



Town of Brookfield Master Plan

ADDENDUM
2024

Adopted September 2024



Town of Brookfield



A comprehensive Master Plan prepared with technical assistance from the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC), and funding from the Town of Brookfield, Massachusetts and the CMRPC District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) program.

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Acknowledgments

A warm thank you to the Brookfield stakeholders who volunteered their valuable expertise, time, and talents to this collaborative Master Plan, including Brookfield Boards, Departments, & Staff; and all contributing residents.



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Donor Appreciation:
Brookfield residents would like to recognize and thank the local families whose generous donations contributed to the completion of improvements across town, including the basketball court, the flag pole at Lewis Field, signage, and more.



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Glossary

Policy

A statement of principles that underlies a plan's overall strategy and directs decision-making.¹

Vision Statement

A statement that describes a community's long-term aspirations based on shared purpose and values. Expresses uniqueness and standards of excellence, focusing on people and quality of life. Provides a framework or hook upon which to hang ideas or information. The foundation that supports more specific goals and objectives.²

Goal

A general statement about desirable future conditions the community seeks to achieve to realize its vision for the future.

Objective

A statement of specific and measurable outcomes in furtherance of a certain goal; a condition that must be attained to accomplish a goal.

Action Item

A task carried out within a specific time frame as part of the strategy to achieve an outcome; a directive intended to guide the implementation of objectives.

¹ For a discussion on developing policies, goals, objectives, and action items, see, Rouse, David, and Rocky Piro. *The comprehensive plan: Sustainable, resilient, and equitable communities for the 21st century*. Routledge, 2021, 41.

² Haines, Anna. "Using Visioning in a comprehensive planning process." University of Wisconsin Extension (2001).



Vision Statement

Twenty years into the future...

We envision our town as a vibrant community where rural character incorporates modern amenities and services.

We imagine a thriving economic landscape where new businesses flourish alongside local establishments. A walkable center and common will continue to serve as the heart of our community, where families gather to shop, dine, and connect, fostering a sense of belonging that has defined our town for generations.

Brookfield continues to be a place where our history, natural beauty, and agriculture remain integral to our identity. Our town balances sustainable economic growth with preserving open space and farmland.

As our population ages gracefully, we prioritize inclusivity, healthy aging, and ensuring that every resident feels valued and supported in their golden years.

Our commitment to improving the quality of life for all Brookfield residents ensures that we have access to abundant green spaces, recreational facilities, and comprehensive healthcare services.

Brookfield will be a place where families can thrive, offering a range of affordable housing options to accommodate diverse needs and income levels.

Safety is paramount, as robust infrastructure and emergency services foster a sense of security for all residents.

In Brookfield, agriculture remains a cornerstone of our heritage, with local farms and farmers' markets preserving our agrarian roots and providing access to fresh, locally sourced produce.

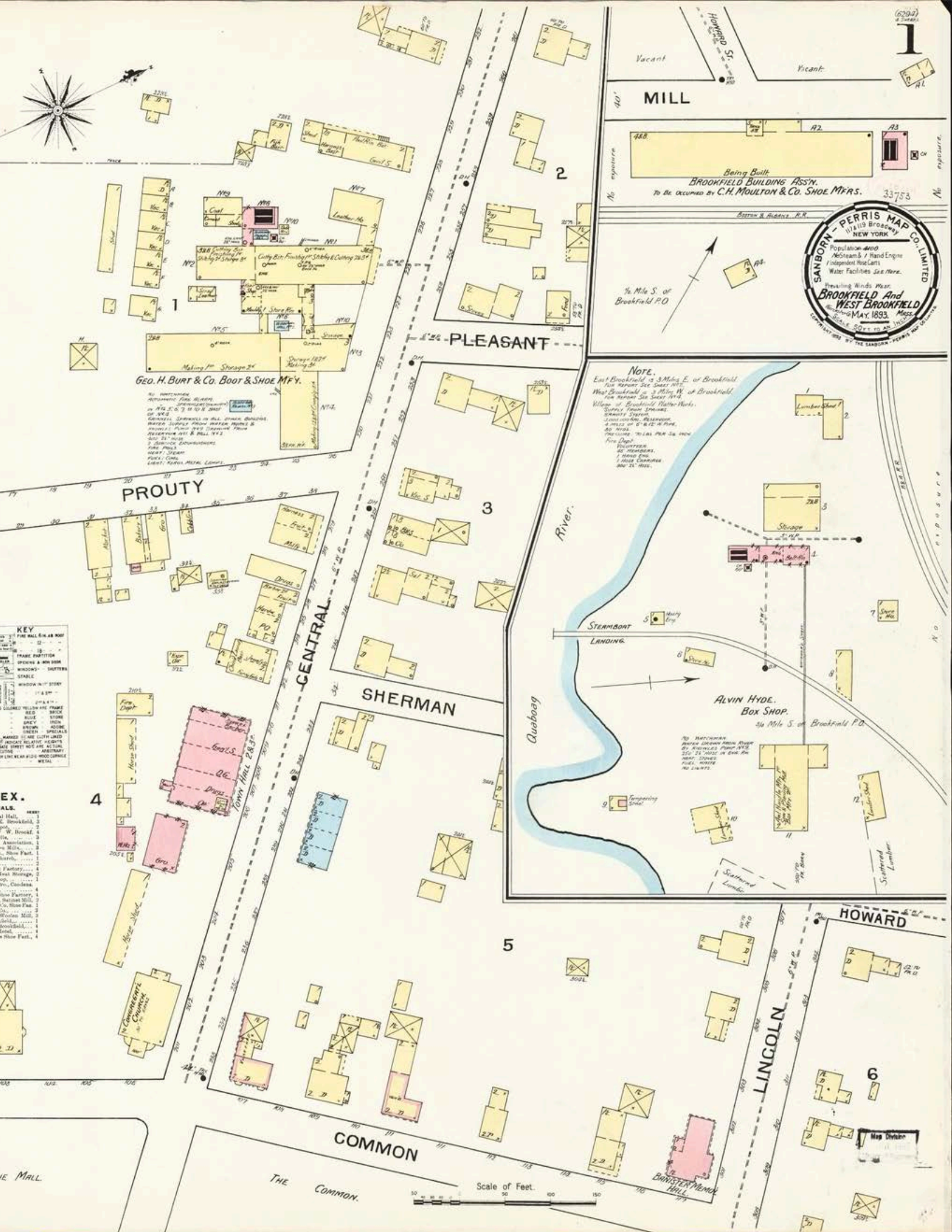
Our commitment to education continues to shape our top-tier schools and offer lifelong learning opportunities that empower our youth to reach their fullest potential.

Above all, Brookfield is a place where history is honored, and community thrives, where the past, present, and future converge to create our collective vision.

1

2

Plan Timeline



PROJECT KICKOFF

Dec 2022

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS



DATA COLLECTION

Jan 2023

FIRST COMMUNITY WORKSHOP



COMMUNITY SURVEY

May-Sep 2023

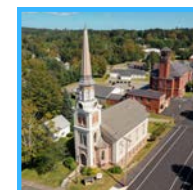
SECOND COMMUNITY WORKSHOP



VISION STATEMENT

Jul 2023

GOALS & STRATEGIES



CHAPTER ADDENDA

Sep-Nov 2023

FINAL DRAFT



APPROVED BY TOWN STAFF

Feb 2024

2024

ADOPTED BY THE PLANNING BOARD



2024



02

Overview



OVERVIEW

Walk around the Brookfield Common Historic District, and it is immediately apparent why the town is a draw for those looking for a quiet, rural lifestyle in a historic New England setting. Home to some of Massachusetts' oldest landmarks and scenic rural landscapes, Brookfield is a residential community with a workforce focused on commuting to job opportunities. Brookfield's population has continued to grow since the 2010 Census, though

growth has slowed significantly since its peak in the 1990s. Despite this, home values continue to increase (Fig. 26, Appendix), reflecting the high demand for housing in town and elsewhere in Massachusetts, where prices are driven not by population growth, but by a constrained supply.

In recent years, Brookfield has seen moderate, but steady growth in residential development, primarily south of the Quaboag River. Across Worcester County, the influx of population leaving cities for rural and suburban areas in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to an increase in median rents and

housing values. Brookfield stands to capitalize from this shift, especially as many continue to work remotely and spur local demand for goods and services.

Yet, the COVID-19 pandemic and the continued decline in manufacturing have also brought challenges to Brookfield and the entire region. Major employers have relocated out of Brookfield, and beloved food establishments have closed, leaving Brookfield with fewer dining options and with an increasing burden on residential taxpayers. At the same time, newcomers, such as the popular Oakholm Brewing Company,

have opened the door to new possibilities for turning Brookfield into an ecotourism destination.

Brookfield has a small commercial sector. In 2022, only 16 business certificates were issued, indicating a limited commercial base. Brookfield has small pockets of commercial development, located in Business districts A and B. Several businesses line Route 9, but many of Brookfield's businesses are located on Central and Mill Street. This location is disadvantaged compared to Route 9, where convenience shopping and light manufacturing benefit from visibility and high traffic volumes.

A robust community engagement process has revealed that one of the main priorities for residents is to maintain Brookfield's small-town character and encourage the type of commercial growth that would meet

residents' daily needs. As Brookfield's population is projected to grow in the next two decades, this master plan examines ways to accommodate this growth within the Town's current infrastructure capacity while also building a strong economic base and preserving the town's character. By translating these competing priorities into actionable planning, this plan aims to chart a path for economic and physical development that aligns with the community's needs and regional trends.

Several prior plans have diagnosed Brookfield's challenges and identified its opportunities. As a result, Brookfield is better positioned to anticipate changes and disruptions. But as residents have made clear in our community conversations, "it's time to implement!" Residents want an actionable master plan that leads to accountability, action, and

ultimately, to shovel-ready projects.

With this call to action guiding the process, this plan seeks to prepare Brookfield to access funding, investments, and grants more effectively by laying the groundwork for a pipeline of fundable projects over the next 10-20 years.

The Town has put in a tremendous amount of work to develop multiple plans.

BROOKFIELD IS READY FOR WORK!





03

Key
Priorities



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PLANNING WITH THE COMMUNITY

Public input significantly shaped this plan and served as a guiding framework. In addition to incorporating U.S. Census data analysis, the plan directly addresses the insights provided by Brookfield's residents and stakeholders. Their invaluable contributions were gathered through various activities, including two public workshops and a community survey where they shared their thoughts and perspectives.

During the community engagement process, Brookfield residents voiced

Residents want a revitalized community while seeking to preserve their way of life.

their desire for this plan to become a catalyst for revitalizing their community while preserving their way of life. To advance this vision, this plan seeks to strike a balance between charting a new direction for development and preserving the community's social and physical environment.

This means achieving stakeholder consensus on how Brookfield can remove barriers to economic development and attract investments. At the same time, it involves planning for deliberate growth management that directs development toward select areas.



**FEBRUARY 2023
VISIONING
WORKSHOP**



**MAY-SEP 2023
COMMUNITY
MASTER PLAN
SURVEY**



**JUNE 2023
COMMUNITY
WORKSHOP**



KEY PRIORITIES

Several recurring topics voiced by Brookfield residents guided our planning work from the start of the community engagement process to the plan development phase. These themes resonated with the key takeaways from our data research and conversations with stakeholders.

1. Build capacity for a more connected community, where involved residents and a responsive government work together.

Volunteer participation: Residents recognize that the Town

government operates with limited resources and capacity, and they are looking for ways to fill this capacity gap through volunteer recruitment and participation. Building on the momentum that already exists in the community, residents have voiced ideas about ways to mobilize volunteers for participation on committees and in community events.

Engagement with Town departments:

Residents would like an open dialogue with the Town departments and more updates on the state of Town activities and projects.

Regionalization:

Residents have voiced their support for regionalizing services

BROOKFIELD RESIDENTS, IN THEIR OWN WORDS *

“Everybody has to volunteer here. Not enough people working in town to make things happen.”

“We could save a lot of money by regionalizing services.”
(Community Workshop, February 2023)

* Comments edited for clarity.

to save resources while expanding access. Drawing on the success of Brookfield’s regional school district, residents have suggested partnering and sharing resources with surrounding towns.

Our recommendations:

Drawing on precedents from neighboring communities, such as the Leicester Regional Public Health Coalition, Brookfield could form local partnerships to share select services for improved efficiency and cost savings.

2. Become investment-ready.

For a town that has infrastructure limitations and relies heavily on state funding to avert deficits, becoming investment-ready is a complex task. It involves identifying potential development sites and providing zoning incentives to attract investment. It entails actively pursuing and incentivizing developers and businesses to locate their operations to Brookfield, while retaining its existing businesses. As several business owners noted at the June 2023 community forum, Brookfield’s small businesses need individualized support, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our recommendations

Expand infrastructure to potential development sites.

Re-activate the Economic Development Committee.

BROOKFIELD RESIDENTS, IN THEIR OWN WORDS

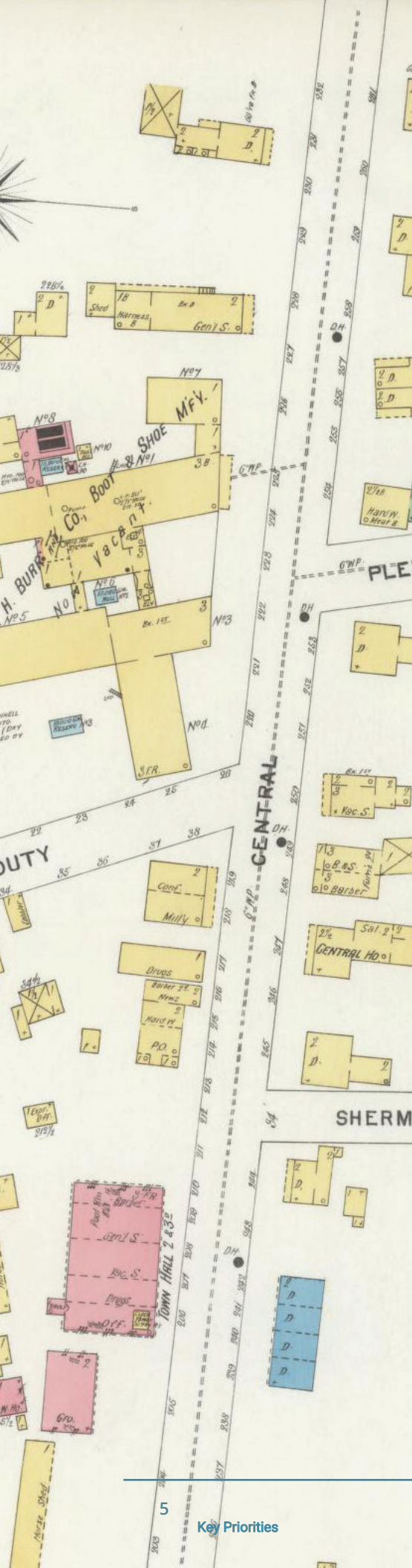
“Growth is not quite a threat right now [...] We need more business in town. We want people to invest in a town like Brookfield.”

“Former shoe factory building south of the town center has potential for development.”
(Community Workshop, June 2023)

3. Develop a pipeline of fundable projects.

To absorb state and federal funds more effectively, Brookfield would benefit from a set of well-thought-out plans in sectors ranging from housing and downtown revitalization to brownfield redevelopment and infrastructure. Yet, a persistent challenge facing small communities like Brookfield is a lack of capacity that prevents them from coming up with fundable projects that align with funding criteria.





Our recommendations:

As noted in the goals laid out in this plan, bringing these projects in alignment with a long-range capital improvements plan would be a key step toward unlocking more funding opportunities. The Town would benefit from exploring opportunities to improve and expand its infrastructure. As noted in the Government Services chapter, the Town should explore a cooperation agreement with North Brookfield to establish a sewer connection.

4. Bring Brookfield’s built environment and land use in closer alignment with the community’s vision and economic development goals.

Is the zoning in Business Districts A and B conducive to commercial activities? Is the town “business-friendly”? There was consensus among residents that the Village District, as well as Business Districts A and B, are underutilized and in need of revitalization. These districts have benefitted from Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) infrastructure upgrades, and should continue to be key focus areas for planning, programming, and new development.

At the same time, community input highlighted that most of the new development in the past decade has occurred south of the Quaboag River. Though growth has been moderate, it has continued the trend of gradual encroachment on the town’s diminishing farmland and open space.

BROOKFIELD RESIDENTS, IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“Need downtown revitalization. Fill Central Street with businesses. Make it walkable and shoppable.” (Community Survey, 2023)

“Don’t have industrial areas available. Have to go out of town, because there’s nowhere (in town) to manufacture.” (Community Workshop, June 2023)

“Retail is starting to make a comeback on Route 9.” (Community Workshop, June 2023)

“I think we should keep our town small. I moved here to be in a rural country setting.” (Community Survey, 2023)

Our recommendations:

Business A district, zoned primarily for retail and service establishments, would benefit from targeted zoning updates that encourage more compact development. The Land Use chapter recommends rezoning and neighborhood planning that reduce dimensional requirements and encourage “infill” development in the town center.

Physical improvements should be implemented in areas of the town center that have potential to support commercial activity. Improvements, such as a walking loop, would facilitate walkability and access to shopping, public amenities (Town Common), recreational uses (Lewis Field), and transit (bus stop on Route 9).

The plan also recommends strategies for compact development in the residential areas located south of the Quaboag River in order to preserve open space.

5. Repurpose Brookfield’s vacant and underutilized properties to ensure their highest and best use.

One of the more pressing issues residents invoked was the need to address the increasing number of vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties throughout the town center. “I live across the street from a house on the verge of collapse,” noted a resident, adding that the Town should address the persistent blight and encourage people to

BROOKFIELD RESIDENTS, IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“There are 30 new homes currently being built. Would like to see people restoring buildings before building new housing.”

“We need housing for the elderly.” (Community Survey, 2023)

take better care of their houses. Brought on by the gradual decline of manufacturing, and precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, Brookfield’s blighted properties could have a negative impact on public health, property values, and the taxpayers. It is demolition by neglect, rather than new development, that presents the biggest threat to Brookfield’s built legacy.

Yet, intervention can pose a challenge for town officials and residents alike. Brookfield’s town center includes many independent property and business owners, and properties in various conditions. While the Town may influence their decisions, through levers such as a vacant property registry, or tax title enforcement, they have no control over how owners choose to use their properties. An article intended to address this problem was voted

down in recent years.

Our recommendations:

The Economic Development chapter looks into programs such as the the Attorney General’s Neighborhood Renewal Division to recommend approaches ranging from enforcing the Sanitary Code, to instituting a vacant properties bylaw.

More broadly, this plan looks at precedents from neighboring communities to recommend that the Town inventory vacant properties, and encourage the adaptive reuse, rehabilitation, and resale of properties with development potential for affordable and senior housing.

6. A Town that leverages its natural and historic assets to improve the economy and quality of life.

BROOKFIELD RESIDENTS, IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“Oakholm is bringing tourists into town.”

“We would like more walking trails and bike paths. Need more access to nature.” (Community Workshop, June 2023)



With 26% of its land occupied by open water/wetlands and abundant open space, Brookfield is a natural asset-rich town. Yet, as the residents suggested during our community dialogues, Brookfield is poor in amenities. “We have a lot of open space with no access,” noted one workshop participant, adding that, “historic sites under MassWildlife management aren’t being maintained or have any walking trails or bike paths.” Similarly, Brookfield’s ponds are underutilized. Multiple workshop participants voiced the need for sidewalks and a beach at North Pond, in addition to kayaking activities and fishing tournaments. To ensure that Brookfield can take advantage of its natural assets for generations to come, the town needs zoning and programming that make these amenities available to residents.

Our recommendations:

The Land Use and Open Space, Recreation, Natural, and Cultural Resources chapters identify both protection strategies for the town’s natural historical assets, and infrastructure improvements that would expand public access.

With a rich history and scenic open space areas, and new businesses such as the Oakholm Brewing Company that have become a regional draw, Brookfield is well positioned to capitalize from a pivot to ecotourism and agritourism. A long-range economic development strategy should leverage this momentum to chart a new course and market Brookfield as an ecotourism destination.



26%
of Brookfield is
unbuildable due to
wetland constraints.

10.5%
of Brookfield is open
water

11.1%
wetlands

4.2%
forested areas



**Leveraging
natural and
historic assets:
Brookfield
could become
an ecotourism
destination.**





04

Economic
Development



Ecotourism is a promising economic development framework that could enable Brookfield to use its historic resources and natural assets productively and become a destination for recreational activities.

particular, ecotourism is a promising economic development framework that could enable Brookfield to use its historic resources and natural assets productively and become a destination for recreational activities.

Brookfield's businesses, in particular those dependent on foot traffic, have been impacted in recent years by the continued decline of retail and the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the publication of the 2011 Master Plan, one of Brookfield's largest employers, Gavitt Wire & Cable

Company, has moved its operations to West Brookfield, leaving behind a vacant industrial building located on Central Street. Carmella's Kitchen, a restaurant that once employed between 25 and 50 people, has closed, further reducing dining options in town. Gables, a restaurant that once operated in the "Gables" building on Post Road, has met a similar fate. Long-term residents recall that the town center used to be a "happening" place, with four restaurants, a newsstand/candy store, and more. Today, the Clam Box on Rout 9 remains the only restaurant in Brookfield and is a destination for out-of-town patrons.

The town's geography poses a

challenge to its ability to retain and attract businesses. Many of its retail businesses are located off Route 9, which hinders their visibility. Brookfield residents drive to towns such as Spencer and Sturbridge to shop for groceries since the town's commercial center is unable to meet this demand. Tip-Top Country Store, however, is the exception. It has weathered the COVID-19 pandemic and continues to thrive on Central Street, where it remains a destination for shoppers from neighboring towns. Furthermore, the town lacks easy highway access, and thus is not an attractive location for industrial development.

This challenge, however, may be

Quality of life is a key consideration for economic development.

OVERVIEW
One of Brookfield's more contentious topics is whether growth is desirable, how to pay for it, and where it should be located. Residents have expressed concern with the pressure growth may put on infrastructure

such as schools, water, roads, and emergency services. In many ways, this is a debate familiar to rural communities in Central Massachusetts faced with the need to diversify their tax base: how to achieve the benefits of growth while maintaining the essence of their community's character.

Community input underscored that quality of life is a key consideration shaping residents' economic development priorities. There is a strong interest in focusing resources on public amenities, such as improving the aesthetics of the

town center, enhancing amenities around the town's natural areas, and providing cultural programming and events that bring the community together. These shared priorities can provide a more effective framework for targeting economic development measures the residents will support.

Incorporating quality of life elements into a long-range economic development plan can give residents and staff a better idea of how the town can leverage its cultural and natural assets for revenue generating opportunities. In



Leverage cultural and natural assets for revenue generating opportunities.

Residents support reducing the burden on the residential taxpayers, who make up 95% of the town's tax levy.

an advantage when it comes to attracting residential development. Many long-term and new residents have noted that Brookfield's quiet, rural way of life was the determining factor in their decision to move to Brookfield. The moderate but steady population growth is evidence of that appeal, as is the ongoing construction of the Molasses Hill subdivision south of the Quaboag River.

At community engagement events, and in the responses to the 2023 community survey, Brookfield residents have expressed the need to reduce the burden on the residential taxpayers, who make up 95% of the town's tax levy. Thus, this chapter is focused on identifying ways to attract more businesses in order to diversify the town's commercial and industrial tax base, while preserving Brookfield's small town character.

KEY FINDINGS

Opportunities for Ecotourism

Brookfield's economy has roots in its agricultural traditions and farms. The Agricultural Commission is actively promoting local agriculture, while also working on regulatory initiatives, such as the passage of a Right-to-Farm Bylaw. But the agricultural business community in Brookfield, much like the rest of the region, faces physical and economic barriers. These barriers have called into question the future of farming in Brookfield and beyond, particularly as chapter lands are removed from classification and solar fields replace agriculture practices.

Ecotourism and historic tourism are a potential avenue and an established economic driver in the region, with orchards, bike trails, and camp sites being the main draws. To capitalize on this economic opportunity, the Town could work through its Agricultural and Historical Commissions to promote main ecotourism attractions in town (Figure 1). Sites such as the Quaboag River, Elm Hill Farm Historic District, and Oakholm Farm and Brewing Company present great opportunities for marketing the town as a destination. Oakholm Brewing in particular has become in recent years a regional destination for events, dining, and other family-friendly activities.

BROOKFIELD RESIDENTS, IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"Brookfield should become an ATV-friendly place to ride. Imagine how much money that would bring to the town, restaurants, and stores." (Social media, 2024)

"Stop spending thousands to fight the dirt bike track. It brings people into town that will spend money." (Community Survey, 2023)

"We should promote kayaking on Quaboag River." (Community Workshop, February 2023)

"Fishing tournaments should come back." (Community Workshop, February 2023)

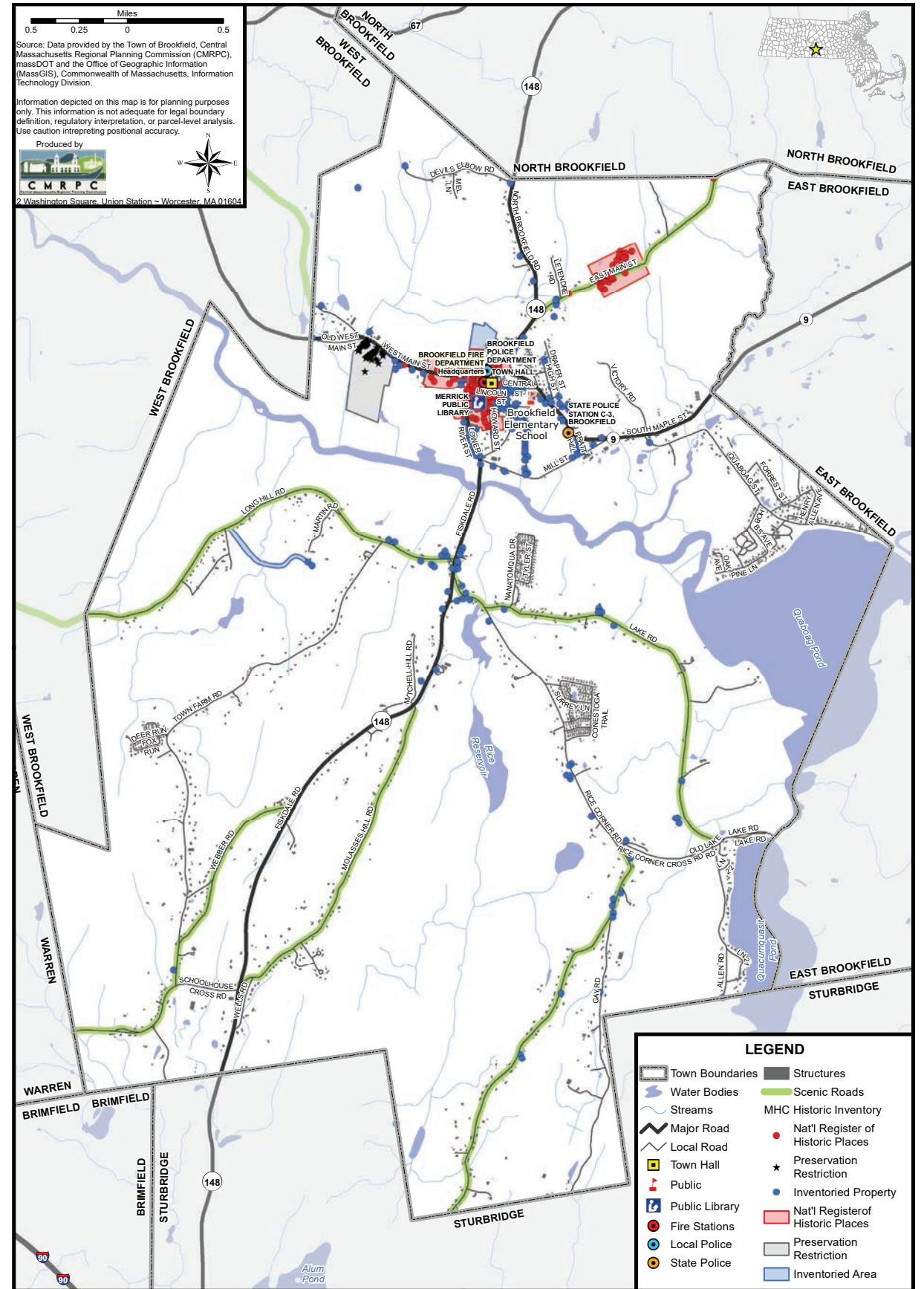


Figure 1. Unique features map of Brookfield. Source: CMRPC, Open Space and Recreation Plan, 2019.



BROOKFIELD RESIDENTS, IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“We need more transportation options. It can attract jobs and young people into town.”
(Community Workshop, February, 2023)

“We need to consider sewage treatment.”
(Community Survey, 2023)

“Town water is limited to too few households.”
(Community Survey, 2023)

The Lack of Infrastructure is a Barrier to Economic Development

One of the primary barriers to the growth of the commercial and industrial sectors in Brookfield is the limited infrastructure. The lack of water infrastructure south of the Quaboag River and the lack of sewer infrastructure in town pose a challenge to business attraction and retention. This problem is

compounded by the lack of town-controlled industrial land. Brookfield’s location relative to Route 9, 148, and I 90, could make it a feasible location for an industrial park. However, the cost of infrastructure would have to be borne by developers, since providing infrastructure is not within the Town’s current capacity. Businesses that locate their operations to Brookfield have to navigate the permitting process with no assistance, and do not benefit from incentives such as infrastructure provision or relocation bonuses. For this reason, Brookfield faces significant competition from neighboring towns, such as Charlton or Sturbridge. These communities have a better location relative to the Mass Pike, or have the resources to offer a better package of incentives.

Vacant and Underutilized Sites

At community engagement events, Brookfield residents have expressed concern with the growing number of vacant properties in town. The Town has taken steps to advance the tax title process, yet, many of these properties are current on taxes and may simply have absentee owners. Understanding the causes of vacancy, be it distressed or absentee ownership, is the first step toward devising a strategy. The cost of doing nothing is significant. Studies indicate that vacant and abandoned properties contribute to a decline in the taxable worth of neighboring

BROOKFIELD RESIDENTS, IN THEIR OWN WORDS

““People need to take better care of their abandoned houses. The blight is everywhere. I live across the street from a house on the verge of collapse.” (Social media, 2024)

“Too many vacant and derelict properties and lots.”
(Community Survey, 2023)

properties and heighten the risk of mortgage and tax foreclosures nearby, thus having ripple effects that present revenue hurdles for local administrations.

Need for a Revitalized Town Center and Support for Small Businesses

Brookfield residents see their town center as essential to their quality

of life. While the commercial sector makes only 3.05% of Brookfield’s revenue, a vibrant town center would positively impact its entire economy. Beyond having an indirect economic impact, a revitalized town center would improve consumers’ perceptions, which are a key determinant of economic success. Thus, a strategy to revitalize the town center should have a dual focus: providing the quality of life elements that residents desire, and creating a cluster of small business that cater to resident demand for goods and services. Interventions could range from support for small businesses to physical improvements.

78 vacant units in Brookfield



A revitalized town center would improve consumers’ perceptions, which are a key determinant of economic success.

BROOKFIELD RESIDENTS, IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“I would love to see another family restaurant in town. We used to go to the Gables and Carmellas all the time. Also, if there were more cute shops on Central Street area people would come out from Sturbridge to walk the street to shop and it would bring customers into the stores that already exist there.” (Social media, 2024)

“Need downtown revitalization. Fill Central Street with businesses. Make it walkable and shoppable.”
(Community Survey, 2023)



GOALS AND STRATEGIES

SUMMARY

Goal 1: Create a long-range economic development strategy.

Objective: Become investment-ready.

Action Item 1.1: Attract and retain businesses that contribute to diversifying Brookfield's tax base and increasing employment opportunities.

Action Item 1.2: Improve and extend municipal infrastructure to enable the town to attract new businesses.

Action item 1.3: Establish an Economic Development Committee and a business association.

Action item 1.4: Explore the possibility of creating a TIF and a UCH-TIF-program.

Objective: Develop a pipeline of fundable projects, and strengthen local policies and practices, that will help the Town absorb available funding and grants.

Action Item 1.5: Continue to pursue opportunities for grant funding for capital improvements.

Action item 1.6: Address Town capacity and staffing needs to assist with applying for funding and technical assistance.

Goal 2: Revitalize the Town Center and Support Small Businesses.

Objective: Encourage commercial activity in the town center to support services that meet the daily needs of Brookfield's residents.

Action Item 2.1: Bring business opportunities to existing commercial and mixed-use buildings.

Objective: Enhance the aesthetic qualities of the town center by completing physical improvements.

Action Item 2.2: Implement placemaking strategies to improve/activate commercial areas. Draw foot traffic to the town center by encouraging and organizing events in outdoor gathering areas.

Action Item 2.3: Create a vacant properties action plan help return underutilized properties to productive use.

Action Item 2.4: Create a vacant property inventory to more accurately understand the causes and extent of vacancy in Brookfield.

Goal 3: Encourage the development of a robust Ecotourism industry.

Objective: Capitalize on Brookfield's recreation and nature areas, such as trails and ponds.

Action item 3.1: Incorporate ecotourism strategies in the agenda of the Agricultural Commission.

Action Item 3.2: Attract and encourage hospitality industry establishments.

GOAL 1

Create a long-range economic development strategy.

A realistic economic development strategy for Brookfield would start with a development attraction policy that takes into account some of the town's challenges—a lack of easy highway access and infrastructure—and focuses on specific sectors that take advantage of the town's assets.

Brookfield has a several key assets, such as a high quality education system, its workforce composition, and available space appropriate for commercial and residential development. However, there are also significant barriers to economic growth. The town's population density is not sufficient to sustain a robust commercial corridor. Brookfield does not have sufficient capacity for growth in water supply. The town's lack of public sewer poses a more significant challenge to commercial and multifamily housing development, because it makes the town less competitive regionally in the race to attract businesses.

Objective: Become investment-ready.

Some of these challenges could be mitigated through targeted incentives for businesses, such as density bonuses, business support services, and the creation of a UCH-TIF and a TIF program. Moreover, as outlined in the Government Services and Facilities chapter addendum,

a more predictable permitting process, and marketing/outreach could help match interested parties with commercial and residential available sites. The Town can also pursue state programs to assist in attracting and retaining businesses. As business owners noted at the June 2023 community workshop, many businesses need individualized attention and would have benefitted from support during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Action Item 1.1: Attract and retain businesses that contribute to diversifying Brookfield's tax base and increasing employment opportunities.

Brookfield has a few "magnet businesses" that attract local and regional customers. Examples, include the Oakholm Brewing Company, TipTop Country Store, Willow Brook Academy, and the Clam



Figure 2. Inflow/Outflow of Workers in Brookfield, 2022. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap.

Box restaurant. However, community input underscored that Brookfield's capacity to create employment, economic opportunities, and attract more businesses remains limited by the lack of infrastructure and the lack of predictability in the development process.

Brookfield is predominantly residential, with most residents commuting for work. Out of a total of 1,913 residents living in Brookfield, 1,814 were employed but worked outside this zone. That is 94.8% of the total population. Conversely, 99 residents were both living and employed in Brookfield, constituting approximately 5.2% of the residents. The largest share of Brookfield workers are employed in Worcester (14%).

The town's commercial sector contributes less than 5% to its total tax revenue, placing the primary tax burden on homeowners. In 2022, only 16 business certificates were issued, indicating a limited commercial sector. With the intention of attracting more businesses, the Brookfield Select Board has consistently voted to tax businesses at the residential rate. Continuing this approach, along with select incentives, such as TIFs, would make Brookfield more attractive to businesses.

An effective tool to attract businesses is creating and maintaining an inventory of available spaces for lease, which the Town can share



with interested businesses. The City of Lowell has successfully implemented this approach through its Site Finder services. Brookfield could adopt this approach and share this database—containing listings of available commercial and industrial properties—with companies looking for suitable spaces. Additionally, this service benefits property owners looking to market their properties.

While Brookfield’s commercial land is underutilized, its lower valuations present an opportunity. Brookfield’s home values, as well as commercial and residential rents, are lower than the county and state, or neighboring employment centers. Brookfield

could position its commercial spaces as an affordable alternative for smaller companies with limited resources that are priced out of central locations. Brookfield could be a viable alternative for startups that cannot pay higher rents in the core of the region and/or do not need a central location for their primary operations.

Action item 1.2: Improve and extend municipal infrastructure to enable the town to attract new businesses.

With water infrastructure available only North of the Quaboag River, and no sewer infrastructure, Brookfield has had difficulty retaining and attracting new businesses. Securing

99% (5%)
Brookfield residents work in Brookfield

14%
Brookfield residents work in Worcester

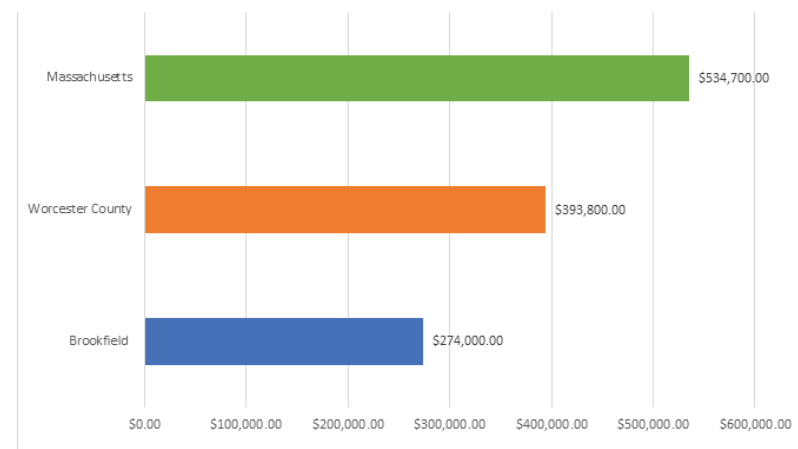


Figure 3. Median home values in Brookfield, Worcester County, and Massachusetts. Source: ACS 5-year Estimate, 2022.

grants to expand this infrastructure would allow Brookfield to identify and market specific development sites and incentivize businesses to come to Brookfield.

Action item 1.3: Establish an Economic Development Committee and a business association.

Although Brookfield lacks its own dedicated business association, it participates in broader regional chambers like the Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce and the Central Mass South Chamber of Commerce. The creation of an Economic Development Committee would enable outreach to businesses and access to funding. While a Committee would not have a regulatory role, it could foster economic development by advocating for initiatives and conducting outreach to local businesses and developers. The Committee could support and build on the efforts of Browse the Brookfields, an organization that has for several years served as a promotional platform for local businesses. A similar effort, Discover Rutland, built an ongoing social media campaign and was funded with the assistance of the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission.

Establishing a committee would play a crucial role in creating a long-range economic development strategy and implementing initiatives to stimulate economic activity, attract investment,

and create job opportunities. By bringing together stakeholders from various sectors including business owners, local government officials, community leaders, and residents, the committee can serve as a platform for fostering networking, and resource mobilization, thereby maximizing the town’s potential for diversifying its tax base.

Action item 1.4: Explore the possibility of creating a TIF and a UCH-TIF-program.

Unlike larger communities in the region, the Town has limited means to incentivize and attract businesses in town. In lieu of a wider package of incentives, such as relocation bonuses or rebates offered to all businesses, the Town could use a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) program to selectively attract businesses that align with the community’s economic development priorities. A TIF program could bring hospitality businesses, such as restaurants or cafes, that are most likely to reactivate the town center. A TIF program could also help target ecotourism opportunities. Lodging is limited in Brookfield and it hinders visitors’ ability to take overnight trips. The Town could use a TIF program to strategically create lodging options (i.e., Airbnb or bed and breakfast options). A UCH-TIF-program could be used for housing developments, if certain criteria are met.

Objective: Develop a pipeline of fundable projects.





Small, rural communities such as Brookfield commonly lack project development plans, given the limited capacity of local government. Planning the Town's upcoming investment priorities and developing a pipeline of projects takes resources, time, and skilled staff to develop. But such development plans are critical to obtain state and federal funds. Strengthening project planning and resource development practices will help Brookfield absorb available funding and grants.

Action Item 1.5: Continue to pursue opportunities for grant funding for capital improvements.

Developing a clear and realistic pipeline of projects would help Brookfield align sources of funding with crucial community priorities such as senior housing, public facilities upgrades, senior center development, and more. Establishing a list of fundable projects with clear timelines and funding needs would not only help unlock state and federal funding, but it would also help mobilize community development and community finance organizations, including Community Foundations, local developers, and housing providers. Organizations such as the Center for Community Investment have published a guide on developing a pipeline of projects. Such a tool could help the Town identify timelines, sources of funding, and funding gaps, and determine whether a project is investment-

ready.

To increase opportunities for accessing federal and state aid, Brookfield would benefit from developing a comprehensive capital improvement plan that aligns with the community priorities outlined in the Master Plan. As a starting point, a committee can evaluate existing capital assets, determine project priority, and establish a method to finance each priority. This would increase opportunities for obtaining federal and state aid, such as CDBG, the Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC), Green Communities, and MassWorks Infrastructure Program.

Action item 1.6: Address Town capacity and staffing needs to assist the with applying for funding and technical assistance.

Brookfield could take advantage of the services offered by the Regional Planning Commission, whose role in the region is to create economic opportunities through technical assistance, grant writing, and grant administration. This type of assistance is particularly helpful for communities such as Brookfield, who do not have sufficient capacity internally to pursue and administer grants. Pre-development, budgeting, public bid and procurement, design and construction administration, scheduling, and reporting are time-intensive tasks for which technical assistance would be particularly useful.

GOAL 2

Revitalize the Town Center and Support Small Businesses.

Interventions to revitalize the town center should have a dual focus: providing business support and continuing to make physical improvements. A walking loop that ties the history-rich Town Common with Central Street, where most institutional buildings and shopping establishments are located, would improve access to public amenities. Activating vacant storefronts by allowing temporary uses and launching a branding campaign to highlight the downtown's businesses and amenities can bring people to the area.

A challenge to getting residents to come to the town center is the geographical barrier posed by the Quaboag River that separates the south part of town from the center. Moreover, the population density is low and does not effectively support retail establishments. Creating an online business directory would help connect residents to their town's businesses.

Objective: Encourage commercial activity in the town center to support services that meet the daily needs of Brookfield's residents.

The economic impact of COVID-19 is still felt among Brookfield's community and business

environment, much like the rest of Central Massachusetts. Filling vacancies in commercial districts continues to pose a challenge for property owners and Town government alike. Recovery efforts are further limited by the fact that Brookfield does not have much available town-controlled developable land, and control over leasing and retail attraction decisions, or housing development, rests primarily with the various property owners (Figure 4).

Yet, municipalities can successfully activate and incentivize investments through interventions in the built/public realm, regulatory environment, and business outreach efforts. The Town can put together a business retention and attraction effort that seeks to incentivize investment through active business outreach and promotion efforts.

Action Item 2.1: Bring business opportunities to existing commercial and mixed-use buildings.

With a median income significantly lower than the state and county, Brookfield's consumers are primarily value shoppers (Figure 5 & 6). Convenience and price may take precedence over quality for Brookfield consumers. As one of the workshop participants noted, the "busiest place in town is the Dollar General."

Residents' biggest discretionary spending categories are entertainment, dining out, household furnishing and equipment, and more

(Figure 6). This data gives us insight on the type of demand that the town center commercial corridor can support.

Convenience shopping and dining continue to be the uses most appropriate for the town center area. As the 2023 Community Survey indicates, there is high demand for restaurants, brewpubs, and other food establishments, with 70% expressing support for this category. The next two categories are grocery stores (59%), and agriculture-based businesses (48%).

Objective: Enhance the aesthetic qualities of the town center by completing physical improvements.

The town center would benefit from comprehensive physical improvements. Community members have noted the need for improving the aesthetic features of the commercial areas near the intersection of Post Road with Central Street.

Action Item 2.3: Implement placemaking strategies to improve/activate commercial areas.

The Town could create a pedestrian walking loop to increase access to recreation amenities such as Lewis Field, public spaces such as the Town Common, retail, such as the Tip Top Country Store, and public transportation, such as the bus route in front of Cumberland Farms on Route 9. Encouraging and organizing events in outdoor gathering areas is

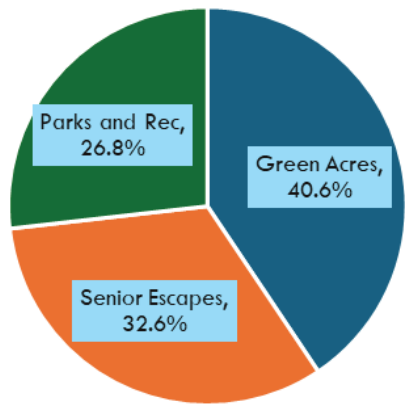


Figure 4. Brookfield's Tapestry Segmentation, 2023. Source: Esri Business Analyst, Tapestry Segmentation Area Profile report.

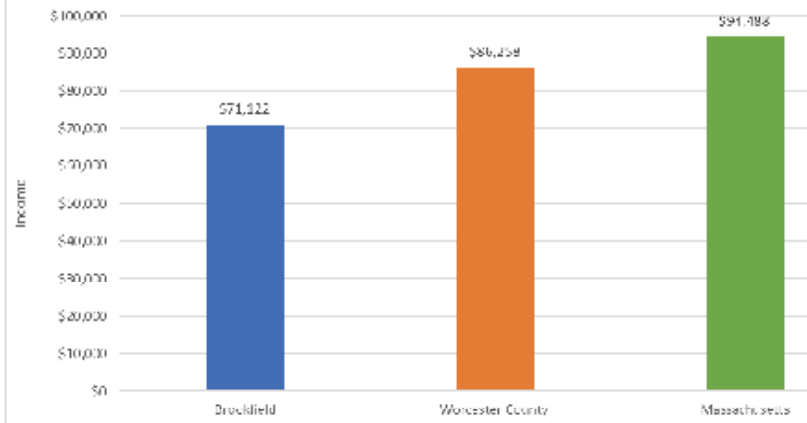


Figure 5. Median Household Income. Source: ACS 5-year Estimate, 2022.

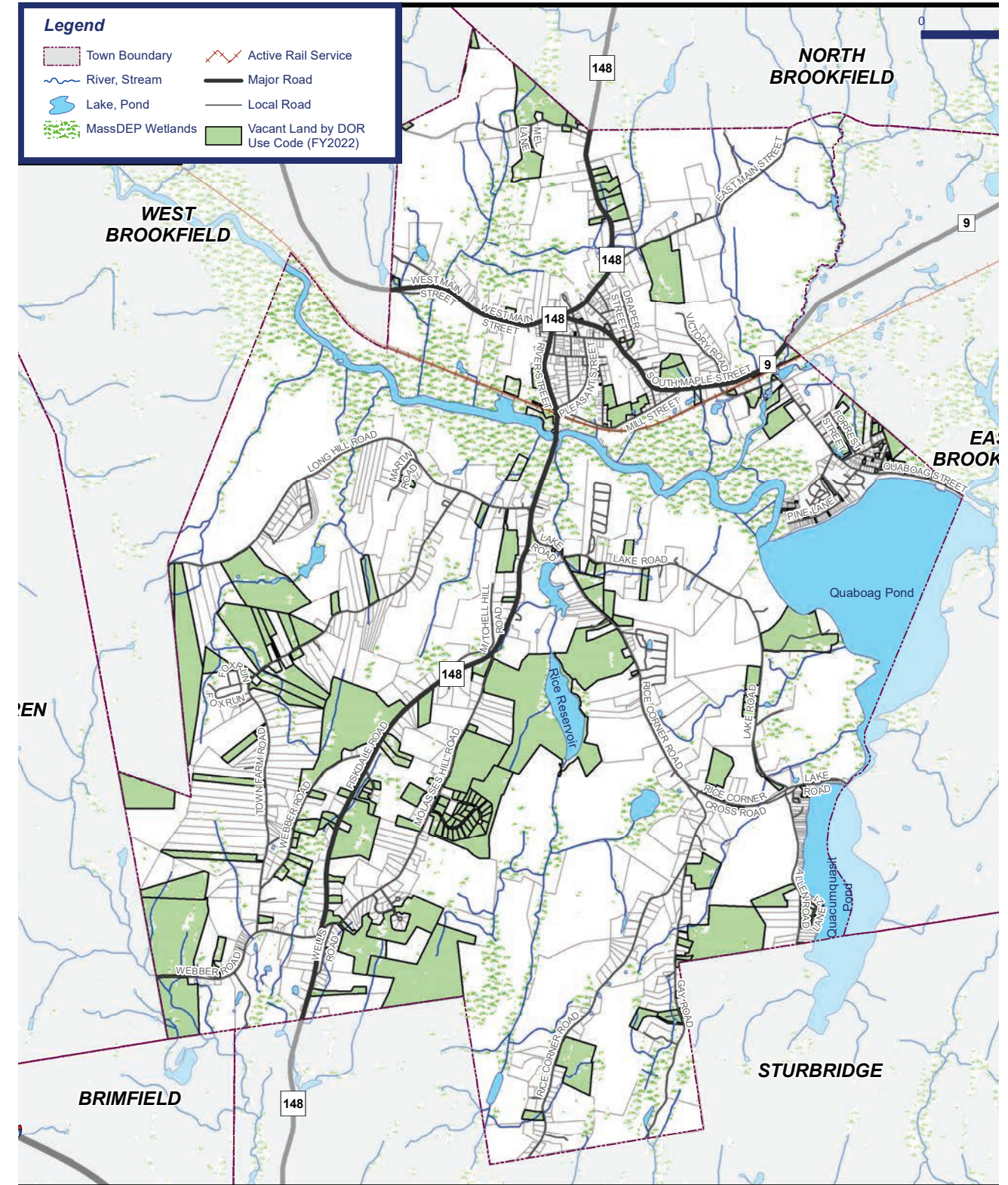


Figure 7. Vacant Land Map. Source: Town of Brookfield, CMRPC and the Office of Geographic Information (MassGIS).



Figure 6. 2023 Consumer Spending in Brookfield. Source: Esri Business Analyst, Market Profile report.



another way to draw foot traffic to the town center.

Participants in the community workshops noted that Brookfield needs branding and signage to help market the town. A wayfinding plan could introduce a historical signage system and historic maps celebrating and highlighting Brookfield’s history for residents, visitors, and tourists. The walking loop has the potential to improve connectivity, encourage active travel, provide predictability for pedestrians, and expand accessibility. Moreover, signage would increase the visibility of businesses located off Route 9.

Action Item 2.4: Create a Vacant Properties Action plan to help manage vacant properties and return them to productive use.

During the community engagement process, Brookfield residents have expressed a concern with the growing number of vacant structures in town, and its effect on the surrounding areas. More than 65% of survey respondents expressed support for working with property owners to resolve the overabundance of vacant properties.

The impact of abandoned houses and vacant properties goes well beyond the ability of the town to collect tax revenue. The consequences are both fiscal and social, as vacant properties have a negative effect on surrounding neighborhoods by depressing property values and rents,

increasing distress, and the likelihood of mortgage and tax foreclosures.

Initiatives, such as the Attorney General’s Neighborhood Renewal Division, has provided assistance to municipalities seeking to use receivership to return vacant properties to productive use. The program helps interested municipalities use the enforcement authority of the State Sanitary Code to communicate with the owner and bring the properties back to code compliance. Creating a dialogue with property owners, and identifying distressed property owners is crucial for spearheading this initiative.

Brookfield could work with its grant writer to continue to access opportunities for grant funding for building rehabilitation, such as the CDBG Housing Rehabilitation Program.

Action Item: Create a vacant property inventory to ensure that underutilized properties are put back into productive use.

In the 2023 community survey, 63% of residents expressed support for implementing a Vacant Property Registry initiative to protect Brookfield from the effects of blight caused by vacant and unmaintained properties. Vacant property inventories are tools localities develop to understand the extent of vacancy more accurately and help manage vacant properties until they are returned to productive use. The Town Administrator has

responded to the need to address Brookfield’s vacant property problem by implementing a tax title initiative, however the Town is not yet enforcing this program.

Several municipalities in Massachusetts have adopted bylaws addressing abandoned properties. Plainville has adopted a bylaw mandating the registration and maintenance of vacant buildings. In addition to maintenance requirements, the bylaw stipulates that owners of vacant buildings must pay an annual registration fee. Brookfield could draw on these precedents to draft a similar bylaw.

Through an informal volunteer initiative, Brookfield residents have taken action and identified vacant properties throughout town (Figure 8). The Town should capitalize on this momentum and formalize their initiative by creating a task force, such as an Abandoned Buildings Committee. Precedents, such as the Athol Vacant and Abandoned Buildings Committee, show that investing volunteer time in stabilizing some of the vacant properties in town can lead to more positive outcomes and lower the public safety and maintenance costs to the town.

63%
of residents support implementing a Vacant Property Registry

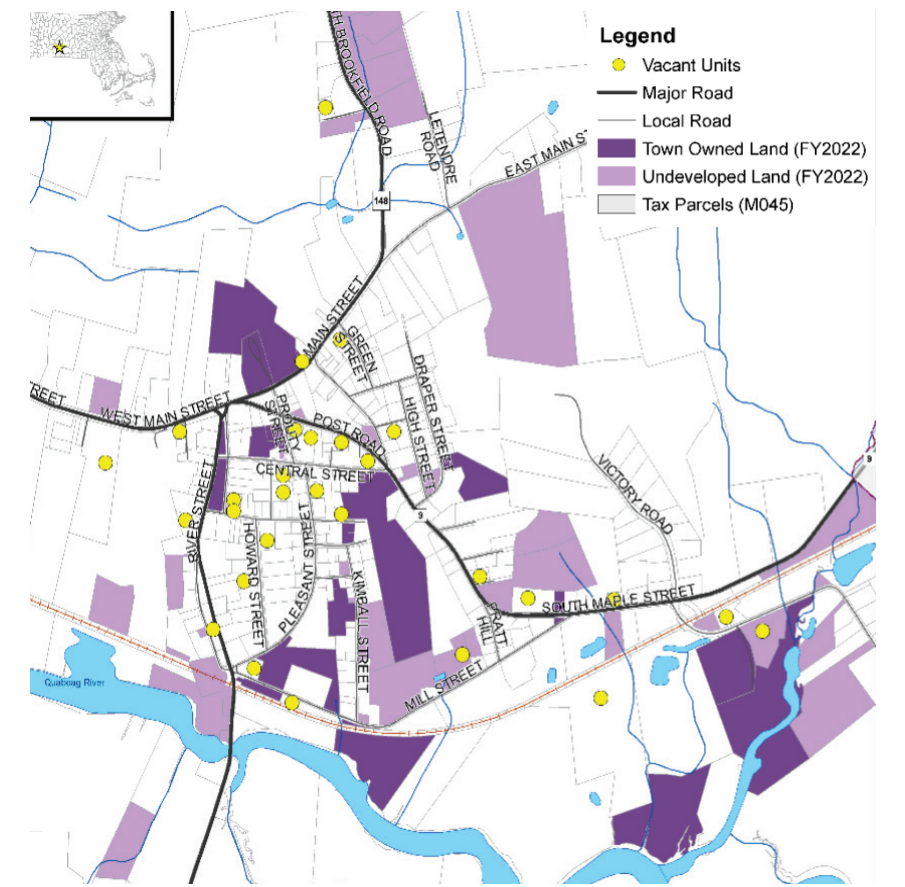


Figure 8. Vacant units identified by residents. Brookfield town center. Source: list of vacant units created by a volunteer resident group and shared with CMRPC at the February 2023 workshop.



\$5.7 M
consumer spending
on entertainment/
recreation

\$5.3 M
consumer spending
on dining outside the
home

\$71k
median
income



Athol is a particularly relevant case study for Brookfield. Faced with a significant stock of vacant housing, and little pressure to conform with the requirements of Chapter 40B, Athol chose an approach tailored to its circumstances. Instead of a Housing Production Plan, Athol put together a plan focused on its existing housing stock. Specifically, it devised a plan to support the preservation, rehabilitation, and expansion of the Town's existing housing stock. The plan sought to address both affordability and the rehabilitation of vacant properties, and thus provided a framework to address blight and at the same time attract new residents.

GOAL 3

Encourage the development of a robust Ecotourism industry.

Objective: Capitalize on Brookfield's recreation and nature areas, such as trails and ponds.

Action item 3.1: Incorporate ecotourism strategies in the agenda of the Agricultural Commission.

To capitalize on economic opportunities such as ecotourism or historical tourism, Brookfield could develop an asset-driven ecotourism strategy as part of a broader, comprehensive economic development strategy. Brookfield should work through its Agricultural and Historical Commissions to promote main eco-tourism

attractions in town. The Agricultural Commission can start by identifying assets and attractions and their potential value to ecotourism. Sites such as the Quaboag River, Elm Hill Farm Historic District, and Oakholm Farm and Brewing Company present great opportunities for marketing the town as a destination for historic tourism.

The Commission should also work to facilitate communication between stakeholders such as farmers, hospitality industry, and other businesses that share a common interest in promoting ecotourism and agriculture. Central Mass Grown and Worcester Regional Food Hub are two examples of organizations that have developed through such efforts and have helped promote local agriculture.

The Commission and other Town boards should identify Brookfield businesses and nonprofits engaged in agritourism and ecotourism and actively promote them. Oakholm Brewing Company in particular has become in recent years a regional destination. Set on a 115-acre farm and in a renovated hay barn, the brewery represents a successful example of a pivot from agriculture to eco-tourism. A Christmas tree and blueberry farm, Oakholm is also a thriving venue that hosts outdoor events in the summer and draws patrons from around the region.

The Commission could also promote

local events that are already popular, such as the Apple Country Fair, and use these events as a marketing platform for the town and its businesses.

Action Item 3.2: Attract and encourage hospitality industry establishments.

Encouraging hospitality establishments would enable Brookfield to integrate ecotourism into its future economic development plans, as well as align the goals of ecotourism with the values of a community. Encouraging overnight accommodations, farm stays, or camping sites could help turn Brookfield into a weekend destination and encourage visitors to lengthen their stay.





05

Housing



BROOKFIELD RESIDENTS, IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“We need housing for the elderly.”
(Community Workshop, February 2023)

“Very limited housing. I know of at least one family in church that has an elderly lady that can’t find a place to live and suitable housing. Senior housing needed.”
(Community Workshop, February 2023)

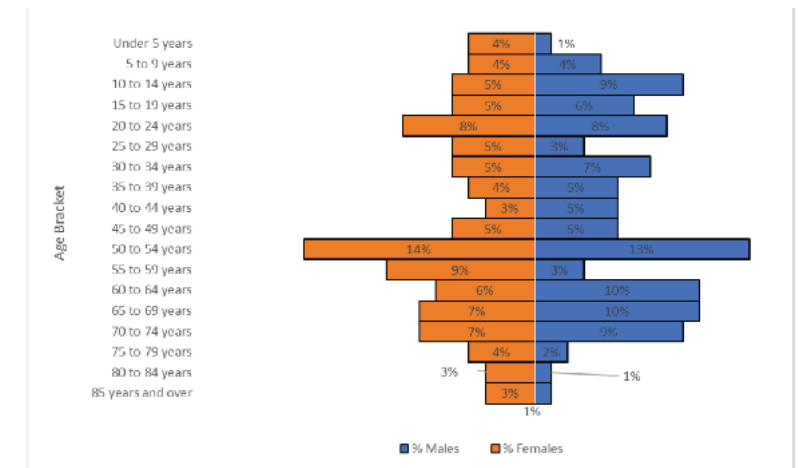


Figure 9. Population Pyramid in Brookfield, 2022. Source U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.

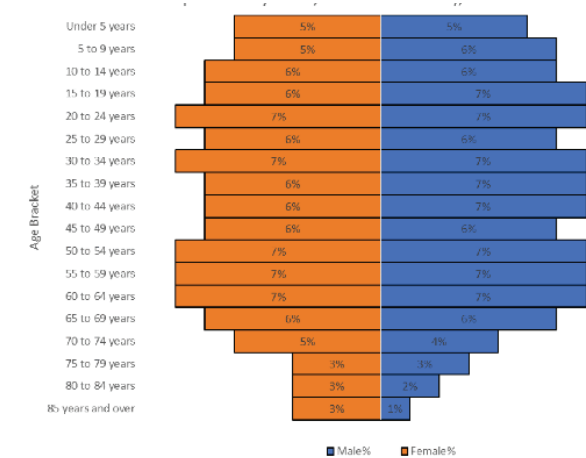


Figure 10. Population Pyramid in Worcester County, 2022. Source U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.

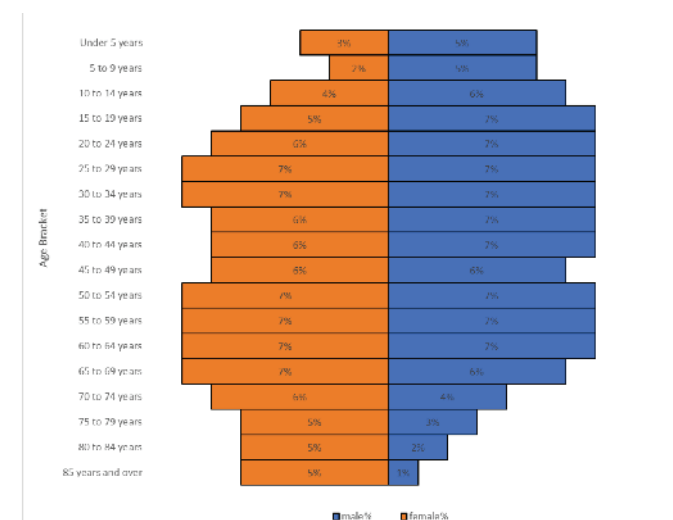


Figure 11. Population Pyramid in Massachusetts, 2022. Source U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.

One-third of Brookfield residents are over the age of 65.

OVERVIEW

With a current population of 3,443, a median age of 50.6, and one-third of the residents over the age of 65, Brookfield’s housing dynamics reflect the challenges that arise from an aging populace. This chapter

seeks to address the challenges brought by the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) deficits and rising housing costs. It also makes a case for the sustainable revitalization of Brookfield’s existing housing stock. Given that the 2020 Census data revealed the presence of 78 vacant houses within the town, this plan suggests leveraging these underutilized resources to foster a more robust housing ecosystem.

From streamlining regulatory processes to diversifying housing types and fostering collaborations with developers, this master plan aspires to meet immediate housing

needs, and lay the foundation for a resilient, inclusive community.

KEY FINDINGS

Aging population

A comparison between the demographics of Brookfield, Worcester County, and Massachusetts reveals an aging population in all three geographies. The 65 to 69 years age group in Brookfield is divided between 10% males and 7% females. This accounts for 708 households that have an old individual 60 years and over out of the complete 1445 households in

Brookfield. Worcester County and Massachusetts both show 10% for males and 6% for females in a similar age section. This highlights a steady aging pattern across the state and district, and the urgency to address the needs of this growing demographic. Senior housing, healthcare facilities, and supportive services will all be in higher demand as a result, underscoring the importance of robust frameworks and housing units specifically designed for the elderly.

Limited housing variety that is not affordable for the local workforce

Much of the existing housing stock and new housing developments consist of single-family homes that are not affordable for various income levels.

The analysis of owner-occupied housing units with a mortgage in Brookfield indicates a varied distribution across different mortgage value ranges. Most of these units fall within the \$100,000 to \$499,999 range, with 366 households falling into this category. A significant portion—360 households—are in the \$300,000 to \$499,999 range. However, it is noteworthy that 439 owner-occupied housing units have no mortgage. This underscores the importance of considering not only mortgage-associated housing but also those without mortgages. While some residents own their homes outright, there is a need to focus on providing subsidized and affordable housing options for those who may face financial constraints. By addressing the housing needs of various income groups, including those with no mortgages, Brookfield can enhance its housing diversity and inclusivity.

Housing Cost Burden

The income distribution in Brookfield reveals significant disparities in its socioeconomic landscape. A considerable portion of the population falls within the lower income brackets, with 203 individuals earning less than \$20,000, and 174 falling within the \$20,000 to \$34,999 range. The need for SHI becomes particularly evident, especially for

those in the 30 percent or more income bracket. Notably, Brookfield's poverty rate (7%) is lower than that of the county (11%) and state (10%). Addressing the housing needs of these income groups is imperative to ensure that the community provides affordable and accessible housing options for all residents. Implementing strategies to increase the SHI can play a pivotal role in creating a more inclusive housing environment that caters to the varied financial capacities of Brookfield's population.

Need for Senior Housing

Brookfield is undergoing a significant demographic shift, with over 33% of its population surpassing the age of 65, exceeding 1000 individuals. The Brookfield Master Plan must address the need for senior-specific housing and community facilities due to this transformation. The absence of dedicated housing options and a designated senior center compounds challenges for the aging population. Many Massachusetts communities have incorporated senior housing laws into their zoning and development plans, covering

BROOKFIELD RESIDENTS, IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“Need more housing and jobs. People are working in Worcester or Westboro or other more urban/suburban areas.”

“People in tech or similar jobs are moving to towns like this because they don't necessarily need to be in the city. This was accelerated by COVID.” (Community Workshop, June 2023)

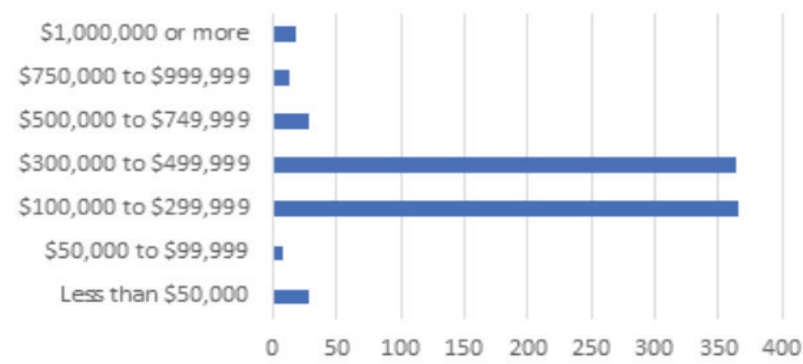


Figure 12. Owner-occupied housing units with a mortgage, 2022. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.

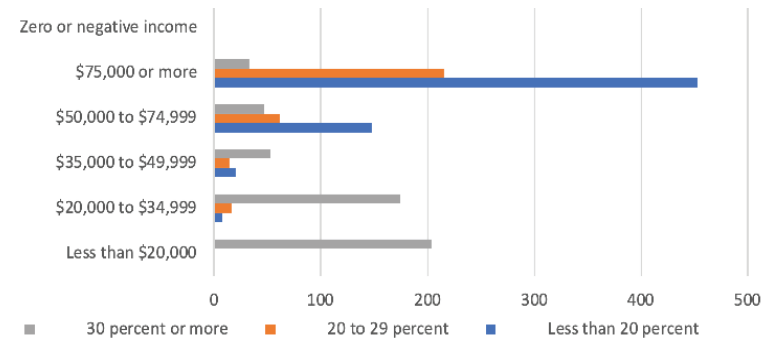


Figure 13. Monthly Housing Costs as a Percentage of Household Income in the Past 12 Months, 2023. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

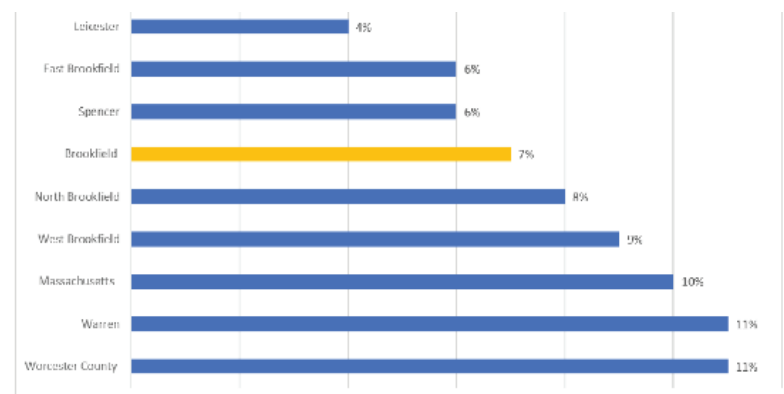


Figure 14. Percentage of Population Below Poverty in Brookfield and Surrounding Towns, 2022. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey



various structures like senior residential communities, retirement communities, assisted living, and private care facilities, all governed by state regulations.

Need for Supportive Services

The Brookfield Master Plan aims to holistically address the housing and supportive service needs of its aging population. With more than one-third of the population being seniors, the creation of senior-specific housing options and community centres is important. Allocating funds from the town, exploring grant opportunities like CDBG, and prioritizing accessible transportation are integral components of a comprehensive strategy.

Shift in Housing Tenure

Over the past decade, housing tenure in Brookfield has witnessed a notable shift, marked by an increase in owner-occupied housing units from 80.6% in 2012 to 87.5% in 2022. Correspondingly, renter-occupied housing units have decreased from 19.4% in 2012 to 12.5% in 2022. While the rise in owner-occupied units may indicate a growing trend of homeownership, it also underscores the importance of addressing the need for SHI to ensure a balanced housing landscape that caters to diverse economic backgrounds. As most housing remains owner-occupied, there is an evident need to enhance affordable housing options to accommodate a broader demographic range, thereby fostering a more inclusive and resilient community in Brookfield.

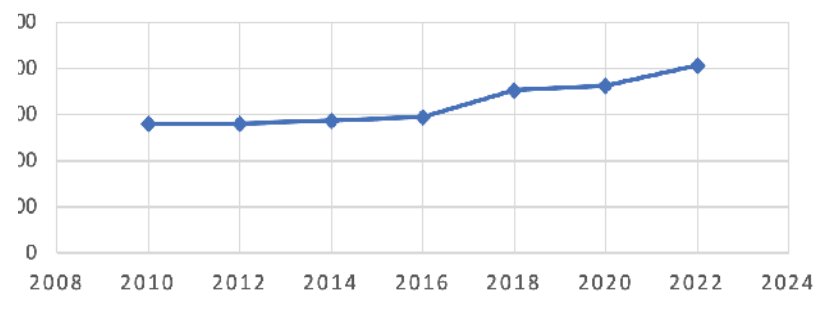


Figure 15. Brookfield's Increasing Elderly Population since 2010. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.

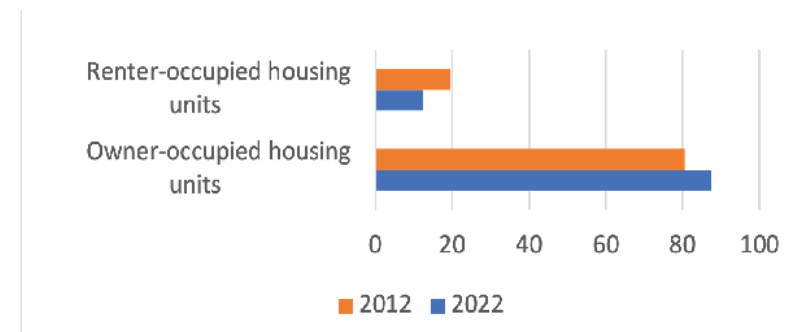


Figure 16. Brookfield's Housing Tenure 2012 and 2022. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

SUMMARY

Goal 1: Build local capacity to advance new housing development that is compatible with Brookfield's small-town character.

- Objective: Foster collaborative partnerships with for-profit and non-profit housing developers.
 - o Action Item 1.1: Establish and maintain an active committee to guide local housing initiatives.
 - o Action Item 1.2: Conduct ongoing community engagement and education on housing issues and activities.
 - o Action Item 1.3: Pursue "Friendly 40B" opportunities as a means of creating new affordable units in appropriate locations in town.
 - o Action Item 1.4: Work cooperatively with developers by providing zoning incentives—such as density bonuses, reduced parking requirements, and expedited permitting—while also directing development to areas with existing infrastructure.
 - o Action Item 1.5: Support affordable housing providers in obtaining financing by endorsing financing applications and leveraging funding resources such as CDBG, Mass Housing, Massachusetts Housing Partnership, Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC).
- Objective: Identify and leverage funding and technical assistance resources to implement housing planning and community engagement initiatives.
 - o Action Item 1.6: Explore funding sources such as the Community Preservation Act (CPA) or a Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Fund to effectively support local affordable housing initiatives.
 - o Action Item 1.7: Actively seek out and apply for planning assistance and community development grant opportunities offered through programs such as Community One Stop for Growth, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, CMRPC District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) Program, and more.

87.5%
owner occupied
units in 2022

12.5%
renter occupied
units in 2022

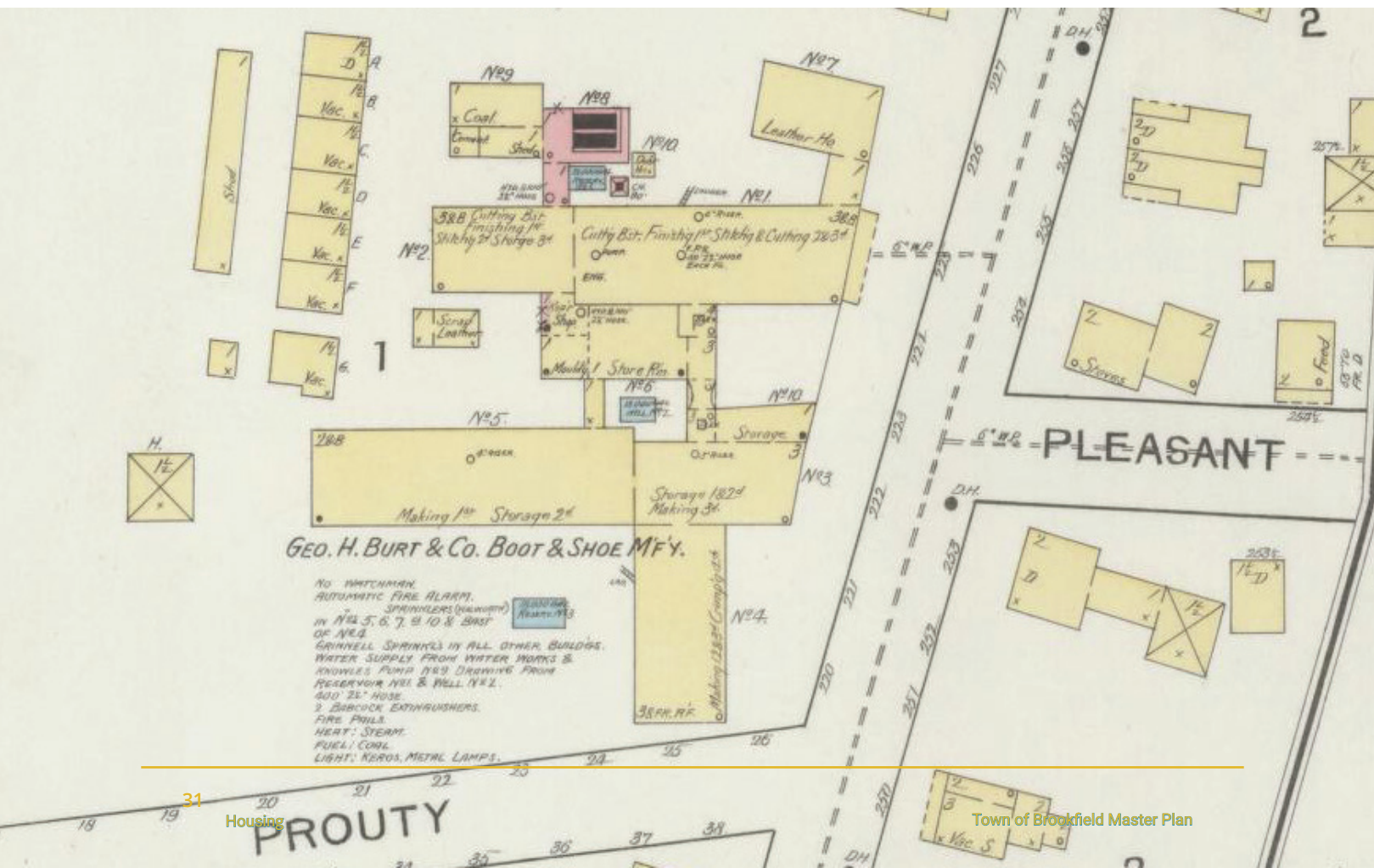
33%
of Brookfield's
population are
over the age of 65

Goal 2: Explore innovative housing solutions that enable a greater diversity of housing choices.

- Objective: Pursue creative policies that support the redevelopment of underutilized properties.
 - o Action Item 2.1: Develop a housing action plan to assess how the available stock of vacant housing could be rehabilitated and expanded to increase the naturally occurring affordable housing inventory.
 - o Action item 2.2: Explore zoning and policy changes, and streamline the permitting process, to encourage home conversions, accessory dwelling units, and redevelopment on nonconforming lots.

Goal 3: Provide housing opportunities that meet the needs of special populations, including the senior population.

- Objective: Expand options to "age in place" for Brookfield's senior population.
 - o Action item 3.1: Encourage creative senior living opportunities, such as accessory dwelling units, intergenerational cohousing, or home sharing.
 - o Action item 3.2: Connect residents with existing programs and resources that assist qualifying households with repairs and improvements, energy efficiency upgrades, and accessibility modifications.
 - o Action Item 3.3: Actively seek partnerships to fund supportive services for special populations within the community.





GOAL 1

Build local capacity to advance new housing development that is compatible with Brookfield's small-town character.

Working cooperatively with for-profit and non-profit developers is a key step in creating the conditions for attracting new development. An Economic Development Committee (EDC), if established in Brookfield, could help buttress the town's administrative capacity to enable new development. The EDC could take on tasks such as identifying developers open to creating affordable housing, establishing a collaborative relationship with them, and ensuring a transparent and streamlined review process.

Objective: Foster collaborative partnerships with for-profit and non-profit housing developers.

The EDC could host roundtable meetings between developers and Town officials to discuss challenges and opportunities associated with affordable housing development in Brookfield.

Action Item 1.1: Establish and maintain an active committee dedicated to guiding local housing initiatives.

Establishing an Economic Development Committee to work on advancing the Town's economic development and housing agenda would help build administrative capacity.

The EDC could identify potential

housing development sites that could support multifamily housing, assess applicable zoning, and create a site inventory that can be used as a tool for outreach to developers. In particular, identifying publicly-owned parcels would allow the Town to leverage vacant, underutilized land to reduce the funding gap that typically exists with affordable housing developments. [Fig 7 Vacant Land]

Action Item 1.2: Conduct ongoing community engagement and education on housing issues and activities.

Securing community buy-in presents a significant challenge in the creation of affordable housing. Housing initiatives or projects hinge on receiving local approval, underscoring the crucial role of community support in implementing new measures. To gain this support, outreach and educational efforts might include organizing community gatherings or workshops dedicated to specific housing proposals. Additional outreach strategies involve making information on existing programs and services easily accessible to the public through social media or public access television. Furthermore, the Town should conduct outreach to developers who are open to incorporating affordable units into their projects.

Action Item 1.3: Pursue "Friendly 40B" opportunities as a means of creating new affordable units in appropriate locations in town.

The "friendly 40B" process through the state's Local Initiative Program

(LIP), is a useful mechanism for encouraging projects that may need a comprehensive permit to allow a development to be built at a higher density than allowed under the existing zoning. Through this process, developers collaborate with town boards to reduce dimensional requirements, or to integrate the development's architectural features with the neighborhood context and character. The Town could organize discussions with developers, property owners, and Department representatives such as the Town Administrator, Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Conservation Commission, and other relevant boards.

Action Item 1.4: Work cooperatively with developers by providing zoning incentives—such as density bonuses, reduced parking requirements, and expedited permitting—while also directing development to areas with existing infrastructure.

The Town could consider introducing incentives for the inclusion of affordable housing in new developments. An approach worth exploring is incentive zoning, a voluntary method that allows developers to forgo specific regulatory obligations or benefit from density bonuses by incorporating affordable housing. Developer incentives could also involve reduced fees and parking requirements, density bonuses, or a streamlined permitting process.

Action Item 1.5: Support affordable housing providers in obtaining financing by endorsing financing applications and leveraging funding resources such as CDBG, Mass Housing, Massachusetts Housing Partnership, Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC).

While Brookfield does not have the capacity to provide predevelopment or gap financing to help developers structure their capital stack, the Town's (presumptive) Economic Development Committee could advocate for a housing project by helping the developer secure funding and local political support. The Town could help a project pencil out by supporting applications for financing and leveraging other sources of funding such as CDBG, Mass Housing, Massachusetts Housing Partnership, Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC).

Objective: Identify and leverage funding and technical assistance resources to implement housing planning, and community engagement initiatives.

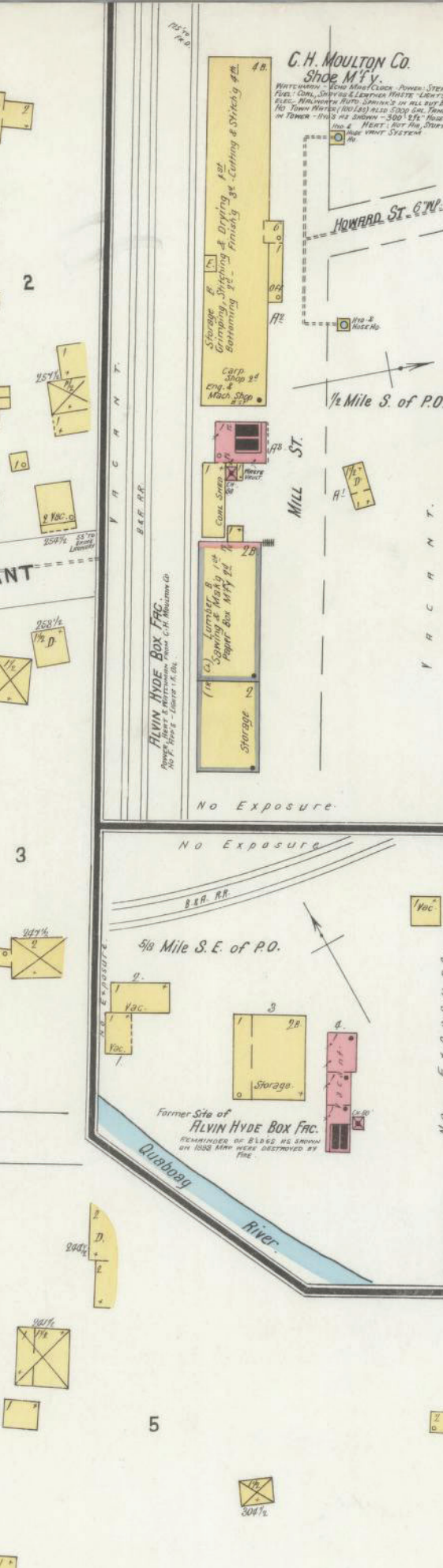
Action Item 1.6: Explore funding sources such as the Community Preservation Act (CPA) or a Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Fund to effectively support local affordable housing initiatives.

The town's inability to access subsidies is a major barrier in developing housing. Exploring tools such as the CPA would help the Town access funding for a variety of projects, including accessible and affordable housing. The Town could

start by assessing how the CPA could help advance critical projects, and conduct community outreach to inform the community of the benefits of the CPA. Many communities across Massachusetts have benefitted from CPA support. Bedford, the first community to pass the CPA, created a housing plan for the town with the help of CPA funding.

Action Item 1.7: Actively seek out and apply for planning assistance and community development grant opportunities offered through programs such as Community One Stop for Growth, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, CMRPC District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) Program, and more.

An important resource and capacity-building strategy for the Town is continuing to access planning assistance from CMRPC. This enables the town to build on the efforts of its current grant writer and get assistance with grant administration.



GOAL 2

Explore innovative housing solutions that enable a greater diversity of housing choices.

Most housing units in Brookfield are single-unit structures (69.3%), with 2 or more-unit structures constituting 13.6%, and mobile homes and other structures making up 17.1%. The age distribution of the housing stock reveals a significant portion built before 1940, indicating potential rehabilitation needs for older residences.

A mismatch between household income and available housing types can worsen the affordability problem.

Objective: Pursue creative policies that support the redevelopment of underutilized properties.

Residents have identified multiple vacant properties in town that are in need of reuse and rehabilitation. Some properties may be suitable for adaptive reuse and repurpose as affordable housing developments. Historic buildings may be eligible for federal and state historic tax credits. Former industrial buildings, such as some of the former shoe factory buildings in town, could be repurposed and converted into housing units with appropriate modifications of zoning regulations. Non-profit housing providers, such as the Preservation of Affordable Housing, are actively pursuing acquisitions and rehabilitations of underutilized structures.

Action Item 2.1: Develop a housing action plan to assess how the available stock of vacant housing could be rehabilitated and expanded to increase the naturally occurring affordable housing inventory.

Brookfield faces a housing challenge with approximately 78 vacant houses, identified in the 2020 ACS survey, due to reasons like renovations, abandonment, and evictions. These vacant properties offer a valuable opportunity for the town to address its housing needs. By implementing initiatives to recover and revitalize these houses, Brookfield can enhance affordable housing options, aligning with the town's commitment to sustainable development. In comparison to Worcester and Massachusetts, where the number of vacant houses is higher, Brookfield's focused efforts can lead to a targeted and impactful approach in addressing housing challenges. [Figure 16: Occupied and vacant housing units]

To chart a course forward, Brookfield could enact a comprehensive housing action plan. This plan should include streamlining the permitting processes, fostering collaborative efforts between public and private sectors, incentivizing affordable housing initiatives, engaging the community in decision-making processes, utilizing grants strategically, diversifying housing types to meet varying needs, and addressing employment discrepancies through partnerships with local businesses. By prioritizing sustainable and affordable housing,

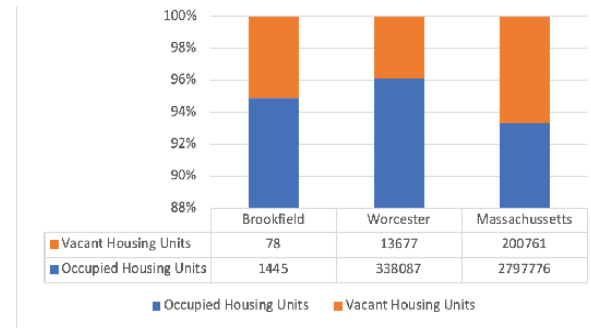


Figure 16. Brookfield's Occupied and Vacant Housing Units, 2022. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

this proactive strategy seeks to guide Brookfield toward a housing plan that aligns with the aspirations of its residents.

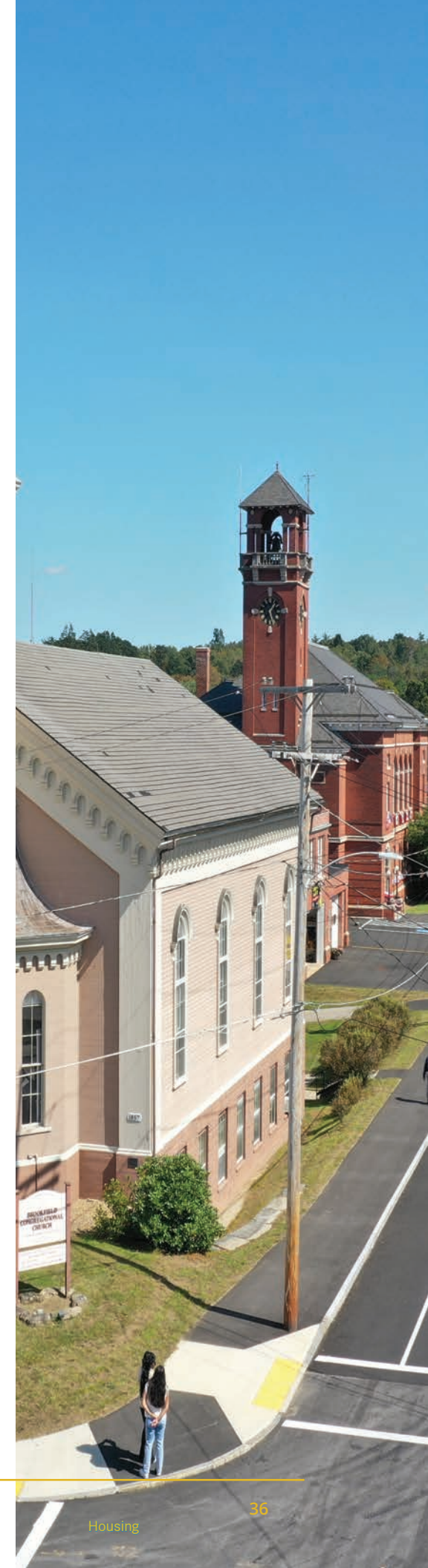
Action item 2.2: Explore zoning and policy changes, and streamline the permitting process, to encourage home conversions, accessory dwelling units, and redevelopment on nonconforming lots.

Brookfield's zoning bylaw includes provisions that allow for ADUs limited to 600 square feet of gross floor area under a Special Permit. Accessory apartments enable elderly family members to remain close to home while maintaining their independence. This type of housing also blends with the existing town character and aligns with Smart Growth principles. However, the Town should consider some amendments to the existing bylaw, such as increasing the allowed maximum square footage. In addition, removing barriers, such as the application for a special permit, would also encourage the production of this type of units. The Town could consider allowing ADUs by right, if the criteria for adequate sewage disposal are met.

GOAL 3

Provide housing opportunities that meet the needs of special populations, including the senior population.

The data from the 2022 ACS reveals a diverse living scenario for adults aged 65 and over in Brookfield. With 232 individuals living alone, there is a clear need for specialized senior housing solutions to cater to this demographic's unique challenges. Additionally, varying living arrangements, including those with spouses, unmarried partners, other relatives, and nonrelatives, highlight the complexity of senior housing needs. It is crucial to address the specific requirements of individuals living alone, ensuring tailored housing options, while also recognizing that seniors living with relatives may have distinct care considerations. This emphasizes the necessity for comprehensive and nuanced approaches to senior housing planning in Brookfield.





Objective: Expand options to “age in place” for Brookfield’s senior population.

The town’s population aged 65 and over has shown consistent growth, with the age group changing into seniors (45-64) encountering the most noteworthy rate of growth beginning around 1990. Seniors now make up one-third of the total population. While Nanatomqua Manufactured Home Park offers units to occupants aged 55, there is a need for Brookfield to extend its lodging choices for the elderly, reflecting a statewide pattern. Intergenerational co-housing arrangements, or accessibility upgrades can be effective solutions for helping seniors age in place.

Action item 3.1: Encourage creative senior living opportunities, such as accessory dwelling units, intergenerational cohousing, or home sharing.

Adjoining communities with local Housing Authorities grapple with extensive waiting lists for senior housing units. As Brookfield’s senior and soon-to-be senior populations continue to grow, the demand for senior housing is anticipated to intensify over the next decade. Recognizing this pattern, numerous Massachusetts communities have integrated senior housing into their zoning and development plans, incorporating different structures like senior residential communities, retirement networks, and assisted living, all represented by state guidelines.

Intergenerational co-housing and home sharing are forms of living arrangements that are particularly

useful in alleviating loneliness and isolation in older adults. Co-housing is an arrangement that allows residents to share facilities while living in separate units. Notable examples in Central Massachusetts are Hager Homestead in Littleton, and Mosaic Commons Cohousing in Berlin. Home sharing—used by various age groups—is an arrangement in which the homeowner rents out rooms to friends, family, or caregivers.

Action item 3.2: Connect residents with existing programs and resources that assist qualifying households with repairs and improvements, energy efficiency upgrades, and accessibility modifications.

Seniors generally prefer to stay in their homes and “age in place.” Several obstacles, including affordability, accessibility, and access to supportive services prevent this from becoming a reality for many. Brookfield’s aging demographic underscores the need for suitable housing, the most important of which is a supply of affordable housing tailored to fixed incomes, such as accessory dwelling units. Accessibility upgrades, including single-level residences, ramps, or handrails, enable elderly relatives to live autonomously within their family unit. The Town does not have capacity to offer financial help for accessibility upgrades, but non-profit organizations can fill this gap. Habitat for Humanity’s Aging in Place program is an example of a service that allows older adults to continue living in their homes as they age by making needed accessibility

upgrades.

Senior residences situated in walkable neighbourhoods are also desirable, as well as options like assisted living facilities, nursing homes, and retirement communities.

Action Item 3.3: Actively seek partnerships to fund supportive services for special populations within the community.

Supportive services are an integral part of housing provision. The Town could actively collaborate with Central Massachusetts service providers, such as United Way of Central Massachusetts, Seven Hills Foundation, Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance, or the South Middlesex Opportunity Council (SMOC).

Brookfield could also get involved in regional partnerships and form a regional housing program in collaboration with neighbouring towns. Regional examples that could serve as a model are the Assabet Regional Housing Consortium and the Metro North Regional Housing Services Office. These organizations offer a range of programs, the most notable of which are the Emergency Rental Assistance programs that were established in response to COVID-19.



Photo: Jackie Mushinski
Spencer Cable Access

06



Land Use



Balance between growth and preservation.

OVERVIEW

Brookfield's development patterns are rooted in its rural and agricultural heritage. Characterized by minimal change, Brookfield's land use reflects a rural and suburban lifestyle primarily centered around creating

single-family homes within the Rural Residential (RR) district. Commercial activities are concentrated along Route 9 and Central Street, offering residents a limited range of essential services.

The Town Common area is primarily residential, with small businesses contributing to the neighborhood's character while minimizing disruption. The Common's inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places acknowledges its significant historic structures contributing to the town's New England character. Furthermore, the open spaces within the Common serve as a scenic

backdrop for local fairs and cultural events.

The Land Use chapter aims to provide a roadmap for the practical and sustainable utilization of the Town's land resources. It focuses on a balance between preserving the town's New England Village character and promoting responsible growth and development. This chapter outlines specific land use goals, objectives, and actionable strategies shaped to meet Brookfield's needs and aspirations for the next two decades.

KEY FINDINGS

Following an assessment of existing conditions, data analysis, and engagement with key stakeholders and residents, three central themes emerged: maintaining Brookfield's small-town and historical character, diversifying commercial uses that accommodate current needs, and preserving rural character through open space. These themes will guide the Town in implementing strategic measures that align with Brookfield's built environment's current and future priorities.

Emphasizing Small-Town and Historical Characteristics

As the 20th century unfolded, Brookfield experienced a notable shift toward residential development, marked by the construction of lakeside cottages and the emergence of scattered residential properties. Brookfield's development patterns have not changed significantly in the last decades. According to the American Community Survey 2020 Census data, Brookfield comprises 1,368 households, with single-family detached homes being the dominant housing type within Brookfield at 66% of the housing stock (refer to image X). This data shows Brookfield's continued preference for single-family homes, contributing to preserving Brookfield's small-town, rural character.

Survey respondents and workshop participants identified Brookfield's

"historic character" as one of its main strengths. The Town Common, placed on the National Register of Historic Places, is one of its most notable historic assets. The Master Plan Land Use and Open Space, Natural, Cultural and Historical Resources chapters provide recommendations for tools to protect these areas and prevent inappropriate changes to historic areas like the Town Common.

and portraying an auto-dominated appearance. As for Business B (BB) district, permitted uses mainly consist of light manufacturing that does not aim to provide convenience services and goods for the residents of Brookfield.

BROOKFIELD RESIDENTS, IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"I think we should keep our town small. I moved here to be in a rural country setting [...]" (Community Survey, 2023).

"Allow for growth that doesn't destroy character" (Community Workshop, February 2023).

Need for Diversified Commercial Services in Business and Mixed-Use Districts

Brookfield has prominently zoned Route 9 with Business A (BA) district, allowing commercial uses to provide highway-oriented services

BROOKFIELD RESIDENTS, IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"Consolidate businesses to make them accessible to the community, including the elderly."

"More small businesses near the center of town."

"Change zoning in the Village district to make a walkable business district with ground floor commercial."

"Allow development between existing buildings on Central Street and the surrounding areas." (Community Workshop, May 2023)

Brookfield residents have consistently voiced their support for broadening the availability of small-scale commercial services concentrated in the Business A and B zoning districts. The proposed strategy encourages neighborhood retail, ensuring convenient access to essential goods and services.

Critically, these commercial areas will be positioned near the Town Center, preserving a clear boundary between commercial and the residential zones south of the Quaboag River. The residents' advocacy for increased business accessibility extends beyond convenience; it also reflects a desire to bolster the Town's tax revenue and employment opportunities by establishing new businesses.

Preserving Rural Character through Open Space

To maintain Brookfield's unique rural character and extensive open spaces, particularly South of the Quaboag River, the Town should guide development away from agricultural land and toward development along main corridors near existing development, which will require updated conservation strategies and land use policies and upgrades to current infrastructure.

Emerging Issues in Land Use

From time-to-time, zoning bylaws should be reviewed and updated to remove potential conflicts, provide clarity, and bring the bylaws up-to-date due to changes in Massachusetts General Law

BROOKFIELD RESIDENTS, IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"The community should prioritize agriculture. Allow for as much farming as the community can still hold." (Community Workshop, February 2023).

"Control growth and ensure it does not result in sprawl" (Community Workshop, February 2023).

(MGL). Brookfield would benefit from undertaking a zoning diagnostic and comprehensive zoning update to ensure that the bylaws are in accordance with MGL and for ease of use. A few sections that are highlighted here are sections pertaining to parking, signs, and solar energy facilities. The Parking and Loading Regulations (Section 9.) of the Zoning Bylaws are limited and do not provide specific parking requirements based on the use and size of a facility. While this allows for flexibility in a time when there is an effort to reduce impervious areas to reduce stormwater runoff, guidelines should be established for residential units and for commercial

uses based on use and size of facility. It is commendable to see that shared parking is permitted as this is another strategy to help reduce stormwater runoff.

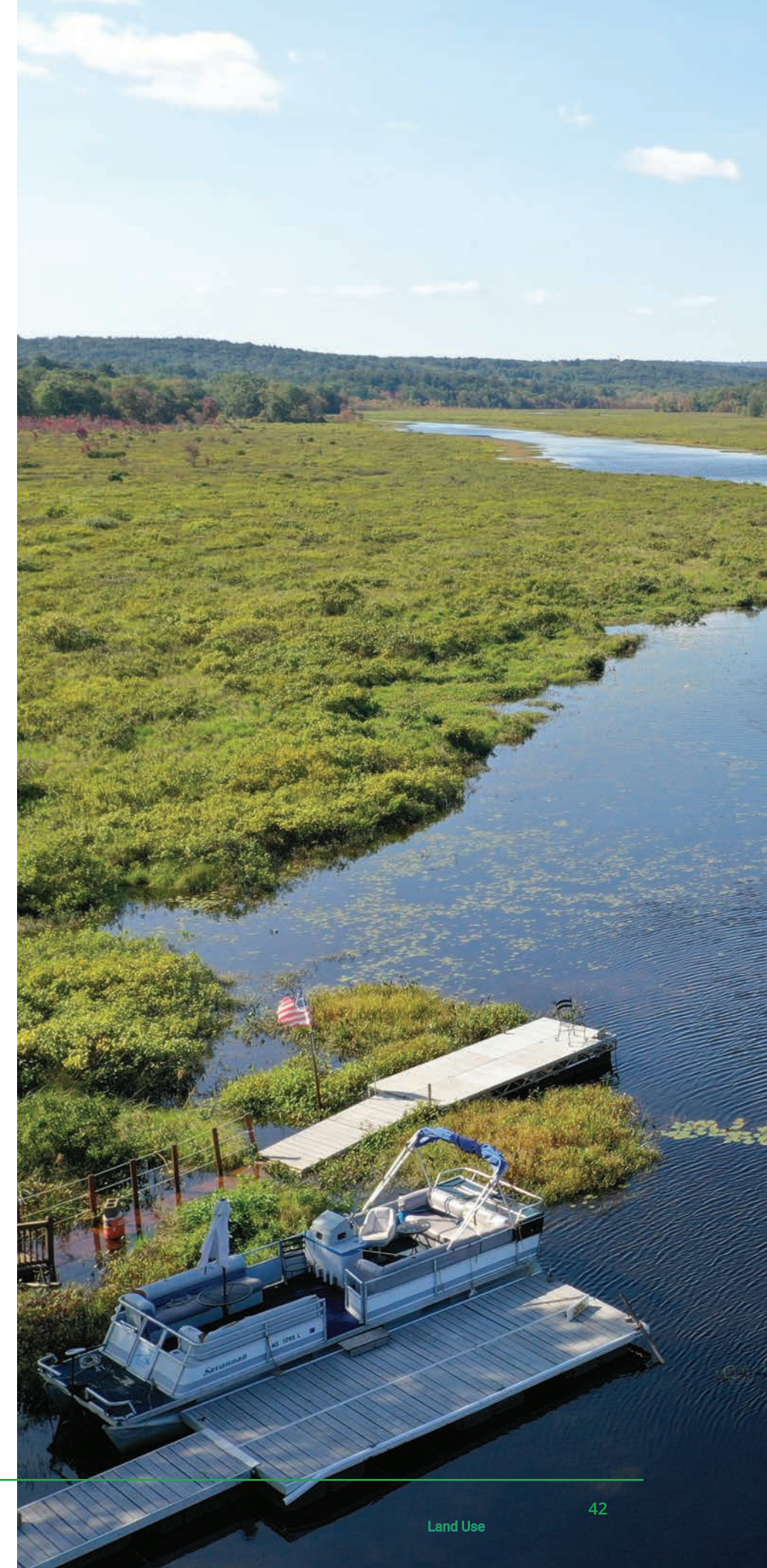
Regarding the Sign Regulation (Section 10.), there have been recent legal cases pertaining to signs. It is good practice to review and update the Sign Bylaw to ensure the bylaw reflects these changes. Additionally, while electronic message centers (also known as LED reader board signs) have been in existence for some time, some older sign bylaws do not yet have language established to regulate these types of signs particularly regarding the size, brightness, and animation capability. The Town should consider whether these types of signs will be permitted in Brookfield and, if so, a definition should be drafted for this type of sign and criteria established to regulate them. If the Town does not support this type of sign, the sign bylaw should be amended to prohibit them.

A newer circumstance that has emerged with solar energy systems (Section 12.) is the development of "micro grid systems," also referred to as large-scale Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS). These systems use large batteries (typically lithium batteries) stored in shipping containers that can power a particular area when the main electrical grid is not operating. While these systems can be beneficial in that they provide electricity during times when local power is down, there are some concerns with them.

The primary concern is with the inability of fire department personnel to extinguish lithium battery fires, and there are also aesthetic concerns. These systems are divided into different classes depending on the amount of energy that can be stored and distributed through them. With these systems being so new, most communities do not yet have adopted bylaws to regulate them. The Town should consider reviewing the solar energy systems bylaw and amending it to include provisions for battery energy storage systems.

The following goals and strategies provide ways to address the issues and opportunities presented in this chapter.

The Town should consider reviewing the solar energy systems bylaw and amending it to include provisions for battery energy storage systems.





GOALS AND STRATEGIES

SUMMARY

Goal 1: Preserve and enhance Brookfield’s cultural heritage and small-town character while incorporating new growth.

- Objective: Encourage new development strategies and standards within the Town Common and business districts to ensure that alterations of existing structures fit with the community’s small-town and historic character.
 - o Action Item 1.1: Create Design Guidelines to ensure that New Development maintains alignment with Brookfield’s small-town characteristics.
 - o Action Item 1.2: Implement Demolition Delay Bylaw for historic preservation within the Town Common to provide a robust framework for preservation of Brookfield’s historical assets.
 - o Action Item 1.3: Promote Adaptive Reuse Programs to put historic structures back into productive use within the town center.

Goal 2: Diversify allowed uses to support various commercial services within business and mixed-use areas.

- Objective : Expand allowed uses in Brookfield’s BA, BB, and Village districts to encourage a diverse mixture of businesses that provide essential goods and services for residents.
 - o Action Item 2.1.1: Hire a Town Planner who can provide technical expertise and implement Land Use goals through the Zoning Bylaws.
 - o Action Item 2.1.2: Conduct a Community-Led Retail Needs Assessment to identify demand for specific essential goods and services for different neighborhoods in Brookfield.
 - o Action Item 2.1.3: Encourage diverse commercial uses in Brookfield’s BA, BB, and Village districts by reviewing and revising the current Zoning Bylaw to allow certain uses that are currently restricted.
- Objective: Initiate a comprehensive zoning diagnostic and update to ensure the Zoning Bylaws are current and in compliance with Massachusetts General Law (MGL).
 - o Action Item 2.2.1: Establish parking standards that provide guidance to residents and developers to provide sufficient parking while being cognizant of minimizing impervious areas and reducing stormwater runoff.
 - o Action Item 2.2.2: Amend the Sign Regulation to reflect precedent setting legal cases and to address new technology in signage.
 - o Action Item 2.2.3: Expand the Solar Energy Systems Bylaw to establish regulations for large-scale battery energy storage micro grid systems.

Goal 3: Encourage utilizing Smart Growth strategies within new housing developments, such as compact development, to preserve open space and community character

- Objective: Review and amend the Zoning Bylaw to allow for compact development within the RR district by using Smart Growth principles to ensure that new housing development design and location prioritize the preservation of open space and farmland.
 - o Action Item 3.1: Support cluster development to encourage the preservation of open space.
 - o Action Item 3.2: Reduce dimensional requirements for duplexes and other small-scale multifamily housing forms.

GOAL 1

Preserve and Enhance Brookfield’s Cultural Heritage and Small-Town Character while Incorporating New Growth

Brookfield has many locations recognized for their historic buildings and impressionable history, such as the Old Post Road Corridor, Town Common, and Elm Hill Farm, to mention a few. With that said, the Town continues to experience a consistent annual population growth rate of 1%, evident in the transition from a population of 3,390 in 2010 to 3,439, according to the latest American Community Survey as depicted in the Housing Chapter . Projections for the future align with this upward trend, advocating for a measured and intentional approach to enhancing Brookfield and preserving the Town through the projected growth in the upcoming years. Goal 1 of the Land Use Chapter aims to not only consider this growth trend but also to preserve Brookfield’s qualities, its historical heritage, and its defined small-town characteristics. Findings from surveys and workshops conducted by CMRPC acknowledge this trend, with residents consistently emphasizing that the Town’s strength lies in its “rural” and “small-town” traits. This goal reflects a commitment to thoughtful planning and sustainable development that respects the ongoing population growth while preserving Brookfield’s cultural heritage.

Objective: Encourage new development strategies and standards that emphasize and maintain Brookfield’s small-town and historic character within the Town Common and business districts to ensure that alterations of existing structures fit with the community’s historic character.

Emphasizing and maintaining small-town characteristics in Brookfield reflects the community’s commitment to preserving its historic features and cultural heritage. The Town aims to foster a sense of continuity and identity amongst potential growth by implementing development strategies prioritizing the conservation of Brookfield’s unique character.

In achieving this objective, Brookfield seeks to strike a delicate balance between growth and preservation, ensuring that future developments align with the distinctive small-town characteristics that define the community. For instance, the approval of the Molasses Hill Subdivision by the Brookfield Planning Board in 2022 is a noteworthy example. Originally proposed as a 31-lot subdivision, the Planning Board created a 10-page draft agreement to modify it to nine lots for Phase One. The agreement extends to 2025 and highlights the Town’s commitment to maintaining its small-town character while permitting controlled growth. The Molasses Hill project demonstrates Brookfield’s proactive approach to preserving its unique identity while accommodating development opportunities that align with its cultural heritage.

Action 1.1: Create Design Guidelines for New Development to guarantee Brookfield maintains alignment with the small-town characteristics

Develop and institute precise design guidelines for upcoming developments in zoning districts of BusinessA(BA), Village(V), and Mixed-use areas to guarantee alignment with Brookfield’s overall premise of the small-town characteristics. These guidelines will include architectural styles, building scale, and landscaping requirements, fostering elements of the Town’s existing qualities. As new developments arise, implementing clear guidelines becomes instrumental in preserving and enhancing Brookfield’s character, preventing any adverse impact on the Town.

Action 1.2: Implement a Bylaw for Historic Preservation within the Town Common to provide a strong framework for the preservation of Brookfield’s historical assets

The Town Common is already recognized as a historical asset to the residents of Brookfield and the National Register of Historic Places. The Common has been well maintained throughout the years, but efforts have yet to be made to ensure the historical aspect stays predominant as new or updated development occurs. Outlining the establishment and functioning of Local Historic Districts, the bylaw provides a strong framework for preserving Brookfield’s rich historical assets.

A feature of implementing this bylaw would be the support from the created local historic district commission that will provide the authority to evaluate and approve changes made to buildings within the Town Common. The commission's role becomes essential in preserving the historical authenticity and character of the Common. Implementing the bylaw reinforces Brookfield's dedication to responsible growth, sustainable development, and cultural heritage preservation. This action item aligns with the Open Space, Recreation, and Cultural Resources chapter.

Action 1.3: Promote Adaptive Reuse Programs to put historic structures back into productive use within the Town Common

Residents express that existing zoning bylaws deter proactive engagement, fostering a perception that limits any potential action. This action item is to launch initiatives and incentives to encourage adaptive reuse of historic structures within the Town Common.

By introducing adaptive reuse programs, Brookfield aims to provide solutions to the challenges posed

by existing zoning bylaws. These initiatives may include establishing grants, tax credits, or technical assistance programs. These mechanisms serve as proactive measures to support property owners in repurposing historic buildings within the Common. The programs foster a positive environment for property owners to engage actively in the adaptive reuse of historic structures. Reuse programs not only address the perceived obstacles but also align with the broader goal of preserving the unique character and cultural heritage of Brookfield's Common.

GOAL 2

Diversify Allowed Uses to Support Various Commercial Services within Business and Mixed-Use Areas:

Brookfield zoning bylaw currently has five (5) zoning and two (2) overlay districts, with each district providing specific regulations as to what is and is not permitted and what development uses may need to obtain a Special Permit. As described in the bylaw, the purpose of these zoning districts and their regulations "is to preserve the rural character of the Town of Brookfield, to provide suitable locations for various uses of property, and to protect the town's natural resources, especially water supplies." Refer to Figure 17 to review each zoning district and its purpose. The intent of Goal 2 is to review Brookfield zoning bylaw and create new avenues that can provide additional support to various commercial services within the Business and Mixed-use districts by diversifying the allowances within those regulations. Goal 2 can assist with updating the current bylaw and allow it to reflect the Town's current needs and future growth.

Objective: Expanding allowed uses in Brookfield's existing zoning districts within the zoning bylaw, such as BA, BB, and the Village districts, to open up opportunities that can increase and establish a mixture of businesses that provide essential goods and services for the local residents.

The objective is to provide a more diversified commercial presence within the current zoning districts.

BROOKFIELD 2023 ZONING DISTRICTS	
District Classification	Purpose Description
Rural-Residential District (RR)	Facilitate low-density residential development, agriculture, and other compatible uses with the overarching goal of preserving Brookfield's rural character.
Village District (V)	Establish centralized and compact centers while the district is predominantly zoned for residential uses. It's important to note the historical presence of various commercial, industrial, institutional, and municipal uses, which creates mixed uses.
Business A District (BA)	Primarily zoned for retail and service establishments, the BA district allows for the potential consideration of certain other uses through a Special Permit
Business B District (BB)	The district is subdivided into four sections. This zone caters to light manufacturing and similar employment uses mentioned in the BA district
Flood Plain District (FP)	Permits specific uses that won't worsen downstream flooding or lead to the construction of significant new buildings vulnerable to flood damage. Residential development is strictly forbidden. The primary purpose of the FP is to ensure the protection of public health, safety, and general welfare
Overlay Classification	Purpose Description
Wellhead Protection Overlay District (WP)	Preserve public health, safety, and general welfare and maintain the quality and quantity of the water supply derived from the wellhead
Marijuana Overlay District (MOD)	Designating appropriate locations for establishing Adult Use/Medical Marijuana Facilities. Aims to create more opportunities for residents and businesses while addressing community concerns and maintaining regulatory oversight.

Figure 17. Zoning districts. Source: Town of Brookfield.

Currently, limited locations provide residents with essential goods and services. Expanding the allowed uses within the zoning districts can preserve Brookfield's character while at the same time providing more opportunities for new development that meets the needs of the residents. To expand commercial uses, the Town needs to conduct an in-depth review

of the bylaw, create a community partnership, and provide any required amendments from the current bylaw regulations. From workshops and provided survey results conducted by CMRPC and shown in the last Master Plan, residents desire businesses that can meet their needs and not require them to travel outside of Town.





Action 2.1: Hire a Town Planner who can provide the knowledge of planning processes and provide consistent assistance to enhance and maintain Land Use goals through the Zoning Bylaws

Currently, Brookfield does not have a staffed Town Planner. The position of a Town Planner can help Brookfield plan for development by performing a variety of routine and complex technical and administrative work for land use development activities, including development review, permit processing and coordination, land use development analyses, report writing, zoning, and regulation review and development, etc. The town planner can continue to work with other departments, developers, and residents to reach the Town planning goals. It will also provide an in-depth knowledge of the zoning bylaws and what changes can be applied to meet the Town's needs.

Action 2.2: Conduct a Community-Led Retail Needs Assessment to identify specific essential goods and services for different neighborhoods in Brookfield

While creating Brookfield's Master Plan, CMRPC conducted various workshops and surveys to understand and identify what Brookfield residents wanted from their Town. Within the 2023 survey results, one of the questions asked about which type of businesses would be most beneficial to Brookfield. The results showed that 70% wanted more Restaurants, brewpubs, and other food and beverage establishments.

Then grocery stores/supermarkets/convenience stores came in second, with around 60% demonstrated within the survey. Conducting a Community-Led Retail Needs Assessment represents a critical strategy to recognize Brookfield's main priorities, as seen in the survey results above. Continuing assessments can provide insights into what particular uses residents perceive are missing in their neighborhood and how those uses can be beneficial. Assessments ensure that the proposed retail spaces not only cater to essential needs but also reflect the distinctive character of each neighborhood, respecting the Town's commitment to its residents. The outcomes of this assessment will serve as a guide for fostering a deeper connection between the residents and the zoning bylaw.

Action 2.3: Review and Plan to Revise the current Zoning Bylaw to allow uses that are currently restricted within the zoning districts

The existing Zoning Bylaw in Brookfield presents a challenge by requiring a special permit from the Board of Appeals for multiple principal uses on a single lot, acting as a deterrent to small-scale commercial development. While this provision aims to preserve the Town's character, there is a growing recognition that restructuring these procedures could enhance the feasibility of small-scale commercial enterprises in Brookfield.

The significance of this action item lies in its potential to directly address Goal 2, which aims to identify its residents' evolving needs and create necessary amendments to the current bylaw to best reflect what Brookfield is. The current Use Table provided by the Zoning Bylaw shows specific uses as permitted, not permitted, or requiring a Special Permit (SP). For example, currently, the table shows that the use of Veterinary or Boarding Kennels is allowed in all the zoning districts (minus the Flood Plain) with an approved SP; these regulations may be seen as unnecessary and could be permitted by right in the BA and V districts.

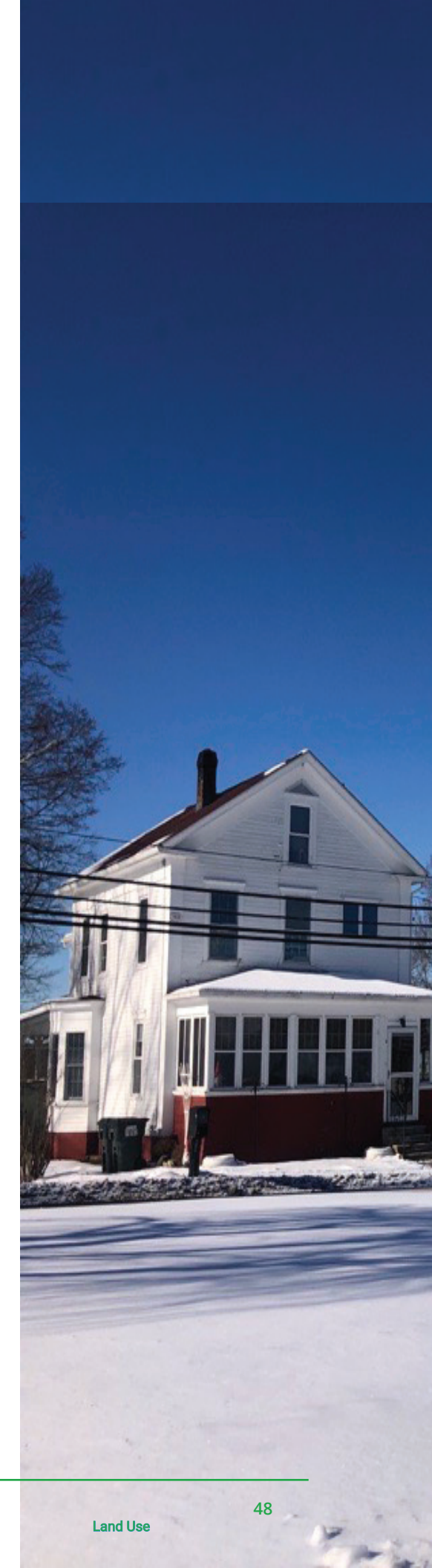
Recognizing Brookfield's character as a community committed to small-town characteristics and a blend of residential and commercial services, this action item strategically focuses on enhancing the Town's zoning framework to accommodate needed neighborhood retail. The existing Zoning Bylaw poses limitations, like the one mentioned above, and when re-evaluated, could introduce greater flexibility into land use regulations. The objective is to create a more adaptable framework, allowing business and mixed-use zoning designations to align seamlessly with the Town's vision of fostering convenient access to essential goods and services for local residents.

Objective 2: Initiate a comprehensive zoning diagnostic and update to ensure the Zoning bylaws are current and in compliance with Massachusetts General Law (MGL).

The objective is to put forth the effort to ensure that the Zoning Bylaws reflect changes that have occurred in state laws since adopting and amending the bylaws. Many communities, particularly small communities, do not have the staffing to complete comprehensive updates in-house; however, state funding is available so that communities can hire consultants to work with them to bring the bylaws up to date. Creating bylaws that are clear and easy to use will aid in bringing business to the community as will streamlining the permitting process.

Action Item 2.2.1: Establish parking standards that provide guidance to residents and developers to provide sufficient parking while being cognizant of minimizing impervious areas and reducing stormwater runoff.

The current parking section does not provide specific parking requirements such as a minimum number of parking spaces per residential unit or distinguish between single-family homes and multi-family dwelling units. Neither does it provide requirements that distinguish between retail, restaurant, assembly or warehouse uses that all have different parking needs. The stormwater management benefits of minimizing or sharing parking that reduce impervious area agree with the recommendations set forth in the Open Space, Recreation, Natural and Cultural Resources chapter to protect surface and ground water.



land by primary use

41.5% residential

0.75% commercial

4.02% recreational/
chapter 61B

Action Item 2.2.2: Amend the Sign Regulation to reflect precedent setting legal cases and to address new technology in signage.

The purpose of this action item is to ensure that the Town's Sign Regulations are not at risk of being in violation of recent legal rulings. It is also to provide clear direction about the size, location, and type of lighting that is permitted for signs. Lastly, it encourages the adoption of language that clearly indicates whether the Town supports electronic reader board signs.

Action Item 2.2.3: Expand the Solar Energy Systems Bylaw to establish regulations for large-scale battery energy storage micro grid systems.

Some communities in Massachusetts are developing regulations for micro grid battery energy storage systems because there are facilities currently requesting approval to construct these facilities. It is best to have regulations in place and to be prepared in advance of such a facility submitting an application. These regulations should take into consideration the needs of emergency personnel and any potential aesthetic impacts to the Town.

GOAL 3

Encourage utilizing Smart Growth Strategies, such as compact development within new housing developments, to preserve open space and community character:

Brookfield's is a "Bedroom community" with a predominance of single-family homes, a housing type central to its

historic development patterns. Goal 3 aims to examine this aspect of Brookfield's development over time while recommending Smart Growth strategies. This approach seeks to guide new developments toward a standard that preserves open space through compact design. Among thoughtful planning and adoption of Smart Growth principles, Brookfield can balance accommodating growth and preserving its characteristic rural landscape, thus ensuring a sustainable future for the community.

Objective: Review and amend the Zoning Bylaw to allow for compact development within the RR District by using Smart Growth principles to ensure that new housing development design and location prioritize the preservation of open space.

Smart Growth Strategies can help ensure Brookfield maintains its small-town character while providing different options for residential development. By re-evaluating the current Zoning Bylaw, Brookfield can apply strategies that encourage cluster development and low-impact designs while preserving the open space and strong character of the Town. The accompanying table offers a comprehensive snapshot of Brookfield's current land uses, shedding light on the distribution of various land use types across the Town. Notably, residential is the dominant land use at 41.73% of total lots in Brookfield.

By leveraging this data, Brookfield gains valuable insights into the

Brookfield Land Use Table		
Use Types	Lot Size (Acres)	Lot Size %
Multi-use	1,313.48	12.64%
Residential	4,337.60	41.73%
Commercial	78.16	0.75%
Industrial	37.4	0.36%
Chapter 61 - Forestry	254.24	2.45%
Chapter 61A - Agriculture	208.11	2.00%
Chapter 61B - Recreational	417.76	4.02%
Exempt	3,747.05	36.05%
Grand Total	10,393.80	100.00%

Figure 18. Land Use by Assessor Acreage. Source: Town of Brookfield.

substantial footprint residential uses occupy within the Town. Recognizing the significance of this aspect, implementing diverse housing development strategies becomes necessary. These strategies, such as the ones outlined in the action items below, can equip Brookfield with the essential tools to optimize development and minimize development pressure on open space.

Action 3.1: Support cluster development within the Village (V) district to be permitted by right

Incorporating Action Item 3.1 involves amending Brookfield's existing zoning bylaws to expand the allowance of cluster development within the Village (V) district, which will complement the Open Space Residential Development (OSRD) Bylaw. The OSRD Bylaw permits developers to pursue OSRD projects with a Special Permit, limited to the

Rural Residential (RR) and Village (V) zoning districts. The primary objective is to bolster the OSRD Bylaw by emphasizing cluster development more, allowing cluster development within the (V) district to promote its implementation in residential zones. Action item 3.1 encourages updates of the bylaw to allow by right of developers to cluster buildings and structures more closely together while optimizing open space allocation within the (V) districts. Allowing Cluster development by right can encourage a more compact site plan, protect environmentally sensitive areas, diversify housing options, and streamline the development review, improving predictability in the review process.

Action 3.2: Reduce dimensional requirements, such as height and lot coverage, for duplexes and other small-scale multifamily within the Village District.

The Village (V) District is centrally zoned within Brookfield, allowing for more compact development of both residential and commercial structures. Currently, the Zoning Bylaw dimensional requirements for (V) districts for multi-family have the minimum lot area as 35,000 sq. ft and an additional lot area for each additional dwelling unit of 5,000 sq. ft. The setbacks from the street line and side and rear yards are 25 ft. As for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU), both zoning districts (RR) and (V) follow the same regulations. Within the Bylaw it states that an ADU cannot exceed 600 sf. Only one accessory apartment is permitted that is subordinate to a one-family dwelling.

Reduced dimensional requirements within the Village District can provide a greater variety of housing types and create more opportunities to meet the housing needs of the Town. Any reductions in dimensional requirements should conform with the minimum requirements of on-site sewage disposal systems. As for regulations for ADUs, zoning districts (V) and (RR) should not be using the same standards as they provide different purposes for residential development in their district. (V) promotes more density and mixed-use development, whereas (RR) encourages larger lots for single-family homes. ADU regulations should reflect and match each district's purpose. Since (V) has a mixed allowance for development, an ADU should become more flexible to accommodate the various developments within the district.



07

Transportation



Need for multi-modal transportation options

OVERVIEW

Located approximately 18 miles west of the City of Worcester and approximately 9 miles north of the I-90 and I-84 interchange, Brookfield relies on its transportation system to connect to regional economic hubs. However, a transportation system does more than connect employers and employees. It provides the

means for residents to access local amenities, from schools and healthcare providers to parks, shopping centers, and more.

For the Town of Brookfield, transportation is a critical aspect of planning for the future. A transportation system can go beyond the function of providing mobility and access by offering opportunities to positively impact health, lifestyle, and sustainability. In this sense, transportation can provide a framework for how communities evolve with respect to active transportation, efficient circulation, and land use. Transportation frameworks can reduce congestion, improve safety, and cut down on

noise and air pollution.

Since the publication of the 2011 Master Plan, Brookfield has accomplished a lot in terms of advancing its goals. In 2019, Brookfield developed a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan, in which 22 potential projects were outlined that would improve traffic and safety. There has been one TIP project over the past 5 years in Brookfield. This project was a bridge replacement in 2019 for the South Pond Road bridge over South Pond Inlet. While substantial work has been done toward achieving these goals, there are still many opportunities for improvements to Brookfield's transportation network.

KEY FINDINGS

Existing Transportation Network Classification of Roadways

The functional and jurisdictional classification of Brookfield's streets is important to understanding how the streets relate to one another, how they are used, and who exercises control over them. Function classifications of roadways in Brookfield are listed and described below.

Principal arterial

A principal arterial roadway primarily serves through traffic and major circulation movements. Route 9 is a principal arterial roadway, running east-west through Brookfield, providing local access to the surrounding towns of East Brookfield and West Brookfield, as well as further destinations such as Worcester.

Minor arterial:

A minor arterial roadway provides through movement with little interference and generally high speeds. Route 148, running north-south through Brookfield, provides local access to the surrounding towns of North Brookfield and Sturbridge, as well as connections to the I-84 and I-90 interchange.

Local roads

Local roads provide access to arterials for residents and generally observe low speeds. Local roads represent most roads in Brookfield. Figure 19 lists the agencies that have jurisdiction over the use and maintenance of the roadways in town.

Controlling Agency	Location	Mileage
MassDOT	Route 9	2.65
Town of Brookfield	Throughout Town	35.74
Unaccepted	Throughout Town	1.11
Total Road Mileage		39.5

Figure 19. Zoning districts. Source: Town of Brookfield.

Traffic Volumes

The CMRPC conducts traffic counts on an ongoing basis throughout the Central Massachusetts region. Automatic Traffic Recorder (ATR) machines are installed along a roadway to record the number of vehicles travelling in each direction over a 48-hour period. In addition to volume, ATRs collect data on vehicle speed and classification. Throughout Brookfield, most local roads handle fewer than 1,000 cars per day; however, Route 9, Route 148, and several other roads are more heavily traveled. In 2019, Route 9 handled approximately 6,500-7,500 cars per day, and Route 148 handled approximately 2,000-4,000 cars per day.

Roadway Conditions

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) maintains Route 9 through Brookfield. The Brookfield Highway Department is responsible for the maintenance of all other roads, as they are considered local roadways. There are some private roads in Brookfield, several of which are dirt roads. It is the responsibility of residents/owners to maintain private roads.

Transportation Patterns and Mode Choice

In Brookfield, there are 44 homes with no vehicles available. There are 445

homes with one vehicle available, 543 homes with two vehicles available, and 413 homes with three or more vehicles available. The average commute time for residents in Brookfield in 2022 was 31 minutes and 90.1% of workers drove alone to work.

Public Transport

The Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) services the Brookfield area with bus route number 33. Inbound buses leave the Brookfield Common at 5:39 AM, 7:39 AM, 6:10 PM, and 7:10 PM, with the ultimate destination being The Hub in Worcester. This schedule provides transit options for commuters traveling to and from Worcester. Additionally, the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVRTA) services Brookfield. Route B79 stops in Brookfield at 8:04 AM, 1:04 PM, and 5:19 PM, offering transport east to Worcester. Route B79 stops in Brookfield at 9:16 AM, 2:16 PM, and 6:31 PM, offering transport west to UMass Amherst. Further, Brookfield is serviced by the Quaboag Connector, a reliable and affordable community transportation option. This is a favorable option for those looking to book a ride to destinations beyond the reach of other public transport services.

Safety

From 2016 to 2023, the Town of Brookfield observed 238 reported crashes, of which 47 involved an injury. The Town recorded no crash related fatalities in this time. There are no Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) crash clusters in Brookfield in the 2018 – 2020 reporting period; this includes vehicle, pedestrian, and bicyclist crash clusters. Crash data from 2016 to 2023 shows no vulnerable user crashes in the Town of Brookfield.

Many Brookfield crashes are single-vehicle crashes (54.45%). This number is more than double of the regional (24.68%) and State (22.96%) percentage for single-vehicle crashes in the same time period (2016 – 2023). These single-vehicle crashes often occurred on a segment of a singular road as opposed to being at an intersection or junction. There were 193 vehicle crashes that occurred “Not at junction,” representing 68.68% of all crashes in the Town. This is in comparison to the region with 58.84% and State with 56.7% of “Not at junction” crash.

A potential contributing factor to single-vehicle crashes is the presence of unstable shoulders in the Brookfield’s road network. The Town has a higher percentage of unstable shoulder crashes (37%) compared to CMRPC (9%) and State (5.4%) [Figure 20].

The following challenges and

opportunities were informed by the documentation and analysis presented above, as well as input received from the community through the public engagement process.

Challenges:

The aging population of Brookfield needs improved transportation and increased awareness of transportation options. There is no senior center in Brookfield, and sometimes people need to contact West Brookfield to travel to the West Brookfield Senior Center.

BROOKFIELD RESIDENTS, IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“Could have something like a “road advisory committee” to help determine needs and allocate funding. This could include a pavement management plan and a way to incorporate pavement management into the town budget.” (Community Workshop, June 2023.)

Opportunities:

More transportation options could potentially attract a younger population and labor force to Brookfield. Amenities such as sidewalks on Quaboag Street would improve quality of life.

BROOKFIELD RESIDENTS, IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“Quaboag Street needs a sidewalk. There is a lot of pedestrian traffic on this road, including elderly. Would provide access to Clam Box on Rt. 9.”

“The Walking area behind Elementary School & State Police Barracks never got accomplished.”

“Path at South Pond Beach needs improvements.”

“There are not any good, comprehensive trail maps of the area.” (Community Workshop, June 2023.)

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Brookfield should continue to provide an efficient, safe, and well-maintained transportation system in keeping with Brookfield’s rural character, one that reduces negative impacts on residential areas while encouraging non-motorized modes of transportation.

Goal 1: Enhance transportation infrastructure throughout Brookfield at key identified locations.

- Objective: Access state and federal aid for improving Brookfield’s transportation infrastructure.
 - Action Item 1.1: Construct pedestrian and bicycle facilities along Quaboag Street.
 - Action Item 1.2: Provide infrastructure and accessibility improvements along trails throughout Brookfield.
 - Action Item 1.3: Provide improvements to transportation options for the aging population of Brookfield.
 - Action Item 1.4: Develop a strategy for electric vehicle charging inclusive of residents, employees, and visitors.

Goal 2: Establish and commit to policies and programs that plan for the future needs of all users of Brookfield’s transportation network.

- Objective: Provide multi-modal transportation options.
 - Action Item 2.1: Continue and expand Brookfield’s participation in state transportation funding programs, especially those that aim to prioritize the safety of all roadway users.
 - Action Item 2.2: Update Brookfield’s policies and bylaws to prioritize the implementation of pedestrian, bicycle, and electric vehicle-friendly facilities as the town commits to various (re)developments.

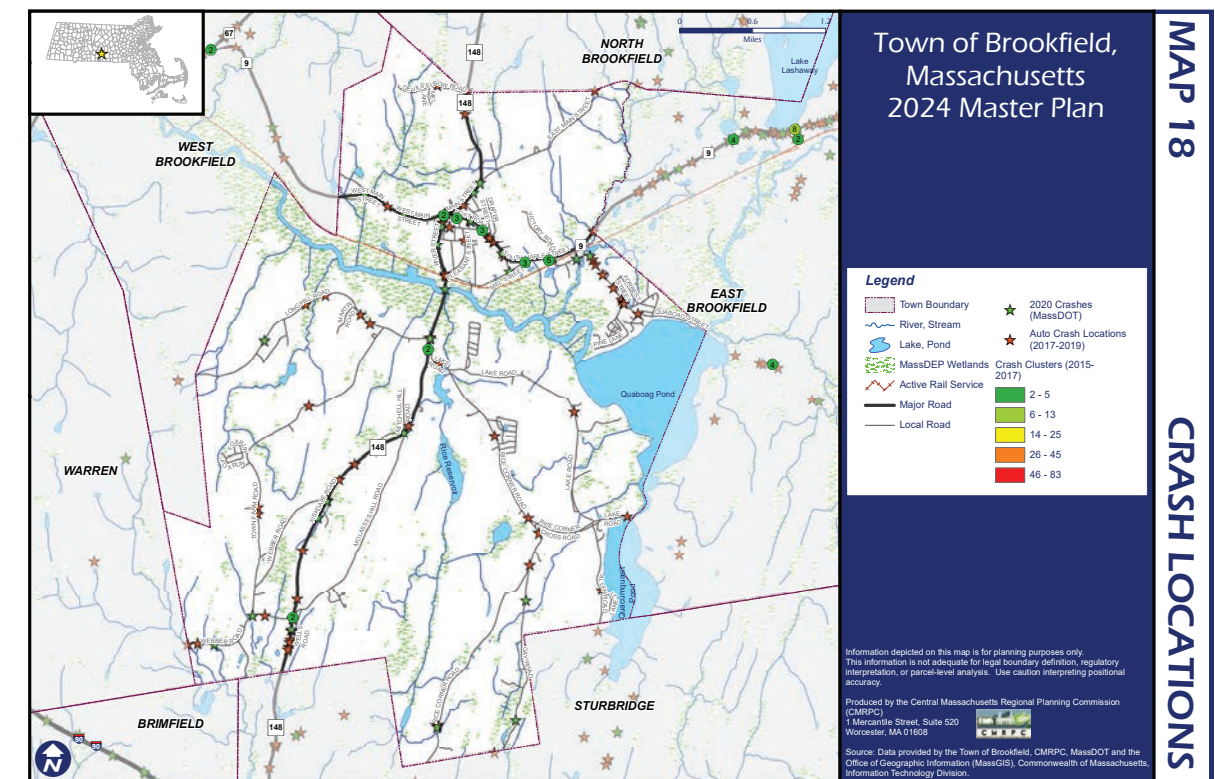


Figure 20. Crash Locations. Source: CMRPC, MassDOT.



GOAL 1

Enhance transportation infrastructure throughout Brookfield at key identified locations.

In 2017, Brookfield’s Select Board voted to adopt the MassDOT Complete Streets policy, emphasizing Brookfield’s commitment to design, construct, maintain, and operate streets in a way that accommodates all road users. There are several key locations in Brookfield that do not currently accommodate all road users. It is recommended that the Town works toward achieving these accommodations, as “complete” streets accommodate users of all ages and abilities.

Action Item 1.1: Construct pedestrian and bicycle facilities along Quaboag Street.

This street connects to Route 9 at The Clam Box, a highly traveled location. Currently, there are no pedestrian or bicycle accommodations to provide safe access to this location. Numerous residents have reported seeing people walking in the roadway along Quaboag Street.

Action 1.2: Provide infrastructure and accessibility improvements along trails throughout Brookfield.

During public outreach, several Brookfield residents noted that improvements could be made to Brookfield’s trail network. Community input underscored that maintenance and upkeep, as well as trail maps, are a priority.

Action 1.3: Provide improvements

to transportation options for the aging population of Brookfield.

Conversations with residents also underscored the need for improved transportation options for seniors. Many seniors rely on vans to access services at the West Brookfield Senior Center due to the absence of a local senior center. Addressing this need would include increasing awareness of available services, exploring viable transportation alternatives, and potentially investing in accessible and senior-friendly transportation options.

As noted in the Public Transport section, Brookfield is serviced by the Quaboag Connector, a reliable and affordable community transportation option. This is a favorable option for those looking to book a ride to destinations beyond the reach of other public transport services, or at specific times of day. Increasing awareness of the Quaboag Connector would play a crucial role in improving transportation for the aging population of Brookfield.

Action 1.4: Develop a strategy for electric vehicle charging inclusive of residents, employees, and visitors.

This strategy aligns with several of Brookfield’s goals to expand electric vehicle infrastructure in town. Accessible EV charging infrastructure creates economic opportunities, improves visitor experiences, and aligns with general environmental goals. Further, electric vehicle infrastructure plays a pivotal role in accommodating all road users by providing diverse options for transportation.

GOAL 2

Establish and commit to policies and programs that plan for the future needs of all users of Brookfield’s transportation network.

Brookfield’s commitment to the MassDOT Complete Streets Policy and Program is a prime example of how this goal can be achieved. After adopting the Complete Streets policy in 2017, Brookfield developed a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan that outlined 22 potential projects eligible for funding, all of which included pedestrian or bicycle infrastructure improvements. In 2021, a project that made upgrades to pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure

on Central Street was approved, and in 2022, this project was completed.

Action Item 2.1: Continue and expand Brookfield’s participation in state transportation funding programs, especially those that aim to prioritize the safety of all roadway users.

It is recommended that Brookfield continue its participation in the Complete Streets program. There are numerous other programs and funding sources that can contribute to reaching this goal. They include, but are not limited to, the following programs: Safe Routes to School, Transportation Improvement Program, and MassTrails.

Action Item 2.2: Update Brookfield’s policies and bylaws to prioritize the implementation of pedestrian, bicycle, and electric vehicle-friendly facilities as the town commits to various (re) developments.

In accordance with the adopted Complete Streets policy, Brookfield recognizes that all roadway projects are potential opportunities to incorporate the design principles of “Complete Streets,” whether public or private. Project implementation must be sensitive to Brookfield’s physical, economic, and social setting. This context-sensitive approach can help Brookfield maintain its rural character while making the necessary changes to achieve future success.

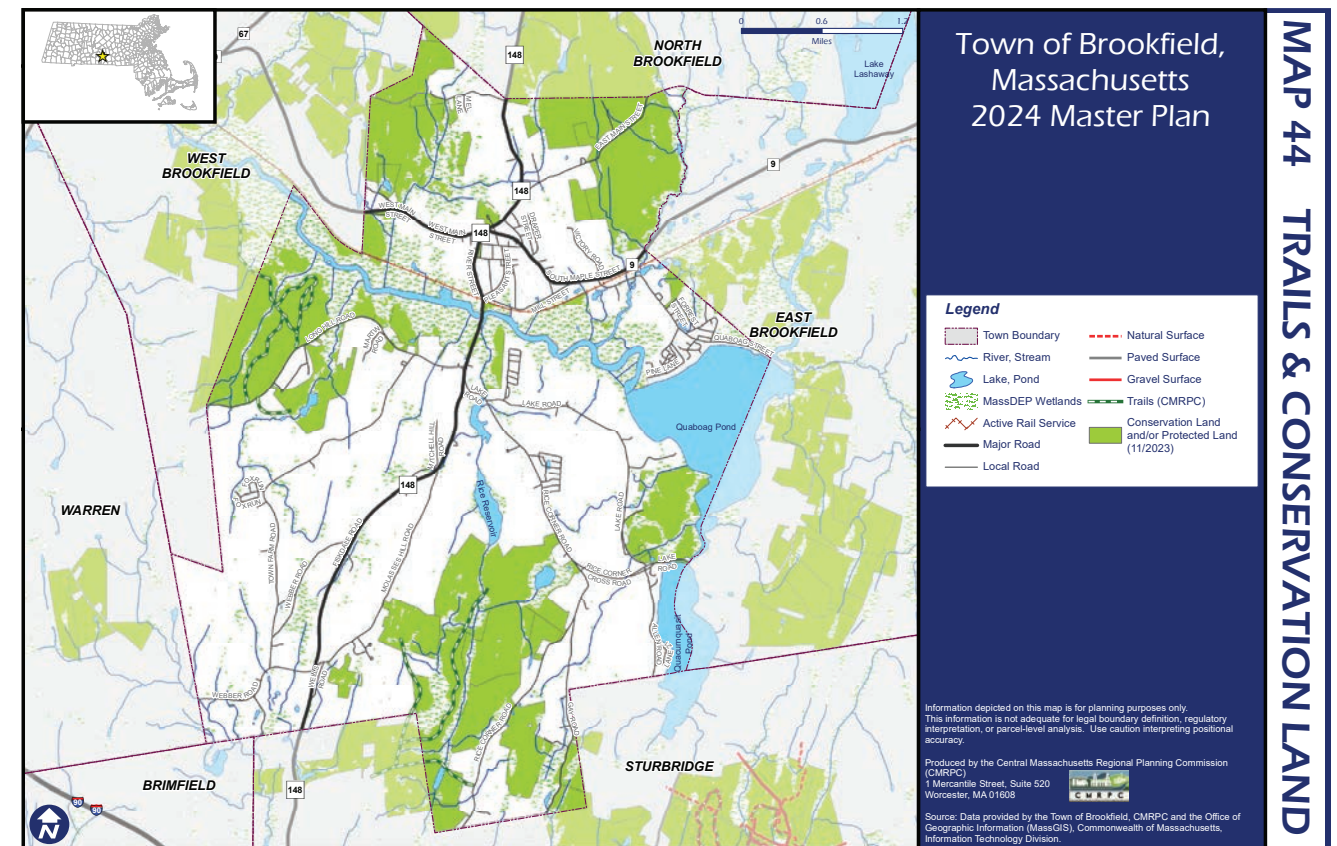


Figure 21. Trails and Conservation Land. Source: CMRPC, MassDOT,



08

Open Space,
Recreation,
Natural, and
Cultural
Resources



Need for improved access to recreation sites.

OVERVIEW

Brookfield is home to a variety of natural resources, from the Elm Hill wildlife sanctuary, with its scenic views of the surrounding rural landscape, to the Quaboag and Quinebaug rivers that spurred the town's industrial growth and linked

it to other nearby communities. These sites shape Brookfield's identity, and serve a significant role in maintaining the environmental, health, and socioeconomic wellbeing of the Central Massachusetts region. Careful planning and management will ensure the sustained health and vitality of these resources.

Brookfield also features an abundance of historic and cultural resources, providing residents and visitors with a sense of community, and a connection to Brookfield's past. The community has a strong tradition of agriculture, a historic common and environs, and relics

from each era of Brookfield's past scattered throughout the Town. Moreover, Brookfield's cultural resources extend beyond its physical landmarks to include the community organizations and events that celebrate the town's heritage and bring its history to life.

This chapter outlines the various actions Brookfield can take to preserve the Town's open space, recreation, cultural, and historical assets. Guided by community input, these strategies aim to enrich the lives of those who call Brookfield home and to invite visitors to explore and connect with its enduring legacy.

KEY FINDINGS

Brookfield would benefit from creating local historic districts.

Throughout the community engagement period, the preservation of the Town's historic sites was consistently cited as an important concern. Local historic districts (LHD) are among the most effective tools for preserving and maintaining historic properties in Massachusetts. Like the National Register designation, LHDs increase eligibility for grants and financial incentives. However, they also enable the community to enact their own preservation measures through a local review and approval process for changes or alterations. There are multiple locations in Brookfield with historical significance



that have already been documented, including two National Register districts, which could serve as the first targets for LHD designation.

Encourage adaptive reuse of historic properties, where appropriate.

Another protection measure for Brookfield's historic properties would be adaptive reuse. The term describes the process of repurposing old buildings for new uses, often maintaining the historic or aesthetically pleasing characteristics of the building while making renovations or alterations for it to support housing, commercial, or other uses. Some properties in Brookfield may be too historically significant to undergo these kinds of alterations. Others, such as some of the old factory buildings, have the potential to be turned into vibrant cultural spaces with the necessary modifications in place.

BROOKFIELD RESIDENTS, IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“Our historic buildings need to make a comeback”

“We need beautification of Central St. in Downtown.” (Community Workshop, February & June 2023)

BROOKFIELD RESIDENTS, IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“Would like to see something done with the Native American burial grounds. The site was made into a national historic park last year. It could receive further protection and should turn it into a walking site and learning center like Sturbridge.”

“Mill Street mill could be made into a restaurant and have its parking improved.” (Community Workshop 2, June 2023)

A BRIEF HISTORY OF BROOKFIELD

The lands making up what is now Brookfield were initially stewarded by the Nipmuc peoples along the Quaboag River and nearby ponds. Brookfield was established in 1673 after being granted to Ipswich petitioners in 1660. The town initially struggled due to King Philip's War in 1675, which led to the destruction of its first major settlement, Foster Hill. Post-war, a new settlement near Elm Hill emerged, and by 1718, Brookfield expanded to include several surrounding towns, becoming a prominent agricultural area.

Throughout the 18th to 20th centuries, parts of Brookfield became independent towns, with East Brookfield separating in 1920. The local economy diversified into small-scale manufacturing, including textiles, shoes, and mills, alongside farming. The arrival of the Western Railroad in 1839 spurred industrial growth and prosperity. However, the Great Depression led to an economic decline, with many farms abandoned or repurposed for residential developments. By the mid-20th century, agriculture, particularly dairy and poultry farming, resurged.

Need for access to, and maintenance of, Brookfield's natural assets.

Much of the open space land in town is owned by the Department of Fish and Game. Although these lands feature trails that are open to the public, they currently are not maintained and not accessible. Some are overgrown and muddy, causing discomfort for trailgoers and creating breeding grounds for ticks and mosquitoes. Parking is also limited, and this frequently leads to residents having to park illegally to access trails.

BROOKFIELD RESIDENTS, IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"South Pond beach should be made more accessible. The path isn't safe for anyone."
(Community Survey, 2023)

"A Sidewalk on Quaboag Pond would be a good addition."
(Workshop 1, February 2023)

Most of the open space land in town is owned by the Department of Fish and Game.

BROOKFIELD RESIDENTS, IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"Access to hiking or biking trails would be wonderful."

"It would be great if trails were made wider and maintained--the fear of ticks makes it harder to use them. It would be nice to have trail maps too--I don't even know where I could park or hike at the wildlife management areas, and when it's safe to do so because of hunting."

(Community Survey, 2023)

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

SUMMARY

Maintain Brookfield's Rural, Agricultural, And Historic Character.

- o Objective: Pursue the recommendations of the Heritage Landscape Inventory for the Brookfield Common Historic District.
- o Action Item 1.1: Prepare a Preservation Master Plan for the common area, including a circulation component to improve vehicular traffic patterns as well as address the continuation of the pedestrian-friendly atmosphere.
- o Objective: Develop a strategic plan to restore, preserve, maintain, and promote Brookfield's historical and cultural monuments and sites.
- o Action Item 1.2: Develop a strategic plan and determine who will have oversight authority for historical and cultural monuments and sites.
- o Objective: Use regulatory tools to protect assets.
- o Action Item 1.3: Establish Local Historic Districts for key locations.
- o Action Item 1.4: Explore the use of a scenic vista protection bylaw.
- o Action item 1.5: Inventory and protect lands identified as containing archaeological resources.
- o Action Item 1.6: Develop a strategy for acquisition of Chapter 61 parcels along the river to anticipate change of land use or ownership.
- o Action Item 1.7: Explore the establishment of a river corridor protection overlay district.
- o Action Item 1.8: Enforce and update the Scenic Roads Bylaw.
- o Action Item 1.9: Facilitate the establishment of conservation easements or restrictions; possibly purchasing critical parcels.
- o Objective: Encourage Local Agriculture
- o Action Item 1.10: Develop a "buy-local" campaign.
- o Action Item 1.11: Promote community gardening.
- o Objective: Investigate possible funding sources to provide support for preserving and maintaining historic structures within Brookfield.
- o Action Item 1.12: Assess the possibility of adopting the Community Preservation Act.
- o Action Item 1.13: Research information regarding available funding program sources and cycles.
- o Action Item 1.14: Promote the Massachusetts Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit (MHRTC).

Goal 2: Educate And Build Awareness About The Historic and Environmental Assets That Lie Within Brookfield's Borders.

- o Objective: Promote historical and ecotourism opportunities.
- o Action Item 2.1: Form an ecotourism working group to identify, develop, and publicize a calendar of activities.
- o Action Item 2.2: Develop promotional materials to market the town's many assets.

Goal 3: Protect open space and natural resources from ecological harm and over-development.

- o Objective: protect surface and ground water resources, wetlands, vernal pools, unique habitats, and wildlife corridors
- o Action Item 3.1: Work with interested stakeholders such as DEP, the Quaboag Quacumquasit Lake Association, and Chicopee River Watershed council on water resource protection efforts and outreach.
- o Action Item 3.2: Identify and seek certification of Brookfield's vernal pools.
- o Action Item 3.3: Develop a strategy for open space acquisition.
- o Action Item 3.4: Redevelop brownfields and reuse land and buildings before building on undeveloped land.
- o Objective: Maintain and improve open space facilities to ensure Brookfield can accommodate users of all ages, incomes, and ability groups.
- o Action Item 3.5: Ensure that open space is accessible.
- o Action Item 3.6: Keep an inventory of open space and recreation facilities along with a record of the status of maintenance needs at each facility.

GOAL 1

Maintain Brookfield's Rural, Agricultural, And Historic Character.

Brookfield's architectural heritage, scenic landscapes, and farmlands shape the economy and identity of the community. The following action items take a comprehensive approach to the protection of these essential resources.

Objective: Pursue the recommendations of the Heritage Landscape Inventory for the Brookfield Common Historic District.

The Heritage Landscape Inventory was a DCR program in the 2000s to identify and document significant landscape resources in communities throughout Massachusetts and provide strategies for preserving them. Many of the recommendations for the different landscapes identified in the HLI Reconnaissance Report for Brookfield have either been addressed by the Town or are echoed in other action items throughout this plan. It is still recommended to review the recommendations and additional information provided in the original report; however, the item below deserves to be expanded upon here for its relevance to this chapter.

Action Item 1.1: Prepare a Preservation Master Plan for the common area, including a circulation component to improve vehicular traffic patterns as well as address the continuation of the pedestrian-friendly atmosphere.

The Banister Common area features

buildings of various architectural styles built from 1797 to 1900, including important civic and institutional buildings like the Unitarian-Universalist Church, the Congregational Church, and Town Hall. The landscape has seen minimal changes despite some building relocations and demolitions. The area was listed on the NRHP in 1990 and has since been considered for the establishment of a local historic district (see action item 1.3 for more information on LHDs). The landscape integrity has been well-preserved and around 75% of survey respondents said they already use the Town Common for recreational purposes. However, much of the land receives no further protection than what is offered through the NRHP designation. Furthermore, the vehicular circulation pattern is also confusing and dangerous. A full preservation master plan can provide a strategic framework for the preservation and enhancement of the Common. It can also help identify funding opportunities and help make the Town competitive for future grants.

Objective: Develop a strategic plan to restore, preserve, maintain, and promote Brookfield's historical and cultural monuments and sites.

Brookfield features many historical and cultural resources that are at least inventoried if not receiving some level of protection. The protection measures in place came about through individual efforts, and there is not yet a coordinated strategy for preservation. A well-crafted strategic

plan not only ensures the protection of the sites, but also can ensure their utility for tourism, education, and fostering civic pride.

Action Item 1.2: Develop strategic plan and determine who will have oversight authority for historical and cultural monuments and sites.

Brookfield has an active historical commission that fosters and encourages the preservation of the community's historical resources. There also exists a cultural council that promotes and facilitates local arts and culture, including organizing the Memorial Day parade and holding summer concerts on the common. The Planning Board, Agricultural Commission, Recreation Committee, and other municipal departments all have a stake in the preservation of cultural and historical monuments and sites throughout Brookfield. This abundance of groups and committees can benefit from a guiding document to provide structure and coordination for their work.

Objective: Use regulatory tools to protect assets

Although Brookfield has already made use of many tools such as a scenic roads bylaw to protect valued assets, there are still many ways the town can enhance its existing practices and adopt new ones.

Action Item 1.3: Establish Local Historic Districts for key locations.

Local Historic Districts are often confused with National Register Districts. Designation as a National Register District has benefits such

as qualifying property owners for state and federal preservation grants or making certain tax incentives available for preservation, however it does not protect buildings and structures within the district from demolition or substantial alteration.

Local Historic Districts are designated by local ordinance, which falls under the jurisdiction of a local historic preservation review commission. This designation protects historic properties and encourages sensitive development through a design review process. LHDs contribute to stable property values and can enhance the overall appeal of neighborhoods. To establish a LHD in Brookfield, the process involves referencing M.G.L. Chapter 40C, identifying the designated area, forming a historic district study committee, and presenting a final report at a town meeting for approval. Once established, a historic district commission oversees future LHD designations. Despite the abundance of historic sites in Brookfield, including two Massachusetts Historical Commission inventoried areas, two national register districts, and one historic landmark, there are not yet any designated local historic districts, which means many sites and buildings in town are under threat from development pressure. Some potential locations for local historic districts include the Elm Hill Farm and Town Common National Register Historic Districts.

Action Item 1.4: Explore the use of a scenic vista protection bylaw.

A scenic vista protection bylaw could

designate specific scenic areas in the town and regulate development within those areas, such as setting height restrictions, setback requirements, and landscaping restrictions to preserve natural features contributing to the scenic quality.

Action item 1.5: Inventory and protect lands identified as containing archaeological resources.

There are several protection measures that can be taken to preserve the Quaboag Pond and Lake Road area, and other significant locations in the community. There exists a high density of archaeological sites identified in the Town, particularly in the area between the Quaboag River, the southwestern shore of Quaboag Pond, and Lake Road in Brookfield. There are likely additional archaeological resources yet to be uncovered and an archaeological survey should be conducted for remaining potential sites. Archaeological protection overlay districts or preservation restrictions would be among the safest measures to ensure permanent protection of lands with inventoried archaeological sites.

Action Item 1.6: Develop a strategy for acquisition of Chapter 61 parcels along the river to anticipate change of land use or ownership.

Towns can preserve farmland through Chapter 61A by being given a right of first refusal (ROFR) to acquire land in the program being sold or converted to non-agricultural use. However, towns often miss out due to a lack of funding to acquire

the parcels or the inability to act within the required time frame. To overcome these barriers, Brookfield should identify and prioritize Chapter 61A parcels for acquisition ahead of time to respond more quickly to the right of first refusal notice and communicate with landowners to understand their future intentions and timeline. Brookfield could also formalize its process for responding to notifications and work with local conservation organizations to discuss a strategy for acquiring the land.

Action Item 1.7: Explore the establishment of a river corridor protection overlay district.

The Franklin Regional Council of Governments developed a draft model River Corridor Overlay District that can be used as a framework to protect river corridors by limiting new development and certain land use activities within these areas, with the goal of reducing flood damage, preserving riverbank integrity, and maintaining natural river processes. The Quaboag and other rivers in Town could greatly benefit from this added layer of protection.

Action Item 1.8: Enforce and update the Scenic Roads Bylaw

A Scenic Roads bylaw is a type of local regulation aimed at preserving the rural and historical aspects of community roads. This bylaw implements a review process for any changes to stone walls or the cutting and removal of trees within the public right-of-way of designated scenic roads. Massachusetts law mandates that such actions within designated

scenic roads need prior consent from the Planning Board or Select Board. It specifies which roads are considered scenic and are therefore subject to this review process

The Town of Brookfield has designated portions of several roads as Scenic Roads consistent with Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40 Section 15C. The 6 designations include portions of the following roads:

- East Main Street (One-half mile of East Main is the only portion of the original Boston Post Road that remains in its original condition

unpaved and the original width.)

- Lake Road
- Long Hill Road
- Molasses Hill Road
- Rice Corner Road
- Webber Road

Enforcement and monitoring of the protections for these roads have been sporadic and the scenic roads bylaw could be updated to further support sustainable development principles and enforcement measures. Scenic Road Designation could also be granted in additional locations such as extended designation along the Boston Post Road Corridor to West

Brookfield Road from Route 9 to the West Brookfield Border (Figure 22).

Action Item 1.9: Facilitate the establishment of conservation easements or restrictions. The town could work with local land conservation organizations for assistance. Key landscapes could include the Richardson and Overlook Farms, and the old Boston Post Road. Easements such as Conservation Restrictions or Agricultural Preservation Restrictions could permanently protect important lands such as farmland or sensitive habitats along the corridor.

Preservation restrictions can also be utilized to protect the markers and other locations along the roadway, potentially funded through CPA.

Objective: Encourage Local Agriculture.

Brookfield has a long history of farming and several farms that embody the rural character of the Town. Farming was named as a priority at the Master Plan workshops, with participants saying they want Brookfield to hold onto as much farmland as it can sustain. Thus, Brookfield can support these aims through promoting sustainable farming practices, obtaining grants and resources for local farmers, and enhancing the market for locally grown produce. Agritourism and ecotourism are brought up elsewhere in this chapter and plan, but some additional important measures are discussed here. (Figure 23)

Action Item 1.10: Develop a “buy-local” campaign

A strong buy-local campaign will support the local economy and keep farmers in business, promote healthy eating habits, and foster a sense of community. To kick off the campaign, a steering committee could be formed of volunteers, the business community, and other relevant stakeholders. The group should conduct research and planning to determine how to shift consumer spending and determine what resources are available for the campaign. They should then engage local businesses and leverage partnerships with the chamber

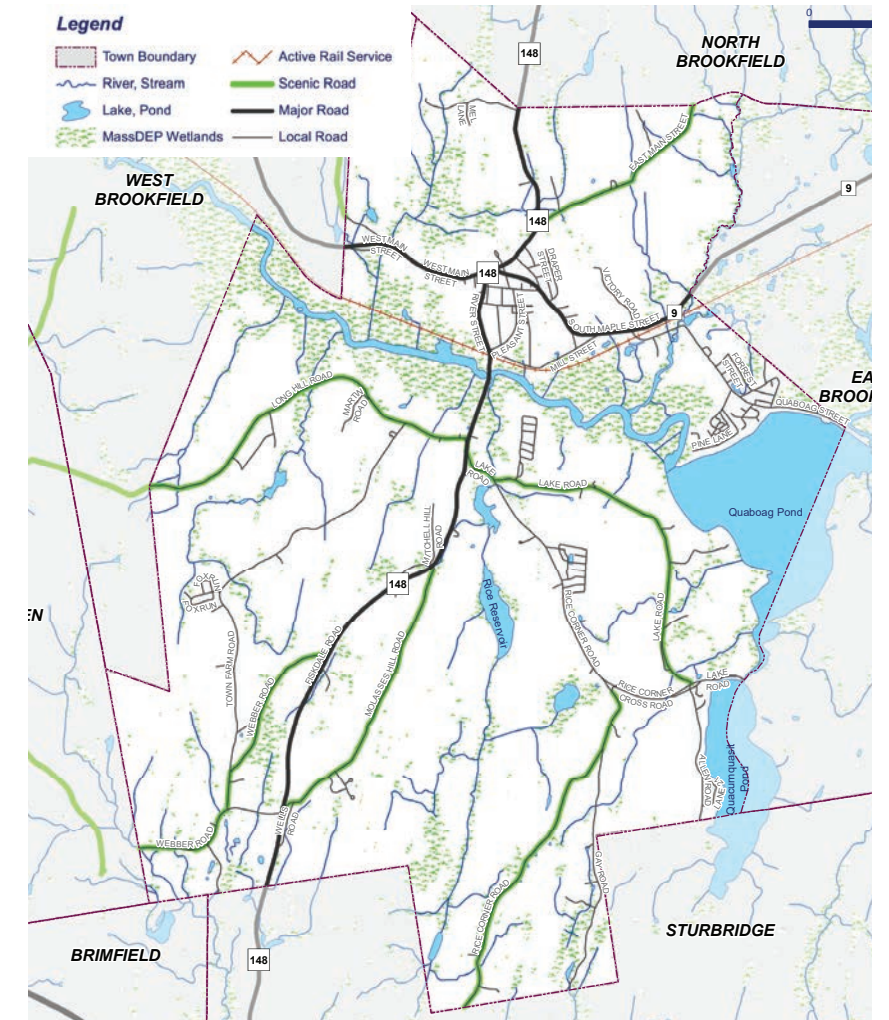


Figure 22. Scenic Roads. Source: CMRPC, Mass GIS.

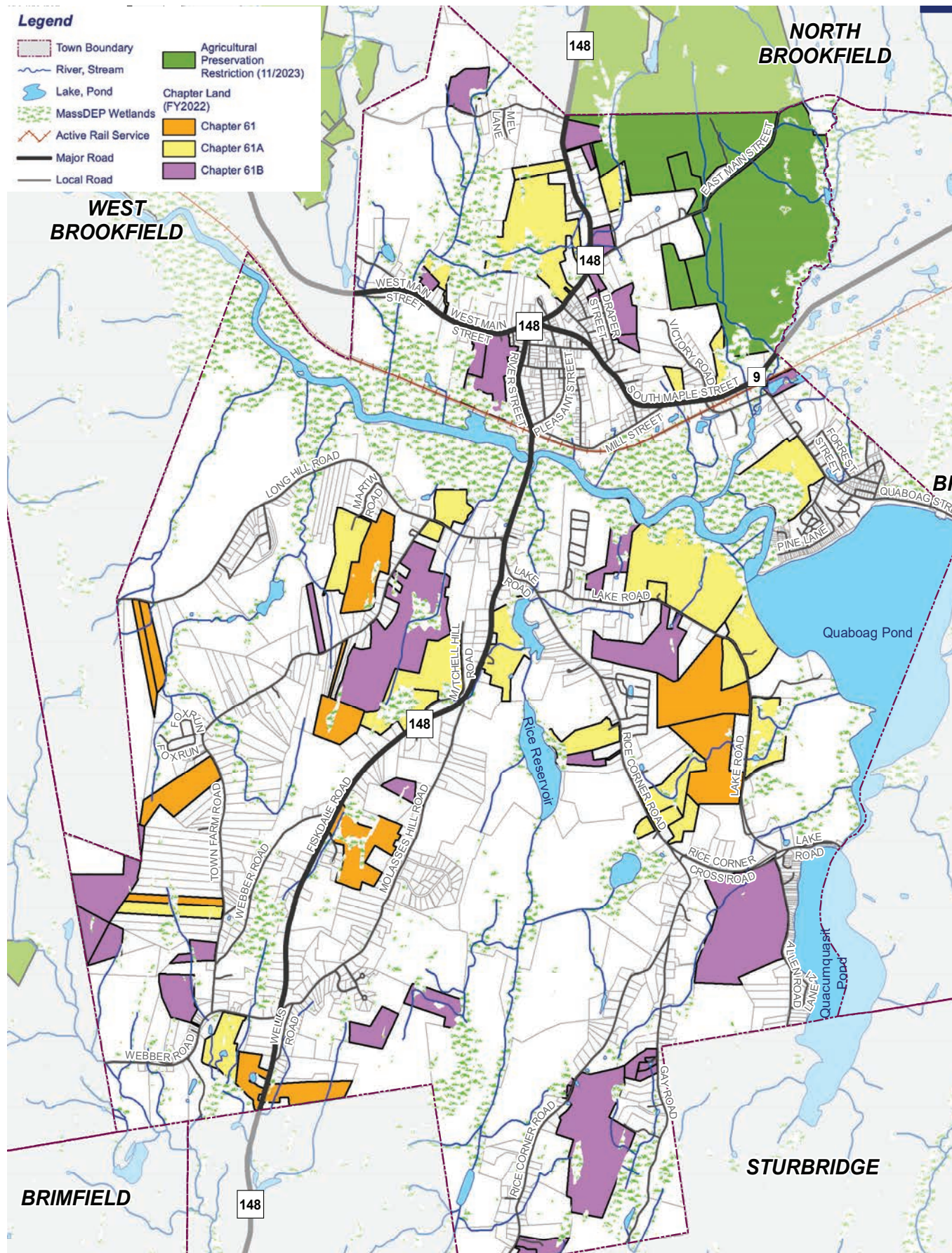
of commerce, local schools, and nonprofits to take part in launching a full marketing campaign. The Town may wish to combine this effort with the tourism effort discussed in Goal 2.

Action Item 1.11: Promote community gardening.

Brookfield is a rural town with the Town Common serving as one of the only gathering areas for the community. Because of this, many community members may feel

disconnected from local issues and events. Brookfield also has a growing aging population and will need more recreational opportunities suitable for aging adults. A community garden can help address both of these concerns by providing a new gathering area with activities suitable for folks of all ages and ability. They also provide unique educational opportunities and promote healthy eating habits.





Objective: Investigate possible funding sources to provide support for preserving and maintaining historic structures within Brookfield.

Survey data reveals that 43% of respondents prioritize the protection of historic character during new development or renovation of historic buildings. One of the biggest issues for historic preservation in small towns is the lack of funding for proposed projects. Brookfield is no exception. The Town will benefit greatly from more time spent documenting and learning about potential grant opportunities. CMRPC and other local/regional organizations can also be called upon to help investigate potential grants and provide support with grant writing.

Action Item 1.12: Assess the possibility of adopting the Community Preservation Act (CPA).

Almost all of the action items of this chapter could be implemented with support from CPA funding. CPA funds must be dedicated to open space preservation and recreation. One example of potential use for CPA funds cited in the Reconnaissance Report is adding more access points along the Quaboag River. The Town is encouraged to actively promote the availability and benefits of CPA funding to the broader community. This could be achieved through various outreach efforts, such as organizing community information sessions, distributing educational materials, and leveraging social

Figure 23. Agricultural lands. Source: CMRPC, Mass GIS.

media platforms. These initiatives could inform residents about how CPA funds can be used to enhance the quality of life in the community, the process for proposing projects, and the overall impact of past projects funded through the CPA in other towns.

Action Item 1.13: Research information regarding available funding program sources and cycles.

It is important that the town stay apprised of any upcoming funding programs they may wish to pursue for relevant projects. Town staff can leverage capacity from CMRPC and local nonprofits to assist with research and grant writing. Developing a timeline of annual grant cycles and completion dates for deliverables can help staff plan accordingly.

Action Item 1.14: Promote the Massachusetts Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit (MHRTC)

This program provides state tax credits to developers, homeowners, or business owners who undertake substantial rehabilitation of historic buildings. The MHRTC program provides a credit of up to 20% of the qualified rehabilitation expenditures. This means if the rehabilitation project qualifies, the property owner could receive a state tax credit worth 20% of the costs they incur in rehabilitating the property.

GOAL 2

Educate And Build Awareness About The Historic and Environmental Assets That Lie Within Brookfield's Borders.

Despite valuing the historic and environmental assets in their community, Brookfield residents may not be aware of how to fully experience or support them. Over 45% of residents agreed in the community survey that Brookfield's many historic resources are at risk of being erased and over 70% agreed that Historic resources are an essential part of Brookfield's character. However, only slightly over 30% agreed that when they have visitors, they take them to visit historic places in Town. Promotion of opportunities, events, locations, and activities related to Brookfield's environment and history can engage people in learning about and supporting the preservation of these valuable resources. (Figure 20)

Objective: Promote historical and ecotourism opportunities.

Brookfield's scenic landscapes and historical sites present a unique opportunity for ecotourism and agritourism. These new forms of tourism would not only call attention to natural, agricultural, or historical features of the town, they also emphasize the importance of conservation and preservation efforts, often including activities that give back to the host community. The Town could develop informative tours, improve access to key landmarks, and offer educational programs. The ecotourism and

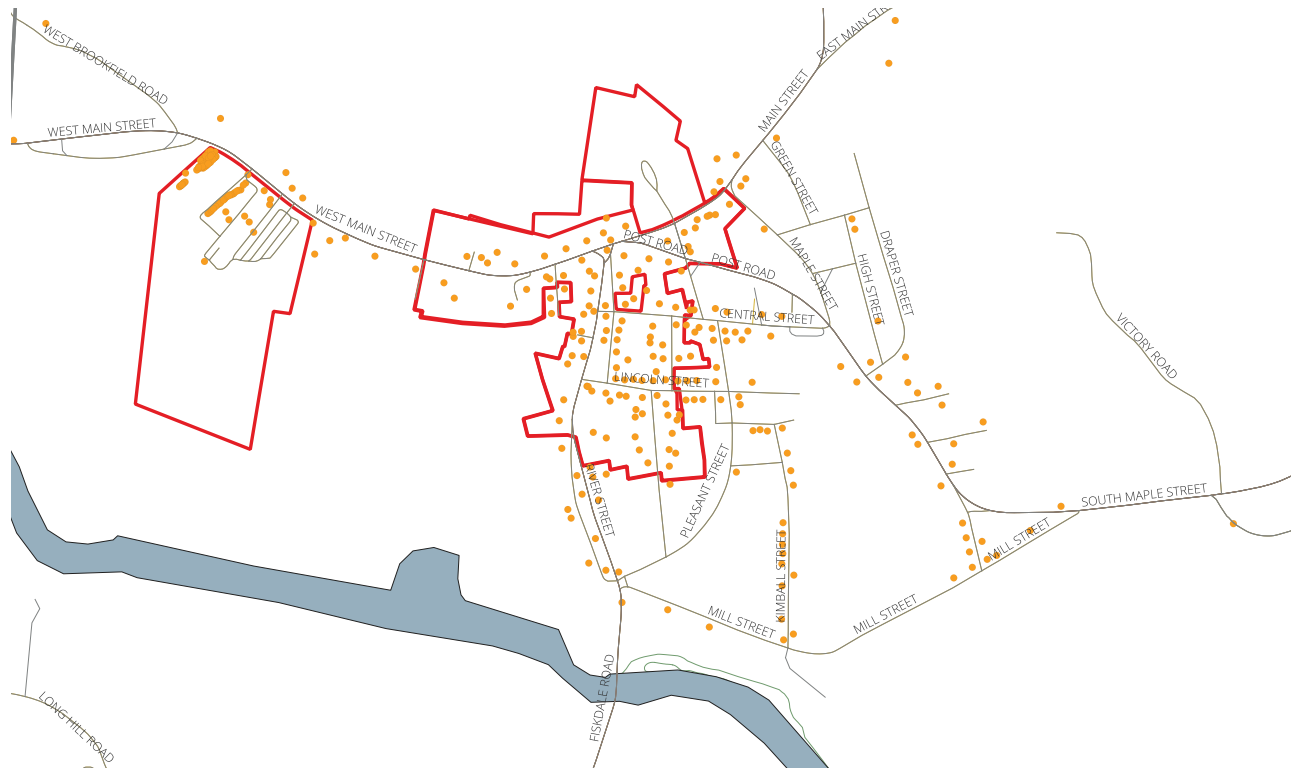


Figure 24. MHC Inventory Buildings in Brookfield. Source: Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System Maps (MACRIS).

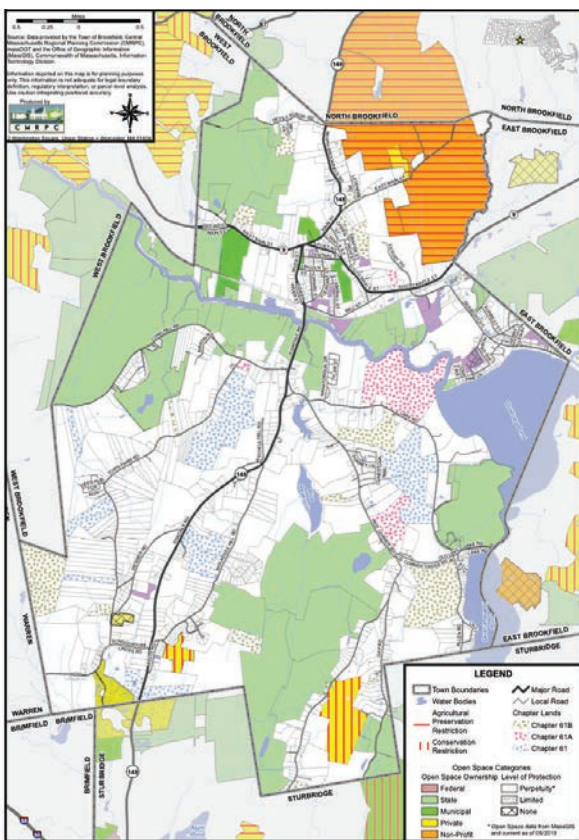


Figure 25. Open Space Inventory. Source: CMRPC, Mass GIS.

agritourism approach could bring new revenue to the town, promote the protection of important sites, and bring the community closer together with new activities and a common objective.

Action Item 2.1: Form an ecotourism working group to identify, develop and publicize a calendar of activities.

Brookfield already has several committees involved in promoting artistic and cultural events year round, including the Recreation Committee, Cultural Council, and Agricultural Commission. These existing groups and committees, along with area businesses, farmers, and other potential stakeholders could initiate a strategic planning process to develop and expand on the list of community events and activities. The group could

develop educational materials and plan for major ecotourism initiatives such as a town history tour/trail. The Brookfield Reconnaissance Report could serve as an important guiding document in this initiative.

Action Item 2.2: Develop promotional materials to market the town's assets.

The working group mentioned above can work to create promotional materials such as an informational packet and map of Brookfield's open spaces to introduce new residents and visitors to Brookfield. A new website or a page on the Town website dedicated to open space in Brookfield, including marketing historical sites as tourist destinations could accompany the physical packet. The group can also further ecotourism efforts through distributing educational materials on the importance of and strategies for environmental, historical, and cultural preservation. These could be posted in schools, libraries, churches, and other areas where people gather. The potential for ecotourism to take off depends on how informed and involved the community is in the effort. The working group can also present and record public forums on the progress of their various efforts to keep the community updated.

GOAL 3

Protect open space and natural resources from ecological harm and over-development.

Brookfield residents care deeply about the town's open space and

scenic areas. However, these resources are continually harmed or threatened by various forces such as pollution or development pressure. The Town can approach these issues with various strategies aimed at protecting vulnerable resources while ensuring the Town's open space sites can still be accessed and enjoyed by all residents. (Figure 25)

Objective: Protect surface and ground water resources, wetlands, vernal pools, unique habitats, and wildlife corridors.

Despite local support for the preservation of the town's natural lands, there are many gaps in the Town's existing protection measures. Enacting more stringent land-use policies and enhancing land management practices to better promote biodiversity and ecological resilience will better ensure these natural lands remain safe.

Action Item 3.1: Work with interested stakeholders such as DEP, the Quaboag Quacumquasit Lake Association, and Chicopee River Watershed council on water resource protection efforts and outreach

Many local and statewide groups are actively involved in water resource protection efforts. The Conservation Commission should look for opportunities to collaborate with these groups to leverage their expertise, resources, and networks. For example, outside groups could assist with grants, technical guidance, or volunteer mobilization.

Action Item 3.2: Identify and seek certification of Brookfield's vernal pools

Vernal pools support a complex foodweb and serve as critical breeding habitat for many amphibians and invertebrates. They also improve water quality, contributing to groundwater recharge and helping to filter pollutants. Brookfield currently only has 7 vernal pools certified and mapped. Aerial imaging from MassWildlife's Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program in 2013, recorded over 50 other potential vernal pools within Brookfield's borders. The conservation commission may consider launching an effort to identify and document the remaining pools, perhaps with the use of citizen science to help with scouting new sites.

Action Item 3.3: Develop a strategy for open space acquisition.

Much of the open space in Brookfield is unprotected and privately owned. Over 32% of the land in Brookfield is classified as open space, however much more green space in Brookfield is currently unprotected. The town should work with local land trusts to identify areas with high ecological value or that serve as important wildlife corridors, and then develop a collaborative strategy for the acquisition of priority lands.

Action Item 3.4: Redevelop brownfields and reuse land and buildings before building on undeveloped land.

Brookfield's development pattern

consists primarily of single family housing and scattered commercial areas. To maintain the rural aesthetic without further degrading the environment, the town should focus on redevelopment and reuse of existing buildings and infrastructure. Moreover, cleaning up and repurposing brownfields can improve public health and the environment and raise property values.

Adopting low impact development guidelines for new development would help prioritize the preservation of open space on development sites. This approach typically incorporates green infrastructure to manage stormwater runoff, reduce pollution, and enhance the natural hydrological cycle. This strategy protects local ecology from the impacts of climate change.

Objective: Maintain and improve open space facilities to ensure Brookfield can accommodate users of all ages, incomes, and ability groups.

Brookfield features an income-based Environmental Justice (EJ) population covering a large portion of the town. This group has a median household income of \$34,779, which is 41% of the Massachusetts Median Household income. Folks in low-income EJ communities are more likely to have health issues, limited transportation options, or other barriers limiting their access to and enjoyment of natural amenities in town. As such, it is important to consider the location of these EJ populations in Brookfield when

planning for open space.

Brookfield also has a growing aging population, necessitating greater emphasis on ensuring facilities are equipped with accessibility features. The Town could develop additional accessible trails and additional recreational facilities catered to the interests of aging adults. This also further emphasizes the need to ensure public sites are well maintained.

Action Item 3.5: Ensure that open space is accessible.

Much of the passive recreational land in Brookfield is owned by the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game. As stated in the key topics section, the trails on these properties are not maintained and there are few parking options for getting to the trails. With an aging population, residents in Brookfield will need more accessible options for trails. As a first step, Brookfield can look to the 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan's ADA transition plan, which includes a list of necessary improvements for existing facilities to be brought into compliance with ADA regulations. The Town should also map and document trails, listing their difficulty levels and the amenities available at each site, and post the findings on the Town website. This process can also help in determining if the Town needs to develop more trails that are fully accessible.

Action Item 3.6: Keep an Inventory of open space and recreation facilities and record of the status of

maintenance needs at each facility. Like many small towns, Brookfield has limited capacity and funding to support the maintenance needs of the open space and recreation facilities in town. Unfortunately, this means that many facilities are at risk of falling into disrepair. Sites were already inventoried during the OSRP planning process and the existing list can serve as a starting point for organizing and prioritizing maintenance efforts.



Photo: Jackie
Mushinski
Spencer Cable
Access

09

Government
Services
and
Facilities





Build Town capacity to improve facilities

OVERVIEW

Brookfield’s facilities accommodate the essential services for its residents, such as day-to-day administrative tasks crucial for the town’s operation. However, there is limited availability for facilities to house the type of programming

that enhances quality of life in Brookfield. The Merrick Public Library is a space the residents cherish and use for events. But the town lacks a community center and a senior center that can serve as hubs for community engagement and events. Many seniors travel to West Brookfield to attend events and activities. It is evident that the lack of facilities hampers the potential for expanding programming.

In recent years, efforts led by volunteer committees have explored turning the Town Hall basement into a senior center. Many have proposed a space with a dual focus—a community and senior center—and

have voiced ideas of rehabilitating and reusing vacant buildings for that purpose. A concerted volunteer effort with the support of the Town will be needed to line up funding for building this facility.

This chapter explores possible options to build the Town’s capacity to improve its facilities. It also explores options for regionalizing services with the goal of expanding and filling gaps in service provision.

KEY FINDINGS

More programming and events could engage the community and improve quality of life.

During the community forum discussions, residents expressed the need for more community events. The Cultural Council organizes many of the events throughout the year, with support from the Mass Cultural Council. But with only three people working to organize the events, they are short-staffed and could use volunteer support. Creating meaningful events that bring the residents together and foster a sense of community require participation and many volunteer hours. Some of the cultural events organized by the cultural Council include the Memorial Day Parade, Common concerts/ events including Pumpkin Fest, and the Annual Tree Lighting Event.

Town Departments need additional support. Regionalization could help.

Brookfield funds services such as the Council on Aging, Fire Department, Recreation, Public Library, Police Department, the Tantasqua Regional School District, and others. The Town could fill service gaps, as well as maintain or improve the quality of its services, by forming partnerships with other communities to implement municipal service and cost sharing programs.

Need for a Capital Improvements Plan

Reinstating the Town’s Capital Planning Improvement Committee would help identify what needs and

priorities each department has in the next 10-20 years. The need for a senior center continues to be unmet since the publication of the 2011 Master Plan. Residents continue to ask for a dedicated space for the activities and programs of the Council on Aging.

BROOKFIELD RESIDENTS, IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“We need a senior center/community center. We should appropriate money from the town to work on a senior center project.”

“The Town Hall has a lot of maintenance and insulation issues.”

“We would like more walking trails and bike paths. Need more access to natural areas.”

“Update equipment for the highway dept. It’s very old.” (Community Workshop, February 2023)

BROOKFIELD RESIDENTS, IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“Use our town common and Lewis for events.”

“Lack of meeting space is an issue.”

“A lot of issues caused by not being able to use the upper floor of the town hall.”

“Everybody has to volunteer here.”

BROOKFIELD RESIDENTS, IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“We could save a lot of money by regionalizing services. A lot of existing services in surrounding towns.”

“Sharing resources would be more efficient.” (Community Workshop, February 2023)

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Goal 1: Ensure the provision of quality services for all Brookfield residents and businesses.

- Objective: Streamline the process of obtaining permits and licenses to increase predictability and minimize costs to applicants.
 - o Action Item 1.1: Implement online permitting.
 - o Action Item 1.2: Create a permitting guidebook to clarify the procedures of obtaining a permit.
- Objective: Expand infrastructure south of the Quaboag River.
 - o Action Item 1.3: Continue to seek resources for capital improvements needed to provide drinking water to Brookfield water customers.
 - o Action Item 1.4: Raise awareness among residents about regular water quality testing of private water wells.
- Objective: Regionalize select services for improved efficiency and cost savings.
 - o Action Item 1.5: Explore the formation of service coalitions with neighboring towns.
 - o Action Item 1.6: Pursue an inter-municipal cooperation agreement with North Brookfield to enable Brookfield to establish a sewer connection.

Goal 2: Improve the condition of municipal facilities to ensure the continuous operation of town services over the next 10-20 years.

- Objective: Create an updated Capital Improvements plan to provide resources for the ongoing maintenance of town buildings and properties.
 - o Action Item 2.1: Re-activate the Capital Improvements Committee.
 - o Action Item 2.2: Continue to renovate the upper level of the Town Hall building.
- Objective: Improve recreational facilities.
 - o Action Item 2.3: Complete improvements, such as accessibility, parking, restrooms, concession facilities, security cameras, and general repairs at recreational facilities across town.

Goal 3: Ensure that Emergency Services are accessible to residents South of the Quaboag River.

- Objective: Ensure that the provisions of the 2019 Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) plan are implemented.
 - o Action Item 3.1: Ensure that the Fiskdale Road Bridge is accessible in case of an emergency evacuation.
 - o Action Item 3.2: Ensure that more town facilities can serve as emergency shelters.

GOAL 1

Ensure the provision of quality services for all Brookfield residents and businesses.

The 2023 Master Plan workshops residents expressed the need for improved facilities and services. These include having well-maintained and functional facilities, efficiency and sustainability, quality education for students, and wise allocation of money and resources to alleviate the burden on taxpayers.

As highlighted at the 2023 community workshops, the Town of Brookfield has a very limited staff capacity. Many of the town services are currently covered by volunteers, which are also in low numbers. Because of this limited capacity, many of the following recommendations should be considered as interdepartmental collaborative efforts, with meetings to plan, share resources, and coordinate tasks. This approach will not only help in managing the workload but also in breaking down silos for more integrated and effective service delivery.

Objective: Streamline the process of obtaining permits and licenses to increase predictability and minimize costs to applicants.

The inefficiency of the current permitting process was cited as an issue by town staff. A slowed permitting process can be a major hindrance on the Town's economic development by driving away developers. Fortunately, the measures needed to improve this

system are low-cost and well within Brookfield's capabilities. Part of the process for streamlining permitting is to ensure application materials are clear and consistent. This will lower the workload for everyone involved and lead to more thorough submissions. It will also improve the efficiency of follow-ups and strengthen enforcement efforts. Interdepartmental review meetings with the applicants, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Conservation Commission, and other relevant parties such as the Select Board, can ensure applications are in good shape before submittal, saving everyone time by reducing the back and forth caused by incomplete documentation.

Action Item 1.1: Implement online permitting.

The permitting process in Brookfield

is slowed down by the fact that there is no online system to streamline the process. The current system is completely offline for building permitting. Switching to an online system can speed up and increase the accuracy of the review and approval process. It also increases accessibility and convenience for applicants, allowing them to access forms and utilize tracking software to track the application status at any time, without having to travel to the Town offices. Digital permits are also easier to store, search, and manage than paper records. For these reasons and more, it is highly recommended that the town explore options for implementing online permitting.

Action item 1.2: Create a permitting guidebook to clarify the procedures of obtaining a permit.

A permitting guidebook details the specific requirements for obtaining various types of permits. It outlines the necessary steps, documentation, and standards that applicants must meet, making the process more transparent. By providing clear instructions and checklists, the guidebook helps applicants prepare complete and correct applications the first time, reducing the likelihood of delays due to incomplete or incorrect submissions. Supplementary information on local resources, tax policies, and steps for getting business loans can also be included.

Objective: Expand infrastructure south of the Quaboag River.

Brookfield only has water and gas in the town center. Currently, all homes and businesses south of the Quaboag River are reliant on



TOWN FACILITIES



Brookfield Police Department

The Brookfield Police Department is a new building, completed in 2016. There are not any pressing maintenance or repair issues.



Merrick Public Library

The library saw significant repairs made between 2021 and 2022 following the detection of water damage in the foyer, the north wall, and the eastern walls of the building. By July 2022, the library had received repairs to the carpeting, plaster walls, and roofing and a local mason repointed the brick joints, as needed.



Brookfield Town Hall

The Town Hall has recently had a lot of maintenance issues, especially with insulation. The building needs an elevator to the upper floor. The lack of an elevator is preventing the upstairs from being used due to ADA compliance. The upstairs used to be a meeting space for various activities. Restoring access to this floor is a top priority.



Brookfield EMS, Fire, and Emergency Management facility

In 2022, the fire and emergency services facility received a new gas generator. A new roof was also installed for the second-floor portion of the building and they completely renovated the kitchen and meeting/training room.



Brookfield Elementary

Brookfield Elementary is a newer building so there are not any pressing maintenance or repair issues. The Tantasqua schools are considered high-quality regionally, so they do get a lot of students transferring into their schools from surrounding communities and there is a risk of schools becoming overcrowded.



Tantasqua Regional High School

The school is comprised of grades 9-12 for Brookfield and four other nearby towns. It also functions as a vocational school within its technical division. No pressing maintenance or capital needs were cited during community engagement.





individual or shared private wells. In a survey on water access distributed as part of the 2019 Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) planning process, an even number of residents said they were and were not interested in joining the public water supply. The MVP also reports concerns over metals in the well water and a high risk of wells drying up during prolonged droughts. Given these issues, the MVP called for completing an engineering analysis and study of the existing water system to guide the development of a plan for expanding south of the Quaboag.

Action item 1.3: Continue to seek resources for capital improvements needed to provide drinking water to Brookfield water customers.

The water supply in Brookfield is vulnerable to contamination, especially due to the reliance on private wells South of the Quaboag River. Concerns over the safety of remaining on private wells will increase as climate change causes extended periods of drought which not only threaten to dry up wells, but could cause contaminants in the drinking water to become more concentrated.

The town has used CDBG funds to make extensive water system infrastructure improvements over the last few years. In 2022, funding through both CDBG and ARPA was used to fund water main replacements. The Town should remain proactive in seeking funding to improve water quality and availability.

Action Item 1.4: Raise awareness among residents about regular water quality testing of private water wells.

As part of the MVP planning process, well owners in Town were asked to report on the well's water chemistry. A notable percentage of respondents reported high levels of iron (39%) and manganese (13%), bad odor (12%), and bad taste (10%). Public water systems in Massachusetts are regulated by state and federal standards to ensure water safety and quality. However, unless requirements are set by mortgage lenders or the local board of health, private well testing is left up to the owner's discretion. Currently, the only regularly available information on water quality testing is a link to a MassDEP well testing guide on the Brookfield Board of Health webpage. The Board of Health, Water Department or other relevant town boards and committees may want to consider holding annual information sessions or distributing well testing guides in frequently visited locations in Town.

Objective: Regionalize select services for improved efficiency and cost savings.

Brookfield funds services such as the Highway Department, Council on Aging, Fire Department, Recreation, Public Library, Police Department, the Tantasqua Regional School District, and others. However, the Town lacks a planning office or a health department. Regionalization could help fill this gap. Sharing existing and new services with other towns could

improve efficiency and expand the delivery of essential public services.

Action Item 1.5: Explore the formation of service coalitions with neighboring towns.

Planning for municipal service and cost sharing opportunities would start with pursuing funding assistance, such as the grant program offered through the Massachusetts Department of Public Health for inter-municipal shared service agreements. In 2021, the program funded the Leicester Regional Public Health Coalition (LRPHC), which could serve as model for Brookfield and other municipal coalitions. Serving the Towns of Leicester, Barre, Brookfield, Holden, New Braintree, North Brookfield, and Oakham, LRPHC provides comprehensive public health services. The impetus for forming this coalition was addressing the gaps in service that each of the municipalities faced when operating independently. Forming this type of alliance with neighboring towns would allow Brookfield to provide comprehensive services that it could not afford to fund otherwise.

Action Item 1.6: Pursue an inter-municipal cooperation agreement with North Brookfield to enable Brookfield to establish a sewer connection.

Brookfield should continue to explore the possibility of an agreement that would allow the Town to connect to North Brookfield's sewer system and begin to serve parts of the town with sewer infrastructure. Providing this service in Brookfield, particularly in the center of town, would address a

longstanding need to incentivize and attract commercial establishments. As noted in the 2011 Master Plan, the lack of municipal sewer in commercial areas is a barrier to commercial development.

A sewer connection agreement between towns in Massachusetts can be formed through a contract between their sewer departments. This contract may be authorized by an ordinance, by-law, or a town vote and can address the operation and maintenance of the towns' sewer systems.

GOAL 2

Improve the condition of municipal facilities to ensure the continuous operation of town services over the next 10-20 years.

Brookfield has an aging stock of municipal properties, some of which are historic structures with deferred maintenance. With the exception of the Police Station, built in 2016, most town-owned facilities are older than 50 years. The community has been making great strides toward rehabilitating the Town Hall and the Merrick Library. Both of these structures have a preservation restriction designation that prevents major alterations, such as ADA upgrades, without Massachusetts Historical Commission review.

ADA compliance continues to be a priority, as the town works toward addressing obstructions to mobility in facilities that provide services to the general public. Participants

in community engagement events and survey respondents have highlighted safety, accessibility, and maintenance issues with various town and recreational facilities.

To translate these community needs into practice, the Town should work with the Grant Writer to identify sources of funding that will lower capital expenditures. Moreover, a long-range capital plan would allow the town to anticipate capital expenses and debt service over the next 5 years.

Objective: Create an updated Capital Improvements Plan to plan resource allocation for the ongoing maintenance of town buildings and properties.

Town facilities would benefit from an updated Capital Improvements Plan (CIP). However, several factors have made the development of a CIP difficult, among which are the COVID-19 pandemic, staff turnover, and the inability of the Town to get Free Cash certified for several years, which has led the Town to fund expenditures from Stabilization. Importantly, inventorying capital assets and intervening with repairs in time, would prevent cost overruns caused by deferred maintenance. A case in point is the conclusion of the 2018 Town Report, which noted that the Town had been "deferring capital needs for our Library, Town Hall, Senior Citizens, Highways, Historical Commission, Open Space and Recreation and other areas." A CIP will be essential in spreading out these expenditures and working within the Town's debt service limit of



6% of the Annual Operating Budget. (Figure 37, 38, Appendix)

Action Item 2.1: Re-activate the Capital Improvements Planning Committee.

Brookfield's Capital Improvements Planning Committee has been inactive since 2017. A re-activated advisory committee would oversee Brookfield's capital program, act as liaisons with department heads, help create a timetable and an inventory of capital assets and make recommendations on capital requests in a given fiscal year. Having the advisory committee plan how the

Town spreads out these expenditures over 5 years would prevent large capital projects from occurring simultaneously, and thus becoming costly and unmanageable.

Action Item 2.2: Continue to renovate the upper level of the Town Hall building.

The importance of providing services to Brookfield's aging population was a recurring topic during community engagement. Approximately one third of Brookfield's population is over 65. The lack of accessibility and the need for a senior center to

accommodate this population were among the top concerns cited by workshop participants. CDBG funded a study that explored design options for placing the Senior Center in the Town Hall basement. The project did not progress to the bid and construction phase.

Another concern was the renovation of the upper floor of the Town Hall where, according to residents, numerous community activities used to take place. With upstairs access restricted by the lack of ADA-compliant access, public activities and senior programming

have moved elsewhere, to places such as the Public Library, or the Congregational Church. Feedback from the community has clearly shown that the lack of available—and ADA compliant—town facilities have impacted not only the residents' quality of life, but the Town's ability to provide programming to a community that relies on public facilities to gather.

Objective: Improve recreational facilities.

Action Item 2.3: complete general improvements, such as accessibility, parking, restrooms, concession facilities, security cameras and general repairs at recreational facilities across town.

Brookfield has numerous natural and historic assets that can generate economic development. They can be a draw for visitors across the region, and they can also have consumer spending spillover effects when visitors patronize local businesses. Investment in physical upgrades and maintenance would increase local and regional utilization of Brookfield's recreational sites. Marketing these sites along with local businesses would brand Brookfield as an outdoor recreation and eco-tourism destination. Some strategies used successfully by other communities include self-guided Instagram tours, offering discounts to visitors. Trail interpretive sites and QR codes could include a suggested donation for maintenance and improvements.

Goal 3

Ensure that Emergency Services are accessible to residents South of the Quaboag River.

In 2022, the Brookfield Emergency Squad reported that their calls have been longer in duration. This is partially due to the fact that the closest hospital to Brookfield, Mary Lane Hospital, was closed in 2021. Additionally, the increase in EMS calls in the last year meant that there were extraordinarily long wait times in Worcester hospital emergency rooms with crews frequently waiting over 30 minutes for a room assignment.

Emergency services in Brookfield are considered to be in good condition and are able to reach the entire town with the help of mutual aid. They use various methods to communicate information to the public. The local emergency services are all located north of the Quaboag River, and must utilize Fiskdale Road in order to access the southern half of the Town. Elderly residents living at home will need a targeted plan for assistance in case of an emergency, and the Brookfield emergency services may wish to partner with agencies for assistance with developing a strategy for this group. The elderly residents living in Brookfield's mobile home parks are particularly vulnerable.

Objective: Ensure that the provisions of the 2019 MVP plan are implemented

The 2019 MVP features the recommendations listed above, and generally recommends that





emergency services in Brookfield continue to provide adequate services. In particular, they stress that communication will need to be strengthened as climate change continues to worsen. The Town should upgrade its cell phone towers and maintain a working relationship with cellular providers and Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency. The plan recommends that evacuation procedures are reviewed, particularly for vulnerable populations with limited means of evacuation, such as the Quaboag Street and Pine Lane Neighborhood and the Nanatomqua Mobile Home Park. The plan calls for expanded outreach to these vulnerable groups. Reverse 911 and other communication systems need to expand usage for evacuation planning.

Action Item 3.1: Ensure that the Fiskdale Road Bridge is accessible in case of an emergency evacuation.

Emergency services in Brookfield are all based north of the Quaboag River and can only access the southern half of the town using Fiskdale Road. This means the Fiskdale Road Bridge needs to be well maintained and accessible. Despite this, some storm events could cause the Quaboag to flood to a level that would make the bridge impassible. The Town should ensure that there are emergency plans in place in case this happens and that emergency shelters are available south of the Quaboag.

Action Item 3.2: Ensure that more town facilities can serve as emergency shelters.

Currently, Brookfield Elementary School is the only designated emergency shelter. The Town Hall, Fire Department, Police Department, and other municipal buildings could all potentially serve as additional shelters. However, some of these buildings do not have adequate backup power, including Brookfield Elementary School. Any building serving as a designated shelter will need to be ADA-compliant and have the proper equipment and food supplies to respond to any severe weather emergency.

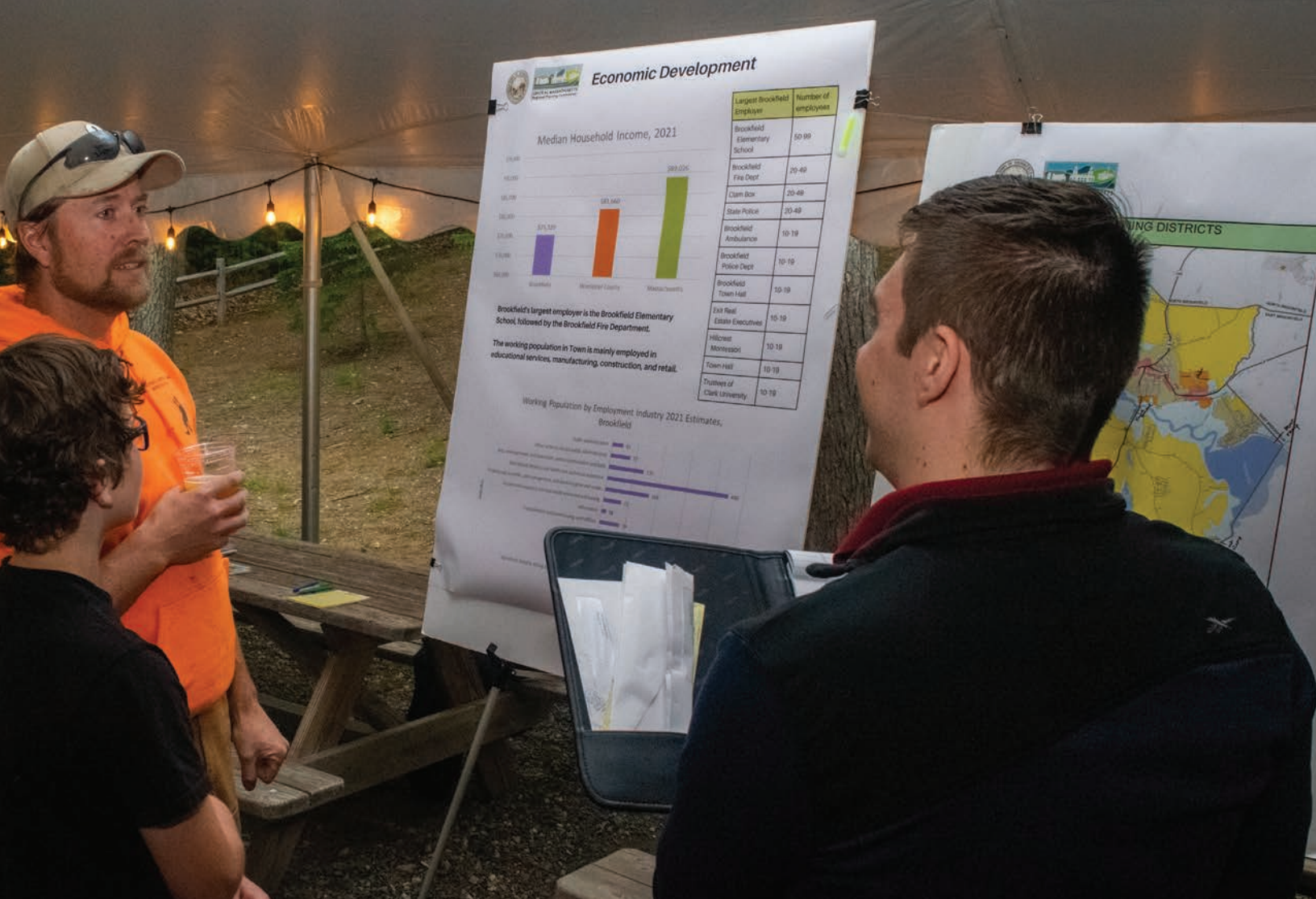
There are also no municipal buildings south of the Quaboag River. With Fiskdale Road being the only means of accessing the northern half of the town, additional shelters may need to be set up in the South.





10

Prior
Planning
Efforts



Several planning efforts have identified ways in which Brookfield can expand its economy, protect its open space, and prepare for unforeseen structural changes that can impact its safety and quality of life.

2011 Master Plan

Captured in Brookfield's 2011 Master Plan, the community vision aspires to cultivate a thriving economy marked by diverse commercial activities, sustainable practices, and the promotion of "buy local" programs. The Town was facing limited employment opportunities; hence the community's focus on establishing an Economic Development Committee in hopes of fostering a sustainable local economy. The Master Plan allowed the community to identify challenges and proposed goals on the following topics: housing, land use and zoning, transportation, open space and cultural resources, and government

services and facilities.

Brookfield seeks to provide housing catering to diverse income levels and age groups while preserving the town's unique character. Challenges are highlighted as the Town is coping with an aging housing stock and grappling with high taxes. To tackle these issues, the proposed goals concentrate on controlled residential development, aiding homeowners in housing rehabilitation, and ensuring a balanced housing mix.

Regarding land use and zoning, the community envisions preserving the town's rural character, enhancing the town center, and implementing a Geographic Information System

(GIS) for improved planning. Challenges, however, include weak zoning by-laws that can be vague and contradict each other at times. The proposed goals within land use and zoning matters involve creating a local historic district, rezoning to concentrate businesses, and enhancing zoning by-laws and standards.

The transportation vision places importance on fostering pedestrian-friendly areas within the community and ensuring efficient public transportation. Challenges identified include limited pedestrian spaces and established connectivity on roads for non-motorized street users. To address these issues, proposed goals include implementing traffic calming measures, enhancing non-motorized connectivity, and improving both mass transit and communication.

Concerning open space, recreation, natural, and cultural resources, the community envisions protected open spaces, an agricultural revival, and vibrant recreational opportunities. Challenges in this realm include poorly marked trails and insufficient support for ecotourism. Proposed goals center on maintaining the rural character, preserving water quality, and offering diverse recreational opportunities.

In terms of government services and facilities, the vision encompasses well-maintained town facilities, efficient services, and a seamlessly connected website. Challenges arise from the poor conditions of town buildings and confusing permitting

procedures. Proposed goals in this area involve upgrading the website, creating a permit manual, exploring regionalization, and improving municipal buildings.

2019 OSRP

The 2019 Brookfield Open Space and Recreation Plan, developed with public input, coordinates efforts among town departments, private entities, and citizens to manage and acquire recreational lands. The Plan discusses the town's desire for preservation, recreation, improved open space connectivity, and enhanced facilities. The goals identified include maintaining the town's rural, agricultural, and historic character. Preserving the town's unique habitats and water quality, working towards sustainability practices and self-sufficiency, as well as providing diverse and well-maintained open spaces and recreation opportunities and facilities. Lastly, the plan suggests educating and supporting awareness about the open space opportunities that lie within Brookfield's borders.

2018 ADA Self Evaluation and Transition Plan

The Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan, or Accessibility Plan, aims to identify non-compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) related to services, programs, and activities. It includes an assessment of policies, procedures, and facilities, offering recommendations and sample documents for compliance. This plan, prepared for the Town of Brookfield, encompasses model policies, procedures, and solutions

for barrier removal in public buildings and facilities to achieve ADA compliance.

Assessments took place in several different locations in Brookfield, ranging from public facilities to recreation facilities and parks.

Municipal Vulnerability Report (2019 Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan)

In 2019, the Town of Brookfield held a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) workshop. The goal of the workshop was to identify and address climate change-related hazards. CMRPC delivered presentations on the workshop overview, climate change projections, impacts, and mitigation strategies, as well as a detailed profile of natural hazards in Brookfield. For the environment, the recommendation identified is to develop a detailed plan to monitor and assess the water quality and flooding risks posed on the Quaboag River. For societal risks, the plan recommended assessing evacuation procedures, ongoing educational efforts, and outreach, developing a plan for flood water pumping. It also recommended working toward grant opportunities that aim to protect homes in the Quaboag Street and Pine Lane Neighborhood bordering the Quaboag Pond. The homes in this area are vulnerable to flooding, contained by two sides of water, and only have one road to access for evacuation purposes. If flooding occurs and the single street becomes blocked on either end, it puts the residents at risk. The southern half

of Brookfield currently relies on private wells, while the northern half of the Town is connected to a public water system (Page 1). Regarding infrastructure, Brookfield will seek to complete an engineering study and analysis of the current water system infrastructure. This will include finalizing a plan to expand and update access to public water south of the Quaboag River and seek other ways to potentially expand water resources.

2018 Hazard Mitigation Plan

The Hazard Mitigation Plan for Brookfield identifies natural hazards, assesses vulnerabilities in critical facilities, infrastructure, and the community, and provides realistic recommendations to mitigate negative effects. The goal is to implement actions that will result in savings, including less property destruction, and reduced disruption to essential services. The HMP allowed Brookfield to identify high-priority spaces to protect from natural and man-made hazards. Emergency Response Facilities are the highest priority. These spaces include the Emergency Operations Center/Fire Station/EMS, Highway Department/Backup EOC/ Emergency Dispensing Site/Supplies Distribution Site, Life Flight Landing Zones, the Police Station, and Primary Evacuation Routes. Non-emergency facilities have been identified as well, as they are important to the everyday operations of Brookfield. The Town's Water Supply, Town Facilities, and Utilities. Dams, Special Needs

Population/Elderly Housing/Assisted Living are also a high priority. This is followed by Schools and Daycares, as well as Historic Buildings and Sites. Employment Centers, Environmental Justice, & Vulnerable Populations, and future developments are limited in hazardous areas utilizing Brookfield's Zoning Bylaws and the Wetlands Policy (Page 53-55).

Complete Streets

A Complete Street accommodates all road users by creating a network that meets the needs of individuals utilizing a variety of transportation modes, including but not limited to, pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, motorists, commercial vehicles, and emergency vehicles. In 2017, Brookfield adopted the Complete Streets policy, recognizing that all roadway projects are potential opportunities to implement Complete Streets design principles.

In 2019, Brookfield developed a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan, in which 22 potential projects were outlined that would improve traffic & safety, bicycle facilities, pedestrian facilities, or transit facilities. In 2022, MassDOT approved and awarded the maximum funding amount to one project: Central Street upgrades. This project included bicycle and pedestrian improvements, as well as geometric upgrades at the Route 9 intersection to improve safety.

2008 Brookfield Reconnaissance Report

Recognizing the vulnerability of heritage landscapes that can define

a community's character and preserve its past, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, along with regional partners, initiated the Heritage Landscape Inventory program. The program aims to identify and protect valued landscapes, address land planning issues, highlight priority heritage landscapes, and offer preservation recommendations. Amidst significant growth pressure in Brookfield, the community is confronted with the challenge of determining how this expansion will impact its rural character and cherished heritage landscapes. In a public meeting, participants identified key landscapes that play a defining role in the town's heritage. Priority Heritage Landscapes identified include the Quaboag River & Lake Road Context, Old Boston Post Road Corridor, Elm Hill Farm Complex, Brookfield Common Historic District, and Wolf Swamp.

Brookfield Community Development Block Grant FY17 – FY23

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program aids community development activities. The CDBG Program can address needs related to housing rehabilitation, public services, infrastructure, and economic development to name a few uses for the grant program. The Town of Brookfield has engaged in many CDBG projects with the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, and some CDBG projects are ongoing.

FY17 CDBG

- Activity: 6K Public Facilities/Infrastructure Design only (architectural and engineering)
 - o Project 1: Hayden-Hyde & Draper-High (H3D) Engineering Design Project
 - o Project 2: Senior Center Architectural Design (SCAD)

• Activity: 7 Planning

- o Project 1: 15 Post Road Environmental Assessment and Reuse Plan
- o Project 2: ADA Self Evaluation and Transition Plan

FY18 CDBG

• Activity: 4 Housing Rehabilitation

- o Project 1: Housing Rehabilitation Loans

• Activity: 6H Public Facilities/Infrastructure Drainage

- o Project 1: Hayden-Hyde Construction Project (Draper-High remains unbuilt due to significant drainage connection issue)

FY21 CDBG

• Activity: 6H Public Facilities/Infrastructure Drainage

- o Project 1: Green Street Improvements Design & Construction Project

FY22-23 CDBG

- Activity: 6B Public Facilities/Infrastructure Streets and Sidewalks
 - o Project 1: Kimball Street Improvements Design & Construction Project

Note: Brookfield has also undertaken Housing Rehabilitation projects in various years through regional CDBG grants with North Brookfield.



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Photo: Jackie Mushinski
Spencer Cable Access

Implementa- tion



Establish clear roles, priorities, and timelines to measure progress toward achieving the intended results.

Implementation plans are essential for bringing Master Plans from concepts to reality. The first step is to establish clear roles, priorities, and timelines to measure progress toward achieving the intended results,

The Master Plan was designed to facilitate informed decision-making. The measure of success in implementing this plan should not solely depend on the completion of every task listed. Instead, any progress that furthers the Master Plan's policies, vision, or objectives should be viewed as a success.

IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE

The Town could consider creating a Committee dedicated to the Master Plan's effective Implementation. This Committee would include a dedicated group charged with the following tasks for the successful execution of the plan:

- Develop clear metrics, benchmarks, and objectives for implementation.
- Monitor and communicate the status of implementation to both officials and the community.
- Regularly update the implementation matrix
- Coordinate efforts across departments and share updates with regional groups to leverage external resources and funding.
- Link the execution of the plan to financial planning and capital improvement plans, ensuring those involved in drafting these documents are well-versed with the Master Plan's implementation plan and that these documents are in alignment.

These strategies will enable the Implementation Committee to effectively inform the town about ongoing progress and needs, ensuring that future planning efforts are consistent with the Master Plan's recommendations.

Time required for completion - Projects that are faster to implement, either due to short work duration, current or near-term availability of funds, and/or ease of permitting or other regulatory procedures, are given higher priority.

Political and public support - Strategies that have demonstrated political and/or public support through positive involvement by the public or prioritization in previous regional and local plans and initiatives that were locally initiated or adopted are given higher priority.

Administrative burden – Strategies that are realistically within the administrative capacity of the town and its available support network (CMRPC, etc.) are prioritized. Considerations include grant application requirements, grant administrative requirements (including audit requirements), procurement, and staff time to oversee projects.



Land Use	Priority (L, M, H)	Time to Completion	Magnitude of cost: Very Low- 0-50k Low- 50-100k Med- 100-250k High: 250k- 500k Major capital item: 500k+	Responsible Parties	Resources/ funding sources	Progress
Goal 1: Preserve and enhance Brookfield's cultural heritage and small-town character while incorporating new growth.						
Objective	Encourage new development strategies and standards within the Town Common and business districts to ensure that alterations of existing structures fit with the community's small-town and historic character.					
Action item 1.1	Create Design Guidelines to ensure that New Development maintains alignment with Brookfield's small-town characteristics.		Very Low	PB, ZBA, SB	Community One Stop, EEA PAG, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Action item 1.2	Implement a bylaw for historic preservation within the Town Common to provide a robust framework for preservation of Brookfield's historical assets.		Very Low	HC, PB, ZBA, SB	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance, Preservation Mass	
Action item 1.3	Promote adaptive reuse to put historic structures back into productive use within the town center.		Very Low	HC, PB, ZBA, SB	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance, Preservation Mass	
Goal 2: Diversify allowed uses to support various commercial services within business and mixed-use areas.						
Objective	Expand allowed uses in Brookfield's BA, BB, and Village districts to encourage a diverse mixture of businesses that provide essential goods and services for residents.					
Action item 2.1	Hire a Town Planner who can provide technical expertise and implement land use goals through the Zoning Bylaws.		Medium to Major Capital Item	SB, TA	Town Staff, Town Meeting	
Action item 2.2	Conduct a community-led retail needs assessment to identify demand for specific essential goods and services in Brookfield.		Low	PB, ZBA	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Action item 2.3	Encourage diverse commercial uses in Brookfield's BA, BB, and Village districts by reviewing and revising the current Zoning Bylaw to allow certain uses that are currently restricted.		Very Low	PB, ZBA, SB	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Goal 3: Encourage utilizing Smart Growth strategies, such as compact development, for new housing developments, to preserve open space and community character.						
Objective	Review and amend the Zoning Bylaw to allow for compact development within the RR district by using Smart Growth principles to ensure that new housing development design and location prioritize the preservation of open space and farmland.					
Action item 3.1	Support cluster development where applicable.		Very Low	PB, ZBA, SB	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Action item 3.2	Reduce dimensional requirements for duplexes and other small-scale multifamily housing forms.		Very Low	PB, ZBA, SB	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Economic Development	Priority (L, M, H)	Time to Completion	Magnitude of cost: Very Low- 0-50k Low- 50-100k Med- 100-250k High: 250k- 500k Major capital item: 500k+	Responsible Parties	Resources/ funding sources	Progress
Goal 1: Create a long-range economic development strategy.						
Objective	Become investment-ready					
Action Item 1.1	Attract and retain businesses that contribute to diversifying Brookfield's tax base and increasing employment opportunities.		Very Low	TA, PB; Potential Partner: EDC	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance, Quabog Hills Chamber of Commerce	
Action Item 1.2	Improve and extend municipal infrastructure to enable the town to attract new businesses.		Medium to Major Capital Item	TA, PB, HWY, Water Dept	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Action Item 1.3	Establish an Economic Development Committee and a business association.		Low to Medium	TA, SB	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance, Quabog Hills Chamber of Commerce	
Action Item 1.4	Explore the possibility of creating a TIF and a UCH-TIF program.		Very Low	TA, PB; Potential Partner: EDC	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Objective	Develop a pipeline of fundable projects, and strengthen local policies and practices, that will help the Town absorb available funding and grants.					
Action Item 1.5	Continue to pursue opportunities for grant funding for capital improvements.		Low to Medium	TA, PB, CIPC; Potential Partner: EDC	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Action Item 1.6	Address Town capacity and staffing needs to assist with applying for funding and technical assistance.		Major Capital Item	TA; Potential Partner: EDC	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Goal 2: Revitalize the Town Center and Support Small Businesses						
Objective	Encourage commercial activity in the town center to support services that meet the daily needs of Brookfield's residents.					
Action Item 2.1	Bring business opportunities to existing commercial and mixed-use buildings.		Very Low	TA, PB; Potential Partner: EDC	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance, Quabog Hills Chamber of Commerce	
Objective	Enhance the aesthetic qualities of the town center by completing physical improvements.					
Action Item 2.2	Implement placemaking strategies to improve/activate commercial areas. Draw foot traffic to the town center by encouraging and organizing events in outdoor gathering areas.		Low to Medium	PB, HWY; Potential Partner: EDC	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Action Item 2.3	Create a vacant properties action plan help return underutilized properties to productive use.		Low	PB; Potential Partners: Housing Committee, EDC	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Action Item 2.4	Create a vacant property inventory to more accurately understand the causes and extent of vacancy in Brookfield.		Very Low	PB	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Goal 3: Encourage the development of a robust Ecotourism industry.						
Objective	Capitalize on Brookfield's recreation and nature areas, such as trails and ponds.					
Action Item 3.1	Incorporate ecotourism strategies in the agenda of the Agricultural Commission.		Very Low to Low	AC, CC, PB, RC, Cultural Council; Potential Partner: EDC	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Action Item 3.2	Attract and encourage hospitality industry establishments.		Very Low	TA, PB; Potential Partner: EDC	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Town Services and Facilities	Priority (L, M, H)	Time to Completion	Magnitude of cost: Very Low- 0-50k Low- 50-100k Med- 100-250k High: 250k- 500k Major capital item: 500k+	Responsible Parties	Resources/ funding sources	Progress
Goal 1: Ensure the provision of quality services for all Brookfield residents and businesses.						
Objective	Streamline the process of obtaining permits and licenses to increase predictability and minimize costs to applicants.					
Action Item 1.1	Implement online permitting.		Very Low to Low	PB, ZBA; Potential Partner: EDC	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Action Item 1.2	Create a permitting guidebook to clarify the procedures of obtaining a permit.		Very Low	PB, ZBA; Potential Partner: EDC	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Objective	Expand infrastructure south of the Quabog River.					
Action Item 1.3	Continue to seek resources for capital improvements needed to provide drinking water to Brookfield water customers.		Low to Medium	Water Dept, CIPC	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Action Item 1.4	Raise awareness among residents about regular water quality testing of private water wells.		Very Low	Water Dept	Town Staff	
Objective	Regionalize select services for improved efficiency and cost savings.					
Action Item 1.5	Explore the formation of service coalitions with neighboring towns.		Very Low	TA and relevant departments	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Goal 2: Improve the condition of municipal facilities to ensure the continuous operation of town services over the next 10-20 years.						
Objective	Create an updated Capital Improvements plan to provide resources for the ongoing maintenance of town buildings and properties.					
Action Item 2.1	Re-activate the Capital Improvements Committee.		Low to Medium	SB, TA	Town Staff	
Action Item 2.2	Continue to implement the recommendations of the 2018 Town of Brookfield Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan.		Medium to Major Capital Item	All Town Departments	Town Staff	
Action Item 2.3	Continue to renovate the upper level of the Town Hall building.		Major Capital Item	Town Hall Improvement Committee, CIPC	Town Staff	
Objective	Improve recreational facilities.					
Action Item 2.4	Complete improvements, such as accessibility, parking, restrooms, concession facilities, security cameras, and general repairs at recreational facilities across town.		Major Capital Item	All Town Departments	Town Staff	
Goal 3: Ensure that Emergency Services are accessible to residents South of the Quabog River.						

Objective	Ensure that the provisions of the 2019 MVP plan are implemented.							
Action Item 3.1	Ensure that the Fiskdale Road Bridge is accessible in case of an emergency evacuation.				Very Low	HWY	Town Staff, MVP Action Grant	
Action Item 3.2	Ensure that more town facilities can serve as emergency shelters.				Medium to High	Fire Department and Emergency Services, CIPC	Town Staff, MVP Action Grant	
Open Space, Natural and Cultural Resources		Priority (L, M, H)	Time to Completion		Magnitude of cost: Very Low- 0-50k Low- 50-100k Med- 100-250k High- 250k- 500k Major capital item: 500k+	Responsible Parties	Resources/ funding sources	Progress
Goal 1: Maintain Brookfield's Rural, Agricultural, And Historic Character.								
Objective	Pursue the recommendations of the Heritage Landscape Inventory for the Brookfield Common Historic District.							
Action Item 1.1	Prepare a Preservation Master Plan for the common area, including a circulation component to improve vehicular traffic patterns as well as address the continuation of the pedestrian-friendly atmosphere.				Low to Medium	HC, PB	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Objective	Develop a strategic plan to restore, preserve, maintain, and promote Brookfield's historical and cultural monuments and sites.							
Action Item 1.2	Develop strategic plan and determine who will have oversight authority for historical and cultural monuments and sites.				Low to Medium	HC, PB, Cultural Council	Town Staff	
Objective	Use regulatory tools to protect assets.							
Action Item 1.3	Establish Local Historic Districts for key locations.				Low	PB, HC	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance, Preservation Mass	
Action Item 1.4	Explore the use of a scenic vista protection bylaw.				Very Low	PB, HC, CC	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Action Item 1.5	Inventory and protect lands identified as containing archaeological resources.				Low to Medium	HC	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance, Preservation Mass	
Action Item 1.6	Develop a strategy for acquisition of Chapter 61 parcels along the river, should they opt to change land use or ownership.				Very Low	PB	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Action Item 1.7	Explore establishment of a river corridor protection overlay district.				Very Low	PB, CC	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Action Item 1.8	Enforce and update the Scenic Roads Bylaw.				Very Low	PB, CC	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Action Item 1.9	Facilitate the establishment of conservation easements or restrictions; possibly purchasing critical parcels.				Low to Medium	CC	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Objective	Encourage Local Agriculture							
Action Item 1.10	Develop a "buy-local" campaign.				Low	AC; Potential Partner: EDC	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Action Item 1.11	Promote community gardening.				Very Low	AC	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Objective	Investigate possible funding sources to provide support for preserving and maintaining historic structures within Brookfield							
Action Item 1.12	Assess the possibility of adopting the Community Preservation Act.				Very Low	PB; SB; TA; Potential Partner: Housing Committee	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Action Item 1.13	Research information regarding available funding program sources and cycles.				Low	HC, PB, Cultural Council	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance, Preservation Mass	
Action Item 1.14	Promote the Massachusetts Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit (MHRTC).				Very Low	HC, PB	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance, Preservation Mass	
Goal 2: Educate And Build Awareness About The Historic and Environmental Assets That Lie Within Brookfield's Borders.								
Objective	Promote historical and ecotourism opportunities.							
Action Item 2.1	Form an ecotourism working group to identify, develop and publicize a calendar of activities.				Low to Medium	CC, RC, AC, Cultural Council; Potential Partner: EDC	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Action Item 2.2	Develop promotional materials to market the town's many assets.				Very Low	CC, RC, Cultural Council; Potential Partner: EDC	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Goal 3: Protect open space and natural resources from ecological harm and over-development.								
Objective	Protect surface and ground water resources, wetlands, vernal pools, unique habitats, and wildlife corridors							
Action Item 3.1	Work with interested stakeholders such as DEP, the Quaboag Quacumquasit Lake Association, and Chicopee River Watershed council on water resource protection efforts and outreach.				Very Low	CC	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Action Item 3.2	Identify and seek certification of Brookfield's vernal pools.				Low	CC	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Action Item 3.3	Develop a strategy for open space acquisition.				Very Low	CC, PB, MassAudubon, Opacum Land Trust	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance, PARC and LAND Grant Programs, Local Land Trusts	
Action Item 3.4	Redevelop brownfields and reuse land and buildings before building on undeveloped land.				Very Low to Major Capital Item	CC, PB, ZBA, BLDG	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Objective	Maintain and improve open space facilities to ensure Brookfield can accommodate users of all ages, incomes, and ability groups.							
Action Item 3.5	Ensure that open space is accessible.				Medium to High	CC, PB, MassAudubon, Opacum Land Trust	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance, Local Land Trusts	
Action Item 3.6	Keep an inventory of open space and recreation facilities along with a record of the status of maintenance needs at each facility.				Very Low	CC	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance, Local Land Trusts	
Housing and Population		Priority (L, M, H)	Time to Completion		Magnitude of cost: Very Low- 0-50k Low- 50-100k Med- 100-250k High- 250k- 500k Major capital item: 500k+	Responsible Parties	Resources/ funding sources	Progress
Goal 1: Build local capacity to advance new housing development that is compatible with Brookfield's small-town character.								
Objective	Foster collaborative partnerships with for-profit and non-profit housing developers.							
Action Item 1.1	Establish and maintain an active committee to guide local housing initiatives.				Low to Medium	SB, TA	Town Staff	
Action Item 1.2	Conduct ongoing community engagement and education on housing issues and activities.				Very Low to Low	PB; Potential Partner: Housing Committee	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Action Item 1.3	Pursue "Friendly 40B" opportunities as a means of creating new affordable units in appropriate locations in town.				Low	PB; Potential Partner: Housing Committee	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Action Item 1.4	Work cooperatively with developers by providing zoning incentives—such as density bonuses, reduced parking requirements, and expedited permitting—while also directing development to areas with existing infrastructure.				Low	PB; Potential Partner: Housing Committee	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Action Item 1.5	Support affordable housing providers in obtaining financing by endorsing financing applications and leveraging funding resources such as CDBG, MHP, Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC).				Low to Medium	PB; Potential Partner: Housing Committee	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Objective	Identify and leverage funding and technical assistance resources to implement housing initiatives.							
Action Item 1.6	Explore funding sources such as the Community Preservation Act (CPA) or a Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Fund to effectively support local affordable housing initiatives.				Very Low to Low	PB; SB; TA; Potential Partner: Housing Committee	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Action Item 1.7	Actively seek out and apply for planning assistance and community development grant opportunities offered through programs such as Community One Stop for Growth, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, CMRPC District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) Program, and more.				Low to Medium	PB; SB; TA; Potential Partner: Housing Committee	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Goal 2: Explore innovative housing solutions that enable a greater diversity of housing choices.								
Objective	Pursue creative policies that support the redevelopment of underutilized properties.							
Action Item 2.1	Develop a housing action plan to assess how the available stock of vacant housing could be rehabilitated and expanded to increase the naturally occurring affordable housing inventory.				Low to Medium	PB; Potential Partner: Housing Committee	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	

Action Item 2.2	Explore zoning and policy changes, and streamline the permitting process, to encourage home conversions, accessory dwelling units, and redevelopment on nonconforming lots.			Very Low	PB; Potential Partner: Housing Committee	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Goal 3: Provide housing opportunities that meet the needs of special populations, including the senior population.							
Objective	Expand options to "age in place" for Brookfield's senior population.						
Action Item 3.1	Encourage creative senior living opportunities, such as accessory dwelling units, intergenerational cohousing, or home sharing.			Very Low	PB; Potential Partner: Housing Committee	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Action Item 3.2	Connect residents with existing programs and resources that assist qualifying households with repairs and improvements, energy efficiency upgrades, and accessibility modifications.			Very Low	PB; Potential Partner: Housing Committee	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Action Item 3.3	Actively seek partnerships to fund supportive services for special populations within the community.			Very Low	PB; Potential Partner: Housing Committee	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Transportation		Priority (L, M, H)	Time to Completion	Magnitude of costs: Very Low- 0-50k Low- 50-100k Med- 100-250k High- 250k- 500k Major capital item- 500k+	Responsible Parties	Resources/ funding sources	Progress
Goal 1: Enhance transportation infrastructure throughout Brookfield at key identified locations for all users.							
Objective	Provide multi-modal transportation options.						
Action Item 1.1	Construct pedestrian and bicycle facilities along Quaboag Street. This street connects to Route 9 at The Clam Box, a highly traveled location. Currently, there are no pedestrian or bicycle accommodations to provide safe access to this location.			High to Major Capital Item	TA, HWY	MassDOT Complete Streets; MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces; Town Meeting	
Action Item 1.2	Provide infrastructure and accessibility improvements along trails throughout Brookfield. This includes maintenance and upkeep as well as mapping and awareness improvements.			Very Low to High	TA, HWY, CC,	MassTrails, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Action Item 1.3	Provide improved transportation options for the aging population of Brookfield. This includes improvements to and increased awareness of transportation to the West Brookfield senior center.			Major Capital Item	TA, HWY	Town Staff, CMRPC Technical Assistance	
Action Item 1.4	Develop a strategy for electric vehicle charging inclusive of residents, employees, and visitors.			Very Low	TA, HWY	DOER Green Communities, MDEP, MassEVIP Grant Program	
Goal 2: Establish and commit to policies and programs that plan for the future needs of all users of Brookfield's transportation network.							
Objective	Access state and federal aid for improving Brookfield's transportation infrastructure.						
Action Item 2.1	Continue and expand Brookfield's participation in state transportation funding programs, especially those that aim to prioritize the safety of all roadway users. Such programs include, but are not limited to, Complete Streets, Safe Routes to School, Transportation Improvement Program, and MassTrails.			Low to Medium	TA, HWY	CMRPC Technical Assistance, Town Staff, MassDOT	
Action Item 2.2	Update Brookfield's policies and bylaws to prioritize the implementation of pedestrian, bicycle, and electric vehicle friendly facilities as the town commits to various (re)developments.			Very Low	TA, HWY	CMRPC Technical Assistance, Town Staff	



Photo: Jackie Mushinski
Spencer Cable Access

Appendix

Appendix Table of Contents

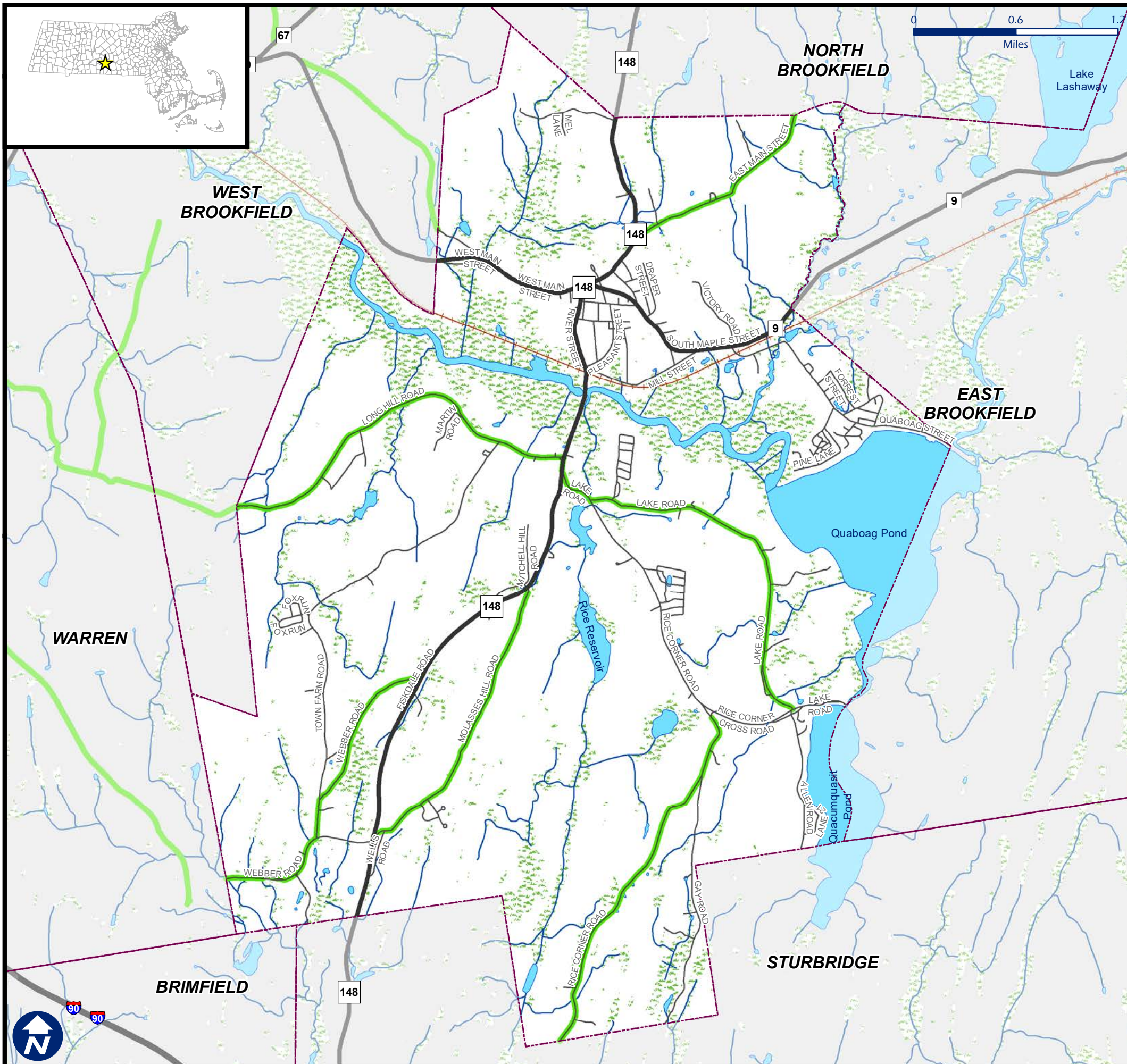


Appendix A: Maps

Appendix B: Data findings

Appendix C: Survey

Town of Brookfield, Massachusetts 2024 Master Plan



Legend

- Town Boundary
- River, Stream
- Lake, Pond
- MassDEP Wetlands
- Active Rail Service
- Scenic Road
- Major Road
- Local Road

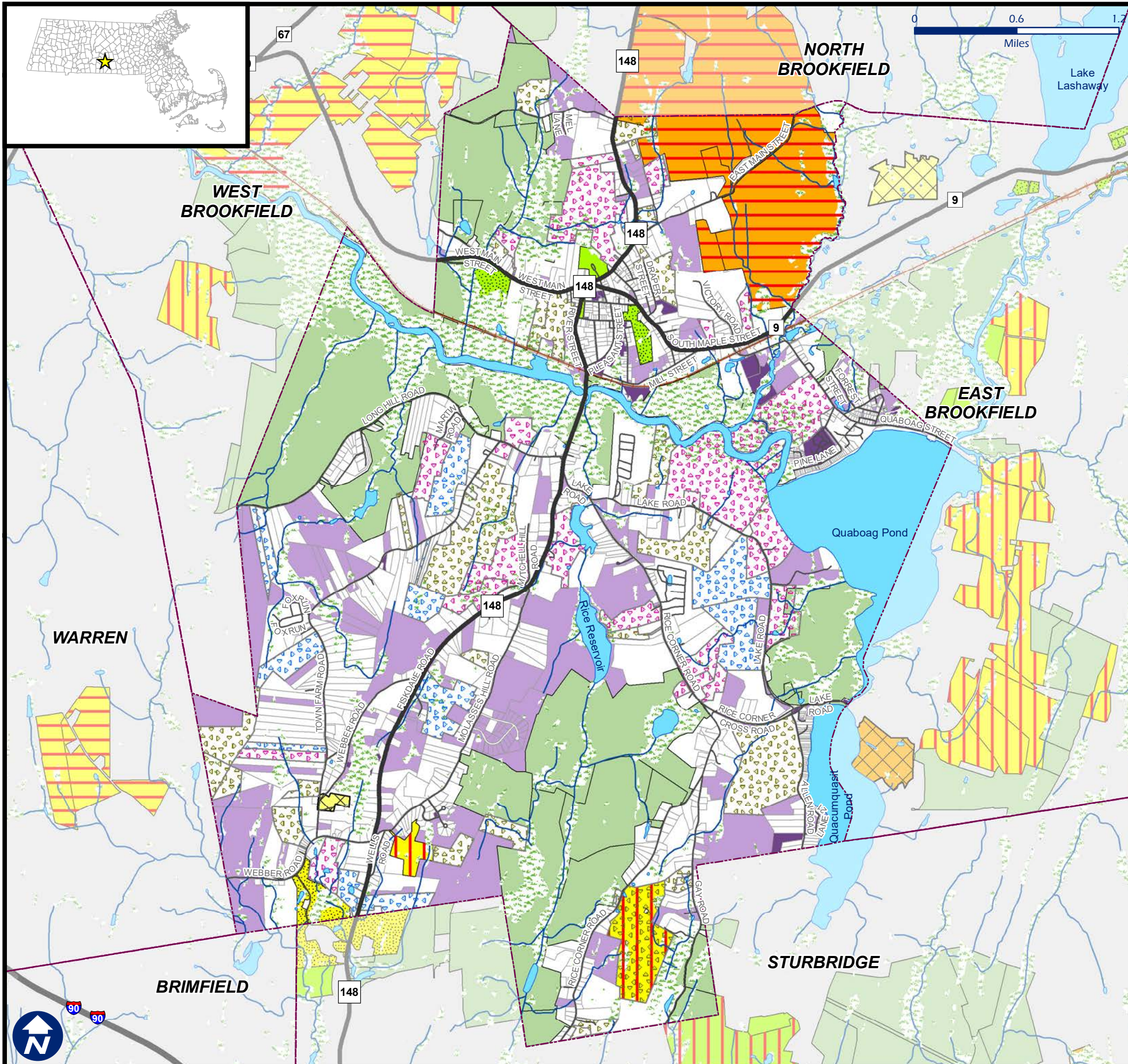
Information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. This information is not adequate for legal boundary definition, regulatory interpretation, or parcel-level analysis. Use caution interpreting positional accuracy.

Produced by the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC)
1 Mercantile Street, Suite 520
Worcester, MA 01608



Source: Data provided by the Town of Brookfield, CMRPC and the Office of Geographic Information (MassGIS), Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Information Technology Division.

Town of Brookfield, Massachusetts 2024 Master Plan



Legend

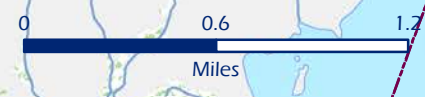
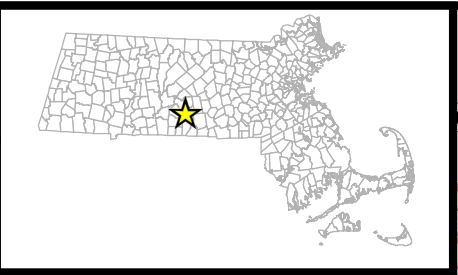
- Town Boundary
- River, Stream
- Lake, Pond
- MassDEP Wetlands
- Active Rail Service
- Major Road
- Local Road
- Town Owned Land (FY2022)
- Undeveloped Land (FY2022)
- Conservation Restriction (04/2023)
- Agricultural Preservation Restriction (04/2023)
- Chapter Land (FY2022)**
 - Chapter 61
 - Chapter 61A
 - Chapter 61B
- Open Space Ownership (04/2023)**
 - Federal
 - State
 - Municipal - Conservation
 - Municipal - Recreation
 - Municipal - Water Supply Protection
 - Municipal
 - Private
 - Non-Profit
- Level of Protection (04/2023)**
 - Perpetuity*
 - Limited
 - None

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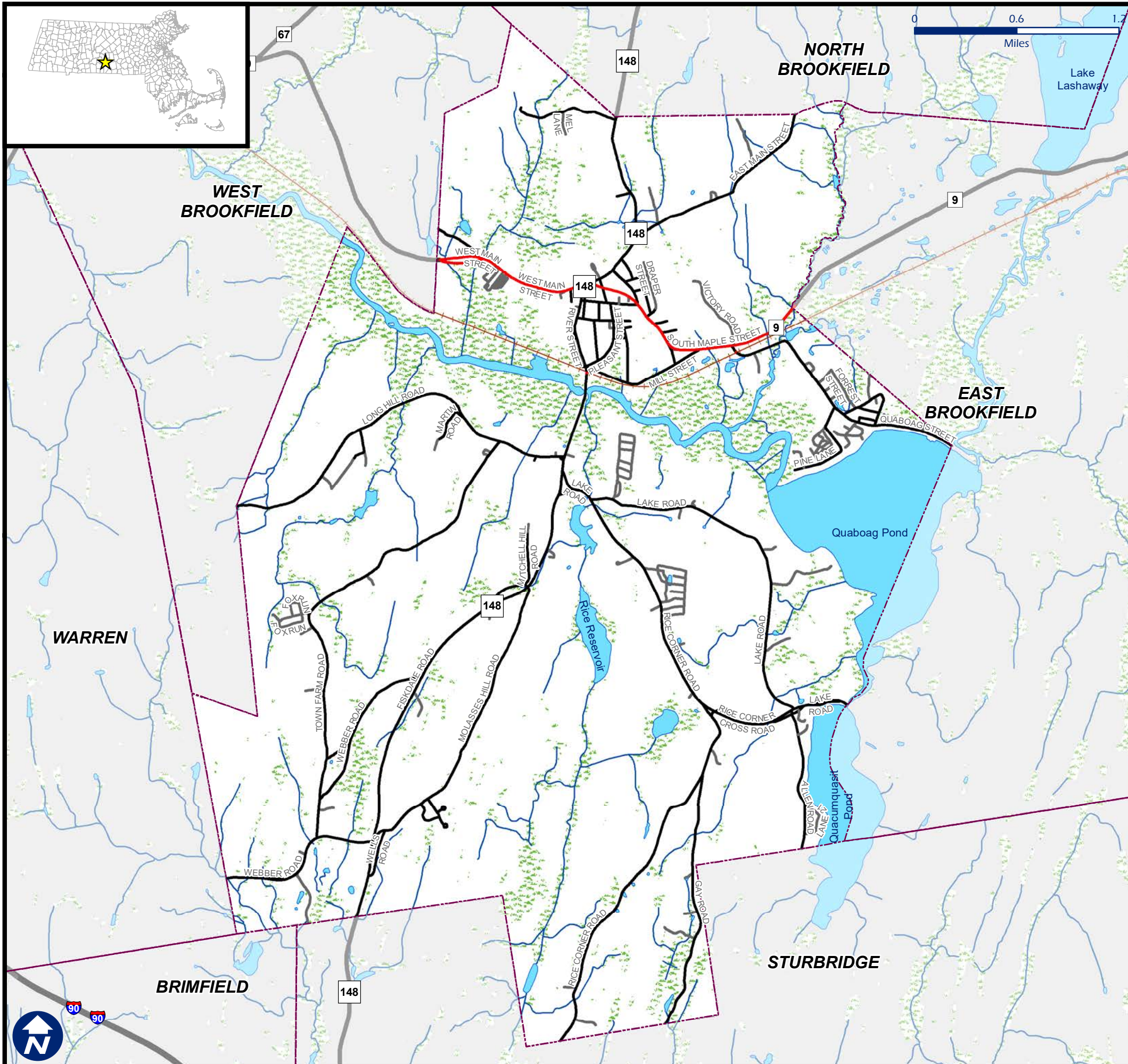
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Town of Brookfield, Massachusetts 2024 Master Plan



Legend

Town Boundary	City or Town accepted road
River, Stream	Massachusetts Department of Transportation
Lake, Pond	Unaccepted by city or town
MassDEP Wetlands	
Active Rail Service	

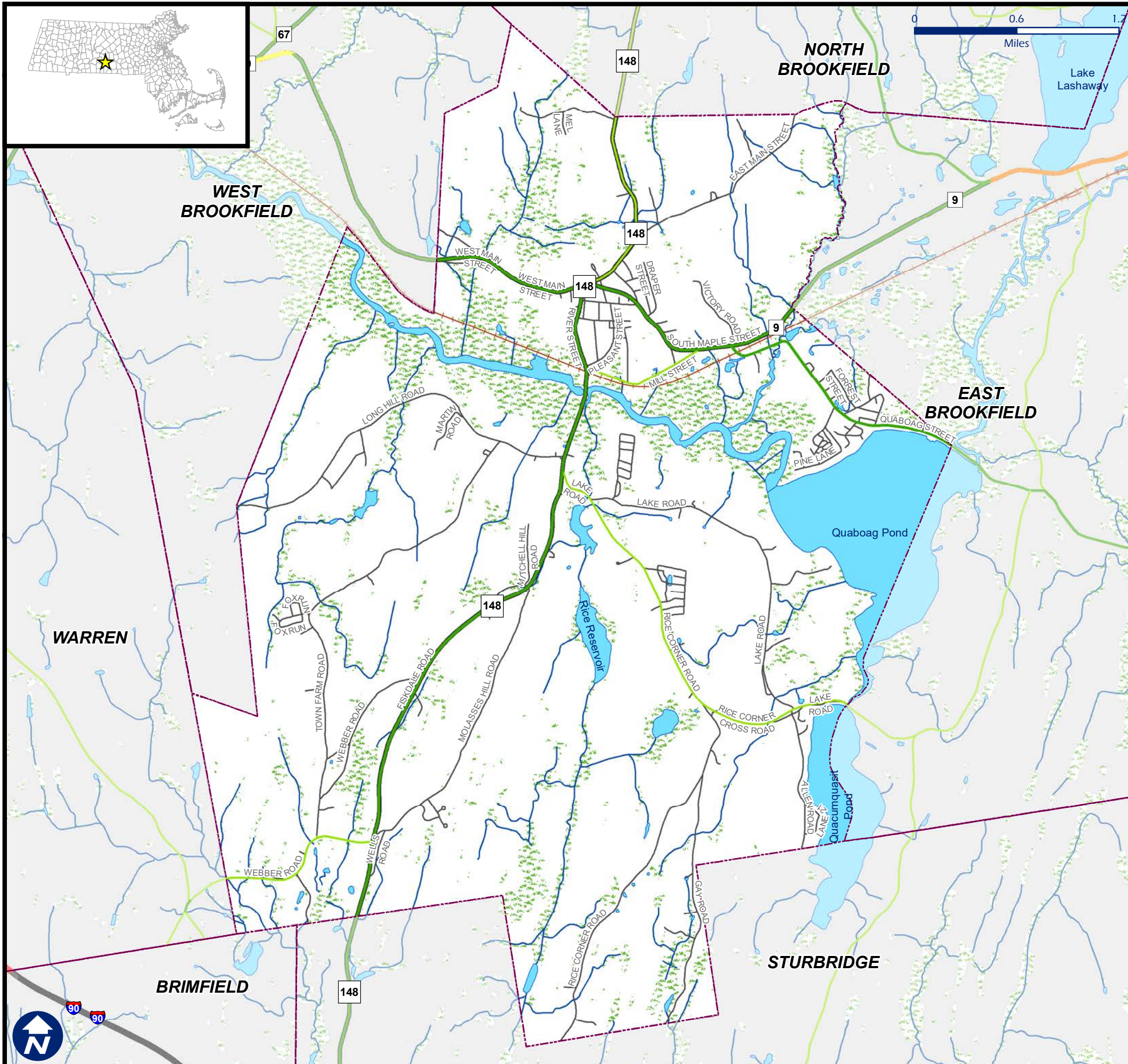
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Town of Brookfield, Massachusetts 2024 Master Plan



Legend

Town Boundary	Most Recent Total Volume (updated 2022)
River, Stream	≤ 2,500
Lake, Pond	≤ 7,499
MassDEP Wetlands	≤ 14,999
Active Rail Service	≤ 30,000
Major Road	> 30,000
Local Road	

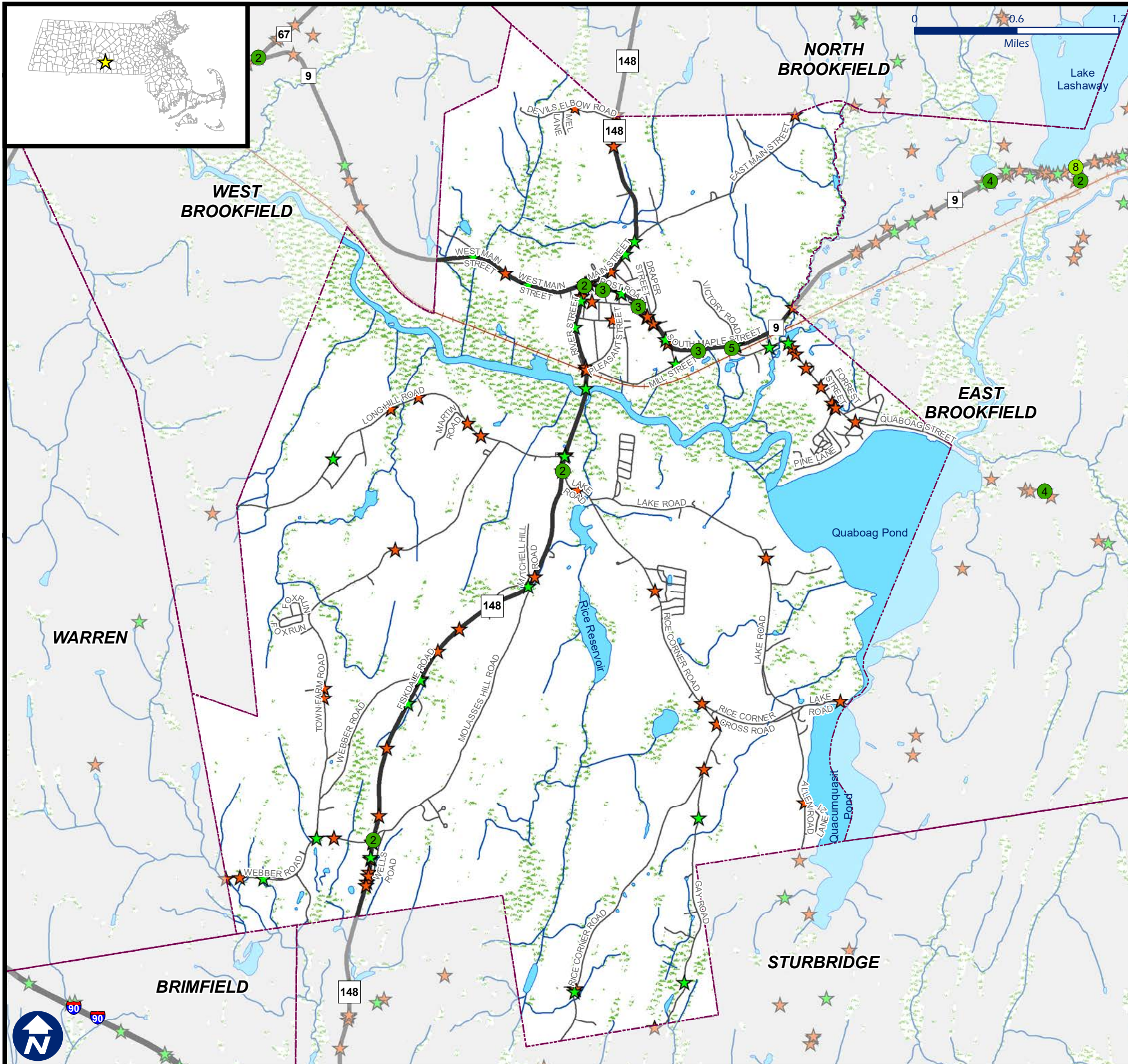
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Town of Brookfield, Massachusetts 2024 Master Plan



Legend

	Town Boundary		2020 Crashes (MassDOT)
	River, Stream		Auto Crash Locations (2017-2019)
	Lake, Pond	Crash Clusters (2015-2017)	
	MassDEP Wetlands		2 - 5
	Active Rail Service		6 - 13
	Major Road		14 - 25
	Local Road		26 - 45
			46 - 83

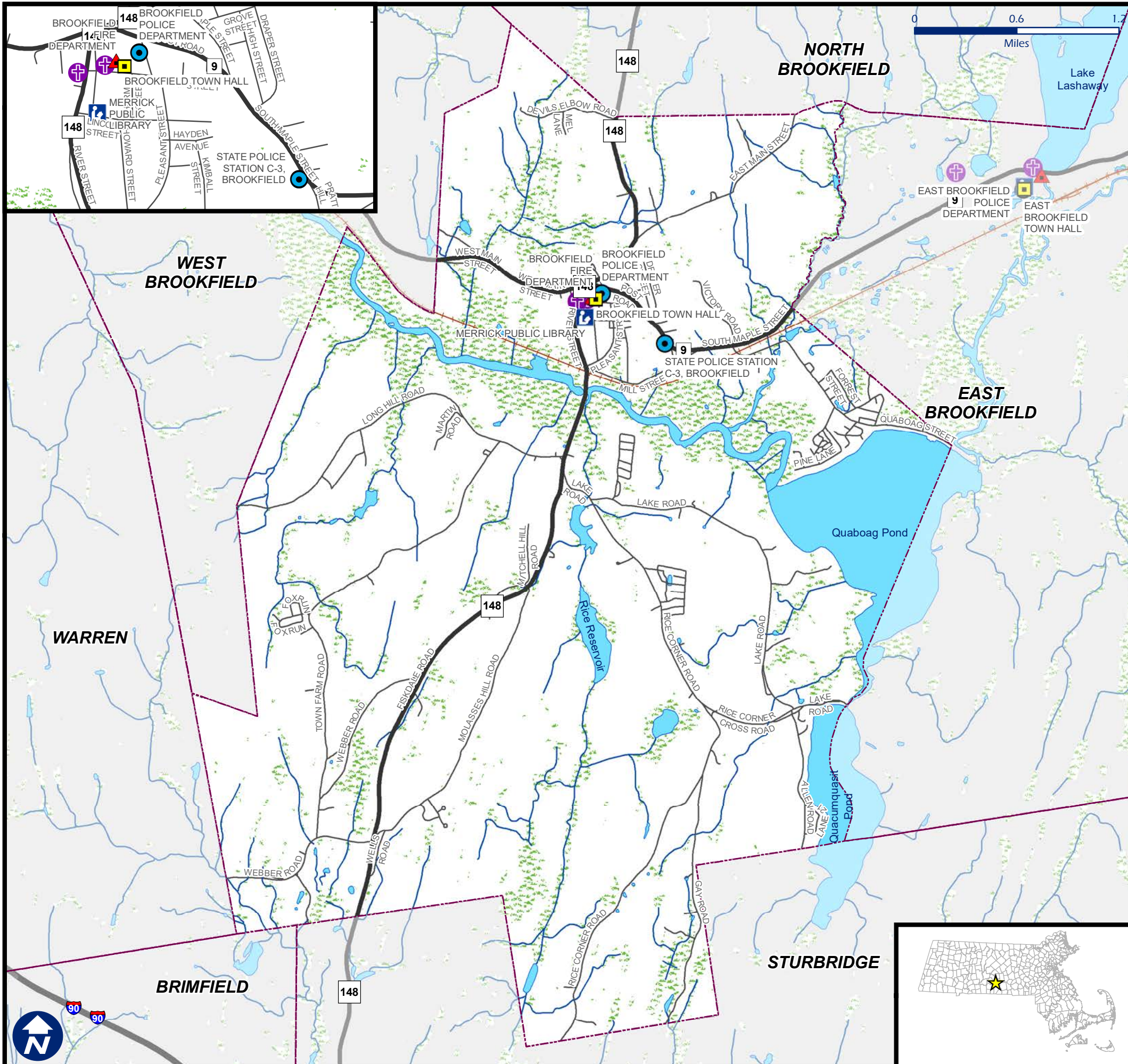
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Town of Brookfield, Massachusetts 2024 Master Plan



Legend

Town Boundary	Town Hall (07/2017)
River, Stream	Public Library (8/2017)
Lake, Pond	Police (5/2022)
MassDEP Wetlands	Fire Dept. (9/2022)
Active Rail Service	Places of Worship (07/2022)
Major Road	Church
Local Road	

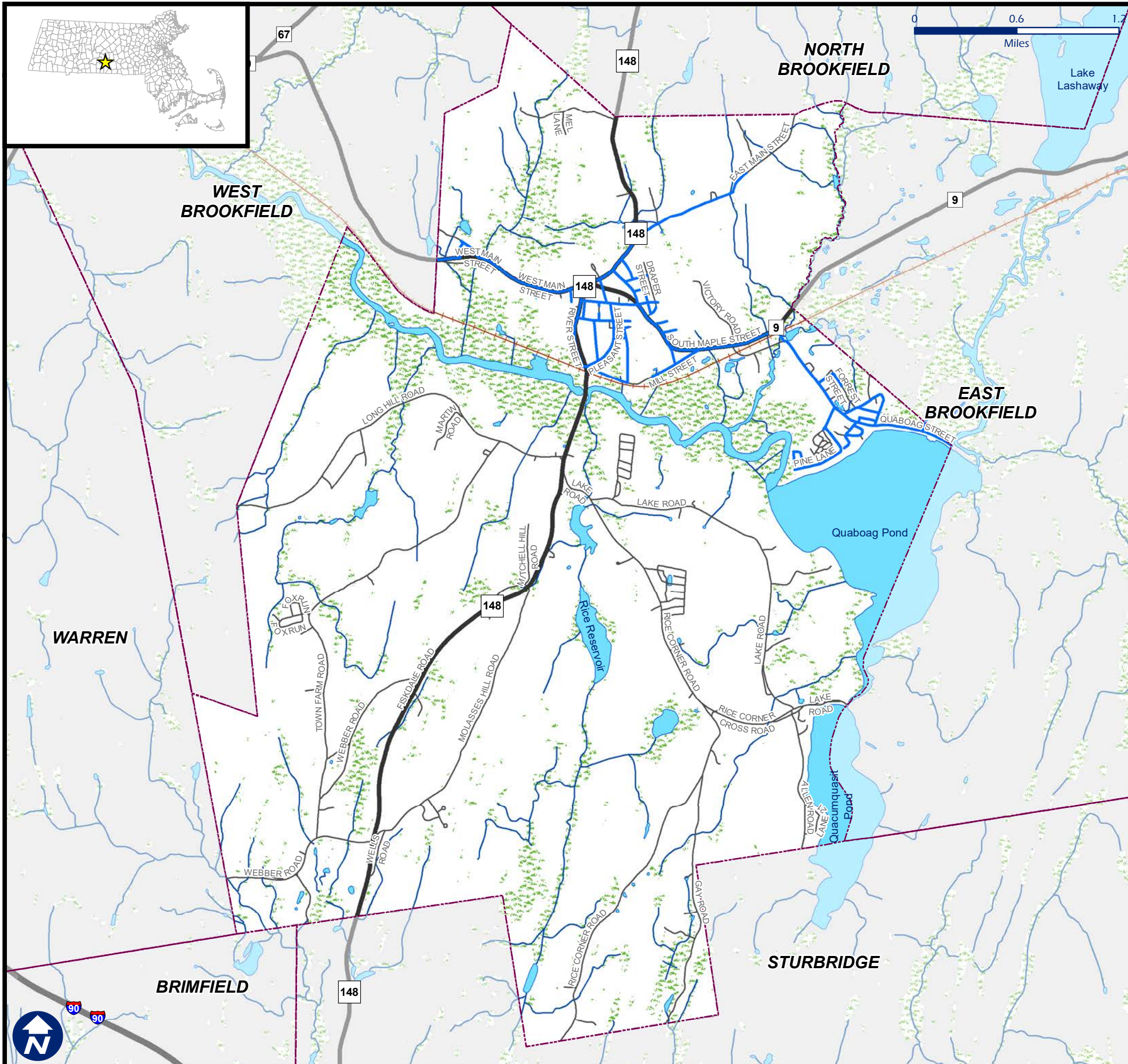
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Town of Brookfield, Massachusetts 2024 Master Plan



Legend

- Town Boundary
- Water Line
- River, Stream
- Active Rail Service
- Lake, Pond
- Major Road
- MassDEP Wetlands
- Local Road

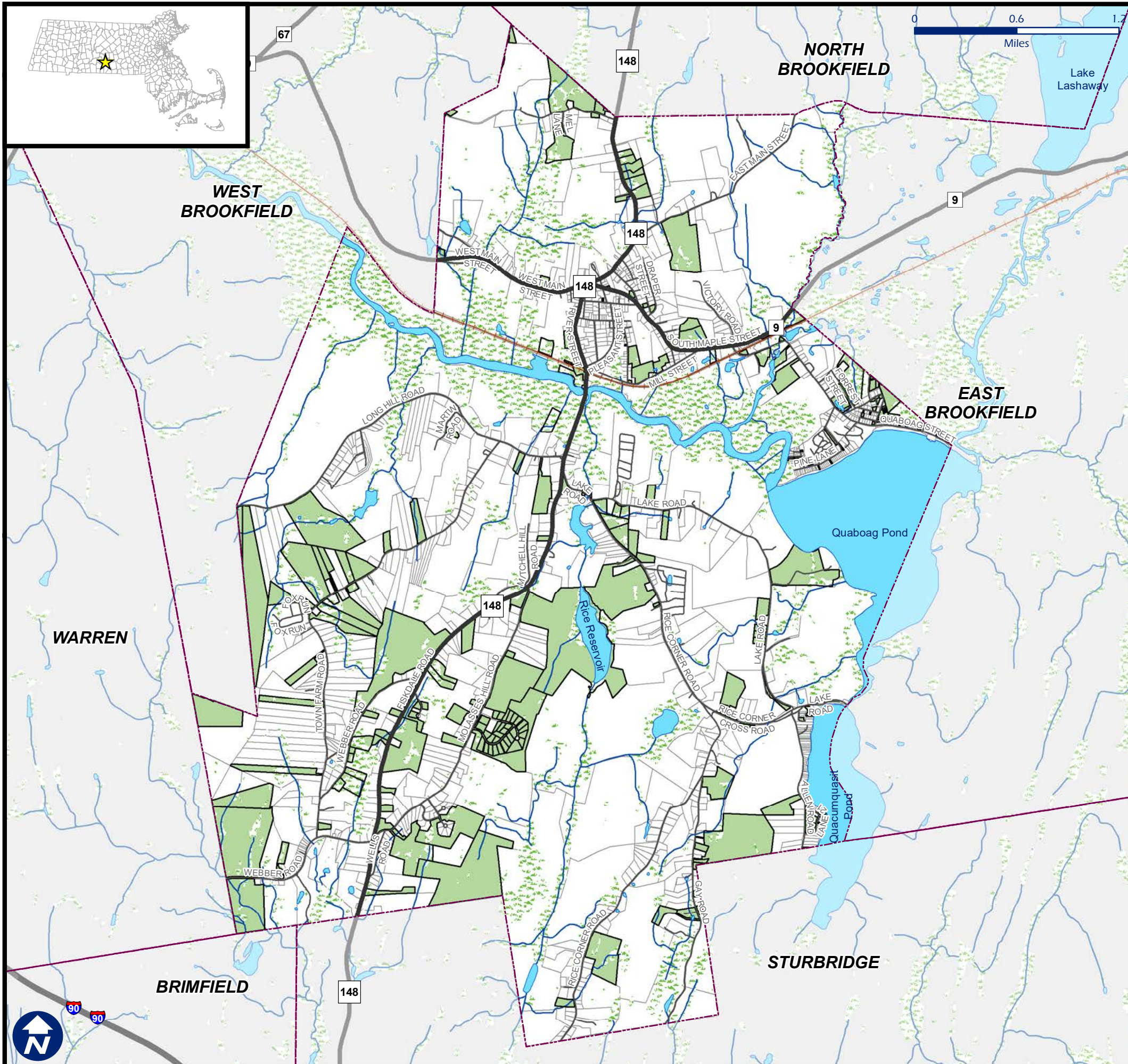
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Town of Brookfield, Massachusetts 2024 Master Plan



Legend

Town Boundary	Active Rail Service
River, Stream	Major Road
Lake, Pond	Local Road
MassDEP Wetlands	Vacant Land by DOR Use Code (FY2022)

Vacant lands include all properties with a assessor Use_Code field value of 13* (Residential vacant land), 39* (Commercial vacant land) and 44* (Industrial vacant land).

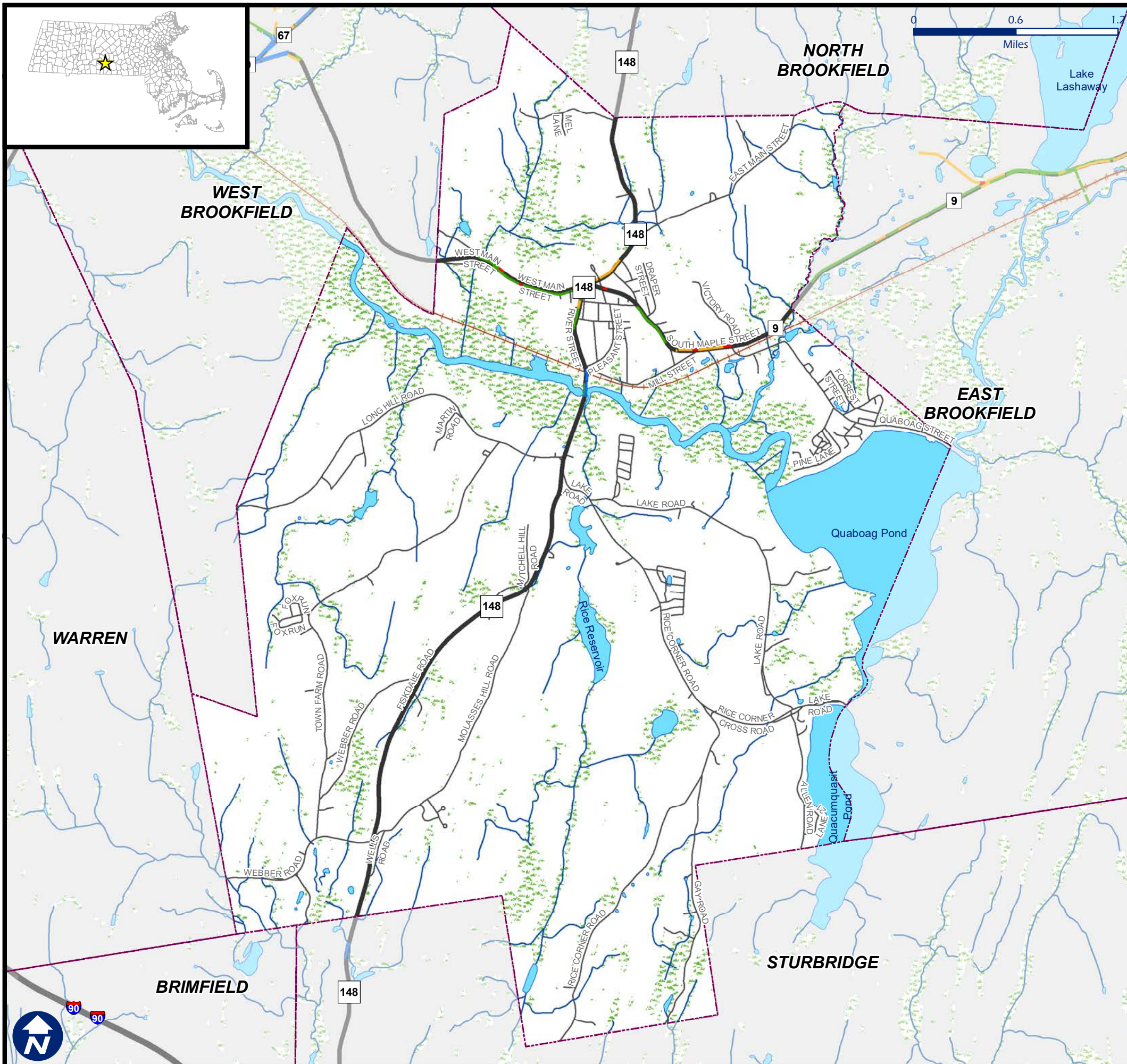
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Town of Brookfield, Massachusetts 2024 Master Plan



Legend

Town Boundary	Major Road
River, Stream	Local Road
Lake, Pond	Sidewalk Condition (2013-2023)
MassDEP Wetlands	Excellent
Active Rail Service	Good
	Fair
	Poor

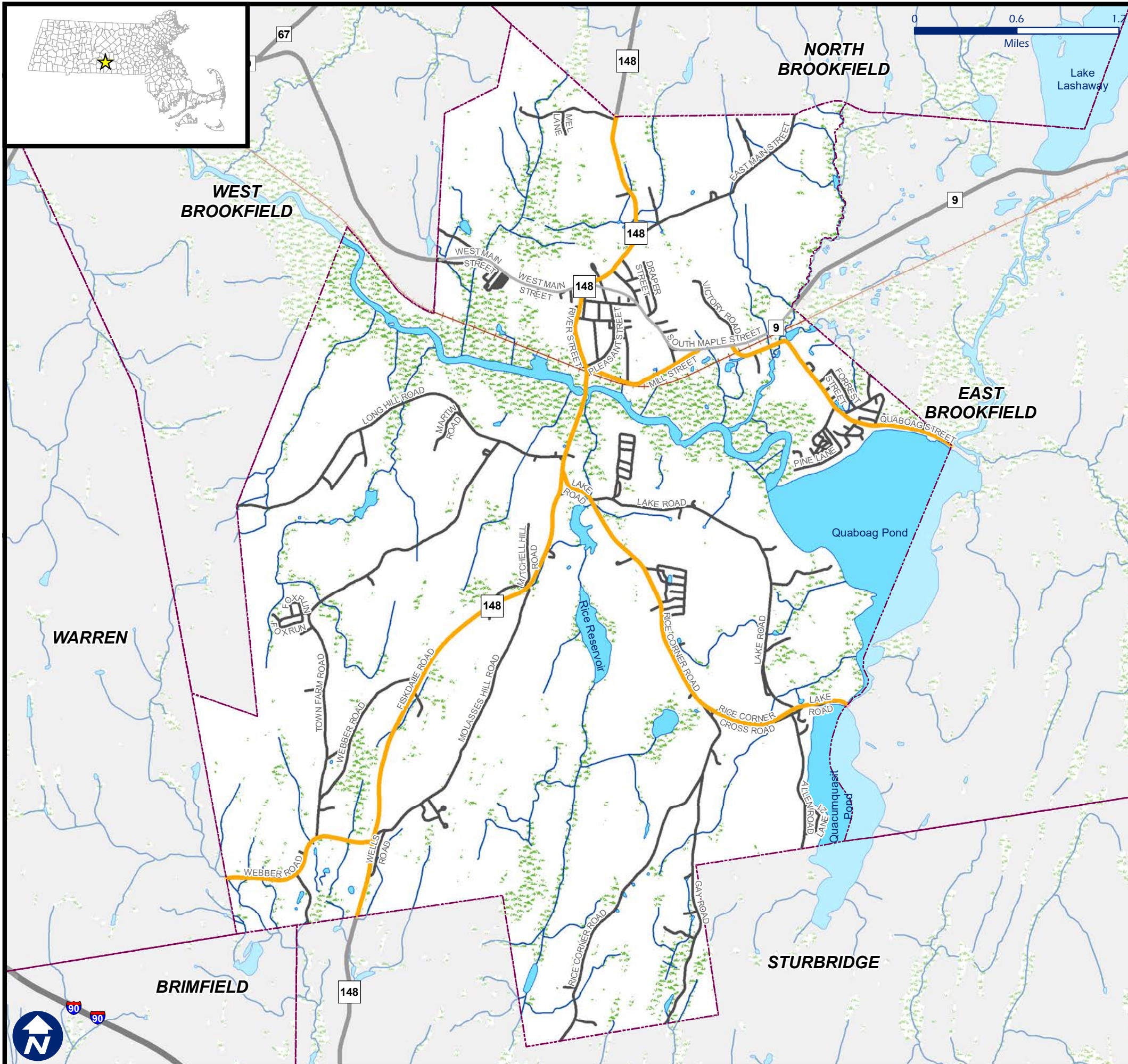
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Town of Brookfield, Massachusetts 2024 Master Plan



Legend

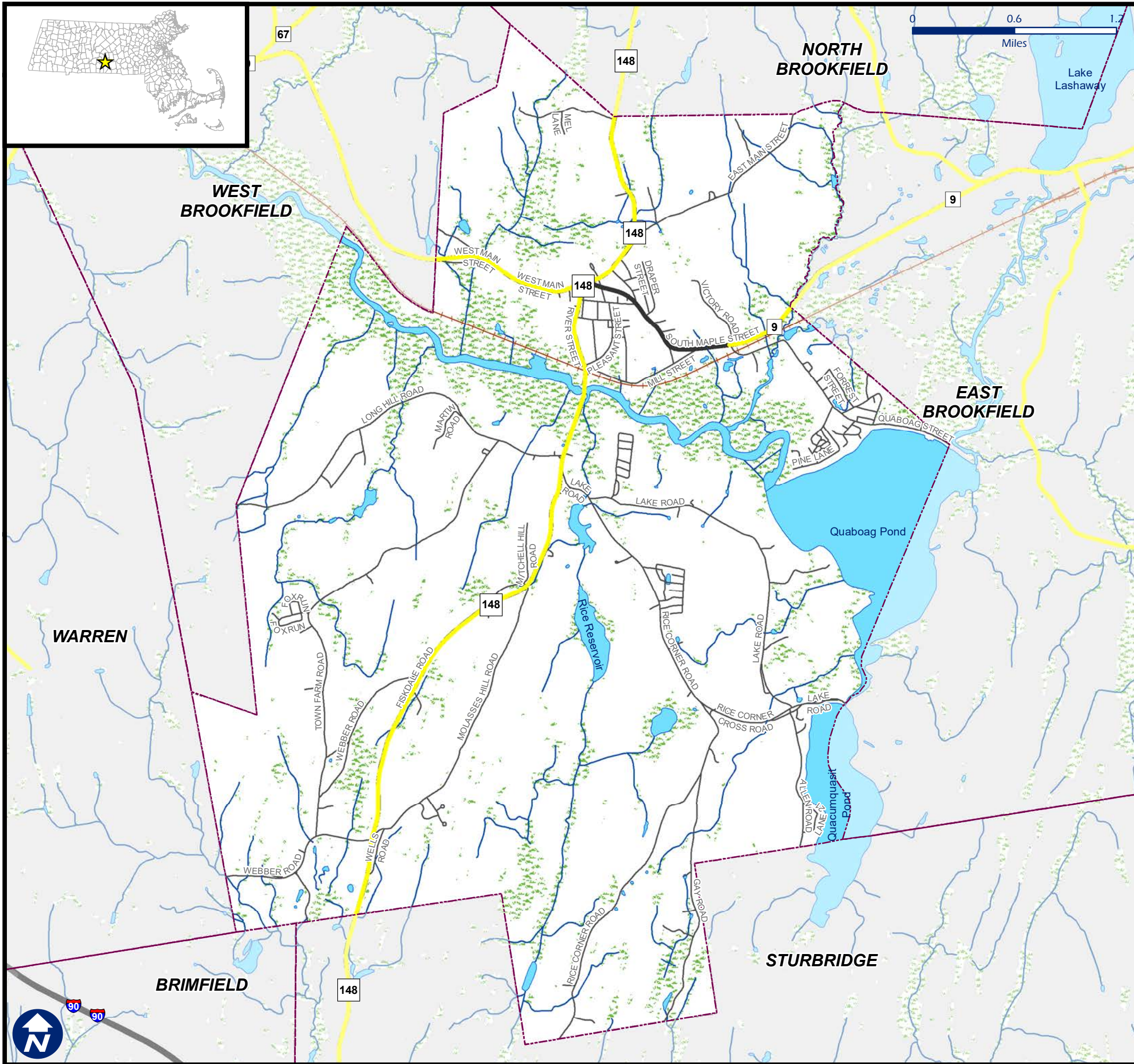
- Town Boundary
- ~ River, Stream
- Lake, Pond
- MassDEP Wetlands
- x—x— Active Rail Service
- Federal Aid Eligible Road (RIF 2021)
- Not Eligible
- Other Road - NHS
- STP Eligible
- STP Road - C15

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Town of Brookfield, Massachusetts 2024 Master Plan

Legend

- Town Boundary
- ~ River, Stream
- ☪ Lake, Pond
- MassDEP Wetlands
- +—+—+— Active Rail Service
- Major Road
- Local Road
- Traffic Volume: Truck Percent (2019)
- 0% - 5%
- 10% - 15%

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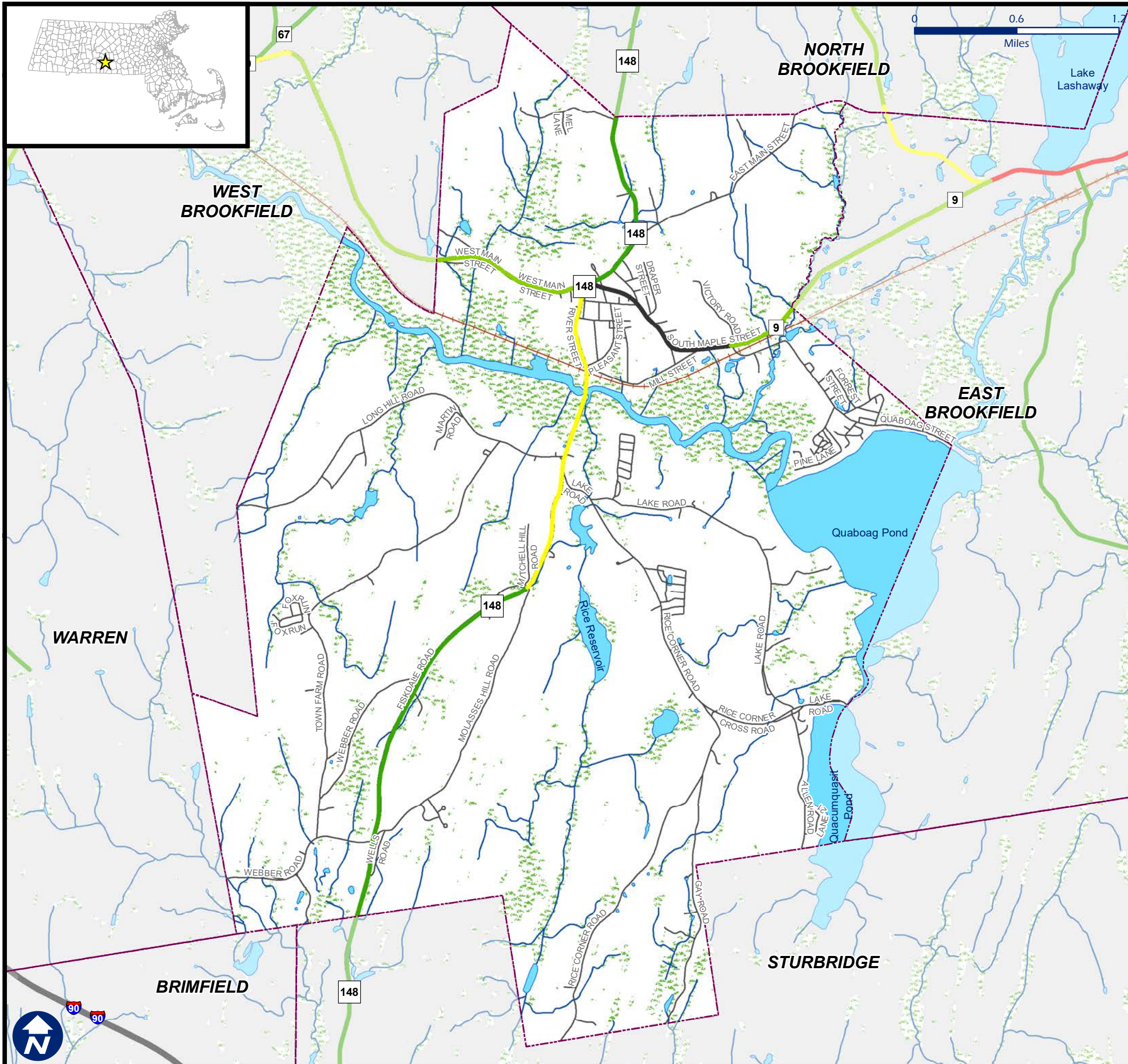
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MAP 42 TRAFFIC FLOW: TRUCK PERCENT

Town of Brookfield, Massachusetts 2024 Master Plan



Legend

Town Boundary	Truck Volume (2019)
River, Stream	-10 - 300
Lake, Pond	300 - 600
MassDEP Wetlands	600 - 1200
Active Rail Service	1800+
Major Road	
Local Road	

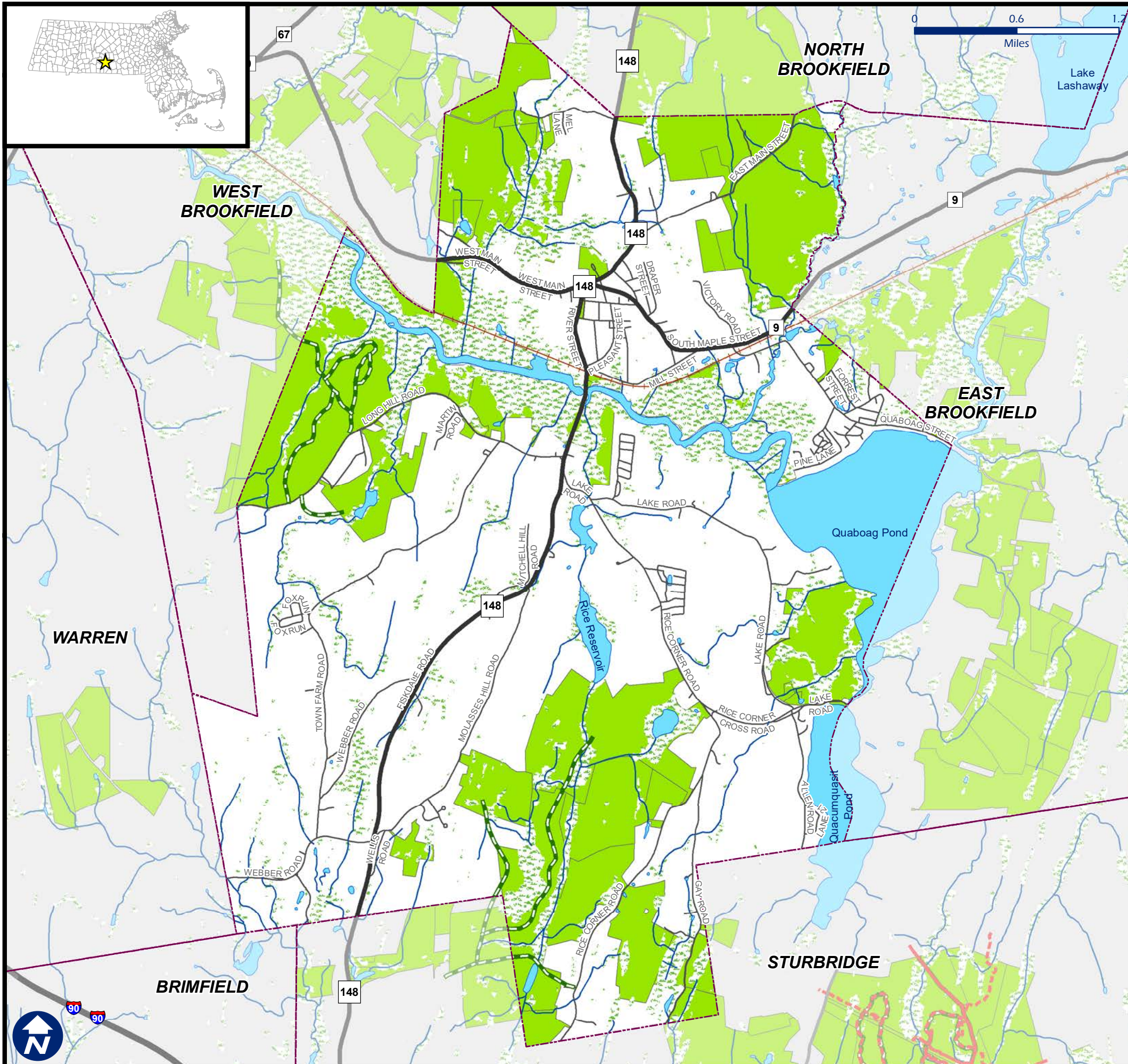
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Town of Brookfield, Massachusetts 2024 Master Plan



Legend

- Town Boundary
- River, Stream
- Lake, Pond
- MassDEP Wetlands
- Active Rail Service
- Major Road
- Local Road
- Natural Surface
- Paved Surface
- Gravel Surface
- Trails (CMRPC)
- Conservation Land and/or Protected Land (11/2023)

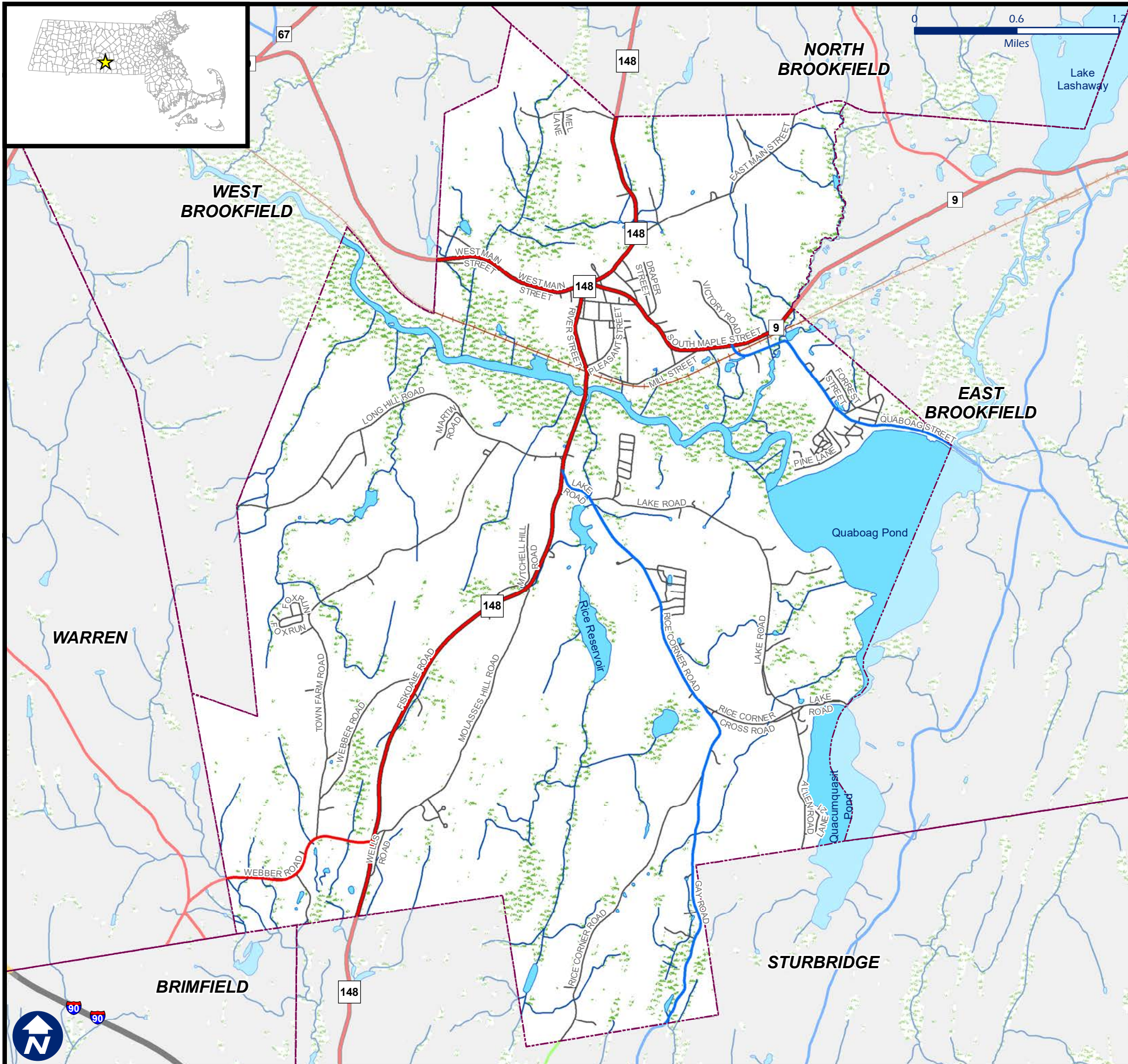
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Town of Brookfield, Massachusetts 2024 Master Plan



Legend

Town Boundary	Major Road
River, Stream	Local Road
Lake, Pond	Evacuation Routes
MassDEP Wetlands	Highway
Active Rail Service	Primary
	Secondary
	Tertiary

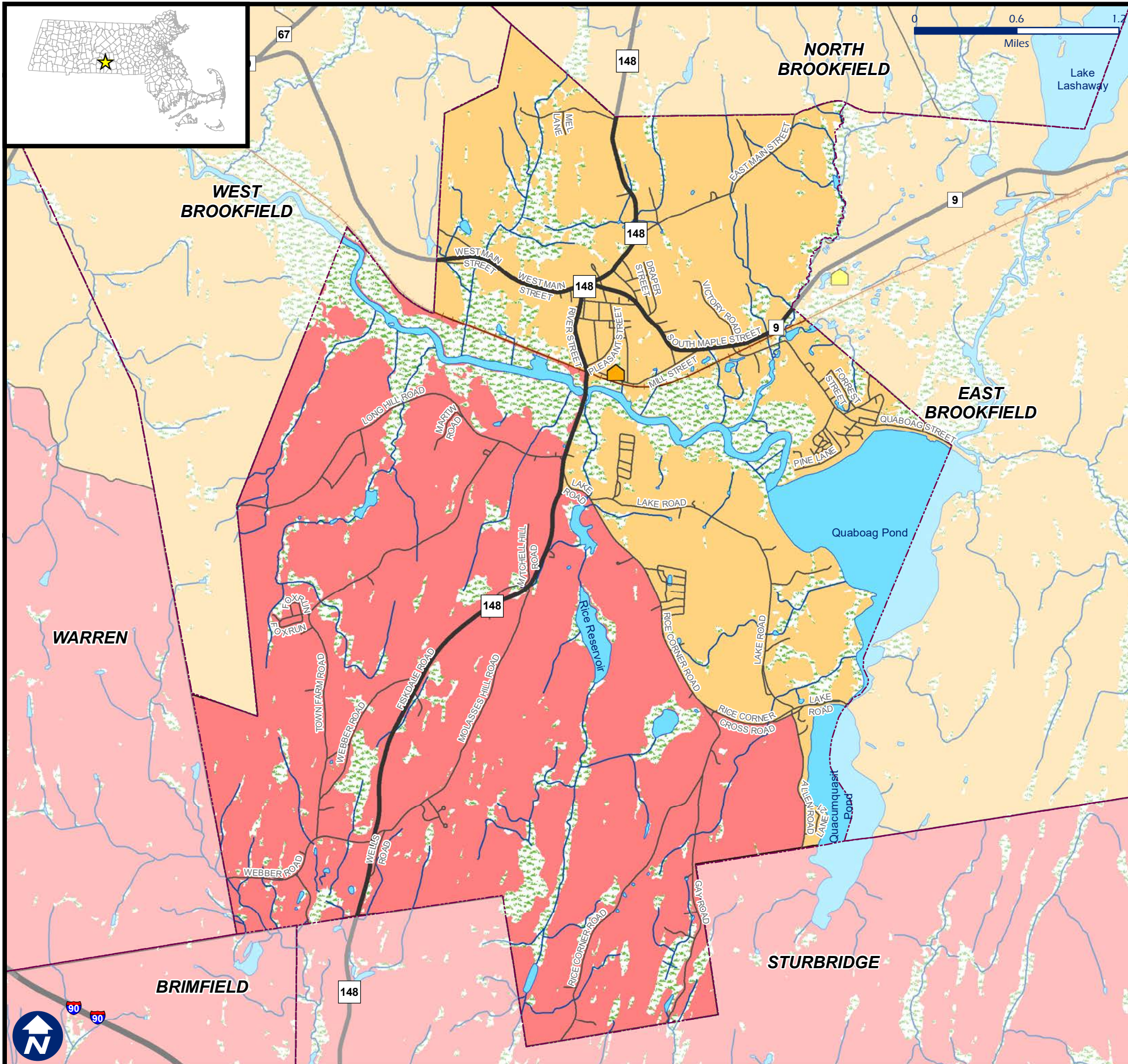
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Town of Brookfield, Massachusetts 2024 Master Plan



Legend

- Town Boundary
- River, Stream
- Lake, Pond
- MassDEP Wetlands
- Active Rail Service
- Major Road
- Local Road
- Food Retailers (2021)
 - Convenience Stores, Pharmacies, and Drug Stores
 - Dollar Store
 - Supermarket or Other Grocery
- Drive to Food - Food Access Score: use for less populated areas (2016)
 - Low (0 to 6)
 - Medium (6 to 12)
- Index Along Driving Network (5 miles)

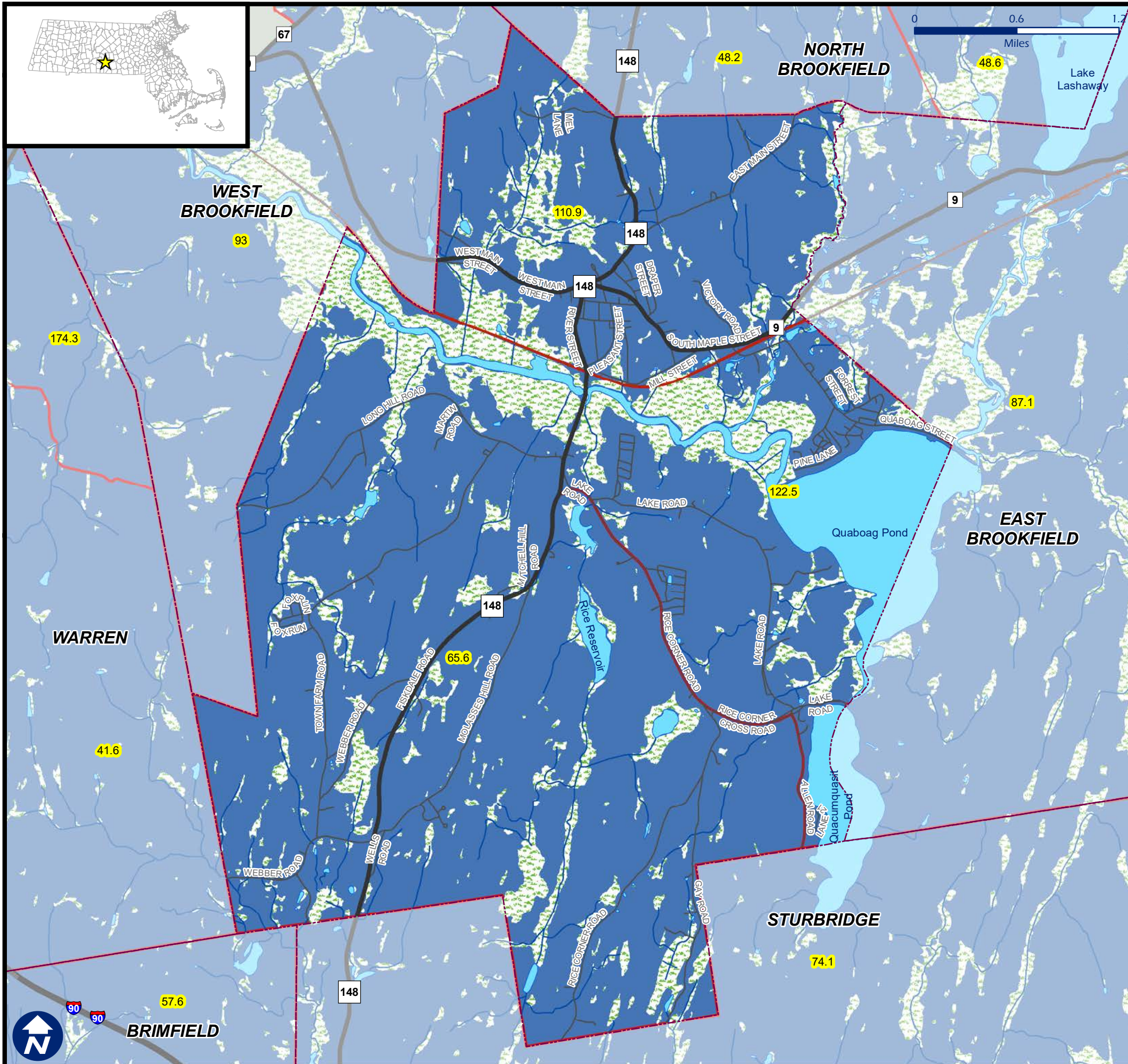
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Town of Brookfield, Massachusetts 2024 Master Plan



Legend

	Town Boundary		202 Census Block Group
	River, Stream		Population Density (people per square kilometer)
	Lake, Pond		0-250
	MassDEP Wetlands		250-500
	Active Rail Service		
	Major Road		
	Local Road		

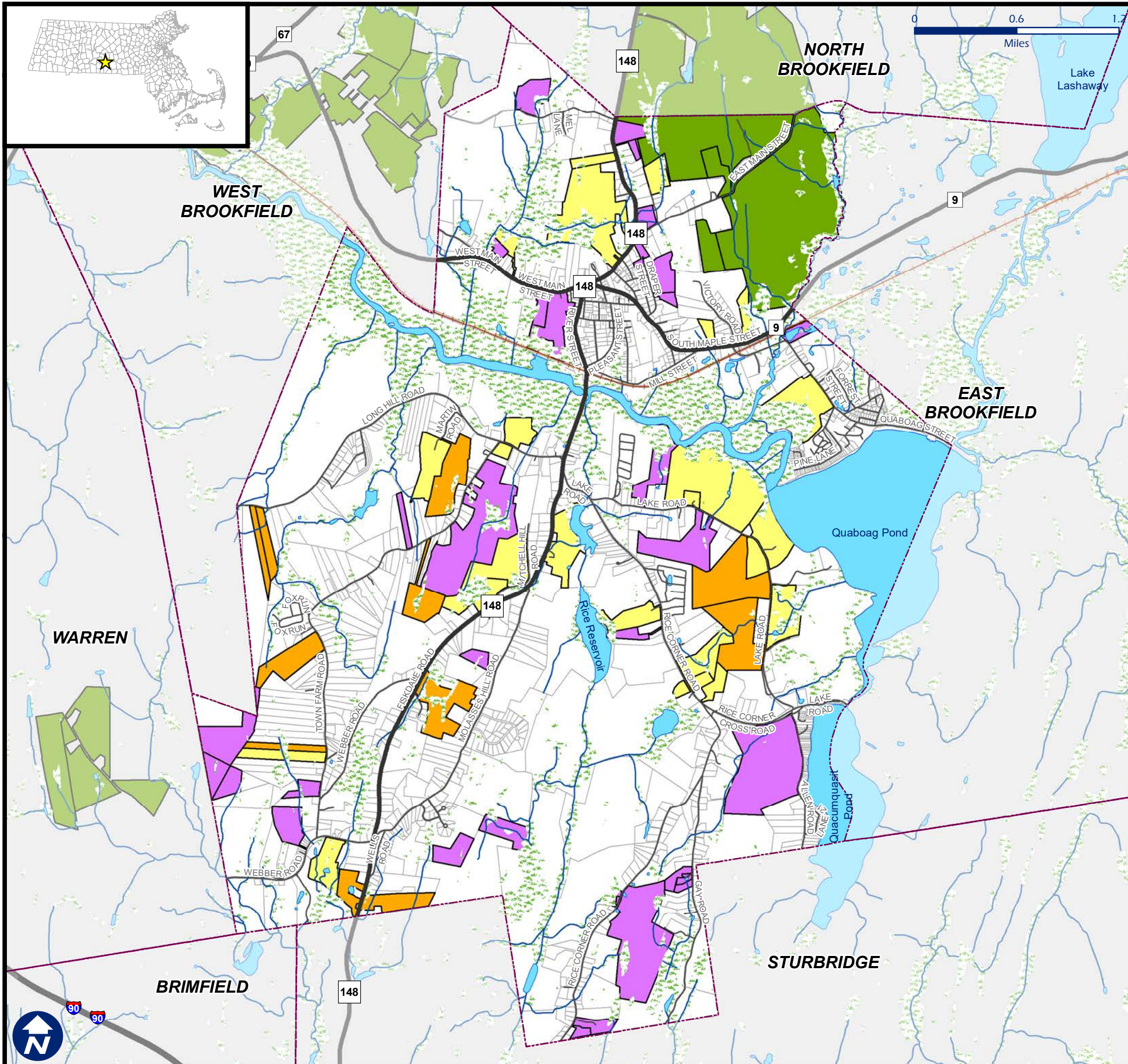
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Town of Brookfield, Massachusetts 2024 Master Plan



Legend

Town Boundary	Agricultural Preservation Restriction (11/2023)
River, Stream	Chapter Land (FY2022)
Lake, Pond	Chapter 61
MassDEP Wetlands	Chapter 61A
Active Rail Service	Chapter 61B
Major Road	
Local Road	

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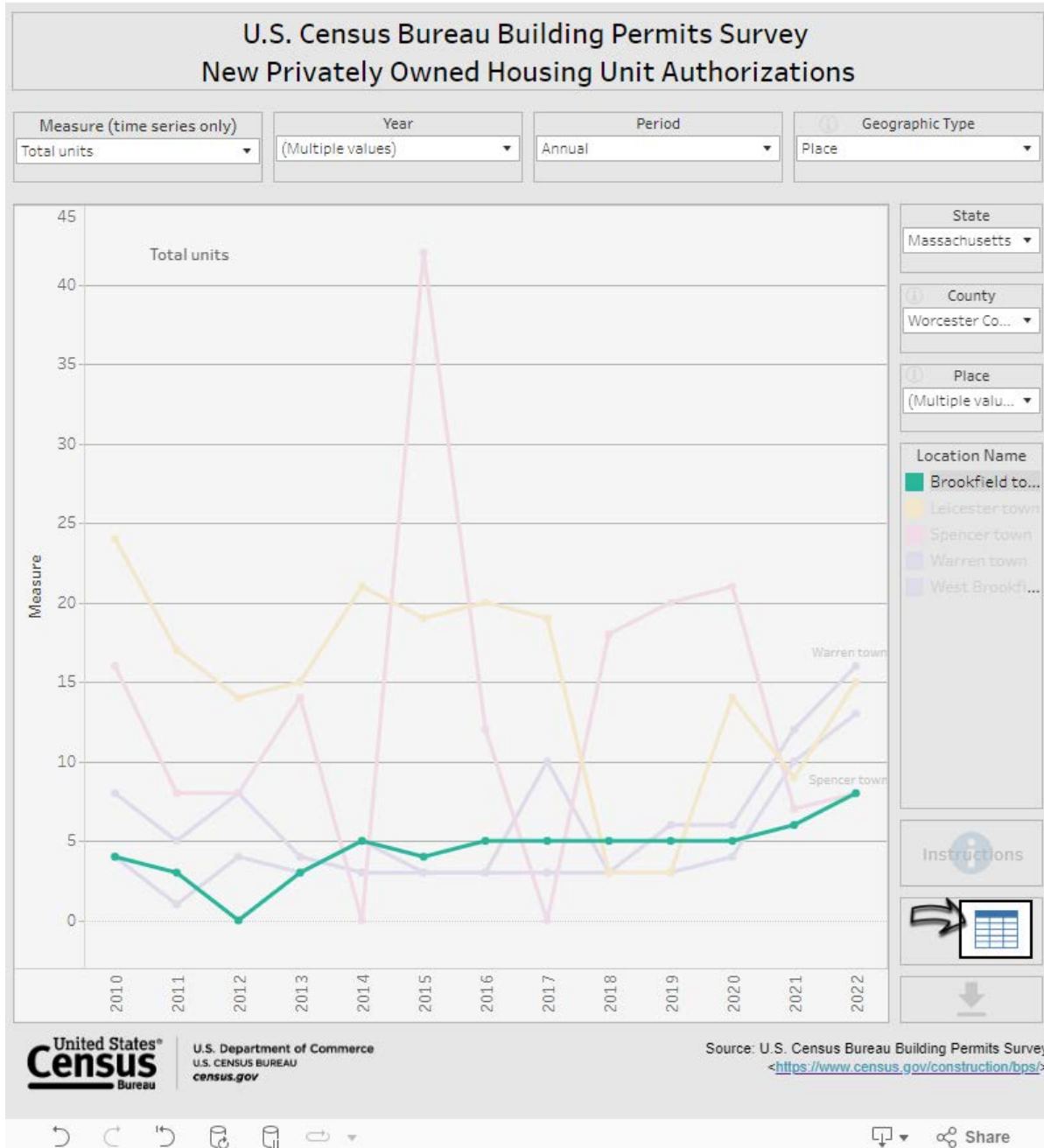


Figure 1: Building Permits, New Housing Units, 2010-2022. Source: U.S. Census Bureau Building Permits Survey.



Figure 2: MHC Inventory Buildings. Source: MACRIS.

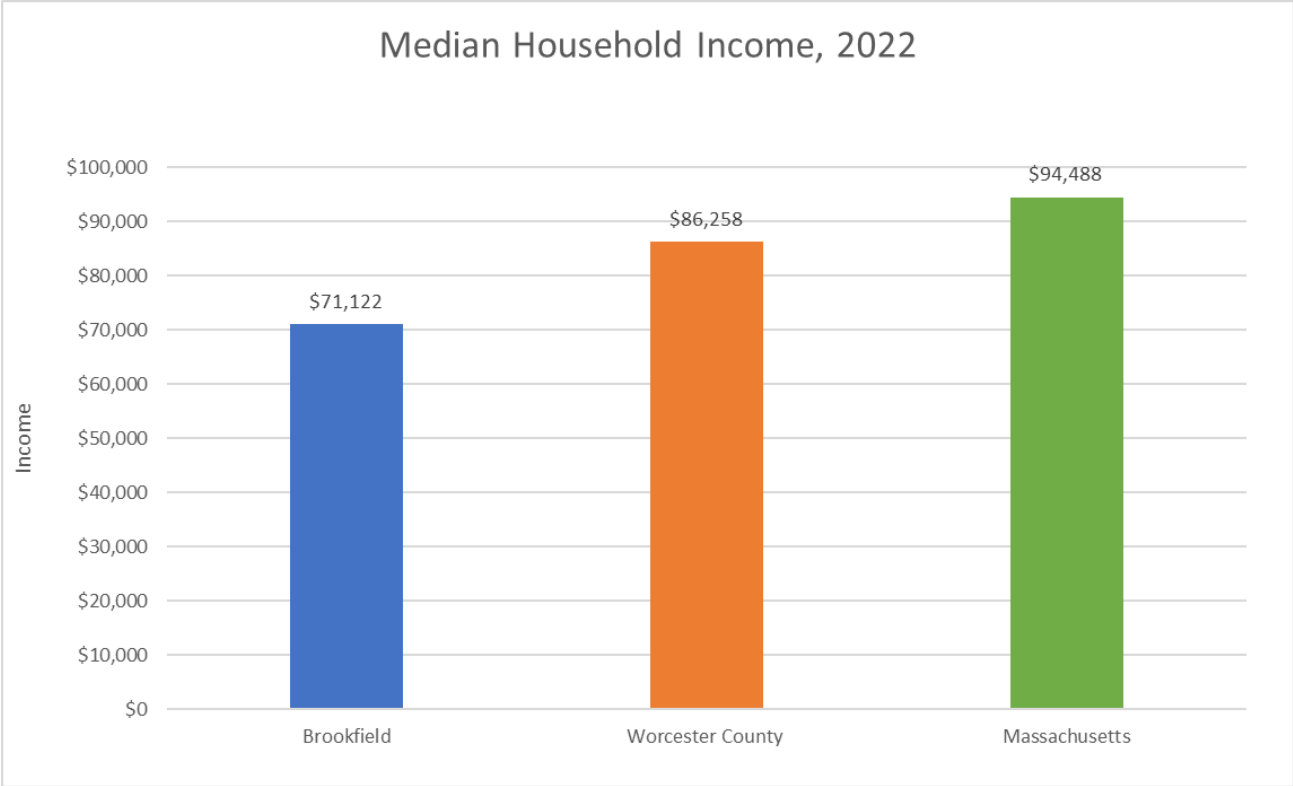


Figure 3: Median Household Income in Brookfield Compared to the County and State, 2022.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

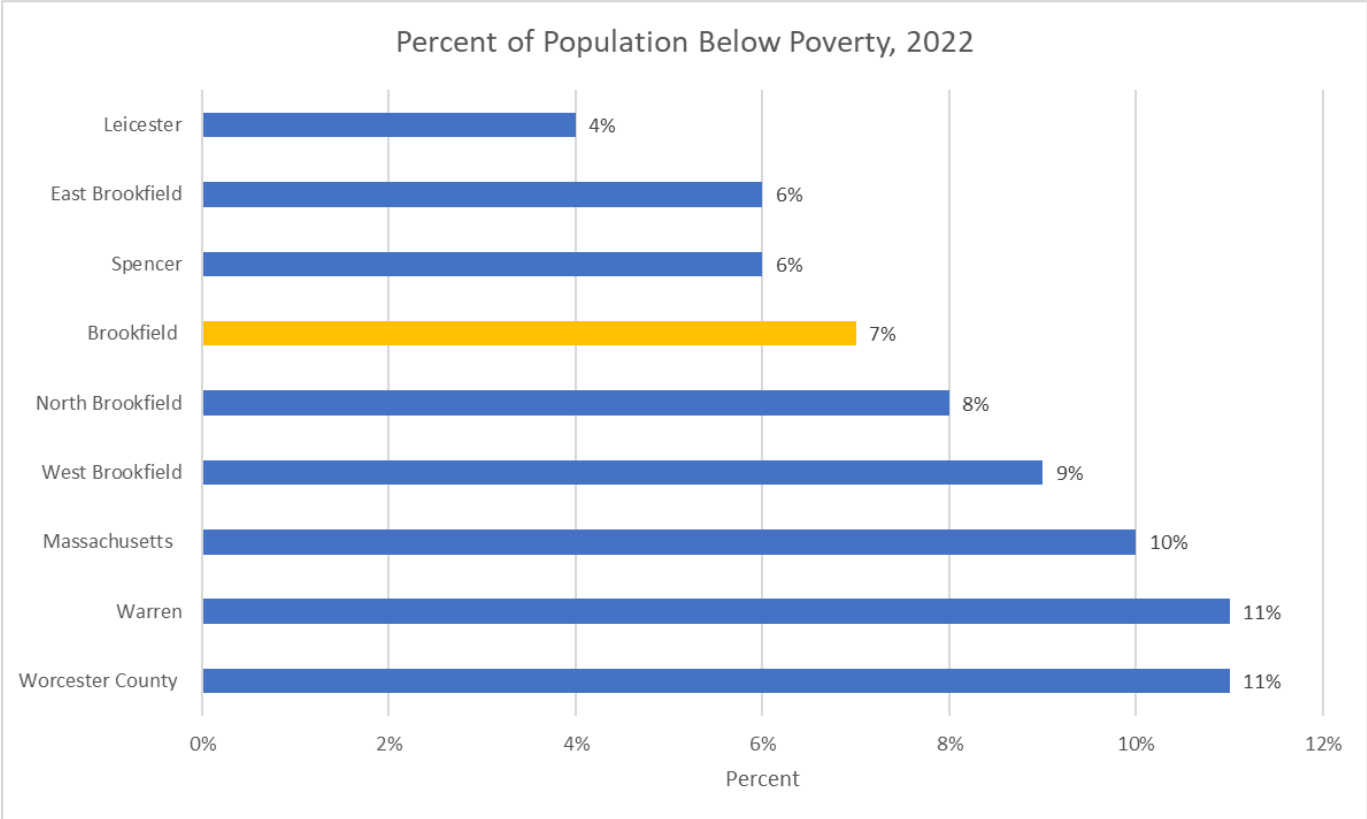


Figure 4: Percentage of Population Below Poverty in Brookfield and Surrounding Towns, 2022.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

Population Pyramid, Brookfield, 2022

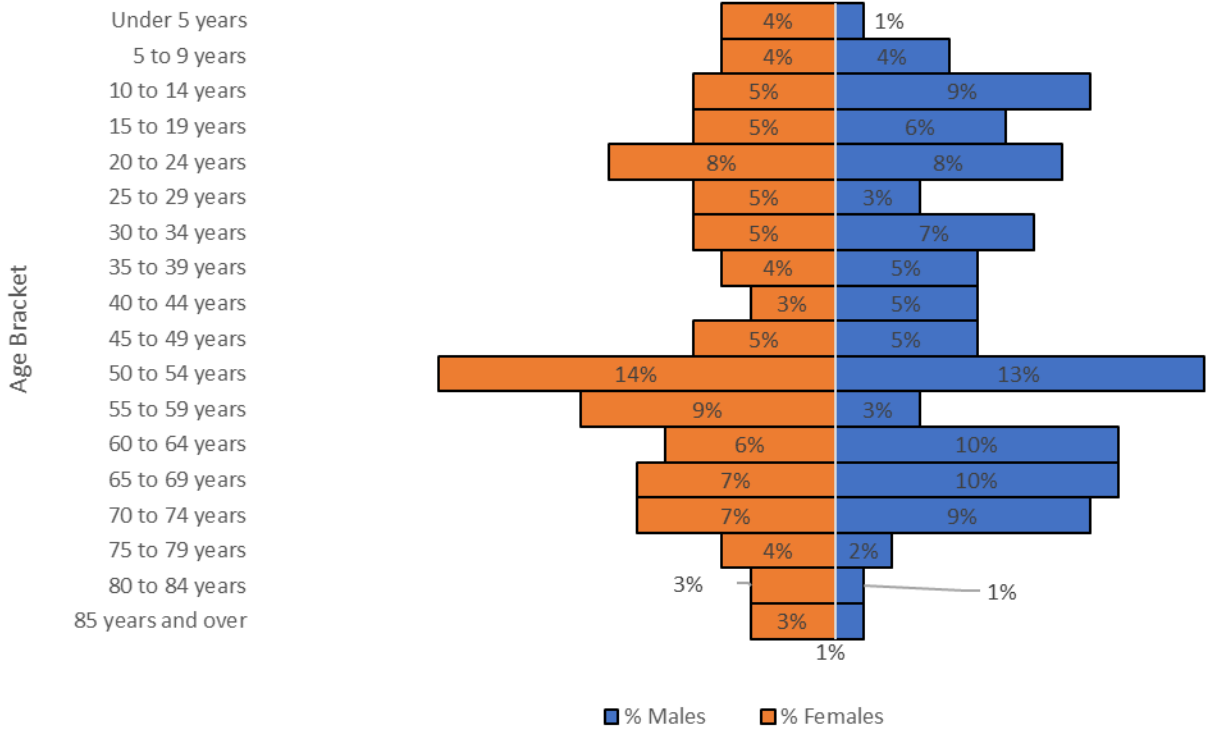


Figure 5: Population Pyramid in Brookfield, 2022. Source U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

Population Pyramid, Worcester County, 2022

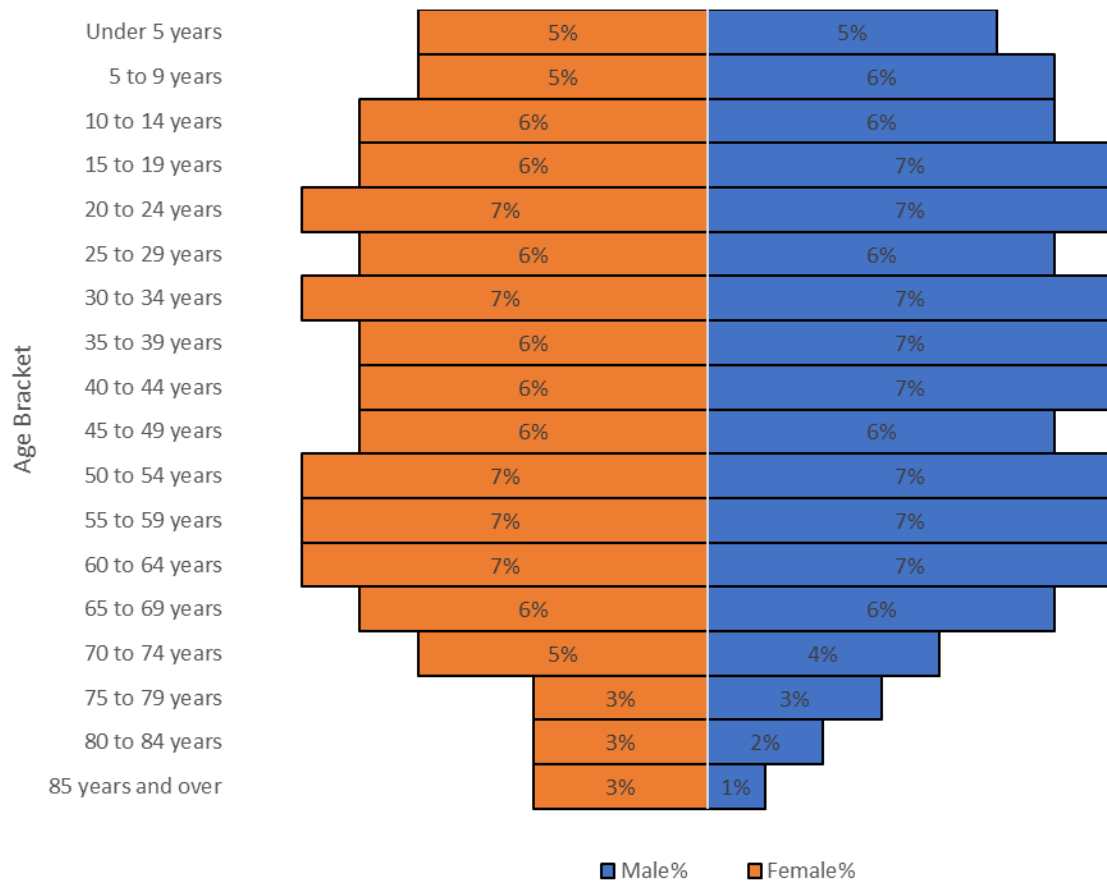


Figure 6: Population Pyramid in Worcester County, 2022. Source U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

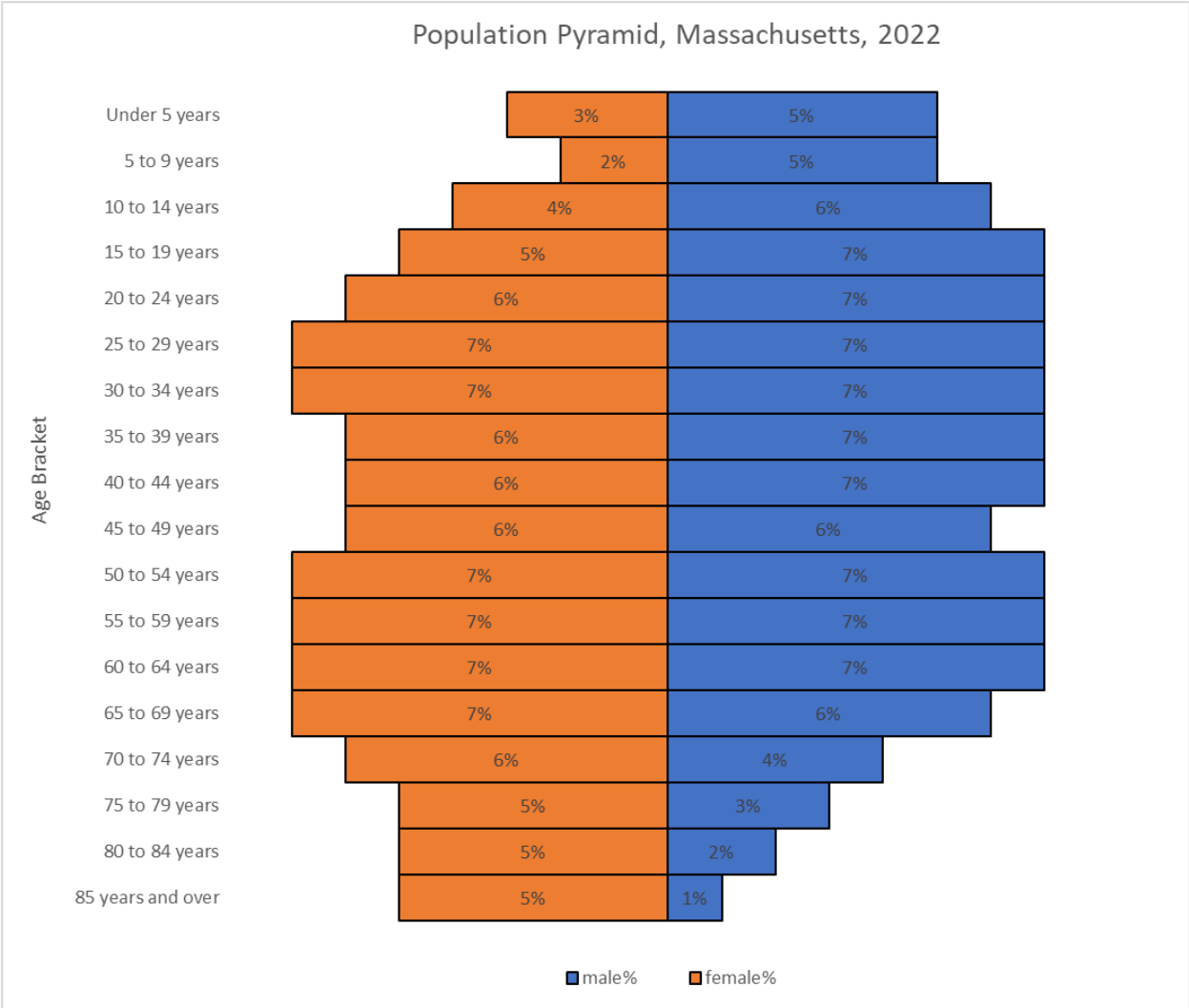


Figure 7: Population Pyramid in Massachusetts, 2022. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

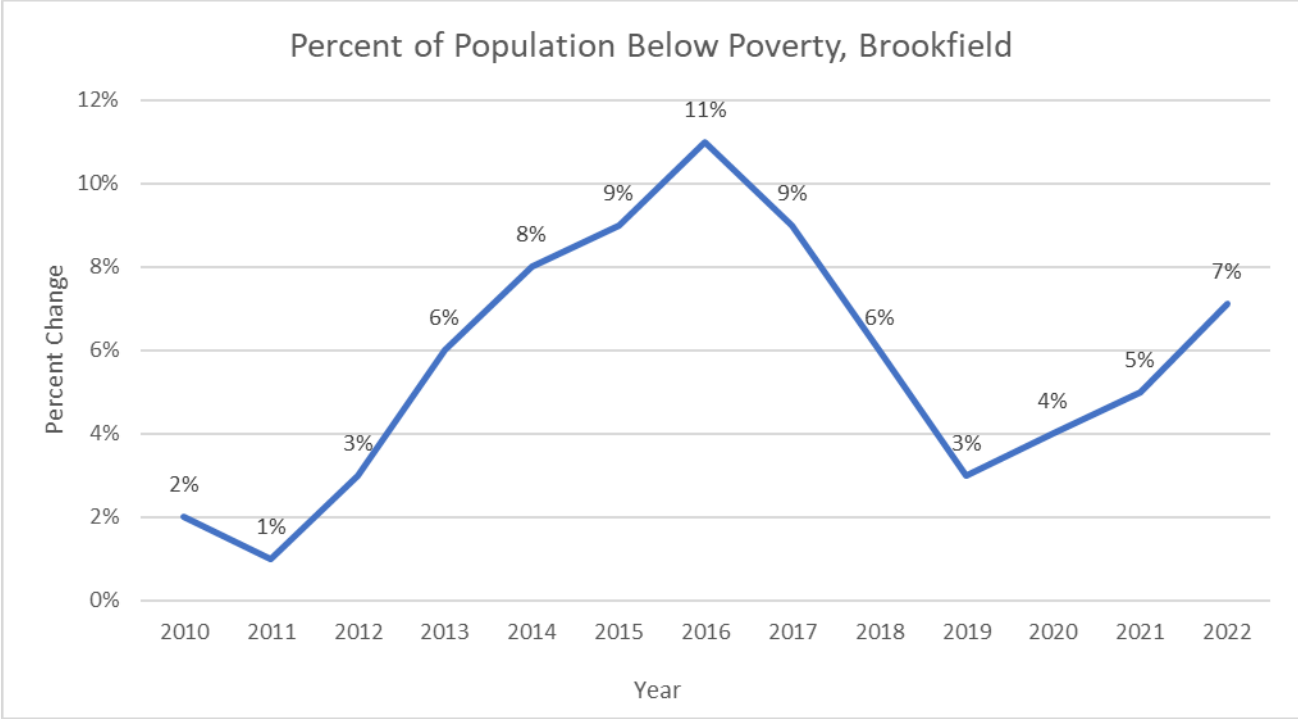


Figure 8: Population Below Poverty in Brookfield Over Time. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

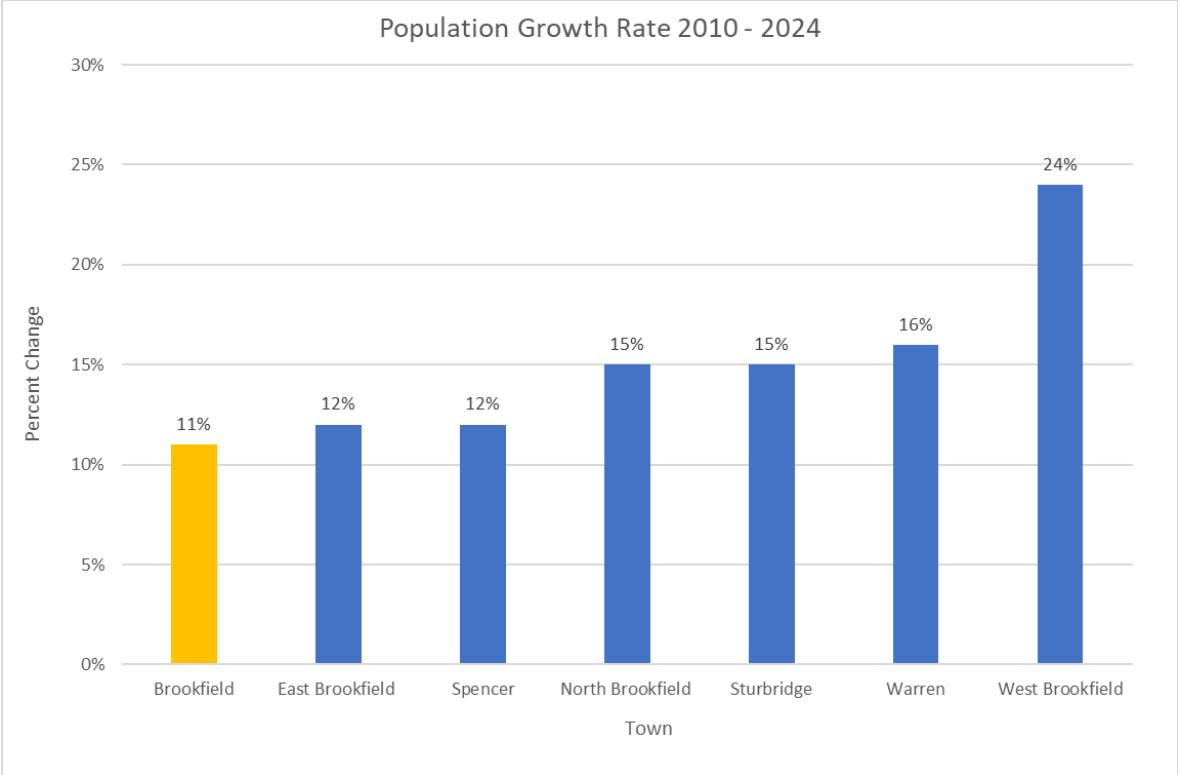


Figure 9: Population Growth Rate in Brookfield and Surrounding Towns. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

Table X, Employment Growth Rate (2010 - 2040)					
Town	2010 Population	2020 Population	2030 Population	2040 Population	Percent Change
Warren	574	582	606	625	9%
North Brookfield	899	1,158	1,285	1,333	48%
West Brookfield	851	1,163	1,319	1,381	62%
Spencer	3,012	3,203	3,298	3,304	10%
East Brookfield	396	532	592	619	56%
Sturbridge	4,596	4,726	4,587	4,594	0%
Brookfield	494	662	764	800	62%

Source: CMRPC Regional Projections, ACS 5-Year Estimates

Table 1: Employment Growth Rate in Brookfield and Surrounding Towns. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

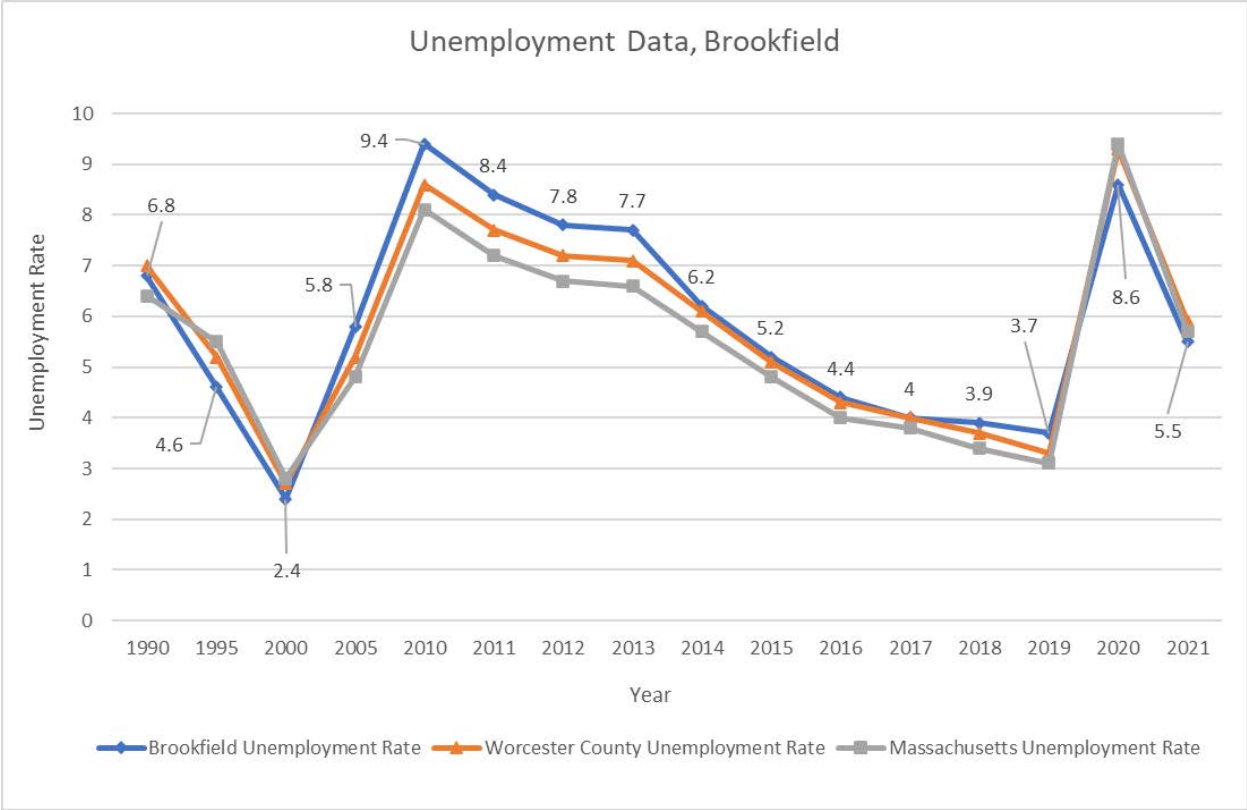


Figure 10: Unemployment Rate in Brookfield Over Time. Source: Massachusetts Division of Local Services

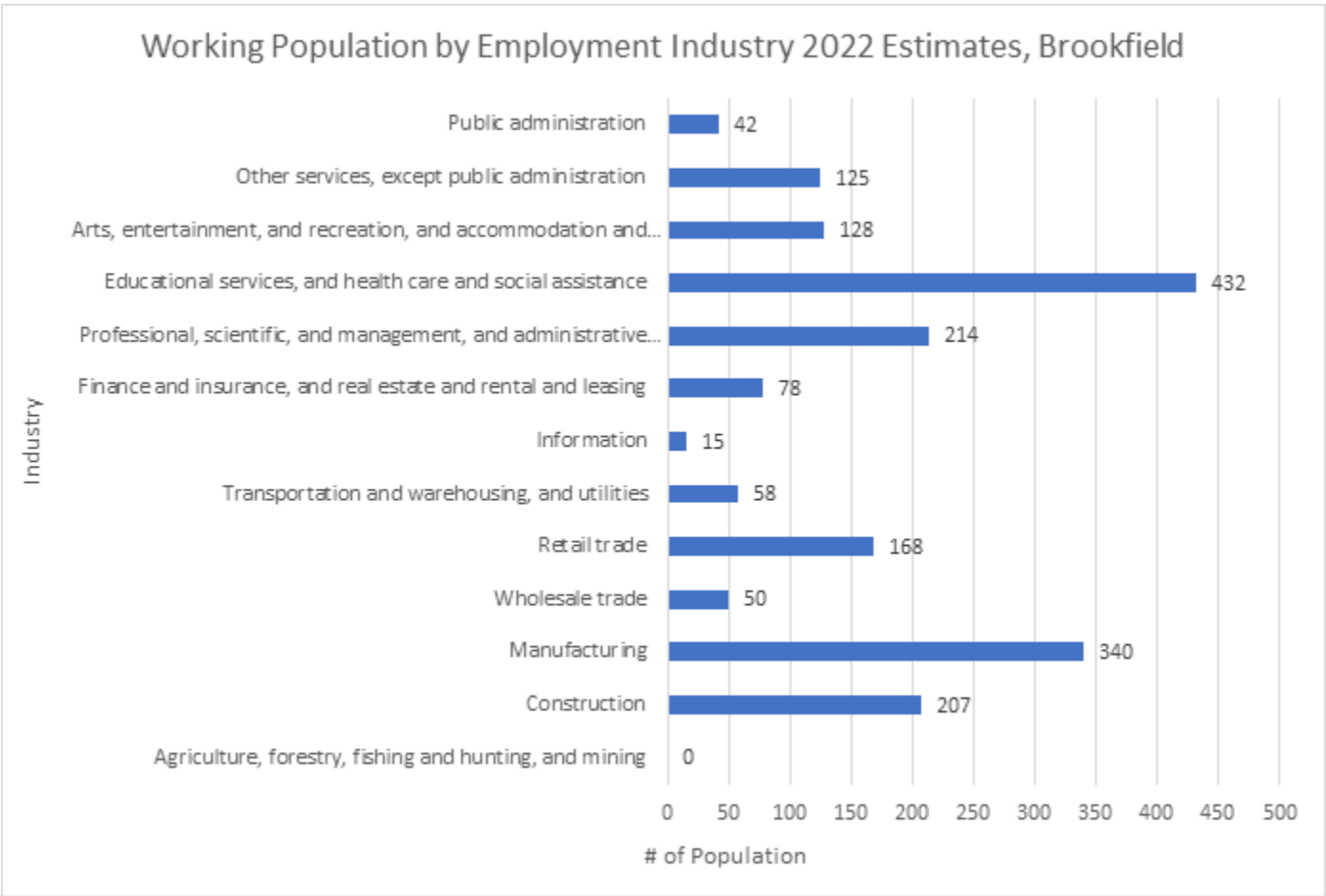


Figure 11: Working Population by Employment Industry in Brookfield, 2022. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

Largest Employers in Brookfield	
Company name	Number of employees
Brookfield Elementary School	50-99
Brookfield Fire Dept	20-49
Clam Box	20-49
State Police	20-49
Brookfield Ambulance	10-19
Brookfield Police Dept	10-19
Brookfield Town Hall	10-19
Exit Real Estate Executives	10-19
Hillcrest Montessori	10-19
Town Hall	10-19
Trustees of Clark University	10-19
American Charitable Inc	5-9
Bay Path Spirits Inc	5-9
Community Resources-Justices	5-9
Cumberland Farms	5-9
Dollar General	5-9
Merrick Public Library	5-9
Paint & Fix It	5-9
Sapphire Pools Inc	5-9
SONG Inc	5-9
Stone & Lime Imports Inc	5-9
Walker Machine	5-9
Dave's Appliance	1-4
Quaboag Equipment	1-4
Smokestack Lightning	1-4

Table 2: Largest Employers in Brookfield, 2022. Source: Massachusetts Division of Local Services

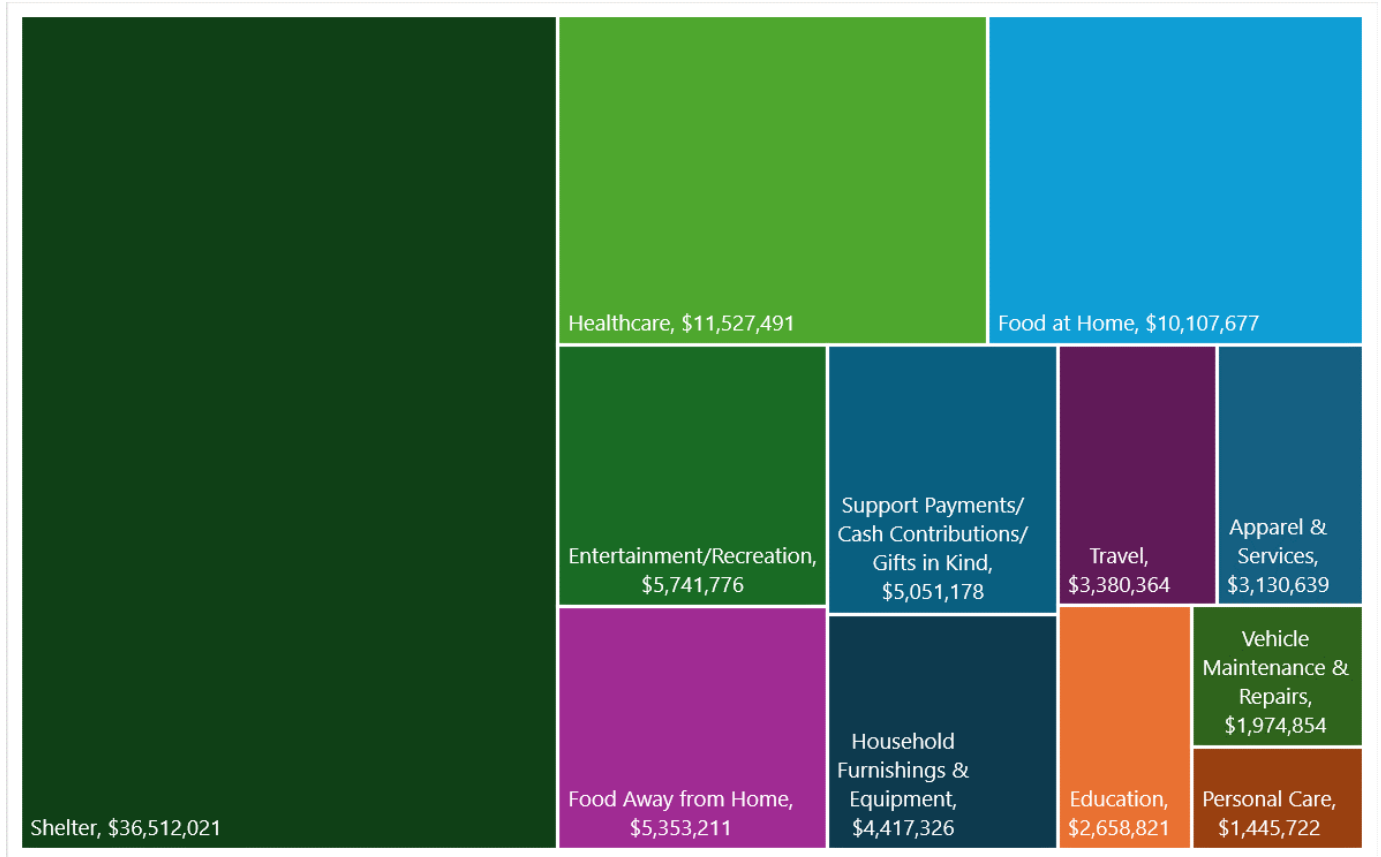


Figure 12: 2023 Consumer Spending in Brookfield. Source: Esri Business Analyst, Market Profile report

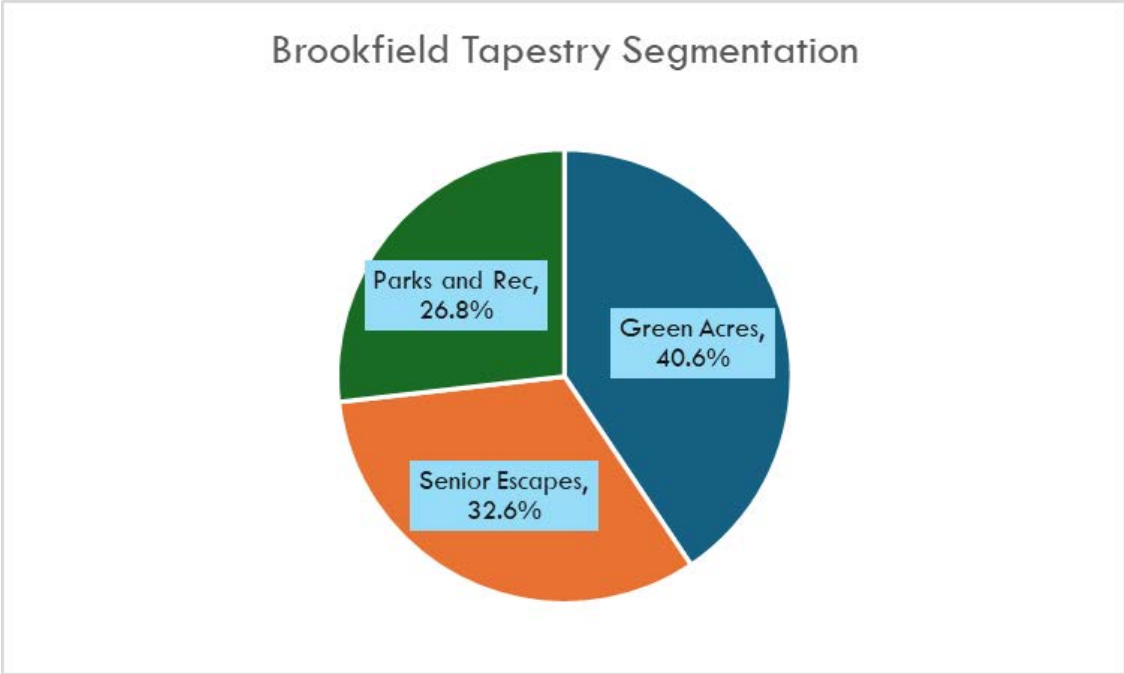


Figure 13: Brookfield Tapestry Segmentation, 2023. Source: Esri Business Analyst, Tapestry Segmentation Area Profile report

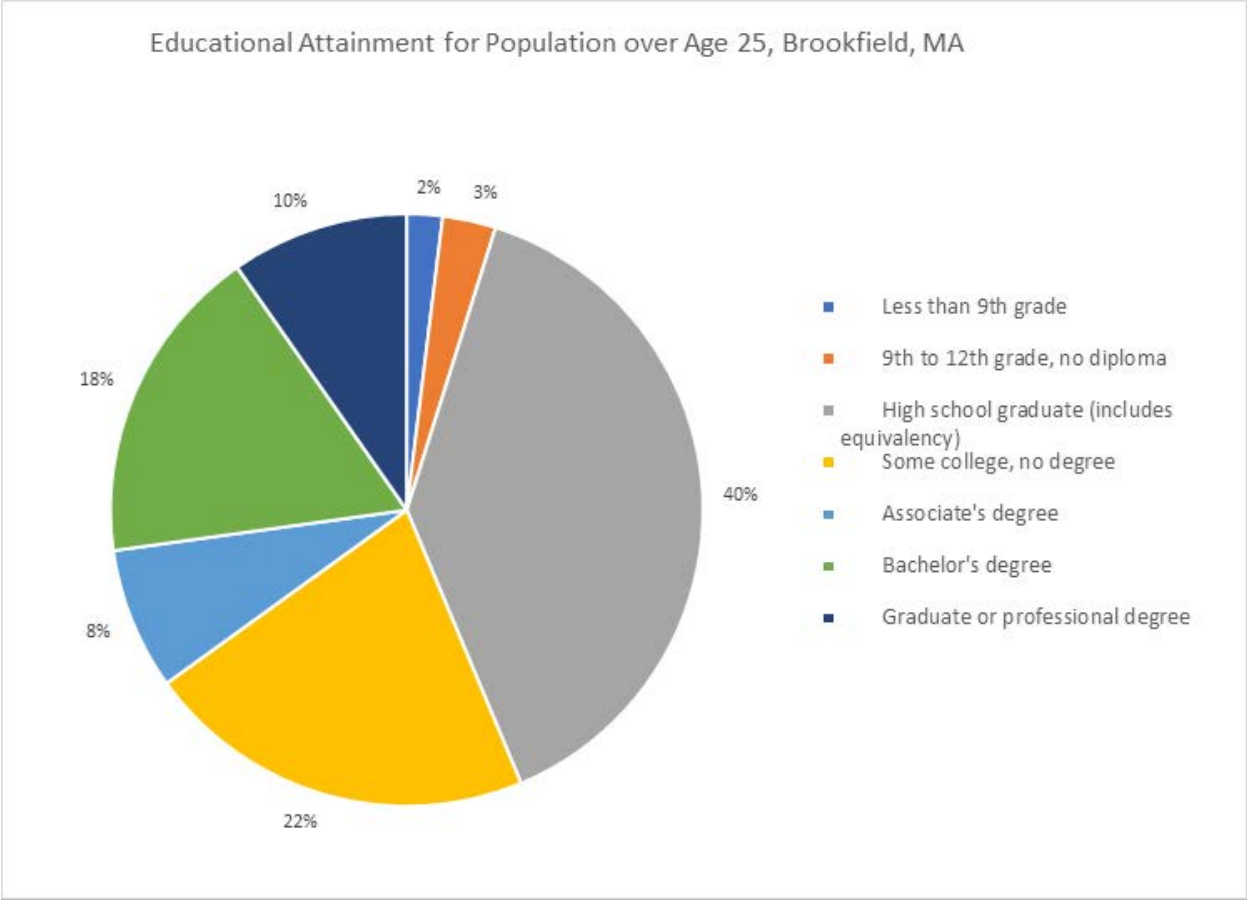


Figure 14: Educational Attainment for Brookfield’s Population over Age 25, 2022. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

Commute Patterns, Age				
Age	Total	Drove alone	Carpooled	Public Transportation
16 to 19 years	3%	3%	0%	0%
20 to 24 years	13%	14%	0%	0%
25 to 44 years	27%	27%	20%	100%
45 to 54 years	35%	34%	80%	0%
55 to 59 years	6%	6%	0%	0%
60 years and over	16%	16%	0%	0%

Source: 2022 ACS 5-year estimates

Table 3: Brookfield Commuting Patterns by Age, 2022. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

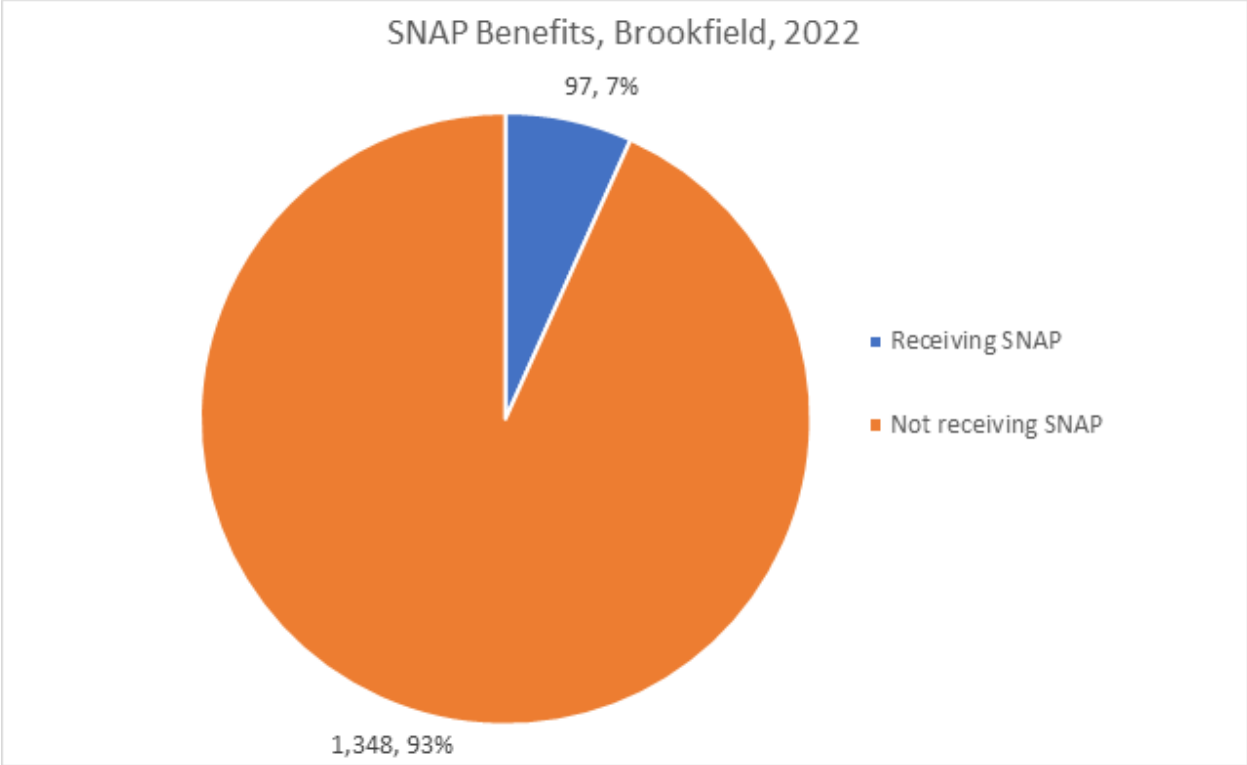


Figure 15: Residents Receiving SNAP Benefits in Brookfield, 2022. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

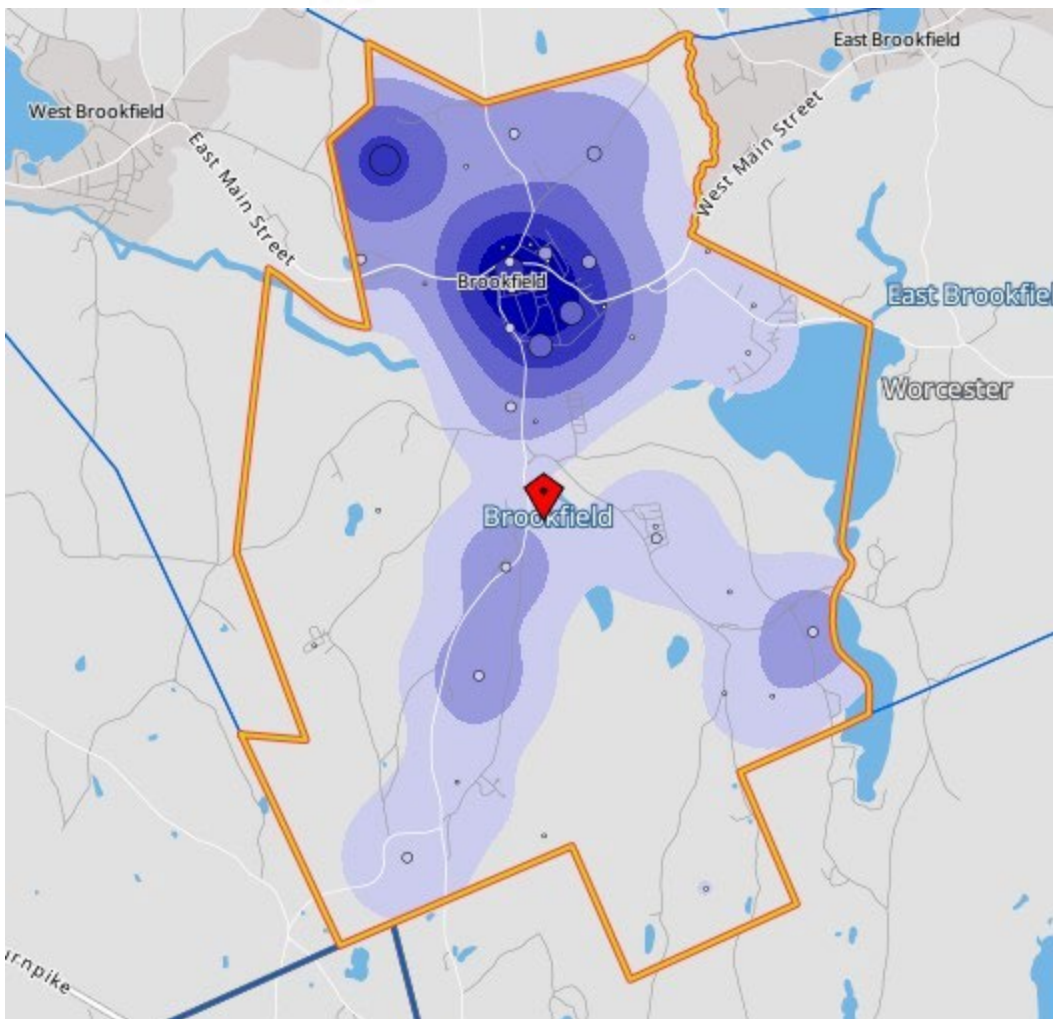


Figure 16: Job Concentration Location, Brookfield, 2010 – 2021. Source: US Census Bureau, OnTheMap

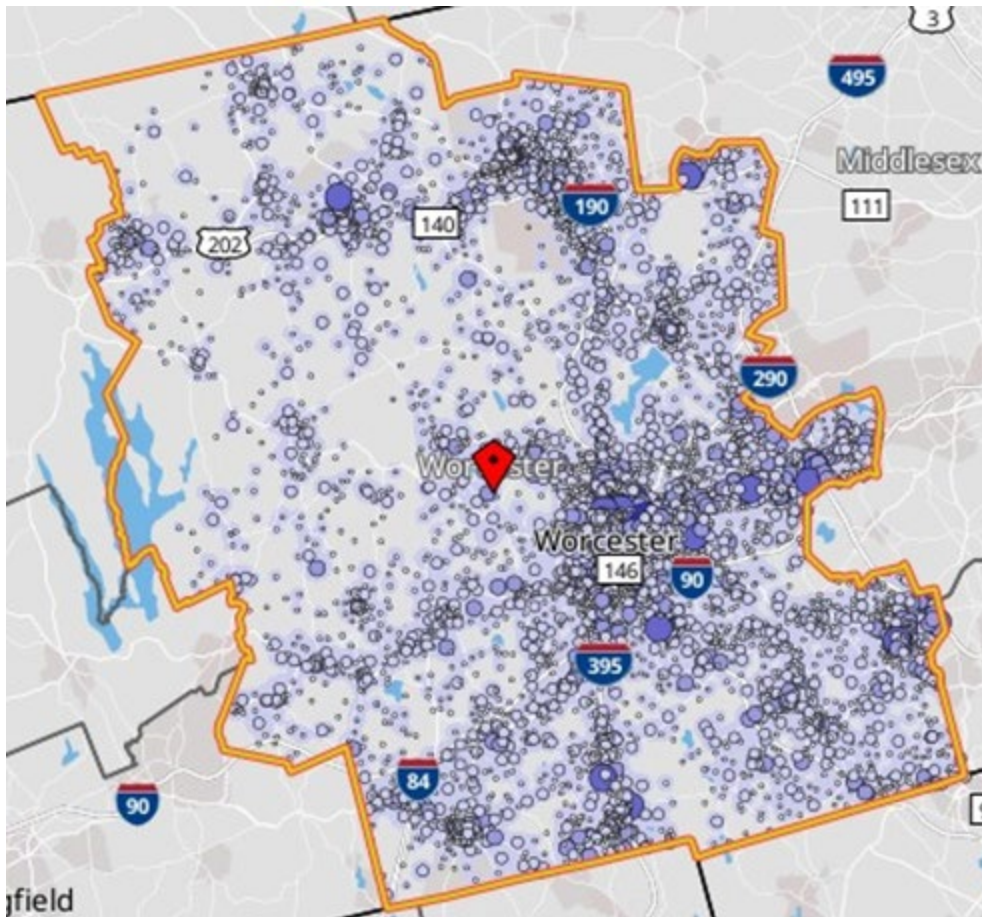
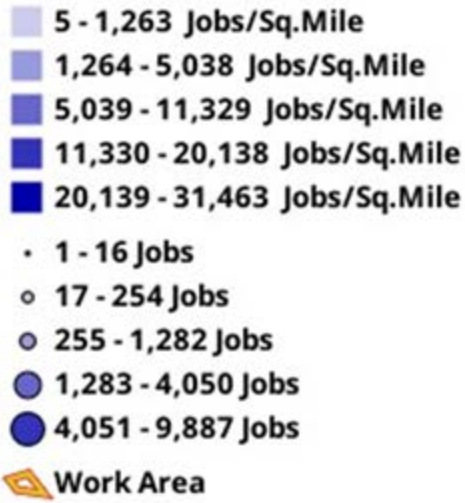


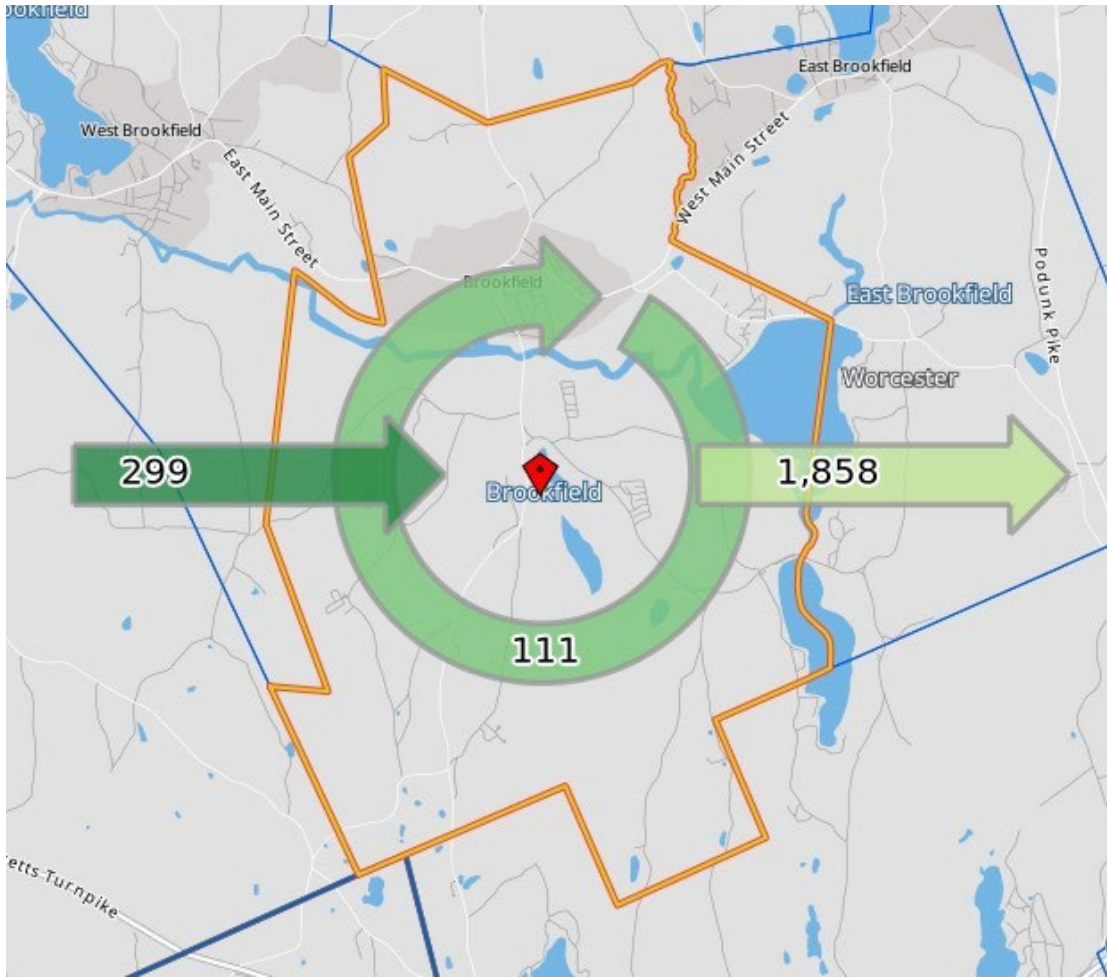
Figure 17: Job Concentration Location, Worcester County, 2010 – 2021. Source: US Census Bureau, OnTheMap

Where Brookfield Residents Work	
2022	
Worked in state of residence	94%
Worked in county of residence	82%
Worked outside county of residence	12%
Worked outside state of residence	6%
Living in a place	30%
Worked in place of residence	3%
Worked outside place of residence	27%
Not living in a place	70%
Living in 12 selected states	100%
Worked in minor civil division of residence	10%
Worked outside minor civil division of residence	90%
Not living in 12 selected states	0%
Workers 16 years and over who did not work from home	1,704
Source: 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates	

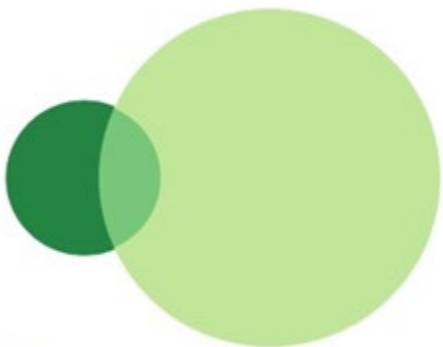
Table 4: Where Brookfield Residents Work, 2022. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

Where Residents Live, Brookfield	
2021	Share
Employed in the Selection Area	100%
Employed in the Selection Area but Living Outside	73%
Employed and Living in the Selection Area	27%
Living in the Selection Area	100%
Living in the Selection Area but Employed Outside	94%
Living and Employed in the Selection Area	6%
Source: On The Map Census	

Table 5: Where Brookfield Residents Live, 2022. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap



Inflow/Outflow Job Counts in 2021



- 299 - Employed in Selection Area, Live Outside
- 1,858 - Live in Selection Area, Employed Outside
- 111 - Employed and Live in Selection Area

Note: Overlay arrows do not indicate directionality of worker flow between home and employment locations.

- Employed and Live in Selection Area
- Employed in Selection Area, Live Outside
- Live in Selection Area, Employed Outside

Figure 18: Inflow/Outflow of Workers, 2022. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap

Home Destination Report - Where Workers Live Who are Employed in the Selection Area - by County Subdivisions

Total All Jobs

	2021		2020		2019		2018		2017		2016		2015		2014	
	Count	Share	Count	Share	Count	Share	Count	Share	Count	Share	Count	Share	Count	Share	Count	Share
Total All Jobs	410	100.0%	375	100.0%	384	100.0%	372	100.0%	325	100.0%	322	100.0%	296	100.0%	390	100.0%

Jobs Counts by County Subdivisions Where Workers Live - All Jobs

	2021 ▼		2020		2019		2018		2017		2016		2015		2014	
	Count	Share	Count	Share	Count	Share	Count	Share	Count	Share	Count	Share	Count	Share	Count	Share
Brookfield town (Worcester, MA)	111	27.1%	79	21.1%	99	25.8%	96	25.8%	79	24.3%	78	24.2%	89	30.1%	73	18.7%
North Brookfield town (Worcester, MA)	18	4.4%	7	1.9%	7	1.8%	15	4.0%	15	4.6%	7	2.2%	18	6.1%	29	7.4%
Sturbridge town (Worcester, MA)	17	4.1%	19	5.1%	15	3.9%	11	3.0%	11	3.4%	19	5.9%	18	6.1%	18	4.6%
Ware town (Hampshire, MA)	13	3.2%	12	3.2%	10	2.6%	10	2.7%	6	1.8%	9	2.8%	4	1.4%	6	1.5%
West Brookfield town (Worcester, MA)	13	3.2%	8	2.1%	16	4.2%	17	4.6%	8	2.5%	11	3.4%	8	2.7%	20	5.1%
Worcester city (Worcester, MA)	13	3.2%	20	5.3%	19	4.9%	28	7.5%	17	5.2%	17	5.3%	8	2.7%	18	4.6%
Barre town (Worcester, MA)	12	2.9%	10	2.7%	6	1.6%	6	1.6%	7	2.2%	7	2.2%	4	1.4%	6	1.5%
Spencer town (Worcester, MA)	12	2.9%	12	3.2%	20	5.2%	19	5.1%	8	2.5%	11	3.4%	11	3.7%	14	3.6%
Holland town (Hampden, MA)	11	2.7%	3	0.8%	7	1.8%	4	1.1%	3	0.9%	1	0.3%	3	1.0%	13	3.3%
Palmer Town city (Hampden, MA)	10	2.4%	20	5.3%	10	2.6%	7	1.9%	5	1.5%	6	1.9%	4	1.4%	2	0.5%
All Other Locations	180	43.9%	185	49.3%	175	45.6%	159	42.7%	166	51.1%	156	48.4%	129	43.6%	191	49.0%

Figure 19: Home Destination Report. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap

Work Destination Report - Where Workers are Employed Who Live in the Selection Area - by County Subdivisions

Total All Jobs

	2021		2020		2019		2018		2017		2016		2015	
	Count	Share	Count	Share	Count	Share	Count	Share	Count	Share	Count	Share	Count	Share
Total All Jobs	1,969	100.0%	1,682	100.0%	1,913	100.0%	1,902	100.0%	1,905	100.0%	1,927	100.0%	1,901	100.0%

Jobs Counts by County Subdivisions Where Workers are Employed - All Jobs

	2021 ▼		2020		2019		2018		2017		2016		2015	
	Count	Share	Count	Share	Count	Share	Count	Share	Count	Share	Count	Share	Count	Share
Worcester city (Worcester, MA)	285	14.5%	275	16.3%	276	14.4%	279	14.7%	284	14.9%	297	15.4%	301	15.8%
Brookfield town (Worcester, MA)	111	5.6%	79	4.7%	99	5.2%	96	5.0%	79	4.1%	78	4.0%	89	4.7%
Sturbridge town (Worcester, MA)	106	5.4%	96	5.7%	153	8.0%	127	6.7%	127	6.7%	135	7.0%	155	8.2%
Boston city (Suffolk, MA)	102	5.2%	92	5.5%	92	4.8%	95	5.0%	95	5.0%	109	5.7%	85	4.5%
Spencer town (Worcester, MA)	90	4.6%	70	4.2%	77	4.0%	97	5.1%	88	4.6%	82	4.3%	79	4.2%
Southbridge Town city (Worcester, MA)	64	3.3%	55	3.3%	44	2.3%	76	4.0%	94	4.9%	83	4.3%	69	3.6%
Auburn town (Worcester, MA)	55	2.8%	48	2.9%	55	2.9%	47	2.5%	58	3.0%	67	3.5%	60	3.2%
West Brookfield town (Worcester, MA)	54	2.7%	35	2.1%	56	2.9%	48	2.5%	53	2.8%	58	3.0%	61	3.2%
Charlton town (Worcester, MA)	52	2.6%	44	2.6%	35	1.8%	60	3.2%	56	2.9%	45	2.3%	54	2.8%
Shrewsbury town (Worcester, MA)	42	2.1%	29	1.7%	38	2.0%	35	1.8%	34	1.8%	38	2.0%	38	2.0%
All Other Locations	1,008	51.2%	859	51.1%	988	51.6%	942	49.5%	937	49.2%	935	48.5%	910	47.9%

Figure 20: Work Destination Report. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap

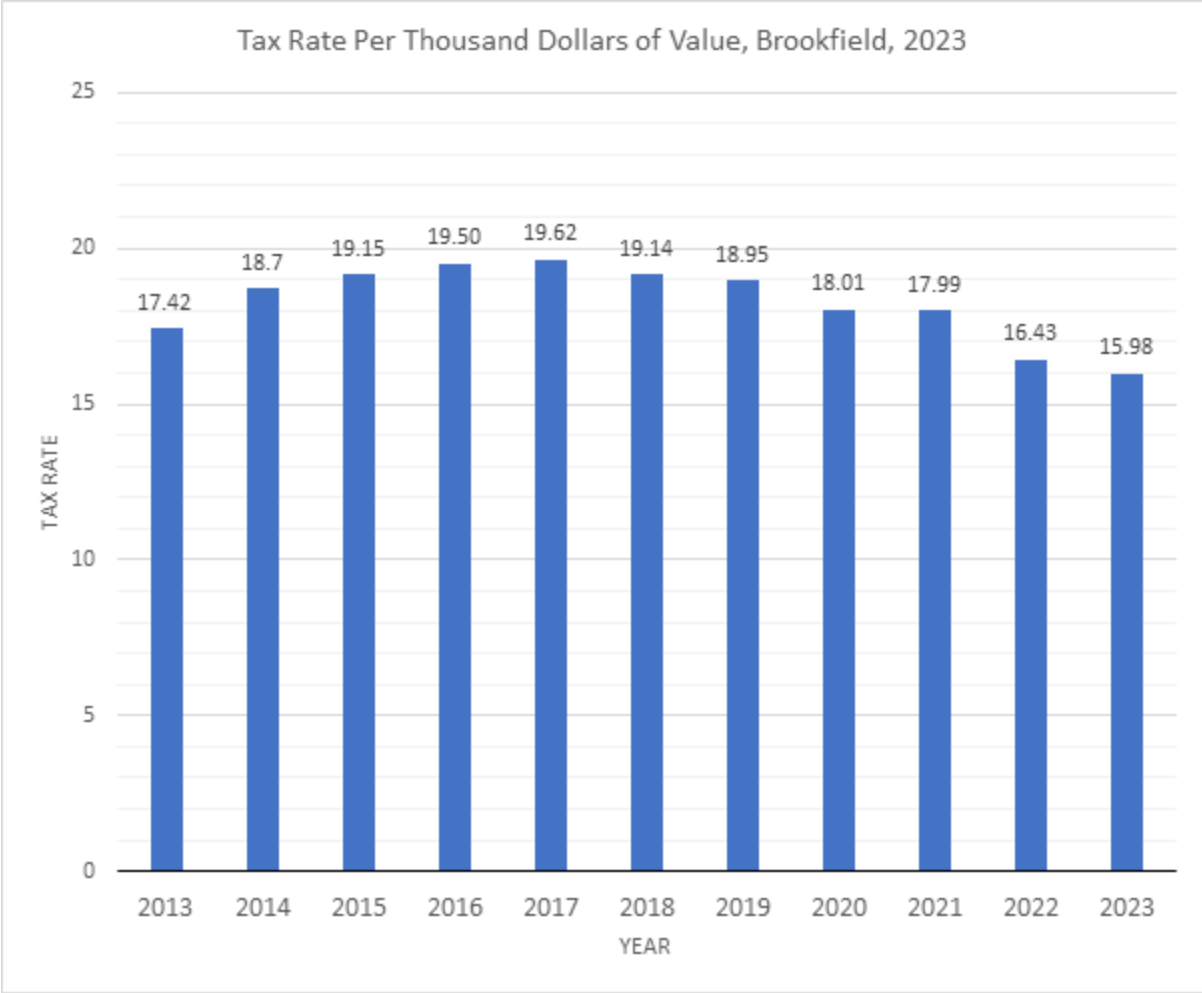


Figure 21: Tax Rate in Brookfield Over Time. Source: Massachusetts Division of Local Services

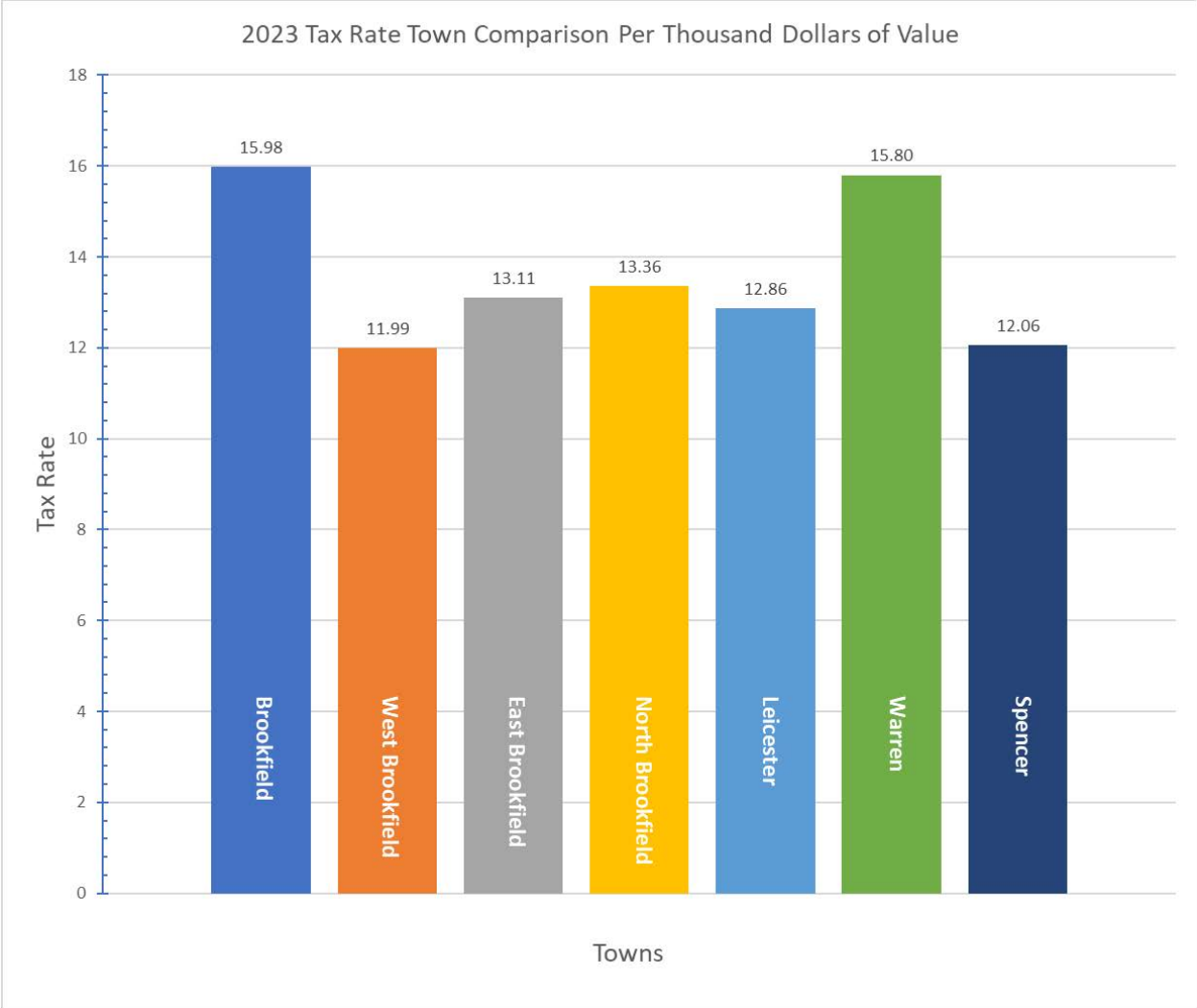


Figure 22: Tax Rate of Brookfield and Surrounding Towns, 2023. Source: Massachusetts Division of Local Services

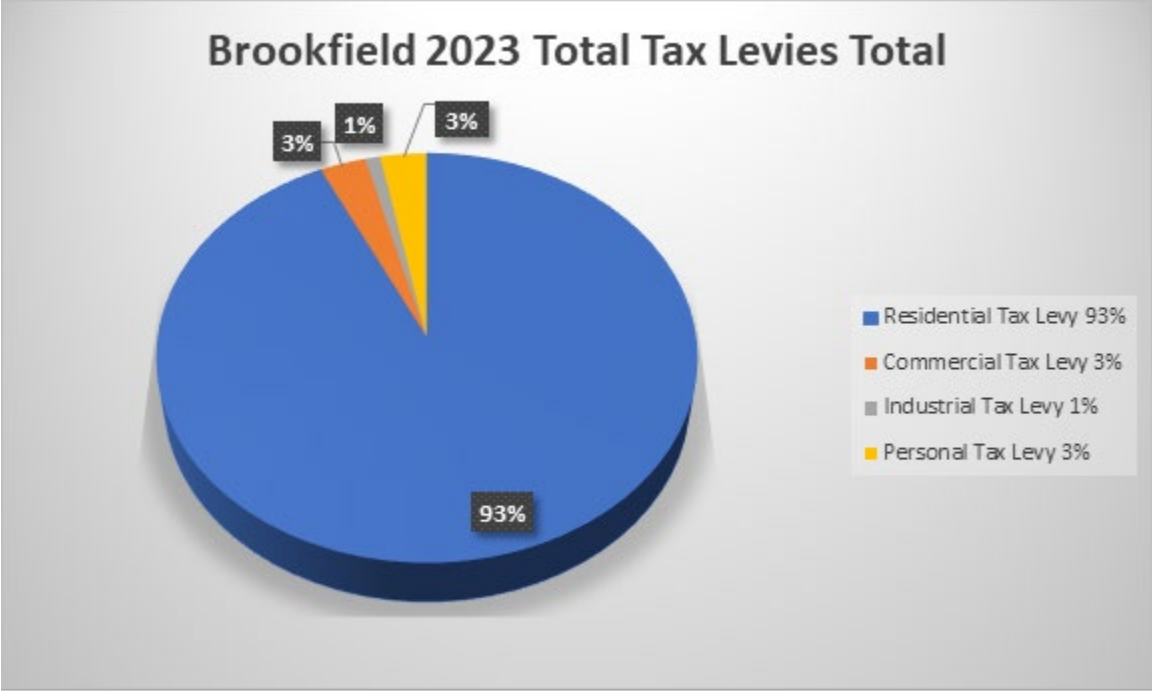


Figure 23: Tax Levy by Class in Brookfield, 2023. Source: Massachusetts Division of Local Services

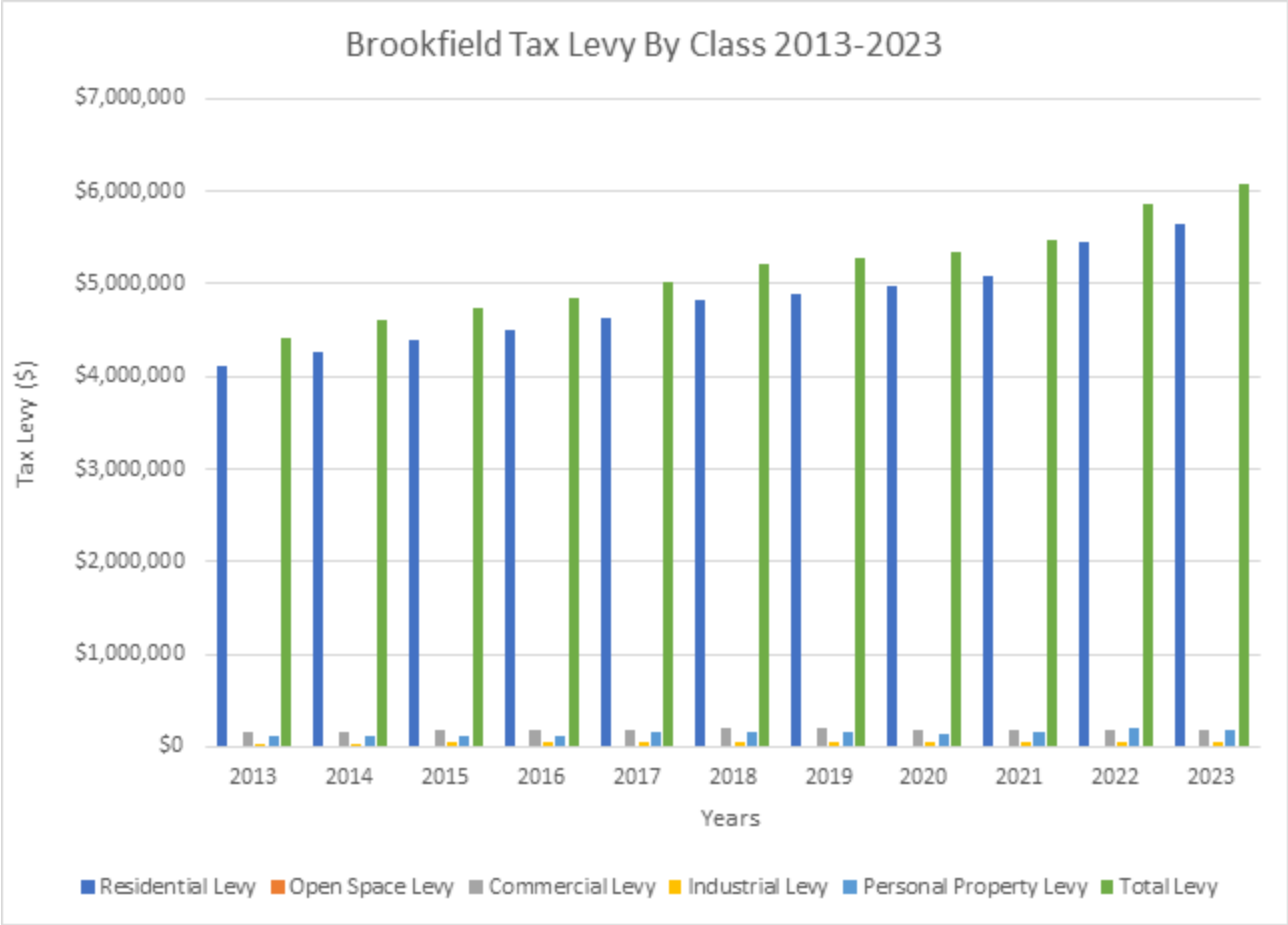


Figure 24: Tax Levy by Class in Brookfield over Time. Source: Massachusetts Division of Local Services



Figure 25: Tax Levy by Class Comparison with Surrounding Towns, 2023. Source: Massachusetts Division of Local Services

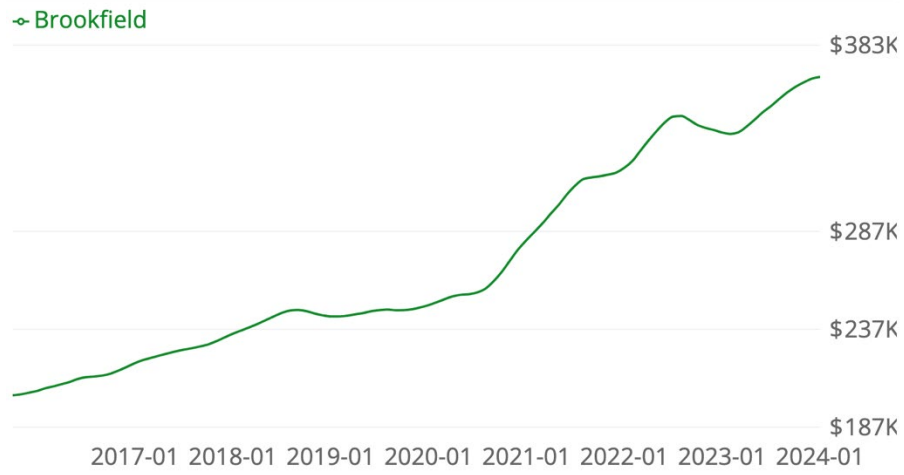


Figure 26: Median home value in Brookfield 2017-2024. Source: Zillow Home Value Index

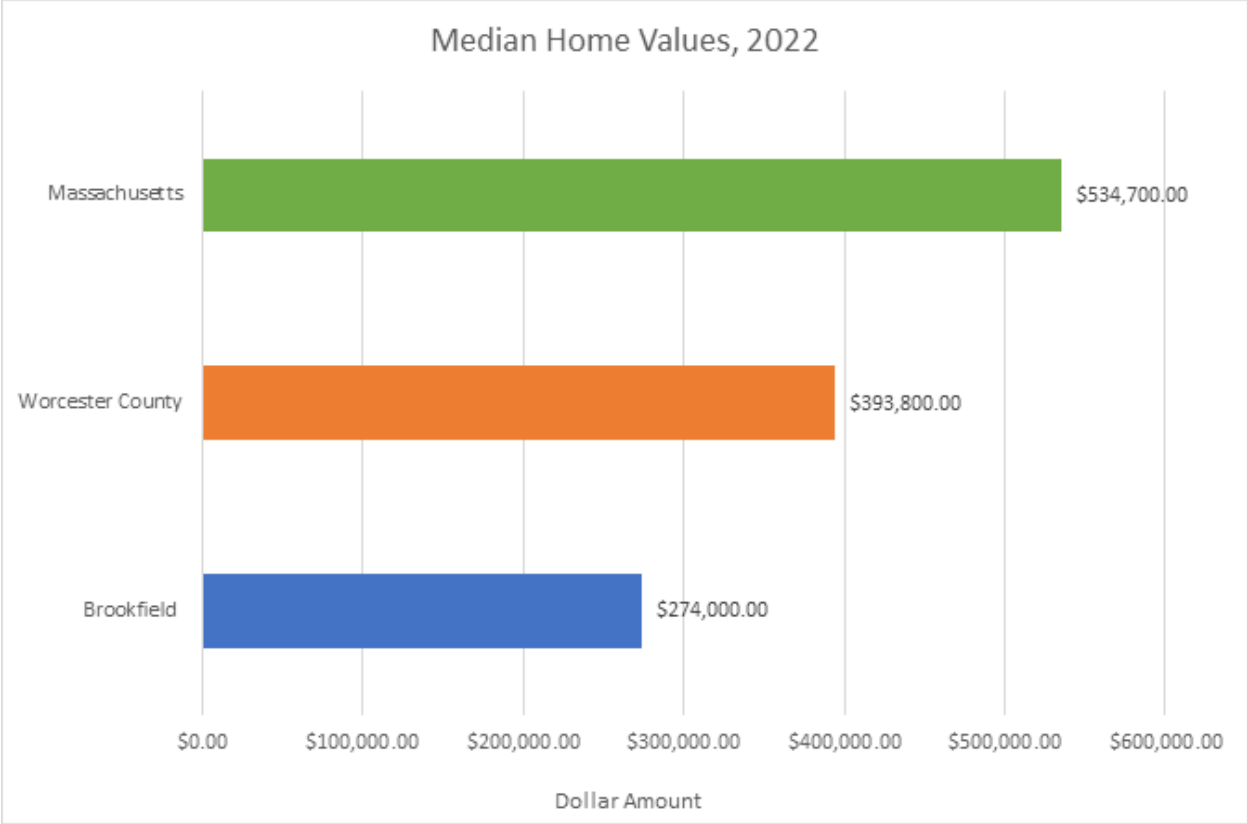


Figure 27: Median Home Value in Brookfield Compared with the County and State, 2022.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

Table X, Housing By Number of Bedrooms			
# of Bedrooms	Occupied Housing units	Owner-occupied housing units	Renter-occupied housing units
0 bedrooms (loft)	0	0	0
1 bedroom	214	112	102
2 or 3 bedrooms	1,014	947	67
4 or more bedrooms	217	206	11
Source: 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates			

Table 6: Brookfield Housing by Number of Bedrooms, 2022. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

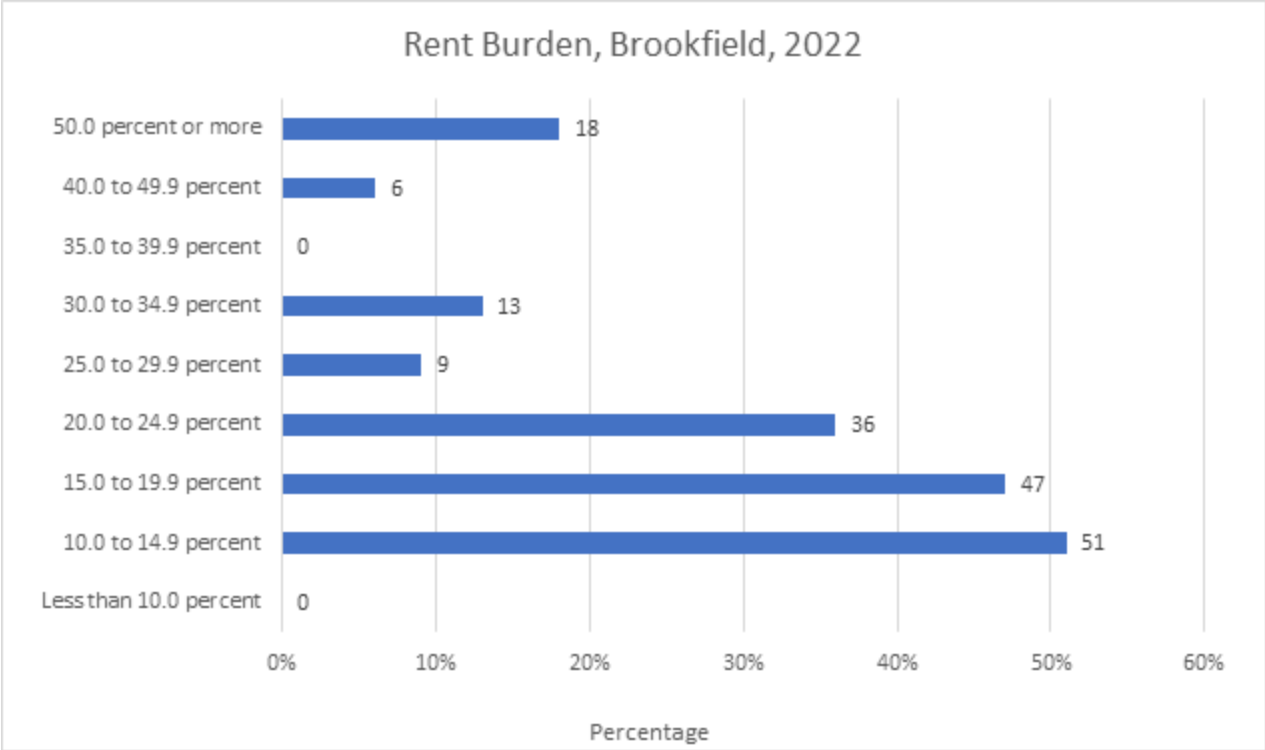


Figure 28: Rent Burden in Brookfield, 2022. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

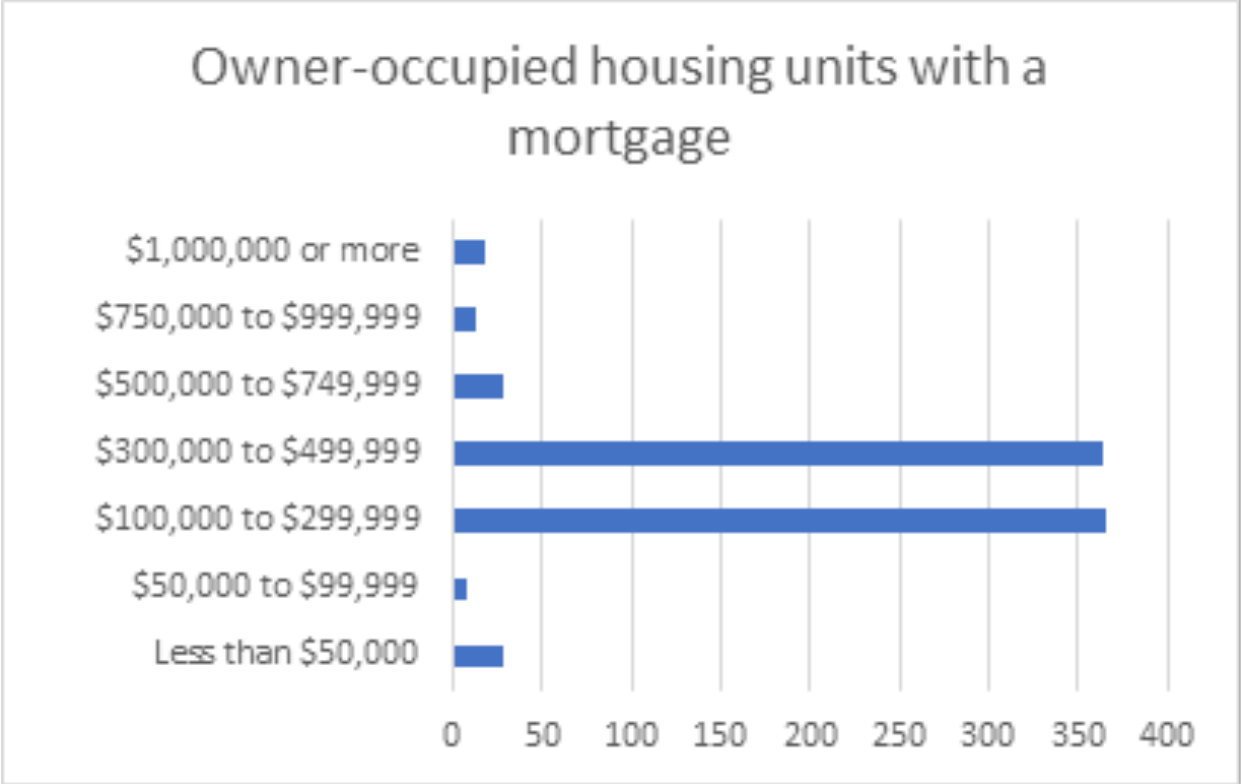


Figure 29: Owner-occupied housing units with a mortgage, 2022. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

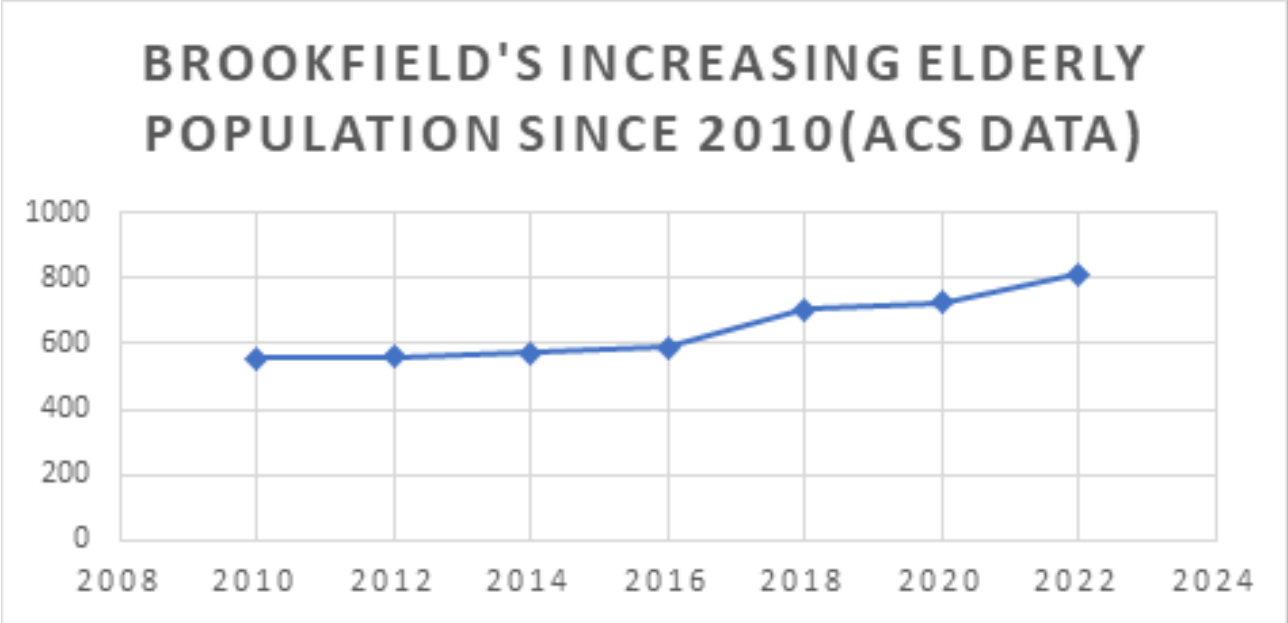


Figure 30: Brookfield's Increasing Elderly Population since 2010. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

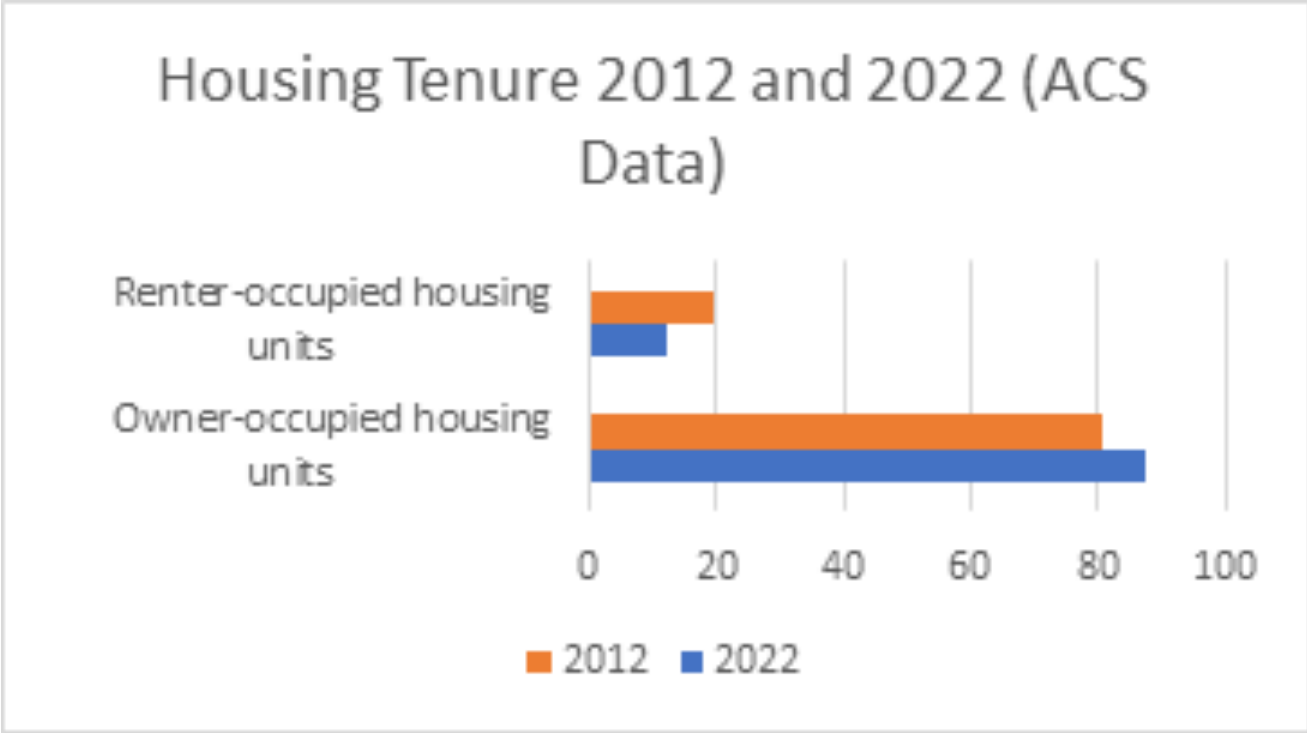


Figure 31: Brookfield's Housing Tenure 2012 and 2022. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

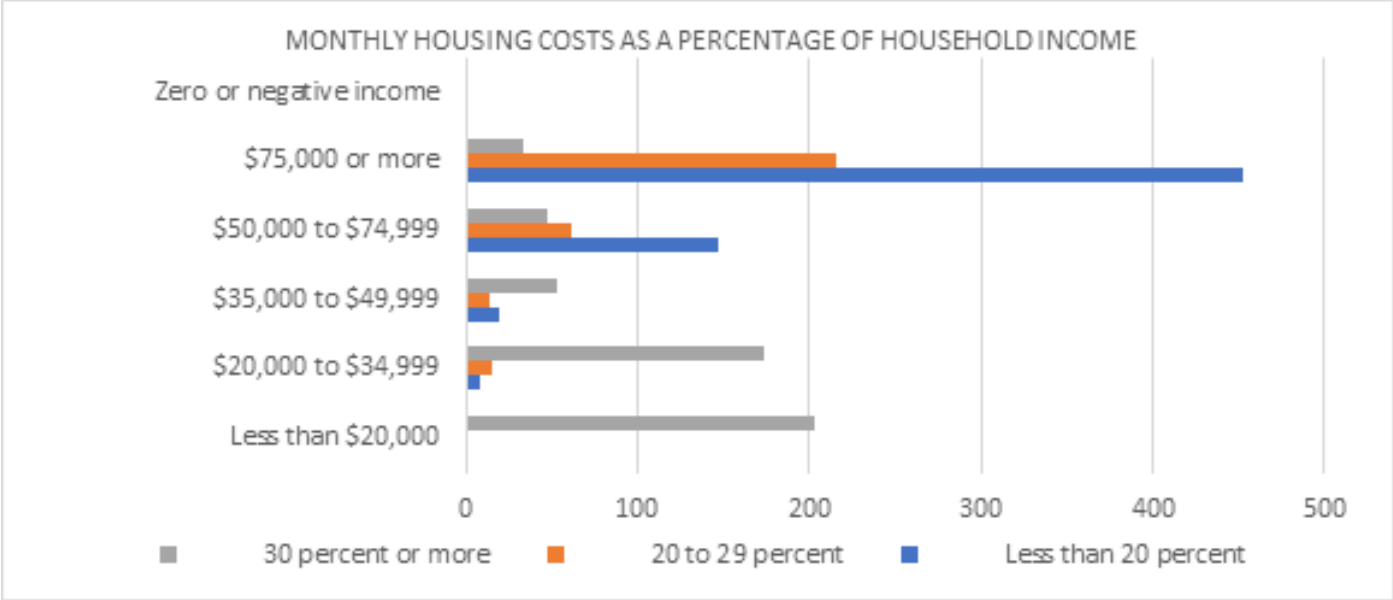


Figure 32: Monthly Housing Costs as a Percentage of Household Income in the Past 12 Months, 2023. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

Brookfield's Occupied and Vacant Housing Units

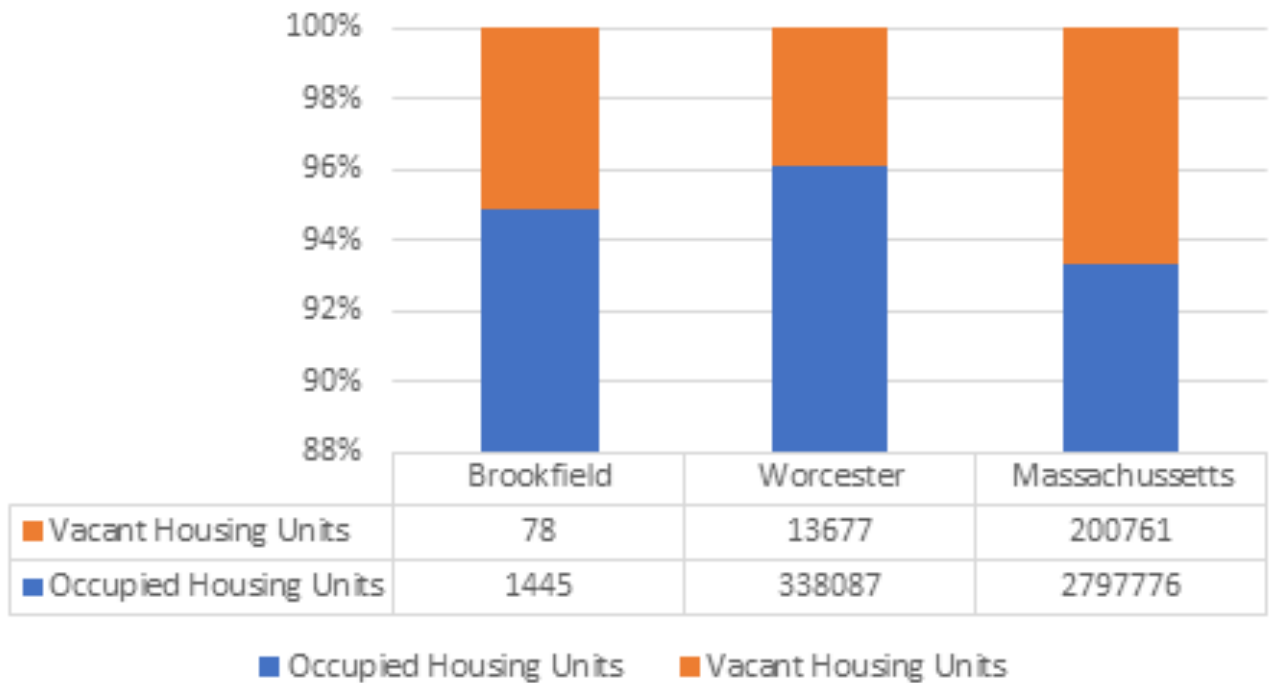


Figure 33: Brookfield's Occupied and Vacant Housing Units, 2022. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

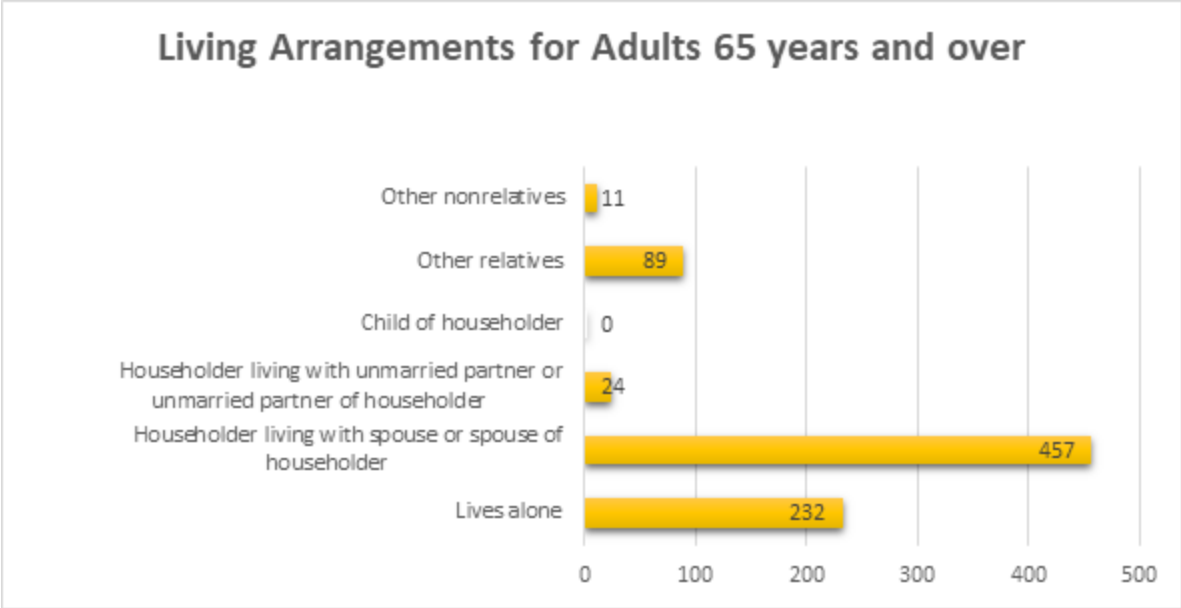


Figure 34: Living Arrangements for Adults 65 years and over, 2022. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

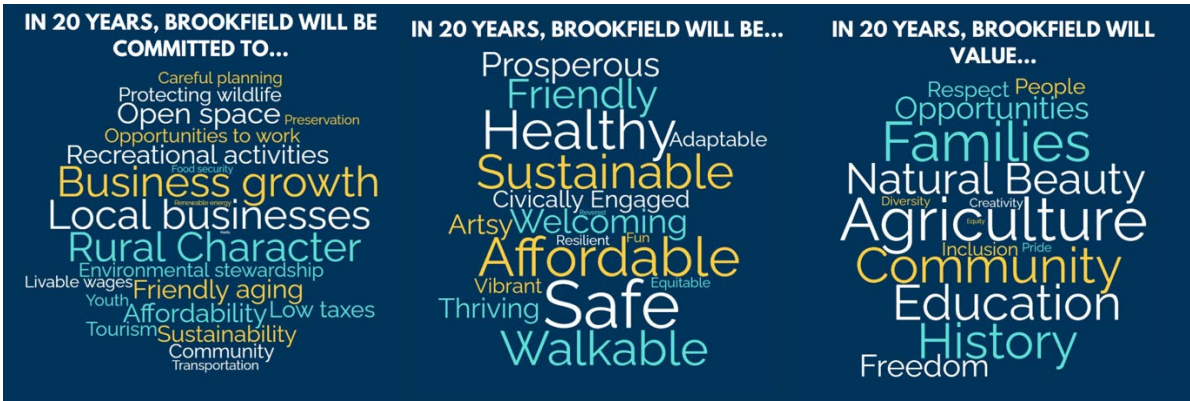


Figure 35: Results of the visioning activity at the June 2023 Community Workshop.

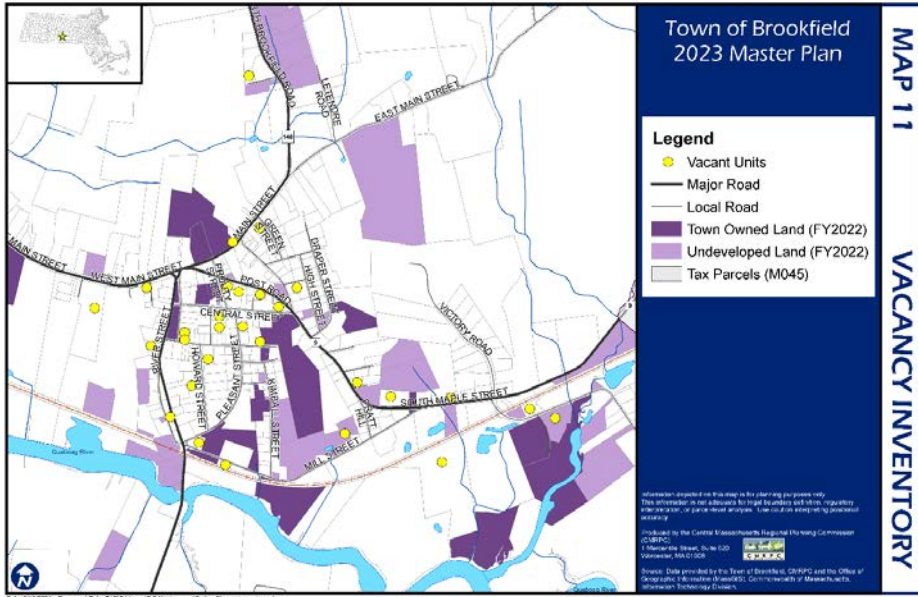


Figure 36: Vacant units identified by residents. Brookfield town center. Source: list of vacant units created by a volunteer resident group and shared with CMRPC at the February 2023 workshop.

Town of Brookfield Budget FY2022 Expenditures

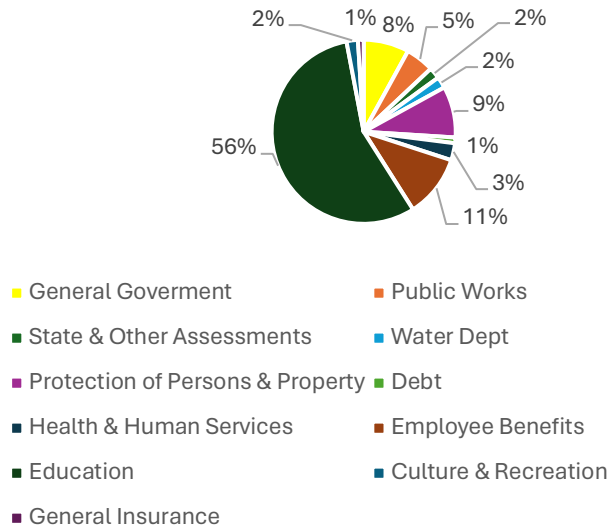


Figure 37: Town of Brookfield Budget FY2022 Expenditures. Source: Town Report 2022.

Chart Title

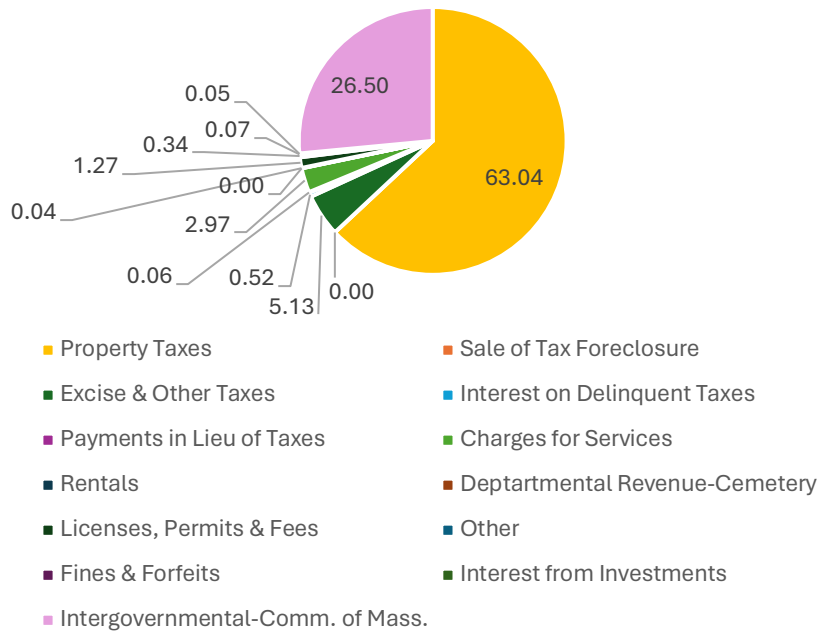
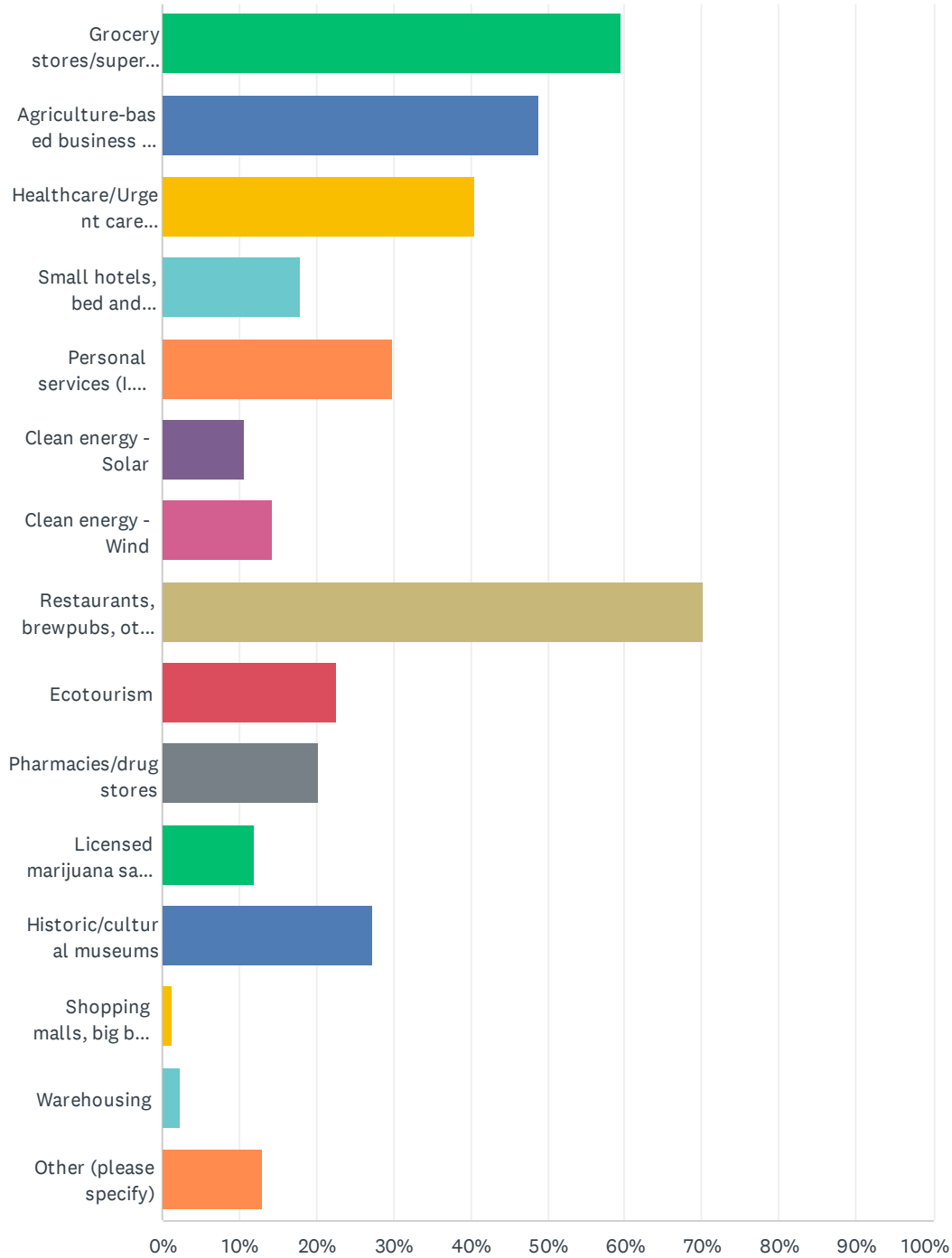


Figure 38: Town of Brookfield Budget FY2022 Revenues. Source: Town Report 2022.

Q1 Which of the following types of businesses do you feel would be beneficial to Brookfield? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 84 Skipped: 0



Town of Brookfield Master Plan Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Grocery stores/supermarkets/convenience stores	59.52%	50
Agriculture-based business and services	48.81%	41
Healthcare/Urgent care center/Medical facility	40.48%	34
Small hotels, bed and breakfasts, homestays	17.86%	15
Personal services (i.e., lawyers, dentist, hair salons, etc.)	29.76%	25
Clean energy - Solar	10.71%	9
Clean energy - Wind	14.29%	12
Restaurants, brewpubs, other food and beverage establishments	70.24%	59
Ecotourism	22.62%	19
Pharmacies/drug stores	20.24%	17
Licensed marijuana sales establishments	11.90%	10
Historic/cultural museums	27.38%	23
Shopping malls, big box retail, outlet shopping	1.19%	1
Warehousing	2.38%	2
Other (please specify)	13.10%	11
Total Respondents: 84		

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Wellness/Spa services (unique like float tank could draw in folks)	7/5/2023 6:50 PM
2	Love it the way it is	6/29/2023 12:45 PM
3	Coffee shop	6/28/2023 8:50 PM
4	Bookstore	6/19/2023 4:07 PM
5	None	6/18/2023 10:27 AM
6	Senior Day Care Center	6/11/2023 7:49 PM
7	Keep Brookfield small. I'd rather drive to Sturbridge or Spencer for stores, etc	6/11/2023 7:24 PM
8	General business/ a BANK etc.	6/9/2023 7:43 AM
9	Local boutique type shops	6/8/2023 6:10 PM
10	Pot shops	6/7/2023 10:10 PM
11	Recreational businesses	6/5/2023 6:42 PM

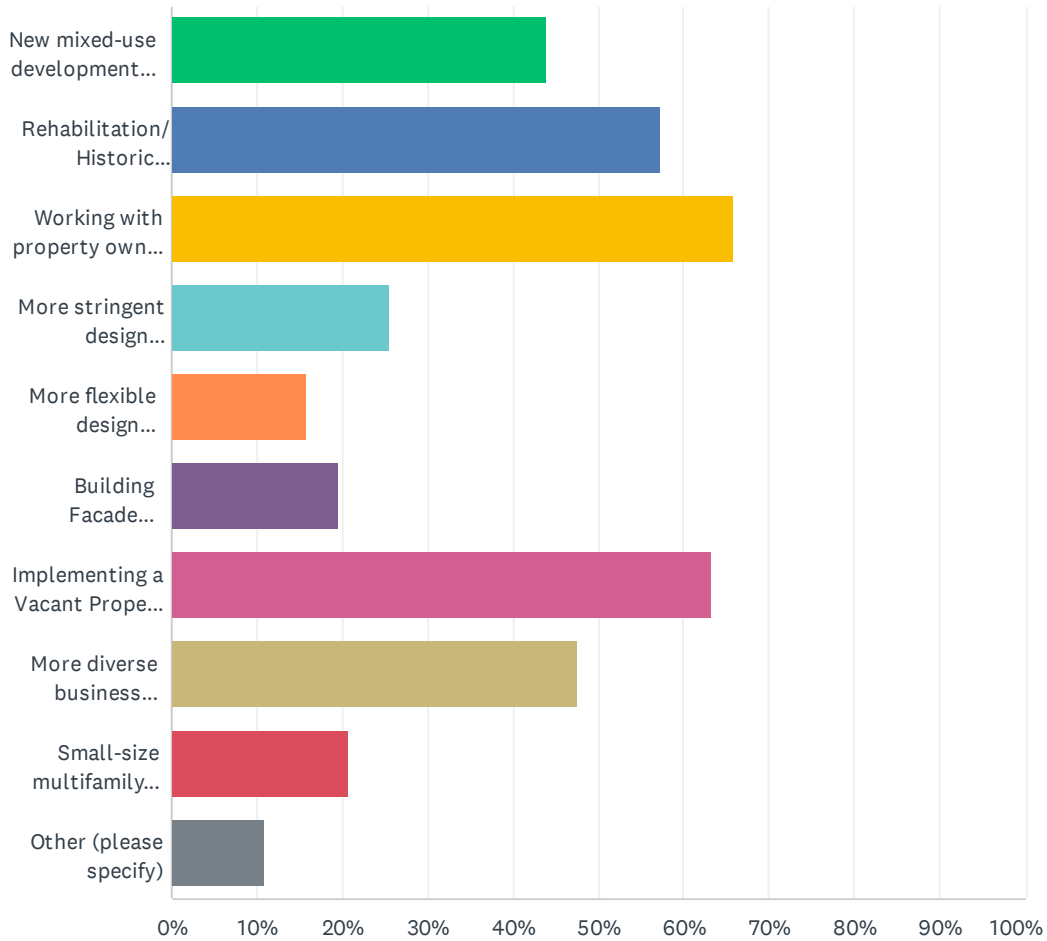
Q2 Please Share Any Additional Comments Below

Answered: 0 Skipped: 84

#	RESPONSES	DATE
	There are no responses.	

Q3 Which of the following initiatives would you support in Brookfield (Select all that apply)

Answered: 82 Skipped: 2



Town of Brookfield Master Plan Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
New mixed-use development (Retail on the lower floor, housing on the upper floor.)	43.90%	36
Rehabilitation/Historic Preservation	57.32%	47
Working with property owners to resolve the overabundance of vacant properties	65.85%	54
More stringent design guidelines to maintain community character for renovations of existing buildings	25.61%	21
More flexible design guidelines	15.85%	13
Building Facade Improvement Program	19.51%	16
Implementing a Vacant Property Registry initiative to protect Brookfield from the effects of blight caused by vacant and unmaintained properties.	63.41%	52
More diverse business opportunities in existing buildings	47.56%	39
Small-size multifamily housing	20.73%	17
Other (please specify)	10.98%	9
Total Respondents: 82		

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Elderly housing	7/3/2023 7:48 AM
2	None	6/29/2023 12:45 PM
3	Stop spending thousands to fight the dirt bike track. It brings people into town that will spend money.	6/28/2023 6:54 PM
4	Downtown revitalization--fill Central Street with businesses, walkable and shoppable	6/19/2023 4:07 PM
5	Curbs on roads, removal of invasive rose species.	6/9/2023 7:43 AM
6	When you say stringent design guidelines I'm guessing you're referencing horrible looking buildings like the purple house on the common 🏠	6/7/2023 10:10 PM
7	Enforcing codes and establish a noise ordinance	6/7/2023 11:00 AM
8	Housing for the elderly	6/6/2023 2:07 PM
9	Community housing development	6/5/2023 7:33 PM

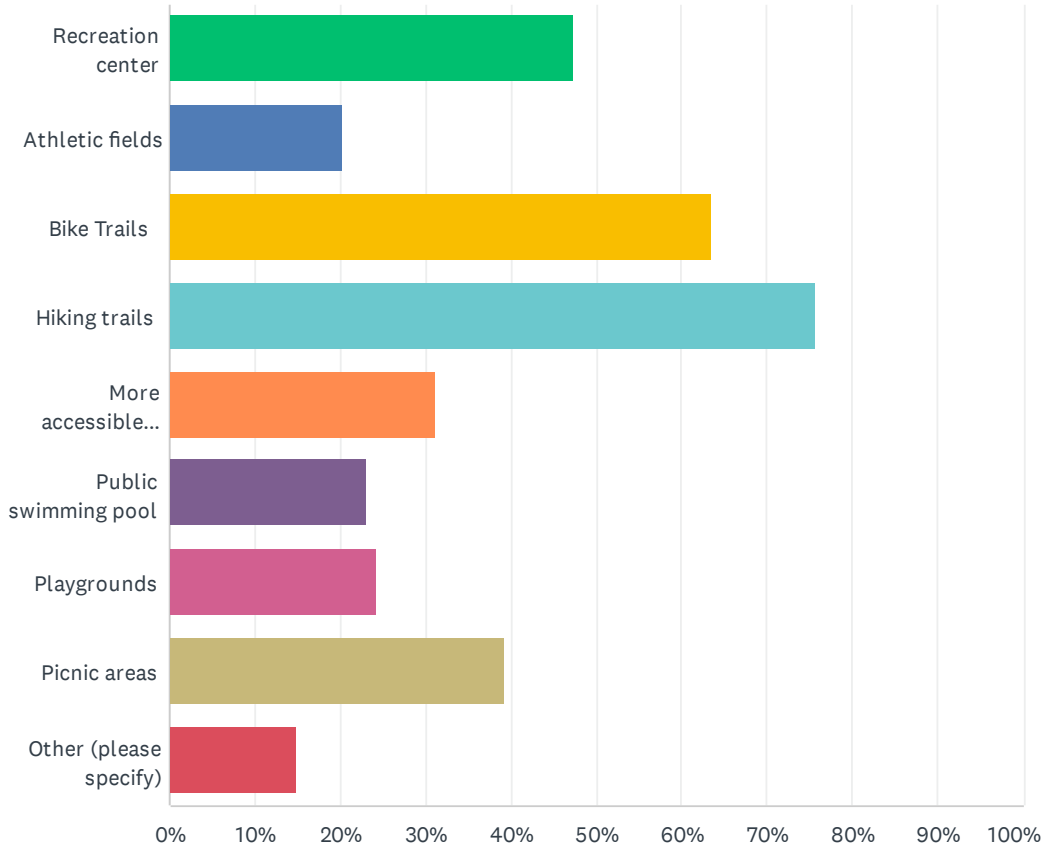
Q4 Please Share Any Additional Comments Below

Answered: 0 Skipped: 84

#	RESPONSES	DATE
	There are no responses.	

Q5 Which of the following recreational opportunities would you like to see more of in Brookfield? (Select all that apply.)

Answered: 74 Skipped: 10



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Recreation center	47.30%	35
Athletic fields	20.27%	15
Bike Trails	63.51%	47
Hiking trails	75.68%	56
More accessible trails	31.08%	23
Public swimming pool	22.97%	17
Playgrounds	24.32%	18
Picnic areas	39.19%	29
Other (please specify)	14.86%	11
Total Respondents: 74		

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
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Town of Brookfield Master Plan Survey

1	None, people ruin natural beauty with trails	6/29/2023 12:45 PM
2	I live adjacent to the pathway that runs behind the school and it's in shambles with downed trees and overgrowth. It would be a great spot for the school kids to walk and learn about nature and wildlife	6/28/2023 6:54 PM
3	Dredging north pond to make it swimable	6/21/2023 10:07 PM
4	Sidewalks	6/19/2023 4:07 PM
5	No additional	6/18/2023 10:27 AM
6	skatepark	6/11/2023 3:34 PM
7	Would love a trail system like sturbridge	6/8/2023 6:10 PM
8	Use our town common and Lewis field and other properties for events not private land.	6/7/2023 10:10 PM
9	Tennis court, Dog Park	6/6/2023 5:58 PM
10	Equestrian/hiking trails	6/6/2023 10:27 AM
11	Dog park	6/5/2023 7:33 PM

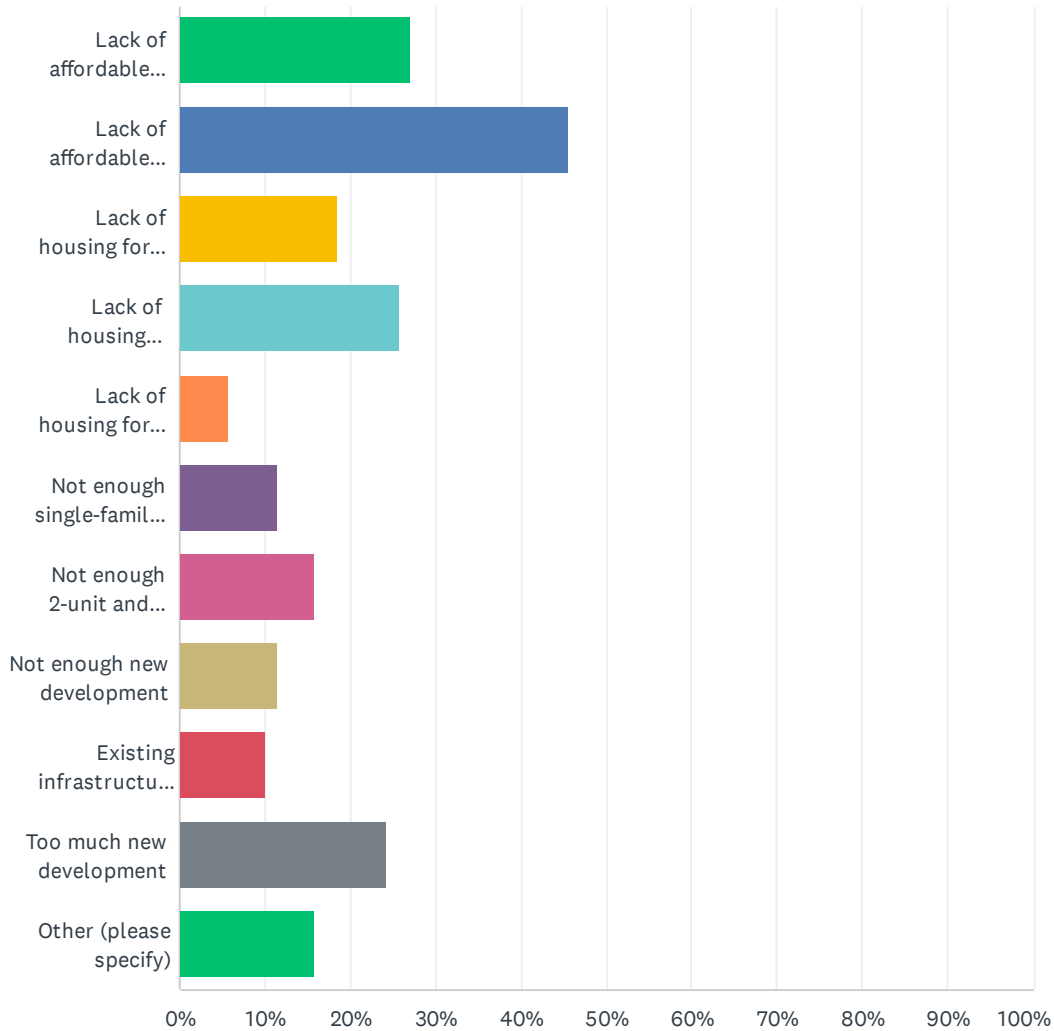
Q6 Please Share Any Additional Comments Below

Answered: 0 Skipped: 84

#	RESPONSES	DATE
	There are no responses.	

Q7 What is your biggest concern regarding housing in Brookfield? (Select all that apply.)

Answered: 70 Skipped: 14



Town of Brookfield Master Plan Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Lack of affordable housing to lower income households	27.14%	19
Lack of affordable housing for seniors	45.71%	32
Lack of housing for single adults in need (Recovery, veterans, survivors of domestic abuse, etc.)	18.57%	13
Lack of housing affordable to middle class households	25.71%	18
Lack of housing for families	5.71%	4
Not enough single-family houses	11.43%	8
Not enough 2-unit and multi-family houses	15.71%	11
Not enough new development	11.43%	8
Existing infrastructure capacity cannot accommodate new development	10.00%	7
Too much new development	24.29%	17
Other (please specify)	15.71%	11
Total Respondents: 70		

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Too many vacant/dilapidated properties.	6/28/2023 6:54 PM
2	I would hate to see overdevelopment or the uprise of housing complexes. I really appreciate the neighborhood feel as it is and how it gives a balance of community and nature along with culture and history. Let's beautify what we have and maintain the simplicity.	6/23/2023 12:53 PM
3	Ques 2 addresses vacant housing and this one states no housing available???	6/21/2023 10:07 PM
4	Too many vacant and derelict properties and lots	6/21/2023 3:23 PM
5	Town water limited to too few households	6/19/2023 7:36 AM
6	I am concerned about many of these things statewide, but think we should keep our town small. I moved here to be in a rural country setting.	6/11/2023 7:24 PM
7	We have an abundance of low income. We need to attract families and higher incomes!	6/9/2023 7:43 AM
8	Not enough businesses in town	6/8/2023 6:10 PM
9	Block anymore incoming solar fields	6/8/2023 8:50 AM
10	Why does there have to be a problem?	6/7/2023 10:10 PM
11	We need to consider sewage treatment	6/6/2023 11:20 AM

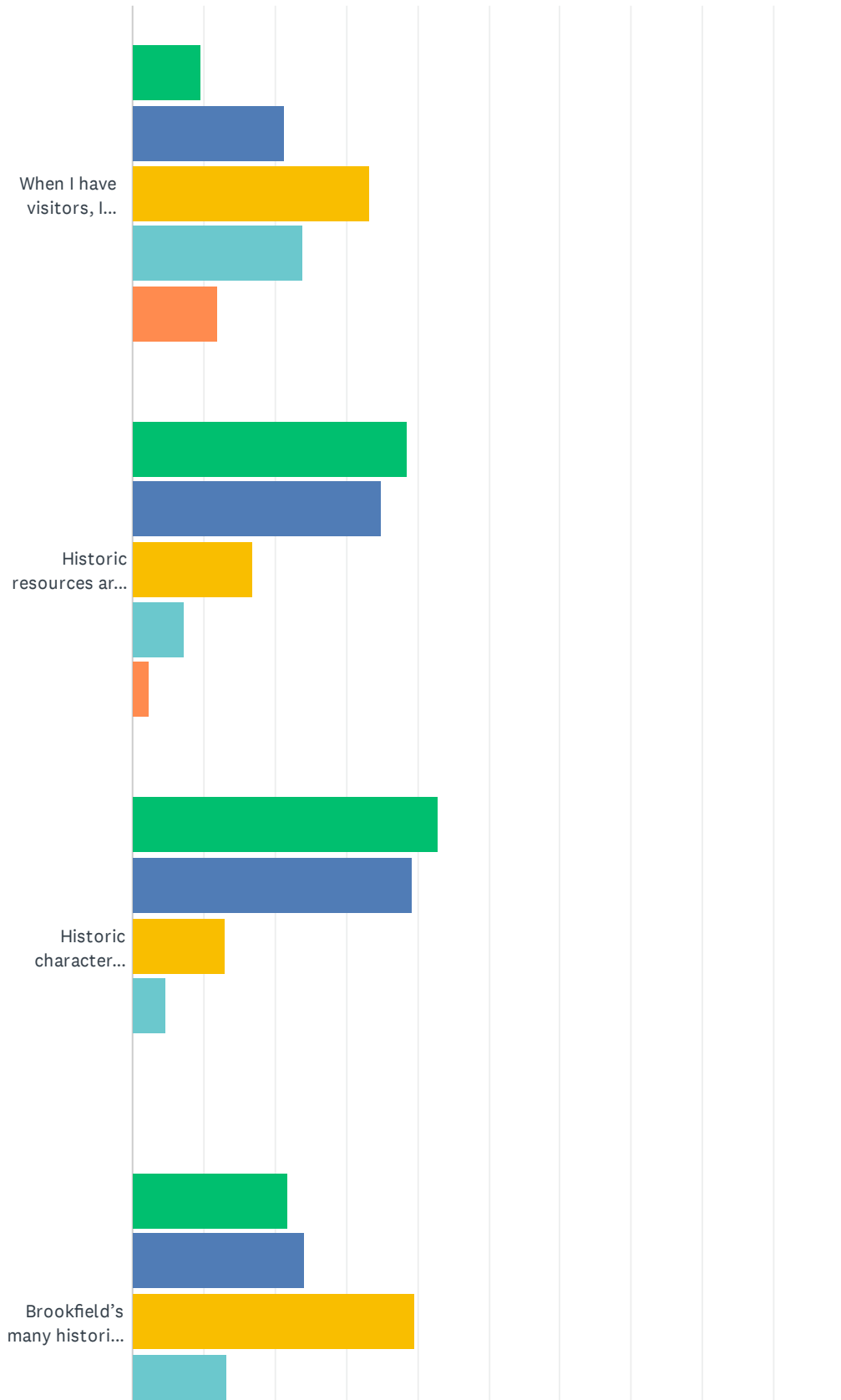
Q8 Please Share Any Additional Comments Below

Answered: 0 Skipped: 84

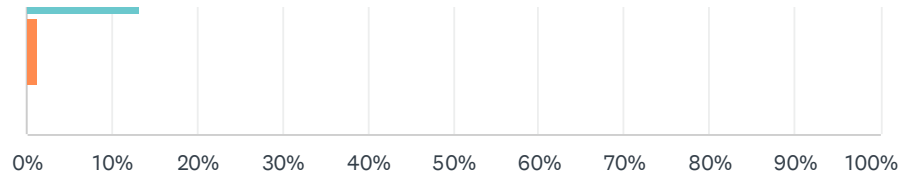
#	RESPONSES	DATE
	There are no responses.	

Q9 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Answered: 84 Skipped: 0



Town of Brookfield Master Plan Survey



■ STRONGLY...
 ■ AGREE
 ■ NEITHER A...
 ■ DISAGREE
■ STRONGLY...

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	TOTAL
When I have visitors, I take them to visit historic places in my community.	9.52% 8	21.43% 18	33.33% 28	23.81% 20	11.90% 10	84
Historic resources are an essential part of Brookfield's character.	38.55% 32	34.94% 29	16.87% 14	7.23% 6	2.41% 2	83
Historic character should be protected when new development takes place or when historic buildings are renovated.	42.86% 36	39.29% 33	13.10% 11	4.76% 4	0.00% 0	84
Brookfield's many historic resources are at risk of being erased.	21.69% 18	24.10% 20	39.76% 33	13.25% 11	1.20% 1	83

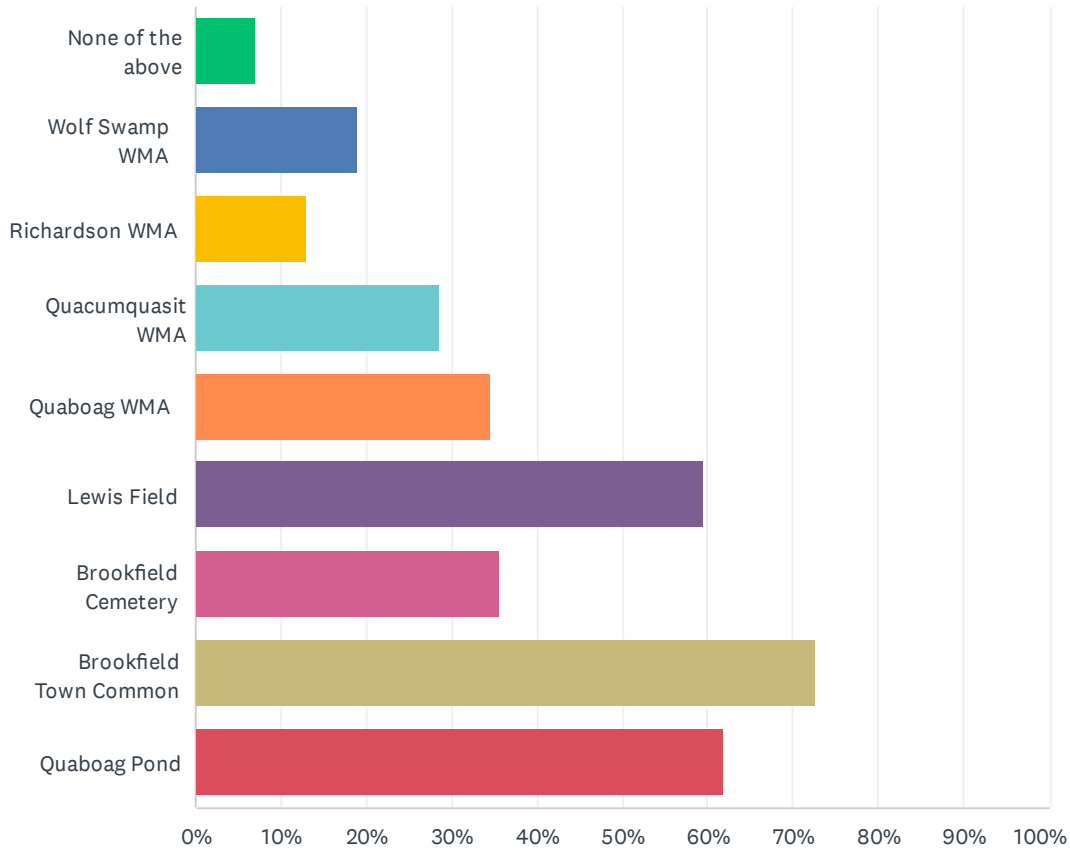
Q10 Please Share Any Additional Comments Below

Answered: 0 Skipped: 84

#	RESPONSES	DATE
	There are no responses.	

Q11 Do you use any of the following sites for recreational purposes?

Answered: 84 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
None of the above	7.14% 6
Wolf Swamp WMA	19.05% 16
Richardson WMA	13.10% 11
Quacumquasit WMA	28.57% 24
Quaboag WMA	34.52% 29
Lewis Field	59.52% 50
Brookfield Cemetery	35.71% 30
Brookfield Town Common	72.62% 61
Quaboag Pond	61.90% 52
Total Respondents: 84	

Q12 For any of the above sites that were checked off, or for any other open space areas in town, do you have concerns regarding safety, accessibility, maintenance, etc.? Please specify below.

Answered: 32 Skipped: 52

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	So many ticks or mosquitos and not always accessible parking in a portion of the listed areas. Some trails are over grown or extremely muddy.	7/5/2023 6:50 PM
2	No	7/3/2023 7:48 AM
3	Accessibility to hiking or biking trails would be wonderful	6/29/2023 7:46 PM
4	Love their natural beauty	6/29/2023 12:45 PM
5	I moved here from Worcester 4 yrs ago mainly because it's not Worcester. We don't need Sec 8 housing or anything like that We have plenty of retail Keep Brookfields Rural esthetic as it is Presearve its culture heritage traditions n values We are a safe community for a reason If you want it it to look like Worcester or Boston then plz go to those places. Leave Brookfield as it is	6/29/2023 5:49 AM
6	I can't find wolf swamp, always wanted to check it out. We go to Rockhouse in WB all the time.	6/28/2023 6:54 PM
7	Maintenance	6/25/2023 9:24 PM
8	Out of town folks crowd the beach area and leave trash and debris behind. They don't follow the posted rules regarding no open flames or cooking on the beach, blocking the entry with chairs & tents, etc. Locals can't enjoy it because of this.	6/23/2023 2:16 PM
9	I would have to revisit each site to give a proper reply, as it has been a while since I have been to some of the more rustic sites.	6/23/2023 12:53 PM
10	Water quality at north pond. Needs to be dredged.	6/21/2023 10:07 PM
11	I'm concerned about the safety of the old campground on Hobbs Ave. There seem to be people hanging around in there and it's not properly patrolled or maintained.	6/21/2023 3:23 PM
12	No	6/19/2023 6:56 PM
13	It would be great if trails were made wider and maintained--the fear of ticks makes it harder to use them. It would be nice to have trail maps too--I don't know even know where I could park or hike at the wildlife management areas, and when it's safe to do so because of hunting.	6/19/2023 4:07 PM
14	No	6/18/2023 10:27 AM
15	No	6/11/2023 7:24 PM
16	no	6/11/2023 3:34 PM
17	South Pond beach should be made more accessible. The path isn't safe for anyone.	6/9/2023 10:51 PM
18	Concern for parking. Not enough causes people to park in an area where they shouldn't park. The state owns most and do not keep trails up so you end up actually glad people are going in with atvs. Otherwise no trails. Too many ticks because trails are not maintained. Too much brush with poison ivy growing along roads	6/9/2023 7:43 AM
19	Concerns about safety (fishhooks, etc on beach area) and cleanliness at South Pond	6/8/2023 11:12 PM
20	No	6/8/2023 6:10 PM
21	No	6/8/2023 4:33 PM
22	I know for sure Wolf Swamp doesn't seem very accessible off the east side from Rice Corner Rd.	6/8/2023 10:14 AM

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23	Wolf swamp parking and trail access and richardson wma parking	6/8/2023 8:50 AM
24	No	6/7/2023 10:10 PM
25	The Quaboag pond boat ramp and beach can be dangerous do to reckless boaters.	6/7/2023 2:32 PM
26	Maintenance could be a little better.	6/7/2023 11:48 AM
27	Noise surrounding Quaboag Pond from third party businesses	6/7/2023 11:00 AM
28	I would like to see a beach on Quabog (North) Pond	6/6/2023 5:58 PM
29	The cemetery should allow dogs again. I used to walk my dog there. Why the ban now?	6/6/2023 4:08 PM
30	Quacumquasit-use of swim area.	6/5/2023 7:54 PM
31	Develop a beach area between boat ramp and town line	6/5/2023 7:33 PM
32	The ones I didn't click I didn't know existed	6/5/2023 6:24 PM