

Facilities, Services, and Social Resilience

1. Introduction

Chapter Overview

The *Facilities, Services, and Social Resilience* element of the Hatfield Comprehensive Plan provides an overview of the current municipal infrastructure and public services provided by the Town, the relevant issues and opportunities pertaining to the Town's facilities and services, and examples from other communities that have faced similar circumstances.

Some Key Takeaways

The following sentiments were expressed during the community engagement phase of this comprehensive plan process, reflecting the residents' perspective on municipal facilities, services, and the social resilience of Hatfield.

- Schools are of paramount concern and there is a great interest in understanding the relationship between municipal revenues and expenses, and the needs to sustain Hatfield schools over the long term.
- There is general satisfaction among residents with the level of public services received from the town, yet the challenges posed by the effects of climate change and an aging population are also apparent.
- The growing population of older residents raises concerns about services for seniors and the support available for people to age in place.
- Critical facilities are highly valued and commonly used for services, but their location within the floodplain poses challenges.
- Residents are increasingly aware of the need to adapt to climate change and similarly aware of the tension between taking climate action and preserving the Town facilities and services most at risk.
- To ensure Hatfield's resilience, or its ability to respond to crises and be better prepared for future stress, residents view the services provided by the schools, library, and Town Hall as critical.

Connecting Themes

Over the course of the first year of the comprehensive planning process, residents engaged through multiple formats and at various community events to provide information on the current conditions and future demands on the town's Facilities, Services, and Social Resilience. Throughout the community engagement process, dynamic tensions and critical conversations emerged that demonstrate the interconnected nature of the various elements of

the comprehensive plan. In regard to the Facilities, Services, and Social Resilience of Hatfield, the following themes and threads emerged:

Climate and Infrastructure

Residents recognize the importance of emergency preparedness and protecting and improving infrastructure in the context of a changing climate where hazards, especially flooding, pose greater challenges to the community. A focus on controlled growth, careful development, and protecting critical infrastructure will help guide decision making where costs will be great, whether action is taken or not.

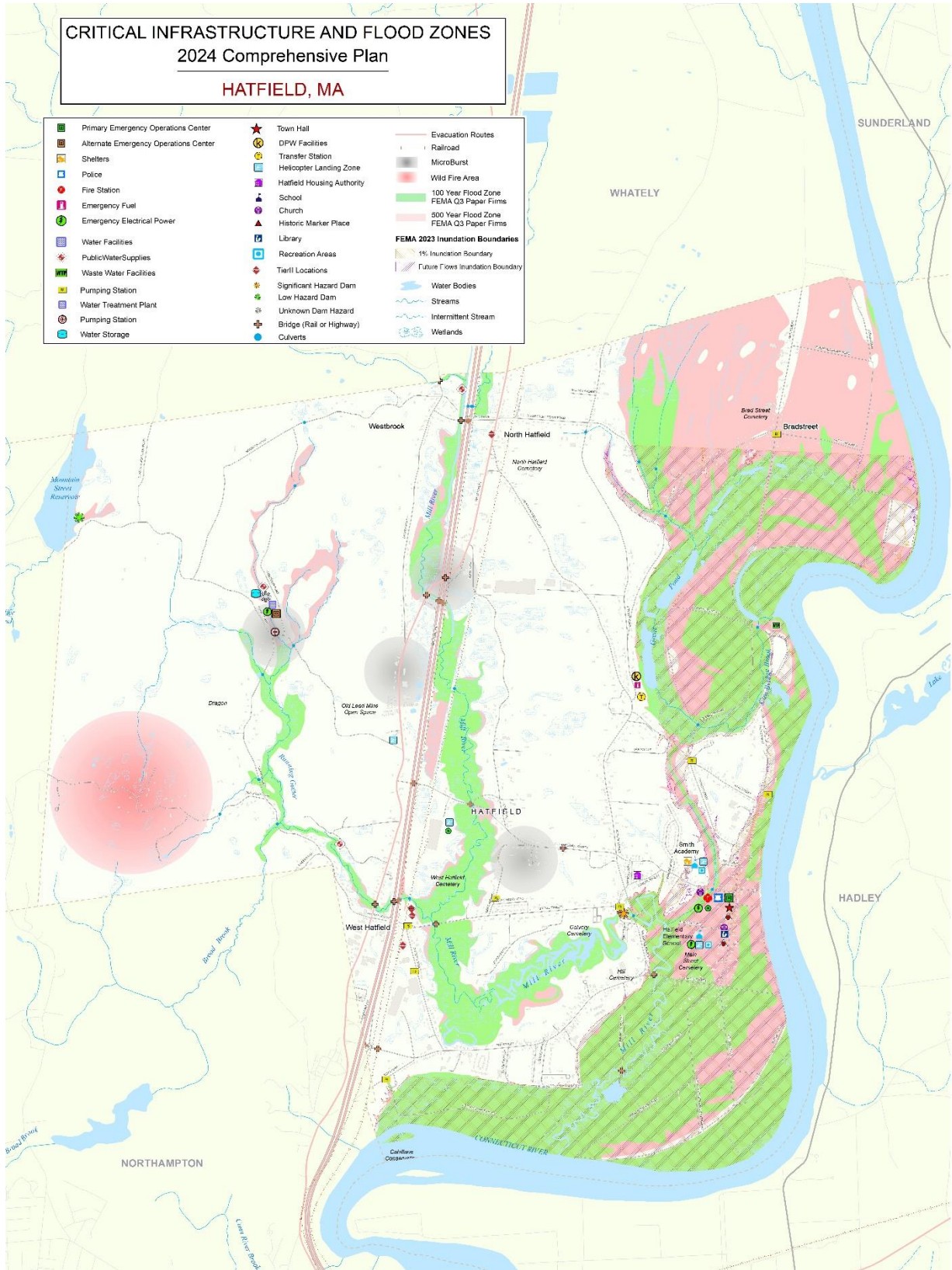
Character and Community

Residents reflecting on the character of their community hold a desire for a welcoming environment for all, where lifelong residents and new neighbors can gather to build a strong community. Despite being a small town, residents acknowledge a disconnectedness and inaccessibility that many experience and value building new support systems and social spaces. Fostering inclusivity is a key component, not only of welcoming diverse residents new to town but also of caring for long-term residents.

Schools

The strength and stability of the school system is a primary concern, for its importance both as an attractant for new families moving to town but also as a potential burden on taxpayers. Education in the context of climate change is both an urgent need and opportunity to enhance the educational experience that may have indirect impacts to school choice enrollment and home values. A complementary vision for the schools that will reduce the strain on town finances is desired.

Figure 1 – Critical Infrastructure and Flood Zones in Hatfield



2. Existing Conditions

This section presents an overview of the existing conditions of Hatfield's facilities and services in two subsections, an inventory of existing infrastructure in town and narrative on the various services provided through Town departments, boards, and committees.

Infrastructure

Hatfield's geography has been a major factor in the development of its infrastructure. The broad, alluvial plains of the Connecticut River attracted farms, and settlement patterns grew around the fertile soils. Interstate 91 with two on and off ramps in Hatfield, provides easy access and serves as a major conduit for goods and people. Over time, this has spurred modest industrial and commercial growth as well as residential growth. The town has water and limited sewer utilities, and the boundaries and capacities of these utilities are shaping and directing growth.

Roads and Highways

The major artery running through town is Interstate 91, which connects Hatfield with Northampton and Springfield to the south and Greenfield, Northfield, and Vermont communities, such as Brattleboro, to the north. Within Hatfield, residents can travel both north and south via Route 5 & 10. There is not an east-to-west route available due to the Connecticut River, but residents can travel across the river, using Route 9 to access Hadley, Amherst, and points east as well as points west.

Sidewalks and Trails

Pedestrian infrastructure across town is limited, with most sidewalks along Main, School, Elm, Prospect and Maple streets. There are also limited walking trails along Kellog Hill Road near the public boat ramp. Despite limited sidewalks and trails, residents enjoy walking around the center of town and express strong desires to expand the existing sidewalk network to connect to more residential areas and shared paths to neighboring communities.

Railway

The Amtrak train was re-routed in 2014 to run from Springfield through Northampton north to Brattleboro VT, passing through Hatfield twice each day. There is not a stop in Hatfield and the passenger train route has not had an impact on the Town, although the Hazard Mitigation Planning Committee determined that there has also been an increase in the number of cargo trains. Pan Am Railways operates the freight line that runs north-south through Hatfield, which serves a handful of commercial and industrial operations in Town.

Public Transportation

The Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA) makes four daily trips from Greenfield to Northampton on Routes 5/10. The Route 5/10 FRTA bus makes requested stops at C&S and Brockway Smith. FRTA'S service is accessible to persons with disabilities. Buses have priority seating for persons with disabilities, and FRTA provides ADA paratransit services for individuals who are unable to independently ride FRTA's accessible fixed route system.

Public Drinking Water Supply

Hatfield's drinking water comes from three sources: the Hatfield Town reservoir, also known as the Running Gutter Brook Reservoir; the Omasta Well; and the West Hatfield Well. The Town of Hatfield has a water distribution system with about 37 miles of water mains ranging from 2" to 16" in diameter. While a vast majority of residents are connected to public water, some residents have private wells.

For the residents who are on private wells, the Board of Health oversees relevant state and local regulations to ensure the quality and quantity of available water. Within its Rules and Regulations, adopted in 2017, the Board of Health provides guidance for the location and construction of new wells, standards for decommissioning wells, and permitting processes and procedures.

Wastewater

Approximately one-half of Hatfield is tied into the town's sewer system. Sanitary sewer service is provided to homes and businesses on Elm Street, Main Street, North Street, Colonial Acres, Chestnut Street, Nolan Circle, School Street, and portions of Prospect Street, Bridge Street, King Street, Plantation Road, Elm Court, Old Farms Road, Raymond Avenue, Dwight Street, Church Street, North Hatfield Road, and the southernmost portion of West Street.

Dams

Hatfield has two dams within its boundaries: Hatfield Reservoir Dam along the Running Gutter Brook near Reservoir Rd. and the D.F. Riley Grist Mill Dam on the Mill River near Prospect Ct.

- The Hatfield Reservoir Dam is municipally owned. The Massachusetts Office of Dam Safety lists the facility with an "Unknown" hazard classification, and the condition of the dam is also unknown. As this dam is upstream in the Running Gutter and Mill River watershed, any failure of this facility would directly affect much of the town's infrastructure, including the Route 5 & 10 corridor.
- The D.F. Riley Grist Mill Dam is privately owned, in unsafe condition, and is rated a "Significant Hazard" by the Massachusetts Office of Dam Safety. These hazard potential ratings indicate how likely failure of the dam would lead to loss of life, damage to property, or interruption of important services. The last inspection of the dam was completed in May 2019, when it was found to be in unsafe condition. This is a serious potential hazard that the Town will need to address within the next few years.

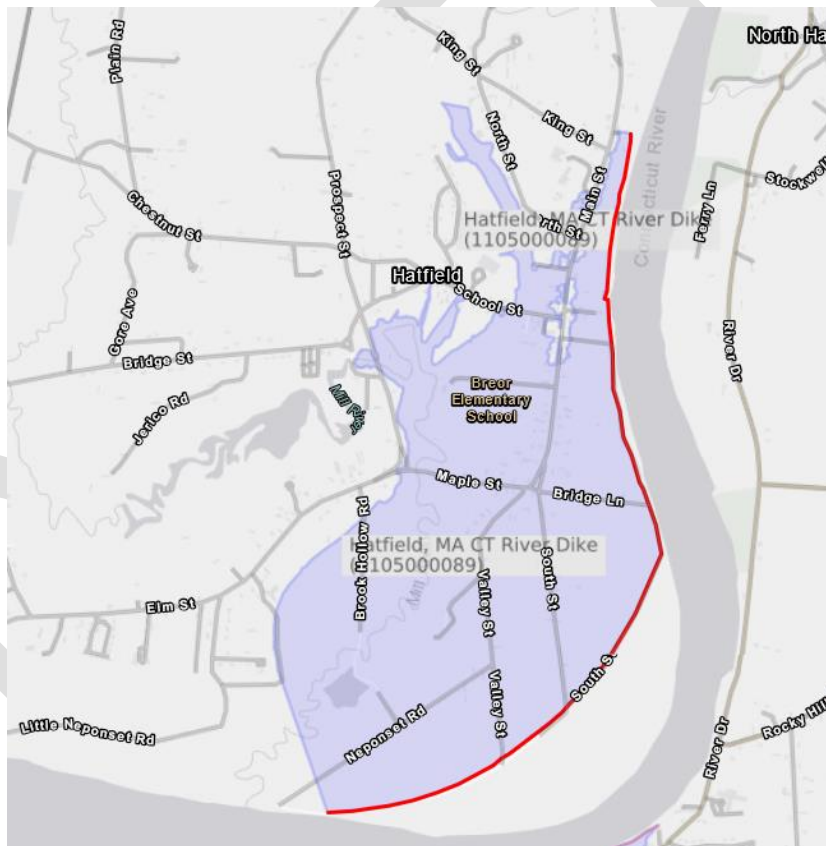
At Hatfield's western boundary are the eastern dikes for the Mountain Street Reservoir, which are part of Northampton's Water Supply Lands. While the Mountain Street Reservoir dikes sit just over the town line in Hatfield, the reservoir is in the towns of Hatfield, Whately, and Williamsburg. The dikes have been identified by the Massachusetts Office of Dam Safety as a "Low Hazard" in poor condition. Flooding from overtopping of these structures would

pass down the Running Gutter watershed through Hatfield and cause significant impacts throughout the western area of Town.

Flood Control Structures

Hatfield's most significant flood control structure is the 2.67-mile levee along the banks of the Connecticut River. The Army Corps of Engineers National Levee Database indicates that the Town is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the levee. Since its construction in 1938 this earthen levee has provided some protection from Connecticut River flooding. It was noted during discussion of the Comprehensive Plan Committee that the levee serves more to delay flood waters than prevent flood waters from reaching the town. The Federal Emergency Management Agency has indicated to the Town that for the updated flood maps, the levee will not be credited with reducing hazard from flooding.

Figure 2: Map of Levee in Hatfield along Connecticut River



Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers National Levee Database

On a smaller yet extensive scale, agricultural ditches were historically constructed by farmers along the edges of fields as a flood control system. Over time, as land has transitioned from farming to other uses, landowners have often been unaware of the function of these drainage ditches or have been unable to maintain them due to wetlands regulations. As these ditches are abandoned the frequency of localized flooding increases. Hatfield has relatively flat

topography with ample low-lying land. The town does not have a comprehensive plan for assessing the long-term impacts of the abandonment of drainage ditches or for managing stormwater as land transitions from drained agricultural uses to non-farm uses. See the Farm chapter for a more in-depth discussion of these agricultural ditches.

Telecommunications/IT

One cell tower is located in Hatfield adjacent to I-91 and accessible from Chestnut Street. While five service providers utilize the tower and the tower is centrally located in town, cell phone coverage in Hatfield is considered poor, especially in the area around Town Hall.

Comcast provides Xfinity broadband internet service across the town. Broadband internet connectivity at the school buildings is considered good.

Public Facilities and Services

The town center of Hatfield is located within the 1980 FEMA mapped 500-year flood zone. Critical facilities here include the town hall, town records and historical archives, emergency management including the police and fire stations and associated vehicles, the library, elementary school, emergency shelter, and a senior assisted care facility. The area also includes the historic architecture of Hatfield's oldest buildings.

Hatfield Memorial Town Hall, 59 Main Street

The Memorial Town Hall is located at 59 Main Street and is home to the majority of the Town's administrative offices, departments, and boards. Over recent years, the Town Hall building has received improvements for accessibility and energy efficiency.

Most of the town government, the town staff, and its boards and commissions are based at the Town Hall, including the following:

- Accountant
- Animal Control
- Assessor's Office
- Building Commissioner
- Council on Aging
- Town Administrator
- Town Clerk
- Treasurer
- Veterans' Agent
- Agricultural Advisory Commission
- Board of Assessors
- Board of Health
- Capital Improvement Planning Committee
- Cemetery Commission

- Community Preservation Committee
- Conservation Commission
- Cultural Council
- Disability Commission
- Emergency Management Planning Committee
- Energy Committee
- Finance Committee
- HCTV – Hatfield Community Television
- Historical Commission
- Planning Board
- Recreation Committee
- Redevelopment Authority
- Select Board

Council on Aging, 59 Main Street

Hatfield’s Council on Aging (COA) can be found downstairs within the Hatfield Memorial Town Hall. The department aims to provide quality services to the growing population of elderly residents. Three staff members manage the various programs and services directed through the COA, which is governed by the Council on Aging Board, a group of six residents. Services offered through the COA include van services for residents needing transportation services.

Police, 3 School Street

The Hatfield Police Department is established by the citizens to provide the town with a high level of safety, security, and service. As an enforcement agency of local government, the police department has the responsibility for the preservation of public peace and for the effective delivery of a wide variety of police service.

The police station is located on the western side of Town Hall, where the town’s emergency management director is also located. This facility is also located within the floodplain.

Fire, 3 School Street

The Hatfield Fire Department is established to meet both the emergency and non-emergency needs of the community. Dedicated to providing for the safety and welfare of the public, the Hatfield Fire Department also coordinates the Hatfield Ambulance service.

The fire hall is located next to the Police Department behind Town Hall.

Library, 39 Main Street

Constructed c. 1894, the Dickinson Memorial Hall has been home to the Hatfield Public Library since its completion. The handsome Renaissance-style building is also home to the Hatfield Historical Museum and town archives. From this location, the town library provides services for residents of all ages and prides itself as “a welcoming and lively center for

lifelong learning, personal enrichment, and community interaction.”¹ Led by a director and the board of trustees, the town library offers programming, books, and media resources to town residents, connecting its users to ideas, to experiences, and to others in the community.

Hatfield Housing Authority, 2 School Street

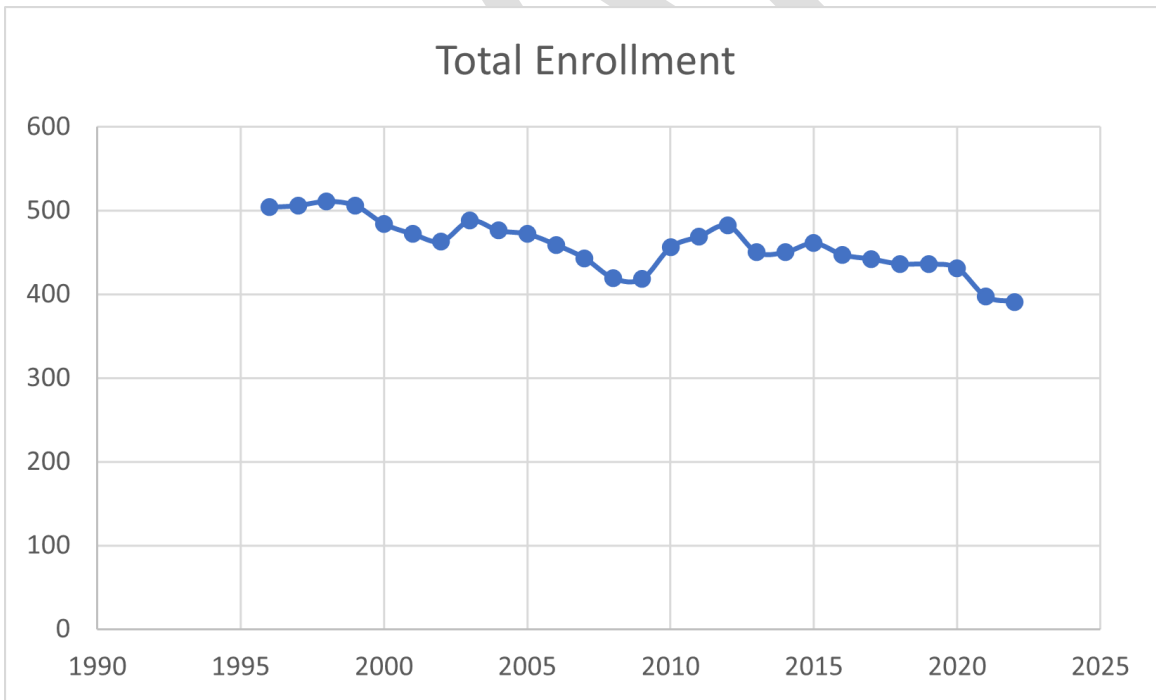
The Hatfield Housing Authority owns and operates one property in town, across from Memorial Town Hall. The property is also home to Capawonk Housing for the Elderly, a complex of 44 publicly subsidized, single-story housing units for seniors. The property is centrally located and near to municipal offices and services, albeit within the floodplain along with other critical facilities.

Schools

The Hatfield School District is composed of two schools, enrolling approximately 391 students in the 2022 school year. Enrollment has declined in the past two decades, presenting significant challenges to the district, now one of the smallest in the state.

While the School District offices are located at Smith Academy, the town high school, the School Committee hosts meetings at Hatfield Elementary School.

Table 1- School Enrollment



Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of District and School Finance

¹ <https://hatfieldpubliclibrary.org/library-history/>

Smith Academy, 34 School Street

Built in 1980, Smith Academy serves students of middle and high school age in grades 7 through 12. The nearly 60,000 square foot facility sits on a 42-acre campus that is fortunately above the 500-year floodplain. The building was constructed to accommodate a projected enrollment of 300 students. Enrollment for the 2023-2024 academic year was 126.

Hatfield Elementary School, 33 Main Street

Opened in 2003, Hatfield Elementary School serves the youngest students in town, from pre-Kindergarten through grade 6. The 55,000 square foot facility sits on a 12-acre site that stretches from Main Street toward the Mill River to the west and rests entirely within the 500-year floodplain. The school was built to accommodate a projected enrollment of 250 students. Enrollment for 2023-2024 was 196. As of Spring 2024, the School Committee was debating the option of relocating the 6th-grade class to Smith Academy to open more space for growing class sizes in the lower grades.

Transfer Station, 6 Straits Road

Residential household waste, recycling, and yard waste are accepted by the town at the Transfer Station at 6 Straits Road. Residents are required to purchase a Transfer Station Decal to utilize the facility, which has limited hours on Wednesday and Saturday.

Hatfield Department of Public Works, 10 Straits Road

The main office for the Department of Public Works is also the home of the Highway Department's facilities and emergency fuel reserve. The DPW's many departments and services are coordinated through this primary facility, including but not limited to the following:

- Roadway paving, plowing, and salting
- Tree maintenance on public lands
- Tree planting in the tree belt
- Water metering and service connections
- Sewer service expansions, maintenance, and inspection

DPW maintains an additional storage facility on Elm Court.

Wastewater Treatment Plant, 260 Main Street

Hatfield's wastewater treatment plant is located in the northeast part of town close to the Connecticut River, within the 1980 FEMA mapped 500-year floodplain. The Wastewater Management Plan Report from 2022 confirmed that the finished floor elevation is not compliant with either the 100-year or the 500-year flood elevation. The Town utilizes an Enterprise Fund for its wastewater utility while also collecting sewer use fees from properties connected to the system. The facility is scheduled for critical updates to equipment and facility improvements. As of April 2024 the Town is finalizing the contract for the long awaited improvements that also take into account addressing risks to flood flows.

3. Challenges and Opportunities

Hatfield, like many smaller communities, makes annual decisions to position the Town in good financial standing and ensure the capability of providing quality services to its residents. In planning for a future Hatfield, particularly considering increased impacts from climate change, sustaining existing infrastructure and re-investing in needed improvements seems insufficient to meet additional needs for facilities and services prepared to face unforeseen disruptions. The working group for this chapter took care in the review and elaboration of Community Survey responses that began to identify residents' main hopes, key concerns, and budgetary priorities for Hatfield and its future. The following topics emerged and are presented in no order:

- Maintaining and Improving Schools
- Capital Improvements and Financial Planning
- Relocating and Consolidating Critical Resources
- Water Infrastructure – Drinking Water and Sewer Services
- Building Maintenance and Accessibility
- Planning for an Aging population
- Communications
- Cultivating Social Resilience

Maintaining and Improving the Schools

The previous Hatfield Master Plan from 2001 intentionally deferred discussion on the topic of schools to the relevant committees and boards. While Schools are not often central to the typical Facilities and Services component of comprehensive plans, the overwhelming response from community members regarding this topic has elevated it to a top priority.

“Public Schools” was the top priority for 35% of respondents to the Community Survey and one of the top 3 priorities for 55% of respondents.

As one of the smallest school districts in the Commonwealth, Hatfield Schools provide a uniquely personal educational experience. The small class sizes and low student-to-teacher ratio are qualities that residents admire in the schools. However, the ever-increasing cost of providing quality education, from the wages needed to attract and retain teachers to the operating costs associated with keeping school buildings open, has become a perennial problem for the Town budget.

With a relatively static local tax base, resident taxpayers are increasingly burdened to provide the necessary revenues to cover the expenses of maintaining the schools. Enrollment of school-choice pupils sends additional tuition funds into the district that help supplement the budget approved by voters. In recent years, the School Committee and residents at Town Meeting have needed to address budgetary shortfalls as school-choice tuition payments have been insufficient in covering expanded demands for services.

The ongoing challenges of raising the necessary revenue, either through local taxes or from school choice tuition payments, to ensure that Hatfield Schools are attractive to residents and out-of-district families remain. This challenge, however, has sparked conversation about the opportunity to develop a complementary vision for the schools as more than the site of primary and secondary education and more of an asset to the broader community.

Through engaging the community and collaborating with the members of the working group for this chapter, the following strategies emerged as examples of recent successes and future opportunities:

- continuing the before- and after-care programming hosted at the Schools,
- expanding the before and after-care programs beyond the school year,
- increasing the use of school buildings for summer camp activities,
- expanding the schools' curricula, adding inter-disciplinary subjects such as climate change,
- increasing community access of school facilities for local recreation leagues,
- inviting the broader community to school functions, such as homecoming, and partnering with the Council on Aging to co-host community events.

Capital Improvements and Financial Planning

Hatfield has taken significant strides in recent years to improve the Town's financial standing, resulting in an improved credit rating. There remains the challenge of outstanding debts that need to be consolidated for the Town to receive better interest rates for refinancing. The Town's Capital Improvement Planning Committee reviews the priority funding needs for maintaining facilities and any ongoing or expanded municipal services. Looking ahead through fiscal year 2030, the Capital Improvement Planning Committee has reviewed over 50 projects to fund across various Town departments. The School District and the Water Department have identified the most projects in need of funding support. In the short term, ten projects were prioritized for funding in the current year.

- Preservation of Birth Records
- Climate-Smart Comprehensive Plan matching funds
- Fire Department – Extrication equipment for new fire truck
- New laptops for ambulance and two fire trucks
- Additional police cruiser if new officer is approved for Police Department
- Elm Cort building Phase 2
- Forestry Management Plan for watershed
- Mini-splits for Town Hall second floor
- Smith Academy Park irrigation
- Hatfield Elementary School roof repair/replacement

The Town's ability to provide adequate facilities depends on effective capital planning and commitment to implementation by the town, asset management policies, and the revenues for the town to use to support those operations and maintenance requirements. Additional discussion of this key issue and the broader implications can be found in the *Economic Development Chapter*.

Relocating and Consolidating Critical Resources

As the risk of flooding increases with climate change, the many town-owned facilities in the floodplain will face increased risk of irreparable damage that could cause significant disruption to the functioning of town government and public services. In the town center, there are nearly 30 town departments, boards, and committees operating in the Town Hall, including the Council on Aging, the Fire Department, Police Department, Senior Housing at Capawonk, the Town Library, and Elementary School. With so many critical resources spread across the town center and all facing the same heightened risk, the relocation of critical services to new, consolidated facilities is both a daunting challenge and exciting opportunity.

A thorough examination of adequate, undeveloped parcels outside of the 500-year floodplain will be needed to begin the conversation about relocating these essential services. The issue of funding such an extensive project is also a significant challenge, yet the Commonwealth's Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program has supported communities in the Pioneer Valley with consolidation of public services, albeit not to the extent that Hatfield may face. The Commonwealth's focus on planning for the impacts of climate change means that many funding sources could be leveraged to support this initiative.

Water Infrastructure – Drinking Water and Sewer Services

Water infrastructure is critical to public health and economic growth in Hatfield. While public drinking water lines have been extended to most properties, sewer service is limited largely to the eastern half of the town. The expansion of sewer services has the potential to spur development but is a costly investment that the Town is struggling to cover. Since 2020, sewer service upgrades have been ongoing along the Route 5 corridor, connecting to both residential and commercial customers.

The challenges of funding large-scale expansion, let alone regular maintenance, tend to direct development toward areas with existing infrastructure in place. The opportunity of infill development, especially where water infrastructure is already available to meet the additional demands of new connections, can typically guide both residential and commercial construction across communities. Unfortunately, in Hatfield, most of the existing sewer infrastructure lies within the floodplain, including the wastewater treatment facility and multiple pump stations. In the light of new flood projections, infill development is further constrained and limited to uplands where services are already in place.

Building Maintenance and Accessibility

As a small town with finite resources, the continued maintenance and operations of public buildings can be a strain. The Capital Improvement Planning Committee supports the various municipal departments and boards to prioritize upgrades to town-owned buildings and public properties. Recently, the Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade project has received significant attention due to essential equipment and components reaching the end of their useful lives, and the need for a more flood resilient facility. While the School buildings are not yet old, both facilities are beginning to need more than regular maintenance such as upgrading mechanical systems and repairing/replacing the roofs.

As the Town of Hatfield plans for an aging population and seeks to address the needs of all residents, accessibility to Town buildings and open spaces is important. Accessibility to the Council on Aging's Senior Center is an example of successful accessibility upgrades in historic, town-owned buildings. Additional suggested improvements emerging from the planning process include:

- the town-owned playground
- accessing the Town Library
- offering of more active recreational amenities

Community Development Block Grants and Community Preservation Funds could be used to help fund some of these upgrades.

Planning for an Aging population

Like much of Massachusetts, Hatfield's population is aging. Services and facilities for this increasing segment of the population must also be expanded. The Hatfield Council on Aging provides important programming and services for seniors in town, and residents praise the COA for their services. An increasing elderly population will also demand increased services and programming, which will need additional funding and planning.

44% of respondents to the Age & Dementia Friendly Community Survey expressed a desire for a new or larger Senior Center.

With the Hatfield Council on Aging currently located in the Town Hall basement, room to expand is limited. Since the Town Hall is one of the Town's critical facilities located within the floodplain and at increasing risk of flooding, the relocation of the Senior Center is one of the many public facilities deserving of a new location. *Additional discussion on the challenges and opportunities related to planning for an aging population can be found in the Health and Social Environment chapter on page [xx].*

Communications

For many smaller, rural communities, communication is an ongoing and important responsibility for the Town. The challenge of public outreach, especially regarding important public health and safety information, can be fraught with challenge as there is such a range in how communication could occur based on capability with use of technologies and frequency of visits to such places as Town Hall. For older residents, the Council on Aging has found a successful model in their regular newsletter, which includes a community calendar, contact information for town and regional resources, and updates from the COA. The physical newsletter seems to work well with Hatfield's senior residents, which may hold true to other resident groups. Responses to the Community Survey emphasize the value of traditional media such as local newspapers, the postal service, and town billboard as preferred means for sharing information.

For the more digitally oriented residents, the Town website is the starting point to find public notices and important Town information. The capacity for a town employee or consultant to maintain the Town website is an important consideration, as is the ability of town staff, volunteer boards, and elected officials to promptly share important information through the resource. Clear and effective policies and procedures for communicating Town business, either past decisions or upcoming deliberations, are an integral part of improving communications within the Town government and amongst the community.

Cultivating Social Resilience

Resilience is not only the ability to bounce back after a hardship or disaster, but also the ability to recover more quickly and to become better positioned prior to the next hardship. When considering the resilience of Hatfield's social fabric, residents have frequently discussed how they as a community can cultivate greater resilience so that the future, regardless of the challenges that lay ahead, is bright and prosperous for all community members. The common framing of the question itself offers, in part, what social resilience means for Hatfield: "How do we build a multigenerational community?"

The challenge of cultivating social resilience is directly contingent on many other factors in the community, from housing and economic development to transportation and infrastructure, to the services the town can provide and more. For many, before those factors can be addressed, there is a desire to affirm the Town's direction through the comprehensive planning engagement process residents have shared a collective desire to remain a small, involved community.

The work to strengthen the social resilience of Hatfield is ongoing and continues in the form of a variety of community events, focused on engaging all ages and connecting residents across generations and backgrounds. These events take the form of school functions, Friday concerts, and more. A greater variety and frequency of community events could contribute to

strengthening the social ties among residents. Leveraging public spaces and facilities will be integral to this process.

Additional strategies have also been offered by residents passionate about this topic:

- Firstly, a devoted town staff-member to direct this effort and coordinate across municipal departments and bodies. This individual or small group would then take up the charge and begin sharing information more broadly with the community, via newsletters, post cards, or digital media.
- Expanding the social calendar for community events has also been identified as a primary task for cultivating greater social resilience, especially events throughout the town in various spaces, such as the Community Gardens or school buildings.
- The most ambitious concept would be to build a new, welcoming community space in the form of a Community Hub where residents of all ages and backgrounds can gather to socialize, support and celebrate one another.

While this effort may invite various critique from residents, the goal of cultivating social resilience is to promote a stronger, healthier, and more welcoming community. Returning to the definition of “resilience” as a proactive ability rather than a reactive capacity, it is worth noting that this framing suggests that cultivating social resilience is a dynamic rather than static process.

4. Examples from other Communities

Hatfield faces considerable challenges and opportunities, particularly with so many critical facilities and services located within the floodplain. By looking at examples from various municipalities, the Town may find opportunities for success in meeting its many challenges. In consultation with the members of the working group for this chapter, the following topics were considered promising trends and with examples of success.

Consolidation of Municipal Facilities and Services

For smaller, more rural communities such as Hatfield, the cost of maintenance for municipal facilities can become a significant annual cost. By consolidating services into fewer newly built and efficient facilities, municipalities can create financial savings in the long-term while also freeing underutilized or aging buildings for redevelopment opportunity. This strategy can lead to long-term sustainability for the Town and help advance climate resilience for the community. With so many of the Town’s critical facilities and services based within the floodplain, Hatfield could benefit greatly from a consolidation of facilities and services to a new location outside the floodplain.

A recent example of a town in the Pioneer Valley consolidating municipal services with a new facility can be found in Williamsburg. A new safety complex was built in 2023 to provide combined space for both the police and fire departments and garages for emergency

response vehicles. The facility was funded in part through the Commonwealth's Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program in Fiscal Year 2023. The new public safety complex was designed to enhance community resilience through increasing energy efficiency and incorporating nature-based solutions into the building's site design. By including three specific climate resiliency goals in the design, siting, and construction of the complex, Williamsburg was granted \$1.8 million dollars by MVP toward the \$5 million project cost.

While Williamsburg offers a successful example of combining related municipal services into one complex, considering the number of town offices, departments, and services currently facing risks of flooding suggests a need for a larger municipal complex for Hatfield should this topic be further explored.

Another example of consolidating municipal facilities and services, comes from the Town of Middleton. The future Middleton Municipal Complex is sited on the former Middleton Golf Course, which the Town voted to purchase in 2017. The property, centrally located on the Town's South Main Street, will soon include two separate buildings to accommodate the fire station, police station, senior center, and town offices. The 40,000-squarefoot public safety building will house the police and fire departments while the 20,000 square foot community center/town hall will consolidate the senior center and municipal offices. The third component of the project is a town commons, a public park that will surround the two buildings. The Middleton project is ongoing and the construction phase has yet to begin, showcasing the multi-year time frame projects of this scale require.

Adaptive Re-use of Town-owned properties

Adaptive re-use is the act of finding a new use for a building and has long been an important and effective historic preservation tool. With a new use, vacant or underutilized buildings can contribute to the local economy, encouraging businesses and investment. Additionally, a rehabilitated building will provide additional property taxes to the municipality.

With many communities facing a crisis in housing accessibility, the broad trend for adaptive re-use of municipal buildings and vacant property has been to develop new housing units. These can take the form of either market-rate or affordable housing development, with the municipality typically relinquishing ownership to a private entity to develop and manage a project. Hatfield has experienced this form of adaptive re-use in the past, as it sold the long vacant Center School property at 58 Main Street in 2016. The Town invited proposals for a 55-and-older residential development that resulted in the development of 8 condominiums. As noted by residents at a Housing Workshop in 2023, these market-rate units are likely unaffordable to the many residents who once attended the Center School.

Other communities in the Pioneer Valley have also sold municipal facilities to developers for housing. But none have faced the risk of flood that Hatfield does, especially when considering the adaptive re-use of the town-owned buildings that sit in the floodplain. Housing may not pose the best opportunity for these buildings, but communities have

leveraged their underutilized public buildings for other, non-residential uses. Springfield has sold several of its aging fire stations to developers who have repurposed the buildings for a mix of uses including office and commercial space, dining establishments, and a funeral home. Easthampton redeveloped its former town hall as an arts center and performance space renamed City Space Easthampton. Beyond the Pioneer Valley, Framingham has seen the redevelopment of their Athenaeum Hall at the Saxonville Mills as a community space, owned and operated by the non-profit Friends of Saxonville.

Regionalization of Municipal Services

While Hatfield has historically opted-out of the regionalization of services, especially regarding the school district, current financial constraints are encouraging a re-thinking of the regionalization of municipal services. “Regionalization,” “municipal cost sharing,” “cross-jurisdictional sharing,” and “inter-local cooperation” are all terms that describe a collaborative process that results in the sharing or consolidation of the purchasing of goods or provision of services between two or more entities. Cooperation and collaboration at the local and regional level can result in opportunities to maintain or improve services, and to save or enhance revenue. Such efforts can take a variety of forms, from the joint purchasing of goods or sharing of services to hiring and sharing staff, to the full consolidation of a municipal service, and creation of a regional department.

Communities in neighboring Franklin County have long collaborated to regionalize essential services that would be too costly for any single community to provide. With the support of the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) acting as the host agency for many inter-municipal agreements, many municipal services have been regionalized to save member community funds. Regionalized services in Franklin County include waste management, regional housing, collective purchasing, shared business inspections, and cooperative public health services.

Through conversations with the members of the working group for this chapter, the following municipal services were identified as potential opportunities for regionalization:

- Emergency dispatch for police, fire, and emergency medical technicians (EMTs)
- Certified wastewater treatment technician
- Superintendent of schools
- Food services for schools

In 2013, the Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies produced the *Massachusetts Shared Services Manual*, a toolkit of regionalization best practices for city and town officials. Additional examples of successful regionalization efforts and details on the various agreements that can produce regionalized services are provided throughout the manual. The resource is available from Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) online at <https://www.pvpc.org/sites/default/files/2013-shared-permit-manual-web.pdf>.

Community Schools and Innovative Curricula

Hatfield's schools are valued by residents for their small class sizes and tight-knit communities. Unfortunately, with such a small district and limited enrollment capacity, the Hatfield School District is routinely burdened with increased costs to deliver educational services. The Town has needed to increase the schools' budgets routinely in recent years, and consistently spends 51% of the Town's budget on schooling. In order to preserve the quality of schools, retain full enrollment of local students, and attract new school-choice students, the town must explore innovative strategies to keep its community schools.

Through the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), various cost-saving and alternative funding programs can be explored. Strategies such as education collaboratives, which have operated in Massachusetts for over 50 years and Hatfield is currently a part of, could offer different mechanisms to supplement or strengthen regular school programs, to share resources and/or to provide cost-effective services for Hatfield and other participating districts. Other programs offered through DESE, such as the Innovative Schools program, could offer a means for the Hatfield School District to enhance its curriculum while finding supplemental funding to ease the burden on the Town budget.

5. Recommended Goals and Strategies

Goal 1: Maximize the Town's existing facilities and services

Ensure the Town's existing facilities and services are being utilized to their greatest potential without exceeding the demands of the Town's occupants.

Actions:

- Assess the feasibility of consolidating the Town's Fire Departments and/or Water Districts to potentially minimize excessive personnel and capital assets, as measured against the Town's needs and regulatory standards.
Lead Party: Select Board
Support Parties: All Town boards/committees
Timeframe: Short-term
- Working with the School Department and other local educational authorities, continue to explore opportunities for expanded community use of school facilities.
Lead Party: Select Board
Support Parties: School Committee
Timeframe: Short-term

- In a centralized manner, inventory and develop use and re-use plans for Town-owned properties to promote their highest and best use in consideration of community needs/benefits.
 Lead Party: Department of Public Works
 Support Parties: Department Heads
 Timeframe: Short-term
- Work with an accessibility consultant on all the Town’s future facility construction activities, where appropriate, to ensure the incorporation of design, policies, and products that enhance access for all users.
 Lead Party: Select Board
 Support Parties: All Town boards/committees
 Timeframe: Short-term
- Explore the expansion, relocation, or new construction of the Senior Center to enable greater use of the facility by the Town’s elderly population and perhaps, the larger community, and an expansion of programming now and in the future.
 Lead Party: Council on Aging
 Support Parties: Select Board, Capital Improvement Planning Committee
 Timeframe: Short-term

Goal 2: Ensure the Town’s departments are appropriately staffed and equipped

Ensure that the Town’s departments have the resources necessary (i.e., fleet vehicles and equipment, staff, training, etc.) to meet the service demands of the community today and tomorrow.

Actions:

- Ensure the Town’s public safety departments (i.e., police, fire, etc.) have the necessary members and support staff to meet the existing and projected service needs of the community.
 Lead Party: Police Chief, Fire Chief
 Support Parties: Select Board, Finance Committee
 Timeframe: Ongoing, Short-term
- In concert with the Town’s capital improvement planning process, perform a fleet vehicle assessment to understand if the Town’s departments have the correct number, types, and sizes of vehicles in their inventories, and plan for optimizing fleet efficiency. Ensure new and replacement vehicle purchases meet the Town’s Fuel-Efficient Vehicle Policy.
 Lead Party: Director of Public Works
 Support Parties: Police Chief, Fire Chief, School Committee, Council on Aging
 Timeframe: Short-term, Ongoing

Goal 3: Efficiently manage the Town's infrastructure

Invest in routine and capital maintenance/improvement activities at local roads, bridges, water supply and resources, etc. to minimize long-term reconstruction costs and to ensure the ongoing effective use of these assets.

Actions:

- Continue to pursue federal and state grants and other advantageous financing for the maintenance/ improvement and, as necessary, replacement of the Town's existing infrastructure, including through competitive state infrastructure grants (e.g., MassWorks Infrastructure Program).
Lead Party: Select Board, All Department Heads
Support Parties: Capital Improvement Planning Committee
Timeframe: Ongoing
- Evaluate the impact of, and opportunities associated with, current and next-generation communications technologies on the Town's infrastructure and services.
Lead Party: Department of Public Works, Capital Improvement Planning Committee, Finance Committee
Support Parties: Select Board
Timeframe: Ongoing, Short Term

Goal 4: Explore the strategic expansion of the community's water infrastructure

As nearly all sectors of the economy rely on water infrastructure (i.e., potable water, wastewater, and stormwater utilities), invest in such assets in line with the Town's economic development and land use goals.

Actions:

- Pursue federal and state grants for the expansion of the Town's wastewater and stormwater infrastructure. Such investments should prioritize the necessary upgrades at the Wastewater Treatment Plant and connected assets (e.g., pump stations [and generators] and sewer lines).
Lead Party: Department of Public Works, Capital Improvement, Finance Committee
Support Parties: Town Administrator, Select Board
Timeframe: Ongoing
- Explore potential partnerships with adjacent communities for the development of regional wastewater services.

Lead Party: Department of Public Works
Support Parties: Select Board
Timeframe: Short-term

- Evaluate the imposition of limited impact fees to fund a revolving account for Town-wide wastewater infrastructure among other infrastructure improvements.

Lead Party: Department of Public Works, Select Board
Support Parties: Finance Committee, Capital Improvement Planning Committee
Timeframe: Short-term



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