

HINGHAM MASTER PLAN FINDINGS BY ELEMENT

Text for Slides

Note to readers: some topics in the following slides relate to more than one element of the Master Plan. These instances are noted **parenthetically in bold** at the end of finding statements.

TRANSPORTATION

1. **Finding available Parking in Hingham Square can be challenging. (Land Use)**

- Merchant's Parking Lot is 96% occupied on weekdays
- Little or no enforcement of on-street parking
- Employees parking all day limit turnover
- Parking may spillover to neighborhood streets

Opportunities:

- Manage parking and increase turnover through increased enforcement
- Revisit parking limits for on-street spaces
- Identify long-term parking areas for employees
- Identify opportunities for shared parking
- Consider eliminating minimum parking requirements for developments

2. **Traffic Congestion and safety is an issue on several roadways.**

- High crash rates at locations on Route 3A (Kilby St, Summer St Rotary), Route 3 and Derby Street
- High traffic volume growth on Route 3A, Route 53, and Derby Street
- New development planned in South Hingham will increase traffic volumes
- Speeding

Opportunities:

- Complete planned Route 3A Road Diet Project
- Complete MassDOT Derby Street Corridor Project
- Monitor and enforce speeding
- Identify potential improvements for intersections (signals) and roadways

3. **It is difficult to walk/bike between The Square, Harbor, Neighborhoods and Destinations.**

- Pedestrians and bicyclists do not feel comfortable crossing Route 3A
- Several roadways have no sidewalks and bicycle facilities (Martins Lane)
- Some sidewalks need repair and/or are too narrow
- There are no dedicated on-street bike lanes (sharrows only)
- Pedestrian signals and accessible ramps are inadequate at some intersections

Opportunities:

- Complete ongoing study to evaluate sidewalks, signage and crosswalks
- Develop a Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan to prioritize improvements
- Identify Safe Routes to School project eligible for MassDOT funding

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4. **Bus and Shuttle service may not be adequate for residents.**

- MBTA Bus service has been reduced. Bus #220 does not stop within Shipyard and no bus service to commuter rail stations
- Parking demand is increasing at the Shipyard, availability may become an issue
- Parking lots at the commuter rail stations and Town Hall are near capacity on a regular basis
- Demand for the Senior Center Medical Van and Shuttle Van exceeds capacity.
- No weekend service

Opportunities:

- Coordinate with MBTA to improve service and connections
- Evaluate need and potential ridership demand for shuttle bus service
- Identify funding opportunities for first mile/last mile service and a pilot shuttle bus program

5. **New development planned for South Hingham will increase traffic in this area. Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies would be appropriate to consider to reduce employee single-occupant auto travel. (Land Use)**

- Traffic added from new developments will exacerbate delay and congestion in the area and neighborhood streets
- Traffic, Safety, and Infrastructure Improvement Fund with South Hingham Development Overlay District. No TDM requirements.

Opportunities:

- Use funds to mitigate development-related transportation impacts within the Overlay District
- Develop TDM regulations and thresholds for new development

SUSTAINABILITY, WATER, ENERGY

6. There are many environmental vulnerabilities related to climate change and sea-level rise (particularly storm surge and coastal erosion/shoreline change) that must be addressed during the life of the Master Plan. (Land Use)

- Quality and availability of ground and surface water supply is at risk
- Open space and forests are vulnerable to flooding, severe storms, and drought
- Rising waters could leach pollutants from the transfer station

Opportunities: aggressively seek state, federal, and local grants and financing to:

- Identify additional sources of water supply and emergency water distribution
- Pursue projects that improve tidal flow from Hingham Harbor
- Pursue pilot green resilience projects around Beal Cove to absorb more flood waters/sea level rise, such as marsh expansion or living shorelines

7. There are many infrastructure resources vulnerable to climate change and sea-level rise (particularly storm surge and coastal erosion/shoreline change) that must be addressed during the life of the Master Plan. (Facilities & Services)

- Sewer pump stations vulnerable to inland/coastal flooding
- Foster Elementary School vulnerable to flooding
- Many roadways and rail routes important for emergency access and evacuation are vulnerable to flooding, such as Rte. 3A, G.W.Blvd, Rockland St., and MBTA

Opportunities: aggressively seek state, federal, and local grants and financing to:

- Implement resiliency improvements to sewer pump stations
- Develop an emergency student relocation plan for Foster Elementary and make long term plans to replace the building
- Raise roadway levels and implement existing disaster mitigation plans

8. Hingham has the opportunity to lead by example in reducing energy consumption, influencing the actions of local residents and business owners. (Facilities & Services)

- The Hingham Energy Action Committee is actively exploring options for reaching Carbon Neutrality
- Hingham has identified which of its buildings and vehicles consume the most energy and steps for reducing this energy use
- Many residents and business owners already support “going green.”

Opportunities: aggressively seek State, Federal, and Local grants and financing to:

- Implement energy efficiency upgrades in all public buildings
- More aggressively seek energy efficient alternatives for Town vehicles
- Start an education campaign for Town employees and the public on individual behaviors that can reduce energy use

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9. Hingham is potentially dampening renewable energy use by not having explicit policies for accessory solar facilities, wind facilities, and energy storage facilities. (Land Use)

- More home and business owners would likely install accessory solar energy facilities if the Town had explicit policies and processes for installation
- Energy storage facilities and wind energy facilities are not mentioned in the current bylaws and are therefore prohibited

Opportunities:

- Develop zoning bylaw changes that explicitly allow solar energy as an accessory use for most homes and businesses
- Add energy storage facilities to the zoning bylaw as a standalone industrial use as well as a smaller-scale accessory use for homes and businesses
- Explore options for allowing wind turbines both on land and off shore

10. Hingham Harbor, and its coastal, recreational, transportation, and economic assets, is particularly vulnerable to climate change and sea level rise.

- Seawalls/Piers/Oceanic Buffers are all vulnerable due to existing conditions and need for maintenance
- Parks and beaches are subject to flooding and erosion
- Land-based facilities supporting boating/ferry service are vulnerable to flooding

Opportunities: aggressively seek state, federal, and local grants and financing to:

- Increase the height of the existing seawalls and adjacent upland
- Implement resiliency plans for recreational and transportation assets
- Install a Tide Gauge in Hingham Harbor

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FACILITIES & SERVICES

11. The public institutions providing education are in need of updating and upgrading in order to be state-of-the-art.

- Many people move to Hingham for the schools
- Foster School is expected to experience significant increase in flooding
- The role of the library is increasingly that of a community center, but doesn't have the space for programming

Opportunities:

- Relocate Foster School out of flood zone
- Update schools with new technology and state of the art pedagogical spaces (e.g. STEAM, maker spaces, etc.)
- Support the Library in its plans to expand space, programming, parking, etc.

12. The increase in the number of older adults and the changing expectations regarding aging will have implications regarding the need to provide services.

- Hingham has highest percentage of people over 65 in South Shore
- Between 2000 and 2010 number of residents 65 and over increased by 55% (compared to 16% statewide)
- Space and parking are inadequate at the Senior Center
- Baby boomers have different expectations regarding aging
- Only 14 percent of residents living in town use the Senior Center

Opportunities:

- Re-brand Senior Center
- Create a Community Center for all ages
- Increase transportation and health, wellness and fitness services and programming
- Continue to encourage co-programming between Elder Services and other Town Departments (e.g. Schools, Library, Recreation, etc.)

13. The combination of old and outdated facilities, changing demographics, and a significant increase in development have resulted in a need to upgrade public safety facilities.

- All three fire stations were built in 1941
- Response times in South Hingham are worse than in the rest of town
- Police and Fire Departments experienced increase in calls associated with aging population
- Police Department space inadequate

Opportunities:

- Renovate fire stations
- Consider relocating fire station
- Plan for possible future need for a fourth fire station
- Consider new police facility

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14. Public utilities including sewer, water, and electricity need to be maintained and expanded to support increasing development.

- Sewer
 - Approximately 40% of the Town is on Town sewer in two districts
 - Sewer Commission working on reducing the significant unwanted water entering the sewer system in effort to increase efficiency
- Water
 - 95% of homes in Hingham connected to public water system
 - Water supply considered “stressed;” need to reduce water usage and identify additional sources of water
 - Extension of water system paid for by developer
- Electricity
 - Hingham Municipal Lighting will need to increase capacity given goal to reduce carbon and trend towards electric cars and buses

Opportunities:

- Develop South Hingham Sewer District
- Explore possibility of constructing a Wastewater Treatment Plant
- Increase awareness regarding need to reduce water consumption
- Identify additional sources of water
- Support HML to expand capacity (add transmission line)

15. As the Town has grown, so has the need to formalize and make the process of capital planning and deferred maintenance more systematic.

- Long-term capital projects come out of separate committees
- Some Town staff report a lack of clarity regarding decision-making

Opportunities:

- Develop criteria for prioritizing capital improvement projects
- Hire full-time Facilities Manager
- Form a Consolidated Facilities Committee
- Prepare a Town-wide Facilities Master Plan

HISTORIC & CULTURAL RESOURCES

16. Hingham has established seven Local Historic Districts with approximately 700 homes, commercial and civic structures and historic landscapes, and the town's Scenic Roads Bylaw has designated eight routes, yet many historic resources remained threatened.

- The Local Historic Districts cover just 10% of historic buildings and the Scenic Roads Bylaw has protected a small fraction of roads.

Opportunities:

- Create additional Local Historic Districts to protect a greater portion of historic resources
- Provide education programs to new homeowners about the value of preserving their historic property, and involve children in this effort
- Amend the existing Scenic Roads Bylaw to include more stringent criteria relating to removal of historic stone walls, trees and other natural and manmade features
- Designate additional roads through the Scenic Roads Bylaw

17. Hingham has a scarcity of smaller historic homes desired by residents who want to remain in Hingham but wish to down-size. (Land Use) (Housing)

- Since Hingham's Demolition Delay Bylaw was enacted in the late 1980s, the town has lost roughly half of the buildings reviewed under the bylaw after the six-month delay is imposed.
- The short six-month delay period of the Demolition Delay Bylaw has allowed property owners to simply wait out the delay and the proceed with demolition, and many smaller homes have been replaced by much larger ones.

Opportunities:

- Extend the delay period to a maximum of two years
- Provide financial incentives to developers who restore historic properties as affordable housing
- Provide financial incentives to first-time owners of small historic homes to restore, rather than replace their properties

18. Current zoning, specifically lot coverage, allows property owners to build homes that are out of scale with their neighborhood. (Land Use) (Housing)

- Existing lot coverages have resulted densities that conflict with traditional neighborhood patterns, altering historic character.

Opportunities:

- Amend the existing zoning bylaw with redefined lot coverages that more accurately reflect traditional patterns
- Create overlay districts in areas where historic homes remain to preserve historic lot coverages and traditional patterns

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19. Gateways into Hingham from the north, east, and south lack clear definition and do not clearly convey to visitors a sense of arrival.

- Entrances from neighboring towns lack consistent signage, plantings, lighting, and other landscape amenities that reflect the character of Hingham and welcome visitors to town.

Opportunities:

- Work with neighboring towns of Weymouth, Norwell, and Cohasset when opportunity arises, to upgrade shared intersections (for example, at Queen Anne's Corner)
- Develop and implement a signage and landscape plan that can be applied to all major entrances

20. Hingham lacks a comprehensive catalogue of historic town records, as well as a facility and system for storing the records.

- Town records are not currently maintained by one entity and each department has developed its own approach to saving, storing and preserving records.
- Neither the Library nor the Town Hall has the capacity to adequately and safely store records.

Opportunities:

- Create a system to archive records, both manually and electronically
- Build a facility for storing records
- Hire a professional archivist to catalogue and maintain records

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HOUSING

21. Hingham has done more than many South Shore communities to provide affordable housing.

(Land Use)

- Hingham exceeds the 10 percent statutory minimum under Chapter 40B; currently at 11.37 percent, and may remain above 10 percent after Census 2020
- Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) includes local initiatives, e.g., Lincoln School and 80 Beal Street
- From 2003 to 2018, Hingham appropriated over \$2 million for CPA-assisted community housing Opportunities:
 - Take a selective approach to future affordable housing proposals
 - Consider a comprehensive approach to inclusionary zoning
 - Focus on housing needs of specific populations, e.g., older adults, people with disabilities, local workforce, other needs identified in Hingham Housing Plan (draft)

22. There is market demand and market opportunity for turning existing residential properties in Hingham into higher-value assets, mainly through teardowns. (Land Use) (Historic/Cultural)

- According to Town data, between 1/2017 and 10/2019, 54 single-family dwellings were demolished for teardown/rebuild projects – often called “mansionization.”
- There has also been an uptick in single-family to two-family home conversions, with 14 in the past five years.
- High land-value ratios exist for homes built ca. 1929-1974, or about 25 percent of Hingham’s single-family home inventory

Opportunities:

- Revisit lot coverage ratios in the residential districts
- Large-house review bylaw comparable to Wellesley’s
- Targeted affordable housing buydowns

23. Despite Hingham’s efforts to meet (and exceed) the 10 percent minimum under Chapter 40B, there are many unaffordably housed residents in the town, especially renters.

- A statistic commonly tracked by housing policy analysts is median gross rent as a percentage of household income. It is an indicator of the relationship between market housing costs and prevailing incomes. Hingham has the highest median gross rent as a percentage of household income – 44.9 percent - of all the surrounding towns, higher than Plymouth County, and higher than the state. In some parts of town, it exceeds 50 percent.
- The most cost burdened renters have incomes below \$50,000, representing about half of all Hingham renters. Many but not all are older adults.

Opportunities:

- Focus future affordable housing initiatives on deeper subsidies for lower-income rental units
- Explore options for CPA-funded rental assistance (e.g., Chatham model)

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24. Hingham is a Community Preservation Act (CPA) community and since 2007, it has also had the Hingham Affordable Housing Trust (HAHT) under G.L. c. 44, §55C. With enough funding and staff support, the HAHT could become an even stronger player in the creation and preservation of affordable housing: as developer, investor, housing services provider, and advocate.

- Over time, approximately 9.2 percent of CPA appropriations have been committed to community housing.
- Many towns systematically commit 10 percent or more to housing, e.g., Provincetown, Chatham, Sudbury, Andover.
- Under the new short-term rental occupancy tax law, many communities already plan to dedicate some or all of the local option tax to affordable housing. At any given time, there are over 300 Hingham properties listed on AirBnb.

Opportunities:

- Adopt maximum 6 percent local tax rate for short-term rentals and commit funding to the HAHT
- Provide General Fund appropriations to the HAHT, e.g., Nantucket, Somerville, Scituate.
- Establish inclusionary zoning and direct developer “fee in lieu” payments to the HAHT (see below).

25. Hingham’s zoning has some provisions for affordable housing (Multifamily, Flexible Development), but there is currently no comprehensive approach to *inclusionary zoning*: incentives or requirements (or both) to create affordable housing in new residential or mixed-use projects. (Land Use)

- Inclusionary zoning (IZ) usually applies to any development that includes housing over a certain number of units.
- It can be town-wide or district-based, or town-wide with requirements customized to each district.
- About one-third of Massachusetts cities/towns have IZ, though often it has not worked.

Opportunities:

- Assemble a working group that includes local developers to explore feasibility and design options for IZ.
- Consider options for “fee in lieu” for small projects, with funding dedicated to the HAHT.
- Boost opportunities to develop multifamily housing and tie IZ to density bonuses.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

26. There is a less-than-optimal “match” between Hingham’s highly educated labor force, the make-up of its employment base, and opportunities to work locally.

- Compared with the Boston labor market area, Hingham’s strongest industries are the construction trades, retail, finance and insurance, arts and entertainment, management of companies and enterprises – e.g., holding companies – and to a lesser extent, professional services. These industries all have **location quotients** over 1.50. Hingham has large employers in other industries, but relative to the labor market area, their presence in Hingham is about the same as other areas in the region.
- The industries that employ most Hingham residents are information, finance and real estate, and professional services.
- Most job growth is happening in lower-wage employment.
- There an imbalance between the number of jobs in Hingham and employment needs of households.
- Overall, residents with the highest wage/salary earnings commute to work by public transportation.

Opportunities:

- Tailor economic development strategies to achieve better alignment between jobs and labor force.
- Facilitate collaborative workspaces to support self-employed and home-based workers.

27. Hingham has potential for economic growth in South Hingham. Local planning work has been done to understand opportunities, constraints, and possible solutions. One of the Planning Board’s approved (2017) master plan goals is to “encourage high-quality commercial and mixed-use development in South Hingham and the Hingham Shipyard.” (Land Use) (Transportation)

- It appears that to date, little has happened since the South Hingham Study Group released its final report in 2017.
- The need for sewer in South Hingham has not been resolved. Town Meeting voted to study and develop a sewer district, but the study has not gone anywhere. Public safety challenges exist, too.
- Master planning has been done to reposition South Shore Park as a mixed-use office-industrial center with housing, retail and services.
- There is opposition to more development in South Hingham.

Opportunities:

- Recognize the future of South Hingham as one of the most critical directions needed for this Master Plan update.
- Work with South Shore Chamber of Commerce or another economic development-focused organization to facilitate consensus and determine a path forward for infrastructure, transportation, and regulatory reform for South Hingham.
- Collaborate with neighboring Rockland to achieve mutual benefits.

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28. When it comes to the permitting process, Hingham is not regarded as a “business-friendly” town.

(Land Use)

- Complaints: slow and unpredictable process, Town has high but unrealistic expectations, boards listen too much to residents.
- Zoning is sometimes convoluted/difficult to follow and understand/poorly written.

Opportunities:

- Review division of responsibilities/shared or overlapping jurisdiction
- Focus group with developers, attorneys, and engineers/architects to understand their experiences with Hingham’s approval process – a permitting “self-assessment” process
- Survey “best practices” in permitting
- Consider options to streamline or consolidate permitting
- Review administrative rules and regulations, applications, and procedures from an applicant’s perspective and identify options to make information clear, well organized, and easy to follow
- Update the Zoning Bylaw

29. As one commenter said at a core assessment meeting, “Downtown Hingham is nice, but it isn’t extraordinary.” (Land Use) (Housing)

- Attractive buildings, historic charm, walkable design, but –
- Limited/fragmented connectivity with the waterfront
- Perceived shortage of parking
- Conflicts between traffic speeds and pedestrian safety
- High rents and ability of small, traditional downtown establishments to survive
- How much housing should be encouraged or even allowed?

Opportunities:

- Downtown/Hingham Harbor Master Plan (with MAPC)
- Resist temptation to over-regulate commercial space in mixed-use buildings
- Parking management plan for the downtown area

30. Hingham has two significant retail centers with national brands – Derby Street and the Shipyard – but retail is under pressure everywhere, due in part to overstored markets and in part to online shopping. (Land Use)

- The potential for pressure from the re-invention of Hanover Mall is an example of regional challenges
- Other changes around Hingham: potential Chapter 40R at Queen Anne’s Corner and planning in Weymouth to catalyze investment along Bridge Street.

Opportunities:

- Be alert to the transformation of retail centers to mixed-use developments and their potential impact on Hingham’s economy
- Redevelopment, intensification of use, and mix of uses in South Hingham and further concentration of housing near the Shipyard
- Consider options for form-based code over traditional zoning, especially in South Hingham, as a strategy to facilitate market-driven development

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OPEN SPACE & RECREATION

31. Residents and key stakeholders have expressed concern about water quality and quantity, including the need to conserve water in a more proactive way (Land Use) (Sustainability)

- Groundwater, recharged by Accord Brook, supplies much of the town with drinking water and while the town has taken steps to protect the Accord Brook Watershed, supply is not unlimited. The town has not placed restrictions on watering of lawns.

Opportunities:

- Update and strengthen regulations associated with the existing watershed protection district
- Regulate the watering of lawns to promote water conservation

32. The cost of purchasing open space in Hingham is high and management of open space is an additional cost.

- Hingham contains more than 4,000 of protected open space through ownership and easement held by the town and land trusts.
- A total of nine entities of town government, including departments, trustees and partnerships, manage the 2,800 acres of town-owned open space and recreation land.
- The degree to which this open space is managed varies depending on the resources of the owner.

Opportunities:

- Require that funds to manage open space acquisitions accompany all future gifts of open space lands
- Explore alternative approaches to land management, such as forming friends' groups and/or open space cooperatives
- Consolidate and streamline management of town-owned open space and recreation land

33. Many of Hingham's open space parcels and recreation areas are disconnected from one another, making it difficult for users to move between multiple sites on a single recreation outing. Connections can also serve as wildlife corridors. (Sustainability) (Land Use)

- A recently completed comprehensive trails study confirmed the lack of linkages and identified many opportunities for making connections.

Opportunities:

- Devote more resources to making these connections
- Develop a signage program to better identify open spaces and the connections between them

34. Hingham maintains several school and neighborhood playgrounds, each with a shelf-life of 20 to 30 years. The cost to the town to maintain these is high and ongoing. (Sustainability)

- Between 2013 and 2019, the Community Preservation Committee funded nearly \$250,000 to upgrade existing playgrounds and construct new playgrounds at four sites.
- The town operates just one fully ADA-compliant playground.

Opportunities:

- Explore sustainable approaches to constructing playgrounds and playground equipment

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- Consider replacing traditional playgrounds with nature-based playgrounds
- Enlist the efforts of volunteers to raise funds for playground equipment

35. The town will need to balance support for expanded, upgraded and additional recreation fields with the need for more and improved public services, including a library and new senior center.

(Facilities & Services)

- Hingham recently commissioned a recreation fields assessment to better understand existing conditions and forecast long term needs. This study is in progress.

Opportunities:

- Weigh the recommendations of this assessment with other priorities for improved public facilities

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