



# COMMISSION HANDBOOK

Prepared for Delegates and Alternates

Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission  
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Revised August, 2024

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# **Chapter 1**

## **WELCOME TO THE CMRPC**

You have been appointed by your community to serve as either a delegate or alternate to the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC). You may have several questions at this point, including:

- What is the CMRPC?
- What are the functions and objectives?
- What are my roles and responsibilities as a delegate or alternate?

This section will address those topics and provide you with the necessary information to fulfill your role effectively.

This Commission Handbook is a resource and reference guide to help answer these and other questions you may have. The Handbook has been approved by the Executive Committee and presents the legal basis for the Commission and an outline of the programs and policies that form the framework of the Commission's operation. Of particular interest to new members are the sections on organization and planning resources. New members should also review the Commission's bylaws which can be found on the CMRPC website.

### **WHAT IS THE CMRPC?**

The CMRPC was established on July 30, 1963 under state enabling legislation (Chapter 40B of the General Laws of Massachusetts) as a regional governmental agency to coordinate the orderly development of the district's 960-square-mile area. It is comprised of delegates and alternates representing the City of Worcester and 39 towns in central and southern Worcester County. Legislation was added in 1972 (Chapter 578) which designates the number of Delegates a municipality has to the Commission based on its population. The CMRPC is one of 13 regional planning agencies in Massachusetts.

While enabling legislation was enacted in 1955, local planning officials did not begin meeting until 1960 to discuss the possible formation of a regional planning agency in Central Massachusetts. As a result of their discussions, six municipalities including the City of Worcester voted to participate in the venture. The State Department of Commerce (now Executive Office of Economic Development) approved establishment of the CMRPC and designated 25 municipalities as the regional planning district. From this start, the CMRPC has expanded to its present membership of forty (40) communities.

### **WHAT ARE THE FUNCTIONS AND OBJECTIVES?**

The Commission is a regional partnership, serving the planning and development interests of its member communities that strives to improve the quality of life for those who live, work, and visit the region. As such, its primary mission is:

- Addressing growth and development issues that extend beyond community boundaries
- Maintaining the district's certification for federal transportation improvement funds

- Providing technical knowledge and resources to assist local government in addressing specific land use, economic or environmental problems resulting from growth or decline
  - Building strong working relationships with member communities, state and federal officials, as well as the area's legislative body
  - Fostering cross-jurisdictional partnerships that tap into the strengths of each community, creating a unified and resilient region
- A further description of the programs and services provided can be found in Chapter 2.

## **WHAT ARE MY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES?**

As a delegate or alternate to the CMRPC, you have a dual role in the planning and development of this region. In addition to promoting the interests of your local community, you will be looking at the broader regional picture as well. You will be working with other delegates and alternates to ensure that the region's future development occurs in an orderly manner. As a member of the Commission, you will be involved in the decision-making processes.

Your responsibilities as a delegate or alternate to the Commission include the following:

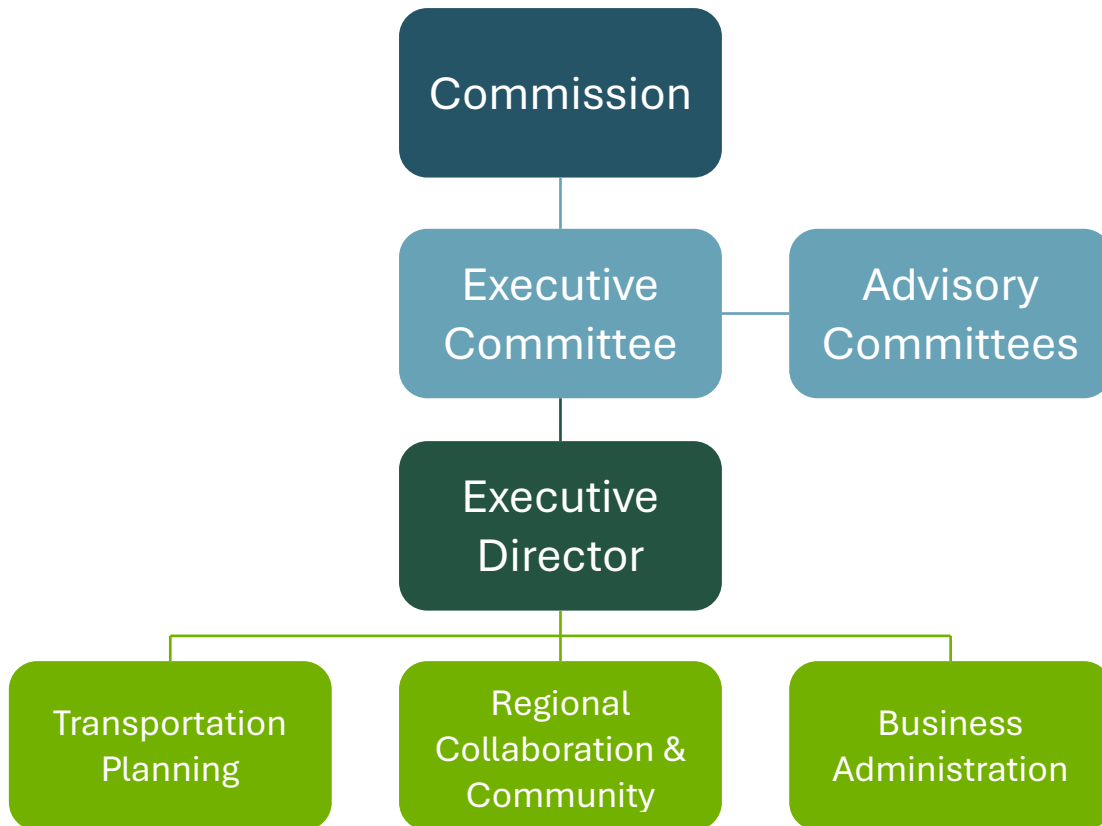
- Attend quarterly and annual meetings of the Commission and participate fully in the business before the Commission. If an alternate, vote in the absence of a delegate from your community.
- Consider an active role as a member on the Commission's committees as described in Chapter 3.
- Connect town officials and board members to CMRPC staff on relevant local planning and development issues in your community.
- Provide frequent feedback to your local boards summarizing the activities of the Region's planning program and services
- Work with staff and other local officials on issues of regional or inter-municipal significance brought before the Commission
- Review and vote on the Commission's annual budget
- Participate in the design and implementation of the Commission's program of technical planning services to communities
- Review and comment on state and federal legislation affecting local and regional planning
- Complete Massachusetts Conflict of Interest Training for CMRPC

## **WHERE IS THE COMMISSION LOCATED?**

The Commission maintains two offices in Worcester with departments for Administration, Transportation, and Regional Collaboration and Community Planning. The main office is located at 1 Mercantile Street ~ Suite 520. Parking is available in the attached parking garage. The Transportation department is located at the MassDOT District 3 Building at 499 Plantation Parkway. Both offices have conference rooms of varying sizes used for committee meetings, hearings and similar activities.

## Chapter 2 ORGANIZATION AND AGENCY RESOURCES

### CMRPC ORGANIZATION CHART



### COMMISSION

The Commission is comprised of 73 delegates and 40 alternates appointed by the 40 member municipalities of the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning District. The number of delegates for each municipality is based on population and ranges from one to four delegates. Per Chapter 578 of the Acts of 1972, the Commissioner of Community Affairs, the City Manager of Worcester and the Town Managers of Holden and Shrewsbury are also ex-officio members.

As the policy-making body, the Commission holds four quarterly meetings a year in September, November, January and March. The meetings are usually held on the 2nd Thursday of the month at 7 PM. An annual meeting is held in June and special meetings of the Commission may be called by the Chairperson if necessary. As a government agency, CMRPC follows Open Meeting Law and posts all meetings on the website.

Membership of the CMRPC is based on a weighted vote. Chapter 578 of the Acts of 1972 established the method for the selection of delegates and alternates from each member

municipality. Those municipalities with a population of 8,000 or less in the most recent federal census have one delegate appointed by the Planning Board. This delegate must be a Planning Board member. Municipalities with a population of 8,001 to 15,000 receive a second delegate appointed by the Select Board or city/town Manager. Municipalities with a population of 15,001 to 50,000 receive a third delegate appointed by the Planning Board. Municipalities with a population exceeding 50,000 receive a fourth delegate appointed by the City Manager. In addition, each municipality has one alternate appointed by the Select Board or city/town Manager who assumes the duties of a delegate absent at a meeting. All delegates and alternates must reside in the municipality they represent.

Based on the results of the 2020 federal census of population, the distribution of Commission Delegates is as shown below.

**Communities with One Delegate**

Barre, Berlin, Boylston, Brookfield, East Brookfield, Hardwick, Hopedale, Mendon, Millville, New Braintree, North Brookfield, Oakham, Paxton, Princeton, Upton, Warren, West Boylston, West Brookfield

**Communities with Two Delegates**

Blackstone, Charlton, Douglas, Dudley, Leicester, Millbury, Oxford, Rutland, Spencer, Sturbridge, Sutton, Uxbridge

**Communities with Three Delegates**

Auburn, Grafton, Holden, Northborough, Northbridge, Shrewsbury, Southbridge, Webster, Westborough

**Community with Four Delegates**

Worcester

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

The Commission's Executive Committee is comprised of 12 members - six officers and six delegates representing each of the sub regions – which are elected annually by ballot and announced at the June Annual Meeting. The Commission's past Chairperson, if still active and not elected to another position, may serve as an ex-officio member of the committee.

The Executive Committee meets monthly to review and act on administrative and business items. Responsibilities are confirmed annually by ballot vote, of the Commission and include: employment of staff, retention of consultants, application for grants, salary schedule, merit adjustments, Executive Director's employment contract, disbursement of funds based on a warrant, personnel policies and job descriptions, and revised program and budget. The meetings are normally held on the last Thursday of the month at 7 PM. The location of the meeting, and online option if applicable are listed on the meeting agenda which can be found on the website.

## ADVISORY COMMITTEES

The Commission utilizes advisory committees to oversee the planning work program undertaken by staff and the preparation of recommendations on specific projects to be presented to the full Commission for action. You may volunteer or be asked to serve on one of these committees. At the present time, three standing committees, Physical Development, Transportation Planning and Legislative Affairs, are active and summarized below:

- **Physical Development Committee** oversees the recommendation of projects and initiatives to be approved, utilizing District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) funds. The Physical Development Committee meets a handful of times throughout the year, dependent on project development and availability of DLTA funds. This body is comprised of Commission members and area planners.
- **Transportation Planning Committee** oversees the Commission's multimodal transportation program. Under designation by the MassDOT, staff is responsible for the preparation of the Regional Transportation Plan, the annual Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the annual Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) that defines its activities and studies. In addition, staff is under contract to the Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) for the provision of technical planning assistance on its fixed route transit services and those provided to the area's elderly and handicapped. This body is comprised of CMRPC members, local highway officials and representatives of MassDOT. It generally meets on the last Thursday of each month.
- **Legislative Affairs Committee** oversees and coordinates CMRPC interaction with State Senators and Representatives and the Federal Congressional Delegation. The committee hosts events to highlight pressing matters of legislative relevance. In addition, it promotes opportunities for delegates and the general public to provide comment and possible support to pending legislation. The committee meets periodically though the year during the day.
- **Southern Worcester County Economic Development Organization (SWC EDO)** is represented by a group of economic development professionals who seek to foster growth in the southern Worcester county region of Massachusetts. With members from a variety of sectors including local government and planning, higher education, private industry, and small business, the SWC EDO represents diverse perspectives on growth and development, equity, as well as workforce development. The Economic Development Organization (EDO) and CMRPC staff update the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) to reflect the latest target redevelopment sites, innovative financing and permitting techniques, and the newest thinking in our region.
- **Special Committees to the Executive Committee** are established throughout the year to undertake specific limited-time projects. Appointments to these Committees are made by the Commission's Chairperson. Some of these committees include:
  - Personnel Subcommittee
  - Nominating Subcommittee
  - Budget Subcommittee

- County Commissioners
- Project Committees
- **Affiliated Committees & Organizations** are supported by CMRPC
  - Central MA Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMMPO)
    - CMMPO Advisory Committee
    - Transportation Planning Advisory Group (TPAG)
  - Central Region Homeland Security Advisory Council (CRHSAC)

## CMRPC DEPARTMENTS

### Transportation Planning Department

Federal legislation originally created Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) nationwide in 1976 to assure both local and regional input into the transportation planning process. CMRPC provides the staffing necessary for the Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMMPO) to carry out the federal-aid transportation planning process throughout the region. The federally required *3C Process* is a Comprehensive, Continuous and Cooperative transportation planning process resulting in plans, programs and operations consistent with the planning goals & objectives of the entire region.

The four major Elements of the CMMPO's transportation planning program include Management & Support of the Planning Process and Certification Activities, Data Collection & Analysis Activities, Transportation Plan Refinement Activities and Other Technical Activities notably roadway, bike, ped, trail and transit planning for the elderly and disabled as well as technical assistance to the Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA). Further, by maintaining the intent and spirit of the 3C Process, the ongoing transportation planning process maximizes public participation, thus allowing the region to remain certified to receive federal transportation improvement funding. This ensures the steady implementation of a broad range of highway, transit and intermodal improvement projects throughout the planning region.

The CMMPO serves as the designated transportation policy and project selection body for the Central Massachusetts planning region. The CMMPO is a forum for cooperative decision making by chief elected officials of general-purpose governments in the region, regional commissions, regional transit authorities, transportation agencies and MassDOT officials. Accordingly, the CMMPO, through the CMRPC staff, performs all functions as required in federal or state law, including jointly developing, reviewing and endorsing the following federal certification documents and other products of the regional transportation planning program including the following:

- Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), *prepared annually*
- Long-range Regional Transportation Plan (LRTP), addressing all major modes including the development of a financial plan that supports the LRTP, *updated every four years*
- Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), addressing major highway, bridge, transit, bike/ped & intermodal projects including the development of a financial plan

that supports the TIP and the development and explicit posting of the annual listing of obligated projects, *prepared annually*

- Related Air Quality Conformity Determinations, *as necessary*
- Performance Management, addressing both highway & transit, status review of metrics and target setting, *prepared annually*
- Public Participation Plan, outreach plan adherence, *ongoing*
- Any other unanticipated transportation planning activities required by federal and state laws & regulations, *as necessary*

In an overarching manner, the CMMPO is completely committed to operate its programs, services and activities in full compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 12898, 1994 (Environmental Justice), current Regional Environment Justice “Plus” (REJ+) regulations that encompass transportation disadvantaged and other identified vulnerable populations, Executive Order 13166, 2000 (Limited English Proficiency), American with Disabilities Act of 1990, and other related federal nondiscrimination laws administered by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), or both as well as any applicable state law, regulation or requirement.

### **Regional Collaboration and Community Planning Department**

The Regional Collaboration & Community Planning (RCCP) Department is dedicated to building vibrant, sustainable communities through strategic partnerships and innovative planning. We collaborate with local stakeholders, business leaders, government agencies, and residents to shape a shared vision for the future, ensuring that every voice is heard and every idea valued. The RCCP Department consists of five dynamic divisions that address a wide range of multidisciplinary projects, plans, and initiatives:

- **Community Development:** The Community Development division assists member communities in accessing and managing Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds through a competitive annual program.
- **Community Planning:** The Community Planning division supports the creation and development of comprehensive plans addressing land use, zoning, and other critical community issues.
- **Economic Development:** The Economic Development division focuses on enhancing regional economic vitality through targeted analysis, including brownfields redevelopment, economic development planning, and village strategic planning.
- **Environmental & Resiliency Planning:** The Environmental & Resiliency division covers a broad range of topics, including climate and energy planning, Green Communities assistance, open space and recreation planning, and resiliency and hazard mitigation planning.
- **Regional Services:** The Regional Services division facilitates municipal collaboration and partnerships, that build connections to enhance municipal capacity, and support initiatives in healthy aging, procurement, public health, homeland security, regional dialogues, and regionalization projects.

### **Business Administration**

The CMRPC Business Administration department includes Human Resources, Communications and Finance. The Commission employs over 50 staff members and is an Equal Employment Opportunity / Affirmative Action employer.

## **FINANCIAL RESOURCES**

To support its programs and services, the Commission, consistent with Chapter 40B, annually levies a per capita assessment against the forty (40) member municipalities. The amount of this assessment is governed by state law, which limits its increase to no more than 2½% yearly. The most recent national census is used to determine a community's population.

These assessment funds are primarily used to provide the required match for grants from both the state and federal agencies, primarily to assist the Commission's work in transportation. In addition, the Commission uses local assessment funds as a match to undertake community planning projects such as master plans, GIS products, grant writing, all Local Planning Assistance (LPA) projects, District Local Technical Assistance funds and Economic Development Administration funds. These assessments, although comprising only about seven percent of the Commission's budget, are critically essential for acquiring state and federal funds, as well as providing assistance to member communities

Other sources of funding include, but are not limited to, Federal, State, Non-profit & other Local Grants and Contracts, Municipal contracts and Miscellaneous income

## **LOCAL PLANNING ASSISTANCE**

CMRPC offers its communities Local Planning Assistance (LPA) as a flexible planning resource. LPA Hours directly correlate to CMRPC planning staff time. Each community begins the fiscal year with an initial allocation of twelve (12) LPA Hours that can be used to support municipal planning efforts. In addition to the initial allocation, communities can "earn" an additional twelve (12) LPA Hours when municipal officials attend approved events. Approved events include, but are not limited to, the following:

- CMRPC Annual & Quarterly Commission meetings
- Executive, Transportation Planning, Legislative Affairs & Physical Development Committee meetings
- CMRPC Rural Caucus
- CMMPO Advisory Committee meetings
- Certain Regional Dialogues such as Town Managers/Administrator Meetings; Planners Forum; Economic Development Roundtables; Planning Board Gatherings

One LPA Hour per Municipality will be earned for each event, regardless of the number of individuals from that Municipality that are in attendance. LPA Hours cannot be accumulated or rolled over from fiscal year to fiscal year. Further information can be found on the website.

## **PUBLICATIONS**

The primary source of information for Commission meetings, publications and staff contacts is our website – [www.cmrpc.org](http://www.cmrpc.org). Anyone interested in commission activities, upcoming meetings, calendar of events, etc. is encouraged to visit the site to either read

or download information, or to find out how to follow up on interests. Paper copies will be made available upon request per MGL Part I Title X Chapter 66 Section 10.

The Commission maintains an extensive resource library of planning and planning-related materials, including copies of most CMRPC plans and studies. Copies of these documents may be reviewed on our website.

At the end of each fiscal year, the Commission publishes an annual report that summarizes the agency's accomplishments over the past year and the status of the agency's finances. The report receives wide distribution and can also be accessed on the Commission's website.

The Commission publishes an electronic newsletter, which highlights timely items of general interest to local officials and the planning community, including funding opportunities and program announcements. Subscriptions can be initiated through the Commission's website.

Meeting notices are posted in accordance with the Commonwealth's Open Meeting Law on the Commission's website. Cancellations of meetings will also be posted in the same manner.

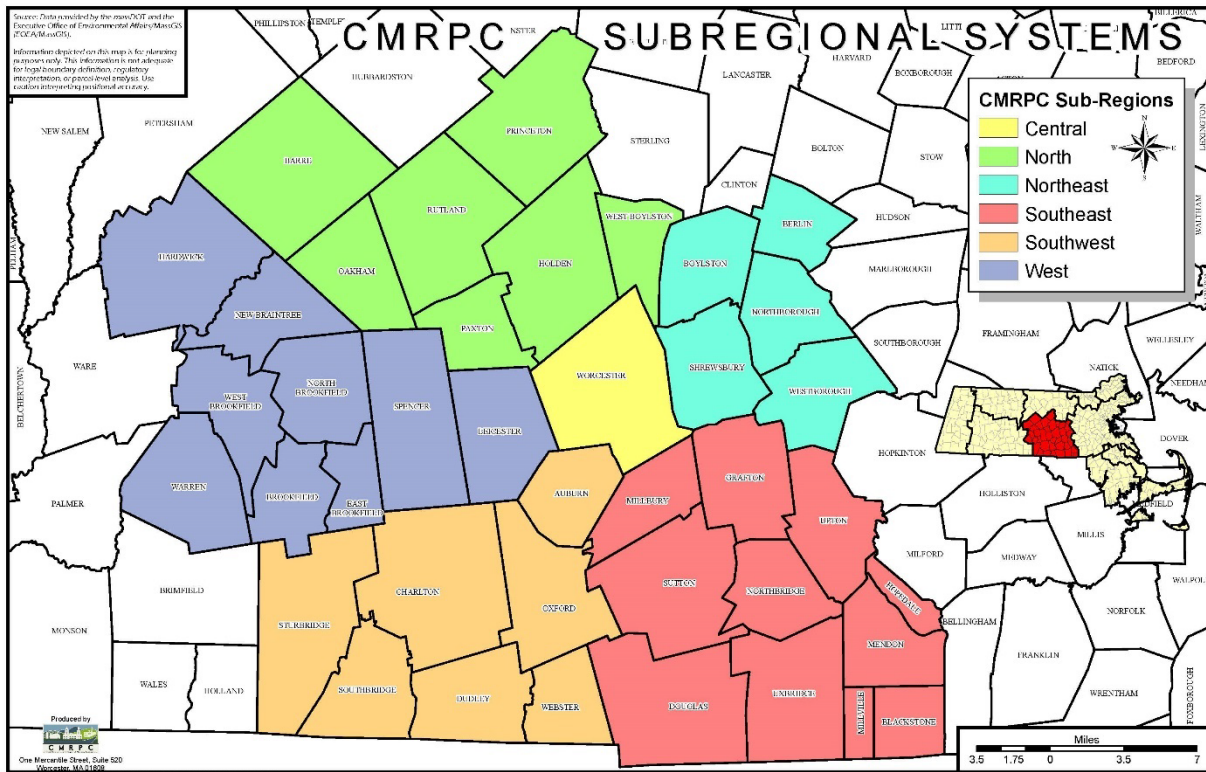
The Commission updates its website and social media and distributes press releases to the news media as needed. These postings may include upcoming events, the release of studies and reports, presentation of awards, or other significant actions taken by the Commission.

## **Chapter 3 ABOUT THE REGION**

### **REGIONAL PROFILE**

The Commission's planning district covers 960 square miles in central and southern Worcester County. Within the planning district there are forty (40) municipalities - all members of the Commission. For planning purposes, the region has been divided into six subregions (see Map below) with the City of Worcester a subregion by itself. The remaining sub regions with the number of towns in each are the North (7), Northeast (5), Southeast (11), Southwest (7) and West (9). The towns within these sub regional groupings generally can identify with one another. As an example, the Southeast sub region comprises the towns in the Routes 122 and 146 corridors through the Blackstone River Valley. Many of the towns in the West sub region identify with the Route 9 corridor, as do the towns in the North with the Wachusett Reservoir.

# REGIONAL MAP



The planning region lies nearly equidistant from the cities of Boston, Providence and Springfield. Its physical features are as diverse as its population. Elevations in the region range from over 2,000 feet above sea level in Princeton (Mt. Wachusett) to less than 200 feet in Uxbridge (Blackstone River Valley). The Commonwealth’s geographic center lies in the Town of Rutland, northwest of Worcester. Several river basins drain the region including the Assabet, Blackstone, French, Nashua, Quaboag, Quinebaug, Sudbury and Ware. The largest is the Blackstone, which drains all or portions of 22 communities in the region.

## POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS & CHANGES

The region’s population has grown from 383,262 in 1950 to 603,904 in the 2020 census – see graph below. Between 2010 and 2020 the region’s population increased 8.7%. Population increases in the decade of over 10% were tabulated in eight of the Commission’s 40 communities. The town of Westborough saw the greatest increase of 18% with 3295 new residents; the City of Worcester increased by 25,473 (14.1%) while Hardwick lost 323 residents, 10.8% of its population. More information about Population as well as the areas of Economy, Housing, Transportation, and Plans & Designations can be found on the Community Snapshots page of the website.

## POPULATION CHANGES 2010-2020

<b>Community</b>	<b>Land Area in Sq. Miles</b>	<b>2010 Assessable Population</b>	<b>2020 Assessable Population</b>	<b>Percent Change</b>
Auburn	15.36	16,118	16,889	4.8
Barre	44.33	5,398	5,530	2.4
Berlin	12.93	2,866	3,158	10.2
Blackstone	10.9	9,026	9,208	2.0
Boylston	16.03	4,355	4,849	11.3
Brookfield	15.52	3,390	3,439	1.4
Charlton	42.71	12,981	13,315	2.6
Douglas	36.37	8,471	8,983	6.0
Dudley	21.05	11,390	11,921	4.7
East Brookfield	9.84	2,183	2,224	1.9
Grafton	22.74	17,765	19,664	10.7
Hardwick	38.59	2,990	2,667	-10.8
Holden	34.99	17,346	19,905	14.8
Hopedale	5.15	5,911	6,017	1.8
Leicester	23.36	10,970	11,087	1.1
Mendon	18.1	5,839	6,228	6.7
Millbury	15.73	13,261	13,831	4.3
Millville	4.93	3,190	3,174	-0.5
New Braintree	20.7	999	996	-0.3
North Brookfield	21.06	4,680	4,735	1.2
Northborough	18.54	14,155	15,741	11.2
Northbridge	17.19	15,707	16,335	4.0
Oakham	21.12	1,902	1,851	-2.7
Oxford	26.63	13,709	13,347	-2.6
Paxton	14.74	4,806	5,004	4.1
Princeton	35.45	3,413	3,495	2.4
Rutland	35.26	7,976	9,049	13.5
Shrewsbury	20.73	35,608	38,325	7.6
Southbridge	20.17	16,719	17,740	6.1
Spencer	32.85	11,688	11,992	2.6
Sturbridge	37.41	9,268	9,867	6.5
Sutton	32.38	8,963	9,357	4.4
Upton	21.52	7,542	8,000	6.1
Uxbridge	29.55	13,457	14,162	5.2
Warren	27.53	5,135	4,975	-3.1
Webster	12.49	16,767	17,776	6.0
West Boylston	12.9	6,531	7,150	9.5
West Brookfield	20.48	3,701	3,833	3.6
Westborough	20.52	18,272	21,567	18.0
Worcester	37.56	181,045	206,518	14.1
<b>CMRPC Region</b>	<b>925.41</b>	<b>555,493</b>	<b>603,904</b>	<b>8.7</b>

# POPULATION 1950-2020 WITH PROJECTIONS FOR 2030

