



**TOWN OF LEICESTER**  
**Office of Development & Inspectional Services**

Leicester Town Hall, 3 Washburn Square, Leicester, MA 01524  
[www.leicesterma.org](http://www.leicesterma.org)  
508-892-7003 (Building/Health) / 508-892-7007 (Planning, Conservation, ZBA)

Board of Health  
Building/Code Enforcement  
Conservation Commission  
Planning Board  
Moose Hill Water Commission  
Zoning Board of Appeals

**OPEN SPACE & RECREATION PLAN COMMITTEE**

Tuesday, July 27, 2021 @ 6:00PM

*Hybrid Meeting*

In-Person	Virtual
Meeting Room 3 Leicester Town Hall, Lower Level	<a href="https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/717060109">https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/717060109</a> United States (Toll Free): <a href="tel:18668994679">1 866 899 4679</a> <b>Access Code: 717-060-109</b>

**6:00PM – Open Meeting**

1. Town-Owned Open Space and Recreational Properties
2. Section 3: Community Setting Draft
3. Section 5: Land Inventory Draft
4. Features Maps Review
5. Feedback on sample public forum fliers (follow-up from last meeting)
6. Final Survey Updates
7. Adoption of Minutes
8. Miscellaneous

**7:00PM - Adjourn**

# Leicester 2021 DRAFT OSRP Town-Owned Open Space and Recreational Properties

Site Name	Acres (GIS)	Level of Protection	Public Access + Fee	Management Agency	Grant Used	Current Use & Amenities	Recreation Potential	Condition
Burncoat Park/Town Park	101.72	Perpetuity	Full	Town of Leicester Parks and Recreation Department	Self Help	Recreation		
Cedar Meadow Pond Beach	0.43	Limited	Limited	Town of Leicester Parks and Recreation Department	-	Recreation		
Cherry Valley Cemetery	2.56	Limited	Full	Town of Leicester Department of Public Works	-	Historical/Cultural		
Cherry Valley Grammer School	0.77	Limited	Full	Town of Leicester School Department	-	Recreation		
Community Field	7.90	Limited	Full	Town of Leicester Parks and Recreation Department	-	Recreation		
Conservation Area	3.28	Perpetuity	Full	Town of Leicester Conservation Commission	-	Conservation		
Elliot Cemetery	0.84	Limited	None	Town of Leicester Department of Public Works	-	Historical/Cultural		
Hillcrest Country Club	295.67	Perpetuity	Full	-	Land and Water Conservation Fund	Recreation		
Leicester Town Common	2.35	Perpetuity	Full	Town of Leicester Parks and Recreation Department	-	Historical/Cultural		
Leicester Water Supply Land	30.78	Perpetuity	None	Town of Leicester Water Supply	-	Water Supply		
Memorial School	27.85	Limited	Full	Town of Leicester School Department	-	Recreation		
Pine Grove Cemetery	46.69	Limited	Full	Town of Leicester Department of Public Works	-	Historical/Cultural		
Quaker Cemetery	1.84	Limited	Full	Town of Leicester Department of Public Works	-	Historical/Cultural		






# Leicester 2021 DRAFT OSRP Town-Owned Open Space and Recreational Properties

Rawson Brook Cemetery	1.35	Limited	Full	Town of Leicester Department of Public Works	-	Historical/Cultural
Rochdale Park	9.03	Limited	Limited	Town of Leicester Parks and Recreation Department	-	Recreation
Russell Memorial Park	10.77	Perpetuity	Full	Town of Leicester Parks and Recreation Commission	-	Recreation
School Fields	25.09	Limited	Full	Town of Leicester School Department	-	Recreation
School Playground	0.83	Limited	Limited	Town of Leicester School Department	-	Recreation
St Joseph Cemetery	6.29	Limited	Full	Town of Leicester Department of Public Works	-	Historical/Cultural
Towtaid Park	5.08	Perpetuity	Full	Town of Leicester Parks and Recreation Department	-	Recreation
<i>Subtotal:</i>	<i>581.12</i>					

# HABITAT FEATURES

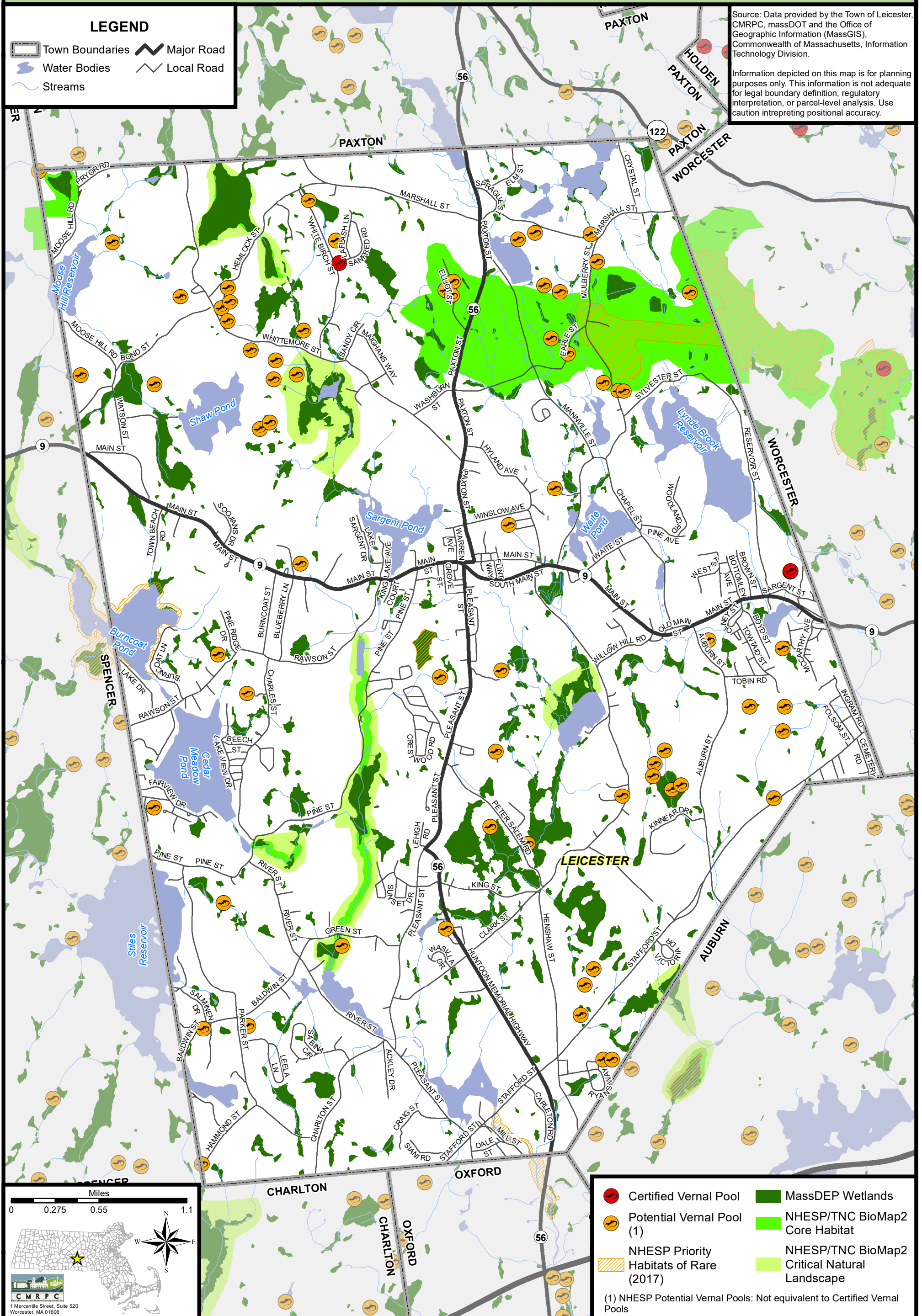
## OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN

## LEGEND

-  Town Boundaries
  Major Road
-  Water Bodies
  Local Road
-  Streams

Source: Data provided by the Town of Leicester, CMRPC, massDOT and the Office of Geographic Information (MassGIS), Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Information Technology Division.

Information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. This information is not adequate for legal boundary definition, regulatory interpretation, or parcel-level analysis. Use caution interpreting positional accuracy.



# Town of Leicester, Massachusetts



PRODUCED BY THE LEICESTER OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE &  
CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION



# SECTION 3 COMMUNITY SETTING



## SECTION 3: COMMUNITY SETTING

### Regional Context

Leicester is in Worcester County, bordered by Paxton to the north, Auburn and Worcester to the east, Charlton and Oxford to the south, and Spencer to the west. Leicester encompasses an area of 24.53 square miles, or 15,900 acres, 5% of which (850 acres) is water. Within its boundaries are the headwaters of three major river basins, the Chicopee, the French, and the Blackstone. Many of Leicester's water bodies serve as drinking water reservoirs, mostly for surrounding cities and towns. These water bodies will only become more important as growth in the region continues, and as expected shifts in climate unfold.

Leicester is currently included in the 2nd Massachusetts Congressional District, the 7th Councilor District, the 2nd Worcester State Senatorial District, the 17th Worcester Representative District, and the Worcester Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area.

The town has three distinct villages: Leicester Center, Cherry Valley (on the east side of town, near Worcester), and Rochdale (a crossroads in the southeast, near the Oxford line, that includes Greenville). The village boundaries are legacies of past settlement patterns and have no official standing, but nevertheless provide many residents with a sense of place and identity. Historically a quiet rural community, Leicester saw significant population growth in a period of suburbanization in the second half of the twentieth century.

Two state highways (Routes 9 and 56) bisect the town, dividing it roughly into quarters. These roads carry considerable amounts of traffic to the Massachusetts Turnpike and to Worcester, the major employment center in Central Massachusetts. Worcester has historically looked to Leicester to supply its drinking water, as well as open space and recreational opportunities. Most of Worcester's Kettle Brook water reservoir system, including the Lynde Brook Reservoir, is in Leicester, along with much of the Worcester Regional Airport property. Leicester also shares a border with Paxton, Spencer, Charlton, Oxford, and Auburn. **Map 1 - Regional Context Map** (Appendix A) shows Leicester's location in proximity to its nearby communities and highways.

Leicester is a member of the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC), which encompasses the southern two-thirds of Worcester County. CMRPC regularly works on statewide and regional planning initiatives to assist communities in meeting the challenges of future growth. Recent initiatives related to land use in Leicester include Central Thirteen Prioritization Project and the Leicester Water Resource Project. The Central Thirteen project, completed in 2012, identified Priority Development Areas and Priority Preservation Areas in each of the communities in the study area. The Central Thirteen Region is comprised of the following communities: Auburn, Boylston, Charlton, Dudley, Holden, Leicester, Oxford, Paxton, Southbridge, Spencer, Sturbridge, Webster, and West Boylston. Leicester Center and a portion of Route 56 south of the Town Center were later designated as Regionally Significant Priority Development Areas. In addition, five areas in Leicester were designated as regionally significant Priority Preservation Areas: Johnson Farm, Mannville, Ballard Hill, Cooper's Hill Top Farm, and the Mid-State Trail.

Leicester, along with 23 other cities and towns, is part of the part of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor. The Corridor, an affiliated area of the National Park Service, was established by Congress in 1986 to tell the story of the American Industrial Revolution, promote

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the environmental recovery of the Blackstone River, and encourage preservation of historic resources in the Corridor. The Corridor is currently managed by the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, Inc. (Blackstone Heritage Corridor), a non-profit.

Leicester's regional context, including proximity to the City of Worcester and transportation access, provide potential for future development pressure. Maintaining recreational spaces and preserving open spaces and environmentally sensitive areas should be a priority as further development occurs.

In addition, Leicester's water bodies should be protected to continue to serve the needs of Leicester residents and residents of neighboring communities.

## History of the Community

Settled at the crossroads of ancient Nipmuc trails and incorporated in 1713, Leicester is older than the United States which it helped to found, with its militia and minutemen playing an important role founding at the pivotal battles of Lexington and Concord. It was a Leicester resident, Colonel William Henshaw, who coined the phrase "minute men" at a Committee of Safety held in Worcester in 1774. Leicester sits at the headwaters of the Blackstone River, the "Birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution" and America's "Hardest Working River." Leicester's early growth and development can be traced to these abundant water resources found within its borders. Settled as a farming community, Leicester became an important center of the early period of America's Industrial Revolution, manufacturing hand cards for the textile industry. Today, although Leicester is no longer an industrial center, its waterways continue to suffer the effects of this early period of industrial development.

Oraskaso, a Nipmuc Sachem, sold the land that would one day become Leicester (an area originally known as "Towtaid") to colonists to establish a buffer against marauding Mohawks (Washborn, 1860). By the mid-seventeenth century, agrarian European settlement displaced the local Nipmuc population who had fished and farmed the fertile floodplains for thousands of years.

European farmers settled Leicester in the early 1700s, the only flourishing colonial community between Worcester and the Connecticut River during the early years. Eventually, roads were developed between these farms to facilitate marketing; these roads still exist as Routes 9 and 56.

Local tradition holds that "plot one," where the Reverend Samuel May's house stands, was the site of the first residence in the community; the original house, however, no longer exists. Samuel May was a pastor and active abolitionist in the 1860s, and the May House, now the property of Becker College, was a stop on the Underground Railroad. The oldest house remaining in town, the Henshaw Place near Henshaw Pond, was built in 1720 by one of the original town proprietors, Judge Menzies.

Established on February 15, 1714, and incorporated as a town on June 14, 1722, Leicester still has an open town meeting form of government headed by a five-member Board of Selectmen. The first recorded Town Meeting was held on March 17, 1722.

Religion played an important part in the early life of the town. One of the earliest buildings was the Congregational Meeting House, constructed before 1722. In 1736 a society of Baptists formed in Greenville, where they continue to this day, although not in the original building. The Society of Friends had a meetinghouse as early as 1732. The Episcopal Church was formed in Clappville

(now Rochdale) in 1823 and the church building (the oldest in the county) was consecrated in May 1824.

The Unitarians organized their society on April 30, 1833, and built a church, which is still in use on the Town Common. In 1846, the Methodists built two town meeting houses: one in Cherry Valley, the other in the center of town. The first Catholic Church, built in 1855, was eventually moved to Rochdale. Architect Elbridge Boyden, who also designed the famous Mechanics Hall in Worcester, designed the brick church currently used, which replaced the original building. Churches and their grounds continue to serve as centers of many social and recreational activities in the town.

The floodplains were cleared of forests and plowed, and the early European settlers harnessed the rivers. This represents the first “layer” of land-use practices that still affect Leicester’s open spaces and development today, with a legacy of stone walls and the second-growth forest on former fields characteristic of much of New England. Small sawmills, gristmills, and forges furnished materials needed on the farms. In 1790, Samuel Slater built the first American water-powered textile mill, in the Blackstone River Valley in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, establishing the first manifestation of the industrial revolution on this continent. The mills and the accompanying mill villages were built to implement a set of business practices that came to be known as the Rhode Island system of production: small, independently owned mills, each with exclusive water power supplies, with the families of the labor force housed in the adjacent villages. Examples are evident throughout the region and Rochdale is an important example within Leicester. Today the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor recognizes the important cultural contributions of this region to our national history. The Corridor also serves to identify and address the effects of industrial development on the natural resources of the region, especially the waterways.

By 1814, all available dam sites were occupied on the Blackstone River. This era represents a second historical “layer” of environmental impacts on the land that are still of consequence today. As mills and villages were established to harvest the waterpower, structures were built within, immediately beside, and overhanging the water. The moving water was intercepted to provide power to run the mill machinery and used as a disposal system for both human and industrial wastes. Flood storage capacity for the river, habitat for native plants and animals, and breeding grounds for wetland species were eliminated as development displaced riparian areas. Today this history manifests itself not only with continuing issues surrounding water quality, but also with private ownership of many dams and the lands surrounding Leicester’s many water bodies. This complicates conservation efforts and restricts public access to water resources.

Before cotton and wool fibers could be spun into threads to be woven into cloth, they were untangled and straightened by means of leather “cards” set with bent wire teeth. These cards were manufactured in Leicester. By 1826, card manufacturing establishments in Leicester were powered mainly by water, sometimes by hand or by steam. As the century progressed, the mills gradually shifted from water to steam power. The high brick chimneys typical of mill boiler houses were once a prominent feature of Leicester, but few remain today. One chimney, in ruin, still stands over the remains of the mills on Rawson Street by Rawson Brook. Today, silted ponds and numerous dilapidated dams remain as a legacy of the mills.

While Leicester dominated the early manufacture of hand and machine cards, accompanying industry sprang up in town. By the early 1800s, Worcester began producing textile machinery, eventually surpassing Leicester in card production, and the manufacture of spinning, weaving,



and shearing machines. Footwear production replaced card production in Leicester, and the production of wire products increased.

The completion of the Blackstone Canal and the Providence & Worcester Railroad solidified the centralization of administration and transportation in Worcester that exists today. From the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, Worcester began acquiring the waterways in Leicester in order to establish a reservoir system for its growing population. This period coincided with the end of Leicester's hydro-industrialization.

Following World War Two, Leicester saw a boom in population as suburban developments sprang up throughout town. These developments, with their resource-intensive design features, represent a third "layer" of historical land-use, with implications still being felt today (discussed below, Section 3, subsection D, Growth and Development Trends).

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Leicester's Town Common has been the center of life in town for nearly 300 years and was recently listed on the National Register of Historic Places. As a crossroads, it was the site for the meetinghouse and several taverns, along with a few small shops. ~~The Common has also been a center of education since 1784 when Leicester Academy was established.~~

~~Today, Becker College sits on the eastern side of the Common and owns many of the historic buildings along Main Street. Becker College and its predecessor, the Leicester Academy, operated in Leicester from 1794 to 2021. The College owns a substantial amount of property in the Town, including a campus complex located just off the Town Common that covers 44 acres (Sager, 2021). The institution was an important economic and social driver for the Town, and its absence in Leicester will be missed. The Town is currently exploring ideas for redeveloping the property.~~

## Population Characteristics

According to the 2014-2019 ACS 5-year survey, Leicester's total population ~~of~~is estimated to be 11,306 ~~in 2019, which showed~~shows modest population growth since 2010, when total population was 10,970. Leicester's population has seen a steady increase over a long period of time ~~as shown~~Table 1. The fastest rate of population growth in Leicester between 1920 and 2000 occurred between 1950 and 1960, when population grew by 35.6 percent in only ten years.

In recent decades, growth has been more modest. Compared to similar-sized communities in the region, Leicester's population is experiencing relatively slow growth (see Table 1).

Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) projections ~~place~~project Leicester's population ~~to be at~~ 12,360 in 2035, which would be an increase of 13% over 2010 population levels. Separate pPopulation projections prepared by the Donahue Institute in 2018 also show Leicester's population increasing slightly until 2040 to 11,898 (UMass Dohahue Institute, n.d.).

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Table 1: Population Size and Percent Change - Leicester & Comparable Communities (Figures in parentheses represent growth over previous decade)

Year	Charlton	Dudley	Leicester	Oxford	Spencer	Uxbridge	Webster
1980	6,719	8,717	9,446	11,680	10,774	8,374	14,480
1990	9,576 (42.5%)	9,540 (9.4%)	10,191 (7.9%)	12,588 (7.8%)	11,645 (8.0%)	10,415 (24.4%)	16,196 (11.8%)
2000	11,263 (17.6%)	10,036 (5.2%)	10,471 (2.7%)	13,352 (6.1%)	11,691 (0.4%)	11,156 (7.1%)	16,145 (-.3%)
2010	12,981 (15.3%)	11,390 (13.5%)	10,970 (4.8%)	13,709 (2.7%)	11,688 (0%)	13,457 (20.6%)	16,767 (3.9%)
2019	13,550 (4.4%)	11,723 (2.9%)	11,306 (3.1%)	13,974 (1.9%)	11,928 (2.1%)	13,993 (4%)	16,973 (1.2%)

Source: Decennial Census and American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates Source: (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.) US Census Bureau  
Years: 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010 and 2015-2019 ACS

Density figures provide an understanding of how Leicester has changed over the years. The 24.68 square miles of the town support a current average density of 458 persons per square mile. This is more than double the 1940 density figure of 197 persons per square mile (US Census). Much of this increase has occurred in suburban housing developments, with attendant environmental and municipal costs (discussed below, Section 3, subsection D, Growth and Development Trends).

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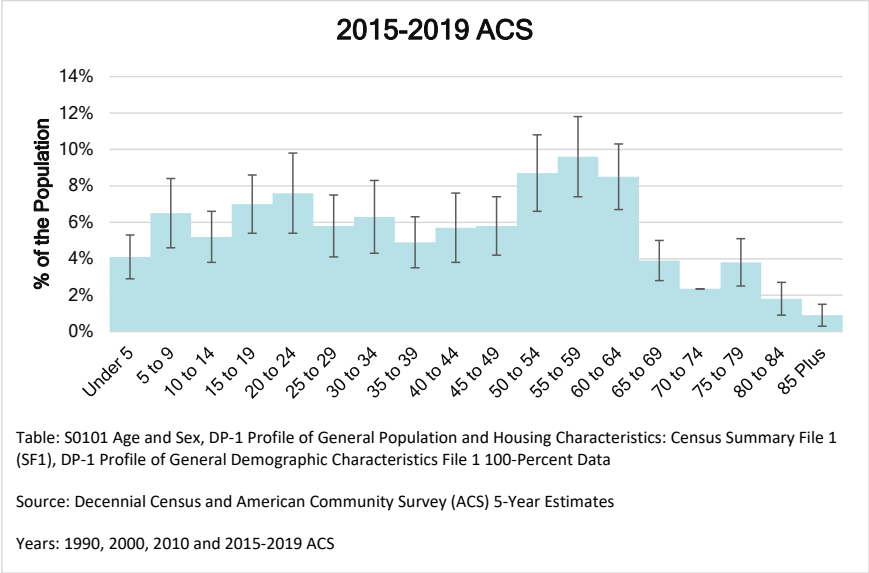
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The 2015-2019 American Community Survey reported 4,070 households in Leicester, of which 27.7% had children under the age of 18. The average household size of 2.66 persons has remained constant from 2.64 in 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.-c). However, as shown in Figure 1, Leicester's population is aging. Between 2010 and 2019, the population over age 65 has increased from 13.2% to 14.4%, while percentages of residents in other age groups have declined (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.-a). Meanwhile, the median age of Leicester residents has increased from 40.3 to 42.5. The overall age profile of Leicester residents is somewhat relatively consistent with the broader overall population of Massachusetts, which had a higher percent of residents over age 65 in 2019 (17%) but a similar median age in 2019 of 39.7 (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.-a).

Figure 1: Leicester Age Breakdown for 2015-2019 from the American Community Survey (with margin of error band)





~~While consideration must be given to the needs of all community members, funding is always a limitation, so demographic~~Demographic considerations ~~can guide~~can be a guiding factor in a town's decision making ~~when it comes to~~ ensure choices that best meeting the needs of its citizens. Leicester's aging population suggests that special attention be given to appropriate recreational opportunities, such as hiking, walking, and birdwatching. Survey respondents indicated walking (and dog-walking) as the most popular recreational activity in Leicester, ~~after~~ while sightseeing and birdwatching, gardening, and hiking, were also very popular.

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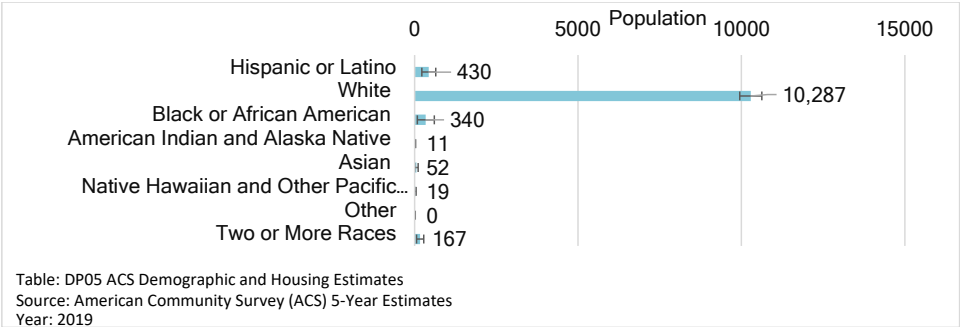
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The 2019 American Community Survey reported 4,070 households in Leicester, of which 27.7% had children under the age of 18. The average household size of 2.66 persons has remained constant from 2.64 in 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d. b). As shown in Table 2, Leicester's population is predominately white. Around 4% of the Town's population identifies as Hispanic or Latino, and 3% of the population identifies as Black or African American, according to the 2015-2019 ACS 5-Year Estimate.

Table 2: Leicester Population by Race 2019 (Race alone or in combination with one or more other races)



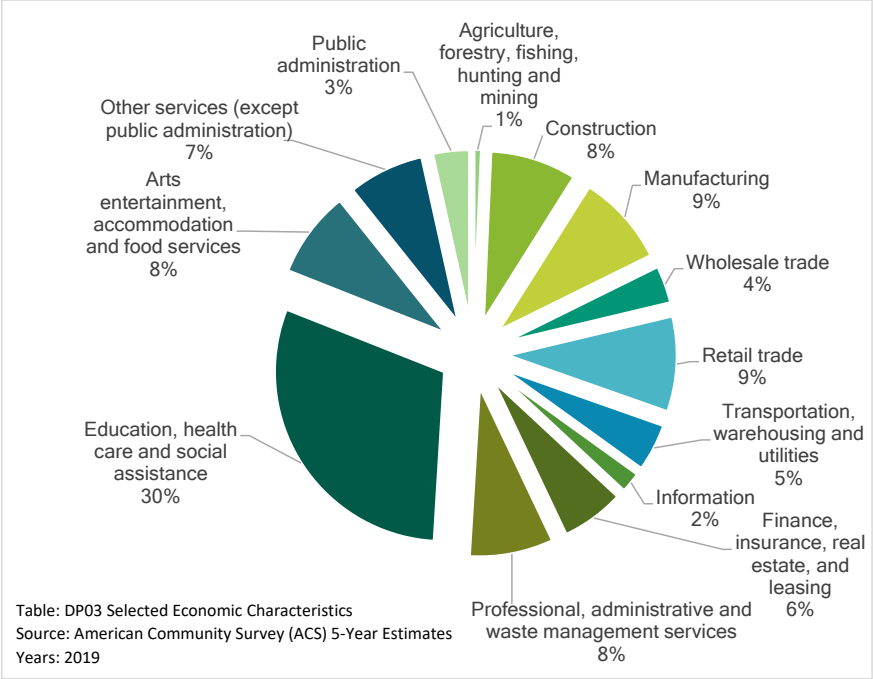
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Leicester ~~was~~ historically a farming community, currently ~~has~~ only 1% of its workforce ~~is~~ employed in the agricultural sector (see below). The largest category of employment, at 30%, is ~~“Educational Services, Health Care, and Social Assistance,”~~ followed by Retail Trade (9%) and Manufacturing (9%).

Figure 22: Estimated Leicester Employment by Industry, 2015-2019 (Civilian Employed Population 16 years and ~~o~~Over)



Source: ~~US Census Bureau, 2008-2012 American Community Survey~~

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As shown in Table 3, Leicester's largest employers ~~include a variety of industry types~~ cover a variety of industries, including retail, medicine, education, and a variety of local services.

Table 3: Largest 25 Employers in Leicester (2021)

Company Name	Address	# of Employees	Industry
<b>Walmart Supercenter</b>	<u>Soojian Dr</u>	<u>250-499</u>	<u>Department Stores</u>
<b>Vibra Hospital of Western MA</b>	<u>Huntoon Memorial Hwy</u>	<u>100-249</u>	<u>General Medical and Surgical Hospitals</u>
<b>Archway Inc</b>	Mulberry St	50-99	Individual and Family Services
<b>Leicester High School</b>	Paxton St	50-99	Elementary and Secondary Schools
<b>Leicester Memorial School</b>	Memorial Dr	50-99	Elementary and Secondary Schools
<b>Leicester Primary School</b>	Paxton St	50-99	Elementary and Secondary Schools
<b>Leicester Town Ambulance</b>	Washburn Sq	50-99	Other Ambulatory Health Care Services
<b>Lusignan Security Agency</b>	Pleasant St	50-99	Investigation and Security Services
<b>American Alarm &amp; Comms Inc</b>	Grove St	20-49	Household Appliances and Electrical and Electronic Goods Merchant Wholesalers
<b>Barbers Crossing Road House</b>	Main St	20-49	Restaurants and Other Eating Places
<b>Becker College</b>	Main St	20-49	Other Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
<b>Camp Wind In the Pines</b>	Parker St	20-49	RV (Recreational Vehicle) Parks and Recreational Camps
<b>Country Bank For Savings</b>	Main St	20-49	Depository Credit Intermediation
<b>Dunkin'</b>	Main St	20-49	Restaurants and Other Eating Places
<b>Eden Healthcare Svc Inc</b>	Main St # 3	20-49	Home Health Care Services
<b>Giguere's</b>	Main St	20-49	Other Schools and Instruction
<b>Leicester Middle School</b>	Winslow Ave	20-49	Elementary and Secondary Schools
<b>Leicester Police Dept</b>	S Main St	20-49	Justice, Public Order, and Safety Activities
<b>Liberty Movers Inc Bekins Agnt</b>	Huntoon Memorial Hwy	20-49	General Freight Trucking
<b>Lincare</b>	Main St # 2	20-49	Health and Personal Care Stores
<b>Accu Trak Tool Corp</b>	Stafford St	10-19	Cutlery and Handtool Manufacturing
<b>Castle Restaurant</b>	Main St # 9	10-19	Restaurants and Other Eating Places
<b>Leicester Country Club</b>	Main St	10-19	Other Amusement and Recreation Industries
<b>Leicester Gymnasium</b>	Main St	10-19	Promoters of Performing Arts, Sports, and Similar Events
<b>Mcdonald Heating A C &amp; Plbg</b>	Main St	10-19	Building Equipment Contractors

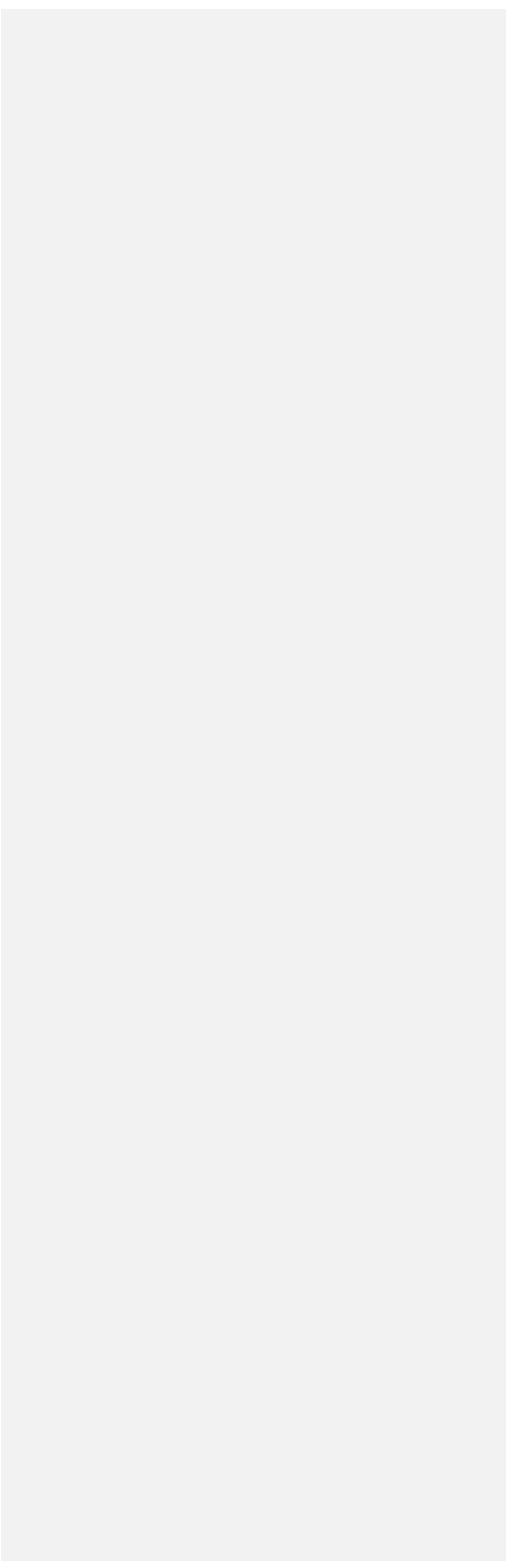
Source: ~~Executive Office of Labor & Workforce Development (EOLWD)~~ (Largest 25 Employers in Leicester, n.d.)

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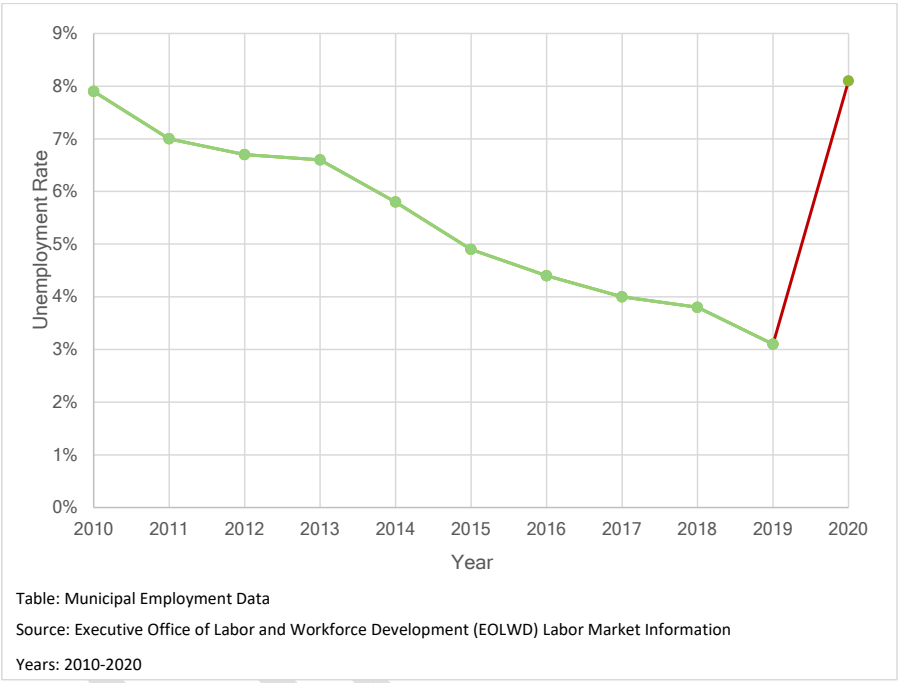


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Data for 2010 show the Town's 6,390 person labor force had a 7.9% unemployment rate. As shown in , Leicester's unemployment gradually decreased over the next several years, then rose to a peak of 8.1% in 2020, during the coronavirus pandemic. However, this recent peak was lower than Leicester's 2009 unemployment rate of 8.9%. Leicester had a total of 6,546 people in the labor force in 2020, declining from a peak of 6,837 in 2018.

Figure 3: Average Unemployment Rate



According to the 2015-2019 American Community Survey, the estimated median household income of Leicester is \$88,505, slightly higher than the Massachusetts median household income of \$81,215 (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.-e). Over the same period, the percentage of the population under the poverty line increased to 6.1% from 4.5% in 2012 (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.-d). The rise in median income combined with an increasing population living below the poverty level suggests that financial inequality is becoming more prevalent in Leicester.

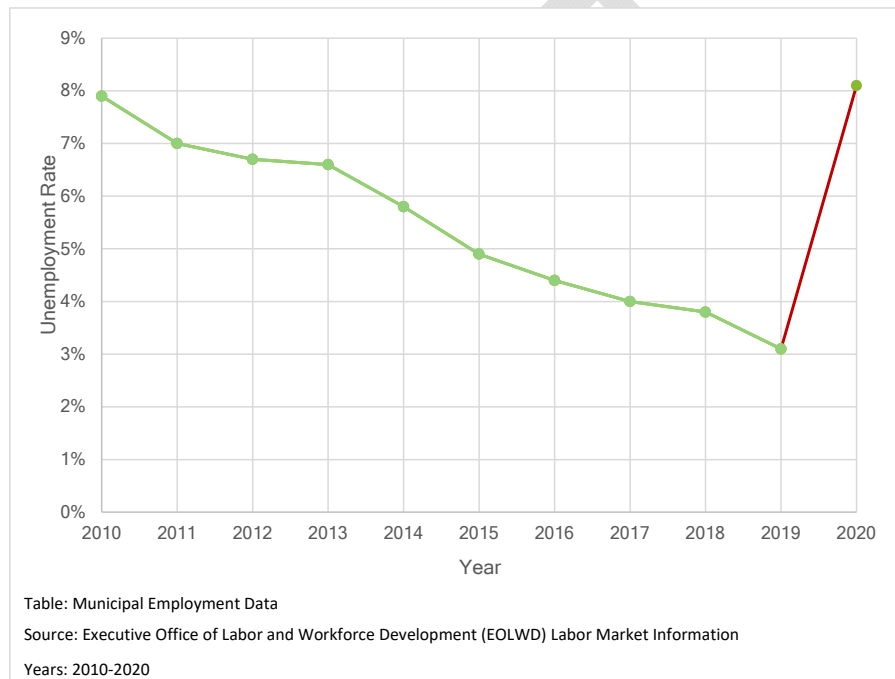
A requirement of Open Space and Recreation Plans is that special attention be given to designated Environmental Justice Populations. Environmental Justice Populations are those that meet certain demographic criteria, and that have historically been underserved by public spending on open space protection, recreational opportunity, and environmental quality. Leicester's Environmental Justice Population meets the income criteria, meaning that the median income of the census block in question (encompassing Town Center, Hillcrest, Henshaw Pond, and Five Points area - See Map 2, Environmental Justice) is under \$40,756 (65% of the state median income of \$62,702 in 2010).

**Commented [MHS4]:** If new census data is published prior to OSRP, need to check this section. It seems like area may have changed a lot over last 10 years.

Environmental Justice populations are designated using the decennial census, and data from the 2020 census is not yet available. In the most recent American Community Survey 5-year estimate covering 2015-2019, the median household income in this area was \$71,389. The American Community Survey median income is less precise estimate than the decennial census, and has a significant margin of error. However, the general increase in median income in this area over the period of several ACS 5-year estimates (see Figure 4) could indicate that the population of this area is changing.

From 2015-2019, the estimated median household income of Leicester is \$88,505, higher than the Massachusetts median household income of \$81,215 (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d. e). Over the same time period, 6.1% of the population was under the poverty line, increasing over the year 2012 when the percentage was 4.5% (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d. d).

Figure 3: Average Unemployment Rate



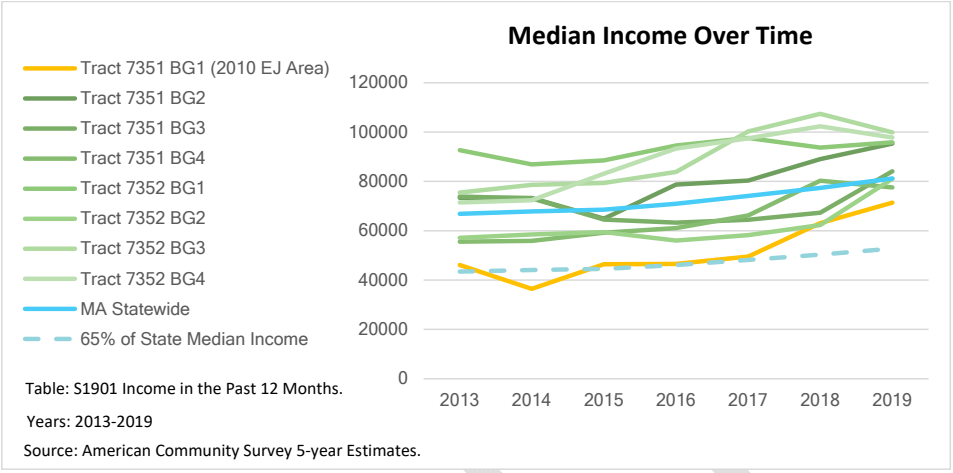
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**Commented [MHS6R5]:** Is this population (and median income) driven by Becker College students? This BG has much lower median age than elsewhere in town

**Commented [MHS7]:** If new census data is published prior to OSRP, need to check this section. It seems like area may have changed a lot over last 10 years.

Figure 4: Median income by Leicester block group (BG), with statewide median income for reference.



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It should be mentioned that households that fit the income and other criteria are found throughout Leicester, and not only in this block group, which only designates a statistical concentration. Several hundred other households in Leicester also fall below 65% of state median income (US Census). Nevertheless, efforts to expand open space and recreational opportunities should be sure to include Leicester's Environmental Justice Area, with focus on park revitalization, and improving pedestrian connections between residential and recreational areas.

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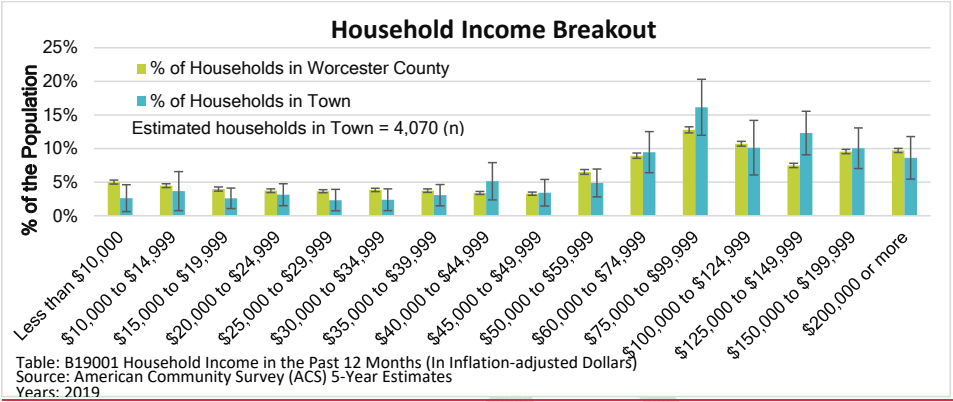
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The median household income of this Environmental Justice census block is only 51% of the state median, or \$31,875. It should be mentioned that households that fit the income and other criteria are found throughout Leicester, and not only in this block, which only designates a statistical concentration. Several hundred other households in Leicester also fall below 66% of state median income (US Census). Efforts to expand open space and recreational opportunities should be sure to include Leicester's Environmental Justice Area, with focus on park revitalization and improving connections between residential and recreational areas.

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Figure 5: Income breakout across all Leicester households.



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The vast majority of Leicester's workforce (87.5%) works within Worcester County, while 11.9% works outside Worcester County. The mean travel time to work is 31.9 minutes, with 20.3% of workers having a travel time of 45 minutes or longer. This is a point of concern for Leicester's tax base, which does not enjoy the tax proceeds of the economic activity generated by the town's commuting workforce. Many commuters (81.1%) drove alone to work, with only 9.4% carpooling, 2.6% walking, and only 1.2% taking public transportation (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.-b).

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The lack of employment options is also an issue of special concern for low-income members of the community, who may not have the necessary resources to support a daily commute, or access to public transportation needed to sustain employment. Pedestrian access throughout town, a need highlighted in the 2009 Master Plan, could provide important social, recreational, and economic opportunities for all segments of society, but especially benefits this demographic. Pedestrian access is not just a pleasant luxury; it plays an important role in the health of a town's people, its society, and economy.

## Growth and Development Trends

### Patterns and Trends

Massachusetts is the third-most populated state in the United States, with its cities forming part of what is designated by the Census Bureau as a "Combined Metropolitan Statistical Area," a designation that acknowledges urban areas that have expanded and merged over recent decades, providing a more or less contiguous urban corridor stretching from Washington, DC, all the way up to Maine. Leicester's demographic and open space future is intimately tied with the growth and development of this urban corridor, as Leicester sits right at the interface between this urban belt and the more open, rural areas further west.

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Historically, Leicester has experienced slow, steady growth. The areas of population density mirror the historic villages built around former mills in Cherry Valley, Rochdale, and Leicester Center.

Leicester was once part of neighboring Spencer, and the neighborhoods including Leicester Center, Cherry Valley and Rochdale were once independent villages clustered around industrial mills (Town of Leicester, Massachusetts, 2009). Most of Leicester's villages remained an active

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part of local identity until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century and some residents today still identify with their local village (Town of Leicester, n.d.).

Historically, slow growth had allowed Leicester to maintain and enjoy a rural atmosphere. In the twentieth century, the population of Leicester boomed as suburban developments sprang up throughout the central and southern portions of town. These post-war settlements, while providing needed housing and supporting economic growth in the town, also created environmental and economic impacts such as resource-intensive lawns that negatively impact water quality, and an extensive system of roads and streetlights that require regular and costly maintenance.

Leicester was once part of neighboring Spencer, and Cherry Valley and Rochdale were once independent villages (Town of Leicester, Massachusetts, 2009). Many residents today still identify with their own village (Town of Leicester, n.d.). Leicester is home to three water districts and four sewer districts, and has three zip codes. This historical shifting of administrative centers over time has likely contributed to a pattern of settlement more dispersed than is typical of New England towns settled before trains and automobiles, and this may play a role in explaining some of the town's infrastructure issues (discussed below, and in more detail in the 2009 Master Plan), as well as its social and political dynamics.

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Though somewhat constrained by the lack of water and sewer in much of the Town, new residential subdivisions continued to be developed regularly until roughly 2005, when housing development slowed considerably in Leicester. Land use changes have historically taken place over long periods of time. Today's technology allows these changes to occur much more rapidly, and for building to take place on more marginal lands. Low-density housing subdivisions away from traditional neighborhood centers have dominated residential development for several decades. New commercial development in recent decades has typically been along Leicester's major roadways on undeveloped lands rather than on former industrial sites such as mill complexes or commercial centers.

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major roadways on undeveloped lands rather than on former industrial sites such as mill complexes or commercial centers.

Development is concentrated in the central and southern portions of town along Route 9 and Route 56. Most recent construction is on frontage lots on established roads. This pattern of development fragments open space and leaves large unbuilt areas behind the frontage strips, with significant environmental impacts. Contiguous open spaces provide greater ecological value, as plants and animals are able to migrate freely through these areas, and ecological processes unfold with less interference. In much the same way, this pattern fragments the traditional New England landscape by converting farmlands to suburbs and cutting roads through the forest. Adoption of new zoning regulations that concentrate development and protect contiguous open spaces is one way to address this pattern of development, while simultaneously promoting sustainable economic development. These land use patterns in Leicester mirror the changes in the region. As agriculture has declined, open space and scenic landscapes have been lost.

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Housing development in Leicester has slowed considerably in the last several years due to the economic downturn (discussed in more detail later in this section, see Long Term Growth and Development Patterns). Development can be expected to resume as the economy improves, though demographic and economic changes may result in demand for different types of housing than large-lot single family housing. Areas in the region expected to experience the most commercial development growth over the next several years are those near the eastern boundary of Worcester along Route 9, and along Route 56 near the southern boundary, via the Massachusetts Turnpike (CMRPC).

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Developed land constitutes approximately 14% of Leicester, and is concentrated in the central and southern portions of town. Most recent construction is on frontage lots on established roads. This pattern of development fragments open space and leaves large unbuilt areas behind the frontage strips, with significant environmental impacts. Contiguous open spaces provide greater ecological value, as plants and animals are able to migrate freely through these areas, and ecological processes unfold with less interference. In much the same way, this pattern fragments the traditional New England landscape by converting farmlands to suburbs and cutting roads through the forest. Adoption of new zoning regulations that concentrate development and protect contiguous open spaces is way to address this pattern of development, while simultaneously promoting sustainable economic development.

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Between 1999 and 2005, Mass Audubon has found that [statewide] 22 acres of land were lost to development each day, mostly due to residential development. This development caused over 30,000 acres of forestland and 10,000 acres of agricultural land to be converted from open space to development. (Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan draft (SCORP 2012, p.8)

Developed land has increased, along with car-oriented commercial uses and the accompanying impervious surfaces. An impervious surface is any surface which impedes or prevents the natural infiltration of water into the soil.

Table 5: Impervious Surface Area by Town, Leicester & Surrounding Communities

Town	Total Impervious	Percent of Total Acres
Auburn	1787.43	9.94%
Charlton	1853.82	10.31%
Leicester	902.39	5.02%
Oxford	1622.49	9.03%
Paxton	462.51	2.57%
Spencer	1293.05	7.19%
Worcester	8786.92	48.88%

Housing demand in Leicester has been consistently high in recent years, especially for single-family homes (Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, 2017). However, single-family home construction has lagged below the regional average and has slowed relative to historic levels (Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, 2017). One local factor that may constrain growth is local zoning. According to a recent report from the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (2017), Leicester has relatively large minimum lot sizes, relatively small maximum lot coverages in any zone, and no areas where multi-family housing is allowed by right.

Leicester's residential construction may also be constrained by the availability of water and sewage infrastructure. New houses need access to water and waste disposal but there are large areas of Leicester without public water or sewage access. Private wells and septic tanks require relatively large lots to accommodate these systems. This encourages dispersed development patterns that can fragment open space, and makes it more challenging to construct multi-family housing (Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, 2017) or cluster development. Development may also be constrained in the 44% of Town with access to public water, due to limited capacity in, and complicated governance of, Leicester's multiple water districts (see Error! Reference source not found.).

The coronavirus pandemic of 2020 could shift growth trends in Leicester. While it is too soon to predict the full impact of the pandemic on the local real estate market and broader migration trends, as of June 2021 Leicester was rated as "one of the 'hottest' towns for local real estate in Worcester County" (Sami, 2021). The surging demand for real estate in Leicester could influence the amount of new construction built in town in the coming years.

Source: Greater Leicester Water Resource Project Report, December 2010

Such surfaces include a roads, buildings, paved parking lots, sidewalks etc. Impervious surfaces exacerbate hydrological issues by altering the flow of water through the landscape. While Leicester has a relatively low percentage of impervious area compared with neighboring communities (see Table 5), it remains important to limit or appropriately mitigate additional impervious surfaces.

Typical housing subdivisions in the region consist of home sites of an acre or more. Large properties with high-maintenance lawns strain local resources, particularly water supplies. Suburban landscape practices can pollute or degrade water resources when high nitrogen fertilizers and pesticides leach into groundwater. This nutrient loading of waters can contribute to significant cumulative impacts.

Housing development in Leicester has slowed considerably in the last several years due to the economic downturn (discussed in more detail later in this section, see Long Term Growth and Development Patterns). Development can be expected to resume as the economy improves, though demographic and economic changes may result in demand for different types of housing than large-lot single family housing. Areas in the region expected to experience the most commercial development growth over the next several years are those near the eastern boundary of Worcester along Route 9, and along Route 56 near the southern boundary, via the Massachusetts Turnpike (CMRPC) (Sami, 2021)

## Infrastructure

### Transportation

The principal highways through Leicester are Massachusetts Route 9, which runs east-west through the state, and Massachusetts Route 56, running north-south. The Massachusetts Turnpike (Interstate 90) passes near the southern boundary of the town and is easily accessible from Route 56 through Auburn. Leicester is served by the Worcester Regional Transit Authority with regular

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daily bus service along Route 9 providing service to Union Station in Worcester to the east, and to Spencer and the Brookfields to the west.

Traffic is a **growing** concern for Leicester residents, particularly along Route 9. A Wal~~m~~-Mart opened near the Spencer border in March 2007, and a traffic light was added to help manage anticipated increases in traffic volume. Data from the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, however, indicates weekday volumes (combined east and westbound vehicles) on Route 9 have shown **generally** modest changes since 2006/2007. ~~For example, traffic counts for traffic east of Route 56 were 13,453 in 2007 and 13,876 in 2010 (a 3% increase). Traffic volumes at the Spencer Town line and the Worcester city line have actually decreased slightly in recent years, likely due to the economic downturn.~~

Table 6: Selected Traffic Counts, Route 9 Leicester

Table 4: Selected Traffic Counts, Route 9 Leicester

Location	Date	Total Traffic
Route 9 at Worcester city line	2006	17,102
	200910	16,499
	2012	16,406
	2015	17,306
	2018	17,121
Route 9 at Spencer town line	2007	14,012
	2010	13,471
	2016	14,399
	Route 9, East of Route 56	
	2007	13,453
	2010	13,876
	2019	15,900

Source: (Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization, 2019) ~~CMRPC, Daily Traffic Counts and Peak Period Turning Moving Counts, 2011~~

The 2009 Master Plan includes the following recommendation: “facilitate pedestrian access Town-wide for all ages of the population” (p. 5-10). The Master Plan observes, however that:

“the majority of Leicester roadways are narrow, rural roadways. The Planning Board requires sidewalks in new subdivisions, but most existing local roads outside of Leicester Center do not have sidewalks. Most of Leicester’s roadways are also not suitable for safe bicycle transportation. The speed of automobile traffic is also a common area of concern among residents. These conditions discourage pedestrian and bicycle transportation (p. 5-7).”

Public transit and pedestrian access are particularly important resources for low-income members of a community. Since publishing its 2009 Master Plan, Leicester commissioned a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan, which recommended pedestrian and cycling infrastructure improvements at specific locations in town. This study found that many of the suburban or rural in town are suitable for cycling given their width and low volumes of traffic, however, several especially narrow and winding roads in town were rated as less safe given their limited lines of site and lack of shoulder (Howard Stein Hudson, 2018).The Leicester Complete Streets Prioritization Plan (2018) also confirmed that in many areas the sidewalk network is disjointed, in poor condition, or may be difficult to navigate with wheelchairs or strollers. In 2019, the Town was awarded a Complete

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Streets Grant to improve sidewalk conditions and install a shared-use path around the Town Common.

## **Water Supply Systems**

There are three existing water districts that service different portions of Leicester: Cherry Valley/Rochdale Water District, Hillcrest Water District, and the Leicester Water Supply District. Each of these districts is separately administered ~~and maintains~~ and operates their own facilities for water service. However, the Town has commissioned multiple studies in recent years to assess the health of its water districts and the feasibility of various improvements. At present, a study led by the engineering firm Weston and Sampson is exploring the potential of consolidating water districts (Weston & Sampson, 2021). The project is still underway but may lead to future changes in Leicester's water system to improve service, manage infrastructure costs, and ensure town residents have a sustainable water supply.

~~-Water lines serve the majority of existing structures in the eastern, central, and southern sections of Leicester. In addition, the Moose Hill Reservoir is a potential future source of water, and is overseen by the Moose Hill Water Commission.~~

Existing water lines serve most properties in the eastern, central, and southern sections of Leicester along Route 9 and along Route 56 south of Leicester Center. While these ~~more~~ densely settled areas of Leicester are served by water lines, the ~~vast~~ majority of vacant developable land in Leicester has no water service. Private wells serve most new residential developments over the last few decades.

~~Seven-Several~~ of the town's twenty-six water bodies serve as drinking water reservoirs for Leicester and the neighboring communities of Spencer and Worcester. In addition, the Moose Hill Reservoir is a potential future source of water and is overseen by the Moose Hill Water Commission. However, the availability of water is a concern for Leicester's water districts. The Cherry Valley/Rochdale Water District currently draws its entire supply from Worcester, while the Hillcrest Water District draws most of its supply from the Leicester Water Supply District. The Leicester Water Supply District is also pursuing an interconnection with Worcester to supplement its wells (Weston & Sampson, 2021).

~~-As water needs in the region increase-change over time and drought conditions become more common due to climate change,-~~ Leicester's ~~waters-water sources~~ will ~~play an increasingly important role, and~~ become increasingly valuable, both to Leicester and communities downstream. "[Protecting] the Town's surface water and groundwater" was the second-most highly rated reason for protecting open space and natural areas in the 2021 Leicester OSRP survey, demonstrating that residents recognize the link between local land conservation and maintaining a healthy water supply.

## **Sewer Service/Septic Systems**

There are four existing sewer districts within the Town boundaries of Leicester: Cherry Valley Sewer District, Hillcrest Sewer District, Leicester Water Supply District, and Oxford/Rochdale Sewer District.

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Most of the land area in Leicester is not served by sewer lines, and development requires private septic systems. Title 5 of the State Environmental Code dictates proper siting, construction, upgrade, and maintenance of on-site systems. Severe limitations for septic systems due to soil conditions occur on over half of the land in Leicester, including moderately to excessively drained poor-filter soils, shallow depth-to-bedrock soils restricted by Title 5, and high-water-table soils restricted by Title 5 (see [Map 4.2, Soils & Geologic Features: Septic Suitability](#)). On-site septic systems that are not properly sited or maintained can contribute pathogens and nutrients to groundwater and surface water, endangering drinking water supplies and surface water bodies. Such “nutrient loading” can also contribute to the establishment of aquatic invasive species.

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Modification of zoning and subdivision requirements could help to channel development into areas where water and sewer services currently exist. However, having multiple independent water and sewer districts presents a challenge to the Town in its ability to effectively plan and manage long-term growth. The interests of a particular water or sewer district may or may not be consistent with Town interests and priorities. Where water and sewer is centrally managed by a community, the community can target certain areas for residential and commercial growth, and limit development in areas that are unsuitable. Fragmentation of water and sewer services makes effective long-term community wide planning for water and sewer difficult.

~~As~~ development increases in Leicester, the demand for services will also increase. These include sewers, solid waste disposal facilities, gas and electric lines, schools, and other municipal services. A more detailed assessment of town infrastructure may be found in Leicester’s 2009 Master Plan.

### Long T-erm Growth and Development Patterns

Leicester has the following Zoning Districts ([see Map 3, Zoning Map](#)):

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|--------------------------------|--|
| • Residential 1 (R1)           | • Business Residential-1 (BR-1)                          |
| • Residential 2 (R2)           | • Residential Industrial Business (RIB)                  |
| • Suburban-Agricultural (SA)   | • Highway Business-Industrial District (HB-1)            |
| • Business (B)                 | • Highway Business-Industrial District (HB-2)            |
| • Industrial (I)               | • Central Business (CB)                                  |
| • Business-Industrial-A (BI-A) | • Greenville Village Neighborhood Business District (NB) |

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• Recreation Development

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• ~~Recreational Development (RD)~~

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Additionally, there are three zoning overlay districts: the Water Resource Protection Overlay District, which limits activities for the protection of water resources within the district; the Flood Plain District, which prohibits loss of flood storage capacity; and the Adaptive Re-Use Overlay District, which allows for ~~reuse of allows~~ easier reuse of former mills, religious buildings, and former municipal building.

The Water Resource Protection Overlay District was adopted after a study was completed by Lycott Engineering in 1987. The purpose of this district is to “prevent the contamination of those areas within Leicester that contribute ground or surface water to existing or planned public water supplies,” according to the Zoning Bylaw. This district encompasses ~~much many~~ of the important water resource areas in Leicester. In this district, application of fertilizers and pesticides are

permitted only by special permit ~~only, but, and new building and subdivision are not prohibited~~ impervious surfaces are regulated. Land uses involving hazardous materials are prohibited in this zoning district. The boundaries of this district were expanded in 2002 to include the Conceptual Zone II of the Grindstone Well, a new drinking water source for the Cherry Valley and Rochdale Water District.

In 2001, the town introduced several revisions to the bylaws increasing minimum lot size in residential districts. Within the Suburban Agriculture (SA) district, the minimum lot size was increased from 50,000 to 80,000 sq. ft. The minimum lot size the Residential 1 (R1) district was increased from 20,000 to 50,000 sq. ft. (40,000 where public water and sewer are available). Increases in the minimum lot size were introduced to limit development in Leicester by reducing the total number of homes that could be built. However, this strategy may also have the effect of spreading out development, rather than concentrating development in previously-developed areas better served with existing infrastructure (roads, water, sewer, etc.)

~~While~~ Leicester has a district called the "Recreational Development District," which was designed to preserve open space and recreational opportunities by allowing concentrated residential development, though this district only encompasses the Hillcrest Country Club property. After a large subdivision was proposed on the site of the Hillcrest Country Club, the Town purchased the property so that it could be permanently protected as a recreational and water supply protection land resource.

The Town adopted an Open Space Residential Development (OSRD) Bylaw in 2009 to provide a mechanism for protecting open space in exchange for higher density residential development. No developments have been built under this bylaw to--date, likely due to the struggling housing market in Leicester in the last several years. Only one subdivision has been approved after 2009, a 23-lot subdivision approved in 2010. This development, Boutilier Estates, was designed and under review prior to adoption of the OSRD Bylaw. Boutilier Estates is the only subdivision approved in

Leicester between 2006 - present (September 2014). (A preliminary proposal for an 8-lot subdivision in 2011 has not moved forward due to litigation.)

In addition to zoning bylaws, Leicester has a separate body of Subdivision Regulations that affect residential development. These regulations specify construction standards for new subdivisions.

Currently, the Subdivision Regulations require the following basic requirements for new roadway construction:

- 40 foot minimum right-of-way
- 28 foot minimum paved surface
- 5 foot sidewalk on both sides of proposed roadways
- 500 foot dead-end limit
- Underground utilities
- Streetlights at the end of cul-de-sacs and at intersections

Changes to the Subdivision Regulations, such as narrower roadway pavement requirements, updated stormwater management requirements, and adoption of low impact development practices, could reduce the environmental impacts of new subdivisions allowing for continued

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growth while protecting Leicester's highly valued open spaces (see the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission's online Smart Growth Toolbox, and the Massachusetts EOEEA's Smart Growth/Smart Energy Toolkit for further information, case studies, and sample language). Comprehensive revisions to the Subdivision Regulations are currently being considered by the Planning Board, with completion anticipated in 2015.

As previously noted, housing development has slowed significantly in Leicester in recent years. Figure 5 shows housing units authorized by building permits from 2000 through 2013, which have declined from a high of 65 housing units in 2003 to a low of only 7 housing units in 2010. The number of building permits for residential units has only increased slightly since 2010. Ten (10) housing units have been authorized by building permits in 2014 (through 8/31/2014).

The majority of permits issued between 2004 - 2006 were for multi-family (2-4 unit structure) senior housing developments. There are currently four unfinished residential subdivisions throughout Leicester with 79 remaining lots/units available for building (see Table 7). With the exception of Oakridge Estates, there has been essentially no development in these projects in several years.

There are no pending subdivision applications. ANR lot development (development along existing roads, rather than on new subdivision roads) has also been relatively slow in recent years, though there was an increase in 2014. Between 2008 and August 2014, 37 new building lots have been created with ANR Plans, as shown in Figure 6.

Table 7: Unfinished Residential Subdivisions in Leicester

	Date of	Number of Units Approved	Number of	Remaining Units Available for building*
Boutilier	2010	23	0	23
Briarcliff (senior dev.)	2004	34	8	26
Hammond Street	2008	2	0	2
Oakridge Estates (senior)	2004	74	46	28
Total		133	54	79

\*As of August 2014

Source: Leicester Planning Board Subdivision database and Building Permit records

Even with Leicester's current Zoning Bylaws, existing protected land, and lands protected by the Wetlands Protection Act, the town could still lose much of its fields, farms, forests, and other open spaces if the town were built out to maximum capacity under existing zoning laws. The town would see considerable degradation of its open space, with severe impacts in many areas. CMRPC completed a build-out analysis as part of the 2010 Greater Leicester Water Resources Project. As described in this report:

"A build-out analysis does not attempt to estimate when or if a community will reach full build-out - it simply attempts to describe what the community would look like if it were fully built out according to the town's current zoning policies" (p.6).

The results of this analysis show that Leicester's potential population could grow as high as 24,088 people, more than twice what it is today, at full build-out under Leicester's zoning. It should be noted that this buildout was based on 1999/2000 data. Since that time, Leicester has increased

lot sizes for residential development in three zoning districts (SA, R1, and R2). This would reduce the total population at buildout.

Fortunately, recent zoning changes provide promising opportunities for smart growth in Leicester. These changes illustrate Leicester's attempt to direct growth in a way that provides appropriately for a growing population, while preserving the open space and recreational opportunities that make the town appealing. Encouraging the re-use of existing buildings and allowing higher density development, (with provisions that large tracts of open space be preserved and natural resources be protected) can accommodate a growing population without greatly adding to the amount of developed land.

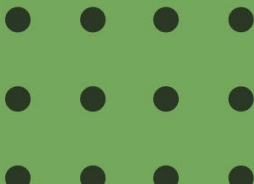
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# SECTION 5 LAND INVENTORY



## SECTION 5. INVENTORY OF LANDS OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION INTEREST

This section provides an overview of Leicester's open space. Leicester's conservation and recreation lands encompass 2,619 acres, 16.4% of the town's total land area. Open space includes larger parcels of undeveloped or partially developed land. Open space is important to the Town of Leicester for several reasons. Open space improves the quality of life for residents, providing recreational opportunities, scenic views, and places to simply enjoy the outdoors. Parks can provide health benefits by providing places for active recreation, as well as providing places for social gathering. Open spaces also provide valuable wildlife habitat, help to protect water resources, and provide natural stormwater storage. Protection of open space is an important Town priority.

Leicester's open space resources have various levels of protection. Permanently protected open space lands have the maximum legal protection and are protected by permanent deed restrictions that restrict development. Temporary protections on open space include protected lands which have a legal protection of a set term (temporary easements), or with conditions for conversion to other uses but which may be converted at any time (such as land protected by Chapter 61). Unprotected open space is land with no legal restriction against future development. These properties may be currently protected but could be sold or developed at any time.

Ninety-two percent of 2014 survey respondents polled feel there is a need to protect Leicester's open space. In addition, 93% are in favor of a town trail system that would connect parks and established trailheads, and 70% of respondents said they would be willing to pay higher taxes or user fees to support the maintenance of Leicester's recreation areas and facilities.

See the following maps related to Section 5: Map 7.1, Conservation & Recreation Lands Map 7.2, Conservation & Recreation Lands: Grant-Funded Lands Map 7.3, Conservation & Recreation Lands.

A detailed inventory of all categories lands of conservation and recreation interest is located in the Appendices (Appendix B). Summary Information is contained below.

**Commented [MHS20]:** We need to discuss potential overlap between CH61 and other open space and recreation land. When you include CH 61 land, the amount of ACTUAL open space in Leicester is around 5,236 acres or 33% of the town's total land area.

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## Privately Owned Parcels

### Chapter 61

According to 2021 Assessors' records, there are 2,617 acres under any type of Chapter 61 protection in Leicester, a moderate increase since the last Open Space & Recreation Plan in 2014 (2,198 acres).

**Commented [MHS22]:** This is currently NOT INCLUDED in the 2,619 acre figure listed in the last section.

Chapter 61 provides a limited protection that the landowner may withdraw from. Chapter 61 lands include "forest, agricultural/horticultural, and recreational lands valued according to MGL Chapters 61, 61A, and 61B. Land is valued at its current use rather than the full and fair cash value. The commercial property tax rate is applicable for land defined under these chapters (Mass Department of Revenue website)." If a parcel protected under Chapter 61 status goes up for sale, the Town has the right to first refusal. This means that the Town of Leicester can decide whether it wants to purchase these parcels before any other buyers. The Town can assign its right to a conservation partner, such as the Common Ground Land Trust or Greater Worcester Land Trust. Until the town is able to adequately maintain its parks and recreational facilities it may be easier to pursue right to-first-refusal partnerships in order to avoid further overburdening Town resources. The town and its partners (e.g. land trusts and user groups) can make efforts to work with private landowners to achieve limited protection by assisting them in achieving Chapter 61 status.

#### *Forestry Properties – Chapter 61*

Currently in Leicester, there are 839.8 acres of Chapter 61 land. This land is actively managed forest and must have a state-approved 10-year forest management plan (Van Vleet et al., n.d.). It may also be enrolled in Department of Conservation Resources' Forest Stewardship Program. This program helps private landowners develop a ten-year management plan based on the owner's personal goals.

#### *Agricultural Properties – Chapter 61A*

There are currently 1,516.4 acres of land in Leicester enrolled in Chapter 61A. In order to be eligible for this program, parcels of land must be at least 5 acres and must be actively used for agriculture (Van Vleet et al., n.d.).

#### *Open Space and Recreation – Chapter 61B*

261.2 acres in Leicester are enrolled in the Chapter 61B program. This program enables tax reductions if the owner keeps the land in a "substantially natural, wild, or open condition", or as a pasture, or as forest land (Van Vleet et al., n.d., p. 10). Land that is available for recreation, as long as the recreational uses do not cause environmental harm, is also eligible for CH61B. Eligible recreational uses are broad and include "hiking, camping, nature study and observation, boating, golfing, noncommercial youth soccer, horseback riding, hunting, fishing, skiing, swimming, picnicking, private noncommercial flying, hang gliding, archery and target shooting, and commercial horseback riding and equine boarding" (Van Vleet et al., n.d., p. 10). Land owners can charge a fee for access to their property.

**Agricultural Preservation Restriction Properties**

There are no lands with an active Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) in Leicester. However, the Common Ground Land Trust has begun working with Leicester’s farmers toward establishing APRs on active farms (Parke).

**Commented [MHS23]:** Does anyone know the status of this? There are still no active APRs in Leicester.

**Other Privately-Owned Parcels**

Several private organizations own open space and recreational land in Leicester, which totals 344.97 acres. The Green Mountain Club allow public access on their private land, while Leicester’s Rod and Gun Club, Girl Scouts of America - Montachusett Council, the Mount Pleasant Country Club, and the Worcester Chevra Kadisha allow access to members only (MassGIS, 2020).

Table 4 Privately-Owned Parcels

Site Name	Acres (GIS)	Owner	Level of Protection	Public Access	Current Use
Camp Laurelwood	95.86	Girl Scouts of America - Montachusett Council	Limited	Limited Public Access	Recreation
Green Mountain Club	6.74	GREEN MOUNTAIN CLUB	None	Full Public Access	Recreation
Leicester Rod And Gun Club	33.54	LEICESTER ROD AND GUN CLUB	None	Limited Public Access	Recreation
Mt. Pleasant Country Club	205.70	FIVE O INC.	None	Limited Public Access	Recreation
Sons Of Jacob Cemetery	3.13	Worcester Chevra Kadisha	Limited	Limited Public Access	Historical/Cultural
Total:	344.97				

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Source: (MassGIS, 2020)

## Public and Land Trust Parcels

### Town-Owned Parks & Recreation Properties

Leicester has 8 Town-owned public parks and 1 conservation area, as listed in the table below and shown on **Map 7.3, Conservation & Recreation Land Inventory**. Descriptive information about each park is on the following pages. Management of the parks is overseen by the volunteer members of the Parks & Recreation Commission, with the assistance of a part-time clerk. Highway Department staff assist with park maintenance. The Conservation Commission is responsible for Willow Hill Conservation Area.

Table 5 Parks and recreation properties owned by the Town of Leicester  
[Placeholder for town-owned parks and recreation table]

Source: (MassGIS, 2020)

**Commented [MHS24]:** We can update this detail once we confirm public access in the Town-owner properties table.

### **Burncoat Park**

The Town was awarded a \$37,500 Self-Help grant in 1967 towards the purchase of the 115 acre Burncoat Park (the total cost of the land was \$95,000). Burncoat Park was used as a Town Beach from the time of purchase in 1968 until 1990, when the beach was closed due to lack of funding for a park ranger, life guards, and general maintenance and upkeep. After the beach was closed, the park continued to be used for softball, and there was also playground equipment. With the exception of the softball field (which is only used during softball season) Burncoat Park is no longer open to the public. There is no active maintenance except related to the softball field. However, hikers, dog walkers, snowmobilers, and hunters use the forest land (Scoping Meeting). Some residents also fish at Burncoat Pond. The parking lot is locked behind a gate, leaving visitors to the park parking their vehicles on the sides of a dead-end road. Attendants at the community meeting report that constant vandalism had made the park very difficult to maintain. At the Annual Town Meeting on May 1, 2006 (Article 31), the Town voted to petition the Massachusetts General Court (the legislature) to change the use of 10 acres of Burncoat Park from passive to recreational use.

**Commented [MHS25]:** MassGIS data says 102 acres

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This was to allow the construction of soccer and softball fields (as well as associated parking) at Burncoat Park. At the Special Town Meeting on November 13, 2006 (Article 6), an additional 10 acres was proposed for conversion to active recreational use. In 2008, the Massachusetts legislature voted to approve the change passive to active recreational use for "a 20 acre more or less parcel located west of the existing paved access road known as Town Beach Road and north of Burncoat Pond in the Town of Leicester." Conceptual Plans were prepared for the fields and parking (available in the Office of Development & Inspectional Services). The Town has been unable to move forward with additional planning for this project due to limited staffing and funds. This 115-acre park abuts the Mass Audubon Society's Burncoat Pond Wildlife Sanctuary in Spencer. There is potential to make formal connections between the two areas through extensions of the extensive trail system at the Wildlife Sanctuary, and the Midstate Trail (that traverses the boundary between Leicester and Spencer).

**Commented [MHS26]:** Need committee to confirm these details.

**Commented [MHS27]:** Need committee to confirm these details.

### **Community Field**

This field on Waite Street is used for football and soccer. This field also has a swing set for younger children to play on, and also sometimes used for movie nights. The field has a sprinkler system and lights (for night games). The Leicester High School football team uses the field. The Field is also used by the Leicester Soccer Club, Leicester Youth Soccer, and occasionally by the Leicester High School soccer team. Highway Department staff mow the field; the Leicester Soccer Club and the High School are responsible for lining the fields. The field is often in poor condition, due to drainage problems and damage caused by being used for soccer practice during wet weather. The public restrooms are not in working order; porta-potties are used during the soccer season.

**Commented [MHS28]:** Need committee to confirm these details.

### **Hillcrest Country Club**

Hillcrest Country Club was acquired in a successful effort by the Town to protect the 310 acres from proposed residential development. This purchase was funded by the Town of Leicester and a Land & Water Conservation Fund Grant from the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs. The Trust for Public Land also assisted with the purchase of the property. The Hillcrest site is divided into three general use restriction

**Commented [MHS29]:** MassGIS data lists this as 295 acres

areas: 1) water supply/protection, 2) public outdoor recreation, and 3) recreation with the ability to convert to general municipal use with Town Meeting approval. (See Map 11, Hillcrest Country Club.) Protecting this large, centrally located property from development offers vital protection for Henshaw Pond, which supplies drinking water to roughly forty percent of the town's residents, and creates multiple recreation opportunities, including a municipal golf course and hiking trails. The 48.6-acre nine-hole golf course includes a club building with a restaurant. The Town leases the golf club operations to a private management company. Any changes to the golf course portion in particular require a complicated conversion process. Such changes must be for another public outdoor recreational use, unless an equivalent additional parcel of land is provided to substitute (such land may not currently be in use for recreation). Repurposing of a portion of the property could potentially provide for much needed ballfields as well as directly serving the environmental justice population.

**Commented [MHS30]:** Need committee to confirm these details.

### **Leicester Lions Park**

Leicester Lions Park is located on Main Street (Route 9) in Cherry Valley. The park, dedicated in 2005, was created by the Leicester Lions Club on a vacant Town-owned parcel. The park provides a peaceful place to relax, with landscaping and benches. The park is maintained by members of the Leicester Lions Club.

**Commented [MHS31]:** Has this park been renamed? I need the committee to confirm these details.

### **Rochdale Park**

Rochdale Park is eight acres and within walking distance (approximately one-quarter mile) of Rochdale village center. The park has two baseball fields, used by Becker College, Leicester High School, Little League, and American Legion Baseball. Lighting is available for night games. Becker College is under contract with the Town for the park's use as its baseball team's playing field (Griffin).

**Commented [MHS32]:** MassGIS lists this as 9 acres

Under this contract, Becker is responsible for maintenance of the baseball field during the baseball season. The park also has a basketball court, volleyball court, and a skatepark. Besides the ballfields, residents report that this park in disrepair. Recent improvements include sealcoating and crack-filling of the parking lot, skateboard park, and basketball court. Residents report mostly using the park for walking their dogs (Community meeting). Vandalism is reported to be a problem at this park. Rochdale Park is adjacent to 43-acre Rochdale Pond. The pond is not available for swimming or fishing but provides scenic views.

**Commented [MHS33]:** Need committee to confirm these details. We will need to update the reference to Becker College.

### **Russell Memorial Fields**

This field is used by Leicester Little League and by Becker College for baseball and softball. Becker College has a long-term lease for use of the field and is responsible for maintenance of the field. A concession stand building (with broadcast booth) was constructed in 2004.

**Commented [MHS34]:** Need committee to confirm these details. We will need to update the reference to Becker College.

**Commented [MHS35]:** Is this difference from Russell Memorial Park (10 acres)?

### **Town Common**

The Town Common in Leicester Center is used for town functions, such as July Fourth, Arts and Crafts Festival, the Harvest Fair, a Mother's Club Apple Festival, and summer concerts. The Town Common is a favorite place for Leicester's residents (Questionnaire, 2014). The Town is considering re-design of the Common, including increased accessibility for the disabled.

**Commented [MHS36]:** Need committee to confirm these details.

**Towtaid Park**

Towtaid Park is one of the town’s oldest parks. It originally encompassed 4.5 acres. In 2009, the town acquired an additional 15.5 forested acres directly abutting the park that incorporates Olney Pond and an informal trail system used by walkers and snowmobilers.

[This property was taken for non-payment of taxes; the 2009 vote (October 7, 2009 Town Meeting, Article 5) transferred care and control to the Parks & Recreation Commission.] The park also abuts the 2.5-acre Cherry Valley Cemetery to the south. Towtaid Park is within walking distance of Cherry Valley village center. Park amenities include a basketball court, tennis court, and playground equipment. Currently, the park’s amenities are somewhat in disrepair (with vandalism identified as the main culprit). A Towtaid Park Master Plan was completed in 2004, but the Town has had insufficient funding and staff to implement the recommendations of the plan.

**Commented [MHS37]:** I need the committee to confirm these details

**Willow Hill Conservation Area**

The Town of Leicester acquired the 3 acre Willow Hill Conservation Area in 2002 (November 13, 2002 Town Meeting, Article 17) from the National Wildlife Federation Endowment, Inc. (at no cost to the Town). This parcel contains woods and wetlands, and is bisected by a National Grid utility easement. There are no improvement to the property, it is intended to remain as conservation land.

**Commented [MHS38]:** I need the committee to confirm these details.

**Cedar Meadow Pond Beach**

[Add details]

**Commented [MHS39]:** This seems like a new acquisition. We need to add a description.

**Other Town-Owned Properties with Recreation or Conservation Potential**

Recreational facilities are available at all of the town’s schools, as shown in Table 10 on the following page.

School	Recreational Facilities
Leicester Primary School	Playground and soccer field
Leicester Memorial School	Softball fields, soccer fields, tennis courts, play area
Leicester Middle School	Baseball field, tennis courts, indoor basketball court
Leicester High School	Football field, outdoor track, indoor basketball court

**Commented [MHS40]:** Is this the Cherry Valley Grammar School?

The Town also owns six cemeteries: Cherry Valley Cemetery, Elliot Cemetery, Pine Grove Cemetery, Quaker Cemetery, the Rawson Brook Cemetery, and St. Joseph Cemetery. Four of these were acquired since the last Open Space and Recreation Plan was published in 2014.

**Water Resource Management Lands**

The Town of Leicester owns approximately 31 acres of land for the purpose of protecting the local water supply. This land is permanently protected and is not open to the public.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, two other municipalities (Worcester and Spencer), as well as several water supply and watershed protection organizations own land in the town related to water resource management. These lands are described in more detail in Section 4 (Environmental Inventory & Analysis). These lands are generally available for passive recreational uses.

## State-Owned Wildlife Management Lands

### **Moose Hill Wildlife Management Area**

The Moose Hill Wildlife Management Area is owned by the EEA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife and provides 194 acres near Moose Hill for passive recreation and hunting. These parcels of land continue across the town boundaries into Spencer (to the west) and Paxton (to the north) for an additional 384.6 acres. The Moose Hill Wildlife Management Area is the only conservation land in Leicester that includes a portion of the Midstate Trail. Leicester's section of the Midstate Trail is less than three miles and is predominantly a road walk until entering these state-owned lands.

## Conservation Non-Profit Owned Properties

### **Greater Worcester Land Trust Land**

The Greater Worcester Land Trust (GWLTL), together with the City of Worcester, owns **Conservation Restrictions** on 63 acres in the northeast corner of town, known as Southwick Brook Pond and Southwick Pond (portion in Paxton), which are adjacent to Muir Meadows (in Paxton).

These properties are open to the public for passive recreation on a loop-trail system and includes unimproved lake access to Southwick Pond as well as opportunities for fishing (Novick). These properties abut and connect to portions of these GWLT properties in Paxton. A map of these properties and their walking trails is available on the GWLT website at [www.gwlt.org](http://www.gwlt.org). At present, the access in Leicester is via a former fire road, but the property is gated (there is room for 1-2 cars off the road in front of the gate). GWLT plans to add a parking lot off Marshall Street for improved access for Leicester residents to this property.

**Commented [MHS41]:** Committee needs to confirm.

In addition, GWLT owns two parcels totaling **27** acres of land off Paxton Street (east of Hyland Ave) which were donated to GWLT by the Cooke family in 2013 and Ganley family in 2014. These parcels are open to the public and are accessible from Cart Road that lies between Washburn and Paxton Street and Manville Street. GWLT maintains the property for passive recreation and wildlife habitat, and contains a beaver wetland and open meadow (Leicester, n.d.).

**Commented [MHS42]:** 34 acres according to Mass GIS - includes Ganley addition

### **Other Non-Profit Owned Parcels**

The YMCA's Camp Wind in the Pines, the Dawn Acres Park, the Greenville Baptist Cemetery, and the Meadow Lake Association's Beach and Park provide access to members only (MassGIS, 2020).



Table 6 Non-profit Owned Parcels

Site Name	Acres (GIS)	Owner	Level of Protection	Public Access	Current Use
Cooke Forest	24.57	Greater Worcester Land Trust	Perpetuity	Full Public Access	Recreation and Conservation
Ganley	9.50	Greater Worcester Land Trust	Perpetuity	Full Public Access	Recreation and Conservation
Southwick Pond Brook Access	4.72	Greater Worcester Land Trust	Perpetuity	Full Public Access	Conservation
Southwick Pond Brook Conservation Area <sup>1</sup>	80.41	Greater Worcester Land Trust	Perpetuity	Unknown	Conservation
Camp Wind	40.22	YMCA (non-profit)	Limited	Limited Public Access	Recreation
Dawn Acres Park	1.41	DAWN ACRES IMPROVEMENT (non-profit)	Perpetuity	Limited Public Access	Recreation
Greenville Baptist Cemetery	3.37	GREENVILLE BAPTIST C (non-profit)	Limited	Limited Public Access	Historical/Cultural
Meadow Lake Beach	0.78	Meadow Lake Association (non-profit)	Perpetuity	Limited Public Access	Recreation
Meadow Lake Park	0.19	Meadow Lake Association (non-profit)	Perpetuity	Limited Public Access	Recreation
<b>Total:</b>	<b>390.93</b>				

Source: (MassGIS, 2020)

<sup>1</sup> A Conservation Partnership Grant was used to acquire this property.

## Recreational Programs

The Parks & Recreation Commission is responsible for several recreational programs, including the following:

Program	Location
Indoor Basketball	Town Hall
Tennis	Leicester Middle School
Fitness Boot Camp	Leicester Middle School & Primary School
Golf	Hillcrest Country Club

The Parks & Recreation Commission also organizes field trips, such as trips to Pawtucket Red Sox and the Basketball Hall of Fame. In addition, the Parks & Recreation Commission runs fundraisers such as tailgate parties, movie night on the Town Common, and a Christmas Party at the Leicester Senior Center.

**Commented [MHS43]:** Can the Committee Verify this? Most of this data is from the 2014 report. Are there any programs that you would like to add?

## Trails

As noted above, a portion of the Mid-State Trail is in Leicester (see [www.midstatetrail.org](http://www.midstatetrail.org) for more information). Leicester's section of the Midstate Trail is less than three miles and is predominantly a road walk until entering the Moose Hill Wildlife Management Area. Leicester's snowmobile trails connect many of the town's conservation and recreation lands. These trails are managed and maintained by the private Leicester Snowmobile Club with formal and informal arrangements with landowners. Some of the Town's parks, notably Hillcrest, Towtaid, and Burncoat also have walking trails. Improved mapping of these trails would increase awareness and use of Leicester's trails.

**Commented [MHS44]:** Are any of the trails on the open space map NOT already described in this paragraph?

## Park and Open Space Equity

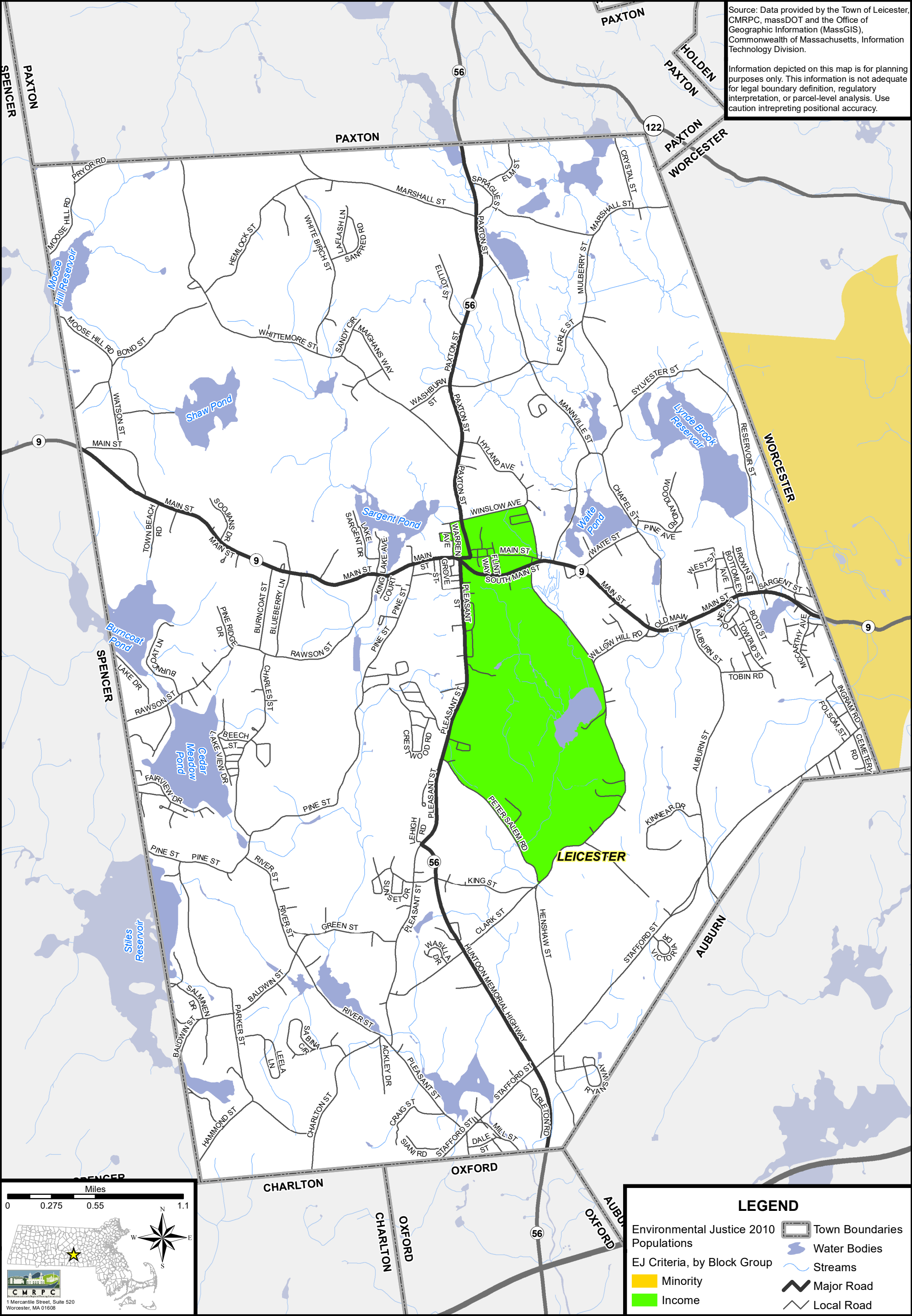
The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs requires special attention be given to Environmental Justice Populations in respect to open space. The Environmental Justice Program is founded on the observation that certain populations - including minorities and the poor - are systematically underserved by public spending on open spaces, recreation, and environmental quality issues. Leicester's Environmental Justice Population area was identified in Leicester by the state based upon household annual income (Mass GIS). See Map 2, Environmental Justice. Although this area includes Leicester Center, the largest portion of the Environmental Justice Population is isolated from all three of the town's village centers. Few sidewalks and a lack public transportation (Leicester Master Plan 5-7) contributes to the isolation of the Environmental Justice Population from the village centers.

At the center of the Environmental Justice Population area lies the 310 acre, mostly forested, Hillcrest Country Club property, which includes a golf course and an informal trail system. The trails and trailheads may not be obvious to most residents. The Town could better serve its Environmental Justice Population by revitalizing this area with facilities and trails that serve as a connection to Leicester Center.

**Commented [MHS45]:** Has any of this information changed since 2014? Has new development or new open space been created in this area? What progress has been made on clarifying the trailheads around the Hillcrest Country Club property?

# ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MAP

## OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN





# ZONING DISTRICTS

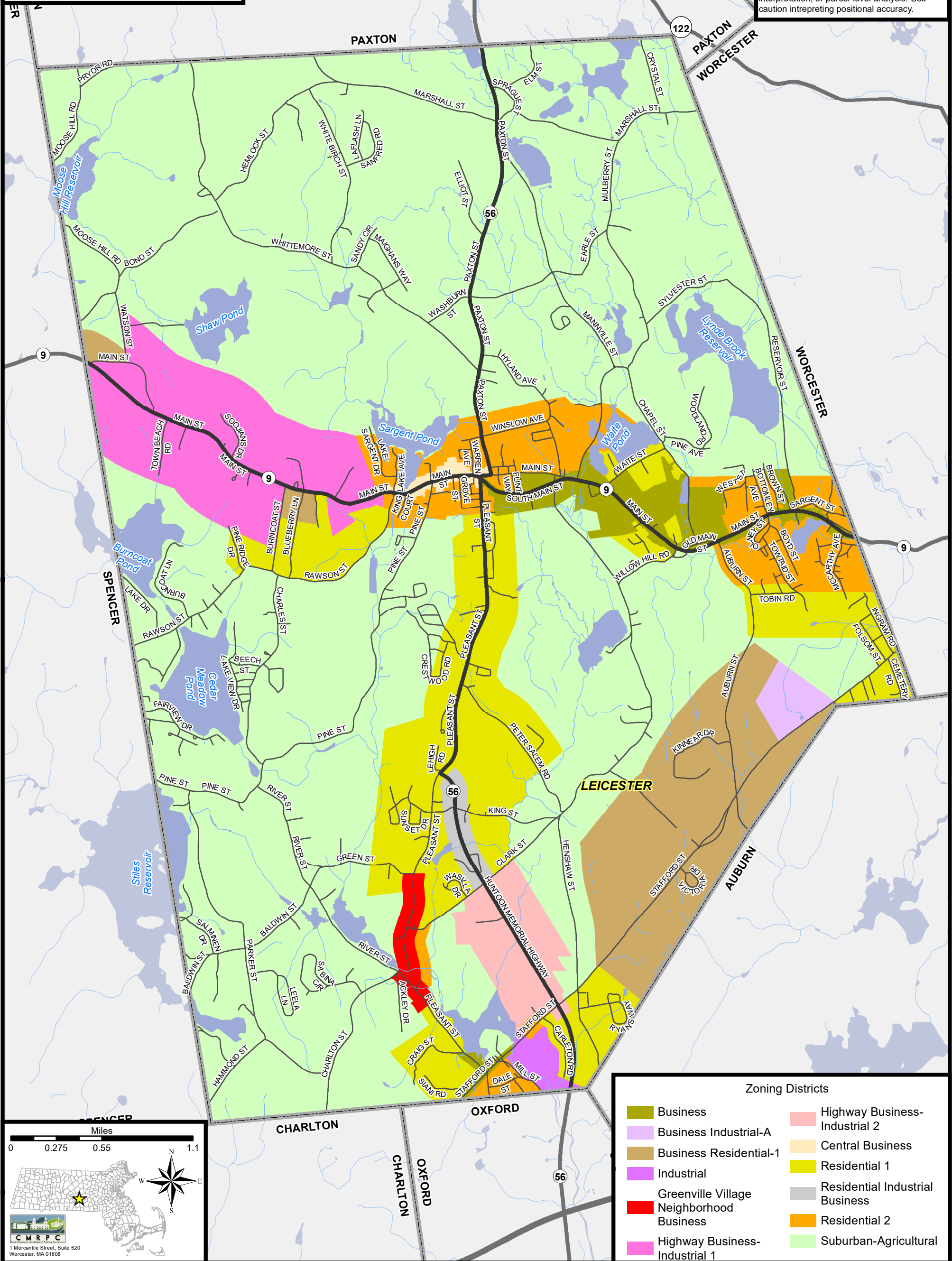
## OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN

### LEGEND

- Town Boundaries
- Major Road
- Water Bodies
- Streams
- Local Road

Source: Data provided by the Town of Leicester, CMRPC, massDOT and the Office of Geographic Information (MassGIS), Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Information Technology Division.

Information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. This information is not adequate for legal boundary definition, regulatory interpretation, or parcel-level analysis. Use caution interpreting positional accuracy.



# Town of Leicester, Massachusetts



# SOILS & GEOLOGIC FEATURES

## OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN

### LEGEND

- Town Boundaries
- Water Bodies
- Streams
- Major Road
- Local Road
- AUL Location\*
- MassDEP Tier 21E Sites\*\*
- Prime Farmland Soils (NRCS Soils-WORC. S)

\*\*Many of the locations in this datalayer are based on information provided by the RP, PRP or their LSP. Locations in this datalayer should ONLY be considered as an "approximation" or "best estimate" based on the information submitted to the MassDEP BWSC. The accuracy and completeness of the information submitted has not been verified by MassDEP.

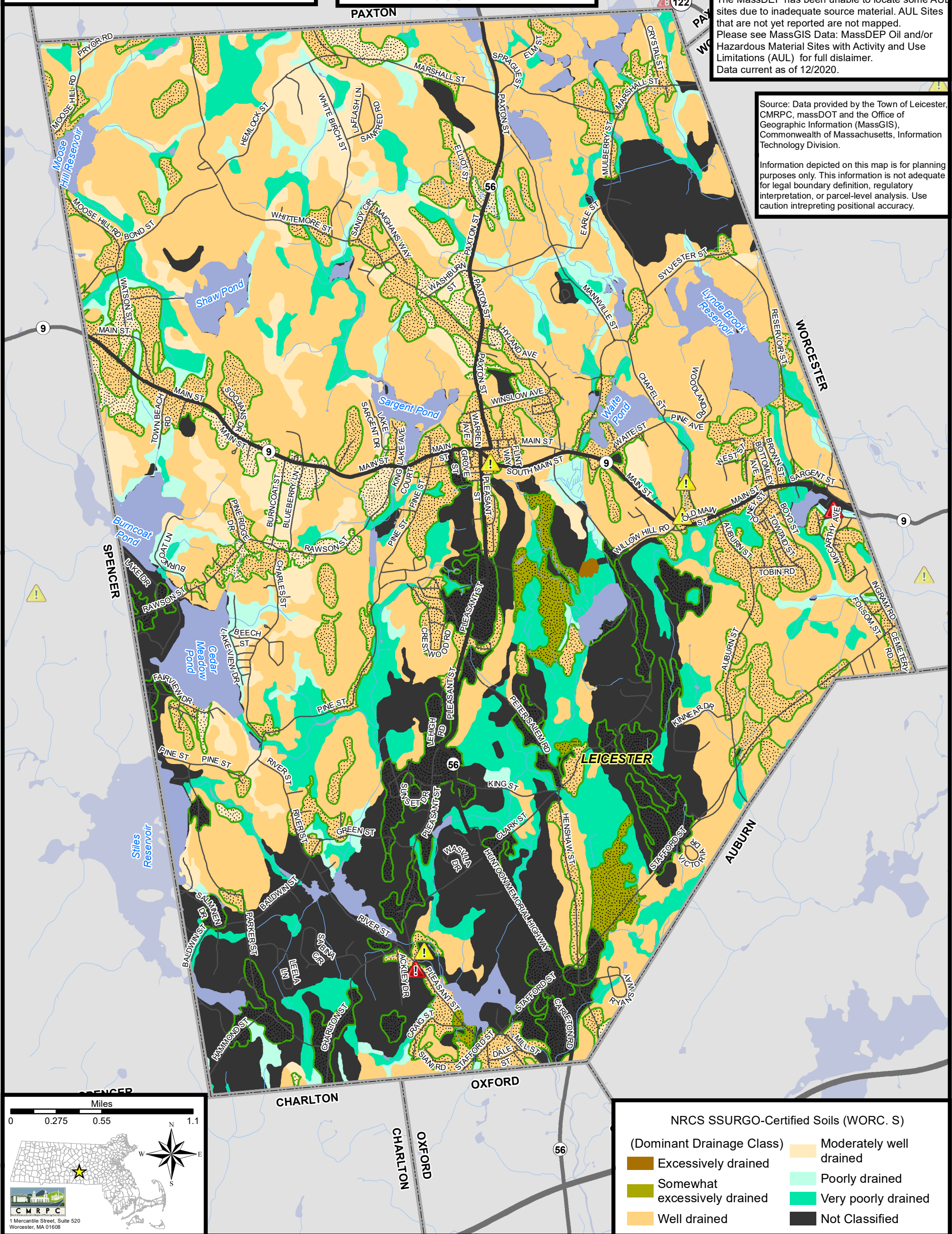
See the MassGIS data layer description page for full data disclaimer.  
Data current as of 12/2020

\* Point locations representing AUL sites in this datalayer have not been field-verified and should be considered approximate. Locations were derived through review and interpretation of paper maps and textual information contained in Mass DEP BWSC site files, which are maintained in the respective MassDEP's Regional Offices.

Please be advised that this datalayer is incomplete. The MassDEP has been unable to locate some AUL sites due to inadequate source material. AUL Sites that are not yet reported are not mapped. Please see MassGIS Data: MassDEP Oil and/or Hazardous Material Sites with Activity and Use Limitations (AUL) for full disclaimer.  
Data current as of 12/2020.

Source: Data provided by the Town of Leicester, CMRPC, massDOT and the Office of Geographic Information (MassGIS), Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Information Technology Division.

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- NRCS SSURGO-Certified Soils (WORC. S)
- | (Dominant Drainage Class)    |                         |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Excessively drained          | Moderately well drained |
| Somewhat excessively drained | Poorly drained          |
| Well drained                 | Very poorly drained     |
|                              | Not Classified          |

# Town of Leicester, Massachusetts



# UNIQUE FEATURES

## OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN

### LEGEND

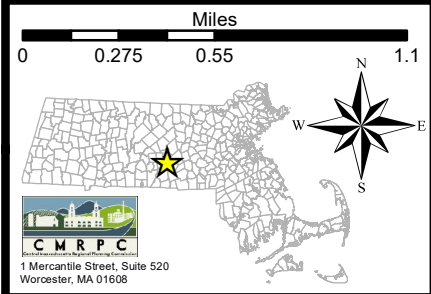
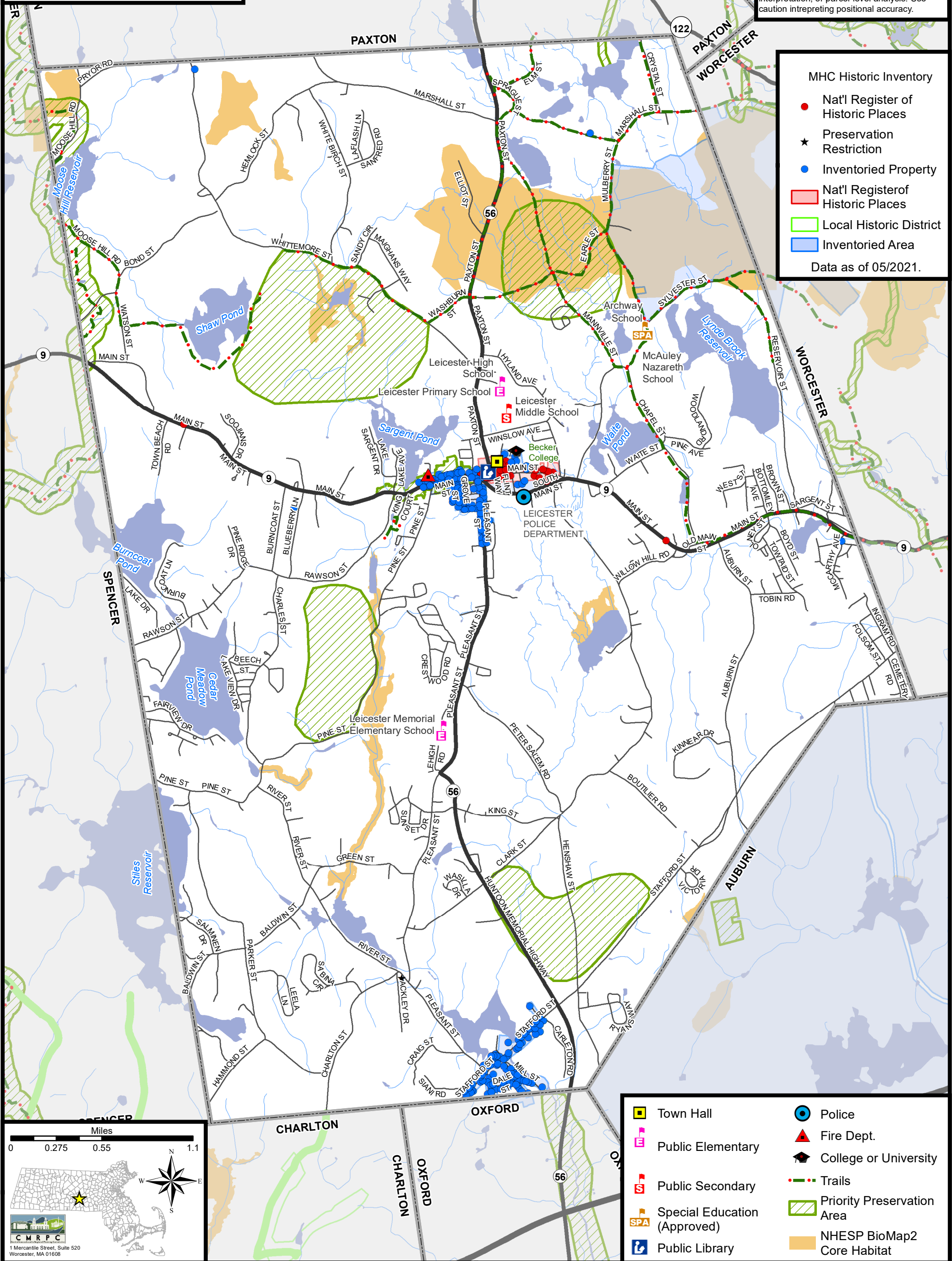
- Town Boundaries
- Water Bodies
- Streams
- Major Road
- Local Road
- Scenic Roads

Source: Data provided by the Town of Leicester, CMRPC, massDOT and the Office of Geographic Information (MassGIS), Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Information Technology Division.

Information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. This information is not adequate for legal boundary definition, regulatory interpretation, or parcel-level analysis. Use caution interpreting positional accuracy.

### MHC Historic Inventory

- Nat'l Register of Historic Places
  - Preservation Restriction
  - Inventoried Property
  - Nat'l Register of Historic Places
  - Local Historic District
  - Inventoried Area
- Data as of 05/2021.

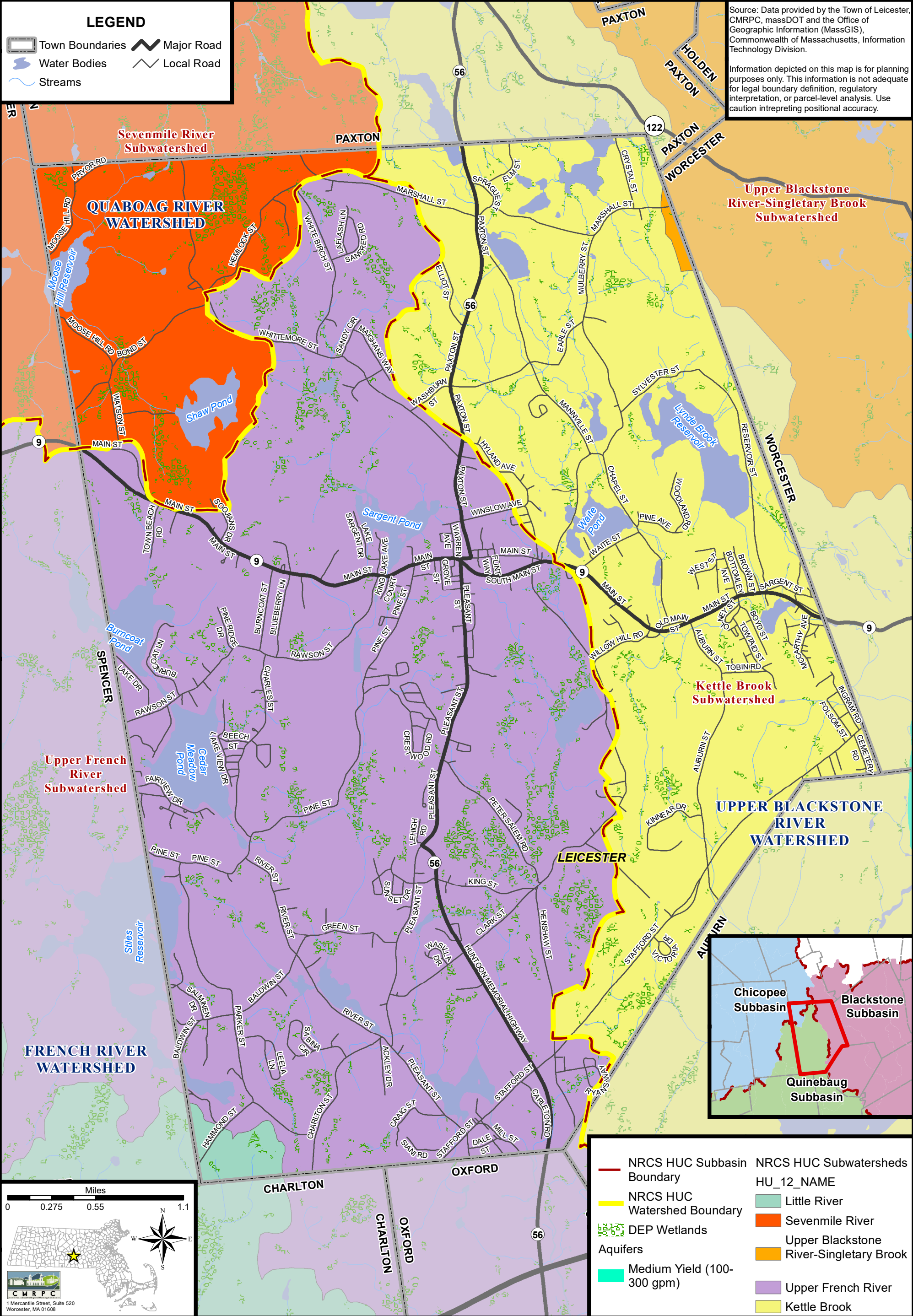


# Town of Leicester, Massachusetts



# WATER RESOURCES MAP 1

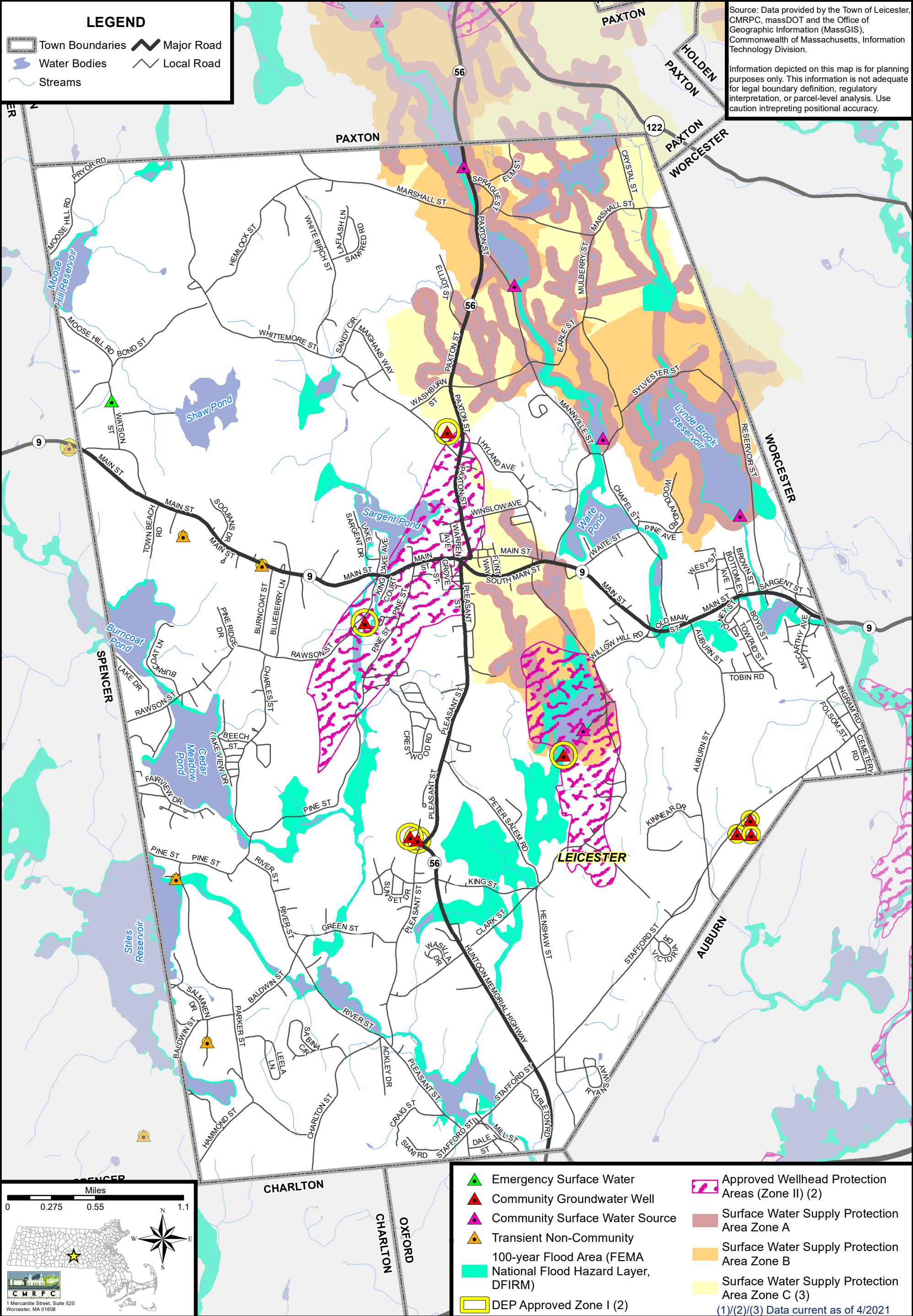
## OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN





# WATER RESOURCES MAP 2

## OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN





# OPEN SPACE INVENTORY

## OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN

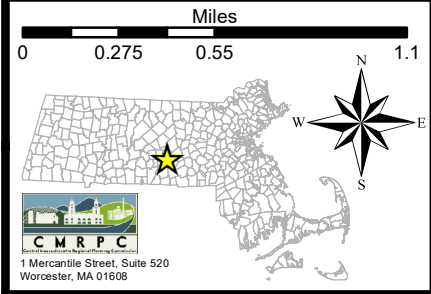
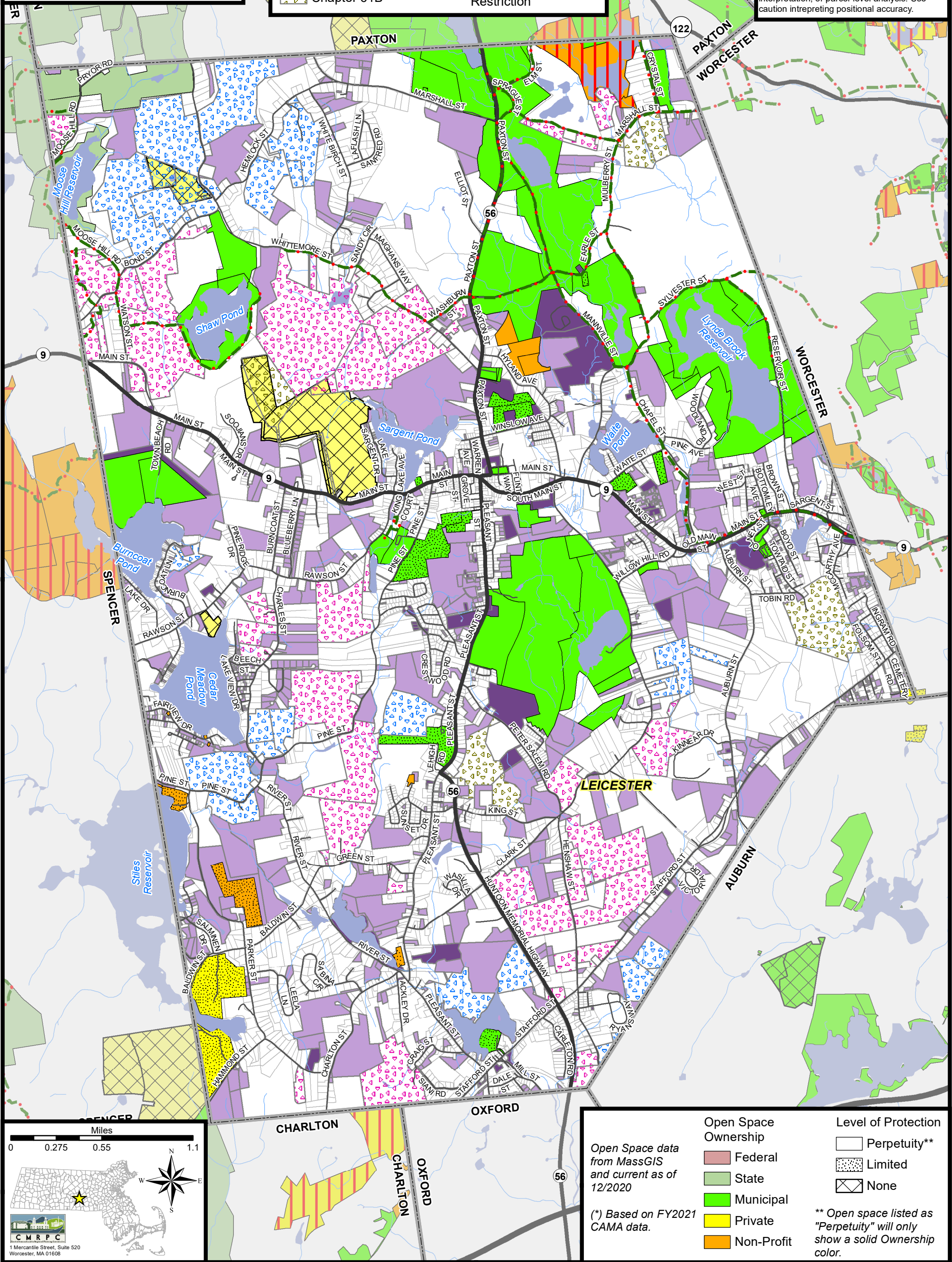
### LEGEND

- Town Boundaries
- Water Bodies
- Streams
- Major Road
- Local Road
- Trails

- Town Owned Land (\*)
- Chapter Lands
  - Chapter 61
  - Chapter 61A
  - Chapter 61B
- Undeveloped Land (\*)
- Conservation Restriction
- Agricultural Preservation Restriction

Source: Data provided by the Town of Leicester, CMRPC, massDOT and the Office of Geographic Information (MassGIS), Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Information Technology Division.

Information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. This information is not adequate for legal boundary definition, regulatory interpretation, or parcel-level analysis. Use caution interpreting positional accuracy.



- Open Space Ownership
  - Federal
  - State
  - Municipal
  - Private
  - Non-Profit
- Level of Protection
  - Perpetuity\*\*
  - Limited
  - None
- Open Space data from MassGIS and current as of 12/2020
- (\*) Based on FY2021 CAMA data.
- \*\* Open space listed as "Perpetuity" will only show a solid Ownership color.

# Town of Leicester, Massachusetts

## OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN COMMITTEE

May 25, 2021

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jim Reinke, Sharon Nist, Dawn Marttila, Sue Sears, Vaughn Hathaway (Alternate)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Dianna Provencher (Chair)

### 6:00PM – Open Meeting

1. Survey Update
2. Public Forum Planning
3. Adoption of Minutes: 4/27/2021
4. Miscellaneous

### 7:00PM - Adjourn

Meeting started at 6:06 PM

1. Survey Update

Mary-Hannah Smith from CMRPC says there are 342 responses, which is 3% of Leicester's total population. Ms. Smith wants to leave the survey open to collect more responses, specifically from older adults and senior citizens. Mr. Reinke notes the survey was shared on Facebook and passed out to some high school classes, hence the age results skewing younger. Ms. Sears suggests advertising the survey on the Lions Club board in the center of town. The survey will stay open until the next meeting.

2. Public Forum Discussion

Ms. Buck says hybrid meetings start in June, so the Committee will meet in person whereas the public has the option of joining virtually or in-person. The 2015 Open Space plan expires in December of 2021, so the 2021 plan needs to be completed by that date. Ms. Buck says in person participation has been minimal in the past, so having a hybrid approach may be beneficial. The Committee agrees to hold two public forum meetings using the hybrid meeting method.

**Motion:** Ms. Sears moves to schedule two public forums, one virtual and one in-person.

**Second:** Ms. Nist

**Discussion:** Ms. Smith says the in-person meeting will be held in the Planning Board meeting room in Leicester Town Hall. Because of the December deadline, the forums should be held no later than September.

Amended Motion: Ms. Nist moves to schedule two public forums, one in-person on 9/9/21 and one virtual on 9/16/21, both starting at 6 pm on the respective dates.

**Second:** Ms. Sears

**Roll-Call Vote:** (5-0-0)

3. Approval of Minutes

**Motion:** Ms. Nist moves to accept the April 27 minutes.

**Second:** Ms. Sears

**Discussion:** None

**Roll-Call Vote:** (5-0-0)

Adjourn:

**Motion:** Ms. Nist makes a motion to adjourn.

**Second:** Ms. Sears

**Discussion:** None

**Roll-Call Vote:** 5-0-0

The next meeting will be held June 22, 2021.