

## CHAPTER II POPULATION AND HOUSING

### A. INTRODUCTION

To plan effectively for a community, an understanding of the size, composition and distribution of the existing population is essential. An effective master plan must also include an analysis of potential changes in future population size, composition and distribution as well as a description of past trends. In some cases, the factors that influence population change are beyond the control of the community. In other cases, the Town can influence or manage future demographic changes through the adoption of policies based on community goals.

A description and analysis of existing demographic data as provided by the US Bureau of Census, the NH Office of State Planning (OSP), and the Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) as well as background historical information from a variety of sources, is provided. While it is essential to review relevant demographic information and to include it in the Master Plan, it should be emphasized that all such information should not be taken at face value. This is particularly true for population projections. This chapter provides: 1) population trends, projections, density and composition; 2) housing units, types, affordability and sales; and 3) recommendations.

### B. POPULATION

#### 1. Historic Population Trends

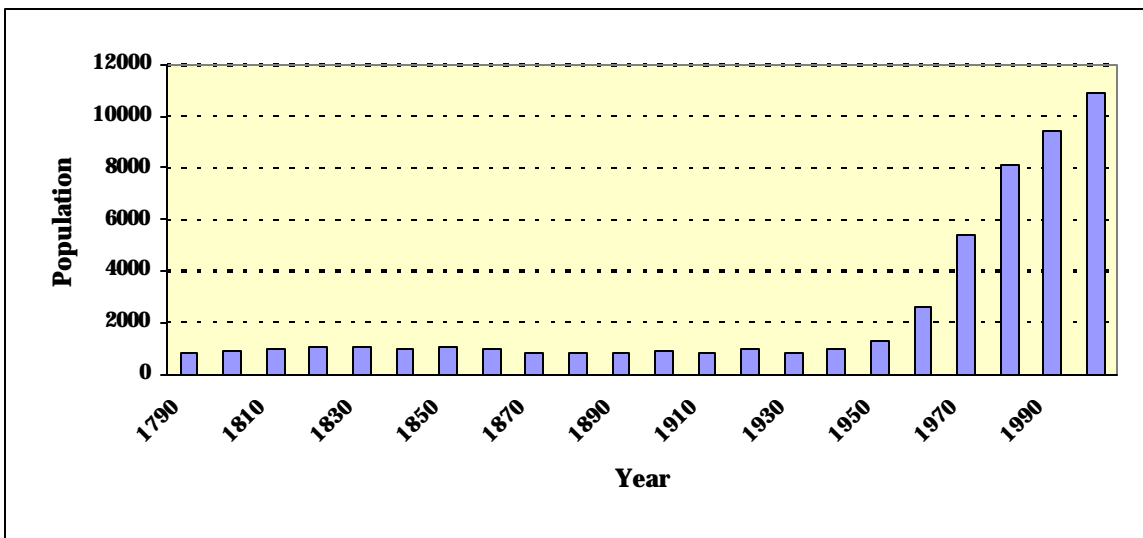
During the mid-19th Century, Pelham, like most rural New Hampshire towns, experienced the beginning of a long, slow period of population decline as populations migrated either west or to newly emerging industrial centers. This trend continued into the 20th Century. By 1890, Pelham's population had returned to its 1790 population level of 791 people. The Town did not surpass its 1859 peak population level of 1,071 people until 1950. Between the 1930's and 1960's, the population grew steadily and moderately. The 1960's, however, saw the beginning of a two-decade long period of rapid population growth spurred on by the growth of high-technology industries in the Nashua area and by ex-urban expansions of the Boston metropolitan area made possible by major improvements to the state and federal highway system. Between 1960 and 1970, Pelham grew by 108%, the fastest period of growth in the Town's history. From 1970 to 1980, the Town grew more moderately from a population of 5,408 to 8,090, an increase of approximately 50%. Since 1980, growth has occurred at a somewhat more moderate rate of 16% per decade. The Town's population was 9,408 in 1990 and 10,914 in 2000. Historical growth trends are depicted in Table II-1 and Figure II-1.

**Table II-1: Comparative Population Growth, 1790-1990**

Year	Pelham	% Change	NRPC Region	% Change	State of NH	% Change
1790	791	-	10,196	-	141,885	-
1800	918	16%	11,431	12%	183,858	30%
1810	998	9%	12,444	9%	214,460	17%
1820	1,040	4%	13,003	4%	244,161	14%
1830	1,070	3%	14,461	11%	269,328	10%
1840	1,003	-6%	17,589	22%	284,574	6%
1850	1,071	7%	21,656	23%	317,976	12%
1860	944	-12%	22,423	4%	326,073	3%
1870	861	-9%	23,055	3%	318,300	-2%
1880	848	-2%	25,103	9%	347,000	9%
1890	791	-7%	30,998	23%	376,500	9%
1900	875	10%	36,731	18%	411,600	9%
1910	826	-6%	38,467	5%	430,600	5%
1920	974	18%	40,796	6%	443,100	3%
1930	814	-16%	45,347	11%	465,300	5%
1940	979	20%	48,214	6%	491,500	6%
1950	1,317	35%	52,010	8%	533,200	9%
1960	2,605	98%	63,216	22%	606,900	14%
1970	5,408	108%	100,862	60%	737,579	22%
1980	8,090	50%	138,089	37%	920,475	25%
1990	9,408	16%	171,478	24%	1,109,252	21%
2000	10,914	16%	195,788	14%	1,235,786	11%

Source: US Census; compiled by NRPC.

**Figure II-1: Population by Decade, Pelham 1790 - 2000**



From 1950 to 1980, Pelham was growing at a significantly higher rate than that of the region or state. Since 1980, however, population growth has slowed to a rate similar to that of the region and state.

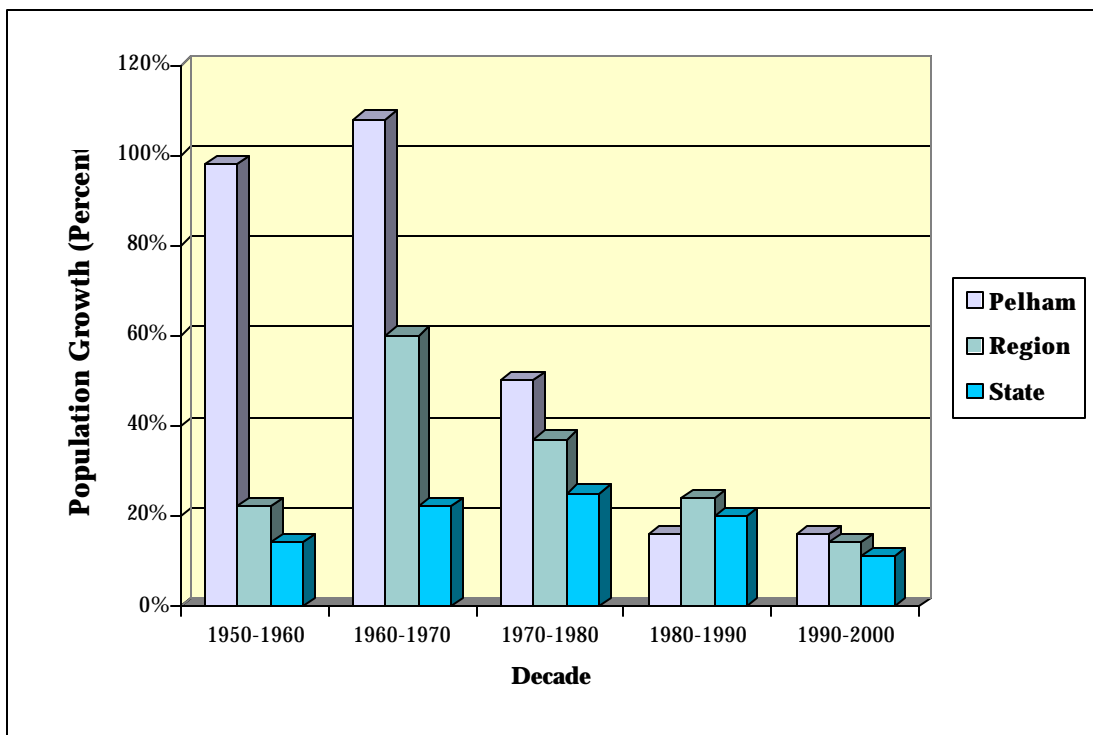
Indeed, during the decade 1980-1990, Pelham's population growth rate was the second lowest in the region, at 16%. Table II-2 and Figure II-2 compares the growth rates by decade for the Town, region and state. Table II-3 shows the actual population by decade since 1960 for the Town, region and state. Despite recent growth rate decline, the tremendous increases in population in the past five decades have had an obvious impact on the land and people of Pelham.

**Table II-2: Proportionate Growth by Decade, 1950-2000**

	1950-1960	1960-1970	1970-1980	1980-1990	1990-2000
Pelham	98%	108%	50%	16%	16%
Amherst	40%	125%	79%	10%	19%
Brookline	18%	47%	51%	36%	74%
Hollis	44%	52%	79%	22%	23%
Hudson	40%	81%	32%	39%	17%
Litchfield	69%	97%	192%	33%	33%
Lyndeborough	8%	33%	36%	21%	22%
Merrimack	57%	188%	79%	44%	13%
Milford	27%	59%	31%	36%	15%
Mont Vernon	44%	55%	59%	25%	12%
Nashua	13%	43%	22%	17%	9%
Wilton	4%	12%	17%	17%	20%
Region	22%	60%	37%	24%	14%
State	14%	22%	25%	20%	11%

Source: US Census, derived by NRPC.

**Figure II-2: Comparative Population Growth by Decade; Pelham, Region and State**



**Table II-3: Population Growth, Pelham and NRPC Region, 1960-2020**

<b>Community</b>	<b>1960</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2010* Projected</b>	<b>2020* Projected</b>
Pelham	2,605	5,408	8,090	9,408	10,914	14,118	17,285
Amherst	2,051	4,605	8,243	9,068	10,769	12,113	14,686
Brookline	795	1,167	1,766	2,410	4,181	5,953	8,279
Hollis	1,720	2,616	4,679	5,705	7,015	9,299	11,940
Hudson	5,876	10,638	14,022	19,530	22,928	26,267	31,656
Litchfield	721	1,420	4,150	5,516	7,360	9,674	11,785
Lyndeborough	594	789	1,070	1,294	1,585	1,920	2,427
Merrimack	2,989	8,595	15,406	22,156	25,119	28,126	32,886
Milford	4,159	6,622	8,685	11,795	13,535	15,106	17,006
Mont Vernon	585	906	1,444	1,812	2,034	2,448	2,978
Nashua	39,096	55,820	67,865	79,662	86,605	87,997	91,145
Wilton	2,025	2,276	2,669	3,122	3,743	3,889	4,363
<b>NRPC Region</b>	<b>63,216</b>	<b>100,862</b>	<b>138,089</b>	<b>171,478</b>	<b>195,788</b>	<b>216,910</b>	<b>246,436</b>
<b>State of NH</b>	<b>606,921</b>	<b>737,681</b>	<b>920,610</b>	<b>1,109,117</b>	<b>1,235,786</b>	<b>1,358,750</b>	<b>1,527,873</b>

**Source:** US Censuses, 1960 – 2000 and NH Office of State Planning, 1999.

## 2. Population Projections

The New Hampshire Office of State Planning’s (OSP) population projections for the Town, region and state are presented in Table II-4. OSP’s forecasting methodology is based on a community’s historical share of its respective county’s growth, and assumes that a community’s share of growth, according to changes in the 1970 through 2000 population, will remain about the same into the future. Pelham’s population is projected to continue to increase by 2.3% per year over the next twenty years. If these projections hold true, then an additional 6,371 persons will be added to Pelham’s population by 2020. With an estimated population of 17,285 in 2020, Pelham would no longer be a rural community with suburban elements, but a suburban community with increasing urban elements such as increased commercial and industrial development or two-family housing.

**Table II-4: Population Projections, 2020**

<b>Community</b>	<b>Projected Population 2020</b>	<b>Population 2000</b>	<b>Projected Net Increase 2000-2020</b>	<b>Projected Percentage Increase 2000-2020</b>	<b>Projected Annual Percentage Increase 2000-2020</b>
Pelham	17,285	10,914	6,371	58%	2.3%
NRPC Region	246,436	194,788	51,648	27%	1.2%
State of NH	1,527,873	1,235,786	292,087	24%	1.2%

**Source:** US Census 2000 and NH Office of State Planning Projection, 1999.

The Town should consider conducting a Buildout Analysis using the Nashua Regional Planning Commission’s parcel-based Geographic Information System. A Buildout Analysis considers the remaining undeveloped land in the Town and the constraints to development on that land, including

soils, slopes, ownership and the provisions of the Pelham zoning ordinance. The Buildout Analysis estimates the number of housing units that will result when the Town is fully developed by Traffic Analysis Zone and can aid in determining the type and quantity of public facilities needed in the future.

### 3. Population Density

Closely related to population growth is population density. Because towns vary in size, population levels alone do not provide sufficient indication of the extent to which the land in a community is developed. A comparison of the densities for the Town, NRPC region and the state is provided in Table II-5. This information, however, must be viewed cautiously. Certain communities, for example, may contain a relatively high overall density, but may still contain substantial rural or undeveloped areas. This is the case for communities such as Milford, which contains a high concentration of population within a relatively small portion of the Town.

**Table II-5: Population Density 1990, 2000 and 2020**

Community	Area (sq. mile)	Pop. 1990	Density /sq. mile 1990	Pop. 2000	Density /sq. mile 2000	Projected Pop. 2020*	Density /sq. mile 2020
Pelham	26.7	9,408	352	10,914	409	17,285	647
Amherst	34.5	9,068	263	10,769	312	14,686	426
Brookline	20.1	2,410	120	4,181	208	8,279	412
Hollis	32.6	5,709	175	7,015	215	11,940	366
Hudson	29.2	19,530	669	22,928	785	31,656	1,084
Litchfield	15.1	5,516	365	7,360	487	11,785	780
Lyndeborough	30.6	1,294	42	1,585	52	2,427	79
Merrimack	33.0	22,156	671	25,119	761	32,886	997
Milford	25.9	11,795	455	13,535	523	17,006	657
Mont Vernon	16.8	1,812	108	2,034	121	2,978	177
Nashua	30.6	79,662	2,603	86,605	2,830	91,145	2,979
Wilton	26.1	3,122	120	3,743	143	4,363	167
NRPC Region	321.2	171,478	534	195,788	610	246,436	767
State of NH	8,993.0	1,109,252	123	1,235,786	137	1,527,873	170

**Source:** US Censuses, 1990 – 2000 and \*NH Office of State Planning, 1999; compiled by NRPC.

Table II-5 indicates that Pelham has an overall population density that is higher than six of the region's communities, but lower than the regional average. Development since the 1960's, however, has provided Pelham with a population density far higher than rural towns such as Lyndeborough, Mont Vernon, or Brookline. This indicates that Pelham has increasingly become a suburban community. Based on OSP population projections, Pelham's population density will increase substantially by the year 2020. Should such a scenario be fulfilled, Pelham would achieve densities exceeding that of current day Milford, and approaching that of current day Hudson and Merrimack. Such a rate of development would make the Pelham of twenty years hence a place somewhat more developed than the present day.

#### 4. Population Composition

According to the US Census 2000, 96.4% of Pelham's population reported their race as white only, compared to 90.5% for the region. The vast majority of the region's racial diversity is located in the City of Nashua. Table II-6 compares the racial diversity of Pelham to the region and the state.

**Table II-6: Population by Race, 2000**

Community	White Only	Black or African-American Only	Asian Only	American Indian/Alaska Native Only	Other (Only One)	Two or More Races	Hispanic Origin	Percent Non-White
Pelham	10,624	48	114	24	27	77	105	3.6%
NRPC Region	183,081	2,428	4,592	461	2,956	2,212	6,618	9.5%
State of NH	1,186,851	9,035	15,931	2,964	7,420	13,214	20,489	5.5%

Source: US Census, 2000.

In terms of age, over 36% of Pelham's population were between 35 to 54 years of age in 2000, forming the Town's largest age group. Comprising 24% of the population, school age children (5 to 19 years of age) were the Town's second largest age group. Population by age is indicated in Table II-7.

**Table II-7: Population by Age, 2000**

Community	Under 5	5 to 19 (School Age)	20 to 34	35 to 54	55 to 64	65 and Over
Pelham	804	2,577	1,824	3,888	967	854
NRPC Region	13,510	44,227	36,516	66,563	16,836	18,136
State of NH	75,685	268,480	228,827	405,165	109,659	147,970

Source: US Census, 2000.

#### C. INCOME

Average household income in Pelham increased from \$50,817 to \$68,608, or 35 percent, from 1990 to 2000. This is a similar percentage increase to the State and slightly lower than the NRPC Region. The growth in income during the 1990's can be attributed to the growth in high wage, high technology jobs in the northeast United States. Pelham ranks sixth in average household income in the NRPC Region, being substantially higher than that of the City of Nashua and substantially lower than the Towns of Hollis and Amherst. Table II-8 shows the average household income for 1990 and 2000.

**Table II-8: Average Household Income, 1990 and 2000**

Community	1990	2000	Percent Change 1990 - 2000
Pelham	\$50,817	\$68,608	35%
Amherst	62,568	89,384	43%
Brookline	55,858	77,075	38%
Hollis	64,351	92,847	44%
Hudson	47,859	64,169	34%
Litchfield	49,946	73,302	47%
Lyndeborough	42,208	59,688	41%
Merrimack	52,798	68,817	30%
Milford	38,792	52,343	35%
Mont Vernon	49,650	71,250	44%
Nashua	40,505	51,969	28%
Wilton	36,098	54,276	50%
NRPC Region	49,288	68,644	39%
State of NH	36,329	49,467	36%

## D. HOUSING

### 1. Housing Units



The most important unit of analysis for demonstrating the impact of growth is the housing unit because it represents the household for which most state and local services are oriented. Data on housing can be found in the NRPC Regional Housing Needs Assessment, updated every five years.<sup>1</sup> While the data directly correlates with the changes in population over time, household sizes have been decreasing significantly since the 1950s, due to the increase in single parent households and a reduction in the number of children per household. In 1960 the average household size in Pelham was 3.01 persons per household whereas in 2000 the average household size was 2.92 persons per household. The implication of a dwindling household size is that it requires a greater number of units to house the same population, with obvious impacts on the environment and housing costs per capita.

From 1960 to 2000, Pelham experienced a significant increase in the total number of housing units. As shown in Table II-9, Pelham's housing unit growth (432%) during this timeframe outpaced regional (354%) and state growth (244%).

<sup>1</sup> Nashua Regional Planning Commission, *Regional Housing Needs Assessment*, 1999.

**Table II-9: Housing Unit Growth, 1960-2000**

Community	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	% Increase 1960 - 2000
Pelham	865	1,641	2,408	3,118	3,740	432%
NRPC Region	21,002	31,260	47,944	66,375	74,341	354%
State of NH	224,440	280,962	386,381	502,247	547,024	244%

Source: US Census, 1960 – 2000.

## 2. Housing Type

While the NRPC region's proportion of single family homes (61%) is identical to the state's, the Town of Pelham exhibits an extraordinarily high percentage of single family housing units (85%) with the majority of the remainder in multi-family units. There are few manufactured housing units in the Town. Housing stock by type is indicated in Table II-10.

**Table II-10: Housing Stock by Type, 2000**

Community	Single Family Units		Multi Family Units (2+) Units		Manufactured Housing Units		Total Housing Units
	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Pelham	3,339	85%	550	14%	34	1%	3,923
NRPC Region	45,680	61%	26,838	36%	2,655	3%	75,173
State of NH	343,630	61%	170,348	30%	47,689	8%	561,667

Source: Office of State Planning.

## 3. Affordable Housing

As the NRPC region has continued to grow, the availability of housing affordable to individuals of all income levels has one of the region's most critical issues. According to data from the National Low Income Housing Coalition (see Table II-11), the hourly wage needed to afford any type of rental housing in the Lowell PMSA (Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area, which includes Pelham) is approximately \$1.50/hr. greater than the state level. In addition, individuals earning minimum wage need to work far greater hours to afford rental housing in the Lowell PMSA as opposed to the state average.

**Table II-11: Housing Wage and Work Hours at Minimum Wage Needed to Afford Fair Market Rent, Lowell PMSA and State, 2000**

Location	Hourly Wage Needed to Afford Fair Market Rent (@ 40 hrs./wk.)			Work Hours/Week Necessary at Minimum Wage (\$5.15) to Afford Fair Market Rent		
	One Bedroom	Two Bedroom	Three Bedroom	One Bedroom	Two Bedroom	Three Bedroom
Lowell, MA-NH PMSA	\$12.67	\$15.31	\$19.17	84	102	128
New Hampshire	\$11.11	\$14.15	\$18.37	86	110	143

Source: National Low Income Housing Coalition, "Out of Reach," September 2000.

In addition to basic affordability issues, very little assisted housing is located in Pelham. The NH Housing Finance Authority (NHHFA) defines assisted housing as housing units that are “provided subsidies for the purpose of creating affordable units for low and very low income households.” In 2000, Pelham had a deficiency in the amount of assisted housing provided relative to the region and the state. As indicated in Table II-12, the regional and state averages for percentage of assisted housing units in 2000 were both 3.1%. Pelham, at 1.3%, fell the below these averages.

**Table II-12: Assisted Housing Units, 2000**

Community	Elderly Assisted	Family Assisted	Other Assisted or Combined Types	Total Assisted	Percent Assisted Units	(Shortfall)/ Excess
Pelham	48	0	0	48	1.3%	(64)
NRPC Region	1,074	346	842	2,264	3.1%	-
State of NH	8,485	3,514	4,868	16,877	3.1%	-

**Source:** NH Housing Finance Authority, Directory of Assisted Housing, 2000;  
Other or Combined includes group homes, mentally handicapped, physically handicapped, and developments containing both elderly and family housing.

However, 64 units of affordable housing were approved by the Planning Board in October 2000 (Atwood Road Elderly Facility) and in October 2001 (Pelham Terrace Elderly Housing on Windham Road). If constructed, these units will eliminate Pelham’s affordable housing shortfall for 2000.

#### 4. Home Sales Costs

Table II-13 shows total residential sales (both new and existing) for 1998 and 2001. Throughout the late 1990s, increasing demand and supply increased annual housing sales in Pelham, greater than for the region as a whole.

**Table II-13: Total Residential Sales, NRPC Region, 1998 and 2001**

Community	1998	2001
Pelham	132	181
Amherst	282	229
Brookline	108	70
Hollis	164	123
Hudson	413	448
Litchfield	163	96
Lyndeborough	N/A	18
Merrimack	622	794
Milford	291	297
Mont Vernon	36	45
Nashua	1,496	1719
Wilton	85	44
NRPC Region	3,792	4,064

**Source:** New Hampshire Association of Realtors, compiled by NRPC.

Due to the high housing demand of the late 1990s, average home prices in Pelham are high when compared to the NRPC region and surrounding towns such as Hudson, Litchfield and Merrimack (see Table II-14). The average residential sales price in Pelham was \$255,000 in 2001 (both new and re-sale), while the average residential sales price in the region was \$215,500. Pelham has the highest average residential sales price of any town in the NRPC region, with the exception of Hollis.

The relatively high cost of housing in Pelham is perhaps due to the dominance of single family housing in comparison with the region as a whole. Over 85% of all housing units are single family as opposed to 64% for the region (see Table II-10), thereby reducing housing choice. The majority of new single family homes being constructed in Pelham today can be considered “high-end,” often up to 5,000 square feet in size and built on larger lots than homes constructed in the 1960s and 1970s. This new construction is therefore more expensive, with homes often selling for upwards of \$250,000. In addition, Pelham has few manufactured housing units.

**Table II-14: Average (Mean) Residential Sales Price, NRPC Region, 2001**

Community	2001
Pelham	\$255,000
Amherst	\$258,000
Brookline	\$243,000
Hollis	\$339,000
Hudson	\$188,000
Litchfield	\$222,000
Lyndeborough	\$162,000
Merrimack	\$183,000
Milford	\$180,000
Mont Vernon	\$208,000
Nashua	\$174,000
Wilton	\$174,000
NRPC Region	\$215,500

**Source:** New Hampshire Association of Realtors, compiled by NRPC.

## E. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Conduct a Town buildout analysis using parcel-based Geographic Information System (GIS) technology. The buildout analysis can provide a more accurate estimate of the amount of developable land remaining in the Town. The results of the buildout analysis can be used to predict the level of public services required when the Town is fully developed.
- Using the results of the buildout analysis and the Natural Resources Inventory, conduct a study of the potential need for public water and/or sewer in certain sections of the Town.
- Develop regulatory measures that will facilitate the provision of affordable housing, such as: 1) review and consider revising the Housing for Older Persons Ordinance to further encourage the provision of such housing; 2) review and consider revising the requirements for Accessory Dwelling Units to allow for one-bedroom market rate rental housing; and 3) review and consider revising the zoning ordinance to further encourage the provision of mixed residential/commercial units in the Business Districts

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