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Hamilton Master Plan

Section 4: Inventory and Assessment



Barrett Planning Group LLC
with assistance from
RKG Associates, Inc.



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4. Inventory and Assessment

4.1 Land Use

INTRODUCTION

Land use is the centerpiece of master planning, connecting all other elements of the plan by asking the question: “where?” A thoughtful assessment of past and present land use can help to identify areas most appropriate or inappropriate for development and options for aligning local land use policies with what the community wants for its future. The purpose of a master plan’s land use element is to guide local decisions about what to save and what to build, for it takes both to make a community.

Hamilton’s landscape and land use patterns - marked by expansive open space, rolling hills, large estate properties, and a small but vibrant downtown – reflect the community’s unique equestrian and agricultural history and draw residents who cherish the Town’s calm rural lifestyle and natural beauty. Still, local land use policies also affect who has access to the community and the amenities available to residents. Hamilton will continue to grow and change with new development and reuse of existing public or institutional properties, just as it has grown and changed throughout its history. When thoughtfully planned, growth does not have to be at odds with protecting the Town’s priority landscapes. What follows in this section is an assessment of where residential, commercial, and institutional development has occurred in Hamilton, where open space preservation efforts have been concentrated, and how current land use regulations shape what is possible for the future.

LAND USE PATTERNS

Residential Development

Nearly half of Hamilton’s land is associated at least in part with some residential use, although many parcels contain significant amounts of protected conservation land in addition to homes.¹ Table 4.1.1 classifies Hamilton’s land area by primary use, based on tax parcel data from the Town Assessor’s Database (see Map 4.1.1 for a visual representation of the same data). Lots with single-family homes are the largest category, totaling 2,800 acres.

¹ Hamilton Assessors Database (2023)



Table 4.1.1: Land Use by Area (2023 Tax Parcel Data)

Land Use Category	Acres	% of total area	Land Use Category	Acres	% of total area
Single-Family Residential*	2,991.3	33.8%	Conservation	2,545.9	28.8%
Residential - 2 or more units	37.7	0.4%	Vacant Land	830.2	9.4%
Residential & Conservation	1,300.6	14.7%	Outdoor Recreation	328.4	3.7%
Commercial (including Mixed Use)	27.3	0.3%	Public Land - Developed	343.5	3.9%
Commercial & Conservation	86.7	1.0%	Private Education & Other Nonprofit	336.7	3.8%
Utilities	20.4	0.2%	Total	8,848.7**	100.0%

** Includes parcels with multiple single-family dwellings and parcels accessory to a single-family residential use.*
***Tax parcel data does not include areas like roads and major water bodies, so this number is smaller than Hamilton’s total land area.*
Source: Hamilton Assessors Database (2023)

Historic farmhouses and estates exist throughout Hamilton, but most modern residential development is concentrated in the south and east (see Map 4.6.1 “Residential Structures by Year Built”). The southern part of Hamilton has smaller lots and denser development patterns than elsewhere in town. Downtown Hamilton has many homes built before World War II as well as affordable rental apartments operated by the Hamilton Housing Authority.

Toward the Town’s eastern border with Essex, single-family neighborhoods are concentrated along Route 22, although such neighborhoods are scattered throughout Hamilton. Much of the Town’s suburban development took place in the 1950s and 1960s as former farms and forested lands were subdivided into single-family lots. Other notable types of residential development include the cottage community in Asbury Grove, a historic Methodist meeting camp, and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary’s on-campus dormitories and apartments for students (although the seminary is phasing out these uses).

Open Space

Hamilton is famous for its open space. When asked for input on this plan, Hamilton residents almost universally cited Hamilton’s abundant open space as one of its most significant assets. About 44 percent of Hamilton’s land area is made up of parcels with some level of open space protection. One-quarter of the Town’s total land area is held by private or public entities for preservation in perpetuity, including Bradley Palmer State Park (Department of Conservation and Recreation), the Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary (Mass. Audubon), Appleton Farms (The Trustees of Reservations), the Chebacco Woods area (owned by the Town), and many others.² See Section 4.3 “Natural Resource Areas” for a more detailed analysis.

Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B are a state tax incentive program that provides property owners with property tax relief in exchange for protecting forest, agricultural, and recreation land. Some

² See Section 4.3 “Natural Resource Areas” for a more detailed analysis.



properties remain as protected “Chapter land” for many years, but landowners are always free to opt out and sell or develop their land, so it is not considered permanently protected. The Town does, however, have the right of first refusal to purchase Chapter land if an owner decides to sell. Four percent of Hamilton’s land area, about 340 acres, is currently enrolled in the Chapter 61 program. Some of these parcels may be candidates for permanent preservation in the future.

Finally, the 1,400+/- acres classified as “Residential & Conservation” and “Commercial & Conservation” in Table 4.1.1 are mostly made up of parcels with some amount of developed land and some other portion of the property protected in perpetuity by a conservation restriction. This type of permanent deed restriction ensures that hundreds of privately owned acres in Hamilton will not be developed.

Institutional Uses

Besides conservation organizations, Hamilton hosts several major private institutions that collectively own hundreds of acres of land. Pingree School, a private day school for grades 9 through 12, owns 88 acres of land off Highland Street in northwestern Hamilton. Gordon-Conwell Seminary operates on a 102-acre hilltop site in eastern Hamilton, although in May of 2022 the school announced that it would downsize operations and sell most of its property. The Myopia Hunt Club, located near the Town’s southern border with Wenham, famous for its equestrian activities, owns 415 acres mostly devoted to equestrian fields for use by its members, although the Schooling Field adjacent to Patton Park is open to the public with limited restrictions governing loose dogs and bike riding.³

The Town of Hamilton owns about 800 acres of land, most of which is vacant or held for conservation purposes.⁴ Municipal properties include the Cutler and Winthrop elementary schools, Hamilton-Wenham Public Library, the historic Patton Homestead, Town Hall, Public Service Building, and Patton Park, a public recreation area near downtown Hamilton.

The Hamilton-Wenham School Committee is in the process of working with the state to evaluate the feasibility of building a new elementary school, a process that Town stakeholders expect could include the consolidation of two existing elementary schools during the life of this plan.⁵ If this turns out to be the case, it could mean the Winthrop School site near downtown Hamilton could be made available for redevelopment.

Commercial Development

Commercial uses are almost entirely limited to Downtown Hamilton and take up less than two percent of Hamilton’s land, even when counting the “Commercial & Conservation” category that includes significant open space. The downtown commercial area has local restaurants and retail spaces, gas stations, and Hamilton’s commuter rail station. The Shoppes at Hamilton Plaza is a

³ Hamilton Assessors Database (2023)

⁴ Hamilton Assessors Database (2023)

⁵ Neil Zolot, “Massachusetts School Building Authority gives Hamilton initial nod for Cutler School project,” wickedlocal.com, April 6, 2022.



shopping center with a grocery store (Crosby’s Marketplace), national franchises and corporations like Dunkin’ and CVS, and some local businesses like the BoSoma School of Dance.

There are a few scattered businesses outside of downtown Hamilton, such as the Institution for Savings office on Route 1A, Five Sons Pizza on Asbury Street, and U.S. Gas at the corner of Highland and Asbury Streets. Hamilton also benefits from multiple commercial organic farm operations, including Meadowbrook Farm which operates a seasonal farmstand.

Vacant and Developable Land

Only about 9 percent of the land (830 acres) in Hamilton is vacant without any permanent conservation protections. Only 180 acres of the town’s vacant land are considered potentially developable under current zoning regulations, although some of the over 300 acres of vacant land owned by the Town may be considered developable in the future.⁶ Developable land is scattered across Hamilton and is not concentrated in any particular area (see Map 4.1.1).

LOCAL CAPACITY, POLICIES, AND REGULATIONS

Zoning Districts

Hamilton’s Zoning Bylaw is the primary tool for regulating land use. Zoning districts control the types of uses allowed to operate in different areas of the Town and regulate the size and shape of new buildings. The Town has four use

District	Acres	% of Total Area
Residential RA	4,227.5	44.2%
Residential R-1B	3,130.1	32.7%
Residential R-1A	2,186.7	22.8%
Business (B)	26.2	0.3%

Source: Town of Hamilton Assessors Department

districts: three residential districts and one commercial district. As shown in Table 4.1.2, 99.7 percent of Hamilton’s land is zoned primarily for residential use, although all residential districts also allow agricultural activities and other uses that are exempt from local control under the state Zoning Act.

The use regulations for Hamilton’s three residential districts are essentially identical. The districts differ mainly in the allowed density of development (see Table 4.1.3 for dimensional regulations). The R-1A district provides for the smallest minimum lot size and least intensive setback requirements, and it encompasses areas with established neighborhoods around Downtown Hamilton and Chebacco Lake (see Map 4.1.2). The RA district requires large lots and is intended to promote a mix of single-family residences and agriculture. The R-1B district is the “in-between” point between the requirements of R-1A and RA. Besides the requirements in Table 4.1.3, the maximum building height in every district is 35 feet, and front yards must measure 25 feet from the street line or 50 feet from the street center line, whichever is greater.⁷

⁶ Hamilton Assessors Database (2023)

⁷ Town of Hamilton, Zoning Bylaw, as amended August 11, 2021



Zoning District	Minimum Lot Size (s.f.)*	Minimum Contiguous Land (s.f.)**	Minimum Frontage (feet)	Max. Lot Coverage
Business Zone (B)	20,000	N/A	125	75%
Residential R-1A	20,000	10,000	125	25%
Residential R-1B	40,000	20,000	175	25%
Residential RA	80,000	40,000	175	25%

**Only applies to dwelling units. Other uses are determined during Site Plan Review.
 ** For a lot to be considered buildable, it must have this amount of contiguous land that does not have severe soil limitations that impact construction or wetlands.
 Source: Town of Hamilton Zoning Bylaw*

Single-family homes are allowed by right (that is, without requiring a discretionary permit from the Planning Board or Zoning Board of Appeals) in residential districts and most commercial uses are prohibited. Some uses like kennels and wind energy facilities are allowed through a special permit from the Board of Appeals. A single-family dwelling in existence before 1954 can be converted into a two-family dwelling, also via a special permit from the Board of Appeals.

The Business District (B) allows a much more expansive set of uses by right, including retail stores, office space, and restaurants. The district also allows mixed-use projects with both commercial and residential components. These projects are the only way to develop two or more units in Hamilton without a special permit. Despite allowing a wide range of commercial and residential uses not permitted elsewhere, the Business District is small and completely built out, limiting opportunities for development.

Overlay Districts

In addition to the underlying use districts described above, the Town has five overlay districts. An overlay is a district that “floats” on top of and modifies what is allowed in the underlying zoning. Hamilton has two overlays designed to regulate environmentally sensitive areas and three to encourage desired development in specific, key areas.

The *Groundwater Protection Overlay District* is comprised of aquifer protection areas including DEP Zone IIs and Interim Wellhead Protection Areas. (see Map 4.3.1 “Aquifers and Aquifer Protection”). The purpose of the district is to protect existing and potential sources of drinking water supplies and recharge areas. Minimum lot size within the Groundwater Protection Overlay is always 80,000 square feet, and a special permit is required for any use that renders 2,500 square feet or 15 percent of a lot impervious. Uses associated with increased water contamination risk, like landfills or the storage of hazardous materials, are prohibited.

The *Floodplain Overlay District* is intended to mitigate flood damage and pollution in the 100-year flood zone (see Map 4.3.2 “FEMA National Flood Hazards”). Uses allowed in the underlying zoning district are subject to flood protection standards



The purpose of the *Estate Overlay District (EOD)* is to preserve the buildings and land of large estate properties while still allowing for desirable commercial and residential development. It permits a mix of commercial and residential development (including multifamily) in existing estate houses on lots of 10 acres or more, with the potential to expand the structure with new construction if the site meets additional dimensional requirements. EOD regulations apply in all residential districts, and all projects must include publicly accessible open space.

The *Willow Street Overlay District (WSOD)* is a small area of the Business District between Willow Street and the MBTA commuter rail tracks that includes auto service businesses. The goal of the district is to promote redevelopment to drive economic development in Downtown Hamilton and improve the area's aesthetics, vibrancy and quality of life. The WSOD includes a design review and special permitting process that involves public hearings with the opportunity for input from Hamilton's land use boards and abutters.

The *Commercial Overlay District (COD)* is located in the extreme southeast corner of Hamilton where the underlying zoning is RA. The district's purpose is to support economic development while mitigating negative impacts to surrounding properties and including abutters and local boards involved in review. Commercial uses such as light manufacturing, life sciences, and offices are allowed by special permit from the Planning Board.⁸

Other Zoning Regulations

Parking. Hamilton's zoning requires one off-street parking space per dwelling unit and per 300 square feet of gross commercial floor area. Many rural and suburban towns require two parking spaces per unit, which often serves to create more impervious, paved areas than may be necessary.

Home Occupations. Home occupation regulations allow residents to run businesses from their homes, provided they do not have a detrimental impact on neighbors. Hamilton's zoning limits outside employees, outdoor signage, noise, and exterior storage to preserve the character of residential neighborhoods while allowing residents flexibility in the use of their homes.

Open Space and Farmland Preservation Development (OSFPD). OSFPD is an alternative form of residential development that is meant to allow more flexibility and creativity in site design to preserve as much open and natural space on a property as possible. Fifty percent of the site's land area must be set aside as permanently protected common open space, and developers must follow a design process that prioritizes the preservation of unique and valuable natural features. Through the special permit process, the Planning Board may allow a 20 percent increase in units over what would be permitted in a conventional subdivision of the same size, with the ability to earn an even greater density bonus (up to 50 percent) by contributing to town-wide priorities through providing extra open space, public access to open space, or senior housing. OSFPD may be proposed on any lot, and diverse housing types including townhouses and multifamily condos may be allowed.

⁸ Zoning Bylaw, 2021.



Senior Housing. Senior Housing developments allow greater density and more flexible site design for age-restricted residential developments. Senior Housing may be proposed anywhere in Town for households with at least one member 55 years of age or older where all residents are 18 or older. Allowable density varies by zoning district and can be increased to four units per acre through density bonuses earned through incentives like creating extra open space, affordable housing, or a mix of smaller units. The bylaw includes a hard cap of 100 units that may ever be constructed under the Senior Housing bylaw.

Accessory Apartments. Accessory apartments are small, secondary units added to a lot with an existing single-family dwelling. Hamilton allows one accessory apartment per lot in all residential districts (as long as a lot conforms to zoning regulations) to help produce moderately priced housing units and allow older homeowners more flexibility to remain in their homes. Apartments may be located in the existing structure or in a separate building, but are limited to two bedrooms, one bathroom, and 900 square feet of gross floor area.

Site Plan Review. Site Plan Review (SPR) is a regulatory tool that allows the Planning Board to review as-of-right development proposals and impose reasonable conditions to reduce impacts on surrounding properties. SPR can address issues of site design, traffic circulation, infrastructure, and the appearance and character of the site. Hamilton requires SPR for any new or expanding business, office, industrial, institutional, or multi-family use, as well as the alteration or extension of nonconforming uses in residential zones. An alternative Abbreviated Site Plan Review is available for alterations to existing buildings constituting less than 10 percent of existing floor area or 10 percent of assessed building value.

Local Historic District

Hamilton has one Local Historic District, called simply the Hamilton Historic District, centered on Bay Road (Route 1A). It includes sites like the Hamilton Cemetery, the Town Hall, and the First Congregational Church of Hamilton. Exterior alterations, new construction, and demolition in the district are subject to approval by the Hamilton Historic District Commission, who are charged with protecting the area's historic resources and character.⁹

⁹ Town of Hamilton, <https://www.hamiltonma.gov>. Accessed March 2023.



4.2 Transportation

INTRODUCTION

The local transportation infrastructure in Hamilton facilitates circulation throughout the Town. It supports the connectivity of local goods and services to larger markets, including the commute of Hamilton residents to Boston as a regional job center. Hamilton, a small community with a population of approximately 7,561 residents, depends on passenger vehicles and trucks to transport both people and goods. Transportation infrastructure decisions are closely tied with the land use, economic development, and housing opportunities referenced in respective chapters.

This section will discuss the current transportation network available in Hamilton, including highway and roadway infrastructure, bridges, mass transit, biking, and pedestrian facilities. Planning for transportation allows a community to align long-term goals with other aspects of town planning, such as land use, economic development, and housing. Adequate transportation and infrastructure maintenance can mean quality of life for local residents and accessibility within the town and region.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Roadways

The local road network's scale, location, and functionality contribute to Hamilton's existing and future rural-suburban development patterns. Hamilton has a total of 79 miles of roadway, each classified by the FHA as either numbered interstates, arterials, collectors, or local roads. Table 4.2.1 shows federal road classifications and corresponding roadway lengths. Functional road classifications are designations for planning purposes dependent on the type of service provided to motor vehicles and design standards. The level of mobility offered by each classification varies.

Classification	Miles	Percent of Roadways
Interstate	5.6	7.1%
Arterials & Collectors	6.9	8.7%
Local Roads	66.8	84.2%
Total	79.3	100%

Source: MassDOT, MassGIS

For example, interstate highways and arterials provide the highest level of mobility with high-speed traffic between 55 and 75 miles per hour. In comparison, collector roads operate at lower speeds, between 35 and 55 miles per hour, and grant access to greater land areas. Hamilton has two principal highways: State Route 1A, which is under the jurisdiction of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) and known locally as Bay Road, and State Route 22 (Essex Street/Woodbury Street), which is a State road owned and maintained by the Town. Local roads account for most of Hamilton roadways and provide access to residential areas, commercial districts, and nearby open space at low speeds, between 20 and 45 miles per hour. As of 2016, there were thirty private roads in Hamilton with three or fewer homes except for the Woodland Meadow



development.¹⁰ Most of these private streets are not built to a standard that would allow them to become public streets. These standards include appropriate width, materials, right of way, pedestrian facilities, drainage, and other essential elements. Private roads may become public based on a strong majority vote among abutters and an assumption of costs for all improvements.¹¹

Scenic Roads

Many of Hamilton’s roads are identified as scenic roadways for their contribution to the Town’s historic character. State Route 1A, also known as Bay Road, historically acts as a major throughway running north-south between Boston and northern New England since colonial times. Highland Street also facilitates north-south traffic through the western portion of town at lower speeds. Other scenic throughways in more rural areas of town display the prominent open spaces and scenic vistas. Roads designated as scenic under the Scenic Roads Act, G.L. c. 40, Section 15C, include Asbury, Bridge, Gardner, Goodhue, Highland, Moulton, Sagamore, and Winthrop Streets; and Chebacco, Cutler, Miles River, and Waldingfield and Walnut Roads.¹²

Asbury Street	Miles River Road
Bridge Street	Moulton Street
Chebacco Road	Sagamore Street
Cutler Road	Walnut Street
Gardner Street	Waldingfield Road
Goodhue Street	Winthrop Street
Highland Street	
<i>Source: Hamilton Reconnaissance Report (2005)</i>	

Capital Improvements & Transportation System Maintenance

Hamilton residents believe most transportation infrastructure is well maintained and meets their current circulation needs. The Department of Public Works (DPW) facilitates regular road maintenance, including plowing and treating roads during winter storms and regular improvements throughout the year like potholes and repaving projects. When speaking to Hamilton residents there was some confusion regarding road maintenance requests on 1A, Bay Road, and concerns about road debris and vegetation overgrowth impeding the path of cyclists and pedestrians. Capital improvements from Fiscal Year 2019 to 2023 focused on road infrastructure maintenance and paving, National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) improvements, and new pedestrian connections.¹³ Table 4.2.3 summarizes improvements funded over the past five years. A well-planned approach to transportation infrastructure repairs, redesign, and updates is important for the future health of the Town’s circulation system.

¹⁰ US Federal Highway Administration. “Road Function Classifications.” FHWA Safety. November 2000.

¹¹ Town of Hamilton Board of Selectmen. “Town of Hamilton Policy: Converting Private Streets into Public Ways.” Adopted February 2019.

¹² Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, Essex National Heritage Commission. “Hamilton Reconnaissance Report.” May 2005

¹³ Town of Hamilton Finance Department. *Capital Improvement Plan 2019-2023*. August 2018.



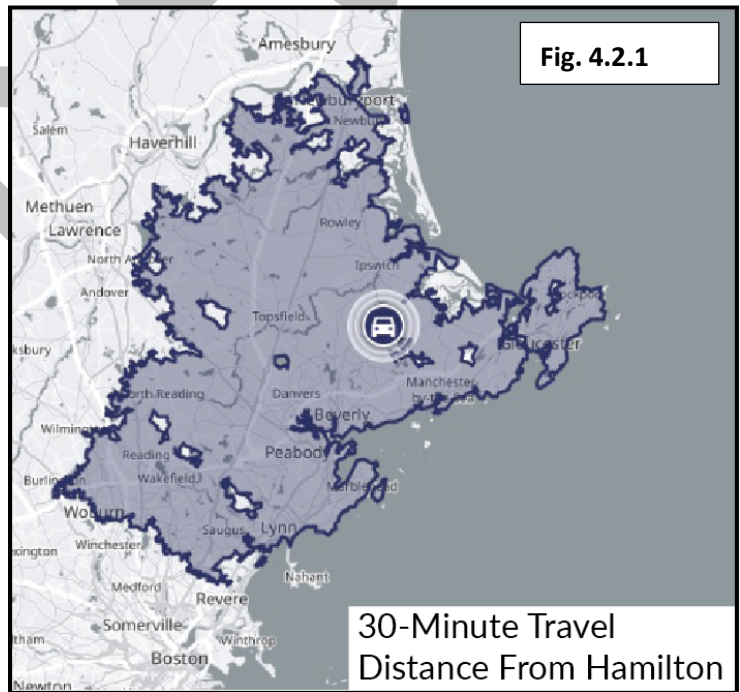
	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	Total
Essex Street Pathway Phase I & II		\$300,000	\$250,000	\$300,000		\$850,000
Road & Sidewalk Repair Program	\$190,000	\$190,000	\$190,000	\$190,000	\$190,000	\$950,000
NPDES Phase II Compliance	\$60,000	\$70,000	\$80,000	\$50,000		\$260,000
Chebacco Road Paving		\$1,000,000				\$1,000,000
Total	\$250,000	1,560,000	\$520,000	\$540,000	\$190,000	\$3,060,000

Source: Town of Hamilton Finance Department. *Capital Improvement Plan 2019-2023*

Overall Traffic Patterns

As a small rural-suburban community, Hamilton does not have a sizable employment base and many residents commute to out-of-town places for jobs and goods and services. Traffic congestion associated with many non-local trips is a concern for community members at peak hours, when caretakers are venturing to and from schools and work. Several roads collect and move traffic from local neighborhoods to State Route 1A and Route 22. Highland Street and Asbury Street form a triangle that provides important links to U.S. Route 1 and Route 97 in Topsfield. Highland Street, which becomes Arbor Street in Wenham, carries a considerable amount of peak period traffic. In community interviews, many Hamilton residents reported that school pick up and drop off turned Bay Road near the Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School into standstill traffic. Car dependence in Hamilton is efficient for users since density is low and there are few stops with the exception of stop signs and a signalized crosswalk on Bay Road. Current infrastructure and traffic patterns may be convenient, but it also affects residents’ lives with more vehicle miles traveled, paved roadways, and greenhouse gas emissions.

An important component of understanding and planning for a community’s transportation network is having a baseline of information on the network’s users and the locations they may access in a certain timeframe. Hamilton residents can reach many towns in the area in under thirty minutes, including Beverly, Danvers, Gloucester, Ipswich, Lynn, Marblehead, Newbury, Newburyport, Peabody, Reading, Rockport, Rowley, Salem, Saugus, Stoneham, Topsfield, and Wakefield.¹⁴ Figure 4.2.1 shows the distance Hamilton residents may reach in single-occupancy vehicles.



¹⁴ TravelTime. "Map Demo."



A majority of individual commuters, 74.6 percent, rely on private vehicles to travel to and from their employment, while 8.9 percent use public transportation. Hamilton’s public transportation infrastructure is limited to the Newburyport/Rockland commuter rail line used to access Boston through North Station and dial-a-ride bus transit for older adults and people with disabilities. Resident preferences for single-occupancy cars to commute may be attributed to the scattered employment centers they travel to, existing transportation infrastructure, few opportunities to carpool, and an inconvenient train schedule. Two-thirds of Hamilton residents commute to nearby job centers. Table 4.2.4 shows the full breakdown of commuter modes as of 2019, with an additional 9.9 percent of residents working from home.¹⁵ Trends are expected to change in the coming years as more individuals are presented with the opportunity to work from home or through flexible arrangements.

Table 4.2.4 Commute to Work Data in Hamilton	
Primary Transportation Mode	Percentage of Labor Force
Car, truck, or van	74.6%
Public transportation	8.9%
Walking	5.3%
Taxicab, motorcycle, bicycle, or other means	1.2%
Source: American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates (2015-2019)	

Hamilton commuters experience a range of travel times. More than half of workers in 2019 over the age of sixteen, 54 percent, traveled less than thirty minutes one way to their place of employment. By contrast, a large cohort, 27.5 percent of residents, traveled sixty minutes or more to offices or employment centers like Boston. The northernmost area of Boston is nearly thirty miles, forty-two minutes by car, or 50 minutes by train. While some residents use public transportation to access North Station, many would still prefer to drive due to the challenges of traveling between North Station, the Financial District, and other areas of Boston proper.

Table 4.2.5 Commuting Time for Hamilton Residents	
Commuting Times	Percentage of Population
Less than 10 minutes	11.4%
10 to 14 minutes	8.2%
15 to 19 minutes	16.9%
20 to 24 minutes	14.1%
25 to 29 minutes	3.6%
30 to 34 minutes	7.9%
35 to 44 minutes	3.9%
45 to 59 minutes	6.4%
60 or more minutes	27.5%
Source: U.S. Census 2019	

Public Transit

Hamilton public transit is comprised of the Newburyport/Rockport MBTA commuter rail line. The Newburyport/Rockport MBTA commuter rail line runs through the center of the downtown area and serves as a stop for both Hamilton and Wenham. The rail line allows for a commute south into Boston or a commute north to Newburyport. The Town is not currently served by a public bus service. The

¹⁵ US Census Bureau. American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates 2015-2019.



Cape Ann Transportation Authority (CATA) provides reservation-based van services for medical appointments, shopping, banking, and other services to the elderly population.

During the community engagement process, many residents described the Newburyport/Rockport Commuter Rail as a strength and an integral feature of Hamilton's connection to Boston. Still, while some residents identified the train as their personal mode of choice when commuting to work, data only shows 8.9 percent of residents relying on it for their daily commutes. Riders may also travel between communities like North Beverly, Beverly, Salem, Swampscott, Chelsea, as far north as Newburyport, and municipalities to the South through North Station in Boston.

Commuter rail fares to and from Boston are \$9.75 for one-way trips, \$19.50 for round trips, or \$311 for a monthly rail zone 5 pass.¹⁶ Depending on peak or off-peak travel times, trips in and out of Hamilton from North Station in Boston may take 43 to 52 minutes, according to schedules posted by the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority.¹⁷ During off-peak trip times, the Hamilton stop becomes a flag stop, meaning riders must be visible and waiting on the platform for the train to stop. Weekend and personal trips are less convenient for Hamilton residents looking to explore Boston using the train as their mode in and out of Boston since inbound and outbound trains arrive on two hour intervals. The last trip out of North Station departs at 11 pm on weekdays, often before events at major civic centers conclude. Weekend service is limited to nine trips between Hamilton and North Station. Commuter rail service on the weekend ends even earlier, with the last trip on Saturday and Sunday departing at 9:27 pm. While convenient for commuters working close to North Station, the rail service could be enhanced to support broader desires to spend more time in Boston and reach the city quicker.

Parking

Hamilton's primarily large-lot residential zoning has an impact on parking infrastructure. Recent infrastructure updates highlighted in the Town Manager's reports include new electric vehicle parking infrastructure at Town Hall and Patton Park.¹⁸ Parking lots in Hamilton are concentrated in the downtown area and the edge of Patton Park to accommodate patrons visiting small shops and restaurants, and residents using Town recreational facilities. The Shoppes at Hamilton Crossing provides nearly 200 parking spaces adjacent to the Hamilton-Wenham Commuter Rail line, accommodating shoppers and commuter pickups. Additional parking in the area includes on-street parking on the one-way thoroughway, Railroad Avenue, and smaller, private parking lots for small businesses along these downtown corridors. Commuters and others traveling to Boston for the day may pay to park at the Hamilton-Wenham parking lot for four dollars during the week, two dollars on weekends, or seventy dollars for a monthly parking pass. This small downtown area caters to individuals arriving in cars rather than providing greater connectivity through pedestrian and bicycle connections.

¹⁶ "Newburyport/Rockport Commuter Rail Timetable." Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Town of Hamilton. "Town Manager Report." February 27, 2023



Bridges

Hamilton has five bridges throughout town with varying travel volumes. As of 2017, the five bridges had a cumulative annual average daily traffic (AADT) of 10,850.¹⁹ Annual average daily traffic is calculated by adding the total vehicle volume of a highway for a year divided by 365 days. This performance metric is used to plan bridge maintenance due to the implication of traffic load and construction methods. Table 9-4 provides more information on bridges in the Town, including the date constructed and their current condition.

Bridge conditions are determined by the National Bridge Inventory (NBI) ratings for deck, superstructure, substructure or culverts. If the rating is greater than or equal to 7, the bridge is classified as Good; if it is less than or equal to 4, the classification is Poor. Bridges rated 5 or 6 are classified as Fair.²⁰ Three bridges in town are in fair condition or worse, poor condition. Recent initiatives such as the Sagamore Street Culvert repair demonstrate the Town of Hamilton is monitoring the condition of roadway infrastructure and facilitating necessary maintenance.²¹

Bridge Location	AADT (2017)	Date Constructed	Structure	Condition
Bridge Street over Miles River				New
Moulton Street over water Miles River	5,000	2000	Prestressed concrete	Good
Cutler Road over RR MBTA	1,100	2004	Prestressed concrete	Fair
Highland Street over Water Ipswich River	4,100	2009 repaired-older	Masonry	Fair
Winthrop Street over Water Ipswich River	650	1845	Wood or Timber	Poor

Source: National Bridge Inventory (2019 edition)

Pedestrian & Bicycle Infrastructure

The Town has limited pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure as a part of the existing road network. Sidewalks and bicycle lanes were not priorities in the development of Hamilton's infrastructure. According to the Census Bureau, less than 10 percent of residents walk or bike to work, likely due to both the lack of opportunity and the condition of local infrastructure. The Town adopted a Complete Streets policy in January 2019 to promote an environment that provides safe, convenient, and

¹⁹ City-Data. "National Bridge Inventory (NBI) Statistics.

²⁰ Bridge Reports. "Map by Condition." National Bridge Inventory Data.

²¹ Town of Hamilton. "Town Manager Report." February 27, 2023



accessible routes for all users of local roadways, trails, and transit systems, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, motorists, buses, and emergency vehicles.²²

In focus group interviews, Hamilton residents and Town officials say there is a need for low-stress infrastructure that connects residents without vehicles and school-age children. A new traffic law passed by the State Legislature, H.5103, also aims to protect vulnerable road users including cyclists, pedestrians, and individuals on horseback by mandating motorists give four feet of safe passing distance. Connections through existing open space parcels could lower travel times, ease congestion during peak periods like school pick up and drop off, and protect vulnerable road users.

Complete Streets

In 2019, the Town initiated a Complete Streets policy aiming to provide safe, convenient, and accessible infrastructure for all users across local roadways, trails, and transit systems. Priorities highlighted in the local policy include incremental improvements of existing infrastructure, integrated transportation facilities in new development, and evaluating all proposed projects in the context of neighborhood characteristics. Hamilton outlined the creation of a Complete Street Advisory Committee and the submission of a prioritization plan to the Massachusetts Department of Transportation as critical steps in the Complete Street policy implementation. Projects at the top of the prioritization plan ranking focus on intersection reconstruction to enhance pedestrian safety, ADA compliance, and increase visibility through lights or signage. The top-ranked projects and details are included in Table 4.2.7.

4.2.7 Hamilton Complete Streets Funding Project Project Prioritization Plan		
Rank	Project Name	Project Description
1	Highland Street / Asbury Street / Pleasant Avenue Intersection Reconstruction	Tighten and define the Pleasant Avenue radii to provide better vehicle sightlines. Stripe new crosswalks with ADA-compliant wheelchair ramps across Asbury Street and Highland Street at the existing pedestrian crossing locations. Reconstruct existing sidewalks to provide a consistent 5-foot width and ADA-compliant cross-slope. Install pedestrian flashing beacons (such as RRFBs) at the Highland Street crossing.
2	Highland Street / Asbury Street Intersection Reconstruction	Realign the Asbury Street approach at the intersection to provide a standard T-intersection to improve vehicle sightlines and reduce crossing distances. Extend the existing sidewalk approximately 400 feet along the west side of Highland Street north from Pleasant Avenue to Asbury Street. Construct a new crosswalk with ADA-compliant ramps across Asbury Street. Restripe pavement markings as necessary (e.g., centerline, STOP-bars, etc.).
3	Essex Street (Route 22) / Woodbury Street Intersection Reconstruction	Realign the Woodbury Street northbound approach by tightening both corners and removing the channelizing medians to create a standard T-intersection to clarify traffic patterns and reduce pedestrian crossing distances. Construct curb bump-outs at the Woodbury Street southbound approach. Stripe crosswalks with ADA-compliant wheelchair ramps across the westbound and southbound approaches.

²² Town of Hamilton Board of Selectmen. “Complete Streets Policy.” Adopted January 2019.



		Construct new sidewalk areas at crosswalk ends. Relocate the Stop-bars and STOP signs to the relocated approaches. Restripe pavement markings (centerlines, shoulder, etc.) as necessary. Consider warrants for installing a flashing beacon at the intersection for an additional safety feature.
4	Bridge Street / Woodbury Street Intersection Reconstruction	Tighten the radii on the southwest corner of the intersection to reduce crossing width. Restripe/ relocate existing crosswalk and construct ADA- compliant wheelchair ramps. Extend the existing sidewalk to the new curb location. Restripe / relocate the existing STOP- bars on the Woodbury Street approach. Reconstruct approximately 600 feet of existing sidewalk to the east of the intersection to provide a consistent width and ADA cross-section. Restripe the existing pedestrian crossing across Bridge Street at Ockenga Lane and construct ADA-compliant wheelchair ramps. Install pedestrian flashing beacons (such as RFBs) at the Bridge Street pedestrian crossing at Ockenga Lane.
Source: Tier 2 Prioritization Plan Final Hamilton Revised (Mass DOT)		

Trails

Hamilton residents have access to a variety of beautiful and well-used local and regional nature trails for hiking, biking, mountain biking, horseback riding, fishing, snowshoeing, and skiing. This includes a variety of trails branded as the Discover Hamilton Trail network managed by the Essex County Trail Association. Figure 4.2.2 shows the network of trails, open space, and trailhead parking for potential users. Currently, many users must drive to these trail systems and park their cars to enjoy the open space. Additional infrastructure could connect individuals to Downtown shopping or students to the local schools from their neighborhoods through extended trails. Residents expressed a desire for better connectivity between bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and these trails. A list of trails and paths can be found in the Open Space and Recreation chapter.

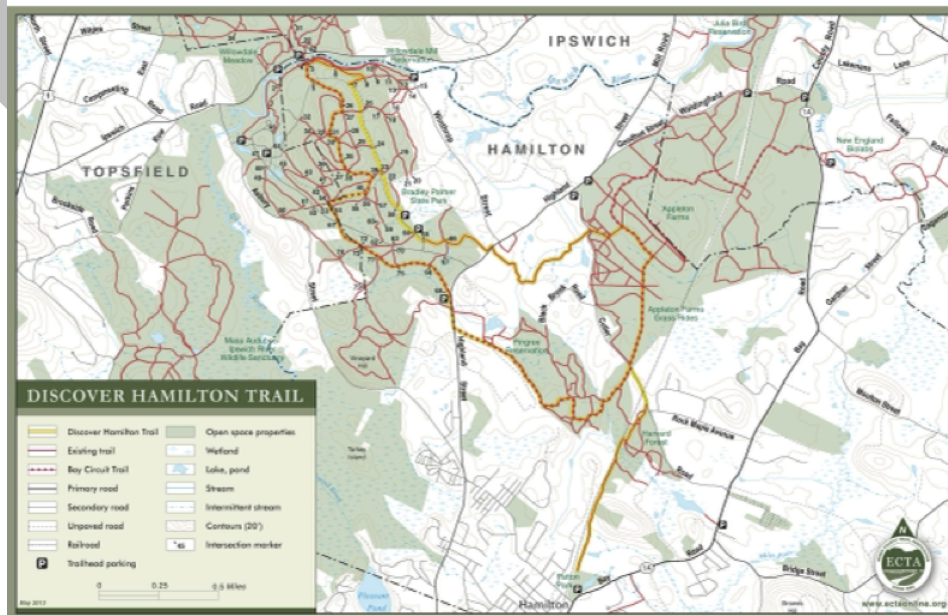


Figure 4.2.2 Discover Hamilton Trails



LOCAL CAPACITY, POLICIES, AND REGULATIONS

Transportation projects, policies, and updates are facilitated by a variety of Hamilton committees, departments, designees, and volunteers. The Department of Public Works (DPW) executes a range of public services from maintaining and improving road conditions to the upkeep of traffic signs and pavement markings and trench permitting. Regular updates are available monthly through the Town Managers report which includes projects underway or permits pertaining to the transportation system and more.

The Department of Public Works also serves as the home for the Complete Streets Policy Committee that collaborates closely with other committees within the town including the Hamilton Development Corporation, Community Preservation Committee, Council of Aging Board, and other designees to ensure comprehensive and effective implementation of the policy initiatives. While the Department of Public Works is ultimately responsible for physical improvements to infrastructure, prioritization and planning occurs at the intersection of local committees. Committees like the Planning Board facilitate the Road Acceptance Procedure that allows residents to propose private streets become public upon the completion of necessary improvements financed by abutters. Hamilton's departments and committees work together to facilitate the smooth operation of the transportation system, through initiatives such as road maintenance, traffic management, and the implementation of pedestrian and cyclist-friendly infrastructure.

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4.3 Natural Resource Areas

INTRODUCTION

Hamilton enjoys a variety of beautiful and important natural resources including high-quality agricultural lands, forests, lakes, rivers, wetlands and freshwater aquifers that support regional water resources and habitat. Hamilton's natural resources play a defining role in the Town's development patterns and character. In both direct and indirect ways, the town's natural resources support the local and regional economy, community health, natural hazard mitigation, and local agriculture, while also providing scenic and recreational opportunities. However, Hamilton's natural resources are at risk from improperly managed development and human activity. For all these reasons, natural resource management is a critical component of this Master Plan and plays an important role in planning for Hamilton's future.

EXISTING RESOURCES²³

Geography

Hamilton's geography is relatively gentle, sloping land covered by fields, forests, residential development, and a historic district, all under 200 feet above sea level. The eastern portion of the Town has relatively flat areas (0-5% slopes).²⁴ Almost 40 percent (39.9%) of the Town's low-lying areas consist of wetlands with deep marshes, shallow marsh meadows, open water, shrub and wooded swamp areas.²⁵ Higher portions of the landscape are boulders, clay, and bedrock that are slow to drain, making them problematic for septic systems. In total, over 50 percent of the Town's land is covered by wetlands and steep slopes.²⁶ These are some natural constraints on development.

Floodplains

There are approximately 2,353 acres of land within the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) mapped 100-year floodplain, and 111.7 acres of land within the 500-year floodplain within the Town of Hamilton, together comprising 26 percent of the Town's land area²⁷ (See Map 4.3.1 Town of Hamilton FEMA National Flood Hazards). Localized flooding has occurred throughout the watershed and was identified as a key concern in the 2019 Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan Update.²⁸ These areas are:

- Woodbury Street culvert/ beaver-induced flooding; water backs up onto Gordon Cromwell Theological Seminary land.
- Beaver dam at New England Biolabs; backs up Miles River and adds to siltation and vegetation

²³ Unless otherwise noted, inventory content in Section 4.3 is based on the Town of Hamilton Open Space and Recreation Plan, 2008.

²⁴ MassGIS. MassGIS Data: Elevation Contours (1:5000), June 2003.

²⁵ MassGIS. MassGIS Data: MassDEP Wetlands (2005), updated December 2017.

²⁶ MassGIS. MassGIS Data: MassDEP Wetlands (2005), updated December 2017; MassGIS Data: Elevation Contours (1:5000), June 2003.

²⁷ MassGIS. MassGIS Data: FEMA National Flood Hazard Layer, July 2017.

²⁸ MAPC, Town of Hamilton Hazard Mitigation Plan Update, 2019, 23-24.



- Winthrop Street Bridge
- Bradford Road/ Sharon Road
- Flooding at Bay Road and Patton Park, Horseshoe, and Tally Ho Drives

Other known flooding sites include:

- Parallel to Tally Ho Drive and Locust Street
- Bay Road across from High School
- Harrigan's Field Neighborhood
- Miles River Road
- Lake Shore Drive / Chebacco Lake
- Chebacco Road (hillside erosion)
- Flooding at Essex Street - needs to be tied to Appaloosa Street drainage

Additionally, the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Planning process identified beaver management programs and the Miles River Vegetation Management study as important strategies to control flooding.²⁹ Better management of forests and preservation/acquisition of open space to protect and buffer against the effects of flooding were also strategies identified to help mitigate the effects of climate change.³⁰

Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHAs) are designated on the Hamilton's Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) for the administration of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) as Zones A and AE, which indicate the 100-year regulatory floodplain (Metropolitan Area Planning Council, 2019). The MassGIS FEMA National Flood Hazard layer is a compilation of effective Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) databases. This layer has 2,353 acres of land that has been designated as Zones A and AE. These areas include:³¹

- Ipswich River
- Miles River
- Idlewild Brook
- Black Brook
- Pleasant Pond
- Cutler Pond
- Chebacco Lake
- Gravelly Pond
- Beck Pond
- Round Pond

²⁹ Metropolitan Area Planning Council. Town of Hamilton Community Resilience Building Workshop Summary of Findings, October 24, 2019.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ MassGIS. MassGIS Data: FEMA National Flood Hazard Layer, July 2017.



These are locations where the NFIP's floodplain management regulations must be enforced because they are within the land area covered by the floodwaters of the base or 100-year flood.

Wetlands and Vernal Pools

Forty percent of the Town consists of low-lying wetlands with deep marshes, shallow marsh meadows, open water, and shrub and wooded swamp areas. Hamilton has several very scenic wetland areas, including Wenham Swamp, Miles River, Black Brook, and on the fringe of Chebacco Lake. Wetlands constitute an integral part of the natural environment, and more specifically, the hydrologic system. In addition to diversifying the landscape, wetlands often play a significant role in the storage of water, flood control, and the maintenance of water quality. Wetlands are one of the most effective natural carbon sinks, as they absorb and store large amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, making them a crucial tool in mitigating the effects of climate change while also serving as habitat for a variety of wildlife species. Additionally, wetlands may serve as groundwater recharge or discharge areas. Map 4.3.2 Town of Hamilton MassDEP Wetlands, shows wetland areas throughout Hamilton.

The existence of wetlands depends on the relative stability of a variety of natural influences, including groundwater elevation, soil type, topography and surface waters. The alteration of one or more of these factors may result in profound changes in both the structure and function of wetland communities. For example, the lowering of the water table or the diversion of surface water away from a wetland may result in conditions suitable for upland vegetation, and thus the eventual loss of the wetland.

Vernal pools, also known as ephemeral pools, are unique, ecologically significant seasonal pools of water that provide habitat for distinctive plants and animals. They are a specific type of wetland usually devoid of fish, and thus allow the safe development of natal amphibian and insect species unable to withstand competition or predation by fish. According to the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species office (NHESP), Hamilton currently has 13 certified vernal pools which are located on private land.

As noted on the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) website, Massachusetts is somewhat unique in its efforts to protect vernal pools. In 1988, the MA Wetlands Protection Act was amended to include wildlife habitat as a reason to protect wetlands, and in recognition of the value of vernal pools to wildlife, they were defined and included in regulation. Hamilton's local Conservation Bylaw outlines some unique protections for vernal pools and other wetlands resource areas in town.

Geology and Soils

The areas of town with low, flat to rolling terrain are marked by eskers or ice contact deposits that drain slowly, and flat sandy outwash areas, characterized by pitch pine and oaks. The portion of the town with higher slopes (15-17% slopes) are boulders, clay, and till or bedrock of all sizes that are slow to drain.³² These higher sites include:

³² Town of Hamilton. Open Space and Recreation Plan, 2008; MassGIS Data: USGS 1:24,000 Surficial Geology, August



- Brown Hills, Southeastern portion of the Town
- Blueberry and Moon Hill at Bradley Palmer State Park, Northwest portion of the Town
- Willow Hill and Sagamore Hill at the Sagamore Hill Conservation Area, Northeastern portion of the Town
- Chebacco Woods Conservation Area, Southeastern portion of the Town

The bedrock is made up of 450 million years old igneous rock high in potassium and sodium and is visible in a few places but overlaid by glacial deposits in most areas. The glacial outwash sediments are Hamilton's best agricultural land. These soils are also favorable for building residences and septic systems.

Habitat

The forests, wetlands, rivers, and lakes in the Town provide habitat for a variety of regionally significant and rare fauna and flora, while also supporting community health via the provision of clean water and providing scenic and recreational opportunities. These undeveloped areas comprise 6,513.6 acres (68%) of Hamilton's land.³³

Hamilton is fortunate to contain significant, connected blocks of undeveloped forest identified by BioMap2 as Critical Natural Landscape and Forest Core. BioMap2 is a report on biodiversity conservation that includes local biodiversity information to assist in specific conservation efforts at the town or regional level. Critical Natural Landscape areas identify larger landscape areas that are better able to support ecological processes, disturbances, and wide-ranging species. Hamilton has approximately 2,800 acres of Critical Natural Landscape area.³⁴ Much of the forest area in town is intact and connected, thus these areas are uniquely able to support key species (both plants and animals). It is important to keep the value of this connectivity in mind as Hamilton considers which areas in town to develop.

A variety of wildlife species are supported by lands within the town. Audubon-identified important bird areas (IBAs) make up more than half of the Town, at 5,900 acres. These IBAs support 10 conservation priority bird species for the region, species whose breeding is threatened by fragmentation of habitat from development in the area. The IBAs include Appleton Farm and the Eastern Essex County Interior Forest complex.³⁵ The Ipswich River, Chebacco Lake, and various riparian areas provide important habitat for the blue-spotted salamander, rare plants, and spawning habitat for alewife and cold-water fisheries.³⁶

2015.

³³ MassGIS. MassGIS Data: Land Use (2005), updated June, 2009.

³⁴ MassWildlife's Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program. BioMap2: Conserving Biodiversity in a Changing World, n.d., and Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, BioMap2, 2012.

³⁵ Mass Audubon. Massachusetts Important Bird Areas (IBA), n.d.

³⁶ Ibid.



The wetlands, rivers, and marshes in the Town provide habitat for regionally significant or rare birds, fish, reptiles/amphibians, and flora.³⁷ The freshwater marshes, swamps, and floodplain forests that border the Ipswich River support bird species of high conservation property.³⁸

- Wood ducks use wetland plants here for food and nest cavities to raise their young
- Rare state-listed birds such as the pied-billed grebe and least bittern may nest here in beaver-enhanced wetlands
- American woodcock use fields on Bradstreet Hill

In 2015, Trout Unlimited with support from the Marine Fisheries, undertook the task of improving fish passage in the Ipswich River by revitalizing an antiquated concrete fish ladder that had fallen into disrepair.³⁹ The success of this effort included an improved passage for American eel and herring.⁴⁰

As large woodlands continue to be cut up for a wide variety of human uses, many interior-breeding species are showing significant population declines.⁴¹ Mass Audubon lists the blue-spotted salamander, the ringed boghaunter, the arrowhead spiketail, and sixty-seven species of butterflies as endangered/species of concern. The NHESP Office lists species that are scarce in Massachusetts and considered to be endangered, threatened, or of special concern. This list includes several animals and plant species in Hamilton.⁴²

Climate change is expected to adversely affect biodiversity in Hamilton. Winters will be warmer with less snow cover to protect soil and tree roots. High-intensity rain and wind events will exacerbate soil erosion, especially on steep slopes, disturbed land, and agricultural fields that may be without a winter cover crop. Invasive species will be more widespread, with new species arriving. Wildlife groups including montane birds, salamanders, cold-adapted fish, and freshwater mussels will be particularly affected by changing temperatures, precipitation, and stream levels. The arrival of migrating birds may be out of synchronicity with the time of leaf-out and insect infestations. Southern species will benefit from warming and may gradually displace native northern species in the forest, but protecting diverse habitats and managing land well can help mitigate these potential effects. Through planning decisions, the Town can mitigate future effects of climate change and better adapt to the changes that are currently underway.⁴³

Surface Water Resources

Hamilton is bordered by the Ipswich River to the west, Chebacco Lake to the east, and includes several small ponds and numerous tributaries (See Map 4.3.3, Town of Hamilton Surface Water). Hamilton's

³⁷ Mass Audubon. *Bird Checklist Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary*, n.d.; Nor'East Chapter Trout Unlimited, n.d.

³⁸ Mass Audubon. *Bird Checklist Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary*, n.d.

³⁹ Nor'East Chapter Trout Unlimited, n.d.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Mass Audubon. *Bird Checklist Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary*, n.d.

⁴² MassGIS. *MassGIS Data: NHESP Estimated Habitats of Rare Wildlife*, August, 2021.

⁴³ Resilient MA. *Featured Initiatives*, n.d.; MassWildlife's Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program. *BioMap2: Conserving Biodiversity in a Changing World*, n.d.



water sources provide several recreational uses such as swimming, fishing, and boating but occasionally experience low flows and water quality impairments.⁴⁴ The Ipswich River was named among America’s Most Endangered Rivers of 2021, especially because of threats of low flows caused by extended droughts and nonpoint source pollution.⁴⁵ The Ipswich River is one of the largest paddling destinations in Massachusetts and is a MassAudubon Wildlife Sanctuary, part of the Eastern Essex County Interior Forest Important Bird Area.⁴⁶ Pumping and changes to inflows have led to low flows and even dry conditions in some sections, which can dry up critical habitat for fish, raise water temperatures, lower dissolved oxygen levels, and impede paddling.⁴⁷

Chebacco Lake and the Miles River are also impaired from nonpoint pollution sources and low flows.⁴⁸ All impairments and outfalls discharging to primary waterbodies are summarized in Table 4.3.1, below. The Miles River requires a total maximum daily load (TMDL) according to the U.S. Clean Water Act. A TMDL is a regulatory term describing a plan for restoring impaired waters that identifies the maximum amount of a pollutant that a body of water can receive while still meeting water quality standards.

Water Body	Impairment
Miles River (MA92-03)	Aquatic Macroinvertebrate Bioassessments, Fecal Coliform
Chebacco Lake (MA93014)	None
Black Brook (MA92-19)	None
Beck Pond (MA93003)	None

Source: Town of Hamilton’s 2019 Stormwater Management Plan.

Groundwater and Aquifer Recharge Areas

Hamilton draws its drinking water from groundwater resources that are hydrologically connected with the Ipswich and Miles Rivers and their tributaries. Because the drinking water aquifer lacks hydrogeologic barriers and most of the Town’s soils are highly permeable, it has a high vulnerability to contamination. Severe and extended droughts are also creating increased risk to water supplies. Map 4.3.4, Town of Hamilton Aquifers and Aquifer Protection, illustrates the aquifer areas in Hamilton as well as the aquifer protection zones and interim wellhead protection areas.

LOCAL CAPACITY, POLICIES, AND REGULATIONS

The Hamilton Conservation Commission is responsible for protecting the town of Hamilton’s wetlands resources. It does this by working with residents to comply with the state *Conservation Commission Act (G.L. c. 40 S. 8C)*, state *Wetlands Protection Act (G.L. c.131 S. 40)*, and the *Town of Hamilton non-zoning Conservation Bylaw (Town of Hamilton Bylaws Chapter 17)*, which contains additional

⁴⁴ Ipswich River Watershed Association. *River Conditions*, n.d.

⁴⁵ *Ipswich River named among America’s Most Endangered Rivers*, n.d.

⁴⁶ Ipswich River Watershed Association. *River Conditions*, n.d.; Mass Audubon. *Bird Checklist Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary*, n.d.

⁴⁷ Ipswich River Watershed Association. *River Conditions*, n.d.

⁴⁸ MassDEP. *MassDEP Online Map Viewer*, 2014.



requirements deemed necessary by town residents to protect our local wetland values. The Hamilton Conservation Bylaw was last updated in 2023, by a vote at the Annual Town Meeting.

The Commission reviews activities proposed within 100 feet of any wetland, marsh, swamp or bank, that borders any waterway or waterbody, land under those waters, or lands that flood; and activities within 200 ft from larger watercourses. This review process is utilized to contribute to the following interests: protect public, private, and groundwater supply, control floods, prevent storm damage, prevent pollution, and protect fisheries, shellfish, and wildlife habitat.

The Commission consists of up to seven volunteers each serving a 3-year renewable term and is supported by one part-time Conservation Agent. It serves as a resource to residents on wetlands issues, including through consultations with the agent, site visits, educational events, and informational resources. There are twice monthly public meetings and hearings.

A Stormwater Management Plan (SWMP)⁴⁹ includes Best Management Practices (BMPs) and public education measures to be implemented to improve and manage stormwater in the Town of Hamilton. Stormwater runoff is generated from rain events and snowmelt that flow over land and impervious surfaces like pavement or rooftops. The stormwater runoff picks up pollutants like trash, chemicals, nutrients and oils that can harm our lakes, rivers, streams and coastal waters. Stormwater runoff carrying accidental spills from hard surfaces like streets, parking lots and driveways can threaten drinking water stored in surface reservoirs. Additionally, nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus which are found in animal wastes, fertilizers and faulty septic systems are a significant source of pollution to nearby waterbodies.⁵⁰

Concluded in 2022, the overall purpose for the *Water Management Act (WMA) Grant to Improve Water Supply Resiliency within the Lower Ipswich River Watershed* is to conduct a regional evaluation of alternative sources to improve water supply resiliency within the lower Ipswich River Watershed for the Town of Hamilton and its neighboring communities of Topsfield, Manchester, Ipswich, Essex and Wenham.⁵¹

In 2019, the Town used a grant from the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness program to conduct a Community Resilience Building workshop in which residents were invited to:

- *Define top local natural and climate-related hazards of concern;*
- *Identify existing and future strengthen and vulnerabilities;*
- *Develop prioritized actions for the community;*
- *Identify immediate opportunities to collaboratively advance actions to increase resilience.*⁵²

⁴⁹ Town of Hamilton. Stormwater Management Plan MS4 General Permit Compliance, June 2020.

⁵⁰ Massachusetts Department of Recreation and Conservation, DCR Stormwater Management, What is Stormwater Runoff and Why Does it Matter?, Accessed April 2023.

⁵¹ Town of Hamilton. *Water Management Act (WMA) Grant to Improve Water Supply Resiliency within the Lower Ipswich River Watershed, 2022*. By Dewberry Engineers, Inc., Ipswich River Watershed Association, Town of Hamilton Department of Public Works.

⁵² Town of Hamilton. *Community Resilience Building Workshop Summary of Findings*, September 2019.



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4.4 Cultural and Historic Resources

INTRODUCTION

Cultural Resources are the places and institutions that contribute to a community's unique identity. Hamilton's unique landscapes, architecture, and historic sites contribute to its small-town feel and civic pride.

EXISTING RESOURCES

Hamilton has three historic parks: Bradley Palmer State Park, Cutler Park and Patton Park. The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) manages Bradley Palmer and the Bradley Palmer Mansion. Cutler Park on Bay Road honors Dr. Manasseh Cutler, the pastor who advocated for Hamilton's secession from Ipswich. The park was built on the former Wigglesworth Cemetery, though the graves and headstones were moved to the cemetery on Bay Road. Patton Park memorializes General George S. Patton, Sr., one of Hamilton's most distinguished citizens. A Sherman tank and acknowledgment markers from the citizens of Avranches and LeHavre, France stand in the park today.

Appleton Farms in northeast Hamilton is generally characterized as open space and farmland, but its historic buildings, stone walls and trees are part of a larger historic cultural landscape of the town and region. The Trustees of Reservations and Past Designs prepared a detailed inventory and a master plan for the seventeenth-century property in 2002. Other important historic resources include cemeteries, the Masconomet burial ground, scenic roads, bridges and heritage trees. See the Transportation section for more details about Hamilton's scenic roads.

The historic Patton Homestead, gifted by the Patton family, is a community asset where the Hamilton community and beyond can enrich their lives through cultural events, seasonal festivals, military and veterans focused programming, recreational use, private rentals, and other activities. Patton Homestead Inc. is an independent 501(c)3 non-profit which signed an agreement in August 2018 to help advise the Town relative to the Homestead and to fundraise for the property's capital and programming needs.

Hamilton-Wenham Public Library first opened to the public on December 17, 2001. After years of planning, the two towns had successfully created the first regional library in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Located on the site of the old Hamilton High School (later the Hamilton Junior High School), the library's boundaries touch the town lines of both Hamilton and Wenham. This remarkable collaboration is a continuation of a partnership that began in May 1959 with the regionalization of the public school systems and the construction of the Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School. The wisdom that strength is gained by combining resources has ensured the stability and excellence of the public educational and cultural institutions of Hamilton and Wenham for present and future generations. To ensure a vibrant future, the library recently completed a long-range plan of service.⁵³

⁵³ Hamilton-Wenham Public Library Long-Range Plan of Service 2020-2024, March 15, 2019.



The Community House (TCH) is a community center, founded in 1921, and remains a thriving non-profit, 501c3 charitable organization dedicated to promoting the arts, enrichment and civic unity. In 2019 The Community House launched The Kids Community (TKC), a new childcare program, with an initial enrollment of 98 children. In 2020, TCH redesigned its flagship programs to unite the community during the COVID-19 pandemic. TKC provides safe childcare that matches the quickly evolving needs of families in the Hamilton-Wenham School District. Stage 284, an in-house theater company, creates new content and shares it widely through digital channels. And, TCH continues to offer special events that bring the community together.

Wenham Museum's mission is to celebrate childhood, interpret history, and explore culture for the enrichment of all generations in the greater North Shore community and beyond. The Museum engages multigenerational members and visitors in examining the promise of the American experiment and provides thought-provoking learning experiences that connect the past, present, and future, in a welcoming and inclusive environment. Although not located within the borders of Hamilton, this Museum provides cultural activities for the residents of the town and acts as a repository for documents, records, and artifacts.

Hamilton Historical Society's purpose is to preserve the history of the Town of Hamilton and in 2020 they were presented with a challenge and an opportunity. They felt a great responsibility to create an account of Hamilton during the Pandemic. The challenge was how to chronicle this in the best way. The board met in the chilly barn at the Patton Homestead, masked and socially distanced. They had three major goals. One to record this historic time, second was to keep up communication with their members and lastly to plan for the future. They decided to create a pictorial journal of how Hamilton carried on during this difficult time.

Hamilton-Wenham Cultural Council's purpose is to re-grant state funds for community-based arts, humanities, and interpretive science projects and activities to benefit the residents of Hamilton and Wenham. Grant decisions are subject to final approval by the Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC).

Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) Inventory

Hamilton has 275 inventoried historic resources including buildings (238), burial grounds (1), structures (34), and objects (2).⁵⁴ The objects include the General George S. Patton Sherman Tank and the Soldiers Monument. The burial ground is the Hamilton Cemetery. The structures are also important to the historic character of the town and include roads, gates, steps, parks, ponds, stone walls, tilled fields, railroad crossings, and recreation areas. Map 4.4.1 Hamilton Historic and Cultural Resources, shows the MHC Inventoried Historic Resources throughout the town.⁵⁵

Hamilton has one designated Local Historic District (LHD) which is located along Bay Road. Since the local historic district is a relatively small area in Hamilton Center, it does not protect many of the town's historic structures. Several properties are listed individually on the National Register, including

⁵⁴ MassGIS. MassGIS Data: MHC Historic Inventory, February 2023.

⁵⁵ N.B. Map 4.4.1 still being developed.



Hamilton Town Hall, the Pingree School, the Austin Brown House, the Emeline Patch House, the Brown House, the Woodberry Quarrels House and Gordon-Conwell Seminary. The historic vestiges that accompany these buildings, such as outbuildings, stone walls and tilled fields, are also important.

TRENDS

Hamilton is a town rich in history and cultural resources. Through Community Preservation Act (CPA) funded projects, Historic District Bylaw, the work of the Hamilton Historic District Commission/Historical Commission, the historic and cultural treasures that are abundant in town can continue to be enjoyed by residents and visitors.

Table 4.4.1 lists the Community Preservation Act (CPA) funded historic projects completed to date since 2010. The citizens of Hamilton voted to adopt the Community Preservation Act (CPA) on May 12, 2005. This program creates a 2% surcharge on real estate taxes for all residences and businesses, with exemptions for the first \$100,000 of residential property value and property owned and occupied by any person who qualifies for low income housing or low or moderate income senior housing. This surcharge is then matched by a state fund.

Table 4.4.1 Historic Community Preservation Act (CPA) Projects Completed Since 2010	
Project Name	Project Description
Old Library Window Renovation	Funds the renovation of the windows at the old library
American Legion Building Renovation	Renovation of the American Legion Building; one of Hamilton's original school houses.
Old Library Restoration	Restoration and renovation of Hamilton's Old Library
Hamilton Senior Center Ceiling Repairs	Renovation of the ceiling and railings at the Hamilton Senior Center
Patton Homestead Acquisition	Legal and closing costs
HW Community House Exterior Renovations	Exterior renovations to the Community House, particular focus on the cupola.
Hamilton Senior Center Kitchen	To fund the capital improvements necessary for the renovation of the kitchen.
Liberty Road Markers at Patton Park	To repair the historic Liberty Road Markers at Patton Park.
Town Hall Rear Steps	To replace the rear steps at Hamilton's historic Town Hall
Renovation of Bathrooms at Senior Center	To renovate the bathrooms and their ADA accessibility at the Hamilton Senior Center
Senior Center Balustrade	Restoration of the balustrade at the Old Library (Senior Center).
Town Hall Restoration/Renovation Project	To fund the restoration/renovation of the Town Hall
Community House Heating System	Grant to the historic Community House for the replacement of the heating system as part of the greater preservation and rehabilitation project.
First Congregational Church of Hamilton - Clock Tower and Belfry	Restoration of Clock Tower and Belfry of First Congregational Church
<i>Source: MassGIS. MassGIS Data: CPA Projects, 4/18/2022</i>	



LOCAL CAPACITY, POLICIES, AND REGULATIONS

The Historic District Commission/Historical Commission makes decisions with regard to approval of external changes made to properties within the Historic District, including but not limited to building additions, demolitions, all signs visible from a public way, and any other modifications.

Hamilton Historic District Bylaw and Demolition Delay Bylaw (Town of Hamilton Bylaws, Chapter 16) purpose and intent is preserving and protecting significant historic buildings within the Town of Hamilton and encouraging owners of such buildings to seek out alternatives to preserve, rehabilitate, or restore such buildings rather than to demolish them or alter them in a detrimental way. Such buildings constitute or reflect distinctive features of the architectural, cultural, economic, agricultural, political, or social history of the Town. Further, through the bylaw, residents of the Town are alerted to impending demolition or alteration of significant buildings. By preserving and protecting significant buildings, streetscapes, landscapes and neighborhoods, this bylaw promotes the public welfare by making the Town a more attractive and desirable community.

On September 22, 2020, the HHDC adopted the Hamilton Historic District Handbook. The Handbook was created as a tool for members and staff of the Commission, property owners within the district, and applicants before the Commission. The handbook contains information on the history of the Hamilton Historic District, the design review process and the design review guidelines used by the Commission when considering an application.



4.5 Open Space and Recreation

INTRODUCTION

Hamilton is host to a range of open space and recreation areas, all of which contribute to its unique atmosphere and rural character. As a residential suburb to Boston and other urbanized areas, Hamilton offers the charm of a small New England town, largely due to its ample outdoor space. At the same time, Hamilton remains accessible to nearby cities, which makes it desirable for commuters. This section studies Hamilton's open space and recreation resources to help plan for future change that doesn't sacrifice the town's identity.

"Open Space" typically refers to conservation land, forested land, agricultural land, neighborhood parks, active recreation areas, passive recreation areas, as well as vacant or undeveloped lands. Open spaces vary by ownership, environmental protections, and primary use. Most open space is protected to some degree, but not all. Several levels of protection are applied to open space lands, as discussed in the Land Use Chapter. These levels are broken down into the categories: in perpetuity, limited, Chapter 61, or none.

- *In perpetuity* refers to lands that are legally and permanently protected and are recorded as such in a deed or other binding document. Land falls into this category through a few different means. First, land can be considered protected in perpetuity if it's owned by a Town's conservation commission or water department. Other methods of conservation include if there's a conservation restriction on the property, if it is owned by a state conservation agency or non-profit land trust, or if the Town received federal or state assistance for the purchase or improvement of the property.
- *Limited* is another category of open space protection. In many cases, limited protections differ from those listed above in that any changes to the protection status must be approved by a majority vote by the municipality. Limited protection can also apply to open space areas that are protected by functional or traditional use types. For example, some school district lands are only temporarily protected while being used as a school is their primary use. Or some water district lands are only temporarily protected while water resource protection is their primary use.
- *Chapter 61* refers to a tax incentive program that aims to protect forest, agricultural, and recreation land. Property owners can opt in or out of the Chapter 61 tax credit, thus making the open space susceptible to changes in legal protections down the line.
- Finally, a *none* protected status generally refers to land that is privately owned and can be sold without restriction for another use.
- *Recreation* refers to outdoor areas with activities meant for relaxation, exercise, or enjoyment. This category is most often divided into "active" and "passive" recreation.
- *Active recreation* refers to high intensity activities that require the use of a specialized facility. This includes athletic fields, playgrounds, and swimming pools.



- *Passive recreation* refers to lower intensity programs that don't necessitate formalized facilities. This sub-section includes activities like hiking, biking, running, walking, nature observation, and horseback riding.

Compiling information about Hamilton's existing open space and recreation assets helps identify areas for town growth, conservation, protection, and management.

EXISTING CONDITIONS⁵⁶

Currently, Hamilton stands at a total area of 9,536 acres, 4,065 of which (42.6 percent) is open space.⁵⁷ The large overall proportion of open space is one of the Town's core characteristics and has long been a part of its rural identity. Several of the large open space properties also serve as regional resources. These properties include an extensive network of trails, recreation areas, and conservation areas. The largest open space properties by ownership include the Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary and the Bradley Palmer State Park, which serve regional populations and towns and include portions of the Bay Circuit trail system. The Town also shares conservation land purchased in Chebacco Woods with Manchester-by-the-Sea.

Open Space Inventory

This section primarily focuses on inventorying Hamilton's existing open space assets through the lens of protected versus unprotected land. This filter is crucial in understanding which open space areas are potentially at risk of development and those that could be expanded or connected with other existing resources. Map 4.5.1 Town of Hamilton Open Space by Level of Protection, shows open space by level of protection throughout the town and Map 4.5.2 Town of Hamilton Open Space by Ownership shows open space by ownership throughout the town.

- The non-profit Essex County Greenbelt Association (ECGA) is one of the largest open space landowners in Hamilton and manages several conservation properties.⁵⁸ Other enterprises that hold legal interest in land with conservation restrictions in Hamilton include the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation's (DCR) Division of State Parks and Recreation, the Town of Hamilton Conservation Commission, the Town of Hamilton, and the Massachusetts Audubon Society. Below is a brief description of landowners with properties totaling five percent or more.
- Massachusetts Audubon Society was founded in 1896, the Massachusetts Audubon Society is New England's largest nature-based conservation organization. This nonprofit group focuses on the conservation and restoration of land, advocates for environmental policies, offers educational programs, and offers opportunities to explore the outdoors.
- Division of State Parks and Recreation (DCR) is run by the state government with the aim of managing and overseeing natural, cultural, and recreational resources across Massachusetts.

⁵⁶ Unless otherwise noted, content in Section 4.5 is based on the Town of Hamilton Open Space and Recreation Plan, 2008.

⁵⁷ MassGIS. MassGIS Data: Protected and Recreational Open Space, August 2022.

⁵⁸ Greenbelt Essex County's Land Trust, n.d.



Funding for the maintenance of most DCR properties comes from either the state, public-private partnerships, or modest parking fees.

- Trustees of Reservations was founded by renowned architect and urban planner Charles Eliot to act as a steward of ecologically and culturally significant landscapes. The Trustees manage over 100 properties across the state of Massachusetts that annually attract around 2 million visitors. This group is classified as a non-profit land conservation and historic preservation organization.
- Essex County Trails Association (ECTA) is a non-profit group that works to protect and preserve trails across Essex, Hamilton, Ipswich, Topsfield, Wenham, and West Newbury. ECTA relies upon a variety of partnerships with public and private landowners, land trusts, and local conservation commissions for access to land and funding.
- Myopia Hunt Club is a privately owned foxhunting and country club in Hamilton. The Club dates back to the 19th century and has hosted several U.S. Opens for golf. Originally established as a “summer community,” the 350-acre Myopia Hunt Club is used for foxhunting, golfing, and other activities. This private club attracts members from Hamilton and other nearby areas.
- Town of Manchester-by-the-Sea is a nearby municipality about 8 miles away from Hamilton. Two of Manchester’s largest conservation properties, Chebacco Woods and Gravelly Pond, extend across the Hamilton border, making Manchester-by-the-Sea a de facto top landholder in Hamilton.
- Town of Hamilton - Among the largest open space owners in Hamilton, the Town itself ranks low on the list, as most of its holdings are recreational fields or small parks. The Town tends to partner with land trust organizations for the oversight of its larger natural resources or those shared with nearby towns.

About a quarter of Hamilton’s open space (1,236 acres) is protected under Article 97 of the Massachusetts Constitution. All land acquired by Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) agencies (either in fee simple or by CR) is protected under Article 97 of the Amendments to the Massachusetts Constitution. EEA has a “no net loss” policy with regards to the disposition of any Article 97 protected open space. Land that is protected under Article 97 requires a two-thirds vote of the Legislature with regards to the disposition of any protected open space.⁵⁹

Recently, Hamilton has worked not just to preserve its existing open space, but to protect and acquire additional parcels. These include a gift of 27 acres of restricted open space with Riverwalk Reservation and a canoe launch in Patton Homestead, the Community Preservation Act (CPA)-funded acquisition of 170 acres at Sagamore Hill (Hamilton holds the Conservation Restriction and the Essex County Greenbelt Association owns the land), and a Land Acquisition Policy that established a uniform method for obtaining assets.⁶⁰ Table 4.5.1 Major Open Space Landowners, lists for landholders totaling five percent or more of total open space acreage in Hamilton.

⁵⁹ Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs.

⁶⁰ Town of Hamilton, 2020; Town of Hamilton, 2019.



Table 4.5.1 Major Open Space Landowners

Landowner	Owner Type	Total (%) of Open Space	Properties
Mass Audubon	Land Trust	15%	Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary
DCR – Division of State Parks and Recreation	State	12%	Bradley Palmer State Park
Trustees of Reservations	Land Trust	11.4%	Appleton Farms, Pine and Hemlock Knoll Reservation
Essex County Greenbelt Association	Land Trust	11%	Donovan Reservation, General George S Patton Reservation, McCarthy Reservation, Osgood Reservation, Pingree Swamp Reservation, Pingree Woodlands Reservation, Willowdale Mill
Myopia Hunt Club	Private	8.6%	Myopia Hunt Club
Town Of Manchester-by-the-Sea	Municipal	7.1%	Chebacco Woods Conservation Area, Gravelly Pond Watershed
Town of Hamilton	Municipal	5%	Chebacco Lake Town Landing and Beach, Cutler Elementary School, Donovan Fields and Woods, Hamilton Cemetery, Hamilton Water Supply Land, Patton Park, Patton Wells, Pinetree Drive Well Area, School Street Well, Town Well

Source: MassGIS Protected and Recreational Open Space 2021.

Table 4.5.2 identifies the five largest open space parcels in Hamilton.

Table 4.5.2 Large Open Space Properties

Name	Landowner	Public / Private	Protection Level	Area in Hamilton (Acres)	Total (%) of Open Space
Ipswich Wildlife Sanctuary	Massachusetts Audubon Society	Public	Protected in perpetuity	616.31	15.2%
Bradley Palmer State Park	DCR – Division of State Parks and Recreation	Public	Protected in perpetuity	488.3	12.0%
Appleton Farms	Trustees of Reservations	Public	Protected in perpetuity	460.13	11.3%
Myopia Hunt Club	Myopia Hunt Club	Private	Protected in perpetuity	350.41	8.6%
Gravelly Pond Reservation	Town of Manchester-by-the-Sea	Public	Protected in perpetuity	173.44	4.3%

Source: MassGIS Protected and Recreational Open Space 2021.

Ipswich Wildlife Sanctuary spans 2000 acres across Hamilton, Wenham, and Topsfield, with over 600 acres of the parcel falling within Hamilton’s town limits. This property offers 12 miles of trails that take visitors through a range of habitats and hilly topography. The Sanctuary is managed to support bird species by protecting breeding sites, nesting places, and Spring courtship display areas.



Bradley Palmer State Park is owned and operated by DCR, Massachusetts’ Parks and Recreation department. The park is split between Hamilton and the neighboring town Topsfield, standing at a total of 700 acres.

Appleton Farms includes 700 acres across Ipswich and Hamilton and is one of the oldest continuously operating farms in the country. The portion of Appleton Farms that sits within Hamilton includes Appleton Farms Grass Rides, which offers over five miles of turfed trails that are used as both horseback riding trails and walking paths.

Chebacco Woods area was acquired after a major fundraising and outreach effort, involving multiple state agencies and non-profits, before the towns of Hamilton and Manchester-by-the-Sea jointly purchased approximately 115 acres of what is now protected open space. This park offers a range of recreational activities, such as hiking, biking, jogging, horseback riding, kayaking, canoeing, and fishing.

Tables 4.5.3 Open Space Protection by Protection Level and 4.5.4 Total Open Space Protection by Protection Type, detail the levels of open space protection in Hamilton.

Protection Level	Acres	% of Protected Land
In Perpetuity	3,881	95%
Limited (not by time)	76	2%
None	108	3%
Total Protected Land	4,065	
<i>Source: MassGIS Data: Protected and Recreational Open Space 2021.</i>		

Protection Type	Acres	% of Total Town Land Area
Protected Land	4,065	45%
Privately Owned, Chapter 61 Land	340	4%
<i>Source: MassGIS Data: Protected and Recreational Open Space, 2022.</i>		

Recreation Facility Inventory

An inventory of recreation facilities will help the Town determine if there are gaps in the kinds of amenities it provides as well as identify the types of physical spaces, programs, maintenance regimens, or budgetary issues that could be improved. Typical types of recreational facilities common in Hamilton include playgrounds, sports fields, neighborhood parks, ponds and lakes.



Playgrounds and Minor Parks

Minor parks tend to serve the immediately adjacent community or some specialized purpose. Minor parks often have playgrounds, which are defined as active recreation areas for children between the ages of 5 to 15. Playgrounds sometimes have a “tot lot” component for children from 1 to 5. Playgrounds are sometimes, but not always associated with school buildings.

Playfields and Major Parks

Playfields are typically outfitted with facilities for active sports, such as basketball, soccer, baseball, or tennis. Playfields serve a wide range of ages, from children who use little league fields to senior citizens who use tennis courts to play pickleball. Major parks often compliment playfields, providing options for passive recreation, such as walking, hiking, or simply enjoying nature. Major parks can also offer active recreation activities, like swimming, fishing, or boating. Major parks are less tied to specific neighborhoods and tend to serve a larger constituency.

Recent additions to the open space and recreation inventory include the 52-acre Donovan Fields and Woods, which features nature trails and a multipurpose athletic field.⁶¹ Hamilton’s recreation facilities also include a swimming pool at Patton Park.⁶² Friends of the Patton Park Playground and the Town of Hamilton have been an important resource in updating Patton Park’s playground equipment, landscaping, and public athletic facilities.⁶³ Other recreational facilities include a cross country ski run at Appleton Farms and various athletic fields at Cutler Elementary School, Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School, Pingree Park, Donovan Field, Fairfield Park, and the neighboring Buker Elementary School.⁶⁴

Additionally, the Hamilton-Wenham Recreation Department is in the process of developing recreational facilities, needs assessment, and a master plan independent from this report. The Hamilton-Wenham joint Recreation department has already begun to implement recommendations from the Recreation Master Plan, including the redevelopment of the football field and track at Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School.⁶⁵ Table 4.5.5, Recreation Facilities Inventory, lists the existing recreational facilities in Hamilton.

⁶¹ Town of Hamilton, 2020.

⁶² Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), 2019.

⁶³ Town of Hamilton, 2020.

⁶⁴ North Shore Nordic Association, n.d.; UDisc, n.d.

⁶⁵ Town of Hamilton, 2020.



Table 4.5.5 Recreation Facilities Inventory

Name	Landowner	Public / Private	Passive / Active	Use Type
Chebacco Town Landing and Beach	Hamilton	Public	Both	Swimming areas, boat launches, trails, ice fishing
Cutler Elementary School	Hamilton	Public	Active	Sports fields
Hamilton-Wenham Public Library	Hamilton	Public	Active	Recreation field, playground
Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School	Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District	Public	Active	Sports fields
Patton Park	Hamilton	Public	Both	Sports fields, playground, pond, open lawn
Pingree Park	Hamilton + Wenham	Public	Active	Sports fields, playgrounds
Donovan Field	Hamilton	Public	Active	Sports fields
Fairfield Park	Hamilton + Wenham	Public	Active	Sports fields
Buker Elementary School*	Wenham	Public	Active	Sports fields

**Facility is in a neighboring town, but highly utilized by Hamilton.
Source: MassGIS Protected and Recreational Open Space 2021*

RECENT TRENDS

Hamilton’s last Recreation Master Plan was completed in 2012. A new assessment will confirm whether the current active recreation offerings meet residents’ needs, whether the current facilities are receiving appropriate maintenance, evaluate sustainable funding sources, and discern whether the Town’s recreation facilities comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

One step towards realizing Hamilton’s open space and recreation goals is drafting an up-to-date Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP), the last of which was approved in 2008. OSRPs bring opportunities for funding, which can help municipalities realize new visions for their residents. This document can help forge expanded partnerships with Land Trusts and municipalities, help identify specific methods of water resource protection, and examine possibilities for connecting tracts of open space and conservation land. The latest OSRP for Hamilton received conditional approval in 2020 but needs to be completed.

LOCAL CAPACITY, POLICIES, AND REGULATIONS

Structure and Staffing

The Hamilton-Wenham Recreation Department serves the neighboring towns of Hamilton and Wenham. This joint department is the result of the two towns working cooperatively to consolidate their efforts and to manage their natural and human resources more effectively. This cooperation between the two towns extends to the Department’s organization. The Department is led by the Joint



Recreation Board, which is permanently staffed with three residents from the Town of Hamilton and three from the Town of Wenham. This board meets monthly to discuss various recreation initiatives. In addition to the Joint Recreation Board, the Recreation Department has two office staff members: a Recreation Director and a Recreation Assistant.

Facilities

The Hamilton-Wenham Recreation Department maintains several types of recreation facilities, ranging from farms to parks to athletic fields. These facilities include Castle Neck Farm (which offers horseback riding), Patton Park (basketball courts, pavilion, tennis courts, small and large baseball fields), Pingree Park, the Recreation Center at Fairhaven Field. The Hamilton-Wenham Schools maintain the athletic fields at the Town elementary, middle, and high schools.

From 2022 to 2023, Hamilton’s Parks and Recreation and Public Works departments conducted an extensive public planning process for a Patton Park Master Plan with the goal⁶⁶ to engage park users and residents in the process of identifying overarching and long-term improvement goals for Patton Park.”⁶⁶

Programs

The Recreation Department offers a wide range of programs for different ages and interest groups. For younger children, programs are both seasonal and year-round. These programs include preschool soccer programs, nerf gun battles, flag football, obstacle courses, tennis lessons, soccer clinics, field hockey clinics, softball and baseball clinics, arts and crafts, youth karate at the Recreation Center, swimming lessons, golf clinics, and more. Other programs are more attuned to the interests of adolescents; teenagers can sign up for chess club, science programs, lifeguard positions, youth running club, and a range of sports teams and games. Teens can also sign up for more specialized programs, like archery courses at Patton Homestead and summer cooking workshops.

The department also provides a diverse array of adult programs. Adults can sign up to play pickleball at the Patton Park tennis courts, grab a walking pass to enjoy the trails at Gordon College, join a sports team, take a dip at the Veterans Memorial Pool, or reserve sports fields for team use.

Community Preservation Committee - Community Preservation Act

Town Meeting voted to adopt the Community Preservation Act (CPA) in 2005, creating a 2 percent surcharge on real estate taxes to fund historic preservation, open space, and affordable housing related projects. Hamilton’s Community Preservation Committee presents recommendations to Town Meeting on how to allocate funds. Over \$12 million in CPA grants have been awarded in Hamilton since 2005. Table 4.5.6 lists the Community Preservation Act Projects pertaining to Open Space and Recreation that have been approved by the Town of Hamilton from since 2019.

⁶⁶ Town of Hamilton *Patton Park Master Plan Report*, March 2023. Prepared by CBA Landscape Architects, LLC.



Project	Applicant	Description	Cost	Fiscal Year
Donovan Playing Fields Bond Payment		To fund the debt service for the Donovan Acquisition	\$42,400	2019
Sagamore Conservation Project Bond Payment	Essex County Greenbelt Association	To fund the debt service for the Sagamore Hill Conservation Project.	\$114,000	2019
Removal of Invasive Species in Weaver Pond	Hamilton Cons. Commission	To fund the removal of invasive species in Weaver Pond and Patton Park.	\$17,000	2019
Basketball Court in Patton Park	Hamilton Recreation Board	To fund the rehabilitation/replacement of the two basketball courts.	\$10,000	2019
Donovan Playing Fields Bond Payment		To fund the debt service for the Donovan Acquisition	\$41,200	2020
Sagamore Conservation Project Bond Payment	Essex County Greenbelt Association	To fund the debt service for the Sagamore Hill Conservation Project.	\$112,300	2020
Open Space and Recreation - Reserve		To fund the debt service for the Sagamore Hill Conservation Project. The bond will be paid in full in FY 2032.	\$110,600	2021
Tennis Courts in Patton Park	Hamilton Wenham Recreation Board	To fund the repair and restoration of the Patton Park tennis courts.	\$32,000	2022
Turf Field at the High School	Recreation Board		\$200,000	2022*
Feasibility Study for Skate Park and Flat Track at Pingree Park Tennis Courts	Friends Group		\$25,000	2022*
* Anticipated projects				
Source: Town of Hamilton, Community Preservation Committee, CPC, Funded Projects. https://www.hamiltonma.gov/government/community-preservation-committee/cpc-projects/				



4.6 Housing and Residential Development

INTRODUCTION

Housing is an issue of critical concern throughout Massachusetts as populations grow and housing costs rise due to supply shortages. With pastoral values entrenched in the land use policies and physical fabric of many communities like Hamilton, housing production is a challenge. Another statewide challenge is the provision of affordable housing. G.L. Chapter 40B states that every community should provide at least ten percent of its housing stock as affordable for households with low or moderate incomes.

Housing policy shapes housing options and affordability, which in turn shape available opportunities for current and prospective residents. This chapter examines Hamilton’s demographic and housing market trends to understand current needs and help the Town plan to meet current and future demand.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Demographics

According to the Census Bureau, Hamilton’s total population in 2020 was 7,561. While the county and state saw steady population increases between 2010 and 2020 (9 and 7.4 percent, respectively), Hamilton experienced a net loss of about 200 residents or 2.6 percent during the same period. Both the UMass Donohue Institute and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) predict that Hamilton will continue to see a gradual decline in population. Table 4.6.1 shows that according to the 2020 Census, about 89 percent of Hamilton residents self-identified as White, a significantly larger share than the county or state.

Table 4.6.1: Race and Ethnicity (Census 2020)

	Hamilton		Essex County		Massachusetts	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
White	6,719	88.9%	536,424	66.2%	4,748,897	67.6%
African American or Black	56	0.7%	27,081	3.3%	457,055	6.5%
American Indian & Alaska Native	7	0.1%	782	0.1%	9,387	0.1%
Asian	310	4.1%	29,302	3.6%	504,900	7.2%
Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander	0	0.0%	130	0.0%	1,607	0.0%
Hispanic (any race)	197	2.6%	182,847	22.6%	887,685	12.6%
Two or More Races	249	3.3%	26,475	3.3%	328,278	4.7%
Other	23	0.3%	6,788	0.8%	92,108	1.3%
Total Population	7,561	100.0%	809,829	100.0%	7,029,917	100.0%

Source: U.S. Decennial Census 2020

Between 2010 and 2020, the number of households in Hamilton remained steady, decreasing by only 17 (less than 1 percent) while the average household size increased to 2.9. Hamilton has a larger

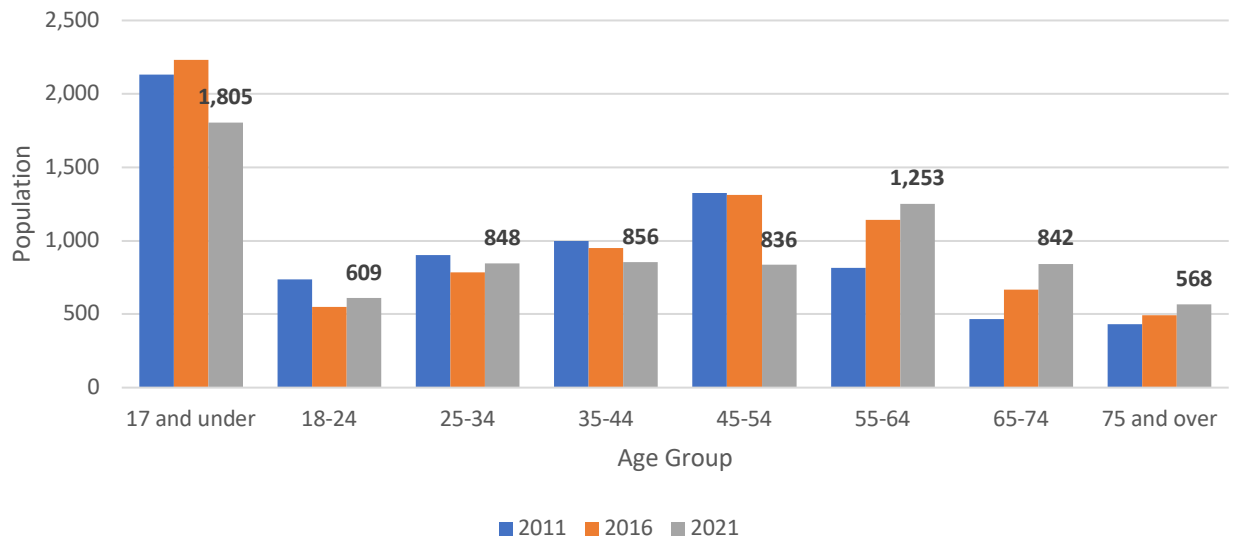


average household size than any neighboring community, Essex County, or the state of Massachusetts.⁶⁷ This likely reflects the prevalence of families with children.

Given its high-quality amenities, strong school system, proximity to employment opportunities in Boston, and other lifestyle benefits, families continue to be attracted to Hamilton. This is a likely reason for Hamilton’s large average household size. Children under the age of 18 make up 24 percent of Hamilton’s population, compared to 21 percent in Essex County and 20 percent in the state. The older adult population (65 or older) make up 19 percent of Hamilton and Essex County residents, compared to 17 percent statewide.⁶⁸ Figure 4.6.1 shows Hamilton’s estimated age distribution at three points between 2011 and 2021, showing that the share of the population 55 years of age or older has increased while the number of children has decreased

Figure 4.6.1: Hamilton Age Distribution (2011-2021)

(Source: American Community Survey)



Three-quarters of Hamilton households are married-couple families, and another 7 percent are families led by an unmarried householder.⁶⁹ Table 4.6.2 shows that the Town is heavily weighted toward families compared to state and county averages.

	Hamilton		Essex County		Massachusetts	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Married-Couple Family	1,924	75.0%	148,964	48.4%	1,268,605	46.7%
Male householder family	40	1.6%	15,190	4.9%	120,511	4.4%
Female householder family	141	5.5%	41,320	13.4%	322,576	11.9%

⁶⁷ US Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 2010-2020

⁶⁸ American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021)

⁶⁹ American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021)



Table 4.6.2: Households by Type

	Hamilton		Essex County		Massachusetts	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Nonfamily households	462	18.0%	102,485	33.3%	1,002,756	36.9%
Total	2,567	100.0%	307,959	100.0%	2,714,448	100.0%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021)

Hamilton’s median household income was about \$116,699 in 2021, which is 31 percent higher than the state’s median income of \$89,684, but comparable to other nearby towns (see Table 4.6.3). Hamilton’s households are not a monolith, however. Over half (about 55 percent) have incomes greater than \$100,000, but an estimated 295 of Hamilton’s households (about 11.5 percent) have income less than \$25,000.⁷⁰ Household income alone does not tell the full story because it does not account for a household’s expenses.

Table 4.6.3: Median Household Income (MHI)

Area	MHI
Topsfield	\$155,208
Wenham	\$154,375
Hamilton	\$116,699
Essex	\$116,027
Ipswich	\$111,701
Massachusetts	\$89,026
Essex County	\$86,684

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021)

Housing Stock

Hamilton’s housing supply includes 2,764 units, 84 percent of which are single-family detached units (see Table 4.6.4). That is a high number considering the variety of ages, household sizes, and incomes in Hamilton. Three percent of units are in buildings that have two units within the structure, and only 11.1 percent of housing units are in buildings that have three or more units in the structure (most being in buildings with 20 or more units).⁷¹ The structures with 20 or more units are likely a combination of Housing Authority and Gordon Conwell apartments.

Table 4.6.4: Residential Units by Number of Units in Structure

	Hamilton		Essex County		Massachusetts	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
1 unit detached	2,308	83.5%	164,423	50.6%	1,541,923	51.7%
1 unit attached	63	2.3%	22,790	7.0%	167,536	5.6%
2 units	86	3.1%	32,114	9.9%	285,680	9.6%
3 or 4 units	40	1.4%	38,591	11.9%	319,557	10.7%
5-9 units	84	3.0%	17,929	5.5%	172,089	5.8%
10 or more units	183	6.6%	47,497	14.6%	468,693	15.7%
Other	0	0.0%	1,884	0.6%	24,156	0.8%
Total Housing Units	2,764	100.0%	325,228	100.0%	2,979,634	100.0%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021)

⁷⁰ American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021)

⁷¹ American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021)



While Hamilton’s housing stock is largely composed of single-family homes, there is a range of sizes, architectural styles, and development patterns within the single-family inventory. From historic estates to the cottages of Asbury Grove and

Table 4.6.5: Housing Units by Year Built

	Hamilton		Essex County		Massachusetts	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
1939 or earlier	766	27.7%	115,466	35.5%	938,618	31.5%
1940-1949	131	4.7%	15,026	4.6%	159,144	5.3%
1950-1959	689	24.9%	35,031	10.8%	334,668	11.2%
1960-1969	345	12.5%	33,502	10.3%	302,393	10.1%
1970-1979	281	10.2%	31,644	9.7%	337,727	11.3%
1980-1989	229	8.3%	36,503	11.2%	321,161	10.8%
1990-1999	139	5.0%	24,360	7.5%	231,602	7.8%
2000-2009	97	3.5%	21,674	6.7%	211,087	7.1%
2010 or later	87	3.1%	12,022	3.7%	143,234	4.8%
Total Housing Units	2,764	100.0%	325,228	100.0%	2,979,634	100.0%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021)

from Downtown Hamilton neighborhoods to suburban-style cul-de-sacs, the Town’s architectural character has changed throughout its history. Most of Hamilton’s housing stock was built more than sixty years ago, with more than a quarter built in or before 1939 (see Table 4.6.5). This means that about two thirds of Hamilton’s housing stock is more than 50 years old, while only an estimated 184 housing units have been produced since 2000, or 6.7 percent of the total housing stock.⁷²

Eighty-two percent of Hamilton residents own their home, while 18 percent are renters, compared to 64 percent homeowners and 36 percent renters in all of Essex County (see Table 4.6.6). Hamilton’s residential vacancy rate is slightly higher than average for Essex County, but over 90 percent of units are occupied. The estimated share of renter-occupied housing declined from about 24 percent (about 609 units) to 18 percent (about 465 units) of total occupied housing units between 2010 and 2021, a 20 percent decline.⁷³

Table 4.6.6: Tenure and Occupancy by Household

	Hamilton		Essex County		Massachusetts	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Occupied Units:						
<i>Owner Occupied</i>	2,102	82%	195,868	64%	1,694,407	62%
<i>Renter Occupied</i>	465	18%	112,091	36%	1,020,041	38%
<i>Total Households</i>	2,567	100%	307,959	100%	2,714,448	100%
Vacant Units:						
	197	7%	17,269	5%	265,186	9%
Total Units:	2,764	100%	325,228	100%	2,979,634	100%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021)

⁷² American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021); Town of Hamilton, Assessors Database, 2023

⁷³ This may be due to a decline in the use of Gordon Conwell owned apartments, margins of error in the American Community Survey, or a combination of both.



HOUSING TRENDS

Housing Market

Purchasing a home in Hamilton has become more expensive over time. According to data published by The Warren Group, the median single-family sale price decreased during the 2008 financial crisis and then began to rise around 2013, peaking at nearly \$800,000 in 2021 (see Figure 4.6.2). Median sale price increased by over 90 percent between 2013 and 2022, while median household income only grew by 11 percent over the same period.⁷⁴

Figure 4.6.2: Hamilton Median Home Sales Price

Source: Banker & Tradesman

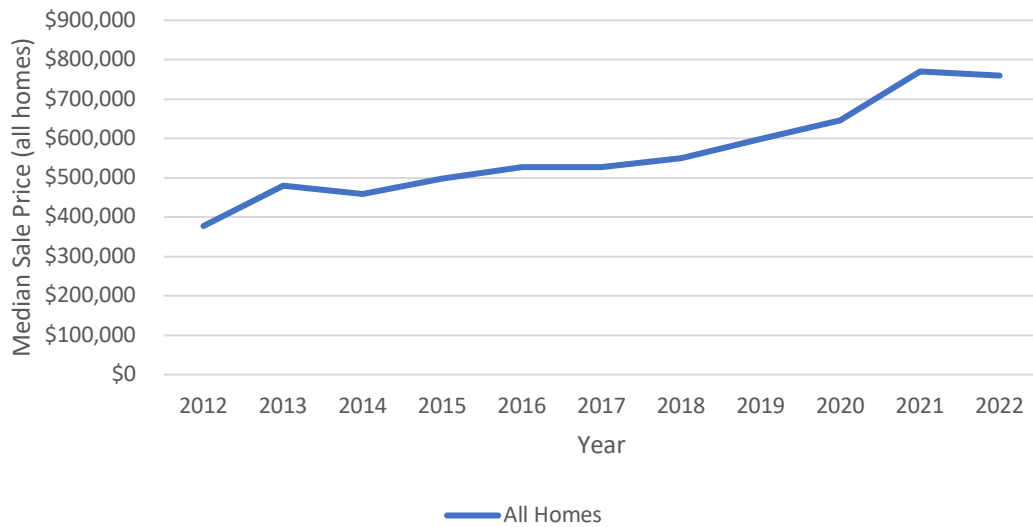


Figure 4.6.3 shows the last decade of annual home sales statistics in Hamilton. The volume of home sales peaked at 168 transactions in 2021 (the same year that the median sales price peaked) after slowly trending upwards throughout the decade. Condominiums make up a small percentage of home sales in Hamilton (a ten-year average of 5.5 percent), but at least a handful tend to enter the market every year.⁷⁵

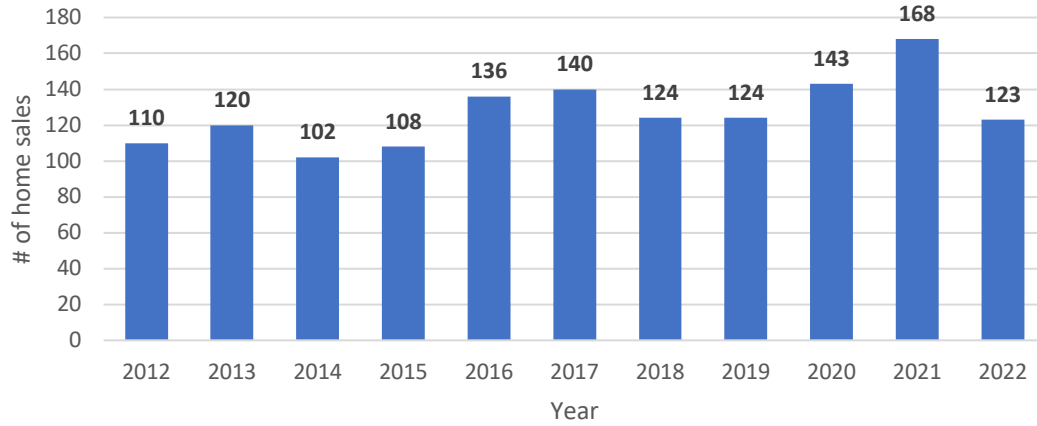
⁷⁴ American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2009-2013); (2017-2021)

⁷⁵ The Warren Group, Banker & Tradesman, Town Stats 2023



Figure 4.6.3: Hamilton Total Home Sales (All Housing Types)

Source: Banker & Tradesman



Some new housing has been built in Hamilton in recent years, as reported by the Hamilton Building Department in Table 4.6.7. The Town has permitted 67 new residential units since 2018 and issued 12 demolition permits, resulting in a net gain of 45 units. The busiest year for new construction during this period was 2022, with permits issued for eleven new single-family homes and a Habitat for Humanity development of five duplexes.⁷⁶

Table 4.6.7: Residential Building Permits in Hamilton (2018-2022)

	Single-Family Units	Duplex Units	3-4 Units	Demolition *	Net new units
2018	1	0	0	1	0
2019	5	8	6	2	17
2020	9	0	0	3	6
2021	7	0	0	3	4
2022	11	10	0	3	18
Total	33	18	6	12	45

**Does not count demolition and reconstruction under a single permit.
Source: Hamilton Building Department*

Affordable Housing

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines “low or moderate income” as households with incomes equal to or less than 80 percent of Area Median Income (AMI), adjusted for household size. Hamilton is a part of the Boston metropolitan area, so the 2022 HUD monthly rent limits in Table 4.6.8 currently apply.

⁷⁶ Hamilton Building Department, 2023



Table 4.6.8: Affordable Housing Monthly Rent Limits - 2022

Unit Size	30% AMI	50% AMI	80% AMI
Studio	\$736	\$1,227	\$1,957
1-bedroom	\$788	\$1,315	\$2,097
2-bedroom	\$946	\$1,577	\$2,517
3-bedroom	\$1,093	\$1,823	\$2,908
4-bedroom	\$1,220	\$2,033	\$3,243
5-bedroom	\$1,346	\$2,243	\$3,579

Source: MassHousing (2022)

A common indicator used to measure housing affordability is housing cost burden. HUD considers households to be “housing cost-burdened” when their housing costs exceed 30 percent of their monthly gross income. Severe housing cost-burden is defined as paying more than 50 percent of gross household income for housing. For homeowners, “housing costs” include the monthly cost of a mortgage payment, property taxes, and insurance. For renters, it only includes monthly rent and basic utilities (heat, electricity, hot water and cooking fuel). Table 4.6.9 shows that over one-third of households in Hamilton have incomes below the 80 percent AMI threshold, although not all are housing cost burdened.

Table 4.6.9: Housing Cost Burdened Households in Hamilton by Household Income and Tenure

	Cost burden 30-50%		Cost burden over 50%		Not Cost Burdened		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Less than 30% AMI	80	16.3%	290	59.2%	120	24.5%	490	100.0%
31-50% AMI	85	41.5%	40	19.5%	80	39.0%	205	100.0%
51-80% AMI	105	36.2%	50	17.2%	135	46.6%	290	100.0%
81-100% AMI	45	18.0%	20	8.0%	185	74.0%	250	100.0%
Greater than 100% AMI	155	10.5%	10	0.7%	1,315	88.9%	1,480	100.0%
Owner Households	359	16.3%	280	12.7%	1,561	71.0%	2,200	100.0%
Renter Households	110	21.2%	130	25.0%	280	53.8%	520	100.0%
All Households	470	17.3%	410	15.1%	1,840	67.6%	2,720	100.0%

Source: HUD CHAS Data (2019)

Of the 985 low or moderate-income households reported by HUD in 2019 (see Table 4.6.9), 650 (about two-thirds) are cost-burdened, including 380 households that are severely cost-burdened (spending over half their monthly income on housing costs).⁷⁷

⁷⁷ HUD CHAS Data (2019)



The estimated median rent for Hamilton in 2021 was \$1,356, including utilities.⁷⁸ While this is comparable to most neighboring towns, and the state, the median income for renters in Hamilton was \$34,063 (ACS 2021). For that median household, \$1,356 would be nearly half of all monthly income.

Chapter 40B, the state’s regional planning law, requires that every municipality in Massachusetts provide at least 10 percent of its total year-round housing stock as affordable for low-and-moderate-income households. Table 4.6.10 is Hamilton’s official count of Chapter 40B-eligible units, called the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI).

Project Name	SHI Units	Tenure	Comp Permit?	Subsidizing Agency
Housing Authority Properties	40	Rental	No	DHCD
Housing Authority Properties	12	Rental	No	DHCD
Housing Authority Properties	8	Rental	No	DHCD
Housing Authority Properties	3	Rental	No	DHCD
DDS Group Homes	0	Rental	No	DDS
Union Square	4	Rental	No	DHCD
DMH Group Homes	7	Rental	No	DMH
Carriage House Junction	6	Ownership	Yes	MassHousing
Firehouse Place	4	Rental	Yes	MassHousing, DHCD
Asbury	2	Ownership	Yes	DHCD
434-438 Asbury Street	10	Ownership	Yes	DHCD
59-63 Willow Street	18	Rental	No	MassHousing, DHCD
Total SHI Units	114	4.1% of 2,783 total year-round units		
* Comprehensive Permits are an expedited permitting process that developers of affordable housing may take advantage of in MA communities with less than 10 percent affordable housing, commonly referred to as “Chapter 40B” projects. Source: MA Department of Housing and Community Development				

The 114 units on Hamilton’s SHI represent less than half of the 278 minimum required under Chapter 40B. More than half of these units are public housing located downtown, owned and operated by the Hamilton Housing Authority. All 114 affordable units in Hamilton are deed-restricted in perpetuity, meaning their affordability restrictions will never expire.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021)

⁷⁹ MA Department of Housing and Community Development, Hamilton Subsidized Housing Inventory, January 2023



LOCAL CAPACITY, POLICIES, AND REGULATIONS

Zoning Regulations

Single-family dwellings are the only residential development allowed without benefit of a special permit in most of Hamilton. In the business district, projects with two or more units development may be pursued by right if it is part of a mixed residential-commercial project.⁸⁰ More diverse housing types like townhouses, duplexes, and apartments can be included as part of *Open Space and Farmland Preservation Development or Senior Housing Development*(see Chapter 1 “Land Use” for a more detailed description of these and other residential land use regulations). One accessory apartment of up to 900 square feet of gross floor area is allowed per single-family lot, as long as the lot conforms with current zoning regulations.

Hamilton’s Inclusionary Housing bylaw requires all developments of ten or more dwelling units to set aside at least one of those units as affordable housing as defined under Chapter 40B. For every additional seven units beyond the first ten, one more affordable unit is required. In the last five years no market-rate projects that would trigger inclusionary requirements have been permitted.

Administration and Funding

Established in 2005, the Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust Fund (HAHT) is charged with using public funds to acquire property for affordable housing and to facilitate the development of affordable housing.⁸¹ The Hamilton Housing Authority is the other major local affordable housing entity, administering 60 units of public housing including housing for disabled and elderly residents.

The Community Preservation Act (a fund based on a 2 percent real estate surcharge on real estate tax) is a major source of funding for local housing efforts. Over the last five years, Hamilton’s Community Preservation Committee has allocated \$330,000 to support the production and maintenance of affordable housing including regular grants to the HAHT. The CPC has also helped the Hamilton Housing Authority fund repairs and maintenance to its properties.⁸²

Hamilton Development Corporation (HDC) is a public nonprofit dedicated to facilitating beneficial economic growth in underutilized areas of Town, focusing on the downtown Business District. The HDC has recognized the role that housing plays in furthering economic development and successfully created 18 units in a mixed-income rental development on Willow Street.⁸³

⁸⁰Town of Hamilton, Zoning Bylaw, as amended August 11, 2021

⁸¹ Town of Hamilton, <https://www.hamiltonma.gov>. Accessed March 2023

⁸² Town of Hamilton Community Preservation Committee, 2022 Community Preservation Report

⁸³ Hamilton Development Corporation, 2021 Annual Report



4.7 Economic Development

INTRODUCTION

Economic development” is often thought to refer to physical development of commercial and industrial space in a community, but true economic development supports the improvement of the town and the lives of people residing there through both physical change and policy. Specific economic conditions in a municipality are largely driven by sources of household income; the commercial and industrial base a community can attract, retain, and support; and the uses a community chooses to allow or encourage on its land through zoning. There are many factors that businesses and organizations take into consideration when choosing where to locate, including availability of space, local amenities, access to a skilled workforce, tax rates, and quality and capacity of existing and planned infrastructure.

Local governments in Massachusetts depend heavily on property taxes for their operating revenue and thus consider the structure of their tax base critical to long-term fiscal sustainability. This influences which land uses the town emphasizes and in which areas of town development is supported. Compared to residential uses, most commercial and industrial uses tend to generate lower levels of service demand from a municipality, so the balance of commercial, industrial, and residential uses in a town or district is important to maintaining adequate services to support residents and businesses alike.

In Hamilton, these elements of economic development are important considerations as much of the town’s land is comprised of residential uses and open spaces with fewer opportunities to support jobs and businesses. These land use decisions have left the town with a heavy reliance on residential property taxes as its main form of local revenue, while also giving residents few options to obtain goods and services within town. This chapter provides an overview of Hamilton’s current economic conditions with a review of the local labor force, employment trends, commuting patterns, and non-residential land uses.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Labor Force

The labor force in Hamilton is composed of residents aged 16 and over who are either currently employed or actively looking for work. In 2021, the labor force was estimated to be 4,302 people. By mid-2021, the labor force had essentially returned to its pre-pandemic level, which also hovered around 4,300.⁸⁴

The labor force participation rate of 73 percent – an important measure of how engaged an overall population is in economic activity – suggests that Hamilton’s working-age population is highly engaged relative to Essex County’s or Massachusetts’ population, both of which are just above 67 percent (see Table 4.7.1). While 6 percentage points may seem like a small amount, Massachusetts’ participation

⁸⁴ Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor & Workforce Development (MA EOLWD), Labor Market Information (LMI)



rate has not been as high as Hamilton’s current rate at any point since at least 1980, and even minor changes in percentages have important implications for household incomes, household spending, and the flexibility of the labor market at a municipal scale.⁸⁵

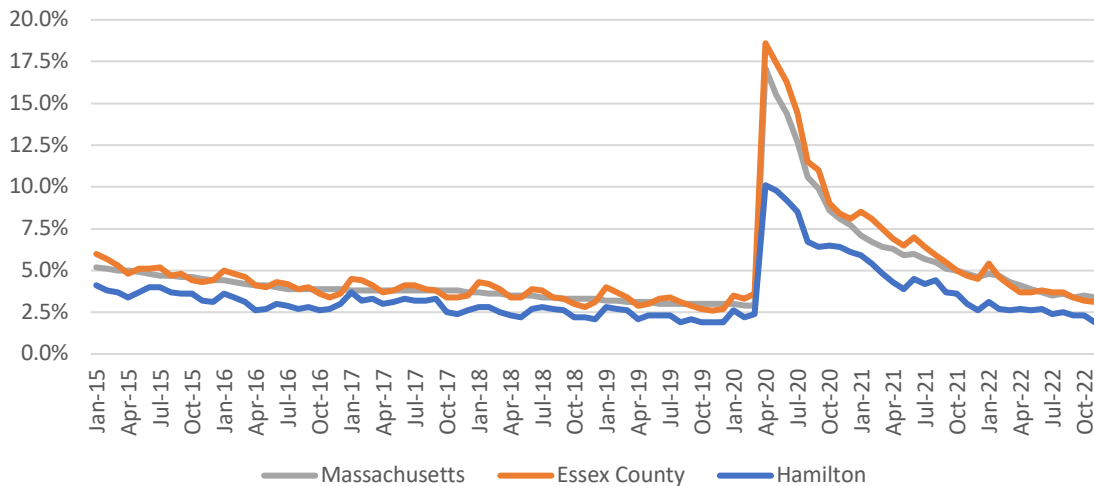
	Labor Force Participation	Annualized Unemployment Rate
Hamilton	72.6%	4.2%
Essex County	63.8%	6.4%
Massachusetts	65.5%	5.8%

Sources: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021), MA EOLWD LMI

However, unemployment figures indicate that those who are part of the labor force in Hamilton are faring better relative to workers across the state. Since 2015, Hamilton has consistently outperformed Massachusetts in this metric, with sometimes dramatically lower unemployment rates (see Figure 4.7.1). Furthermore, after a significant jump at the outset of the pandemic, unemployment rates in Hamilton returned to low levels, suggesting that the jobs held by Hamilton residents may not have been as heavily impacted by the pandemic as other places in Essex County and Massachusetts.⁸⁶

Figure 4.7.1: Unemployment Rates

Source: MA EOLWD



This may be due to the high educational attainment of Hamilton’s population, as the Town has a relatively high percentage of residents with a bachelor’s degree or higher. Nearly 69 percent of Hamilton’s residents have at least a bachelor’s degree, compared to 41 and 45 percent of the county

⁸⁵ Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor & Workforce Development (MA EOLWD), Labor Market Information (LMI); US Census Bureau 2021 5-year American Community Survey (ACS)

⁸⁶ MA EOLWD, LMI

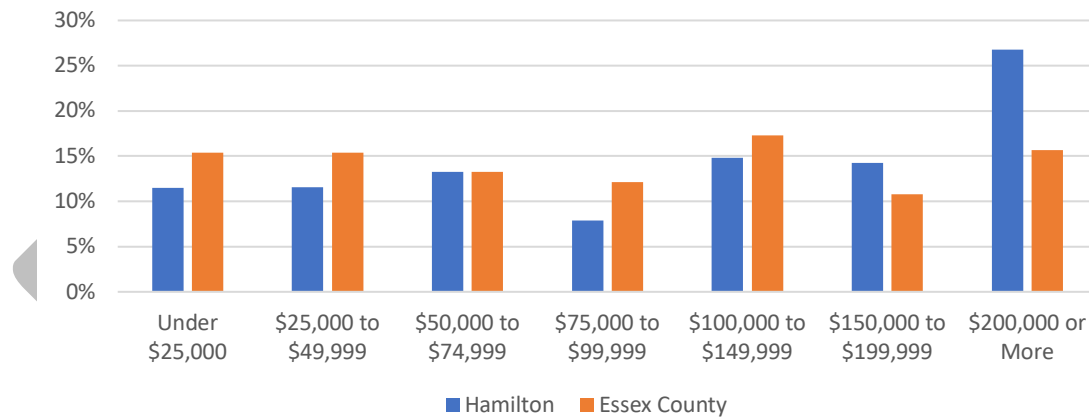


and state populations, respectively.⁸⁷ Workers with that level of education have been repeatedly shown to experience lower levels of unemployment and were likely impacted in a different way during the pandemic compared to lower-skill workers. These differences are explored further in this chapter.

With a median household income of \$120,357, Hamilton households are well above the county median of \$93,533. However, the distribution of incomes in town is strongly divergent, as shown in Figure 4.7.2. Thirty-six percent of households earning under \$75,000 and 27 percent earning over \$200,000. An additional 14 percent earn between \$150,000 and \$199,999. This distribution indicates a bifurcation of incomes within town, and an examination of the changes in income distribution since 2010 suggests that the middle class in Hamilton is shrinking, as are the numbers of lower-income households earning less than \$50,000 a year. These proportions are shrinking faster than those in the county.⁸⁸ Given the Town’s older resident population, a percentage of households with lower median incomes could be seniors on a fixed income. Householders aged 65 years or older in fact have a median household income of about \$60,500, roughly half of the Town average. However, that does not likely account for all households in that income category.

Figure 4.7.2: Household Income Distribution

Source: 2021 5-yr ACS



Major regional employment centers are the dominant destinations for workers living in Hamilton. Many Hamilton residents are commuting to Boston and Beverly, which welcome 682 and 370 workers from Hamilton, respectively. Hamilton itself is the third most common destination; 209 Hamilton residents both live and work in town. More than 1,700 of Hamilton’s working residents have commute destinations on the North Shore (see Figure 4.7.3).⁸⁹

⁸⁷ American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021)

⁸⁸ American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021)

⁸⁹ US Census Bureau, Quarterly Workforce Indicators/OnTheMap (2019)



Figure 4.7.3

Home Areas for Workers in Hamilton

Home Area	Count of Workers	Share
Hamilton	209	16.2%
Beverly	156	12.1%
Ipswich	83	6.4%
Wenham	61	4.7%
Gloucester	60	4.7%
Danvers	56	4.3%
Salem	45	3.5%
Peabody	42	3.3%
Manchester-by-the-Sea	30	2.3%
Haverhill	24	1.9%

Work Destinations for Hamilton Residents

Work Destination Area	Count of Workers	Share
Boston	682	19.6%
Beverly	370	10.6%
Hamilton	209	6.0%
Ipswich	135	3.9%
Danvers	115	3.3%
Peabody	102	2.9%
Wenham	102	2.9%
Salem	101	2.9%
Cambridge	95	2.7%
Burlington	63	1.8%

Source: US Census LEHD, OnTheMap, 2019

There is a large disparity between the number of resident workers and the number of jobs in Hamilton. According to the Census' OnTheMap tool, Hamilton has a net outflow of 2,192 workers. This means there are 2,192 more working residents leaving Hamilton every day than there are employees commuting into or staying in Hamilton for jobs. This statistic is not surprising as Hamilton has fewer jobs in town that match well with the industry sectors Hamilton residents are employed in. Jobs in Hamilton tend to be concentrated in government, healthcare, education, and retail while Hamilton residents tend to work in sectors like professional and technical services, finance and insurance, and management of companies (see Table 4.7.2). The heavy outflow of workers from Hamilton every day means fewer people remain in the town to support daytime activity for commercial businesses, retail establishments, and restaurants.⁹⁰

Industry	# of Resident Workers	Percent of Total Resident Workers
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	28	0.7%
Construction	281	7.4%
Manufacturing	237	6.2%
Wholesale trade	56	1.5%
Retail trade	361	9.5%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	55	1.4%
Information	99	2.6%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	259	6.8%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	882	23.1%

⁹⁰ US Census Bureau, Quarterly Workforce Indicators/OnTheMap (2019)



Industry	# of Resident Workers	Percent of Total Resident Workers
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	1,105	28.9%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	264	6.9%
Other services, except public administration	123	3.2%
Public administration	67	1.8%
Source: <i>American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021)</i>		

The industry sectors Hamilton residents are employed in closely reflect the Greater Boston economy, with significant numbers in Education Services and Health Care & Social Assistance, as well as Professional, Scientific, and Management; and Administrative Services. The number of residents working in Retail Trade has decreased particularly since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, a trend reflected in many local communities. Between 2016 and 2021, resident employment essentially remained unchanged (the estimated change was well within the statistical margin of error). As a share of the overall number of resident workers, Finance & Insurance and Real Estate & Rental & Leasing decreased the most over that period, while Professional, Scientific, and Management, and Administrative Services increased the most.

Hamilton's resident workers are in relatively high-paying industries, especially Finance & Insurance and Professional Services, which do not host large numbers of jobs in Hamilton. Education Services and Health Care & Social Assistance are the largest sector for resident workers, though the wages for jobs in those industries are, on average, below the town-wide average. However, both of those industries are limited in Hamilton and do not reflect the regional economy: jobs in those industries in Hamilton are anchored by relatively low-paying subsectors (Elementary & Secondary Schools and Child Day Care Services), whereas across the county and state those industries have significantly higher prevalence of higher-paying subsectors such as General Medical & Surgical Hospitals and Colleges & Universities & Professional Schools.

Employment Base

The employment base in Hamilton includes all wage and salary jobs reported by public and private sector employers, as well as those who are self-employed. In 2022, there were a total of 2,183 jobs located in Hamilton, listed by industry in Table 4.7.3. Those working in the Government sector comprised the largest share with 593 employees; this number does include those working for the school districts⁹¹. Other notable industry sectors in Hamilton include Health Care & Social Assistance; and Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services, which employ 358 and 219, respectively. Overall, employment has grown since 2012, increasing 4 percent or 85 jobs.⁹²

⁹¹ This category includes employees of any government, not just the Town of Hamilton.

⁹² Lightcast Industry Report, datarun 2022.4



The biggest absolute decreases were in Health Care & Social Assistance (a decrease of 67, or 16 percent) and Finance & Insurance (down 51 jobs, or 31 percent). In percentage terms, Wholesale Trade grew the most with an increase of 436 percent, or 55 jobs, while Construction and Administration & Support both saw notable growth at 59 jobs (153 percent) and 84 jobs (197 percent), respectively. Essex County’s employment grew at a slightly slower rate overall, increasing by 3.6 percent since 2012. Across the county, Health Care & Social Assistance, Construction, Transportation & Warehousing, and Administration & Support were the industries with the largest absolute increases in employment over the last decade.⁹³The impending departure of the Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary from Hamilton will almost certainly decrease employment in town in the short term, as nearly all of the institution’s jobs move elsewhere in the state or country.

Table 4.7.3: Industries in Hamilton by Employment

Description	2022 Jobs	2012 - 2022 % Change	Avg. Earnings Per Job	2022 LQ (Essex County)
Government	593	5.1%	\$98,906	2.33
Health Care & Social Assistance	358	-15.8%	\$46,175	0.89
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	219	-3.6%	\$92,324	1.52
Retail Trade	180	-7.7%	\$40,499	0.81
Other Services(except Public Administration)	170	-12.2%	\$29,485	1.44
Admin. & Support & Waste Mgmt. & Remediation Services	127	196.8%	\$59,628	0.99
Educational Services	118	18.2%	\$57,964	1.67
Finance & Insurance	117	-30.6%	\$267,551	1.96
Construction	97	153.2%	\$87,785	0.76
Accommodation & Food Services	85	-6.0%	\$39,093	0.54
All Others	118	36.3%		0.23
All Industries	2,183	4.0%	\$79,702	

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021), Lightcast Industry Report, datarun 2022.4

Hamilton residents are underrepresented in many of the local industries with the highest employee workers in town. In fact, an analysis of jobs per resident (see Table 4.7.4)shows that, in almost every single industry, there are far more resident workers than jobs in Hamilton. Table provides greater detail on this analysis.⁹⁴

⁹³ Lightcast Industry Report, datarun 2022.4

⁹⁴ 2021 5-year ACS; Lightcast Industry Report, datarun 2022.4



Description of Sectors	# of Jobs	% of Total Employees	Jobs/Workers Ratio
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	0	0.0%	0.00
Construction	97	4.4%	0.34
Manufacturing	5	0.2%	0.02
Wholesale trade	67	3.1%	1.20
Retail trade	180	8.3%	0.50
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	5	0.2%	0.09
Information	0	0.0%	0.00
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	117	5.4%	0.45
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	346	15.8%	0.39
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	476	21.8%	0.43
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	124	5.7%	0.47
Other services, except public administration	170	7.8%	1.38
Public administration	593	27.2%	8.85

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021), Lightcast Industry Report, datarun 2022.4

Occupations, i.e., job roles within industries, that are most common in Hamilton are closely aligned with the dominant industries. Educational Instruction & Library, Office & Administrative Support, Personal Care & Service, and Management are the roles with the largest numbers of jobs; however, all but Management have shrunk since 2012. Construction & Extraction jobs – which, based on industry statistics, are likely almost entirely in the Construction industry – have grown the most, with an increase of 38 jobs since 2012.⁹⁵

Location Quotients

Location quotients compare employment by industry in two or more geographic areas. The location quotient is a ratio of the percentage of an industry's employment in one geography to that of a larger comparison geography. If the ratio falls between 0.80 and 1.20, then the proportion of jobs is very similar in both geographies. If the ratio is less than 0.80, then the identified industry sector is thought to be under-represented in the local economy. Conversely, a ratio greater than 1.20 can show a specialty within the local economy as compared to the larger geography. The location quotient can be useful in pointing out opportunities for certain industry sectors to gain a larger share of the employment base or to indicate when a community may be heavily reliant on one or two industry

⁹⁵ Lightcast Industry Report, datarun 2022.4



sectors. In some cases, a high location quotient may indicate a specialty area in the local economy. Figure 4.7.4 shows location quotients for Hamilton’s major industries compared to Essex County.

**Figure 4.7.4: Location Quotient vs. Essex County
Hamilton's 10 Most Predominant Industries**

Source: Lightcast, Industry Report, 2022

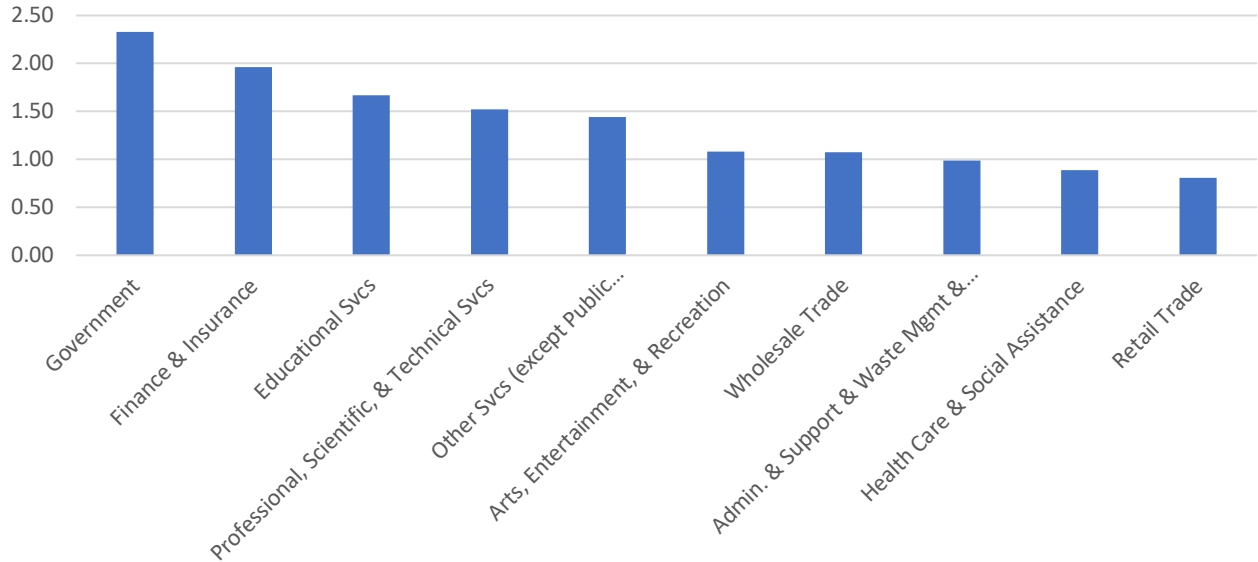


Figure 4.7.4 shows that Hamilton has a particularly high concentration of Government⁹⁶, Finance & Insurance, Educational Services, and Professional, Scientific & Technical jobs compared to Essex County. There are more than 2.3 times as many Government jobs in town than would be expected based on employment across the county. However, the very small number of total jobs in Hamilton means that even small industries – with very limited employment – can appear to be dramatically overrepresented. Minor fluctuations in jobs numbers thus change the LQ for any given industry substantially; for instance, a decrease of just 60 jobs in the Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services sector drops the LQ from 1.52 to 1.11 – from quite overrepresented to well within normal range compared to the county. This effect is even more pronounced for industries with lower employment, such as Finance & Insurance and Educational Services.⁹⁷

Employers

Large employers and clusters of businesses by type in a municipality can be an indicator of local economic strengths, highlighting common industries and the potential for growing businesses. Hamilton’s largest employer is the Town itself (see Figure 4.7.5). With several hundred employees (at least 350), the Town accounts for nearly 20% of all employee jobs within its boundaries. Other notable employers include Gordon-Conwell and Crosby’s Marketplace. Because the largest employers represent government, non-profit education, and a regional grocer, and other significant employers

⁹⁶This includes employees working for any government, not necessarily the Town of Hamilton.

⁹⁷ Lightcast Industry Report, datarun 2022.4; RKG Associates



are in similar low- or even no-growth industries, it is likely that Hamilton may not be able to count on the expansion of these organizations to drive meaningful local employment growth.⁹⁸ In May 2022, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary announced plans to relocate its Hamilton operations, meaning Hamilton’s second-largest employer will soon disappear.

Table 4.7.5: Largest Employers in Hamilton

Company name	Address	Number of employees
Town of Hamilton		~500
Gordon-Conwell Theological	Essex St	100-249
Crosby’s Marketplace	Walnut Rd	50-99
Myopia Hunt Club	Bay Rd	20-49
USPS	Railroad Ave	20-49
Weathervane Tavern	Railroad Ave	20-49
<i>Source: MA EOLWD, LMI</i>		

Property Taxes

There are important financial implications businesses and even individuals evaluate when making choices about where to locate. In Hamilton, the residential property tax levy makes up 96 percent of the tax base, while commercial, industrial, and personal property together account for 4 percent. Hamilton has a single tax rate across uses, and that rate has decreased by 4.8 percent since 2013; this represents one of the smallest decreases among the surrounding communities (see Table 4.7.6).⁹⁹

Local property taxes almost always represent the single largest source of revenue for a municipality in Massachusetts, and thus a town’s ability to fund services is highly dependent on its tax base. Hamilton’s dependence on residential uses means that residents, rather than businesses, carry nearly all of the tax burden, and any increase in operating and capital costs will likely directly add to residents’ cost of living. Furthermore, overreliance on a single type of land use can leave the town vulnerable to changes in property values for one specific type of use; should the housing market shrink or collapse as it did during prior economic disruptions, the Town could experience significant decreases in tax revenue. Hamilton also has a significant amount of land that generates little to no tax revenue: about 37 percent of the Town’s area is protected conservation land, or owned by a public or nonprofit entity.

⁹⁸ MA EOLWD LMI

⁹⁹ Massachusetts Department of Revenue (MA DOR), Division of Local Services (DLS), Municipal Databank (2023); RKG Associates



Town	2023 Property Tax Rates		% Change FY13-FY23		Avg. SF Home Value (FY2023)	Avg. SF Property Tax Bill (FY2023)	Single Family Tax Bill as % of Value
	Res.	C/I/P	Res.	C/I/P			
Wenham	17.35	17.35	-6.1%	-6.1%	\$847,660	\$14,707	1.74%
Hamilton	16.34	16.34	-4.8%	-4.8%	\$713,728	\$11,662	1.63%
Topsfield	15.20	15.20	-4.7%	-4.7%	\$766,934	\$11,657	1.52%
Essex	13.88	13.88	-8.4%	-8.4%	\$768,516	\$10,667	1.39%
Ipswich	12.23	12.23	-8.0%	-8.0%	\$704,834	\$8,620	1.22%
Danvers	11.75	19.98	-19.2%	-1.2%	\$605,754	\$7,118	1.18%
Beverly	11.26	22.07	-17.4%	-11.2%	\$683,198	\$7,693	1.13%
Manchester By the Sea	10.43	10.43	-0.8%	-0.8%	\$1,400,141	\$14,603	1.04%

Source: MA DOR, DLS, Municipal Databank, 2023

Commercial Areas

As described in the Land Use section, there are very few places in Hamilton with existing commercial and industrial activity. Almost all commercial and industrial uses are focused on Route 1A, and particularly around the MBTA Commuter Rail in downtown Hamilton. There are no business or industrial parks located within Hamilton, and the closest such areas are clustered closer to Route 128 and downtown Beverly.

The Shoppes at Hamilton Crossing, a shopping center at the intersection of Bay Road/Route 1A and Walnut Road, represents the majority of retail space in Hamilton. Tenants in the center include restaurants, a fitness studio, a pharmacy, and a small supermarket and specialty foods store. Some small commercial office spaces are also located in the shopping center, above the retail storefronts.

Commercial & Industrial Real Estate Market Indicators

As part of the Greater Boston real estate market, Hamilton faces one of the most competitive markets for commercial and industrial space in the country. Even with the impacts of COVID-19 creating uncertainty in some sectors, the demands for space are healthy. Though Hamilton has a highly educated population, its distance from regional highway connections and the overall limited number of commercial and industrial properties means that there are very few properties on the market in town. For the same reasons, competing directly with neighboring municipalities with better regional transportation access and more flexible land use regulations will be challenging.

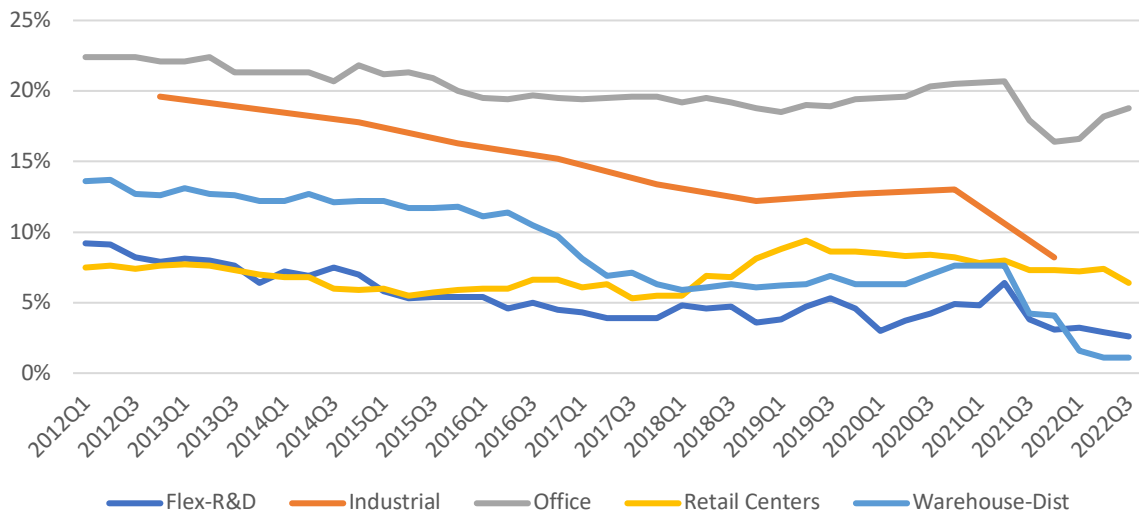
As of the third quarter of 2022, vacancy rates were decreasing or stable for all property types within Hamilton's respective submarket areas, with the exception of Office (see Figure 4.7.5). Office and Retail vacancy rates both increased at the outset of the pandemic, a common trend nationwide. The lowest regional vacancy rates are in Flex-R&D and Warehouse-Distribution properties, and the



Industrial market has seen significant decreases over the past decade. This echoes broader trends in the Greater Boston real estate market where R&D space has recently been in very high demand, and as the growth of online retail necessitates additional distribution facilities for many retailers, as well as the continued conversion of traditional industrial space to other uses.¹⁰⁰

Figure 4.7.5: Submarket Vacancy Rates by Property Type

Source: Moody's Analytics REIS



Asking rents have been increasing consistently over the past decade, even as vacancies have been more volatile. Office and Retail space command the highest prices in Hamilton’s submarket areas; the pandemic had affected rents for both, with slight decreases beginning in 2020, but Office rents have since grown while Retail rents have decreased slightly.¹⁰¹

LOCAL POLICIES AND PRACTICES

The Town’s main economic development entity is the Hamilton Development Corporation (HDC), which was formed in 2013 via enabling legislation as a direct result of a goal in the Town’s 2004 Master Plan. The HDC’s charge is to promote economic development in Downtown Hamilton, defined as the area within the Commercial zoning district (see Map 4.1.2). It has the power to own and operate property and utilize public and private funds to support existing businesses, attract new ones, and redevelop underutilized sites.

Beginning in 2016, the HDC became involved in a mixed use redevelopment project at 59-63 Willow St. Through several iterations, the HDC facilitated the development of 18 housing units, half of which are affordable, and 2,400 new square feet of commercial space. Ongoing efforts include improving downtown wayfinding, assisting the Town in applying for state grants, and developing green space.

¹⁰⁰ Moody’s Analytics REIS

¹⁰¹ Moody’s Analytics REIS



4.8 Community Facilities and Services

INTRODUCTION

Planning for public services and facilities directly affects the ability of the residents to live in a safe and healthy environment. Public safety services, schools, and a functioning municipal government are vital components of a thriving community. When facilities planning and maintenance are handled poorly, Town services will suffer and new development stress the community’s ability to serve new residents or businesses.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

General Government

Hamilton Town Hall is located at 577 Bay Road in South Hamilton. Built in 1898, Town Hall is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and houses most municipal departments (see Table 4.8.1).

Assessor’s Department	Treasurer/Collector’s Office
Building Department	Town Clerk
Cemetery Department	Town Manager/Select Board
Department of Public Works	Planning and Inspections
Energy Commission	Weights and Measures
Finance Department	
<i>Does not include volunteer boards and committees.</i>	
<i>Source: hamiltonma.gov</i>	

Table 4.8.2 shows the two sites where the remaining Town departments are housed.

299 Bay Road	16 Union Street
Board of Health	Hamilton-Wenham Public Library
Council on Aging	Recreation Department
Emergency Communications Center	
Fire Department	
Human Resources	
Police Department	
<i>Does not include volunteer boards and committees.</i>	
<i>Source: hamiltonma.gov</i>	

Hamilton, like most Massachusetts towns, has a Town Meeting form of government where voters act directly as the main legislative body. An annual Town Meeting is held the first Saturday of every April where residents vote on matters such as the annual budget, bylaws, and citizen petitions. Hamilton’s Select Board is a five-member elected board that is the Town’s main executive and policymaking body.



The Select Board appoints a Town Manager who oversees the Town’s day-to-day operations including appointing department heads and preparing annual budgets.

The Town Clerk is responsible for managing local elections, certifying official documents, handling certain licenses (like dog licenses), and recording various official documents required by state law. The Assessing Department values real estate and personal property to determine local property taxes. The Assessors Database is a publicly available record of assessments for every property in Hamilton. The Finance Department tracks the Town’s revenues and expenditures, processes payroll, and fulfills state reporting requirements.¹⁰²

Hamilton’s government is unique in the extent to which departments and services are shared with its neighbor Wenham. The towns share a single regional school district, a recreation department, the state’s only regional public library, a building inspector, and other staff positions. Hamilton has explored regionalization with other neighbors as well; for example, the Town’s Human Resources Director is shared with Rockport and Manchester-by-the-Sea.¹⁰³

Public Safety

Police Department

The Hamilton Police Department consists of the Chief of Police,, a Captain, a Lieutenant, three Sergeants, eight patrolmen, and an administrative assistant .¹⁰⁴ In the police station there is a Chief’s office, a reception station desk, an armory, an evidence room, officer locker room, a briefing room, an office for three sergeants, and an office for the patrolmen.¹⁰⁵

Hamilton Police Department is responsible for continuously promoting a safe environment through a police-citizen partnership. As of 2016, the Hamilton Police Department fleet consists of an all-terrain vehicle for dirt trails and cruisers for everyday patrol. In 2020, the Police department responded to 21,433 calls for service. Table 4.8.3 provides an overview of call classifications and the number of incidents over the last five years.

Classification	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Motor Vehicle Citations Warnings	359	373	269	189	486
Motor Vehicle Citations Civil	61	117	52	37	35
Motor Vehicle Citations Criminal Complaints	104	69	88	71	122
Motor Vehicle Citation Arrests	45	20	13	11	11
Operating Under the Influence	6	6	2	2	5
Motor Vehicle Verbal	739	574	550	687	1,209
Parking Tickets	42	34	8	13	7

¹⁰² Town of Hamilton, <https://www.hamiltonma.gov>. Accessed March 2023.

¹⁰³ MichelleLee Maloney (Director of Human Resources, Town of Hamilton, MA), interview by Judi Barrett, February, 2023.

¹⁰⁴ Town of Hamilton, <https://www.hamiltonma.gov>. Accessed April 2023.

¹⁰⁵ Hamilton-Wenham Public Library, 2018



Classification	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Motor Vehicle Accidents Total	112	90	69	87	83
Motor Vehicle Accidents Investigated	93	77	57	78	71
Crimes Against Persons	10	7	15	19	14
Crimes Against Property	76	86	120	81	56
Crimes Against Society	44	33	34	24	37
Municipal Citations	5	5	1	14	17
Animal Calls	549	588	300	495	451
Medical Calls	377	428	372	459	449
Alarms	399	351	225	299	159
Pistol Permits/FID Cards.	115	135	147	90	84
Total Arrests	94	72	66	75	81
Traffic Stops	1,051	994	720	912	1,448
Total Calls for Service	21,397	20,847	17,071	19,128	21,433
<i>Source: Hamilton Police Department</i>					

Fire Department

The mission of the Hamilton Fire Department is to prevent and minimize the loss of life and property of citizens and fire service personnel; to mitigate the consequences of natural and man-made disasters; to provide non-emergency support services, and to safeguard the environment and economic base of the community.¹⁰⁶

The Fire Department lists twenty-four firefighters (not counting the Fire Chief) that serve the residents of Hamilton twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.¹⁰⁷ In 2020, the Fire department responded to 1,474 calls for service, a number that has been increasing significantly since around 2017 (see Figure 4.8.1). Common calls were for house fire suppression, emergency medical services, and hazardous materials response. The department's fleet consists of eight vehicles that are routinely checked in house by a fire mechanic.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Town of Hamilton, <https://www.hamiltonma.gov>. Accessed March 2023.

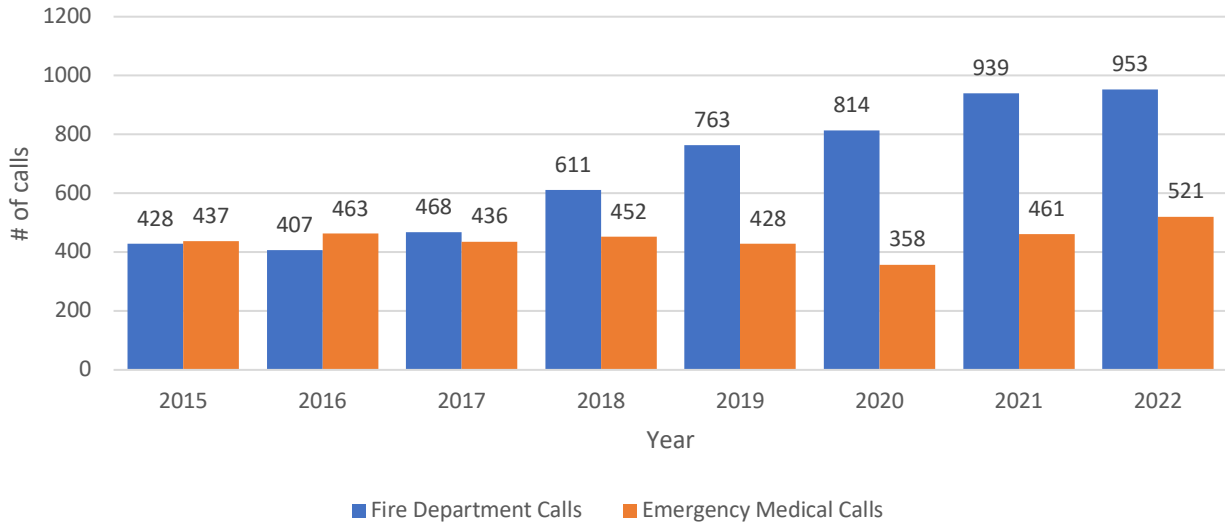
¹⁰⁷ Town of Hamilton, <https://www.hamiltonma.gov>. Accessed March 2023.

¹⁰⁸ Town of Hamilton, Annual Town Report, 2020



Figure 4.8.1: Hamilton Fire Department & Emergency Medical Calls

Source: Hamilton Fire Department



The Fire Department coordinates outreach programs with the school aged children and seniors, fire and lockdown drills at all the public schools, Pingree School, and the Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary. Additionally, the inspection department conducts a variety of fire inspections. The Fire Department is responsible for issuing burn permits for residents and farms, allowing burns with Fire Chief approval during favorable weather conditions. Hamilton uses CodeRED as a mass notification system to disseminate emergency alerts and information to residents via phone, text messages, social media, and email for individuals that sign up for the alerts. General notifications can communicate non-life safety matters such as planned road closures.¹⁰⁹

Emergency Services

Hamilton’s Emergency Management Director is the Fire Chief. The Hamilton Communications Center provides comprehensive emergency management and assistance. Hamilton’s primary ambulance provider since 2013 is Beauport Ambulance Service, a Gloucester-based company that operates locally out of the Hamilton Emergency Center.¹¹⁰

Education

Hamilton and Wenham partner to form the Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District (HWRSD), which includes three elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school (listed in Table 4.8.4). The HWRSD also operates a regional preschool program at the Winthrop School. The school district is the owner of record for the middle and high schools, while the district leases the Cutler and Winthrop schools from the Town of Hamilton and the Buker School from the Town of Wenham. Each town contributes a portion of the district’s budget proportional to a three-year average of student

¹⁰⁹ Town of Hamilton, <https://www.hamiltonma.gov>. Accessed March 2023.

¹¹⁰ Town of Hamilton, <https://www.hamiltonma.gov>. Accessed March 2023.



enrollment. Hamilton typically provides about two-thirds of the budget.¹¹¹

Table 4.8.4 shows that the annual student enrollment for Hamilton-Wenham schools has fallen over the last five years. The HWRSD’s 2022 “State of Our School Facilities” report, the authors identify three factors leading to the decrease in enrollment:

1. Families can afford to send children to private schools.
2. Hamilton-Wenham’s learning environments are “very outdated.”
3. The district lacks high-quality sports and recreation facilities.¹¹²

The report notes that due to their age, school buildings were not properly designed to fully accommodate students with disabilities.

Table 4.8.4: HWRSD Enrollment by School (2018-2022)

School	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Buker Elementary School	257	245	257	223	250
Cutler Elementary School	289	285	278	256	253
Winthrop Elementary School	291	281	332	294	310
Miles River Middle School	393	395	418	393	379
Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School	560	563	551	524	492
Total	1,790	1,769	1,836	1,690	1,684

Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

In 2011, a Comprehensive Facilities Assessment was completed to develop a long-range improvement plan for the school district. The school buildings in the district range from 50 to 60 years old except for the Miles River Middle School, which was built in 1999. The district’s last major expansion was at the Cutler School in 1992¹¹³. The older schools have accessibility issues, and several equipment and building components, technology, windows, and roofs are due for upgrades and replacement.

A 2008 Space Needs and Demographic Study stated that the amount of available educational space was identified as a concern. Other concerns include undersized classrooms and secondary spaces such as art, music, and gymnasium spaces at the elementary schools, undersized classrooms and field space, secondary spaces such as orchestra, chorus and life management programs at the Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School, and slightly undersized classrooms at the Middle School, with greatest needs identified for specialist spaces, resource rooms, and the cafeteria.

¹¹¹ Correspondence with Hamilton-Wenham School Committee Chair Dana Allara, March 27, 2023.

¹¹² Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District, “State of Our School Facilities,” 2022

¹¹³ Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District, “State of Our School Facilities,” 2022



Public Works

Hamilton’s Department of Public Works (DPW) is a multipurpose agency that oversees the Town’s Water Department, Highway Division, Building Maintenance, Waste Disposal, and Cemetery Department. The Department consists of Director of Public Works, Assistant Director of Public Works, Administrative Assistant for the Water Department, and an Administrative Assistant for the DPW (Town of Hamilton). DPW is responsible for maintaining and improving the condition of streets, maintaining and operating all Town-controlled traffic signs and pavement markings, providing a safe and clean drinking water, and effectively planning and implementing delivery of capital projects.¹¹⁴

Trash and Recycling

Hamilton was the first community in Massachusetts to implement a town-wide composting program, with compostable material taken to Brick Ends Farm located at 464 Highland Street. Regular trash streams are taken to North Andover and burned (Town of Hamilton). The Town has a single stream recycling method, also known as “No Sort” recycling which gives residents the convenience to commingled recycling (Town of Hamilton).

According to the Department of Environmental Protection, the trash disposal tonnage for the Town of Hamilton was 1,460.9 tons in 2020 (see Table 4.8.5). The separate trash tonnage from the Town’s schools was 60 tons. The Town also provides curbside pickup for bagged leaves three times a year while Brick Ends Farm accepts disposal of branches, brush, grass, clipping, and leaves.¹¹⁵

Waste Type	Yearly Tonnage
Single Stream	1,042.10
Scrap Metal	19.68
Textiles/Used Clothing	50.69
Food Waste	332.17
E-Waste	7.29
Total	1,451.93

Source: MA Department of Environmental Protection

Water and Wastewater Facilities

Hamilton owns and operates five pump stations at the Idlewood Wellfield in the eastern part of Town and one on School Street. Water is treated in a plant located at 79 Pine Street. The Town provided public water service to 2,563 connections in 2021 and distributed 205 million gallons of water in 2021. DPW reported only 81 residential properties that depended on private wells rather than municipal water.¹¹⁶

Supply sources, locations of proposed wells, and sources with a defined DEP approved wellhead protection area (Zone IIs) are further detailed in the Natural Resources chapter and shown on Map 4.3.1. According to the 2020 Annual Drinking Water Quality Report, the key issues identified for the water supply sources serving the Town are:

¹¹⁴ Town of Hamilton, <https://www.hamiltonma.gov>. Accessed March 2023.

¹¹⁵ Town of Hamilton, <https://www.hamiltonma.gov>. Accessed March 2023.

¹¹⁶ Hamilton Water Department, “Public Water System Annual Statistical Report”, June 22, 2021



1. Inappropriate activities in Zone I;
2. Residential land use;
3. Manure storage or spreading;
4. and stormwater catch basins within Zone II.¹¹⁷

The Town lacks public sewer infrastructure and all lots are served by onsite wastewater treatment systems. The Gordon–Conwell Theological Seminary has a private sewer system, with its own onsite plant and pump stations.

Energy Commission/Energy Manager

Hamilton received designation as one of the first Green Communities by the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER) in 2010. The Town applied for and was ultimately awarded a grant through DOER to hire a part-time Energy Manager in 2014. The position is shared with the Town of Wenham, another Green Community.

The Energy Manager is responsible for continually measuring and monitoring the comprehensive energy use at all municipal facilities. This data allows the Energy Manager to measure the performance of previously completed energy efficiency projects and identify opportunities for future projects. Finally, the Energy Manager serves as a primary contact point for state agencies on energy grant programs and other energy initiatives. For example, the Energy Manager recently used a grant to install public electric vehicle charging stations at Town Hall.¹¹⁸

Human Services

Council on Aging

The Senior Center is located at 299 Bay Road and administered by a volunteer Board and professional manager. Public health staff includes a regional public health nurse, a regional social worker, a public health nurse, a septic inspector, and other administrative staff. The Hamilton Council on Aging (COA) creates a friendly and safe community for seniors by providing social services, transportation, education, health, recreation and leisure-time activities, and resources that support their well-being and independence (Town of Hamilton, n.d.).

The COA plays a vital role as a centralized access point for providing information and programs to Hamilton's seniors. The COA provides a wide range of services and programs including:

- Cape Ann Transportation Authority (CATA) Hamilton Transportation Service
- Monthly Congregate Lunch Menu
- Nutrition Program
- Outreach/SHINE (Serving the Health Information Needs of Elders)
- Senior Citizen Property Tax Work-Off Abatement¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Town of Hamilton, Annual Drinking Water Quality Report, 2020

¹¹⁸ Victoria Masone (Energy Manager, Town of Hamilton, MA), interview by Tyler Maren, March 2023.

¹¹⁹ Town of Hamilton, <https://www.hamiltonma.gov>. Accessed March 2023



The CATA service provides transportation for medical appointments, or daily shopping, banking, and other needs. Outreach services host a certified SHINE counselor and a monthly Low Vision Group for Hamilton residents over the age of 60. The SHINE Program provides free health insurance information and counseling to all Massachusetts residents and their caregivers with Medicare.

Board of Health

The Board of Health (BOH) consists of a part-time Health Director, Administrative Assistant, Health Inspector, Animal Inspector, Septic Inspector, and a Public Health Nurse. The BOH is overseen by a three-member board appointed by the Select Board for a three-year term. The BOH conducts health clinics, addresses concerns of public nuisance, air quality, noise control, animal and pest control, food protection, housing complaints, Massachusetts Title 5 septic system inspection, and communicable disease reporting.¹²⁰

The COVID 19 pandemic forced Hamilton to adapt to unprecedented public health challenges. The BOH regularly advised local agencies like the Hamilton Select Board, Hamilton-Wenham Community House, the Hamilton-Wenham Library, the COA, DPW, and the Fire and Police Departments on the best practices for safely operating during the pandemic.

Culture and Recreation

Public Library

Hamilton and Wenham have a joint public library which opened to the public in 2001 and is the first and only regional library in Massachusetts. The facility is located at 14 Union Street by the Wenham border, although the Town of Wenham is responsible for administering the library. There are eight full-time and eight part-time staff members, and a six-member Board of Trustees responsible for the custody and management of the library and its services. The library provides several programs, events, and services including museum passes, meeting rooms, art workshops, science Fridays, reading challenges, book clubs, virtual stories, and songs.¹²¹

Recreation Department

The Hamilton-Wenham Recreation Department manages both Towns' sports fields, recreation facilities, and seasonal recreation programs. Key outdoor recreation facilities include the fields at Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School and Patton Park, which hosts a playground, tennis courts, and a public pool, and hosts annual summer programs for children.. At time of writing, the Town is engaged in a Patton Park Master Plan process to "engage park users and residents in the process of identifying overarching and long-term improvement goals."¹²² While there is no dedicated Parks Department, the Recreation Department is responsible for maintaining public parks.¹²³

Patton Homestead

¹²⁰ Town of Hamilton, Annual Town Report, 2020

¹²¹ Hamilton-Wenham Public Library, <https://hwlibrary.org>. Accessed March 2023

¹²² Town of Hamilton Department of Parks & Recreation and Department of Public Works, "Hamilton Patton Park Master Plan Report" March 2023.

¹²³ Sean Timmons (Recreation Director, Town of Hamilton, MA), interview by Tyler Maren, March 2023.



Hamilton received the Patton Homestead as a gift from the Patton family, and now operates both sites as historic and recreational assets for the public. The twenty-four acre property is located on the Town’s western border by a tributary of the Ipswich River. The director of the Patton Homestead is a municipal employee who works with the Recreation Department to develop community-oriented cultural programming and outdoor activities for the property. The Town’s goals for the Homestead are to increase public awareness and utilization of the property.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS AND FUNDING

Property taxes accounted for about 90 percent of Hamilton’s total revenue in fiscal year 2023.¹²⁴ About 96 percent of this tax revenue was from residential property taxes.¹²⁵ The Town relies on a Capital Committee to work with department heads and local committees to identify and understand capital needs. The Committee works with the Town Manager to produce an annual budget proposal that is then brought to Town Meeting for a vote. The Committee also produces an annual five-year capital plan that forecasts the most pressing needs the Town will have to budget for.

Table 4.8.6 shows Hamilton’s total municipal expenditures by year since 2019. The Town’s annual budget remained consistently around \$30 million during this period, and the majority of funds were consistently spent on education. Annual debt service has decreased by about \$300,000 since 2019.¹²⁶

Table 4.8.6: Hamilton Municipal Expenditures by Year (2019-2022)

	2019		2020		2021		2022	
	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%
General Gov.	1,878,187	6.4%	1,836,890	6.0%	1,932,613	6.0%	2,038,622	6.1%
Public Safety	2,918,568	9.9%	3,012,606	9.9%	3,072,490	9.6%	3,376,465	10.0%
Education	18,582,829	62.9%	19,145,148	62.7%	20,727,030	64.6%	21,787,353	64.7%
Public Works	1,737,534	5.9%	1,899,834	6.2%	1,914,872	6.0%	1,944,134	5.8%
Human Services	292,386	1.0%	309,801	1.0%	225,102	0.7%	253,558	0.8%
Culture & Recreation	235,013	0.8%	222,317	0.7%	219,387	0.7%	255,817	0.8%
Fixed Costs	1,891,424	6.4%	2,001,704	6.6%	2,090,031	6.5%	2,164,825	6.4%
Intergov. Assessments	1,034,371	3.5%	1,128,489	3.7%	1,172,112	3.7%	1,114,707	3.3%
Other Spending	60,321	0.2%	75,462	0.2%	91,596	0.3%	97,791	0.3%
Debt Service	933,607	3.2%	912,753	3.0%	652,628	2.0%	638,675	1.9%
Total Expenditures	29,564,240	100.0%	30,545,004	100.0%	32,097,861	100.0%	33,671,947	100.0%

Source: Division of Local Services, MA Department of Revenue

Major Capital Improvement Needs

Hamilton’s 2004 Master Plan noted the need for renovations to Town Hall, and this need persists nearly twenty years later. Currently there are plans for major upgrades to Town Hall, including

¹²⁴ Municipal Databank, MA Division of Local Services, 2023

¹²⁵ MA EOLWD LMI

¹²⁶ Municipal Databank, MA Division of Local Services, 2023



restoring exterior deterioration, adding a fire suppression system, updating the septic system, increasing parking, and improving accessibility, (Town of Hamilton, 2021). Voters did not approve a ballot measure for the loan needed for the initial project budget in 2022, so the Town is planning a more limited and less costly partial renovation.¹²⁷

The Hamilton-Wenham School Committee is in the process of working with the state to evaluate the feasibility of building a new elementary school, a process that Town stakeholders expect could include the consolidation of two existing elementary schools during the life of this plan.¹²⁸ While the decision depends on the Massachusetts School Building Authority, the School Committee has stated that a likely outcome would be to combine the Cutler and Winthrop schools in a new or renovated building at the Cutler site.

As of 2023, the HWRSD supports a major “Athletic Facilities Improvement Project” to create tennis courts, a track, and several turf fields to accommodate football, baseball, softball, soccer, lacrosse, and more at the Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School. In April 2023, Hamilton Town Meeting voted to approve borrowing the estimated project cost of \$15 million. Voters subsequently approved a debt exclusion for the project to move forward, likely in 2024.

¹²⁷ Joseph Domelowicz (Town Manager, Town of Hamilton, MA), interview by Judi Barrett, February, 2023.

¹²⁸ Neil Zolot, “Massachusetts School Building Authority gives Hamilton initial nod for Cutler School project,” wickedlocal.com, April 6, 2022.

