



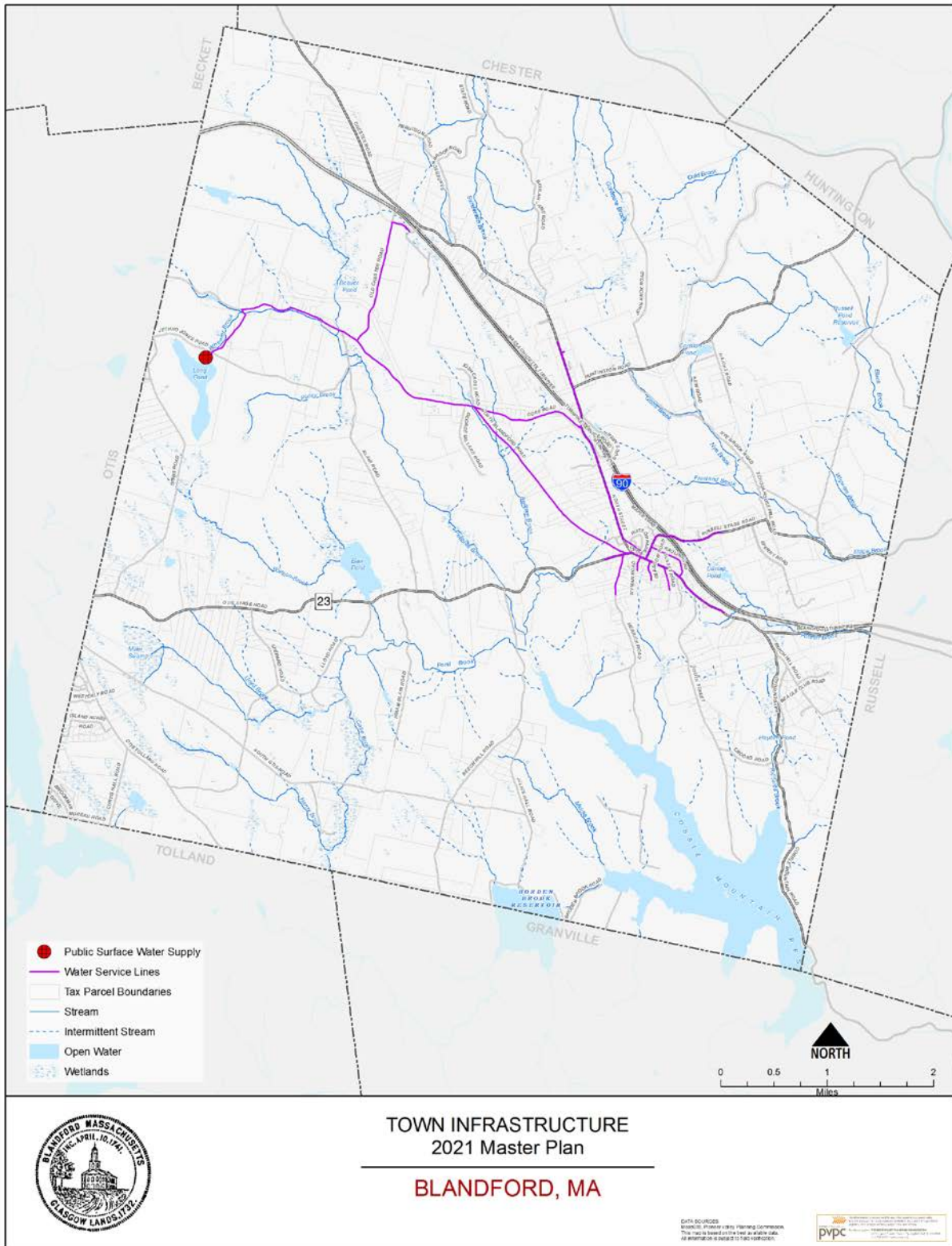
## PUBLIC SERVICES AND FACILITIES ELEMENT TECHNICAL PAPER

The life blood of any community are the services that it provides its residents. Police, fire and public works, along with the infrastructure that is necessary for these services, are vital for the city to function properly. Likewise, local decisions about how and what public services and facilities are funded and built will be critical in determining the direction the town takes in future development and continued governance.

### **Some Key Findings:**

- Generally, residents are satisfied with the level of public services they receive from the town.
- The Town takes advantage of state programs that exist to help fund building and infrastructure improvements in Blandford, like the *Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness* program which helps towns plan for and implement resiliency projects that respond to climate change risks, and *Green Communities* program that will help fund energy efficiency upgrades to municipal buildings.
- Blandford has an aging population that is overwhelmingly interested in aging in place. Public services and facilities will need to be expanded and adjusted to meet the needs of this demographic.

# Map 8-1 Infrastructure Map



# INVENTORY AND EXISTING CONDITIONS

## INFRASTRUCTURE

### *Public Water*

According to the most recently posted 2017 Annual Drinking Water Quality Report, the Town of Blandford relies on one source of supply, the Long Pond Reservoir which located in the western part of Blandford. The reservoir is approximately 1 mile long by 0.25 miles at its widest point with a surface area of 81 acres and a hydraulic grade elevation of 1,544 feet. Water from the reservoir is processed at the Long Pond Water Treatment Facility, which has a maximum capacity of 250,000 gallons per day.<sup>1</sup> As the sole public water source for the town, this reservoir is an invaluable asset that is protected as best as it can be by an overlay district which restricts development that may impinge on the water resource. Map 8-1 has the water service lines and public service water supply.

### *Wastewater*

Blandford does not have a public sewer service or wastewater treatment. Development in town utilize 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.

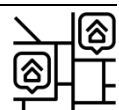
### *Dams*

The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation Office of Dam Safety is the agency responsible for regulating dams in the state. To be regulated, these dams are in excess of 6 feet in height and have more than 15 acre feet of storage capacity. The dam regulations enacted in 2005 transferred significant responsibilities for dams from the state to dam owners, including the responsibility to conduct dam inspections.

According to the Office of Dam Safety, Blandford has eight dams located in town. The dams include:

<b>Dam Name</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Hazard Potential</b>
Beaver Pond	City of Springfield, Water and Sewer Commission	N/A
Black Brook Dam	Town of Russell, Board of Water Commission	High
Borden Brook Reservoir	City of Springfield, Water and Sewer Commission	High
Dunlap Pond Dam	Non-jurisdictional	N/A
Huntington Water Works	Town of Huntington, Board of Selectmen	N/A
Long Pond Dam	Town of Blandford, Board of Water Commissioners	Significant

<sup>1</sup> Town of Blandford Water Department, 2017 Annual Drinking Water Quality Report



No Name	Non-jurisdictional	N/A
Peck Lumber	Town of Blandford, Board of Water Commissioners	N/A

High hazard dams are classified as likely to cause loss of life and damage to property and infrastructure, where significant hazard dams may cause loss of life and damage to the property.

### ***Telecommunications/IT***

The availability of broadband technology plays a major role in advancing development, where as the saying goes, “Be Wired or Be Fired”. Companies are less likely to move to a community that does not have dependable broadband service. Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, broadband and high-speed internet connections are necessary for those residents who needed to work from home.

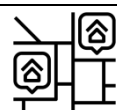
Currently, Blandford has moderate broadband internet coverage, with seven internet providers with four providers serving residents. In addition to the more typical internet servicers, the town is nearing complete construction and connectivity at the end of 2021 for a fiber optic network provided by Whip City Fiber of Westfield, Massachusetts. This was made possible by initiatives from the town committee, Blandford Municipal Light Board.

## **MUNICIPAL FACILITIES & SERVICES**

### ***Town Hall (& Shared Police Department), 1 Russell Stage Road***

The Town Hall and Shared Police Department (with Town of Chester) share a building at 1 Russell Stage Road. Most of the town government, its boards and commissions are based at the Town Hall. Some of the departments and boards are listed below:

- Building Department
- Police Department (Shared with Town of Chester)
- Tax Collector
- Town Clerk
- Select Board
- Board of Assessors
- Board of Health
- Conservation Commission
- Finance Committee
- Planning Board
- Council on Aging
- Arts Council
- Municipal Light Board
- Zoning Board of Appeals
- Cemetery Commission
- Treasurer
- Recreation Committee
- Town Administrator



The hours of operations for each department and board vary. Some town services are available online, through the Town’s website. Residents can access municipal information, download permit and application forms, and pay bills online. Unlike some towns of a similar size, Blandford does have its own building inspector. This is a critical position for the efficient implementation of community development and economic development strategies.

Community survey results indicate general satisfaction with the majority of town services. The sentiment regarding town services seem to align with many of the issues and opportunities captured elsewhere in this plan.

#### *Council on Aging: Center for Active Adults*

With an aging Baby Boomer population and people living longer than previous generations, the number of residents living over the age of 60 will be higher than in previous generations. As a result, communities need to ensure that town services and the built environment meet the need of this growing population. In 2019, 273 residents, or 25% of the total Blandford population, were age 65 years old or older. This is up from 104 residents and 9% of the population in 2010.

The Council on Aging serves Blandford’s seniors and the rest of the community by organizing and hosting social and health-related activities and keeping seniors informed about available programs and resources. The Council on Aging operates its programming at the Town Offices at 1 Russell Stage Road.

Some of the activities that the Council of Aging supports include book clubs, field trips, exercise opportunities, social hours, meals, etc. In 2020, the Council on Aging began “Need a Ride,” a program to take seniors to various appointments, as well as shopping. The program is assisted by volunteer drivers who are able to take seniors outside of Blandford, on an as-needed basis.

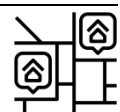
According to the community survey, the ability for the COA to provide transportation to appointments has been an added benefit for the senior services in town. However, transportation services can be improved, with considerations presented in the *Mobility* section of this Plan.

#### *Chester Blandford Police Department*

The Chester Blandford Police Department combined the two municipalities’ police departments, with the formation of an inter-municipal agreement, funded by a Community Compact grant. The grant paid for purchase of dual band portable radios, digital vehicle repeater systems, standardization of uniforms and patches, re-marking of cruisers and legal and consulting costs for the shared service agreement. Both towns have part-time police departments generally providing less than 25 hours of patrol per week, with additional coverage by the Massachusetts State Police, led by a chief of police employed by both communities. The police department budget is split 50/50 between Blandford and Chester.

#### ***Porter Memorial Library, 87 Main Street***

The town’s public library was constructed along Main Street in 1892 and is named in memory of Edgar Sheffield Porter, the son of summer resident Josephine Porter. The library is a community asset that is in the vicinity the town offices, general store, post office, Watson Park, all contributing



to the look and feel of the traditional rural town center. The library is open Monday through Friday 2PM – 6PM and Saturday from 10 AM – 4 PM.

The town library, led by the Library Director and the Board of Trustees, offers programming, books and media resources for the community. Recently, Porter Memorial Library has digitized its entire catalog in order to become a member of the Central and Western Massachusetts Automated Resource Sharing (CW/MARS) network. With this digitization process, residents have access to 8.1 million items waiting to be enjoyed in the shared catalog.

The library relies on funding from the town for its operation, along with foundations, state grants and individual giving.

During the pandemic, the library has become even more important, especially in collaboration with the school system. This past year the library expanded its services by providing curbside pick-up. The library recently was awarded a Libraries Transforming Communities Grant from the American Library Association, which will allow for construction and installation of a permanent story walk along the paths in Watson Park.

Continuing its important role in the community, 2020 has been a year where over 1 million audio and e-books were checked out in the CW/MARS system that the library belongs to – the highest year ever for digital checkouts.

### ***Transfer Station, 20 Huntington Road***

Trash and recycling services are maintained by the town at the Transfer Station at 20 Huntington Road. The transfer station is open two days a week to residents with a valid transfer station sticker. Comments from the community survey suggest the transfer station is very well run, organized, and effective.

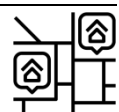
### ***Blandford Fire Department, 93 Main Street***

The Blandford Fire Department operates out of the firehouse facility at 93 Main Street in the center of town. The firehouse also serves as the Emergency Operation Center. The Hazard Mitigation Plan had identified that the Department faces challenges due to the inadequacy of the firehouse and its trucks. The firehouse is so small that a regular size fire truck would not fit and the small Blandford trucks have only inches of room to back-in. Multiple planning efforts (Hazard Mitigation Plan, Community Building Workshop Summary of Findings) suggest the Fire Department be moved to the current Highway Department facility. The fire department had the most positive responses with regards to satisfaction with level of town services in the community survey (Question #5).

The all-volunteer Fire Department is overseen by a part-time Fire Chief.

### ***Blandford Highway Department, 114 Otis Stage Road***

The Highway Department garage is located at 114 Otis Stage Road, however, the salt shed is not located at the same site. According to both the Hazard Mitigation Plan and the Community Resilience Building Workshop Summary of Findings, the Department struggles with having their equipment in multiple places, and a possible relocation and expansion at salt shed had been identified to house all Highway Department vehicles and equipment. This centralization of town



highway services would allow for maximizing their environmentally-friendly products being used for winter weather road preparation, in place of the typical sanding and salting.

Plowing and road maintenance had the second most positive responses of satisfaction with level of town services in the community survey (Question #5). Road maintenance is addressed in the *Transportation* element of this Plan.

### ***Blandford Long Pond Reservoir Water Treatment Plant***

The Blandford Water Department provides water to approximately 67% of the Town's population. There are a total of 238 connections, including two Interstate 90 (Massachusetts Turnpike) service areas, serving an estimated 875 people. Blandford Water Department is supplied solely from Long Pond Reservoir. The treatment plant, located adjacent to Long Pond, went online in July 2007 with an average day design flow of 130,000 gpd. The treatment process consists of a packaged enhanced slow sand filtration system.

Existing infrastructure includes two aged water storage tanks which are in disrepair, town water lines, a pump house to support the reservoir and water treatment plant. Due to the pump station and water treatment plant (WTP) not being automated, they are currently not up to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)'s standards. It has been identified that sometimes the WTP sometimes experiences chlorine leaks due to outdated system technology. Improvements

## **ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

### ***Water Infrastructure – Wells, Septic Systems, and Public Services***

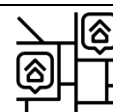
Although the town does not currently provide public sewer infrastructure there are potential future situations where such infrastructure could be considered.

It has also been observed that some areas, particularly near the Muddy Brook Valley, where there may exist large stones and boulders left as glacial debris can be a severe limitation for septic systems. Although these are private systems, if unchecked, these systems could lead to public health concerns and the contamination of water resources. In town, requiring buffer areas and updating regulations concerning development next to water bodies should be considered, along with stormwater management regulations.

### ***Building Maintenance and Accessibility***

As a small town with finite resources, the continued maintenance and operations of public buildings can be a strain. Additionally, several of the town's properties are in need of substantial capital improvements. Blandford does not have a facilities department to oversee a centralized facility management plan and program and capital improvement plan and program for the town. It is recommended that the Town develop and implement a Capital Improvement Budget and Plan, with assistance from a Capital Improvement Planning Committee.

Community Development Block Grants can be used to fund accessibility upgrades where identified, but not general building maintenance.



## ***Municipal Vulnerability and Hazard Mitigation Planning***

According to the community survey, 61.4% of respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement that the “town should prioritize energy efficiency, reducing emissions, and responding to the impacts of climate change.” New development should support adaptation to anticipated climatic changes and should align with statewide and regional goals towards reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. It is well established that climate change is currently adding and will increasingly add stress to the municipal infrastructure and facilities that keep Towns like Blandford running, both day-to-day, and in the crisis times of natural emergencies.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) define Hazard Mitigation as any sustained action taken to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to people and property from natural hazards such as flooding, storms, high winds, hurricanes, wildfires, earthquakes, etc. Mitigation efforts undertaken by communities will help to minimize damages to buildings and infrastructure, such as water supplies, sewers, and utility transmission lines, as well as natural, cultural and historic resources.

Planning efforts make mitigation a proactive process. Pre-disaster planning emphasizes actions that can be taken before a natural disaster occurs. Future property damage and loss of life can be reduced or prevented by a mitigation program that addresses the unique geography, demography, economy, and land use of a community within the context of each of the specific potential natural hazards that may threaten a community. Preparing a Local Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan before a disaster occurs can save the community money and will facilitate post- disaster funding. Costly repairs or replacement of buildings and infrastructure, as well as the high cost of providing emergency services and rescue/recovery operations, can be avoided or significantly lessened if a community implements the mitigation measures detailed in the Plan. FEMA requires that a community adopt a pre-disaster mitigation plan as a condition for mitigation funding.

Blandford developed a Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) in 2016 with assistance from the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission. This plan will be due for an update in the coming year as MEMA requires that HMP plans be updated every five years.

Recognizing that climate change will continue to exacerbate the threats and hazards Massachusetts communities face, the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) created the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) grant program. Blandford’s Resilient Master Plan is being funded through this program. This program provides funding for towns to plan for and implement climate-change resiliency projects. The town remains eligible to apply for action grants to fund resiliency projects.

