



# 2019 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

## TOWN OF UPTON, MA



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This plan was financed through the Massachusetts Community Compact Cabinet Program

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## INTRODUCTION



The Town of Upton partnered with the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) to develop an Economic Development Strategy Plan (EDSP) between 2018 and 2019. This document establishes baseline existing conditions driving the town's economy and provides a five-year action plan to support economic growth in Upton. Building off an existing body of work and utilizing the most recent data plus input from the community, CMRPC has been able to establish a strategic plan for enhancing local economic development in Upton. **This report will lay out a strategic plan including specific goals to help local stakeholders and Town staff capitalize on the town's existing historical, cultural, and economic assets.** This plan was financed through the Massachusetts Community Compact Cabinet Program.

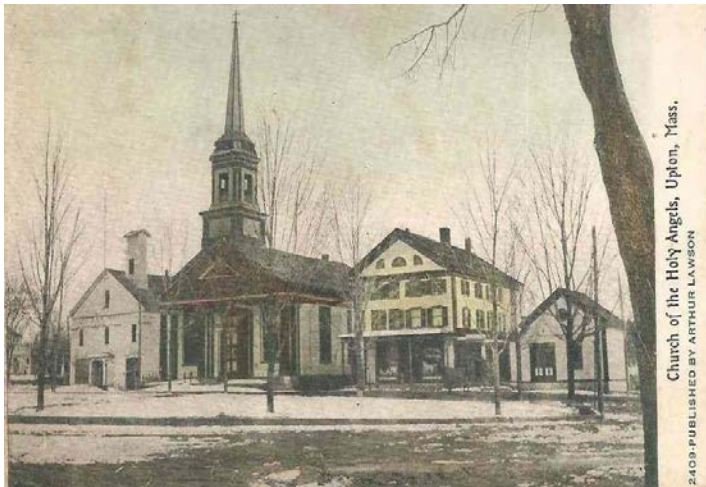
This comprehensive economic development plan is the culmination of discussions between the Economic Development Committee, Town staff, and the CMRPC Project Team. To establish base line conditions an extensive data collection, mapping, and analysis process took place. The Project Team worked with locals to identify a community vision for Upton's future. Subsequently the town's opportunities and challenges for economic development were identified.

A particular focus was paid to enhancing Upton's downtown and simultaneous efforts to redevelop and re-zone the town center have complemented strategic economic planning. Consultants Dodson & Flinker led a public outreach process to revitalized Upton Center and these events have provided significant opportunities to discuss economic development planning. Many communities focus their resources on the town centers when laying out an economic development plan. For small towns in New England, town centers breathe life into typically quiet, residential communities. These centers of commerce and community contain mixed-use buildings and provide spaces for people to live, work, shop, and gather. Town centers aim to be walkable and bike-able, incorporate open space and historic sites, and have characteristics of traditional, compact New England villages.

This plan was financed through the

Massachusetts Community Compact Cabinet Program

# History



Upton is a small, suburban town located in the Blackstone Valley of Central Massachusetts. Incorporated in 1735, Upton has an economic history rooted in agriculture, craftsmanship and manufacturing. While the Town was not proximate to a major water source necessary to power the large-scale manufacturing mills prevalent in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Upton residents utilized smaller mills to build a prosperous boot and shoe industry.

Along with the development of the boot and shoe industry, Upton women were braiding straw hats in homes and small shops. Led by the entrepreneurial genius of William Knowlton, this cottage business resulted in the largest hat factory in the world, employing over 1,000 workers. Many female workers migrated from other New England States and Canada to work in the hat factories. Numerous social functions, including dancing, were provided for these young girls and their escorts. This social activity earned Upton the nickname “Capertown”, a designation that persisted into the twentieth century.

Rail service came to Upton in 1871 and until 1920, Upton residents could travel to Milford, Boston and Worcester on the Upton Street Railway. This trolley line connected West Upton to Upton Center and had stops on the Grafton and Upton Railroad as well.<sup>1</sup> [Upton’s Heritage, The History of a Massachusetts Town, Donald Blake Johnson, 1984]

By 1940, residents began to commute to work in surrounding communities at factories manufacturing products such as military equipment and automobiles. The town’s population expanded significantly in the 1980’s, as people were drawn to Upton’s small size, good school system, open space, and commuting distance to jobs. Upton continues to maintain its small-town charm by managing growth, providing for open space, operating an excellent regional school system, hosting an award winning Vocational Technical High School, and providing services that ensure quality of life for its citizens.

## HISTORIC BUILDINGS

The Town Common was historically the center of social, religious, and economic activity in Upton. Most of the buildings surrounding the common date to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. A few notable buildings include:

### UPTON TOWN HALL

- Built in 1884 and designed by architect Elbridge Boyden & Son – the same firm that designed Mechanics Hall in Worcester.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid



- Listed on Massachusetts Register of Historic Places and National Register of Historic Places for architectural and historical significance.
- The Town Hall underwent an extensive historic renovation in 2013-14 and was re-dedicated on September 24, 2014 – 130 years to the day from the original dedication in 1884.
- The renovated Town Hall serves as a focal point for a revitalized Upton Center.

Town Hall in the 1920's



Town Hall Today



## CHURCHES

- Holy Angels Church was built in 1848 as the First Unitarian Society but later purchased by the Catholic bishop of Springfield in 1874.
- Methodist Episcopal Church was built in 1876 and later purchased by the town. It is currently home for the Town Library and Historical Society Museum. The church building was donated to the town in 1970 (and named the Knowlton-Risteen building) when two parishes voted to merge into the current United Parish. The building now houses the town library and Historical Society Museum.
- United Parish Church was built in 1848 and celebrated its 150<sup>th</sup> dedication anniversary in 1998. The United Parish is currently home to a pre-school and a vibrant congregation.

## UPTON GRANGE HALL

- One of only a few of its kind still standing in the Blackstone Valley, the Grange Hall on Warren Street is a reminder of the once prominent Order of the Patrons of Husbandry, an organization established as a social and educational group for farmers in 1867.
- Grange members still meet here on a regular basis.

## POLLY DEAN BRADISH HOUSE

- This home was built in 1844 and was one of two known stations in Upton on the Underground Railroad.
- Polly Dean Bradish is said to have moved more than 500 slaves through her home.

## KNOWLTON HAT FACTORY

In 1835 William Knowlton and William Legg formed a business partnership that spawned the creation of the hat factory. In 1845 William Legg retired, and was replaced by Joseph F. Farnum who was in a partnership with



Knowlton for a short time. When he retired, Knowlton carried on the business until his sons became of age. This is when the business was named "William Knowlton and Sons."

The factory was expanded in 1872 with the addition of a tower and later an office. This date is in cement over the front door. By this time the factory had become the biggest women's hat factory in the world. Other buildings were added through the years, most notably a large addition of a wing in the rear of the shop in 1908. In 1925 the shop was bought by the Merrimack Hat Company, makers of wool and fur hats, who continued operation until 1952 when the shop was sold to Charles Kartiganer. Shortly following Kartiganer's takeover he sold the business to Lish Industries, where in 1972 it again changed hands and was bought by Millhaus Trust. The factory building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982. It was converted into senior housing in 1985.



## MAP 1 | UPTON IN A REGIONAL CONTEXT



MassGIS Community Boundaries from Survey Points: last updated March 2017

# Economic Development Strategic Planning

In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, many former centers of manufacturing transitioned to bedroom communities for larger cities. Upton's easy access to Worcester, Boston, and Providence has allowed the town to maintain a robust housing market with ample open space and a comparatively high standard of living. However, by shifting the local economy away from the once-thriving manufacturers and town center, and limiting pedestrian-scale development, it has stifled the ability of businesses in the town center to flourish. The nation's captivation with automobile-oriented development contributed to the rise of regional shopping centers located outside of Upton, thus creating an even greater challenge for local businesses to succeed and for workers to find nearby employment.

"Upton Center has experienced a slow decline in vitality over the past decades. Foot traffic has declined. Businesses have come and gone. The Holy Angels church, an anchor institution in the area, shut its doors. Several buildings have been removed and not replaced. Others suffer from deferred maintenance and/or vacancy. The number of civic events in the Center has declined. Property values in Upton Center, and by extension tax revenues, have not kept pace with other parts of the town." <sup>2</sup>

This EDSP aims to reimagine economic centers of Upton and take proactive steps to reclaim these spaces as community-oriented, economic destinations. Economic Development Goals from the Town Master Plan 2005:

*Goal: Encourage economic development that maintains a balance between resident's preferences for limited, selective commercial/industrial growth while recognizing that increasing Upton's 3.5% commercial/industrial tax base will lessen the residential property tax burden.*

*Key Strategies: Revitalize and expand Upton's Development & Industrialization Committee; develop the Town's grant writing capacity; initiate a town center revitalization program.*

In 2018, the Board of Selectmen voted to appoint a new Economic Development Committee to replace the Development & Industrialization Committee that has been dormant for many years. The primary focus of the Economic Development Committee was the revitalization of the Upton Center.

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<sup>2</sup> Upton Center Final Report, Dodson & Flinker, May 3, 2019

## Prior Efforts

The Town of Upton has a number of previous plans and reports to help form the basis of facilitating economic development, including: Upton Master Plan (2005), Open Space Project (2007), Open Space and Recreation Plan (2011), Housing Production Plan (2012), and Complete Streets Prioritization Plan (2018). The Town is also conducting multiple related projects that are ongoing.

The 2005 Master Plan, while now in need of an update, is the comprehensive guiding document for Upton. Its key strategies for economic development include revitalizing and expanding the Town's Development & Industrialization Committee, developing the Town's grant writing capacity, and initiating a Town Center revitalization program. In the Land Use Chapter of the Master Plan, it stated:

"The Town Center should be improved and enhanced through a combination of mixed use village scale zoning and a town center improvement plan. Transportation improvements should be sensitive to the unique, pedestrian scale of the center and future development should be of a traditional form where mixed use and a diversity of housing types prevail."

The 2007 Upton Open Space Project was an extensive evaluation of various aspects of the landscape in Upton, including cultural, historic, and ecological elements. The following recommendations related to economic development in Upton Center were extracted from the action plan of this project:

- Protect the historic district from Elm Street to West Upton
- Pursue designation as a historic district
- Prepare GIS inventory of sites
- Seek grants for streetscape improvements
- Plan for historically-sensitive improvements to road corridor
- Adjust zoning to promote restoration and adaptive reuse
- Celebrate district with tours, maps, and outreach

The 2011 Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) acts as a guide for the Town's policy related to matters on open space and recreation. While this document does not specifically discuss economic development, it is a useful reference when considering components such as the town's land use and zoning, eco-tourism, water and sewer infrastructure, and more. Since Upton has a vastly forested landscape and values its open space, it will be important for decisions related to economic development to consider any impacts on the town's natural resources.

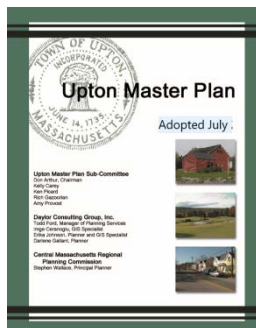
The 2012 Housing Production Plan identifies housing needs within the community, with a focus on affordable housing needs, and creates a strategic plan to create more affordable housing. Housing and economic development are closely interrelated, as the town aims to create diverse jobs along with affordable housing options for the workforce. This Plan recommended the Town allow multi-family homes by-right in Upton Center and that the Town promote mixed-use development.

The most recent ongoing effort is the 2018 Economic Development Committee (EDC) Core Principles for Revitalized Upton Center. The EDC is stewarding the revitalization of Upton Center according to five core principles. The core principles, which were confirmed through the Working Group and Public Input process, call for the future Upton Center to be:

- **VIBRANT**
  - Create a re-invigorated and welcoming Upton Center
  - Provide reasons for people to come to Upton Center
- **DIVERSE**
  - Include mixed-use retail and residential
  - Encourage small/home businesses to locate in Upton Center
  - Town Hall and possible Community Center
- **WALKABLE**
  - Improve traffic flow—work with state on roundabout
  - Improve pedestrian safety, sidewalks, crosswalks, and street lighting
  - Future-Connect to Heritage Park, Pratt Pond
- **RETAIN A NEW ENGLAND LOOK AND FEEL**
  - **Reflect the Historical Nature of Upton Center and Town Values**

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## 2005 MASTER PLAN



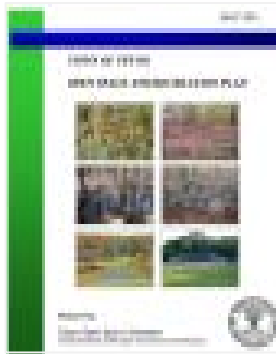
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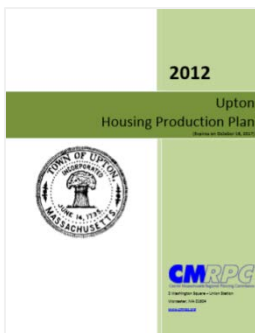
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## 2011 OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN (OSRP)



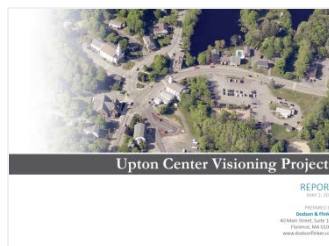
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## 2012 HOUSING PRODUCTION PLAN



The 2012 Housing Production Plan identifies housing needs within the community, with a focus on affordable housing needs, and creates a strategic plan to create more affordable housing. Housing and economic development are closely interrelated, as the town aims to create diverse jobs along with affordable housing options for the workforce. This Plan recommended the Town allow multi-family homes by-right in the Town Center and that the Town promote mixed-use development.

## 2018 UPTON CENTER VISIONING PROJECT



The most recent ongoing effort is the 2018 Economic Development Committee (EDC) Core Principles for Revitalized Upton Center. The Upton EDC is stewarding the revitalization of Upton Center and as part of this effort they developed five core principles. The core principles, which will be confirmed or revised through the Working Group and Public Input process, currently call for the future Upton Center to be Vibrant, Diverse, Walkable, retain a New England look and feel, and reflect the Historical Nature of Upton Center and Town Values.

## TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

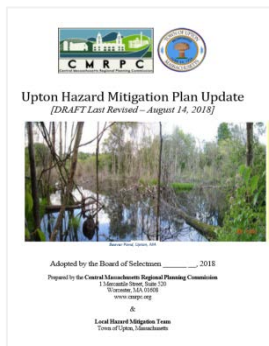
Multiple transportation projects are planned for Upton which will improve existing infrastructure and create safer routes for pedestrians and cyclists. Projects on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) include the resurfacing of Route 140 from Williams Street to Brooks Street/ Elm Street in 2021, reconstruction of High Street and Hopkinton Road in 2019, and Phase II of reconstruction of Hartford Avenue North and High Street in 2020. The Complete Streets Funding Program improvements for Upton Center are designated for Upton's third year of funding and the proposals include Milford Street realignment, plus adding sidewalks, curb ramps, and parking spaces to Main Street, Church Street, and North Main Street.



## GREEN COMMUNITIES

Green Communities Division (GCD) falls under the state agency Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources and provides grants, technical assistance, and local support from Regional Coordinators to help municipalities reduce energy use and costs by implementing clean energy projects in municipal buildings, facilities, and schools. Upton became a green community in December of 2014 receiving two Green Communities grant awards. The first in 2014 for \$148,350 to fund installation of idle reduction systems on a police cruiser and the following energy conservation measure; in Memorial School; digital direct controls (DDC) system optimization, demand control ventilation, refrigeration controls, exterior LED lighting, weatherization upgrades, and variable frequency drives for heating ventilation units; lighting upgrades at the Wastewater Treatment Plant and DPW facility; and weatherization at the Fire Station. The second grant in 2016 for \$170,549 to fund conservation measures at the Police and Fire Station, LED lighting retrofit, and an upgrade for the HVAC systems and controls; and at the Wastewater Treatment Plant, building weatherization improvements.

## HAZARD MITIGATION PLANNING



Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) programs provide funding for eligible activities that are consistent with the National Mitigation Frameworks' Long-Term Vulnerability Reduction capability. HMA program reduce community vulnerability to disasters and their effect, promote individual and community safety and resilience, and promote community vitality after an incident. Furthermore, HMA programs reduce response and recovery resource requirements in the wake of a disaster or incident, which results in safer community that is less reliant on external financial assistance.

# Process and Methodology

## PROCESS OVERVIEW

The EDC engaged the consulting firm of Dodson & Flinker to help facilitate the process of creating a shared vision for what a revitalized Upton Center could be. The following is a summary of the process facilitated by Dodson & Flinker during the period of January-May 2019 leading to a presentation at the Annual Town Meeting on May 5, 2019

### ENGAGE A BROAD CROSS-SECTION OF RESIDENTS TO CREATE A SHARED VISION FOR UPTON CENTER

Dodson & Flinker helped us understand the need to engage a broad cross-section of the community in order to reach consensus on a shared vision for the revitalization of Upton Center. The first Community Meeting was held on January 23, 2019, and was attended by over 130 people. The purpose of this meeting was for the facilitators to explain the process that would be used to help achieve consensus. Themes that arose from this initial meeting included:

- 1) Upton Center is the heart of civic life in Upton
- 2) Elements such as the Town Common, some sidewalks, historic buildings, municipal functions, and existing businesses are already in place for a vibrant center
- 3) Opportunity to expand the tax base
- 4) Opportunity for places to live, work, and play
- 5) Opportunity for connectivity through safe, walk-able streets and paths

### INITIAL PUBLIC WORKSHOP JANUARY 23 2019

During this time, the EDC met with Town boards (including: Police/Fire, Men's Club, Board of Selectmen and Code Enforcement, Council on Aging and Disability Committee, CPC, Library Trustees, Conservation Commission, Historical Commission, Community Center Feasibility, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals), civic groups (Grange, Historical Society), residents, and business owners to explain process and help build consensus.

Following the initial public workshop, the facilitators asked for volunteers to form a Working Group. About 40 residents volunteered. The Working Group members represented a broad cross-section of groups such as the EDC, Historical Commission, Library Trustees, Conservation Commission, Code Enforcement, School Committee, VFW, etc. The Working Group sessions were led by the facilitators and focused on Upton Center, however many topics discussed were applicable to the town as a whole. These sessions helped to identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities in regards to business and community development in Upton Center. In addition, a full-day workshop open to the general public was held on a Saturday in March at which over 60 people attended.

Working Group meetings were held in March and April. The facilitator created conceptual drawings and took diligent notes based on discussions with the Working Group. Following the significant public outreach process, a consensus on what a revitalized Upton Center could look like was established. The Shared Vision is documented in a comprehensive final report prepared by Dodson & Flinker. <sup>[2]</sup>

## SHARED VISION PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION AT MAY TOWN MEETING

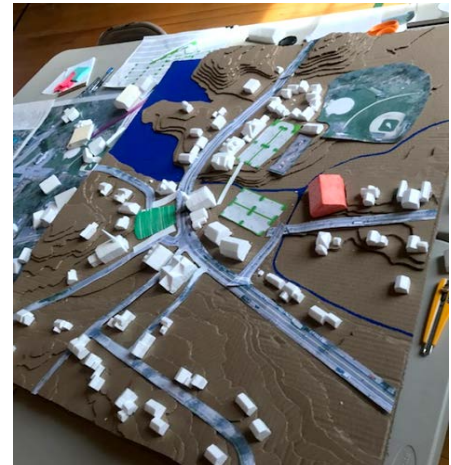
The next step of the process was to present and discuss the Shared Vision at the Annual Town Meeting in May 2019. The EDC presented the process used to arrive at the consensus while Working Group members presented the consensus reached for the Shared Vision. The presentation concluded in the overwhelming support from Town Meeting to move forward with the Shared Vision.

## REVISE UPTON CENTER ZONING TO SUPPORT SHARED VISION

Following the vote to move forward with the Shared Vision, the EDC began work on creating the Upton Center Business District (UCBD) Zone and Table of Allowed Uses. Working closely with the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Code Enforcement and other town departments, the EDC prepared an article for the Fall Town Meeting to change the zoning by-laws and Table of Allowed Uses to create a new district called the UCBD as shown on the map below.

In addition, the EDC also created a new Shared Parking By-law that would encourage shared parking wherever practical and agreeable to all parties. This by-law would help reduce the amount of parking spaces typically required for commercial and residential development. The EDC mailed letters to residents in the proposed UCBD zone and held an informational meeting on October 17, 2019. The Planning Board held a public hearing on the UCBD on October 22, 2019 to consider public feedback prior to the bylaw being brought to Fall Town Meeting. At the Fall Town Meeting, the UCBD Zoning By-law and Shared Parking By-law were approved.

The EDC also supported the development of a new Municipal Community Center to house a new library and senior center. This building is to be located in the town-owned parking lot adjacent to the VFW property. The EDC believes that this Community Center can be the anchor for a revitalized Upton Center. Initial funding for the schematic design phase of the Community Center was approved at the Fall Town Meeting.



## CREATION OF DESIGN STANDARDS

Following the Annual Town Meeting, the Board of Selectmen appointed a committee (called the RFP Committee) to draft the Design Standards that would be used by the Planning Board to govern the “look and feel” of new construction within the UCBD. An initial draft of the Design Standards has been completed.

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**IMPLEMENT FIRST PHASE OF DEVELOPMENT OF SHARED VISION**

The Annual Town Meeting voted to give the Board of Selectmen the authority to negotiate, sell, lease, or transfer two Town-owned parcels (the former Holy Angels church and the town parking lot). The RFP Committee will prepare a Request for Proposals (RFP) for First Phase of development of the Shared Vision during the first quarter of 2020. The RFP Committee and the EDC will then review all responses received from qualified developers and make a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen for development of the First Phase of the Shared Vision.

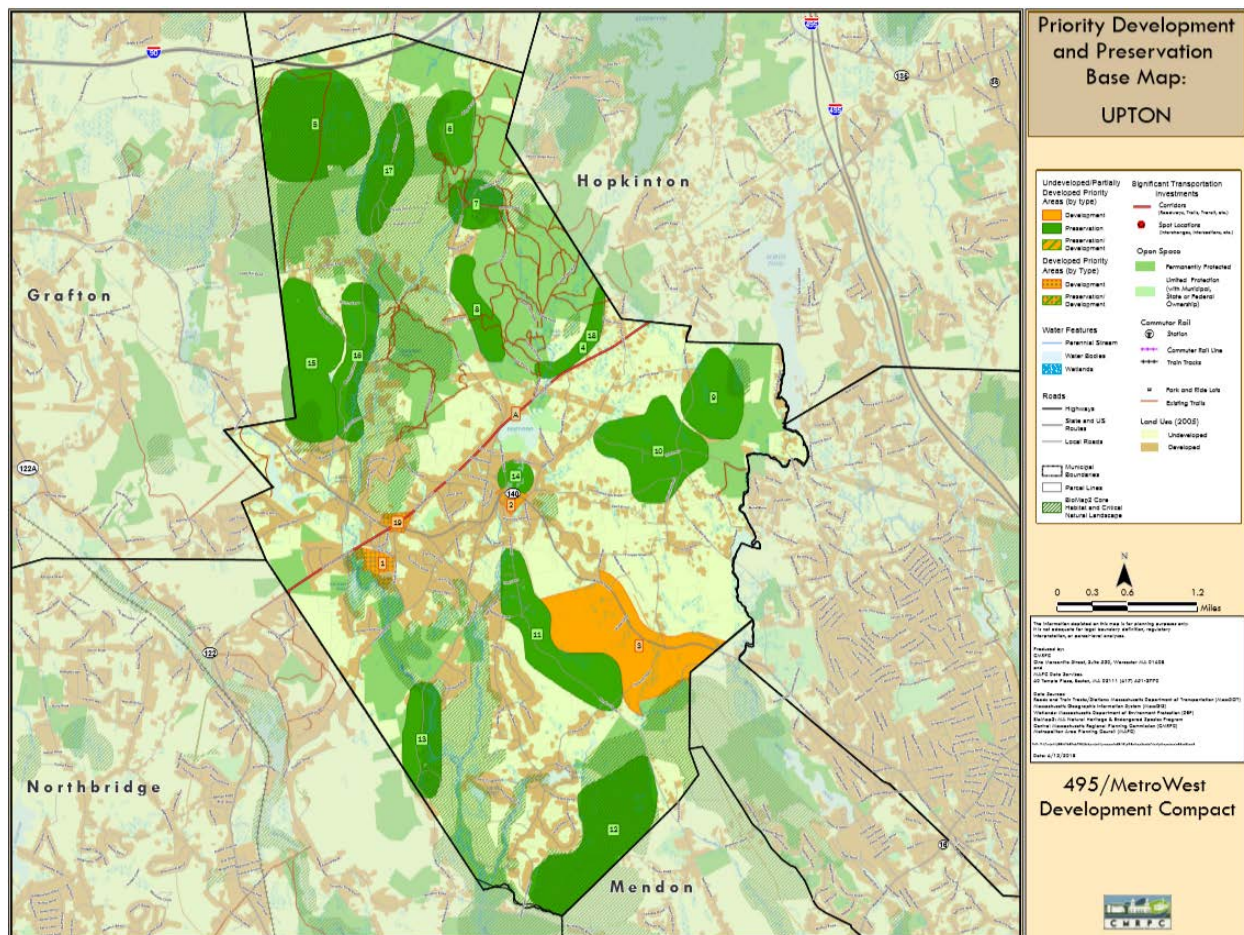
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**APPLY FOR MASSWORKS GRANT FOR PEDESTRIAN AND ROAD SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS**

Town to work with MassDOT District 3 on TIP project for Rte. 140 to coordinate design activities based on Upton Center RFP progress and state constraints.



# MAP 2 | PRIORITY DEVELOPMENT



UPTON		
ID	Name	Priority Type
303-1	Grafton & Upton Railroad	Development
303-2	Downtown General Business Zone	Development
303-3	Route 140 Area Zoned Commercial & Industrial	Development
303-4	Sweetwilliam Farm	Preservation

## TASKS COMPLETED

During the lead up to publishing this report a number of tasks were outlined and tracked. These areas of analysis and inquiry have been used to craft this economic plan.

### TASK #1

COMPLETED Compile all reports written and submitted to date on Upton, MA

COMPLETED Draft summary of all plans submitted by CMRPC

### TASK #2

COMPLETED Update the Economic Development Chapter of the Upton Master Plan

COMPLETED ESRI analysis for leakage

### TASK #3

COMPLETED Form an Economic Development Committee

COMPLETED Decide on date for initial Economic Development Committee meeting

COMPLETED Send out invites and survey to find best time and date for committee members to meet

### TASK #4

COMPLETED Meet with Elizabeth Wood to review the Village Overlay District ideas, uses and zoning changes.

### TASK #5

COMPLETED Full review of downtown zoning

COMPLETED Define a downtown

COMPLETED Walkability analysis

COMPLETED Identify entertainment, dining or farmer's market areas

COMPLETED Identify parks or trails that connect to the downtown area

COMPLETED Identify what condition the streets are in around the down town area

COMPLETED Identify how established the crosswalks are

COMPLETED Consider the possibility of Complete Streets

COMPLETED Address parking concerns

### TASK #6

COMPLETED Look into other areas of town that could sustain an industrial type build-out or that already holds industrial land/property

COMPLETED Create a snapshot of Upton's workforce and demographic scale

### TASK #7

COMPLETE Look into water and sewer connection and any ongoing infrastructure issues or plans for upgrades: See Capital Improvement Plans

### TASK #8

COMPLETED Meet with Economic Development Committee



---

**TASK #9**

**COMPLETED** Assess the Overlay zoning

---

**TASK #10**

**COMPLETED** Develop public input plan and time line

---

**TASK #11**

**COMPLETED** Create a GIS map of Upton and available parcels

**COMPLETED** Analyze co-star data on real-estate and property features in Upton

**COMPLETED** Assess local real estate listings and identify any property for lease or sale

---

**TASK #12**

**COMPLETED** Review all open space in Upton

**COMPLETED** Review and compile trail systems and create a map

**COMPLETED** Identify rail lines in Upton

**COMPLETE** Assess the relationship with Grafton and Mendon

---

**TASK #13**

**COMPLETE** Identify non-profits in Upton

**COMPLETE** Assess the engagement of the student population

**COMPLETE** Assess how do Nipmuc and BVT work together to make Upton a better community

**COMPLETE** Identify any local teachers on the EDC or who are part of the town community

---

**TASK #14**

**COMPLETED** Assess possible shared planner services between Upton and Mendon

**COMPLETED** Review future funding sources (E & R will only pay for one year- who will take care of the rest?)

## PUBLIC PROCESS



As part of the Upton Center Visioning Project, Dodson & Flinker was contracted by the Town to conduct the public input process in order to gather valuable perspectives and feedback on Upton's future. The community input process consisted of a Public Process open to the general public as well as a Working Group Process in which a group volunteers representing a cross-section of interests and groups in the community was established. The Working Group of community members represented a diverse array of local groups such as the Economic Development Committee, Historical Commission, Library Trustees, School Council,

VFW, etc. and included over 40 local citizens. These meetings focused on Upton Center, however many themes discussed are applicable to the town as a whole.

A series of public meetings and working group meetings were held in early 2019 to identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities in regards to business and community development. The first Community Meeting open to the public was held on January 23, 2019, in which over 130 people were in attendance. The themes that arose from this initial meeting included.

- 1) Upton Center is the heart of civic life in Upton;
- 2) Elements such as the Common, some sidewalks, historic buildings, municipal functions, and existing businesses are already in place for a vibrant center;
- 3) Opportunity to expand tax base;
- 4) Opportunity for places to live, work, and play; and
- 5) Opportunity for connectivity through safe, walkable streets and paths.

The first Working Group Meeting as part of the Upton Center Visioning Project was held on February 11, 2019. There was a discussion of the Working Group members' motivation for participating in the visioning process, their perspectives, as well as their goals for the process. A presentation on trends of Main Street and examples of other developments was made, followed by a discussion of Upton's historic value and its strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities.

## PUBLIC INPUT AND IDEAS

## SESSION 1: USING OPEN SPACES



## KEY POINTS

In this session residents discussed ideas for re designing and using open spaces. Residents noted ideas about open spaces on table maps. Some of the key points expressed were,

- Upton is about 1/3 open space – this is a major draw for new residents to Upton – trails that connect major green spaces
- Connectivity, trails, bike lanes, **walking safety and sidewalks** were a key issue throughout
- Enhancing the common, making it larger, more useable for events, have more activities on the common, more walkable
- Plans for the Catholic Church and library – interest in preserving historic features balanced with need for larger more assessable spaces if these resources are going to have utility to the community (handicapped & stroller accessible, and children's area)

The facilitator asked residents to discuss three key area, connectivity and walkability, the common/ downtown, catholic church/ library. The following were points noted by residents in this workshop.

## CONNECTIVITY AND WALKABILITY

- On MA140 - walking there is no view shed of Heritage Pond Park. Many people don't know it is there. There should be a connection to Main St. There is already some recreation in the park i.e. boat rentals.
- Heritage Park – not well known, no connection to downtown, no good sidewalks or trails to get to the park.
- Possible connection through the plot circled in yellow in (right), currently a marshy area, could add a boardwalk to connect over water and wetland to the park itself.
- Would be nice to use this area as a- boat launch for people with their own boats
- North Main St. and High St. – Many walkers and bikers – need for trails and sidewalks
- Main St. – Sidewalks and bike connections
- Hopkinton Rd. – Hervey traffic possibly use Westborough road as walkable/ bike able connection to state forest.
- Potential River walk – across the rail roads
- Look at creating connecting trails between all of Upton's green spaces, downtown, and the state forest



### THE COMMON/ DOWNTOWN

- The Space is not used, not large enough, not enough parking, no foot traffic, no area to walk, nothing to do.
- Narrow streets in downtown to widen sidewalks – this may impact parking as people are parking street-side in downtown.
- Possibly extend down town area into Church Street. There is a creek that runs along Ch. Street. Use to have stone banks now they have worn away.
- There is an empty body shop on Church St.
- Early learning center is also there.
- United Parish wants to open a Café.
- Expand the common by getting rid of the intersection
- Warren St. – Make it only a four-way intersection or rotary. Also, the idea of re-routing the street to expand downtown – in yellow (image right). Possibly get rid of the red portion of street and expand the town common into that area (image right). Concerns raised about the one small business located there – yellow star.
- Architect incite – rotary is car focused, other ways of slowing traffic may be better – raised roads, street trees.
- Dog park in downtown – possibly at the site of the connection to Heritage Park
- Fountains/ water features for kids



### FORMER HOLY ANGELS/ LIBRARY

- Church - want to keep some historic features such as steeple and stain glass windows. Recognize the need for more space/ accessibility if it is going to be used for a community center or library. Concern that the lot is too small.
- Library: Too small, not assessable to strollers/ handicapped residents, no sitting area or children's area, the physical feel is not inviting or warm.



## SESSION 2: ACTIVATING UPTON CENTER

In this session residents were asked to discuss the following questions and topics. They also brainstormed and voted on priority areas.

- Walkability and safety – 6 votes
- Organized events – 4 votes
- Restaurants – 3 votes



### IN A PERFECT WORLD (NO RESTRICTIONS) WHAT WOULD YOU WANT FOR DOWNTOWN?

- Restaurants – residents regularly going to dinner in other towns
- Emphasizing historic buildings – touch stones of the library and town hall
- Coffee shops
- Gift shop a number of gift shops have been open but closed)
- Sides walks
- Interactive elements: dog bowls, interactive sculptures, basketball courts, skating rink, boating.
- Lanterns and banners
- Outdoor Seating
- Little street parking, currently light parking – short term parking
- Residential development in downtown (Rental housing – post grad housing, Senior/ mixed use housing, Commercial space on the bottom floor, More affordable housing options)
- Events (Truck or treat – well liked – other events like that)
- “Just enough” commercial to keep small town feel
- Limit chain stores (no drive through)
- Walkability

### WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE DO YOU WANT TO ATTRACT TO THE TOWN CENTER?

- Families with young children (stroller assessable), retired people, teenagers, dog walkers

### HOW DO YOU ATTRACT NEW RESIDENTS AND YOUNG FAMILIES?

- Open space, nature
- Walkability
- Gathering spaces and events

### WHAT IDEAS DO YOU HAVE FOR BRANDING/ MARKETING THE TOWN?

- Named the most boring town in MA at one point, seen as sleepy boring. This narrative could be used for marketing.
- Hat and shoe manufacture

### HOW MANY OF YOU FEEL THAT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH NEEDS TO BE PRESERVED AS IT IS NOW?

- ‘No love lost’ if the church is renovated and expanded. Would like to keep some historic elements

### WHAT ABOUT THE LIBRARY?

- Prefer a new library
- Current library is not handicap assessable, not aesthetically welcoming

# Strengths and Weaknesses

This set of strengths and resources was compiled based on the information gathered from residents and stakeholders to summarize the key points raised by the public process.

## Strengths

Great Schools	Little Coffee Bean	1 Hour from Boston	Friendly Residents	Good Sports Teams
Peaceful	Safe	Great Public Services	Nice Local Parks	Wildlife and Open Space

## Weaknesses

Not Enough Businesses	No Highway Access	Downtown Not Walkable	No Grocery Stores
Pricey Housing	Higher taxes	Extreme Retail Leakage	

## Opportunities

State and Federal Funding	Complete Streets for schools	Connect Downtown to Trails	State Roadway Improvements
Farming/ Farm Stands/ Co-op	Close to Commuter Rail	Interested Developers	Excited/ Involved Residents

## Threats

Capacity of Sewer/ Water	Not a lot of Community Groups
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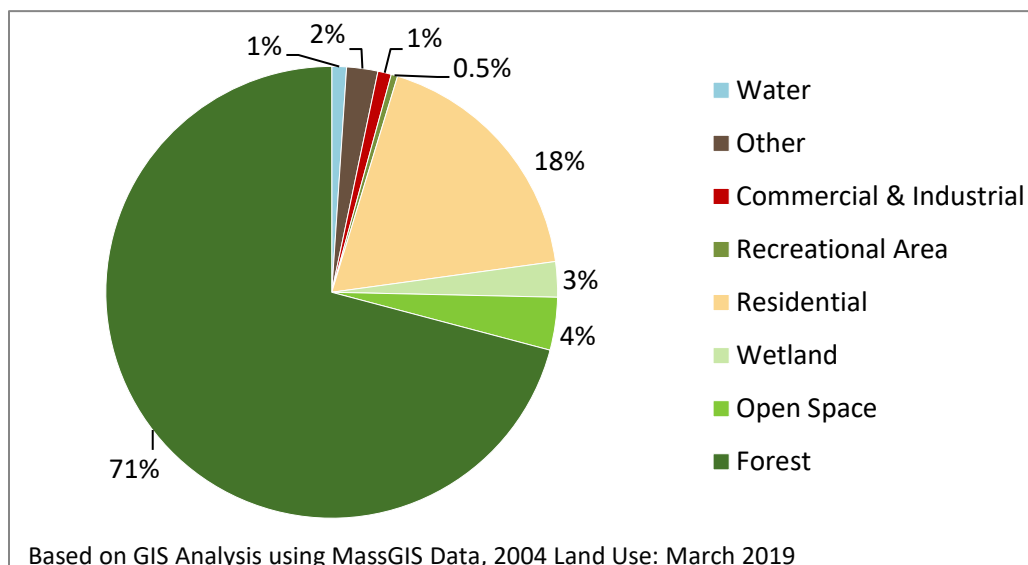
# Land Use



Upton comprises 21.8 square miles of area in south-central Massachusetts. A notable feature of Upton's landscape is the large region of forested and open space, comprising 16.8 square miles, or approximately three quarters of Upton's land area. Upton abuts the towns of Westborough, in the north, Grafton and Northbridge, in the west, Mendon, in the south, and Hopedale, Milford, and Hopkinton, in the east.<sup>3</sup> The town is located 30 miles from Boston and 12 miles from Worcester. Based on the 2010 census, Upton has a population density of 349.7 people per square mile.<sup>4</sup> This is the lowest population density among Upton's neighbors, with the exception of Mendon which has a similar population density (328.5 people per square mile).<sup>5</sup>

As seen in Map 2, based on the most recent 2004 land use classifications, Upton is composed largely of low-density residential and forestland uses, making the town a relatively rural community. With limited commercial development, the majority of commercial and industrial areas are located along Massachusetts Route 140 (MA-140), including a large cluster as you proceed south on MA-140, towards Hopedale. A number of small commercial areas are also concentrated in Upton Center and are spread along the entirety of MA-140, as can be seen in Map 2. While commercial centers in nearby communities are located closer to major highway interchanges, the Upton Center commercial area's location makes it more attractive for local traffic.

FIGURE 1 | UPTON LAND USE IN 2005

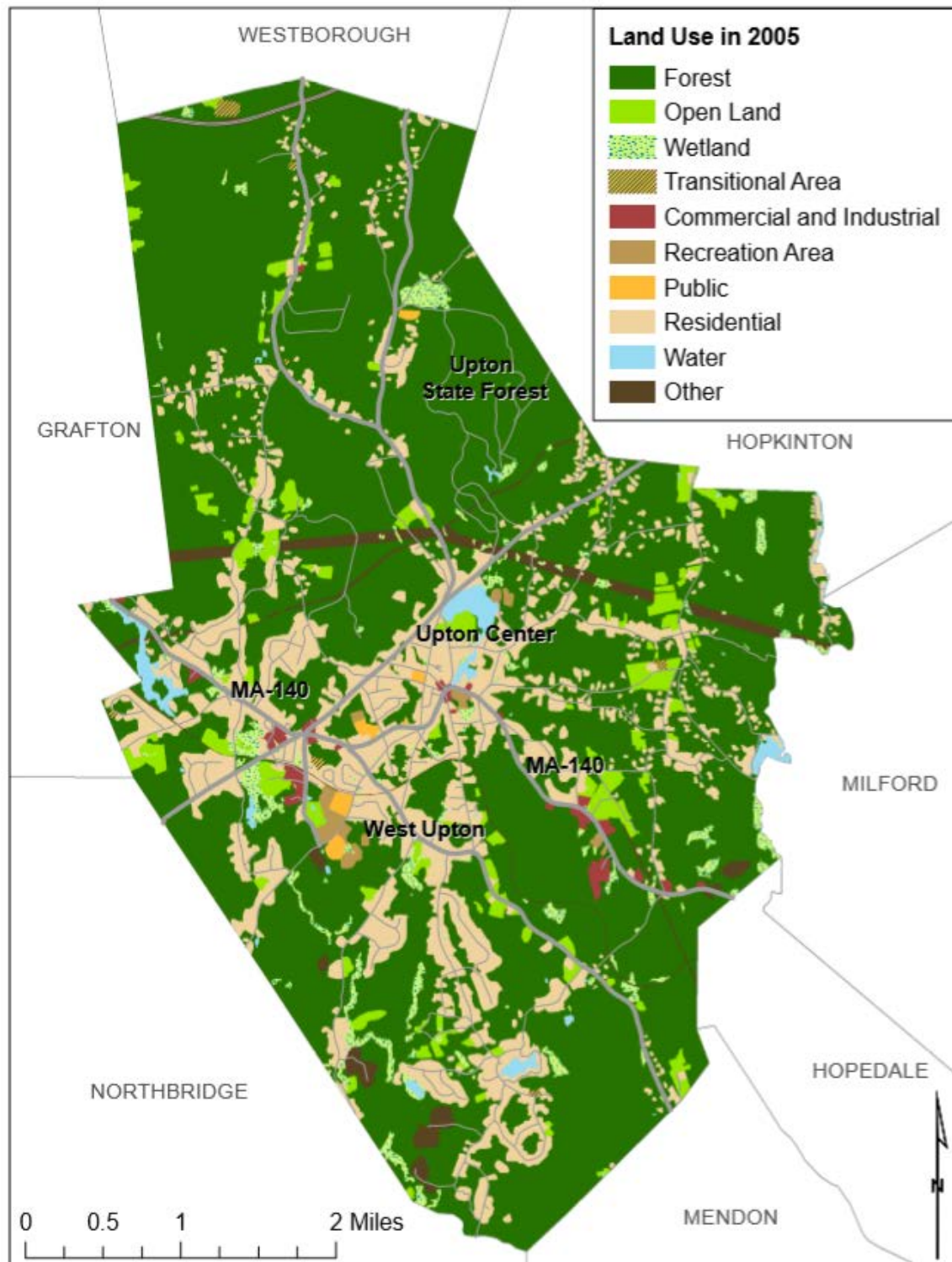


<sup>3</sup> GIS Analysis using MassGIS Town Boundaries via CMRPC GIS Library

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census 2010 SF1 100% Data, Population, Housing Units, Area, and Density: 2010 - State -- County Subdivision, Table: GCT-PH1

<sup>5</sup> ibid

## MAP 3 | LAND USE IN 2005



MassGIS Community Boundaries from Survey Points: last updated March 2017

# Natural and Cultural Resources

Natural and cultural resources are some of the most significant assets in Upton. The Cultural Resources Map (Map 3) shows the different types of protected land and trails located in Upton. The majority of protected land is under State-level protections and the most notable area is Upton State Forest. This is a large tract of protected forested area in the northeast section of town and comprises 2,035 acres, or 15% of the town of Upton. Municipal Protected Land is also known as Town Conservation Lands and includes Peppercorn Hill, Howarth Conservation Area, Pratt Pond Conservation Area, and many other areas. Privately owned parcels are protected under conservation restrictions, deed restrictions, and flowage easements, plus landowners using the Chapter 61 programs and maintaining their property as open space receive preferential tax treatment. A small tract of land in the southern section of town is federally owned.

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## Protected lands

With vast tracts of protected open space, Upton has a long history of open space preservation. Approximately 5,500 acres has some type of permanent or temporary protection. Approximately 3,320 acres are considered to be permanently or very strongly protected. These lands include Town conservation areas, Upton State Forest, cemeteries, Kiwanis Beach, athletic fields, Town-owned wellfields, Old Zachary, Goss Pond, and privately-owned parcels protected by conservation restrictions or deed restrictions.

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## Trails

Upton boasts an excellent system of trails on both public and private land, including at Upton State Forest, Peppercorn Hill, the Warren Brook Watershed Conservation Area, and Stefans Farm. There are also numerous miles of informal, unmapped trails on public and private land throughout the town, including trails along the West River, in the vicinity of Miscoe Hill, north of the Warren Brook Watershed Conservation Area, and at many other locations.

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## Water bodies

Upton additionally has numerous water bodies, including North Pond, Lake Wildwood, Pratt Pond, Old Zachary Pond, and Goss Pond. Principle streams include Center Brook, West River, Mill River, Warren Brook, Miscoe Brook, and Taft Pond Brook. There are about 150 acres of surface water in Upton.

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## Historical sites

Some of Upton's historical sites include the Knowlton Hat Factory (1834), United Parish Church (1848), Holy Angels Church (1848), First Burying Ground (1730), Whitney House (ca. 1755), and Town Hall (1881). Additionally, there are dozens of residences spread throughout the town that were built prior to 1800.

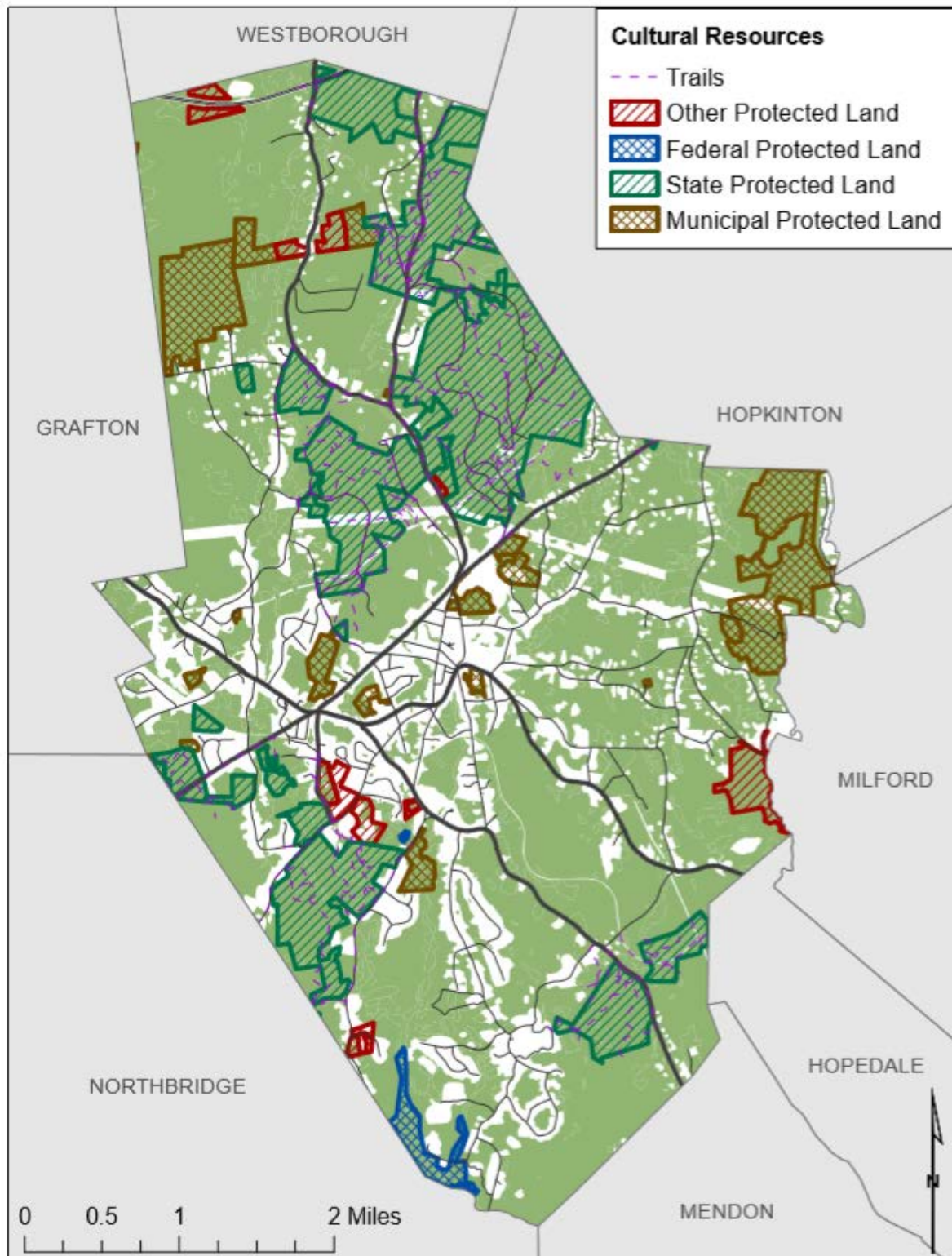
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## Scenic vista

Upton has a diverse landscape filled with a number of scenic views. Arguably the most beautiful vista is the historic Sweetwilliam Farm, a property that includes an 18<sup>th</sup> century farm house, fields, stone walls, and cart paths. Other farms, wetlands, and open spaces offer scenic vistas for Upton's residents and visitors to enjoy.



## MAP 4 | NATURAL RESOURCES



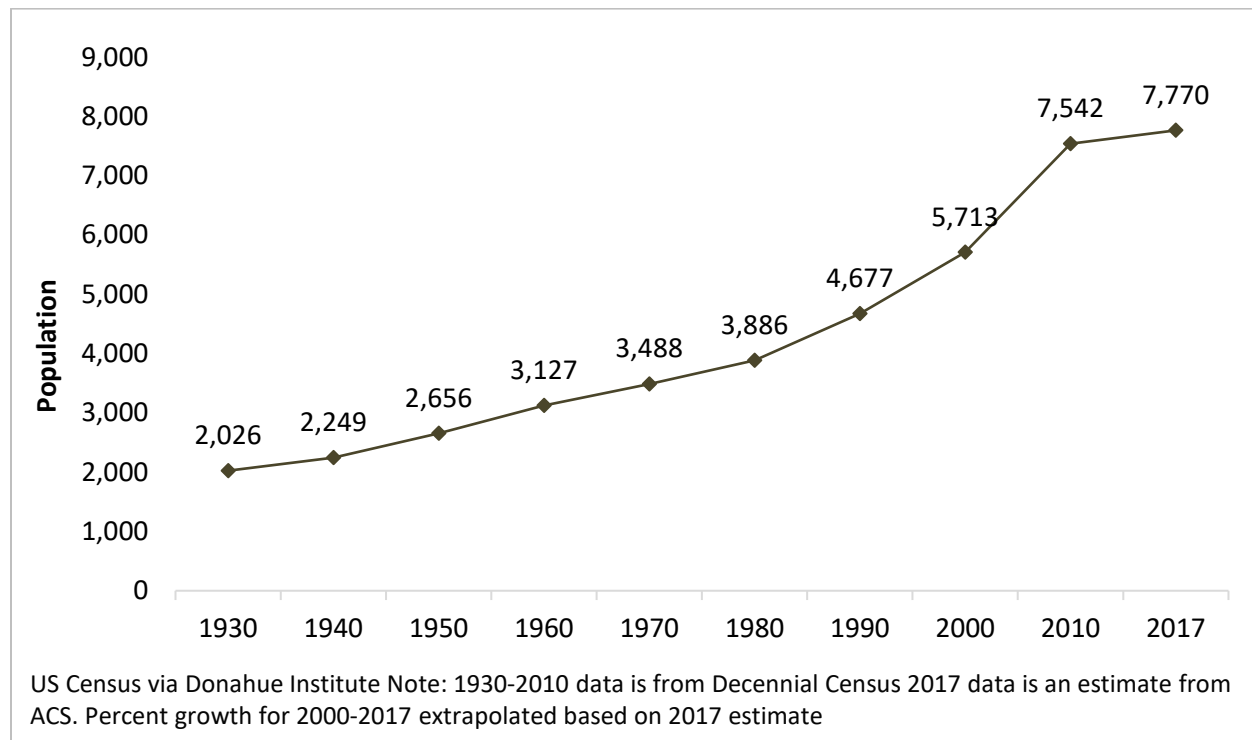
MassGIS Data, Protected Lands: last updated March 2017

# Population Trends

## POPULATION CHANGE

Figure 2 shows that Upton's population has increased gradually since 1930. As of the 2010 Census, Upton's population was 7,542. Between 2010 and 2016, Upton's population was estimated to have increased by 3% from 7,542 to 7,773 people, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.<sup>6</sup>

FIGURE 2 | POPULATION CHANGE IN UPTON, 1930-2017



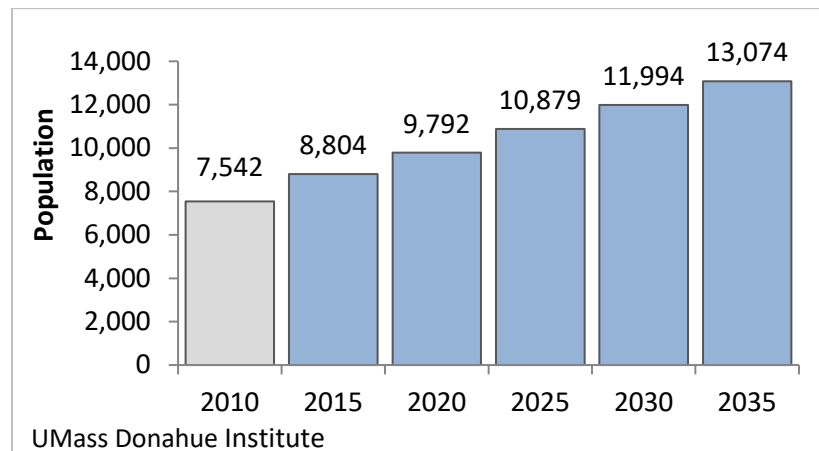
The population of the town is predicted to continue to increase by as much as 73% and reach 13,074 residents by 2035 (Figure 3). This rate of growth outpaces the anticipated population growth rate of the state, which is predicted to increase 13% by 2035<sup>7</sup>.

Upton is considered part of the Metro West region, which contains 45 communities and lies at the western fringe of the Boston metro area between Interstates 495 and 95/MA Route 128. This region added nearly 30,000 residents between 2000 and 2010 for an annualized growth rate of just below 0.5% per year. The steady growth of the MetroWest region over the past decade is expected to continue into the foreseeable future, particularly as Boston-area rents continue to rapidly increase, forcing residents and businesses to migrate outwards.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Census 2010 SF1 100% Data, Population, Housing Units, Area, and Density: 2010 - State -- County Subdivision, Table: GCT-PH1

<sup>7</sup> UMass Donahue Institute, Massachusetts Population Projections, Current as of 5/9/2019. Modeled projections do not claim to predict the future, but rather may serve as points of reference for planners and researchers. In general, projections for small geographies and distant futures will be less

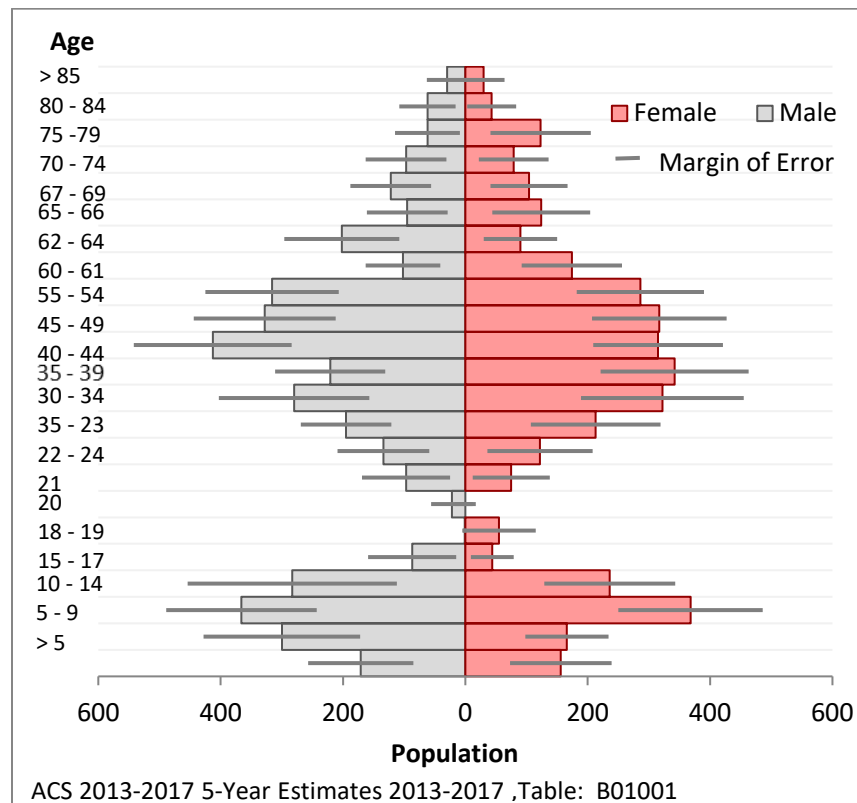
FIGURE 3 | POPULATION PROJECTIONS, 2010 - 2035



### AGE DISTRIBUTION

The American Community Survey population estimates for 2017, displayed in Figure 4, show that Upton's age distribution is concentrated around the age groups of 35-59-year-old and 5-17-year-old. There is a large population gap among the 18-24-year-old age group. The low population counts between ages 18 to 34 speak to a possible lack of attraction for young people and families to move to Upton.

FIGURE 4 | POPULATION DISTRIBUTION, 2017

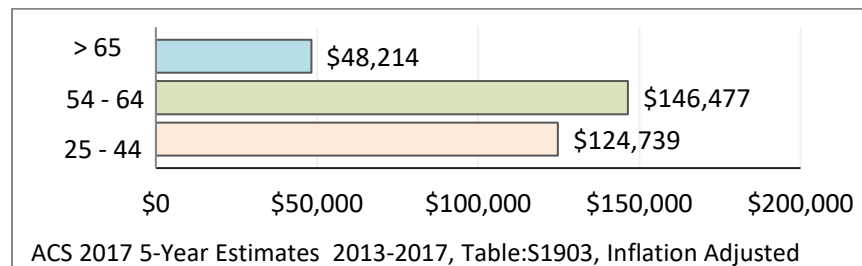




## INCOME

Based on recent data, it is evident that incomes in Upton are on the rise. The estimated median household income in 2017 was \$119,392, which is significantly higher than both Massachusetts (\$74,167) and Worcester County (\$69,313).<sup>8</sup> Since 2010, median income has increased by 11% for Upton residents.<sup>9</sup> Further illustrating this upward trend, per capita income was \$48,694 in 2017 and has increased by 18% since 2010.<sup>10</sup> Of households in Upton, an estimated 21% have an income of more than \$200,000 a year.<sup>11</sup> It is significant to note the inequality between the median incomes across age cohorts in Upton. Figure 5 below shows that households with a householder older than age 65 have a median income of less than half that of other age cohorts. The poverty rate in Upton is 4.8%, however among residents 65 and older that number rises to 10.4%.<sup>12</sup>

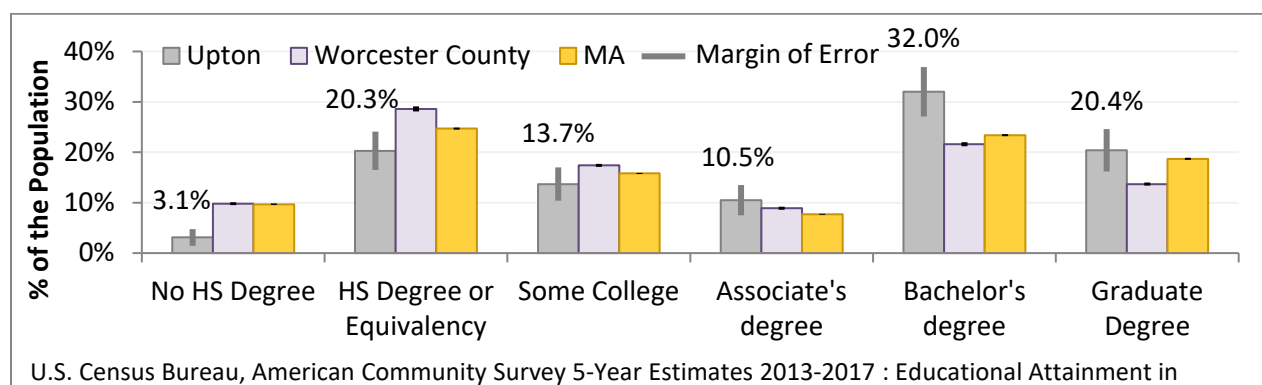
FIGURE 5 | MEDIAN INCOME BY AGE OF HOUSEHOLDER



## EDUCATION

It is possible that the income trend previously described is correlated with high education levels in Upton. As seen in Figure 6, the population of Upton has higher educational attainment compared to both the state and county. Fewer residents compared to the state and county hold less than a high school degree or only a high school degree, while a greater percentage of residents have attained a bachelor's degree or higher. Overall, 61% of Upton residents have a bachelor's degree or higher.<sup>13</sup>

FIGURE 6 | EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



<sup>8</sup> Income in the Past 12 Months (Non- Inflation Adjusted Dollars), 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table: S1901

<sup>9</sup> ibid

<sup>10</sup> ibid

<sup>11</sup> ibid

<sup>12</sup> Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table: S1701

<sup>13</sup> Educational Attainment, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table: S1501

With a 92% graduation rate, Upton remains in the top performers for school districts based on graduation rates among nearby towns. It should be noted, however, that the Upton-Mendon District graduation rate actually decreased between 2014 and 2018 from 95.7% to 92.9%, as can be seen in Table X. Upton was one of only nine districts in the region that experienced a decrease in the graduation rate during this time frame.

TABLE 1 | CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS GRADUATION RATES BY DISTRICT, 2014-2018

District Name	Graduation Rate 2014	Graduation Rate 2018	% Change
State Totals	86.1	87.9	1.8
CMRPC Totals	87.1	89.0	1.9
Hopedale	94	97.8	3.8
Tantasqua	91.3	97.6	6.3
Berlin-Boylston	91.5	97.5	6
Westborough	97.1	97.1	0
Grafton	90.4	96.8	6.4
Leicester	90.3	96.4	6.1
Wachusett	93.1	96	2.9
Northboro-Southboro	96.9	94.8	-2.1
Shrewsbury	94	94.7	0.7
Millbury	91.9	93.9	2
Sutton	95.7	93.9	-1.8
Auburn	90	93	3
<b>Mendon-Upton</b>	<b>95.7</b>	<b>92.9</b>	<b>-2.8</b>
Douglas	92.1	92.6	0.5
Dudley-Charlton Regional	95.3	90.9	-4.4
Quaboag Regional	89.3	88.5	-0.8
West Boylston	91.5	88.1	-3.4
Blackstone-Millville	87.9	87	-0.9
Uxbridge	84.6	84.3	-0.3
Worcester	79.2	83.5	4.3
Quabbin	82	83.3	1.3
Spencer-E Brookfield	83.2	81.7	-1.5
North Brookfield	88.2	78.9	-9.3
Southbridge	62.9	68.4	5.5
Webster	66.2	67.7	1.5
Hopedale	94	97.8	3.8

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 4-year Graduation Rates (GED's not included)

# Housing

## UNITS AND AFFORDABILITY

Of the 2,820 housing units documented in the 2010 Census, 223 units are considered affordable (6.3%) for qualifying individuals earning less than 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI). Of those 223 qualifying affordable housing units, 178 units are subsidized affordable housing.<sup>14</sup> Since affordable housing comprises less than 10% of Upton's total housing stock, the town does not qualify for exemption from comprehensive permitting allowed by M.G.L. 40B. This law makes it possible for developers to initiate affordable housing projects that do not meet Upton's standards for density, buffers, conversion, and other criteria.<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, the affordable housing stock in Upton is insufficient to meet the needs of residents. Based on 2017 ACS estimates, 24% of Upton households are housing cost-burdened. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines a cost-burdened household as one that pays 30% or more of their income towards housing costs.<sup>16</sup> As seen in Table 8, the majority of Upton's households (84%) are homeowners. Homeowners in Upton tend to be less cost-burdened than renters, as 20% of homeowners are considered cost-burdened while 44% of renters are considered cost-burdened.<sup>17</sup> High rates of cost-burdened households follow trends at the state and county levels. The proportion of cost-burdened households in Upton (24%) is somewhat lower than Worcester County (33%) and the state (35%). This trend is true for both renter and owner households.

TABLE 2 | COST-BURDENED HOUSEHOLDS

	Massachusetts	Worcester County	Upton
Total Households	2,585,715	305,975	2,741
Total Cost-Burdened Households	910,359	100,130	647
% of All Households Cost-Burdened	35%	33%	24%
% of Renter Households Cost-Burdened	47%	46%	44%
% of Owner Households Cost-Burdened	28%	26%	20%

U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2013-2017: Mortgage status and selected monthly owner costs in Upton, Table: B25087

## FISCAL HOT SPOTS

In order to identify key neighborhoods of value in Upton, geographic fiscal analysis can be used. This method uses geographic information systems, or GIS, tools (the concept of spatial autocorrelation or dependence) to characterize "clusters" of development with similar tax assessment values. Through Hot Spot Analysis, clusters of

<sup>14</sup> MA Department of Housing and Community Development, Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI), update as of September, 14, 2017

<sup>15</sup> Fact Sheet on Chapter 40B The State's Affordable Housing Zoning Law, Prepared by Citizens' Housing and Planning Association October 2007

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Who Needs Affordable Housing?", Accessed 4/25/2018

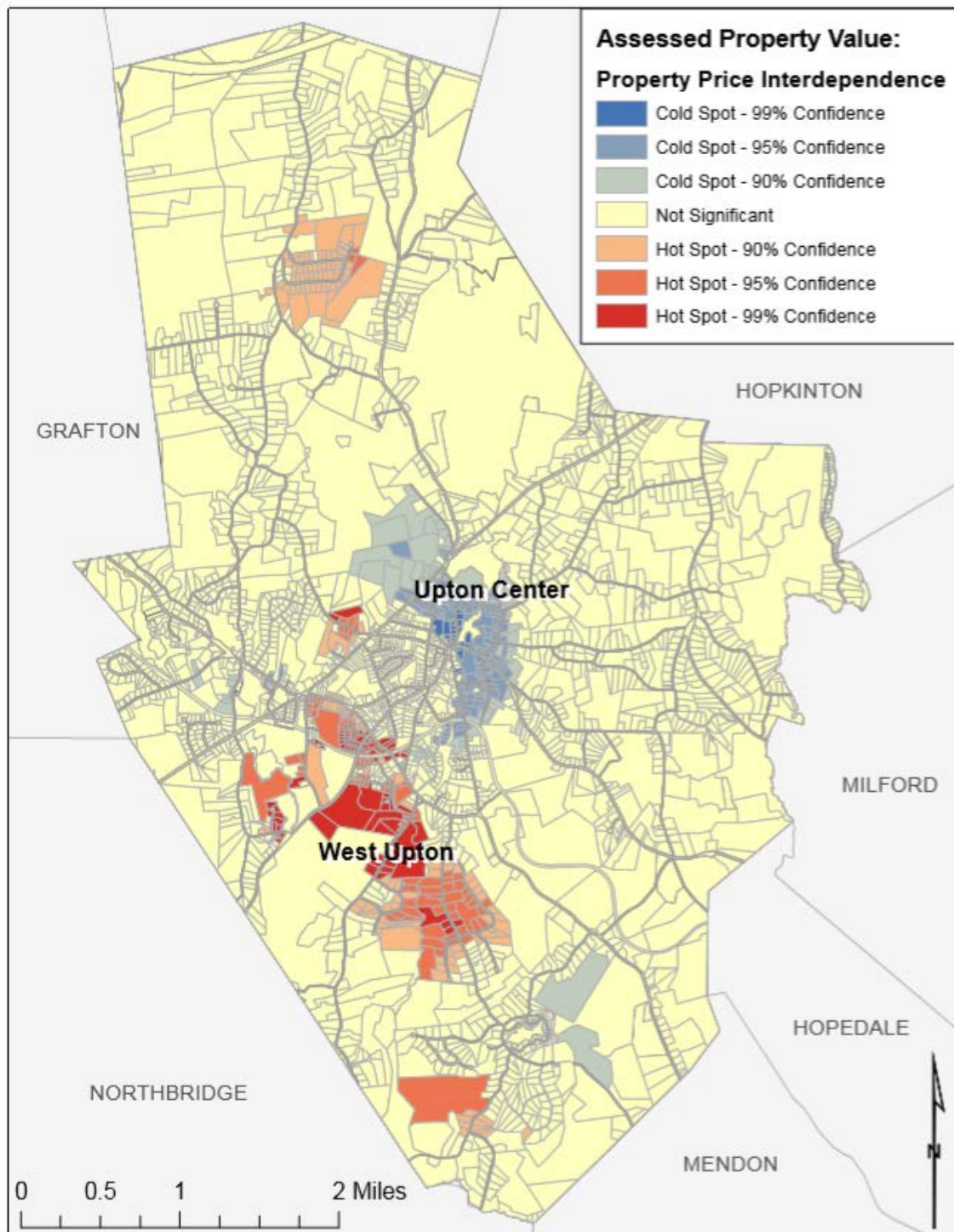
<sup>17</sup> Gross rent as a percentage of household income in the past 12 months, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table: B25070 Mortgage status by selected monthly owner costs as a percentage of household income in the past 12 months, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table: B25091

features with high or low values can be identified. To be considered a statistically significant hot spot, parcels must have high assessment value and be surrounded by parcels with a high assessment value. This demonstrates that the assessment value of the parcel is interdependent on the value of its neighbors. This tool can help the town of Upton answer several questions: 1) *Is the community's tax base heavily driven by a few geographic locations?* 2) *How much of the tax base is concentrated there?* 3) *Are these areas that can be expanded and invested in?*

As seen in Map 4, the majority of the parcels in Upton are not statistically interdependent on the assessed value of their neighbors. The primary hot spot identified in Upton is the neighborhood of West Upton. West Upton is adjacent to Nipmuc Regional High School and Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School and is a mid-density residential neighborhood. There is also a small, less significant hot spot north of Upton center, which primarily surrounds housing development on Howarth and Francis Drive. Combined, these hot spots (90% or greater confidence) account for 11% of the land area in Upton. They make up a slightly larger portion of Upton's tax base, accounting for 16% of taxable property value. Investments in these areas have a strong chance of impacting nearby prices due to strong price interdependence.

## MAP 4 | HOUSING HOT SPOTS

UPTON TAX PARCELS BY ASSESSES VALUE HOTSPOTS



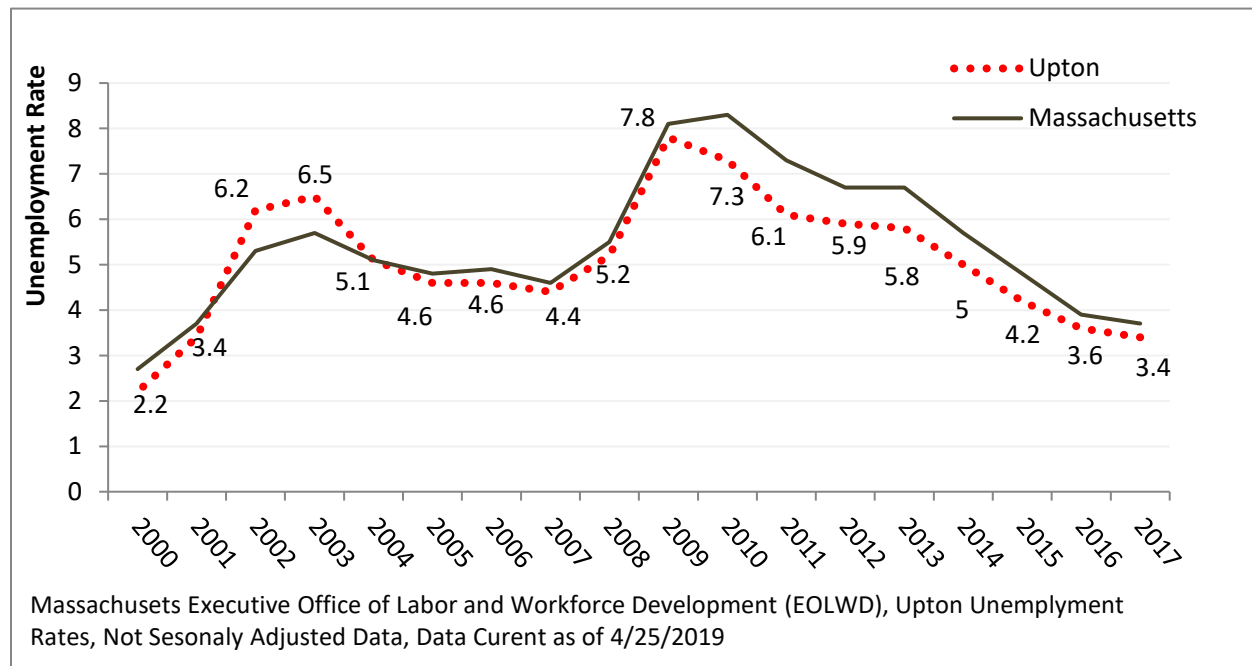
MassGIS Data, Standardized Assessors' Parcels: Updated between 2012 and 2018 Hotspot Analysis of Total Assessed Value (Fixed-Distance Band, Euclidean Distance) By Gemma Wilkens, CMRPC

# Jobs and Workforce

## RESEDENT EMPLOYMENT

Upton's unemployment rate is strong, at the low rate of 3.4%, and remains at a rate slightly below the state. The town's unemployment rate has been decreasing at a similar pace as the state since it peaked in 2010 and is currently at its lowest rate since 2001.

FIGURE 7 | ANNUAL UNEMPLOYMENT OVER TIME



Approximately 50% of Upton residents commute outside Worcester County for work while 2% commute outside of Massachusetts.<sup>18</sup> The average travel time to work for an Upton resident is 35 minutes, which is higher than the state and county average of 29 minutes. About one third (32%) of Upton residents commute more than 45 minutes to work.<sup>19</sup> Like many other small, suburban Massachusetts towns, Upton is a bedroom community for the majority of its workforce that commutes to outside communities for work. As seen in Table 10, a majority of the population of Upton is employed in the education and health, professional, and manufacturing industries. Map 5 outlines the transportation options in Upton, there are a number of bike routes but little public transit available.

<sup>18</sup> Sex of workers by Place of Work--State and County Level, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table: B08007

<sup>19</sup> Commuting Characteristics by Sex, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table: S0801



# Transportation and Parking Concerns

Transportation and parking are major concerns in Upton Center. Upton Center has a relatively high volume of traffic on weekdays. Most traffic is travelling through the town center and not stopping. Reducing speed and improving pedestrian safety are a high priority. Aside from the town-owned parking lot, there is little parking available for accessing the few retail establishments currently located in Upton Center.

The intersection directly in front of Town Hall is extremely dangerous due to the volume and speed of traffic travelling through Upton Center. The town is considering the following changes to improve both traffic and pedestrian safety in this key area:

- The town is planning to close Warren Street from Nelson Street to Main Street in an effort to improve traffic and pedestrian safety in the Town Hall area. Parking adjacent to the Town Hall will be re-designed to have handicapped parking next to the building.
- The town is considering re-aligning North Main Street and Church Street to also improve traffic and pedestrian safety.

Multiple state-funded transportation projects are planned for Upton, which will improve existing infrastructure and create safer routes for pedestrians and cyclists. Projects on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) include:

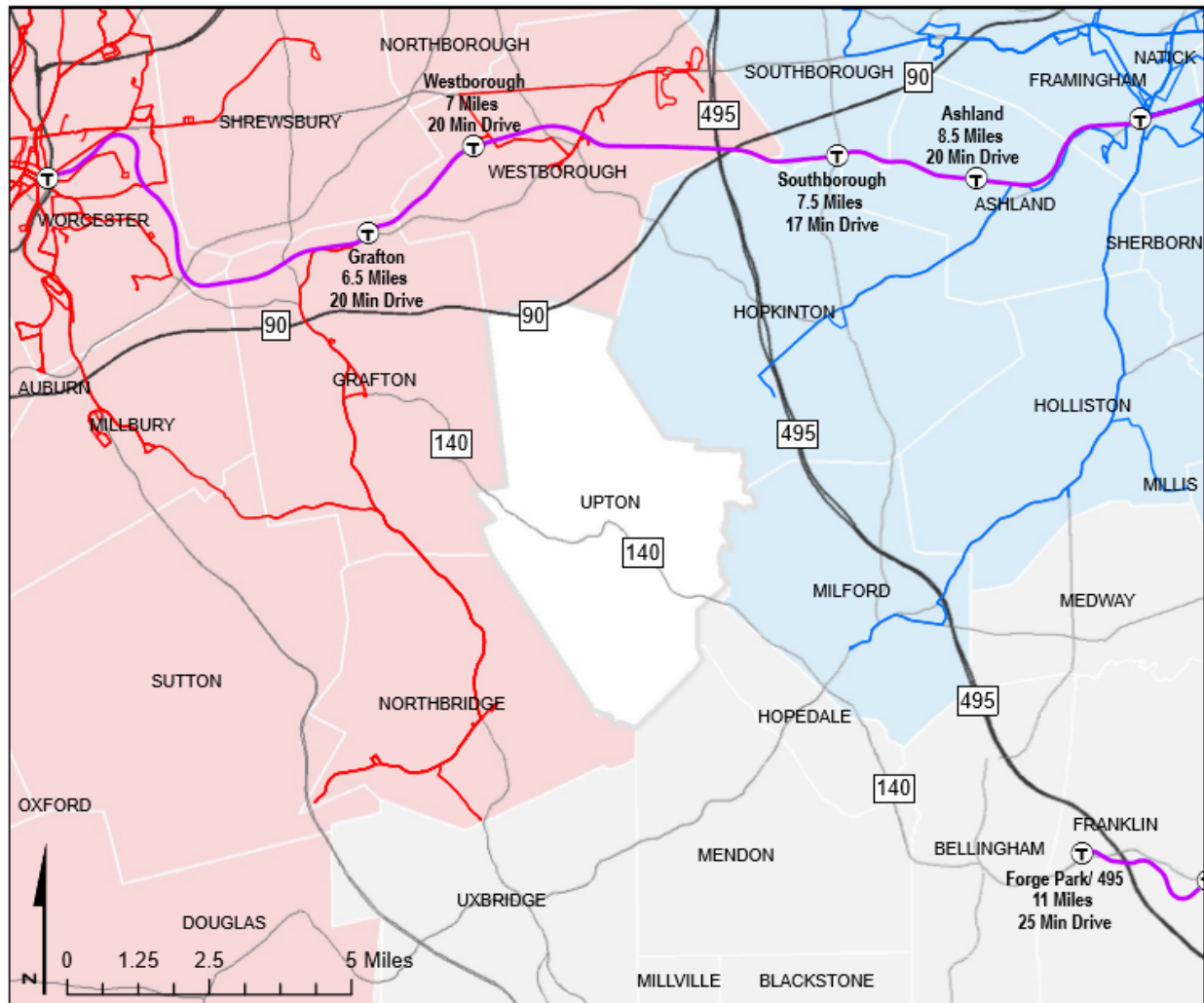
- Phase I - Reconstruction of High Street and Hopkinton Road, including a new traffic signal at School Street, Westboro Road, Hopkinton Road intersection. MassDOT Project ID 606125 – planned for 2020.
- Phase II - Reconstruction of Hartford Avenue North and High Street including sidewalks, granite curbing and improved pedestrian crossings. MassDOT Project ID 606125 – planned for 2021.
- Resurfacing of Route 140 from Williams Street to Brooks Street/Elm Street in 2022, including sidewalks, granite curbing and signage.
- The Complete Streets Funding Program improvements for Upton Center are designated for Upton's third year of funding and the proposals include Milford Street realignment, plus adding sidewalks, curb ramps, and parking spaces to Main Street, Church Street, and North Main Street.

The EDC is looking forward to working with the MassDOT design consultant on the Rte. 140 resurfacing project so that we can coordinate with the state as the revitalization of Upton Center moves forward.

In addition, the town recently approved a new Shared Parking By-law, which will hopefully encourage shared parking and reduce the amount of space dedicated to parking.

# MAP 6 | TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

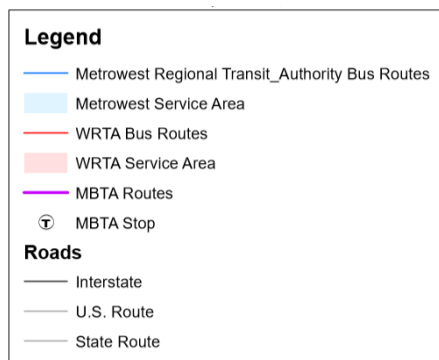
UPTON IS 20 MINS FROM 6 COMMUTER RAIL STATIONS AND IS INTERSECTED BY BIKE TRAILS



\*Distance is a linear distance

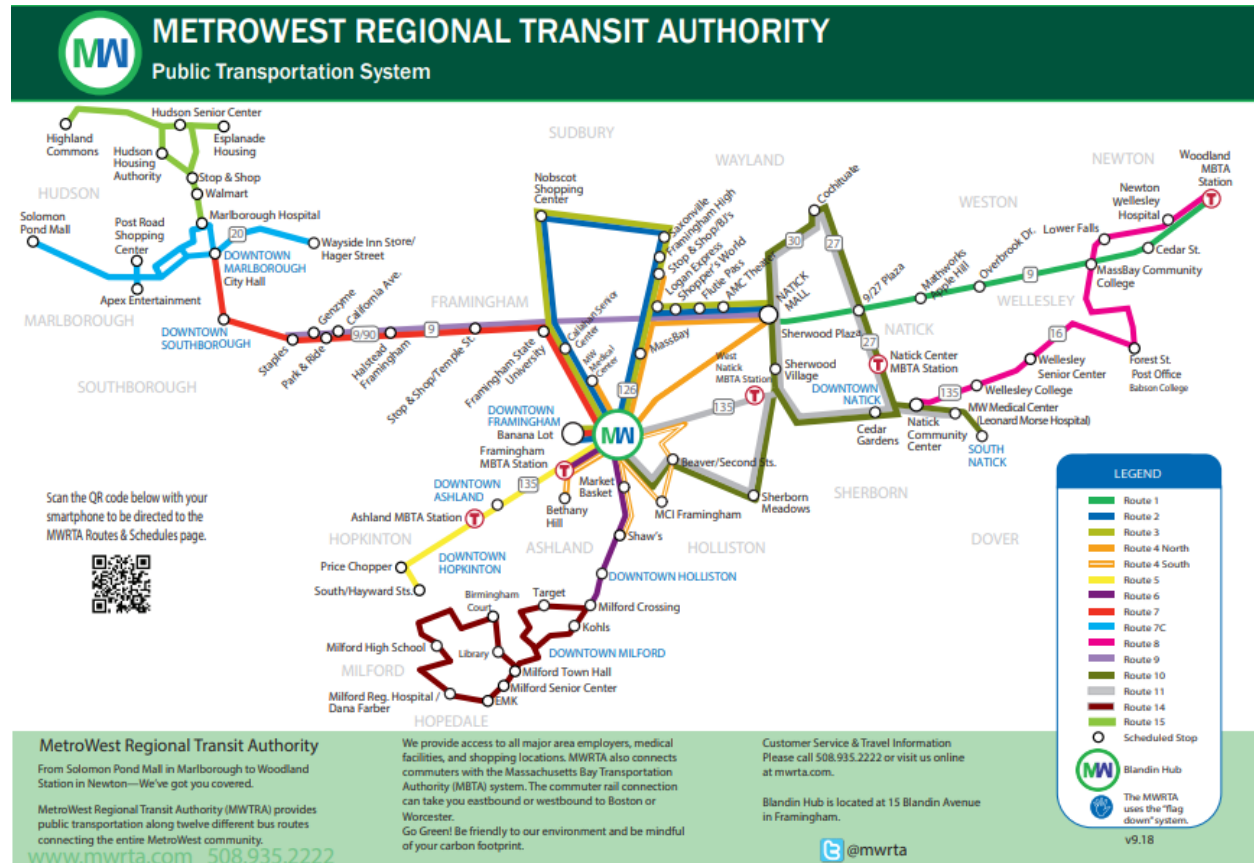
\*\*Travel time based on google maps estimates during lowest traffic hours

\*\*\*MetroWest routes not up to data, new downtown Milford route and Hopedale connection excluded



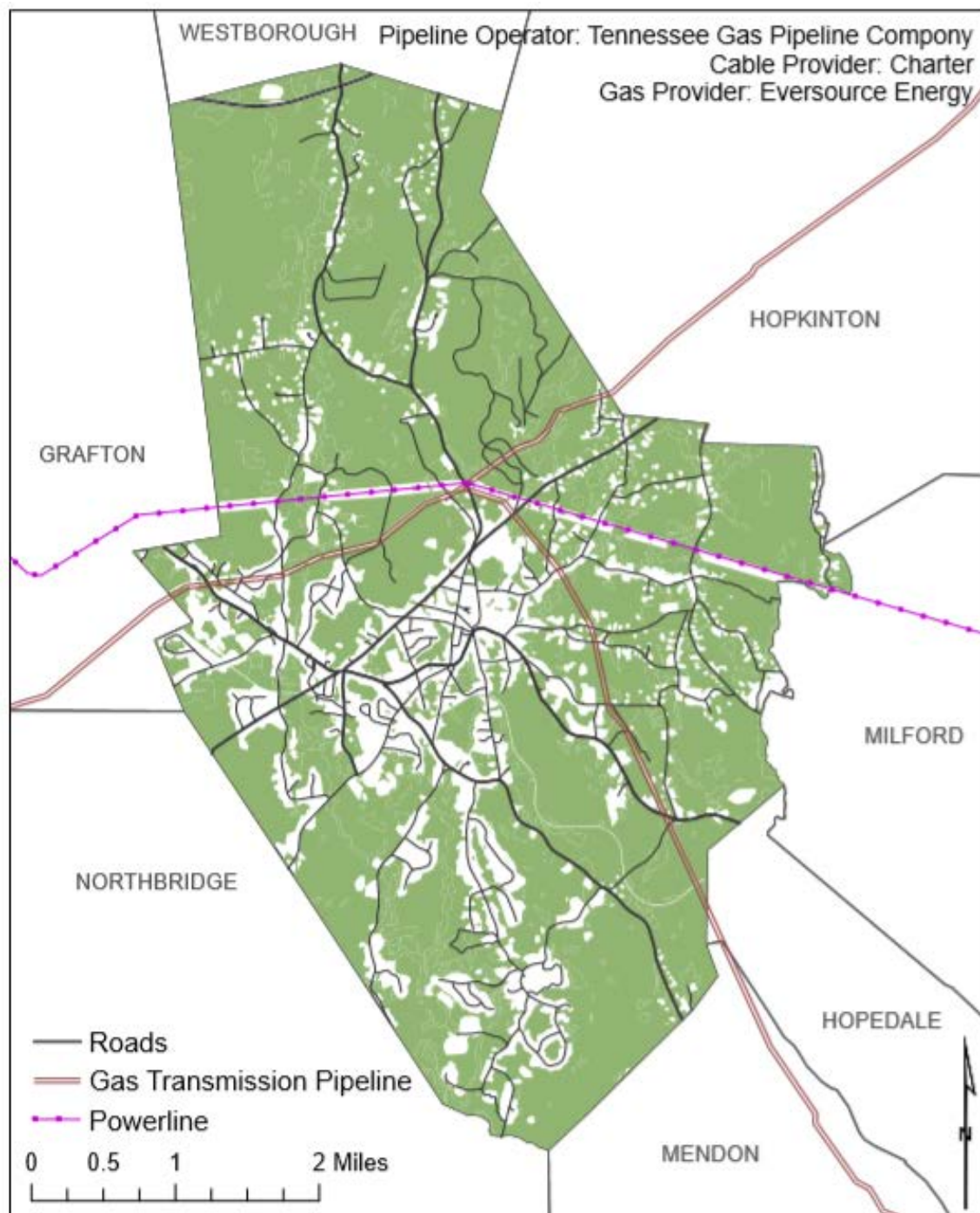
Produced by CMRPC

# MAP 7 | MWRTA SYSTEMS



Produced by MWRTA

## MAP 8 | INFRASTRUCTURE



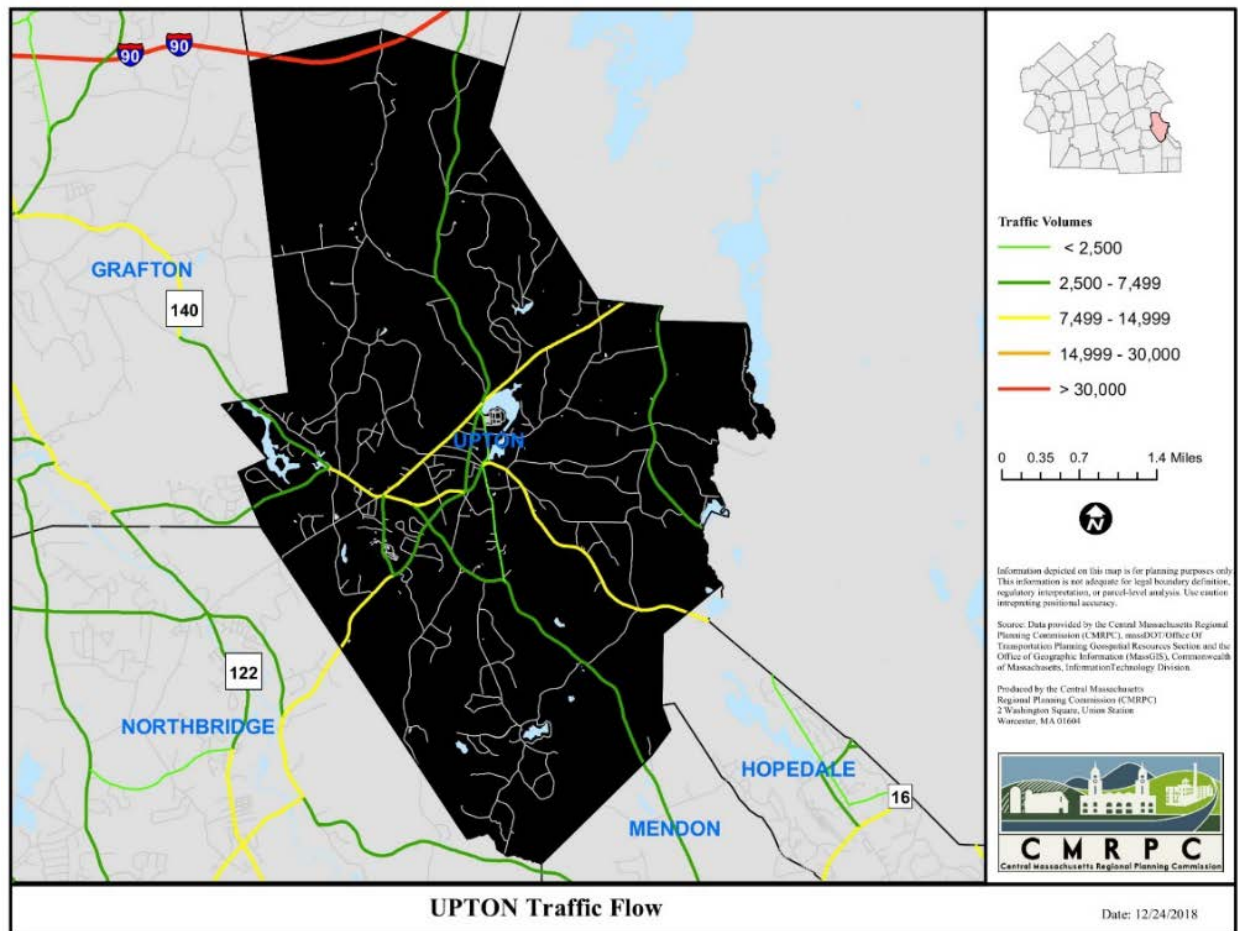
MassGIS, 2005 Land Use

USGS, Powerlines

National Pipeline Mapping System, the NIPMS contains information about hazardous liquids and gas transmission pipelines under the jurisdiction of US DOT PHMSA

# MAP 9 | TRAFFIC

## TRANSPORTATION, TRAFFIC, AND CONNECTIVITY



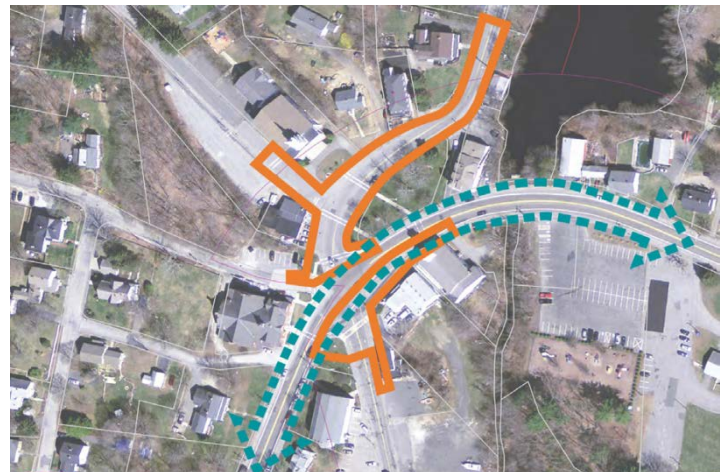
Produced by CMRPC




# Complete Streets

The Complete Streets Funding Program is a Mass-DOT program that distributes up to \$400,000 per year to cities and towns for improvements to streets for “all modes” — pedestrians, bicyclists, freight, transit, emergency responders, etc. There are three steps to the program:

1. Adopting a Complete Streets Policy;
2. Creating a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan that describes projects, estimates their costs, and prioritizes them;
1. Making a funding request to MassDOT for one or more shovel-ready projects not to exceed \$400,000 per year. Even though design is not an eligible expense, Chapter 90 funds can be used for design.



 Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), 2021

 Complete Streets Prioritization Plan, Year 3

Upton has completed the first two steps. Its Complete Streets Policy was approved in 2017. The Prioritization Plan—created by Beta Group working with the DPW and Town Manager—was approved in January 2019.

Complete Streets improvements for Upton Center are designated for the third year of funding (2022), including:

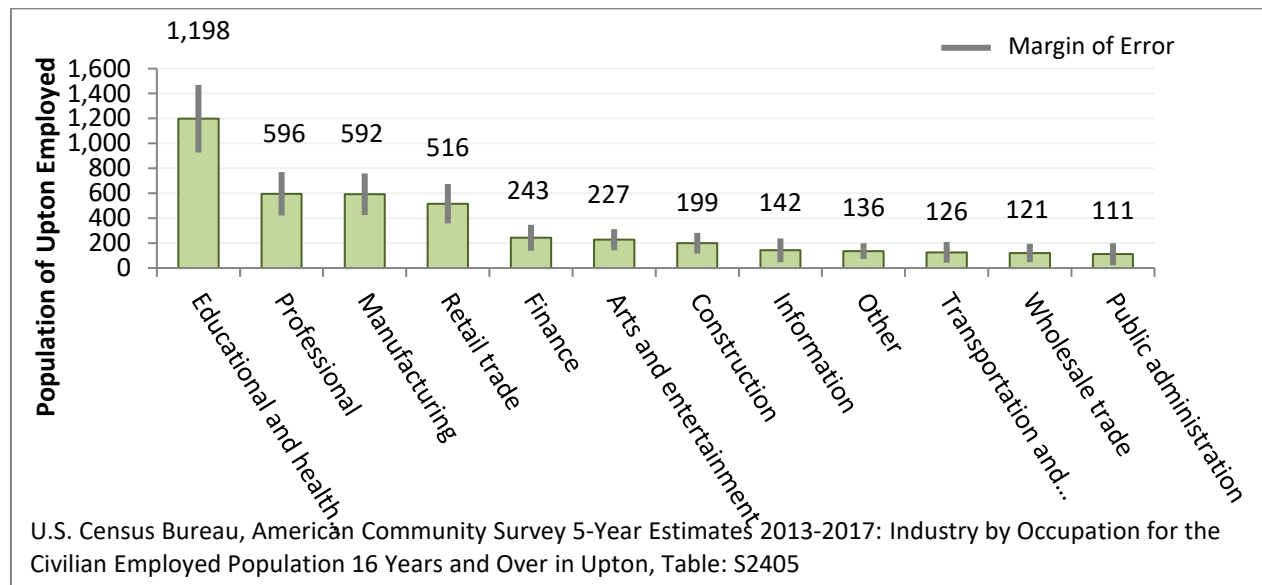
- Milford Street realignment in front of 1-3 Milford St and upgrades to the corner of Grove Street.
- Replacing the small island in front of the Arcade Block with a wide sidewalk/plaza with parking adjacent to Route 140. Parking is also added along the north side of the Town Common.
- Adding sidewalks, curb ramps, and parking spaces to Main Street, Church Street and North Main Street from Main Street to 10 North Main Street.

Additional Improvements to streets, sidewalks in Upton Center and surrounding neighborhoods are proposed for funding years after 2022. It is unclear whether the Complete Streets Funding Program will still be funded in 2022 or beyond.



# Jobs

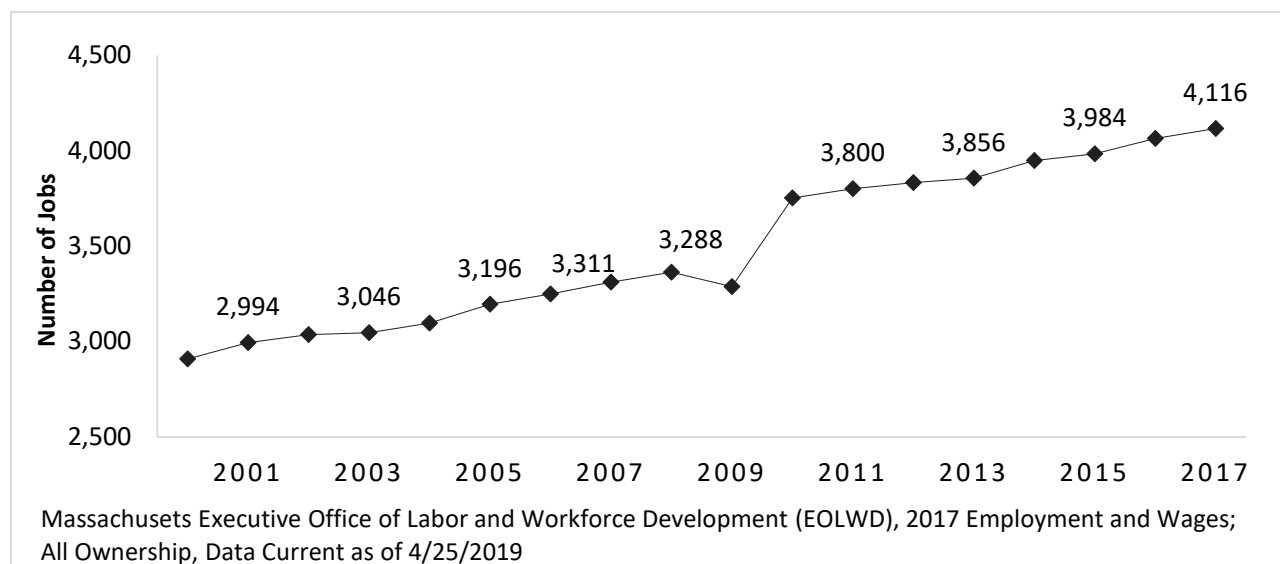
FIGURE 8 | POPULATION OF UPTON BY EMPLOYMENT INDUSTRY



## JOBS IN UPTON

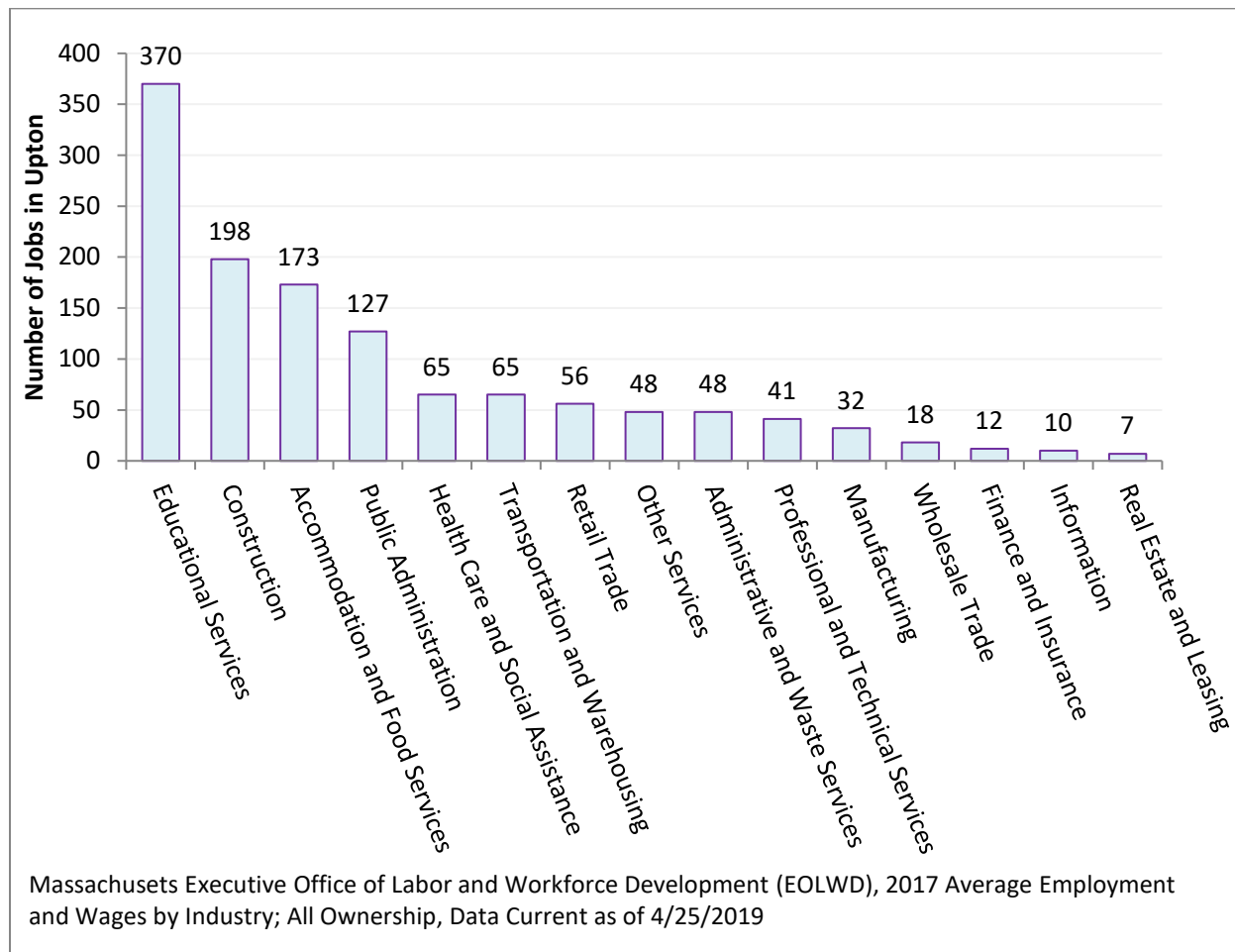
Since 2009, the number of people employed in Upton has experienced a gradual increase, following a slight dip between 2008 and 2009 during the Recession. After a steep increase between 2009 and 2010 of 14%, this continued growth has remained in the 0.5% to 2.5% range. Most recently, Upton added 52 jobs between 2016 and 2017.

FIGURE 9 | NUMBER OF JOBS BY YEAR IN UPTON



The industries that dominate the job market within Upton are educational services, construction, and accommodation and food services, as seen in Figure 10. Educational Services is the only industry that is prevalent among both the jobs that Upton residents are employed in and among jobs in Upton. The discrepancy between the jobs that residents of Upton are employed in and jobs available in Upton indicates that the job market in Upton may not fully match the skill set of its population. Additionally, it is a reflection on the high number of people who commute out of Upton for work.

FIGURE 10 | JOBS IN UPTON BY INDUSTRY



The strength of Upton's job market can be assessed in a number of ways to better understand what industries are key players and how the market is changing. Figure 11 shows the top industries based on criteria including highest paying industries, top employers, and greatest growth. Professional/ Technical Services and Transportation/ Warehousing both increased their workforce by more than double between 2010 and 2017. Transportation/ Warehousing added 34 jobs to the market, coming close to the Construction industry, which added the most jobs (68) between 2010 and 2017. The highest paying industries (wholesale trade and information services) are not represented in these categories.

FIGURE 11 | INDUSTRIES ASSESSMENT

<b>Largest Proportional Growth:</b> <i>% Change in employment 2010 - 2017</i>	
Professional and Technical Services	156.3%
Transportation and Warehousing	109.7%
<b>Most Jobs Added:</b> <i>Change in number of jobs 2010 - 2017</i>	
Construction	68
Transportation and Warehousing	34
<b>Highest Paying Industries:</b> <i>Highest average weekly wage in 2017</i>	
Wholesale Trade	\$2,453
Information	\$1,791
<b>Largest Employers:</b> <i>Highest average weekly employment in 2017</i>	
Educational Services	370
Construction	198
Source: MA Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD)	

There are only 11 firms in Upton employing more than 20 workers; five of the top 11 are municipal and educational facilities. Upton has issued 321 business licenses, indicating that the town's economy is dominated by small businesses and organizations. It is suspected that a large number of the town's employers are home businesses. Based on a GIS analysis that removed all businesses located in a commercial or industrial zoning district and those located adjacent to a commercial route, as indicated in Map 5, an estimated 172 of Upton businesses are home based.

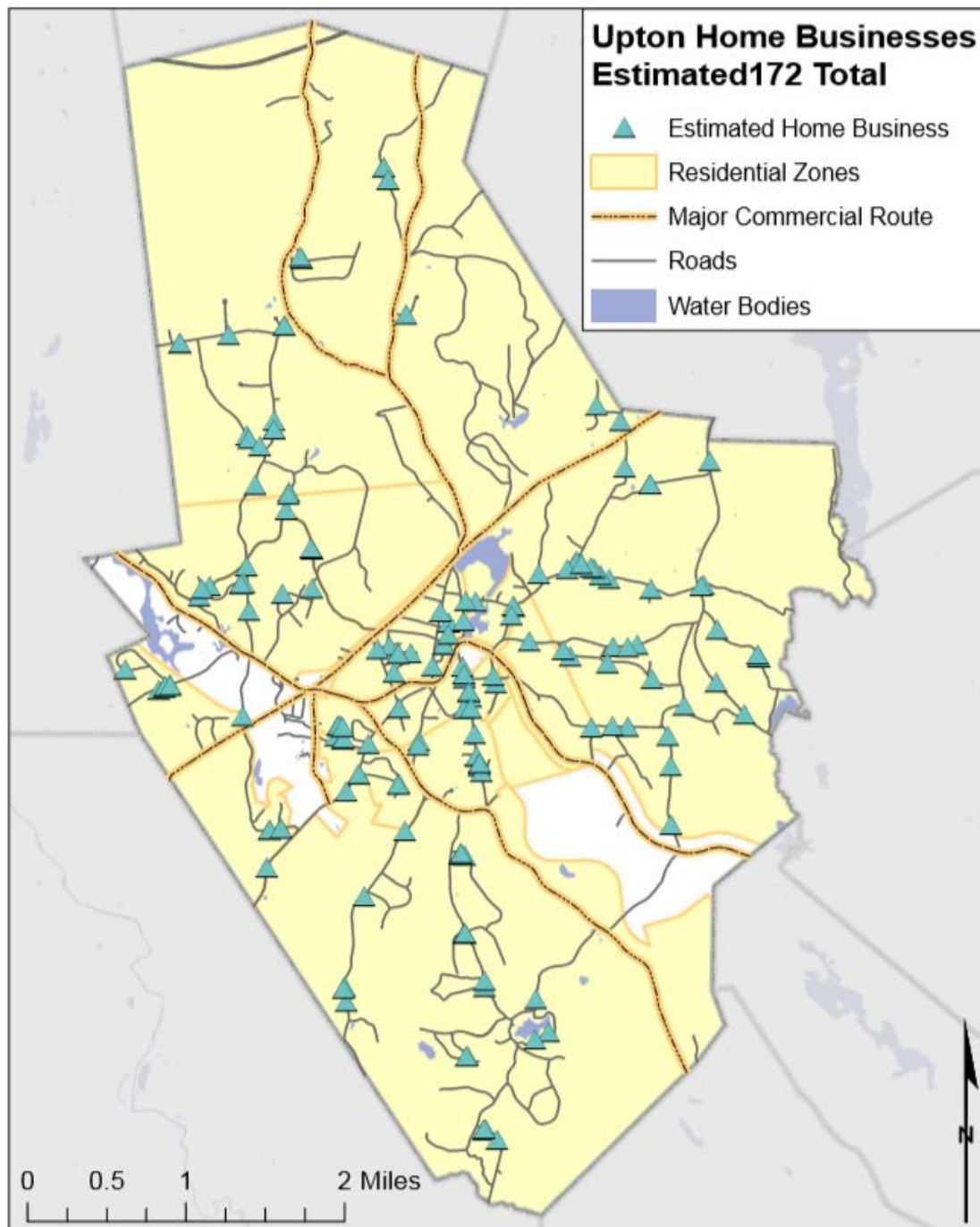
TABLE 3 | TOP EMPLOYERS IN UPTON

Top Employers in Upton	Address	Number of employees
Blackstone Valley Voc. Tech High	Pleasant St.	100-249
Nipmuc Regional High School	Pleasant St.	100-249
Memorial Elementary School	Main St.	50-99
Chem-Dry	Milford St.	20-49
Dunkin' Donuts	Hartford Ave N.	20-49
George J Summers Trucking Co	Church St.	20-49
Hopedale Cardiology	Milford St.	20-49
Red Barn Coffee Roasters	Walker Dr.	20-49
Riverside Outpatient Ctr.	Milford St.	20-49
Upton Fire Dept.	Church St.	20-49
Upton Police Dept.	School St.	20-49

The Official Website of the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD): Largest 25 Employers in Upton

## MAP 10 | HOME BUSINESSES

ESTIMATED HOME BUSINESSES BASED ON LOCATION



Town of Upton Business Certificates as of 2019. 98% Geocoded (8 Addresses Not Found). Analysis to Estimate the Number of Home Businesses in Upton: Identified Businesses with Addresses in Residential Zones, and Outside a 100-meter buffer from a Major Commercial Route.

# Tax Base

The Town of Upton's tax rate as of 2018 is \$17.31 per \$1,000. Upton's primary revenue source is levied taxes, making up 76% of total town revenue. Upton ranks 63<sup>rd</sup> among Massachusetts towns with the highest average single family tax bill.<sup>20</sup> The tax burden largely falls on residents as 94.58% of Upton's tax ratio derives from taxes on Residential and Open Spaces. The proportion of taxes from residential is greater than 88% of MA towns. Although slightly more in line with surrounding towns, Upton still has the greatest dependence on its residential tax base among its neighbors. In 2017 the average single family tax bill in Upton was \$7,355, an average higher than many surrounding towns, with the exception of Westborough and Hopkinton.

TABLE 4 | FY 2018 TAX RATES BY PROPERTY CLASSIFICATION

Municipality	Residential (per \$1,000)	Open Space (per \$1,000)	Commercial (per \$1,000)	Industrial (per \$1,000)	Personal Property (per \$1,000)
Westborough	\$18.33	\$0.00	\$18.33	\$18.33	\$18.33
Hopedale	\$17.57	\$0.00	\$28.29	\$28.29	\$28.29
Uxbridge	\$17.35	\$0.00	\$17.35	\$17.35	\$17.35
<b>Upton</b>	<b>\$17.31</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$17.31</b>	<b>\$17.31</b>	<b>\$17.31</b>
Hopkinton	\$17.17	\$17.17	\$17.17	\$17.17	\$17.17
Mendon	\$16.74	\$0.00	\$16.74	\$16.74	\$16.74
Grafton	\$16.66	\$0.00	\$16.66	\$16.66	\$16.66
Milford	\$16.54	\$0.00	\$30.88	\$30.88	\$30.88
Northbridge	\$12.97	\$0.00	\$12.97	\$12.97	\$12.97

Division of Local Services Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DLS), Tax Rates by Class: Data current as of 04/04/2019

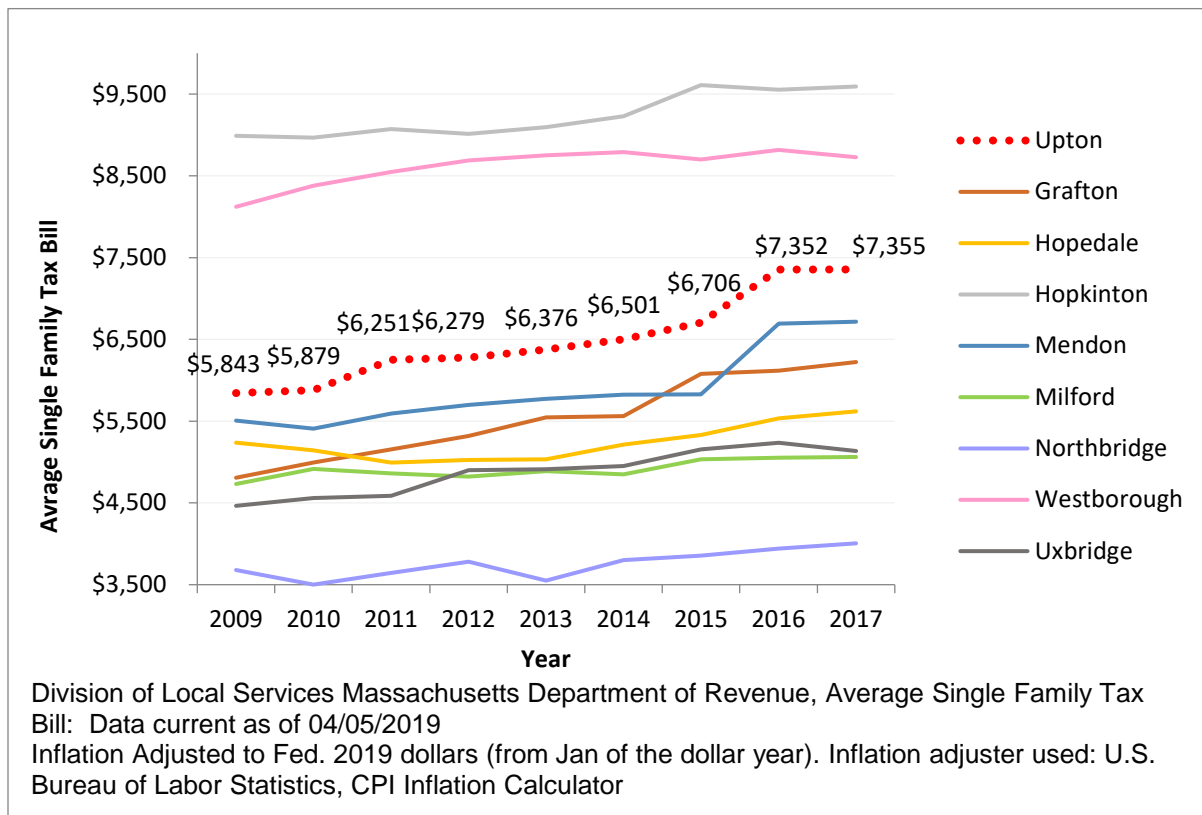
TABLE 5 | FY 2018 TAX RATIO BY MUNICIPALITY

Municipality	% Residential and Open Space Levy	% Commercial Levy	% Industrial Levy	% Personal Property Levy
Uxbridge	83.18%	5.05%	5.74%	6.03%
Milford	66.92%	17.57%	9.73%	5.78%
Westborough	68.68%	15.50%	10.13%	5.69%
Mendon	87.77%	6.22%	0.39%	5.62%
Hopkinton	83.67%	3.91%	7.89%	4.52%
Hopedale	81.95%	8.38%	5.92%	3.74%
Northbridge	87.22%	8.00%	1.91%	2.88%
Grafton	90.99%	4.02%	2.33%	2.67%
<b>Upton</b>	<b>94.58%</b>	<b>1.91%</b>	<b>0.90%</b>	<b>2.61%</b>

Division of Local Services Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DLS), Tax Levy by Class: Data current as of 04/04/2019

Adjusting for inflation, Upton's average single-family tax bill has steadily increased since 2009, with a particularly large increase in 2016. This trend is a similar occurrence in nearby towns, as can be seen in Figure 12.

FIGURE 12 | AVERAGE SINGLE-FAMILY TAX BILL, 2009-2017





# The Market

## MANUFACTURING

The manufacturing sector in Upton is small, with no manufacturing companies ranking in the top 11 employers, based on having more than 20 employees. There are four firms designated as Manufacturing by the Department of Labor as of 2017, employing an average of 32 workers per month. The total wages distributed by these four manufacturers in 2018 was \$1,622,652, which amounts to an average weekly wage per worker of \$975. This weekly wage is lower than the average for all those employed in Upton, implying those with manufacturing jobs in Upton are not earning as much as employees in service industries.

## SERVICE INDUSTRIES

Service industries play a stronger role in Upton's economy. Educational Services employ the most workers (1,198), however, Food Services, Technical Services, Finance and Insurance, Information, and Retail Trade all experienced growth in employment between 2010 and 2017. The top three largest employers in Upton fall under Educational Services, a field that dominates the workforce in Upton. The town also contains many home-based businesses that may not be reflected accurately in the U.S. Census data. Overall, Upton's workforce is primarily based in service industries.

## RETAIL GAP

CMRPC identified retail surplus and leakage areas within a 5-minute drive time from Upton's Town Center. ESRI Business Analyst tracks the supply (retail sales) and demand (retail potential) of communities to provide a sense of where people are spending money in a given community and in what sectors people are going to other communities to spend money. Leakage in an area represents a condition where demand exceeds supply, therefore highlighting an opportunity for new retailers to enter the trade area or for current retailers to expand their marketing outreach to accommodate the excess demand. The Retail Gap column in Table X shows that there is retail leakage in every major industry group for Upton. The top industries where Upton residents are spending the most money in other communities are Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers, Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores, Food & Beverage Stores, and General Merchandise Stores. If Upton is determined to grow its commercial and industrial tax base, then it should consider where its residents are most likely to spend their money locally. The only sub-industries that Upton has a retail surplus in are Lawn & Garden Equipment & Supply Stores which sales exceed demand by 65% and Beer, Wine & Liquor Stores which sales exceed demand by 13%. Upton is not fulfilling its retail potential and there is much opportunity for new and existing retailers to capture the market.



TABLE 6 | ESRI RETAIL MARKETPLACE PROFILE

Industry Group	Demand (Retail Potential)	Supply (Retail Sales)	Retail Gap
Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers	\$14,361,274	\$902,237	\$13,459,037
Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores	\$2,109,452	\$791,386	\$11,096,413
Electronics & Appliance Stores	\$3,078,882	\$252,317	\$2,826,565
Building Materials, Garden Equipment & Supply Stores	\$4,849,252	\$1,758,474	\$3,090,778
Food & Beverage Stores	\$13,849,039	\$3,423,922	\$10,425,117
Health & Personal Care Stores	\$4,571,275	\$0	\$518,354
Gasoline Stations	\$6,157,311	\$3,954,419	\$2,202,892
Clothing & Clothing Accessories Stores	\$5,418,948	\$0	\$5,418,948
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book & Music Stores	\$2,819,522	\$630,218	\$2,189,304
General Merchandise Stores	\$8,846,931	\$0	\$8,846,931
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	\$2,834,377	\$322,020	\$2,512,357
Non-store Retailers	\$2,915,215	\$0	\$2,915,215
Food Services & Drinking Places	\$8,117,660	\$2,474,009	\$5,643,651

ESRI Business Analyst, 1 Main St, Upton, MA 5-minute drive time radius

# Zoning

Upton currently has the following zoning districts:

- 1) Single Residential A (SRA)
- 2) Single Residential B (SRB)
- 3) Single Residential C (SRC)
- 4) Single Residential D (SRD)
- 5) Agricultural Residential (AR)
- 6) General Business (GB)
- 7) Commercial & Industrial (C&I)
- 8) Municipal Government Facilities (MGF)
- 9) Upton Center Business District (UCBD)

Upton's initial attempt at zoning was enacted in the late 1950's. General zoning regulations were updated in the 1970's and some specific changes (Planned Village Development and Marijuana Overlay) were approved in the 2000's.

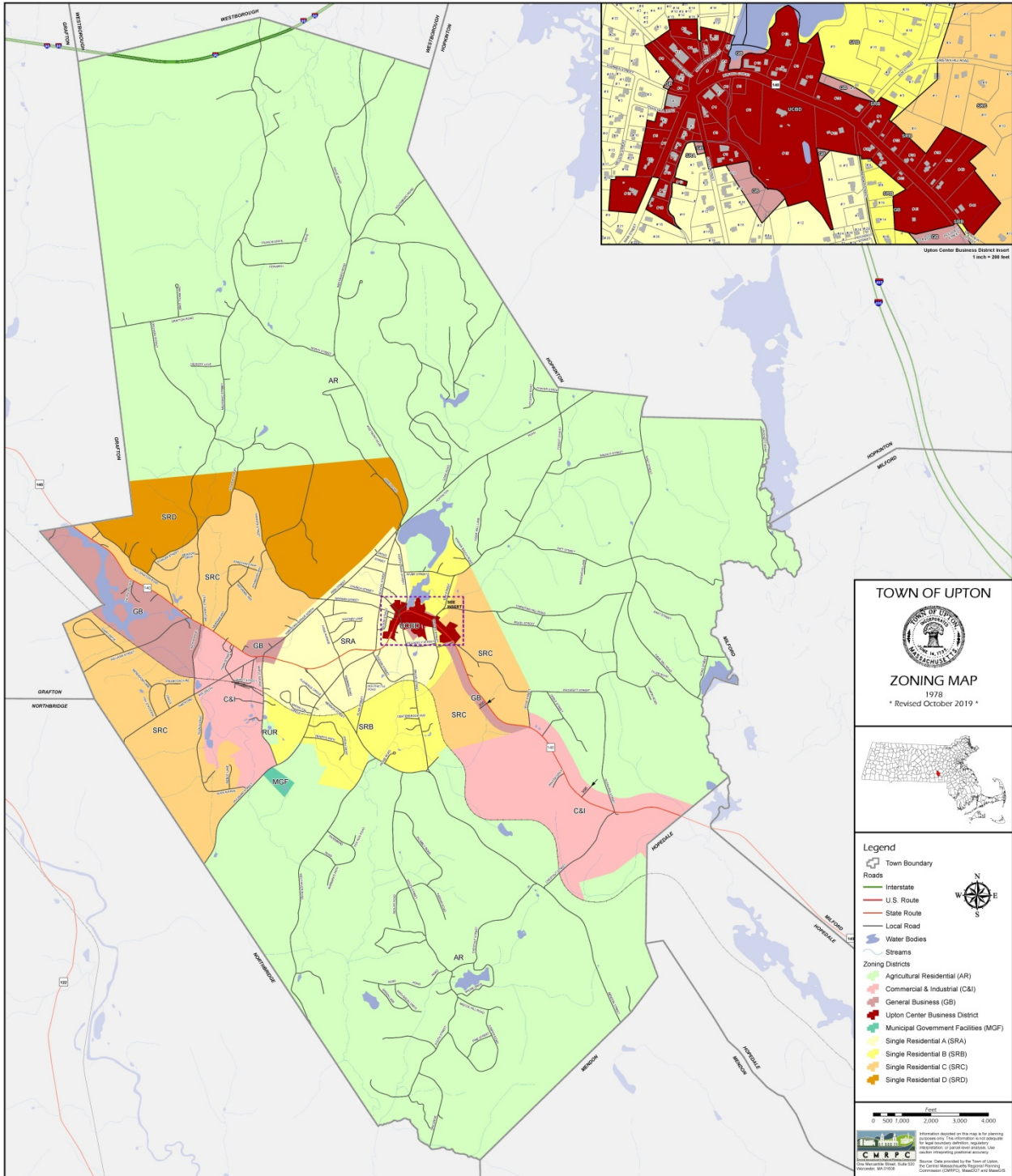
The most recent zoning change was approved at the Fall Town Meeting in November 2019. This change established a new zoning district known as the Upton Center Business District. More details on this are included in the sections below.

Some challenges we are currently facing with regard to zoning are:

- Land currently zoned C&I is mostly residential.
- Planning Board and ZBA grant many special permits that allow uses not currently in zoning regulations.
- There is one commercial and industrial area (Walker Drive) that is home to a handful of businesses.
- There are no existing buildings that are available for new businesses to move into

# MAP 11 | ZONING

## ZONING MAP WITH COMMUNITY FEATURES



Town of Upton zoning areas

[illegible]

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# FIVE-YEAR ACTION PLAN

## Goal 1: Upton Center Revitalization

	Actions	Responsible Parties	Time Frame (years)
1.1	Continue working on first phase of the Upton Business Center Revitalization Plan	Upton EDC, Town of Upton	2019-2020
1.2	Post Request for Proposals to the Central Register in early 2020	Upton EDC, Town of Upton, Upton RFP Committee	2020
1.3	Develop second phase of Upton Business Center Revitalization Plan	Upton EDC	2020-2021
1.4	Form a building committee for the Municipal Building (Library/Community Center).	Upton EDC	2020-
1.5	Work with DPW on implementing the Complete Streets Prioritization Plan	Upton EDC	2020-2021
1.5	Explore possibilities to improve walkability to Maple Avenue from Pleasant Street to the railroad tracks.	Upton EDC	2020-2021

## Goal 2: Focus on West Upton Center

	Actions	Responsible Parties	Time Frame (Years)
2.1	Review the current zoning by-laws in West Upton center and see if there are any by-laws that can be updated.	Upton EDC, Upton Planning Board	2020
2.2	Create design guidelines for West Upton center so that West Upton is just as desirable for future improvements as Upton Center.	Upton EDC	2020-2021
2.3	Coordinate with MassDOT on both of the TIP projects happening in 2020 and 2021 to maintain open communication so that the residents and passengers traveling through West Upton Center are well aware of the projects timeline.	Upton EDC, Upton Police Department, Upton DPW	2020-2022
2.4	Explore becoming a Safe Routes to School partner to enhance the walkability for all of the schools in the Town of Upton.	Upton EDC, Upton School Department, Town of Upton, CMRPC	2020
2.5	Review Complete Streets Prioritization Plan project areas	Upton EDC	2020-2021



	in West Upton and use the program to help align with the TIP projects for the most effective process for safe and walkable streets in West Upton.		
2.6	Complete the Municipal Vulnerability Program and apply for MVP Action Grants that align with the downtown development plans for resiliency	Upton EDC, Town of Upton, Upton DPW, Upton Fire Department, CMRPC	2020

## Goal 3: Create a Transit Hub

	Actions	Responsible Parties	Time Frame (Years)
3.1	Finalize and distribute commuter survey to Upton residents to determine commuter patterns.	Upton EDC , CMRPC	2020
3.2	Evaluate and determine Upton joining the Metro West Regional Transit Authority service.	Upton EDC	2020-2021
3.4	Assess possible locations of transit hub; whether the parcel on Hopkinton Road is feasible.	Upton EDC	2020-2023
3.5	Assess whether the parcel on Hopkinton Road is a feasible area for large scale solar energy battery storage.	Upton EDC	2020-2022

## Goal 4: Streamline Municipal Procedures

	Actions	Responsible Parties	Time Frame (Years)
4.1	Improve usability and accessibility of the town website.	Town of Upton	2020-2025
4.2	Create and upload Upton small business resource guide to make the path of starting a business in Upton well-lit and welcoming.	Upton EDC	2020-2021
4.3	Enhance online permitting software currently being used by the Town of Upton.	Upton EDC	2020-2025
4.4	Create business reviews board to meeting periodically to assist in the process of starting a business and also helping with any assistance that might be needed by and existing business in Upton.	Upton EDC	2020-2022
4.5	Explore hiring a part time (or full time) planner to assist with ZBA,	Town of Upton,	2020-2021

	EDC, the planning board and zoning issues.	Upton EDC	
4.5	Update existing master plan (2005) to help guide the Town of Upton with a plan for the future.	Upton EDC, CMRPC, Town of Upton	2020-2025

## Goal 5: Foster Business Growth

	Actions	Responsible Parties	Time Frame (Years)
5.1	Inventory existing businesses and vacancies in commercial and industrial zones to determine mix, needs, and opportunities.	Upton EDC	2020-2021
5.2	Conduct a study of infrastructure needs throughout Upton.	Upton DPW	2022
5.3	Promote the use of vacant buildings as business incubators.	Upton EDC	2021
5.4	Update existing small business listings and post/maintain the listing on the Upton website.	Upton EDC	2020
5.5	Promote the creation of a small business association and help foster the relationship between the association and the business owners in Upton.	Upton EDC	2020-2022
5.6	Apply for all of the grant opportunities available on Commonwealth Compact Connector	Upton EDC	2020
5.7	Consider becoming a Main Street America Community	Upton EDC	2020

