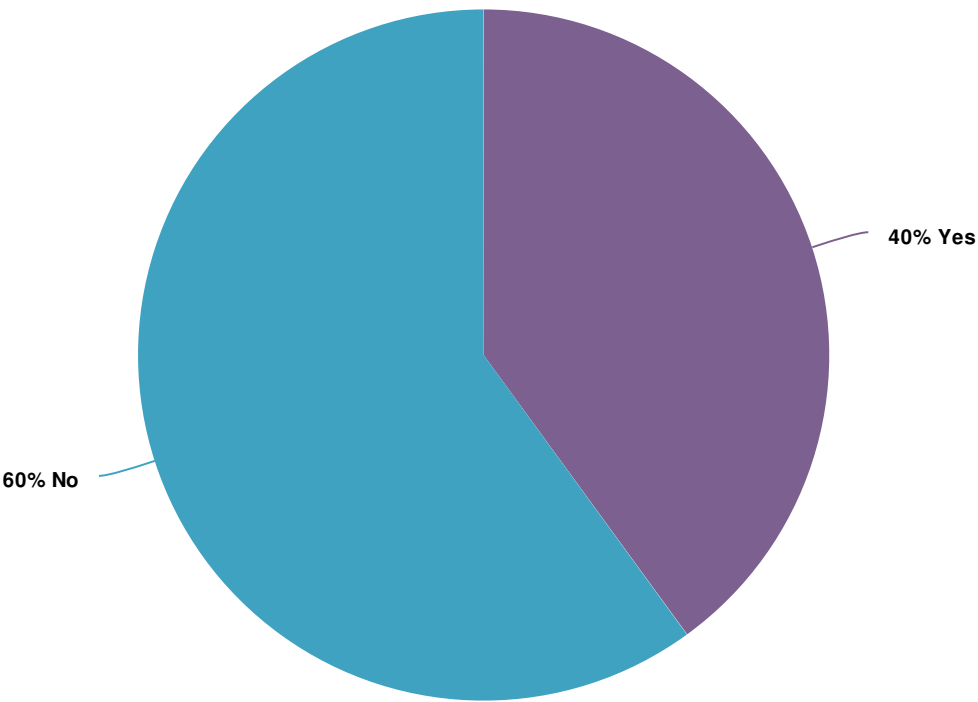
12. Do you work from home?



Value		Percent	Responses
Yes	<div><div></div></div>	23.7%	33
No	<div><div></div></div>	76.3%	106

Totals: 139

13. If yes, did you work from home pre-COVID-19?

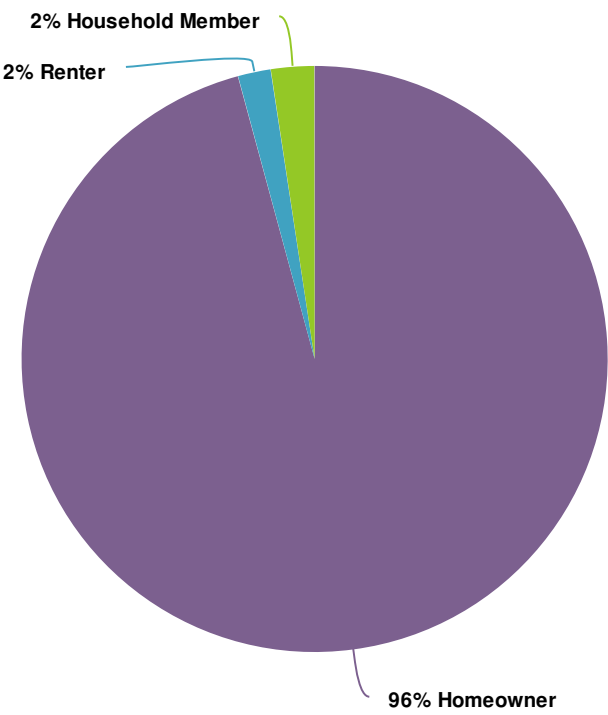


Value		Percent	Responses
Yes	<div><div></div></div>	40.0%	12
No	<div><div></div></div>	60.0%	18

Totals: 30



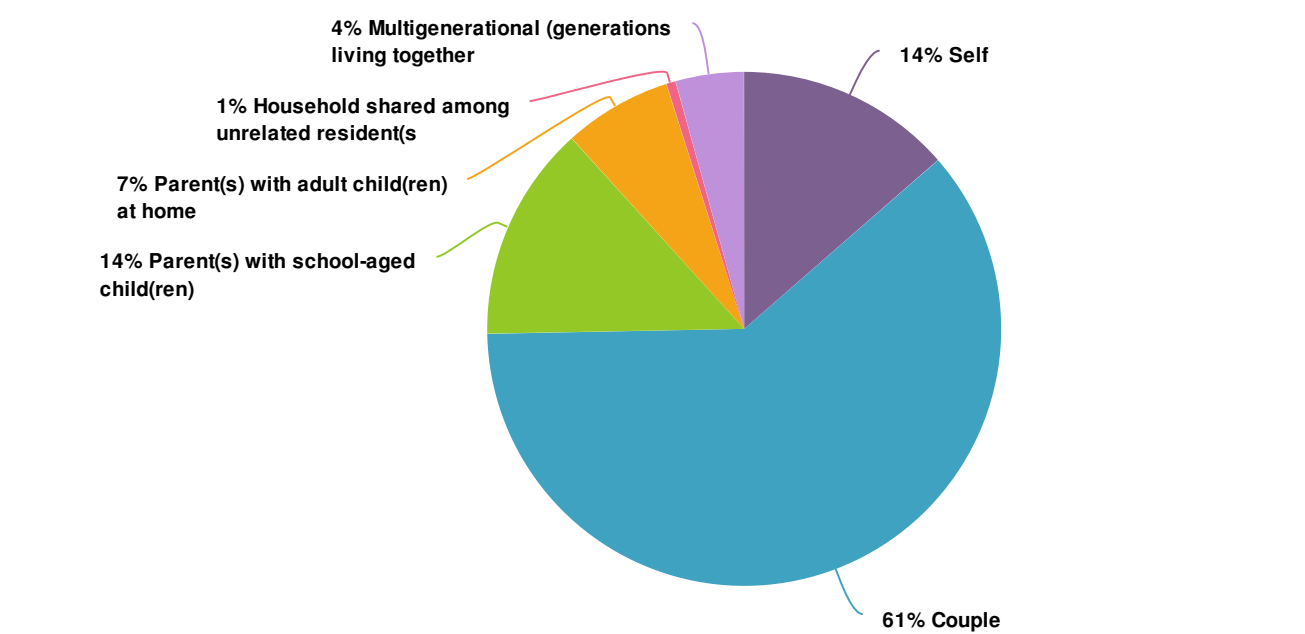
14. Please indicate whether you are a:



Value		Percent	Responses
Homeowner	<div><div></div></div>	95.8%	160
Renter	<div><div></div></div>	1.8%	3
Household Member	<div><div></div></div>	2.4%	4

Totals: 167

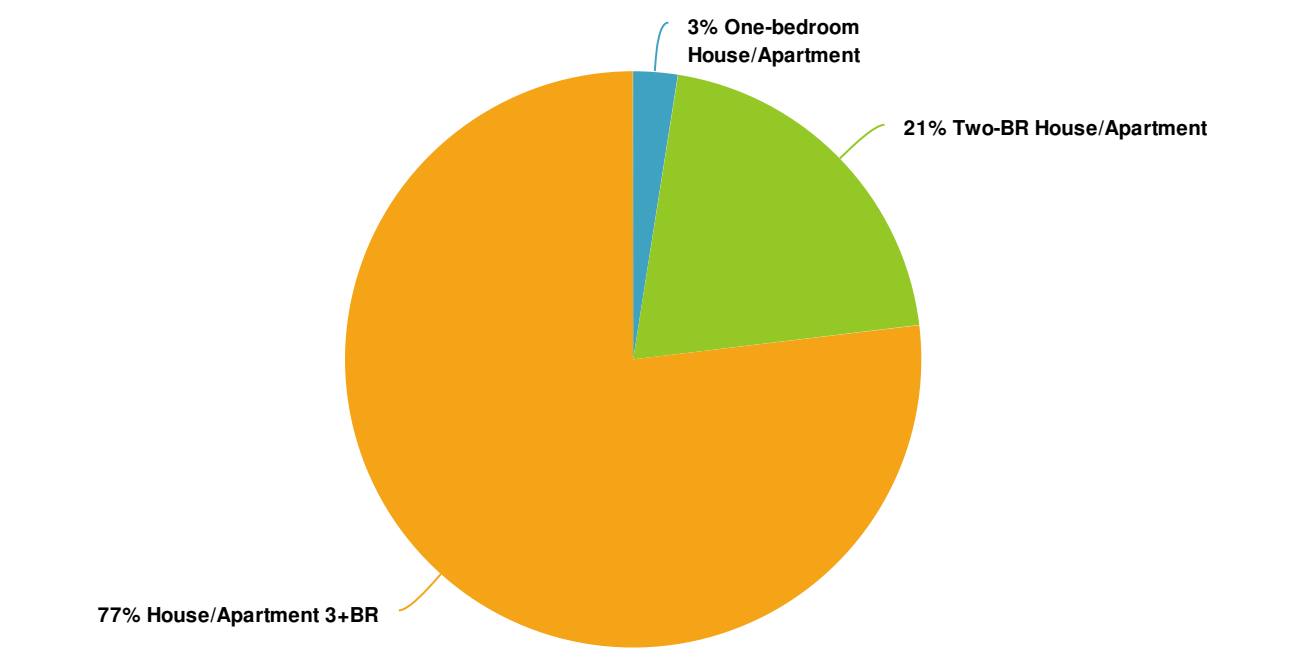
15. Which best describes your household?



Value		Percent	Responses
Self	<div><div></div></div>	13.6%	22
Couple	<div><div></div></div>	61.1%	99
Parent(s) with school-aged child(ren)	<div><div></div></div>	13.6%	22
Parent(s) with adult child(ren) at home	<div><div></div></div>	6.8%	11
Household shared among unrelated resident(s)	<div><div></div></div>	0.6%	1
Multigenerational (generations living together)	<div><div></div></div>	4.3%	7

Totals: 162

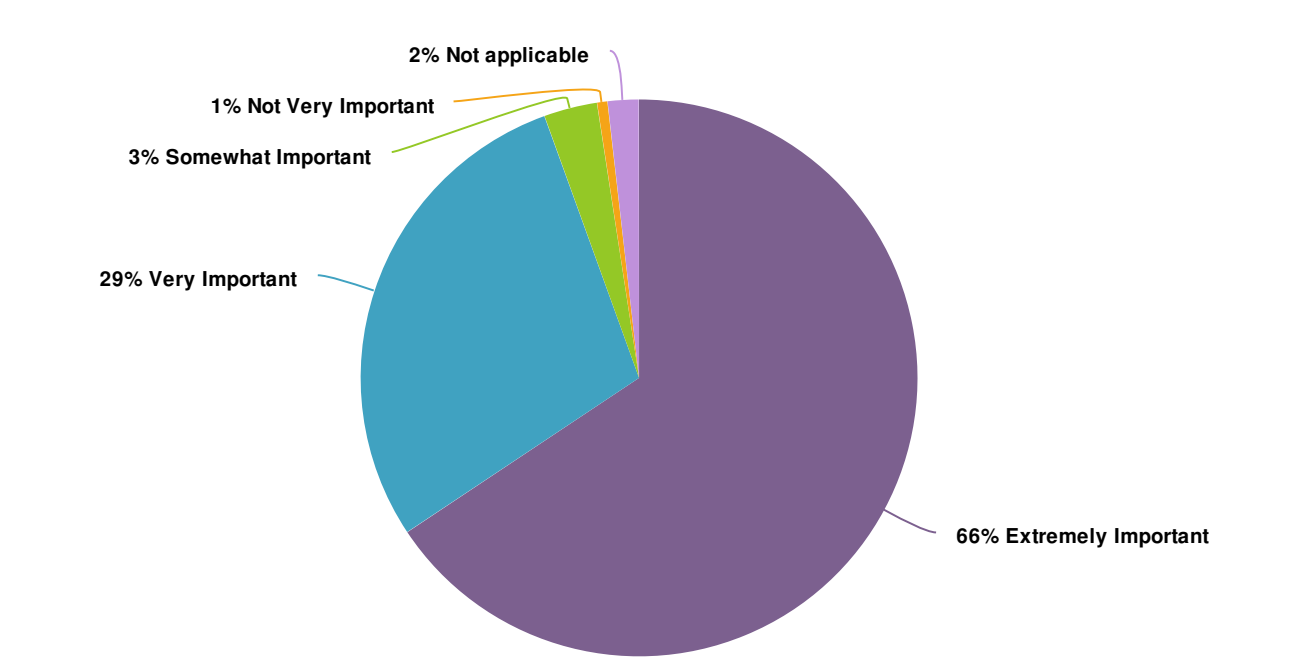
16. I live in:



Value		Percent	Responses
One-bedroom House/Apartment	<div><div></div></div>	2.5%	4
Two-BR House/Apartment	<div><div></div></div>	20.6%	33
House/Apartment 3+BR	<div><div></div></div>	76.9%	123

Totals: 160

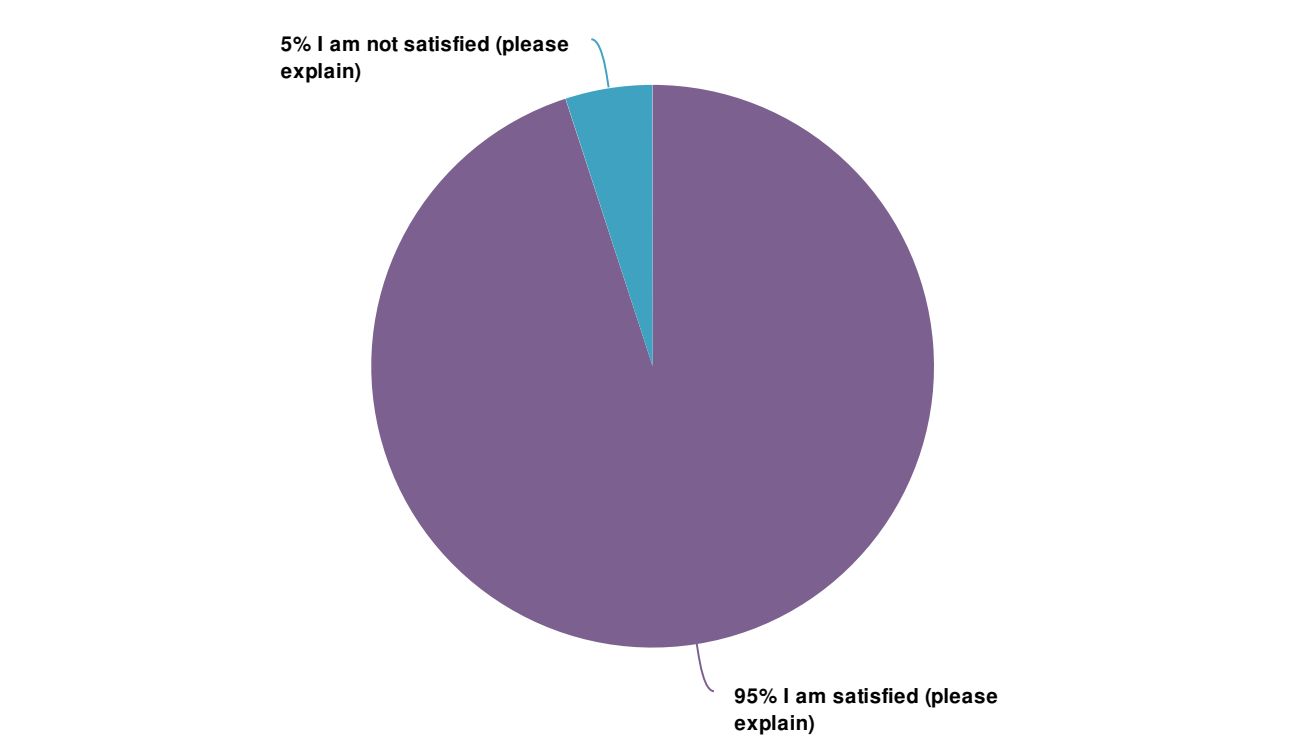
17. How important is it for you to be able to live independently in your own home as you age?



Value		Percent	Responses
Extremely Important	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	65.6%	107
Very Important	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	28.8%	47
Somewhat Important	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	3.1%	5
Not Very Important	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	0.6%	1
Not applicable	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	1.8%	3

Totals: 163

18. Please indicate whether you are satisfied with your present housing:

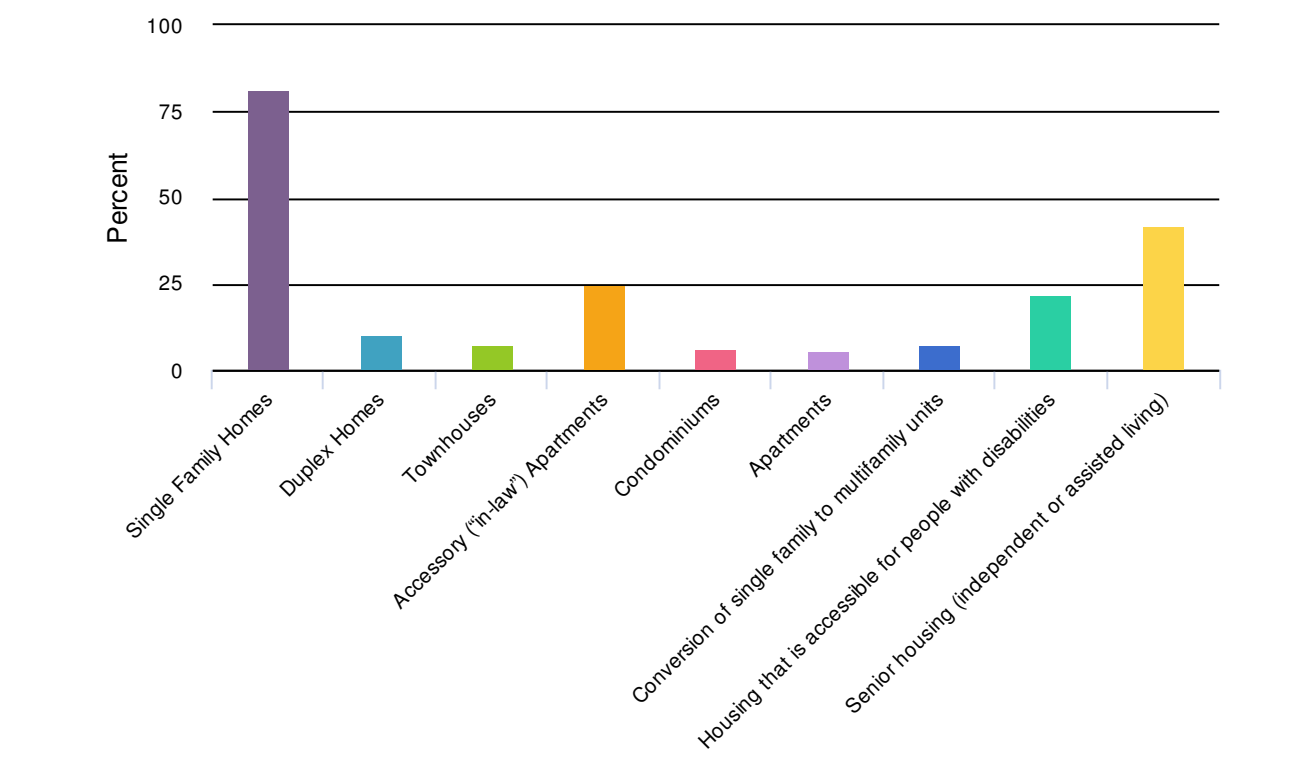


Value		Percent	Responses
I am satisfied (please explain)	<div></div>	95.0%	151
I am not satisfied (please explain)	<div></div>	5.0%	8

Totals: 159

I am satisfied (please explain)	Count
Built our home, but over taxed for little benefit	1
Comfort, location, access	1
Currently satisfied, but it might be too much to maintain as I get older.	1
I like my house	1
I love my home	1
I love my home and love that you can't see other houses from our own	1
I love my house	1
Totals	26

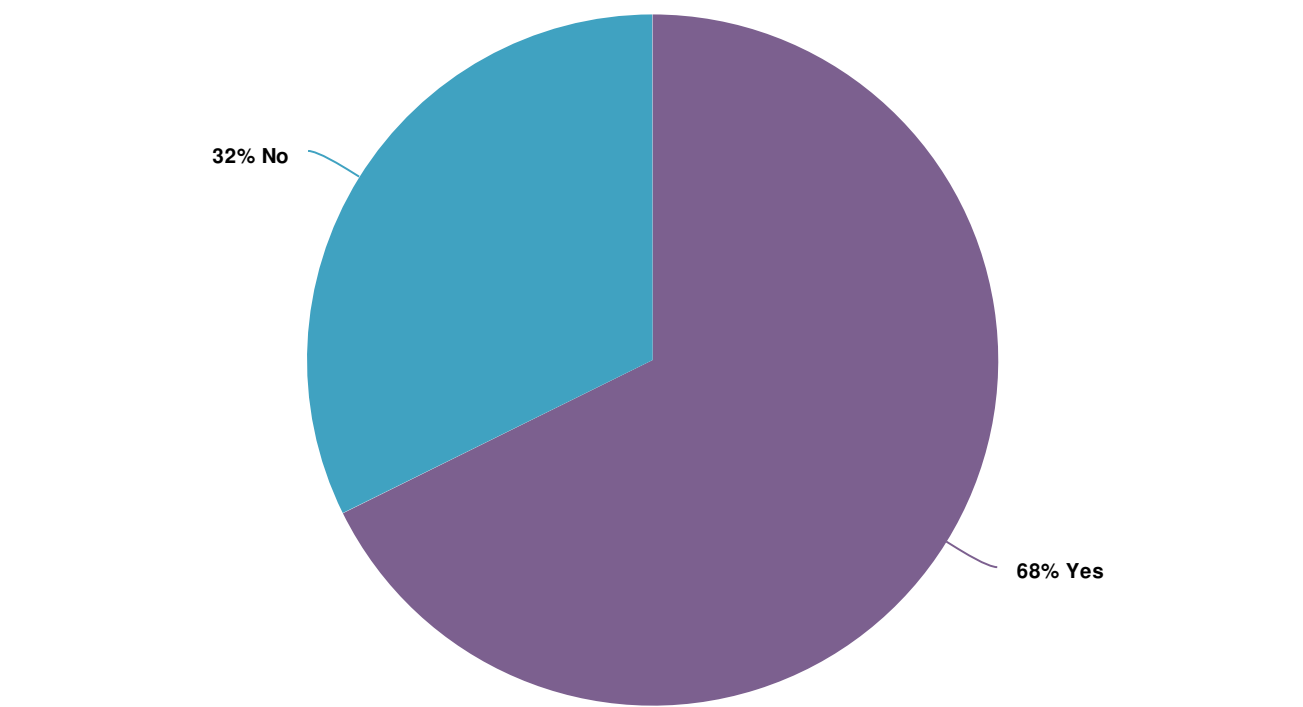
19. I would like to see the Town promote the following housing types:  
(Choose all that apply).



Value		Percent	Responses
Single Family Homes	<div><div></div></div>	81.1%	120
Duplex Homes	<div><div></div></div>	10.1%	15
Townhouses	<div><div></div></div>	7.4%	11
Accessory ("in-law") Apartments	<div><div></div></div>	25.0%	37
Condominiums	<div><div></div></div>	6.1%	9
Apartments	<div><div></div></div>	5.4%	8
Conversion of single family to multifamily units	<div><div></div></div>	7.4%	11
Housing that is accessible for people with disabilities	<div><div></div></div>	22.3%	33
Senior housing (independent or assisted living)	<div><div></div></div>	41.9%	62



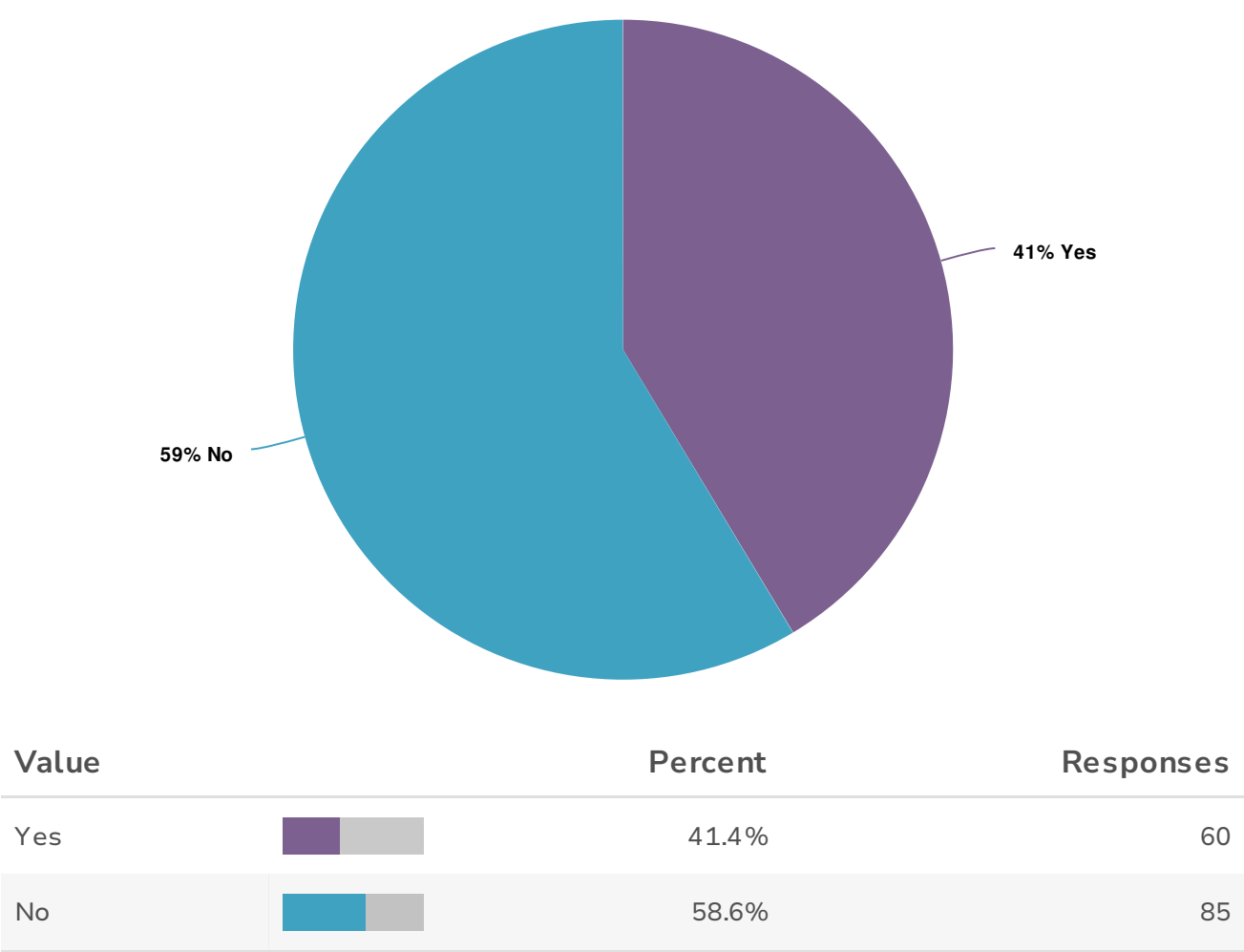
20. Do you believe there are sufficient housing options in Blandford?



Value		Percent	Responses
Yes	<div><div></div></div>	67.7%	107
No	<div><div></div></div>	32.3%	51

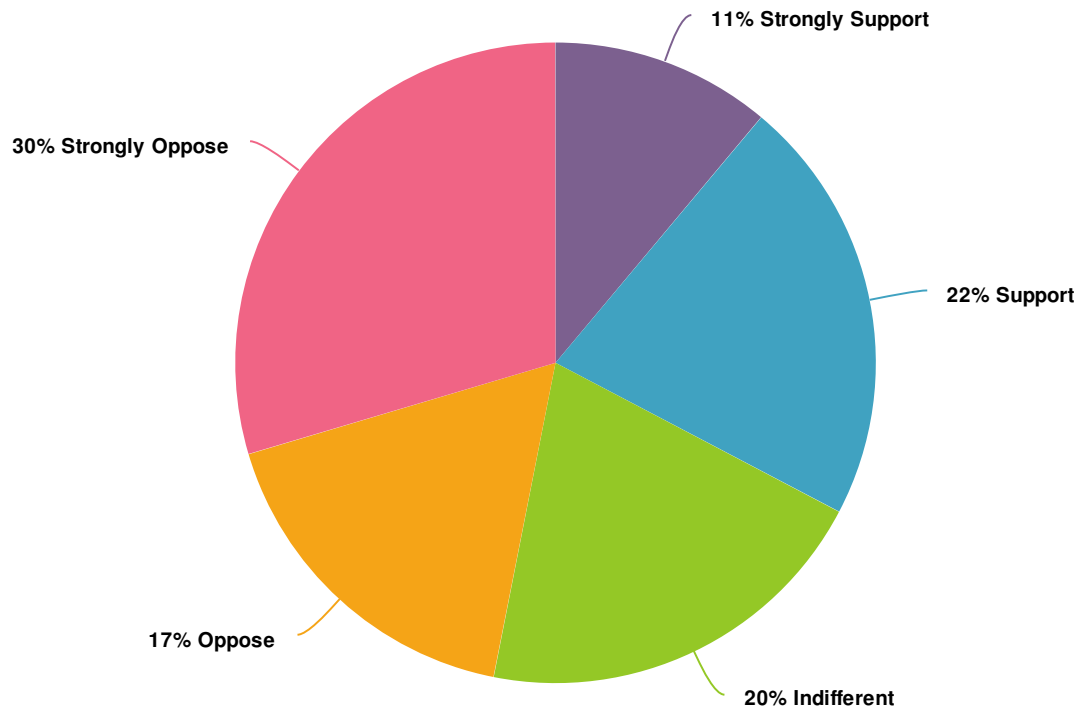
Totals: 158

21. Do you believe there is enough housing for Blandford seniors of varying incomes and abilities?



Totals: 145

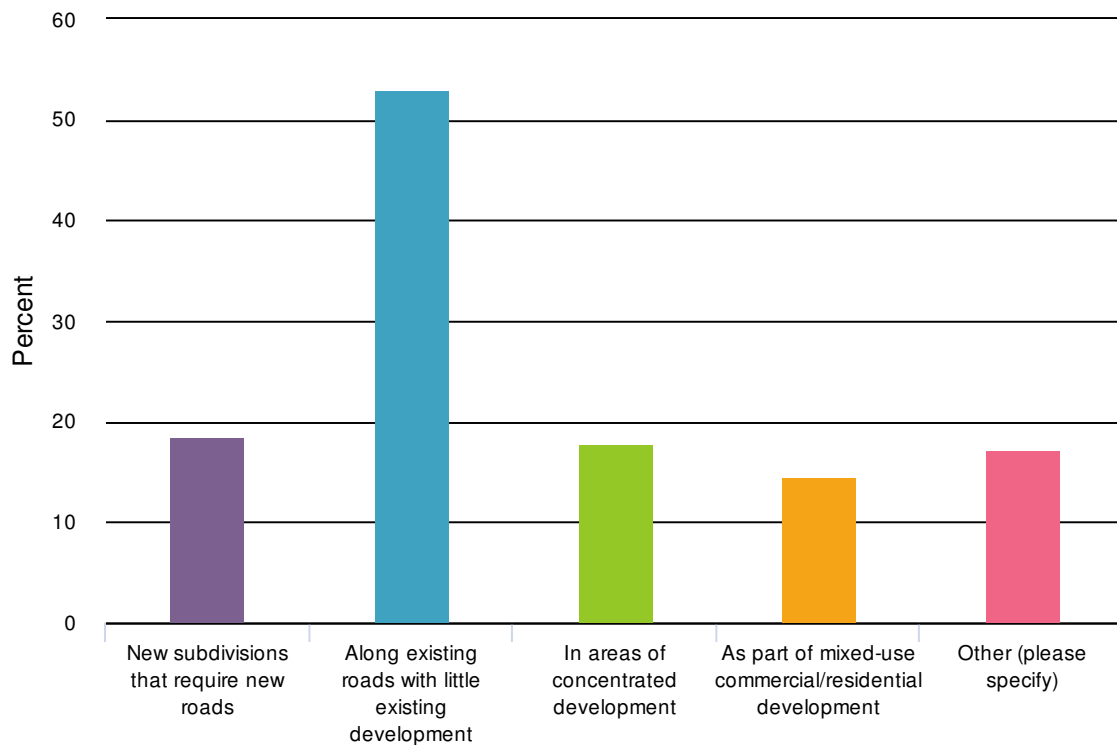
## 22. Would you support planned affordable housing?





Value		Percent	Responses
Strongly Support	<div><div></div></div>	11.1%	18
Support	<div><div></div></div>	21.6%	35
Indifferent	<div><div></div></div>	20.4%	33
Oppose	<div><div></div></div>	17.3%	28
Strongly Oppose	<div><div></div></div>	29.6%	48

Totals: 162

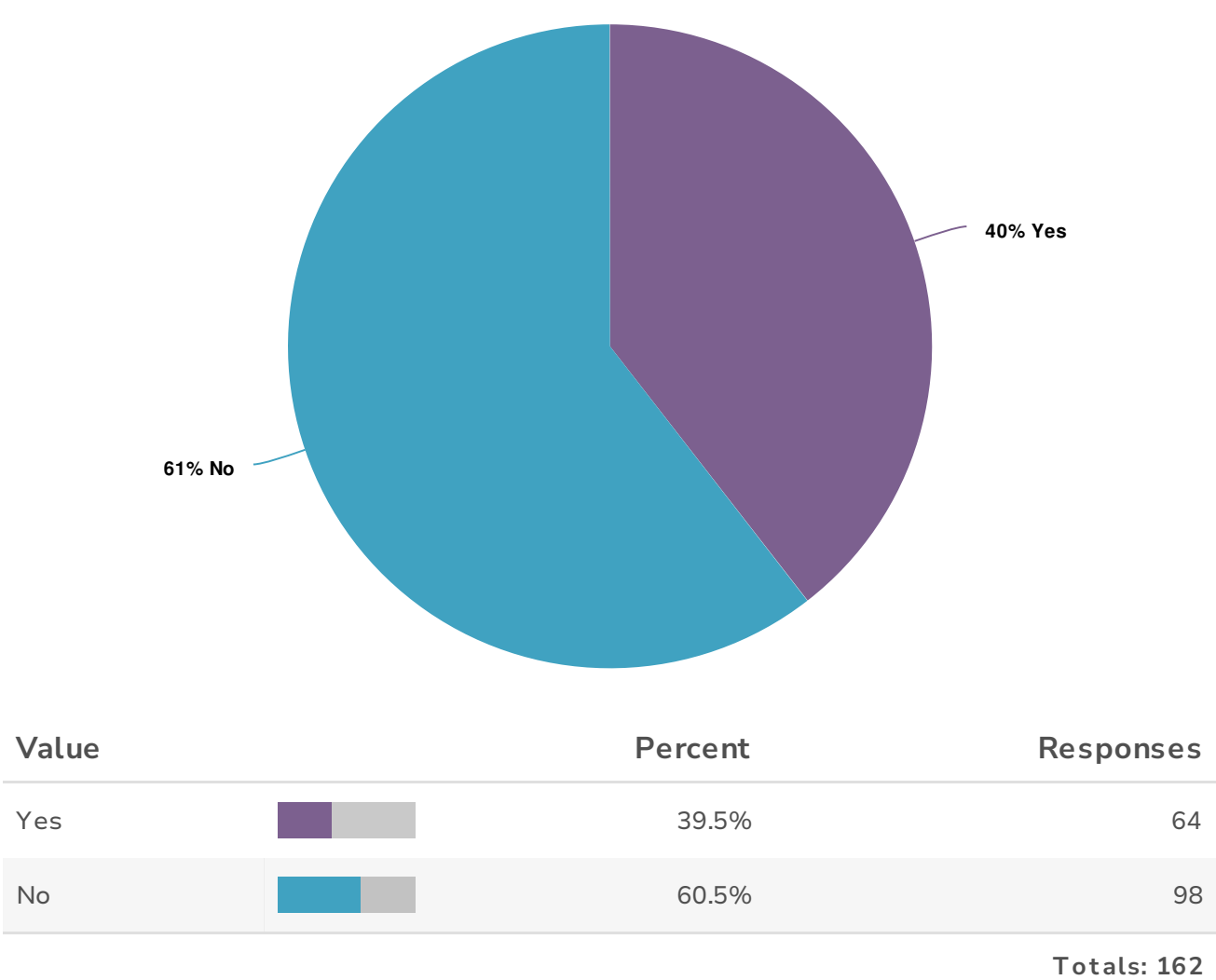
## 23. Where would you like to see new housing built?



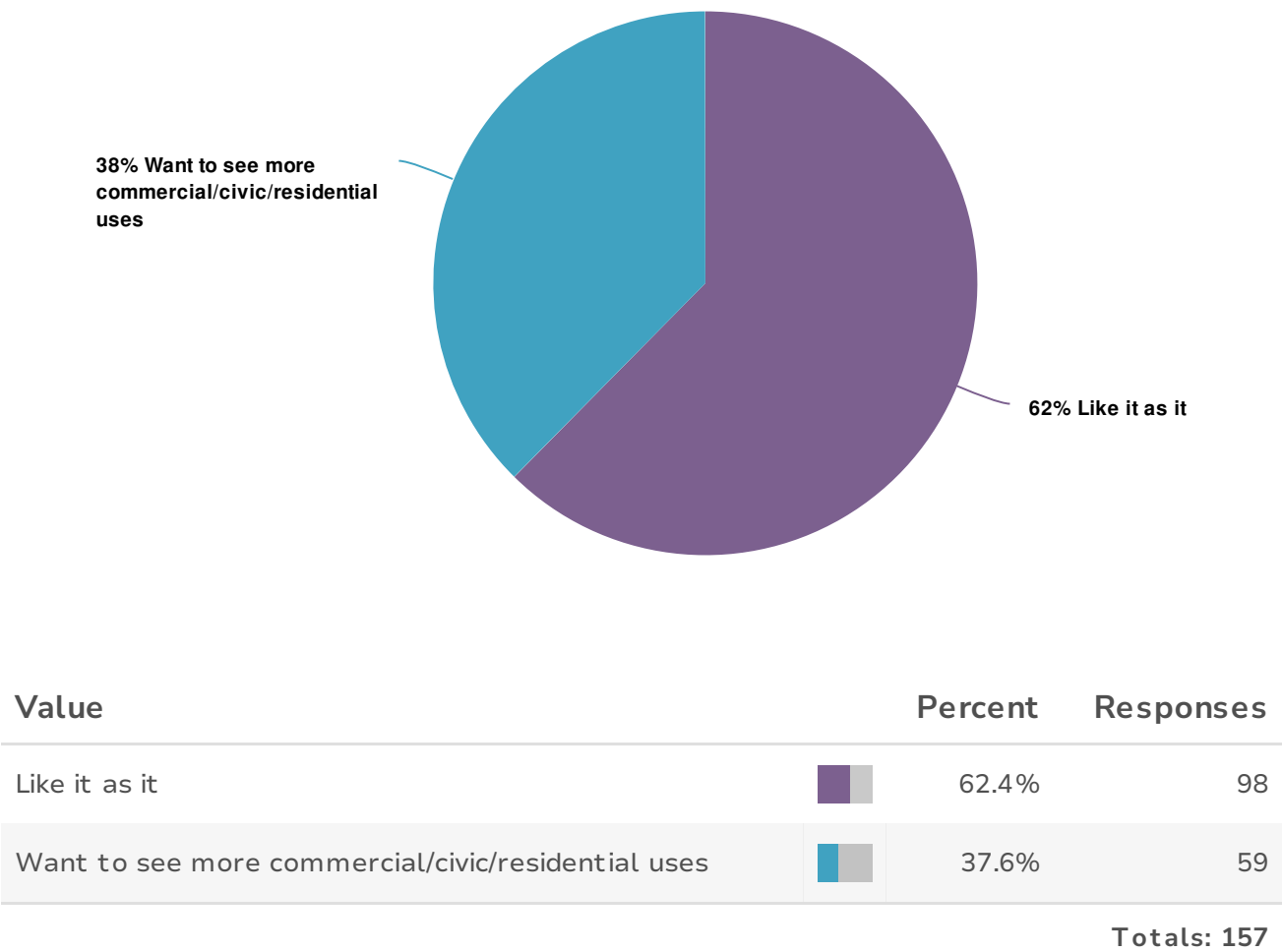
Value		Percent	Responses
New subdivisions that require new roads		18.6%	27
Along existing roads with little existing development		53.1%	77
In areas of concentrated development		17.9%	26
As part of mixed-use commercial/residential development		14.5%	21
Other (please specify)		17.2%	25

Other (please specify)	Count
Blandford has enough housing	2
none	2
I favor limited expansion	1
Leave as is	1
No more development	1
Totals	25

24. Would you support a 1-3% surcharge on your property tax (partially matched by state funds) in support of the Community Preservation Act to preserve open space & farmland, create and support affordable housing, and preserve historic buildings and landscape?



25. With regard to the town center of Blandford, do you:



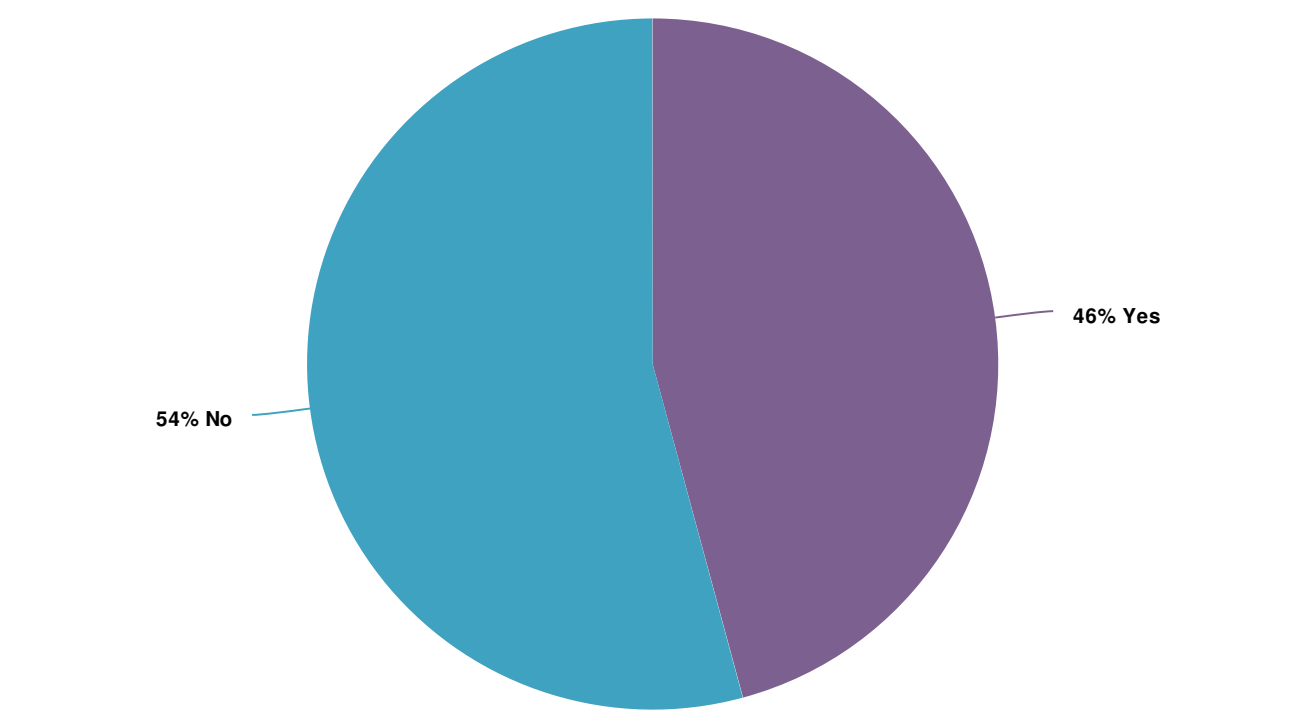


26. What type of strategies should the town adopt to address future growth? Please check the answer you agree with

	Support	Indifferent	Oppose	Total Checks
Update zoning to designate residential, commercial, and industrial districts for development Checks Row Check %	56 39.4%	37 26.1%	49 34.5%	142
Identify areas appropriate for mixed-use development. Checks Row Check %	65 44.5%	32 21.9%	49 33.6%	146
Adopt zoning to protect agricultural lands. Checks Row Check %	124 80.5%	16 10.4%	14 9.1%	154
Adopt clustered homes development zoning bylaw. Checks Row Check %	25 18.0%	34 24.5%	80 57.6%	139
Adopt zoning for high density residential development. Checks Row Check %	8 5.6%	26 18.3%	108 76.1%	142
Revisit design standards for non-residential development Checks Row Check %	34 24.5%	63 45.3%	42 30.2%	139
Increase mobility options for non-motorized vehicles i.e., bike lanes. Checks Row Check %	51 34.9%	45 30.8%	50 34.2%	146
Limit development to the capacity of the town's water supply Checks Row Check %	69 47.9%	47 32.6%	28 19.4%	144

	Support	Indifferent	Oppose	Total Checks
Continue to educate landowners about options for permanently protecting land and preserve Blandford's open spaces in perpetuity. Checks Row Check %	112 74.2%	29 19.2%	10 6.6%	151
Create new active recreational resources such as horseback riding trails, etc. Checks Row Check %	102 69.9%	29 19.9%	15 10.3%	146
Total Checks				
Checks	646	358	445	1449
% of Total Checks	44.6%	24.7%	30.7%	100.0%

27. Should the town encourage new commercial development?



Value		Percent	Responses
Yes	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	45.8%	70
No	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	54.2%	83

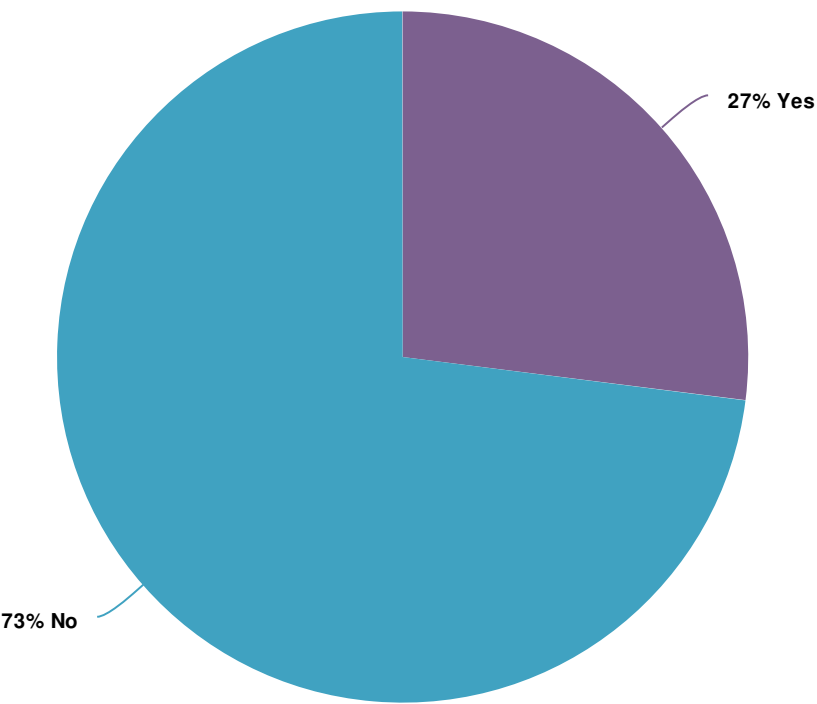
Totals: 153

28. If yes, where



ResponseID	Response
1	Center of Town
3	center of town, ski area
4	Center of town
5	Not sure, I dream of opening a brewery in the future so someplace that I could do that.
10	In lieu of "commercial" development, make it easier for those that want to work from home to put up a building on their own property.
11	Where the town can provide the appropriate services.
13	within center of town
14	town center
15	Near town center
16	center of town / adjacent to pike
20	anywhere as a new development
21	Wherever is economically feasible for residents and the business
22	in the town center

29. Should the town encourage new industrial development?



Value		Percent	Responses
Yes	<div><div></div></div>	27.0%	40
No	<div><div></div></div>	73.0%	108

Totals: 148

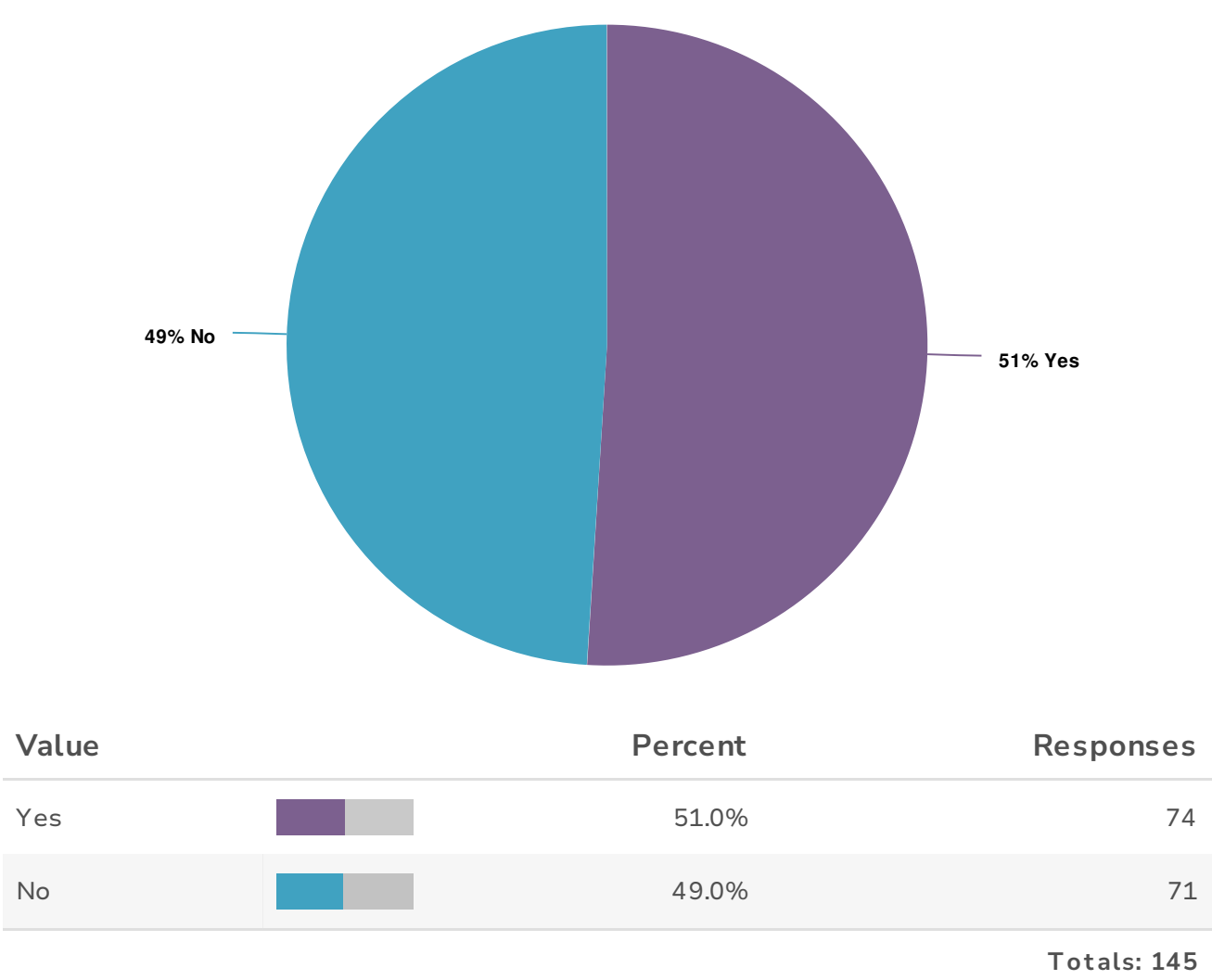
30. If yes, where

A word cloud visualization of responses to the question '30. If yes, where'. The words are arranged in a cluster, with 'turnpike' and 'center' being the most prominent. Other visible words include 'business', 'area', 'pike', 'agricultural', 'open', 'amount', 'possibly', 'polluting', 'industry', 'district', 'create', 'limited', 'exit', 'provide', 'rest', 'route', 'adjacent', 'or', 'rt', 'park', and '0'.

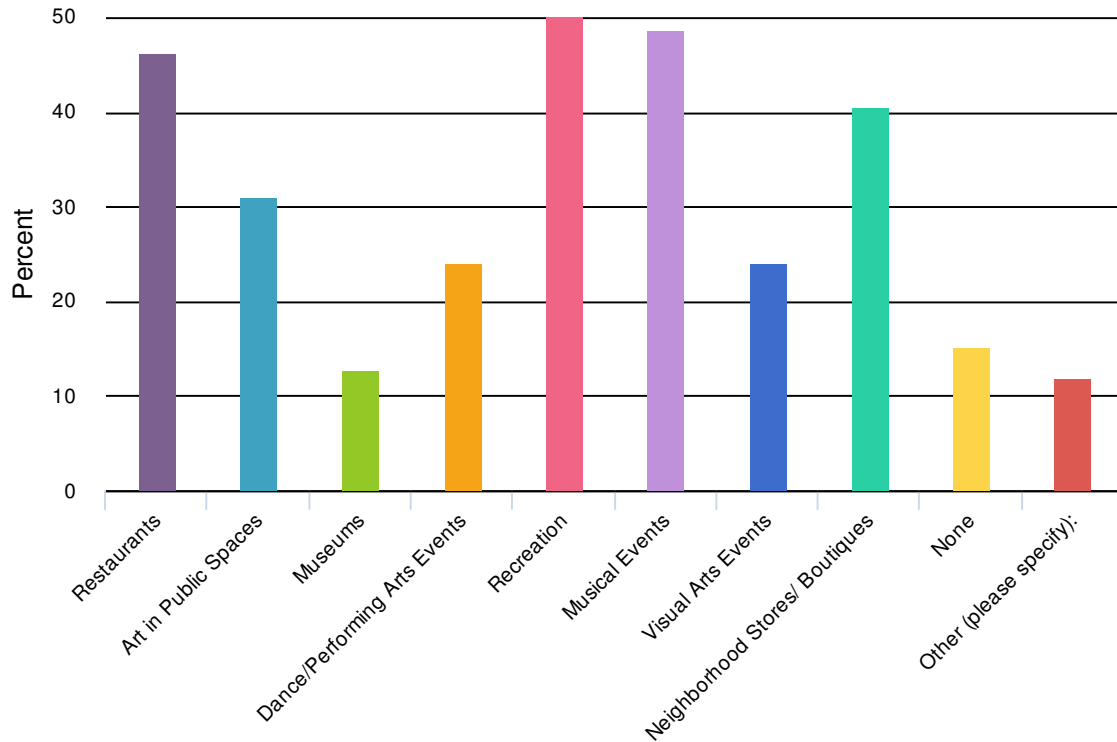
turnpike center areastown  
business area pike  
agricultural open amount  
possibly polluting  
industry district  
create limited exit  
provide rest route  
adjacent or rt park  
0













31. Does the existing variety of shopping, recreation, and entertainment available meet your needs?

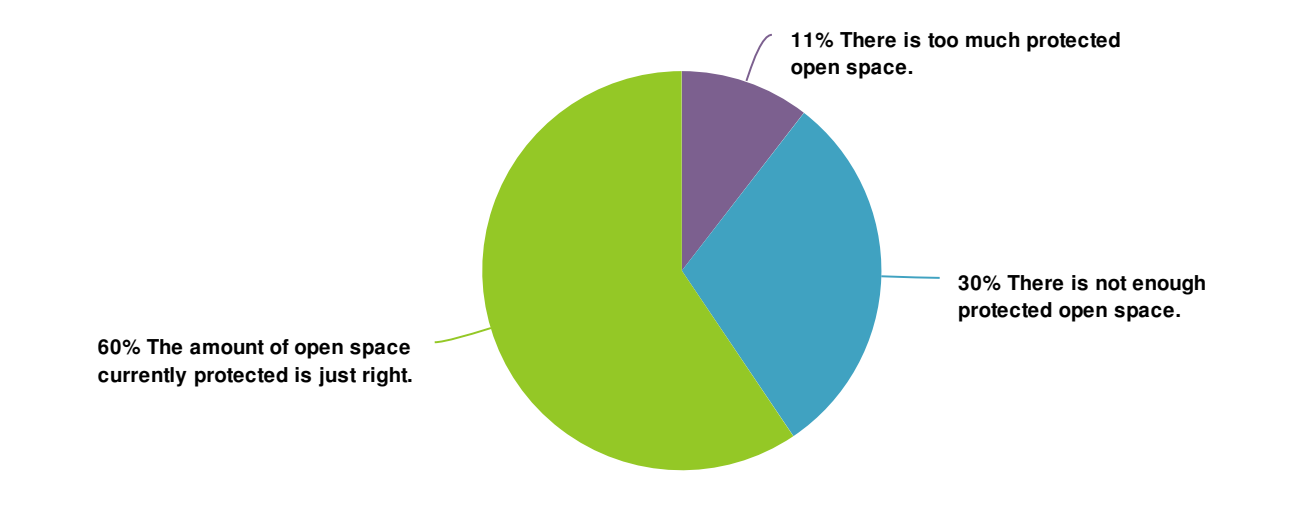


32. What would you like to see in the Town of Blandford? (Choose all that apply)



Value		Percent	Responses
Restaurants		46.2%	73
Art in Public Spaces		31.0%	49
Museums		12.7%	20
Dance/Performing Arts Events		24.1%	38
Recreation		50.0%	79
Musical Events		48.7%	77
Visual Arts Events		24.1%	38
Neighborhood Stores/ Boutiques		40.5%	64
None		15.2%	24
Other (please specify):		12.0%	19

33. Choose the statement that most closely reflects how you feel about the protection of open space in Blandford.



Value		Percent	Responses
There is too much protected open space.	<div><div></div></div>	10.5%	16
There is not enough protected open space.	<div><div></div></div>	30.1%	46
The amount of open space currently protected is just right.	<div><div></div></div>	59.5%	91

Totals: 153

34. Please check all of the following activities that you enjoy (in Blandford or elsewhere):

	Participate Regularly in Blandford	Adequate Space in Town	Participate Elsewhere	Total Checks
Walking (on roads) Checks Row Check %	105 61.4%	39 22.8%	27 15.8%	171
Hiking (on trails) Checks Row Check %	85 51.5%	39 23.6%	41 24.8%	165
Bird/nature watching Checks Row Check %	86 63.7%	29 21.5%	20 14.8%	135
Road biking Checks Row Check %	26 33.3%	24 30.8%	28 35.9%	78
Mountain biking Checks Row Check %	12 23.1%	24 46.2%	16 30.8%	52
Horseback riding Checks Row Check %	13 27.7%	22 46.8%	12 25.5%	47
Dog walking Checks Row Check %	63 56.3%	29 25.9%	20 17.9%	112
Hunting Checks Row Check %	29 51.8%	18 32.1%	9 16.1%	56
Fishing/ice fishing Checks Row Check %	28 37.3%	13 17.3%	34 45.3%	75

	Participate Regularly in Blandford	Adequate Space in Town	Participate Elsewhere	Total Checks
Motorized boating Checks Row Check %	8 21.1%	4 10.5%	26 68.4%	38
Non- motorized boating Checks Row Check %	16 25.0%	5 7.8%	43 67.2%	64
Swimming Checks Row Check %	15 17.4%	6 7.0%	65 75.6%	86
Playing team sports Checks Row Check %	8 19.5%	12 29.3%	21 51.2%	41
Snowshoeing Checks Row Check %	59 57.8%	32 31.4%	11 10.8%	102
Cross-country skiing Checks Row Check %	35 50.0%	19 27.1%	16 22.9%	70
Motorized boating Checks Row Check %	3 11.1%	4 14.8%	20 74.1%	27
Snowmobiling Checks Row Check %	10 26.3%	9 23.7%	19 50.0%	38
Ice skating Checks Row Check %	12 23.1%	12 23.1%	28 53.8%	52
Total Checks Checks % of Total Checks	613 43.5%	340 24.1%	456 32.4%	1409 100.0%

35. Do you enjoy other open space and recreational activities in Blandford that aren't listed above? Please explain.



ResponseID	Response
2	ATV use on our own land gardening/farming
9	no
10	I enjoy most of these but within my own property.
12	There's no water in town that is open for swimming, fishing, or boating
18	Gardening
25	We have places to walk but need to do a better job with making them noticeable, safe, and connecting.
32	Use playground
33	No
41	Camping/ Backpacking
55	Downhill skiing
59	Quadding
60	walking in the woods
62	no



**ResponseID   Response**

70	My own property plus all state and Russell property
71	ATV Minimal
74	none
76	golf
79	Skiing but ski area closed
87	I enjoy the solitude and peace and quiet that blandford offers
91	Golf
96	downhill skiing
97	I just enjoy being outside on my property and I would like others to be able to enjoy the outdoors more if that is their gig.
99	rc flying
111	We enjoy our own property
112	some
115	golf
121	skating rinks are a good idea, just need to be maintained
125	running
150	no
153	camping peace and quiet
165	Parking and access to trails is very limited

36. Please check all of the following in Blandford that are important to you:

	Very Important	Important	Not Important	Don't Know	Responses
Protecting farmland Count Row %	120 75.5%	35 22.0%	3 1.9%	1 0.6%	159
Protecting forests/wildlife habitats Count Row %	127 80.9%	29 18.5%	1 0.6%	0 0.0%	157
Protecting water quality Count Row %	131 84.0%	25 16.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	156
Maintaining/expanding trails Count Row %	76 53.5%	46 32.4%	18 12.7%	2 1.4%	142
Preserving Blandford's rural character Count Row %	112 70.9%	37 23.4%	7 4.4%	2 1.3%	158
Preserving scenic vistas Count Row %	92 65.7%	32 22.9%	10 7.1%	6 4.3%	140
Preserving dirt roads Count Row %	78 53.4%	33 22.6%	28 19.2%	7 4.8%	146
Preserving stone walls Count Row %	81 54.4%	39 26.2%	24 16.1%	5 3.4%	149
Maintaining/ Improving recreational facilities Count Row %	62 45.9%	52 38.5%	16 11.9%	5 3.7%	135
Other: Count Row %	8 57.1%	2 14.3%	2 14.3%	2 14.3%	14

#### Totals

Total Responses

159

37. Anything else to tell us about natural areas, land conservation, open space, or recreation needs in Blandford?



## ResponseID Response

1	The City of Springfield has far too much land "locked up" in the Town of Blandford and this really ties Blandford's hands. The intent of this survey is good but the reality is that most recreational land has been placed off-limits by Springfield.
2	Preserving water quality and wildlife habitats should be the priority over any new development. We would like to see more small local businesses and would support their growth. Commercial development to bring in chain/corporate-run businesses and industrial development should be avoided at all costs.
12	Access to Springfield waterworks land for hiking, swimming, fishing, boating and mountain biking
14	The building and/or zoning depts. need to address abandoned property and property with excessive junk and non-registered vehicles. Blandford property taxes have increased too much. For the quality of the services we get taxes are way too high.
15	Addition of recreational opportunities / trails at Shepard Farm and Long Pond Conservation sites.
17	Would love to see more hiking trails, open Cobble Mountain reservoir access if only for Blandford residents. Keep Blandford rural, that's why we moved out here.

## ResponseID Response

23	Prefer the rural, small town atmosphere of the town. Do not feel small lot size, cluster homes are in keeping with that atmosphere.
25	Blandford has a Town Common, Town Center, and Watson Park that abut each other. We need to have them connect better and make them accessible and inviting for people to want to congregate and explore. Also, we have protected lands owned by the town. We need to do a better job managing them and promoting recreational activities.
26	I would like to see Cobble Mountain Road re-opened. This has adequate parking and is flat for walking and has been closed since 9/11. City of Springfield has taken over 1/2 of Blandford and our water. We should at least be able to enjoy the nature walks and be able to get exercise in a flat, open area.
29	We could sure use a town pool or beach since we can apparently no longer use Russell Pond.
30	The nature of Blandford and the limited population is what drew us here.
31	Re: Q. 30, I am not sure how much open space is protected in town. I do know that a lot of land is owned by Springfield Water Supply and we are not adequately compensated for it, nor is it available for public use.
33	Blandford is perfect as is and does not need developers to come in and destroy a lovely quiet spot in the Berkshires that I love! If that is something that gets done I will go elsewhere.
34	Can we have a moratorium on solar farms?
37	Lets take care of what we have
51	The solar areas have destroyed enough trees already
55	Opening the road to cobble mtn res would add a lot to the town; a scenic place to walk, hike, bike, and cross country ski. I wrote a letter to the state commission that is in charge of this at Joshua Garcia's suggestion. I would like to help more in this if there is something to do.
64	Consider purchasing Blandford Ski Area
70	The town is fine the way it is. I would support a basketball court, tennis court, playground, some other things for children and teens
76	I feel the area around cobble mountain reservoir should be opened up to Blandford residents

## ResponseID    Response

80	Would love if the park was better, had more plants, was more attractive. More scenic trails for public. Someday some workshops on nature, birdwatching, plant id etc. I would give plant walks since Im you local herbalist
83	How about a town pool or swim area
87	Blandford needs to expand its tax base by opening the pike entrance and allowing commercial industry into the town
91	Please no more solar projects destroying our forest land
93	Keep Blandford rural, protect our natural beauty
95	new housing construction needs to conform to the 300' frontage zoning requirement, cobble mountain and borden brook should be available for town residents for passive recreation (hiking, etc)/
96	The town should continue to support the gold course. ( and the ski area if it reopens) They are important town businesses that provide recreation
97	Connect and open up-maybe have a full time person to chair conservative board and expand public access to areas currently not as accessible
101	Town is a joke
105	Maybe entering into negotiations with springfield water and sewer about their land for hiking and mntn biking, horse back riding, and cobble mtn road for walking and biking etc
107	Natural areas very important to me
110	We enjoy our small town and all it has to offer!
112	open up more land for hunting
118	IN the 1950's the state talked about a route 23 bypass for blandford center. Now with all the stone trucks and other trucks it would be a good idea
120	you need rod and gun club
121	do not turn into a city. there is a reason people move out to the sticks
124	moved here primarily for the beauty of blandford.. have some concerns as we age that basic needs are hard to get to. groceries, milk, bread. Would not want a major grocery store here
129	turnpike exit

## ResponseID Response

130	a swimming area or co op with russell pond, inc hiking trails with maps and parking, dog park, more rec areas for kids
134	I just feel there is open space that cannot be used over 30 % of the town (again water works property)
143	dont change blandford
144	Leave things the way they are
147	blandford does not need to be built up. Revenue can be made via minimal impacting businesses such as cannabis cultivation
150	Put the ski area to some recreational use. education public about cpa, it was failed to pass in the past. Ill check on the town of blandford site
153	f arms=food
156	We love how open and rural the town is now. We would love to see more conservation areas and would strongly consider moving if the town is planning on becoming built up in the future
160	cant we build a walk/run track at the fair grounds. Rebuild horse stall at fairgrounds
161	cobble mtn area should be opened up again for walking/hiking
162	Been in town almost 50 years. Did we ever need a "master plan" and why now are you hell bent on increasing the population?
164	I would like to investigate getting a larger payment in kind from the springfield water company and opening their land to recreational use
165	Wish we had access to cobble mountain area. We really miss that
170	What's all this push for "recreation" in blandford? (And by enlarging areas would folks from other towns who don't pay taxes come and use our town for resources? (that aren't private, country club, ski area) People move here knowing what available, were not a big city so don't need town run activities, old town study found #1 reason for coming to town is rural, small, non-city, atmosphere. Once there is "development" you can't put the town back the way it was. Stop the push for expansion, those efforts that people think will bring people to live here could actually make many here leave.



Please choose the **TOP THREE** reasons why you live in Blandford. (Additional items can be added under "Other")

- Low crime rate-Not sure, we found out our neighbor was burgled 6 mo after it occurred

Please choose the **TOP FIVE** land uses you view as important. (Additional items can be added under "Other") Just hiking, nature based, no noisy ATV trails

- Wind and solar energy providers

The Town should prioritize energy efficiency, reducing emissions, and responding to the impacts of climate change

- Man doesn't affect climate change. It happens the last 4.5 billion years

Are you satisfied with the level of services provided by the Town for the following:

- Never see police-potholes are dreadful, they get filled and FAIL. Plowing is very poor and highway NEVER seems to fully complete a task. As far as administration, too much is discussed behind closed doors. TA meets individuals with selectmen and decisions are made outside of public forum. Need to fix this!
- Police all very good except enforcing laws on hunting and trespassing and about ATVs, dirtbikes (motorized), snow mobiles etc, on roads (especially dirt) and private land side roads etc. Internet service-poo, many don't have access so post town information at town office, PO, and library
- Answer on scale of 1-10 Plowing=6 Recreation 2, internet service will get better 0

Please indicate whether you are a:

- Homeowner "Not for long"

I live in:

- Two family

I would like to see the Town promote the following housing types: (Choose all that apply)

- Single family homes: "Only under current zoning"
- No Townhomes are available in Blandford
- Single family homes: but plenty of homes already here, so no need to "promote"

Do you believe there is enough housing for Blandford seniors of varying incomes and abilities?

- I don't think that matters. Plan better
- Residential/Single Fam-Yes, Multifam/elderly-No

Would you support planned affordable housing?

- For seniorsX4
- Depends on your version of affordable housing

Would you support a 1-3% surcharge on your property tax (partially matched by state funds) in support of the Community Preservation Act to preserve open space & farmland, create and support affordable housing, and preserve historic buildings and landscape?

- Agrees with all except Affordable housing X5
- Taxes are high enough now

What type of strategies should the town adopt to address future growth? Please check the answer you agree with

- We need to bring together residents already in town and have more volunteers, rather than developing to bring I more people who use services yet rarely help the town

Question	Comment
Update zoning to designate residential, commercial, and industrial districts for development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In process</li><li>• I do not want commercial development</li><li>• Didn't we just do a major revision</li><li>• No Not Needed</li></ul>
Adopt zoning to protect agricultural lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We already have</li></ul>
Limit development to the capacity of the town's water supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It's already limited</li></ul>
Revisit design standards for non residential development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Would need to review current standards</li></ul>
Create new active recreational resources such as horseback riding trails, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If these rec areas are open to hunting and fishing as well</li><li>• Plenty already. Not Needed</li></ul>
Adopt clustered homes development zoning bylaw.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cluster homes voted down already</li></ul>

Should the town encourage new commercial development?

- For open space preservation only
- There is not really any space left for either

What would you like to see in the Town of Blandford? (Choose all that apply)

- Would like more outdoor recreation
- selective small town oriented activities
- Performing arts events at the town hall gym
- Restaurants, convenience store that is open 6-7 days a week

Choose the statement that most closely reflects how you feel about the protection of open space in Blandford.

- Would like access to cobble mountain reservoir
- Too much owned sold to Springfield
- Prohibited from using Springfield water works land for recreation
- There is not much left
- open space should be open to passive recreation
- Protected now by nonuse (reservoir/water works properties) X2

Please check all of the following activities that you enjoy (in Blandford or elsewhere):

- Recreation: "We've got this"
- Walking on roads-dangerous hiking-not enough joined trails
- Cross Country Skiing: You drove out Blandford because you were rude
- Swimming: "Nowhere!"
- Motorized Boating-Do not want-Too loud
- Snowmobiling- Do not want-too loud and damaging to the environment and used on roads.  
Keep on property

Please check all of the following in Blandford that are important to you:

- Dirt roads please improve
- "Let Blandford be a quiet small town, not a city"
- As long as its not done by taking private property
- Preserving dirt roads "better maintenance would go a long way!"
- Other:
  - We need to take care of what we have
  - Preserving things important to Blandford's history by putting some money, care, and volunteer support into it (library, parks, town-owned buildings, rather than tearing down) Educate residents with accurate information and by talking to experts

General Comments:

- Many of these questions do not apply or would not work
- When I was an assessor, I concluded a study there is 40% of the town owned by spfld water, Russell watershed, and state of ma. I moved here 23 years ago and built an energy star home registered in dc. Because it was a small town!
- Why do people move to places like Blandford and then want to turn them into the places they just left. I guess city people don't understand that if they want development why didn't they stay in the city
- Want less truck traffic in center. Bring in more Cannabis, Enforce current zoning
- Between spfl water, state land, town land, municipal watershed the majority of open land will remain so.

# OPEN SPACE & RECREATION PLAN COMMUNITY MEETING



## What We've Heard!

*"Blandford has a lot of open space, great for outdoor adventures! We are minutes away from beautiful Otis Reservoir with access to a beach and boating fun!"*

*"Blandford could have recreational trails, nature activities, snow-shoeing, cross-country skiing and more that would enrich the lives of local residents and visitors for future generations!"*

*"There is wildli... compared... owls, ba... cougar... People... the..."*

Join us for a **VIRTUAL COMMUNITY MEETING** to discuss Blandford's **Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) Update!**

**WHEN:** March 30, 2021 from 6:30-8pm

**WHERE:** <https://bit.ly/310Cedk>

**Meeting ID:** 876 3062 6459

**Phone #:** +1 929 205 6099

**WHY:** Blandford's last OSRP was done 20 years ago. It is time to evaluate the Town's natural and recreational resources, areas of concern, and future needs, but we need to hear from the community.

For more information about the plan and upcoming events, please contact:

Ken Comia - [kcomia@pvpc.org](mailto:kcomia@pvpc.org)



Town of Blandford

Press Release

\*\*\*For Immediate Release\*\*\*

Re: Virtual Community Session for the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan Update

For more information, contact: Kenneth Comia, AICP

Senior Planner, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

Kcomia@pvpc.org

The Town of Blandford is updating its Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP), which will help the Town make responsible conservation and recreation decisions for the next **seven** years. By communicating a vision of Blandford as a community dedicated to environmental stewardship and equitable recreational opportunities, the OSRP will provide goals and actions for land use, open space protection, and passive and active recreational needs. Following a comprehensive citizen engagement process, the OSRP will be adopted by the Town's **Planning Board** and ultimately submitted to the **Massachusetts Department of Conservation Services** for final approval.

**Please join the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and Wildscape Design for a Virtual OSRP Community Meeting on March 30, 2021 from 6:30-8 pm.** Your input will help shape the Plan's goals, objectives, and recommendations. This online event is free and open to the public! During the meeting, Wildscape Design will introduce the project, present the work done to date, and engage participants in the development of the OSRP's goals.

Please click the link below to join the meeting via Zoom:

<https://bit.ly/310Cedk>

**Meeting ID: 876 3062 6459**

OR dial in using the provided number:

**Phone #: +1 929 205 6099**

To stay updated on the OSRP's progress, please email Ken Comia at [Kcomia@pvpc.org](mailto:Kcomia@pvpc.org). You can also follow the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission on social media:

<https://www.facebook.com/PVPlanning>

# # #





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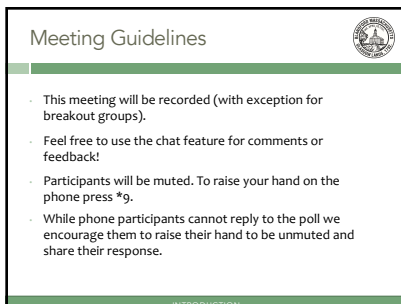
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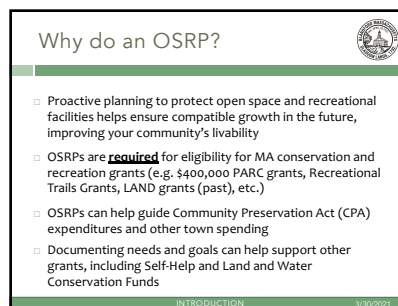
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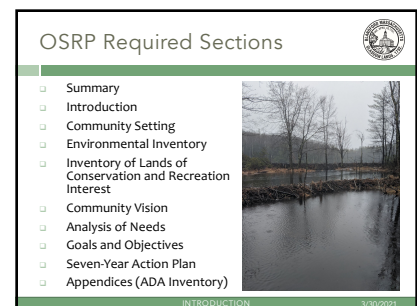
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### OSRP Process

- Obtain and analyze required data and information in OSRP's first 5 Sections
- Town Administrator appoints OSRP Advisory Committee
- Develop and distribute survey to residents
- Community meeting for further public input (tonight!)

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- Develop goals, objectives, and action items based on public input & committee guidance
- Compile draft plan & share with public and elected officials
- Public hearing for final plan later this Spring
- Submit to DCS for review, feedback, and approval

INTRODUCTION 3/30/2021

10

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### Community Engagement To Date

TOWN OF BLANDFORD  
Open Space & Recreation Plan Community Meeting

3/30/2021

11

ALEXIS

### OSRP Committee Meetings

- OSRP Advisory Committee** formed late January 2020
  - Dick Gates, Nathan Maynard, and John Piper, with support from Colleen Doyle & Joshua Garcia
- First Meeting – February 17<sup>th</sup>** – Reviewed 2003 Action Plan
- Second Meeting – March 16<sup>th</sup>** – Reviewed first drafts of Sections 2-6 (Introduction, Community Setting, Environmental Analysis, Inventory of Lands, and Community Vision)

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- Third Meeting (forthcoming)** – Agenda to include review and comments on second draft Sections and content for Sections 7-9 (with input from tonight!)

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TO DATE 3/30/2021

12

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### Resilient Master Plan (RMP)

- Town is currently working on its first official Master Plan with PVPC
- While the OSRP update is separate effort, there are many overlapping strategies and the RMP has a chapter specific to open space and natural resources
- The Resilient Master Plan Committee (RMPC) meets monthly and has shared members with the OSRP Committee:
  - Joshua Garcia (TA)
  - Kenneth Comia (PVPC) – supporting OSRP author & author of RMP Open Space & Natural Resources chapter

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TO DATE 3/30/2021

13

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### Community Survey Responses

- A community survey was developed for the RMP with specific OSRP-related questions.
- A notice with the digital survey link was posted to the RMP website, the Town's website, and through other social media.
- Hard copies of the survey were mailed to 650 households in Blandford.
- The survey was available from the mid-January through the mid-February 2021.

**170 Total Respondents**

- 67% have lived in Blandford more than 20 years
- 52% are working
- 96% own their homes

**Top 3 Reasons Why Residents Live in Blandford**

- Small-Town Atmosphere (78%)
- Open Space (75%)
- Low Crime Rate (44%)

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TO DATE 3/30/2021

14

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### Community Survey Responses

**Land Uses for open space, recreation, and conservation are very important to Blandford's residents**

Please choose the TOP FIVE land uses you view as important. (Additional items can be added under "Other")

- Forest and wildlife (92%)
- Working farms/farm stands (80%)
- Water quality and resources (65%)
- Open space for scenic value (63%)
- Spaces for recreational use (61%)

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TO DATE 3/30/2021

15

KEN

### Community Survey Responses

23. Choose the statement that most closely reflects how you feel about the protection of open space in Blandford.

- 97% of Blandford's land cover remains in a relatively "natural" state.
- Roughly half of that land is protected in perpetuity through conservation restrictions, watershed protection, or a similar form of legal protection – most of which is owned by the City of Springfield.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TO DATE 3/30/2021

16

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### Community Survey Responses

**Open Space-Related Activities Residents Enjoy:**

**Top 5 Activities that residents participate and enjoy in town**

- Bird/nature watching (64%)
- Walking (on roads) (61%)
- Snowshoeing (58%)
- Dog walking (56%)
- Hunting (52%)

**Top 5 Activities that residents participate and enjoy elsewhere**

- Swimming (75%)
- Motorized boating (68%)
- Non-motorized boating (67%)
- Ice skating (54%)
- Playing team sports (51%)

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TO DATE 3/30/2021

17

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### 2003/2004 OSRP Overview

TOWN OF BLANDFORD  
Open Space & Recreation Plan Community Meeting

3/30/2021

18

ALEXIS

### 2003 OSRP "WISHLIST"

On June 5, 2003, residents met at a workshop where they developed a "wish list" of future open space and recreation goals (organized thematically by us). This list included:

Theme	"Wish List" Item
Scenic & Community Character	Protect scenic ridgelines
	Re-establish views and vistas
	Community meeting/gathering space
	Viable Fairgrounds
	I-90 noise abatement
Parks & Commons	Address cell towers
	Interpretive/nature center (Shepherd Farm?)
	Preserve Historic Town Center (zoning?)
	Upgrade Watson Park (soccer, bathrooms)
	In-Town Rec Programming (adult & children)
	Active Recreation (T-ball, ice skating, soccer, playing fields)
	Skate park - investigate liability, feasibility

2003/2004 OSRP Overview 3/30/2021

19

ROWAN

### 2003 OSRP "WISHLIST"

Theme	"Wish List" Item
Conservation & Stewardship	Maintain existing hiking/walking trails
	Map trails
	Explore development of new trails & systems
	Promote hunter safety (esp. fishing and boating)
	Collaborate with TNC to ID and map prime wildlife habitat & corridors (see Flow Zones study)
Programming	Preserve existing farms & farmlands
	Shared transportation for cultural activities, field trips
	Expand adult & youth programming
	Engage with parents - bring parents into participatory planning roles
	Promote hunter safety (esp. fishing and boating)
	After-school or school-related programming
	4-H programming

2003/2004 OSRP Overview 3/30/2021

20

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### 2003 OSRP "WISHLIST"

**GROUP DISCUSSION**

Which items from the 2003 "Wishlist" should still be considered a top priority?

2003/2004 OSRP Overview 3/30/2021

21

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### 2003 OSRP "WISHLIST"

Scenic & Community Character	Parks & Commons	Conservation & Stewardship	Programming
Protect scenic ridgelines Re-establish views and vistas Community meeting/gathering space Viable Fairgrounds I-90 noise abatement Address cell towers Interpretive/nature center (Shepherd Farm?) Preserve Historic Town Center (zoning?)	Upgrade Watson Park (soccer, bathrooms) In-Town Rec Active Recreation (T-ball, ice skating, soccer, playing fields) Skate park - investigate liability, feasibility	Maintain existing hiking/walking trails Map trails Explore development of new trails & systems Promote hunter safety (esp. fishing and boating) Collaborate with TNC to ID and map prime wildlife habitat & corridors (see Flow Zones study) Preserve existing farms & farmlands	Shared transportation for cultural activities, field trips Expand adult & youth programming Engage with parents - bring parents into participatory planning roles Promote hunter safety (esp. fishing and boating) After-school or school-related programming 4-H programming

2003/2004 OSRP Overview 3/30/2021

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### Analysis of Needs

TOWN OF BLANDFORD  
Open Space & Recreation Plan Community Meeting

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### Analysis of Needs

A systematic examination of what is needed to achieve the community's stated goals

**CATEGORIES OF NEED**

- Resource Protection Needs
  - Open Space
- Community's Needs
  - Recreation
- Management Needs, Potential Change of Use
  - Other

ANALYSIS OF NEEDS 3/30/2021

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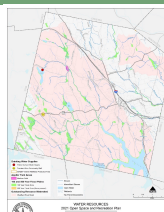
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### Resource Protection Needs

**Summary of Resource Protection Needs (Open Space & Conservation)**

**Water**

- Over 33,000 acres of Outstanding Resource Waters
- 12,000 acres of protected drinking water supply
- 8,900 acres owned by the City of Springfield (SWSR)



ANALYSIS OF NEEDS 3/30/2021

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### Resource Protection Needs

**Summary of Resource Protection Needs (Open Space & Conservation)**

**Forests & Wildlife**


Roughly 87% of Blandford is forested—the largest forest cover of any town in the Westfield River Watershed.

**BioMap2:**

1,650 acres of Core Habitat supporting species such as:

- Bridle Shiners (a minnow),
- Little Bluets (a damselfly), and
- American Bitterns (an endangered heron-like bird)

23,584 acres of Critical Natural Landscape (CNL), part of 2 of the state's largest 20 contiguous CNLs.



ANALYSIS OF NEEDS 3/30/2021

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### Resource Protection Needs

**Summary of Resource Protection Needs (Open Space & Conservation)**

- Continue to protect and preserve the quality of Blandford's surface and ground water supply,
- Explore expanding the community's agency as it relates to access and passive recreational opportunity on watershed lands,
- Safeguard the vitality of the town's farms, woodlands, and wildlands,
- Support the health of Blandford's working landscapes and wildlife habitats.

ANALYSIS OF NEEDS 3/30/2021

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## Resource Protection Needs

**POLL!**

ANALYSIS OF NEEDS 3/30/2021

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## Community's Needs

### Summary of Community's Needs (Recreation & Town Character)

Please choose the TOP FIVE land uses you view as important. (Additional items can be added under "Other")

People choose to live in Blandford for its small-town character, natural setting, and generous open space. Residents particularly value land uses such as:

- forests and wildlife,
- working farms/farm stands,
- water quality and resources (e.g., rivers and ponds),
- open space and scenic value, and
- spaces for recreational use

ANALYSIS OF NEEDS 3/30/2021

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## Community's Needs

### Summary of Community's Needs (Recreation & Town Character)

**Top-Five Rec Activities In Town:**

- Bird/nature watching
- Walking (on roads)
- Snowshoeing
- Dog walking
- Hunting

**Top-Five Rec Activities Out-of-Town:**

- Swimming
- Motorized boating
- Non-motorized boating
- Ice skating
- Playing team sports

**Implications:** Blandford's open spaces offer seasonal, passive recreational opportunity, but lack water-based recreational and active recreational (sports) opportunities.

ANALYSIS OF NEEDS 3/30/2021

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## Community's Needs

### Summary of Community's Needs (Recreation & Town Character)

- Reinforce the town's wealth of passive recreational activities through improvements and maintenance.
- Ensure areas for passive recreation are adequately accessible, especially around the Town Center.
- Expand access and opportunity for passive, water-based recreational activities, where feasible, within Blandford.

ANALYSIS OF NEEDS 3/30/2021

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## Community's Needs

**POLL!**

ANALYSIS OF NEEDS 3/30/2021

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## Management Needs, Potential Change of Use

### Summary of Management Needs

- 27% of Blandford is in Chapter 61 "current use" tax abatement programs, a 116% increase since the 2004 OSRP.
- Blandford's large tracts of open space have become attractive to solar developers—one of the state's fastest-growing segments of development.
- Blandford Ski Area shut down in 2020. The future of this 140-acre parcel is uncertain.

ANALYSIS OF NEEDS 3/30/2021

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## Management Needs, Potential Change of Use

### Summary of Management Needs

Landscapes are shaped through time by dynamic interplays between people's land use needs, ecological processes, and geophysical and climatic forces; sometimes quickly but oftentimes generationally.

- Blandford, like much of New England, is experiencing new and unplanned forms of land use development.
- Over 27% of the town's open space is sheltered only through current-use tax abatement programs, which someday expire.
- Thoughtful coordination between town boards and committees is essential to planning for preserving land in use as open space.

ANALYSIS OF NEEDS 3/30/2021

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## Management Needs, Potential Change of Use

**POLL!**

ANALYSIS OF NEEDS 3/30/2021

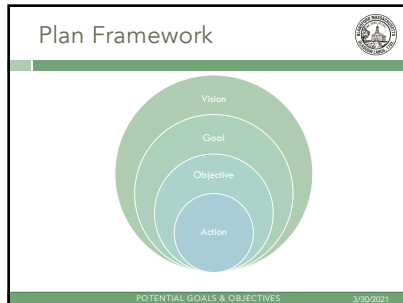
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## Potential Goals & Objectives

TOWN OF BLANDFORD  
Open Space & Recreation Plan Community Meeting

ANALYSIS OF NEEDS 3/30/2021

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KEN

POTENTIAL GOAL: Preserve Blandford's small-town atmosphere & charm, while protecting vital water resources and scenic, community character.

**Objectives**

- 1. Safeguard the quality and ecological integrity of Blandford's surface waters, upland stream corridors, riparian areas, and wetlands.
- 2. Enhance the Town Center as a livable, workable, and walkable community center, surrounded by a generous interweaving of open space.
- 3. Identify and protect scenic roadways, historical stone walls, vistas, and roadside trees, while addressing priority maintenance needs to climate-related hazard mitigation.

POTENTIAL GOALS & OBJECTIVES 3/30/2021

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POTENTIAL GOAL: Preserve Blandford's small-town atmosphere & charm, while protecting vital water resources and scenic, community character.

**POLL AND BREAKOUT GROUP!**

POTENTIAL GOALS & OBJECTIVES 3/30/2021

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ALEXIS &amp; FIONA

POTENTIAL GOAL: Conserve and steward Blandford's mosaic of forests and farms—its working landscapes—for the benefit of all present and future residents and wildlife alike.

**Objectives**

- 1. Maintain the vitality and support the expansion of Blandford's remaining working farms.
- 2. Identify unprotected parcels including large, intact forest or farmland, adjacent to existing protected open spaces, whose permanent protection would preserve the quality of water resources, wildlife habitat and corridors, and human recreation; explore tools for permanently protecting such parcels.
- 3. Encourage forms of residential development which permanently protect open space, agricultural & forestlands, and other natural resources.

POTENTIAL GOALS & OBJECTIVES 3/30/2021

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POTENTIAL GOAL: Conserve and steward Blandford's mosaic of forests and farms—its working landscapes—for the benefit of all present and future residents and wildlife alike.

**POLL AND BREAKOUT GROUP!**

POTENTIAL GOALS & OBJECTIVES 3/30/2021

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ALEXIS &amp; FIONA

POTENTIAL GOAL: Enhance existing recreational opportunities and access within Blandford, while expanding access to recreational opportunities currently unavailable in town.

**Objectives**

- 1. Expand multi-use trail systems and connections to existing trails, parks, and cultural destinations; designate trail uses appropriately based on the proximity to core habitats and critical landscapes.
- 2. Form partnerships between town boards and committees, and with outside recreational organizations, to explore new programming opportunities.
- 3. Continue engaging Springfield on the topic of public access to Cobble Mountain Reservoir and Long Pond Reservoir watershed lands.

POTENTIAL GOALS & OBJECTIVES 3/30/2021

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POTENTIAL GOAL: Enhance existing recreational opportunities and access within Blandford, while expanding access to recreational opportunities currently unavailable in town.

**POLL AND BREAKOUT GROUP!**

POTENTIAL GOALS & OBJECTIVES 3/30/2021

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**Wrap-Up**

TOWN OF BLANDFORD  
Open Space & Recreation Plan Community Meeting

POTENTIAL GOALS & OBJECTIVES 3/30/2021

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**Next Steps**

- Draft to be reviewed by the Committee
- Public Hearing for finalized plan later this spring

**QUESTIONS? Contact:**

Rowan Cignoni: wildscapedesignllc@gmail.com  
Ken Comia: kcomia@pvpc.org

WRAP-UP 3/30/2021

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## Appendix D: Letters of Support



Kimberly H. Robinson, MUP  
Executive Director

June 30, 2021

Ms. Melissa Cryan  
EOEEA – DCS  
100 Cambridge Street, 9th Floor  
Boston, MA 02114

Dear Ms. Cryan:

The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) supports the Town of Blandford's 2021 Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP). PVPC worked closely with the Town of Blandford and its Open Space and Recreation Plan Update Committee over the last year in support of this plan update, and finds the plan consistent with DCS requirements and the recommendations of the regional land use plan Valley Vision 4.

The Blandford OSRP update committee went far beyond simply updating tables and figures, and instead developed a foundational document that will be a launching pad for a number of discreet open space and recreation initiatives in the coming 7-years. The greatest need that came out of the planning process was to continue working with Springfield Water and Sewer Commission to understand the Conservation Restrictions (CRs) on lands that Blandford previously enjoyed for recreation prior to September 11<sup>th</sup> and to maximize use of these lands for their intended purposes.

The plan recommends several actions that PVPC supports and has encouraged in the region for several years including seeking permanent protection for ecologically sensitive open space parcels, and enhancing the capacity of natural systems to help mitigate the impacts of climate change. Acknowledging that much of Blandford is difficult to develop due to difficult slopes, the committee examined many resource protection tools including limiting development, regulatory controls such as conservation zoning, and the Community Preservation Act funding mechanism. Some recreational needs can be met with an expansion of programming and partnerships related to trails and open space opportunities.

In summary, PVPC fully supports the submission of Blandford's 2021 Open Space and Recreation Plan update.

Sincerely,

Kimberly H. Robinson  
Executive Director  
Pioneer Valley Planning Commission