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## CHAPTER 1

### Executive Summary

#### **Background**

Following three years of work by a group of dedicated volunteers, community members, elected officials and municipal employees, the City has articulated a strategy for its future. The entire master planning effort was led by a Steering Committee, consisting of individuals that represent a cross-section of the community and several smaller committees focused on each of the elements of the plan. These groups met several times throughout the course of this planning endeavor to consider how the City can meet its future challenges, from ever-increasing housing prices to aging infrastructure to resiliency planning for climate change and associated sea-level rise. Consideration of each issue in this plan involved a process of research, analysis, public input and debate, strategizing, drafting, editing and review.

This Master Plan provides an overall development concept that promotes continued prosperity for the community and is intended to lend City officials, administrators and community leaders support in their daily efforts to manage and shape Newburyport's growth into the future. Newburyport's character and charm is likely to remain largely unchanged; however, trends in demographics, land use, housing, municipal finance, education and other areas will require proactive efforts to achieve a positive vision for this dynamic City. Each of the Plan elements presents the existing conditions, trends and goals with accompanying actions; these actions, when implemented, will result in a community that meets the needs and expectations of its residents while welcoming visitors, supporting local businesses, and responsibly and sustainably planning for the future.

#### **Guiding Principles**

Throughout the public planning process, one term seemed to be continually mentioned – sustainability. It is a term that is applicable to all facets of this plan and provides the foundation on which all aspects of development must be considered. The City is committed to ensuring the community's positive progress over the course of the next decade, which will be guided by the principle of balancing environmental, social, economic, and financial sustainability.

#### ***Environmental Sustainability***

Preserve and protect the environmental resources that have come to define Newburyport. Protect our natural biodiversity and ensure that our ecological resources remain healthy through responsible land use planning, waste management practices, and consumption patterns.

#### ***Social Sustainability***

Foster and respect Newburyport's socioeconomic diversity so that all members of the community are able to live and thrive in the City throughout all phases of their lives, including young adults, individuals, families, and seniors. Foster the creation of a community that welcomes, celebrates and supports diversity and ensure that families may continue to live and enjoy the City and all of its amenities.

### ***Economic Sustainability***

Ensure that growth is balanced and consistent with Newburyport's historic development patterns and natural environment. Promote and support the City's commercial centers in order to maintain economic and fiscal health. Recognize the importance of the community's cultural resources and their impacts on residents' quality of life.

### ***Fiscal Sustainability***

Responsibly allocate resources so that spending, tax rates and other fiscal policies are sustained in the long-term without threatening government solvency while ensuring that resources are available for continuing maintenance and improvement projects.

## **Key Issues**

### ***Preserving Newburyport's Sense of Place***

#### **The Waterfront**

One of the most important and most discussed issues facing Newburyport is its central waterfront and how it should be treated, enhanced and celebrated. This area has long been the subject of extensive discussion and debate within the community and even extending beyond the City's borders. Today, the waterfront is home to several large parking lots that provide much-needed long-term parking for visitors, shoppers and businesses. A significant amount of park land, public walkways, and parking lots critically located along the retail edge of Merrimac Street and the downtown core, are under the ownership and management of the Newburyport Redevelopment Authority and the Waterfront Trust. Various plans for the redevelopment of this area have long been in discussion, ranging from a mix of retail, restaurant, and residential uses to public open space with structures as necessary for enlivening and shaping the park. Based on extensive public input, there is emerging consensus around maintaining an open waterfront, with some properly located and appropriately-designed public amenities as a first step. Outstanding questions that will need to be vetted include: where to relocate all of the parking that is currently on the waterfront parcels; how to fund both the construction of the park space and its maintenance; what amenities might be included in a possible visitor center and where should it be located; and what other public amenities are most appropriate to add to the park space (i.e., picnic tables, play structures, performance shell, etc.).

#### **Newburyport's Historic Structures and Neighborhoods**

The preservation of Newburyport's historic character will always be a fundamental concern for the City since so much of its identity, value and economy is linked to its heritage and architecturally-significant structures. Additionally, the historic streetscape is an integral part of the community's neighborhoods; without its urban forest landscape Newburyport would be a very different place. As property values in the traditional neighborhoods rise, there is more pressure to renovate, expand, and replace existing structures, impacting the integrity of the neighborhoods and on the City as a whole. To address this concern, the City Council adopted two zoning overlay districts in April 2014 aimed at retaining Newburyport's historic structures and protecting its significant architecture from demolition and from inappropriate restoration and redevelopment. While these regulatory measures add a layer of protection to the buildings located within the downtown and its adjacent residential neighborhoods, there is still a strong community desire to do more to ensure that the City does not lose the very assets that have made it thrive as a desirable place to live, work and visit. There is general

consensus that additional design and architectural standards are needed to ensure that any infill or redevelopment within the National Register Historic District (the oldest and densest area of the City) is appropriate in scale and architectural character so as to protect neighborhood and overall community character.

### **Planning for Resiliency**

Being a coastal community, increasing intensities of storms and projected sea level rise mean that Newburyport must plan ahead for more frequent and more intense storm surges while at the same time making strides in reducing local greenhouse gas emissions by updating facilities and building standards to reduce waste. The City has set a goal to become a zero net energy (i.e. the energy consumed is equal to the renewable energy generated) community by 2050. To achieve this goal, the City will significantly reduce energy use in the governmental, residential, and commercial building and transportation sectors via energy efficiency and energy conservation measures. It will also require the development of new renewable energy resources to provide the balance of energy needs through clean energy generation. Developed with the support of the Massachusetts Community Energy Strategies Program (CESP), Newburyport stakeholders created the *Newburyport Clean Energy Roadmap* that outlines a set of detailed, actionable steps to assist the community and its decision-makers in implementing projects, programs and policies over the next five years. Additionally, the City has formed an Ad-Hoc Resiliency Team focused on creating a Resiliency Plan for Newburyport and Plum Island.

### **Improving and Investing in Newburyport's Infrastructure**

The past decade has seen significant progress in investing in Newburyport's infrastructure and public facilities. Noteworthy projects include wastewater and water treatment facilities, elementary school and senior center, and improvements to parks, trails, fields, sidewalks, and roadways. Continued improvement and consistent, high quality investment in the City's infrastructure, along with comprehensive and transparent planning for road and sidewalk improvements and maintenance strategies are important to the quality of life in the City and to maintaining public health and safety. Likewise, consistent planning and maintenance of public trees contribute to the quality of life in the City, improving air quality, protecting soil from erosion, creating habitats for wildlife, reducing noise, as well as providing an aesthetic appeal that enhances civic pride.

Equally important, capital investment planning will ensure that these expenditures are prioritized, that City staff has sufficient budgets to implement plans and schedule tasks so as to minimize tax burdens and fiscal stress. The City has created and maintained an annual Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), which has provided a link between the City's physical development, its Master Plan, and its fiscal planning and financial capacity; the City has long maintained strong fiscal policies and a AAA bond rating. In addition to ensuring that the CIP is a "living document", the City needs to protect its investments by ensuring that long-term funding is available for facility maintenance.

## **Ensuring Economic Stability**

### **Expanding Newburyport's Local Economy**

In a changing economy, it remains critical to target economic growth that will enable the City to continue to provide an equitable balance of commercial and job opportunities, offering infrastructure, services, and quality of life that attracts residents, businesses and visitors to Newburyport. Economic growth creates new contracting opportunities for local businesses, provides local employment, and connects the City with national, state and



regional economies. Newburyport has a stable local economy based on services and retail and wholesale trade; it also has a growing service-based sector with Anna Jaques Hospital being Newburyport's largest employer and ever expanding medical services industry. Its vibrant downtown serves an affluent population and a thriving tourism sector. There is the potential to enhance the local economy through the expansion of businesses located in the Business and Industrial Park as well as along the Storey Avenue corridor. By encouraging local economic growth, the City will become more fiscally sustainable as the tax base expands. Additionally, a strong local economy will promote a more environmentally sustainable community by reducing the distance residents have to travel to work, shop and play. Notably, census data shows the average age of a Newburyport citizen has increased from 41 to 46 in the last five years, and average household income continues to rise aggressively. Newburyport's economic sustainability will depend on its ability to ensure an affordable place to live for all ages and professions.

### **Ensuring that Housing is Affordable**

The City of Newburyport has experienced a rapid revitalization over the past few decades. Areas of the City that were dilapidated have been restored through substantial rehabilitation, and housing values in these neighborhoods have significantly increased. With few opportunities for renters, first time home buyers, and seniors in the community to downsize, many long-time residents and families have been forced to leave Newburyport and seek housing that is more affordable in neighboring communities. Coupled with the rising home values, the City has experienced a net loss of rental apartments as multi-unit structures have been converted to condominiums. The affluent individuals and families who are moving into Newburyport are bringing new investment and energy into the community. However, if those of more modest means can no longer afford to live in the City, the community may lose much of the economic diversity and generational continuity that have made it such a vibrant, vital city. Additionally, increasing housing prices and fewer rental opportunities bring new challenges in attracting a workforce to sustain local businesses. Resolving this issue will require a significant commitment on the part of the entire community, its elected officials, staff and volunteer board and commission members. The City adopted a Housing Production Plan that presents several strategies that tackle this issue and when implemented, should result in the creation of homes that are affordable to working families, young families and seniors. While some of these strategies involve amending and/or adopting various zoning provisions such as the 40R Smart Growth Overlay District adjacent to the Route 1 traffic circle and commuter rail station, which was adopted in 2015, some require significant financial investment. The City's Affordable Housing Trust and the Community Preservation Fund are both local sources of funding that may be used to support the creation of housing that is affordable. Funding challenges may also be addressed through collaborations among the City and various housing non-profit organizations.

### ***Providing a Healthy, Connected, Community***

#### **Creating a Walkable, Bikeable Community**

Much of Newburyport's attraction lays in its walkable pattern of development, characterized by well-defined neighborhoods, waterfront, and public spaces, all connected by pleasant streets. Newburyport is eminently walkable and bikeable due to its density, mix of uses, and the network of sidewalks and pedestrian amenities on many of its streets. Still, the City can do much to further encourage the community to navigate the City on foot or on bike through reallocating the use of the right-of-way on existing streets to provide a safe and inviting space for bicycles and pedestrians. Traffic calming measures can improve the quality of life in neighborhoods and allow residents and pedestrians to coexist peacefully with cars and other modes of transportation. The City is in the

process of adopting a 'Complete Streets' policy and approach to providing multi-modal public access throughout the city. There is no singular design for Complete Streets, but with the goal being to create active, pedestrian-friendly environments and encourage responsiveness to pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities in building and site design, a 'complete street' often includes sidewalks, bike lanes, special bus lanes, frequent and safe crossing opportunities, narrower travel lanes, and curb extensions. Improvements to, expansion of, and consistent maintenance of walking and biking trails will further promote bike and pedestrian connectivity. As the City becomes more walkable and bikeable, automobile, parking congestion and air pollution will be reduced and public health will be improved as pollution is lessened and opportunities for exercise are increased.

### **Providing Quality Educational Opportunities**

Newburyport's schools are thriving. The students and the parents are engaged in the learning process and now, with the construction of a new elementary school as well as a major renovation of the building that houses both the upper elementary and middle schools, the students have state-of-the-art facilities in which to learn and grow. It is important that the City continues to build on the current momentum of updating its facilities and working to expand its curriculum to get students out into the community for hands-on learning through place-based education. Students will benefit from interactive programming, whether it's a science class taking water samples from the Artichoke River or it's an internship opportunity with one of the City's local businesses. As the community invests in its students and exposes them to real world opportunities in our backyard and beyond, partnerships are formed, trust is reinforced and all residents, no matter the age, benefit.

## CHAPTER 2

### Introduction

#### Section A: Purpose and Goals

A Master Plan is a comprehensive planning document that establishes long-term policy recommendations for a community's physical development, and outlines implementation strategies that address land issues, transportation, community facilities and services, the local economy and the environment. It includes assessments of existing resources and issues, projections of future conditions and needs, and consideration of community goals and desires. This document is not law; it acts as a policy guide and provides a framework for decision-making when projects are proposed and funding decisions need to be made.

Generally, communities use the Master Planning process to understand and identify potential options to manage future growth and development throughout the community. Pockets of land within Newburyport's neighborhoods are subject to development pressure since much of the City is built out. Therefore, we use Master Planning to determine how to guide both the location and the design of redevelopment throughout the City. This Master Plan explores a broader range of issues focused on managing redevelopment and guiding sustainable growth over the next decade.

As a community we will use the Master Plan to provide direction and to guide us, elected officials, city staff and Newburyport's boards and commissions, as land use and funding decisions are being contemplated. The Plan will function as the main policy tool for local decision-makers as proposals and projects are evaluated; it provides a consistent point of reference for those in both the public and the private sectors. While the Plan encompasses all aspects of land use and planning, it does not replace Newburyport's other policy documents, such as the *Housing Production Plan*, and the *Open Space and Recreation Plan*, but compliments these plans.

The goal of this Master Plan was to create a dynamic document that would:

- Articulate the core values of the City;
- Be reviewed yearly by the Planning Board and updated by City staff and elected officials in the interim period before a new Master Plan is created to ensure that the document continues to align with the needs of the community;
- Promote a more comprehensive approach to managing growth and provide such guidance to:
  - Community leaders and decision-makers
  - Developers and property owners as to what the City wants;
- Provide coordination:
  - To intertwine new and existing plans into a single document in a single location,
  - To encourage big-picture thinking with respect to planning for housing, open space, recreation, and municipal facilities while weaving aspects of sustainability throughout the document,
  - To allow for the creation of a balance among competing interests,
  - To help coordinate the City's efforts with respect to common regional interests;
- Afford accountability:
  - To articulate who is responsible for achieving goals and objectives,
  - To set timelines for doing so, and
  - To provide a mechanism to develop an implementation strategy for meeting goals and objectives.

## **Section B: Public Participation and the Master Plan Process**

This document represents a set of policies, goals and actions that together form a direction for the City for the next ten years and beyond. The Master Plan has been developed through extensive consultation with, and participation by, the City's residents and public officials. This process included:

- Nine broadly represented subcommittees, each focused on a Plan chapter, with a Steering Committee overseeing the process. These subcommittees met periodically throughout the drafting process;
- A series of public meetings throughout the first, information-gathering phase of the project (February 2013 to February 2014), focusing on specific aspects of the Master Plan;
- A website created solely for the purpose of this project where residents could access information about the Plan, learn about the public meetings and also connect directly with the project managers;
- A community survey that was advertised through traditional means via the local newspapers and the City's website, through social media using Facebook and Twitter and through various email list serves compiled by local officials and the City; and
- At least six broad public meetings with the City Council and the Planning Board to review the draft document and to vote to adopt the document in its entirety.

All of the steps in this process led to the creation of goals, objectives and actions for each of the specific chapters that were reviewed at subcommittee level, by the Steering Committee and by the public. As the chapters were reviewed and edited, the full document took shape and was brought to both the Planning Board and the City Council for review, finalization and adoption.

## **Section C: Structure of the Plan**

This document consists of four distinct sections. The introductory section presents an overview of the Master Planning process and provides an "at-a-glance" snapshot of Newburyport today. This section is important to understand where Newburyport is currently and helps identify focal points on which to direct municipal efforts over the next decade.

The next section focuses on the community's 10-year vision and is comprised of a review of the key issues facing Newburyport, a set of guiding principles and a vision statement. The key issues are not meant to be comprehensive – there are other broad areas which the Master Plan addresses – but they are especially important because they are areas where change is occurring and where strategic action by the City can have meaningful impact. This section also informs the community of the overarching goals for the City, principles that will guide our approach to accomplishing these goals and presents an overview of the positive trends and changes that residents envision for the City that this Master Plan is intended to support and promote.

The third section is comprised of ten distinct chapters, which give readers an in-depth analysis for each of the following topics: Land Use Planning & Development; Economic Development; Housing; Transportation and Circulation; Open Space, Natural Resources, and Recreation; Cultural, Historical and Natural Heritage Resources; Municipal Facilities and Services; Energy and Sustainability; Community Engagement; and Education. Each chapter in this section lists the broad-range goals for the particular topic. These goals are based largely on community input and are meant to reflect Newburyport residents' broad desires for the City's future.

Finally, the fourth section, “Plan Implementation & Monitoring” couples with the previous section in that each goal has associated Objectives and Actions, that when implemented, result in the achievement of the goal. This section represents the core of the Master Plan and is designed to provide a framework for the Planning Board to track and report on progress on various actions that would lead to fulfillment of the recommendations. While the Master Plan is focused primarily on land use and physical form and thusly land use regulations as established in the Zoning Ordinance are primary tools for implementation, the range of implementation tools extends to non-zoning regulations, land acquisition, public facilities management and public-private partnerships. It is important to recognize as well that planning, organization and management play an important part in implementing municipal goals.

## **Section D: Progress Report**

The City has made significant progress in exploring and achieving the Priorities for Action listed in the 2001 Master Plan. In accomplishing these seven priorities, Newburyport has grown, improved, and remains an exceptionally livable community with a unique character.

### ***Infrastructure Investment***

In 2001, many of the goals listed that we have since accomplished in terms of investing in our infrastructure was only in the beginning planning stages. The concerns then included the capacity and age of the existing infrastructure as well as the question of how to accommodate future growth. To address these concerns, the 2001 Plan suggested creating a Capital Improvement Plan, a budget for long-term maintenance and also maximizing the use of our existing public facilities.

Since 2001, we have made significant progress and have invested heavily into our public infrastructure. The City has constructed new schools and a new senior center, new water and wastewater treatment plants, and has continued to upgrade utilities, roadways, sidewalks, plant street trees, parks, and athletic fields. In addition to these “brick and mortar” investments, the City submits a capital improvement plan with the annual budget. The Department of Public Services maintains a five-year plan for water and sewer lines as well as road and sidewalk improvements.

### ***Preservation of Historic Character***

In 2001 there was a concern that Newburyport’s historic character was in jeopardy due to the lack of protective regulations. There was also, and continues to be, the idea that regulations were “superimposed” on a neighborhood and as a result, didn’t reflect the existing, built environment. In 2001, the community suggested creating a Local Historic District (LHD) to address these concerns, as well as adopting a design review process along with amending setback requirements to allow new or re-development to be built to match the buildings surrounding.

A small LHD on historic Fruit Street was adopted in 2007; however, a larger proposed LHD that encompassed much of historic High Street was not passed, though the idea was fully vetted through the public process with much debate. In late 2012, the Newburyport City Council amended the Zoning Ordinance, giving the Zoning Board of Appeals the power to grant a Special Permit to allow setback relief for buildings in the downtown business area, which will allow new buildings to be constructed so as to match the existing historic fabric in terms of siting and massing. Additionally, in 2014, the City Council adopted zoning provisions in both the downtown and in the immediately-surrounding residential neighborhoods (commonly referred to as the National Register

Historic District) that incorporate elements of design review and thorough examination of proposed demolition of historic structures. The preservation of historic character also plays a prominent role as the City, through its Office of Planning & Community Development, completes a comprehensive rewrite of its zoning ordinance.

### ***Central Waterfront***

Much like today, the central waterfront was a priority for action in 2001. The concerns then were its relationship, or lack thereof, with the rest of the downtown, its break in continuity from the historic streetscape of the downtown, the amount of open space that should be preserved and alternatively, the amount of parking that could be lost with any change in use along the riverfront. To address these concerns, the 2001 Plan suggested conducting a feasibility study to explore how to retain open space through limited development of commercial/retail space that could underwrite the cost of maintaining the park. The Plan also suggested creating new parking facilities so that any space lost on the riverfront could be replaced elsewhere in the downtown. Finally, the Plan suggested improving access and circulation along the entire riverfront, from Maudslay State Park to Plum Island.

The City has made some progress since 2001. There has been much discussion that has evolved into planning documents, including a plan for redevelopment of the downtown waterfront as well as parking feasibility studies. There continues to be public debate with the Mayor and other City officials and staff engaging stakeholder groups to keep this issue moving forward with the goal of finding a resolution.

In 2010 the City Council designated a site for construction of an Intermodal Transit & Parking Facility to consolidate the “footprint” of downtown and central waterfront parking in conjunction with waterfront park expansion. At this time the City has completed final design of this 207-space facility and is in the public bidding process for construction to begin in 2018.

### ***Affordable Housing***

In 2001, like today, Newburyport was a very attractive place to live with its residents enjoying a high quality of life. As a result, land and housing values tended to be higher than those of surrounding communities. High land and housing values can be positive for a community, but often are a barrier to creating and maintaining housing that is affordable to all ages and demographics. In 2001 the community recognized that there were no “starter homes” – homes that young professionals could buy and begin to raise their families. Even rental rates were too high for the average working person to afford.

To address these concerns, the 2001 Plan suggested adopting Inclusionary Zoning (where a percentage of housing units being developed would have to be affordable to working families), create incentives for developers to include an affordable unit within their projects, and also look for surplus municipal land for affordable housing development. The City has made moderate progress on this priority. While Inclusionary Zoning has not been adopted city-wide, it does exist in certain overlay districts around the City. There continues to be a decline in rental housing with many apartments being converted into condominiums resulting in a lowered rental stock with higher rents. The Zoning Ordinance allows for residential density bonuses when developers incorporate affordable units into their projects. Through the Newburyport Affordable Housing Trust, there is a subsidy program for developers to help offset the high costs of construction in exchange for the production of deed-restricted affordable housing units. Another major step toward accomplishing the City’s affordable housing goals is the local- and state-adopted Housing Production Plan, which identifies specific strategies that will increase

housing diversity and provide more affordable housing opportunities in Newburyport. Both legally deed-restricted affordable housing units and ‘informal’ affordable housing units (due to their smaller size, which often translates into lower rental rates) are needed to ensure diversity of the housing stock and to provide much-needed housing for residents and employees of all socio-economic levels.

### ***Residential Subdivisions***

In 2001 land in Newburyport was in high demand. Today is no different, with current residential subdivisions comprised mostly of development in and among existing residential structures. Large subdivisions of land are not inundating the Planning Board’s docket, however, when they are proposed, the community takes note. In 2001, the predominant concerns regarding residential growth focused on the design and siting of the homes. Fears about large homes on small lots, architecture and massing that may not be in keeping with the surrounding neighborhood and also the loss of open space that accompanied residential growth led the community to suggest a few actions to address these fears. The 2001 Plan suggested creating residential design criteria as well as identifying key open space areas that should be protected from development.

The City has made progress in addressing these concerns. While we have not adopted residential design criteria, The City would like to address residential design concerns through creating design criteria, which, given the development patterns today, may be more impactful. The City has made strides in identifying key open space areas that need to be protected, which can be found in the 2012 Open Space and Recreation Plan. When these key parcels come up for sale, the City takes the steps necessary to explore and pursue their purchase. Additionally, the City, through its Planning Board encourages cluster developments – locating homes closer together and permanently protecting the surrounding open space. This cluster development technique was successful in the recently completed Oleo Woods subdivision in the West End.

### ***Infill Development in Older Neighborhoods***

Many properties in Newburyport’s historic downtown neighborhoods are small with older homes that were constructed to the lot lines with little yard space. Even in 2001 these properties may not have been the best fit for modern-day families. As families moved into the City they needed more living space and residential development included the expansion of existing building footprints and sometimes demolishing homes to construct larger ones. More people were coming to Newburyport, creating denser neighborhoods, which posed a concern to the community.

The 2001 Plan suggested creating a Local Historic District, adopting a demolition delay ordinance and also creating what we refer to as “McMansion” zoning. This is zoning that seeks to curb the construction of large homes on undersized lots that are not in keeping with the surrounding neighborhood.

The City has made substantial progress on these action items. While the creation of an LHD was fully vetted and ultimately not adopted, the City did adopt a demolition delay ordinance in addition to two ordinances in 2014 that address both demolition and design in the downtown and surrounding residential neighborhoods. The ordinances address development concerns through design review and demolition review for structures that are listed as contributory to the City’s National Register Historic District.



### ***Business Park***

In 2001, the concerns for the industrial park were focused on allowing additional growth to expand the tax base and providing local job opportunities. However, accompanying this desire for more growth was the concern that the natural environment in the park, especially its wetlands, was at risk of being damaged. In order to balance these concerns, the 2001 Plan suggested comprehensively mapping the wetlands in the park so that areas for growth could be identified. Additionally, the 2001 Plan suggested revising the park's zoning to allow for appropriate development and growth as well as examining alternate access points to reduce the number and frequency of truck traffic in residential areas.

Some progress has been made on this priority item with a recent push to continue to support the Park and also to begin expanding the types of uses that may locate within it as evidenced by the Park's new name – the Newburyport Industrial and Business Park. While its roots are firmly planted in industrial uses, the Zoning Board of Appeals had been granting Variances for new uses, predominantly office space, in the park, so much so that in 2015 the City Council voted to amend the zoning ordinance to allow office use via Special Permit. With the Comprehensive Zoning Revision project about to be started, the City will examine the current uses allowed in the park and seek to expand them to include new, appropriate and compatible uses in this area.

In terms of protecting the Park's natural environment, while the wetlands have not been mapped comprehensively, as parcels are redeveloped through the City's permitting processes, specifically with the Conservation Commission, wetland delineations show where the environmentally sensitive areas are located. The City's GIS mapping system includes wetland information, which provide a good indication of where they are located. There continues to be progress made in protecting the wetlands, ensuring that drainage systems are clear from debris and functioning and working to limit impervious surface in the area.

### **Section E: Newburyport, At a Glance**

As part of the introduction to the 2017 Newburyport Master Plan, this section provides a demographic profile of the community to establish some standard and comparative data related to population, households and income. More specific data related to the subject areas, such as economic development, housing or transportation, are included in their respective chapters.

### ***Regional Context***

Newburyport is one of the smallest cities in the Commonwealth, located in north-eastern Essex County on the North Shore of the Boston metropolitan area. Newburyport is located in the lower Merrimack Valley region, defined by the watershed of the Merrimack River, which forms the northern borders of the City.

Newburyport is one of fifteen cities and towns that are represented by the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC). MVPC has developed regional plans and processes to guide regional growth, development, and redevelopment throughout the Valley. The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) provides an overview of the existing conditions and projects and outlines goals, objectives and tactics for the region. The Priority Growth Strategy (PGS) is a process to identify areas within each community suitable for development growth; for preservation of existing character and natural resources, and infrastructure requirements that would support each community's growth and preservation goals. The Regional Planning Framework Strategic Plan was developed to ensure MVPC communities' policies and regulations are: 1) up-to-date; 2) consistent with the PGS; and 3) meet the Commonwealth's opt-in performance benchmarks from the Comprehensive Land Use Reform



and Partnership Act (CLURPA). CLURPA has not yet passed into law, but zoning reform continues to be a discussion at the state level.

The Merrimack Valley is sometimes referred to as the “Crossroads of New England” due to its proximity to Interstates 93, 95, and 495 connecting to major population centers in New Hampshire and Maine as well as Rhode Island and Massachusetts. Downtown Boston is 30 to 40 minutes by car from any point in the Valley. The economy of the region is focused on healthcare, advanced manufacturing, creative economy, tourism and bio-tech business clusters. Many of these industry sectors are represented in Newburyport, along with the emerging green technology/clean energy sector.

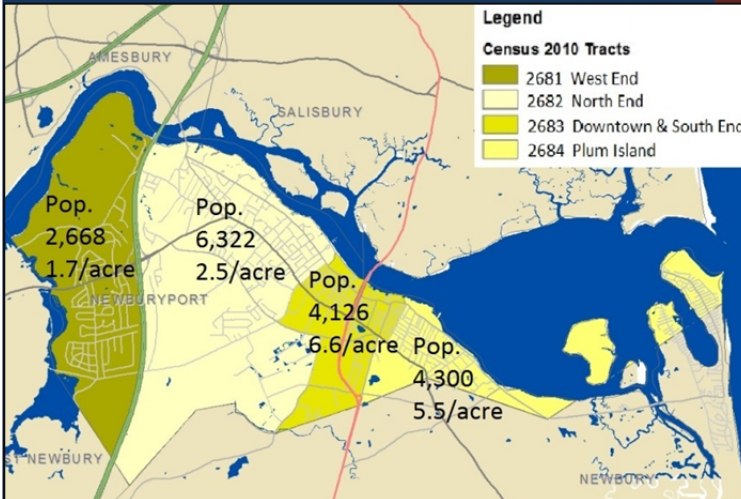
Newburyport is a regional hub for employment, as well as a regional destination for culture, entertainment, commerce and recreation. The City also draws visitors from farther afield, providing opportunities for history and architecture buffs, birders, boaters, beach-goers, trail-users, and others who enjoy the attractive downtown’s festivals, shops and restaurants.

# NEWBURYPORT'S DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

## Who We Are

### Overview (2010)

- Total population: 17,416
- Total households: 7,622
- Average household size: 2.28
- Median age: 45.9
- Non-White population: 3.6%
- Population density: 2,078 persons per square mile



### Education of population age 25 and over (2014)

- Completed a 4-year college: 33%
- Graduate level education: 24%

### Households (2010)

- Family households: 58% (4,437)
  - With children under the age of 18: 25% (1,929)
  - Single parent households: 5% (419)
- With persons aged 65 and older: 27% (2019)
- Individuals living alone: 34% (2,621)
  - Individuals living alone over age 65: 12% (926)

### Income

- Median household income: \$83,149
- Median family income: \$116,892
- Median nonfamily income: \$48,310
- Households earning over \$200,000: 15%
- People below the poverty level: 7%

Source: 2010 U.S. Census;  
2009-2014 American Community Survey

## How We are Changing

Between 2000 and 2010 significant changes in Newburyport's population occurred:

- The population aged 20-49 declined by 20%.
- The population over age 50 increased by 29%.
- Median household income increased by 31%.

Over the next two decades, Newburyport's population is expected to decline, even as the number of households increases.

- Newburyport will continue to see an increasing share of older adults and retirees.

People over the age of 50 will comprise 51% of the population in 2030.

- Average household size will continue to decline, as there are fewer families with children and more individuals living alone.

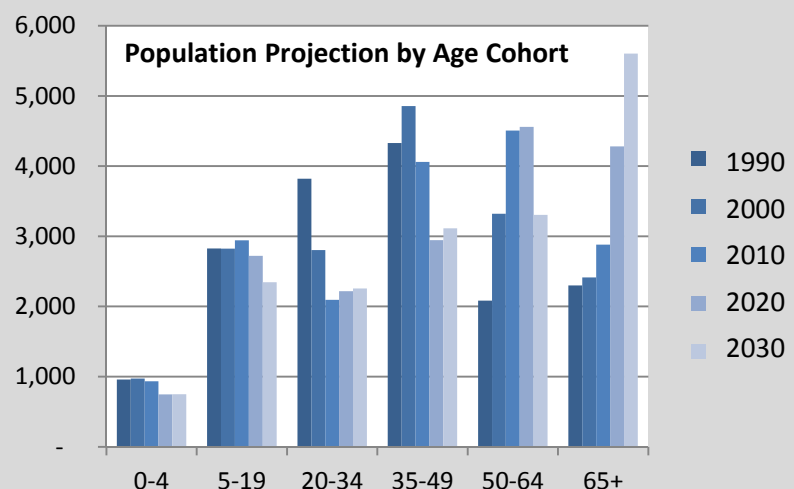
The number of school-aged children is expected to decline by 20% by 2030, while the number of young adults and retirees grows.

In order to sustain the size of the City's workforce that exists today, the City will need to expand the supply of housing.

### Population Projections

	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030
Population	16,317	17,189	17,416	17,474	17,375
Households	6,754	7,519	7,622	8,005	8,175
Household Size	2.42	2.29	2.28	2.18	2.13

Source: MAPC "Strong Region" Scenario



## NEWBURYPORT'S REGIONAL PROFILE

### Location

- Coastal community situated 35 miles northeast of Boston; 5 miles south of New Hampshire border.
- Part of North Shore and Merrimack Valley regions.
- Served by Interstate 95, US Route 1, Massachusetts Routes 113 and 1A, MBTA commuter rail, MRTA bus.

### Population

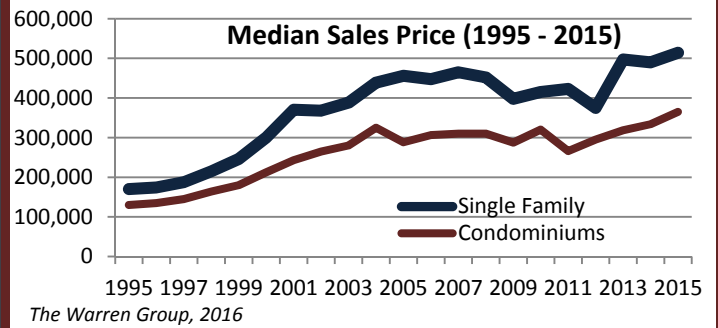
- Newburyport has the largest population among neighboring communities, most comparable to Amesbury.
- Very slight gain in population between 2000 and 2010. Salisbury had most growth.
- Relatively moderate median household income.

### Housing

- Median home prices comparable to more affluent communities.
- Diverse housing stock; nearly half are attached or multifamily units.
- 28% renter occupied; higher owner-occupancy than Amesbury or Salisbury.
- Average 22 units permitted annually since 2010.

### Economic Base

- Regional employment center: job/workforce ratio is highest by far among surrounding communities.
- 87% of tax base is residential. Amesbury and Salisbury have a higher share of commercial/industrial property.



	Owner-Occupied Housing Units	Single Family Units	Median Home Price	Building Permits 2010-2015
Amesbury	68%	51%	\$312,000	120
Newbury	83%	79%	\$440,000	82
<b>Newburyport</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>\$435,000</b>	<b>132</b>
Salisbury	69%	55%	\$290,000	411
West Newbury	91%	90%	\$461,000	94

ACS 2014, The Warren Group 2015, Census Building Permits

	Commercial-Industrial (CIP) Tax Base	Jobs/Workforce Ratio
Amesbury	16.03%	0.46
Newbury	4.4%	0.42
<b>Newburyport</b>	<b>13.4%</b>	<b>1.13</b>
Salisbury	18.7%	0.61
West Newbury	2.9%	0.31

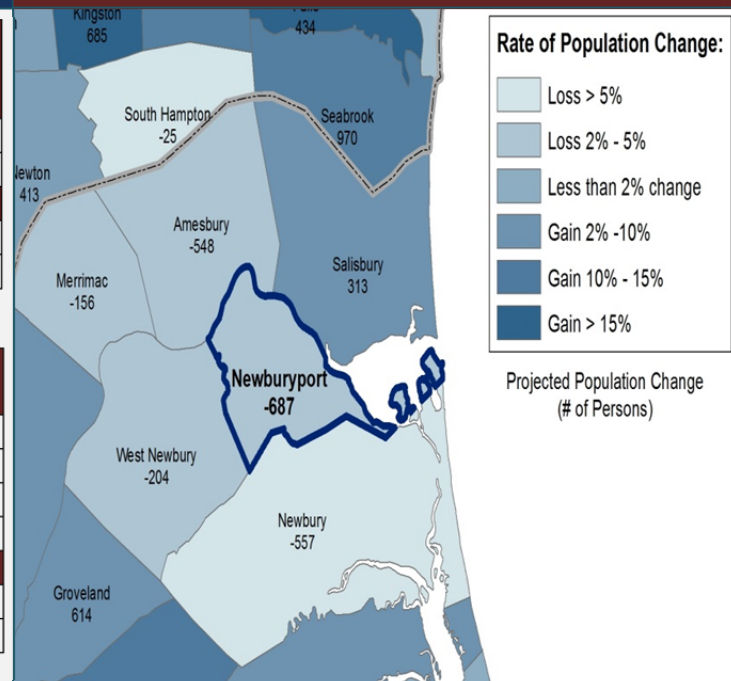
EOWLD 2014, MA Division of Local Services 2015

	Population 2010	Pop. Growth 2000-2010	Median Household Income 2014
Amesbury	16,283	-1.0%	\$76,463
Newbury	6,666	-0.8%	\$95,827
<b>Newburyport</b>	<b>17,416</b>	<b>1.3%</b>	<b>\$83,149</b>
Salisbury	8,283	5.8%	\$75,995
West Newbury	4,235	2.1%	\$122,969

US Census, ACS 2009-2014

Community	Population Density (persons/square mile)	Housing Density
Amesbury	1,343	580
Haverhill	1,863	778
Methuen	2,166	824
Newbury	283	126
<b>Newburyport</b>	<b>2,124</b>	<b>990</b>
Salisbury	556	295
West Newbury	328	117

MA Department of Revenue 2013, 2009



**Table I-1: Racial Composition of Newburyport, 2000-2010**

	2000		2010		Percent Change 2000-2010
	#	%	#	%	
<b>Total Population (One Race Alone)</b>	<b>17,092</b>	<b>99.4</b>	<b>17,199</b>	<b>98.8</b>	<b>-.06</b>
White	16,864	98.1	16,788	96.4	-1.7
Black or African American	73	.4	98	.6	.2
American Indian and Alaska Native	21	.1	24	.1	-
Asian	105	.6	195	1.1	.5
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	2	0	1	0	0
Some Other Race	27	.2	93	.5	.3
<b>Two or More Races</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>.6</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>.6</b>
<b>Hispanic or Latino (of any race)</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>.9</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>.8</b>

Source: US Census Bureau 2000 and 2010

### **Household and Family Characteristics**

The following table provides a snap shot of family and household characteristics. Despite a small increase in the number of households, the average household size has remained steady at about 2.23 people.

**Table I-2: Household Composition, 2000-2010**

<b>Household Type</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2010</b>
<b>Total Households</b>	<b>7,519</b>	<b>7,622</b>
Households with individuals under 18 years of age	27.2%	26.6%
Households with individuals 65 years of age and over	21.5%	26.5%
<b>Family Households</b>	<b>58.9%</b>	<b>58.2%</b>
Married couples with children	20.4%	19.9%
Single parents with children	5.5%	5.5%
Married couples without children	27.3%	27.4%
Single head of household without children	33%	5.5%
<b>Nonfamily Households</b>	<b>41.1%</b>	<b>41.8%</b>
Persons living alone	33.1%	34.4%
Persons not living alone	8%	7.4%

Source: US Census Bureau

### **Growth and Development Patterns**

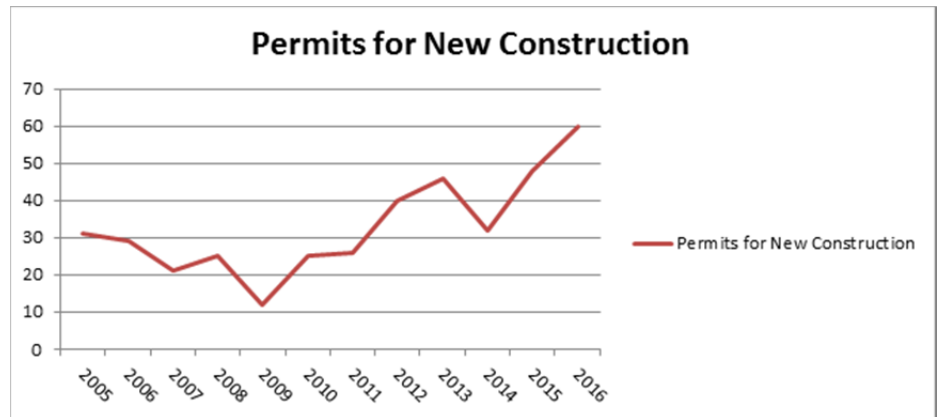
The City's signature development identity is that of a historic seaport with barrier island, marshes, a large pastoral area, and forested river land. As mentioned, the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century dense seaport development pattern persists in much of Newburyport today, with the 19th century addition of mill buildings and some infill over time. From about the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the 1970s, the City's growth and development was limited by economic depression and decline.

The latter part of the 20th century brought an innovative approach to urban renewal – clearing of central waterfront land and restoration of most of downtown -- plus the development of a business and industrial park and subdivisions spreading out into northerly parts of the Common Pasture and into the West End. The construction of Interstate 95 and nearby shopping plazas changed the character of the western part of the

city. Revitalization of downtown businesses in architecturally coherent buildings, together with cleanup of the Merrimack River, expansion of marinas, and improvement of waterfront parks transformed the downtown riverfront. Over the past century the community shifted from manufacturing and industry toward a service- and tourism-based economy.

Restoration of commuter train service to Boston in 1998 sparked more new development, primarily housing. More recently, City water and sewer service was extended to Plum Island, supporting an existing trend of conversion of summer cottages to year-round homes. Development activity has continued, although the overall rate of growth has seemingly slowed.

**Chart I-1: Building Permits**



## Zoning

The City of Newburyport first adopted zoning no later than 1940 with **Table I-3** listing the City's districts. In addition to the listed districts, the City has adopted several overlay districts that serve to add additional protections, uses and or regulations for specific areas and neighborhoods.

**Table I-3: Zoning Districts, 2015**

Name		Description
Agricultural / Conservation (Ag/C)		Intended to serve a dual purpose – protection of existing agricultural land and restriction on development for lands with soils that have poor to moderate capabilities for supporting onsite sewage systems. Intensive land uses, uses that would detract from the desired agricultural/open nature of the district, and uses which would otherwise interfere with the intent of the district are prohibited.
Business Districts	B1	Intended to allow all types of customary business uses oriented toward either pedestrian and/or vehicle traffic. It also allows multifamily residential dwellings either alone or in combination with business uses.
	B2	The downtown business district includes retail, service, office and residential uses, at a scale intended to reinforce downtown's role as the focus of activity in Newburyport. Mixed-use development is encouraged, such as the combining of residential and business uses. Activities are oriented to pedestrian traffic and to centralized parking. Businesses which consume large amounts of land and interrupt pedestrian circulation and shopping patterns, single- and two-family principal buildings or uses which would otherwise interfere with the intent of this ordinance are prohibited.

Name		Description
	B3	The neighborhood business district consists of neighborhood businesses in proximity to residential uses and serves as a transitional zone between business and residential districts.
General Acute Medical Care (GACM)		This district accommodates a general acute care hospital, a medical / dental professional building and associated and related uses.
Industrial Districts	I1	Allows uses requiring the manufacture, assembly, processing or handling of materials that, because of their operations would be disruptive to residential and other commercial uses. Commercial uses intended to service the industrial areas are also permitted.
	I1B	This district was created to allow the development of corporate office headquarters in the city. This zoning allows for a needed use/occupancy which the I-1 zoning district does not allow, specifically, corporate headquarters. The objective is to provide diversification in employment opportunities. Light manufacturing uses similar to those allowed in the I-1 district are also allowed, but the corporate headquarters type uses are preferred.
	I2	The intent of this district is to protect the existing, older “pockets of industrial development” within the business and industrial park area and allow them by-right. Non-industrial uses are allowed by special permit.
Residential Districts	R1	Single-family zoning.
	R2	Single- and Two-family zoning. Two-family structures require a Special Permit
	R3	Multi-family zoning that allows for single, two-family, and multifamily units at no greater than six (6) units per structure and generally fewer than ten (10) dwelling units per acre.
Waterfront Districts	WMD	The Waterfront Marine Dependent district is intended to protect and enhance existing marine-dependent and marine-related uses along the waterfront as well as to allow the expansion of such uses and the redevelopment of non-marine uses into marine-related ones.
	WMU	The Waterfront Mixed Use district is intended to encourage the development of marine, civic, tourism and cultural land use activities which benefit from the location of the central waterfront and to enhance this area as the civic and cultural center of the City.

Source: Newburyport Zoning Ordinance

## Infrastructure

### Transportation Systems

Newburyport has several established transportation systems that service all areas of the City and offer many options to both residents and visitors navigating to, from and within the City’s borders. Newburyport’s location provides easy access to Route 95, Route 1, Route 1A, Route 113, and an MBTA commuter rail station. The Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority provides bus service to Haverhill, while C & J Trailways runs buses to Logan Airport and downtown Boston. The Council on Aging van meets certain local travel needs of seniors. Taxis serve residents and visitors. A pedestrian and bicycle trail links the train station with downtown and riverfront parks, and an envisioned second phase through the South End will provide a complete loop. Bicycle lanes run to Plum Island and along High Street. The small, historic Plum Island airfield provides the opportunity



for a few residents to depart and arrive by small airplane. Active marinas and docks also allow boaters to use the Merrimack River as an access point to the city.

### Parking

Parking has been an issue downtown and in nearby densely developed older neighborhoods, especially during declared snow emergencies when street parking is not allowed, and during summer weekends and festivals. Providing adequate and convenient parking for shoppers is a key issue in future plans for the Central Waterfront as community members and planners weigh the appropriate balance between open space and new development. Many residents depend on open lots for off-street parking during snow emergencies. In May 2011, the city instituted a paid parking program at public parking lots throughout downtown and on the waterfront to encourage more frequent turnover of parking spaces and increase opportunities for more short term parking. Current regulations are codified by two-year agreements between the city and the Newburyport Redevelopment Authority, and between the city and the Newburyport Waterfront Trust. The City and the Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority (MVRTA) are partnering to construct a downtown intermodal parking garage, which will be partially funded with state monies.

### Water Supply Systems

The City's drinking water comes from both surface water and groundwater supplies. Surface waters, which make up 80 percent of the water supply, include the Indian Hill Reservoir in West Newbury, the Artichoke Reservoir in West Newbury and Newburyport, and Bartlet Spring Pond in Newburyport. Surface water is treated at the water treatment plant on Spring Lane next to Interstate 95. Groundwater, which makes up 20 percent of the city's drinking water, is supplied by two gravel packed wells (Well #1 and Well #2) located along Ferry Road in Newburyport. The water supply system recently underwent a multi-phase \$18.75 million upgrade that included regular maintenance as well as improvements to meet future water demand. As shown in Table I-1, in 2016, the City used an average of 1.97 million gallons per day with the City being permitted by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection's Water Management Act to use up to 2.49 million gallons per day. This permitted usage represents current capacity, which leaves approximately 520,000 gallons per day remaining, according to the 2016 estimates. The City is currently undertaking water supply and sewer service capacity studies to more accurately quantify current usage levels, remaining capacity, and future projections sufficient for the purpose of evaluating the potential impact of proposed development projects.

**Table I-4: Newburyport's Drinking Water Capacity**

	Million Gallons per Day
Average Use	1.97
Maximum Use	2.49
Remaining	0.52

Source: DPS Water Division, 2016

### Sewer Service

Just as the City provides water service to virtually the entire city, so it provides sewer service. The City has recently completed substantial improvements to its Wastewater Treatment Facility at the river's edge on Water Street. The project included some remediation/removal measures for petroleum contaminated soils on the site and the creation of pedestrian access along the riverfront through the Massachusetts Chapter 91 licensing process. Sections of a granite-capped wharf wall, part of the William Coombs Wharf, will be reinstalled at grade and interpreted by signage as part of the city's expanded Harborwalk. The current design capacity of the wastewater treatment plant of 3.4 million gallons per day should be adequate to meet future flow and pollutant load demands in the 20-year period. The City's sewer-use ordinance requires future

developments to supply their own wastewater pumping and collection systems. As noted above, the City is currently undertaking water supply and sewer service capacity studies to more accurately quantify current usage levels, remaining capacity, and future projections sufficient for the purpose of evaluating the potential impact of proposed development projects.

## **Education**

The Newburyport Public Schools completed a five-year strategic plan that outlined goals to reflect specific school improvements that would define the course of action for the upcoming years. The strategic plan is comprised of three distinct sections: Learning, Community and Wellness. These concepts also led to subtle but important changes to the District’s Mission Statement that now reflects the most important core values and the three major themes of this new strategic plan. The Mission Statement perspective was also changed from an “our schools” orientation to an “our students” point of view, and is as follows:

*The Newburyport Public Schools are committed to the intellectual, physical, social development and engagement of every student. Within a culture of high expectations for individual and group learning, our students experience rigorous academic challenge, are intellectually curious, and express themselves creatively. Our students enhance their well-being by applying knowledge and skills about nutrition, fitness and healthy behaviors.*

*Our schools are an inclusive and supportive community. As part of this community, our students demonstrate values of personal integrity, sensitivity and social responsibility. Our schools partner with parents and community in significant ways to help achieve this mission. Members of our school community - teachers, parents, staff, and administration - support this mission every day, in every classroom, on every field of play, and in every activity.*



## CHAPTER 3

### A Ten-Year Vision

#### Community Vision Statement

Newburyport is a place that is rich with heritage and resplendent in natural beauty. The citizenry is active and has a strong sense of community. The economy is diverse with a thriving downtown along the waterfront, a retail center on Storey Avenue, a hospital and medical area, and an industrial and business park nestled along the Newbury border. As a community, we will continue to build upon our strengths and make conscious decisions about where to encourage development and where to protect our natural resources, how to encourage housing diversity while preserving our historical assets, how to allow for job creation through the fostering of an economically-diverse environment, how to support our families and enrich our educational system, and also how to provide for artistic and cultural enrichment for the community and visitors alike.

In looking forward to the next ten years, we envision a Newburyport that continues on the path that we have already begun to take toward a balanced, sustainable community. We want to see the character of our community protected while welcoming change. The City sees its architectural and maritime heritage preserved, its downtown strengthened as a retail and cultural center, its waterfront celebrated, and its residents thriving. We hope that when the goals in this Plan are met, Newburyport will be a community that:

- Protects the character of its neighborhoods while allowing appropriately scaled and architecturally-designed infill and redevelopment in both the residential and commercial sectors so that the diverse needs of the community are met;
- Supports its economic base and local employment opportunities in the downtown, the Newburyport Business & Industry Park, Anna Jaques Hospital and surrounding medical node, and the Storey Avenue commercial center;
- Ensures that housing development meets the needs of the entire community that is available and affordable to all as well as being designed in such a way as to respect the surrounding neighborhoods;
- Alleviates traffic congestion through thoughtful planning and addresses the parking needs of both residents and visitors;
- Creates a system of sidewalks and trails to provide a network within and between neighborhoods, commercial area, and public facilities that meets the needs of all age groups and physical capabilities;
- Preserves open space, enhances our recreational spaces and promotes the protection of our natural resources and utilizes renewable energy sources in both the public and private sectors;
- Markets its downtown as a cultural destination and supports our existing cultural, arts and historical assets as well as welcomes new assets to our community;
- Offers superior public education with a diverse educational program that enables the children of our community to thrive.

These are lofty goals, ones that many communities strive to achieve. The Master Plan approaches these goals comprehensively, recognizing that through the formation of positive partnerships, new ideas arise, collaborations are strengthened and solutions are found. As the City and the community work to implement the actions listed in the Plan we must be cognizant of our interconnectedness and continue to support one another to guarantee that Newburyport remains a thriving community that is socially, economically and financially diverse and environmentally responsible.