

3.0

INTRODUCTION

The Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) was selected by the Holden Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC) to update Holden's Master Plan from 2008. The project ran from January 2018 through July 2019. The plan lays out a vision for the community's future over the next ten years, or more, and creates a roadmap of goals and actions. The main topics of this Master Plan include:

1. Population and Housing
2. Natural Resources
3. Historic and Cultural Resources
4. Open Space and Recreation
5. Economic Development
6. Transportation
7. Town Services and Facilities
8. Land Use

What is a Master Plan?

A Master Plan is a statement of intent and is intended to serve a whole community, guiding its overall character, physical form, and evolution. It describes

where, how, and at what pace a community wants to develop physically, economically, and socially. A Master Plan serves as a guide for local officials and Town Meeting members when they make decisions about zoning, budgets, and capital improvements. This "living document" acts as a guiding force for any planning that is to occur within the Town in the future. However, the plan and its recommendations do not automatically advance any specific item. Many of the topics and actions can, and should, be coordinated and implemented together.

Why does Holden Need a Master Plan?

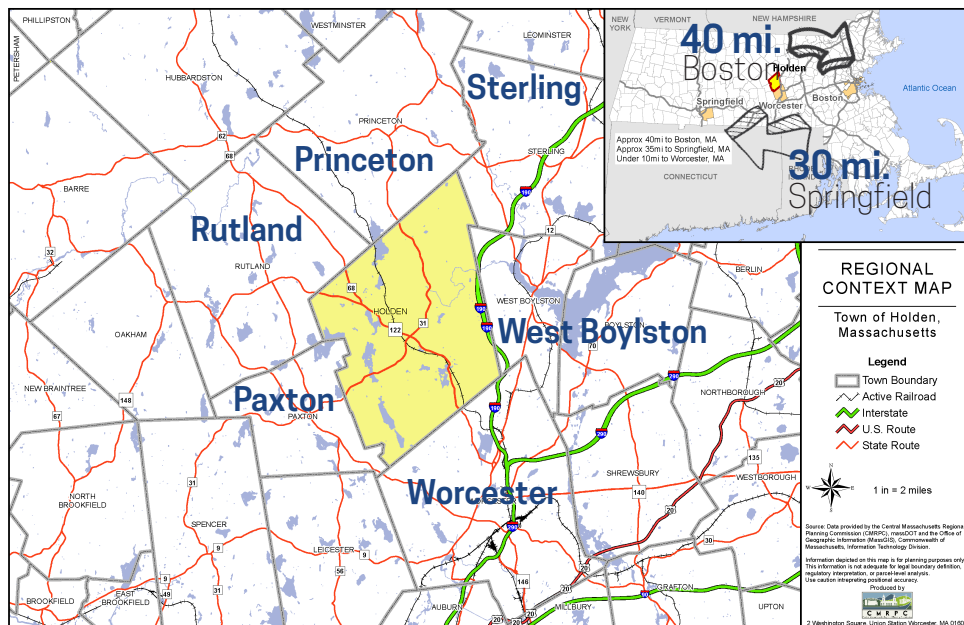
In accordance with Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 41, Section 81D, Planning Boards are required to prepare a Master Plan for their communities. These roadmaps are living documents which must be updated periodically to reflect the evolving conditions and desires of communities. CMRPC has been commissioned to assist the Town in updating Holden's Master Plan to reflect changes in community trends since 2008, achievements under the original Master Plan, and to establish new community objectives and action items.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Located on the northwestern edge of the City of Worcester, the Town of Holden is a bedroom community that retains the charming characteristics of a small New England town while providing access to urban amenities and jobs.

Holden offers much to residents. The presence of two key urban protected water reservoirs significantly aids Holden in preserving large swaths of land. Cultural amenities include the Gale Free Library, Senior Center, Town pool, fields and recreation centers, community events, classes, and more.

Incorporated 1741



Map 3 - 1 Regional Context of Holden



Rural farming community evolved to **textile mill villages**

Villages developed 1860-1900 including Chaffins, Quinapoxet, Eagleville, and Jefferson are still known to residents today.



Strong housing growth
Predominately **single-family homes**

2018 Median Sale Price: **\$290,000**
Cost-burdened Households: **25%**



Creation of the **Quabbin and Wachusett Reservoirs** for the City of Boston lead to the decline of the majority of Holden's manufacturing industry

Post World War II, became a **"bedroom community"** for commuting workers



Median Family Income: **\$102,000**

Median **monthly housing costs** are lower than the metropolitan areas of Boston, Worcester, or Springfield at **\$1,687**



Foremost industries: **education, healthcare, and social services**

The largest employers in town: **Clariant Corporation, Pepsi Bottling Company, Alden Labs, Big Y, Town of Holden, and the Wachusett Regional High School**

19,003 current residents (historic high)

Quality of education continues to draw in new families with school-aged children

Older families and retirement age residents are the fastest growing cohort, as is the case across the state



The majority of residents **work outside of Holden**

Average Commute: 28 minutes

Community
Development
Plan 2004

Facilities
Study 2006

History of Holden's Community Planning

2007 The Holden Town
Common: Past,
Present, and
Future

Master Plan 2008

2011 Route 122A
Access Plan

Central Thirteen
Prioritization Plan 2012

Open Space and
Recreation Plan

2015 Holden Village Center
Zoning Initiative:
Phase I, II, and III

Hazard
Mitigation
Plan 2017

2018 Fiscal Impact Assess-
ment and Growth
Management Plan

Master Plan
Update 2019

Capital Plan

Wastewater Flow and
Buildout Analysis

Municipal
Vulnerability
Preparedness

Town and School
Building Assessments

PRIOR PLANNING EFFORTS

Holden has been proactive in developing municipal plans that touch on all parts of Town life. Much like this Master Plan, these documents are only effective when they are put into practice. The Town should review, update, and implement its existing plans. This includes reviewing the timelines, relevance, and oversight of municipal plans. This Master Plan is first and foremost an update of the original **Master Plan (2008)**. The Master Plan is a long-term guiding document for the Town and volunteers to refer to during decision-making processes. It provides an outline of existing conditions, issues, and recommendations for key topics of concern.

Capital Plan (2019)

Holden develops a rolling comprehensive analysis of the Town's capital assets every year that outlines expected maintenance, replacement, and new investment necessary among the Town's capital assets over the next five years.

Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) (2019)

The Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) focuses on the region's current transportation system and how to plan for and maintain it over a 20-year horizon. The WRTA's Comprehensive Service Analysis (CSA) within the LRTP recommended the implementation of a new WRTA Route (Route 32) to connect Holden with Worcester.

Fiscal Impact Assessment and Growth Management Plan (2018)

As a component of the Master Plan process, the Town requested a Fiscal Impact Assessment and Growth Management plan. The Buildout Analysis details the physical amount of remaining possible development under existing zoning. The Fiscal Impact Assessment details the impact of complete build out on the tax base of the Town.

Gienapp Design Associates Town and School Building Assessments (2018)

This recent report was commissioned by the Town to aid in development of a 10-year capital improvement and maintenance plan for various local facilities. The document included a comprehensive review of 18 buildings across a number of categories, ranging from American with Disabilities Act (ADA) access and other code requirements to structural needs and building systems evaluations. Improvements for each structure were prioritized by level of urgency, and estimated costs for improvements were provided.

Weston & Sampson Wastewater Flow and Buildout Analysis – Phase 1 (2018)

The purpose of Weston & Sampson's report was to help Holden gain a better understanding of existing and future wastewater needs and to quantify potential future flows from buildout of properties within the existing service area. Weston & Sampson concluded that capacity should be reserved for roughly 25% in expanded flows to account for long-term buildout of buildable lots and existing properties with betterments. The report also included an evaluation of Holden's sewer pump stations and recommendations for maintenance and upgrades.

Holden Hazard Mitigation Plan (2017)

The historical development pattern of Central Massachusetts makes the likelihood of devastating impacts from a natural disaster more likely. This plan identifies the natural hazards facing the Town of Holden, assesses the vulnerabilities of critical facilities, infrastructure, residents, and businesses, and presents recommendations on how to mitigate the negative effects of probable natural hazards.

Holden Village Center Zoning Initiative: Phase I, II, and III (2015)

Since 2015, the Holden Planning Board has been working with CMRPC on a three-phase project to create a village center zoning district. Phase III (currently underway) includes finalization of the study area, creation of zoning bylaw text amendments, public outreach, and presentation

of the new village center zoning district for consideration at Annual Town Meeting.

Open Space and Recreation Plan (2012)

The Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) provides an overview and analysis of the Town's significant natural and scenic resources, inventory of conservation and recreation lands, and tangible steps to improve open space and recreation opportunities in Holden. OSRP's in Massachusetts require an update every seven years to maintain such eligibility. The last officially adopted OSRP was finished in 2009. In 2012 an update was drafted but not adopted. The Town will need to update the OSRP in 2019.

Central Thirteen Prioritization Plan (2012)

The Central Thirteen Prioritization Plan was completed by CMRPC in 2012 and was a collaborative approach to classify local priorities for development and preservation within thirteen (13) identified communities in central Worcester County, including Holden. Priority Preservation Areas (PPAs), Priority Development Areas (PDAs), and priority transportation improvements were identified and mapped for each town and subregion in a manner consistent with existing policies, master plans and guidelines, and the State's Sustainable Development Principles.

Route 122A Access Management Plan (2011)

In 2011, CMRPC prepared an Access Management Plan for Route 122A from Shrewsbury Street to Mt. Pleasant Avenue. An access management plan reviews the current and potential land uses along a corridor evaluating the ability for the current adjacent parcels to provide safe and efficient vehicle, transit, bicycle and pedestrian movement. The plan's recommendations were divided into short, medium- and long-term improvements in order to help local authorities consider both internal and external movements through the planning, design, permitting and project approval stages.

The Holden Town Common: Past, Present, and Future (2007)

In 2006, the University of Massachusetts Amherst Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning Department assisted the Town with the *Holden Town Common: Past, Present, and Future* report, which is a cultural landscape plan for Holden Town Common. The plan provided design concepts to stimulate growth in the Holden Town Center to meet goals identified in the community outreach process.

Lamoreux Pagano Associates (LPA) Facilities Study (2006)

Intended to update and expand upon an earlier study of the Town's buildings (1998), LPA's report focused on Holden's administrative buildings (Town Hall and Starbard Building), the Council on Aging, the Gale Free Library, and Municipal Light Department, and the Recreation Department. It included evaluations of physical building conditions as well as functional needs for each relevant department.

Community Development Plan, Town of Holden (2004)

The economic development and housing needs assessment highlighted the limited availability of undeveloped parcels along with increased housing demand pressure as significant limitations to economic development. A product of executive order EO 418, the plan identified four key locations to target for economic development.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) lists all highway, bridge, transit, and intermodal projects in the Central Massachusetts planning region programmed to receive Federal-aid funding. Historically, Holden has received TIP designation for the following projects:

- Bridge maintenance of H-18-028 and 029, I-190 over River Street and Quinapoxet River
- Resurfacing and related work on Route 122A
- Pavement rehabilitation on Shrewsbury Street and Doyle Road, from Main Street to Brattle Street
- Resurfacing and related work on I-190
- Roadway reconstruction on Main Street (Route 122A) from the Route 122A/Route 31 intersection to Shrewsbury Street
- Traffic safety improvements at 3 locations on Route 122A
- Bridge replacement, BR#H-18-016, River St. over Quinapoxet River
- Bridge replacement, H-18-011, Mill Street over the Quinapoxet River
- Bridge rehabilitation, H-18-022, Princeton Street over Quinapoxet Reservoir
- Furnishing and installation of a safety fence and bridge joint repairs on H-18-029 = W-17-027, I-190 over Quinapoxet River
- Bridge replacement, H-18-008, Route 31 (Wachusett Street) over the Quinapoxet River
- Bridge replacement, H-18-020, River Street over Quinapoxet River
- Resurfacing and related work on Route 122A, from Route 31 to Route 68

HOLDEN TODAY

Holden Community Survey Results

What do
Residents think
of Holden?

HOLDEN'S GREATEST ASSET

1. Schools
2. Location
3. Reality of Small Town

HOLDEN'S GREATEST NEED

1. Growth Management
2. Road/Traffic/Sidewalks
3. Schools



Holden Tomorrow
planning our future together

FOR MORE INFORMATION: www.holdenmasterplan.com Town of Holden Master Plan Committee

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The project employed a number of outreach tools to inform the community, Town staff, and others about the master planning process. The goal was to encourage the community to engage in the process.

Promoting awareness of the Master Plan process in the community was key to the successful Community Survey, Holden Bucks event, and each of the public participation forums. Public elements of the project were covered by local media including the *Landmark*. Additionally, elements were promoted on the Master Plan's own website, Facebook page, and boosted through other uniquely Holden tools, like the Town's electronic signboard and flyers in the municipal light bill.



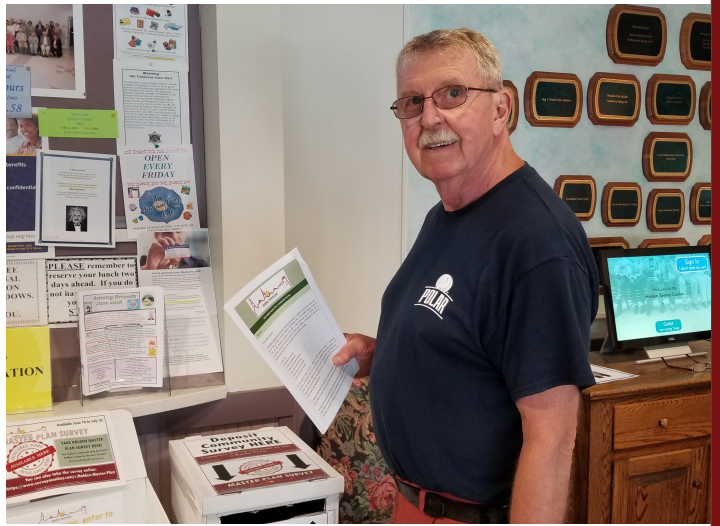
Visitation Day

On May 23, CMRPC staff traveled to Holden Town Hall for a kick-off meeting with Town officials, Master Plan Committee members, and community liaisons invested in the future of Holden. CMRPC staff broke out into small-group discussions with each of these representatives. The discussions informed CMRPC staff of the Town's current conditions, while providing an opportunity to discuss the direction of the Master Plan process in the coming months.

The following Town officials were interviewed:

- Town Planner, Pamela Harding
- Conservation Officer, Glenda Williamson
- Recreation Director, Denise Morano

- Fire Chief, Russ Hall
- Supervisor of Operations (DPW), Chris Demoranville
- Building Commissioner, David Lindberg
- Light Department Manager, Jim Robinson
- Superintendent (WRSD), Darryll McCall
- Town Clerk, Dale Hickey
- Library Director, Susan Scott
- Town Engineer, Isabel McCauley
- Water-Sewer Superintendent, Ryan Mouradian
- Assessor, Rose Scully
- Town Manager, Peter Lukes



Community Survey

A critical part of the Master Plan process is to collect opinions, thoughts, and input on a range of different subjects from as many Holden stakeholders as possible. The community survey was designed to understand how Holden community members perceive their Town's strengths and challenges, and to identify issues within the Town which will inform the goals and strategies for the Master Plan update (Appendix B).

A flyer was inserted in the municipal light bill, sent to every home and business address in Holden, announcing the launch of the survey. Participation was maximized by providing both an online link and a list of the following five pick-up/drop-off locations for hard copies:

- Town Hall
- Gale Free Library

- Senior Center
- U.S. Post Office
- Municipal Light Department

Reminders to complete the survey were posted in *the Landmark* and on the Holden Master Plan media pages. Additionally, CMRPC and the Master Plan Steering Committee hosted a Master Plan booth at the Holden Days Festival on August 25, 2018. In total, 979 responses were submitted by Town residents, indicating just over 5% of Holden residents completed the survey. The results were compiled into a booklet made publicly available online (Appendix B).



Holden Days

On August 25, 2018, the Steering Committee and CMRPC attended Holden Days to publicly release the results of the community survey. Now in its 39th year, Holden Days is a town-wide celebration that draws a large audience, including residents, businesses, and other organizations. CMRPC tabled at the event, engaging with visitors and discussing the Master Plan initiative. The survey results posters from Holden Days can be found in Appendix A.

Visioning Day

Visioning Day was hosted by CMRPC and the Master Plan Steering Committee at the Wachusett Regional High School on September 22, 2018 (Appendix A). Participants engaged in critical discussions of the strengths and weaknesses of the Town facilities and services, open space and recreation, housing, transportation, economic development, land use, natural, historical, and cultural resources. This first community event kicked off with an overview of the process and elements of a Master Plan, and what to expect in the subsequent months.

Each Steering Committee member facilitated a dialogue about one of the eight topics addressed in the Master Plan. Participants broke out to these sessions to discuss the topic and compile a list of strengths and weaknesses. Each session featured “Fact Sheets” to help inform residents as they circulated through the room.

Each group rotated three times allowing different groups to cover the same topic. After facilitators summarized the discussions to the room, participants were given five green and five red dots to identify primary strengths and issues under the topics. The results were tallied by CMRPC staff after the event and compiled into a booklet that was posted online (Appendix A).

Visioning Survey

The Master Plan Steering Committee designed an online, follow-up survey to Visioning Day asking residents to dive deep into their aspirations for Holden. The goal for this Master Plan update was crafted using public input provided through both visioning mediums.





Holden Master Plan: Looking Forward

What Holden Do You Want To Live In 10 Years? 20 Years? 50 Years from Now?

Our town and our lives are constantly evolving. Holden is never the same town year to year just as its residents grow and change as time passes. The population has increased by over 1,402 since 2008, and today the town has approximately 19,000 residents. Holden is growing. What kind of town do you want to live in 10 years? 20 years? 50 years from now? What elements do you hope to still see in the future? What characteristics would you like to see improved or added?

This Visioning Survey is a Holden Master Plan 2019 Outreach activity conducted by the Master Plan Steering Committee.

Take the survey online:
www.HoldenMasterPlan.com

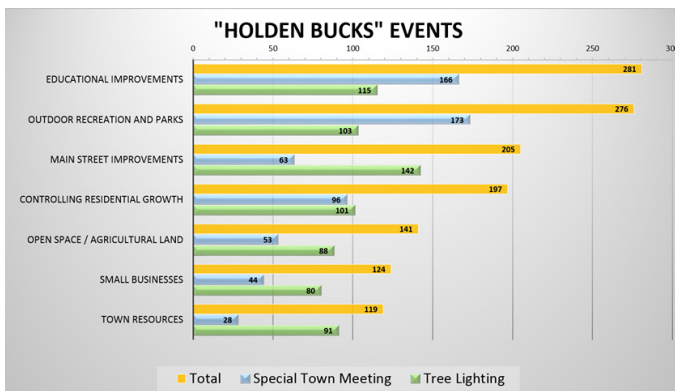
"Holden Bucks"

The Master Plan Steering Committee participated in the community event at Holden's most popular winter-time activity – Tree Lighting! CMRPC crafted dollars for participants to "invest" in various aspects of Town. Festively-decorated boxes adorned the Master Plan booth located inside the church, right next to the free hot cocoa. Steering Committee members circulated through the crowd, handing out packets of \$500 "Holden Bucks" and encouraging attendees to participate by "spending" them.



Help inform the Holden Master Plan by spending your Holden Bucks on subjects that matter to you!

A similar event was repeated at the Winter Town Meeting to connect with a diverse set of citizens. "Holden Bucks" were well received by families and voters alike! The results were compiled into a chart and shared over social media.



Radio Show

CMRPC and the Steering Committee organized two community radio interviews on the *Jorden Levy Show* and *Talk of the Commonwealth with Hank* to share a detailed overview of the nature and significance of the process, and encourage listeners to attend Visioning Day or complete the survey. Members of the Committee, CMRPC's Executive Director, and several of the project's planners were interviewed by the radio hosts.



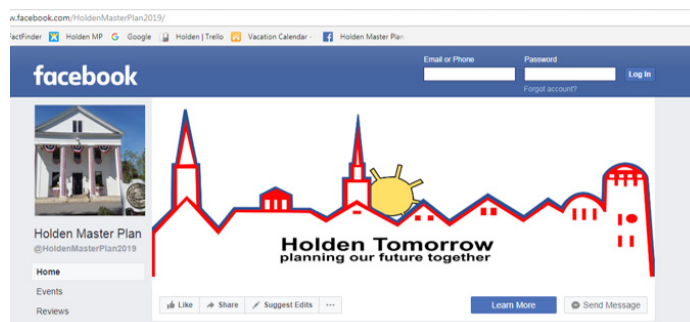
Website - www.holdenmasterplan.com

CMRPC staff developed a website as a focal point for a transparent and inclusive planning process. The website hosted all relevant information to emerge from the planning process, event details, prior planning efforts, and the results of many successful outreach methods.

Upcoming events were posted on the *Home*, *Events Calendar*, and *Public Participation* pages. General information on master plans, plus introductions to the CMRPC team and the Master Plan Committee,



were posted in the *Learn More* section. Historic information on Holden, including past studies, reports, and plans were easily accessible on the Documents and Data section, as well as news articles from local sources written about the Master Plan and the community events. A Contact section enabled anyone to reach out to CMRPC staff. The website also allowed residents to sign up for the Master Plan email list to receive direct reminders about participation opportunities. The final adopted plan, podcasts of the radio shows and other associated information can be found here.



Facebook

CMRPC created a Facebook page to share reminders for upcoming events, information on how and where to take the community survey, as well as pictures, videos, and news articles on Master Plan events.

Email List

The sign-up sheet on the website linked to a Googlegroup email list. By the end of the Master Plan, the email list had 90 members who received direct updates about ways to participate in the planning process.



Mailings

The Master Plan Steering Committee worked with the Holden Municipal Light Department to post event flyers to every household and business in Holden through the light bill. The Steering Committee used this outreach tool three times to ensure that every household was individually informed of the opening of the Community Survey, its closing, and Visioning Day. With nearly 1,000 responses to the survey, this tactic was clearly a success!



Electronic Sign

The Steering Committee coordinated with the Town Manager's office to advertise several key outreach events using the Town's Electronic Signboard at the intersection of Shrewsbury and Main Street.

Other Events

CMRPC's planning staff attended a variety of events hosted by local organizations including Business After Hours events and Chamber Chats to boost awareness among stakeholders.

