

SECTION 3: Community Setting

The information provided in this section, *Community Setting*, inventories and assesses the human and land use components of the landscape, moving from the present, to the past, and then to the future based on current development trends. *Regional Context* provides a snapshot of Shelburne today, and identifies the ways in which the location of the Town within the region has affected its growth and quality of open space and recreational resources. *History of the Community* looks back at the manner in which human inhabitants settled and developed the landscape. Next, using statistical information and analysis, *Population Characteristics* describes who the people of Shelburne are today and how population and economic trends may affect the town in the future. Finally, *Growth and Development Patterns* describes how the town of Shelburne has developed over time and potential impacts that the current zoning could have on open space, drinking water supplies, and municipal services.

A. REGIONAL CONTEXT

A.1 TOWN OF SHELBURNE

The town of Shelburne is an agricultural, light manufacturing, and residential community located in the hilltowns of Franklin County in northwestern Massachusetts. Shelburne is bordered by Colrain on the north; Greenfield on the east; Deerfield and Conway on the southeast and south; and Buckland and Charlemont on the west and northwest (see the *Regional Context* map).

Shelburne is entirely within the Deerfield River basin. The town boundaries with Charlemont, Buckland, and Conway are the lower North River and the Deerfield River. Rising above and parallel to the Deerfield River is a ridge of mountains called Massaemett Mountain and the High Ledges. An historic stone fire tower on the peak and other trails to this area and the High Ledges offer magnificent views of the area. Two cellular transmission towers have been erected along this ridge. In the northern section of the town is the Patten district, which is a high elevation flat area with deep agricultural roots.

In 1914, the Mohawk Trail (Route 2) was opened as an auto-touring route, thus transforming Shelburne into a tourist destination and stopover. Route 2 is a significant east-west travel corridor that pre-dates the Massachusetts Turnpike (Interstate 90) to the south. Though an east-west corridor, Route 2 in Shelburne takes several turns to maintain lower elevations between Massaemett Mountain, Dragon Hill, and Greenfield Mountain. Tourism continues to be a dominant driver of the town's economy, as people visit the region for recreational and cultural opportunities.

On the western edge of Shelburne is the village of Shelburne Falls, which has dense village street housing and a small but picturesque downtown. The village area spans the Deerfield River and also lies in the Town of Buckland. The Bridge of Flowers, a former trolley bridge that is now a pedestrian bridge, is planted with trees and flowers and is an attraction for visitors and local residents. The Iron Bridge is the main travel route across the river in Shelburne Falls village. Shelburne Falls village has been used as several movie and television series settings in the last ten years. Shelburne Center is close to the

geographic center of town and has a library and a cluster of housing in this rural residential setting. The rest of the town is much less densely developed, with much of it in forest and farmland. The Route 2 travel corridor is zoned for commercial use along its length, which has facilitated the development of several commercial spaces in Shelburne.

During the mid 1850's, the Deerfield River was used to power mill buildings along Mill Street, which began an era of manufacturing in Shelburne Falls. In 1912, the Deerfield River was harnessed for hydropower, providing electricity to the area as well as giving a major boost to several Shelburne Falls manufacturers, including cutlery manufacturer Lamson and Goodnow (located on the Buckland side of the river). Deerfield No. 3 Dam (owned by Great River Hydro LLC), Gardner Falls Dam (owned by Central Rivers Power MA, LLC), and Deerfield No. 2 Dam (owned by Great River Hydro LLC) all span the Deerfield River shared by Shelburne on one side. The powerhouses for these dams lie on the Buckland side of the river.

Between 1998 and 2001, Shelburne experienced a significant loss in manufacturing jobs due to the closure of businesses. During the last decade, the Industrial zoning district located along Route 112 north of the village has been subdivided and occupied by Ashfield Stone, a landscaping company, a cabinetmaker business, and a rental storage building. Service jobs and schools account for other employment in town. Agriculture continues to be important to the local economy, with agricultural land accounting for roughly 16 percent of the town's total area. Finally, the area is attractive to artists and artisans, who are helping to grow the creative economy in the region.

Like many of the communities in the western and eastern edges of Franklin County, there has not been the same level of pressure to develop the open spaces of Shelburne for residential development as compared to communities along the Interstate 91 corridor. Shelburne's population has been slightly declining over the past 20 years. If recreational tourism related to the Deerfield River and other natural and cultural amenities in the region grows, the increased influx of tourists could lead to demand for more businesses in town that support tourism. Though western Massachusetts communities have lower property values than in eastern Massachusetts, real estate prices have risen sharply since 2020 when people began shifting priorities during the COVID-19 pandemic and moving out to rural communities where they can work remotely, often paying more than the asking price for a home.

In order to plan for the protection of open space and natural resources and the provision of recreational opportunities in the town of Shelburne, residents should consider the role natural resources play across the region. The character of the landscape is dominated by the Deerfield River; large blocks of forest and farmland on rolling hills and in the Patten District, an area of higher elevation farm and forestland. Each of these characteristic landscapes is discussed in detail in Chapter 4, Environmental Inventory and Analysis. The presence and relatedness of these significant resources present both opportunities and challenges to open space and recreation planning for Shelburne. In addition, these landscapes have shaped the historical development of Shelburne and the surrounding region.

A.2 REGIONAL SUSTAINABILITY PLAN CONTEXT

In 2013, a Sustainable Communities Consortium including Community Action, Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA), North Quabbin Community Coalition (NQCC), Franklin County Community Development Corporation (FCCDC), and the towns of Greenfield, Deerfield, Montague, and Orange completed a plan *Sustainable Franklin County: Franklin County's Regional Plan for Sustainable Development (RPSD)*. The RPSD is a long-term guide for Franklin County municipal governments, regional organizations, businesses, non-profits, and individuals. Through extensive public participation, individual residents and representatives of many organizations contributed to the creation of the plan. The plan identifies issues and constraints, goals, and recommendations and strategies. The overall sustainable development goals that came out of the public participation process are as follows:

- Increase and improve the housing stock, while focusing on affordability;
- Provide additional options for alternative transportation;
- Encourage economic development, by redeveloping vacant sites;
- Promote energy conservation and efficiency;
- Protect natural resources, including farmland and drinking supplies;
- Foster the growth of arts and culture;
- Concentrate new growth near town centers and focus on infill development; and
- Improve infrastructure, particularly high-speed internet.

The RPSD identified Shelburne Falls Village Center as a Priority Development Area.¹ Shelburne Falls Village straddles the Deerfield River and is located partially in Shelburne and partially in Buckland. The goals for all of the priority development areas are to redevelop vacant or underutilized structures and properties, locate new businesses in town centers or near transit services, and to coordinate new development in areas that have existing public transportation and water and sewer infrastructure. Shelburne Falls is easily accessible to Route 2, is on a Franklin Regional Transportation Authority (FRTA) bus route, and the village area is served by public water and public sewer. Shelburne Falls has a small downtown with a mix of retail stores, including grocery stores, restaurants, artists' studios, a library, and a candlepin bowling alley, and very small park spaces (two private and one public). The village draws tourists to the Bridge of Flowers and Salmon Falls with its river pothole viewing area, both with views of mountains and the Deerfield River their background. Tourists are frequently drawn to outdoor recreation offerings in western Franklin County and come to Shelburne Falls for food and shopping.

B. HISTORY OF THE COMMUNITY

The early history of Shelburne was centered around the area of Shelburne Falls. The falls were an important fishing site for Indigenous peoples, which around the time of European contact included the Mohican, Nipmuc, and Pocumtuck people (or tribes). After colonial settlement, Salmon Falls was the

¹ A Priority Development Area is defined as an existing or emerging regional employment center. More information about Redevelopment/Infill Development projects for the Shelburne Falls Village Center is available in the RPSD: <https://frcog.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Sustainable-Franklin-County-2013-Plan.pdf>

site of extensive fishing. A 1743 statute designated twenty acres of land along the Deerfield River as a public fishing area. This land was sold to a private landowner later in the 18th Century. The uplands of Shelburne were first used as pastureland by colonials prior to residential settlement.

Permanent colonial settlement of Shelburne began in the vicinity of Shelburne Falls, c.1760, by five families. Sixteen years later the non-indigenous population had risen to 575, with most of the settlement occurring east of Shelburne Falls. By 1790 the population increased by 105%, and essentially remained the same for the next forty years. Shelburne was established as the Shelburne District of the town of Deerfield in 1768. In c. 1770, Shelburne's first meetinghouse was built in the area of the Hill Cemetery, initiating colonial settlement into this area. The rich soils of the uplands, used both for crops and grazing, provided the early residents of Shelburne with their economic base. Lumbering also took place at this time, but on a smaller scale. By 1790, the population increased by 105% to 1,183. The majority of these early settlers were Presbyterian Scotch Irish who migrated from New Hampshire. Shelburne was established as the Shelburne District of the Town of Deerfield in 1768.

Shelburne was incorporated as a town in 1775. Between 1775 and 1830, sawmills and gristmills were built along the river to take advantage of the waterfalls. However, agriculture continued to be the primary commercial activity.

During the Early Industrial Period (1830 – 1870), the population in Shelburne grew by 59 percent, reaching 1,582 by 1870. Although Shelburne remained predominantly an agricultural community, manufacturing grew in the village with the establishment of the snath and cutlery company, Lamson and Goodnow, in 1837. Shelburne Falls soon became home to many small tool manufacturing shops, catering to the needs of farmers and ranchers. Two fabric mills were also established. In addition to manufacturing, the production and export of butter and cheese, maple syrup, and apples contributed to the economic prosperity in Shelburne. This prosperity resulted in an expansion of a residential district along Water Street and the construction of commercial blocks along Bridge Street. The civic center of the town was moved from Village Hill in central Shelburne south to Shelburne Center along Greenfield Road (Route 2).

Manufacturing continued to thrive in Shelburne during the period 1870-1915 with a row of factories lining Mill Street, at the end of Deerfield Street, along the river and sharing an aqueduct for water power.² Contributing to this growth were the arrival of the Troy & Greenfield Railroad in 1867, the Shelburne Falls and Colrain Street Railway in 1896, and the introduction of hydroelectricity in 1912. In addition to Lamson and Goodnow, Shelburne's industry consisted of hardware manufacturers, box makers, a silk manufacturer and knitting mills. Agriculture also continued to prosper. By the 1880s, Shelburne was considered the leading milk producer in Franklin County and was third in the production of cheese. With its location on the rail line, dairy farmers in Shelburne also began selling to milk

² Mill Street is located at the end of Deerfield Street, and most of these factories no longer exist, except for the Mayhew Steel Quonset hut and the Mole Hollow candle factory building, which was recently converted to condominium apartments.

distributors for markets in Boston, Springfield and Northampton. During the 1870's, Shelburne's economy was focused in the village area rather than the rural areas outside of Shelburne Falls, and the town's commercial district along Bridge Street expanded.

Between 1915 and 1920, Shelburne's population declined below 1,500 and then increased 10 percent over the next twenty years to 1,636. The trolley system closed in 1927, yet Shelburne Falls continued to grow as the center of both commercial and industrial activity in town. In 1914, the Mohawk Trail (Route 2), which was designed as a scenic tourist route, brought tourism-related commercial development to that portion of Shelburne along the highway. The major industry during this period was the Mayhew Steel Products Company, which manufactured a variety of forged tools and employed approximately 200 people in 1930. Dairy farming, along with other farm products such as apples and maple syrup, continued as the primary agricultural activities in the uplands of Shelburne.

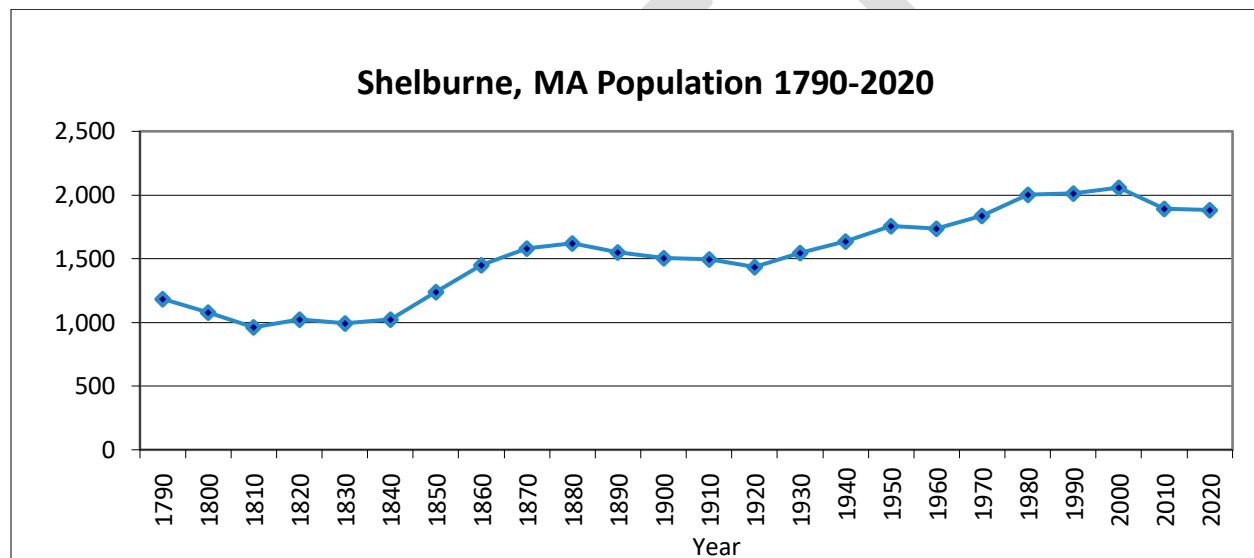


Figure 3-1. Population in Shelburne, Massachusetts, 1790 to 2020

Since the early 20th century, there has been a shift from manufacturing to tourist-related businesses such as restaurants, retail establishments, bed and breakfasts, etc. Shelburne Falls has a strong artistic community, which is evident with the many art galleries and studios located in the village. Agriculture still plays an important role and several farms and orchards continue to operate. A map of Shelburne's farms and other agricultural-based activities was created for this plan update (see Section 4).

Shelburne's significant historic resources are its village and agricultural land use. The living history of productive fields, pastures and old farmsteads also contributes to the town's special character. The architecture in this working landscape represents what the rest of New England once looked like.

Important historic resources that relate to open space and recreation in Shelburne include the following:

- The Shelburne Falls National Historic District (NHD), established in 1988, encompasses approximately 163 acres, spanning the entire village in Shelburne, as well as a portion of the village on the Buckland side of the river. The district was expanded from the commercial core of the village to include the surrounding predominantly residential areas in 2010. The commercial core of the Shelburne Falls NHD, located ½ mile from Route 2, contains many contributing commercial, civic, and religious buildings located primarily to the north and south of Bridge Street in Shelburne and on State Street in Buckland. Within the NHD are the Salmon Falls Potholes located in the Deerfield River, just below the Deerfield No. 3 dam. There are 360 historical “resources” (features) in the expanded district, with only 25 of these built after 1960.
- “The Residences at Mill Falls,” a condominium development, and the “Salmon Falls Potholes,” within the Salmon Falls on the Deerfield River, are both considered historically significant landscapes. Many potholes were formed as the Deerfield River eroded its channel as Lake Hitchcock, formed by the glaciers, drained. The formation of potholes, which continues today, is caused by smaller rocks spinning and carving out rounded holes into the gneiss rock. The Residences at Mill Falls is located off Deerfield Avenue with a view to the dam and potholes. The building is a historic structure that formerly housed Mole Hollow Candles, was vacant for over a decade, and has been converted to residential space. In 2022, the public gained full, legal access to the overlook of the falls, dam, and potholes, but lost the parking areas that had been open to visitor use.
- Historically significant buildings in Shelburne Center.
- Historically significant structures scattered throughout the town from the Deerfield Town Line North to Smead Road on the Colrain border. The only visible pattern to these structures is their association with both historic landscapes and scenic roads.
- Historically significant landscapes. Many of these landscapes are tied to the agricultural history of Shelburne and remain an important asset, though greatly reduced following the rise and fall of sheep grazing in the 1800’s.
- In 2018, the public gained temporary, legal and physical access via a hiking trail from the village to the Shelburne State Forest Stone Fire Tower on Massaemett Mountain. The fire tower was constructed of stone in 1909 and is still used today as a fire lookout. Hikers regularly use the trails leading to the Fire Tower and climb the stone tower for views of the region.
- The intermittent Mohican – Mohawk Recreation Hiking Trail follows the corridor of the historic indigenous people’s footpath along the Deerfield River as it passes through Shelburne.

For more information on the town’s historic resources, please see the expanded discussion in Section 4 under Scenic Resources and Unique Environments and the Cultural Resources Map at the end of Section 4.

C. POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

Understanding Shelburne’s population characteristics can help the Town plan for its future open space and recreational needs and to maximize the use of its open space resources. The following discussion will provide information about Shelburne’s population characteristics and an analysis of how the Town’s open space and recreation planning can respond to those demographics.

C.1 GENERAL POPULATION

The Town of Shelburne is one of several municipalities in Franklin County with a total population that hovers around 2,000. As indicated below in Table 3-1, Shelburne’s population has been slightly declining each decade since 2000.

Table 3-1: Total Population, 1990-2020

Geography	U.S. Census Population			
	1990	2000	2010	2020
Shelburne	2,012	2,058	1,900	1,884
Franklin County	70,092	71,535	71,372	71,029
Massachusetts	6,016,425	6,649,097	6,547,629	7,029,917

Source: U.S. Census Bureau – Decennial Census of Population and Housing 1990, 2000, 2010; U.S. Census Bureau 2020 Census PL 94-171 Redistricting data.³

Overall, this trend aligns with population growth and decline across Franklin County, but contrasts with the trend for Massachusetts as a whole, where the population grew by 7% between 2010 and 2020.

Shelburne’s median age is 58.7, the second oldest median age of all the 26 towns in Franklin County. A third of the town’s population is aged 65 and above, and only 10% of the population is under 18 years of age. Shelburne is a predominantly White community. Approximately 7% of the town’s population identify as being Latino/a or Hispanic.

Table 3-1. Demographic Summary for Shelburne

Demographic Indicator	In Shelburne
Population	1,436
Median age	58.7
% Under 18 years old	9.5%
% Age 65 and older	33.9%
% White	89.8%
% Black/African American	0.8%
% Native American	0.0%
% Asian	0.7%
% Other/Multiple races	7.7%
% Latino/Hispanic (any race)	6.9%

³ The PL 94-171 dataset is the Redistricting Data File created by the United States Census Bureau based on the decennial census. It was created for use by the states in redistricting. When the final 2020 Census dataset is released, there could be some minor variations to Shelburne’s population from the redistricting data.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2017-2021, Table DP-05

C.2 FUTURE PROJECTIONS

The University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute (UMDI) has produced a set of population projections for all Massachusetts municipalities at 5-year intervals to 2040. This estimate, completed in 2018, projects that the population of Shelburne will decrease by 12% between 2020 and 2040 (Figure 3-2). Comparatively, the county's population is expected to decrease by 2% and the state's population is expected to increase by 6% over the same period. The modeling did not consider the range of social and economic factors that may influence population trends (e.g., climate, broadband, recession, Covid-19), and it should be stressed that the modeled projections are meant to serve as reference points for planners and researchers, and they do not claim to be able to predict the future.

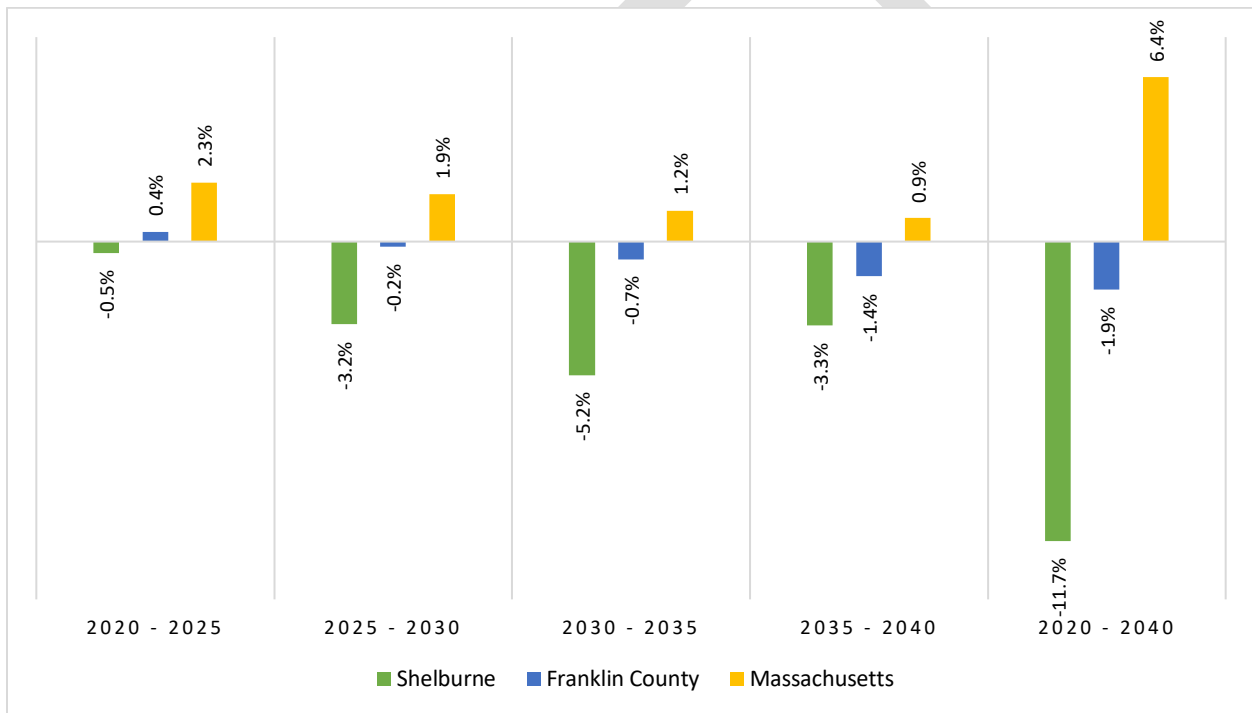


Figure 3-2: Projected Population Change, 2020 – 2040

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau and UMass Donahue Institute Vintage 2018 Population Projections.

A large amount of Shelburne's land area is devoted to agriculture and forested open space, resulting in a relatively low population density of 60 persons per square mile. Shelburne is characterized by mixed-use development and high-density single-family homes in Shelburne Falls, and by single-family houses distributed at low density along main arteries, especially in Shelburne Center. Currently, projections for total population do not indicate major development impacts from population change in Shelburne, but it will be important for the Town to continue to monitor these trends as more data becomes available, to ensure that farmlands, forests, and ridgelines are protected from fragmentation.⁴

⁴ Wildlife corridors, for example, are impacted by fragmenting forest and farmland.

To determine how the recent and projected population change in Shelburne translates into demand for open space and recreational resources, it is necessary to look at the age distribution of the current and projected population. According to the 2021 American Community Survey, shown in Figure 3-3 below, Shelburne has a higher percentage of people 65 and older than Franklin County and nearly twice as much as Massachusetts as a whole. As with the oldest residents, Shelburne also has proportionately more adults from 45-64 years of age than the county or state. It follows that the inverse is true in regards to younger residents: the population of residents between the ages of 0 and 44 (31% in all) is significantly smaller than that of the county (47%) and the state (57%).

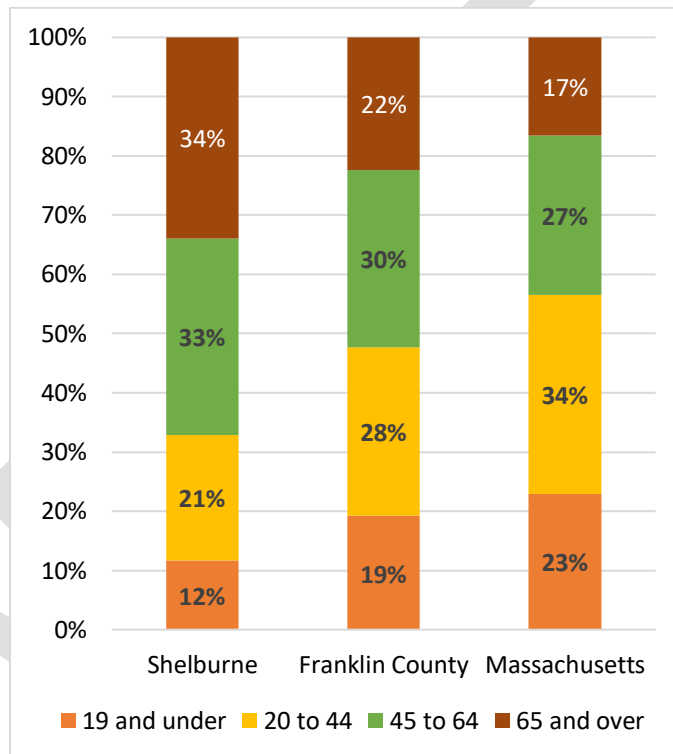


Figure 3-3: Age Distribution, Shelburne, Franklin County and Massachusetts

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

If the relatively large cohort of elderly residents (65 and over) continues to reside in Shelburne, it will result in a significant increase in the population of individuals in the oldest age cohorts in ten to twenty years. As shown in Figure 3-4, population projections estimate that by 2040, roughly 38% of Shelburne's population will be over the age of 65, compared to 20% in 2010.

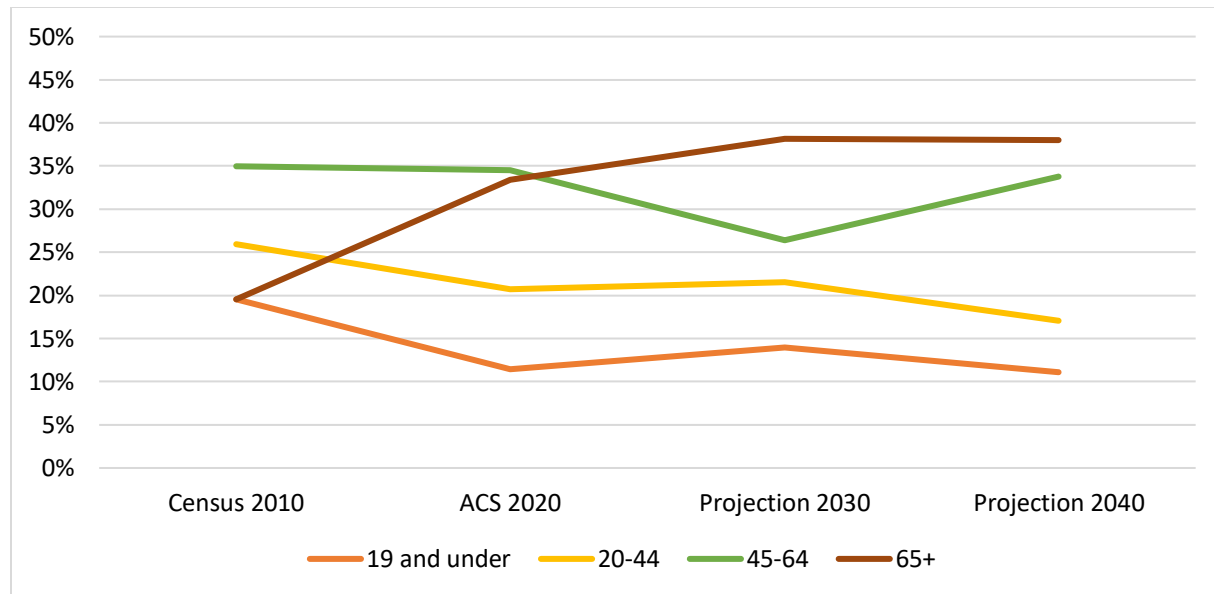


Figure 3-4: Shelburne Projected Age Distribution through 2040

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, and UMass Donahue Institute Vintage 2018 Population Projections.

Overall, Shelburne’s population is stable, but slowly aging. Given present uncertainty on the direction and speed of population change, Shelburne should plan for multiple possible futures. Evaluating the town’s current recreation opportunities and how they meet the needs of a changing population, particularly in terms of facilities that are accessible and age-friendly, is key to developing recreational programming in the coming years that will be attractive to the older residents currently present in the community. That said, providing facilities and programs appropriate for all ages will remain an important recreational goal for the Town in the future, and should be a top priority if a broad demographic range in the town’s population is desired.

C.3 ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESIDENTS AND COMMUNITY

Measures of income levels of Shelburne’s residents as compared to the county and state are helpful in assessing the ability of citizens to support recreational resources and programs, and for access to open space. The 2021 ACS 5-year survey estimated Shelburne’s per capita income was \$47,442, which is higher than the county per capita income, but lower than the state figure (Table 3-2). The median household income for Shelburne was estimated to be \$72,236 in 2020, which is again higher than the county but lower than the state estimates. Shelburne’s poverty rate of 10.8% is equivalent to Franklin County and a little higher than Massachusetts as a whole.

Table 3-2: Income and Poverty, 2021

Geography	Per Capita Income Estimate	Median Household Income Estimate	Percent of Individuals Below Poverty Level*
Shelburne	\$47,442	\$72,236	10.8%
Franklin County	\$37,740	\$64,949	10.6%
Massachusetts	\$48,617	\$89,026	9.9%

* For whom poverty status was determined.

Source: American Community Survey 2017-2021 Five-Year Estimates. Five-year estimate of income for the past 12 months and reported in 2019 dollars.

C.3.1 ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE POPULATIONS

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts defines an Environmental Justice (EJ) Community if any of the following conditions are met:

- Block group whose annual median household income is equal to or less than 65% of the statewide median; or
- 40% or more of the residents identifying as minority; or
- 25% or more of households lack English language proficiency; or
- Minorities comprise 25% or more of the population and the annual median household income of the municipality in which the neighborhood is located does not exceed 150% of the statewide annual median household income.

According to these criteria, the Shelburne portion of the Shelburne Falls village area meets the income threshold and is considered an EJ community. According to MassGIS, this section of Shelburne has a population of 828 in 335 households and the median household income is \$49,063, which is 58.1% of the statewide median household income. According to Massachusetts Municipal statistics, 43.9% of the population of Shelburne is included within this EJ community. EJ populations will bear a disproportionate burden of the adverse health outcomes due to climate change.⁵ In terms of this Open Space and Recreation Plan, it is important to consider how to ensure EJ populations will continue to have access to open spaces, clean air, clean water, and places to safely enjoy recreational activities.

C.3.2 EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS

The labor force is defined as the pool of individuals who are 16 years of age and over, and are either employed or who are actively seeking employment. Persons not actively seeking employment, such as some enrolled students, retirees, or stay-at-home parents, are excluded from the labor force. In October 2022, Shelburne had an estimated labor force of 1,170 with 1,140 residents employed and 30 residents unemployed (Table 3-3). Shelburne experienced a 2.6% rate of unemployment, slightly lower than the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' rate of 3.0%.

⁵ People Who Are Vulnerable to Climate Change. The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. https://www.niehs.nih.gov/research/programs/climatechange/health_impacts/vulnerable_people/index.cfm

Table 3-3: Labor Force and Unemployment Data, Average for 2022

Geography	Labor Force	Employed Persons	Unemployed Persons	Unemployment Rate
Shelburne	1,178	1,137	41	3.5%
Franklin County	40,138	38,784	1,354	3.4%
Massachusetts	3,743,924	3,603,172	140,752	3.8%

Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, LAUS Data.

As Figure 3-5 demonstrates, the size of Shelburne’s labor force fluctuated slightly between 2010 and 2022, though it has been stable for the past three years. Often increases in the labor force are attributed to recent population growth or changes in labor force characteristics, such as people re-entering the workforce due to economic need. Decreases in the labor force are frequently attributed to population decline or individuals ceasing to be counted in the active workforce due to being discouraged from pursuing active employment, or due to pursuing educational opportunities instead.



Figure 3-5: Labor Force and Employed Persons in Shelburne, 2010 to 2022⁶

⁶ Employment data from before 2010 are not shown because the methodology to estimate the labor force size changed in January 2010. Beginning in 2010, Census total population count data are used to develop labor force estimates.

Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, LAUS Data.

The town experienced the same fluctuations in unemployment as the county and state over the course of the last ten years, demonstrating that Shelburne’s labor pool and employment opportunities are influenced by the greater economy (Figure 3-6). Massachusetts workers faced the highest rates of unemployment in the nation during the Covid-19 pandemic,⁷ but in 2022 Shelburne’s unemployment rate returned to its pre-pandemic low, ending up slightly lower than the state’s rate.

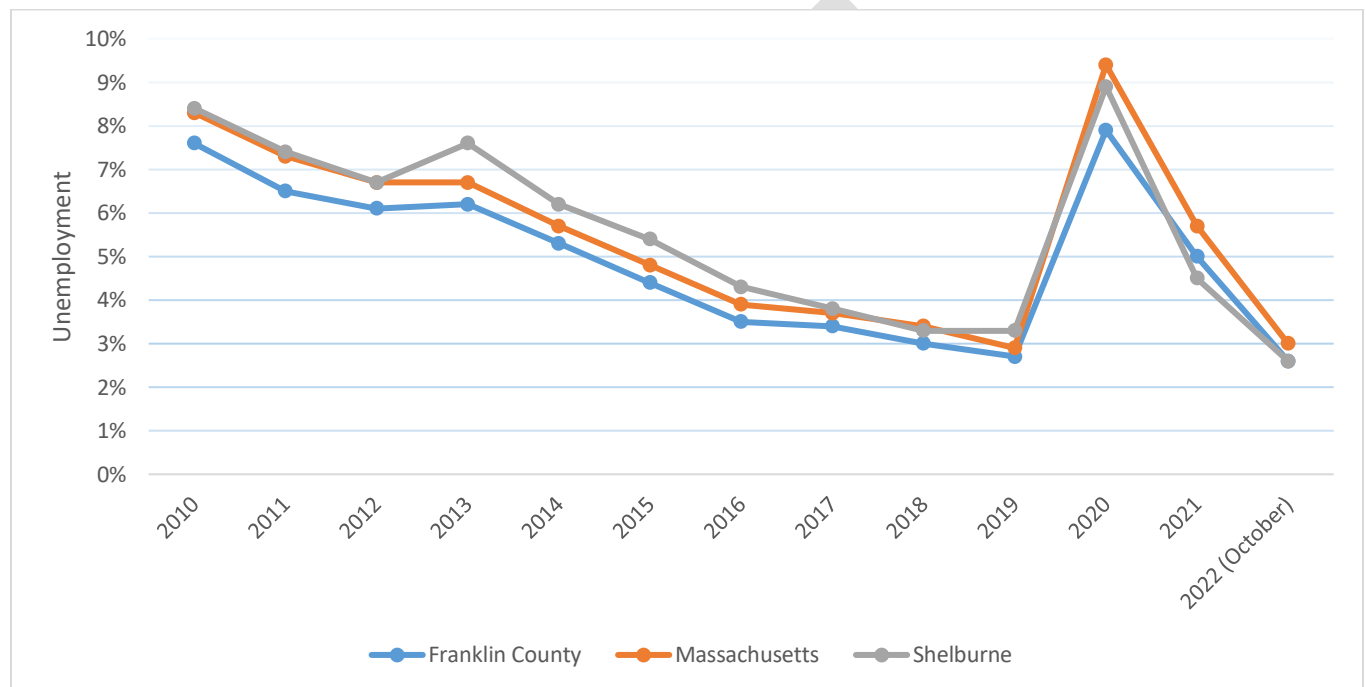


Figure 3-6: Unemployment Rates, 2010 – October 2022

Source: Massachusetts Department of Labor and Workforce Development

Over time, the economic base of Shelburne has shifted away from manufacturing and agriculture. Table 3-4 shows the number of workers and the percentage of total workers in each industry sector for residents of Shelburne in 2021: the largest type of employment for residents is the educational services, health care and social assistance industry, followed by manufacturing, retail trade and professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management. Educational services, health care, and social assistance, and manufacturing are more important industries in Shelburne than in Franklin County as a whole.

⁷ Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Local Area Unemployment Statistics

Table 3-4: Top Industries for Shelburne Residents, 2021

Industry	Percentage of Total Shelburne	Percentage of Total Franklin County
Total civilian employed population 16 years and over	758	36,176
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	39%	33%
Manufacturing	14%	11%
Retail trade	11%	11%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	8%	8%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	6%	7%
Public administration	5%	4%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	5%	4%
Other services, except public administration	4%	4%
Construction	4%	7%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	2%	2%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	2%	4%
Information	1%	2%
Wholesale trade	0%	2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, 2017-2021

C.3.3 TRAVEL TO WORK

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, of Shelburne's workers who travel to work, 91% use a car, truck, or van; 8% walk; 1% use a taxi, motorcycle, or bicycle, and 0% use public transportation. The average commute time in Massachusetts is 30 minutes; 66% of Shelburne's commuters have a commute that is under 30 minutes.⁸ One result of the pandemic is that more people are working from home, and the location of an employer is becoming less important than having access to high-speed internet.

C.4 ANALYSIS

Although Shelburne's population has been relatively stable over the last 40 years, population projections indicate the town may need to accommodate shifting age demographics in the next couple of decades. The median age in Shelburne is 58.7, compared with a state average of under 40, and the percentage of residents over the age of 65 is expected to rise to 35% by 2040. The region recognizes that a declining and aging population presents a major challenge because it affects all aspects of life and the economy.

⁸ American Community Survey 5-year estimates for 2016-2020, Table B08134.

Shelburne is wealthier than Franklin County on average, but it does have one EJ community based on income level, in the village area (see subsection C.3.1). Shelburne's location near Greenfield and a major transportation corridor, along with its scenic village and proximity to natural areas, gives Shelburne an economic advantage.

The overall character of Shelburne could be affected by a number of other potential changes in the near future. The impacts of climate change could begin to push populations away from the coast, resulting in increased residential development in Shelburne. Diminishing supplies of fossil fuels – and their potential rising costs – may lead Shelburne residents to seek alternate sources of locally produced energy sources, such as wood and solar, which could impact Shelburne's woodlands and open spaces. Potential increases in fossil fuel costs could result in increased costs for shipping foods and other products. This could result in an even greater demand for locally-grown and processed food, potentially helping to ensure economic viability of farmland in Shelburne. The Northern Tier passenger rail study, if continued to implementation, would expand train service from Boston to Greenfield to North Adams. This would result in an easier commute to Boston and eastern Massachusetts, and thus may result in increased population in western Massachusetts. This would have a number of social and economic impacts, including increased residential and commercial development. Planning for growth before it happens will help to protect open space and recreation resources into the future while providing a livable community for people of all ages.

D. GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

D.1 PATTERNS AND TRENDS

Although the Deerfield River along the border of present-day Shelburne was at one time important for fishing for Indigenous communities, it is not known to have been an area of settlement at the time the Europeans began to populate the area. When Europeans arrived in the area that is now Shelburne Falls village, permanent settlement began along the Deerfield River on the town's western boundary with Buckland. The village continued to grow throughout the colonial and industrial periods, fueled by manufacturing development in the vicinity of the falls. Even as manufacturing began to decline in 1915, Shelburne Falls village continued to grow in population as the area shifted to a tourism-based economy. Shelburne Falls has maintained itself as the commercial heart of Shelburne until the present day .

Settlement outside of Shelburne Falls village began predominantly east of Shelburne Falls in the area around Hill Cemetery on Old Village Road. Very rich upland soils lent themselves to farming, as forested lands were cleared for agriculture. In the mid-1800s, Shelburne Center, along Greenfield Road (Route 2), became the Town's civic center and today maintains the highest concentration of residential buildings outside of Shelburne Falls village. Today, 13% percent⁹ of Shelburne is unforested open space used primarily for agriculture; a higher percentage than many of Shelburne's upland neighbors.

⁹ An estimate based on the MassGIS 2016 Land Cover/Land Use dataset, which shows 12% of Shelburne in pasture/hay and 1% in cultivation.

Approximately 1,329 acres of farmland are permanently protected by Agricultural Preservation Reservation Restrictions and over 4,690 acres are partially protected under Chapter 61.

There are two large areas of contiguous undeveloped forestland: one along the steep slopes of the eastern border with Greenfield, and the other covering the Massaemett Mountain-Patten Hill complex, which lies just east of Shelburne Falls. This area is the largest protected area within town and includes the Mass Audubon High Ledges Wildlife Sanctuary.

Route 2 is the primary road artery through Shelburne, bisecting the town east – west. The Route 2 corridor is now zoned for commercial use. Since the promotion of Route 2 as an auto-touring route in the early 1900s, much of Route 2 has been commercially developed along its 7.5-mile stretch with a variety of craft, food, and other businesses and services.

Approximately one new home has been built in Shelburne per year on average over the last decade. According to the Franklin County Cooperative Inspection Program, a total of 15 new single-family homes were built in the 12 years between 2010 and 2022, and one single-family home was converted to a two-family, as shown in Table 3-6. All but one new home was in the Rural Residential/Agricultural zone of town, east of the Shelburne Police Station on Route 2.

Table 3-6: New Homes Permitted in Shelburne by Year, 2010-2021

Year	Single-family	Multi-family	Accessory Apartment	Single to two-family
2010	0	0	0	1
2011	1	0	0	0
2012	2	0	0	0
2013	1	0	0	0
2014	3	0	0	0
2015	1	0	0	0
2016	0	0	0	0
2017	1	0	0	0
2018	0	0	0	0
2019	2	0	0	0
2020	2	0	0	0
2021	2	0	0	0
2022	0	0	0	0
Total	15	0	0	1

Source: Franklin County Cooperative Inspection Program

The following land cover table is based on a new land cover/land use dataset provided by MassGIS and released in May 2019 (Table 3-7). This statewide dataset contains a combination of land cover mapping from 2016 aerial and satellite imagery, LiDAR, and other data sources. Land use data is derived from standardized assessor parcel information for Massachusetts. This dataset does not conform to the classification schemes or polygon delineation of previous land use data from MassGIS (1951-1999; 2005)

so comparisons of land use change over time can't be made using this current data.¹⁰

Table 3-7: Shelburne 2016 MassGIS Land Cover Data

Land Use	Acres	%*
Evergreen Forest	6623.99	44%
Deciduous Forest	4566.29	30%
Pasture/Hay	1799.51	12%
Grassland	498.12	3%
Impervious	389.64	3%
Developed Open Space	362.18	2%
Wetland	245.62	2%
Cultivated	210.00	1%
Water	174.19	1%
Scrub/Shrub	76.77	1%
Bare Land	27.01	0%

*Calculations based on a total of 14,973 acres of land in Shelburne. Source: MassGIS

Nearly 75% of Shelburne is forest or scrub, with an additional 16% as pasture, hay, cultivated crops, and grassland, and 3% wetland and water. Impervious cover and developed open space constitute 5% of Shelburne's land cover. Although residential, commercial, and industrial impervious cover is currently a small fraction of Shelburne's total land area, these uses together constitute 48% of Shelburne's potential land use meaning existing parcels that are currently forested, but also zoned rural residential, could be further divided and converted from forest or farmland.

In 2013, the Town was a founding partner in the Mohawk Trail Woodland Partnership (now the Woodland Partnership of Northwestern Massachusetts) designed to work on strategies to advance sustainable and productive woodlands, land conservation, and economic development in the region.

Although the change has been gradual, the conversion of forest and agricultural land to building sites for single-family homes has been the dominant land use change in Shelburne over the last century. When thinking about providing quality, affordable housing to the Shelburne community, it is also important to understand the impacts of development, especially large-lot housing development, on livelihoods, the environment, and municipal finances. The more fragmented farmland becomes from development, the more expensive it becomes to farm, based on additional time and fuel costs. In the same way, fragmentation of the landscape affects the viability of forest management operations. When subdivision fragments a block of forest, the resulting parcels associated with single-family homes are often too small to manage individually for forestry purposes. Fragmented forest and unforested open space reduces the habitat available for wildlife and natural plant communities. Finally, the most inefficient method of providing municipal services such as police, fire, sewer, water, waste disposal, and

¹⁰ <https://docs.digital.mass.gov/dataset/massgis-data-2016-land-coverland-use>

plowing is associated with a fragmented landscape in which residential development is spread sparsely across the town. Therefore, establishing open space zoning bylaws that seek to limit the fragmentation of open spaces would help maintain the consolidation of farmland, preserve larger blocks of forest for wildlife and forestry management, and improve efficiency of public services. One such bylaw that could allow for smaller lot sizes in existing Village Residential (VR) zone should be proposed. A second zoning bylaw could explicitly state the Town's preference for preserving open space, especially that which is connected to other open spaces, or has been designated as a wildlife corridor, farmland of importance, or contiguous forest.

Use of Shelburne's open space development zoning provision is an important tool for protecting significant natural, cultural, and historic features, but it is important that land conserved under open space development is generally connected to other open space, not fragmented. Shelburne's forest and agricultural land open spaces, its trails and sidewalks, the Bridge of Flowers, and scenic river and mountain views are what help to draw tourists to the town. Protecting these key elements from excessive development are crucial to supporting Shelburne's livability as a community and its tourism economy.

There is additional need for affordable housing in Shelburne. Massachusetts's Affordable Housing Law was enacted with the goal of making at least 10% of every community's housing affordable. In communities with little affordable housing (less than 10% of its year-round housing), developers are able to appeal an adverse local decision. Only 5.2% of Shelburne's year-round housing qualifies as affordable, meaning the Town must maintain a housing production plan and meet other short-term production goals in order to receive one- or two-year exemptions from state appeals.¹¹ In 2022, the Town approved the Community Preservation Act which will provide additional resources for developing affordable housing, protecting open space and preserving historical structures.

Highland Village, developed for and owned by the town, was merged with the Franklin County Regional Housing & Redevelopment Authority (HRA) in 2022. It has 46 housing units for income-eligible seniors and handicapped residents. Developing more affordable housing in Shelburne for multiple ages would not only benefit the community, but it would also put Shelburne in a better position to determine where affordable housing is developed.

Shelburne completed a Housing Plan in 2018. The plan identified the types of housing that Shelburne considers most desirable and appropriate given its housing needs, current housing mix and natural, scenic, and historic resources include the following:

- Infill housing in the Village Residential and Village Commercial zoning districts that is consistent with the historic development pattern and character;
- Reuse of existing buildings for housing;
- Mixed-use development/housing on the upper floors of commercial buildings in the village;
- Starter home/cottage developments on smaller lot sizes;
- Senior housing options including accessible units, congregate living, and assisted living;

¹¹ Department of Housing and Community Development (now Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities): Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory, December 2020.

- Accessory apartments or conversion of single-family homes to two-family or multi-family homes; and
- Open Space Development which allows for the grouping of homes on part of a development site in order to preserve natural features, prime farmland soils, and open spaces on the rest of the site.

The Town attempted some zoning changes in 2019 to create more infill housing in the village, but these measures were not approved at town meeting. Given the water and sewer infrastructure available in town, revised attempts may be worth pursuing. Allowing denser housing in some areas that have the infrastructure or soil types to support density can spare other areas from development. Additionally, Shelburne's Open Space Development provision in the zoning bylaws are an option for subdivision development. Shelburne could decide to make Open Space Development a requirement for subdivisions.

D.2 INFRASTRUCTURE

D.2.1 TRANSPORTATION

ROADS

Route 2 is the dominant transportation corridor that links Shelburne with towns to the west and Greenfield and Interstate 91 to the east. Route 112 north connects Shelburne with Colrain and communities in Vermont (Route 112 south goes through Buckland). Both routes are state-designated scenic byways. The Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway (Route 2 and Route 2A), was designated a scenic byway in 1953, and is one of the earliest scenic byways in New England. Route 112 was designated as a scenic byway in 2004. Corridor management plans have been completed for both byways, making them eligible for National Scenic Byway funding for various projects along the roadway, including open space protection and recreational facilities. There are no park and ride facilities in Shelburne, however, there is a facility just over the town line on Route 2 in Charlemont

About 10 miles (17 percent) of Shelburne's roads are gravel. The town has a total of 58 miles of State and Town maintained roads.¹²

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Shelburne's public transit is limited. The Town is served by the Franklin Regional Transit Authority's (FRTA's) Route 41 that runs between Greenfield and Charlemont, stopping across from the Arms Library in Shelburne Falls on the corner of Main and Bridge Streets. The FRTA has four scheduled weekday trips between Greenfield and Charlemont. FRTA also has weekly demand response door-to-door transit service for seniors and the disabled for a small fee. There is no weekend service of this bus route. For a period of time, Peter Pan bus lines ran a daily service between Springfield, Northampton, North Adams, Williamstown, and Albany NY, however this service was terminated as of October 1, 2018.

¹² Massachusetts Department of Transportation, 2017 Road Inventory File.

RAIL

Shelburne has no access to passenger rail. Amtrak passenger rail to destinations north and south is available nearby in Greenfield. Freight rail service on the Buckland side of Shelburne Falls is available from Pan Am Rail Systems. This rail line is one of the most important east/west freight rail lines in New England, transporting up to 5 million tons annually of freight between eastern Massachusetts and eastern New York (near Albany).¹³

SIDEWALKS

Shelburne is not a Complete Streets community¹⁴, and therefore has no prioritized set of goals for making the community more walkable. Residents of Shelburne Falls village regularly walk to destinations in town. Buckland-Shelburne Elementary School, preschool to 6th grade, is nestled in the village and there are many staff and students who live on either side of the river who regularly walk or bike to school.

BIKEWAYS

There are no bike paths or signed bikeways in Shelburne. Two Franklin County bikeways run through parts of Shelburne. The Shelburne – Vermont Connector runs north on Route 112 out of Shelburne Falls village. The West County – Greenfield Connector runs from Bardwells Ferry Road to Taylor Road between Conway and Greenfield. Bikeway maps are available online at <https://frcog.org/program-services/transportation-planning/>. Neither of these two routes have end-to-end dedicated bike lanes, so bikes and vehicles must use caution.

For residents who may wish to commute by bicycle into Shelburne Falls or Greenfield, there is no easy and safe route. The back roads are very hilly, and state roads like Routes 112 and 2 leave bicyclists vulnerable if a fast-moving vehicle strays into the breakdown lane.

D.2.2 WATER SUPPLY

Parts of the Town of Shelburne are served by one community public water system, the Shelburne Falls Fire District, which lies in the North River valley of the town of Colrain. The Shelburne Falls Fire District is a Class II-D system serving about 1,975 people via 806 Service connections in Shelburne and the Buckland sides of the Village of Shelburne Falls. The water system is supplied by two wells with a combined capacity of 456 gpm. The Fox Brook Reservoir, located in the Town of Colrain, is available as an emergency source with MassDEP approval. The wells are located between 120 and 165 feet from the banks of the North River. Farmland on the west side of the North River and within the Interim Wellhead Protection Area is protected through the Agricultural Preservation Restriction program. Fox Brook Reservoir has a surface area of approximately 3 acres and a total storage capacity of 12 million gallons. The Shelburne Falls Fire District owns land in Shelburne as part of the recharge area for Fox Brook Reservoir (called a Zone II Recharge Area).

¹³ Pan Am Rail Systems was sold to CSX Corporation on November 30, 2020. The sale is still pending as of February 2022.

¹⁴ Complete Streets are streets designed and operated to enable safe use and support mobility for all users. The term is used by the U.S. Department of Transportation, and the federal program is implemented at the state level. For more information, go to MassDOT's website at <https://gis.massdot.state.ma.us/completestreets>.

Water is treated prior to entering the distribution system at the water treatment facility located on Call Road in Colrain. Treated water is pumped through a two-mile transmission main, installed in 1912, from the treatment facility on Call Road to the Shelburne water storage tank and down to Shelburne Falls on the Shelburne side.

The District has a MassDEP authorized water withdrawal of 0.23 million gallons per day (MGD) while average daily use is around 0.14 MGD. Approximately 61% of the total supply is currently being utilized, with about 0.09 MGD available for future growth. Approximately half of the water consumed was by Buckland residents and businesses and half by Shelburne's. The Shelburne Falls Fire District also serves fifty residents in Colrain.

One of the issues facing the Shelburne Falls Fire District is the protection of the water source. To date, development around the water sources has been moderate, and the municipal public water supply, which is closely monitored, has not suffered from contamination. The Fire District has already acquired some land around the water supplies in Colrain. However, this is an expensive and time-consuming strategy.

The remainder of the Town of Shelburne's population is serviced by private wells.

D.2.3 WASTEWATER

The Shelburne Falls Wastewater District provides municipal sewage treatment to the village of Shelburne Falls which in most cases is coincident with the water system. The plant has a total design capacity to treat 0.25 million gallons of wastewater per day, and currently treats roughly 0.175 million gallons per day¹⁵ (approximately 70 percent of design capacity). Sewage is pumped across the Iron Bridge to the Buckland side, where it is gravity fed to the wastewater treatment plant on Gardner Falls Road. The district is focusing its efforts on reducing inflow and infiltration to lower the number of gallons of groundwater and stormwater treated by the plant. The collection system is over 100 years old, and is therefore susceptible to leakage into the system through old pipes. The Town of Shelburne has applied for and received grants over the last 20 years to replace deteriorating pipes with new piping that will reduce the amount of infiltration into the system.

Other areas of Shelburne are serviced by private septic systems. In areas served by septic systems and wells, typically at least an acre is needed for a single-family home in order to accommodate these systems, depending on how well the soil percolates.

¹⁵ Franklin County Water and Wastewater Study, conducted by Tighe & Bond, published by FRCOG, dated June 2022.

D.2.4 INTERNET AND CELL SERVICE COMMUNICATIONS

Many parts of Shelburne have cell service, as there are two cell towers on the ridge of Massaemett Mountain above Shelburne Falls village and Route 2, and multiple towers on Great Hill that sits above Greenfield and Deerfield. Shelburne has 100% availability. Most residents have or can choose to receive broadband from Comcast (96%) and the remaining 4% can get their broadband through Colrain's fiber network.¹⁶

D.3 ZONING AND DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

Shelburne has five zoning districts, which are shown on the Zoning Map at the end of this section:

- Rural Residential / Agricultural (RA)
- Village Residential (VR)
- Village Commercial (VC)
- Commercial (C)
- Industrial (I)

Zoning bylaws¹⁷ proactively determine land use by regulating the built environment. The zoning of Shelburne Falls and the area of Main Street north of the village is predominantly Village Residential, with two Village Commercial districts bordering the river in the village, one Industrial district bordering the river in the village, and one Industrial district along Main Street/Route 112 north of the village. Outside of Shelburne Falls village and the Main Street Corridor, zoning is primarily Rural Residential/Commercial. The Route 2 corridor is designated Commercial between Shelburne Falls village and the Greenfield line, with the exception of the Shelburne Center area.

In addition to the five districts, Shelburne has a Floodplain Overlay District that regulates development within the 100-year floodplain in town.

Single-family, two-family, and accessory apartments are permitted by right in Shelburne everywhere except in the Industrial District. Multi-family dwellings, mobile home parks, and conversions to multi-family units are allowed by special permit. This means that Shelburne's zoning currently provides for a diversity of housing and also encourages the use of the existing building stock to create new housing. Other residential uses allowed in Shelburne include nursing homes (by special permit) and congregate housing, which is allowed by-right in the Village Commercial and Commercial Districts and by special permit in the Rural Residential/Agricultural and Village Residential Districts.

In addition to regulating housing type, the zoning bylaw regulates the minimum lot size and dimensions needed to build a new structure or establish a new use (Table 3-6). Whether a lot is served by municipal

¹⁶ Personal communication with Michael Duffy, Chair of Shelburne's Technology and Cable Advisory Committee, March 2023.

¹⁷ Shelburne's Zoning Bylaws are linked on the Planning Board's web page at <https://townofshelburne.com/g/48/Planning-Board>.

water and sewer is important. If no water or sewer is available, a lot needs to be large enough to safely accommodate a drinking water well and a septic system, typically at least an acre (43,560 feet), depending on soil conditions and the size of the septic system. Shelburne’s water and sewer infrastructure is described earlier in this section.

Table 3-6: Shelburne Zoning Dimensional Requirements

Zoning District	Minimum Lot Area (sq ft)	Minimum Lot Frontage (ft)	Front Yard Setback (ft)	Side Yard Setback (ft)	Rear Yard Setback (ft)	Maximum Height of Buildings (ft)
Rural Residential / Agricultural (RA)	86,000	250	25	20	20	35
Village Residential (VR)	20,000	100	20	10	20	35
Village Commercial (VC)	20,000	100	20	10	20	35
Commercial (C)	86,000	250	30	30	30	35
Industrial (I)	86,000	250	50	30	30	35

Source: Town of Shelburne Zoning Bylaw, June 12, 2021.

Shelburne’s minimum lot size in the Rural Residential/Agricultural district is 86,000 sq. ft., or 2 acres. This is on the higher end of the range for Franklin County towns: many communities permit building of single-family homes in 40,000 sq. ft. (~1 acre) and 60,000 sq. ft. (~1.5 acre) lots. While minimum lot requirements are designed to protect health and safety by keeping septic systems and wells adequately distanced, larger minimum lot sizes tend promote sprawl, drive up housing costs, and often increase the cost to taxpayers for municipal services.

The 20,000 sq. ft. minimum lot area for the Village Residential and Village Commercial zones, where public water and sewer are available, is larger than the majority of existing lots in those districts. In 2019, the Shelburne Planning Board proposed a warrant article at the Annual Town Meeting to decrease the minimum lot size and frontage requirements in the Village Residential and Village Commercial zones. That warrant article was rejected. At the 2023 Shelburne Annual Town Meeting, the Planning Board proposed a warrant article to allow smaller lot size and frontage requirements for Town-owned properties to be sold for development as Affordable Housing in all zones *except* Industrial. That warrant article passed in May of 2023, and awaits final approval from the Attorney General’s Office.

Shelburne revised its Open Space Development (OSD) bylaw in 2016 to include flexibility in housing types and development design while protecting significant natural resources. OSD is a development option for both Approval Not Required (ANR) development and new subdivisions. OSD is allowed by-right as long as requirements of the bylaw and subdivision regulations (when applicable) are met, including a minimum parcel size of 6 acres and the permanent protection of at least 50% of the parcel as open space. Single-family, two-family, multi-family (up to 4 units), and congregate senior housing are allowed in an OSD. There are no minimum lot or frontage requirements. The total number of dwelling units is determined by dividing the net developable acreage of the parcel by the minimum lot size of the

zoning district. Density bonuses, not to exceed 25% of the initial allowable dwelling units, can be obtained for providing a congregate senior housing unit for 6-12 seniors; separate senior housing units (restricted to 55+, with 2 or fewer bedrooms, and handicap accessible); and affordable dwelling units that can be counted toward the Town's Subsidized Housing Inventory.

A number of other specific zoning provisions protect natural and cultural resources in Shelburne. Large scale industrial and commercial facilities are allowed only in the limited industrial zone by special permit, and are supposed to minimize impacts to the natural environment and existing neighborhood character. No marijuana establishments are allowed by right. All marijuana establishments, where allowed in a district, require a Special Permit. Zoning bylaw provisions also exist that regulate wind energy and large-scale ground-mounted solar-electric generating installations (1-20 acres).

Subdivision regulations control how land is divided up and the road that serves subdivided land. Shelburne's regulations require conformity to a Development Guidelines and Low Impact Development (LID) Site Planning and Design checklist and asks for due regard to be shown for natural and cultural features.

Design guidelines are advisory design parameters aimed at preserving the desired character of existing neighborhoods. The Shelburne Falls Design Guidelines promote the protection of historic character and distinctive architectural features for the village.

These land use controls direct commercial and industrial development to appropriate areas of Shelburne, protect some critical water resources, and provide options to minimize the negative effects of development on the character of the town. Nonetheless, because such a large percentage of the town is located in the Rural Residential / Agricultural district, this is where further residential development is likely to occur. This district includes most of the farmland and forestland that defines Shelburne's rural/agricultural character. Without a concerted effort to direct development to appropriate locations and protect critical resources, ecologically and culturally significant land may be developed.

D.3.1 ZONING AND TRAIL DEVELOPMENT IN SHELBURNE

Section 4.3 of Shelburne's Zoning Bylaw, the Table of Use Restrictions, contains an unusual provision that requires any "municipal or non-profit trail" to go through the special permit process with the Zoning Board of Appeals. A Municipal or Non-Profit Trail is defined in the bylaw as "any trail, walkway or pathway open to the general public and intended for nonmotorized, except mobility assisting devices used by handicapped persons, recreational use. Such trails shall have barriers at the start and finish, and shall be designed to avoid private lands and return users to public ways. The Trail shall have appropriate signage indicating the beginning and ending of the Trail and directing users away from private lands near the Trail." This provision in the zoning bylaws makes it more difficult to make trails on town or nonprofit land. The community survey done as part of this OSRP update showed a high degree of interest in more trails among residents in town. Hiking is one of the most popular activities that survey respondents

participate in: 77% of survey respondents reported that someone in their household hikes in or near Shelburne. The Shelburne Planning Board intends to discuss this bylaw provision at upcoming meetings to look at possible changes it can propose at the next Annual Town Meeting (in 2024).

E. PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Since the last update to the Shelburne Open Space and Recreation Plan, the Town has completed land surveys for a River Trail on town-owned land, developed the Wooded Loop Trail system on privately owned land, has cleared invasive plants on some trails, has published a brochure of town trails and walking routes, has received grants from the Woodland Partnership, and has led guided hikes on trails.....

In 2022, Shelburne passed the Community Preservation Act (CPA). In the near future, Shelburne will have a source of funding for open space, recreation, historic preservation, and community housing projects. This Open Space and Recreation Plan can provide the foundation for project ideas that will be implemented with CPA money.

With a state-wide emphasis on providing more housing, it will be important for residents to carefully plan where that might happen, without impacting large forest and agricultural properties that have defined the town since its inception.

Future oriented planning in Shelburne should assess ways to protect land, encourage development in a targeted manner, and make the town's current recreational resources and open spaces accessible to the public. As demonstrated in the Community Survey completed in January 2023, Shelburne residents enjoy walking and hiking in the area and want increased access to the Deerfield River and adjacent land deeded to the town by Lillian Davenport for recreational purposes. Continuing to develop these connections such as completing the Mohican-Mohawk Trail system through thoughtful land conservation, trail enhancements, and wayfinding will promote a hikeable Shelburne. Bike lanes and trails, as well as increased access to the Deerfield River are unmet needs that should be considered as future projects.

