

# Town of Washington, Massachusetts

## TOWN PLAN

Adopted by the Planning Board on May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at public hearing.



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# 1. Overview

The Town of Washington is centered like a keystone within the arch of the towns of the Berkshire Hills. The Appalachian Trail passes through its mountains that are also the source of the West Branch of the Westfield River and the East Branch of the Housatonic River. Residents enjoy the Town's natural beauty, privacy, a unique history of place, and community strengths that include:

- The town-owned fiber optic network with high-speed broadband service;
- Well-maintained local and state roads;
- The Town Park and athletic fields;
- A very low crime rate;
- An environmentally conscious and supportive electorate;
- A moderate tax burden compared to other Berkshire County municipalities;
- A rural community with well-maintained homes and farms;
- Being centrally located with easy access to services, cultural events, and other destinations across Berkshire County; and
- Several unique local events such as The Annual Sons & Daughters Reunion, The Pumpkin Walk, and Tree Lighting.

However, there are challenges facing Washington that make the Town's prosperity less certain:

- **Increasing costs beyond town control:** Significant elements in the Town's annual operating budget — such as school assessments and other outside services, insurance costs, and materials costs — are largely beyond the Town's control and have been increasing at a higher rate than available revenue sources.
- **Underfunded State Aid:** Town budgets are further strained by underfunded State Aid for schools, roads, and Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT)<sup>1</sup> for State-owned land, placing an increasing burden on the property tax levy.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on PILOT, refer to page 25

- **An encroaching debt limit:** The Town is at or near its capacity for taking on additional debt, making it difficult to invest adequately in maintaining essential public infrastructure like buildings, roads, and bridges.
- **Limited and dwindling non-tax revenue sources:** There are limited avenues available to expand non-tax revenues in Washington. Opportunities to grow the property tax base are restricted by single town-wide zoning and nearly 70% of Washington's area being tax-exempt conservation land.
- **Diminishing commercial taxable resources:** Existing commercial activity to help bolster the tax base has declined over the years with the closure of Bucksteep Manor, Woody's Roadhouse, Mapleview Nursing Home, and Slater's Lumber Mill.
- **Lack of tourist-based commercial facilities:** There are no lodging facilities, restaurants, or other tourist-based businesses in Washington to capitalize upon the tourism potential provided by the State Forest and other natural attractions.
- **An aging population:** The overall age of the population had increased substantially during the past two decades. The median age has increased from 41 years old, recorded in the 2000 Decennial Census, to over 53 now.
- **Diminishing human resources:** There has been a gradual decline in the number of people qualified and willing to take on important town service positions or volunteer for various boards and commissions.

The concern regarding these challenges motivated members of the Select Board, Planning Board, and Finance Committee to form a Capital and Town Planning Committee. The Committee is comprised of the Chairpersons of the three Boards and civically engaged residents. The Committee has utilized two Community Compact grants to request the technical assistance of the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (Appendix A) to develop this comprehensive plan. This *Town Plan* will serve as a blueprint for municipal decision makers, as well as volunteer groups, over the next ten years. The Committee adopted the following mission statement to guide their efforts:

*"To chart a course with a Town Plan which articulates a long-term vision based on the priorities of the community that will ensure viability and sustain it for Washington's future."*

Given the current conditions in Washington, change is inevitable. This plan is proactive and supports preemptive change in the best interest of the Town and its residents, rather than waiting and being forced to make reactive and undesirable changes. The recommendations herein expand upon the strengths and assets in Washington and make adaptations that will benefit and be acceptable to residents.

Of all the available data, the Committee prioritized the input from residents, gathered from interviews and two separate surveys, to articulate these goals:

1. Maintain Washington's character;
2. Expand the tax base;
3. Attract visitors and prospective residents;
4. Support seniors; and
5. Expand community involvement.

The Committee then designed a set of projects to realize these goals:

1. Explore ways of expanding the Town's housing stock;
2. Explore the development of senior housing and a Senior Center;
3. Market the Town to prospective home buyers and visitors;
4. Explore the establishment of limited commercial zoning; and
5. Utilize State and other resources to rationalize town budgets.

# 2. The Projects

## Housing Expansion

Washington's housing stock is severely limited. For prospective residents who are interested in renting, living in Washington is simply not an option. According to the 2018 American Community Survey, only 2.2% of Washington's households were renter occupied which was the second lowest rate for the entire county. Options for the prospective homebuyer are equally limited; a recent search on Zillow.com yielded no available homes for sale. The only sale options were undeveloped lots that may exclude prospective residents of more modest means.

Since Washington has no lodging facilities and a search on Airbnb did not yield any results, examination of local bylaws to accommodate accessory dwelling units is recommended. Many municipalities are pursuing bylaw reform to appropriately regulate accessory uses. This strategy can adaptively use existing structures to limit the physical changes to Washington's landscape.

This Project Team will explore how to increase housing availability and provide more diverse housing options for both existing residents and prospective buyers and/or renters while being mindful that many current residents are opposed to significant development. The Project Team should work with housing authorities, such as Berkshire Housing Development Corporation, and explore Federal grants and Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development programs to develop solutions appropriate for Washington.

## Measures of Success

- Increased tax revenue
- Increased housing availability

## Senior Housing

A common symptom of an aging population is that current residents need to downsize so they can remain a part of their community and "age in place" but in a home that is more manageable to maintain. With no available homes, residents who find themselves in this situation are forced to relocate outside of Washington.

This Project Team should determine the desirability for housing among seniors, explore what State or Federal grant money is available by working with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs and the Massachusetts Office on Disability to develop a proposal for senior housing including a Senior Center.

## Measures of Success

- Financially feasible proposal for senior housing and a Senior Center

## Marketing & Communication

Washington is a rural New England town surrounded by mostly undeveloped natural landscape. It has close proximity to cultural centers in the region as well as reasonable access to travel routes to several major cities. The Town now enjoys state-of-the-art broadband internet that offers greater opportunities for remote working and internet-based businesses.

This Project Team's task is to develop a general marketing plan to promote these and other assets of Washington; rural beauty, community values and lifestyle that encompass nature and outdoor activities, and ready access to nearby goods and services.

The Team's efforts should serve to support the other initiatives to help bolster the residential tax base and foster appropriate small business. It should also aim to ensure greater availability of general information about the Town, its workings, activities, local attractions and events, which will better serve current residents and appeal to potential new residents and visitors.

Key promotional tools should include an updated, comprehensive town website and might also include an expanded newsletter, a social media presence, print, and broadcast media. The Team should evaluate each of these in terms of the most cost-effective means of reaching and attracting the appropriate target audience(s). The Team may choose to investigate other means of promoting the Town, such as joining regional trade organizations or co-hosting regional and local events.

## Measures of Success

- Creation and implementation of a marketing strategy for the Town
- A revamped town website

## Business Development

Washington is primarily a residential community and has a single zoning district. However, there are a number of business activities in town — various building tradesmen and women, excavating and landscaping services, mail-order retail, a campground, and a local veterinarian. Not all economic activity in Washington is home-based; historically, there have been a handful of exceptions. At various times, these enterprises have contributed significantly to the economic base and vitality of the Town without disrupting its essential character.

This Project Team's task is to foster the potential expansion of appropriate small business in Town, which will include proposals for limited changes in the zoning bylaws to accommodate certain kinds of commercial activity without requiring variances.

The idea of creating a commercial zoning district in Town was posed in both surveys. Residents were almost evenly divided for and against any such zoning. At the same time, many responses expressed a desire for local access to professional services and conveniences.

Increased lodging opportunities could cater to area tourists. Visitors and residents alike could benefit from dining options and various other amenities. Town senior citizens could benefit from closer proximity to medical and related services. The recent investment in a state-of-the-art broadband network created the possibility for low-impact business in Town, both home-based and standalone. Any of these types of enterprises could provide employment opportunities as well as additional tax revenue for the Town.

This Project Team may include members of the Planning Board or should work closely with that Board to identify possible areas for commercial zoning. They are also tasked with further clarifying what uses might be most welcome and acceptable to the community and provide greatest potential benefit to the Town. The Team's efforts may extend to delving into the specific economic viability of certain sectors in order to determine opportunities for greatest potential success.

The marijuana industry is still in early stages in Massachusetts. The Town has already adopted zoning for both growing and retail and the tax revenue to the Town would be considerable. The Team should explore attracting marijuana commerce, while being cognizant that some residents may be resistant to the idea or the proximity to any marijuana establishment.

At every stage, consideration must be given to both the potential revenue for the Town as well as any impact to residents, in order to balance feasibility with acceptability.

## Measures of Success

- Proposal of revised zoning to promote commercial activity
- Increased tax revenue from commercial activity

## Financial Sustainability

Washington has limited financial resources; town revenue is largely derived from property taxes. The lack of income diversification coupled with limited options is straining the Town's annual budget, which has restricted the investment in and maintenance of the Town's infrastructure, and could eventually lead to a decline in public services as well.

This Project Team may include members of the Finance Committee or should otherwise work closely with that Committee. The Project Team should review and analyze data trends in the 2020 Financial Sustainability Report (Appendix 2) and forecast future spending needs in order to identify areas of concern as well as opportunities for improvement.

The Project Team will also work to develop a Capital Improvement Plan to better anticipate long-range investment needs and guide the Town's annual reserve and debt allocations.

Washington currently benefits from shared services with other municipalities and countywide organizations such as Berkshire Public Health Alliance. The Project Team should explore what additional services or activities can be shared or outsourced. The Team will need to evaluate any such opportunities to see that any cost benefits do not come at the expense of quality of service or responsiveness to local need.

To assist with such analyses and planning, the Project Team should draw on State resources through the Division of Local Services where available, as well as consult outside expertise in cases where any associated cost can be justified.

## Measures of Success

- Five-year budget forecasting
- Long-range Capital Plan
- Viable cost-sharing proposals

# 3. Implementation

The Washington Town Plan is intended to facilitate both communication and decision-making to ensure the Town is financially sustainable. Each of the Plan's five projects is equally important and supports the five goals. All proposed projects will be supported by grant funding to any extent possible. **Each proposed project will require a volunteer Project Team of residents.** The success of these efforts depends heavily on a high level of public engagement and support. This is not, and cannot be, a short-term effort to face long-term problems. The scope of this plan will extend beyond year-to-year budgeting and provide a template to guide town authorities for years to come. The timeframe for the Project Teams, like the timeframe for addressing Washington's needs, extends five or more years into the future.

## Implementation Structure

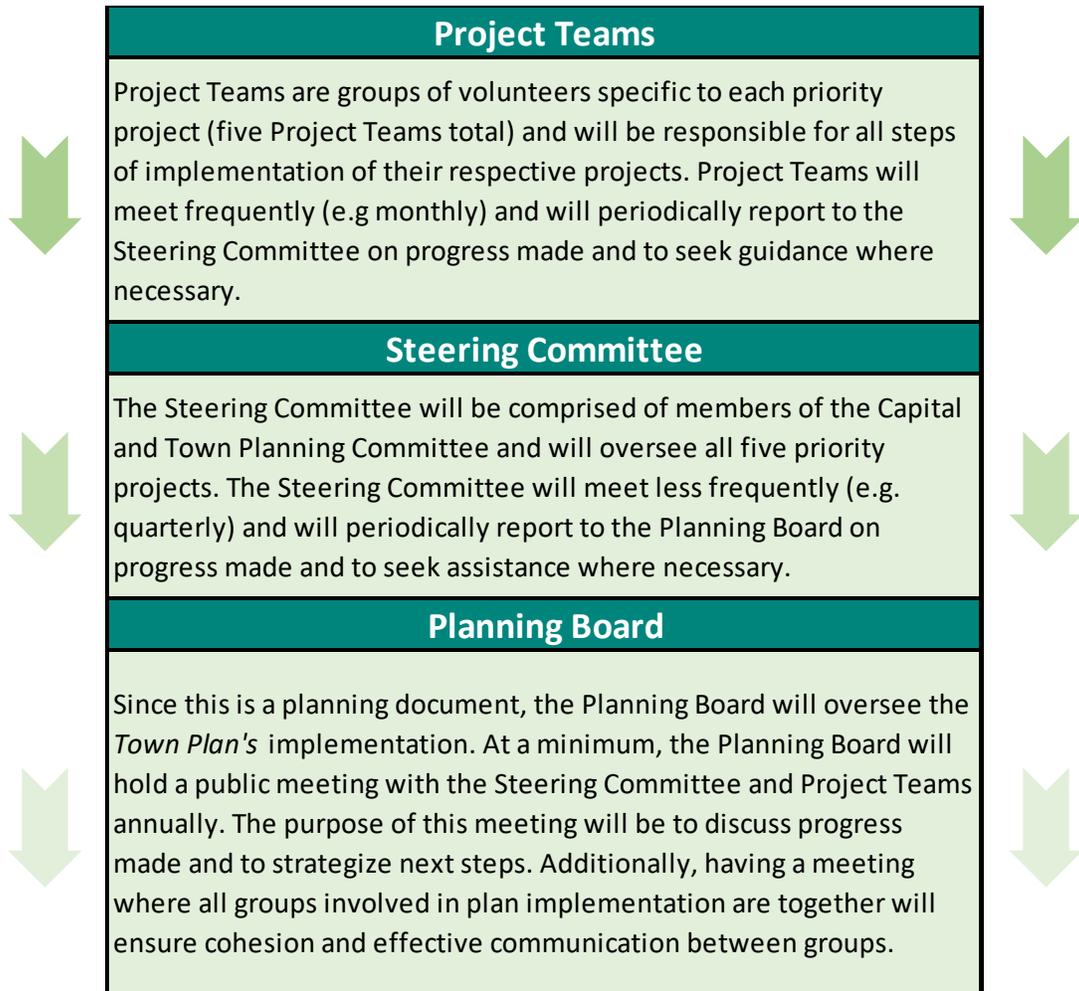
The work done to date complies with Massachusetts General Law Ch. 41, sec.81D. The law specifies that the Planning Board has overall responsibility for adopting the Plan, for the ongoing review of progress, and for any changes or updates to it.

A Steering Committee made up of one appointee each from the Planning Board, the Finance Committee, and the Select Board, plus two additional members to be nominated by the Select Board, will oversee the implementation on behalf of the Planning Board. The Planning Board has final authority over the membership of the Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee has the responsibility to:

1. Nominate the members of each of the five Project Teams;
2. Provide each Project Team with guidance regarding both process and goals;
3. Monitor each Project Team's progress; and
4. Report to the Planning Board, Select Board, and Finance Committee on a quarterly basis.

The Project Teams will be comprised of volunteers of town residents, both full- and part-time, augmented as needed by appointments from the Steering Committee. A form for recruitment is attached (Appendix C).



# 4. Demographics

## Population

According to the 2018 American Community Survey conducted by the Census Bureau, the Town of Washington had a total population of 543 people that year. Compared to the recorded population of 544 people in the 2000 Decennial Census, the change in overall population has been negligible over the past twenty years. However, population projections generated from the uMass Donahue Institute forecast a steady decline over the next twenty years.

**Table 3.1 - Population Projections (2020 - 2040)**

uMass Donahue Population Projections for Town of Washington					
Year	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
Population	500	490	480	452	428

Source: <http://www.pep.donahue-institute.org/>

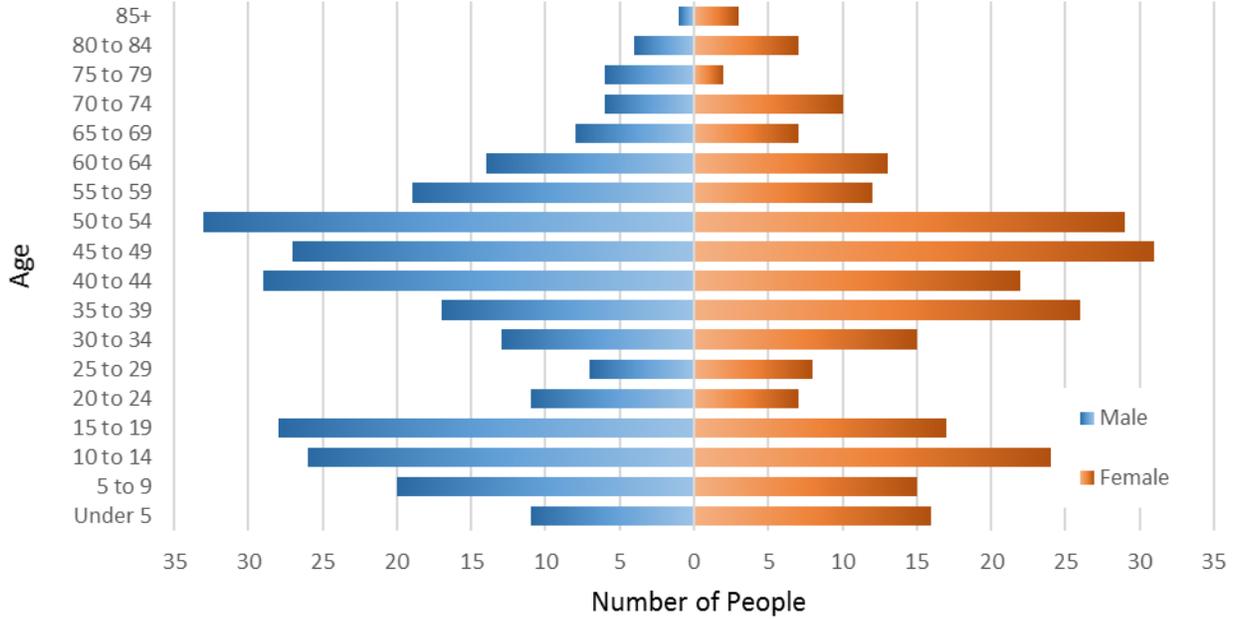
**A note from uMass Donahue Institute on small geographies:**

“Researchers should note that any statewide method will tend to produce unusual looking results in very small geographies or in small age cohorts. Because we control town-level age/sex cohorts to the larger regional age/sex populations generated by our model, the age/sex distribution in small towns may look particularly irregular. We publish the full detailed series for all 351 municipalities—even knowing that the small geographies will be irregular—so that researchers may have the option of aggregating results across multiple geographies or age groups, and we encourage researchers to use their best judgment in deciding for which cases aggregate populations are more appropriately used. Researchers needing small-geography age/sex projections that are not controlled to the larger regions should contact our program to inquire about alternatives for their specific municipality. We can provide these alternative projections, upon request, as a public resource.”

<http://www.pep.donahue-institute.org/>

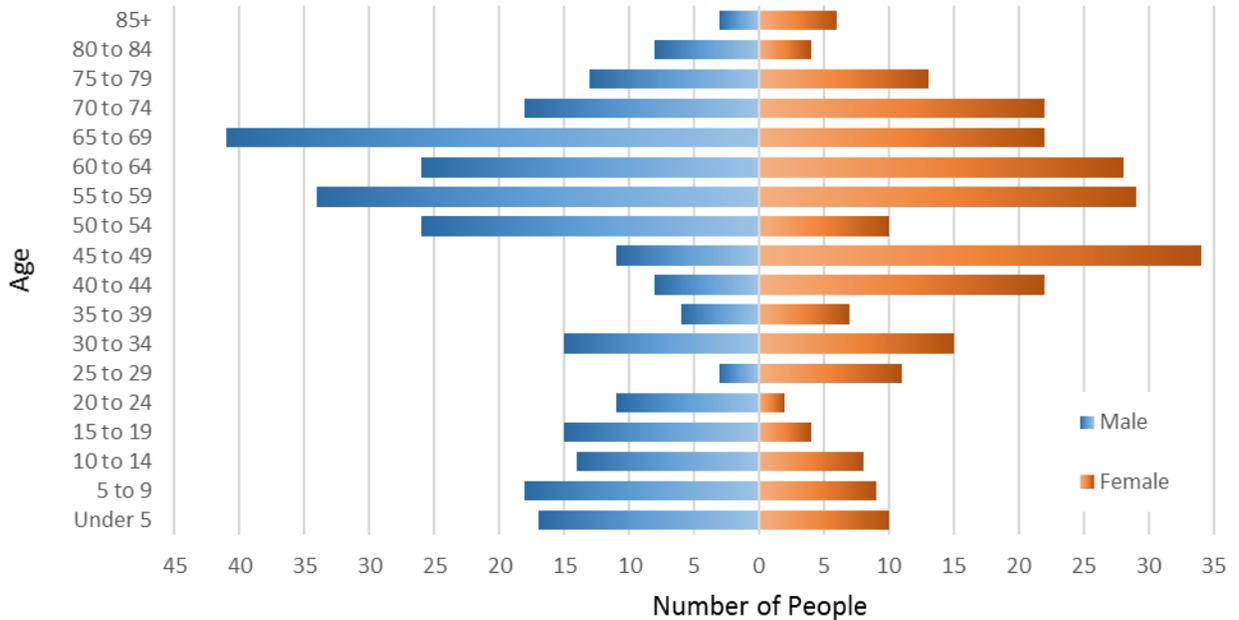
Further analysis of Washington’s population shows that although the overall population has barely changed since 2000, the population of specific age cohorts have changed significantly as shown on the following page in Figure 3.1 and Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.1 - Age Cohorts by Gender (2000)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000 Decennial Census Table P012

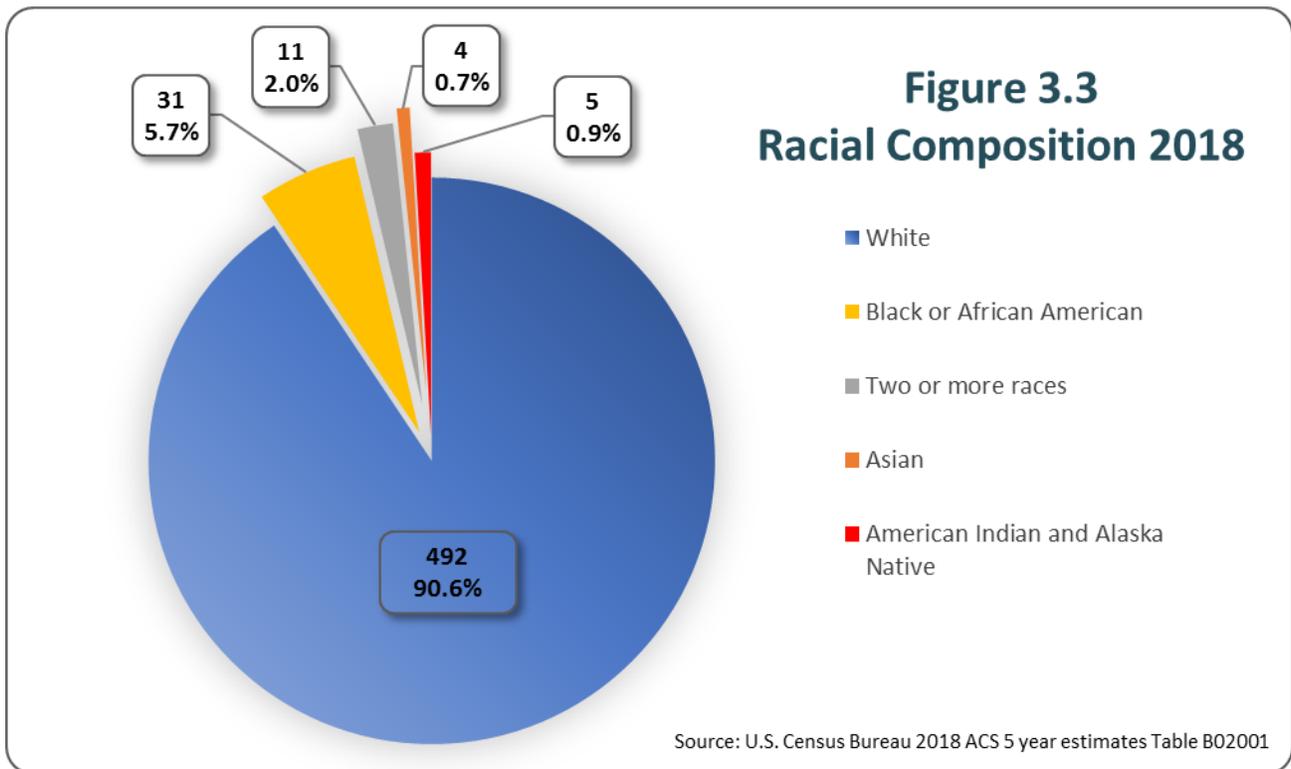
Figure 3.2 - Age Cohorts by Gender (2018)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2018 ACS 5 year estimates Table S0101

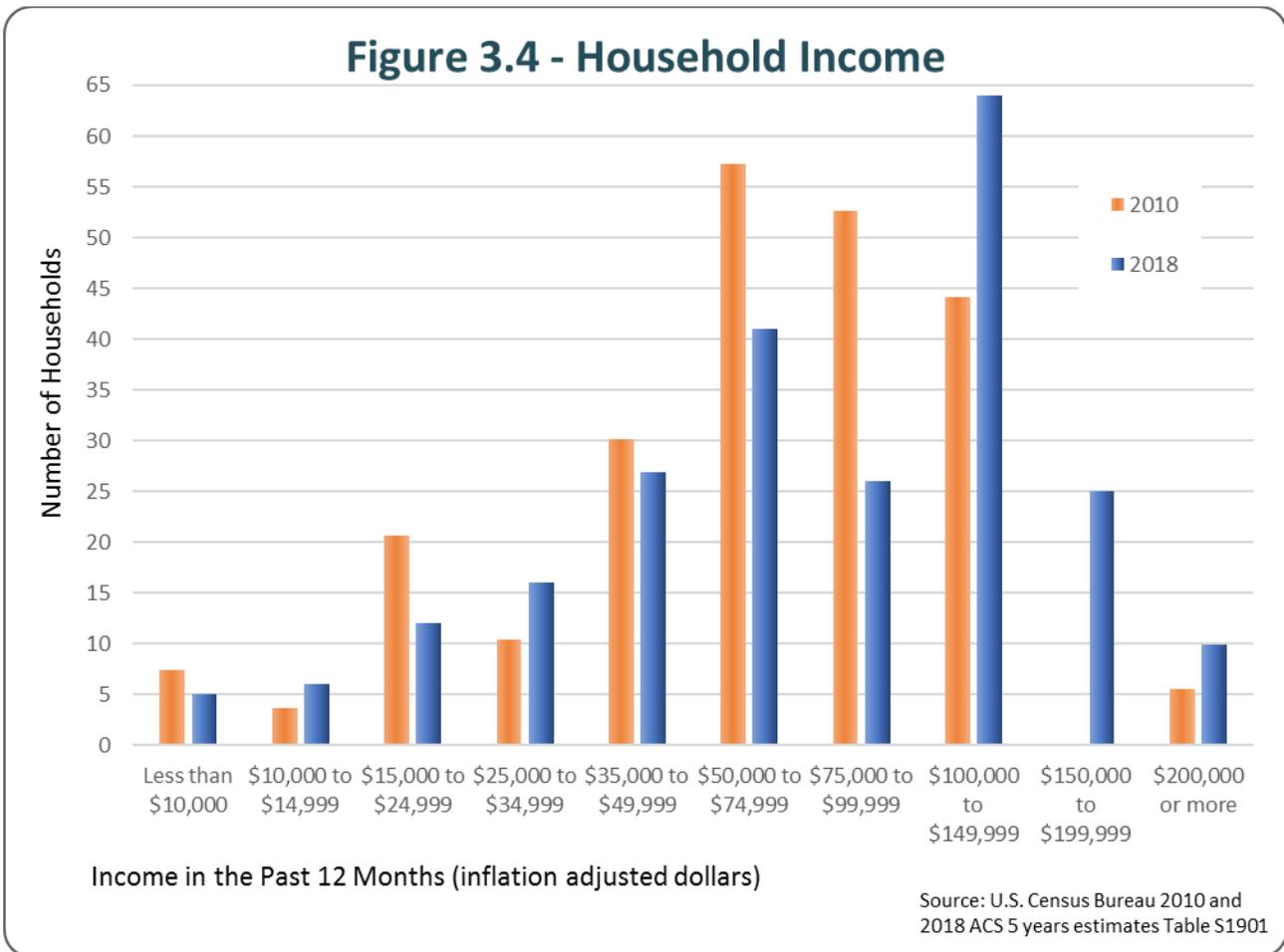
These population pyramids show that the most populous age cohort in the year 2000 was the age 45-49 group, comprised of 61 people. In 2018, the most populous age cohorts were age 55 to 59 and 65 to 69, both comprised of 63 people. This aligns with the increase in median age from 40.7 years old in 2000 to 53.0 years old in 2018. Although an aging population is a regional concern that is not specific to Washington, the increase in median age of 30.2% over the last twenty years is considerable. In the year 2000, 92 residents (16.9%) were age 65 and over and in 2018, 150 residents (27.6%) were age 65 and over. The cohort of people ages 20-24 was comprised only thirteen people in both the 2000 Decennial Census and the 2018 American Community Survey. This group is the smallest age cohort under the age of 65. Furthermore, people age 20-39 only comprised 12.9% (70 people) of the total population in 2018.

The Town of Washington’s racial composition echoes the trend seen in most Berkshire County municipalities: the vast majority of the population is white (90.6%) and there is limited racial diversity in town. It should be noted that racial groups *not* included in the following chart have not been overlooked but rather have a population of zero in Washington.



## Income & Employment

Washington has experienced substantial increases among high earning households in recent years. According to the Census Bureau, in 2010 there were 50 households in Washington earning \$100,000 or more. By 2018, that number had almost doubled to 99 households. Significant change was seen in the category of households earning between \$150,000-\$199,999: in 2010, there were no households in this income bracket and in 2018 there were 25 which makes up 10.8% of all occupied households. Based on relatively proportional declines of households earning between \$50,000 and \$99,000 and the minimal change in population, it can be inferred that many households in Washington are simply earning more money than in previous years as opposed to a notable influx of new residents with higher earnings. Median household income in 2018 was \$82,500.



Washington has an estimated population of 457 people that are age sixteen and over which constitutes “working age”. 63.2% of that population participate in Washington’s labor force which ranks Washington nineteenth out of the thirty-two Berkshire County municipalities. The following table categorizes employment in Washington by industry along with median earnings.

**Table 3.2 - Employed Population by Industry (2018)**

Industry	Totals	Median Earnings
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	280	\$50,577
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining:	5	-
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	2	-
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	3	-
Construction	15	\$38,125
Manufacturing	30	\$41,250
Wholesale trade	2	-
Retail trade	36	\$13,750
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities:	17	\$56,250
Transportation and warehousing	11	\$34,375
Utilities	6	-
Information	15	\$84,063
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing:	11	\$53,250
Finance and insurance	11	\$53,250
Real estate and rental and leasing	0	-
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services:	30	\$51,667
Professional, scientific, and technical services	19	\$39,531
Management of companies and enterprises	0	-
Administrative and support and waste management services	11	\$52,917
Educational services, and health care and social assistance:	67	\$55,536
Educational services	20	\$38,750
Health care and social assistance	47	\$56,750
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services:	28	\$41,250
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	13	\$78,393
Accommodation and food services	15	\$9,375
Other services, except public administration	12	\$15,833
Public administration	12	\$98,750

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2018 ACS 5 year estimates Table S2403 & S2413

The most recent data (November 2020) from the Department of Unemployment Assistance, Economic Research Department indicated that Washington had a total labor force of 294 people that month and 17 people were unemployed. This is an average unemployment rate of 5.8%. This is a notable reduction in the unemployment rate since the peak of 12.5% in June due to COVID-19.

## Housing

The 2018 American Community Survey estimates 275 housing units in Washington; 232 (84.4%) of which are occupied and the remaining 43 (15.6%) are vacant. Of all the housing units, 266 (96.7%) are single-family detached dwellings and 9 (3.3%) are single-family attached dwellings. The Census Bureau does not have record of any other type of housing within Washington such as multi-family units, boat home, RV, van, etc. The table to the right categorizes the age of Washington’s housing units. Of the 275 housing units, 135 are three bedroom homes which are the most common in Washington. This is followed by two bedroom homes which total 79.

The overwhelming majority of homes in Washington are owner occupied which compose 97.8% of the total housing stock with 227 homes. Only five homes in Washington are renter occupied. Of these householders, 100 moved into their home before the year 1990. There has been some migration to, or within, Washington in more recent decades – specifically between 2000 and 2009 where 51 people moved to a new home in town - but overall migration to Washington or even moving from one home to another within town has been sparse.

**Table 3.3 - Year Structure Built (2018)**

Total housing units	275
Built 2014 or later	4
Built 2010 to 2013	5
Built 2000 to 2009	22
Built 1990 to 1999	27
Built 1980 to 1989	49
Built 1970 to 1979	61
Built 1960 to 1969	26
Built 1950 to 1959	14
Built 1940 to 1949	13
Built 1939 or earlier	54

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2018 ACS 5 year estimates Table DP04

**Table 3.4 - Home Value (2018)**

Owner-occupied units	227
Less than \$50,000	12
\$50,000 to \$99,999	3
\$100,000 to \$149,999	12
\$150,000 to \$199,999	22
\$200,000 to \$299,999	92
\$300,000 to \$499,999	73
\$500,000 to \$999,999	10
\$1,000,000 or more	3
Median (dollars)	\$275,400

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2018 ACS 5 year estimates Table DP04

Housing units that are renter occupied without payment of rent are shown separately as “No rent paid.” The unit may be owned by friends or relatives who live elsewhere and who allow occupancy without charge. Rent-free houses or apartments may be provided to compensate caretakers, ministers, tenant farmers, sharecroppers, or others.

Source: American Community Survey and Puerto Rico Community Survey 2018 Subject Definitions

Of the vacant homes in Washington, the majority are for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use as depicted in the table below. The “other vacant” category includes homes that were vacant due to being foreclosed upon, being under repair, being abandoned, being involved in legal proceedings, and for other/unknown reasons.

**Table 3.5 - Vacancy Status (2018)**

Total	43
For rent	0
Rented, not occupied	0
For sale only	6
Sold, not occupied	0
For seasonal, recreational, or occasional use	29
For migrant workers	0
Other vacant	8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2018 ACS 5 year estimates Table B25004

Over half of the occupied housing units in Washington are occupied by people between the ages of 55 and 74 years old. This group comprised 53% of the total occupied households. More detail can be seen in the following table along with a comparison of owner-occupied housing to renter-occupied housing.

Table 3.6 - Age of Householder (2018)

Age Cohort	Occupied housing units	Percent occupied housing units	Owner-occupied housing units	Percent owner-occupied housing units	Renter-occupied housing units	Percent renter-occupied housing units
Under 35 years	16	6.9%	16	7.0%	0	0.0%
35 to 44 years	16	6.9%	14	6.2%	2	40.0%
45 to 54 years	42	18.1%	42	18.5%	0	0.0%
55 to 64 years	62	26.7%	62	27.3%	0	0.0%
65 to 74 years	61	26.3%	58	25.6%	3	60.0%
75 to 84 years	29	12.5%	29	12.8%	0	0.0%
85 years +	6	2.6%	6	2.6%	0	0.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2018 ACS 5 year estimates Table S2502

A quick search on Zillow.com (January 2021) shows no available rental properties in Washington. Additionally, the only properties that were available for sale are vacant lot with potential for development but not a single home for sale or for rent was available. Granted, Zillow.com is not the only means for finding a home but it provides an idea of how extraordinarily limited housing options are in town.

# 5. Survey Results

As part of a community engagement process, the Capital and Town Planning Committee and the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission conducted two mailer surveys and held stakeholder interviews. The first survey was circulated in late 2019 and received responses from 96 households in town. Although the survey successfully gathered information from almost half of all households in town, it was conducted just before the COVID-19 pandemic. In the short time from late 2019 when the survey was distributed to early 2020, COVID-19 had already significantly impacted virtually every aspect of local, regional, and global economies. For this reason, the Capital and Town Planning Committee felt it was prudent to conduct a second survey that would provide a better perspective on town needs in the wake of a crisis. A copy of the first survey is attached as Appendix A and a copy of the second survey as Appendix B. It should be noted the survey results are not presented as facts but rather valuable anecdotal insight from residents.

## Survey #1

Phone interviews were held with stakeholders in Washington on November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019. There were nine participants. The questions asked are as follows:

1. Were you raised in the Town of Washington? If not, when did you move here?
2. If you did move to the Town of Washington, what made you move here?
3. What do you like about living in the Town of Washington?
4. What do you not like about living in the Town of Washington?
5. What do you think could be done to improve the Town of Washington?
6. What services would you like to see added to the Town of Washington?
7. What services would you like to see improved in the Town of Washington?

The key issues presented during the interviews are as follows (and prioritized based upon how many comments each received):

1. Need for high speed internet (in progress)

2. Road improvements
3. Need for more business opportunity. Participants suggest creating new zoning districts that could help commercial growth.
4. High tax rate, unaffordability to live in Washington. Participants suggest creating new zoning districts that could be taxed differently based upon use.
5. Local government demonstrates “favoritism” rather than townspeople being involved in the decision-making. Other concerns with local government were a lack of transparency, inadequate advertisement of meetings which solicit few attendees/participation, the need to have town meetings recorded and posted online, and improvements to the town website.
6. A lack of meeting places in town. Participants suggest a form of a senior center during dedicated hours at Town Hall and improved elderly services for those who’d like to “age in place” but still feel involved in the community.
7. Some participants recognize an increased need for public services such as fire, EMS, and police but the issue is the cost and the Town’s limited budget.
8. There were three concerns which were only mentioned once in the interview responses:
  - a. Need for improved trash and recycling pickup
  - b. Need for an improved school system
  - c. Need for gas station(s)

### **Washington Town Planning: Mailer Questionnaire Results**

Mailer questionnaires were distributed during the Christmas 2019/New Year 2020 holiday season to everyone on the TRACKS mailing list. This mailing list should account for every household in Washington (275 total households according to 2018 ACS). Ninety-six (96) responses were returned to the Capital and Town Planning Committee.

A copy of the questionnaire is attached to this document as Appendix A and the following is a summary of the findings:

1. What do you like about Washington? “Privacy” was mentioned 86 times, “beauty” 84 times, followed by “recreation” (51), “value” (31) and “convenience” (22). What is your age?

Age Cohort	Total Count
Under 30	17
30-50	34
50-65	45
65 and over	6
Left this question blank	6
Total:	108

2. How many people are in your household?

Household Size	Total Count
1	15
2	57
3	9
4	7
5	2
6	3
More than 6 people	0
Left this question blank	9
Total:	102

- Washington has limited access to shopping, healthcare, and dining; to increase revenue and services would you like to see limited retail/commerce permitting in Town? Fifty-seven (57) of the 96 responses (59.4%) voted “yes”.
- If you said “no” to question #4, why? Those opposed to the idea echoed the reasons for wanting to live in Washington; privacy, wanting to keep Washington rural, and relatively easy access to shopping and dining in neighboring municipalities.
- If you said “yes” to question #4, what should be prioritized and where should the new zone be? Respondents prioritized a health center, gas station/convenience store, and a restaurant. The property of Woody’s Roadhouse was suggested as a site for small-scale retail permitting.

6. Are you a full-time resident? 89 of 96 respondents (92.7%) replied “yes”.
7. Should the town continue to share or outsource the following services?
  - a. Fire
  - b. EMS
  - c. Police
  - d. Library
  - e. Veterans’ Services

There was wide support for sharing the Town’s municipal services.

8. What other shared or outsourced services should the Town consider? Some respondents suggested sharing road maintenance and senior services.
9. The Town spends over \$10,000 annually supporting the Becket Athenaeum; do you agree? A majority (67, 69.8%) agree that the Town continue to support the Becket Athenaeum and should also support the Becket Art Center. Some respondents wanted to be more informed about what events were available at the Athenaeum.
10. Do you use Becket Beach? Only about a third of the respondents (33, 34.4%) use Becket Beach. The idea of Washington having its own beach was not strongly supported.
11. Do you feel adequately represented in town? The majority of respondents (70, 72.9%) feel adequately represented in Washington.
12. If you said “no” to question #12, why? Eden Glen was mentioned by several people both in the context of a recreational area and as an issue of contention.
13. Would you consider volunteering more in town? Most of the positive responses (34, 35.4%) to the idea of volunteering more in town were from those who already donate their time.
14. Have you signed up for Washington’s municipal broadband internet service yet? Most of the respondents (69, 71.9%) have signed up for broadband internet service.
15. If you have not signed up for internet service, why? Those who have not, mentioned cost and lack of need for it.
16. Please add any additional comments or ideas you may have.

Additional comments included desire for bus service, health clinics, improved senior services, improved road maintenance, and improved cell service.

## Survey #2

The second survey asked questions designed to help guide future land use decision making in town. This follow up questionnaire was completed by 134 respondents and the results are as follows.

1. When asked if a commercial area should be developed in town, 29% of respondents strongly disagreed with the idea, 15% disagreed, 17% were unsure/neutral, 22% agreed, and 17% strongly agreed.
2. Question #2 posed different land use and housing options to gauge what types of development would be acceptable to residents. The following are the results:

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Left Blank</b>
Return to 2-acre zoning?	45	85	4
Allow multi-family housing?	48	73	13
Other dense housing options?	24	92	18

3. Question #3 was left open for respondents to provide additional feedback on the first two questions. Most of the comments focused on keeping the Town rural because it is part of the appeal of Washington and were opposed to denser development. However, a few respondents did seem interested in more housing options and the possibility of a commercial area. Their concern was how these projects would be built while still preserving the character of the Town.
4. Do you care for a person(s) in your household who is; Elderly 14; A child or children 17; A disabled person(s) 7; Are you being cared for by a caretaker 2.

5. The following table shows general information regarding employment.

Question	Number of Respondents
I work from home	36
I work in Washington	8
I work outside of Washington	47
I am retired	60
I am retired but travel for volunteering work	4
Not my primary home	4

6. Of the respondents who have a commute, 37% were commutes of less than 10 miles, 47% were commutes between 10 and 30 miles, and 16% of commutes were in excess of 30 miles.

7. How many days per week do you commute?

0 days	1-2 days	3-4 days	6-7 days	Varies
23	11	27	15	7

8. Has COVID-19 affected your commute?

I have begun working remotely	15
I was laid off and no longer commute	3
I commute less	19

9. Now that Washington has Broadband, do you do more work from home? Yes 39, No 46.  
Do you see additional opportunities for yourself? Yes 58, No 27.

10. If a local shuttle service was implemented in Washington, 53% of respondents said they would not use it, 37% said they would possibly use it, and 10% said they would use it.

11. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of respondents said they read the hard copy of the TRACKS newsletter, 17% said they'd prefer an emailed copy, and 16% would like to have both a mailed hard copy and a digital copy emailed to them.

12. The majority of respondents (87%) agreed or strongly agreed that Washington's roads are well maintained in winter.
13. The majority of respondents (73%) agreed or strongly disagreed that Washington's roads are well maintained in the spring and summer.
14. Question #14 was left open for respondents to provide additional feedback on questions #12 and #13. Most of the comments suggested improvements to routine road maintenance such as fixing potholes, resurfacing roads, cutting brush alongside roads, and cleaning litter.
15. The use of Washington's Transfer Station for household waste is paid for by taxes and free for residents. Ninety-one percent (91%) of respondents agreed this service should continue as is and should not become a fee-based service.
16. When asked if respondents felt that town government is transparent and communicates enough, 17% strongly agreed, 42% agreed, 27% were unsure/neutral, 9% disagreed, and 5% strongly disagreed.
17. Question #17 was left open for respondents to provide additional feedback on question #16. Most of the comments indicated the TRACKS newsletter was a helpful tool to communicate what is happening in town. A few respondents indicated that there could be improved communication and suggested an improved town website would be an effective vehicle for posting meeting minutes, recordings, etc. and it was suggested that intergovernmental communication needs to be improved also, not only communication with residents.
18. Question #18 had two parts. The first asking how much money respondents felt would be appropriate to spend/borrow to restore/create a recreational area on the 3-acre site around the Eden Glen dam. Fifty-seven percent (57%) said nothing should be spent for this project, 38% said up to \$50,000 should be spent, and 9% said up to \$100,000 should be spent. The second part of the question asked if respondents would volunteer to work on such a project since volunteer labor would decrease the overall cost. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of respondents said they would volunteer.
19. Question #19 was left open for respondents to provide additional feedback on question #18. Several of the responses indicated interest in a plan for some potential projects around Eden Glen dam. This would provide a better idea of how much money certain projects would cost and whether or not that would be feasible for Washington. Many respondents mentioned that they

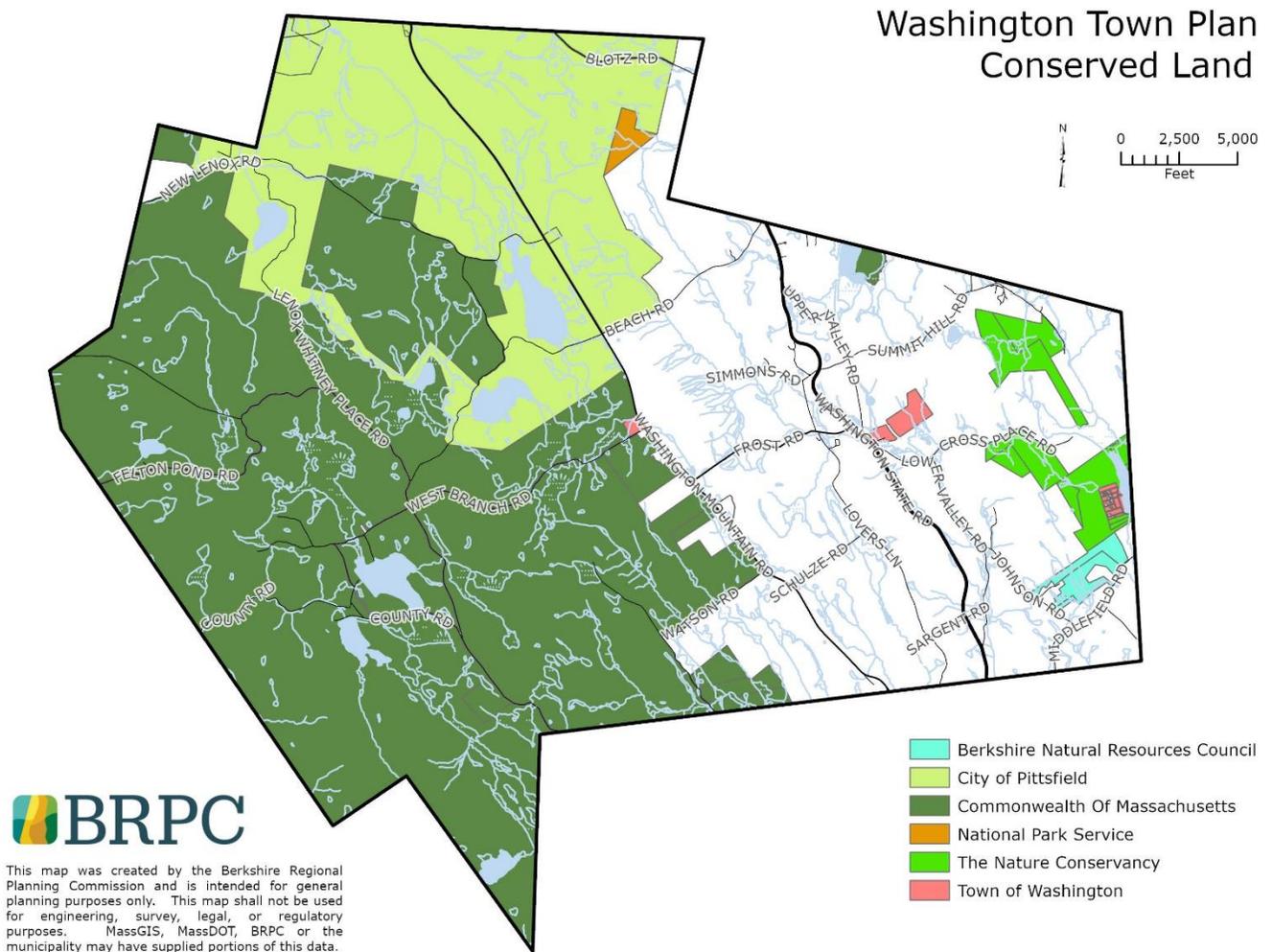
knew little of Eden Glen, the dam, or the surrounding area so outreach to educate residents would be helpful in restoration efforts.

20. Question #20 was left open for general questions, concerns, or comments. One concern expressed was the reliance on an ambulance service from Pittsfield. This respondent has had to use this service three times and in each instance, the response time was 20-30 minutes. Additionally, there was interest in how much it costs to operate the Transfer Station, how much revenue the Town receives in return for recycling, and the suggestion of keeping the use of the Transfer Station free for residents – up to 5 bags dropped off – and then charging a fee for additional bags and charging a fee for the drop off of non-household trash such as building materials. Other comments included general opinions about road maintenance, public services, and the proposed Eden Glen project.

# 6. Land Use

The Town of Washington has a total area of 38.8 square miles. The majority of the land area is comprised of State-owned land which is occupied by a portion of October Mountain State Forest and the city-owned land occupied by the Pittsfield watershed. Together, this land is 25.1 square miles which is 65% of the total land area of Washington. The total conserved land area is 16,804.6 acres.

Figure 5.1 - Conserved Land Map



## PILOT Program

There are two PILOT payments that the Town of Washington receives annually. One is from the City of Pittsfield for the city-owned watershed land along Washington Mountain Road and adjacent to October Mountain State Forest. The Pittsfield watershed payment is governed by Ch. 375 of the Acts of 1954, with subsequent minor adjustment by Ch. 244 of the Acts of 1976. The amount is certified annually by a Department of Revenue Commissioner. This PILOT increases annually by a factor tied to the year-over-year increase in Washington's budget appropriations, so it roughly aligns with the annual Tax Levy.

The second PILOT payment is from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as part of the Cherry Sheet Revenue for State-owned land. This is primarily for October Mountain State Forest, but it also includes the small portion of Washington acreage in Hinsdale Flats Wildlife Management Area. The State PILOT payment is governed by M.G.L. Ch. 58 Sections 13–17.

Although the State owns much more land than the City of Pittsfield, the Pittsfield PILOT is now 1.5 times greater than the State PILOT. In fiscal year 2020, Washington's allotment for the State PILOT went down by \$30,000 (about 30%). Prior to that, this single line item in the Town's budget had provided more than half of Washington's annual State Aid and is now down to 37%.

The Town of Washington has lobbied over the past few years to have this program re-examined and overhauled. Several letters have been submitted<sup>2</sup> which highlighted what the Town considers flaws in this system and recommended specific changes or areas for reconsideration.

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<sup>2</sup> Letters submitted to:

- Sen. Adam Hinds, who had proposed legislation to begin to address this in 2018;
- John Robertson, Director of the Legislative Division of Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA);
- Sen. Pacheco & Rep. Gregoire, co-chairs of a Joint Committee

The developed land in Washington is virtually all located in the eastern portion of the Town that is bordered by Hinsdale, Peru, Middlefield, and Becket. Land use in Washington is regulated by the Town's Zoning (protective) By-law. The By-law states, "the entire area of the Town of Washington shall constitute a single zoning district with uniform regulations for each class or kind of structure or use permitted". Having a singular zoning district inhibits economic development because there are limited options for commercial and industrial activity. The total tax-exempt land area is 20,344.4 acres.

Figure 5.2 - Land Use Map

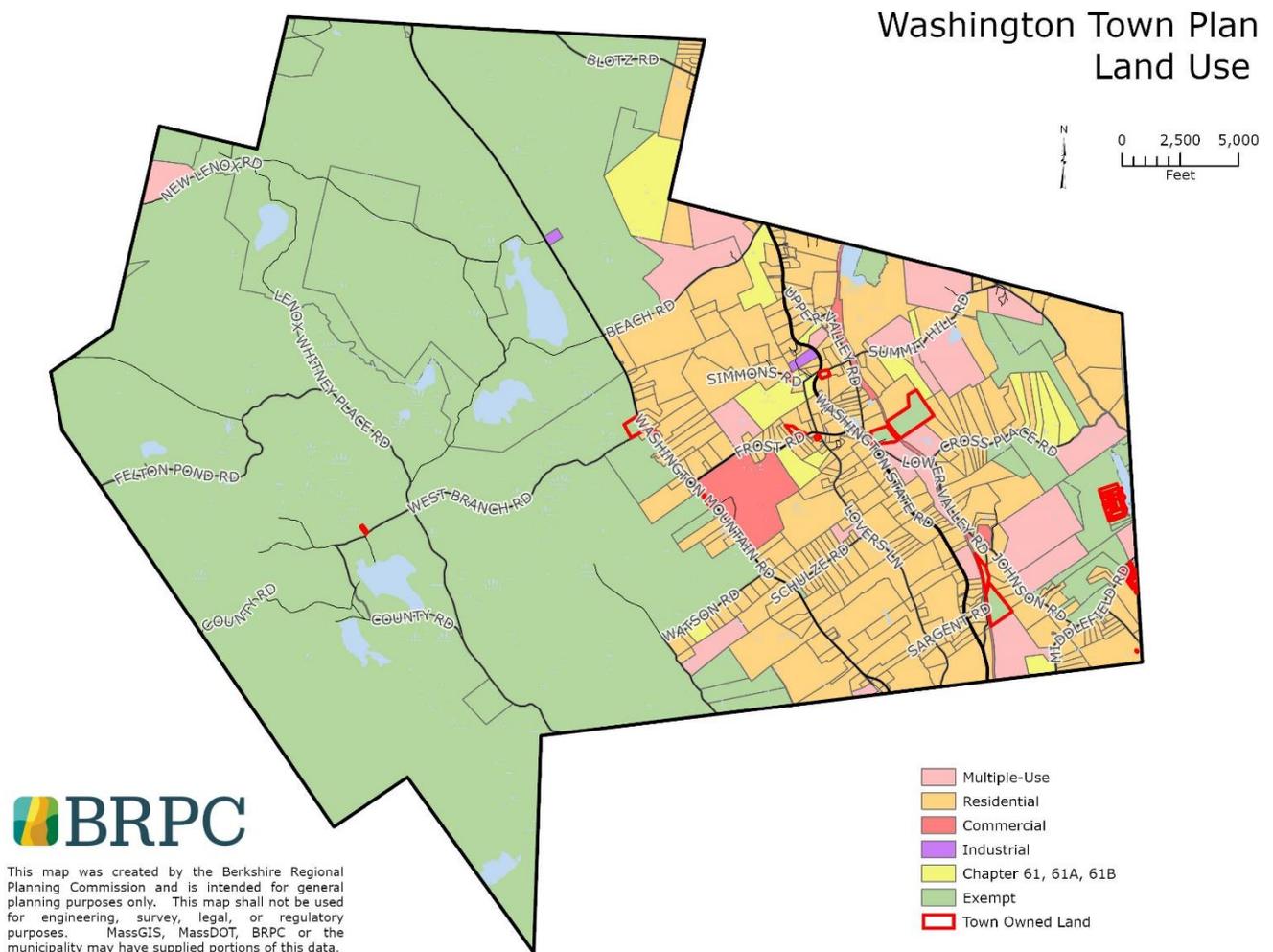
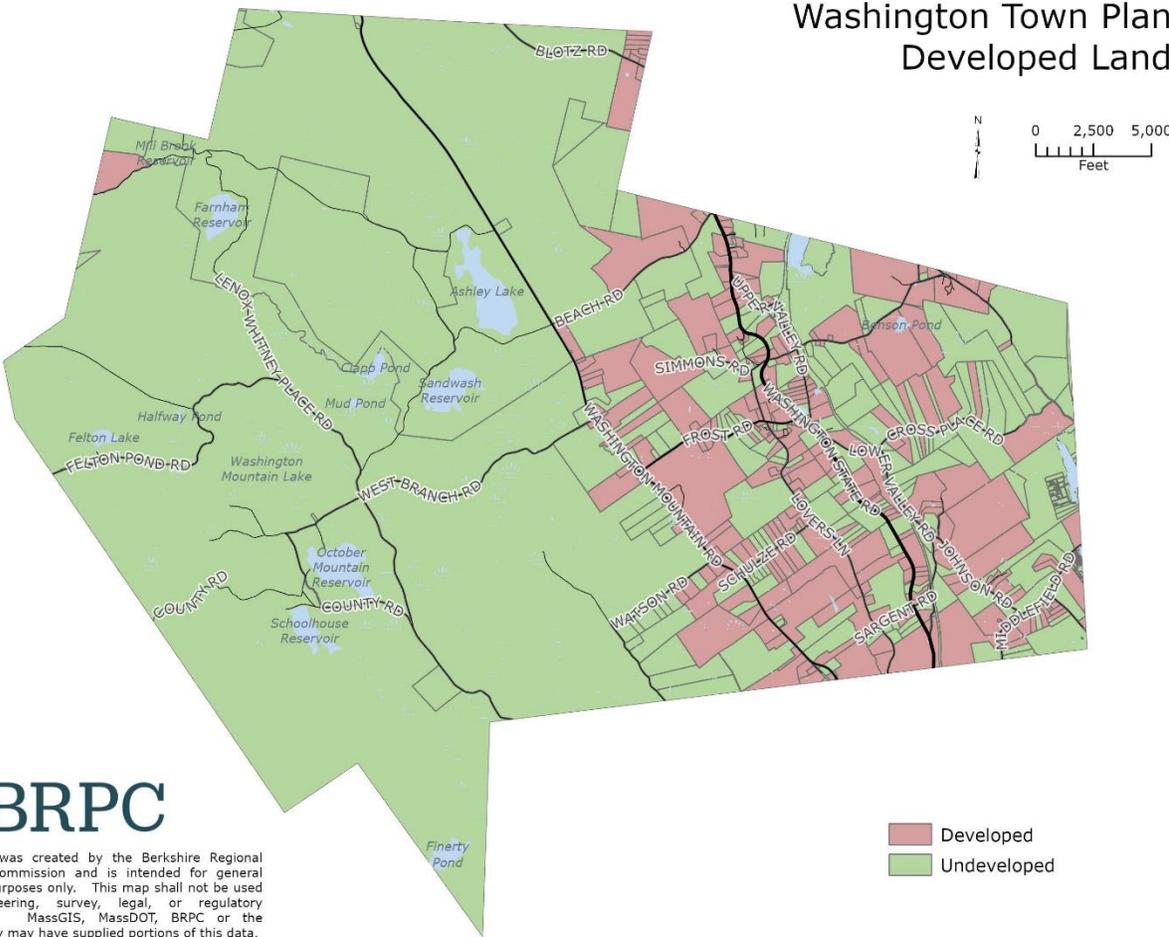


Figure 5.3 - Developed Land Map



This map was created by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and is intended for general planning purposes only. This map shall not be used for engineering, survey, legal, or regulatory purposes. MassGIS, MassDOT, BRPC or the municipality may have supplied portions of this data.

Although Washington has a single zoning district with uniform regulations, in 2018 a Special Town Meeting was held to propose the implementation of a marijuana overlay district in town. The proposed bylaw amendment passed by a 2/3 vote and the overlay district was adopted to regulate marijuana establishments, medical marijuana treatment centers, and other marijuana-related uses. A copy of Washington's Zoning (protective) By-law can be found on the Town's website:

<https://www.washington-ma.com/>

Figure 5.4 - Marijuana Zoning Map

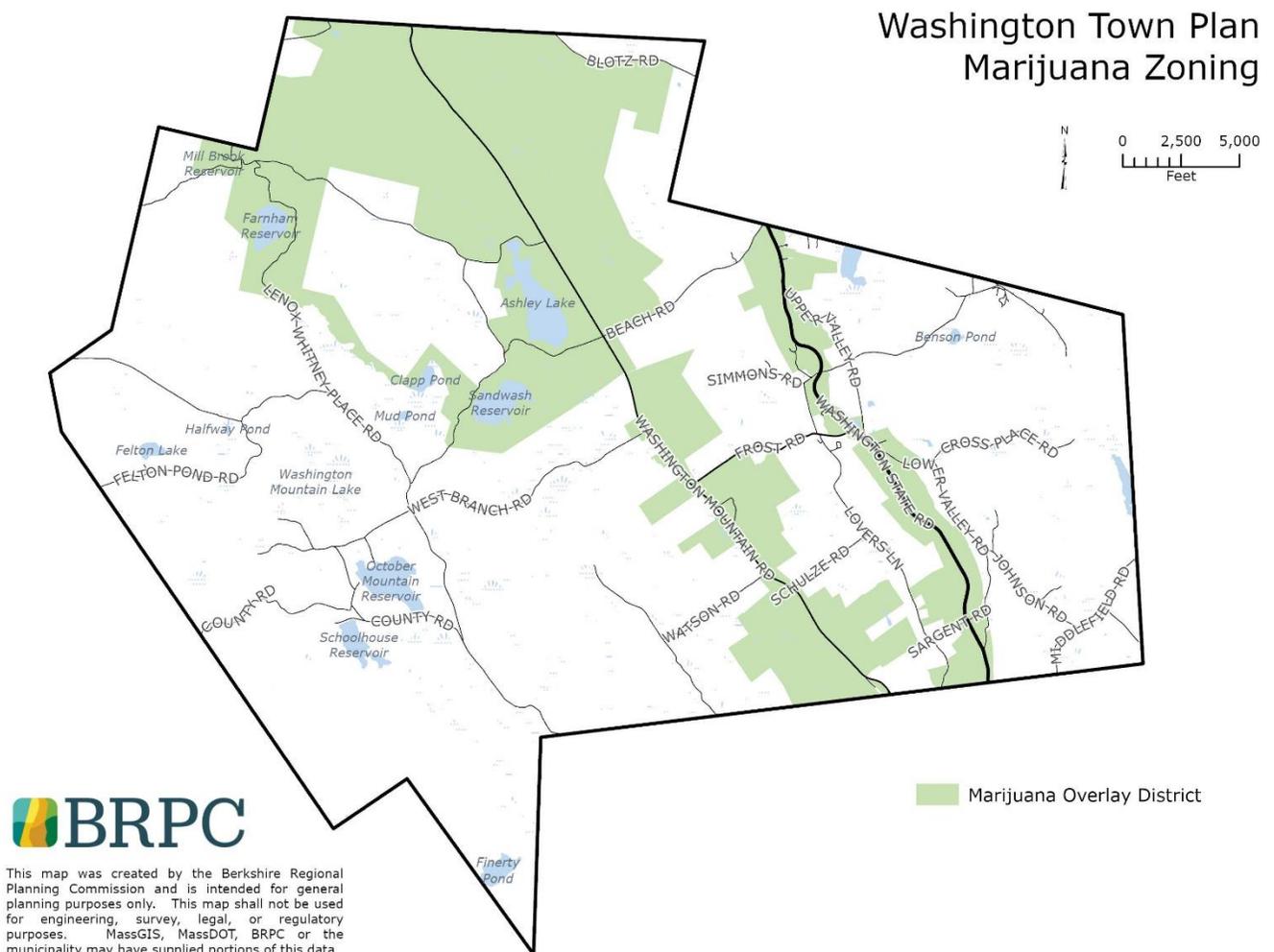


Figure 5.5 depicts some of Washington’s physical infrastructure including roads, bridges, and culverts. There is only one major road (Washington State Road) which runs north-south through the developed portion of town.

Figure 5.5 - Roads Map

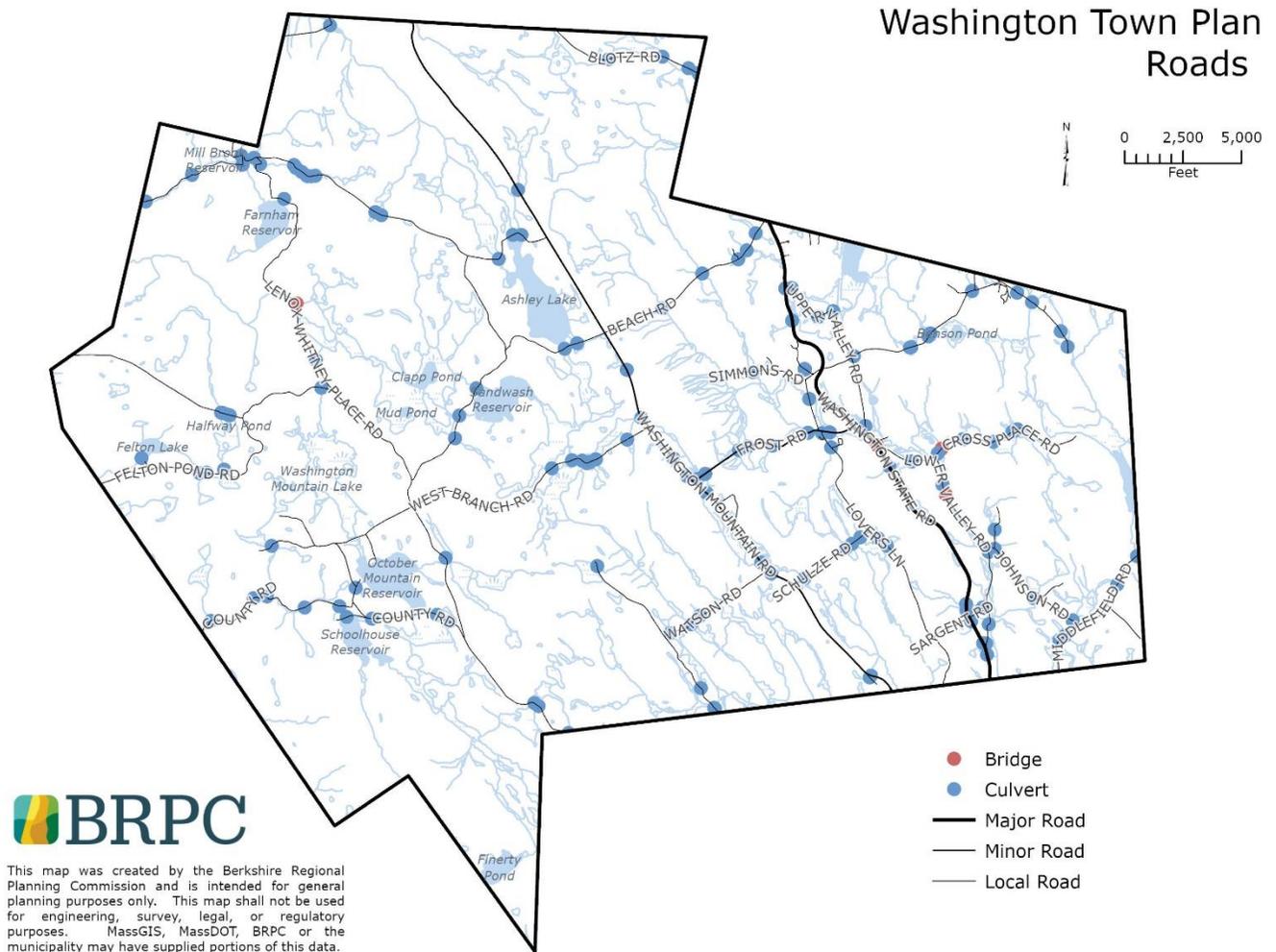
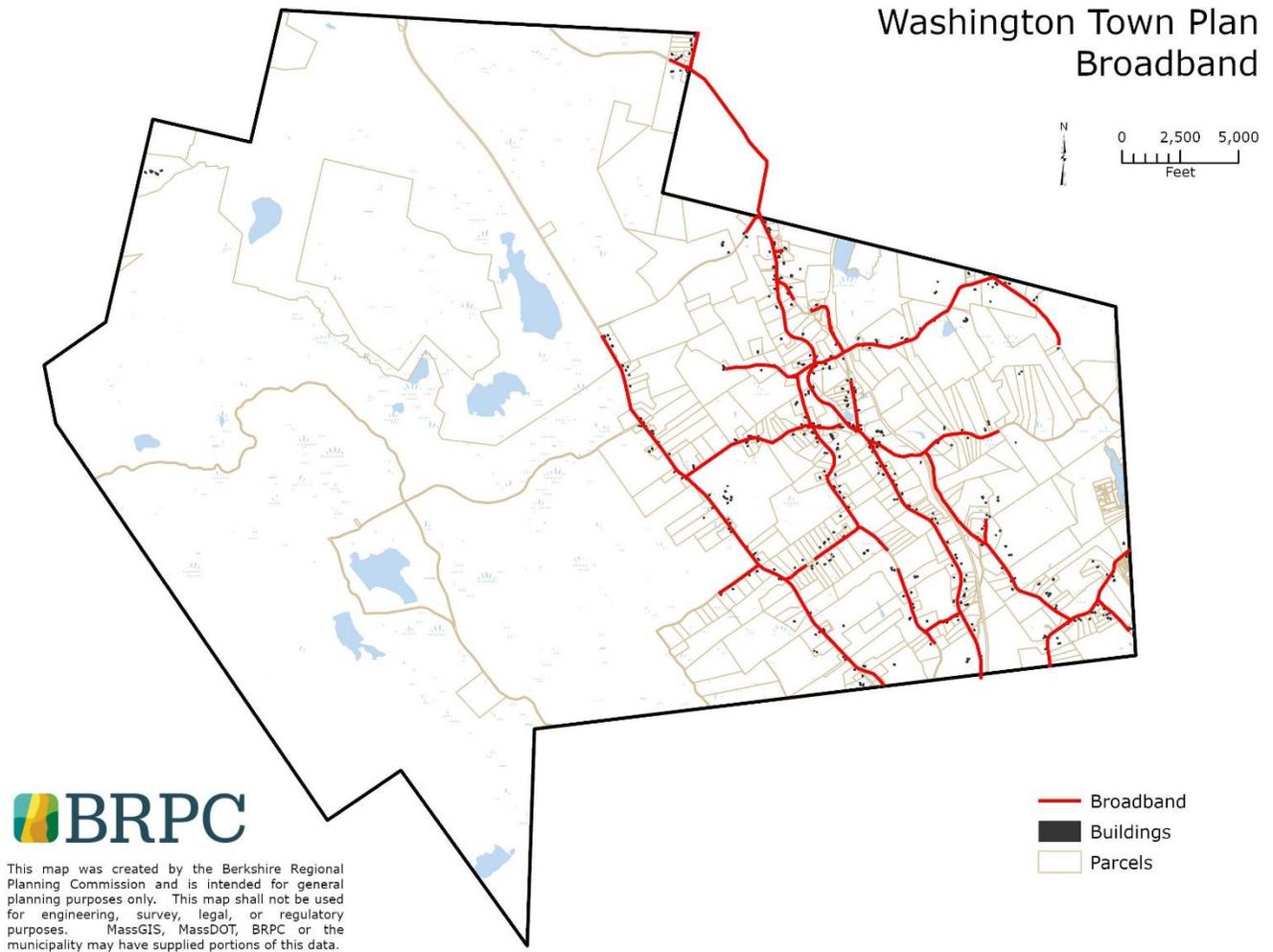


Figure 5.6 depicts the recently installed broadband network throughout Washington. The emergence of high-speed internet has already proven to be a tremendous asset to the Town and is widely available throughout the developed portion of Washington.

**Figure 5.6 - Broadband Network Map**



# 7. Appendices

## Appendix A: Acknowledgements

### **Washington Capital & Town Planning Committee**

Jim Huebner, Select Board Chairperson

Don Gagnon, Planning Board Chairperson

Kent Lew, Finance Committee Chairperson

Dick Spencer, Finance Committee

Jodi Hostetter, Administrative Assistant

Rose Borgnis, Council on Aging

Anne-Marie Desautelle

Brad Sokol

### **Berkshire Regional Planning Commission**

Philip V. Arnold, Community Planner

Alexander Valentini, Economic Development Researcher

Mark Maloy, GIS, Data, & IT Manager

**A special thanks to those who completed the Washington Town Plan questionnaires!**

Cover image is of the Washington Old Town Hall. Photo credit – Jan Paxton

## Appendix B: 2020 Financial Sustainability Report

# 1. Introduction

In 2015, the Finance Committee for the Town of Washington requested the assistance of the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) with preparing a report on the financial sustainability of the Town. The purpose of the report was to provide town officials with pertinent information to assess the Washington's current financial position and to plan for a sustainable fiscal future. The report included an overview of the Town's revenue and expenditures, a snapshot of the Town's financial status, and a list of potential future expenses and potential future sources of revenue. In 2020, the Washington Capital and Town Planning Committee sought the assistance of BRPC to update the 2015 report to examine how financial conditions have changed since 2015 and to incorporate the findings into the Washington Town Plan.

## 2. Financial Overview

The following section provides an overview of the Town's financial situation over the previous ten fiscal years for which data is available (study period).

**Table 2.1 - General Fund Expenditures (2010 - 2019)**

Fiscal Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
General Government	\$ 134,534	\$ 139,569	\$ 159,999	\$ 221,528	\$ 139,226
Police	\$ 14,775	\$ 45,879	\$ 12,920	\$ 12,895	\$ 13,225
Fire	\$ 12,895	\$ 13,202	\$ 15,565	\$ 15,534	\$ 18,288
Other Public Safety	\$ 772	\$ 7,862	\$ 6,128	\$ 8,462	\$ 4,948
Education	\$ 605,744	\$ 580,713	\$ 611,700	\$ 599,426	\$ 689,048
Public Works	\$ 267,462	\$ 318,634	\$ 292,542	\$ 382,302	\$ 425,392
Human Services	\$ 245	\$ 1,609	\$ 4,707	\$ 4,980	\$ 11,646
Culture and Recreation	\$ 18,668	\$ 12,934	\$ 13,139	\$ 9,382	\$ 9,151
Fixed Costs	\$ 78,005	\$ 74,378	\$ 67,329	\$ 88,116	\$ 86,454
Other Expenditures	\$ -	\$ 8,200	\$ -	\$ 1,284	\$ 2,590
Debt Service	\$ 32,584	\$ 21,563	\$ 11,504	\$ 18,675	\$ 17,202
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$ 1,165,918</b>	<b>\$ 1,222,151</b>	<b>\$ 1,196,683</b>	<b>\$ 1,363,040</b>	<b>\$ 1,416,992</b>
Fiscal Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
General Government	\$ 143,888	\$ 155,154	\$ 133,832	\$ 145,898	\$ 154,882
Police	\$ 13,759	\$ 16,583	\$ 14,360	\$ 17,939	\$ 25,330
Fire	\$ 18,788	\$ 18,786	\$ 19,042	\$ 19,306	\$ 22,078
Other Public Safety	\$ 4,995	\$ 5,280	\$ 5,012	\$ 4,257	\$ 5,763
Education	\$ 669,584	\$ 708,089	\$ 728,432	\$ 720,504	\$ 735,565
Public Works	\$ 430,207	\$ 405,085	\$ 444,389	\$ 573,675	\$ 463,924
Human Services	\$ 11,246	\$ 9,503	\$ 11,552	\$ 11,848	\$ 12,400
Culture and Recreation	\$ 12,902	\$ 10,765	\$ 12,371	\$ 14,775	\$ 13,931
Fixed Costs	\$ 80,301	\$ 99,653	\$ 111,168	\$ 113,537	\$ 90,773
Other Expenditures	\$ 3,328	\$ 3,274	\$ 3,920	\$ 4,410	\$ 4,504
Debt Service	\$ 25,523	\$ 49,199	\$ 35,094	\$ 41,757	\$ 63,750
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$ 1,413,749</b>	<b>\$ 1,480,636</b>	<b>\$ 1,518,094</b>	<b>\$ 1,666,654</b>	<b>\$ 1,591,605</b>

Source: [https://dls.gateway.dor.state.ma.us/reports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=ScheduleA.GenFund\\_MAIN](https://dls.gateway.dor.state.ma.us/reports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=ScheduleA.GenFund_MAIN)

**Table 2.2 - Berkshire County Municipalities (Total Population <1,000) Ranked by Highest Average Percent Increase in Total Expenditures (FY2010 - FY2019)**

Rank	Municipality	Average Annual Increase (\$)	Average Annual Increase (%)
1	Sandisfield	\$139,862	6.06%
2	Florida	\$132,830	5.39%
3	Peru	\$99,660	5.39%
4	Monterey	\$162,834	5.38%
5	Hancock	\$71,949	4.48%
6	Washington	\$47,299	4.06%
7	Windsor	\$64,929	3.81%
8	Tyringham	\$37,626	3.15%
9	New Ashford	\$14,930	2.58%
10	Alford	\$26,754	2.12%
11	Savoy	\$17,285	0.96%
12	Mount Washington	\$5,240	0.78%

Source: <https://dls.gateway.dor.state.ma.us/reports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=ScheduleA.GenFund> MAIN

### Observations

- Between 2010 and 2019, total expenditures increased by \$425,687, or 36.5%.
- Between 2010 and 2019, total expenditures increased on average by \$47,299, or 4.06%, annually. Compared to all Berkshire County towns with a population under 1,000 people, Washington ranks 6<sup>th</sup> out of 12 for the highest average percent increase in total expenditures.
- Between 2010 and 2019, the expense categories that comprised the largest portion of total expenditures were Education, Public Works, and General Government, comprising an average share of 47.6%, 28.2%, and 11%, respectively.
- Between 2010 and 2019, the expense categories that comprised the smallest portion of total expenditures were Other Expenditures, Other Public Safety, and Human Services, comprising an average share of 0.2%, 0.4%, and 0.5%, respectively.
- Expense categories Other Public Safety and Human Services both had outlier figures in 2010. To account for this, each of the following observations were made twice, once including 2010 from the data once excluding 2010 from the data.

- Between 2010 and 2019, the expense categories that experienced the greatest dollar amount increases were Public Works, Education, and Debt Service, with increases of \$196,462, \$129,821, and \$31,166, respectively.
- Between 2011 and 2019, the expense categories that experienced the greatest dollar amount increases were Education, Public Works, and Debt Service, with increases of \$154,852, \$145,290, and \$42,187, respectively.
- Between 2011 and 2019, the expense categories that experienced the greatest percent increase were Human Services, Debt Service, and Fire, with increases of 670.7%, 195.6%, and 67.2%, respectively.
- Between 2010 and 2019, the expense categories that experienced the lowest percent increases were General Government and Education with increases of 15.1%, and 21.4%. Culture and Recreation experienced a 25.4% decrease.
- Between 2011 and 2019, the expense categories that experienced decreases were Police, Other Expenditures, and Other Public Safety, with decreases of 7.2%, 7.2%, and 3.8%, respectively.

**Table 2.3 - Budgeted Revenue by Source (2010 – 2019)**

Value						Percent of Total			
Fiscal Year	Tax Levy	State Aid	Local Receipts	All Other	Total Receipts	Tax Levy	State Aid	Local Receipts	All Other
2010	\$877,683	\$153,541	\$195,100	\$98,032	\$1,324,356	66.3%	11.6%	14.7%	7.4%
2011	\$895,506	\$171,617	\$196,800	\$71,585	\$1,335,508	67.1%	12.9%	14.7%	5.4%
2012	\$904,597	\$168,778	\$201,705	\$89,136	\$1,364,217	66.3%	12.4%	14.8%	6.5%
2013	\$904,288	\$174,714	\$197,719	\$207,258	\$1,483,979	60.9%	11.8%	13.3%	14.0%
2014	\$1,035,353	\$166,363	\$194,787	\$271,904	\$1,668,406	62.1%	10.0%	11.7%	16.3%
2015	\$1,041,504	\$199,835	\$205,284	\$150,592	\$1,597,216	65.2%	12.5%	12.9%	9.4%
2016	\$1,095,526	\$205,019	\$203,438	\$174,130	\$1,678,113	65.3%	12.2%	12.1%	10.4%
2017	\$1,141,617	\$209,667	\$206,108	\$78,946	\$1,636,338	69.8%	12.8%	12.6%	4.8%
2018	\$1,204,504	\$215,811	\$211,200	\$142,290	\$1,773,805	67.9%	12.2%	11.9%	8.0%
2019	\$1,216,917	\$220,236	\$204,362	\$80,611	\$1,722,127	70.7%	12.8%	11.9%	4.7%

Source: <https://dls.gateway.dor.state.ma.us/reports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=RevenueBySource.RBS.RevbySourceMAIN>

**Observations**

- Total receipts increased by \$397,771, or 30%.
- Total receipts increased on average by \$44,196.78, or 3%, annually.
- The revenue category that comprised the largest portion of total receipts was Tax Levy, comprising an average share of 66.1%.
- The revenue category that comprised the smallest portion of total receipts was All Other, comprising an average share of 8.7%.
- The revenue category that experienced the greatest dollar amount increase was Tax Levy, with an increase of \$339,234.
- The revenue category that experienced the lowest dollar amount increase was All Other, decreasing by \$17,421.
- The revenue category that experienced the greatest percent increase was State Aid, with an increase of 43.4%.

**Table 2.4 - Total Assessed Value Residential, Tax Rate, & Average Single Family Tax Bill (2010 – 2019)**

Fiscal Year	Total Assessed Value	Residential Tax Rate	Average Single Family Tax Bill
2010	\$70,666,890	12.42%	\$2,601
2011	\$70,290,862	12.74%	\$2,642
2012	\$69,000,570	13.11%	\$2,618
2013	\$70,045,514	12.91%	\$2,612
2014	\$77,092,556	13.43%	\$2,951
2015	\$77,666,252	13.41%	\$2,994
2016	\$79,790,690	13.73%	\$3,151
2017	\$81,311,784	14.04%	\$3,268
2018	\$81,220,762	14.83%	\$3,385
2019	\$82,057,793	14.83%	\$3,428
2020	\$83,866,965	15.29%	\$3,672

Source: <https://dls.gateway.dor.state.ma.us/reports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=PropertyTaxInformation.AssessedValuesbyClass.assessedvaluesbyclass;>  
[https://dls.gateway.dor.state.ma.us/reports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=PropertyTaxInformation.taxratesbyclass.taxratesbyclass\\_main;](https://dls.gateway.dor.state.ma.us/reports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=PropertyTaxInformation.taxratesbyclass.taxratesbyclass_main;)  
[https://dls.gateway.dor.state.ma.us/reports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=AverageSingleTaxBill.SingleFamTaxBill\\_Main](https://dls.gateway.dor.state.ma.us/reports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=AverageSingleTaxBill.SingleFamTaxBill_Main)

## Observations

- Total assessed value increased by \$13,200,075, or 18.7%.
- Total assessed value increased on average by \$1,466,675, or 1.7%, annually.
- The residential tax rate increased by 2.87%.
- The residential tax rate increased on average by 0.32% annually.
- The average single family tax bill increased by \$1,071, or 41.2%.
- The average single family tax bill increased by \$119, or 3.5%, annually.
- The minimum total assessed value was \$69,000,570 and the maximum was \$83,866,965.

**Table 2.5 - Berkshire County Municipalities Ranked by Highest Average Single Family Tax Bill (FY2020)**

Rank	Municipality	Average Single Family Tax Bill	Residential Tax Rate
1	Williamstown	\$6,665	17.60%
2	Great Barrington	\$6,280	15.75%
3	West Stockbridge	\$5,434	13.12%
4	Stockbridge	\$5,386	9.87%
5	Richmond	\$5,058	12.38%
6	Lenox	\$5,010	12.10%
7	Lanesborough	\$4,738	20.68%
8	Sheffield	\$4,683	14.00%
9	Dalton	\$4,364	20.29%
10	New Marlborough	\$4,267	10.31%
11	Monterey	\$4,218	7.43%
12	Alford	\$3,988	5.50%
13	Egremont	\$3,983	9.49%
14	Pittsfield	\$3,829	19.71%
15	Lee	\$3,695	14.68%
16	Washington	\$3,672	15.29%
17	Peru	\$3,649	18.76%
18	Tyringham	\$3,639	6.99%
19	Sandisfield	\$3,590	13.30%
20	New Ashford	\$3,412	12.48%
21	Adams	\$3,232	21.88%
22	Hinsdale	\$3,156	13.21%
23	Clarksburg	\$3,017	17.89%
24	Cheshire	\$2,903	13.44%
25	Mount Washington	\$2,839	6.27%
26	Windsor	\$2,800	14.08%
27	North Adams	\$2,780	18.62%
28	Becket	\$2,759	11.08%
29	Otis	\$2,678	8.34%
30	Savoy	\$2,434	14.96%
31	Florida	\$1,384	8.42%
32	Hancock	\$712	2.78%

Source: [https://dls.gateway.dor.state.ma.us/reports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=PropertyTaxInformation.taxratesbyclass.taxratesbyclass\\_main](https://dls.gateway.dor.state.ma.us/reports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=PropertyTaxInformation.taxratesbyclass.taxratesbyclass_main);  
[https://dls.gateway.dor.state.ma.us/reports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=AverageSingleTaxBill.SingleFamTaxBill\\_Main](https://dls.gateway.dor.state.ma.us/reports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=AverageSingleTaxBill.SingleFamTaxBill_Main)

**Observations**

- In FY2020, Washington had the 16<sup>th</sup> highest average single family tax bill and 10<sup>th</sup> highest residential tax rate out of all Berkshire County Municipalities.
- In FY2020, the average single family tax bill in Washington was in the 31<sup>st</sup> percentile of those of all Berkshire County municipalities.

**Table 2.6 - Berkshire County Municipalities (Total Population <1,000) Ranked by Highest Average Single Family Tax Bill (FY2020)**

Rank	Municipality	Population	Average Single Family Tax Bill	Residential Tax Rate
1	Monterey	753	\$4,218	7.43%
2	Alford	421	\$3,988	5.50%
3	Washington	543	\$3,672	15.29%
4	Peru	872	\$3,649	18.76%
5	Tyringham	452	\$3,639	6.99%
6	Sandisfield	972	\$3,590	13.30%
7	New Ashford	347	\$3,412	12.48%
8	Mount Washington	164	\$2,839	6.27%
9	Windsor	842	\$2,800	14.08%
10	Savoy	719	\$2,434	14.96%
11	Florida	785	\$1,384	8.42%
12	Hancock	529	\$712	2.78%

Source: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?text=B01003&g=0500000US25003.060000&tid=ACSDT5Y2018.B01003&hidePreview=false;>  
[https://d1sgateway.dor.state.ma.us/reports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=PropertyTaxInformation.taxratesbyclass.taxratesbyclass\\_main;](https://d1sgateway.dor.state.ma.us/reports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=PropertyTaxInformation.taxratesbyclass.taxratesbyclass_main;)  
[https://d1sgateway.dor.state.ma.us/reports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=AverageSingleTaxBill.SingleFamTaxBill\\_Main](https://d1sgateway.dor.state.ma.us/reports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=AverageSingleTaxBill.SingleFamTaxBill_Main)

**Observations**

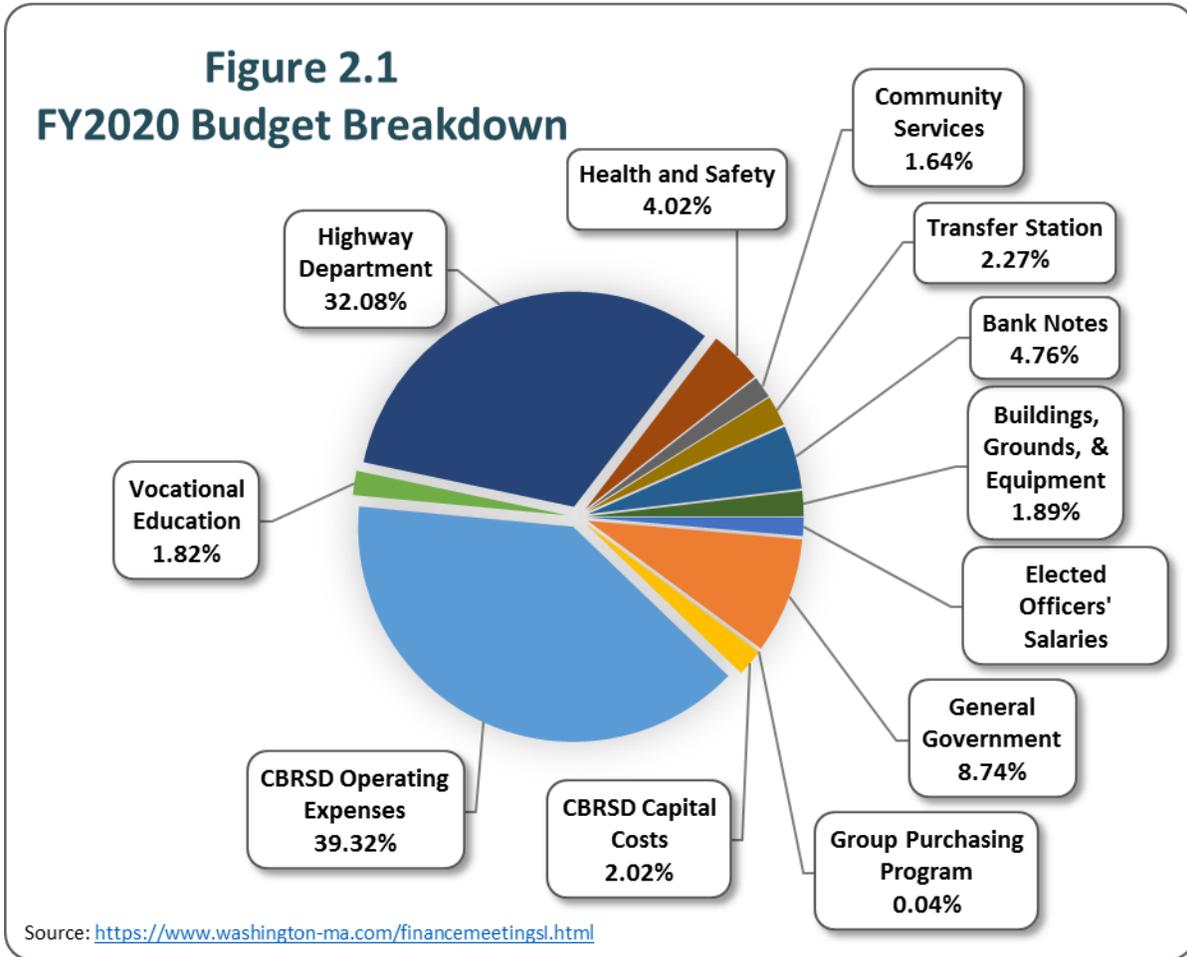
- In FY2020, Washington had the third-highest average single family tax bill and the second highest residential tax rate of Berkshire County municipalities with a population less than 1,000.
- In FY2020, the average single family tax bill in Washington was in the 84<sup>th</sup> percentile of those of all Berkshire County municipalities with a population less than 1,000.

- In FY2020, the average single family tax bill in Washington has higher than that of 82% of Berkshire County municipalities with a population less than 1,000.
- In FY2020, a resident of Washington paid an average single family tax bill higher than 77% of all residents living in Berkshire County municipalities with a population less than 1,000.

**Table 2.7 - FY2020 Budget Breakdown**

Item	FY2020 Amount
Elected Officers' Salaries	\$23,388
General Government	\$147,446
BRGPP	\$600
CBRSD Capital Costs	\$34,139
CBRSD Operating Expenses	\$663,112
Vocational Education	\$30,757
Highway Department	\$541,085
Health and Safety	\$67,809
Community Services	\$27,621
Transfer Station	\$38,360
Bank Notes	\$80,340
Buildings, Grounds, & Equipment	\$31,948
<b>Town Operating Budget</b>	<b>\$1,686,605</b>

Source: <https://www.washington-ma.com/financemeetings1.html>



**Observations**

- In FY2020, the largest budget items were CBRSD Operating Expenses, Highway Department, and General Government, comprising \$663,112, \$541,085, and \$147,446, or 39.3%, 32.1%, and 8.7% of the total operating budget.
- In FY2020, the smallest budget items were Group Purchasing Program, Elected Officer’s Salaries, and Community Services, comprising \$600, \$23,388, and \$27,621, or 0.04%, 1.4%, and 1.6% of the total operating budget.

**Table 2.8 - Levy Limit, Ceiling & Capacity (2010 – 2020)**

Fiscal Year	Maximum Levy Limit	Total Tax Levy	Excess Levy Capacity	Levy Ceiling	Override Capacity
2010	\$916,510	\$877,683	\$38,827	\$1,766,672	\$920,102
2011	\$935,337	\$895,506	\$39,831	\$1,757,272	\$879,502
2012	\$966,097	\$904,597	\$61,500	\$1,725,014	\$813,604
2013	\$1,010,955	\$904,288	\$106,667	\$1,751,138	\$803,870
2014	\$1,061,276	\$1,035,353	\$25,923	\$1,927,314	\$935,485
2015	\$1,098,788	\$1,041,504	\$57,284	\$1,941,656	\$907,934
2016	\$1,138,323	\$1,095,526	\$42,797	\$1,994,767	\$920,365
2017	\$1,167,346	\$1,141,617	\$25,729	\$2,032,795	\$913,567
2018	\$1,214,920	\$1,204,504	\$10,416	\$2,030,519	\$858,813
2019	\$1,255,623	\$1,216,917	\$38,706	\$2,051,445	\$829,970
2020	\$1,303,960	\$1,282,326	\$21,634	\$2,096,674	\$839,062

Sources: <https://dls.gateway.dor.state.ma.us/reports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=Dashboard.TrendAnalysisReports.TaxLevyByClass>;  
<https://dls.gateway.dor.state.ma.us/gateway/DLSPublic/LevylimitPublicReport/LevylimitPublic>

**Observations**

- Between 2010 and 2020, the Maximum Levy Limit increased by \$387,450, or 42.3%
- Between 2010 and 2020, the Maximum Levy Limit increased on average by \$38,745, or 3.6%, annually.
- Between 2010 and 2020, the Total Tax Levy increased by \$404,643, or 46.1%.
- Between 2010 and 2020, the Total Tax Levy increased on average by \$40,464, or 3.9%, annually.
- Between 2010 and 2020, the Excess Levy Capacity decreased by \$17,193, or 44.3%.
- Between 2010 and 2020, the Excess Levy Capacity decreased on average by \$1,710, or 5.7%, annually.
- Between 2010 and 2020, the Levy Ceiling increased by \$330,022, or 18.7%.
- Between 2010 and 2020, the Levy Ceiling increased on average by \$33,000, or 1.7%, annually.
- Between 2010 and 2020, the Override Capacity decreased by \$81,040, or 8.8%.
- Between 2010 and 2020, the Override Capacity decreased by \$8,104, or 0.9%, annually.

## Appendix C: Volunteer Recruitment Form

# TOWN OF WASHINGTON: TOWN PLAN VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT FORM

The Washington Capital & Town Planning Committee is in the final stages of adopting a *Town Plan* that identifies **FIVE** priority projects. We need your help! Each priority project will be overseen by a volunteer Project Team. The priority projects are as follows:

- Diversifying the current housing stock
- Creating more senior housing options
- Implementing a marketing strategy to attract new residents
- Exploring business development possibilities
- Assessing the Town's financial sustainability

Volunteers will be provided with guidance from town authorities such as the Planning Board as well as from a Steering Committee which oversees all **FIVE** projects. If you have expertise in one of the topic areas, if you are interested in participating in local government, or if you simply care about Washington's future and want to be involved — THEN WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Please check **ONE OR MORE** of the boxes above for the projects you are interested in working on and complete the contact information section:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

- Check this box if you are interested in joining the Steering Committee which will oversee all **FIVE** projects.

To submit the completed form, please mail to Town Hall (8 Summit Hill Rd., Washington, MA 01223), place in the drop box at Town Hall, or email it to Washington's Administrative Assistant at [washington.aas@gmail.com](mailto:washington.aas@gmail.com).

**Please see reverse side for more information.**

## **WASHINGTON'S 5 PRIORITY PROJECTS:**

### **Housing Expansion**

This Team will explore how to increase housing availability and provide more diverse housing options for both existing residents and prospective buyers and/or renters while being mindful that many current residents are opposed to significant development. They will work with housing authorities and explore Federal grants and MA Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development programs to develop solutions appropriate for us.

### **Senior Housing**

This Team will determine the desirability for housing for our seniors, explore what State or Federal grant money is available by working with the MA Executive Office of Elder Affairs and the MA Office on Disability to develop a proposal for senior housing and/or senior center.

### **Marketing & Communication**

This Team's task is to develop a general marketing plan to promote Washington's rural beauty, community values, and our lifestyle that combines nature and outdoor activities with easy access to nearby goods and services. This effort should support the other initiatives to help bolster the residential tax base and foster appropriate small business.

### **Business Development**

This Team will work closely with the Planning Board to identify possible areas for commercial zoning. They are also tasked with clarifying what uses might be acceptable to the community and provide greatest potential benefit to the Town. The Team's efforts may extend to delving into the specific economic viability of certain sectors, such as the marijuana industry, to determine opportunities for greatest potential success.

### **Financial Sustainability**

This Team will work closely with the Finance Committee to review and analyze data trends and forecast future spending needs, identifying areas of concern and opportunities for improvement. They will also develop a Capital Improvement Plan to better anticipate long-range investment needs. They will also explore what Town additional services or activities can be shared with other municipalities or outsourced. The Team will draw on State resources through the Division of Local Services.

**For further information , please contact [washington.aas@gmail.com](mailto:washington.aas@gmail.com)**