

September 26-28, 2023



# Strategic Outline for Avon 2040 Comprehensive Plan



## Avon 2040

The Center for Resilient Metro-Regions at the University of Massachusetts is the Avon 2040 Comprehensive Plan consultant. The Center disseminates applied research to practitioners, communities, and students. The Center believes that planning, sustainability, resilience, placemaking and livable communities, public health, justice, and economic development can be synergistic goals and support our communities and our most vulnerable populations. The Center partners with communities to develop more resilient and sustainable planning and design solutions and bring research to practice.

The Architects Foundation's Communities by Design program supported the Strategic Outline for the Avon 2040 Comprehensive Plan, bringing in a multidisciplinary expert team to engage Avon and create a strategic plan that forms the outline of the full comprehensive plan. Communities all over the world are struggling to build effective strategies to address their key challenges: from climate change and equity to housing and revitalization. Communities by Design (CxD) provides a ready, applicable model to overcome these challenges and provide communities with a path to success. Through decades of work in hundreds of communities with tens of thousands of volunteers and community members, CxD Design Assistance Teams have proven that communities are at the heart of solutions to the world's most pressing issues. Every project is community-driven with meaningful public participation and an intensive process to match professional expertise with public values and aspirations for a place. Design Assistance Teams are made up of volunteer architects, planners, and other professionals with expertise customized to fit the local community context.

The full Avon 2040 Comprehensive Plan will be adopted by:

- Avon Planning Board: Chair Charles P. Comeau, Robert Pillarella, Tracy Self, and Jason L. Suzor Jr., (in accordance with M.G.L. C. 41, 81D):

- Select Board: Chair Eric S. Bekerman, Jason L. Suzor, Sr., and Shannon M. Coffey
- NOTE: Town Meeting petitioned the General Court (House No. 3746) to change "Selectmen" to "Select Board," which should become law by end of 2023. The actual change will require a majority vote at the Town Meeting (probably on May 7, 2024) before the Comprehensive Plan is adopted. For that reason, we are using the term Select Board throughout this plan.

This plan would not have been possible without:

- Dozens of community members and other stakeholders participated in the planning process, at stakeholder and focus group meetings, public engagement forums, and interviews.
- Select Board, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, Historic Commission, and Old Colony Planning Commission
- Town and School Department staff: Jonathan L. Beder, Town Administrator; Shanna M. Faro, Town Administrator Executive Assistant; William A. Fitzgerald, DPW Director; Bill Martin, Assistant DPW Director; Lynn McKenney, Planning Board Recording Secretary; Christine Godino, Superintendent of Schools, and other School Department representatives.
- Massachusetts Rural and Small-Town Development Funds for the entire comprehensive plan cost.
- The Architects Foundation team experts volunteering their time.

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# I. Executive Summary, Community Vision, & Community Values

*This Strategic Outline of the Avon 2040 Comprehensive Plan provides an outline for the full comprehensive plan, highlights important points to fully discuss and vet, and offers guidance and recommendations for the future. The full Avon 2040 Comprehensive Plan will build on this outline, evaluate the recommendations with the community, and address other issues not discussed here. This outline is a living document designed to start the full comprehensive planning process.*

The **Town of Avon** is 4.55 square miles with 4,777 people (2020 census). Avon is a small town (both geographically and in terms of population), the smallest in Norfolk County. It retains a small town feel with greater affordability than the overall Boston Metropolitan region and a greater sense of knowing one's neighbors and shared landmarks, especially parks, than in many areas.

It has a modest population and development growth rate. Its population density (1,050 people per square mile) is typical of the area. Two-thirds of Avon's housing units are detached single-family homes, with a median value lower than Plymouth County and the Commonwealth. The median age is 36.9, marginally younger than the county and the Commonwealth.

Avon is a median income community, with median household income slightly higher and the poverty rate slightly lower than Norfolk County and the Commonwealth. The entire community is mapped as an Environmental Justice area based on minority (global majority) status (i.e., minority status greater than 25%). Higher education (bachelor's degree and beyond) is significantly lower than the county and the Commonwealth.

Avon is less than 20 miles from Boston and part of the Boston metropolitan area. It borders Brockton to the south, Stoughton to the west, Randolph to the north, and Holbrook to the east. It is both a suburban commuter town and, with its industrial park and Merchants Park, a major regional employment center.

Avon has up-to-date plans (e.g., hazard mitigation and open space plan) that help guide its future. Avon's last Master Plan (2001), however, is 23 years and often not relevant to today's needs.

This plan is intended to document Avon's shared vision, community values, and pathways to action to help guide Avon, its policies, investments, and regulatory system for the next couple of decades. *Avon 2040* has a long-term (20 years) planning horizon. At the same time, however, the plan seeks to provide a shorter-term implementation path for the next decade.

Opportunities, threats, and community vision, however, will continue to evolve, and the plan should be revisited and updated as needed every five to ten years. At the same time, the path forward to implementing the plan should be tracked and adjusted on an annual or semi-annual basis.

The 2023 Town Meeting approved funding for Avon's first professional planner to supplement the efforts of town volunteers, the Select Board, the Planning Board, other town boards, part-time board staff, the Town Administrator, and the DPW Director. Hopefully, that person, along with town staff and town boards, will be able to steward this plan and ensure that the community's visions and this plan guide detailed plans and actions.

## Avon Community Vision

Avon residents want to preserve their **small-town feel**, a safe, comfortable, resilient small town with a strong identity, unique sense of place, community cohesion, sense of belonging, affordable living, and clean environment.

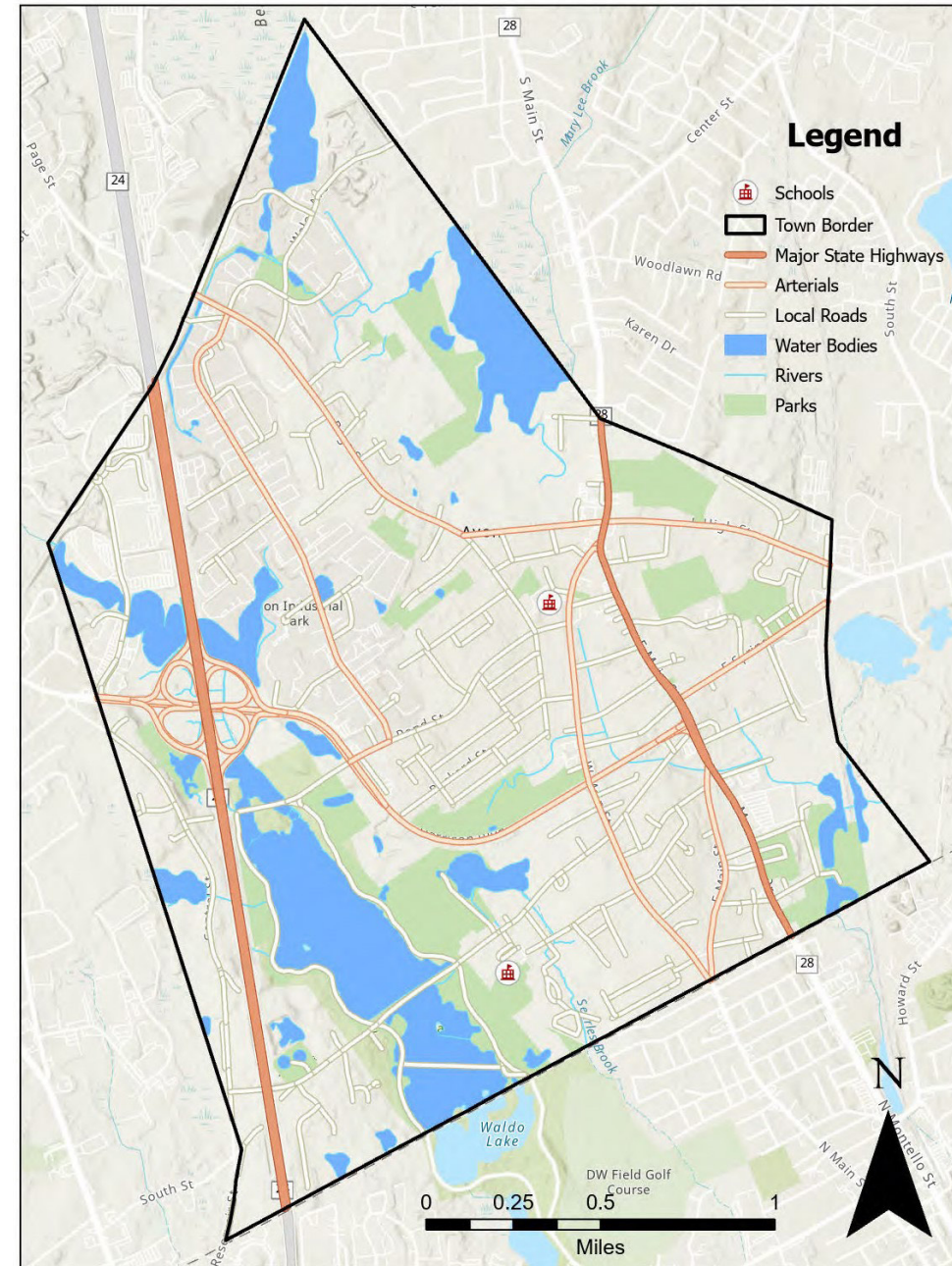


Figure I-1. Avon is proud of its small-town feel.

Identity and sense of place includes parks, recreation, open space, community facilities, downtown, and **other strong focal** points where all members of the community can come together and feel like they belong.

**Community cohesion, diversity, inclusiveness, and belonging** includes knowing one's neighbors, welcoming all residents, and involving all residents in the community. This includes accommodating, including, and celebrating residents with disabilities and new increasingly diverse residents so they can belong to and be welcomed by the Avon community.

**Safety and feeling safe** includes addressing safety from crime, improving traffic safety, and feeling part of the community. Traffic safety includes less crashes, ensuring all modes of transportation are safe and desirable, while still accommodating traffic needs. Slower speeds, not fewer vehicles.

Ensuring that community members can **afford to live** in the community requires that Avon maintains its robust tax base and funds the infrastructure and services residents want with a reasonable tax rate. It includes diversifying employment opportunities, education, and skills training for its emerging workforce, and ensuring housing is affordable to all residents.

**A clean environment** requires addressing climate change and other environmental challenges.

We understand that sharing a community vision and working together to achieve that vision helps us build momentum to protect and enhance our community. We acknowledge that external pressures will lead to change whether that change is guided or not. It is up to us, then, to select the future we want.

Let's get started.

## Community Values

Building on that vision and our small-town identity, we have identified our values for this plan.

- We value **Land Uses** that preserve our existing neighborhoods that we love, while allowing for more flexibility, encouraging new development in the Avon Industrial Park and at Merchants Park/Stockwell Drive, while improving our focus on environmental protection and reducing threats to our water and our property. A small-town feel requires that we have a strong sense of place with strong focal points that are uniquely Avon. A downtown, however small, provides a focal point that helps give Avon a sense of place and small-town flavor (Figure 1-2).
- We want to preserve our **Housing** patterns, while allowing the flexibility to house our increasingly small families, our aging populations, allow our children and youth to find housing as we did when we became Avon residents, and pay attention to the burdens that might otherwise force residents to move away. A small-town feel requires that we have choices in finding housing that serves our needs and our budgets.
- We want healthy **Economic Development** that continues to allow us to have more jobs than workers, white collar and blue-collar jobs that pay decent wages, development which keeps our tax base strong, and greater economic activity that builds a sense of place in the Avon Industrial Park, Merchants Park/Stockwell Drive, and downtown. A small-town feel requires that we maintain our economy and the benefit it provides to our town.
- We want **Open Space and Recreation** to serve as safe gathering, meeting, and play places for everyone in the community, regardless of who they are, places that serve the fundamental needs to reconnect to nature, and places that help us maintain a clean environment and help us thrive

even with climate change. A small-town feel requires that our open spaces provide opportunities to enhance the feel of our community and promote social connections. Our parks, along with our schools, provide our most shared and used focal points that support our identity (Figure 1-3).



Figure 1-2. Small-town flavor includes a downtown, however small, that provides a focal point.

- We want to preserve our **Natural and Cultural Resources** for us and for future generations, in our parks, with our natural systems, with our nature-based solutions, through preserving the best of our history and architecture, while enhancing those features that clean our water and our air, mitigate the effects of climate change. A small-town feel is built on our natural systems.
- We need **Mobility and Circulation** for multiple travel modes, foot-travel, bicycle-travel, automobiles, trucks, and transit, slowing the speed of travel, making it safe, and adding to the quality of our community. A small-town feel demands safe streets, attractive streetscapes, and a transportation network that supports, not divides, our neighborhoods.

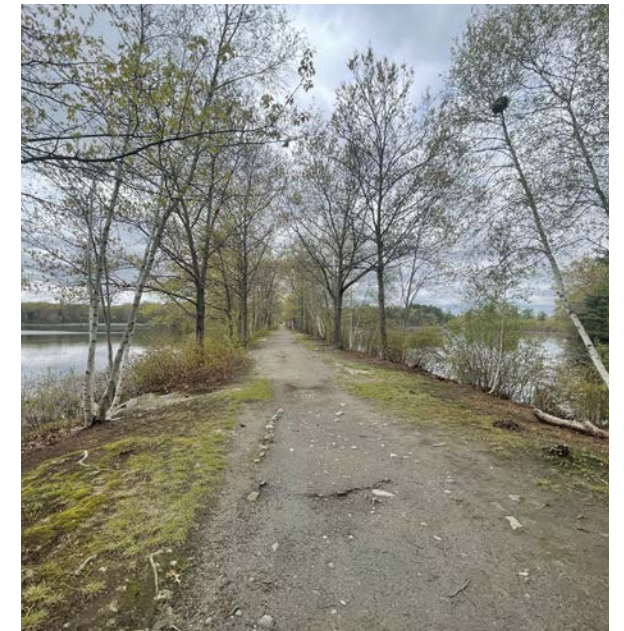


Figure 1-3. Parks, along with our schools, provide our most heavily used and shared gathering space.

- We want public and non-governmental **Community Services and Facilities**, including public buildings, public health, and schools, which serve our needs and are designed to thrive with climate change and reduce our own climate change impacts, without adding undue tax burdens. A small-town feel requires that we serve our community and provide places to meet all our needs.
- We prioritize taking **Climate Action** and building our long-term **Sustainability and Resilience**, not only to address climate change but to let us thrive even with climate change and all the other social, economic, and environmental changes that are inevitable. A small-town feel requires that we take a long view to ensure that we are meeting our needs and those of our children, our grandchildren, and future generations.
- We need to promote **Justice, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**, in our community and in our schools. We need to respect all community members and enable all our residents to connect together and participate in Avon civic life and Avon social life. A small-town feel requires that we embrace, include, and welcome all of our residents and their needs, be it our youth, those who are aging in place, those with visible or invisible disabilities, those who are moving to our community, and those who, like us, want to build a place to live, work, and play.

*One participant said: “I grew up in a little village; I want to die in a little village.” Let’s ensure that our residents can continue to know and care about their neighbors of today and continue to have a strong sense of place and community.*

## 2. Community Engagement

The planning process began with a **joint Select Board and Planning Board kickoff workshop** (6:00 PM on Wednesday June 26, 2023). That workshop created a framework for the plan and public engagement.

For the initial public engagement forums, the Center for Resilient Metro-Regions partnered with the Architects Foundation’s Communities by Design program (the charitable arm of the American Institute of Architects) to engage the community to help scope the overall Comprehensive Plan; identify the community vision, values, and goals; and identify pathways to action. This process entailed:

1. **Community outreach**, including postcards to every mailing address in Avon, social media and email to town boards, town department heads, and community and social organizations.
2. **Stakeholders focus groups** (September 26, 2023) with representatives of town and community board, appointed town and school staff, the Cape Verdean Association members, and the chamber of commerce (Figure 2-1).
3. **Public Engagement Forum** (Sept. 26, 2023) with community members with comments on any aspect of the future were welcomed (“blue-sky”), as summarized in **Public Engagement Forums** (Figure 2-2).
4. **Public Engagement Forum** (September 28, 2023) on proposed strategic framework, community vision, values, and goals, and pathways to action (Figure 2-3). The forum was broadcast live on public access TV and recorded for on-demand delivery.
5. Additional **stakeholder meetings and focus groups** are being planned for our youth, traditionally underserved newer residents, our schools, and our Avon Industrial Park community. Those findings will be incorporated in the draft Comprehensive Plan that goes out for public comment in 2024.



Figure 2-1. Stakeholder Focus Groups



Figure 2-2. Public Engagement Forum



Figure 2-3. Strategic Framework Forum

### Public Engagement Forums

Participants stressed Avon’s strengths (with the most repeated ones shown in bold), including:

- **Small, quiet, family-friendly, and tight-knit community with a small town-feel.**
- **Well-used and loved open space, green space, recreation, and a clean environment, especially D.W. Field Park and Delmarco Park, walking trails, and various park programming.**
- **Avon Industrial Park, its opportunities, and the Avon Industrial Park Association.**
- Partnerships with cultural, civic, and faith-based organizations and the related festivals, markets, programming, and summer concerts.
- A vibrant business community, big-box retail, and a broad tax base.
- Central location and proximity to other towns.
- Services, from the Senior Center to specialized automotive repair.
- Sidewalks and accessibility along with well-maintained streets and infrastructure.
- The new police and fire stations and well-maintained library and other buildings.
- Diverse environment and environmental protection, from increased interest and use of solar energy to free recycling and green infrastructure.
- Drinking water treatment facility, with no detectable PFAS for water leaving the facility.
- Access to highways (Route 24) and to nearby commuter rail access in adjacent communities.



Figure 2-4. Waldo Lake, D.W. Field Park



Figure 2-5. Geese, South Street dam, D.W. Field Park



Figure 2-6. Turkey at Avon Public Housing



Figure 2-7. Events at DeMarco Park



Figure 2.9. Mary Kay & Stephen Mills Memorial playground



Figure 2.11. African Market- diversity downtown



Figure 2.8. Avon Library



Figure 2.10. Green infrastructure at Town Hall



Figure 2.12. Sidewalk improvements underway

Participants also identified weaknesses and challenges, including: (bold being repeated most often):

- **Lack of sanitary sewer and water supply growth opportunities at Avon Industrial Park and Merchants Park.**
- **Traffic and pedestrian safety, high traffic volume and speeds, aggressive driving, limited sidewalks, limited safe crosswalks, and traffic congestion, with Avon being a traffic cut-through (especially on Harrison Boulevard, Main, and Pond) that conflicts with walking and with a safe journey to school.**
- **Other infrastructure that needs investment and upgrades, including roads, sewerage, water supply, town offices, the senior center, and the elementary school, and related services.**
- **A weak town center without a sense of place, with some vacant and underutilized lots creating gaps downtown, and an unfriendly walking and parking environment.**
- Not enough understanding and appreciation of diversity with a disconnect between Avon and increasingly diverse and often socially vulnerable residents. Diversity should not mean parallel lives and limited blending and shared experiences.
- Quality of life challenges (e.g., dumping, out-of-date town website, inadequate parking enforcement, inadequate maintenance of D.W. Field Park).
- Lack of business resilience support, and especially lack of resources to support small businesses, including on digital platforms.
- Limited commercial services, especially restaurants and small businesses to catch attention, retail, health services, and other services.
- Limited bus and transit services in Avon.



- Limited building opportunities, with sewer and physical constraints and limited inventories of building potential.
- High commercial and industrial tax rates and municipal financial obligations.
- Opposition to change, mixed and unclear sense of priorities and limited capacity for managing public resources and facilities.
- Inadequate support and navigation for social needs and chronic and acute adverse events.
- Inadequate multi-jurisdictional and regional cooperation, including no local control over D.W. Field Park.
- Difficulty as a small town to build collaborative partnerships (business, municipal).
- Lack of housing that is affordable.



Figure 2-13. Downtown parking confusion and safety



Figure 2-14. Downtown accessibility challenges

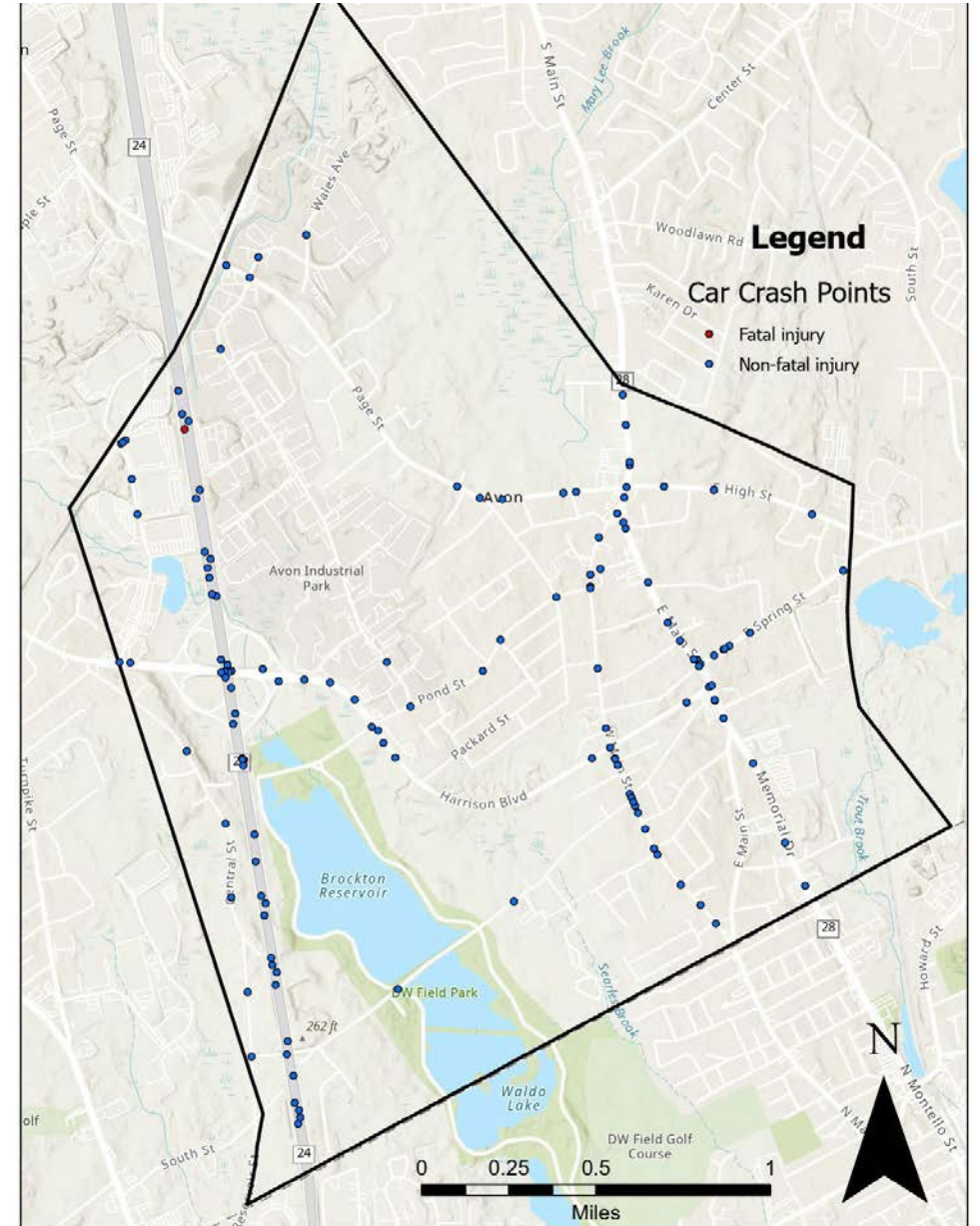


Figure 2-15. Too many crashes

Thinking forward, participants identified opportunities including:

- **Safe Streets, traffic safety, with narrower streets, wider sidewalks, wider and better marked and lighted crosswalks, and slower traffic.**
- **Sewer Avon Industrial Park and Merchants Park with expansion at both sites (industrial, construction, biotechnology, warehousing).**
- **Recreational opportunities, improved infrastructure, especially at D.W. Field Park and more playgrounds.**
- **Create a strong node, gathering space, and sense of place downtown (e.g., recreation center), with a stronger visual presence and activation.**
- Improved or new municipal and elementary school buildings.
- Create spaces for commercial connectivity.
- Accessible mobility.
- Improved transit.
- Expanded housing affordability and housing type to allow our residents to continue to stay here and allow new generations to live here. Be age friendly to all ages.
- Micro-farming and community gardens.
- Improved flood management and education.
- Increased grants and town funding for infrastructure investments.
- Increased focus on diversity, equity, inclusion in community involvement, partnerships, and social networks with schools and social resilience organizations (e.g., Cape Verdean Association, NAACP, Avon Schools).
- Business outreach to community members.
- Apprentice and training for trades in local schools and community colleges.
- Regional cooperation.
- Encourage supermarket, retail, movies, and health care services.
- Restaurants and food-related gathering space, including coffee shop, family restaurant, and food trucks.
- Community and multi-generational gathering spaces (e.g., downtown tavern) and more events.
- Reuse Old Christmas Tree Shops for commercial condominiums and mixed-use development.
- Mobility for businesses, support in place.
- More business resilience and diversity, business development and stability, for more jobs, tax base, and retaining money within Avon.
- Stronger social networks, connections, relationships, and awareness of resources.
- Navigation between geography.
- Plan for continuity of public and private services when stressed (e.g., a major storm).
- Environmental action, such as regenerative material processes, more solar and geothermal development, and addressing stormwater and flooding challenges.
- Adaptive reuse of buildings and sites.
- Maintaining youth populations, with job opportunities, housing, and recreation and community center (e.g., expanded use of after-hours school facilities).

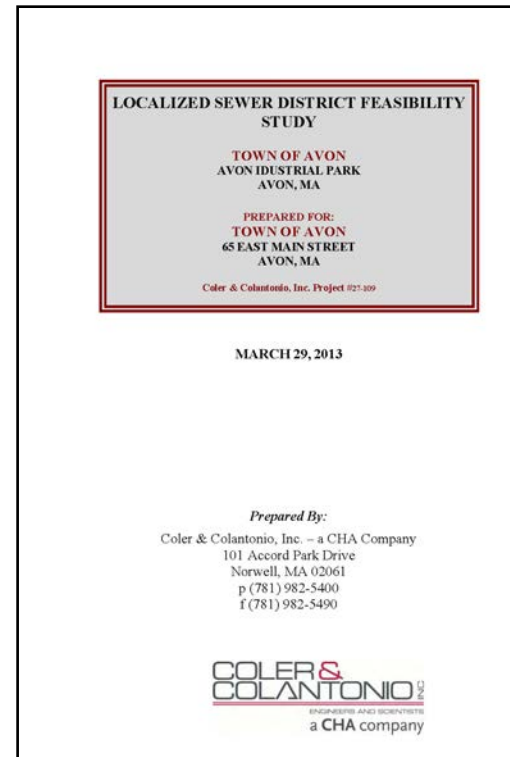


Figure 2-16. Sewer feasibility



Figure 2-17. Parking lots available for redevelopment



Figure 2-18. Development focus

- Quality of technological services – reliability of services.
- Exploring education costs – limitations on programming for small class populations.
- Potential small business expansion vs. big box retailers.
- Add practical civics and political critical thinking to student education, especially as related to local issues.
- Avoid making capital expenditures unless there is a maintenance and operational funding plan.
- Empower town administrative staff to reduce the need to get Select Board’s approval.

Participants also expressed concerns about external threats:

- Flooding, major storms, heat waves, and climate change.
- Increasing housing and other costs.
- Inability to connect to in-town or abutting community sewer.
- Drinking water quality risks, especially PFAS (forever chemicals, Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances)
- Gentrification, displacement, and rising housing prices.
- Environmental and habitat damage.

The initial public engagement and analysis resulted in this *Avon 2040* strategic outline. This plan, subject to public and board comments, will be expanded into the *Avon 2040 Comprehensive Plan*.



Figure 2-19. Industrial Park oil slick



Figure 2-20. Catch basin draining to wetlands with no buffer

Additional planned community engagement include:

6. Focus groups for any identified populations underrepresented at public forums: TBD 2023 or 2024
7. Joint Select Board and Planning Board workshop: TBD on strategic outline-2023 or 2024.
8. **Public Engagement Forum** on *Avon 2040* Comprehensive Plan initial drafts: TBD February 2024
9. Joint Select Board and Planning Board draft plan workshop: TBD February or March 2024
10. **Public Engagement Forum and Public Hearing** on *Avon 2040 Comprehensive Plan*: TBD April 2024
11. Joint Select Board and Planning Board workshop: TBD May 2024
12. Planning Board plan adoption: TBD May-June 2024
13. Select Board plan endorsement: TBD May-June 2024

### 3. Background & Past Plans

Avon has a long history of collaborating with the community to adopt and implement plans. In the last four years, for example, Avon has created four significant townwide plans, including the *Open Space and Recreation Plan*, the *Hazard Mitigation Plan and Municipal Vulnerability Report*, *Housing Production Plan*, and *ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan*. These plans have helped advance positive actions and attract state grant funding.

Both older plans (e.g., the 2001 Master Plan) and current plans provide a vision, principles, and an action agenda that apply to this plan. These plans include, in chronological order:

*Master Plan* (Avon Planning Board with Old Colony Planning Council, 2001) was adopted in accordance with state comprehensive plan requirements (Mass. General Laws Chapter 41, Section 81D). Avon adopted previous Master Plans in 1974 and 1964. The 2001 plan was a highly effective plan, but at 23 years old and never updated, it is now out-of-date.

The 2001 Master Plan goals, excerpted below, and many of its objectives remain relevant to Avon:

1. Guide future development to meet the needs of diverse population groups, protect attractive neighborhoods, preserve natural resources, and open spaces, and continue to provide high-quality services.
2. Balance reasonable industrial and commercial growth with preservation and enhancement of the town's amenities and residential character.
3. Protect and expand the town's open space and recreation resources to serve the diverse needs of the community.
4. Protect watershed areas from direct and indirect impacts of development, to protect and enhance water

resources including ponds, streams, wetlands, well sites and groundwater recharge areas, and to protect people and property from flood hazards.

5. Ensure the general health, safety, and welfare of residents by protecting water supplies in neighborhoods with small lots and potentially failing septic systems.
6. Provide sufficient land, facilities, and programs to accommodate a range of recreational activities to meet the diverse interests and abilities of Avon residents.
7. To work with the City of Brockton to preserve D.W. Field Park, particularly the section along Harrison Blvd.
8. Protect and maintain the present housing stock while expanding opportunities for diverse housing types.
9. Modify the circulation system to meet and reconcile the local and intercommunity needs of residential, commercial, and industrial traffic.
10. Provide public facilities needed to serve the present and probable population.



Figure 3-1. Goeres Square, with its monument dedicated in 2023, has been mentioned in past plans as a downtown focal point.

Many of the objectives and actions in the 2001 Master Plan have been accomplished or partially accomplished. These include developing the new Police and Fire Stations, maintaining the Avon Open Space and Recreation Plan, protecting surface and groundwater, improving access for those with disabilities, working with Brockton on planning for D.W. Field Park and expanding the park, improving sidewalks, and providing an outlet from the northerly end of Stockwell Drive into Stoughton.

Other objections and actions in the 2001 Master Plan remain a part of Avon's focus and this Comprehensive Plan. The most critical items are:

- Meeting the needs of diverse population groups.
- Protect the open space and water supply value of undeveloped business zoned land surrounding D.W. Field Park, especially along Harrison Blvd.
- Protecting town drinking water supplies.
- Addressing sewage and water supply constraints at the Industrial Park and Merchants Park.
- Improving accessibility.
- Expanding recreation, such as trails, at D.W. Field Park.
- Expand diverse housing types in appropriate areas.
- Improving the safety and pedestrian and bicycle friendliness of circulation routes.
- Better rationalizing where to encourage development through zoning.

*Community Development Plan* (Avon Planning Board and Old Colony Planning Council, 2004)

This plan, written just three years after the previous Avon Master Plan and with a state grant (E.O. 418), expands that plan to identify Avon assets and liabilities, analyze

of open space and recreation, housing, and economic development, and identify strategic opportunities. Many of those opportunities remain relevant, including acquire land to protect Brockton Reservoir and Avon's portion of D.W. Field Park, improve joint Brockton/Avon planning for that park, improve water supply protection, advance recreational opportunities including trail systems, and improve accessibility.

*Community Services* (Karen Sunnarborg, 2011)

The social service needs assessment and recommendations were requested by the Select Board and funded with federal CDBG funds distributed by the Commonwealth. The analysis considered health care and mental health, life style, environmental issues, education and diversity, public safety, infrastructure, housing needs, town center/downtown, families and youth, seniors, veterans services, and community engagement. The Community Services plan informs the Services and Facilities chapter of this plan.

*Capital Improvement Plan FY2021-FY2025* (Avon, 2020, periodically updated)

The CIP creates a plan for capital investments, using funding sources such as Chapter 90 Roadway Funds (state aid), ambulance fees, motor vehicle excise revenue, cash, and bond-funded general tax revenue. Future projects could include revenue sources from the Massachusetts School Building Authority and other grants and revenue sources. The current CIP is not directly connected to the Avon Master Plan. Standard and Poors rates Avon's debt worthiness as AA+ and stable, their second highest rating, which allows Avon to sell tax-exempt municipal bonds while paying at a low interest rate.

*Housing Production Plan* (Old Colony Planning Council 2020) provides a plan for increasing the production of affordable housing in Avon and a comprehensive housing needs analysis. The plan sets four relevant housing goals.

1. Create and maintain affordable housing that meets Avon’s needs and equals 10% of housing stock.
2. Ensure new affordable housing is harmonious with the community vision of maintaining Avon’s rural character and zoning.
3. Create affordable units through adaptive reuse of existing buildings and town owned properties.
4. Promote a diversity of housing options to meet the needs of a changing and aging population and promote a socio-economically diverse population.

Many of the strategies outlined remain relevant and will be discussed in the housing chapter of this plan.

A housing production plan that helps create significant new units can provide a safe haven from loss of local decision-making authority under MGL C. 40, the Comprehensive Permit law, but the thresholds for that safe haven (0.5% of affordable housing needs or 9 subsidized affordable units per year until the town reaches the target of 10% of units being affordable) are not currently being met.

*ADA Self-Evaluation & Transition Plan (KMA Architecture + Accessibility 2020)*

Provides a detailed evaluation of Avon’s serving the need of residents and visitors with disabilities and a plan for improvement. The recommendations are referenced in four sections of this plan:

- Open Space and Recreation – as relates to facilities.
- Mobility and Circulation – as relates to transit and transportation facilities.
- Mobility and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) – since accessibility is a key aspect of DEI.
- Services and Facilities – as relates to most of the ADA recommendations.

*Avon Public Schools, District Improvement Plan: 2021-2026 (2021)*

The two most relevant sections of the strategic District Improvement Plan to the comprehensive plan relate to diversity, equity, and inclusion and facilities. The youngest generation of Avon is more diverse than the oldest generation, so the schools have a greater diversity than the Town of Avon as whole. Although not specifically called out by name, Avon Schools have begun the process of addressing the aging physical plant at the Butler Elementary School.

*Complete Streets Prioritization (CG Associates, Inc. 2022)*

*Complete Streets Policy (Select Board 2020)*

In 2020, the Avon Select Board adopted a Complete Streets Policy, committing the town to consider the needs of all users, pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, motorists, users of wheelchairs and power-driven mobility devices, and commercial and emergency vehicles in the design, construction, maintenance, and operation of town transit systems. In 2022, MassDOT approved Avon’s revised Prioritization list, prioritizing streets for all users, with a strong focus on sidewalk and sidewalk protection gaps. These principles have been incorporated in both the scoping/strategic plan and the circulation/mobility sections of this plan.

*Open Space and Recreation Plan (Old Colony Planning Council, 2022, valid to 4/2029)* was adopted with extensive analysis and community participation. With the plan in place, Avon is eligible to apply for grants administered by the Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services through April 2029. Because the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) is so recent, the Open Space and Recreation section of this plan simply excerpts and references the relevant sections of the OSRP. In addition, the plan informs the Natural Resources section of the Natural and Cultural Resources chapter of this plan.

*Hazard Mitigation Plan and Municipal Vulnerability Report (2022, valid to 1/10/2027)*

The plan ensures that Avon remains eligible for both pre-disaster mitigation grants and is positioned to minimize future natural and climate-change induced or impacted disasters. Climate change will lead to larger storm events, more frequent storm events, and increased periods of extreme heat and related peak electric demand, as well as significant risk of droughts and new disease carrying insect vectors. The Hazard Mitigation Plan informs the climate action and land use chapters of this plan.

*Community-Wide Historic Properties Survey (Stacy E. Spies, Historic Preservation Consultant, 2023)*

First community-wide historic resource survey of all buildings more than 50 years old. The plan identified one building, the Nathan and Almira Tucker House at 215 West Main Street, eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic places, created inventory forms of historic buildings and properties, and recommended several properties for future study. The Historic Properties Survey plan informs the cultural resources section of the Natural and Cultural Resources chapter of this plan.

*Smart Avon Industrial Park (Center for Resilient Metro-Regions 2023)*

This plan identifies opportunities for Avon Industrial Park expansion, within its existing footprint, from both sewerage the industrial park and zoning regulatory changes. It identifies easy short-term actions (primarily regulatory) that can provide immediate benefits even before the industrial park is sewerage. The plan informs the Land Use and Economic Development chapters of this plan, with much of the language lifted directly from that plan.

**Technical plans**

Avon also has narrower technical plans that are critical as they move forward on specific aspects of this plan.

These include, for example:

- *Avon Library Strategic Plan (2021)*
- *Localized Sewer District Feasibility Study, Avon Industrial Park (Color & Colantonio, 2013)*
- *Water System Infrastructure Inventory and Assessment (Tata & Howard, 2020)*

## 4. Community Goals & Pathways to Action

Avon's strategic goals and pathways to action build on the community vision and values. Many goals overlap subject areas. Objectives and proposed policies are in the subject area elements that follow this section.

### Land Use Goals

Help Avon retain its small-town flavor, while serving all its residents' needs. This includes:

1. Preserve our existing beloved neighborhoods while allowing greater flexibility to meet changing demographics and housing needs.
2. Expand affordable housing in appropriate places and get local control for comprehensive permits.
3. Encourage resilient development in the Avon Industrial Park, expanding the tax-base and providing jobs.
4. Encourage mixed-use development at Stockwell Drive, expanding the tax-base, countering the national decline in retail, and providing mixed-income housing.
5. Improve Avon's sense of place, identity, and community gathering spaces, especially downtown and at D.W. Field Park.
6. Improve water supply protection.

### Housing Goals

Ensure quality housing is available to serve Avon residents' needs. This includes:

1. Preserve Avon's small-town feel with safe comfortable neighborhoods, housing that serves our needs, including smaller households, aging populations,

new families that want to stay in Avon, and housing that meets their budgets.

2. Address the need for subsidized affordable housing, while regaining local control of comprehensive permits.
3. Support the efforts of Avon residents to age in place in their home.

### Economic Development Goals

Keep a strong economy and tax base that serves Avon residents' needs. This includes:

1. Provide opportunities for job and tax base expansion at the Avon Industrial Park.
2. Provide opportunities for job and tax base expansion at Merchants Park/Stockwell Drive.
3. Supercharge the Town's Energy.

### Open Space & Recreation Goals

Provide safe gathering, meeting, and play places for everyone in Avon. This includes:

1. Existing recreational facilities and opportunities are connected and improved to provide a range of recreational opportunities accessible to meet the needs of all residents, in or close to every neighborhood.
2. Recreational facilities and programs are expanded to provide universal access that meet the needs of underserved populations.
3. Lands of natural resources, scenic, and recreation value are protected, well-stewarded, connect with each other and with neighborhoods to accommodate the needs of all residents and be enjoyed by future generations.
4. The Stormwater Management Program is

implemented and in compliance with Stormwater Management Regulations to ensure groundwater and surface water are protected as clean and abundant resources to preserve and protect the town's water supply, wildlife, and other natural resources.

5. Management and protection of natural and recreational resources is achieved through initiative-taking planning, coordinating, and advocacy that provides adequate, dedicated funding sources for open space and recreational facility acquisition and maintenance to protect natural resources while encouraging appropriate public use.

### Natural and Cultural Resources Goals

Preserve and celebrate Avon's natural and cultural resources for now and the future. This includes:

1. Protect our parks and natural systems.
2. Expand nature-based solutions to clean stormwater, maintain comfortable temperatures, adapt to climate change, and build quality of life.
3. Preserve and celebrate the best of our history and architecture.

### Mobility & Circulation Goals

Ensure that our residents and businesses can travel safely by any mode of travel. This includes:

1. Ensure that all modes of travel, by foot, bicycle, motor vehicles, freight, and transit and safe.
2. Focus on the small-town feel that demands safe streets, attractive streetscapes, and a transportation network that supports, not divides, our neighborhoods.

### Community Services & Facilities Goals

Ensure public and non-profit sector buildings, facilities, and services meet our residents' needs. This includes:

1. Improve or replace public buildings and schools to serve the community and to create resilient decarbonized buildings.
2. Support facilities and services providing public health and social services to Avon residents.
3. Avoid adding undue tax burdens, now and in the future, calculating costs of projects based on total life cycle costs.

### Climate Action Goals

Take climate action to build resilience to a changing climate to mitigate Avon's greenhouse gas emissions. This includes:

1. Improve the resiliency of public and private buildings to prepare for climate change.
2. Develop landscape nature-based and other resilience to the impacts of climate change.
3. Decarbonize new and public buildings to protect the environment and reduce life cycle costs.
4. Focus on thriving with climate change and not waiting to respond to chronic and acute stress.
5. Address the long term needs of our children, our grandchildren, and future generations, with a focus on climate justice for those residents who are most at risk from climate hazards and climate change.

### Justice, Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Goals

Remove barriers to equity, embrace diversity, ensure opportunities for all, and include all residents. This includes:

1. Identify and address barriers to equity.
2. Understand the changing community and celebrate those changes and our collective community.
3. Work on all aspects of equity, distributional, procedural, structural, intergenerational, and cultural.
4. Include all community members to ensure connections and not a divided community.

## 5. Land Use Plan (required under M.G.L. c. 41, s. 81D)

Avon residents are understandably proud of Avon’s land use patterns as part of reinforcing Avon’s small- town feel.

Avon boasts a number of parks, from the enormous regional D.W. Field Park to smaller parks and recreation areas that dot the area, a strong industrial park that is the envy of many communities, the Merchants Park retail complex, smaller economic activity on the east side of town, Walmart on the south, a small downtown on the north, and easy highway connections to the north and the south. Scattered between these facilities are neighborhoods that provide comfortable and safe living.

Residents want to protect their neighborhoods, enhance their downtown and parks, and extend sewers to the Avon Industrial Park and Merchants Park/ Stockwell Drive to create new economic development opportunities.

The lack of sewer creates the most significant limit to growth:

- The town has done extensive analysis to provide sewer service to the Avon Industrial Park, either with treatment at a town site east of the Industrial Park or potentially connecting to Stoughton. Because sewers could allow for more water intensive uses, the town is exploring getting Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) water service for the industrial park. This kind of investment in the Campanelli Business Park in Stoughton has paid off, expanding development, tax base, and jobs.
- The town has done an analysis to provide sewer service to Merchants Park/Stockwell Drive, potentially connecting to Stoughton. Because sewers could allow for more water intensive uses,

the town is exploring getting MWRA water service for the industrial park.

- Walmart is served by a private sewer line draining to Brockton. There may be limited opportunities for Walmart to allow other users to use this line.
- Avon Middle/High School is served by a Bio-Clear Packaged Sewage Treatment Plant. The town has explored connecting the municipal complex (town hall, senior center, library) to the plant.
- Most of Avon is served by on-site sewage disposal (“septic system”). Many homes and businesses require sewage upgrades at point of sale, reducing the fluidity in the market. It is highly unlikely that these areas will be sewered within the planning horizon of this plan.

There are two significant opportunities to expand what today is a largely built-out industrial park. First, on-site sewage treatment and disposal (“septic”) systems can be replaced by a sanitary sewer collection system (sewerage). This would allow an expansion in the footprint of businesses, increasing the square footage of buildings and businesses, and an expansion in the kinds of uses that can be accommodated to include businesses and uses with greater sewage disposal demand.



Figure 5-1 The reliance on septic systems for wastewater disposal is the largest limit to growth.

Second, regulatory changes that can allow infill development and expansion, with many of these changes possible even before any sewerage capacity is added. These changes can improve the resiliency of the industrial park, both by concentrating development in areas with infrastructure and by reducing the climate and stormwater impacts of businesses.

### Preserve our existing beloved neighborhoods while allowing greater flexibility to meet changing demographics and housing needs. Recommendations:

1. Generally, minimize zoning map changes to honor the existing neighborhood development patterns.
2. Identify those neighborhoods that might be appropriate for higher density patterns, especially adjacent to future areas to be sewered where sewer might be accessed, and rezone for higher density.
3. Remove some of the discretionary special permits that can provide unexpectedly dense development in areas of the medium and low-density (R-25 and R-40 zoning districts).
4. Change from a minimum area per unit approach, which requires large expensive homes to provide a developer with a reasonable return, to a floor area ratio approach, which specifies the amount of square footage in relationship to the lot area and leaves it to the developer whether the build multiple smaller units at a lower cost per unit (of course, subject to on-site sewage disposal limitations).
5. Explore changing some uses from special permit, which can be an unpredictable process, to by-right, with site plan approval only.
6. Create a new parks and open space zoning district which allows only parks and recreation facilities and rezone all parks and conservation lands to that district, for a truth in advertising.

7. Rezone commercial districts where wetlands and other severe site constraints make commercial development impossible to low density zoning districts.
8. Provide more detailed site plan approval review standards.
9. Consider whether the Planning Board or Zoning Board should be the Special Permit Granting Authority or whether to petition the General Court to allow Avon to merge the two boards together.
10. Revise the subdivision regulations with clearer traditional neighborhood improvement requirements to create quality subdivisions, if any more are developed.

### Expand affordable housing in appropriate places and get local control for comprehensive permits. Recommendations:

1. Create a Smart Growth Overlay (MGL c. 40R) at Merchants Park allowing mixed use, with housing above the first floor or behind the commercial buildings. This provides the necessary mixed-income housing to support businesses, meet housing demand without going into existing residential neighborhoods, and provide the density necessary to eventually attract transit.
2. Create a local Comprehensive Permit equivalent that would authorize greater density for affordable housing with site plan approval and/or special permit, with the town being able to waive some standards but not all of the waivers that are currently possible and often undesirable with state authorized Comprehensive Permits.

### Encourage resilient development in the Avon Industrial Park, expanding the tax-base and providing jobs. Recommendations:

1. Bring sewer to the Avon Industrial Park.
2. Rezone the Avon Industrial Park, even before sewer arrives, to increase allowable height, reduce required



setback requirements, eliminate parking requirements, and add green infrastructure requirements for stormwater, vegetation, and trees. Many redevelopment projects are not possible without sewer, but even without sewer there is room for significant incremental growth.

**Encourage mixed-use development at Stockwell Drive, expanding the tax-base, countering the national decline in retail, and providing mixed-income housing. Recommendations:**

1. Zone Merchants Park/Stockwell Drive to Smart Growth Overlay (MGL 40R) to allow mixed-use and mixed-income housing above the first floor and behind commercial buildings.
2. Extend sewer to Merchants Park/Stockwell Drive.

Improve Avon's sense of place, identity, and community gathering spaces, especially downtown and at D.W. Field Park.

1. Allow redevelopment of the town owned parking lot on West Main, with replacement parking on West Main.
2. If the flyway bypass between Main and West Main is eliminated, making West Main intersection with Main at a right angle, use that available real estate for something that helps define downtown (e.g., a splash park).
3. As part of the D.W. Field Park master planning, consider uses that will become a community gathering place with more mixing between users. Swimming in Waldo Lake was suggested for swimming in the 2001 Master Plan and the 2004 Community Development Plan, but that may not be feasible.

**Improve water supply protection. Recommendations:**

1. The town should purchase any parts of its aquifer Zone I it doesn't own if anything.
2. The town should examine zoning for Zone II and

ensure it is sufficient to minimize risks to the wells.

3. The areas between Harrison Blvd and D.W. Field Park that is either park land (D.W. Field Park) or wetlands and that drains to the Brockton Reservoir should be rezoned to a new park zoning district allowing only park, recreation, and resilient-related uses.

**Regulatory Analysis**

For a small community, Avon has a strong and modern zoning code and regulatory system and an effective development review approach. These bylaws, regulations, and development reviews serve Avon well. The strategic objectives of those regulations, however, are not always clear nor always consistent with the goals of maximizing economic potential and sustainable development.

There are five regulatory design principles applicable to selecting the preferred zoning, bylaw, and regulatory approach for Avon.

1. The regulatory system needs to align with available professional and support staff.
2. The "right path," the route that best aligns with town goals, should be the easy regulatory path.
3. Uncertainty is the enemy of sound investment and increases Avon's legal exposure from permit appeals.
4. A robust sustainability focus, with clear rules and minimum interpretation, does not add significant cost and can add to the industrial park's cachet or prestige.
5. There should be an easy to articulate reason for each requirement.

**The regulatory system needs to align with available professional and support staff.**

Any regulations require both professional and support staff to complement the work of volunteers. The more

complex the regulations and the development issues, the greater the need for such professional and staff time. Overly complex regulations can waste town and investor resources. At the same time, over simplification can create uncertainty, legal and reputational risks, and discourage investment.

Avon will benefit from their new planner position:

- **Before this staff addition, Avon had limited professional positions** who could coordinate planning efforts and regulatory reviews. For example, the DPW Director provides strong professional support for grant-funded planning projects, such as the Avon Industrial Park redevelopment project, but does not have the time for broader day-to-day regulatory review or management of private consultants. The Building Inspector does zoning enforcement but does not always have enough time to consult closely with the regulatory boards (Planning, Zoning, and Conservation). The new planning position will help address these issues.
- **Land use and regulatory have dedicated members and chairs** to do the daily work, but as volunteer board members they do not have the time or training for in-depth regulatory reviews or to streamline the process while improving the long-term investment and sustainability.
- **Board staff time, before the new staffer, was limited to staff support** (e.g., to prepare minutes), with limited time and expertise for new projects.
- **Consultants and the Old Colony Regional Planning Commission (RPA)**, usually grant funded, can support specific projects, but not provide day-to-day regulatory support.
- **There was no single point of contact** to facilitate the permit and coordination process.

Avon's new investment in a planning, land use and regulatory professional position will pay off in terms of reduced legal and reputational risk, increased investment, productive use of grant funds, improved sustainability, and an improved quality of life.

**The "right path," the route that best aligns with town goals, should be the easy regulatory path.**

In some areas, town regulations should create a floor, a minimum requirement, for development (e.g., one shade tree for every 20 parking spaces or a maximum paved area equal to twice the size of distribution building). The outcome that is most desirable from the town's perspective should always be the easiest regulatory path (e.g., allow a hotel by right, with only a site plan approval, in the areas where a hotel would benefit Avon). Projects that create more investment, more jobs, more tax base, and increased sustainability should be allowed-by-right, with only a site plan approval required. Projects that provide less of those things should require a special permit or not be allowed. For example, a hotel is pure gold in terms of taxes (property tax plus hotel tax), co-benefits from visitor spending, and employment. Currently, because it only makes sense in some areas of the industrial park, this use is by special permit. Making the right path the easy path could mean identifying the area of the industrial park where a hotel makes sense (as discussed in the regulatory options chapter) and zoning that area to allow a hotel with only a site plan approval.

**Uncertainty is the enemy of sound investments and increases Avon's legal exposure.**

As discussed above, Avon relies heavily on zoning special permits and regulatory waivers. While this can appear to make the town flexible, with most special permit applications approved and unnecessary standards waived, it creates uncertainty. Avon will never know the investments that didn't happen because investors or their attorneys and consultant teams did not pursue a project due to uncertainty. Every special permit or waiver issued or denied creates legal and reputational risk from property owners (for permits denied) and abutters or

other interests (for permits approved). Creating more certainty, for example a site plan approval process that creates a guaranteed path to approval when clear conditions are met, avoids this uncertainty.

**A robust sustainability focus, with clear rules and minimum interpretation, does not add significant cost and can add to the industrial park's cachet or prestige.**

Currently, there are environmental regulatory requirements in wetlands and stormwater regulations, with the practice being tying special permits and waivers to better performance. Instead, the town could simply require environmental standards be met, but with multiple compliance paths for the regulated community.

**Every regulatory requirement needs an articulate reason.**

Most, but not all, of Avon's regulatory requirements have obvious rational reasons. Sometimes, however, the regulations seem arbitrary. There is nothing wrong with a tight regulatory structure that serves the town, but there should always be a reason for each standard. The example cited and illustrated earlier in this report is the 40-foot setback requirement in the industrial district. 40 feet does not create more attractive development than 30 or 20 feet, and, arguably, because it incentivizes parking in front of buildings to maximize available space, it could be making industrial development less attractive.

There are options for regulatory revisions specifically to improve the buildout potential of the Avon Industrial Park for both economic development and sustainability. Many changes can be adopted without extending sanitary sewers to the industrial park. Some changes, however, will need to await a definite date for when sewerage will be available.

The relevant regulatory system includes:

- Zoning Bylaws (Code, Division 1: Bylaws, Chapter 255)

- Wetlands Bylaws (Code, Division 1: Bylaws, Chapter 239)
- Wetlands Rules and Regulations (Conservation Commission, not codified in Code)
- Construction and Post-Construction Stormwater Management Bylaw (Code, Division 1: Bylaws, Chapter 120)
- Stormwater Regulations (Planning Board, not codified in Code)
- Subdivision of Land Regulations (Code, Division 2: Regulations, Chapter 350)

Many of the potential changes would involve only minor tweaks, while some would require more substantive changes in vision and approach. Zoning, wetlands, and stormwater bylaw changes require Town Meeting approval. Subdivision regulations and Stormwater regulations only require Planning Board approval. Wetlands Regulations only require Conservation Commission approval. In many cases, the current zoning does not always reflect town aspirations or the realities on the ground. Table 5-1 and Figure 5-2 show zoning map recommendations.

**Table 5-1. Zoning Map Changes**

Area of Avon	Type	Mismatch or Opportunity
D.W. Field Park/ Brockton Reservoir	Zoning map	Zoned for development
Wetlands	Zoning map	Large wetlands zoned for development
Drinking Water Aquifer Zone, I	Zoning map	Stricter zoning possible
Drinking Water Aquifer Zone II	Zoning map	Stricter zoning possible
Stockwell Drive	Zoning map	Unnecessary limits on mixed use

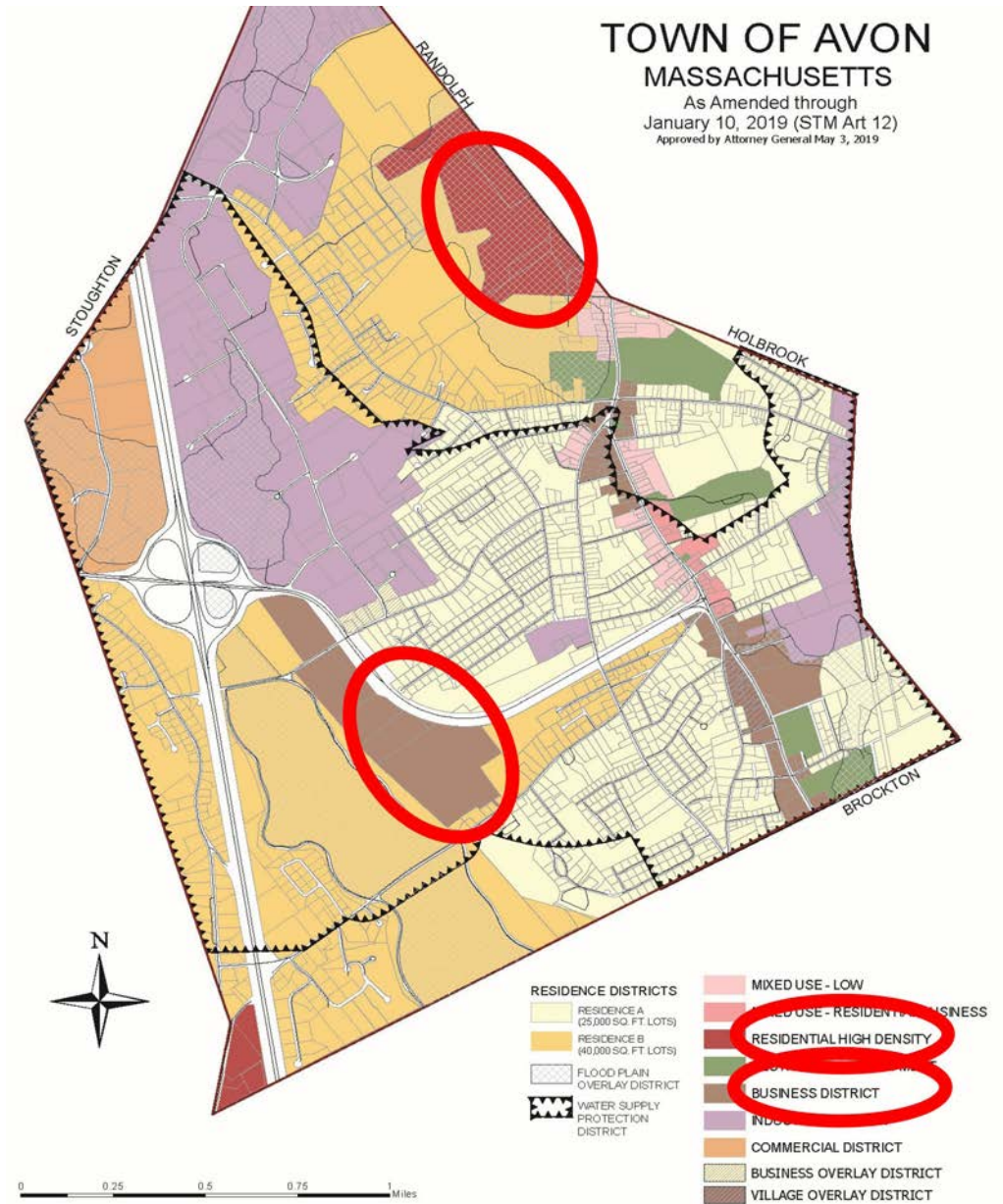


Figure 5-2. Zoning discrepancies

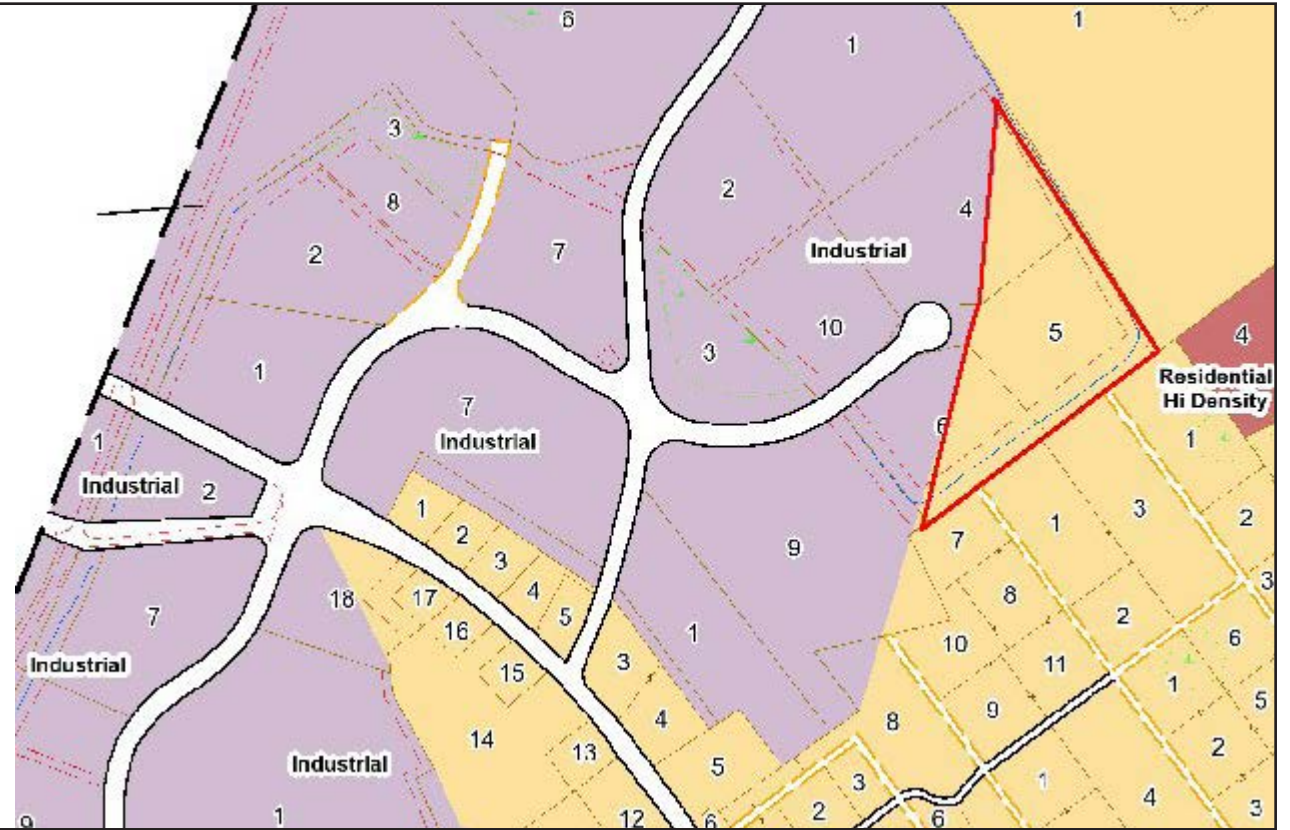
**Table 5-2. Zoning Text Changes**

What	Discussion
<p><b>Adopt Form Based Code</b> (FBC) or Character-Based Districts in Industrial Areas.</p>	<p>Form Based Code is typically more focused on the form of building and site development (private realm) and the streetscape (public realms) and less on regulating uses. In industrial areas, they are most useful in places working to attract retail and commercial uses, such as old New England mill building industrial areas. In the Avon Industrial Park, however, while tweaking the existing code is desirable, there is no need for a major new focus on form, the form of business, or ensuring compatibility with residential and retail uses. (FBC, however, is a powerful approach and could be benefit to other Avon retail and commercial areas in Avon, such as the Business Overlay, Commercial, and Village Overlay Districts.)</p>
<p><b>Adopt Mixed Use Development</b> in Industrial Areas.</p>	<p>Mixed use development allows different compatible use, adding overall value to areas, more flexibility, and creating more attractive areas. While extremely important in retail and commercial areas of Avon (e.g., the Business, Business Overlay, Commercial, and Village Overlay Districts), any widespread use in the AIP could be counter-productive if it attracted multi-family housing and reduced the land base for industrial and office development. (See below, however, for liberalization of allowed uses in the Table of Use regulations and for potential map changes.)</p>
<p><b>Section 255-5.3 Table of Use Regulations</b> Reduce discretionary Special Use Permits and instead clarify what is desired, for example allow Eating Places and hotels by-right in certain areas within the Industrial District and otherwise eliminate the Special Permit option.</p>	<p>Special permits create uncertainty that discourages investment and creates uncertainty for all parties, and sometimes creates greater legal liability from permit appeals. This could be simplified by revising the 27 uses that currently require special permits in the Industrial Park. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Site Plan approval only</b> for uses that are appropriate anywhere in the park (e.g., public utilities, town uses, trade schools, and wind energy conversation).</li> <li>• <b>Site Plan approval only in certain areas</b> and not allowed in the rest of the Industrial Park. Hotels, motels, and restaurants, for example, are among the highest job generating and taxpaying properties with property, room occupancy, and meals taxes. (See map change suggestion, below.)</li> <li>• <b>Site Plan approval only with new specific standards</b> for trucking and freight terminals, but with limits such as the expanse of pavement cannot exceed twice the size of the building.</li> <li>• <b>Special Permit and site plan</b> only for land uses that require a site-by-site assessment.</li> <li>• <b>Prohibited uses</b> such as outdoor sports facilities, which would consume so much land, or extraction of materials except for as needed for developing a site).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Section 255-5.3 Table of Use Regulations</b> Merge and simplify use categories and rationalize the decision. For example, “Place for exhibition, lettering or sale of gravestones” should not be its own use.</p>	<p>Categories do not need to be so specific, and there should be rationalizing what is allowed where. Why ban gravestone lettering and sales in the AIP when car washing is allowed?</p>
<p><b>Zoning Map changes or overlay</b> to allow uses currently allowed by special permit (e.g., hotels, restaurants) and not allowed (e.g., housing) on the edge of the AIP and otherwise eliminate the Special Permit option (e.g., expand the business overlay district at Harrison Blvd/Pond Street intersection to any other sites especially suitable for hotels).</p>	<p>Many of the special permit options are for uses that instead could be site plan approval only on the edge of the industrial park (e.g., restaurants, hotels) and not interior (e.g., at the Pond and Page Streets entrances to the Industrial Park on both sides of the current zoning boundaries). Mixed use and higher value uses should be encouraged but not threats to industrial land or new conflicts.</p>

<p><b>Zoning Map changes</b> to include all areas within the Industrial Park within the general industrial zone, specifically the slivers of lot B8-4-4, -5, and -6 (655, 660, and 675 Bodwell Street Extension) that is within the Industrial Park but is currently zoned residential.</p>	<p>Portions of these three parcels are only accessible from the Avon Industrial Park and are built out as industrial land but are zoned residential. This will make redevelopment or expansion of these parcels easier. (See map, below this table.)</p>
<p><b>Section 255-6.4. Dimensional and Density</b></p> <p>Reduce the 200-foot frontage and 40-foot front setback requirements (e.g., to 50' and 15' respectively to match Business Overlay). Increase maximum building height to 45 feet. Replace 60% maximum building lot coverage with 85% maximum impervious area or eliminate in its entirety, instead using <b>performance standards</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No increase in post-development peak stormwater flow.</li> <li>• Green infrastructure such as vegetated swales, rain gardens.</li> <li>• Sumps and gas hoods in all catch basins, even existing ones.</li> <li>• Street trees and on-site trees</li> <li>• Impervious area caps or green roofs</li> </ul>	<p>There is no clear strategy behind the current requirements which sometimes consume land that could otherwise provide economic and environmental benefits without providing meaningful alternative benefits. Reducing the frontage allows more flexibility. Reduce front setback provides more developable space without making industrial development less attractive and might incentivize moving parking behind and adjacent to buildings instead of in front of them, which is more attractive. With warehouse heights increasingly at 36 feet, getting close to the 40-foot zoning maximum (rooftop mechanicals are already excluded), a slight increase provides flexibility for special needs warehouses or a four-story office building. A cap on impervious cover, a stormwater runoff performance requirement, or a minimum tree planting area is far more important to softening the appearance and environmental impacts of a site than a cap on building coverage.</p>
<p><b>Section 255-8.6. Off-Street Parking Regulations.</b></p> <p>Eliminate off-street parking requirements or dramatically reduce in Industrial zones, privatizing the requirement and leaving it to each land owner to decide their own parking needs and whether they want to share parking lots with abutting properties.</p> <p>Reduction in parking can help meet resilience performance standards, for example from reduced setback requirements and increased stormwater performance site plan requirements.</p>	<p>The current standards require more parking than is typically needed (especially for businesses with two shifts), as evidenced by empty parking areas in the AIP, adding cost, consuming land, adding impervious area. Unlike other areas in Avon, there is no spillover into sensitive neighborhoods if there is not enough parking, so each business can decide what they need. This could allow alternative investments that might reduce expensive to provide parking for single-occupancy vehicles.</p>
<p><b>Section 255-12.2. Permits; site plans.</b></p> <p>Shift to on-line permitting and permit review collaboration as the Town builds out the necessary software and hardware. Reduce or eliminate the number of paper copies provided, provide that plans are provided in PDF at scale and with CAD versions.</p>	<p>Paper and printing add costs and environmental impacts. Reduce the number of copies or eliminate paper filings, if board member reviewers have adequate access to computers, and technical staff reviewers have access to large monitors.</p>

<p><b>Section 255-12.2. Permits; site plans.</b> Clarify that adequate sewage disposal capacity is required for Industrial District projects.</p>	<p>Zoning changes can happen now so long as projects that will generate new sewage needs have adequate sewage disposal capacity, on-site or into a centralized system. It allows owners to plan, even if they don't currently have disposal capacity.</p>																								
<p><b>Adopt resilience, green infrastructure and green industrial requirements and incentives in site plan approval or environmental performance standards.</b>                  These include addressing heat island effect, rooftop, or parking lot solar photovoltaics and/or green roofs, pervious pavement, rain gardens, shade trees and on-site trees and tree pits or constructed soil, outdoor seating areas for employees, increased stormwater treatment and retention standards. Reduced parking requirements, reduced setbacks, and, eventually, freeing up land currently supporting on-site sewage disposal help meet this standard.                   Standards would apply equally to private development and private roads.                   (See also Stormwater Bylaws section, below, for stormwater utility.)</p>	<p>Incentivize or require green infrastructure. This would include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Minimum standards and performance standards (e.g., X trees per square foot, no increase in pre-development to post-development peak stormwater).</li> <li>2. Incentives (e.g., for green roofs).</li> <li>3. Assign points for green infrastructure measures and require a minimum number of points, allowing site designers to customize, over and above the minimum standards, based on their needs and site opportunities. (The table below is to illustrate this and is not designed for Avon or to equalize the cost per point.)</li> </ol> <table border="1" data-bbox="1257 625 2279 1140"> <thead> <tr> <th>Improvement</th> <th>Points Available</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Trees with tree boxes or structured soil</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Number of hours that water is retained after a one-year design storm</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Nutrient removal beyond DEP stormwater standards</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Maximum parking spaces below...</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Solar photovoltaic installation</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Green roofs</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Fossil fuel free for space and water heating</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ground source heating and cooling</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Transportation demand management (see below)</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>EV charging above any building code requirements.</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Total points required</b></td> <td>100</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Improvement	Points Available	Trees with tree boxes or structured soil		Number of hours that water is retained after a one-year design storm		Nutrient removal beyond DEP stormwater standards		Maximum parking spaces below...		Solar photovoltaic installation		Green roofs		Fossil fuel free for space and water heating		Ground source heating and cooling		Transportation demand management (see below)		EV charging above any building code requirements.		<b>Total points required</b>	100
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<p><b>Adopt Transportation Demand Management</b>                  Medium to large uses (e.g., 20,000 square feet and above) can be required to minimize transportation and parking demand by maximum parking spaces, requiring transit and/or shared car investments, employee buyout of free parking benefits, subsidizing transit passes at least as heavily as subsidizing free parking.</p>	<p>Require that major projects going through site plan conduct an alternatives analysis of how they can reduce peak hour trips generated by their use, though measures such as remote working and flexible work hours. Adoption of such measures would earn points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Towards resilience requirements (above)</li> <li>• If zoning is not changed to eliminate parking requirements, could be used to justify less parking.</li> <li>• If Avon adopted traffic mitigation fees in lieu of traffic requirements, such analysis could be used to reduce such fees.</li> </ul>																								

*Zone all areas of the Avon Industrial Park as Industrial  
(#655, 660, and 675 Bodwell Street Extension)*



**Table 5-3. Wetlands Bylaw and Regulations Changes**

What	Discussion
<p><b>Section 239-3 Exceptions</b> could exempt land within the Industrial District from having stricter performance standards or buffer zones than required under the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act. (Currently the Conservation Commission has the authority and uses it to create town-wide buffer requirements.)</p>	<p>Industrial areas are not pristine and there is less flexibility in siting uses. Allowing the industrial part to be built to the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act standards (which still provide a fair amount of protection), may have a smaller total environmental footprint than forcing development to spread out.</p>
<p><b>Section 239-7(C) permits</b> can be amended to change the default period of permit validity from the current two-year period to the three-year period allowed under the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act. (This could be town-wide or only for the Industrial District.)</p>	<p>A two-year permit period can be a challenge for any project, but especially for industrial and large projects that have a long lead time. It is common for construction drawings and financing to take two years after a permit is issued. While the Conservation Commission can currently issue a permit for a longer period or extend a permit, they don't have to: <b>Uncertainty is the enemy of investment.</b> (Note: during the Great Recession and the Covid emergency, the Commonwealth adopted a time-limited permit extension act automatically extending permit periods.)</p>

**Table 5-4. Construction and Post-Construction Stormwater Management Changes**

What	Discussion
<p><b>Section 120-4 Administration</b> – Either formally move permit granting authority to DPW or as allowed under this section, delegate the DPW director as the "reviewing agent."</p>	<p>Stormwater regulations are highly technical, and the approval authority might be more suited to trained staff and/or consultants. The authority to write regulations, however, requires a less technical and more balanced focus on all the town's needs. Writing the regulations should be collaborative between the citizen Planning Board and DPW technical staff or consultants.</p>
<p><b>Allow off-site stormwater mitigation</b> such as from narrowing excess roadway pavement or on other properties in the same watershed reach.</p>	<p>This provides designers with alternatives ways of meeting the same stormwater standard. For example, if a property owner narrowed a roadway pavement to the standards in the proposed stormwater regulations, below, they could use the land they free up for a vegetated swale maintained by the stormwater utility (see stormwater bylaw recommendations below), to help meet their own drainage obligations.</p>
<p><b>Add robust green infrastructure standards</b> to Stormwater Management bylaws and/or regulations.</p>	<p>Grassed swales, bioswales, rain gardens, and other green infrastructure reduces flooding and improves sustainability.</p>
<p><b>Adopt a stormwater fee, utility, and enterprise fund</b> (per MGL Chapter 83, Section 1, et seq. with specific authority in Section 16) with a fee based on impervious area. This could be town-wide or only in the Avon Industrial Park.</p>	<p>A stormwater utility can provide funding for the town to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain its own stormwater gray and green infrastructure in the area where it collects fees.</li> <li>• Ensure that private operations and maintenance obligations are fulfilled.</li> <li>• Potentially take over the maintenance of some privately developed critical stormwater facilities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Put the Stormwater Regulations on Avon's website</b>, ideally in the Code (Division 2: Regulations).</p>	<p>Improve transparency. Regulations are available on the town's website and not readily available in Town Hall. Health, subdivision, and water department regulations are already in the Code (Division 2: Regulations).</p>

**Table 5-5. Subdivision Regulation**

What	Discussion
<b>Section 350-5.2(B) Minimum width</b> – narrow required pavement width (for public and private roads).	Wide pavement widths create more impervious areas, heat islands, runoff, construction cost, and on-going maintenance cost.
<b>Section 350-5.2(B) Minimum width</b> – allow projects to narrow existing local streets and replace with pervious surfaces (for public and private roads).	This could provide project developers with an easier path to meet stormwater requirements. It would also reduce Town maintenance burdens.
<b>Section 350-5.2(J) Storm drains</b> – require low impact drainage/green infrastructure (for public and private roads).	Grassed swales, bioswales, rain gardens, and other green infrastructure reduces flooding and improves sustainability.
<b>Section 350-5.2(R) Shade trees</b> – require more shade trees with structural or other tree pits (for public and private roads).	Shade trees add value, lower heat island, improve aesthetics. Structural soil and other treatment extend the life of shade trees and allows roots to go deep, reducing pavement and sidewalk cracking.



## 6. Housing (required under M.G.L. c. 41, s. 81D)

While Avon's population has been stable with a slow growth rate. At the same time, however, Avon is becoming far more diverse, with an increasing number of households and especially youth other than white alone. This is most dramatic in the schools, but diversity is increasing in all age groups. Despite this diversity, however, a greater percentage of Avon's population was native United States born than the equivalent percentage nationwide.

The average household and average family size has decreased in Avon but are still larger sized than the average in the Commonwealth and the nation and a significant number of grandparents living with grandchildren, with more than one third of those holding primary responsibility for children.

Even with the larger household size, however, over 10% of households are single person households, the majority of those being seniors, driving the need for elder housing and smaller dwelling units.



Figure 6-1 Avon Public Housing senior housing

While single-family housing remains the dominant housing type, the development of new models of housing, such as the Village at Curtis Estates, shows an increased demand for condominium and multi-family housing at all ends of the market.

Most homes are owner-occupied. Avon rental dwelling units have a smaller average household size than owner-occupied units. The proportion of owner-occupied units explains, in part, Avon's relatively large household size.

Avon has 70 units of subsidized affordable housing units for the elderly, owned by the Avon Housing Authority. As of 2023, these are the only subsidized housing units, although several Comprehensive Permit (MGL c. 40B) projects are advancing that will result in more affordable units. The state goal is that 10% of housing stock should be affordable.

**Preserve Avon's small-town feel with safe comfortable neighborhoods, housing that serves our needs, including smaller households, aging populations, new families that want to stay in Avon, and housing that meets their budgets.**

As discussed previously under land use, no large-scale zoning map changes in residential neighborhoods are recommended. There are, however, regulatory opportunities to encourage smaller dwelling units to meet demographic and budget needs.

To this end:

- Avon should allow attached and detached accessory dwelling units by right.
- Avon should allow two family homes or two one family homes on the same right by site plan approval.
- Avon should consider changing from a minimum lot size per dwelling unit to a floor area ratio system that would allow larger units or more units based on the ratio of dwelling square footage to the size of the lot.

- Reduce the availability of special permit options for larger apartments than fit in the neighborhood.

**Address the need for subsidized affordable housing, while regaining local control of comprehensive permits.**

The state comprehensive permit law (MGL Chapter 40B, Sections 20-23) allows the Avon Zoning Board Appeals and, so long as Avon remains below 10% subsidized housing, the Housing Appeals Committee on appeal from the ZBA to waive any and all local zoning, bylaws, and regulations for housing projects with at least 20 to 25% affordable housing if those requirements make affordable housing uneconomical. If 10% of Avon's year-round housing inventory is considered affordable on the Commonwealth's Subsidized Housing Inventory, then the Zoning Board can still issue such waivers ("friendly" 40Bs), but they are under no such obligation and the appeal route to the Housing Appeals Committee ends. Sometimes excellent projects result, but it is a loss of local control and can lead to poorly planned projects inconsistent with Avon's stable neighborhoods and overall planning goals.

Avon is receiving a record number of comprehensive permits that will increase the number of affordable units. It is possible that this will eventually bring Avon to the state's 10% affordable housing goal, but in the meantime, Avon should update their Housing Production Plan to get the safe harbor from unfriendly comprehensive permits, allowing good projects to go forward while retaining local control over the bad project, for so long as Avon is achieving a 0.5% growth in the total percentage of affordable housing.

Two actions, discussed previously in the Land Use element above, will provide longer term control:

- Create a local equivalent of Comprehensive Permit, with more town control and incentives to developers, especially of smaller projects, to use the town process instead of the more cumbersome

state process which involves more extensive upfront approval by the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities.

- Adopt a zoning Smart Growth Overlay district (MGL 40R) for mixed use with mixed-income housing at Merchants Park/Stockwell Drive and downtown, with 25% of those units as affordable and, for rental projects, 100% of the units counting towards the 10% affordable housing goal. This approach also provides for one-time payments from the Commonwealth when the zoning passes and again when the units are built, to be used for any town identified capital improvements. At both locations, such mixed-income housing will add to the critical mass to support further commercial development and eventually better transit services, as well as reduce pressure on residential neighborhoods where new growth may be less desirable.

**Support the efforts of Avon residents to age in place in their home.**

- Avon Zoning for Affordable Housing ("local-control" Chapter 40B equivalent) – The Chapter 40B, Comprehensive Permit process introduces uncertainty for Avon since it is difficult to predict where large projects will be located and at what density, but they are providing affordable units. At the same time, the cost of entry into the 40B process (DHCD eligibility letter and architectural drawings), makes small affordable housing projects harder. Some communities have adopted zoning giving them the right to provide regulatory incentives to provide a more viable path to affordable housing without needing a 40B comprehensive permit. This allows the community to decide what incentives work and what incentives they don't want to offer.

## 7. Economic Development (required under M.G.L. c. 41, s. 81D)

Avon is a major regional employment and business center. The 435-acre Avon Industrial Park (AIP) has approximately 100 buildings with 3.3 million square feet of building space. 127 companies employ over 3,600 people in manufacturing, construction, research, distribution, retail, technology, and non-profit organizations. In addition, Avon's Merchants Park/Stockwell Drive provides a major retail, primarily big box, center.

Avon's commercial and industrial areas, however, are nearly built out under current regulations. The Town of Avon is facing a critical opportunity when considering its future, to learn from its past. Choices made by the town have proven to be helpful in the short term in terms of minimizing the financial burden put upon the town members, and yet, have undermined the economic opportunities that the town now needs for its future sustainability. The choice to not invest in sewer systems across the community over 50 years ago, today, limits the economic revenues that can support town services. To address the future revenue potential, the community of Avon has a variety of options, all of which depend on a fundamental choice of moving forward with linking the industrial and commercial sections of Avon to a sewage system. The following recommendations presume that the Town moves forward and invests in a sewer system for these two land use types.

While Avon has a strong tax base from the Avon Industrial Park and Merchants Park/Stockwell Drive, the lack of sewer has not only limited investment but led to significant spending by Avon residents to leak out of Avon to surrounding communities in such areas as hotels, restaurants, health services, other services, and non-big box retail.

There are, however, opportunities in the industrial park and significant commercial redevelopment opportunities throughout town.

### **Provide opportunities for job and tax base expansion at the Avon Industrial Park**

The Avon Industrial Park (AIP) is an incredible resource, serving as a fundamental revenue generator for the town's needs. The AIP creates jobs for a wide variety of the workforce (e.g., services, distribution, and manufacturing), from high end jobs requiring advanced training (e.g., Cumings Microwave) to jobs available to those with lower educational attainment. Its proximity to the Boston Metropolitan market and regional highways, coupled with lower land rents, have provided unique opportunities.

The Avon's Industrial Park's is a success, despite the limitations created by the lack of sewer systems which inhibit businesses' abilities to grow. The primary industrial segments of light manufacturing and construction materials/suppliers provide strong foundations to build upon.

Development of sewerage capacity in the industrial park will immediately increase redevelopment potential. As a result, this will add significant value to industrial park parcels, even if current businesses have no immediate plans to use that capacity beyond discontinuing their septic systems and hooking into the sewer.

The ability of sewerage to catalyze development, however, will vary significantly on market demand and the potential for redevelopment to create a higher return on investment than current uses.

A sizable portion of the Avon Industrial Park is occupied by low water and sewage users, such as truck storage, laydown and contractors' yards, warehousing, recycling, and truck storage areas. While these uses provide lower tax base than other uses, they provide an excellent return to the property owner. Given the shortage of such affordable space adjacent to limited access highways

in the Boston metropolitan region, the demand for such space remains high. As a result, only a small portion of sewerage capital costs can be passed onto owners in the form of betterment or special assessments. On some parcels it will take a long time for the redevelopment potential made possible by centralized wastewater to be fully realized, requiring the longer-time horizon that economic development investments can provide.



*Figure 7-1 Avon Industrial Park is Avon's economic and job engine.*

**Table 7-1: Possible Industrial Park Development Opportunities**

Development Opportunity	Limiting factor
Replacing one- and two-story buildings with taller buildings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited market demand. Development is likely as buildings become physically and functionally obsolete and/or when the market demand is high enough to drive new development that can pencil out.</li> <li>Limited sewage disposal capacity.</li> </ul>
Expansion, usually with small offices, between buildings and wetlands and property lines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited space without zoning changes.</li> <li>Limited sewage disposal capacity.</li> </ul>
Land extensive businesses (e.g., truck storage and dispatch, contractors processing yard) could be redeveloped as buildings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited demand, especially given that easy access to Boston Metro's drives demand for such business. As market demand rises, however, that will drive new market demands for redevelopment.</li> <li>Limited sewage disposal capacity.</li> </ul>
More water intensive uses (e.g., redevelopment of warehouses for manufacturing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited market demand.</li> <li>Limited sewage disposal capacity.</li> </ul>
Conversion of current low occupancy surplus parking areas and snow storage to new uses development. (Surplus parking is primarily car and small truck parking. Truck parking and loading areas are currently much more heavily utilized.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited market demand, especially for low water use development.</li> <li>Zoning limits.</li> <li>Limited sewage disposal capacity.</li> </ul>



Figure 7-2 and 7-3. Many successful uses currently have little incentive to redevelop even if sewers were available.

Other higher property value, but still relatively low jobs generators, are in warehouse and distribution facilities, services, non-water intensive manufacturing, and certain offices. These uses, except the few that involve washing or processing, are also low water and sewage users. Again, given the need in the Boston metropolitan area for these facilities, warehousing, with its low water demands, is going to remain a significant component of the industrial park even with wastewater collection (Figure 7-2 and 7-3).

Property owners with low wastewater demand, predictable income and expenses, and low sewage demand are not going to change their short to medium term plans even with sewerage services (Figure 7-4). Over the longer term, however, as demands shift, many of these property owners will eventually want to redevelop their properties and take advantage of increased sewage disposal capacities.



Figure 7-4. Warehouses generate relatively little sanitary sewage, remain in demand, and pay significant taxes.

**Industrial Park Recommendations**

**Perform a Business and Vacancy Inventory survey of the Industrial Park to identify needs, clusters, and tolerance for increased costs for infrastructure.**

- Work with the Industrial Park Association to design a survey to identify the current state of business health for the Industrial Park.
- Key questions to include should uncover the rent and lease data, growth needs, and willingness to pay for increased infrastructure (sewer).
- Other key questions should uncover interest in additional services desired (e.g., marketing assistance, workforce needs, technical support).
- Consider partnering with a business technical assistance non-profit organization, or local colleges to perform the survey.
- Use survey to uncover clusters and business to business connectivity to identify the degree of interconnectivity within the Industrial Park.

**Develop an Industry Attraction/Marketing Campaign.**

- Partner with a local college's Real Estate & marketing program to perform an assessment of the current efforts for business attraction and reputational payoff.
- Hire an intern to build out a marketing plan to attract additional businesses to the Industrial Park building on the strengths identified through the survey.
- Use the survey analysis to build an attraction strategy to build upon the existing clusters, which outlines the priorities for the Industrial Park, and defines the current gaps.

### **Create partnerships with local schools to create talent pipeline strategies.**

- Use the findings from the Industrial survey to uncover talent needs for businesses in the Industrial Park.
- Work with community colleges and non-profit workforce providers to align efforts to build out talent pipeline resources of either direct placement, internships, or apprenticeship pathways.
- Connect employers to local High School career day events.
- Create a “toolkit” for engagement for businesses including how to host in-person and virtual tours for students.

### **Partner with business technical support programs to provide companies with customized support and growth strategies.**

- Use the findings from the Industrial survey to find technical support resources and organizations who can meet business needs.
- Based on findings, partner with business service providers in the region to support industrial park businesses (e.g., growth, HR, financing, website, and technology support).

### **Partner with the MASSMEP to increase resources and technical assistance for the manufacturing businesses.**

- Connect with the MASSMEP to uncover ways to partner to grow the manufacturing segment of the Industrial Park.
- Use the findings from the Industrial survey and the clusters identified to map out the resources offered by MASSMEP.
- Prioritize the resources based on the business attraction strategy.

### **Provide an improved Avon Industrial Park Presence**

The Avon Industrial Park has only a modest obvious presence at its entrances, no signs or presence of any kind on Route 24 or the Route 24 exit. Even away from Route 24 on Pond and Page Streets, there is a weak presence at the industrial park gateways. An improved presence does not directly lead to investment, but anything that lends gravitas adds cachet, or prestige. Such things help put the industrial park on the map and in the minds of investors.

### **Provide opportunities for job and tax base expansion at Merchants Park/Stockwell Drive**

Changes in shopping habits, with online shopping competing with big-box retail, are undermining the previous big-box retail strategies. The vacancy found in Merchants Park illustrates these changing shopping patterns. Rather than fight the current trends, the Town of Avon has an opportunity to build upon its proximity to highways and densely populated areas in the region and begin to mitigate the spending leakage from the town. To do so, the town must first address the fundamental lack of sewage infrastructure to ensure any strategy is not hampered in its potential for success. Additionally, the Town of Avon, to consider its full potential of raising additional revenue, has an opportunity to evolve the current single use area, to one that serves multiple needs.

### **Attract a broader tenant mix to serve the Town needs, including grocery and medical uses.**

- Build out a grocer and medical clinic attraction strategy to draw uses to the commercial area.
- Interview grocery and medical clinic real estate team members to understand their location needs and space requirements.
- Build out a demographic and regional context I-pager to help explain the market need and scale of demand for services.

- Work with landlords with the vacant spaces to help “market” the units.

### **Create pop-up events for under-utilized assets to test out market and scale of demand.**

- Leverage empty parking areas found in Merchants Park to hold temporary events (e.g., food truck events) to test out interest and demand for food services.
- Build up local entrepreneurs and attraction to the area, by using vacant stores for craft business fairs.
- Partner with local organizations to tie events to non-profit and community causes to align interests and expand awareness to events.

### **Build upon existing entertainment anchors to attract new tenants.**

- Work with the existing commercial entertainment anchors to develop a strategy to draw entertainment uses to the commercial area.
- Interview regional entertainment categories (e.g., amusement parks, indoor-rock climbing) to understand their location needs and space requirements.
- Build out a demographic and regional context I-pager to help explain the market need and scale of demand for services.
- Work with landlords with the vacant spaces to help “market” the units.

### **Redevelop empty buildings into a Mixed-use development with apartments over commercial uses.**

- Look at existing live-work examples in the region (e.g., Old Colony Square in Cohasset) to understand what zoning implications must be reviewed.
- Understand traffic impacts and what sewage needs are of these developments.

- Perform zoning analysis to identify the changes required to convert zoning.

- Perform feasibility assessment to confirm market demand and uncover the impacts of the potential development along with revenue projections.

- Work with landlords with the vacant spaces to help “market” the units.

## **Supercharge the Town’s Energy**

The Town of Avon has an energized public that cares about the future. However, efforts between different aspects of the town services, whether library, education, senior programs, residential support, all currently don’t integrate to one another spatially. There is an opportunity to connect these essential programs to unify the town and increase awareness between the different segments of the community. This will help improve the sense of identity and quality of life that is critical for “footloose” businesses, businesses that can locate wherever their CEO wants to live, and locational decisions.

### **Create a Civic Center**

- Host a visioning session with residents, students, service stakeholders to uncover how they’d recommend connecting resources/physical spaces.
- Use visioning session to identify programmatic needs for a community center and a 24/7 school.
- Explore funding for a community center to be linked to school, library, or town center grounds.
- Use visioning sessions to identify short-term means to increase connectivity.
- Explore the creation of walking trails between the school, library, and municipal uses to encourage connectivity.

- Explore infrastructure resources to cover costs for landscaping for connectivity.
- Work with a community college to support town needs for expanded programming and services.
- Conduct surveys to uncover demand/interest for small business incubation support services.

### Enhance Community Events

- Build off successful local events and expand them to include food trucks and other activities to raise funds for local services and needs.
- Explore sponsored concerts + Food Trucks to test demand and raise Avon's profile.
- Partner with regional organizations to market events.
- Build off current park events to extend the time visitors stay and integrate Historical Assets to create full day programming.
- Explore recreational tourism (walk/run races) on natural assets to increase awareness and connectivity.

### Explore Rate Structures

Taxes, fees, and other policies are very important to business investment decisions, but they are only a relatively small percentage of total business costs are not typically determinative. It is extremely unlikely that Avon will switch away from a split tax rate, because of the enormous impacts that would have on the residential tax rate, but it does mean that Avon should be sensitive to other costs.

### Retain Avon split tax rate, while acknowledging that the tax rate limits the ability of AIP to pay for sewer.

Avon has a split tax rate, with commercial and industrial properties taxed (\$27 per \$1,000 of assessed value for FY23) at over twice the rate of residential properties (\$13.62 per \$1,000 of value). This gives Avon the 21st highest industrial tax rate in Massachusetts, while allowing its residential rate to be only the 171st highest. Some nearby communities (e.g., Brockton, Taunton, and West Bridgewater) have similar rates while some (e.g., Foxborough and Stoughton) have somewhat lower rates. This can discourage some investment but it is highly unlikely that these differences in tax rate, however, is going to be a primary or even a secondary reason in keeping businesses away. It is difficult to change a split rate since it would lead to significant increases in residential tax rates. More importantly, however, is to acknowledge the high tax rate when it comes to decisions about how to pay for sewer cost to ensure that Industrial Park property owners are not overburdened.

### Avon should develop a clear Tax Increment Financing (TIF) policy and list that on the Avon website.

TIF is where some proportion of new investments are not fully taxed for some grace period. Absent changing the split tax rate, which would be exceedingly difficult because of the effect on residential taxes, a clear TIF policy with authority from Town Meeting would send a clear message to investors that would allow them to plan. Currently TIFs require individual votes from Town Meeting (e.g., Karas Glass, Figure 7-5) without clear pre-request guidelines. TIFs are often appropriate for industrial uses and footloose businesses that can locate wherever they want. They are far less applicable to site-dependent uses like restaurants and retailers who develop where the market is and not based on tax rates. While a TIF can attract investment in what is otherwise a high industrial and commercial rate, care must be taken so that existing businesses who have been supporting jobs and taxes for years are not frustrated when only new investments get to pay low taxes. TIFs are often more important in leveraging Commonwealth industrial

and commercial incentives by showing that the Town has skin in the game than the actual small savings that might be provided to an investor.



Figure 7-5. Karas received tax increment financing, but there was no clear town policy. It was a one-off Town Meeting approval.

### Reexamine Avon's water rates if large water processing businesses are desired.

Avon's water rates are based on increasing block rates, the more you use the higher your rate. This encourages conservation and reflects the costs that Avon faces in needing to have large volumes of water available on demand, regardless of actual use. This approach, however, can discourage large water processing manufacturers (e.g., bottling plants, manufacturing enterprises with high volume water use). As long as that is consistent with Avon's economic development policies there is no problem with this approach. High water rates encourage warehouses and distribution, offices, contractors' yards, and other lower water users. High water and sewer rates, however, can discourage some high-water users, potentially some of the users who might benefit from expanded sewage disposal capacity. Any such decision needs to be based, however, on the actual water supply and sewage disposal availability and large water processing uses may not be appropriate in Avon Industrial Park without dependable supplies.

### Explore ways to control electric rates.

Avon electricity supply is provided by National Grid, so Avon has no ability to influence their default rates. The Avon Community Electricity Aggregation Program (CCA), however, is within Avon's control. Because most large users will opt out of Avon's CCA and National Grid's default offerings, the only way to serve larger users is to have rates and services attractive to those users. Small users, however, like residential and small commercial tenants may be influenced by the structure of Avon's CCA. For example, Avon CCA could offer to sign long-term power purchase agreements for a certain percentage of their expected future load from industrial park warehouses who install solar photovoltaics or even potentially offer a lower rate for renewable distributed energy production and storage and for buildings that do not burn fossil fuels for space and water heating. Their capacity is limited, however, because if CCA rates are not competitive with National Grid, the CCA can lose those customers.

## 8. Open Space & Recreation (required under M.G.L. c. 4I, S. 81D)

Avon recently adopted, after an extensive public process, the [Avon Open Space and Recreation Plan \(2022-2029\)](#), or OSRP, (Old Colony Planning Council 2022). Because that plan is so recent, this plan simply excerpts the most relevant and important recommendations in the OSRP. Other aspects of the OSRP have informed the Natural and Cultural Resources section of this plan.

“This [OSRP] continues the ongoing efforts by the Town of Avon to protect natural resources, conserve open space, develop community gathering spaces, and provide a variety of well-maintained recreational opportunities.

In 2024, Avon will be purchasing approximately 36 acres “Edwards property” (Figure 9-1, with the new purchase outlined in orange). This is a major expansion of the D.W. Field Park, with the purchase to be owned by the Town of Avon, in partnership with Wildlands Trust. Except for this purchase, D.W. Field Park in Brockton and Avon is owned and managed by the City of Brockton. This purchase is one of the first significant outcomes of the joint Avon, Brockton, Wildlands Trust, Old Colony Planning Council D.W. Field initiative. That effort aims to improve the shared D.W. Field Park planning. There are other key land preservation possibilities that can expand open space in Avon.

**Existing recreational facilities and opportunities are connected and improved to provide a range of recreational opportunities accessible to meet the needs of all residents, in or close to every neighborhood.**

*Objective A (high priority): Increase engagement with the community in support of the open space and recreation plan to provide open space in or close to every neighborhood.*

1. Educate the public about the links between open space, infrastructure, and climate change mitigation and adaptation. Work with Town departments to ensure appropriate information is disseminated to the public at large. Develop/Implement beautification projects (e.g., flower beds, trees, community gardens) in public places.
2. Plan and develop a balanced program of intergenerational activities to include team sports, seasonal events, fitness/yoga, nature, agricultural, guided hikes, and other programs.
3. Encourage local schools to use state and town-owned conservation lands as part of their environmental science curriculum. Engage with curriculum coordinators for the School Department to determine appropriate placement within the curriculum. Promote environmental education events (Earth Day, household hazardous waste collection days, stormwater). Gather representatives from all environmental education and outreach organizations to synthesize and coordinate activities.

*Objective B (high priority): Advocate for improved access to open spaces for people with disabilities.*

1. Work with the Select Board/Town Administrator to continue to implement the Town’s ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan (SETP) for Exterior Areas.
2. Study and design ways to improve the availability of ADA-compliant resources and promote existing opportunities for people of all ages and mobilities.
3. Publicize the open spaces that are accessible to people with disabilities.



Figure 8-1. D.W. Field 2024 expansion

*Objective C (high priority): Continue developing the local/regional trail network for transportation and nature-based recreation, study, and plan for bicycle use.*

1. Engage volunteers in open space and trail work.
2. Develop strategies to fill in any gaps.

*Objective D (medium priority): Broaden the network of neighborhood parks so they are equitably distributed across all Avon neighborhoods and maintain playgrounds to the same safety standards applied to schools.*

1. Secure funding for the improvement of DeMarco Park and update existing trails to meet the needs of a variety of users.
2. Promote the acquisition and development of neighborhood parks where none currently exist.
3. Expand the pedestrian and bicycle network to improve safety and increase connections to neighborhoods, schools, and other activity nodes throughout the Town. Improve and expand on-road bike infrastructure and provide more bike parking.
4. Develop amenities supported by neighborhood parks, such as playgrounds, off-leash dog parks, and community gardens.
5. Continue to plant trees and add shade cover to reduce sun and heat exposure at play facilities, walkways, and other facilities.

**Recreational facilities and programs are expanded to provide universal access that meet the needs of underserved populations.**

*Objective A (high priority): Town Parks, playgrounds, and recreation areas provide experiences for people with a variety of mobility, sensory awareness, and mental capacity.*

1. Biennial assessment of all town-owned open space facilities and identify accessibility improvements needed.
2. Develop parks and open spaces that offer amenities that meet ADA requirements for people with disabilities. Expand and improve universal access to facilities and programs for underserved populations.

*Objective B (high priority): Improve access to information about recreational opportunities for users of all ages, incomes, and abilities.*

1. Publicize recreational opportunities in neighboring towns through the town newsletter, Council on Aging, parents, and taxpayers.
2. Produce comprehensive maps of Town open spaces and recreation resources identifying parking, access points, trails, and permitted uses.
3. Establish more formal agreements with the Randolph Intergenerational Center for Avon Residents.

*Objective C (medium priority): Improve access to parks for community members who do not drive, including youth and seniors.*

1. Prioritize projects that expand access or connect to areas that are currently underserved by recreational and/or natural resources.
2. Consider the needs of underserved demographic groups in park and open space designs.

*Objective D (high priority): Improve trail connections and fill in the gaps in existing trail networks.*

1. Support the acquisition of land and development of new open spaces that can provide a trail network.
2. Ensure residents and visitors know where conservation lands are and rules and regulations for use.

**Lands of natural resources, scenic, and recreation value are protected, well-stewarded, connect with each other and with neighborhoods to accommodate the needs of all residents and be enjoyed by future generations.**

*Objective A (medium priority): Identify and prioritize additional parcels with significant open space value.*

1. Work with the Open Space Committee to identify parcels with significant open space value using a comprehensive approach to maximize open space values.
2. Establish a committee to create a specific review process, including a decision tree designating who will decide and how the decisions will be made.
3. Review the tax title list for land protection opportunities and develop a list of ‘high impact’ parcels that will be considered for protection and formalize procedures to determine whether parcels available for acquisition are significant to the interests of open space.

*Objective B (high priority): Protect ecological resilience of private and public conservation lands through stewardship and maintenance.*

1. Improve Town zoning and development standards and regulations to support the protection of natural resources.
2. Review and revise local land use regulations so they effectively encourage compact development where appropriate and protect priority lands.
3. Support implementation of the Actions identified in the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan, where appropriate.

*Objective C (medium priority): Use Town zoning and other land-use regulation and development standards to support the protection of open space and natural resources.*

1. Maintain open communication channels with the Planning Board and review opportunities to modify the Zoning By-laws to effect changes to the zoning districts of the Town for the use of overlay districts, buffer zones, and/or cluster zoning to protect open space where it is appropriate to do so and encourage the creation of open space, street trees, and trail easements.
2. Consider adoption of the Green Communities Program which provides state funds for local projects involving open space, parks, environmental, energy building, and other projects.
3. Consider adoption of the Community Preservation Act, which allows communities to receive State grant opportunities for community projects including open space and recreation, buildings, and historical preservation.

*Objective D (high priority): Develop and begin to implement a policy for climate change adaptation and mitigation and include protection and acquisition of unprotected open spaces in larger community planning processes. Develop a long-term strategic approach to recreation and open spaces and integrate it into the Town’s other key strategic documents.*

1. Track implementation of the Town’s Municipal Vulnerability and Hazard Mitigation Plans particularly opportunities to implement recommended green infrastructure projects.
2. Protect privately held open space through acquisition, conservation, easements, and other means and work with appropriate committees to draft guidelines that describe the process and procedures for considering the acquisition of open spaces.
3. Develop and prepare those guidelines for presentation to the community through a series of community and neighborhood meetings.

4. Present a final set of guidelines to the Selectboard for their review and approval.

**The Stormwater Management Program is implemented and in compliance with Stormwater Management Regulations to ensure groundwater and surface water are protected as clean and abundant resources to preserve and protect the town’s water supply, wildlife, and other natural resources.**

*Objective A (high priority): Continue to implement the Stormwater Management Program and comply with Stormwater Management Regulations.*

1. Promote Low Impact Development strategies and green infrastructure for cost-effective and sustainable stormwater management.
2. Elevate the need to maintain good water quality as a primary objective of local regulations and revise regulations accordingly.
3. Increase enforcement of local regulations protecting groundwater and surface water.

*Objectives B (low priority): Manage town projects to allow improvements to existing greenways when possible and seek opportunities for new greenways.*

1. Develop metrics to quantify pros and cons of green infrastructure actions including cost benefits. Review the most current data on relevant projects with similar parameters.
2. Ensure that all town projects consider opportunities for adding vegetation, enhancing greenways, and improving open space. Establish protocols with the appropriate Town departments to ensure all available opportunities for enhancing greenways are examined as part of a design review or RFP (Request for Proposals) process.

*Objective C (high priority): Use new development and redevelopment as an opportunity to make*

*improvements in infrastructure, and to reduce impacts on resources.*

1. Promote low-impact development strategies and green infrastructure for cost-effective and sustainable stormwater management.
2. Consider regulations for stormwater permits for green streets and complete streets.

*Objective D (low priority): Create a Climate Action Plan to monitor town activities for climate change impacts and undertake appropriate actions where needed to mitigate climate change concerns.*

1. Create an implementation committee to manage the process of creating and monitoring implementation of a comprehensive Climate Action Plan. Identify opportunities to update zoning and stormwater regulations to address these issues.

**Management and protection of natural and recreational resources is achieved through initiative-taking planning, coordinating, and advocacy that provides adequate, dedicated funding sources for open space and recreational facility acquisition and maintenance to protect natural resources while encouraging appropriate public use.**

*Objective A (high priority): Coordinate regionally and work collaboratively with neighboring towns and regional entities on integrated protection and management of natural resources, recreational areas, and trail networks working toward common goals to increase awareness, appreciation, and use of the Town’s open spaces, trails, natural resources, and recreational opportunities.*

1. Identify and prioritize additional parcels with significant open space value using a comprehensive approach to maximize open space values. Evaluate town-owned undesignated open space to dedicate portions to conservation or recreation use.

2. Implementation: Ensure adequate staffing, resources, and communication for the effective implementation of OSRP.
3. Establish a public land use and access policy for all Town lands to guide public access and land management planning.
4. Identify and secure funding for Town open space acquisition and management.
5. Provide a cost-effective means of monitoring and maintaining town-owned open space and trails to prevent over-use, illegal dumping, unauthorized trail creation, and resource degradation.
6. Encourage establishment of programming endowments.

*Objective B (high priority): Identify additional measures to fund protection of significant open space when at imminent risk of loss and promote collaboration among the various town boards, commission, and departments responsible for open spaces.*

1. Evaluate municipal funding mechanisms and procedures for protecting at-risk land and environmental features. Establish a standing committee of appropriate municipal officials and representatives from the community to be available to address any issues and opportunities that arise in a timely fashion when needed.
2. Encourage public-private partnerships, work with local groups and other regional and national entities, establish relationships with outside parties, research outside funding sources, such as individual gifts, challenge grants and foundation grants to ensure a non-governmental system of protecting or acquiring land when municipal funding is not possible.

*Objective C (medium priority): Maintain and increase funds designation for the ongoing*

*maintenance and management of open spaces.*

1. Strengthen ties to the public health community in support of funding.
2. Develop funding sources to uphold the level of maintenance and staff, if feasible, to ensure those significant capital investments in open space during the last decade are sustained.

*Objective D (low priority): Identify connections between priority habitats and identify opportunities to link protection of wildlife corridors to other open space interests and larger community planning processes.*

1. Work with the Town’s GIS and other sources to identify wildlife corridors and animal habitat and identify links between habitat areas and prioritize protection of lands within existing wildlife corridors and with unique environmental features using Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Consult with RPA for drone fly-over of identified corridors.
2. Educate the public about best practices to reduce interactions and conflicts with wildlife. Develop talking points, Q & A, and other materials to post on the Town website.
3. At appropriate public meetings and outreach events, share materials and information. Ensure mapping and knowledge of habitat areas and linkages are discussed in broad community planning efforts. Work with Town staff and friends’ groups to promote activities and opportunities through social media and newsletters.



## 9. Natural & Cultural Resources (required under M.G.L. c. 41, s. 81D)

*This section will be expanded with recommendations in the comprehensive plan.*

Avon has a rich human history and cultural resources that deserve to be celebrated. First used as a Native American or First American hunting ground and early settlements for thousands of years, European settlers arrived in 1630, when the English obtained the rights from the Native American or First Americans to settle. Originally chartered as Stoughton (1726), what is now Avon eventually succeeded (1888). Figure 9-1 shows the historic sites mapped within the MassGIS system.

The Historic Commission recently sponsored Avon’s first comprehensive historic inventory, Community-Wide Historic Properties Survey (Stace E. Spies, 2023). That inventory:

- Found that the Nathan and Almira Tucker House, 215 West Main Street, is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic places (Figure 9-2).
- Created inventory forms of historic buildings and properties that can be used for future project review.
- Recommended several properties for future study.

Natural resources provide ecosystem services, cleaning the air and the water, cooling temperatures, mitigating stormwater, major storms, and climate change, all for a fraction of the cost of human-built systems.

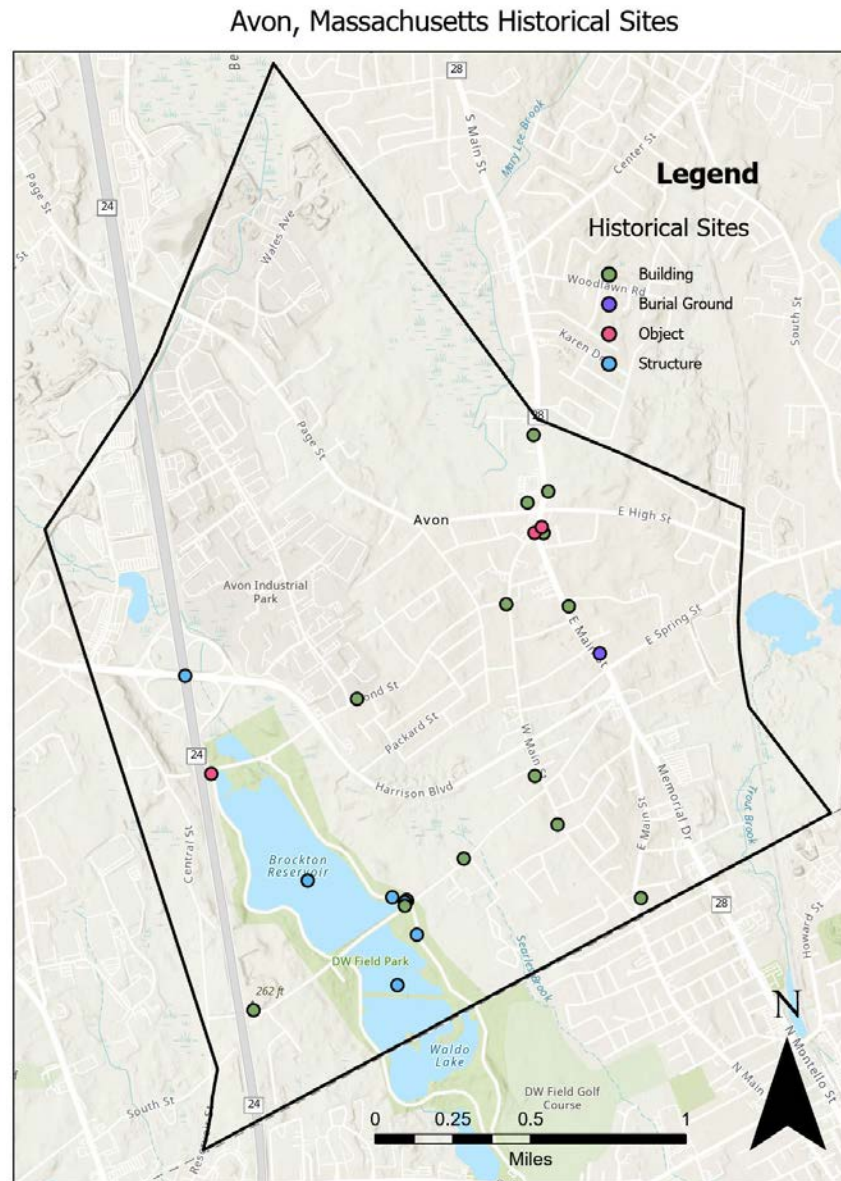


Figure 9-1 Avon Historic Sites



Figure 9-2. Nathan and Almira Tucker House, 215 West Main St. Source: Historic Commission inventory



Figure 9-3. Wetlands in the Industrial Park provide ecosystem services, cleaning and storing stormwater.

## 10. Mobility and Circulation (required under M.G.L. c. 41, s. 81D)

Avon’s circulation system can be characterized as primary suburban, focused mostly on automobile and light truck access and circulation. However, historically as a streetcar suburb of Boston, the downtown and nearby neighborhoods west along High and Pond Streets and south along West and East Main Streets have a more urban structure of smaller blocks and multiple connections that once supported a more walkable tradition. Residents speak of a time in the middle of the last century when walking in downtown or to elementary school was typical and safe. Unfortunately, deference to automobile travel has made other modes of travel unappealing or unsafe, compromising the small-town character of Avon and leaving many of its small community streets feeling like vehicular arterials.

While the historic advantage of Avon’s convenient highway access helped it grow in the years after World War II, this convenience has made the town a cut-through for nearby communities seeking to get to Route 24. Traffic to and from Holbrook and especially Brockton uses Rt. 28 and Harrison Boulevard to access the highway, putting much burden on streets like High, Pond and East and West Main (Figure 10-1). Meanwhile Avon’s success leveraging its convenient highway access for industrial development along Bodwell Street has also promoted heavy truck traffic, which impacts intersections and access on High and especially Pond Streets.

### Roadway System

The predominant roadway corridors of Avon are: Route 24, a four lane, north-south, limited-access highway on the western edge of town; and Route 28, a two-four lane, north-south, surface-level principal arterial on the eastern edge of town. High Street is a collector cutting between and beyond these highways along the northerly



Figure 10-1. The downtown intersection of Main Street (Rt. 28) and High Street is characterized by ample vehicle capacity and traffic, with minimal accommodation for people walking.

edge of town, and Harrison Boulevard—a limited-access, two-lane arterial—along with East Spring Street form a southerly connection between and beyond these highways in the southerly part of town. The only other designated arterials are the industrial Bodwell and its Pond Street connection to Harrison Boulevard, as well as West and East Main Streets near Route 28—though the remainder of Pond Street acts much like a minor arterial. Nearly every other street in town is a small residential street connecting into one of these arterials.

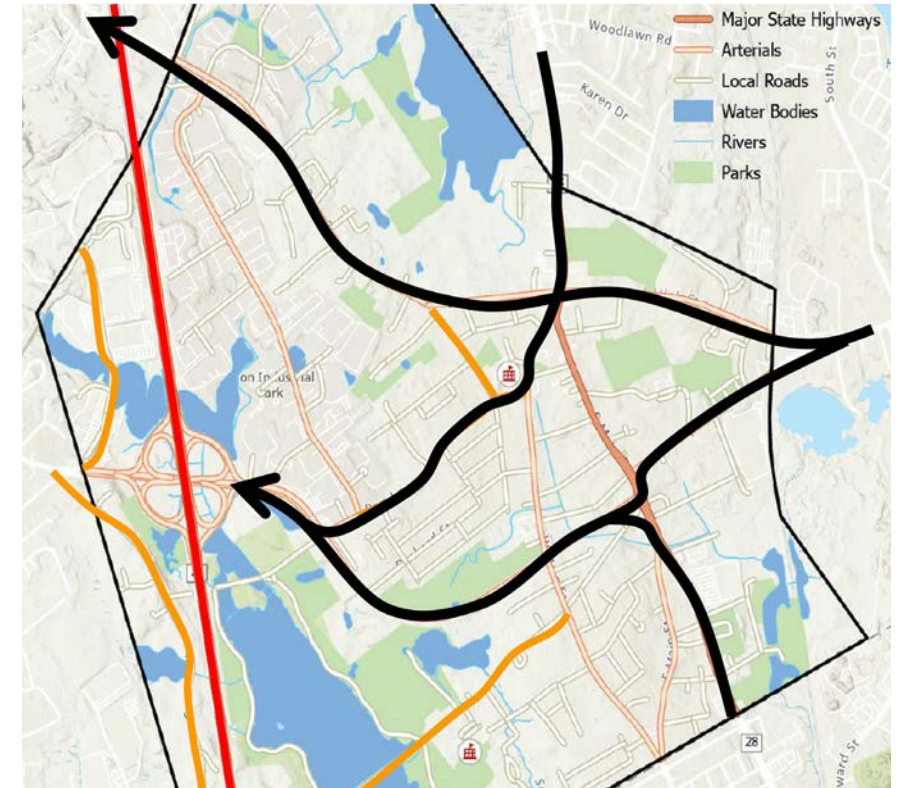


Figure 10-2. Avon’s highway, arterial and street network with predominant cut-through routes shown.

The limited arterial network is more than sufficient to accommodate Avon’s own traffic demands, but its ample capacity has been a benefit to cut-through travelers (Figure 10-2). A notable effect is high speeds, especially on Route 28 and Harrison Boulevard, the latter of which has recently had a large safety median wall installed to mitigate recurrent lane departure crashes at its bend near the Brockton Reservoir. The combination of higher volumes and speeds make the use of other modes of travel along Avon’s arterials feel uncomfortable and unsafe.

### Walk Safety

Downtown Avon and the nearby Pond Street neighborhood retain a rather extensive sidewalk network, and all arterials plus South and Central Streets have sidewalks for most of their length. However, the majority of streets in Avon lack a sidewalk, and none of these streets have marked crosswalks. Even where there are sidewalks, crosswalks are mostly across side streets with very few arterial crossings in town.

The Town has recently conducted extensive upgrades to its walking network with new ADA-compliant curb ramps, new concrete, and newly-painted continental standard or “ladder-style” crosswalks throughout its sidewalk network. Unfortunately much of this network is not accessible for the majority of homes without first crossing and walking along streets without crosswalks and sidewalks (Figures 10-3 and 10-4). As a result of the unsafe arterial crossings, schools need to bus some students who in other communities with safer crossings would not require busing. Residents also noted their lack of comfort letting children walk in town, thereby contributing to many extra automobile trips for school drop-off and pick-up.



Figure 10-3. A typical crossing in the Pond Street neighborhood only carries across the minor side street with no crosswalk for the higher volume arterial. West Main Street has only six crosswalks on its entire length of nearly 1.5 miles through some of Avon’s densest neighborhoods.

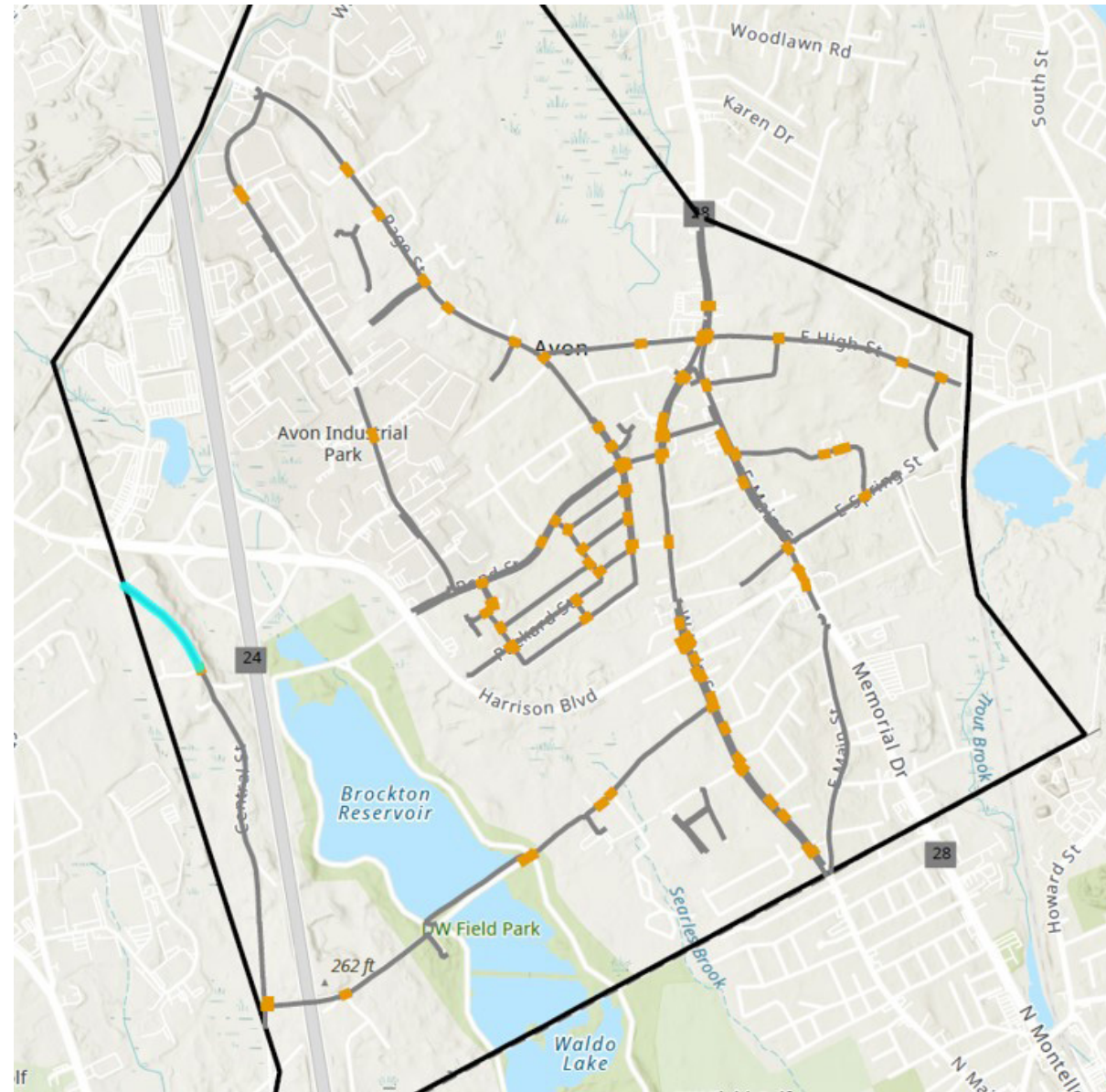


Figure 10-4. Avon’s sidewalk network is rich in certain parts of town, but most streets lack sidewalks and few marked crosswalks cross arterials.

**Transit Access**

Compared to many other bedroom suburbs in metro-Boston communities, Avon has robust transit access. Two MBTA routes connect downtown to Boston and several commuter rail and subway stations, Brockton Area Transit runs buses through Avon to its downtown transit center, and the Avon Council on Aging operates a well-used dial-a-ride service in town. While people are regularly observed using public transit in downtown, overall ridership is low. Passenger amenities are mostly absent, and there is no pedestrian-scale lighting for safety at bus stops (Figure 10-5).

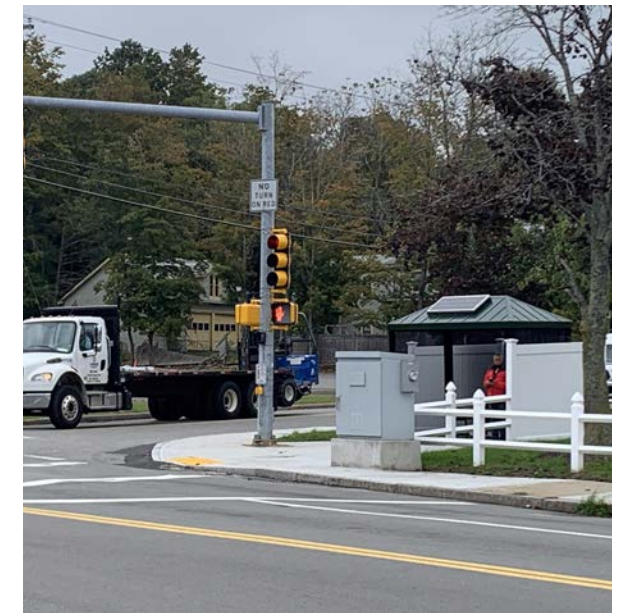


Figure 10-5. One of Avon’s only bus shelters is in downtown, set back from the roadway behind signal equipment and fencing.

## Recommendations

Focusing future infrastructure programs on improving safety and accommodation for non-auto modes can support healthier lifestyles and improve community resilience by making Avon an attractive place to live, work, recreate and raise a family.

**With community preservation top-of-mind in Avon, a rational approach to cut-through traffic and speeding should be taken that acknowledges traffic will exist but aims to accommodate it on the community's terms and reverses past mistakes that have let negative impacts grow unabated.**

- Avon should adopt **Massachusetts' community-wide opt-in to Sections 193 and 194 of MGL c.90§17C**, enabling the Town to have 25 mph speed limits everywhere except where it chooses to post higher speeds. Given that pedestrian fatality chances exceed 1 in 3 when hit by cars at only 25 mph, this regulation is a simple beginning to embracing safer streets and lays the groundwork for walking network and placemaking improvements in Avon.
- Avon should launch a **traffic calming program** that is focused on improving safety and reducing vehicle speeds on corridors of concern throughout the town. Beginning with detailed speed studies conducted wherever speeding is noted to be a concern, locations with average or frequently severe speeds above 25mph or the posted speed limit can be targeted for simple countermeasures that include warning signs, cautionary pavement markings, lane width changes, or targeted geometric changes like bump-outs, crossing islands, traffic circles and raised devices. Many improvements can be designed economically and installed quickly. Funding from MassDOT's Shared Streets and Spaces or similar grant programs can be pursued with nominal effort.

- The **Safe Routes to School program** provides funding for safer walking routes near schools. Avon's local schools have seen some extra safety counter-measures installed in recent years (Figure 10-6), but additional funding is available to expand these improvements to other sidewalks, paths and crossings within walking distance of each school.

**Avon should focus on creating safer, quality, neighborly streets townwide by making its streets easier to enjoy on foot, employing measures to reduce vehicle speeds, and making walking trips to nearby destinations and neighborhoods a common practice for residents of all ages and abilities.**



Figure 10-6. Some crosswalks, particularly near schools and along Central Street, have been improved in Avon to include flashing safety beacons and other countermeasures to make crossing the street safer.

- Launch a **multi-year walking improvement program** with annual targets such as numbers of new crosswalks added and improved, feet of sidewalk constructed and repaired, and percentage of surveyed trips conducted on foot or bicycle. Setting aside dedicated Town funding—supplemented by periodic grant funding—can make walk network expansion and on-going maintenance a regular function of Town administration. The focus on pedestrian safety will be an identifiable brand for the town, helping to attract and retain residents.
- Conduct a town-wide **audit of pedestrian and bicycle safety** to analyze non-auto comfort and threats, identify priority locations for counter-measures and network improvements, and develop preliminary designs for the walking improvement program.
- Launch a **road-diet program** (also known as right-sizing roads) to re-evaluate lane width and excess lanes with the goal of slowing vehicles and improving safety through the addition of on-street parking, planted sidewalk buffers, additional crosswalks, protected bike facilities, dedicated transit lanes, and other features that slow cars and make streets more “complete” and accommodating of other modes of travel (Figure 10-7). Explore whether West Main leaving Main could accommodate some on-street parking spaces if Avon is not going to install bike lanes on West Main.
- Approach MassDOT to carefully reconsider its **designs for the Route 28 and Harrison Boulevard intersection** with a focus on pedestrian safety instead of vehicle throughput. The current alternatives expand capacity on cut-through



Figure 10-7. Rantoul Street in Beverly was successfully dieted for most of its length with a variety of tools, including new on-street parking, bike lanes and removal of excess lanes.

corridors that already have excess capacity and speed, while retaining lengthy pedestrian crossings of each roadway. A modern focus on safety rather than an antiquated focus on preserving best-possible level-of-service can result in a better design, such as a single-lane roundabout or more compact signal.

**Avon’s local destinations and neighborhoods can be better connected through new and improved on- and off-street connections that create recreational opportunities, introduce new placemaking opportunities and offer identifiable gateways, which will improve access to local resources and help to improve community cohesion.**

- Coordinated with a road-diet program, the Town should explore **placemaking opportunities**—especially in downtown—where excess road width can be converted to plazas, green space, pocket parks, splash pads, etc (Figure 10-8). Early pilots using temporary barriers can demonstrate the

viability of solutions and offer interim benefits while funding for permanent changes is sought. Programs such as MassDOT’s Shared Streets and Spaces grant offer funding for qualifying projects.

- Building upon Avon’s trail network planning, a **townwide recreational path system** should be developed to help interconnect neighborhoods with destinations like downtown (Figure 10-9), Walmart, the reservoir and the Stockwell Drive shopping district. Harrison Boulevard’s wide right-of-way as well as watershed parcels near the reservoir offer easy options for multi-use paths. Developed in partnership with private landowners benefiting from site improvements, a continuous network between Stockwell Drive, the reservoir, and the Town’s planned DeMarco Park improvements can connect jogging, biking and rolling residents with downtown. Other connections such as along the eastern industrial parcels of Bodwell Street can be developed as offsets for new development.



Figure 10-8. Utilizing wasted pavement in downtown, Avon can re-envision its heart, making it more walkable, supportive of retail and restaurants, and a renewed destination within walking distance of many neighborhoods.

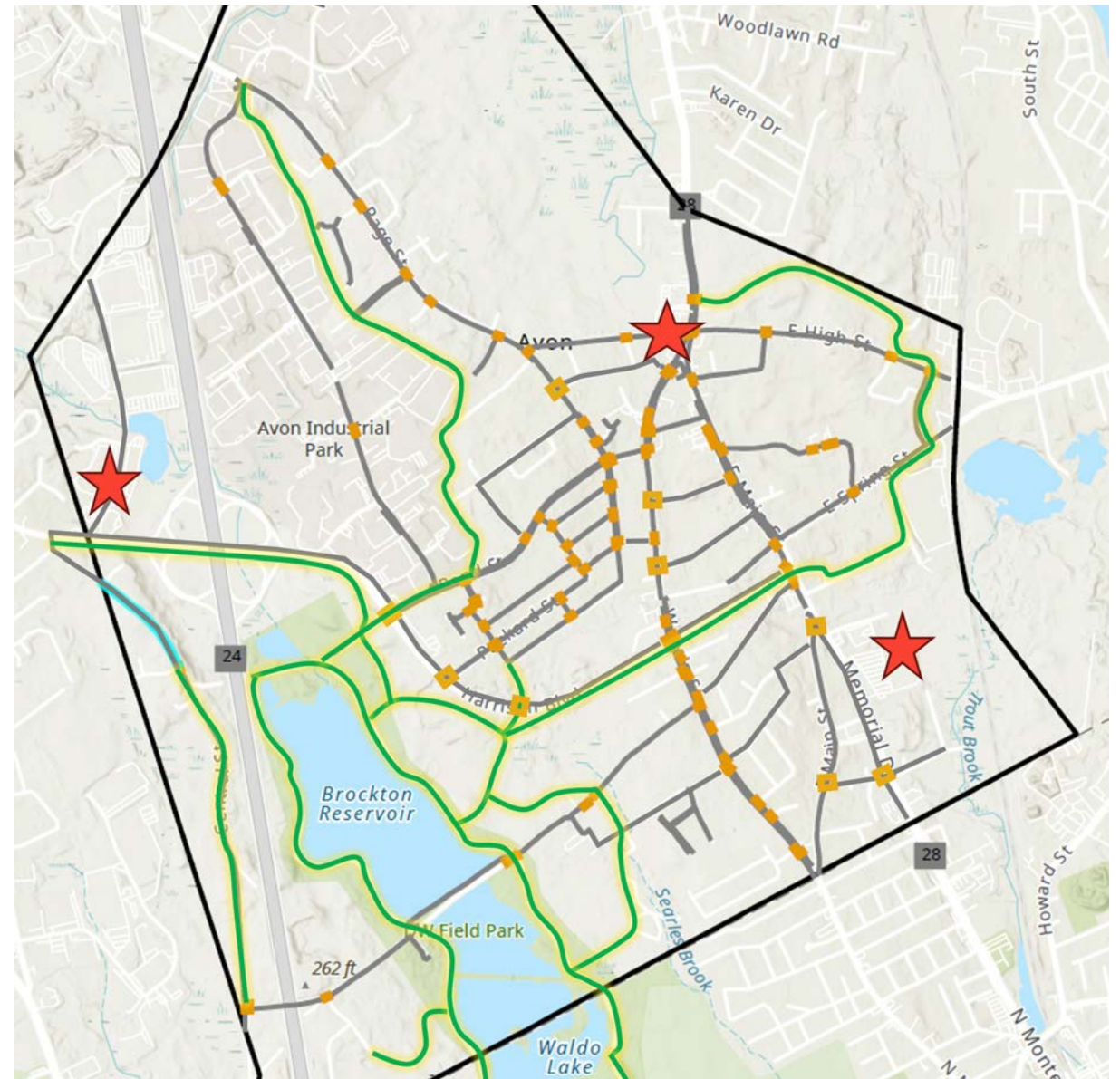


Figure 10-9. Several opportunities exist throughout Avon to create a complete off-road path system that interconnects neighborhoods with recreational, retail and civic destinations.

**To help make Avon resilient to further negative impacts on its quality of life while preparing for a future of continued regional growth, the Town should begin instituting plans and programs that promote walkable development, expand transit access, and anticipate future travel demands that go beyond traditional auto patterns.**

- To help overcome that negative impacts that auto orientation have had on the quality of life, comfort and safety of Avon and its streets and sidewalks, Town leadership should resolve to adopt plans and policies that encourage more sustainable travel patterns. This includes **resisting large-scale single-family development** and instead encouraging mix-use, compact development close to services and community destinations, which can greatly reduce the vehicle trip-making impact of any new residents or businesses; **adopting transportation demand management (TDM)** measures which require new development to promote transit, create biking facilities, add walking facilities, disincentivize excessive car ownership, etc. for any new employers or large-scale developments; **embracing “vision zero” policies** that aim to have no road fatalities by promoting programs and infrastructure which reduce vehicle speeds and pedestrian conflicts; and developing capital improvement programs that **dedicate the majority of road spending to safety and non-auto improvements**, as opposed to status quo facility maintenance and expansion.
- MBTA services in Avon terminate in downtown away from most destinations in town. The Town should begin discussions with the MBTA to **extend one or both of their routes** through town to Stockwell Drive, providing proximate transit connections into Boston for the majority of Avon’s residents, as well as a jobs connection for employees of Bodwell Street and Stockwell Drive businesses. Future redevelopment of Stockwell Drive parcels as multi-family housing can create a mixed-use

community served by transit, while easily meeting housing growth expectations of the MBTA and State government in a part of Avon that doesn’t impact its community character.

- Continued aging in place of Avon’s population will likely outstrip the ability of the Council on Aging’s shuttle to serve the needs of people who can no longer drive. In partnership with BAT or the MBTA, Avon should explore a **sub-regional micro-transit network** that may require less subsidy to provide a more robust, on-demand service akin to rideshare (i.e. Uber) but operating only within the areas that Avon’s residents need trips.
- The popularity of **emerging mobility technologies** are changing local travel options, especially for younger households. Electric bikes, e-scooters, other “micro-mobility” devices, and eventually automated vehicles are making it easier for people to travel beyond a short walk quickly and cost-effectively without a car. Avon should plan to embrace these low-polluting, traffic-free mobility options in the future by planning to install the right infrastructure now (Figure 10-11, following page). This includes bike/micro-mobility lanes, scooter parking, device charging stations, covered bike parking, etc. that can be in both the public realm as well as part of new developments.
- Town leadership should outline specific steps within one year to **begin implementing all mobility recommendations within five years**. A phased implementation program can see low-hanging early actions supported by new Town and grant funding completed within a year and more significant infrastructure programs accomplished over as many as ten years.

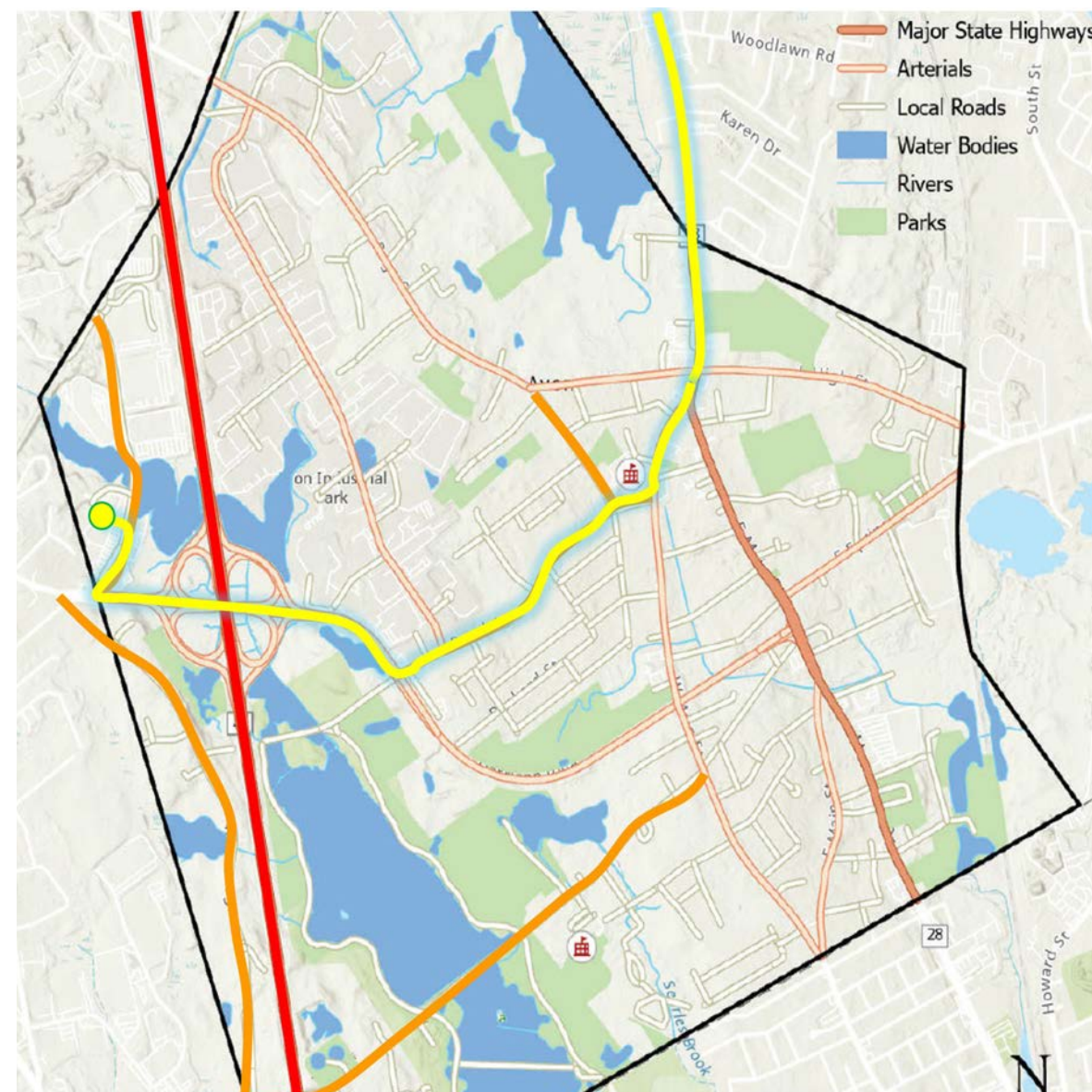


Figure 10-10. The MBTA’s route 238 and/or 240 can be extended along Pond Street and Harrison Boulevard to Stockwell Drive, providing residents and employees direction transit connections to Boston.



*Figure 10-11. A two-way on-street cycle track installed in Jersey City NJ has not only provided space for micro-mobility device users, it has also helped diet a busy arterial to reduce speeds and improve walk safety.*

## II. Services & Facilities (required under M.G.L. c. 41, s. 81D)

*This section will be developed with the full comprehensive plan.*

Avon has good public facilities, but some buildings need attention.

See also the ADA Self-Evaluation & Transition Plan (KMA Architecture + Accessibility 2020) recommendations apply to services and facilities.

Facility	Status
Fire Station	Built 2021 – excellent condition
Police Station	Built 2019 – excellent condition
Dept. of Public Works	Eventually needs work or replacement
Town Offices	Study to determine rehabilitation or replacement underway
Senior Center	Study to determine rehabilitation or replacement underway
Water Filtration Plan	Excellent condition
Middle-High School	Excellent condition
Butler Elementary School	Discussions about need for replacement/upgrade underway
Avon Library (Library bridge at Figure 11-1)	Good condition



Figure 11-1. The bridge connecting from the library to the town hall campus.



## 12. Climate Action, Sustainability, & Resilience

As the Town of Avon develops its comprehensive plan for the next 20 years, it will be important to consider the impacts of the rapidly changing climate. In 2023 the Commonwealth of Massachusetts issued the [Massachusetts Climate Change Assessment](#) that detailed specific vulnerabilities that local governments should prepare themselves for. For Eastern Inland communities, like Avon, the report indicates important impacts. These include:

- Changes in precipitation patterns result in more extreme rainfall events and extended periods of drought.
- More days of intense heat
- The need to house more people as climate change forces people in other regions to move to safer locations.

These anticipated impacts will exacerbate vulnerabilities that town officials have already identified including impaired water resources, threats to environmentally sensitive open spaces, and housing. This underscores the importance of incorporating climate change in the current planning process.

Climate considerations falls into three overlapping categories:

- **Mitigation or regeneration:** Prevent the worst impacts of climate change by reducing carbon emissions that contribute to global heating. The Town of Avon, its residents, and businesses must all strive to implement the [State's statutory target](#) that requires at least 50% emissions reduction by 2030, at least 75% emissions reduction by 2040, and at least net zero Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions by 2050.

- **Resilience or adaptation for Avon's physical infrastructure:** Prepare for the impacts of climate change that are likely to occur because of Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and other greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that are already in the atmosphere and that will continue being added as vehicles, industry, and buildings burn fossil fuels in the upcoming decades. It also means planning and preparing for social and demographic changes in the community.
- **Social resilience:** Build community partnerships and trust to prepare for acute and chronic stress, including climate change and other stressors, with a special focus on the most vulnerable populations. The Town of Avon prides itself on being a small community where residents know each other and get involved in community activities. During our community workshops we saw strong participation and residents shared their thoughts about the town's future. However, the participants did not represent the growing diversity present in the community. Participation by young people and people of color was minimal despite efforts to promote the community planning process across the community and holding several events on different days and at different times to accommodate diverse schedules.

Like Avon, many cities and towns find it challenging to engage a broad cross section of the community in civic life. In some cases, people have demands on their time and limited capacity to engage. In other cases, people may not feel comfortable participating because of the lack of racial or ethnic diversity at town meetings and events. The town works to inform community members of opportunities to engage and participate as demonstrated by mailing information about programs to all households, maintaining a website with informative content, and holding community events in parks and public places. In order to be truly inclusive, however, a community must intentionally bring people from diverse backgrounds and perspectives

into conversations and decision-making processes. Breaking down barriers and creating spaces where people from diverse backgrounds wish to participate is hard work and depends on building trust, often through person to person contact and outreach. It's an ongoing process that takes commitment, but the payoff is a more connected community with a broader group of residents to participate in civic life, to serve on committees, and to build a strong town.

Through this planning process the Town of Avon has an opportunity to ensure that it is a community that meets the needs of its residents now and in the future.

Town officials have identified water resources as a critical issue for the Town of Avon and have commissioned relevant reports including the SNEP report (2018) and the Avon Stormwater Report (Weston and Sampson, 2021). They have also conducted inventories and mapping exercises of the town's stormwater management assets to help comply with the town's MS4 stormwater discharge permit. This includes the Stormwater Asset Management report (2016). These reports indicate that a quarter of the town's surface area is covered by pavement or other impervious surfaces, which places it in the top 15% of all Massachusetts communities. Rainwater flows off these off roads, driveways, construction sites, roofs, and compacted gravel surfaces into Trout Brook, carrying a wide variety of pollutants and excess nutrients. This has caused Trout Brook to be classified as a significantly impaired waterway that the Massachusetts DEP has placed on its 303 (d) list of Category 5 waters. Consequently, Avon must undertake significant action to meet the requirements of EPA Region 1's Phase II Small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System General Permit (MS4 Permit).

The studies further indicate that the quality of Avon's drinking water is tied to the quality of the stormwater flowing into local waterways. About 65% of the water supply comes from groundwater wells in the Trout Brook Aquifer, which is recharged by surface waters, including

Trout Brook. The town lacks sewer infrastructure, so most town residents and businesses rely on septic systems. Old and failing systems discharge untreated sewage, which contributes to surface water and groundwater contamination that can affect the water supply. The Porter well has tested positive for fecal coliform and the town has installed filtration systems to ensure the safety of the water supply. As noted in the 2018 SNEP Report, Identification and Assessment of Causes of Impairment: Trout Brook, "reduction of pollutants in stormwater runoff are necessary given the critical importance of water quality to the Town's vital drinking water resources." (Section 1.1)

### Recommendations

#### Create a full climate action plan for climate resilience and mitigation.

The comprehensive plan starts this conversation, but a more detailed climate action plan with clear targets is needed.

#### Join the Massachusetts Green Communities Program with a commitment to climate mitigation.

Most Massachusetts municipalities have already joined the Green Communities program, showing their commitment to climate mitigation, and earning their communities significant state grants to further this work. The Old Colony Planning Commission and the Massachusetts Green Communities program can provide technical assistance to help Avon achieve this goal. The Green Communities commitment includes:

- File annual Green Communities reports.
- Track energy use.
- Commit to using efficient vehicles and exploring electric vehicles when appropriate for fleet upgrades.
- Adopt the Stretch Energy Code, preferably with

the Municipal Opt-in [Specialized Code \(net zero\)](#), to ensure that newly constructed or extensively renovated buildings are energy efficient and do not emit carbon pollution that contributes to global heating. Energy efficient buildings ensure occupant comfort while reducing future energy and operational costs. They also reduce the building owner's exposure to volatile energy markets that often have dramatic price swings. The stretch code will add some costs to any major rehabilitation or replacement of the Butler Elementary School, but over the full life cycle of the project, as a more energy efficient building, the code will save operation costs.

- Implement energy efficiency measures.
- Being eligible for Green Communities competitive grants to advance climate mitigation and related climate resilience strategies.

#### **Support community efforts to weatherize homes and transition to energy efficient, electric appliances.**

- Building on the *Avon Community Electricity Aggregation* program, Avon should actively promote financial incentives available to help residents and businesses fund energy efficiency projects that will reduce their energy costs while reducing their individual carbon emissions. [Mass Save](#) provides generous assistance for a variety of energy saving technologies and covers between 75% - 100% of the cost for home insulation. In addition, the Inflation Reduction Act provides 30% tax credits for a wide range of electric appliances, renewable energy, and electric heating/cooling systems. Agencies such as Self Help, Inc. provide income residents access to free or low-cost weatherization and heating programs, including energy system retrofits and upgrades.
- Avon should consider creating an [Energy or Climate Action Committee](#) to help guide the town's climate

action and organize education and outreach efforts. Small towns and cities around New England have found such committees effective at getting residents to take advantage of efficiency programs. Such a committee can also organize "solarize" campaigns with the assistance of organizations such as the [Massachusetts Clean Energy Center](#).

- Avon should lead by example and ensure that any new public buildings (e.g., new, or rehabilitated elementary school, town hall, and senior center) achieve high standards of efficiency and decarbonize the building, which will also mitigate against rising costs of energy.

#### **Explore Micro-Transit Work with Old Colony, BAT, and/or MBTA.**

In Massachusetts, 42% of carbon emissions come from transportation. Car dependency also places a financial burden on low- and moderate-income residents who already struggle with high costs for housing and other basic necessities. Providing options for residents to travel without using a car is an important way to reduce carbon emissions and to improve equity within the transportation sector. In Avon, residents can access good regional transit options if they can get to stations in neighboring Brockton or Randolph. Existing fixed route transit options to reach those stations, however, are inconvenient and too infrequent to be a viable option for most town residents.

- Some transit agencies and municipalities facing similar circumstances are experimenting with [micro-transit](#) to provide first and last mile service along transit corridors and to provide convenient transit opportunities in areas that lack the density necessary to make fixed route transit a viable option. This is like on-demand ride sharing services such Uber or Lyft but using vans or small shuttles. Avon's small geographic size and proximity to regional transit hubs may present an opportunity to demonstrate this concept for broader application

around the state. The town should approach the regional planning organization and transit agencies to discuss this option.

#### **Prioritize contingency planning for alternative sources of drinking water.**

Surface water pollution has a negative impact on the town's drinking water supply. This is "due to the presence of at least one high threat land use within the water supply protection area and due to the types of soil in the area, which do not contain hydrogeologic barriers, such as clay, to prevent the movement of contaminants through groundwater."

Filtration and treatment are currently able to ensure the safety of the water supply, but the wells are vulnerable to contamination by future illicit discharges or from accidental spill of petroleum or other hazardous material that could enter the groundwater. The MA DEP notes that "potential contaminant sources for the Avon's drinking water wells are related to spills, leaks, or improper handling or storage of chemicals, solvents, metals, hazardous materials, and process wastes (e.g., automotive fluids, vehicle paints, batteries, fuel oil, septic systems, pesticides or herbicides)." See Avon Source Water Assessment and Protection Report, 2003. Included in the 2018 SNEP report as Appendix B.

Further, the Environmental Protection Agency is [proposing rules](#) that would dramatically reduce the amount of PFAS allowed in drinking water supplies. If PFAS were to be detected in the wells in amounts that exceed these limits, treatment could be technically difficult and very costly.

- Town officials should work to develop contingency plans to source drinking water from other sources. [The MWRA recently conducted a study](#) indicating that it could supply water to South Shore communities including Avon.

#### **Consider establishing a [stormwater enterprise](#) to fund stormwater management activities.**

Communities around the country have established stormwater enterprises or utilities to fund the growing costs of stormwater management and compliance with stormwater regulations. In Massachusetts, more than 20 communities have done so.

- In a stormwater utility, Avon would assess a fee to property owners based on the amount of impervious surface on their property. Residential properties with just a roof and driveway pay a modest fee while industrial and commercial properties with large roofs and large paved areas for parking and other uses pay a higher fee. This distributes the costs of managing stormwater equitably as the properties creating the most stormwater runoff pays their proportionate share of the costs.
- Most stormwater enterprises offer discounts or bill credits when properties take verifiable action to better manage stormwater. This includes eliminating unnecessary pavement and installing green infrastructure to store and treat stormwater on their property. This also incentivizes property owners to fully comply with stormwater regulations, which improves the quality of the stormwater entering local waterways.
- Revenue from a stormwater enterprise fund can fund the town's stormwater compliance and flood control programs. This includes staff time, community engagement programs, relevant studies and consulting fees, construction of BMPs and maintenance of existing infrastructure, inspection and compliance programs, asset identification and management, cleaning catch basins, street sweeping, illicit discharge, detection, and elimination efforts (IDDE), and other relevant program costs.

The [Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection](#) and the [Metropolitan Area Planning Council](#) have resources to help municipal officials understand the process for establishing a stormwater enterprise.

#### **Hire a Stormwater Coordinator to oversee MS4 stormwater discharge permit compliance.**

Managing and fully complying with MS4 permit requirements is highly technical and demands significant staff resources.

- Dedicating all or part of a staff member's time to oversee the program and coordinate compliance efforts with other town staff and private entities will facilitate compliance and improve the quality of the town's stormwater. Dedicated staff will be able to aggressively enforce permit requirements including detection and elimination of illicit discharges and maintenance of BMPs and construction site maintenance practices by entities across the town.
- Funding for this position could come from a stormwater utility fund.

#### **Strategically add sewer connections to replace aging septic systems.**

As noted, aging and failing septic systems contribute to diminished water quality in the Trout Brook aquifer and threaten the town's drinking water. The Stormwater Asset Management Report of 2016 indicates town officials have been discussing the possibility of adding sewers. They should prioritize sewers at the Avon Industrial Park and Merchants Park/Stockwell Drive. In addition, more Avon town facilities could be tied to an expanded package treatment plant at the Avon Middle/High School and, potentially, more private facilities near Walmart could tie into Walmart's private sewer line which drains to Brockton's sewerage system.

#### **Conserve environmentally sensitive parcels.**

Preserving open space is an important opportunity to maintain important wildlife habitats and protect water

quality in abutting waterways and wetland. The town has already taken significant steps to do this as evidenced by its work with the Wildlands Trust to purchase 30+ acres of land abutting D.W. Field Park. The town has also partnered with Manomet to conduct a detailed habitat assessment of the park.

- Avon should continue its pursuit of such opportunities in the future.
- Avon can expand their partnerships with existing land trusts (i.e., Wildlands Trust) and develop new partnerships as needed to acquire more open space and expand a trail network connecting parks and open spaces. Such a group could raise private funds to acquire property and conservation restrictions from private property owners and to build the trails. This approach could protect environmentally valuable areas on private property while providing important outdoor recreational opportunities for residents of Avon and surrounding communities. (See [Portland Trails](#) as an example.)
- The Avon Conservation Commission, Avon Parks and Recreation Commission, a new Avon Open Space Committee, with staff support from the Town Administrator, DPW Director, and Planning Director, should be charged with working for the acquisition and conservation of open space within the town. This body could pursue gifts and funds from private and public sources for the acquisition of open space. (For example, see the [Land Bank program, Portland, ME.](#))

#### **Plan for housing density in strategic locations**

Massachusetts has a severe shortage of available housing. That problem will be exacerbated in the future both because of on-going demographic changes and as people leave homes threatened by the impacts of climate change for places with a more hospitable climate. As the Massachusetts Climate Change Assessment notes, Avon is situated in such a place.

- Establishing a plan to add multi-family housing strategically will allow Avon to build out thoughtfully and strategically. This can ensure that future development is built where residents can easily access jobs, goods and services, recreation, and other amenities to mitigate impacts on existing transportation infrastructure. Thoughtful planning will also allow development to align with existing and future water and sewer infrastructure.

#### **Actively invite a broad cross section of community members to participate in civic life.**

*(See also the governance recommendations in the Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Element of this plan.)*

- Avon 2040's planned engagement of community members who have not yet participated in the process is critical to involve all stakeholders, including students at the Avon High School and other disempowered stakeholders.
- The Town has committed community members who participate on Avon boards and organize events with the Avon Civic Association. However, this group is small and there are vacancies listed for several civic boards. Town officials should reach out to under-represented groups including young people and people of color to build relationships and to begin understanding about the community's needs. Initial conversations could be with religious leaders from diverse backgrounds or with representatives from regional organizations that represent minorities or immigrant communities such as the [Cape Verdean Association](#).

#### **Expand the Avon Community Electric Aggregation (CEA) program.**

The Avon CEA is the default electric supply provider (National Grid still delivers electricity) with a green energy option. Renewable or green energy is provided by purchasing renewable energy credits with electric rates typically, although not guaranteed, to be lower

than National Grid options. Many communities' electric aggregation programs (also known as community choice aggregation) focus on community solar options, local renewable energy, and additive renewable energy. These options increase the supply of renewable energy in New England, instead of simply purchasing credits from renewable energy sources that may already exist and may not be local.

#### **Municipal building energy performance.**

Avon has looked at building energy performance for new buildings (e.g., the recent police and fire stations) and major rehabilitation projects. Avon will be examining energy performance for any new projects (e.g., town hall and Butler School).

Avon should, however, also do a detailed assessment to explore a path to increased building envelope efficiency, mechanical and control systems effectiveness, and identify a path to decarbonization of all Avon municipal and school buildings and processes. Funds are potentially available for such work from the Municipal Vulnerability Program, the Green Communities program (if the town joins), and other sources. Having a plan ready allows the town to move when funds are available, to obtain bonds to be paid back by energy savings, and to eventually lower building energy costs.

### 13. Justice, Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

Psychologists often describe resilience as bouncing back from stress, but of course some people can accommodate stress better than others. Ideally, however, we don't want people to be knocked down so that they can bounce back – we want to minimize them being knocked down in the first place. Avon's goal is for all its residents to thrive, in normal times and even when facing **acute and chronic stress** (see Figure 13-1). This is part of the basic concept of **equity**.

**Equity** is the essential fairness to ensure that everyone Avon has opportunities. A common five-part **equity** definition, often used as a test of proposed action, includes:

- **Distributional equity**, who gets society's goods and burdens, such as where open space is located.
- **Structural or institutional equity**, addressing past inequities.
- **Procedural equity**, who is at the table in making decisions.
- **Intergenerational equity**, considering the effects of decisions on future generations.
- **Cultural equity**, serving all cultures and not only to a dominant culture).

**Justice** requires removing the barriers to full participation by all members of the Avon community. These range from big barriers (potentially out-of-date zoning code) to little barriers. The library, for example, is addressing one of those barriers, providing menstrual



Figure 13-1. Thrive, even under stress.



Figure 13-2. Equity in no-cost menstrual products at the Avon Library

products at no cost to their patrons (Figure 13-2).

**Diversity** is about embracing all the differences that residents bring to Avon. Avon has a significant population of youth, elderly, renters, those with disabilities, English language learners, and Black and Latino/Hispanic population who are sometimes under-represented in civic life. Addressing this **diversity** requires that Avon's increasingly diverse residents are involved in all aspects of governance, services, and civic life.

**Inclusion** goes beyond diversity to ensure that all the differences in the community result in a stronger community. Our goal is to ensure that residents should be coming together for shared experiences, governance, and civic life, not simply living, working, and playing in parallel but apart, with no blending and no shared experiences.



Figure 13-3. Avon is partnering for training.

The schools, town government, the library, and the senior center are the front line for implementing equitable and inclusionary practices. Town government is the front line for equity and justice. Avon is partnering with Avon's Coalition for Everyone's Success (ACES) to advance racism and JEDI training (Figure 13-3).

Avon has a separate regular evaluation of accessibility needs for people with mobility and cognitive disabilities. The most recent analysis is the ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan (KMA Architecture + Accessibility, 2020), which is referred to here by reference. That plan can guide accessibility improvements, but equally critically is to ensure that those with lived experience of disabilities should be included at the table in every relevant conversation. Inclusion requires not only addressing the needs of a diverse population but ensuring that those with lived experience are at the table.

#### Avon Inclusion in Governance

Inclusion in governance represents the health of the collective mechanisms the citizens of Avon have at their disposal to pursue public goals. Avon residents have much to be proud of regarding governance. The town has avoided the debilitating conflicts and acrimony that so many local governments have been subject to in recent years. Avon has been making positive changes to its governance model to maintain a healthy local democracy. For instance, in recent years the Town Meeting voted to update the name of the Select Board, instituted Standards of Conduct for town meetings, and maintained an open mind about considerations for the future. The ingredients are in place for Avon to have a robust, participatory democratic tradition in which a broad segment of the community contributes to the life of the town and actively shapes its future. Avon's key assets include:

- A Civic Association that has demonstrated an ability to convene the public for important dialogues about the future. AVON 2000, though decades old

now, demonstrated that the organization can bring together citizens to help build understanding of key community issues.

- The Town Meeting tradition of direct democracy.
- A professional Town Administrator and soon as town planning director.
- An array of key committees that can organize around town priorities and lead change (See Figure 13-4). Avon is trying to recruit new board members.)
- A town website which is informative, easy to use, and contains a wealth of resources and information.
- A range of civic, social, and cultural events that demonstrate a rich community life and small-town pride. These events contribute to social capital and a shared sense of place that is critical to maintaining the relationships necessary for healthy communities.

Particularly for a community its size, Avon has strong assets in place.

### Challenges

Avon's challenges are not unique but reflect general issues facing communities everywhere. Town Meeting is the predominant form of local town government, with almost 300 towns across Massachusetts using it today. While Town Meeting offers a mechanism to engage every resident in direct democracy and decision-making, it does have its limitations. As the oldest form of democracy in the United States, Town Meeting pre-dates the American Revolution by a century. It was built for a different time. Small towns across New England are challenged by declining participation rates in Town Meetings. As communities grow and become more diverse, Town Meetings are struggling to serve as representative mechanisms of governance as well,



Figure 13-4. Avon wants new board members.

which can lead to negative outcomes as we seek to build equitable communities that serve everyone. Like all towns with the Town Meeting structure, Avon's citizens are constrained by having only a couple of opportunities per year via Town Meeting, which can present additional challenges or deter participation in public life outside of Town Meeting. The team found that Avon needs intentional interventions to improve civic participation rates, feelings of investment in the town's future, and to create accessible opportunities for underrepresented groups to contribute to the town. Most importantly, there is a need to mobilize citizens in a shared vision for the future and catalyze collective contributions from citizens across Avon working together to build the community that we all want. During the team's community presentation, residents of Avon asked about how to improve community engagement techniques in town to increase participation. The following recommendations will move the town forward to make progress on engagement and participation.

### Recommendation: Leverage the Avon 2040 Process to Increase Town Participation

Almost 30 years ago, the Avon Civic Association launched Avon 2000 as a series of public forums to discuss important town issues. The Avon 2040 process provides another generational opportunity to engage all of Avon's citizens in a shared dialogue about the community they want to work toward. It is a rare chance to fundamentally shape the roles citizens play in the town's future and everyone should work to encourage their friends and neighborhoods to contribute to that vision. This process might launch new initiatives on key town priorities and offer opportunities to mobilize citizen volunteers for initial public projects. Other towns have leveraged these processes to bring together huge volunteer efforts to redesign main streets downtown, implement placemaking projects, create new parks and promote temporary economic development programs. The Avon 2040 process is a huge chance to mobilize Avon's residents and stakeholders to work together.

### Recommendation: Expand Town Meeting with Broader Engagement Framework & Passive Input

In Massachusetts, state legal frameworks put strict limits on when and how a town can change its Town Meeting form of government. Fortunately, Avon's small size and lack of growth position it well to preserve Town Meeting, rather than having to consider adopting new models. Like many small towns, Avon has experienced challenges with Town Meeting participation rates. Avon should set a goal to increase participation rates in Town Meeting and expand its reach with complementary community engagement tools that are easy access, such as surveys and direct engagement tools that open the door to more robust participation. One example of this type of activity is 'Pop-Up Town Halls' at farmers markets and community events, which host booths with interactive tools to collect citizen input on current issues (Figure 13-5, following page). Another simple intervention would be posters and signage that are put up in key places around town asking a question for citizen input and using QR codes so that residents can input thoughts digitally. These passive community engagement mechanisms can raise awareness and interest levels in more robust participation while collecting additional data on community sentiment or creative ideas. Engaging in temporary 'tactical' projects, like weekend demonstration projects that show what a different street design would feel like downtown, can be important mechanisms to begin a broader community dialogue about change.

### Recommendation: Implement a Neighborhood College Program

Over the past 20 years, Neighborhood College programs (sometimes called Citizens Academies) have become commonplace in both large and small communities across the United States. A Neighborhood College is a seven-to-eight-week program where approximately 20-25 residents are given the opportunity to meet with various local government staff and elected leaders and gain insight into local government services and



Figure 13-5. Pop-up town hall meetings can reach a broader swathe of community members.



operations. These programs have been utilized as civic engagement tools and mechanisms to build civic leadership, particularly for engaging new citizens in the life of the community. Easton, MA began a program in 2023. Nearby Brockton has a narrow model focused on a Citizen's Police Academy. Avon civic leaders can learn from these and other models and use them to inform a local approach that works (Figure 13-6).

**Recommendation: Build a Town-Wide Infrastructure for Participation**

Avon can dramatically increase participation in town by building the requisite infrastructure to mobilize residents toward collaboration. During the team's community presentation, one resident pointed out the limitations in current town engagement practices, including communication messaging, the need to use multiple languages to reach English language learners, and cultural barriers that exist. It was a perfect example of the assets in Avon needed to enhance current community engagement efforts: citizens. Avon can improve its outreach by partnering with residents across the community in developing a diverse set of engagement tools and methods. Avon should consider creating a Community Engagement Team of residents representing a diverse group of neighborhoods and communities across the town. This team of community leaders can help create culturally appropriate and effective communication vehicles and lead in-person mobilization and engagement efforts at the neighborhood level. Having a Community Engagement Team of volunteer leaders will increase the town's capacity to reach all its residents by having residents collaborate on messaging, translate English to other languages, and identify the most effective engagement vehicles to reach residents. Over the long term, Avon should consider developing an infrastructure of Block Captains across town who can serve as neighborhood organizers that deliver valuable information and help in town outreach and engagement efforts. Given the town's small size, Avon can create this organizational infrastructure much more easily than larger communities



Figure 13-6. Create a Neighborhood College program to build understanding and support for local government amongst the community members.

and utilize it to mobilize the entire town to participate in shared work. Many communities across the United States now employ this kind of network of neighborhood relationships, which have many benefits beyond effective engagement. They help bring neighbors together, build social capital, increase community resilience, and even improve economic and health outcomes for the community.

**Recommendation: Update the Committee Structure – Youth Council and an Inclusive Community Committee**

Avon boasts many of committees but suffers from a lack of diverse volunteers. Avon can update its committee structure by sunseting inactive committees instituting additional committees to its town structure. For instance, the town may want to consider a Youth Council, an Inclusive Community Committee, and a Transportation Committee. While creating narrow committee structures poses the risk of marginalizing critical conversations about equity and inclusion that should be central to every town body’s work, an Inclusive Community Committee would send an important signal that demonstrates the town values all residents and is welcoming new voices to the public dialogue. Forming such groups can provide an initial forum that opens the door to broader participation across the board from communities that are traditionally underrepresented in town discussions. Similarly, the town currently maintains a wonderful Council on Aging, which provides important services to seniors and demonstrates that Avon prioritizes them. There is, however, no such youth council or committee. Youth councils are in widespread use across the country today, and often have a dramatically positive impact on participation rates and town decision making by bringing new voices into the public dialogue and viewing youth voices as legitimate contributors to public work. For instance, Hampton, Virginia – one of the oldest communities in the United States – successfully rejuvenated participation in the city by creating a Youth Council and requiring youth representatives on every city body, including a group of youth planners in the planning

office. Creation of each of these committees can serve as initial steps that are easily implemented where staff capacity can support them and may grow over time into broader efforts over time. One long-term idea would be to explore intergenerational programming opportunities bringing seniors and students together through the school system, a common and effective model.

**Recommendation: Expand Regional Cooperation to Benefit Town Residents**

Avon is in an interesting regional context, surrounded by larger municipalities, including Brockton (pop. 105,643), Randolph (pop. 34,984), Holbrook (pop. 12,284), and Stoughton (pop. 29,281). Residents of Avon already take advantage of regional access to amenities. The opportunity for greater public sector collaboration is low-hanging fruit. The town already has mutual aid agreements and is building important interjurisdictional relationships on water supply issues. Expanding shared service agreements where appropriate and exploring how residents of the region utilize amenities in each town will help everyone conceptualize ways to produce co-benefits and invest resources – or share resources – where it is most needed. It is particularly important to have regional conversations about land use, housing, and transit to connect assets across the region to maximize how the public interest is served to the benefit of all. Avon residents are transit riders in Randolph and Brockton. Brockton residents are park users in Avon. Each town has both a local context and a place in a regional context and understanding that regional context and offering important regional support can benefit each municipality.

**Recommendation (Long-Term): Consider Expanding the Size of the Select Board**

The current governance model includes a Select Board of three elected members. A potential option is to expand the size of the Select Board to five members. This change would be consistent with what other towns have done as they grew, and it would allow for a modest increase in representation, expanded elected board

capacity, and an expanded town governance dialogue without significant new burdens.

**Recommendation (Long-Term): Consider Moving Spring Elections to be part of Even Year Fall Elections**

Like most small towns with spring local elections, Avon suffers from significantly lower turnout for local races. Fall elections for state and national offices experience exponentially higher voter participation. For example, in 2022, 1,665 people voted in the fall state and federal election while only 6% of that number, 103 people, voted in the spring local election. Avon leaders should study the idea of moving elections to a fall schedule to maximize voter participation. This action would require state enabling legislation, but it would dramatically increase resident turnout in local races. It comes with trade-offs. Towns that have combined local elections with state and national elections often struggle to get visibility for local races, and local non-partisan contests can become politicized by the state and national political dialogues. However, it would guarantee two things for the Select Board: exponentially more voter participation and greater credibility for the town’s elected representatives. The town can also save money on a combined election process. It may have a long-term impact in providing an access point for more residents to feel empowered and expand their participation in governance activities across the board. Other municipalities that have implemented this change have seen improved participation across the board and more representative elected bodies.

**Recommendation: Participate in the Municipal Vulnerability Program 2.0 Planning.**

MVP 2.0 planning provides funding to identify underrepresented members of the community, bring representatives to the table, provide training on diversity, equity, and inclusion, and to plan for resilience and oversee a state funded pilot “seed” program.

**Recommendation: Provide town appointed and elected staff, officials, and board members with**

**training on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI).**

Build on the MVP 2.0 training that is specifically focused on the MVP planning process and expand to include all town staff and officials. [As noted by ICMA](#), local government professionals are called upon to integrate equitable public service to rapidly diversifying communities. Local governments must consider issues of equity and inclusion that go beyond race, ethnicity, and gender and include variations in age, sexual orientation, ability, economic status, educational attainment, immigration levels, and community size. Providing town officials with training and resources in this area will help them better serve their community and ensure equitable outcomes for residents. In addition to organizations such as the National League of Cities and ICMA, the Massachusetts Municipal Association has [resources](#) to support member communities with this work.

**Recommendation: Do a JEDI Self-Study on Avon Municipal Government and Operations.**

The Massachusetts Municipal Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Coalition’s DEI Guide (2022) recommends that communities think about all the needs in municipal government, whether the community has a DEI staff person or assigns those duties as part of a larger job description. As part of this, a town can think about the specific responsibilities of each department.

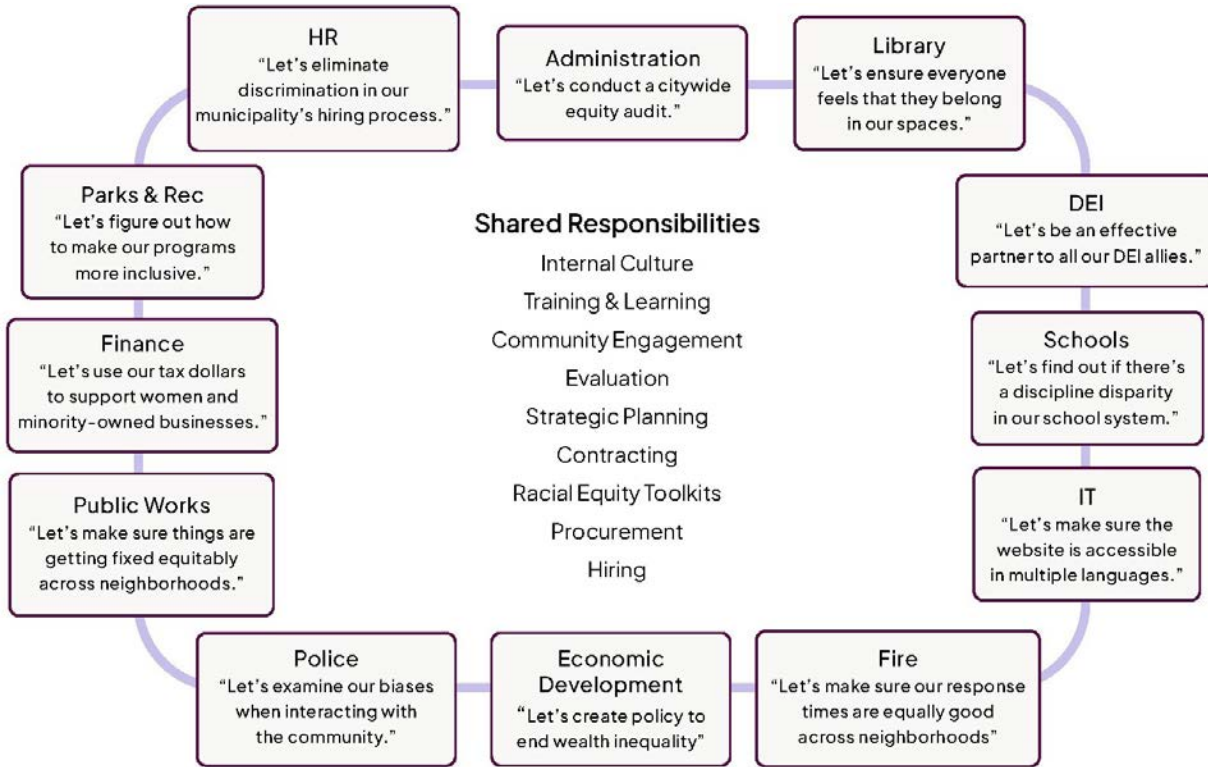


Figure 13-7. Specific Responsibilities (DEI Coalition, 2022).



## 14. Ten-Year Action Plan

*To be completed with the comprehensive plan after consensus on goals, pathways, and objectives.*

## Communities by Design & the Avon Design Team

### Wayne Feiden, FAICP – Team Leader

Wayne Feiden is Director of the Center for Resilient Metro-Regions and Lecturer of Practice at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Wayne is also the principal of Plan Sustain, Inc. a mission-driven planning and sustainability consultancy. Previous to that he was Director of Planning and Sustainability for Northampton. He led that city to earn the nation's first Five-STAR Communities rating for sustainability and the highest "Commonwealth Capital" score, the former Massachusetts scoring of municipal sustainability efforts. Wayne oversaw the city's planning, conservation, sustainability, climate framework, and plan implementation efforts. His focus includes downtown revitalization, sustainable transportation, open space preservation and recreation, and streamlined regulatory efforts. Wayne's publications include four American Planning Association PAS Strategic Planning reports: Planning Management, Assessing Sustainability, Planning for On-Site and Decentralized Wastewater Treatment, and Performance Guarantees, as well as other peer-reviewed and research papers. Wayne's paid and pro-bono consulting focuses on short-term strategic interventions on projects as varied as a greenway in Santa Rosa, master planning on the Hopi reservation, downtown planning in Port Angeles and Dublin, waterfront planning in Staten Island and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and master planning in Haiti. Wayne's Eisenhower Fellowship to Hungary (1995), Fulbright to South Africa (2007), Fulbright to New Zealand (2011), German Marshall Fund Fellowship to Europe (2015), State Department Fellowship Exchange to Malaysia (2017), Bellagio Residency in Italy (2017), and State Department Fellowship Exchange to Indonesia (2023) all focused on planning and sustainability issues.

### Miquela Craytor

Miquela Craytor is the Vice President at Kearns & West co-leading the NY Office. At Kearns & West she is leading the stakeholder engagement and community benefit assessments on public and private sector clean energy transition projects. In her 20+ year career she has specialized in managing complex, multi-stakeholder engagement initiatives, delivering results for the private, government and non-profit sectors. Before Kearns & West, she worked on change management efforts to support Ford Motor Company's BlueOval community engagement strategy for their \$5.6 billion manufacturing investment in EVs and battery production. She ran the City of New York's first Industrial Industry Partnership and oversaw the process to develop the City's Industrial Action Plan. She has designed industry and community-informed workforce and small business growth programs, including apprenticeship programs for the industrial sector. She is passionate about unlocking economic opportunities for equitable and sustainable solutions for all.

### Troy Moon

Troy serves as the Sustainability Director for the City of Portland, ME. In this role, he works to implement the City's climate action plan, One Climate Future. This involves close collaboration with community members, businesses owners, and City staff in all departments. Current initiatives include deployment of EV charging infrastructure with a focus on neighborhood access, waste reduction and composting, and Electrify Everything!, a community wide initiative to promote the electrification of buildings and transportation in both the public and private sectors. Troy also serves as the staff liaison to the City Council's Sustainability and Transportation Committee, which oversees development and implementation of climate action and ordinances related to transportation and the environment.

Prior to joining the Executive Department in 2015, Troy worked in the Department of Public Works, where he began service in 1997. While there he focused

on environmental programs including solid waste management and management of City parks and open spaces. He started his career developing and implementing solid waste management programs including the City's successful "pay as you throw" waste collection program and curbside recycling. As Parks Manager, he worked to expand community agriculture, completed a master plan for a historic cemetery, and led efforts to redevelop two historic parks. He also worked to adopt low impact land management practices that culminated in the adoption of the City's comprehensive Landcare Ordinance that prohibits the use of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers. In 2022, the Natural Resources Council of Maine recognized Troy with a Conservation Leadership Award for his work on One Climate Future and his efforts to promote regional collaboration to fight climate change. He speaks regularly with civic leaders across the State of Maine about municipal climate action. He co-chairs the New England Municipal Sustainability Network and is a member of the Urban Sustainability Directors Network.

### Jason Schriever

Jason is Senior Principal at Stantec. He finds innovative solutions to complex mobility problems, focusing on a balance of private needs and public benefits. His efficient and cost-effective mobility, parking, and demand-management solutions build equity, increase opportunity, and improve community and environmental resilience. In more than 22 years as a transportation planner, he's helped hundreds of cities, institutions, and developers broaden options for urban mobility. He's shown governments from Boston to Abu Dhabi how to manage parking in difficult shared environments. He's helped clients like Partners Healthcare develop demand-management programs that get people out of their cars and onto transit, their feet or bikes. He's led citywide plans like Go Boston 2030, that use community-wide goals to help focus mobility investments in ways that strengthen neighborhoods' sense of place, improve public health, and get travelers where they want to go efficiently and safely. Jason and his wife spend their

spare moments having great fun with their kids, usually on another urban adventure or just having a great time with family and friends.

### Erin Simmons

Erin Simmons is Senior Director of Design Assistance for Communities by Design, a program of the Architects Foundation. For more than 18 years, Erin has provided technical assistance to hundreds of communities around the world, leading democratic planning processes and training workshops focused on empowering citizens to create equitable, sustainable, and resilient communities. Her work has been featured in hundreds of news articles and publications, and she has spoken extensively as a subject matter expert on the topics of participatory planning, sustainability, and community revitalization.

Prior to her work with Communities by Design, Erin worked as historic preservationist and architectural historian for an environmental and engineering firm, where she practiced preservation planning, created historic district design guidelines, and conducted historic resource surveys. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in History from Florida State University and a Masters degree in Historic Preservation from the University of Georgia. Erin is an Academician of the Academy of Urbanism in London, UK.

### Joel Mills

Joel Mills is Senior Director for the Communities by Design program. Joel's 28-year career has been focused on strengthening civic capacity, democratic processes and civic institutions. This work has helped millions of people participate in meaningful public processes, visioning efforts, and community planning initiatives. In the United States, Joel has provided consultative services to hundreds of communities, leading participatory processes on the ground in over 100 communities across 38 states. He has led public processes, training programs and workshops in over a dozen countries across 5 continents. His work has been featured in over 1,000 media stories and several books.

Joel has served on dozens of expert working groups, boards, juries, and panels focused on civic discourse and participation, sustainability, and democracy. He was a founding Board Member of the International Association for Public Participation's United States Chapter. He has spoken at numerous international conferences concerning democratic urbanism and the role of democracy in urban success, including serving as the Co-Convener of the Remaking Cities Congress in 2013. Joel is an Academician of the Academy of Urbanism in London and serves as a Senior Editorial Associate for Civic Green. He is the author of numerous articles on the relationship between democracy, civic capacity and community.

**Lessons from Strategic Planning & the Design Assistance Experience**

The history of the design assistance program is replete with examples of communities that took control of their future by involving everyone in the process. The following community stories illustrate how towns of comparable size have built partnerships and involved everyone to achieve success.

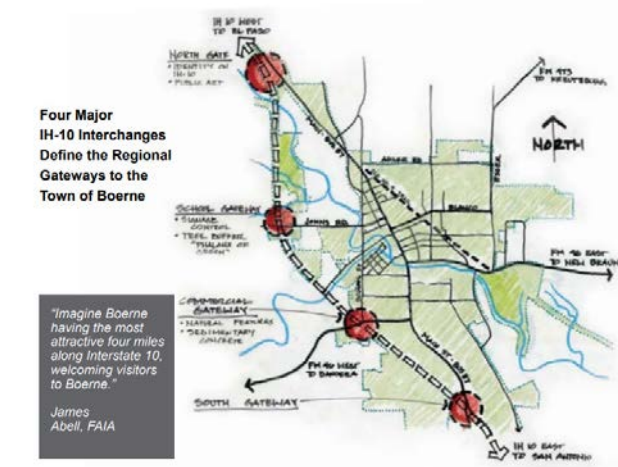
**Boerne, TX (pop 8,000)**

In 2008, the citizens of Boerne, Texas hosted an AIA team to help them plan. At the time, the town had a population of 8,000 but was facing extreme growth pressure and conflict over preservation. It also had a struggling main street that suffered from a lack of walkability, high street speeds, struggling retail, vacant buildings, and a lack of vibrancy. The community process included participation from hundreds of citizens and the resulting report and community outcomes won a state planning award. The main street was a state road, so part of the implementation strategy included the town partnering with the Texas Department of Transportation on improvements to the downtown and connections to it. The strategy also required that the town focus its investments on the downtown main street as it grew,

so that it did not lose the small-town characteristics everyone in town identified with. Investments were made in walkability and the public realm and street design. Ten years later, Boerne boasts "The Hill Country Mile," reflecting civic pride for its vibrant main street that draws visitors from all over the world. The street has been awarded the American Planning Association's Great Street designation and downtown businesses are thriving and growing. Most importantly, the downtown has enhanced its existing character while the town doubled in size (to over 16,000) and it has leveraged its growth to support investment in the characteristics that community members hold important. Today, the life of downtown is marked by cultural events throughout the year that draw both locals and visitors. The downtown and main street have won multiple travel awards as well. While Avon does not boast the kind of historic assets to make it a tourist destination, it does have a main street corridor that could be significantly improved and provide a central community corridor with a vibrant street life that is walkable, safe and offers places that citizens want to visit.



Image of the City



**Newport, Vermont (pop. 4,500)**

In 2009, Newport, Vermont brought an AIA team to town to help build a revitalization strategy. Patricia Sears, the Executive Director of the Newport Renaissance Corporation, described the town’s dilemma beforehand: “We were the last city in Vermont to achieve downtown designation from the state. We had some of the highest unemployment in the state. We decided we were done being last. We decided, ‘we are going to be first.’” Hundreds of residents and stakeholders participated in the process. As Mayor Paul Monette said, “it wasn’t the usual political process. Everyone was heard.” Newport was able to leverage the process to build broad partnership and involvement. The city became the first in the state of Vermont to enact a form-based code and did it through a grassroots process. “Adoption of form-based code in record time through the hard work of numerous people really proves that grass roots efforts pay off,” continued Mayor Monette. “This type of zoning greatly improves the ability for the city to attract development while maintaining our historic downtown. While change does not happen overnight, this zoning will help initiate change and much needed growth.” It also leveraged small actions to build momentum for larger investments. For example, the team included a recommendation to create a community garden downtown. Newport created a community garden with over 32 organizational partners. They took advantage of existing capacity – a downtown parking lot that was donated – and not only created a garden but programmed it to have a transformational impact. Out of the community garden, the “Grow a Neighborhood” program was created, teaching neighborhood residents about agriculture, providing space for family plots, and engaging local restaurants in a farm to table initiative. Six new restaurants opened downtown during the first two years of implementation. This activity spurred new investments that included boutique hotels, a waterfront resort and a tasting center featuring regional agriculture. The Northeast Kingdom Tasting Center set a goal “to create a culinary destination for all the fantastic products in the

Northeast Kingdom.” The new restaurants and Tasting Center created enough connectivity to launch an annual downtown food festival, which provided further momentum to the effort to revitalize the main street. One of the key recommendations of the community process was to re-invigorate the connection to the lakefront and organize and program more events to spur investment and visitors. Newport organized an international speedskating competition, the Rasputitsa Gravel Road Race for mountain bikers, and the Memphremagog Winter Swimming Festival which includes an international outdoor winter swimming competition. The events have spurred visitors from all over the world and increased investment activity in the town while reinforcing local identity and the value of the place. Newport has undergone a fundamental shift in its thinking since the community process. In 2009, the public dialogue was dominated by nostalgia about the city’s past. One resident exclaimed, “I’ve seen Newport come, and I’ve seen it go.” Two years later, the team conducted a follow up visit to assess progress in the community. The sense of change reached all levels of the community. A resident described the civic “attitude adjustment” that had occurred: “When you have people working together, things can happen and do happen. That’s the most important change that has occurred – a change in attitude.... nothing is impossible.” It received a Facilitation Impact Award for the results of its process as well. Newport was no bigger than Avon and demonstrates how mobilizing citizens for collective impact can have dramatic results quickly.

**Helper, Utah (population 2,200)**

Helper City, Utah was incorporated in the late 19th century because of surrounding mines and the railroad, which runs through town. It developed a thriving local mining economy in the early 20th century. The town got its name from the ‘helper’ engines that were stationed at the mouth of the canyon to assist trains in reaching the Soldier Summit up the mountain. The natural resource economy began to suffer economic decline over the past 20 years, and in 2015 the Carbon Power Plant in



Helper was closed. It had been in operation since 1954. The economic impact resulted in de-population and increased poverty, putting a strain on resources and capacity. The population of the town was 2,095, with 13 percent of the population living below the poverty line. In 2017, Helper City hosted an AIA team to build a community-driven strategy for its downtown. Over 200 people participated in the process. The resulting report recommended implementation strategies that focused on strengthening the public realm, activating the downtown and enhancing the historic fabric. At the conclusion of the process, one citizen stood up and declared, “You’ve given us hope.”

In the first year of implementation efforts, the town of 2,000 mobilized hundreds of volunteers in a grassroots effort to remake the public realm and activate downtown. Residents were involved directly in a series of hands-on projects that included the redesign of Main Street, pop-up retail stores, redesigned public parks, restoration of the riverfront, and other initiatives. They also enhanced programming downtown with successful arts festivals and related events. The impact has been transformational, stimulating private investment and momentum for positive change. Helper City Mayor Lenise Peterman notes that, “The plan created from the event is driving continuous improvement in Helper City. By giving voice to the community, we have also given it hope in creating a sustainable environment which is respectful of our past, values our environmental assets and maximizes the opportunity for community engagement.”

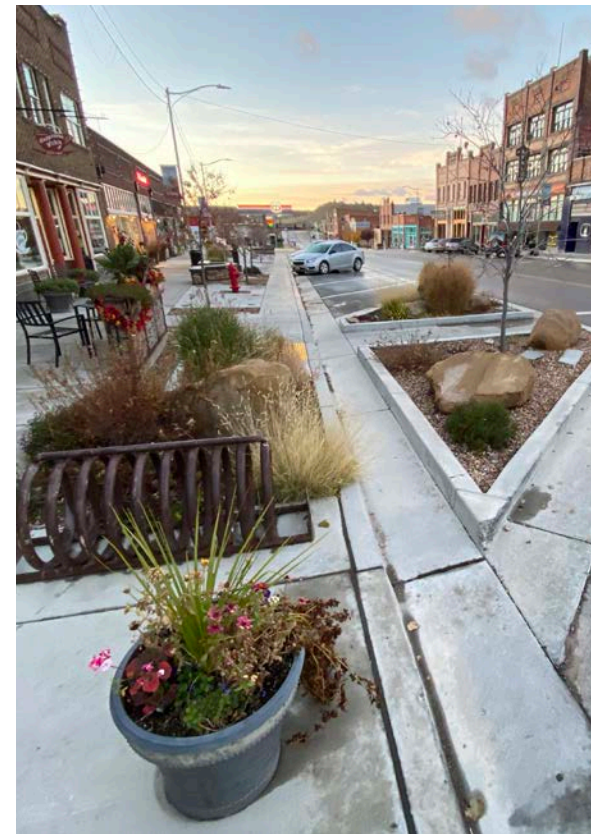
Carbon County leaders hired a consultant to do an assessment of the entire county a couple of years later. Regarding Helper, he had this to say: “I have never seen a community like this. You guys are the poster child for how to get things done...We really believe Helper is setting the Gold Standard for Utah.” That sentiment is felt locally as well. The Mayor and Steering Committee wrote that “The three-day immersion by the team has impacted, and continues to impact, our community on

a daily basis. People in our community have something they haven’t had for some time, hope for a sustainable community. Key tenants of creating that sustainability include replenishing human capital (drawing young families to our city), caring for our environmental assets, and finally recreating an energy-based economy to a destination based one. And we are doing just that – everywhere in Carbon County people say it’s happening in Helper – and it is!” As one local report noted, “Within the last 18 months, all but one of the available buildings on Main Street has been purchased and has undergone some degree of renovation.”

In 2018, Helper was recognized with a Facilitation Impact Award for its revitalization efforts. As Mayor Lenise Peterman wrote, the community process “was the catalyst for what we have done and is the road map for what we will do to create our best version of a sustainable community. The community, at the final presentation during the visit, literally cheered.” Avon has the same opportunity to leverage its master planning process to mobilize citizens for its priorities. Helper demonstrates that being a small community doesn’t have to be a barrier if you mobilize everyone to work together.

**Applying these Lessons to Avon**

As the preceding examples demonstrate, communities of similar and smaller size have achieved significant success by mobilizing and involving residents directly in the process. Avon can achieve the same level of success if the community can come together and build partnerships across the region to implement the strategies outlined in this report. By leveraging its assets together Avon can elevate its place in a way that protects what citizens value so much while providing economic benefits and livability to the people who call it home.



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