

Seekonk Massachusetts

Seekonk Master Plan Volume I

Baseline Report 2012

April 12, 2012



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 What Is The Seekonk Master Plan?

The Seekonk Master Plan is a long-range planning document used to guide development and preservation of the Town of Seekonk. This version of the Plan, updated from the December 2000 version, does not realize a radically different Seekonk, but rather provides the tools to build on the assets of the community. It provides a framework and agenda for the Town to make decisions, to achieve its objectives, and realize its vision. Figure 1-1 demonstrates how some of the goals and objectives of the 2000 Master Plan have been implemented in recent years. Table 1-1 lists some of the accomplished action items from the 2000 Master Plan.

Figure 1-1. 2000 Master Plan - Examples of Implemented Action Items

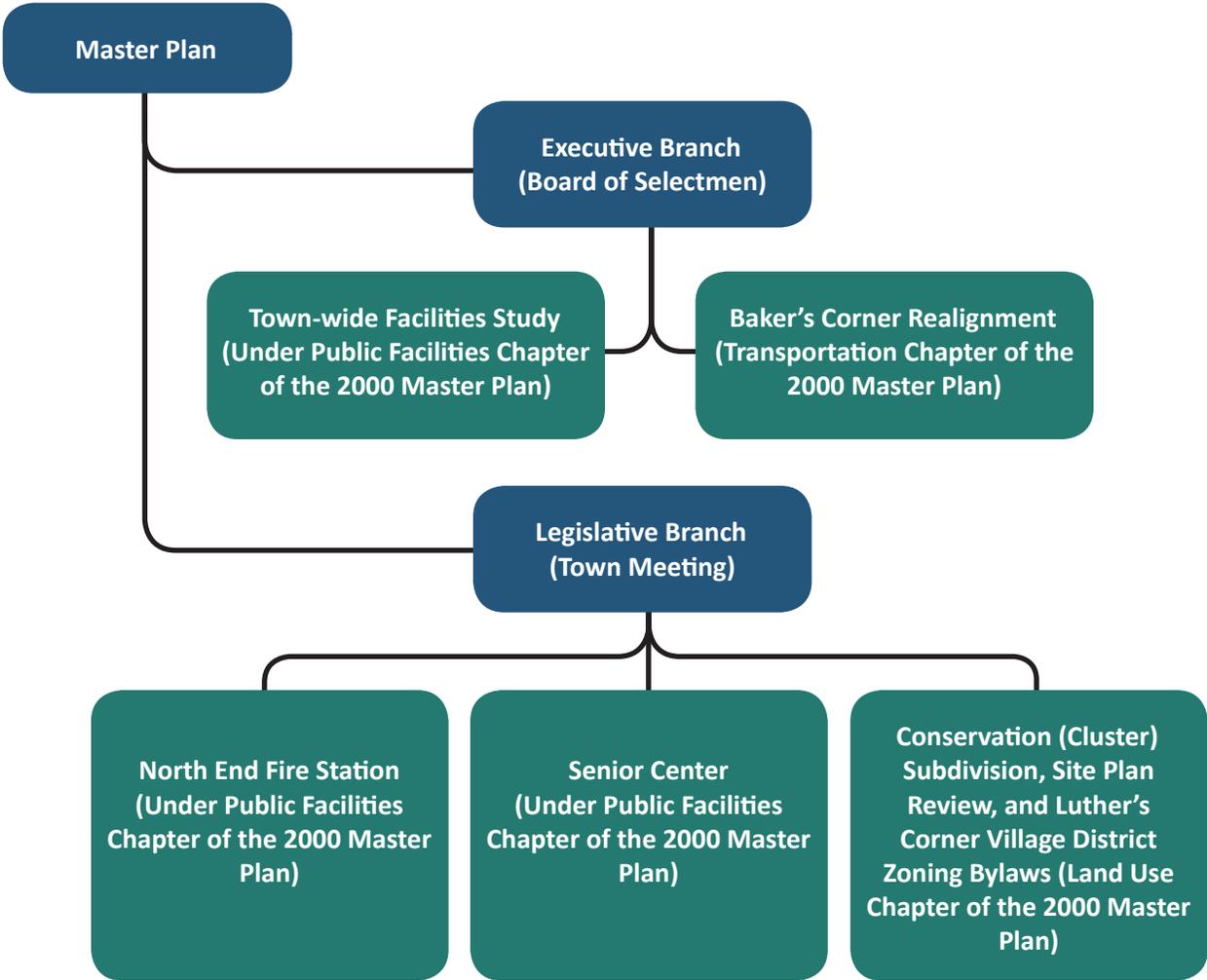


Table 1-1. 2000 Master Plan Accomplished Action Items

2000 Master Plan Goals Accomplished	Responsible Party – Year Accomplished
1. Rezoning of areas that were not appropriately zoned based on the existing neighborhood densities (Heritage Heights and Brookside Court)	Planning Board-2001
2. Conservation (Cluster) Subdivision zoning bylaw	Planning Board-2008
3. Multifamily Development Overlay District zoning bylaw	Planning Board-2005
4. Luther’s Corners Village District zoning bylaw	Planning Board-2010
5. Site Plan Review zoning bylaw	Planning Board-2008
6. Digitization of assessor maps into GIS	Tax Assessor-2007
7. Development of Seekonk Economic Development Group	Board of Selectmen-2011 (proposed)
8. Stormwater bylaw	Department of Public Works / Conservation Commission / Planning Board / Board of Health / Building Department-2008
9. Affordable Housing Production Plan adoption	Planning Board-2010
10. School renovations of Martin Elementary and Seekonk High School	School Committee-2005
11. Library Park	Department of Public Works / Library-2009
12. North End Fire Station	Fire Chief / Board of Selectmen-2009
13. Public Safety Complex	Police Chief / Fire Chief / Board of Selectmen-2005
14. Recreation staff member hired	Board of Selectmen-2008
15. Scenic Roads bylaw	Planning Board-2010 (drafted but not adopted)
16. Assisted Living Facility bylaw	Planning Board-2011 (drafted but not adopted)

The Master Plan is provided as three documents:

- I. Baseline Report
- II. Goals and Policy Initiatives
- III. Action Plan

The Baseline Report component assesses the existing conditions and demographics of the community to establish a framework for understanding the critical planning issues facing the Town. The Goals and Policy Initiatives component establishes a vision and direction for the future development of the community. The Action Plan component establishes a roadmap for implementing the community’s vision. Chapter 41, Section 81-D of the Massachusetts General Laws requires every city and town to prepare a Master Plan and to periodically update the plan. The last three updates to the Seekonk Master Plan occurred in 1979, 1986, and 2000. Because a Master Plan is considered to have a scope of five to ten years, and Seekonk has continued to develop and mature during the last decade, the Town is producing an update to its 2000 Master Plan.

The Master Plan Update reviews the recommendations of the previous plan and provides the current status of those recommendations. Further, the Plan assesses demographics in the community profile, land use, economic development, natural features, open space, housing, public facilities, and transportation elements. The Plan then develops Goals and Policies (Volume II) from which the Action Plan (Volume III) is generated.

The Master Plan will aid the Town Board of Selectmen, the Planning Board, the Zoning Board, and various committees in making informed decisions. To provide this guidance, the Master Plan must efficiently and concisely distill a wide range of information and opinions into concrete strategies. Accordingly, information was gathered from a variety of sources including:

- Town officials;
- Community stakeholder interviews;
- Public participation through a community survey;
- Public forums;
- Existing Town plans and documents;
- Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD); and
- State and federal sources for employment and demographic data.

The Natural Features and Resources Element, Open Space and Recreation Element, and Housing Element of the Master Plan are documented in external planning reports that were developed concurrently to this version of the Master Plan. The Natural Features and Resources Element, and Open Space and Recreation Element are both contained within Seekonk's Open Space Plan, which is being developed by SRPEDD. The Housing Element is contained within Seekonk's Housing Plan, developed by SRPEDD.

1.2 The Visioning Process

The Seekonk Planning Board, made up of a cross section of Seekonk residents, provided oversight and coordination for the Master Plan Update. The visioning process for the Master Plan Update occurred through a series of information gathering techniques including:

- A community survey distributed to all residents in January 2011 along with an on-line version of the survey available through March 2011;
- Two public workshops focused on Master Plan concepts held on May 3, 2011 and November 1, 2011;
- Informational interviews with key Town officials and community stakeholders in January 2011;
- The use of Planning Board work sessions to discuss and refine Master Plan concepts; and
- The use of a project website to provide updates and draft materials to the community.

1.3 A Vision for Seekonk

The 2011 Master Plan hopes to capture the identity and the values of the Seekonk Community, in addition to inventorying and evaluating current physical conditions. The following two questions are important to the document: “How does Seekonk see itself?”, and “What does the Town of Seekonk envision for itself in the years to come?” Community input at public meetings and input from elected Town officials have been gathered to create an inclusive picture of the Town’s identity, and to mold a vision for the future. Three key elements of Seekonk’s vision for the future are outlined below. These themes embody Town values and reverberate in this Master Plan.

- 1. Build on community strong points.** Many residents, municipal staff, and officials think that Seekonk works well today, and that maintaining the aspects of the Town that function well should be set as a priority. Networks of open space, recreational opportunities, traditional neighborhoods, and a regional commercial center all contribute to a high quality of life in the community, and the Town should identify strategies to maintain and, where appropriate, expand on these community assets.
- 2. Seekonk needs to take a proactive versus reactive approach to planning.** Many residents, municipal staff and officials think that the Town often acts “reactively” rather than “pro-actively” when it comes to issues of growth. As an example, many stakeholders think that the Town has only started to provide senior services in response to increases in senior populations. But in order to accommodate the near-term significant increase in this population, public facilities and services will need to be targeted to this group in the near future. Other issues identified by stakeholders as important include retaining agricultural lands, improving industrial sector performance, and water quality restoration. All of these issues require a planning-based approach to identify the tools that address these pressing issues in a proactive and productive manner.
- 3. Implementation is key.** The primary criticism of past Master Plans was the perceived inability of the public and municipal staff to implement the Plans. While many of the previous plans’ strategies have been implemented, there are several that still require attention. This Master Plan was developed with this issue in mind. The intention of providing the Master Plan in three separate volumes was so that each volume could serve a purpose, and so that the Action Plan could be a succinct, easily referenced document that can be shared across multiple municipal agencies.

1.4 Community Profile of Seekonk

1.4.1 Historical Development

Seekonk was first inhabited by the Native American Wampanoag Tribe, where the lands provided for good agricultural and water resources. Seekonk was actually named for the Native American words “Seaki” meaning black and “Honk” meaning goose, referring to the wild geese that frequented the Seekonk River and its cove during their semi-annual migrations.¹ It is unclear if a native community survived past King Phillip’s war, however, when many settlers fled the Seekonk area. Although not known specifically, it is suspected that Seekonk suffered significant damage during the war. A specific date of post-war settlement is not confirmed,

¹ Dupere, Phyllis. 1997. *Seekonk in the Twentieth Century*. Arcadia Publishing. Dover, NH. 63 pp.

but it is likely the first European settlers appeared shortly after 1676. This is acknowledged because a reputed tavern located near the intersection of Jacob Street and Seekonk's eastern border is said to date to 1670-80. The presence of this establishment and the location of a pre-1795 meetinghouse and adjacent pre-1758 cemetery at the junction of Lake and Lincoln Streets suggest a primary settlement node may have been established in the community between 1676 and the mid-18th century. A possible mid- to late- 18th century secondary settlement node may have existed in the vicinity of the Old Grist Mill Pond (Mill Road).^{2,3}



For the next 200 years, Seekonk was primarily a farming community. The first Europeans established farms that radiated out from the present day Luther's Corners. After the dawn of New England's industrial age in Pawtucket and Wakefield, the Seekonk and Ten Mile Rivers proved to be viable power sources and several mills and factories were established along the banks of these rivers. The Cove Factory, a cloth manufacturer established a facility in Seekonk in the early 19th century. The Seekonk Central Factory, makers of textiles, was erected in 1810. Hunt's Mills, built during this time, included a grist and saw mill, cording machines, clothier's works, and a small cotton factory. During this time, boundary disputes were common and the land that is now Rehoboth, East Providence, Pawtucket and Seekonk was claimed by both Rhode Island and Massachusetts. In 1812, the border disputes were settled by the courts and the Town of Seekonk was incorporated.



However, over the next few decades parts of the Town were absorbed by the neighboring Pawtucket and East Providence. In 1828, the then Town (now, City) of Pawtucket incorporated the northwest quarter of the Town. The southwest portion of the Town was incorporated into East Providence in 1862 with the creation of the Rhode Island – Massachusetts border. The area absorbed by Pawtucket and East Providence included Seekonk's industrial base, which had been developed to supplement the agricultural economy from the lands that make up today's Seekonk. For example, the well-known Slater's Cotton Mill, now in Pawtucket, had originally been within Seekonk. The 1862 agreement between the governments in Boston and Providence devastated the Town economically, and deprived Seekonk of approximately half of its territory, two-thirds of the Town valuation, more than two-thirds of its population and virtually all of its manufacturing base. However, historical records show that at least some Seekonk residents had encouraged this agreement to banish the industrial uses from the Town, seen as undesirable and hazardous. Although the Boston and Providence Railroad was built in the northwest corner of the Town during this time, there was no appreciable economic impact to Seekonk.⁴

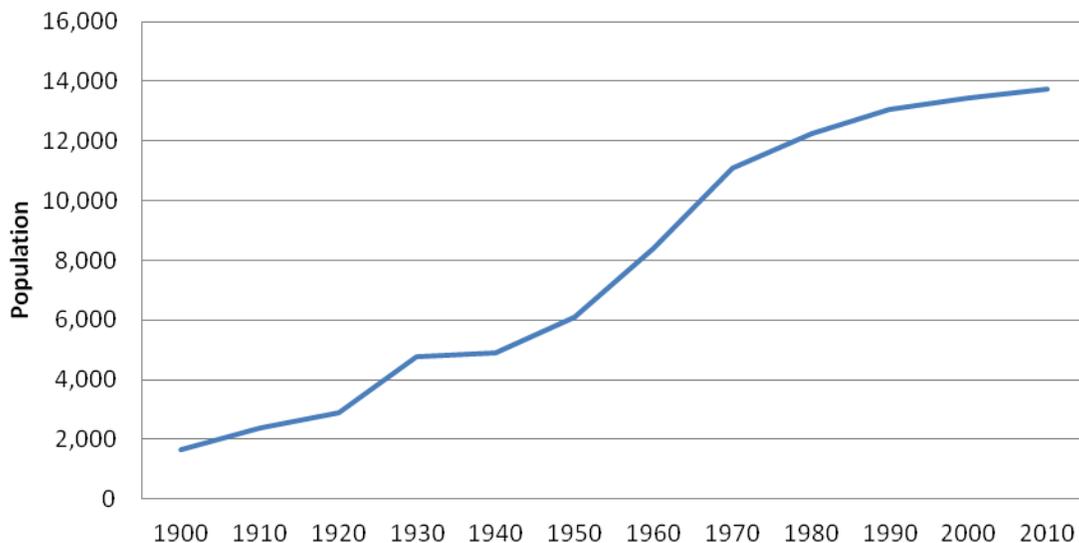
² Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC). 1981. *MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report: Seekonk*. <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/mhcpdf/townreports/SE-Mass/see.pdf>

³ Sign image source: <http://m.wikitravel.org/en/Seekonk>; Canadian geese image source: <http://www.pbbase.com/rcorreia/image/54684370>

⁴ Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC). 1981. *MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report: Seekonk*. <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/mhcpdf/townreports/SE-Mass/see.pdf>

Between 1900 and 1950 Seekonk's population grew steadily (Figure 1-2). Between 1950 and 1980, Seekonk saw a dramatic population increase as a result of the suburbanization that took place in the Post World War II era. Significant portions of Seekonk's agricultural lands were lost to housing and business development as a result. Still the Town did not experience development to the extent of most other communities and townships that surround Providence. The perceived development boundary of the State border allowed Seekonk to retain a lower density and more rural land use pattern than many of the Rhode Island suburbs of Providence.

Figure 1-2. Seekonk Population 1900 – 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 1900 – 2010, Decennial Census)



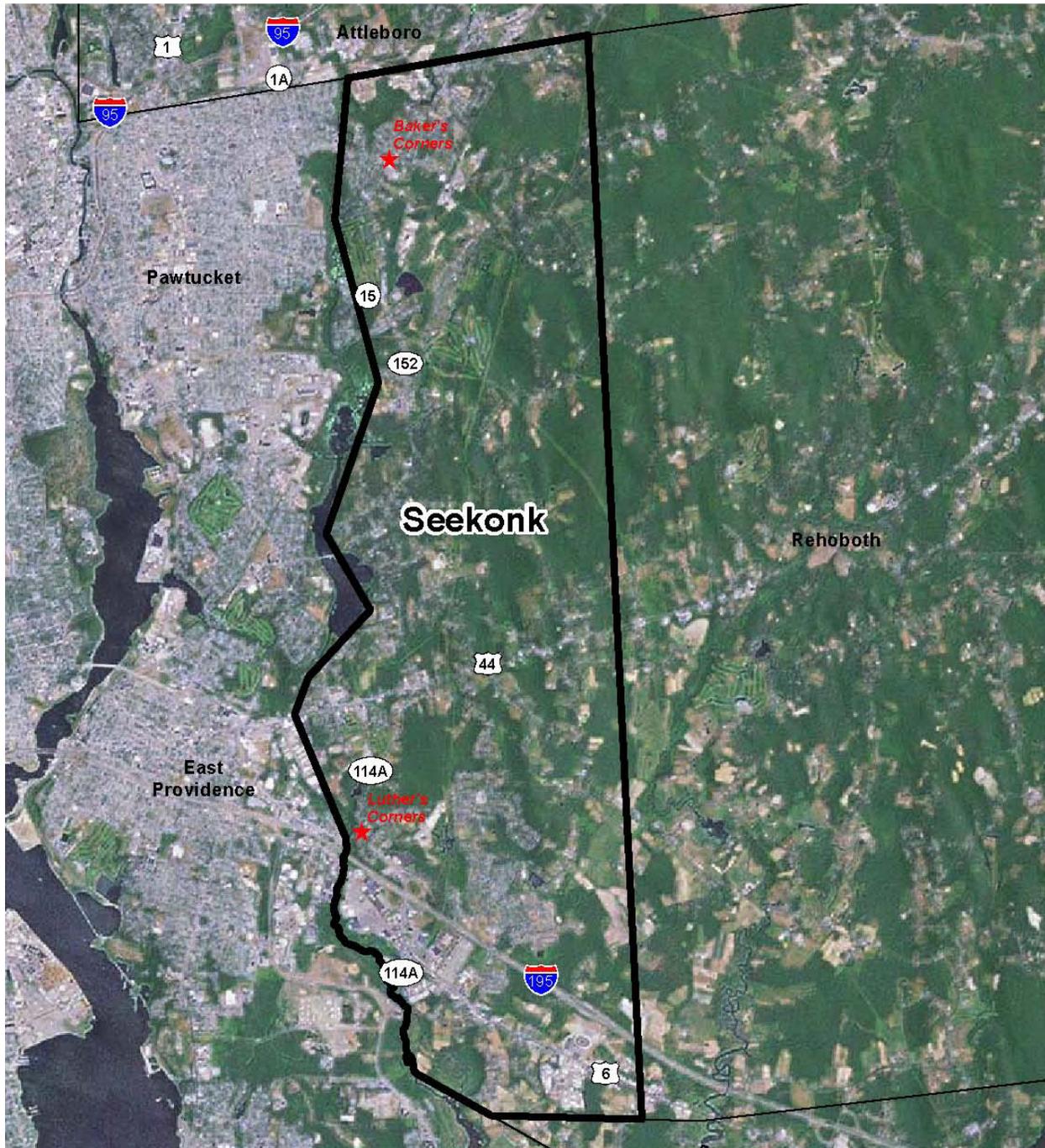
The suburbanization that did take place in Seekonk happened in a polarized north-south fashion. Northern Seekonk residential development eventually grew in response to the Pawtucket urban core, while southern Seekonk was linked to East Providence and Providence. The remnants of this polarization are evidenced in the Town's land use pattern. An array of mature subdivisions occupies the northwest area of Town in proximity to Pawtucket and to East Providence. The separation between north and south is psychological as well as physical as the east-west running Route 44 serves as an informal boundary between "north" and "south" Seekonk. Commercial development has proliferated along this arterial road that is the main route from Providence to Taunton serving as a true commercial corridor for the region.

Environmental constraints have also played a major role in Seekonk by limiting development and preserving natural vistas and open spaces. The Town has a high water table in many areas and an abundance of wetlands and streams that make development in these areas difficult. Presently, protective zoning, along with state and federal law, preserves wetlands and Seekonk's water supply, and serves as a constraint to development. Still, development has encroached upon environmentally sensitive areas, resulting in the pollution of streams, problems with septic system operation and well water quality, as well as the loss of valuable open space. Woodlands and wildlife areas have been preserved in some cases and help to make Seekonk an attractive and picturesque suburban location for further residential development.

The event that had the most significant impact on Seekonk's economy and character in the 20th century was the construction of Interstate 195 in the early 1960s. This expressway immediately transformed Seekonk into a desirable location for large-scale commerce by providing convenient automobile access from the greater Providence area and the Southeastern Massachusetts region. For more than three decades Seekonk has balanced rapid commercial growth with its rural and suburban qualities.

Between 1980 and 2010, Seekonk's population has remained relatively stable. Seekonk is used largely today as a rural/suburban bedroom community for people who work in the Rhode Island and Boston areas. It is also recognized for the commercial area along Route 6, which includes numerous Big Box retail establishments to the west, and the well-known "Seekonk Speedway" auto racing track to the east. A map of Seekonk is provided as Figure 1-3.

Figure 1-3. Seekonk, Massachusetts



1.4.2 Regional Setting

Seekonk is located in Bristol County, in the southeastern region of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts with a total area of 18.42 square miles. It is bordered on the southwest by East Providence, Rhode Island; northwest by Pawtucket, Rhode Island; north by Attleboro, Massachusetts; east by Rehoboth, Massachusetts; and south by Swansea, Massachusetts. It is approximately five miles east of Providence, Rhode Island; 13 miles northwest of Fall River, Massachusetts; and 45 miles south of Boston. Figure 1-4 displays Seekonk's position within the region.

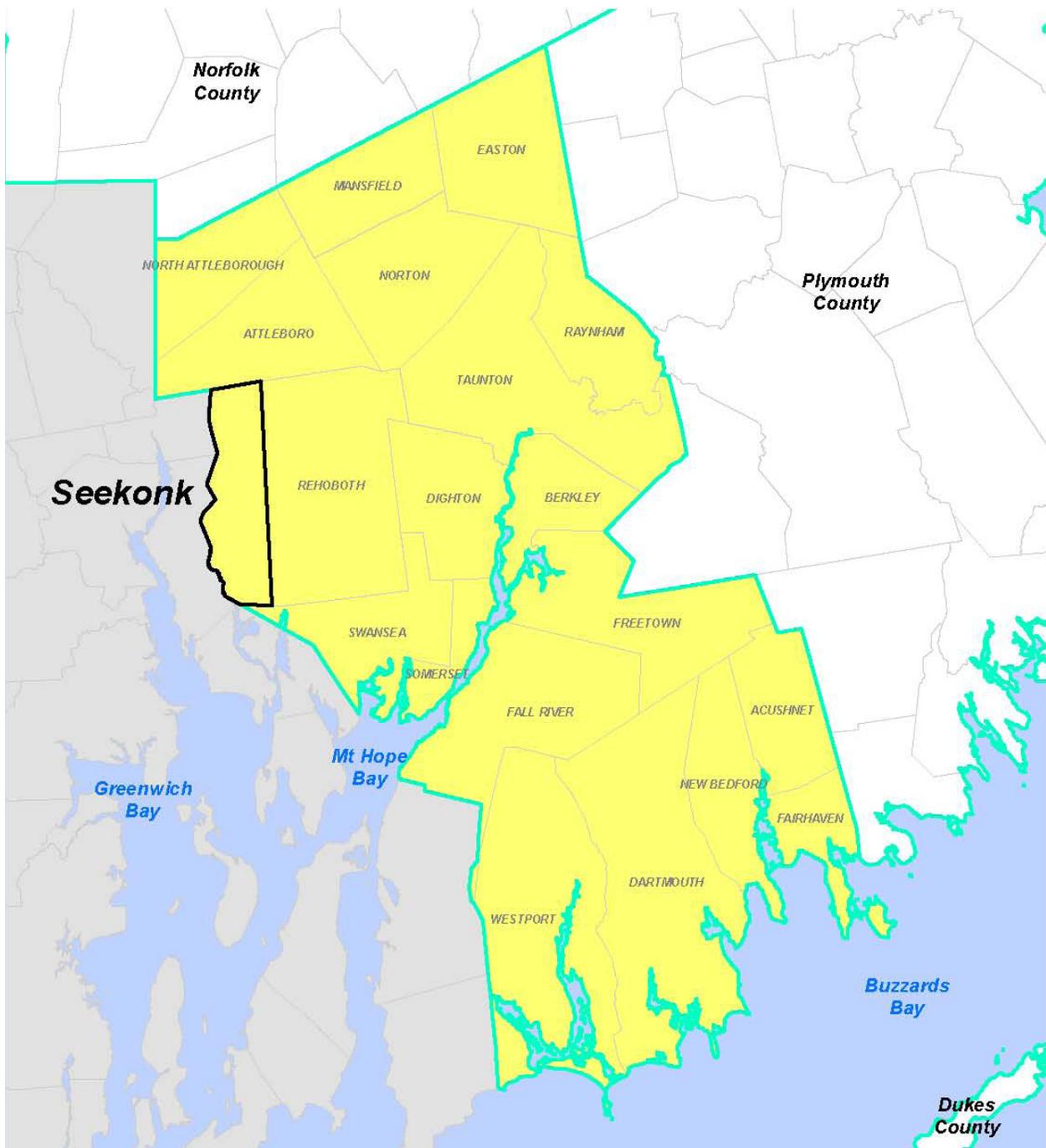
The construction of roads linking Seekonk to other communities in the area has gradually transformed the Town from an agricultural community to its current identification as an inner-ring suburb of Providence. Good transportation networks, including Interstate 195, Route 6, and Route 44, connect Seekonk to Providence to the west and Fall River, New Bedford and Taunton to the east. Routes 114A and 152 traverse the length of the Town and provide access to East Providence, Pawtucket and Attleboro. Seekonk is considered a part of the Providence-Pawtucket-Fall River Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA) by the Census Bureau.

As can be viewed in Table 1-2, Seekonk’s population has increased by almost 12% between 1980 and 2010. Most area communities have also increased in population, with the exception of Fall River, MA and East Providence, RI. Populations in Pawtucket, MA and Barrington, RI have fluctuated, but overall remained relatively constant.

Table 1-2. Regional Population Change, 1980 to 2010 (US Census Bureau, 1980 – 2010, Decennial Census)

Community	1980	1990	2000	2010	Percent Change (1980 - 2010)
Seekonk, MA	12,269	13,046	13,425	13,722	11.84%
Attleboro, MA	34,196	38,383	42,068	43,593	27.48%
Fall River, MA	92,574	92,703	91,938	88,857	-4.02%
Rehoboth, MA	7,570	8,656	10,172	11,608	53.34%
Swansea, MA	15,461	15,411	15,901	15,865	2.61%
Providence, RI	156,804	160,728	173,618	178,042	13.54%
East Providence, RI	50,980	50,380	48,688	47,037	-7.73%
Pawtucket, RI	71,204	72,664	72,958	71,148	-0.08%
Barrington, RI	16,174	15,849	16,819	16,310	0.84%

Figure 1-4. Seekonk Regional Setting



1.4.3 Population

The Town of Seekonk experienced substantial growth between 1940 and 1980, more than doubling the population during that time (Table 1-3). This growth can be attributed to a number of factors, including new housing construction, population loss from cities like Providence and Fall River, and a higher birth rate and family size than exists today. The 1990 – 2010 Censuses showed that the rate of population growth had slowed. Poor regional economic conditions, both during the 1970s and more recently in the 2000s, contributed to a slowdown in migration, birth rate, and family size. More recently, other factors have played an increasing role in the slowdown of Seekonk’s population growth. Larger lot zoning requirements and limited multi-

family housing have reduced the housing choices available to prospective residents. Another constraint is simply that there is very little buildable land left in Seekonk, as most major land parcels have already been developed. Seekonk’s natural features, such as wetlands and flood plains, provide further restrictions to growth. Most recently, the economic downturn experienced in the late 2000s has contributed to an overall reduction in housing construction, population migration, and birth rates.

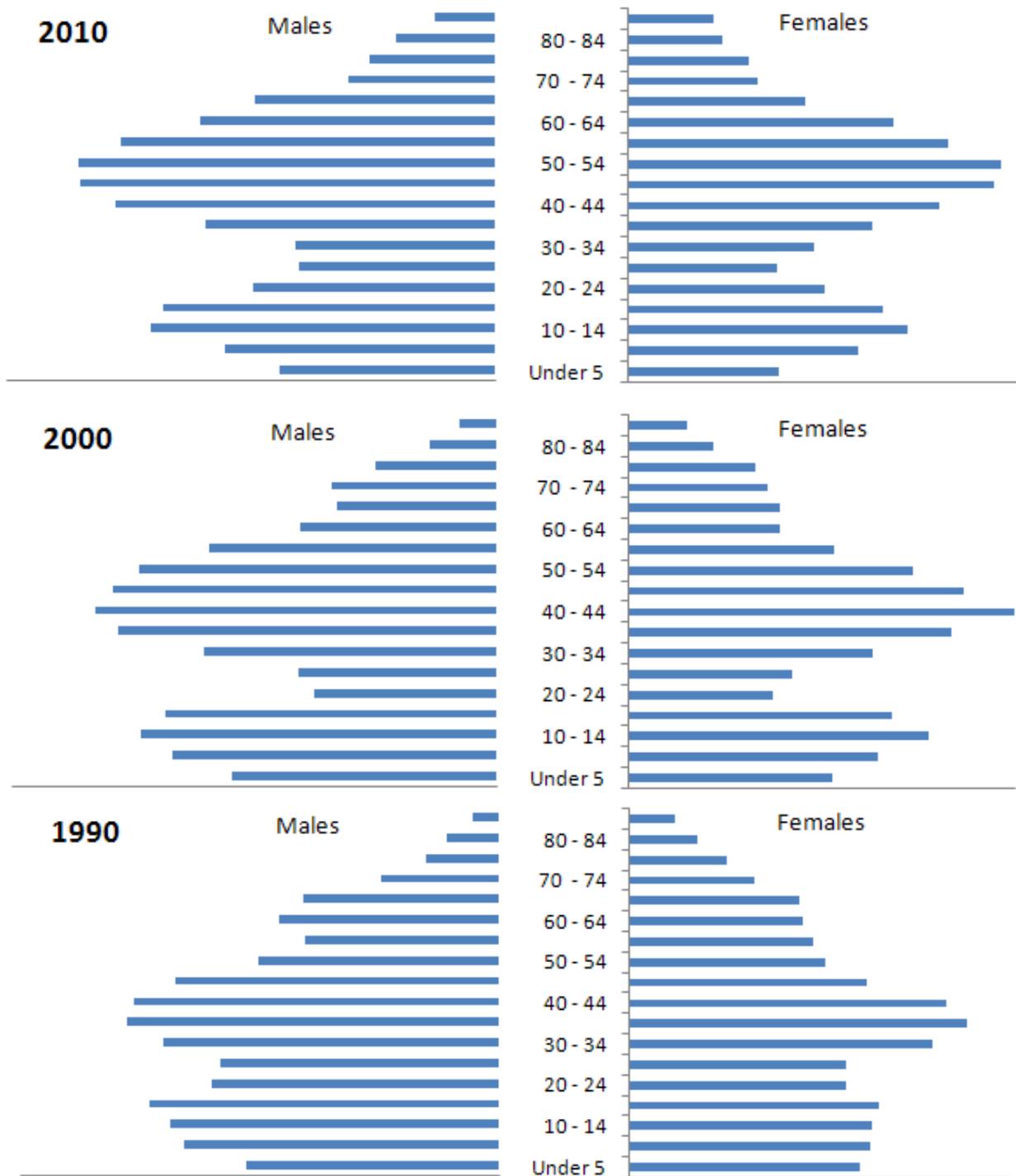
Table 1-3. Population Growth, 1940 to 2010 (US Census Bureau, 1940 – 2010, Decennial Census)

Year	Population	Percent Change
1940	4,912	-
1950	6,104	24.3%
1960	8,399	37.6%
1970	11,116	32.3%
1980	12,269	10.4%
1990	13,046	6.3%
2000	13,425	2.9%
2010	13,722	2.2%

1.4.4 Age Characteristics

The average age of Seekonk’s population continues to increase, due to declining birth rates in the area, increased longevity of the population, and the aging “baby boomer” population. The median age of Seekonk residents, which reached 43.8 in 2010, has increased by over 20% over the last 20 years. Figure 1-5 demonstrates the age demographic in Seekonk, and depicts the “baby boomer bubble” moving up in age from the 1990 chart to the 2010 chart. Across the country, communities are planning for the baby boomer population entering retirement age, and as Figure 1-5 demonstrates, Seekonk should be doing the same.

Figure 1-5. Seekonk Age Demographic (1990 – 2010) (US Census Bureau, 1990 – 2010, Decennial Census)



When comparing the senior (65 and over) and youth (under 20) population in Seekonk, it is clear that while the senior population has been increasing, the youth population has been on the decline (Table 1-4). Population projections produced by the Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research (MISER) predict that this trend will continue, and suggest that the 65 and over population will reach 20% of Seekonk’s population, outgrowing the under 20 population, which is estimated to be 19% of the population in 2020.

Table 1-4. Senior and Youth Population Change

Age Group	1980	1990	2000	2010
Total Population	12,269	13,046	13,425	13,722
65 and over	1,238	1,613	1,810	2,055
Percent of Total	10%	12%	13%	15%
Under 20	4,104	3,597	3,689	3,311
Percent of Total	33%	28%	27%	24%

1.4.5 School Enrollment

The declining youth population is also evidenced by school enrollment, which has shown an overall decrease between 2000 and 2010 (Table 1-5). School enrollment in Seekonk public schools has fluctuated through the years, generally hovering between 2,100 and 2,300 students since the 1999-2000 school year to the present. All age groups have remained rather stable during this time, with a steady rise in total enrollment from the 2000-2001 school year to the 2003-2004 school and then followed by a slow decline in total enrollment from the 2004-2005 school year to the present.

Table 1-5. School Enrollment in Seekonk (Source: Seekonk Public Schools, 2010 (excludes out-of-town tuition students and students in private schools))

School Year	Elementary Grades k-6	Intermediate grades 7-8	High School grades 9-12	Total Enrollment	Enrollment Growth per Year	Cumulative Growth all years
1999-00	1,205	400	606	2,211		
2000-01	1,198	408	600	2,206	-0.23%	-0.23%
2001-02	1,205	419	634	2,258	2.36%	2.13%
2002-03	1,177	429	675	2,281	1.02%	3.17%
2003-04	1,180	395	715	2,290	0.39%	3.57%
2004-05	1,171	374	741	2,286	-0.17%	3.39%
2005-06	1,147	349	740	2,236	-2.19%	1.13%
2006-07	1,123	368	720	2,211	-1.12%	0.00%
2007-08	1,134	362	664	2,160	-2.31%	-2.31%
2008-09	1,099	383	642	2,124	-1.67%	-3.93%
2009-10	1,095	383	642	2,120	-0.19%	-4.12%

2. LAND USE

2.1 Introduction

This section of the Master Plan Baseline Report summarizes the current use of land in Seekonk as well as the issues and opportunities associated with its patterns. Patterns of land development within Seekonk have changed over the years, and Section 2.2 will discuss the historic settlement patterns. Today, land use is governed by the Town's local zoning bylaw as well as federal, state, and local codes and regulations that dictate the way development and growth can occur.

The way in which land is developed can have environmental, social, economic and health implications. Land use practices can have a major impact on natural resources, such as water, soil, and wildlife habitat. For example, development resulting in the conversion of natural land to large areas of impervious surfaces, such as parking lots can reduce infiltration, and cause water quality degradation to receiving waters. Conversely, land use regulations designed to encourage walking and physical activity can promote healthy lifestyles.

2.2 Growth and Development Patterns

As discussed in Section 1.4.1, Historical Development, Seekonk was first inhabited by the Native American Wampanoag Tribe, to whom the lands provided good agricultural and water resources. Between the appearance of the first European settlers in the mid- to late-1600s and when Seekonk was incorporated in 1812, Seekonk was primarily a farming community. During the 1800s Seekonk's border changed dramatically and much of what was Seekonk went to neighboring Pawtucket and East Providence. The area absorbed by Pawtucket and East Providence included Seekonk's industrial base.⁵

Agriculture continued to be a primary land use and dominated Seekonk's economy well into the 20th century, but Seekonk also transitioned into a residential suburb of Providence. Seekonk also became an attractive and convenient location for large-scale commercial growth after the construction of Interstate 195 in the early 1960s. Today, Seekonk is used largely as a rural/suburban bedroom community for people who work in the Rhode Island and Boston areas. It is also a regional commercial destination, for the Route 6 Big Box retail establishments along Route 6 (accessed off of Interstate 195), and the well-known "Seekonk Speedway" auto racing track.

2.3 Current Land Use

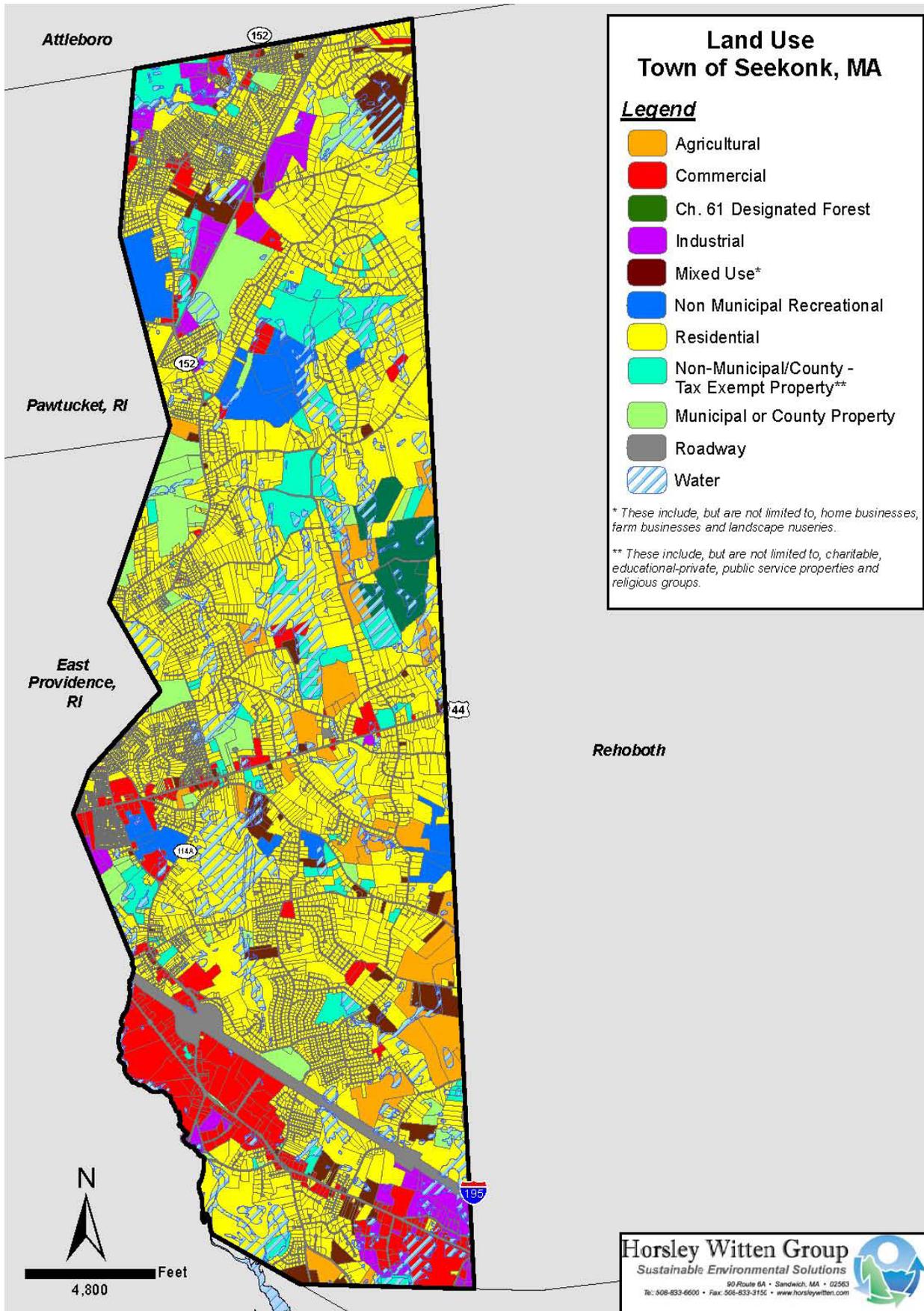
Current land use patterns vary throughout the Town of Seekonk. Table 2-1 summarizes the land area taken up by each land use type. Figure 2-1 shows the Current Land Use Map. The sections that follow the map detail the different types of land use patterns.

⁵ Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC). 1981. *MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report: Seekonk*. <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/mhcpdf/townreports/SE-Mass/see.pdf>

Table 2-1. Summary of Land Uses

Land Use Type	Area (acres)	Percent of total area
Residential	6,589	55%
Commercial	934	8%
Industrial	384	3%
Mixed Use	403	3%
Municipal Property	599	5%
Non-Municipal Tax Exempt Property	783	7%
Agriculture	637	5%
Forested Land	219	2%
Non-Municipal Recreation	426	4%
Roadway	935	8%
Total	11,910	

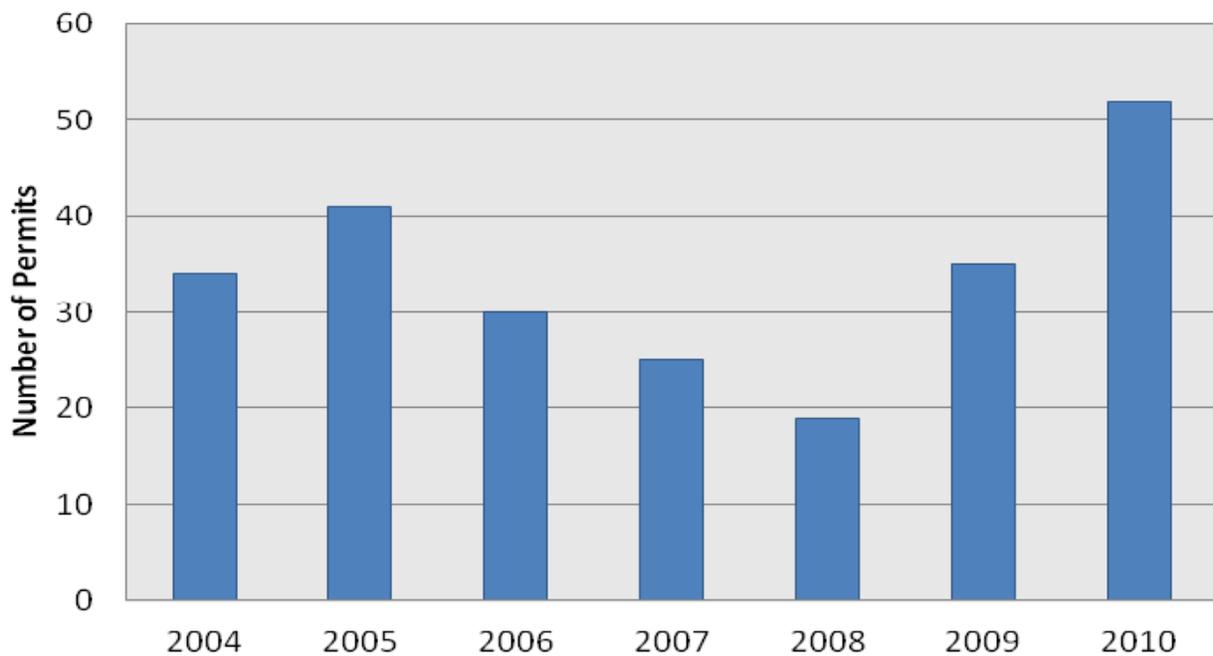
Figure 2-1. Current Land Use Map



2.3.1 Residential Land Use

The predominance of land used for residential development emphasizes the Town’s role as a suburban bedroom community. Figure 2-2 shows the number of building permits issued for new residential construction between 2004 and 2010. There were 52 building permits issued for new residential construction in 2010. This is relatively in line with the annual building permit issuance rate seen since 1989. However, the number of permits issued in 2008 dipped below 20, which is the lowest number of annual permits seen in the last 30 years. This is consistent with national development trends seen during this time of economic downturn. As documented in the 2000 Master Plan, with the exception of the late 1980s when building permits reached over 100 permits per year, the number of permits per year has fluctuated between 20 and 60 since 1980.

Figure 2-2. Permits Issued for New Residential Construction



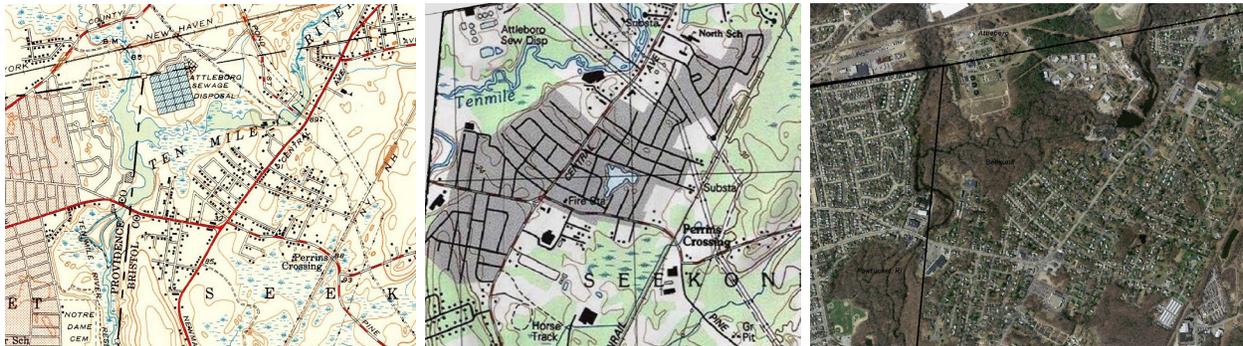
Mature Residential Neighborhoods

Mature residential neighborhoods in Seekonk, similar to other historic New England neighborhoods, consist of homes built on smaller parcels of land with streets developed in a grid-like pattern. This type of development is promoted today as a sustainable approach to development, often under the term “Traditional Neighborhood Design.” Not all of Seekonk’s neighborhoods take this form. Many, which were developed after the Second World War consist of subdivisions with larger lot sizes and dead-end or cul-de-sac street patterns.

The mature subdivisions are mostly built out, and new development in these areas would primarily be in the form of re-development. Seekonk’s oldest residential subdivisions are found near the primary entranceways from Pawtucket, Providence and East Providence. This residential development, which grew out of the suburban development that relates to these cities, exists mostly in northern Seekonk (Figure 2-3). Blocks of mature subdivisions border Central Avenue and Pine Street, northern Seekonk’s major arteries. Mature residential

subdivisions are also located to the north and south of Route 44 near the border with East Providence.

Figure 2-3. Northern Seekonk's mature residential neighborhoods: from left to right - 1941 Historic USGS Topographic Map, Current USGS Topographic Map, 2008 Aerial Imagery.



Suburban Residential Development

Newer residences have been developed on larger lots on streets that generally do not follow a grid-like pattern (Figure 2-4). New residential development is found primarily in the Town's eastern half, and is often characterized by large lots (minimum 62,500 square feet). This residential development varies from rural to urban in nature, but most properties are single-family homes. Some of these homes are associated with active farms.

Figure 2-4. Suburban residential development in Seekonk characterized by larger lots on non-grid street network.



Suburban residential development is also associated with the Route 44 and Route 6 corridors. The residences located directly on Route 44 and the streets that branch off of the artery have a definitive rural/suburban character. Between the industrial uses to the east along Route 6 and the Highway Business uses to the west along Route 6, lies a small stretch of land of mixed use (Figure 2-1). To the south of Route 6 and to the north of Route I-195 there are expanses of residential land use in southern Seekonk. Scenic roadways and a suburban/rural community character persist in each of these southern Seekonk residential zones, despite the proximity to the highway business commercial corridor.

Rural Residential Development

Rural development extends through northern and eastern Seekonk as a continuation of the rural community of Rehoboth to the east. Eastern Seekonk, primarily in the north is characterized by low density residential development, scenic local roadways, and agricultural land uses (Figure 2-5). Northern Seekonk also includes a wealth of open and green spaces including the Caratunk Wildlife Refuge, the Ledgemont Country Club, Seekonk Meadows, the Seekonk Junior High School, and the Gammino Pond site, which add to the rural character in this area.

Figure 2-5. Rural Development in Seekonk: from left to right – Caratunk Wildlife Refuge⁶, Four-Town Farm⁷, Painting of Osamequin Farm⁸



2.3.2 Village Development

Two primary areas in Seekonk are characterized by village style development: Baker’s Corners in northern Seekonk at the intersection of Pine Street, Newman Avenue, and Central Avenue and Luther’s Corners in southern Seekonk at the intersection of Fall River Avenue and County Street (Figure 2-6). Luther’s Corners is one of the locations of the Town’s earliest development, and Baker’s Corners includes the most significant cluster of local business establishments in northern Seekonk. Although recent roadway improvements in both areas have adversely impacted pedestrian mobility and on-street parking capacity, these areas are generally scaled to the pedestrian and include a mix of land uses that would cater to pedestrians. Both villages, especially Luther’s Corners, which was recently re-zoned as its own Luther’s Corners Village Zoning District, have the potential to function as attractive mixed-use village centers.

Figure 2-6. Luther’s Corners (view to east) and Baker’s Corners (view to north) (left to right)



2.3.3 Commercial Development

Commercial development can be divided into local business and highway business. Local business includes smaller scale commercial businesses that tend to exist either within mixed use

⁶ Source: <http://www.asergeev.com/pictures/archives/compress/2004/393/01s.htm>

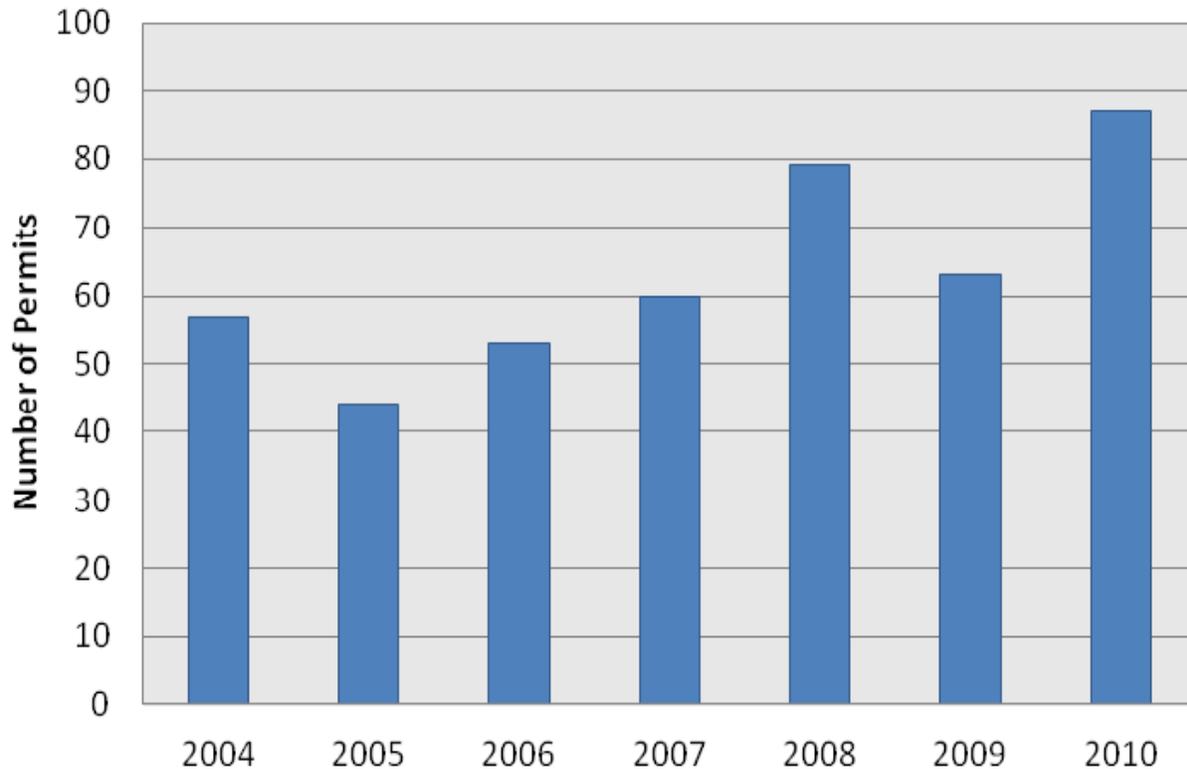
⁷ Source: http://photos.davepacheco.net/Travel/New-England/14404098_Z9UEV/3/1067816850_hopBm#1067817474_Xew36

⁸ Source: <http://sethscark.com/work/index.php?art/map/>

settings or as strip commercial development along main roads. Highway business is typically larger scale commercial uses that are designed to be easily accessed by automobiles from major arteries.

The number of commercial/industrial building permits for new construction, additions and renovations was on the rise between 2004 and 2010 (Figure 2-7). Almost 90 permits were issued in 2010. This trend demonstrates increased investment by business/property owners in the community's commercial and industrial properties.

Figure 2-7. Permits for New/Addition Commercial/Industrial Construction



Local Business

Local business, or small-scale commercial development is sprinkled throughout Seekonk along the major roads of Route 152, Route 44 east of Arcade, and Route 114A. Common examples of the types of small businesses referred to here are gas stations and body shops, specialty retail shops, and professional offices. The districts where these establishments proliferate are those zoned for local business, or mixed use.

Route 44, which enters Seekonk from East Providence and traverses the Town in a generally east-west direction, serves as a major transportation artery connecting Providence, to Rehoboth and Taunton and points east. The western half of Route 44 is Seekonk's largest area of local business development. At the intersection with Fall River Avenue a former K-Mart building has been redeveloped into a 'Town Center' retail complex. Other uses include automotive sales and service establishments, professional offices, gas stations and other retail shops. Automotive business uses along the western portion of Route 44 are an extension of the commerce in East Providence.

The Town of Seekonk recently conducted a study of the Route 44 corridor with SRPEDD to identify future development options within this area. The study identified zoning and regulatory amendments as well as transportation improvements that would facilitate redevelopment along the auto-dependent stretch of Taunton Avenue from Pleasant Street west to the Rhode Island State border. SRPEDD identified a number of recommended strategies and redevelopment options targeted for the Route 44 corridor. Some of these recommendations included adopting zoning amendments to allow additional uses, increase the dimensional requirements of appropriate commercial space, and establish a new mixed-use zoning district or Smart Growth Zoning District.

Highway Business

Highway business has thrived on the western end of Route 6, which has experienced several retail establishments moving westward from points east of Commerce Way, to locations closer to Providence and the interstate 195 interchange. At present there appears to be room within the existing Highway Business zone for infill and refill development, as some parcels may still be available for redevelopment.

In southern Seekonk the commercial and industrial development that has evolved along the Route 6 corridor is the dominant feature of the land use (Figure 2-8). The western third of route 6 and the streets that branch from it are home to nearly all of Seekonk's Highway business establishments. This commercial corridor is a district of high activity and heavy traffic. Highway business uses include big-box retailers, shopping centers, chain restaurants, and gas stations.

Large-scale commercial development has been effectively contained within the swath of land between Route 6 and interstate 195, so that the potential risk to community character and residential neighborhoods has not been overly threatening. Among the most recent additions to the commercial inventory in Seekonk is an expanding network of auto repair and supply establishments, as well as entertainment establishments such as restaurants and movie theater complexes.

Figure 2-8. Highway Business along Route 6



2.3.4 Industrial Development

The two principal areas of industrial uses are located along the eastern end of Route 6 near the border with Rehoboth and along much of the length of the rail line which traverses the northwestern corner of the Town near Central Avenue. The eastern third of Route 6 is the largest and most heavily used industrial area in Seekonk. Where wetlands do not prohibit development, light industrial uses line Route 6. Nonconforming recreational uses are located in this area as well. Most notable among these is the Seekonk Speedway, a major attraction, and a valuable asset to the Town. Approximately 100,000 visitors come to the Speedway yearly during 25 events and patronize other area businesses. A golf driving range is also located on industrially zoned land in southern Seekonk.

Northern Seekonk includes patches of light industrial land use. Industrial uses are tucked away from the major arterials in northern Seekonk, along the railway line and in the Town's northwestern-most corner adjoining the Attleboro and Pawtucket borders.

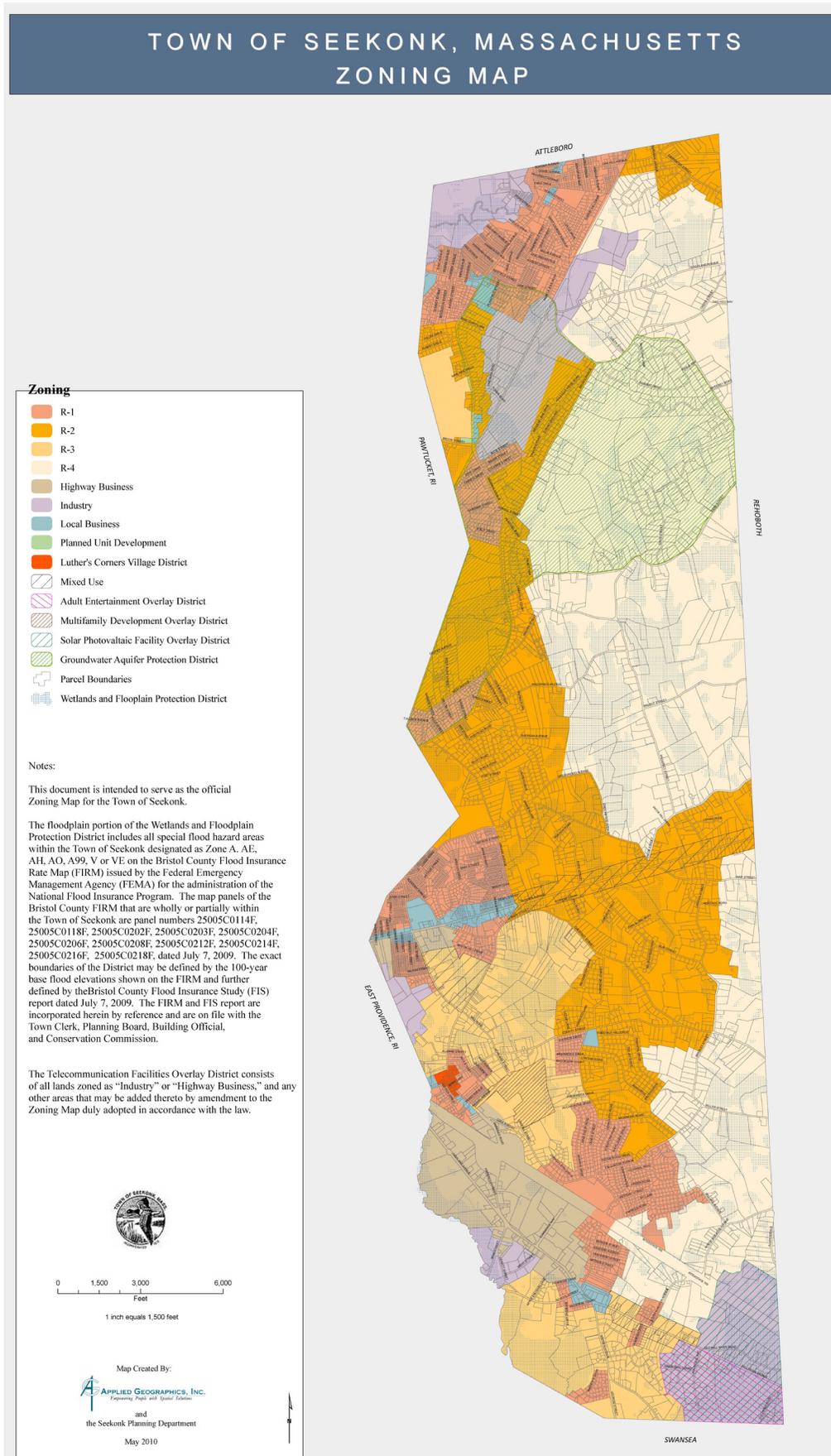
2.3.5 Open Space and Recreational Development

See Seekonk's Open Space and Recreational Plan for current detailed information regarding Open Space and Recreational development.

2.4 Zoning

The Town of Seekonk currently enforces a zoning code to regulate the type of land use permitted within a described zone. The existing Zoning By-Laws were originally approved in 1942, and incorporated subsequent revisions through 2010. The Town of Seekonk employs eight zoning districts and eight special zoning districts all of which are described in more detail in the following sections. Figure 2-9, the Seekonk Zoning Map provides an illustration of the Town's zoning districts.

Figure 2-9. Town of Seekonk Zoning Map



2.4.1 Base Zoning Districts

Table 2-2 summarizes the base zoning districts within the Town of Seekonk. Residential zoning districts make up over 80% of the land area in Seekonk, with the largest lot residential zoning district (R-4) making up over a third of the total land area. Commercial zoning districts make up 6% of the land area and the Industry zoning district makes up 9%. The Luther’s Corner Village District makes up less than 1% of the Town’s land area.

Table 2-2. Zoning Summary

Zoning District	Zoning Code	Description	Approximate Area (Acres)	Percent of Total
Residential				
Residential-1	R-1	Allows for the smallest lot sizes (14,400 square feet (sf)).	1,500	13%
Residential-2	R-2	A broad expanse of R-2 zoned land covers the central interior portion of Seekonk (lot size > 22,500 sf).	2,900	24%
Residential-3	R-3	The majority of the Town’s R-3 zones are located in southern Seekonk (lot size > 40,000 sf).	1,400	12%
Residential-4	R-4	R-4 zoning requires large lots of 62,500 square feet or greater. The abundance of R-4 zoning in Seekonk is intended to preserve the Town’s rural quality and natural resources. R-4 zones dominate the eastern half of the Town, stretching out along most of the border with Rehoboth.	4,400	37%
Commercial				
Local Business	LB	Local Business zones are located primarily along the western part of Route 44, and along parts of Route 152 and Route 114A.	160	1%
Highway Business	HB	Seekonk has one primary Highway Business zone, which contains the bulk of the Town’s large-scale commerce. It extends along Route 6 (Fall River Avenue) from the East Providence Border to Commerce Way and is bound at the north by I-195.	550	5%
Industrial				
Industry	I	Industry is primarily zoned within the southeast corner and northwest corner of the Town, with a few small pockets in the south and north.	1,000	9%
Village				
Luther’s Corners Village District	LCVD	This zone is located in the Luther’s Corners area around the intersection of Route 114A and County Street.	14	0.1%
Total			11,900	

2.4.2 Special Zoning Districts

Planned Unit Development Districts are non-residential developments where a mixture of commercial and industrial uses are determined to be sufficiently advantageous for granting special permission to depart from the normal requirements of the district. Site plan approval by the Seekonk Planning Board is required.

Wetlands and Floodplain Protection District ensures that wetlands are not impacted in such a manner as to endanger the health, safety, or welfare of the public. It also aims to protect and preserve the water table and water recharge areas, and to assure the natural flow pattern of water courses.

Mixed Use Zones are overlay districts with the purpose of preserving the rural character along Seekonk's major roadways by preventing strip commercial development and its associated problems. The major zone is along Route 6. The others are located along Route 44 west of Arcade Avenue and along Arcade Avenue and Route 114A south of Route 44.

Groundwater Aquifer Protection District are overlay districts with the purpose of protecting the existing and potential groundwater supply and recharge areas so as to promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the community. The Groundwater Aquifer Protection District stretches across the north central portion of Town generally sandwiched between Read Street to the south and Pine Street to the north.

Adult Entertainment Overlay District is intended to address and mitigate the secondary effects of the adult entertainment establishments to protect the Town's business climate and the health, safety, and general welfare of the Town of Seekonk and its inhabitants. This overlay district is located south of Fall River Avenue in the Industrial Zone.

Multifamily Development Overlay District are overlay districts that allow for the coordinated development of larger parcels of land to promote the development of varied housing opportunities, more sensitive siting of buildings, and better overall site planning. This district may be superimposed on all underlying zoning districts in the Town with the approval of the Seekonk Planning Board.

Telecommunications Facilities Overlay District establishes the areas in Seekonk in which telecommunication facilities may be permitted in order to minimize visual impacts from related towers and facilities on the Town's rural, residential, and village areas. This overlay currently consists of all lands zoned Industry or Highway Business.

Solar Photovoltaic Overlay District is an overlay district with the purpose of promoting the creation of new large-scale ground-mounted solar photovoltaic facilities by providing standards to address public safety and minimize impacts on scenic, natural, and historic resources. This overlay district is located in the southeast corner of the Town entirely within the Industry zoning district.

2.5 Build-Out Analysis

Consistent with the previous Master Plan, a buildout analysis was provided as a planning tool for estimating future development potential in Seekonk. The analysis identifies the amount of additional developable land area within each zoning district and then estimates the resulting development that could occur. The analysis provided here is considered an update (in approach, methodology and data utilized) to the prior Statewide Buildout Analysis completed between 1999 and 2001, as adapted by SRPEDD in later iterations. Digital GIS files used as part of that earlier analysis by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs were used as a starting point, but were updated in a few important ways. For example, the zoning information used by the State was from an aggregate statewide layer that was not nearly as accurate as the GIS layer Seekonk has today. Information for wetlands had also been updated since the prior analysis, providing a more accurate representation of the manner in which many lots are constrained. Finally, where new development had occurred between the prior analysis and today, these areas were removed from the “developable land” category.

Once developable land was isolated using the updated information, a series of assumptions were applied for the amount of area needed for infrastructure (i.e., roadways) and the types of uses that would be allowed (e.g., multi-family housing, single-family housing, commercial, etc.) Assumptions also accounted for any special provisions associated with zoning overlay districts. A detailed description of the analyses and assumptions was provided to the Town as a technical memorandum. The results are provided below in Table 2-3.

Table 2-3. Buildout Projections

Developable Land Area, excluding wetlands (acres)	1,585
Total Additional Dwelling Units	837
Commercial/Industrial Buildable Floor Area (square feet)	5,874,315
Additional Residential Water Use (gallons per day)¹	153,160
Commercial/Industrial Water Use (gallons per day)²	440,574
Additional Municipal Solid Waste³	1,048
Additional Non-Recyclable Solid Waste⁴	745
Additional Students⁵	307
Additional Population⁶	2,042
New Roads (miles)⁷	15

¹ Additional Residential Water Use is based on 75 gallons per dwelling unit.

² Commercial/Industrial Water Use is based on 75 gallons per 1,000 sq.ft. of floor space.

³ Additional Municipal Solid waste is based on 1,026 lbs. per person per year (for residential uses).

⁴ Additional Non-Recyclable Solid waste is a subset of Additional Municipal Solid waste and is per person per year ending up in a landfill or incinerator.

⁵ The Number of Additional Students is based on 2009 number of housing units and 2009-2010 Student Enrollment. This is a conservative estimate and actual numbers could be lower based on trends identified by the School Department.

⁶ The Additional Population figure is based on the 2010 U.S. Census 2.71 persons per household.

⁷ New Roads is based on an assumption that 60% of the new residential lots will require frontage on new roads.

3. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Introduction

Economic development is the sustainable increase in the standard of living of a community's population. Because economic development means more jobs, a higher tax base, better level of goods and services, and the ability for community revitalization, it predicates improvements in a variety of indicators, such as income, poverty, literacy, education, health, life expectancy, and environmental protection.

Seekonk continues to be primarily a suburban/rural commuter community in which the majority of employed residents work at locations outside the Town. The bulk of the jobs within Seekonk borders are in the retail sector, while the industrial sector has grown slowly. The Town of Seekonk has emerged as a significant regional shopping center within the Providence metropolitan area. Future economic growth in Seekonk will continue to be linked to trends within the larger region.

3.2 Employment & Income

3.2.1 Employment

Where do Seekonk residents work?

About 15% of Seekonk's working population works within the Town of Seekonk; about 33% work within Bristol County, and 46% work within the State of Massachusetts (Table 3-1). Being on the border of Rhode Island, it is expected that a significant portion of people work out of state. This is the case in Seekonk, where over half the residents work out of state. Although only a third of Seekonk's residents were employed within the County, over 80% did work within the Providence-Fall River-Warwick, RI-MA MSA (Figure 3-1). Over half of Seekonk's working population works within a central city of the Providence-New Bedford-Fall River, RI-MA MSA. Despite many citizens working outside of the Town, County, and State, commuting distances are relatively moderate, with over 75% of workers traveling less than a half hour to work in 2000. However, as can be seen in Table 3-2, commuting distances have increased. In 2009, the average travel time to work for Seekonk residents was 23 minutes.⁹

The percentage of residents working within the Town, County and State has decreased since 2000; however, those working in a major city within the Providence-New Bedford-Fall River, RI-MA MSA has increased from 36% in 2000 to 58% in 2009 (Table 3-1).

⁹ US Census. 2009. 2005 – 2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Table 3-1. Place of Work for Seekonk's Working Population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, Decennial Census, U.S. Census Bureau, 2009, American Community Survey)

	Employed population			
	2000		2009	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	6,814		6,624	
Worked in State of Residence	3,478	51%	3,038	46%
Worked in County of Residence	2,761	41%	2,160	33%
Worked in Town of Residence	1,286	19%	1,023	15%
Worked in MSA of Residence	5,682	83%	5,590	84%
Worked in a Principal City	2,475	36%	3,813	58%

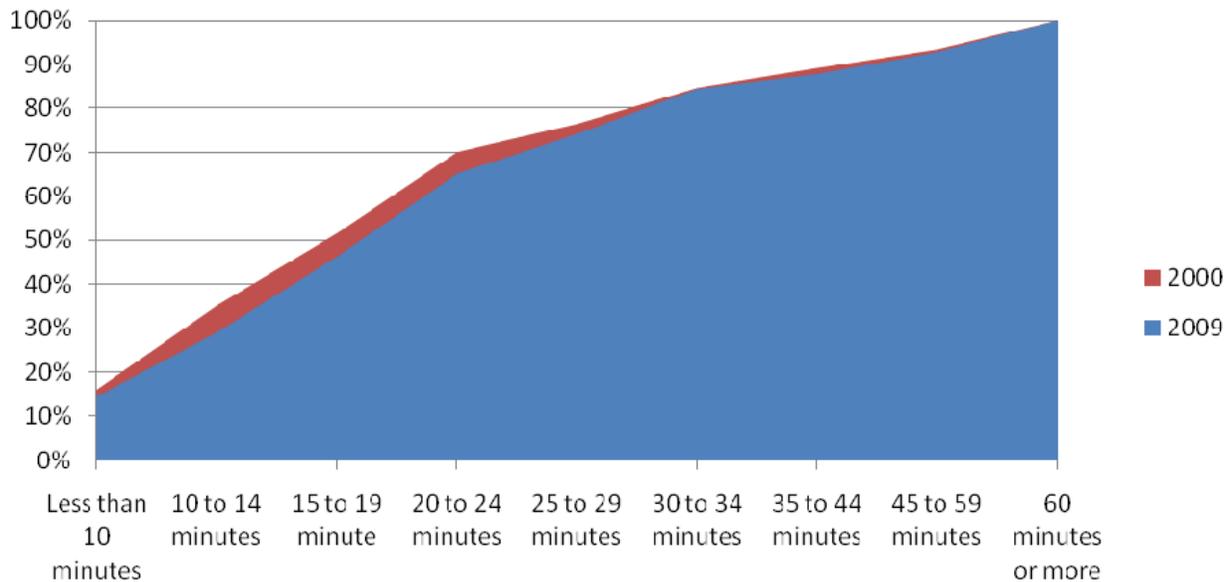
Figure 3-1. Providence- New Bedford-Fall River, RI-MA MSA (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010, TIGER/Line shapefiles)



Table 3-2. Commuting Time to Work: 2000 and 2009 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, Decennial Census; U.S. Census Bureau, 2009, American Community Survey)

	2000			2009		
	Number	Percent of Total	Cumulative Percent	Number	Percent of Total	Cumulative Percent
Total:	6,645			6,539		
Less than 10 minutes	1,061	16%	16%	940	14%	14%
10 to 14 minutes	1,270	19%	35%	956	15%	29%
15 to 19 minute	1,093	16%	52%	1,127	17%	46%
20 to 24 minutes	1,230	19%	70%	1,234	19%	65%
25 to 29 minutes	426	6%	76%	592	9%	74%
30 to 34 minutes	546	8%	85%	671	10%	84%
35 to 44 minutes	296	4%	89%	218	3%	88%
45 to 59 minutes	284	4%	93%	331	5%	93%
60 minutes or more	439	7%	100%	470	7%	100%

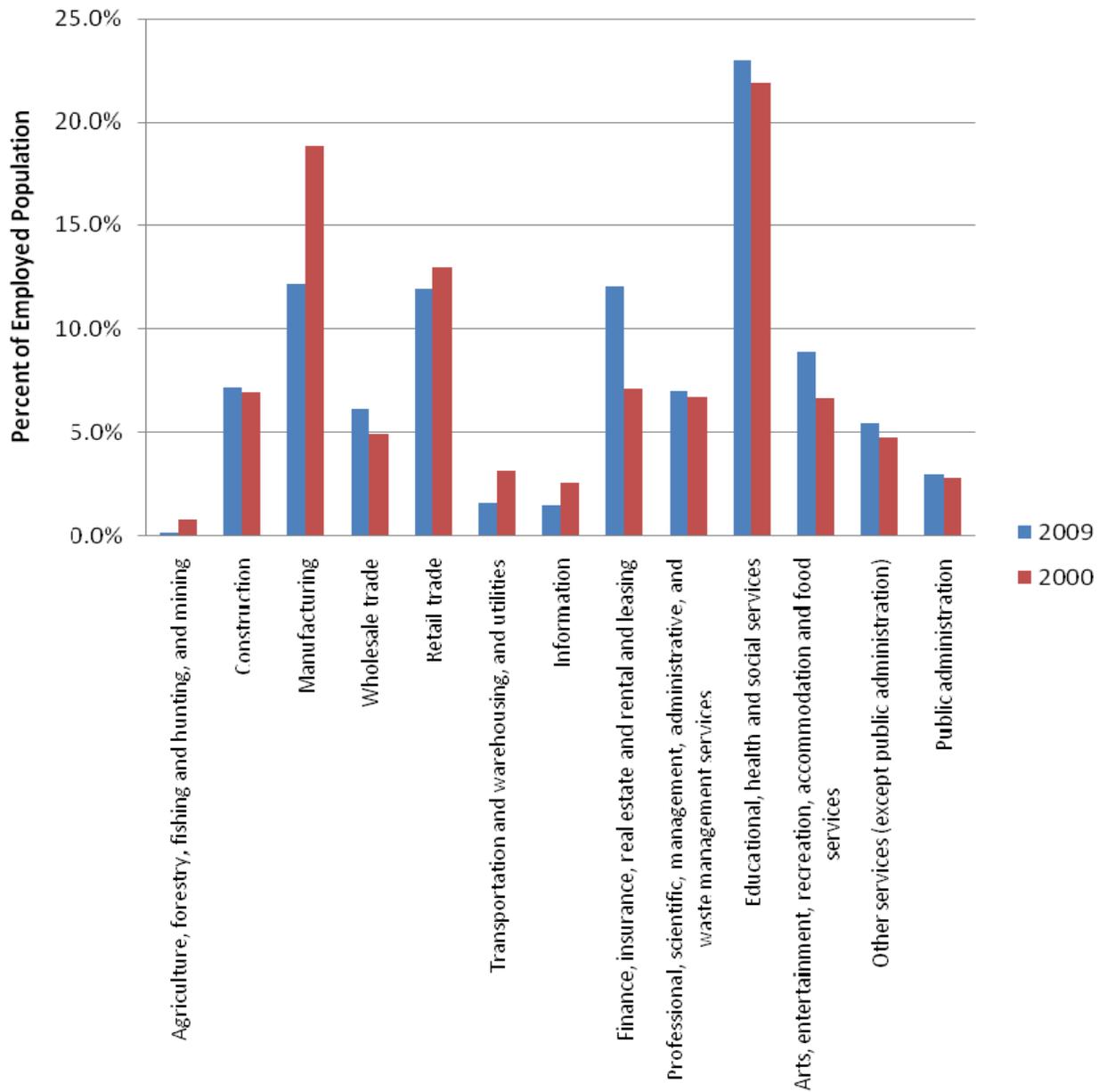
Figure 3-2. Commuting Time to Work: 2000 and 2009 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, Decennial Census; U.S. Census Bureau, 2009, American Community Survey)



What do Seekonk residents do for work?

The industry sector employing the highest percentage of Seekonk residents in both 2000 and 2009 was the educational, health, and social services sector; in 2009, this represented 23% of the employed population (Figure 3-3). The next highest employing sectors are the manufacturing, retail and finance/real estate sectors, which are all about 12%; the manufacturing sector decreased significantly from 19% in 2000, whereas the finance/real estate sector experienced a notable increase.

Figure 3-3. Seekonk Residents – Employment Industries: 2000, 2009 (US Census Bureau, 2000, Decennial Census; US Census Bureau, 2009, American Community Survey)



What kinds of jobs are there in Seekonk?

The largest employers in Seekonk, which are listed alphabetically in Table 3-3 are mostly “big box” stores, including Best Buy, Home Depot, Kohl’s, Lowe’s, Sam’s Club, and Walmart. Other retailers include Ann & Hope Curtain & Bath, Raymour & Flanagan Furniture, and Tasca Lincoln Mercury. Stop & Shop Supermarket is also within the top 14 employers, as are the Wheeler School, YMCA, and Ledgemont Country Club.

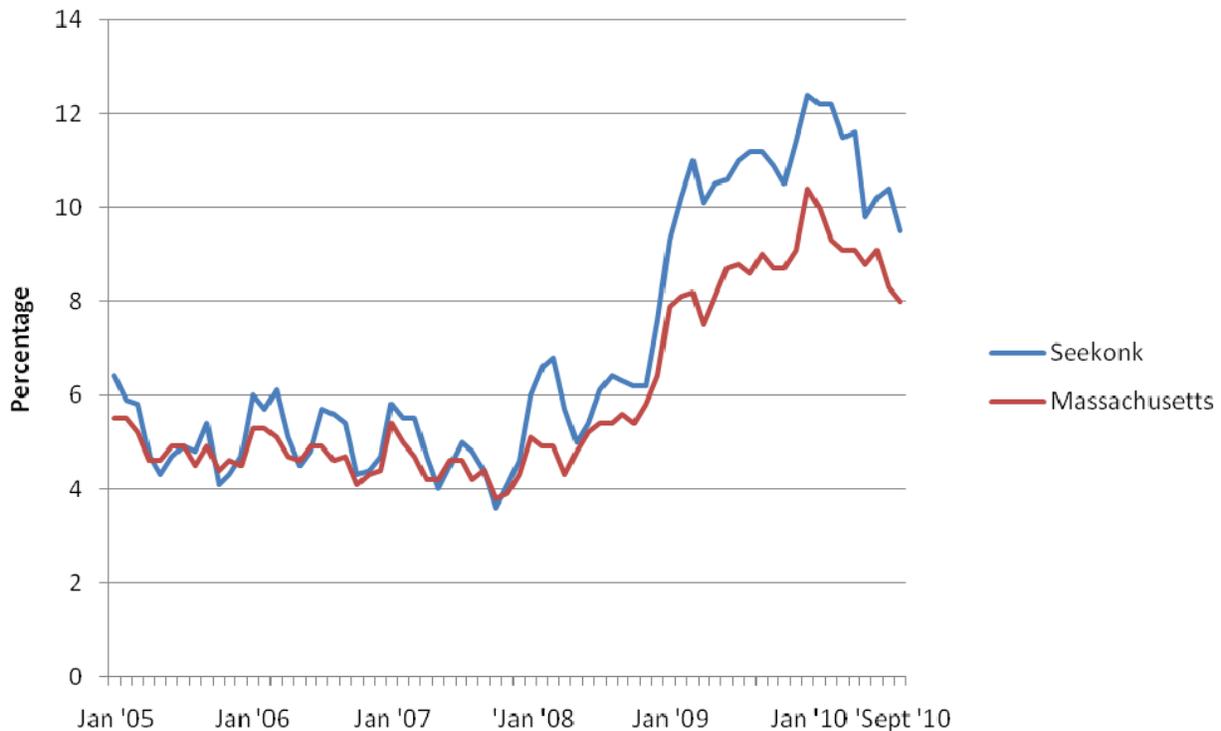
Table 3-3. Largest Employers in Seekonk (MA Labor and Workforce Development Division; Town of Seekonk Planning Department)

Company Name	Address
Ann & Hope Curtain & Bath	Taunton Avenue
Best Buy	Commerce Way
Home Depot	Highland Avenue
Johnson & Wales	Taunton Avenue
Kohl's Department Store	Commerce Way
Ledgemont Country Club	Brown Avenue
Lowe's	Fall River Avenue
Raymour & Flanagan Furniture	Highland Avenue
Sam's Club	Fall River Avenue
Stop & Shop Supermarket	Newman Avenue
Target	Commerce Way
Tasca Lincoln Mercury	Fall River Avenue
Walmart	Fall River Avenue
Wheeler School	Walker Street
YMCA	Taunton Avenue

3.2.2 Unemployment & Poverty

Unemployment data from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Work Force Development were reviewed up to September 2010. These data show that Seekonk tends to have slightly higher rates of unemployment than the State average. This gap widened during the peak of the recession as displayed in Figure 3-4 and the highest rate of recorded unemployment was in January 2010 at 10.4%. Unemployment numbers since that month have continued to decline and the gap between the local rate and the State rate of unemployment shows signs of closing.

Figure 3-4. Seekonk and Massachusetts Unemployment Rates (Mass Office of Labor and Workforce Development, 2011)



The US Census Bureau, following the Office of Management and Budget’s (OMB) Statistical Policy Directive 14, uses a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty. If a family’s total income is less than the family’s threshold, then that family and every individual in it is considered in poverty. The official poverty thresholds do not vary geographically, but they are updated for inflation using the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The official poverty definition uses money income before taxes and does not include capital gains or noncash benefits (such as public housing, Medicaid, and food stamps).

The poverty rate in Seekonk has increased significantly since 2000, especially for those over 65 (Table 3-4). Anecdotal data from the Department of Human Services supports this upward trend. A former employee at the Department of Human Services indicates that there are increasing numbers of Seekonk’s seniors living on the edge, increased number of clients who need Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, fuel assistance, and other services (Bragg, Carol, Department of Human Services. 2011. personal communication).

Table 3-4. Poverty Rate: 2000, 2009 (US Census Bureau, 2000, Decennial Census; US Census Bureau, 2009, American Community Survey)

Seekonk Population	Percent of Total Below Poverty Level	
	2000	2009
Individuals	2.4%	4.5%
Persons 65 years and older	2.2%	7.3%
Related Children under 18	3.0%	5.2%
Families	1.7%	3.0%

3.2.3 Income

According to the U.S. Census, the median income in Seekonk has increased from 2000 to 2009, and it has been higher than both the Bristol County and State of Massachusetts average from 2000 to 2009 (Table 3-5).

Table 3-5. Median Household Income: 2000, 2009 (US Census Bureau, 2000, Decennial Census; US Census Bureau, 2009, American Community Survey)

	Median Household Income	
	2000	2009
Seekonk	\$56,364	\$79,127
Bristol County	\$43,496	\$55,789
Massachusetts	\$50,502	\$64,496

3.3 Commerce and Industry

The primary areas for commerce and industry in the Town of Seekonk are the Route 6 corridor, Route 44 corridor and a few neighborhood commercial centers (e.g., Luther’s Corners and Baker’s Corners). These areas are further described in the sections that follow.

3.3.1 Route 6

The commercial/industrial corridor extending the length of Route 6 along the southern portion of Town continues to be Seekonk’s largest business district in terms of land area and jobs provided. The western portion of Route 6 has developed as a regional retail shopping center attracting business from consumers throughout the Providence metropolitan area. As discussed in previous Master Plans, this strong retail sector is an asset to the Town by providing a convenient shopping area for residents, employment opportunities, and tax revenues.

Activity along the commercial portion of Route 6 remains vibrant, and lucrative for big- box and smaller retailers, and shopping centers. There are more than 40 business commercial establishments located along Fall River and Highland Avenues (Route 6). The commercial corridor is subject to a high turnover rate, which is characteristic of the chain retail industry. Despite the area’s success, at present there appears to be room within the existing Highway Business zone for infill and refill development, as some store facilities are vacant.

The eastern section of Route 6, which is zoned for industrial uses, is also home to many commercial businesses. The Seekonk Speedway attracts approximately 100,000 visitors per year over the course of 25 events. Other recreational establishments in this area include a golf driving range. Light industrial establishments make up the area east of the Speedway.

3.3.2 Route 44 (Taunton Avenue)

Route 44 (Taunton Avenue) has historically been a critical east-west transportation route, connecting Providence, RI to points east, at one time being the primary route to Cape Cod.¹⁰ The majority of commercial uses in Seekonk that are on Taunton Avenue extend from the

¹⁰ SRPEDD. June, 2011. Route 44 Corridor Study.

East Providence line to the intersection at Arcade Avenue. This western half of Route 44 is a commercial district that primarily serves Seekonk residents and persons passing through Town. Many automotive supply and service establishments on the western stretch of Route 44 relate to the commerce in East Providence. Other examples of Taunton Avenue businesses are professional offices, the Benny's Plaza, and smaller stores within the Seekonk Town Centre plaza. The scale of the development on Taunton Avenue is significantly smaller than that of Route 6, and has an entirely different character. Much of the commercial development along Route 44 is older, pre-dating the commercial success of Route 6, and has evolved without extensive management. East of Arcade Avenue is a mixed-use district that largely consists of residential uses, and has a generally rural character.

SRPEDD completed a study of the western Route 44 corridor in June 2011. This study identified current challenges within the corridor, including a lack of adequate landscaping, visibility of parking areas, lack of pedestrian connections between neighborhoods and retail uses, as well as safety concerns on the roadway. The Report from the SRPEDD study also identified redevelopment opportunities for the corridor, including: Highway Commercial, Local Business and Infill Redevelopment; and Mixed Use Redevelopment. Under the first option commercial redevelopment along the corridor would not significantly change. Expected redevelopment would continue to be centered on the existing retail and service related industries including small retail, auto sales and service, commercial, office and indoor/outdoor recreational uses. However, additional opportunities may emerge through redevelopment for sit-down restaurants or eating and drinking establishments as potential anchors for office, retail and service activities, as well as in-fill development options. SRPEDD identified several primary target areas for potential commercial redevelopment and in-fill opportunities, which are summarized in their report and highlighted below in Figure 3-5. Under the mixed use option, redevelopment would include retail and service uses needed by the local population and residential opportunities with housing types not currently available in Seekonk. SRPEDD identified a number of sub-areas that could provide opportunities for mixed-use redevelopment, which are discussed in the Report and identified in Figure 3-6.

Figure 3-5. Potential Redevelopment Areas (excerpted from SRPEDD. June, 2011. Route 44 Corridor Study)

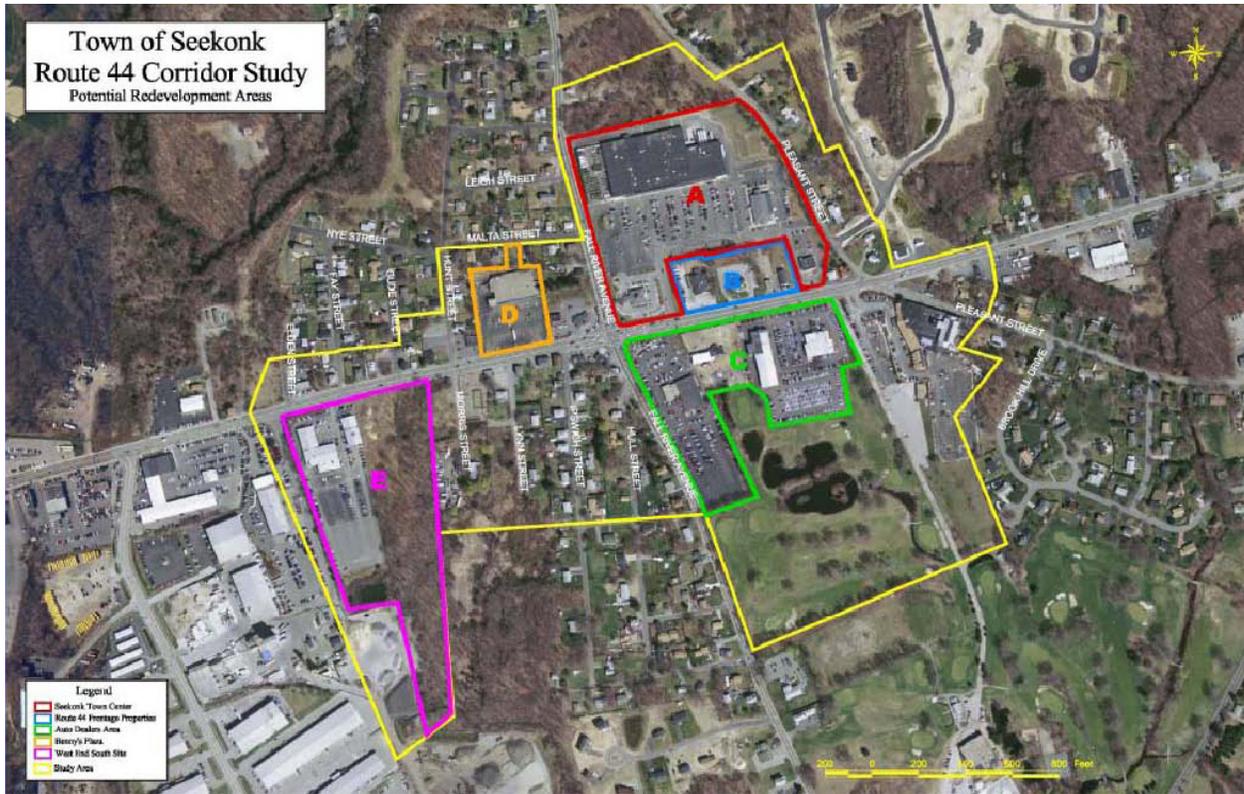
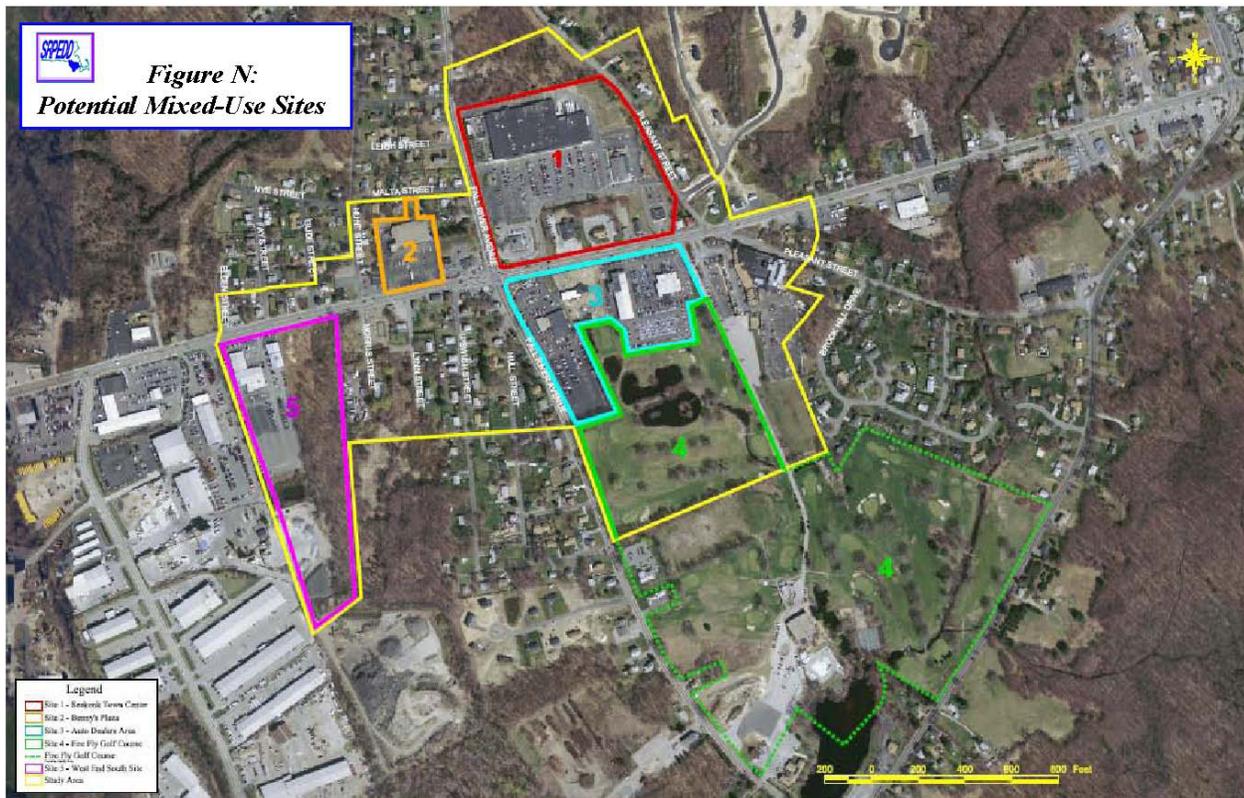


Figure 3-6. Potential Mixed Use Sites (excerpted from SRPEDD. June, 2011. Route 44 Corridor Study)



3.3.3 Neighborhood Commercial Centers

Neighborhood commercial centers are small in number and scale, and mainly serve nearby community residents. Such areas include Luther's Corners in Central Seekonk, and Baker's Corners in northern Seekonk. These neighborhood centers are important in contributing to the pool of locally owned and operated businesses and providing goods and services to local area residents. The Town adopted a Luther's Corner Village Zoning District to target this area for growth in 2010. Subsequent to the zoning district being adopted, a State road improvement project in Luther's Corners resulted in a loss of on-street parking. As a result of the loss of parking, commercial businesses along the roadway have gone out of business; there were approximately six businesses prior to the loss of parking, and now there are about three. Some of these businesses have been converted to residential properties.

Industrial development in Seekonk may also be considered neighborhood commerce. Seekonk's industries are generally small in scale. Industry is limited to types of operations that do not require sewer systems such as trucking and warehouse operations. In addition to the aforementioned industrial establishments along Route 6, pockets of industry are found in either of two swaths of industrially zoned land in northern Seekonk. One is located along the railway line, and the other occupies the Town's northeast corner near the Attleboro and Pawtucket borders. A higher percentage of this industrial land remains undeveloped (compared to industrially zoned land along Route 6). In northern Seekonk, industrial establishments are removed from the major arterial roads.

3.4 Economic Development and Fiscal Health

An important component of discussing economic objectives is the role of economic development in the Town's overall fiscal health. The term "fiscal health" refers to the Town's ability to pay for the services it provides primarily to its residents, but also to business owners and visitors. Most residents are aware of some of the major services like public education, police and fire protection, and roadway maintenance. However, the list of services provided by typical suburban communities like Seekonk is much larger and includes services for seniors, review of development proposals, information exchange, and many other critical items. To fund these services, cities and towns rely primarily on levying property tax. Like many other communities, Seekonk applies a range of tax rates to properties based on the use (e.g., residential versus commercial) and the scale (e.g., different size commercial operations pay different rates).

When discussing the quality of life experienced in the Town of Seekonk by its residents, it is not uncommon for them to mention the tax rate for residential property. At \$11.39 per \$1,000 of property value, the level of municipal service provided in the community is done so at a rate that is highly competitive in the region. At closer examination, one can determine how far the residential tax contribution goes in paying for these services. For example, as with other communities, the most costly service provided in the Town is the public school system. Recent communication with the Director of Finance suggests that, when dividing the total number of students into the full school budget, it costs the Town over \$13,000 per year to educate an individual student. Table 3-7 shows how this relates to the average tax bill in the community.

Table 3-7. Comparing Average Residential Tax Bill to Residential Cost of Public Education

Estimated Enrollment in Seekonk Schools ¹	Number of Single Family Homes ²	Average Number of Students per Single Family Home	Cost of Educating Each Student	Cost per single family home	Typical Single Family Home Property Tax ²	Deficit per Household Related to School Costs Alone
2,050	4,723	0.43	\$13,059	\$5,668	\$3,200	-\$2,468

¹ Source: Finance Office. Estimated number used by the Town to calculate cost for each student. Enrollment may be slightly higher at the time the plan was developed.

² Source: Assessor’s Office 2011.

Table 3-7 illustrates is that when tax revenue and school expenses are averaged over the number of single family homes, each home produces a significant deficit. It is important to note that this example only accounts for costs related to the school system and not the multiple other services provided by the Town including police and fire protection, roadway maintenance, permit review, and others. The addition of these necessary services to the analysis above would only increase the deficit when comparing income from the residential property tax to the costs of municipal services.

This analysis is meant to underscore the importance of maintaining a healthy economic base as Seekonk continues to develop. As the recession continues to subside and the housing market slowly recovers, the development of more homes in Seekonk will add to the tax burden of existing and new residents. To safeguard the competitive residential tax rate as this occurs, Seekonk will need to protect its existing businesses and look for ways to expand that piece of the tax base. Commercial property alone in Seekonk provides over a third of the property tax levy in the community. Further, the businesses along the Route 6 retail corridor provide more than half of the commercial property tax contribution (personal communication with Seekonk Assessor). If these economic engines are not maintained, the economic support structure for Seekonk residential quality of life will be at risk.

4. SUSTAINABLE ENERGY

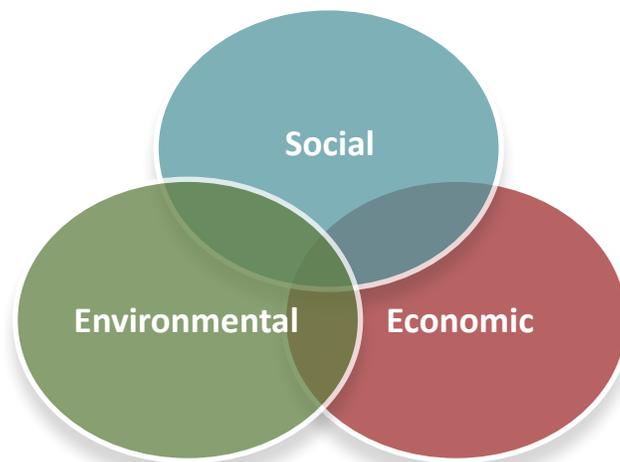
4.1 Introduction

What do we mean by sustainable energy? Although the term sustainability can mean different things to various audiences, the most broadly used definition of sustainability and sustainable development, is that of the Brundtland Commission of the United Nations on March 20, 1987:

“Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

It is widely recognized that sustainability is marked by a balance of the “three pillars of sustainable development,” which are: economic sustainability, social sustainability, and environmental sustainability (Figure 4-1).

Figure 4-1. Three Pillars of Sustainability



When applying the concept of “sustainability” to policies associated with energy supply and use, it is essential to consider each of these three perspectives. Today, in many countries including the United States, a concern about energy consumption is the resulting increase in greenhouse gas emissions, and consequent global climate change. Climate change has been shown to have adverse regional impacts including sea level rise, shifts in rainfall patterns, modification of agricultural and natural crops and species, and changes in ocean circulation and storm patterns.¹¹ Other concerns related to energy consumption include rising energy costs and threats to our national energy security, including threats related to the political instability of several oil producing countries.

When considering sustainable energy use, it is important to first consider approaches to reduce energy use through either conservation or efficiency measures. The less energy is required, the less it needs to be produced. Once measures are in place to conserve energy and use more

¹¹ Tester, Jefferson W., E.M. Drake, M.J. Driscoll, M.W. Golay, W.A. Peters. 2005. Sustainable Energy: Choosing Among Options. Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The MIT Press. Cambridge, Massachusetts

efficient approaches to consumption, then renewable energy sources can be identified for the energy that is needed. Renewable energy is any type of energy which comes from natural resources that do not degrade or pollute during the energy production process, such as wind, rain, sunlight, geothermal heat, and tides.

4.2 Existing Conditions in Seekonk

4.2.1 Local Government Energy Sustainability

Local governments have a unique opportunity to lead by example, incorporating energy sustainability measures into their facilities while achieving energy cost savings. In many cases across the country, local governments have become leaders in energy efficiency by taking action through local policies to improve efficiency in their own buildings and vehicles. These policies help improve the environmental and economic performance of the local government's assets while promoting energy sustainability to the broader public. They can also prove to be very effective policies for reducing fiscal expenditures over time.

Local Government Energy Use Baseline Inventory

The best way for a local government to benchmark its energy use is to perform an energy use inventory of local government buildings, vehicles, and operations (e.g., sewer, water, and traffic lighting). There are a number of tools that may be used to benchmark a local government's energy use. In Massachusetts, the MassEnergyInsight web-based tool is helping many Massachusetts cities and towns to quantify and characterize their energy use and reduce their carbon footprint by delivering customized, easy-to-use reports on electricity, natural gas, and oil use. The MassEnergyInsight tool is provided at no cost to Massachusetts communities by the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER) as part of the Massachusetts Green Communities Program. Other energy use benchmarking software tools include EPA's Portfolio Manager and ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability Clean Air Climate Protection software. The Town of Seekonk has not yet developed a local government energy use baseline inventory.

Local Government Energy Use Profile

Although the Town of Seekonk has not yet developed an energy use baseline inventory, there are other ways to examine the local government's existing conditions related to energy use.

Local Government – Energy Use in Buildings

Municipal buildings in Seekonk mostly use natural gas for heating and electricity for lighting. In 2010 – 2011, the Town had energy audits conducted at all of the municipal government buildings. In addition, the schools have coordinated a Power Purchase Agreement to fund the replacement of lighting in the High School, along with motion switch controls. The Town is currently preparing a contract to have building evaluations conducted at all of the Town's municipal buildings and schools. Also, the Town Hall, Public safety Complex, and the Public Works Garage have been retrofitted with new exterior light-emitting diode (LED) fixtures and lights.

Regarding renewable energy facilities, the Town's Department of Public Works (DPW) facility was outfitted with a new 31 kilowatt (kW) roof-based solar photovoltaic (PV) array in 2010;

this array provides nearly all of the electricity used by the DPW facility. The Town also recently purchased a Big Belly™ trash compactor and two solar spotlights for the Water Lane Field Complex.

The Town is also considering energy efficiency and renewable energy in the design of new municipal building construction as well as renovations and additions. The design of the new Senior Center currently includes a number of energy efficiency considerations, including solar orientation and window placement to promote passive solar heating and lighting. In addition, the Town is considering geothermal energy at the new Senior Center. The design for the Banna Memorial Fire Station renovation also includes the installation of a solar-ready roof structure for the future installation of a roof-based solar PV system.

Local Government – Transportation Energy Use

The Town currently has a vehicle fleet of approximately 63 municipal vehicles and 30 pieces of equipment of various sizes (loaders, backhoe, tractors, etc.), including vehicles used by the DPW, Fire, and Police Departments. The Town does not have any formal fuel efficient vehicle purchasing policies or transportation demand reduction policies (e.g., car-sharing, car-pooling, or priority parking policies). However, Seekonk recently instituted an informal policy to eliminate the recycling of fuel inefficient police cruisers for use as municipal administrative vehicles. Instead of using the recycled inefficient police cruisers, the Town has begun purchasing fuel efficient vehicles for administrative use.

Local Government – Operations

When looking at energy use for local operations, the most common government facilities examined include water, sewer, and street and traffic lighting. The Town of Seekonk does not have municipally owned water or sewer infrastructure; however, there is room for improvement in energy efficiency with respect to street lights and traffic lights. The Town's street lights and traffic lights currently use conventional lighting, but could be retrofitted with LED lights or more efficient lighting.

Local Government – Renewable Energy

Prior to the development of this plan, the Town had not adopted any formal policies regarding local government renewable energy. However, as discussed in the Local Government – Energy Use in Buildings Section above, the Town recently installed one roof-based solar PV system at the DPW building, with potential plans to install another system in the future at the Banna Memorial Fire Station. These developments show recognition of the benefits associated with renewable energy and help to shape the policies in the Master Plan.

4.2.2 Community Energy Sustainability

Community Energy Use Baseline Inventory

The Town of Seekonk has not yet developed a community-wide energy use baseline inventory.

Community Energy Use Profile

Community-wide – Energy Use in Buildings

About two-thirds of the homes in Seekonk use fuel oil for heating and about a third use natural gas (Table 4-1). Between 1990 and 2009, as the number of homes increased, the number and percentage of homes that used natural gas also increased. In 1990, zero homes used solar energy for heating compared to 16 homes in 2000. According to the US Census American Community Survey, the number of homes using solar energy for heating dropped to zero again in 2009.

Table 4-1. Heating Fuel Used by Housing Units (US Census Bureau, 1990 - 2000, Decennial Census; US Census Bureau, 2009, American Community Survey)

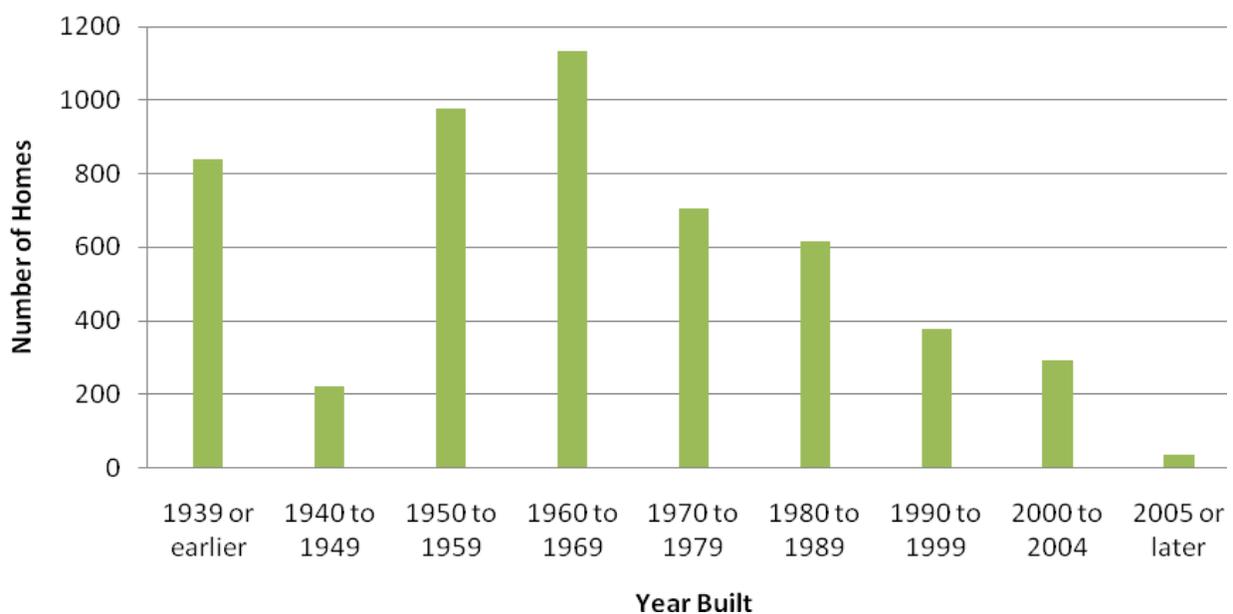
	1990		2000		2009	
	Occupied Homes	Percentage	Occupied Homes	Percentage	Occupied Homes	Percentage
Utility Gas	1,026	23%	1,418	29%	1,651	33%
Bottled, Tank, or LP Gas	57	1%	56	1%	23	0%
Electricity	315	7%	199	4%	226	4%
Fuel Oil, Kerosene, etc.	3,049	68%	3,101	64%	2,829	56%
Coal or Coke	13	0%	19	0%	0	0%
Wood	22	0%	34	1%	78	2%
Solar Energy	0	0%	16	0%	0	0%
Other Fuel	0	0%	0	0%	12	0%
No Fuel Used	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Occupied Housing Units Total	4,482		4,843		5,071	

In general, older homes tend to be less energy efficient than newer homes, which are built to more stringent energy efficiency standards. In New England, it is common to have older housing stock, and as such there are many local and regional weatherization programs that seek to retrofit existing homes with energy efficiency improvements in order to reduce heat loss and reduce homeowners' energy costs. The majority of homes in Seekonk were built prior to 1970 (Table 4-2; Figure 4-2). About 16% of Seekonk's housing stock was constructed prior to 1940. Seekonk does not currently have a local weatherization or residential energy efficiency program.

Table 4-2. Year Structure Built (US Census Bureau, 2009, American Community Survey)

Year Constructed	Number of homes	Cumulative Percentage
1939 or earlier	841	16%
1940 to 1949	221	20%
1950 to 1959	978	39%
1960 to 1969	1,135	61%
1970 to 1979	706	75%
1980 to 1989	615	86%
1990 to 1999	378	94%
2000 to 2004	293	99%
2005 or later	35	100%
Total:	5,202	

Figure 4-2. Year Structure Built (US Census Bureau, 2009, American Community Survey)



Community-wide – Transportation Energy Use

Transportation energy use combines three basic factors: the mode of transportation; the fuel efficiency associated with transportation; and the total distance traveled. The automobile is one of the most inefficient modes of transportation, because it usually requires fossil fuel, and also tends to have high total distance traveled per capita, because it can only transport a small number of people. Buses and trains rank higher in efficiency because they can carry more people, resulting in less total miles traveled per capita. Bicycle and pedestrian modes of transportation are thought of as the most efficient forms of transportation, because they do not require fossil fuel products; however these modes are limited as they are typically only used for short distances.

Evidence suggests that there is a direct relationship between housing type (e.g., single-family detached housing, multi-family housing) and density (lot size), and per capita vehicle

miles traveled (VMT). Due to their heavy reliance on the car, single-family detached housing on one-acre lots tends to have higher per capita VMT than multi-family housing or higher density residential development.¹² The vast majority of housing in Seekonk continues to be single-family detached style homes; however, multi-family housing types are increasing more dramatically than single-family detached housing (Table 4-3). The average lot size for residential properties in Seekonk is about one acre.

Table 4-3. Number of Units in Structure (US Census Bureau, 1990, Decennial Census; US Census Bureau, 2009, American Community Survey)

Number of Units in Structure	2009		
	Number of housing units	Percentage of total	Percent Change from 1990
1, detached	4,906	94%	18%
1, attached	30	1%	-12%
2	176	3%	-36%
3 or 4	59	1%	-58%
5 to 9	31	1%	121%
10 to 19	0	0%	0%
20 to 49	0	0%	0%
50 or more	0	0%	0%
Mobile home	0	0%	0%
Other	0	0%	-100%
Total	5,202		

It has also been demonstrated that there is a relationship between mixed use development and reduction in per capita VMT. This is primarily due to the fact that residents do not need to drive far from their homes to reach destination land uses, such as commercial and office uses. Figure 4-3 depicts population density and destination land uses within the Town of Seekonk. Multiple use areas are also shown, which are scattered throughout the Town. As shown on the map, there are pockets of higher population density in the south-central area of Seekonk, on the western border on Route 44, and at the very northern end of Town. The majority of the commercial destinations are along Route 195 at the southern end of Town; although, there are some commercial destinations along Route 44 and in the north central portion of Town. Industrial uses are primarily located to the south along Route 195, and to the north. Recreational areas are located in the south central part of Town. In general, destination land uses such as employment, recreation or commerce areas do not overlap with the areas of highest population density.

¹² National Resource Council (NRC). 2009. Driving and the Built Environment: The Effects of Compact Development on Motorized Travel, Energy Use, and CO2 Emissions. Transportation Research Board, Report in Brief. The National Academies.

Figure 4-3. Population Density and Land Use

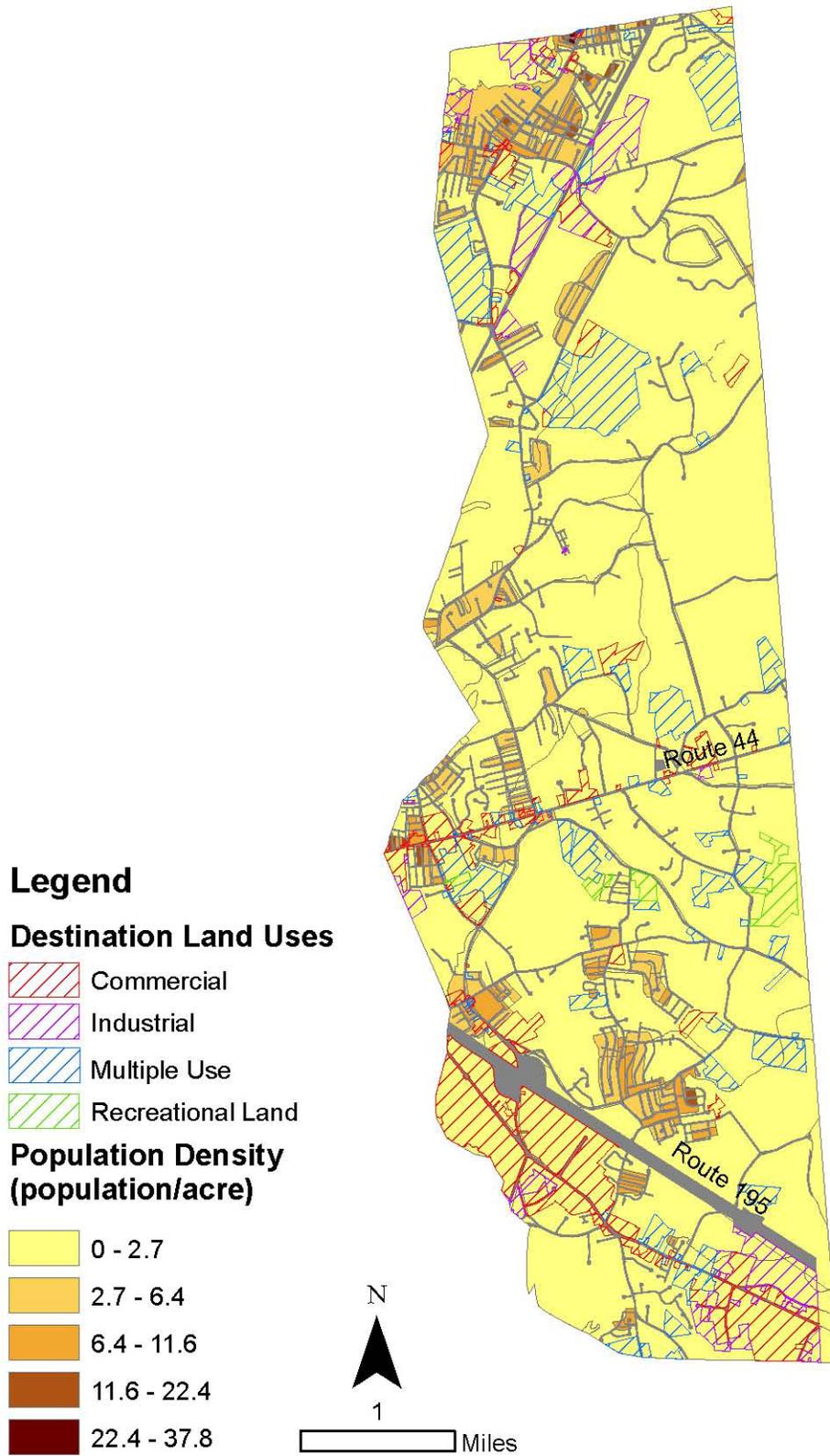


Table 4-4 summarizes Seekonk residents' means of transportation to work. This table shows that the vast majority of residents (by at least one order of magnitude) travel to work alone in a car, truck, or van. The next highest percentage of residents carpool to work in a car, truck or van. In 2009, 108 residents took public transportation to work, which is an overall increase of 5% from 1990. In addition, 69 individuals walked to work, which is over a 50% increase from 1990.

Table 4-4. Means of Transportation to Work (US Census Bureau, 1990, 2000, Decennial Census; US Census Bureau, 2009, American Community Survey)

Mode of Transportation to Work	1990	2000	2009	2009 Percent of Total	Percent Change 1990 - 2000
Car, Truck or Van	6,418	6,491	6,347	98%	-1%
Drove Alone	5,955	6,048	5,715	91%	-4%
Carpooled	463	443	632	7%	37%
Public Transportation	103	96	108	1%	5%
Bus/Trolley Bus	74	55	35	1%	-53%
Streetcar/Trolley Car	0	0	0	0%	0%
Subway/Elevated	0	0	0	0%	0%
Railroad	29	41	73	1%	152%
Ferryboat	0	0	0	0%	0%
Taxicab	0	0	0	0%	0%
Motorcycle	0	0	0	0%	0%
Bicycle	0	8	0	0%	0%
Walked	45	24	69	0%	53%
Other Means	65	26	15	0%	-77%
Worked at Home	153	169	85	3%	-44%
Total	6,784	6,814	6,624		

As discussed in Chapter 6, Transportation, public transportation in Seekonk is provided primarily by the Greater Attleboro Taunton Regional transportation Authority (GATRA), which offers fixed route bus service, paratransit (Dial-A-Ride) service for people with disabilities and senior citizens, and Medicaid and Human Service transportation to Seekonk residents. GATRA provides one fixed bus service line serving Seekonk directly (See Figure 6-3 for bus route map):

Route #16: Seekonk/Attleboro/Plainville. This line runs along Route 152 from Plainville Crossing in Plainville through Attleboro to Central Plaza (on Central Avenue) in Seekonk.

Connections to other GATRA lines as well as to the "T" commuter rail can be made from the direct service line. A previous route did run from Kennedy Plaza in downtown Providence through Seekonk via Route 44 to the Bloom Bus Terminal in Taunton but was discontinued in

2008. This route provided a connection with the Rhode Island Public Transportation Authority (RIPTA) bus system that serves all of Rhode Island.

Currently there are no bicycle routes or share the road designations in Seekonk. In 1997, the Department of Public Works explored the idea of developing a bike network that would utilize the rail bed running adjacent to the McHale Pond well-field and link the Newman Avenue area with East Providence, but access to the rail bed was not granted. Bicycle paths were the number one recreational need identified in the 2010 Open Space and Recreation Plan survey.

The Town of Seekonk recently adopted a Large-Scale Solar Overlay District Bylaw to promote the development of large-scale solar PV facilities within the Town's industrial district. The Town Planning Department had been approached by large-scale Solar PV developers interested in developing solar in Town, but plans for a facility have not come to fruition.

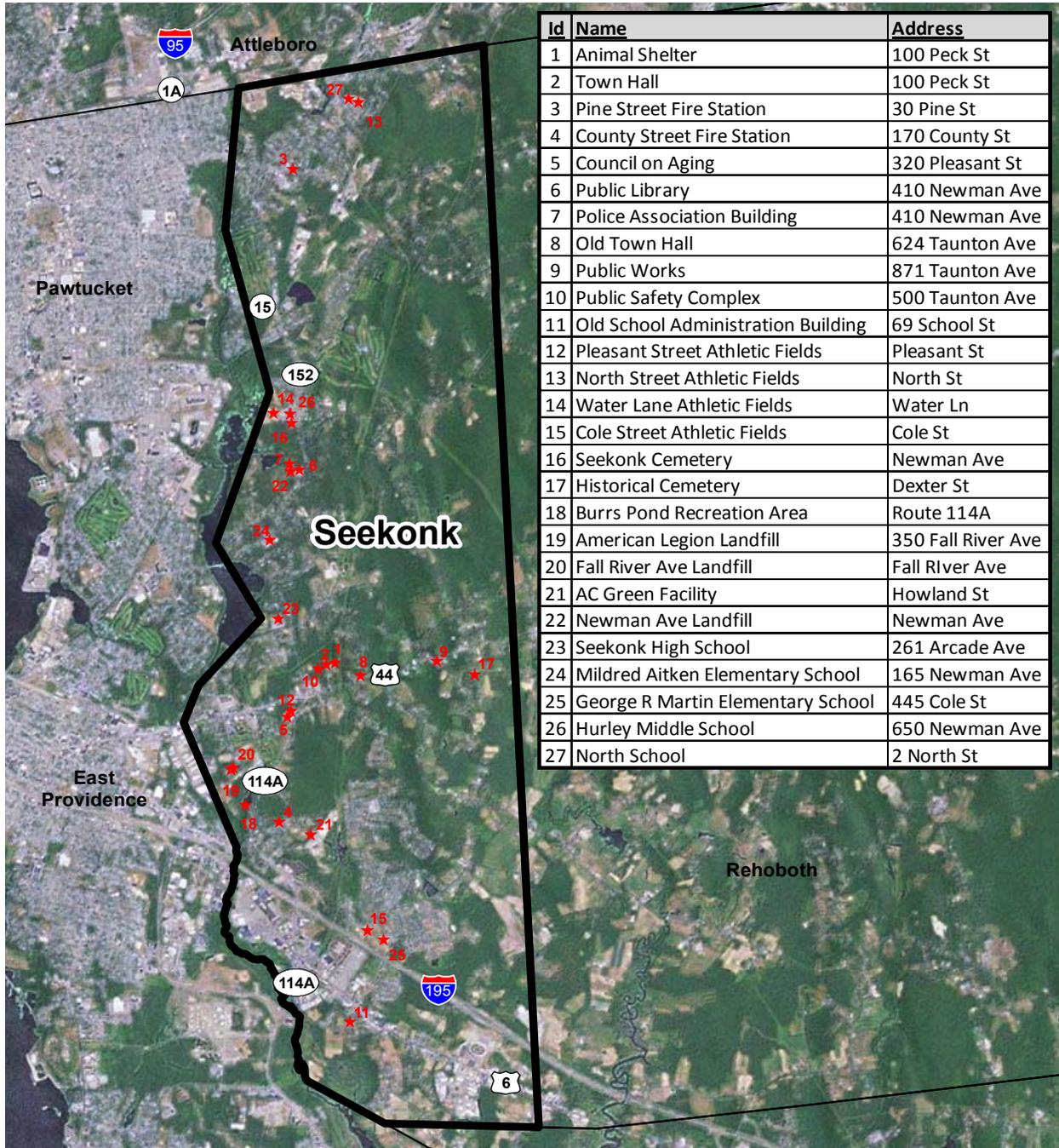
5. PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

5.1 Introduction

As the Town of Seekonk continues to change, its public facilities and services must be evaluated to determine their present adequacy and to forecast future needs. The efficient and effective provision of public services to the community is critical to improving the overall quality of life for residents of the community and achieving an enhanced community profile for prospective residents and businesses. One way in which the community evaluates public facilities is through the Capital Improvement Plan. The Municipal Capital Improvement Committee supports the development of this five-year plan for capital improvements which is updated annually. The Committee has developed a formal annual timeline and procedure for updating the plan, which local government staff use to provide input.

The Community Facilities Map displays the locations of Seekonk's major public facilities (Figure 5-1). Table 5-1 summarizes these facilities.

Figure 5-1. Public Facilities Map



Id	Name	Address
1	Animal Shelter	100 Peck St
2	Town Hall	100 Peck St
3	Pine Street Fire Station	30 Pine St
4	County Street Fire Station	170 County St
5	Council on Aging	320 Pleasant St
6	Public Library	410 Newman Ave
7	Police Association Building	410 Newman Ave
8	Old Town Hall	624 Taunton Ave
9	Public Works	871 Taunton Ave
10	Public Safety Complex	500 Taunton Ave
11	Old School Administration Building	69 School St
12	Pleasant Street Athletic Fields	Pleasant St
13	North Street Athletic Fields	North St
14	Water Lane Athletic Fields	Water Ln
15	Cole Street Athletic Fields	Cole St
16	Seekonk Cemetery	Newman Ave
17	Historical Cemetery	Dexter St
18	Burrs Pond Recreation Area	Route 114A
19	American Legion Landfill	350 Fall River Ave
20	Fall River Ave Landfill	Fall River Ave
21	AC Green Facility	Howland St
22	Newman Ave Landfill	Newman Ave
23	Seekonk High School	261 Arcade Ave
24	Mildred Aitken Elementary School	165 Newman Ave
25	George R Martin Elementary School	445 Cole St
26	Hurley Middle School	650 Newman Ave
27	North School	2 North St

Table 5-1. Seekonk Public Facilities

Name	Building Area (square feet)	Site Area (acres)	Full use/ underutilized/ vacant
Animal Shelter	1,512	-	Full use
Pine Street Fire Station	1,616	0.5	Full use
County Street Fire Station	3,500	0.75	Underutilized
Council on Aging	800	5	Full use
Public Library	14,832	8	Full use
Old Town Hall	2,016	1.25	Vacant
Public Works Building	6,950	2	Full use
Town Hall	9,484	22	Full use
Public Safety Complex	25,000	17.25	Full use
Old School Administration Building	6,900	1	Vacant
Police Association Building	3,000	-	Vacant
North School	39,642	12.32	Vacant
Mildred Aitken Elementary School	51,847	9.75	Full use
George R Martin Elementary School	71,585	26.71	Full use
Seekonk Hurley Middle School	101,598	24.71	Full use
Seekonk High School	171,290	27.80	Full use
North Street Athletic Fields	N/A	3.5	Full use
Water Lane Athletic Fields	N/A	10	Full use
Pleasant Street Athletic Fields	N/A	3	Full use
A.C. Green Facility	N/A	1.5	Underutilized
Cole Street Athletic Fields	N/A	5.5	Full use
Seekonk Cemetery	N/A	3	Full use
Historical Cemetery – Lincoln St.	N/A	1	Full use
Burrs Pond Recreation Area	N/A	1	Full use
Fall River Ave. Landfill	N/A	16	Full use
American Legion Landfill	N/A	12	Full use
Newman Ave. Landfill	N/A	8	Full use

5.2 Overview

Government Operations and Town Hall

The Town of Seekonk's central governmental facility is the Town Hall, located on Peck Street directly across Taunton Avenue. The Town Hall is situated on a plot of land that is approximately 14 acres, and the building itself has 9,500 square feet of floor space. The Town Hall houses most of Seekonk's administrative services and departments, including the Town Administrator, Town Clerk, Tax Assessor, Tax Collector, Building Inspector, Town Planner, and Public Health Department. At present, approximately 30 employees work at the Town Hall. The building is also the meeting place for the Town's elected and appointed bodies, including the Board of Selectmen and the Planning Board. A separate structure on the same site houses the animal control facility.

Table 5-2 lists the Departments and Officers located in Town Hall in alphabetical order, as well as a summary of the services they provide. The Boards and Committees that work in conjunction with these Departments are provided as well. It should be noted that the Boards and Committees are paired with the Departments that are of "typical" affiliation. Many Boards and Committees work in conjunction with multiple Departments as needs arise. A full listing of all Town services is included in the form of a regularly updated brochure provided as a public service by the Town. This brochure is available at the Town Clerk's office.

Table 5-2. Town Hall Departments and Officers and Related Boards and Committees

Departments and Officers	Services provided	Associated Boards and Committees
Administrator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administer budget information and purchasing information • Administer the following licenses: alcoholic beverage, amusement, antique and second-hand, entertainment, license for selling motor vehicles, license for vending machines and amusement machines • Personnel/employment information administration • Town bylaw information administration • Overall Town administration 	Board of Selectmen; Capital Improvement Committee
Assessor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess real and personal property • Assess motor vehicle and boat excise tax • Assess Farm animal tax • Assess values to: commercial, industrial, residential, personal property • Billing of betterments • Maintain values of exempt properties and ownership • Process exemptions for veterans and elderly • Abatements for: personal property, real estate, motor vehicles • Measurements of parcels maintained on maps • Maintain deeds from 1966 to present • Maintain online Assessor’s Database • Manage the Town’s Parcel Map 	Board of Assessors
Building Inspection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building permits: electrical, gas, plumbing, pools • Zoning questions / fence questions 	Zoning Board of Appeals
Clerk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business certificates • Dog licensing • Voter registration / election information • Fish and game licenses, yard sale permits • Genealogical records • Marriage licenses • Census / new resident information • Raffle and bazaar permits • Seekonk cemetery records and deeds • Vital records: marriage, death, birth 	
Collector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bill payments, and questions regarding: real estate tax bills, personal property tax bills, motor vehicle excise tax bills, disposal bills • Municipal lien certificates issued 	

Departments and Officers	Services provided	Associated Boards and Committees
Conservation Agent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official agency responsible for Seekonk’s natural resources • Wetland and water resource permits • Answer questions regarding development near wetlands and streams • Investigate wetlands violations • Investigate illegal discharges into storm drains, waterbodies and streams • Answer questions regarding passive recreation in Seekonk • Accept donations of land for preservation 	Conservation Commission
Finance Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Financial Reports 	Finance Committee
Health Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspect food service facilities • Oversee all aspects of Title 5 • Inspect pools, motels, tanning salons, health spas • Investigate tenant-landlord disputes • License septic installers, engineers, food service facilities, piggeries • Investigate potential illegal dumping 	Board of Health
Parks & Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and maintain recreation programs, facilities, and community special events 	Parks & Recreation Committee
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review subdivision applications • Review development plans • Responsible for the review and development of the Town’s Master Plan, and other planning documents • Administer the Town’s zoning bylaw • Provide GIS mapping services 	Planning Board
Treasurer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Departmental receipts • Tax titles • Employee payroll and benefits • Town / school retiree health insurance 	
Veterans’ Affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compensation, pension, insurance for veterans • Discharge difficulties • Employment, educational, vocational training and benefits • Alcoholic-drug treatment • Hospitalization and domiciliary care • At-risk homeless and housing • Gold Star Parents • Loan information – Small Business Administration (SBA) and Veterans Affairs (VA) • Burial agent and care of graves • Advocacy with other governmental agencies 	

The School System

Seekonk has a total of four public schools, including two elementary schools, one middle school, and one senior high school. The former North School, located on North Street, across Central Avenue in the Perrins Crossing area, was closed in 2006. The Mildred Aitken School is located in the central section of the Town, along Newman Avenue and close to the James V. Turner reservoir on the East Providence border. The George R Martin School is Seekonk’s

largest elementary school in terms of land area and school enrollment. It is located at the intersection of Cole Avenue and Anthony Avenue, just to the north of Interstate 195. The Seekonk Hurley Middle School is also on Newman Avenue, roughly 1.5 miles north of Aitken Elementary. Seekonk High School is located on Arcade Avenue roughly half a mile south of Aitken Elementary.

The schools are organized in a logical geographic manner. The Aitken School generally serves students living north of Route 44, while the Martin School serves students living to the south of Route 44. Both the middle and high schools are situated in the central section of the Town, along Seekonk's major north-south thoroughfares, Arcade Avenue and Newman Avenue (Route 152). The location of the School Administration offices formerly posed an inconvenience for residents of Seekonk's more northern areas, since it was located on School Street at the southern end of the Town. However, the School Administration Offices were recently moved to the Hurley Middle School, which provides a more central and easily accessible location. The former school administration building is now used for storage.

The School Department operates primarily from the District Office, which has the following key staff positions:

- Superintendent;
- Director of Curriculum and Instruction;
- Director of Personnel Services;
- Special Education Clerical Administrative Staff;
- Out of District Coordinator/Program Liaison;
- Transportation Director;
- Transportation Clerical Secretary;
- School Finance Administrator;
- Office Manager;
- Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent;
- Payroll and Human Services;
- Purchasing; and
- Accounts Payable.

The School Department maintains an Annual Budget and also develops a five year Strategic Plan to provide a framework for future operations. The last Strategic Plan was drafted in 2007 and carries through to the 2011-2012 school year. The overarching vision statement developed as part of the Strategic Plan reads as follows:

“Seekonk Public Schools serve as a model for educational innovation as a result of using best practice instructional strategies, an integrated K-12 curriculum, and a variety of assessments in a technologically rich environment. Students are able to access multiple pathways which encourage and prepare them to think critically and use creative problem solving. We are a community united in the belief that it is our fiscal and moral responsibility to provide outstanding educational opportunities and facilities for all of our students. Our graduates are able to set goals, make responsible choices, and appreciate

diversity in order to live their lives with a sense of purpose and face the challenges of the future.”

The Strategic Plan ultimately provides a Master Timeline for a comprehensive series of actions and strategies, which are organized into the following broad categories:

- Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment;
- District and School Organization;
- Community Relations and Partnerships;
- District and School Resources; and
- Technology.

To assist with developing policies for the School Department, a five-member School Committee convenes monthly. Members of this committee are elected for three-year terms. Funding decisions for improving school facilities are decided through the Town’s Capital Improvements Program (CIP) which, in turn, is administered by the Town Administrator. Table 5-3 summarizes the School Department’s 2011 Five-Year CIP.

Table 5-3. Seekonk School Department Five Year CIP

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015-
Paving and seal coating (four schools)					
Seekonk High School					
Installation of New Space Building & Demolition of Two Maintenance Sheds					
Prepare and Paint Pool Ceiling					
Replace High Stage Flooring					
Upgrade Phone System					
Aitken School					
Replace 1/2 Aitken Roof - Old Section					
Martin School					
Phone System Upgrade					
Replace (25) Classroom Heating Units and Controls					
Hurley Middle School					
VTC Flooring					
Seal Coat Mason Block - New Section of Building					
North School					
Pave Parking Lot					
Replace Back Section of Roof (Kitchen and Classroom)					
Maintenance Accounts					
Replace Pickup Truck (Utility Body)					

Conservation

The Conservation Agent for the Town of Seekonk provides oversight and technical assistance to the management of Town-owned conservation property and the processing of development permits that fall within the jurisdiction of state and local wetland regulations. The Town also has a seven member Conservation Commission, which serves as the local regulatory body enforcing the state and local wetland regulations. As part of their duties, the Conservation Commission and the Conservation Agent can set restrictions on Town-owned property and help to identify any maintenance needs. Properties under the management of the Conservation Commission are usually designated for preservation in their natural state, but may include allowances for trails and other means of passive recreation. Additional information regarding the Town's Conservation activities, including a list of properties under the Conservation Commission's jurisdiction is provided in the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan.

The Seekonk Land Conservation Trust (SLCT), a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving the distinctive landscapes and natural resources in the Town of Seekonk, has also provided conservation services to the Town. The SLCT supports land conservation in Seekonk by connecting landowners to potential resources for land conservation and by acquiring undeveloped land through private donations. The SLCT also supports environmental education in the elementary schools and the high school.

Recreational Facilities

A number of facilities (public, quasi-public, and private) provide opportunities for recreation in Seekonk. Foremost among these facilities is the Caratunk Wildlife Sanctuary, a 165-acre parcel of land in the northern part of the Town accessed from Brown Avenue that is owned by the Rhode Island Audubon Society. Seekonk is also home to three golf courses, though only the Firefly Golf Course is open to the general public.

The Town of Seekonk owns and maintains many recreational facilities, including the playing fields of the four Seekonk district schools, and the closed North and Pleasant Street Schools and the playground at the George R. Martin School. Management of these facilities is generally shared between the Parks and Recreation Department and the School Department, depending on the location. These two departments coordinate an extremely high demand for these facilities by groups of all ages. The mission statement for the Parks and Recreation Department is as follows:

“The mission of Seekonk Parks & Recreation Department is to provide inspiration and recreation opportunities for the Town of Seekonk residents through creation and maintenance of high quality programs, facilities, and community special events. By dedication and developing diverse services and programs that promote citizen involvement and strong sense of community. With this being said Parks and Recreation will strive to increase the social, cultural, and physical well being of its residents and generations to come.”

Active recreational properties range in size from the approximate two acre ball field at Howland Street to the 28 acre property at the high school. The Town recently capped an existing municipal landfill located behind the public library and created walking trails. Funding for the

landfill capping was obtained through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund. More information regarding the Town's Recreation Department activities, including a listing of the major recreational facilities owned and maintained by the Town of Seekonk appears in the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan.

Seekonk Public Library

Established in 1899, the Town of Seekonk's main cultural resource is its Public Library, which is located on Newman Avenue in the central part of Seekonk, between the Aitken School and the Hurley Middle School. The library is surrounded by nine acres of meadows with walking trails, managed by the Board of Library Trustees. A seven member elected Board of Trustees guides the Public Library. Major funding for the Library comes from the Town at the Annual Town Meeting. The budget is augmented by money from the State if the library budget meets the minimum funding requirements to remain certified. The Seekonk Library Trust and the Friends of the Seekonk Library also contribute by providing cultural programming that is not funded through the Town appropriation. The library is a member of the Southeast Area Integrated Library System (SAILS), a consortium of over 50 libraries in southeast Massachusetts which have combined their collections to allow customers direct access to the combined catalogs. The present library building was opened in 1981. Usage of the library has nearly reached 300,000 items per year. Seekonk residents make heavy use of their library with 8,410 (62%) of the Town's residents holding library cards.

According to its Strategic Plan, the Library's Vision Statement is as follows:

"The goal of the Seekonk Public Library (SPL) is to be the model for excellence in public libraries by exceeding the expectations of our customers for making knowledge available, by providing a desirable and challenging place to work for our staff, by making the most effective use of public and private resources and by serving as a sanctuary of ideas for the community."

In 2010, the Hennen's American Public Library Ratings (HAPLR) Index ranked the SPL in the 93rd percentile in the country for its size category. This ranking is based upon the quality, excellence and value of the Library's service to the community. The library has one of the highest circulations per hour open and per full-time employee (FTE) in the State and provides materials in many formats: books, videos, DVDs, CDs, CD-ROMs, talking books, electronic games, large print books and the new e-books available with e-readers. This means that a materials budget that meets 16% of the library's budget, which is the minimum appropriation required by the State is a necessity. The library's goal is to exceed the minimum budget in order to provide a diversity of titles, programs and services.

The Youth Services Department provides a variety of programs for children and teens to promote literacy. Children are formally introduced to the Library through its Library Lapsit, Toddler and Preschool Storytimes. By listening to stories, viewing illustrations, and participating in enjoyable group activities, young children develop the pre-reading and thinking skills which will help them to become lifelong readers and learners. There are also reading/craft programs for children in Kindergarten through Middle School: The Book Bunch (K-Gr. 2); Chapter One Club (Gr. 3-5); as well as the Parent-Child Book Club (Gr. 4 & up). The Youth Services area is at full capacity with no room to grow. Youth services offered 171 programs for the community with

5,871 participants attending in 2010. A total of 267 children participated in the summer 2010 reading program.

In the past, library programs and activities were not provided for teens. Since the plan to expand the library was put on hold, the library obtained grant money specifically to establish a teen section in the front of the library. The location allows for greater visibility of the teens. The library still lacks quiet rooms where people can get away from the noise within the library.

The SPL Adult Services Department provides assistance in locating information needed for customers of all ages with a special emphasis on information literacy. A computer-classroom that was set up in fiscal year (FY) 2001 still exists to offer hands-on training in basic computer skills and information retrieval such as Internet classes. These classes are most popular amongst the 55 – 64 and 65 or older groups. Adult Services offered 94 programs in 2010 with 1,060 participants attending.

The SPL offers a wide variety of information technologies and electronic media to meet the needs of customers. Technology primarily shapes services offered by SPL in four areas; (1) obtaining, cataloging and loaning of materials, (2) providing Internet access, (3) offering personal computing, and (4) accessing to electronic information and media. All of these service categories are supported by a sophisticated network infrastructure and a well-trained, tech-savvy staff. These technologies permit the library to serve customers both at its facility on Newman Avenue and at remote locations. In the future, the innovative use of information technology may permit the library to have both a physical and virtual presence throughout the Town of Seekonk. Providing library services under this new service model will require both the development of a high-speed, community-wide network, and a refitting of the central facility so it can support new modes for delivering services. During a typical week in FY 2010, 262 people used the public computers.

Furthermore, the Public Library is one of the few facilities in the Town with the capacity to host public meetings. Steps were taken to carry out the 2000 Master Plan goal of expanding the SPL. The planned addition to the Library would have approximately doubled the square footage of the Newman Avenue facility. The State would have funded the project at \$3,000,000, but the Town was unable to raise the additional required funding. Changing demographics also require a different mix of services. The SPL conducts surveys of the community every five years to determine the space needs and services of its users.

The library has been involved in a two-year study of use patterns with the architectural program at Roger Williams University. Information formats are changing, requiring different types of storage. Using the Roger Williams data and other survey data on users, the library is embarking on a new retrofit of the current space to include more meeting room space, quiet study areas, better computer stations and a larger Technical Services Department. Recent improvements to the public Library occurred in 2009 including the installation of a new roof, remodeling of the Customer Services desk to centralize all staff, and capping of the landfill surrounding the library which expanded the parking lot.

Public Safety

The Seekonk Police Department conducts its operations out of a combined Police/Fire/Communications building located next to the Seekonk Town Hall. The Police Department moved into this building in April of 2006. Clearly, the opening of this building will satisfy any facility requirements for this department for at least the next decade. For the first time in the Town's history, this department is housed in a building that was built specifically for law enforcement purposes.

As of 2011, the Seekonk Police Department has a uniformed staff of 34 full-time career officers, 20 special part-time officers, and two civilian clerical employees. The full-time officer staff consists of two officers at the rank of Captain, two officers at the rank of Lieutenant, five officers at the rank of Sergeant, three detectives, and one School Resource Officer. The Department also has an inventory of 15 marked police cruisers, four marked detail cruisers, two specialty vehicles, eight unmarked administrative vehicles, and two specialty trailers.

Overall, approximately 60% of all police department calls occur south of Route 44/Taunton Avenue, while the remaining 40% occur north of Route 44/Taunton Avenue.

Fire Protection

In 2010, the demands for community service continued to present a challenge for the Fire Department. However, as was the case in previous years, Department personnel remained steadfast in their dedicated approach to serving the community.

The Seekonk Fire Department operates out of three facilities stationed throughout the Town. Station #1 is located on County Street, and serves the section of the Town south of Taunton Avenue, including the commercial area along Route 6. Station #2 is located on Pine Street, near Central Avenue, and services the Town north of Brown Avenue. Station #3 is located on Taunton Avenue, and is the only station that is manned 24/7, serving as the administrative headquarters of the Fire Department. The Department responded to 2,329 emergency incidents in 2010.

Staffing for the Fire Department includes: one Chief, one Captain, four Lieutenants, 20 firefighters, and eight Call Firefighters. The Department operates with four shifts, each having an assignment of one Lieutenant and five Firefighters/Paramedics working two 10-hour days and two 14-hour nights. The Department staffs one Engine, one Ladder and one advanced life support (ALS) ambulance 24/7; when manning allows, a second ALS ambulance is manned at the Pine St. Station.

Because the Call Department is not able to supplement the staffing needs of the Career Department, the Town has a steady reliance on mutual aid from other communities for both Fire and Ambulance services.

Citing a need for improved emergency response and service to the southern end of the Town, the 1986 Master Plan Update recommended the construction of a new fire station within a one-half mile of the Commerce Way shopping center off of Route 6. At this time, no action has been taken.

Road Maintenance and Drainage

The DPW is housed in a facility at the eastern end of Taunton Avenue. Administrative services and operations are conducted out of the facility. The DPW is responsible for road maintenance, street sweeping, roadside brush cutting, snow and ice removal, and drainage. It is also responsible for the buildings and grounds maintenance of public facilities, excluding the Seekonk Public Schools. The DPW maintains all recreational fields and buildings, including 15 baseball fields, four soccer fields, and three multi-use fields. The full scope of infrastructure maintained by the DPW includes:

- 108 miles of road – 381 streets;
- 23 miles of sidewalks;
- Over 1900 catch basins;
- Over 40 detention basins;
- Over 70 miles of drainage conveyance systems;
- Over 60 culverts crossings; and
- 151 drainage outfalls.

Recent improvements to DPW facilities include construction of a new salt shed in 2001, new 40 foot by 60 foot, three bay steel garage in 2004, a new heating system in 2005, a remodeled front office in 2008, a remodeled restroom in 2009, and new security cameras in 2010. Most notably, the DPW facility was outfitted with a new 31KW solar photovoltaic array in 2010. In addition, in 2010 the Town purchased a Big Belly™ trash compactor at the Water Land Field Complex.

Solid Waste Disposal

The Seekonk landfill has been closed since the 1986 Master Plan Update in accordance with that plan's recommendation. Solid waste services are contracted out to a private firm. Solid waste generated in Seekonk is transported to a landfill in Rochester, Massachusetts.

Wastewater Management

The Town of Seekonk has no public sewage collection or treatment system, and wastewater is disposed through on-site disposal systems, including septic systems and cesspools. Septage pumped from individual septic systems is currently disposed of at one of three locations: The City of Attleboro wastewater treatment plant (which is located in the northwestern corner of Seekonk), the Upper Blackstone wastewater treatment plant and the Town of North Attleboro wastewater treatment plant. Regulation of the on-site disposal systems is the responsibility of the Board of Health.

The Town of Seekonk lies within two drainage basins, the Ten Mile River basin on the Town's northern side and the Runnins River basin in Seekonk's southern side. The Ten Mile River acts as a discharge point for other municipalities to the north of the Town, including Plainville, North Attleboro, and the Attleboro treatment plant. The Runnins River has no major point source discharges, and future surface discharges into the Runnins River are prohibited. Given the fact that poor soils and a high water table predominate in parts of Town, concerns have been

raised as to the impact of on-site disposal systems on Seekonk's aquifer, from which the Town's drinking water is largely derived.

In July of 1996, a wastewater facilities plan was submitted to the Town of Seekonk. It concluded that a majority of the Town would be best served by a wastewater system to collect and convey waste to the Attleboro Wastewater Treatment Plant (AWWTP) at the northern edge of Seekonk. The Wastewater Facilities Plan report examined issues of population density, soil suitability, groundwater levels, wetlands, zoning, and potential impacts on the environment and the Town's drinking water supply. It also examined the adequacy of current on-site disposal systems, finding many systems not in compliance with Massachusetts Title 5 subsurface wastewater disposal regulations.

Water Supply

Water services for the Town of Seekonk are provided by the Seekonk Water District, which was formed in 1946. The Water District is an independent authority that mirrors Town Government. As such, it can independently issue revenue bonds, and must follow the operating laws for municipal entities. The Water District finances all of its operations with revenues from the sale of water. Information provided below is taken directly from the recent Water System Master Plan (Amory Engineers, 2010). More detailed information regarding the infrastructure and operations associated with the Water District can be found in that report.

The Seekonk Water District service zone currently covers about 85% of the Town, while serving 93% of Town population through 4,678 service connections, all of which are metered. Areas outside District boundaries are located along the easterly Town boundary between Seekonk and Rehoboth. Within the service zone, water service is currently available along some 85% of the existing roads. The District system is supplied entirely from groundwater sources, namely Brown Avenue Wellfield, Newman Wells GP1 through 4 and McHale's Well GP5. Raw water from all wells is conveyed to the Water Treatment Plant (WTP), located adjacent to the District administrative offices on Water Lane, for treatment prior to delivery through the distribution system.

The distribution system includes approximately 112 miles of water main in a single pressure zone. Water mains consist mainly of cement-lined cast and ductile-iron pipe varying in size up to 16 inches. Three storage tanks, one adjacent to Newman Avenue at Read Street (Newman Tank), one adjacent to Pine Street at Robincrest Court (Pine Tank), and one on Taunton Avenue (Taunton Ave. Tank), provide distribution storage for the system. The District has a metered emergency interconnection with the City of Pawtucket, RI, on Brook Street. The District also has two unmetered emergency interconnections with the Attleboro system which are available for emergency use by either system upon request. Table 5-4 provides a summary of existing well fields in the community. Wells are typically scheduled for redevelopment to restore capacity when the specific capacity is reduced by 25% or more.

Table 5-4. Summary Data for Seekonk Water District Wells

Source	Year Built/ Rehabilitated	Well Type	Design Capacity (gallons per minute)	Standby Power
Newman GP1	1953	Gravel-Pack	600	Generator
Newman GP2	1958/2001	Gravel-Pack	700	None
Newman GP3	1972	Gravel-Pack	700	None
Newman GP4	1987	Naturally Developed	450	Generator
McHale's GP5	1995	Gravel-Pack	450	Generator
Brown Avenue Wellfield	1946/2003	Tubular Wellfield	200	None

Three welded-steel tanks provide distribution system storage: Taunton Avenue elevated tank, Pine Street reservoir, and Newman Avenue standpipe (Table 5-5). The total capacity of the storage tanks is 4.035 million gallons.

Table 5-5. Seekonk Water District Distribution Storage Summary

Tank	Year Built	Diameter (ft.)	Height (ft.)	Capacity (mil. Gal.)	Full Tank Water Elevation
Newman Avenue Standpipe	1947	30	120	0.635	247.8
Taunton Avenue Elevated Tank	1962	80	105/30	1.0	247.8
Pine Street Reservoir	1994	76	72	2.4	247.8

The distribution system includes 4,678 service connections. Of the 112 miles of water main, there are approximately 108 miles of water main from six inches to 16 inches in diameter and approximately four miles of water main that is 2 inches diameter.

Human Services and the Council on Aging

The Human Services Department is a relatively new department, emerging from the Council on Aging. The mission of Seekonk Human Services is as follows:

“The mission of Seekonk Human Services is to ensure the well-being of Seekonk’s older population and residents of any age who are in need of social services due to economic hardship, health issues, family circumstances, or personal loss. We recognize the innate worth of every person in our community and strive to respect their dignity regardless of status.

We seek to maintain and enhance the quality of life of our elder citizens by providing

opportunities for social interaction, physical activity, intellectual stimulation, community service, and health clinics. We help clients of all ages who need assistance with food, clothing, housing, health care, transportation, legal or tax services directly or by introducing them to a network of federal, state, and local support services.

We try to offer effective, quality services that respond to community needs, promote continuous improvement of staff skills and performance, encourage an environment of trust and honesty, and provide services that are accessible, fair, and equitable.”

The Human Services Department provides fuel assistance, meals-on-wheels, and also serves as a conduit for other municipal services. There is a committee to the Department of Human Services, staffed by the local government, which is funded through grants and work-off money. The Department is currently located on the second floor of the closed Pleasant Street School. This space has been deemed inadequate and inaccessible for those served by the Department, since it is not conducive to providing services to seniors and/or handicapped individuals. The facility is not handicap accessible nor is it conducive to privacy and confidentiality when the Departments’ clients are in need of social services due to economic hardship, health issues, or family circumstances. A new Senior Center is planned at the Town Hall site. Funding for such a facility has proven to be a challenge in the past as measures to accomplish the goal of building a new facility have been defeated twice at Town Meeting. The project is currently in the preliminary design phase and funding will be sought after the conclusion of that phase.

Education and Outreach

Since the 2000 Master Plan, the number of mechanisms for outreach and public networking opportunities has increased dramatically. The Town currently uses the following formats for public outreach and education:

- The Town website (seekonk-ma.gov);
- Social networking sites, such as Twitter© (twitter.com/townofseekonkma) (the library and police department both have Twitter© accounts as does the Town Planning department and the Town as a whole; the library has a Facebook© page);
- Patch© community-specific news and information platform website (seekonk.patch.com);
- Cable TV (TV9; also available at: tv9seekonk.com/vod.php);
- Reverse 911 system; and
- Public hearings and Town Meeting.

There are currently no local newspapers that serve the entire Town of Seekonk exclusively; however, there are local and regional newspapers that serve at least part of the Town. The Sun Chronicle is a regional newspaper that provides news for several towns in the area, including the Town of Seekonk. The Pawtucket Times serves the Blackstone Valley region, which serves towns in both Rhode Island and Massachusetts, including Seekonk. The Providence Journal reports on the City of Providence and local towns and cities, including Seekonk. In addition, the Seekonk Reporter and Seekonk Star are smaller publications that reach out to Seekonk residents and business owners.

6. TRANSPORTATION

6.1 Introduction

The Town of Seekonk is an auto-oriented suburban/rural residential community and regional shopping center. As such, the roadway network is structured to facilitate automobile travel between all uses (residential, commercial, industrial, schools, and recreation). Limited existing options are available for travel by public transportation or non-motorized modes (walking and bicycling). More than half of residents commute to jobs in Rhode Island (U.S. Census, 2000). As shown in Table 6-1 and Figure 6-1, most commuters in Seekonk travel to work via single-occupancy vehicle. Between 2000 and 2009 there has been a slight increase in the number of commuters traveling to work via carpool, while other modes remain approximately constant. Table 6.2 compares commuting modes in Seekonk with neighboring towns and cities, and with the Massachusetts average. The percentage of commuters who drive alone is consistent with nearby communities with similar land use and transportation infrastructure, and the percentage that carpools is substantially greater than in Rehoboth and Swansea. Attleboro has a higher public transportation share, which is likely attributed to its relative proximity to the Attleboro and South Attleboro MBTA commuter rail station. Mean travel time to work for Seekonk commuters is about 23 minutes as of 2009.

Table 6-1. Seekonk Journey to Work (US Census Bureau, 2000, American Factfinder)

Mode	Number of Commuters	Percentage
Total Car, Truck or Van	6,491	95.3%
<i>Drive Alone</i>	6,048	88.8%
<i>Carpool</i>	443	6.5%
Total Public Transportation	96	1.4%
<i>Bus</i>	55	0.8%
<i>Rail</i>	41	0.6%
Total Non-Motorized	32	0.5%
<i>Walk</i>	24	0.4%
<i>Bicycle</i>	8	0.1%
Other	26	0.4%
Worked at Home	169	2.5%
TOTAL	6,814	100%

Figure 6-1. Seekonk Journey to Work (US Census Bureau, 2000, Decennial Census)

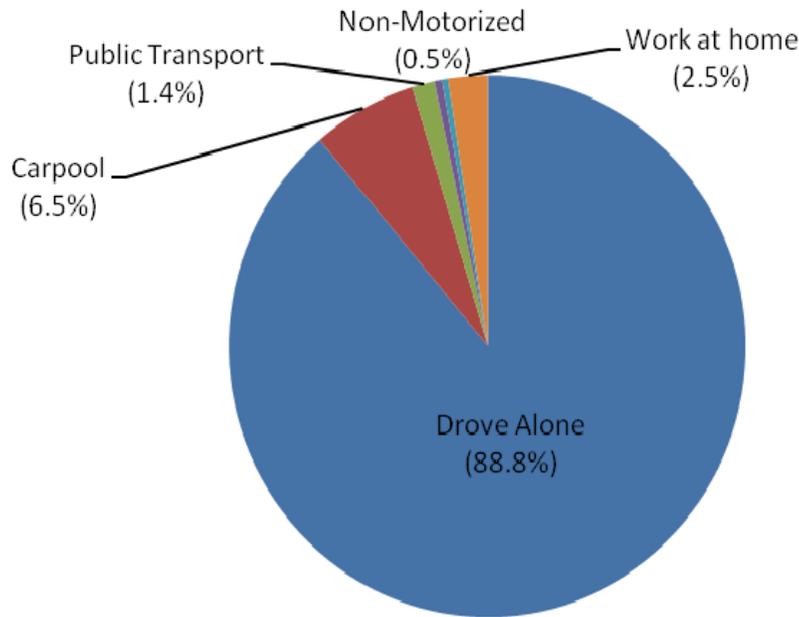


Table 6-2. Comparison of Seekonk and Neighboring Town Commuting Modes (US Census Bureau, 2009, American Community Survey)

City/Town	Drive Alone	Carpool	Public Transportation	Walked	Other
Seekonk	86.3%	9.5%	1.6%	1.0%	1.6%
Rehoboth	86.6%	5.5%	1.1%	2.0%	4.8%
Swansea	91.1%	5.4%	1.1%	0.0%	2.4%
Attleboro	78.2%	9.8%	5.3%	2.9%	3.8%
East Providence, RI	83.0%	10.5%	2.8%	1.3%	2.4%
Massachusetts	72.7%	8.4%	9.0%	4.5%	5.4%

6.2 Roadway Characteristics

Seekonk is well connected via the existing roadway network. The routes of most importance are classified and described below. The roadway projects discussed below are also presented in Table 6-3.

Interstate-195 is an expressway running northwest-southeast across the southern section of Seekonk, making regional connections with Interstate-95 in Providence and Interstate-495 in Wareham, via Fall River and New Bedford. Exit 1 provides the only direct connection into Seekonk from this highway and access to Routes 6 and 114A is provided at this exit. Three travel lanes are provided on each side of the expressway. Roadway resurfacing on the on- and off-ramps were completed by Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) in 2002 and resurfacing work and signage on the expressway is currently in design. The average daily traffic along this highway is about 73,200 vehicles.

Route 6 is a major arterial that runs in a northwest-southeast direction, south of, and parallel to I-195. Commercial land uses dominate the corridor. Towards the western end, new retail uses have developed, while recreational uses, including the Seekonk Speedway and Seekonk Driving Range, are located at the eastern end. Two lanes are provided in each direction. Recent roadway reconstruction in the newly developed areas, northwest of Warren Avenue, has added new traffic signals, central medians, exclusive left turn lanes, appropriate travel lane pavement markings, and new sidewalks. Parking is not permitted. The average daily traffic is about 20,600 vehicles.

Route 114A is also a major arterial and it generally runs north-south, connecting Route 6 in the south, to Route 44 in the north and intersecting with Route 114 in East Providence. South of I-195 lies a mix of commercial uses including hotels, restaurants, and retail uses. One to two lanes in each direction are provided here. North of the newly reconstructed bridge over I-195 are several small businesses and the roadway soon narrows to just one lane in each direction. Route 114A passes through the village of Luther's Corners where some on-street parking is permitted. Sidewalks are provided along much of the corridor. Intersection improvements, including new traffic signals, on Route 114A at Arcade Avenue, are earmarked for design in 2015. The average daily traffic ranges from 13,000 to 19,800 vehicles.

Route 152 (Newman Avenue/Central Avenue) is a major arterial that runs along the western edge of Seekonk. There are mainly residential uses along the roadway, interspersed by commercial, retail, recreational, agricultural, educational, and institutional uses. It operates with one travel lane in each direction. Sidewalks are provided in certain locations, and a select number of pedestrian crossings are provided at important locations, such as the Hurley Middle School, Aitken School, and the Seekonk Public Library. The intersection of Route 152 (Newman Avenue) and Central Avenue is currently under construction to provide improvements, including new traffic signals and improved pedestrian crossing across Central Avenue. The average daily traffic is about 15,000 vehicles.

Route 44 (Taunton Avenue) is a major arterial running in a southwest-northeast direction across the center of Seekonk. Residential and commercial uses are dispersed along this low density development roadway. The eastern section, around the intersection with Route 114A, has more intensified commercial development, with car dealerships being the most frequent occupant. It generally operates with one lane in each direction, with two lanes provided around and west of Route 114A. Sidewalks are generally not provided, except in the more developed areas and at major intersections. The average daily traffic ranges from 10,600 to 12,600 vehicles.

Arcade Avenue is a major arterial that runs in a north-south direction connecting Route 152 in the north and Route 114A in the south, intersecting with Route 44 in the middle. It is a mainly rural roadway with residential development, interspersed with local businesses and Seekonk High School. Sidewalks are generally provided on at least one side of the roadway. The average daily traffic is about 14,000 vehicles.

Table 6-3. Roadway Improvement Projects in Seekonk (MassDOT, 2011)

Project Description	Project Type	Status	Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) year
Seekonk – Bridge Replacement, S-08-11, Route 114A over Route I-195	Bridge Replacement	Complete	-
Seekonk – Intersection and Signal Improvements on Central Avenue (Route 152)	Highway Reconstruction – no added capacity	On-going (completion in Nov. 2012)	-
Seekonk – Intersection Improvements at SR 114A and Arcade Avenue	Traffic Signals	25% Design	2015
Seekonk-Dartmouth – Guide and Traffic Sign Replacement on I-195 and SR 24	Structural Signing	Design	2014
Rehoboth-Seekonk – Resurfacing and Related Work on Route 6	Resurfacing	Design	-
Seekonk-Rehoboth – Interstate Maintenance and Related Work on I-195	Resurfacing	Design	-
Seekonk – Safety Improvements on Route 6 (Highland Avenue) from Route 114A (Fall River Avenue) to Commerce Way (Section III)	Safety Improvements	Complete	2006
Seekonk – Roadway Reconstruction Including Signals, Route 6 (Highland Avenue) from Route 114A to the Rhode Island State Line (Section II)	Highway Reconstruction – no added capacity	Complete	2004
Rehoboth-Seekonk – Resurfacing and Related Work on a Section of Route I-195 and Ramps	Resurfacing	Complete	2002

6.3 Traffic Growth

Available traffic volume data over the past ten years was obtained from MassDOT for roadways in Seekonk. There is less traffic count data available for 2000-2009 than there had been prior to 2000. At each of the six locations where more than one count was available, the changes in traffic volumes have been inconsistent, both rising and declining over various years between 2000 and 2009. Overall, the traffic volumes have not increased substantially when comparing the earlier counts to the later counts, indicating that the consistent traffic growth witnessed in the 1990s has tapered off and traffic volumes in Seekonk are fairly steady. The traffic data revealed the following overall changes.

- County Street at Rehoboth Town Line grew 2% between 2001 and 2007, which equates to less than 0.5% per year.
- Route 44 west of Ledge Road decreased by 4% between 2002 and 2008.
- Route 114A south of Route 44 grew 2% between 2002 and 2008.
- Interstate Route 195 between routes 114 and 136 at Anthony Street decreased by 1% between 2000 and 2009.

Table 6-4 summarizes the most recent traffic volumes on the major arterials.

Table 6-4. Average Daily Traffic Volumes (MassDOT)

Year	Roadway	Location	Count
2009	Route I-195	Between Routes 114 and 136 at Anthony Street	75,195
2005	Route I-195	At Rhode Island State Line	73,196
2001	Central Avenue	North of Pine Street	21,600
2000	Route 6	At Rhode Island State Line	20,600
2006	Route 114A	South of Mill Street	19,800
2007	Newman Avenue	East of Arcade Street	16,200
2008	Route 114A	At Rhode Island State Line	15,900
2002	Route 152	South of Route 15	14,900
2000	Route 152	South of Read Street	14,800
2008	Route 44	West of Ledge Road	13,900
2008	Route 114A	South of Route 44	13,300
2001	Arcade Avenue	East of Route 152	12,600
2007	Arcade Avenue	South of Newman Avenue	12,300
2006	Fall River Avenue	West of Arcade Avenue	12,300
2006	Arcade Avenue	North of Mill Street	10,600
2007	Newman Avenue	West of Arcade Street	9,300
2001	Pine Street	West of Woodland Avenue	7,200
2007	Anthony Street	At I-195 Overpass	5,800
2003	Cole Street	South of Fieldwood Avenue	4,400
2001	Oak Hill Avenue	East of Clyde Street	4,400
2007	County Street	At Rehoboth Town Line	4,300
2001	Chestnut Street	West of Hammond Street	3,700
2003	Cole Street	West of Fieldwood Avenue	3,100
2005	Lincoln Street	South of Elm Street	3,000
2005	Pine Street	East of Brown Avenue	2,700
2006	Mill Street	East of Arcade Avenue	1,900
2003	Ledge Road	Southwest of Greenwood Avenue	1,400
2002	Woodward Avenue	West of Prospect Street	340

6.4 Traffic Operations

Traffic capacity analysis results from SRPEDD at the intersection of Route 44 (Taunton Avenue) and Fall River Avenue show a Level of Service (LOS) C in 2010, with an average delay of 21 seconds. LOS is a measure of driver comfort under a given set of roadway and traffic conditions. At signalized intersections, the LOS is defined by the average delay as shown in Table 6-5. The LOS C suggests that the intersection is operating well with minimal delay, although it is noted that SRPEDD considers this intersection to be one of the most dangerous intersections in Southeastern Massachusetts.

Table 6-5. LOS Criteria for Intersections

LOS	Average Control Delay per vehicle	
	Signalized Intersection	Unsignalized Intersection
A	< 10 seconds	< 10 seconds
B	>10 – 20 seconds	>10 – 15 seconds
C	>20 – 35 seconds	>15 – 25 seconds
D	>35 – 55 seconds	>25 – 35 seconds
E	>55 – 80 seconds	>35 – 50 seconds
F	> 80 seconds	> 50 seconds

At Route 44 (Taunton Avenue) and Arcade Ave, the 2009 capacity analysis results from SRPEDD show an overall LOS E and an average delay of 64 seconds. The southbound approach is operating at LOS F, while the other approaches operate at LOS B.

Route 6 is perceived to experience traffic congestion during peak shopping periods. The roadway has an appropriate cross-section, added left-turn capacity at major intersections, and operates well during non-peak shopping hours. Additional capacity would be needed on Route 6 to eliminate congestion during peak shopping periods, but the magnitude of these improvements does not relate to the roadway’s function, since the peak shopping periods are limited to weekend days and the holiday season.

6.5 Safety

According to MassDOT accident data, SRPEDD studies, and local interviews, the following locations are considered the most problematic locations in terms of roadway safety:

- A. Fall River Avenue (Route 6) and Commerce Way
- B. Fall River Avenue (Route 6) and Mink Street (Route 114A)
- C. Fall River Avenue (114A) and Arcade Avenue
- D. Fall River Avenue (114A) and Taunton Avenue (Route 44)
- E. Newman Avenue (Route 152) and Central Avenue
- F. Taunton Avenue (Route 44) and Arcade Avenue
- G. Taunton Avenue (Route 44) and Lincoln Street
- H. Arcade Avenue and Newman Avenue

Figure 6-2. High Accident Locations in Seekonk (MassGIS)



Italicized intersections above are either under study or are part of projects included in the regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Figure 6.2 shows the above locations within the Town.

Traffic calming measures have been implemented in some locations (e.g., speed hump installation on Foch Avenue, near Central Avenue, and Newman Avenue) in response to perceived or demonstrated cut-through and speeding issues. Additional locations experience cut-through traffic, including Prospect and Read Streets, Luther and Spring Streets, and Olney and Hammond Streets (between Route 6 and Route 44).

6.6 Non-Motorized Modes

Many of the sidewalks in Seekonk are in poor condition and lack compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility requirements. Along Route 44, asphalt sidewalks are degraded and need to be replaced. Along Route 6, sidewalks have been constructed in conjunction with roadway reconstruction, but on other segments, sidewalks are completely absent.

A limited number of crosswalks are strategically located throughout the Town, including blue painted crosswalks along Route 152. Although the blue paint enhances visibility for drivers, the absence of curb ramps, for example on both sides of the crosswalks at Seekonk Public Library and the Mildred Aitken School, make them inaccessible for persons operating wheeled mobility devices. Also, the crossing of Walker Street is almost 200 feet long. Although a refuge is provided with the median, consideration may be given towards realigning this intersection. Similarly at West Avenue there is a 160 foot crossing with one refuge median. Three entry/exit points are provided at West Avenue.

On Route 6 (Highland Avenue), there is a stretch of new sidewalk alongside the Hess gas station. A new tactile warning strip transitions the curb ramp at the driveway to an existing asphalt sidewalk, where less than 20 feet away lies a signalized crosswalk with an older curb ramp. A new tactile warning strip and concrete sidewalk is provided on the Progress Street driveway as well. However, a new signal mast located in the middle of the sidewalk obstructs the path of travel and does not appear to comply with the ADA accessibility requirements for a three-foot wide minimum (four feet desirable) clear unobstructed path of travel.

Currently there are no designated bicycle routes or constructed bicycle facilities in the Town. Previous efforts to develop a bicycle network (i.e., utilizing the rail bed adjacent to the McHale Pond well-field to link Newman Avenue and East Providence) have been unsuccessful. In terms of on-road facilities, many roadways in the Town are not suitable candidates due to roadway width, curvature, and/or traffic volumes.

SRPEDD's 2012 Regional Transportation Plan identifies Seekonk as one location for bridging gaps in the regional bicycle network, specifically for providing connections to the Mansfield bike path, the Blackstone River Bikeway, and the Ten Mile River Greenway in Rhode Island. The SRPEDD plan focuses on on-road bicycle facilities for providing these connections where an off-road route is not feasible due to either land availability or cost, and to provide "last mile" connections to destinations. In Seekonk, the SRPEDD plan identifies the East Junction railroad bed for construction of a multi-use path to accommodate bicyclists, along with connecting

on-street facilities to the west on Newman Avenue to Brook Street and into Pawtucket, and on to the north on several roadways connecting to Attleboro. These suggested facilities would accommodate both commuter and recreational bicyclists by providing access to employment centers and to existing and planned bicycle paths.

6.7 Public Transportation

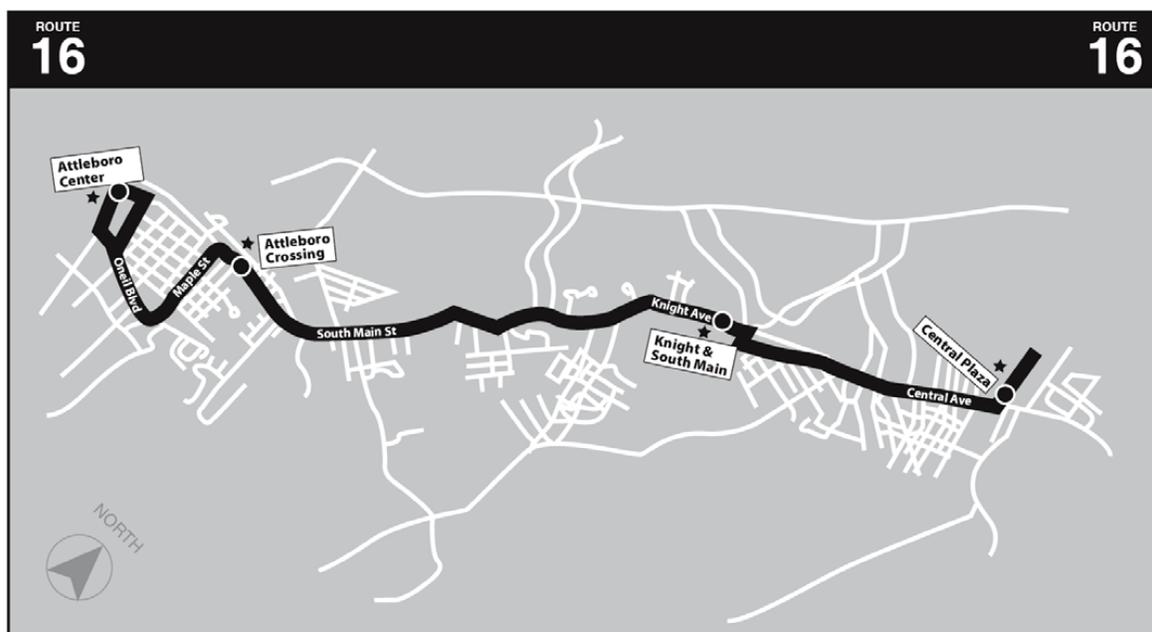
Existing public transportation service in the Town is very limited. The Greater Attleboro Taunton Regional Transit Authority (GATRA) operates one fixed-route bus service (Route #16), which serves North Seekonk only. The route travels between Central Plaza (on Central Avenue) in North Seekonk to Attleboro Center. Buses run hourly on weekdays between 5:40 A.M. and 6:20 P.M. and on Saturdays between 9:40 A.M. and 5:20 P.M. This bus services offers Seekonk residents with one alternative to driving to the Attleboro MBTA Commuter Rail Station.

Route #19 serving Route 44 in Seekonk was discontinued in May 2007. GATRA also provides paratransit on-demand services (Dial-a-Ride) for seniors and persons with disabilities within a three-quarter mile radius from GATRA fixed-route service.

There is some unofficial park-and-ride usage on private lots by GATRA bus riders but currently no official park-and-ride locations. An unofficial park-and-ride lot exists at the 99 Restaurant near I-195 Exit 1.

Many Seekonk residents travel to jobs in Rhode Island, yet GATRA cannot provide service across the State border under current federal regulations. Likewise, the Rhode Island Public Transit Agency (RIPTA) cannot provide service into Massachusetts. Central Plaza, one terminal stop of the GATRA Route #16 bus is adjacent to the Pawtucket border. The nearest RIPTA bus connections are the Routes #76 (on Central Avenue) and #77 on Benefit Street. The closest bus stops on those routes are approximately 750 feet and 1,500 feet from Central Plaza, respectively.

Figure 6-3. GATRA Route #16 Map (GATRA)



6.8 Scenic Roadways

In 2010, the Town drafted a scenic roads bylaw (Category 48. Scenic Roads) for the purpose of identifying, designating, and protecting scenic roads in the Town. The draft bylaw establishes a process for designating a roadway, along with criteria that will be considered in making a recommendation for scenic designation. These criteria include the historic significance and scenic value of the roadway, and of the many affected trees or stone walls; exceptional qualities of affected trees (i.e. age spread, species, and specimen size); present and future bordering land uses; and the feasibility of protection in light of road design and use. Although not designated, Prospect Street is the only roadway that has been considered for scenic roadway status. Currently there are relatively limited candidates for designation within the Town.