



# Watertown

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

### PLAN WORKSHOPS

September 29, 2022

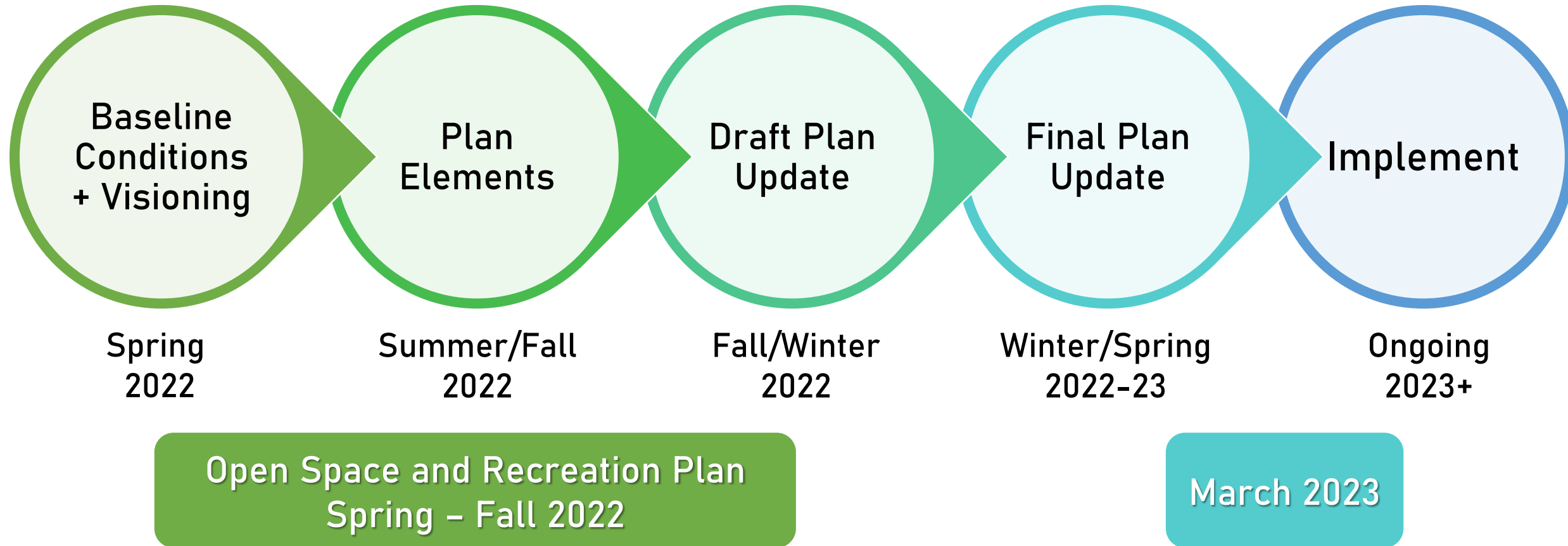


# Agenda

- Welcome
- Baseline Assessment Highlights
- Visioning Forum Recap
- Revised Vision Statement
- Draft Goals and Strategy Directions
- Break-Out Stations
- Report Back
- Q&A



# Schedule





# **Baseline Assessment Highlights**



# Baseline Conditions





# Baseline Conditions

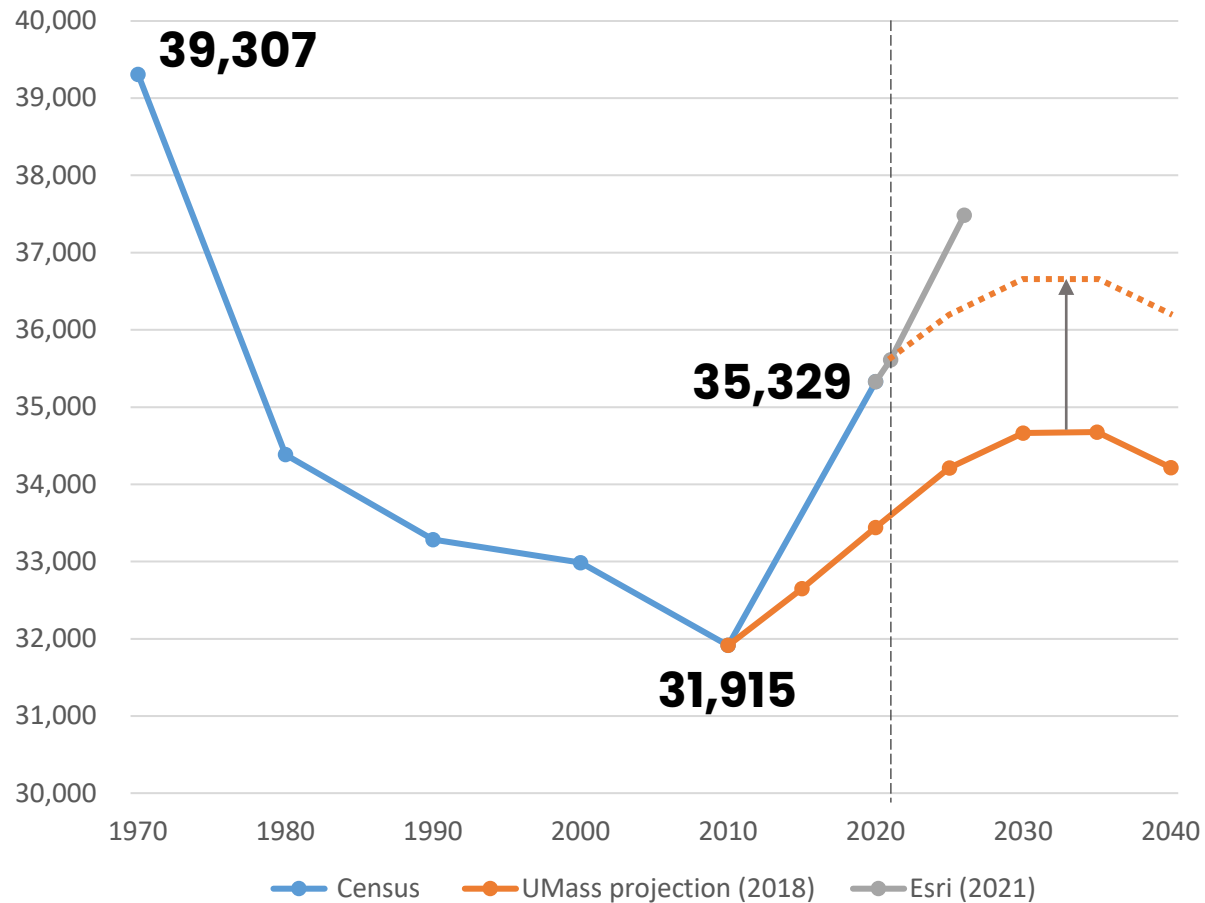


### **Building on recent planning efforts**

- Resilient Watertown Climate and Energy Plan (adopted August 2022)
- Commercial Development/Housing Nexus Study (2022)
- Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Action Grant (ongoing)
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (2021)
- Housing Plan (2021)
- Community Preservation Act Plan (2021)
- Public Arts Master Plan (2020)
- Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Program (2020)
- Community Health Needs Assessment (2019)
- Complete Streets Prioritization Plan (2018)
- Envisioning a Watertown for All Ages (2018)

# Population and Jobs

**+10.7%** population growth since 2010



**+7.4%** job growth since 2010

## Top Growing Industries (2015 -2021)



Admin & Support Service



Scientific Research & Development



Insurance Carriers



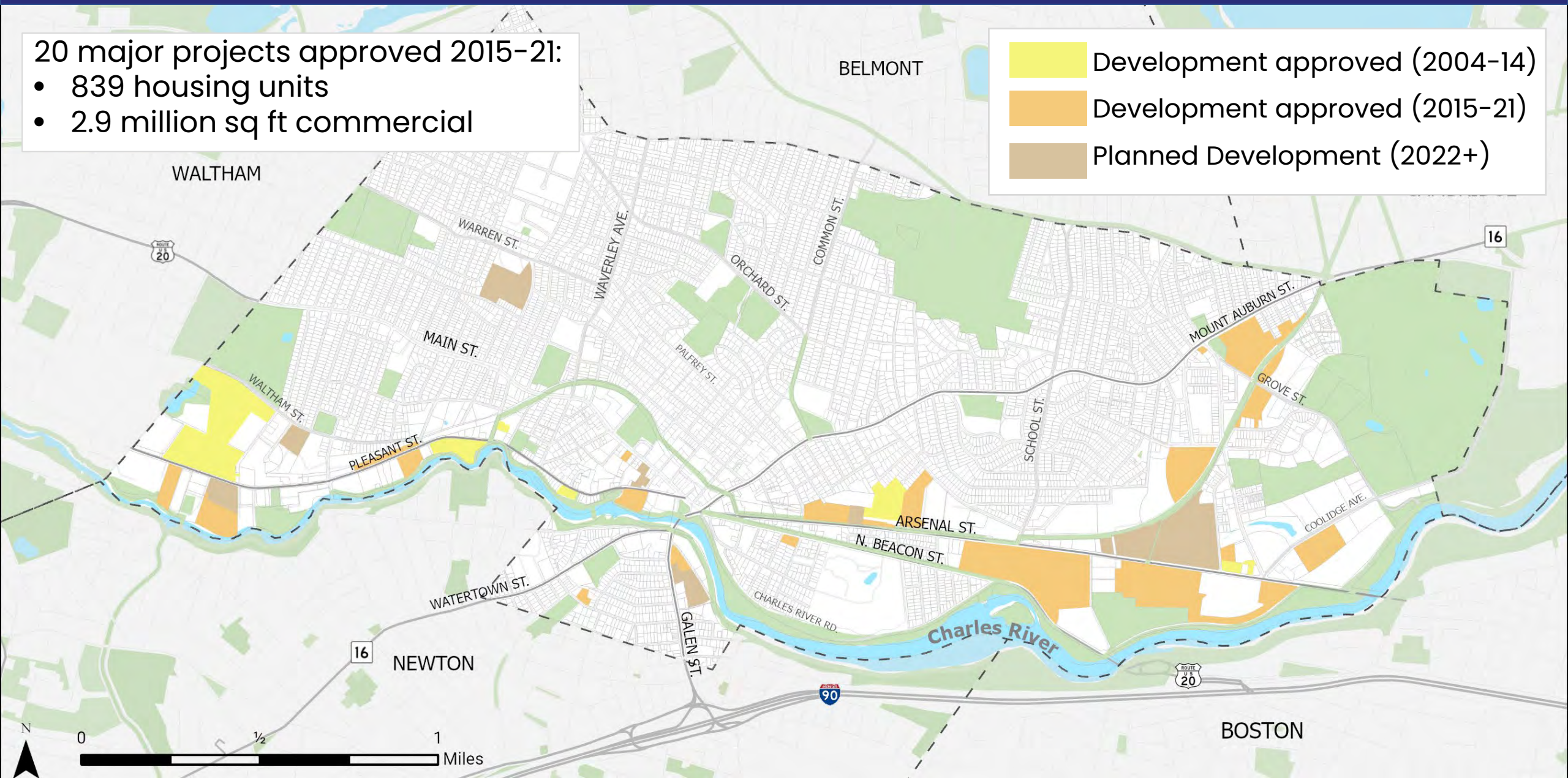
Health Services



# Recent Development

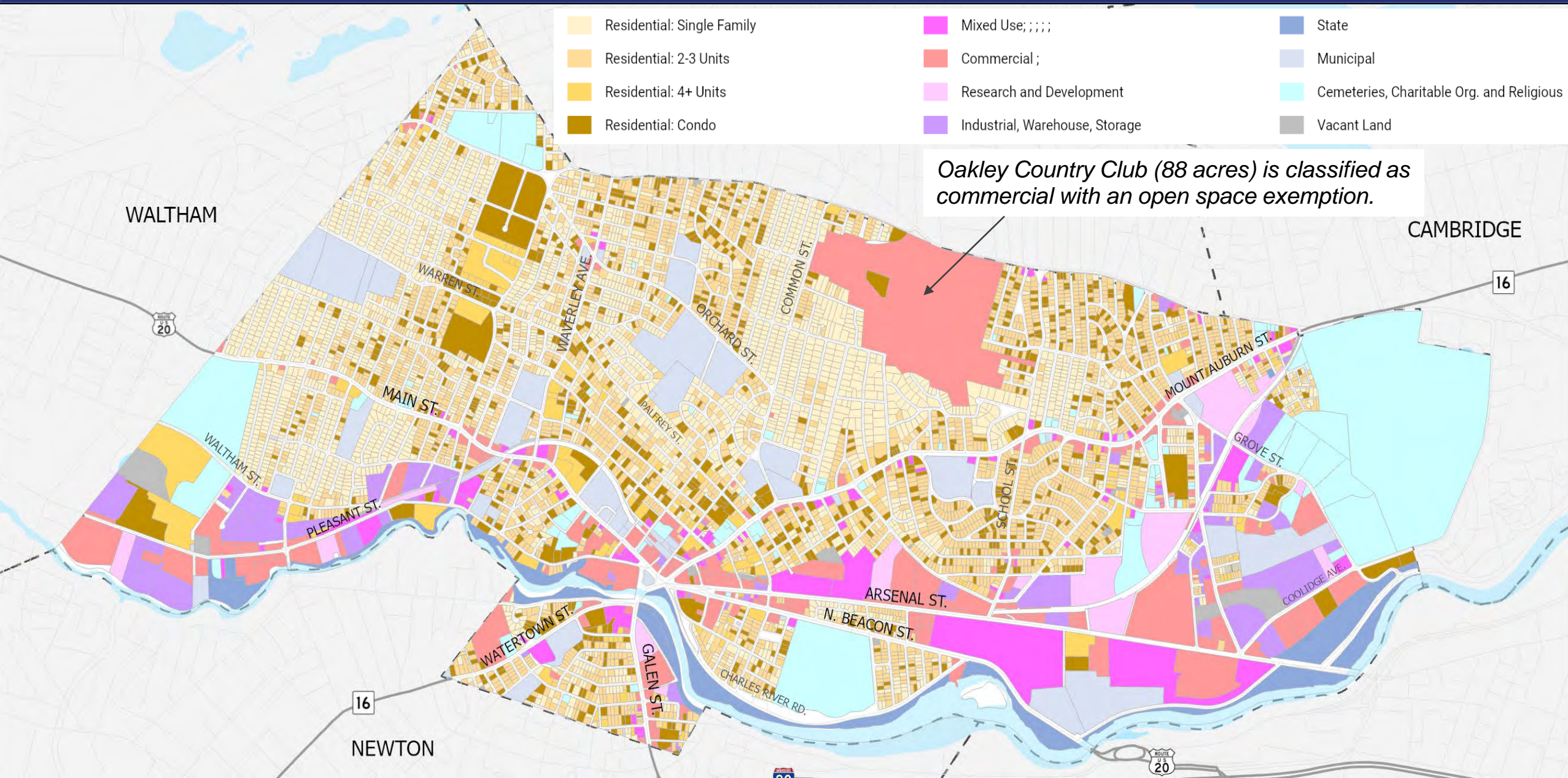
20 major projects approved 2015-21:

- 839 housing units
- 2.9 million sq ft commercial





# Existing Land Use





# Retail Clusters

## PRIMARY (>300k sf)

- Arsenal Street
- Arsenal Yard + Watertown Mall
- Watertown Square
- Pleasant Street

## SECONDARY (<200k sf)

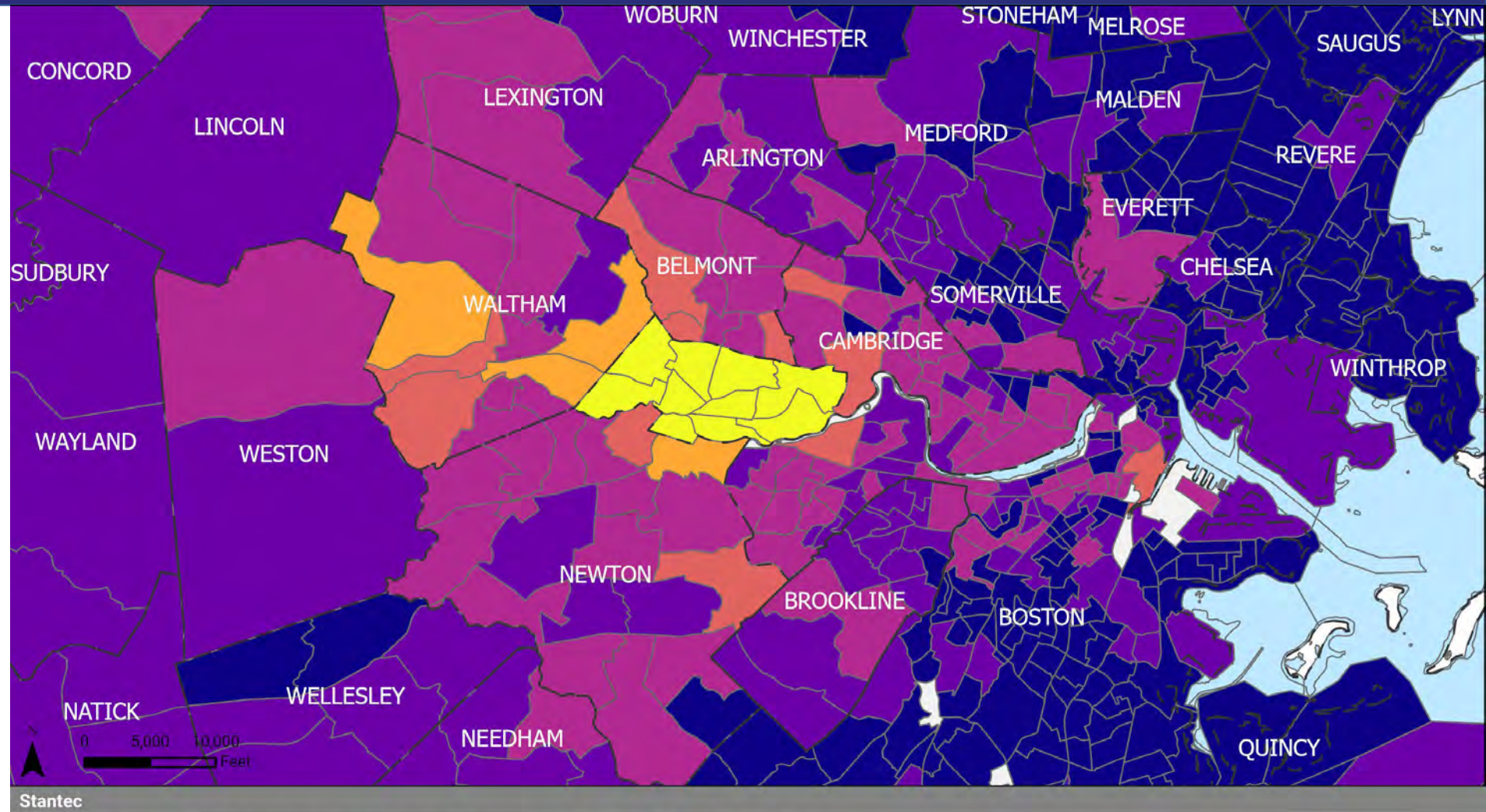
- Galen Street
- Coolidge Square
- Waverley



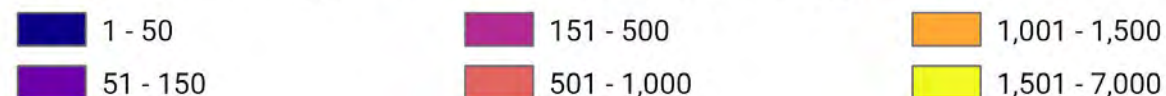


## Weekday Trips

- **~40%** of weekday trips start and end in Watertown
- Boston and Waltham account for ~20% of trips ending in Watertown



## Origins of Trips to Watertown (Daily, 2019)



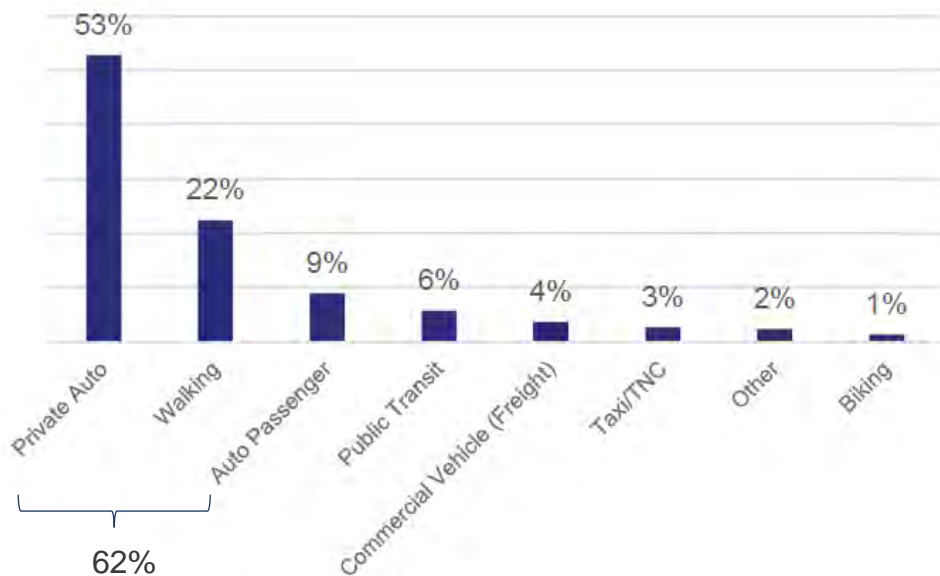
Source: Replica  
April 2022  
Existing Conditions Report  
Watertown, MA





# How We Get Around

Mode Choice – All Trips, 2019



Mode Choice – Work Trips, 2016 & 2020

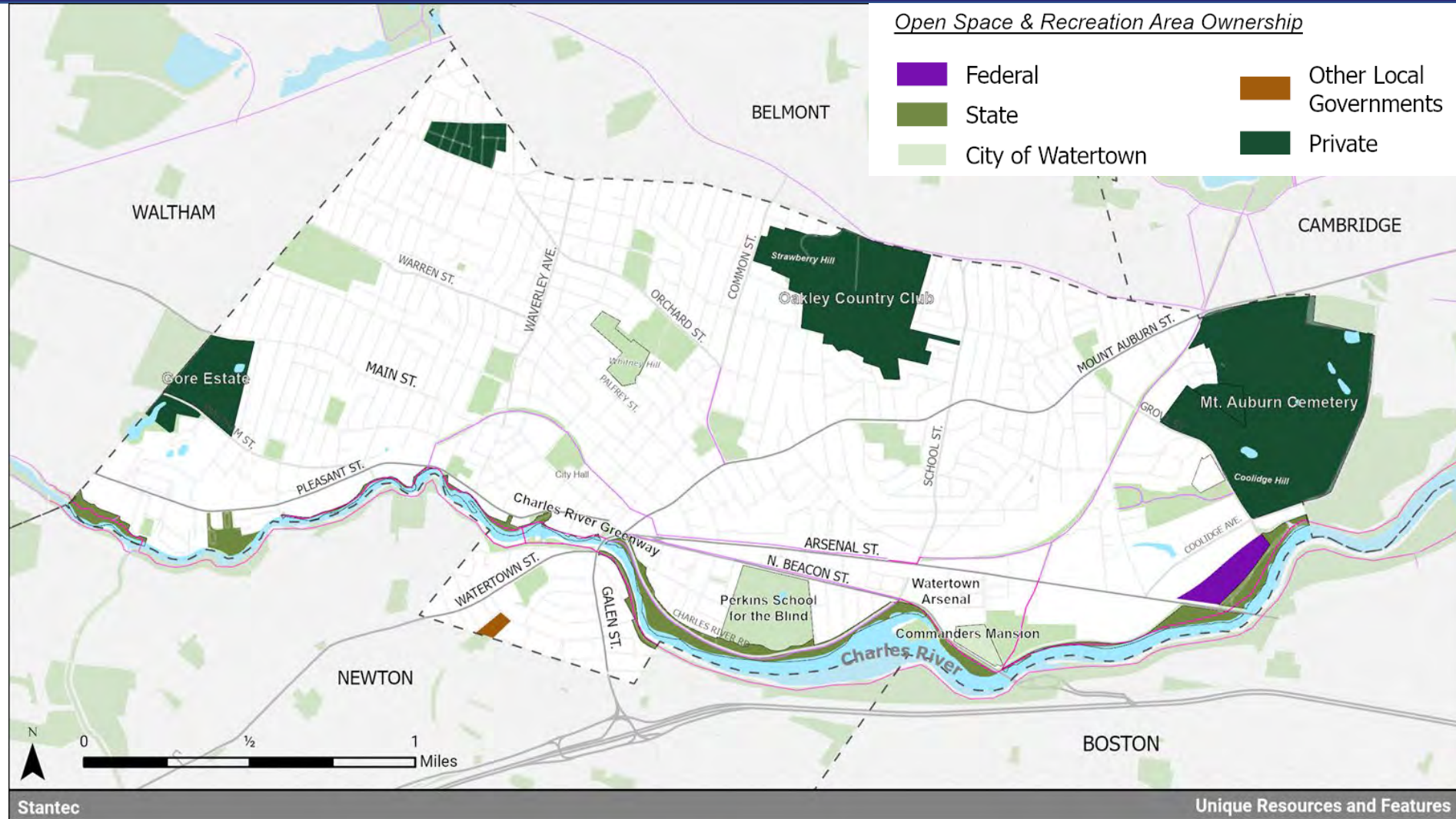
69-73%

Mode Share	Percent of Residents (2016)	Percent of Residents (2020)
Drive Alone	64%	61%
Carpool	9%	8%
Take Public Transit	16%	13%
Walk	3%	3%
Bike	2%	3%
Work From Home	5%	12%

- Many local trips still taken by car despite short distances
- Driving accounts for about 60% of all trips and about 70% of commute trips
- Pre-pandemic, walking accounted for over 20% of all trips taken in Watertown.

# Parks and Open Spaces

- Most parks and playgrounds owned by City
- Largest open spaces are privately owned (e.g. Mt Auburn Cemetery, Gore Estate)
- State DCR owns most open space along Charles River



## Legend

- - - Town Boundaries
- Major Streets
- Secondary Streets

- Minor Streets
- Multiuse Paths
- Surface Water

## Open Space & Recreation Area Ownership

- Federal
- State
- City of Watertown
- Other Local Governments
- Private

Source: MassGIS  
April 2022  
Open Space and Recreation Plan  
Watertown, MA





# Visioning Forum Recap

74

Participants

In-person + online

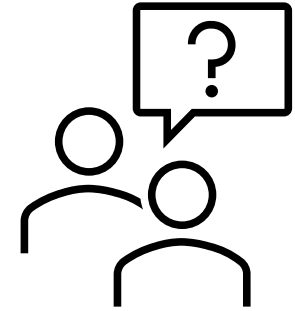




246

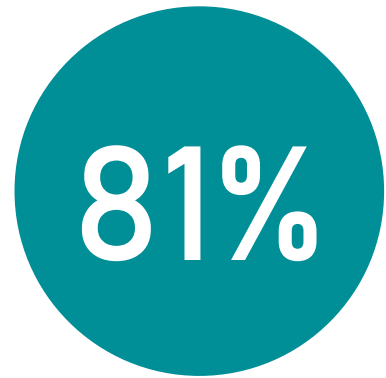
Vision/Needs  
survey responses

(thru 9/2)

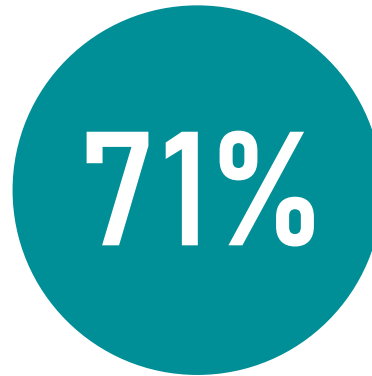


- 58% lived in Watertown 10+ years | 20% less than 5 years
- 80% homeowners | 18% renters
- 24% 65 years or older | 13% younger than 34 years old
- 38% households w/ someone 65+ | 27% households w/ children under 18

## Quality of Life



Excellent or good  
quality of life



Quality of life  
improved or stayed  
about the same recently



### Watertown and Coolidge Squares

How would these factors improve your experience in local business districts?

Highly likely:

- Public realm improvements
- More public gathering spaces
- Better pedestrian/bicycle connections



### Arsenal and Pleasant Street Corridors

Over next 10 years, what priority would you put on these types of development?

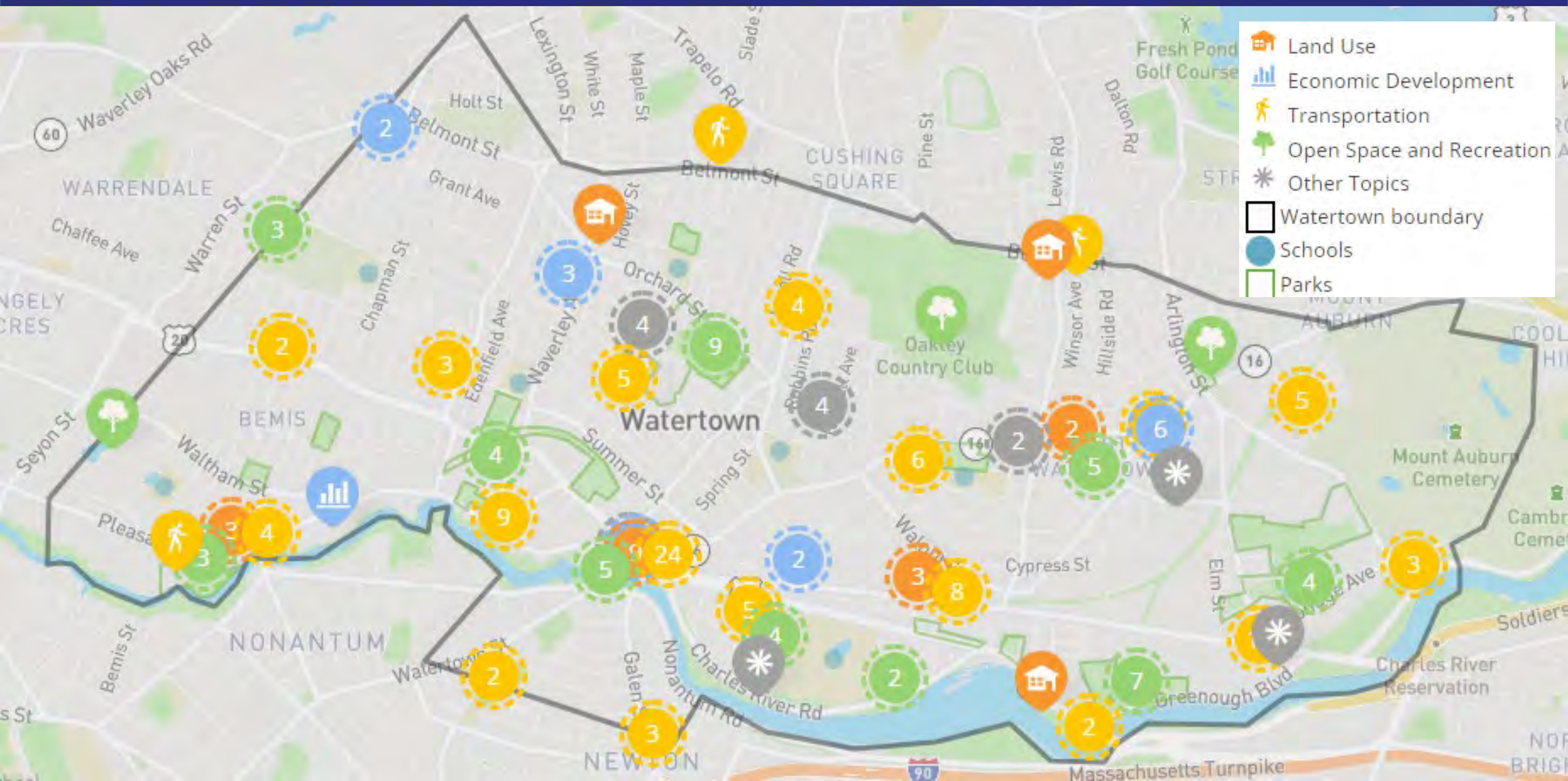
High priority:

- Apartments (w/ affordable units)
- Condominiums (w/ affordable units)
- Mixed-use





# Interactive Map





# Interactive Map





227

## Map comments

(thru 9/2)



19 – Land Use



24 – Economic Development



114 – Transportation

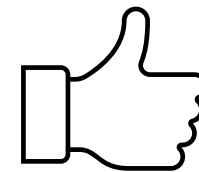


52 – Open Space and Recreation

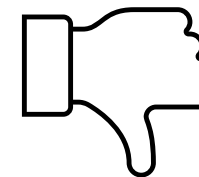


18 – Other Topics

Participants are  
responding to other  
comments, not just  
submitting their own

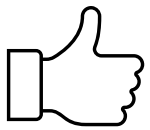


93% received  
1+ up vote



31% received  
1+ down vote

## Most liked comments



38  
up votes

“Coolidge has amazing local businesses (arax, bakeries, hardware, barber, etc.) that I love [...] Beautify the street to calm the car traffic. Prioritize the buses somehow. Celebrate this unique area of Watertown by treating it less like a highway/ parking lot and more like a neighborhood.”

32  
up votes

“Would really appreciate small restaurants, cafes, bookstores, shops friendly to the many children in town, bakeries, etc on the main street.”

30  
up votes

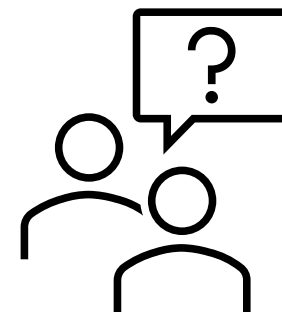
“I'd like to see improvements to the aesthetics of [Watertown] Square's streetscape [...] make consistent architectural changes, large and clear glass (not tinted!) on store fronts, welcoming banners and front displays”



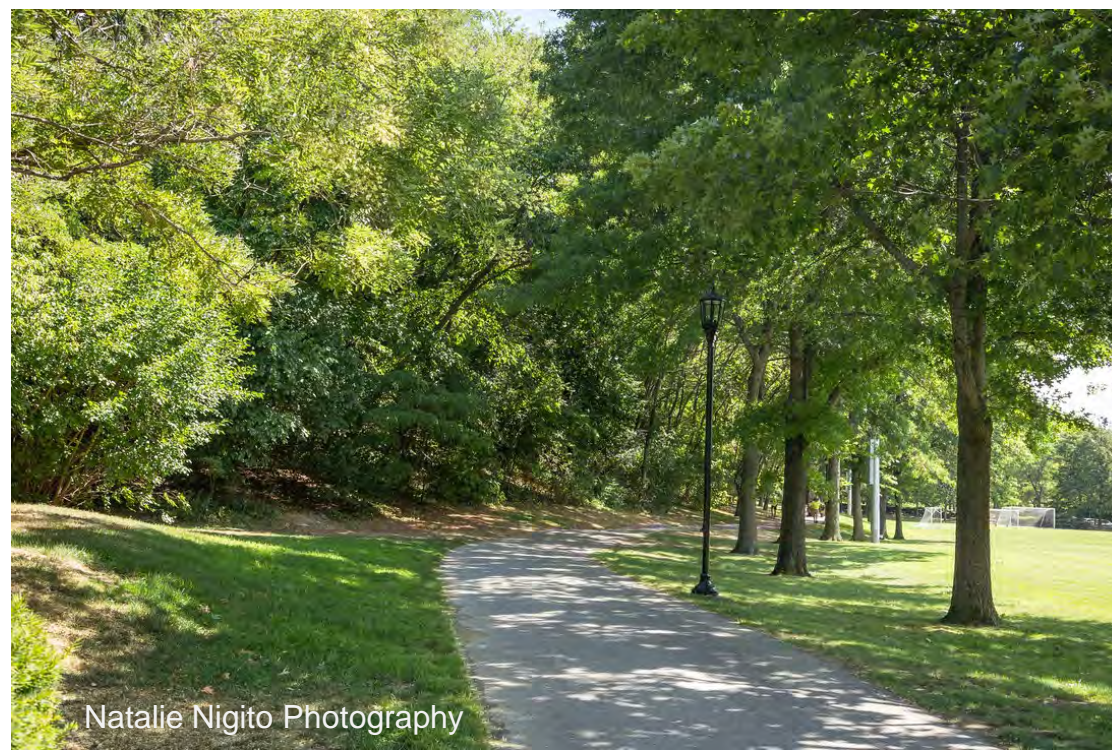
172

Open Space/ Recreation  
survey responses

(thru 9/22)



Natalie Nigito Photography



Natalie Nigito Photography

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# **Vision Statement**



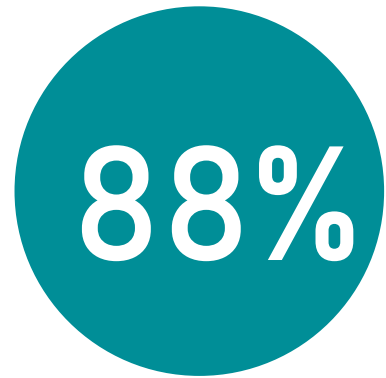
## 2015 Vision Statement

(from current plan):

Watertown envisions a vibrant and diverse future for its community that builds upon its rich foundation of neighborhoods, culture, commercial districts, town squares, diverse street corridors, civic assets, and proximity to the Charles River and Boston.

Watertown will continue to foster and strengthen community, ensuring a built environment with diverse institutions, supported schools, celebrated cultural amenities and recreational facilities that provide the cultural cohesiveness so important to the community.

## 2015 Vision Statement



Valid statement  
as-is or with  
minor changes

*Vision and Needs online survey responses*

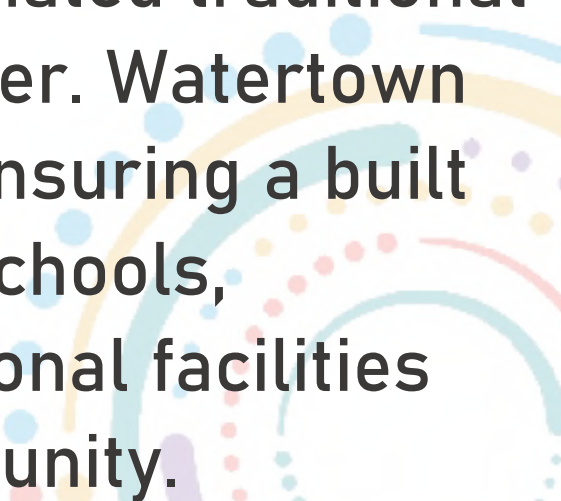


The revised vision statement  
incorporates feedback from  
visioning forum and online  
survey responses



## Revised Vision Statement

Watertown envisions an inclusive and sustainable future that enhances its vibrant neighborhoods, weaves the community together with a mix of new development and rejuvenated traditional commercial districts, and embraces the Charles River. Watertown will continue to foster and strengthen community, ensuring a built environment with diverse institutions, high quality schools, celebrated arts and cultural amenities, and recreational facilities that each foster connections important to the community.





# **Draft Goals and Strategy Directions**



## Goals

**Be a leader on municipal sustainability and managing climate change impacts**

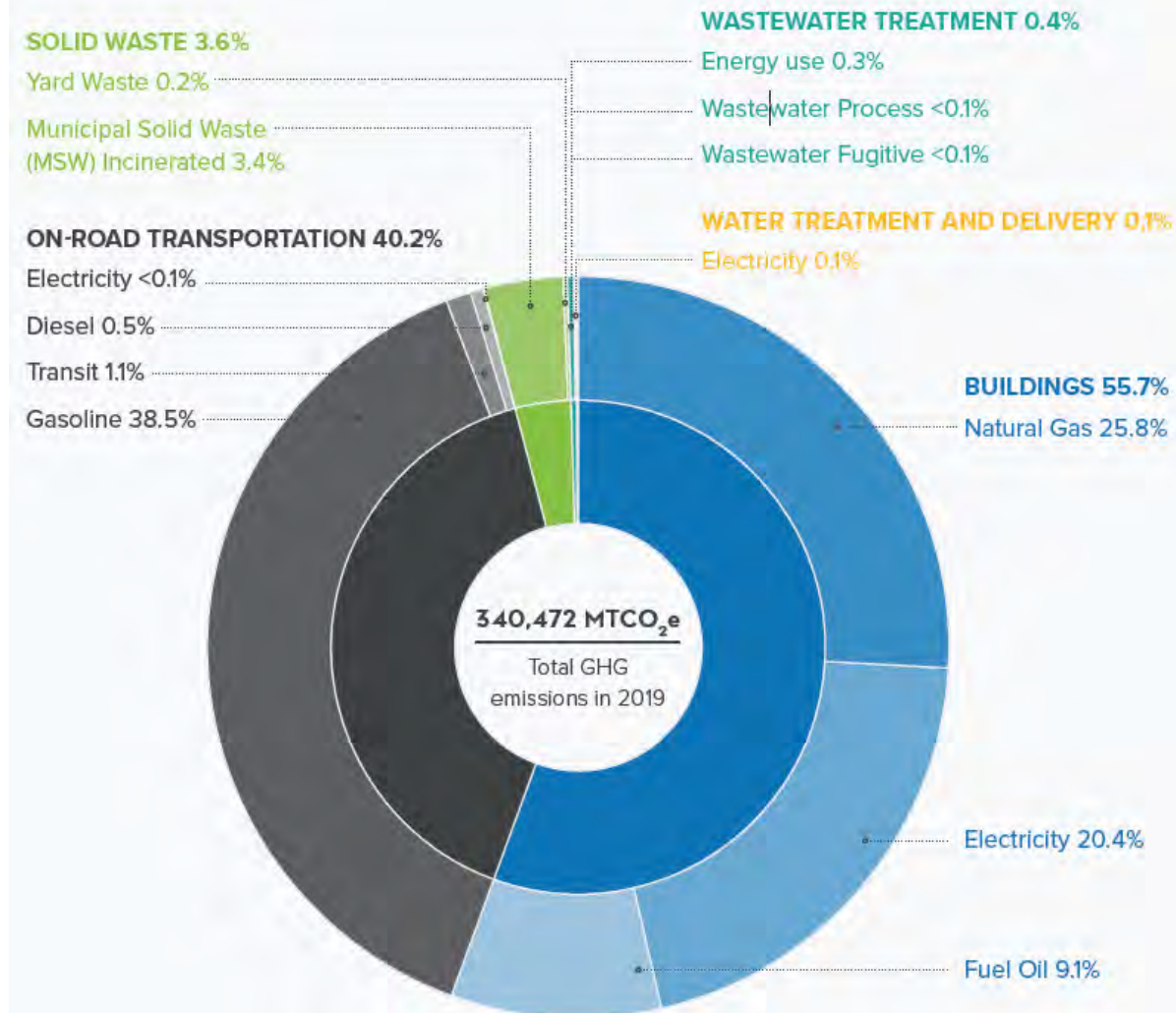


## Why is this important?

- More frequent and severe storms, increasing temperatures, flooding and drought are local impacts of changing climate conditions
- **Buildings** account for 55% of Watertown's greenhouse gas emissions while **transportation** accounts for 40%

*Builds on: Resilient Watertown Climate and Energy plan*

Watertown Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory, 2019





### **Municipal sustainability**

- Increase community resilience and emergency preparedness
- Promote development patterns that support walking and biking for short trips, achieve high levels of energy efficiency, and integrate historic resources
- Reduce consumption and increase recycling
- Increase regional collaboration to address climate challenges

*Builds on: Resilient Watertown Climate and Energy plan*



## Goals

**Enhance the character and quality of life in Watertown's neighborhoods, squares, and along the corridors that connect them to help build community.**



### **Why is this important?**

Take advantage of growth to pursue shared community enhancements:

- Population and job growth expected to continue
- Continued interest in redevelopment of aging commercial/industrial properties

Strong public interest in improvements to make Watertown Square and other commercial districts more inviting and attractive

Neighborhood quality of life important for residents – walkable/bikeable streets, nearby parks, convenient retail, etc.

### **Character and quality of life**

Define future land use vision to guide growth

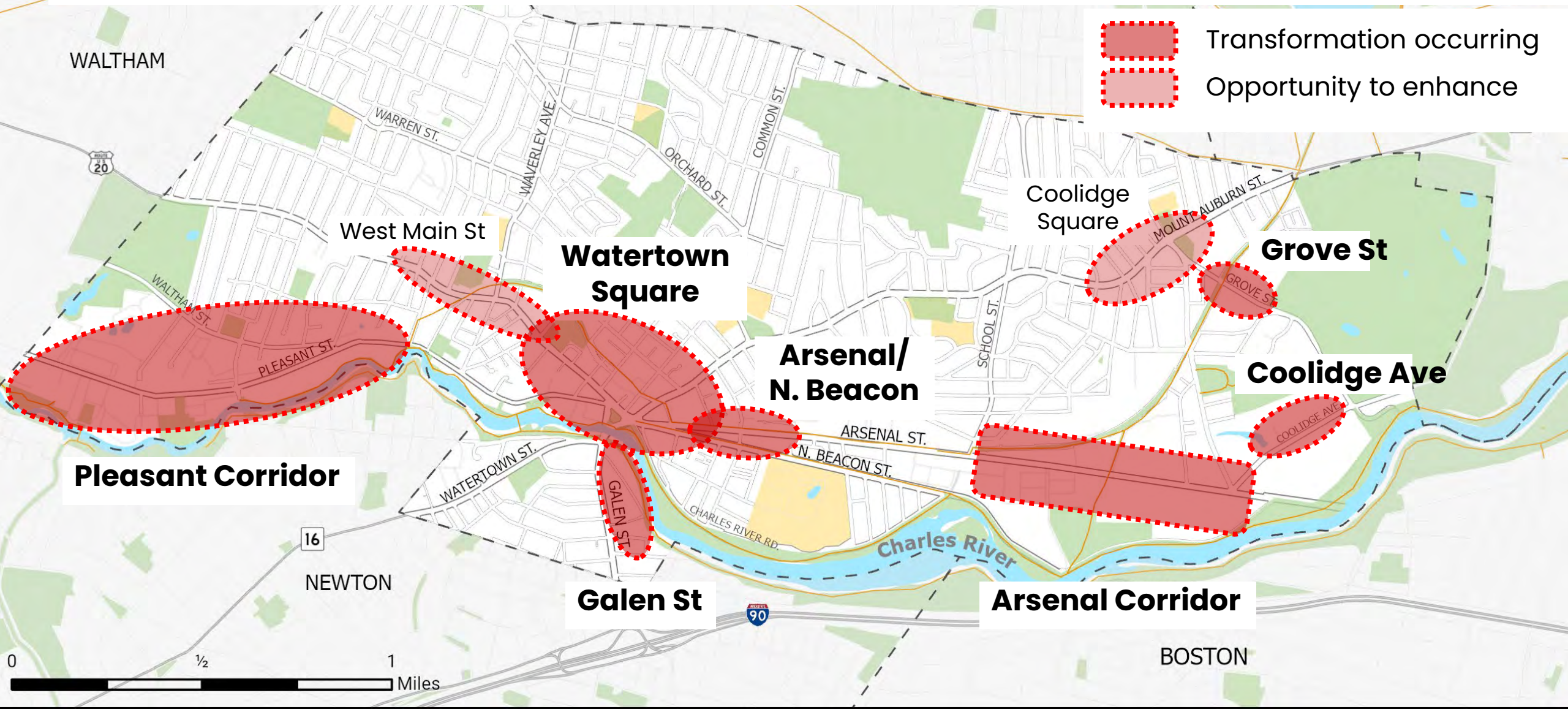
- Implement improvements to enhance quality of life in redevelopment areas – mix of uses, successful retail clusters, accessible open spaces, transportation, etc.
- Plan for more housing near transit... and better mobility options near housing and jobs
- Address transitional areas at neighborhood edges
- Incorporate historic features in property improvements and new projects

*Builds on: Commercial Development/Housing Nexus Study*



# Areas of change and enhancement

- Population and job growth expected to continue
- Continued interest in redevelopment of aging commercial/industrial properties





## Watertown Square

- Identify an anchor attraction(s) to create a destination for residents and businesses
- Add housing in and near square
- Improve streetscapes and storefronts





## Goals

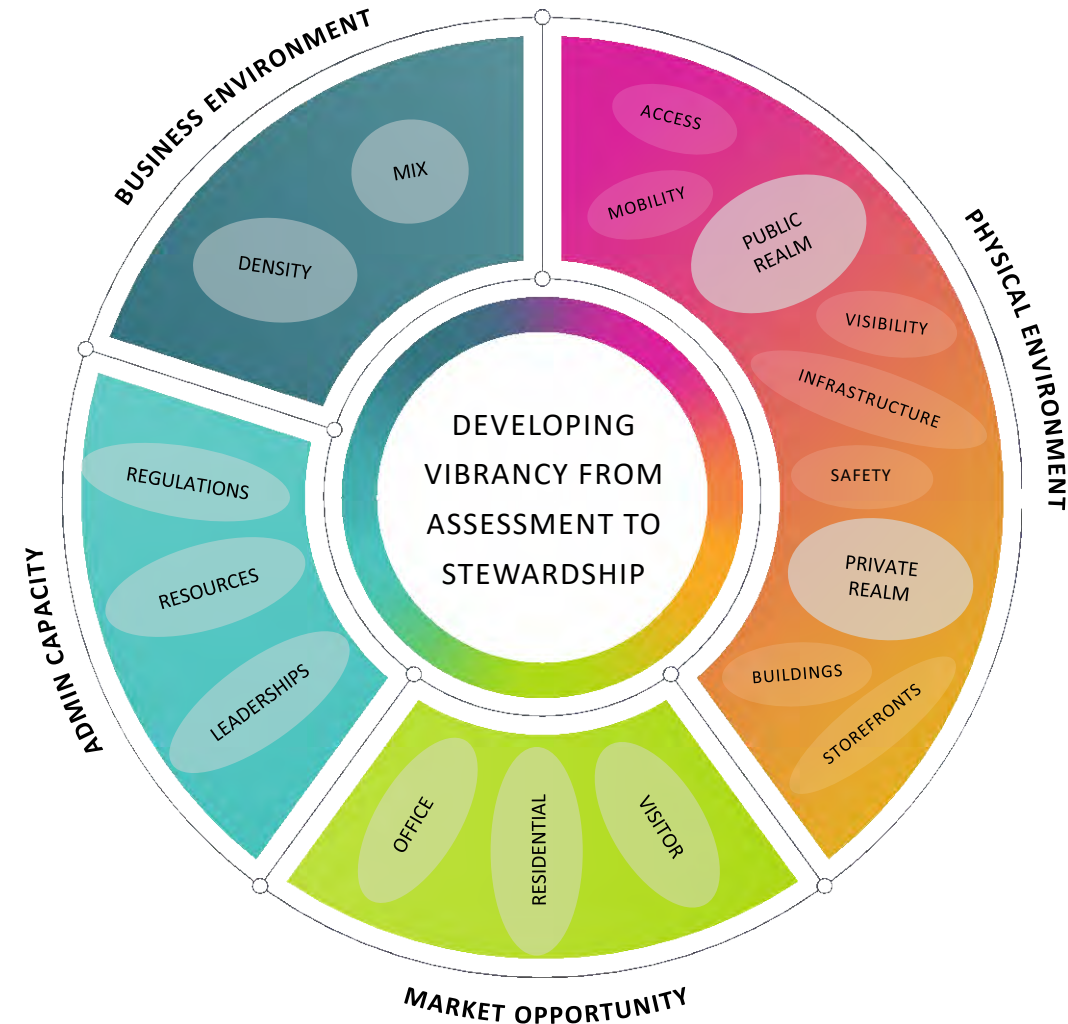
**Cultivate a mix of diverse businesses that strengthens our community by providing jobs, services, and support for City infrastructure.**



## Why is this important?

Two clear areas of interest:

- How to harness the growth in **Life Sciences** and other development in Watertown?
- How to support and enhance **commercial districts** as a quality-of-life feature for residents?





### Use economic growth to strengthen and improve community

- Replace aging and underused sites with new jobs, businesses, housing
- Ensure variety of shared benefits from new development
- Support growth areas with public improvements





## Support and strengthen existing commercial districts

### Business Retention and Attraction

- Promotion, marketing, and branding of Watertown and its squares and corridors to raise profile
- Promote Coolidge Square as a Food & Beverage destination

### Capacity Building

- Explore Business Improvement District formation, Main Street program, or other improvement models



## Support and strengthen existing commercial districts

### Public Realm Enhancements

- Connectivity to and from districts to improve daytime worker spending – sidewalks and mobility infrastructure

### Business-Friendly Zoning

- Allow more flexibility in uses
- Reduce barriers to reuse of existing commercial space
- Expand sidewalk dining where space allows
- Evaluate signage requirements





## Goals

**Promote safe, efficient multimodal transportation options that provide access to jobs, amenities, and services.**



### **Why is this important?**

- Recent growth increasing pressure on streets by more and different users
- Half of public comments on map about transportation issues: walking, biking, buses, driving, parking
- Nearly a quarter of all trips taken by foot
- More local trips taken without a car can reduce traffic and greenhouse gas emissions

## Multimodal transportation

- Identify policy goals for key streets and growth areas
- Enhance residential neighborhoods via safe links to retail, parks, community activities, etc.
- Manage parking availability as part of overall community access

*Builds on: Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan,  
Complete Streets Prioritization Plan,  
Parking Management Plan*





## Multimodal transportation

- Prioritize and implement pedestrian and bicycle facilities throughout Watertown
- Harness growth to provide new connections and mobility options

*Builds on: Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan,  
Complete Streets Prioritization Plan,  
Parking Management Plan*





## Goals

**Facilitate a range of housing types and affordability.**





### **Why is this important?**

- Rising housing costs a concern
- Prospective linkage fee could increase funding for affordable and workforce housing
- Many older residents interested in aging in place

## Range of housing

- Encourage more housing near jobs, transit, and daily needs
- Increase supply of income-restricted affordable housing
- Preserve or create housing that allows seniors to age in place

*Builds on: Housing Plan, Community Preservation Act 5-Year Plan*





## Goals

**Ensure high-quality parks, recreation, and open spaces that meet the needs of residents and the environment, and encourage active and passive use.**



## Why is this important?

- Neighborhood playgrounds and parks can encourage community
- Parks and open spaces play important role in climate resiliency
- Distribution, access, and programming an equity and environmental justice issue





### **Access to high-quality parks, recreation, open spaces**

- Use redevelopment opportunities, CPA funds to create new pocket parks
- Provide equitable access to parks, playgrounds, and open spaces across the city
- Offer programming, facilities, and amenities suitable for a range of ages, abilities, and interests
- Create spaces that bring the community together
- Connect spaces to each other and with neighborhoods through walking and biking networks

*Builds on: Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP)*

### **Support the environmental benefits of parks and open spaces**

- Preserve and expand tree canopy, particularly in public spaces
- Improve and enhance water quality and habitat
- Design parks and open spaces that build resilience to climate impacts

*Builds on: Open Space and Recreation Plan*



Credit: Natalie Nigito Photography



### **Ensure sustainable management of resources**

- Continue maintenance of and upgrades to existing facilities and amenities
- Continue to work with DCR to ensure properties are maintained, providing opportunities for residents
- Communicate with residents about concerns, interests, and other needs

*Builds on: Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP)*

## Goals

**Support community wellness through inclusive programs and events, diverse arts and culture, enhanced natural and historic resources, and more lively public and private spaces.**





### Why is this important?

- Health concerns include mental health and substance abuse, equitable access to medical care and food
- Strong interest in more lively public (and privately owned) public spaces for social interaction
- Increasing focus on public arts as placemaking
- Historic resources distinguish Watertown

*Builds on: Live Well Watertown, Community Health Needs Assessment, Envisioning a Watertown for All Ages, Public Arts Master Plan, CPA 5-Year Plan*

### Community wellness

- Encourage healthy lifestyles through design of streets and parks, access to food, etc.
- Design public and private open spaces to encourage social interaction
- Integrate arts, culture, and historic resources into planning and development



*Builds on: Live Well Watertown, Community Health Needs Assessment, Envisioning a Watertown for All Ages, Public Arts Master Plan, CPA 5-Year Plan*



## Goals

**Proactively maintain and improve infrastructure and services to responsibly meet current and future needs.**



### Why is this important?

- Capital Improvement Plan is an implementation tool for Comp Plan
- Municipal action on energy efficiency will continue leadership
- Proper maintenance extends lifespan of public investments

*Builds on: Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)*





## Infrastructure and services

- Identify staffing needs/ capacity in response to increased population, development, and complexity
- Improve energy efficiency and accessibility of public buildings
- Consider reuse opportunities for unused and underutilized municipal properties.

*Builds on: Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)*



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# **Breakout Stations**



### In- Person

- Breakout stations
- Discussion questions

### Online

- Virtual workshop
- Survey questions

### Visit 5 stations around the room:

- Land use/development
- Economic opportunity
- Open space and recreation
- Transportation/mobility
- Sustainability, housing, community wellness, infrastructure & services





# Discuss draft goals and preliminary strategies

Each station has posters to review and questions to respond to:

- Using a dot sticker to vote
- Writing brief comments on sticky notes
- Talking with planning team members

Comment sheet (provided at sign-in):

- Survey about the vision and goals
- Additional feedback
- Return to planning team



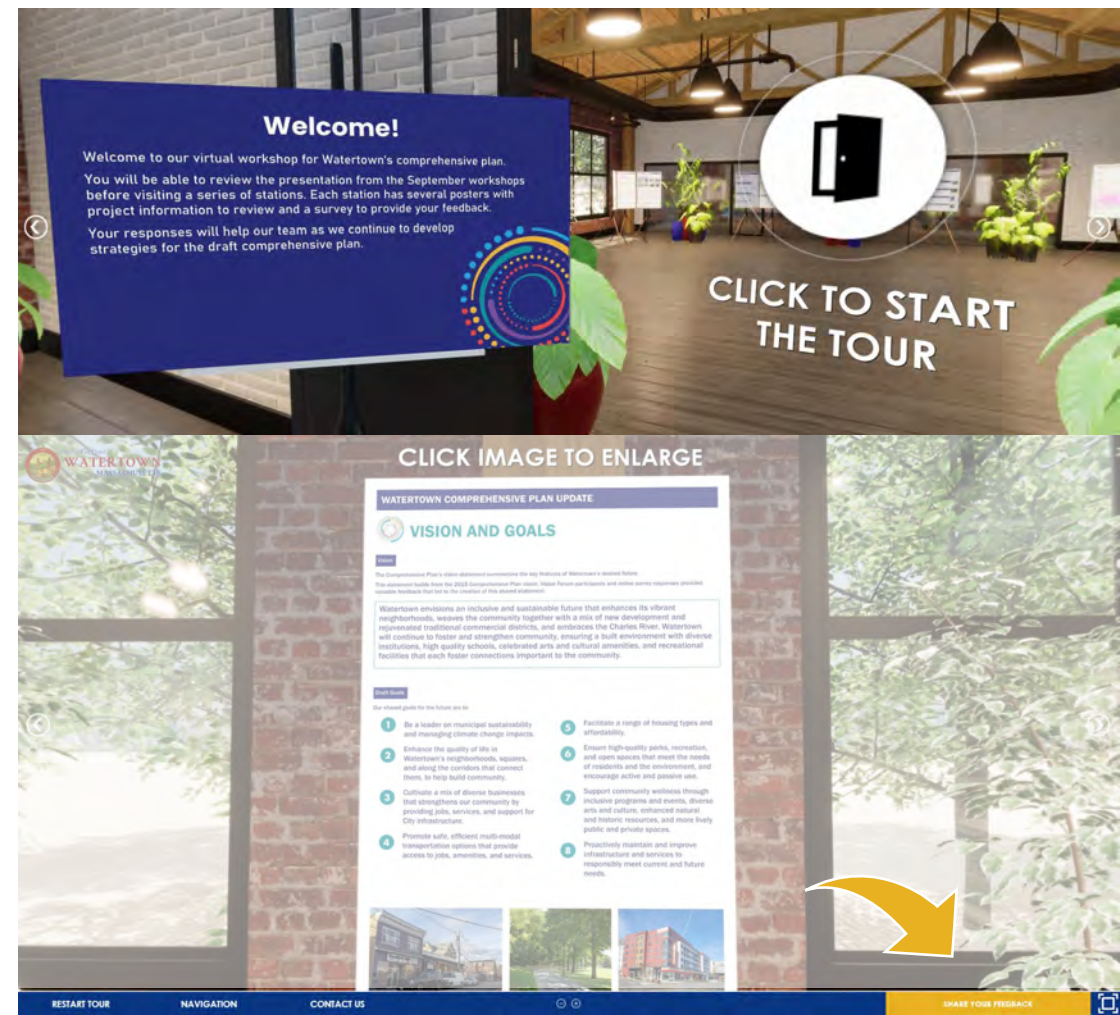
## Continue sharing your thoughts online

Visit the project website:

- Virtual workshop with same content as stations tonight
- Complete surveys to provide feedback on draft goals and strategy directions



<https://www.watertown-ma.gov/comp-plan>











Thank you!