



# TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM

## MASTER PLAN

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### CHAPTER 4

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**Prepared by the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)**  
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## Purpose and Introduction:

Over time communities grow and managing that growth has always been a challenge for local government. Ashburnham recognizes the need for a community Master Plan to help local officials manage that growth and act in concert with a common agenda for the long-range goals of the Town. Without foresight, planning and structure, the chances of optimizing the best and highest value of human, natural and capital resources is greatly diminished.



The Economic Development (ED) chapter includes an inventory and analysis of the economic sector in Ashburnham, town goals and objectives, and recommendations that identify policies and strategies to achieve the economic goals. Compiling the ED chapter was funded through the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission's (MRPC) District Local Technical Assistance Program (DLTA). The DLTA program was established by Chapter 205 of the Acts of 2006, which enables Regional Planning Agencies (RPAs) such as MRPC to provide technical assistance to member communities for projects meeting certain criteria, such as Community Master Planning determined by the General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

### Section 4.1: Assessment of Ashburnham's Current Economic Base

Ashburnham is largely a rural residential community, with limited industrial and commercial development. As a result, residents deal with long commutes, limited retail opportunities, high property taxes, and insufficient revenues for town operations. There are few vacancies in the limited commercial and industrial space in the town. Ashburnham has favorable conditions for additional economic development; its potential is most limited by a shortage of commercial and industrial land.

### Ashburnham's Labor Force

Ashburnham's labor force includes more than 3,700 residents. With few exceptions, small towns and residential suburbs tend to have a relatively high labor force participation rate, and this can be seen in Ashburnham where 69% of the population sixteen years and older is in the labor force, compared to 67% for the State as a whole. The number of employed Ashburnham residents has increased from 2,968 in 2009 (the bottom of the Great Recession) to 3,531 in the year 2021, a 24.7% increase. Similarly, Ashburnham's local unemployment rate has steadily fallen over the same period, reaching a low of just 2.8% in 2019, the lowest it has been since 2000, when the rate was 2.7%. After spiking during the COVID emergency, unemployment in Ashburnham is returning to its previous low rates: the rate for the latest month available (March 2022) was 3.3%,

suggesting that despite a spike in unemployment in 2020, employment is steadily returning to pre-pandemic numbers.

Ashburnham's unemployment rate is closely tied to that of the state and the nation, both of which saw an extended period of job growth between 2009 and the COVID emergency of 2020; sharp job losses in 2020, and a reversion to the strong pre-emergency economy since 2021. One notable observation is that Ashburnham's unemployment rate had been consistently higher than or equal to that of the state from 2004-2018, and consistently lower since 2019. This likely reflects a stronger regional economy in North Central Massachusetts, leading to greater job opportunity and security for town residents.

### **Where Ashburnham Residents Work**

According to the U.S. Census data from 2019, only 9% of Ashburnham's employed residents work in the town. Over a quarter of employed residents worked in the Montachusett Region's largest commercial centers; 9.6% in Fitchburg, 8.1% in Leominster, and 7.7% in Gardner. Travel to Boston accounted for only 4% of the town's working population.

With limited employment opportunities in town and poor access to the highway system and the MBTA commuter rail, Ashburnham residents have disproportionately long commutes compared to workers nationally and statewide. The mean travel time to work for Ashburnham residents was 37.1 minutes, higher than the Massachusetts average of 30.0 minutes, and higher than the national average of 27.1 minutes. Ashburnham has generally not been an attractive location for Greater Boston commuters, while accessing other major employment centers such as the I-495 corridor is challenging.

It should be noted that these figures predate the widespread rise of working from home. Nonetheless, they demonstrate that Ashburnham has a relatively small jobs base, and that this results in residents going far afield for employment.

### **Wealth in the Community**

Ashburnham is characterized by relatively high incomes and a very low poverty rate compared to the state and region. Because employment in North Central Massachusetts is highly regional, with Ashburnham employers playing such a small role in the regional job base, this condition is less a reflection of the town's economic development than its housing characteristics. Most of the housing units in town are large single family homes in rural or suburban neighborhoods. The households who occupy this style of housing (for example, couples who are raising or have already raised children) tend to be larger and include higher-income individuals than the residents of less expensive housing such as apartments or townhouses. As a result, Ashburnham has an unusually large average household size (2.92), significantly greater than Worcester County (2.54), the state (2.5), and the national average (2.60).

In 2020, the per capita income for the State of Massachusetts was \$45,555, while that of Ashburnham was slightly lower at \$43,423. Ashburnham's per capita income was also higher than

that of Athol (\$28,717), Lancaster (\$38,661), and Winchendon (\$33,612). Caution is necessary when comparing per capita income across communities; for example, a town with a larger proportion of households with school-aged children can result in a lower per capita income compared to a town with a larger proportion of households without children, despite the latter having lower incomes.

According to the American Community Survey 2016-2020 Estimates, Ashburnham's median household income (\$113,558) is higher than Ashby (\$97,269), Athol (\$57,667), Lancaster (\$110,893), Lunenburg (\$109,637), Westminster (\$98,555) and Winchendon (\$81,329). Ashburnham's median family income (\$120,478) is higher than Ashby (\$103,370), Athol (\$67,479), Lancaster (\$110,893), Lunenburg (\$109,637), Westminster (\$116,587) and Winchendon (\$101,087), and considerably greater than the state (\$106,526). The disparity between lower per capita incomes and higher household and family incomes could be explained in part by the town's unusually large household size.

Ashburnham's poverty rate (1.6%) is the lowest in the region and is considerably lower than the state poverty rate (9.4%). This, too, is likely more of a reflection of the town's housing characteristics than its economic development status.

## **Education**

Residents with a high school diploma (25.1%) represent the largest segment of the Ashburnham population in terms of educational attainment – this is less than 2% higher than the state average. The second largest group (23.9%) has a bachelor's degree, followed by residents with some college but no degree (21.5%). The state percentages reveal how the population in Ashburnham compares to the overall state population in terms of educational attainment. Unlike Ashburnham, the largest segment in the state contains those with a bachelor's degree (24.5%). The second largest group is those with a high school diploma (23.5%) followed by those with a graduate degree (20%).

There are numerous public-school districts within the region educating young persons from pre-kindergarten through high school, private schools educating residents at approximately the same age levels, and new charter schools. Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical High School is located in Fitchburg offering trade school curriculum at the high school level. Located in Gardner, Mount Wachusett Community College (MWCC) offers two-year programs while Fitchburg State University offers four-year programs. In addition, there are many private sector educational operators offering training courses. The North Central Massachusetts Workforce Investment Board, Inc. promotes the economic and social welfare of the region through education, employment and training programs that increase employability of young people and adults.

## **The Number and Types of Jobs in Ashburnham**

One implication of the limited commercial and industrial development in Ashburnham is that relatively few of its residents work in town. Fewer than half as many people work in Ashburnham as in comparably-sized towns like Lancaster and Sterling. The ratio of people residing in



Ashburnham to those working in town follows a similar pattern; towns like Ashburnham (151.5), Ashby (127.8) and Winchendon (175.0) have approximately half as many jobs per 1000 residents as towns with highway and/or commuter rail access such as Athol (318.4), Groton (291.6) or Westminster (261.0).

Employment in Ashburnham grew slowly in the decade preceding the COVID emergency, and appears to have returned to its previous trend after a significant decline and recovery in 2020-2022. Historically speaking, the cyclical nature of the regional economy has resulted in Ashburnham gaining jobs during one decade, losing jobs the next, and so on. Despite not being a recession, the Covid-19 Pandemic had a large impact on a number of employment sectors, which is reflected in the decrease of the number of persons employed.

Unlike jobs, wages were not significantly affected by the COVID emergency. Total wages increased by 31% from 2012-2021 and the average weekly wage increased by 32.8% during the same period despite the loss of total employment. Similarly, the Consumer Price Index for the northeast U.S. increased by about 11% during the period, indicating that wages in Ashburnham outpace the rate of inflation significantly.



The largest job sector in Ashburnham is Education and Health Services, with about 525 jobs, or 54.9% of all jobs in Ashburnham. This is predictable as there are two schools with large student bodies located in Ashburnham, part of the Ashburnham/Westminster Regional School District, as well as Cushing Academy, a private co-ed high school. Other strengths of the local economy include Construction, with a 29.6% increase in jobs, an indicator that the real estate market has continued to be a

strong driver of economic growth. Unfortunately, there was a loss of jobs in the Trade, Transportation & Utilities (-35.7%) and Leisure and Hospitality (-21.5%) sectors, most likely due to the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic. The Educational Services, Health Care, and Social Services sector is also the largest employer of Ashburnham residents.

### **Business Districts**

Commercial development in Ashburnham is concentrated in a small number of commercial, industrial, and mixed-use areas, with a smaller number of businesses scattered throughout town, mainly on the numbered routes. Like most communities in the region, and like the Commonwealth as a whole, Ashburnham saw a reduction in the number of commercial and industrial parcels between 2012 and 2022.

Downtown Ashburnham is a historic mixed commercial/residential/institutional town center, with retail and service uses concentrated on a relatively dense and walkable Main Street and



residences predominating towards the district's edges. The south end of downtown along Maple Avenue includes both residential and industrial uses, as well as the town's DPW yard. Ashburnham has identified the downtown district as a primary focus of its future economic development efforts. A Village Center zoning district has been created for the area to encourage the commercial and residential revitalization of downtown in harmony with its traditional town center character and walkable development pattern. At the time of this master plan, a property of considerable importance to the town's economy, the Ashburnham Market on Main Street, sits unused. Notably, there is currently no public transit serving downtown.

The center of the South Ashburnham neighborhood, around the junction of Route 101 and South Main Street, features a collection of commercial and industrial properties. This area is in the geographic center of the neighborhood, at its major intersection, and was once a neighborhood commercial center. At the time of this master plan, however, the district consists almost entirely of industrial businesses and automobile-oriented retail. Most of the district is zoned Industrial, with a Light Industrial A (LI-A) overlay district covering the southern half. There is a small area along the south side of South Main Street at the intersection zoned Business. Much of the undeveloped industrial zoned land in this area is not available for development, due to it being protected open space, inaccessible due to railroad tracks, accessible only from unbuilt roadways, or wetlands. The location of this district on Rt. 101 close to the Gardner border is significant in two ways: it is close to existing water and sewer infrastructure in Gardner, and it is the area of town with the best highway access via Rt. 140 in Gardner.

Route 12 in West Ashburnham is a rural road along which several properties are being used for vehicular uses and outdoor storage businesses. The Town has zoned large areas of this corridor Light Industrial B (LI-B). Other industrial, commercial, and vehicular businesses are located on scattered sites throughout town, mainly on the numbered routes. This area's development potential is also severely limited by a lack of utilities and by open space protections.

The Route 119 corridor, featuring the Mt. Watatic Trailhead, is not currently developed for business. The former Ashburnham Country Store property at the junction of Rt. 101 and Rt. 119 is not longer in commercial use. Route 119, home to the Mt. Watatic trailhead, has been identified as a focus for the town's future economic development efforts. The Town has created a Green Business District located 2,000 feet on either side of Route 119 intended to foster businesses that will support tourism and passive and outdoor recreation while preserving the natural beauty and ecological significance of the area. A small area at the junction of Routes 101 and 119, including the former Ashburnham Country Store, is zoned Business.

### **Economic Sector Contribution to Local Tax Base**

Ashburnham has a very small industrial and commercial tax base, resulting in high taxes for business and residents while still providing insufficient revenue for town operations. In fiscal year 2022, Ashburnham levied a total of \$15,743,689 in taxes, based on a local tax rate of \$18.88 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation, the second-highest tax rate in the region. Residential homeowners accounted for an unusually high 96% of the town's total tax base (\$15,127,091) while businesses

and industries accounted for just 2.6% (\$402,653). The remaining 1.4% was derived from taxes on personal property (\$213,946).

Ashburnham has the second highest commercial tax rate of the surrounding communities, but the lowest commercial sector contribution towards the total tax levy, demonstrating the relatively small amount of taxable commercial land. Similarly, Ashburnham has the second lowest industrial tax revenues compared to neighboring communities, surpassing only Ashby, while having the second-highest industrial tax rate. Ashburnham's tax rate increased steadily from 2013-2018, and has subsequently declined to approximately the where it was a decade ago. Owing to rising property values, the town has seen significant increases in revenues despite the steady tax rate. The amount of total tax revenue collected increased 46% from 2013 to 2022, with the residential tax revenue increasing 7% and the commercial and industrial revenues increasing 16%. Ashburnham's home values have increased significantly over the previous decade, with home values increasing more than 42%. In the same time period, Ashburnham's average single-family tax bill increased over 47% and in 2022 was greater than Groton, Lancaster, Sterling, Westminster and Winchendon, but less than Ashby, Athol, and Lunenburg.

## **Section 4.2: Commercial and Industrial Development Potential**

### **Business, Commercial, and Industrial Districts**

Ashburnham has several zoning districts allowing for a variety of commercial and industrial uses. The Village Center Commercial and Residential Districts are intended to foster appropriate reuse of existing structures and new construction within the downtown area in harmony with the historic character and dense development pattern of the downtown. The Light Industrial A (LI-A)



District in South Ashburnham and the Light Industrial B (LI-B) District in western Ashburnham along Route 12 allow light manufacturing, retail, business, and office as listed in the Schedule of Use Regulations. The purpose of the LI-A and B Districts is to provide areas for industrial and commercial uses in an open setting that will not have objectionable influences on adjacent residential and

commercial districts. The zones allow for uses that are not dangerous by reason of fire or explosion, nor injurious or detrimental to the neighborhood by reason of dust, odor, fumes, wastes, smoke, glare, noise, vibration or other noxious or objectionable feature as measured at the nearest property line.

**Development Potential & Methodology**

The Land Use chapter of this master plan contains an analysis of the development potential of Ashburnham's commercial and industrial districts. It concluded that only 37% of Ashburnham's remaining commercial land, and 43% of its remaining industrial land, are available for development. These figures overstate the amount of developable land, as site-specific conditions function to further reduce the developable industrial areas.

Increasing the area of town available for industrial and commercial development is one strategy for growing the economic sector. Another is to redevelop established industrial and commercial properties for more intensive use. The efforts to promote economic development in Downtown Ashburnham are based on this strategy. The existing business district of South Ashburnham, built out with low-density auto-oriented retail and industrial uses despite being a neighborhood commercial center with water and sewer available, could be redeveloped for more intensive business development.

**Infrastructure**

Ashburnham's drinking water comes from the Upper Naukeag Lake in Ashburnham. The Upper Naukeag Lake is a shared water source that provides water to the Towns of Ashburnham and Winchendon. Water is pumped from the lake to the Ashburnham-Winchendon Joint Water Filtration Plant located in Ashburnham. Here, the water is clarified and filtered. From the water filtration plant the water is pumped into 53 miles of water transmission mains and into two water storage tanks. Combined capacity provides 1.5 million gallons of storage, which is equivalent to approximately three (3) days capacity under normal water usage. The tanks are located on Cushing Street and on Rt. 101, about 4 miles south of the water plant. In 2016 the water plant produced an average of 245,000 gallons per day (GPD) with an annual total of 89.8 million gallons of water produced for Ashburnham residents. There are approximately 1,300 service connections to the system with over 270 fire hydrants in town. The water and sewer departments currently services 53 miles of waterlines and 25 miles of sewer lines throughout the town.

While there are opportunities to promote economic development, it is unlikely that the commercial and industrial build-out would be possible without public water and sewer service. There are no short or long-term plans to extend any of the water or sewer lines from where they are currently located. The only industrial or commercial properties where there is water and sewer are the Village Center Commercial District, including the small industrial district at the south end of downtown, and a portion of the Light Industrial A District located in South Ashburnham. The development potential of Ashburnham's other business areas, especially the Green Business District on Rt. 119 and the industrial parcels on Rt. 12 in West Ashburnham, is severely limited by the lack of water and sewer.



### Working at Home

Home occupations have long played a role in Ashburnham's neighborhoods and employment, mostly small service businesses such as hairdressers and home offices, and Ashburnham's existing zoning scheme currently allows a variety of home occupations. In the aftermath of the COVID shutdowns, however, working from home for some or all of the work week has become a common feature of professional life for many American workers, and

has been recognized by zoning authorities throughout the country as an integral part of the ordinary use of a residential unit. According to the American Community Survey 2021 Estimates, 14.5% (442) of Ashburnham residents worked at home in 2020, a sharp increase from 5.2% (169) in 2015. Even this figure may undercount the number of residents working from home on any given day, as people who split their time between the office and working from home will often report the office as their workplace. Despite the reopening of the economy, working from home for some or all of the work has remained popular. This represents a significant shift in the economy, one which creates a number of opportunities for communities in the Montachusett region.

First, more Ashburnham residents working in town means more customers for local retail businesses in town, providing the goods and services that office workers would have otherwise purchased in the community they commute to. Further, people working "from home" often spend some of their working time at so-called "third places" – that is, locations such as cafes, libraries, or other gathering spots where someone could sit with a laptop. This dynamic could be especially beneficial to the efforts to promote economic development downtown.

Second, working from home makes it possible for people employed at jobs located in Eastern Massachusetts, where most of the state's jobs are located, to live in Ashburnham. The length of the commute from Ashburnham to Greater Boston is a significant hindrance when a worker commutes five days a week. The opportunity to work from home a few days a week, and make the commute much less often, opens up the possibility of living in a community like Ashburnham.

Taken together, these factors can create a virtuous cycle in which more workers fuel a resurgence of business in town, particularly downtown, further enhancing the town's quality of life and fiscal strength, and attracting more residents to support business development. It is important to note that any benefits of increased working from home will be dependent on Ashburnham having sufficient internet services to meet the expectations of modern office workers. See the infrastructure section below for a discussion of IT services.

The phenomenon of working from home has another significant implication for economic development: the decline of the office market. Communities with large amounts of office space, especially urban downtowns and suburban office parks, are experiencing high levels of vacancy, requiring them to reevaluate their economic development strategies. For Ashburnham, this

means that the development of commercial office space is unlikely to play a significant role in the town's economic development for the foreseeable future.

## **Section 4.3: Goals and Actions**

### **Economic Development Goals and Actions**

*Vision Statement: Ashburnham will grow its business sector and expand economic opportunity for its residents, in a manner that protects and promotes a high quality of life, by valuing and leveraging its unique cultural, historical, and natural assets.*

#### **Goal 1: Create a vibrant, livable downtown that retains Ashburnham's historic character while encouraging new businesses and residents to become members of the community.**

*Action 1: Explore creating a mixed-use overlay district for redevelopment of the downtown area that allows for a dense assortment of residential and business activity. Care should be to ensure that this rezoning takes the industrial uses in the south end into account.*

*Action 2: Relocate the DPW facilities (in accordance with the Services and Facilities chapter goals) to make space for additional economic development and housing opportunities on municipal property in the south end of downtown.*

*Action 3: Increase the customer base for downtown businesses through the development of diverse downtown housing options that are attractive and affordable to a wide range of ages and incomes.*

*Action 4: Continue to improve pedestrian safety and amenity downtown by improving sidewalk conditions and connectivity, implementing traffic calming where necessary, and avoiding roadway projects that degrade the pedestrian environment. The Intersection of Main and Water Streets should be considered a traffic calming priority.*

*Action 5: Develop pedestrian and bike connections from Downtown to South Ashburnham, expanding off the ongoing TIP Rail Trail Multiuse Pathway project, and to Mt. Watatic via Rt. 101, exploring ways to circumvent any untenable abutting parcels that would prohibit a contiguous pathway.*

#### **Goal 2: Redevelop and better utilize existing municipal assets to improve the quality of services and function to the community.**

*Action 1: Create a liaison or a simplified development guide that can preemptively assist applicants with any potential issues by allowing for the review of pre-applications. Hold preliminary consultation meetings to be to help applicants through the development review and permit process by identifying regulations that apply, identifying site design issues that are of concern and discuss solutions, identifying permits that will be required and the process for obtaining them, clarifying procedures, and establishing relationships early in the process.*



*Action 2: Identify and pursue grant opportunities to improve streetscapes (e.g., more pedestrian and bicycle accommodations, streetlights, landscaping, custom pavers, etc.), expand infrastructure to development zones, or conduct site-readiness work. Potential sources of funding include MassWorks, MassDevelopment, and the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities.*

*Action 3: Explore utilization of Ashburnham's Municipal Light Plant as a local municipal internet service provider to take advantage of the growing remote work and online business sectors.*

*Action 4: Provide economic development staff to pursue grant opportunities, work with local businesses, recruit potential employers, and ensure that policymaking takes economic development considerations into account during the decision-making process.*

**Goal 3: Support and direct economic development opportunities throughout Ashburnham, fostering a collaborative environment that can support a network of mutually beneficial enterprises.**

*Action 1: Maintain and work to expand the role of the Economic Development Committee in the community, assisting with the promotion and development of current and future business opportunities, incorporating economic development considerations into policymaking and operations.*

*Action 2: Coordinate with private sector owners of commercial and industrial land sin to make sure this land is developed in accordance with the Town's objectives. Such assistance could be in the form of extending municipal infrastructure, or simply helping the landowner access the technical assistance made available by any private/public entities that promote economic development.*

*Action 3: Create a South Ashburnham Economic Development Plan to create a vision for this neighborhood's commercial areas. This plan should consider both industrial development and the reestablishment of neighborhood business district.*

*Action 4: The EDC should conduct a review of industrial and commercial properties, zoning bylaws and zoning districts to determine their adequacy for accommodating the development of new businesses.*

*Action 5: The EDC should conduct a review of the commercial zoning bylaws and zoning districts to provide opportunities for neighborhood-scale retail appropriate for lakefront neighborhoods with sufficient density. Investigate the creation of a new neighborhood commercial district for businesses that would benefit these communities, or allowing desired retail uses under the residential zoning.*

**Goal 4: Take advantage of the growth of working from home to foster business development and improve residents' economic opportunities and quality of life.**

*Action 1: Ensure that Ashburnham has access to high-speed internet, especially around the town center, to make working from home or from third places practical for town residents.*



*Action 2: Investigate the creation of municipal broadband through the municipal light company.*

*Action 3: Pursue the provision of LRTA bus service between Ashburnham and the MBTA commuter rail.*

*Action 4: Promote the development downtown businesses as “third places” for people working from home as a core strategy for the revitalization of Downtown Ashburnham.*

**Goal 5: Attract more industrial and commercial businesses to Ashburnham.**

*Action 1: Continue to adhere to the capital plan to improve the financial position of the municipality and position the community to take advantage of any future opportunities for growth.*

*Action 2: Develop a South Ashburnham Neighborhood Plan to promote the creation of a mixed-use neighborhood center at the intersection of South Main Street and Rout 101, as well promoting industrial development in a manner that advances town-wide economic development goals while protecting neighborhood quality of life.*

*Action 3: Investigate the potential for bringing water and sewer service to the town’s industrial areas that currently lack them.*

*Action 4: Continue to pursue the development of businesses focusing on outdoors leisure in the Green Business Corridor.*

*Action 5: Investigate opportunities for additional industrial and business zonings where infrastructure and site conditions exist.*

**Section 4.4: Resources**

Ashburnham Annual Report 2016.

Ashburnham Assessor’s Database.

Ashburnham Open Space and Recreation Plan – 2014 Update.

Ashburnham Village Center Marketing Plan – 2008.

Economic Impact of Devens Report 2016.

ESRI Business Analyst Online.

**Section 4.5: Data & Graphs**

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development is the state entity in charge of tracking the changes occurring in the various sectors of the economy at both the state and local levels.

**Table 1. Ashburnham Labor Force and Unemployment Rate over Time**

Year	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Unemployment Rate	State Unemployment Rate
2021	3,726	3,531	195	5.2%	5.7%
2020	3,688	3,391	297	8.1%	9.4%
2019	3,812	3,704	108	2.8%	3.1%
2018	3,841	3,710	131	3.4%	3.4%
2017	3,738	3,596	142	3.8%	3.8%

2016	3,587	3,445	142	4.0%	4.0%
2015	3,555	3,377	178	5.0%	4.8%
2014	3,555	3,339	216	6.1%	5.7%
2013	3,496	3,252	244	7.0%	6.6%
2012	3,491	3,252	239	6.8%	6.7%
2011	3,514	3,235	279	7.9%	7.2%
2010	3,549	3,248	301	8.5%	8.1%
2009	3,120	2,831	289	9.3%	8.1%
2008	3,140	2,939	201	6.4%	5.3%
2007	3,155	2,979	176	5.6%	4.5%
2006	3,169	2,984	185	5.8%	4.7%
2005	3,139	2,959	180	5.7%	4.8%
2004	3,164	2,968	196	6.2%	5.1%

Data Source: MA Department of Labor and Workforce Development, accessed 4/19/2022.

**Table 2. How far are Ashburnham Workers Driving?**

Distance Driven to Work	Percent of Workers
<10 miles	33%
10-24 miles	27%
25-50 miles	32%
>50 miles	8%

Data Source: Onthemap.ces.census.gov, accessed 4/20/22.

**Table 3. Where Ashburnham Workers are Going...**

Percent of Workers	Where To...
9.6%	Fitchburg
9.0%	Ashburnham
8.1%	Leominster
7.7%	Gardner
5.5%	Worcester
4.0%	Boston

**Table 4: Measures of Wealth, Ashburnham and Neighboring Communities**

Community	Population	Per Capita	Median Household	Median Family	Below Poverty
Ashburnham	6,315	\$43,423	\$113,558	\$120,478	1.6%
Ashby	3,193	\$45,938	\$97,269	\$103,370	2.2%
Athol	11,945	\$28,717	\$57,667	\$67,479	11.5%
Groton	11,315	\$59,674	\$142,500	\$177,118	3.9%
Lancaster	8,441	\$38,661	\$103,140	\$110,893	3.9%
Lunenburg	11,782	\$43,619	\$99,601	\$109,637	7.8%
Sterling	7,985	\$55,912	\$122,810	\$129,675	2.4%
Westminster	8,213	\$46,237	\$98,555	\$116,587	1.7%
Winchendon	10,364	\$33,612	\$81,329	\$101,087	8.7%
State	7,029,917	\$45,555	\$84,385	\$106,526	9.4%

Data Source: American Community Survey 2016-2020 Estimates, Accessed 4/25/2022.

**Table 5: Population and Jobs in Ashburnham**

	Ashburnham	Ashby	Athol	Groton	Lancaster	Lunenburg	Sterling	Westminster	Winchendon
<b>Population</b>	6,315	3,193	11,945	11,315	8,441	11,782	7,985	8,213	10,364
<b>Average Employment</b>	956	408	3,803	3,299	2,230	2,537	2,612	2,144	1,814
<b>Jobs per 1000 Residents</b>	151.4	127.8	318.4	291.6	264.2	215.3	327.1	261.0	175.0

Data Source: MA Department of Labor and Workforce Development (ES-202), Accessed 6/20/2023.

**Table 6: Employment and Wages in Ashburnham 2012-2021**

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Change	
Establishments	117	125	129	129	131	134	129	121	135	141	24	20.5%
Total Wages (Million \$)	\$40.7	\$42.3	\$43.3	\$45.1	\$48.6	\$47.6	\$49.3	\$49.6	\$50.2	\$53.3	\$12.6	31.0%
Average Employment	982	1019	1044	1032	1,096	1059	1080	1011	912	956	-26	-2.6%
Average Weekly Wage	\$797	\$799	\$798	\$841	\$853	\$864	\$878	\$943	\$1,058	\$1073	\$276	34.6%

Data Source: MA Department of Labor and Workforce Development (ES-202), Accessed 4/11/2022.

**Table 7: Employment and Wages – Year 2021 Comparison**

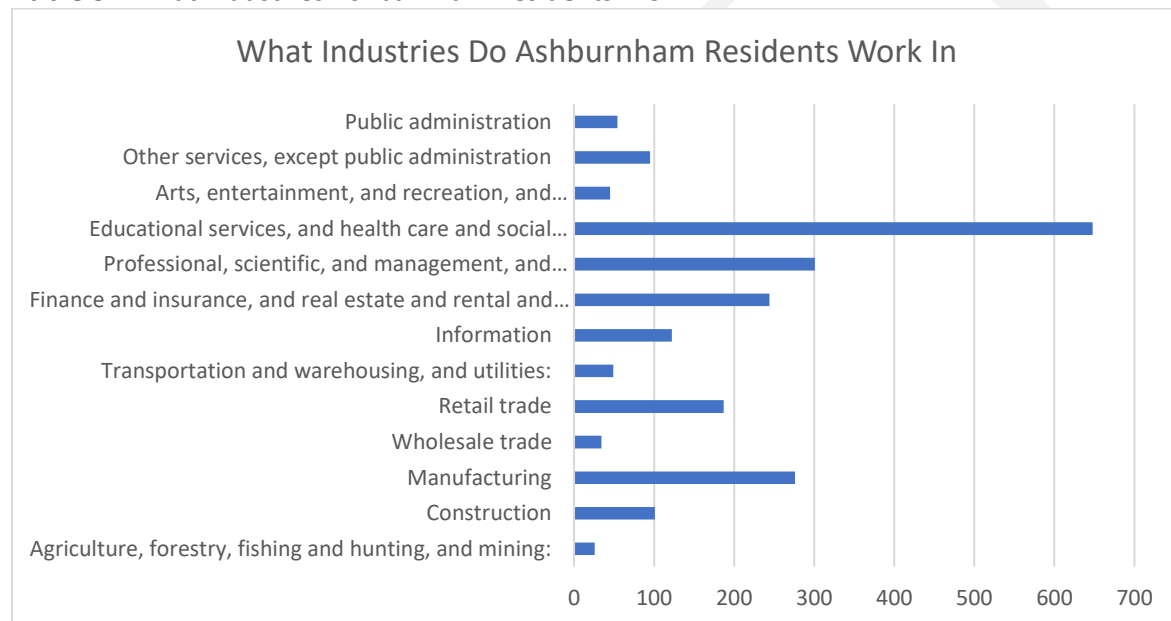
	Ashburnham	Ashby	Athol	Groton	Lancaster	Lunenburg	Sterling	Westminster	Winchendon
<b>Establishments</b>	141	92	422	313	216	288	285	260	225
<b>Total Wages (Million \$)</b>	\$53.3	\$19.4	\$161.7	\$201.6	\$127	\$137.9	\$151.4	\$122.9	\$78.6
<b>Average Employment</b>	956	408	3,803	3,299	2,230	2,537	2,612	2,144	1,814
<b>Average Weekly Wage</b>	\$1,073	\$912	\$818	\$1,175	\$1,095	\$1,045	\$1,115	\$1,102	\$834

Data Source: MA Department of Labor and Workforce Development (ES-202), Accessed 6/20/2023.

**Table 8: Workforce by Industry Within Ashburnham 2015-2021**

INDUSTRY	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Change
Construction	71	93	104	103	88	84	92	29.6%
Manufacturing	23	21	27	32	25	27	29	26.1%
Trade, Transportation & Utilities	199	189	148	154	147	119	128	-35.7%
Financial Activities	11	12	9	9	8	9	9	-18.2%
Professional & Business Services	20	21	17	19	20	28	33	65.0%
Education & Health Services	573	567	571	585	574	515	525	-8.4%
Leisure & Hospitality	65	112	103	94	60	43	51	-21.5%
Other Services	18	18	12	10	11	17	20	11.1%
Total All Industries	1032	1096	1059	1080	1011	912	956	-7.4%

Data Source: MA Department of Economic Research; Accessed 2/10/2023

**Table 9: What Industries Ashburnham Residents Work In**

Data Source: American Community Survey 2016-2020 Estimate, accessed 4/26/2022.

**Table 10. Commercial Tax Base Comparison**

Community	FY2022 Tax Rate/\$1,000	Commercial Taxes Levied	Assessed Valuation	Total Tax Levy	% Total Tax Levy
Ashburnham	18.88	306,459	16,231,940	15,743,689	1.95%
Ashby	17.69	199,081	11,253,859	7,093,430	2.81%
Athol	16.05	1,333,630	83,092,187	15,860,863	8.41%
Groton	17.19	1,390,830	80,909,241	36,277,152	3.83%
Lancaster	19.45	1,711,916	88,016,232	21,662,400	7.90%
Lunenburg	17.19	1,292,310	75,178,002	29,956,477	4.31%
Sterling	15.25	777,902	51,009,959	20,444,413	3.80%
Westminster	15.8	949,813	60,114,752	19,665,247	4.83%
Winchendon	15.11	603,701	39,953,736	13,765,708	4.39%

Data Source: MA Department of Revenue Databank Reports, Accessed 3/31/2022.

**Table 11. Industrial Tax Base Comparison**

Community	FY2022 Tax Rate/\$1,000	Industrial Taxes Levied	Assessed Valuation	% of Total Tax Levy
<b>Ashburnham</b>	<b>18.88</b>	<b>96,194</b>	<b>5,095,000</b>	<b>0.61%</b>
Ashby	17.69	21,805	1,232,600	0.31%
Athol	16.05	400,077	24,926,900	2.52%
Groton	17.19	250,127	14,550,700	0.69%
Lancaster	19.45	755,100	38,822,617	3.49%
Lunenburg	17.19	423,022	24,608,600	1.41%
Sterling	15.25	956,239	62,704,200	4.68%
Westminster	15.8	654,506	41,424,400	3.33%
Winchendon	15.11	603,701	14,390,200	4.39%

Data Source: MA Department of Revenue Databank Reports, Accessed 3/31/2022.

**Table 13. Single Family Home Values and Tax Bills 2012 & 2022**

Community	Average Single-Family Value - 2012	Average Single-Family Value - 2022	Percent Change	Average Single-Family Tax Bill - 2012	Average Single-Family Tax Bill - 2022	Percent Change
<b>Ashburnham</b>	<b>204,859</b>	<b>292,769</b>	<b>42.91%</b>	<b>3,757</b>	<b>5,527</b>	<b>47.11%</b>
Ashby	212,281	295,634	39.27%	3,486	5,230	50.03%
Athol	140,505	206,771	47.16%	2,161	3,319	53.59%
Groton	399,146	535,063	34.05%	6,418	9,198	43.32%
Lancaster	291,603	389,188	33.47%	5,231	7,570	44.71%
Lunenburg	248,038	374,392	50.94%	4,174	6,436	54.19%
Sterling	290,398	410,430	41.33%	4,545	6,259	37.71%
Westminster	231,402	341,704	47.67%	3,989	5,399	35.35%
Winchendon	174,894	242,405	38.60%	2,643	3,663	38.59%
STATE	358,687	525,781	46.58%	4,711	6,724	42.73%

Data Source: Division of Local Services DOR Databank website, accessed 3/31/2022.

**Table 14. Foreclosures in Ashburnham and Surrounding Communities, 2012-2021**

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
<b>Ashburnham</b>	29	7	11	13	21	13	15	7	5	3	124
Ashby	9	4	6	4	4	4	7	1	1	2	42
Athol	61	32	34	49	49	47	33	22	14	10	351
Groton	7	5	5	2	4	6	7	1	1	0	38
Lancaster	10	2	9	5	8	8	7	3	4	0	56
Lunenburg	12	6	10	14	19	17	11	5	2	2	98
Sterling	5	10	8	9	5	11	8	7	1	0	64
Westminster	13	8	6	5	13	8	9	5	4	2	73
Winchendon	43	24	22	23	59	31	30	16	7	1	256

Data Sources: Northern Worcester County Registry of Deeds website, accessed 4/26/2022, Southern Middlesex Registry of Deeds website, accessed 4/26/2022; Worcester District Registry of Deeds, accessed 4/26/2022.

**Table 15. Educational Attainment - Population 25 Years and Over**

Amount of School	Ashburnham	Ashby	Athol	Groton	Lancaster	Lunenburg	Sterling	Westminster	Winchendon	State
No High School Diploma	1.3%	7.0%	10.0%	3.4%	10.8%	4.0%	3.2%	3.5%	9.5%	8.9%
High School Diploma	25.1%	28.9%	38.9%	15.6%	27.9%	28.4%	19.6%	28.2%	34.6%	23.5%
Some College, No Degree	21.5%	14.7%	19.4%	11.0%	11.0%	19.2%	15.5%	14.3%	23.0%	15.3%
Associate's Degree	15.6%	8.9%	11.1%	4.2%	4.3%	9.6%	7.2%	12.3%	10.6%	7.7%
Bachelor's Degree	23.9%	20.9%	14.5%	38.0%	29.9%	24.9%	32.2%	25.0%	13.9%	24.5%
Graduate or Prof. Degree	12.6%	19.7%	6.0%	27.8%	16.0%	13.9%	22.4%	16.7%	8.4%	20.0%

Data Source: American Community Survey 2016-2020 Estimates, Accessed 3/22/22 and 4/7/22.

**Table 16: Number of Commercial and Industrial Parcels**

COMMUNITY	TOTAL PARCELS 2012	TOTAL PARCELS 2022	COMMERCIAL PARCELS 2012	COMMERCIAL PARCELS 2022	INDUSTRIAL PARCELS 2012	INDUSTRIAL PARCELS 2022
Ashburnham	4087	4267	43	38	28	27
Ashby	1752	1844	21	18	4	4
Athol	5380	5777	215	213	61	62
Groton	4436	5081	87	91	14	13
Lancaster	2988	3290	70	99	52	48
Lunenburg	5351	5467	134	130	31	29
Sterling	3718	4028	74	73	114	107
Westminster	3907	4362	57	47	58	50
Winchendon	4962	5037	167	153	69	63

Data Source: MA Department of Revenue Databank Reports, Accessed 4/1/22.

**Table 17. Developable Commercial and Industrial Land**

	TOTAL ACRES	LANDS WITH ABSOLUTE CONSTRAINTS	LANDS WITH PARTIAL CONSTRAINTS	DEVELOPED LANDS	FUTURE DEVELOPABLE LANDS
COMMERCIAL	1,430	778	44	68	540
INDUSTRIAL	1,428	723	-	79	626

Data Source: Town of Ashburnham Assessor's Database, Economic Impact of Devens Report 2016