

ECONOMIC BASE

Hopkinton strives to maintain the Town's rural character while balancing economic and environmental health. A strong, diverse economy is a key element of sustainability. A diverse tax base benefits residents, including job options, access to goods and services, and financial support for community service. Strong working relationships between businesses and local government are important elements for successful economic development.

Hopkinton is advantaged by its location, accessibility, and two distinct villages. With multiple access points to I-89, Hopkinton is easily accessible to Boston, New Hampshire's Upper Valley, and points beyond. Within Hopkinton are two historic villages, which provide a selection of shops, services, and other businesses. The Economic Development Committee provides active, ongoing economic growth and development support.

This Economic Base Chapter lays out the existing state of the Town's economy and identifies economic development tools in use and available to Hopkinton. This Chapter also reviews other considerations such as the Town's conservation lands and trails, strong school system, and transportation network. A series of recommendations, including specific actions to help achieve the Town's vision, are listed at the end of the Chapter.



KEY FINDINGS

A review of the issues in this Chapter and through public involvement identifies several key findings, with steps to move forward noted later in the Chapter:

- When asked in the 2020 Community Survey what new types of commercial enterprises would be desired in Hopkinton, respondents were most supportive of restaurants, agricultural, recreational, professional development, and home businesses. There was an overwhelming concern for the current tax rate, with many open to commercial development.
- In 2021, Hopkinton employers offered the median average weekly wages (\$1,106). Compared with adjacent towns, Dunbarton's wages were the highest (\$1,368) and Warner's wages the lowest (\$722).
- In 2020, Hopkinton's total tax rate was second highest compared to its seven neighboring communities.
- Hopkinton makes use of several available economic development tools, including the Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive (RSA 79-E), the Economic Revitalization Zone (ERZ) program, and the Tax Increment Financing Districts (TIFs). Another potential tool is the Commercial and Industrial Construction Exemption.
- The Economic Development Committee can actively shape future economic development in several ways, one of which is to draft and adopt an Economic Development and Marketing Strategy.

Central/Southern Region of New Hampshire Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is a locally-based, regionally-driven planning process designed to bring the public and private sectors together in the creation of a strategic roadmap or plan for regional economic development.

A "Project List," along with a vision, and goals and objectives make up the heart of the CEDS. Several local Hopkinton projects were included in the 2019 Central / Southern Region of New Hampshire CEDS, including potential improvements at the Main Street/NH 103 intersection, the US 202/NH 9/NH 127 intersection improvement project, and potential improvements to the Hopkinton Fair Grandstand.

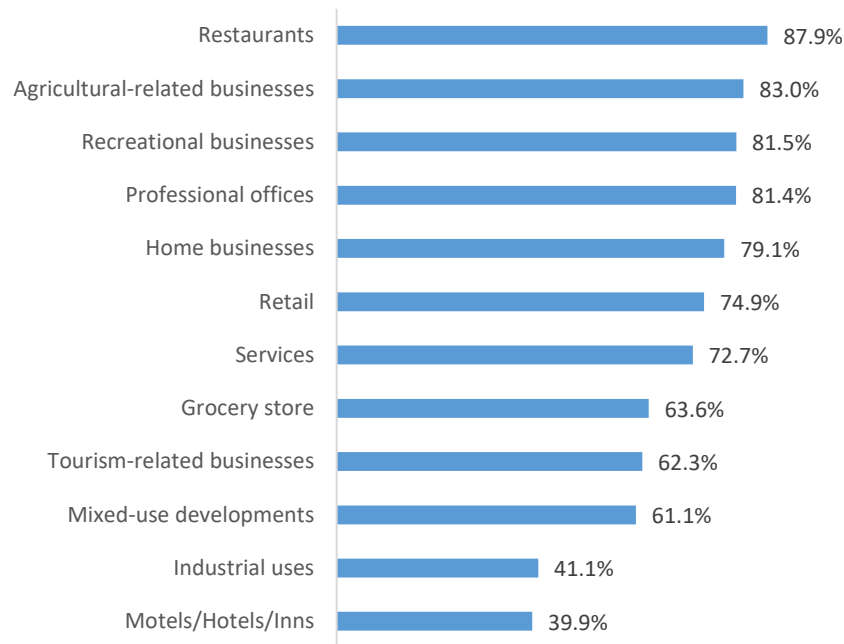
The CEDS is designed to foster collaboration between regions and communities, build capacity and guide the economic prosperity and resiliency of the Central/Southern region. It also includes an analysis of the regional economy; establishes regional goals and objectives; sets forth a regional plan of action; and identifies investment priorities and funding sources for the region.

An important benefit of the CEDS is that it is a prerequisite for the region to be designated by the US Economic Development Administration (EDA) as a future Economic Development District (EDD). A designated EDD enables municipalities and counties to qualify for funding under EDA's current public works, economic adjustment and planning grant programs. Currently, there are three EDDs located within New Hampshire. The CEDS is slated to be updated in 2024.

- Other characteristics affect the Town's economic wellbeing, such as the trail network, schools, potential improvements to the transportation network, and the predictability of the planning process.

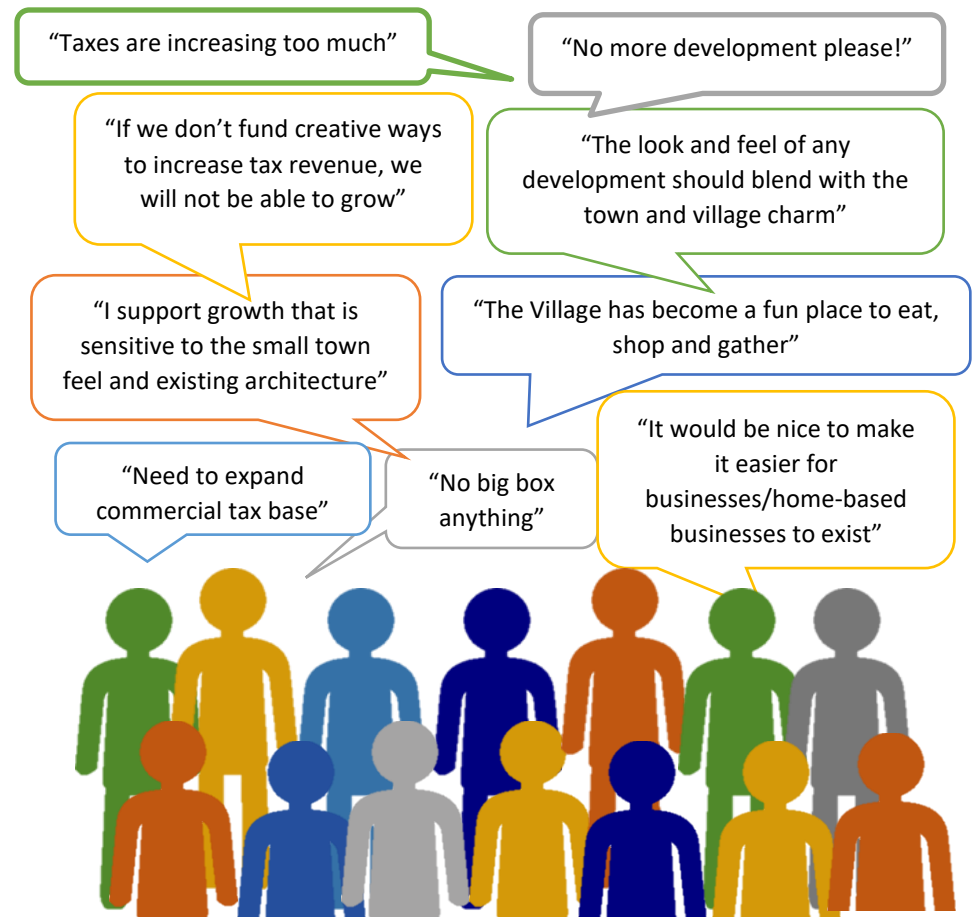
WHAT THE COMMUNITY SURVEY SAID...

Which of the following commercial enterprises would you like to see within Hopkinton?



Again, when asked what new types of commercial enterprises would be desired in Hopkinton, respondents were most supportive of restaurants, agricultural, recreational, professional development, and home businesses. As shown in the graphic, many other

commercial enterprises were also rated highly. There was an overwhelming concern for the current tax rate, with many open to commercial development that could contribute to balancing this rate to be more manageable for residents and property owners.



ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

An analysis of various datasets, such as labor force and employment, provides opportunities for Hopkinton to understand economic trends and to weigh these trends against the overall vision and recommendations identified in this Chapter. It is important to note that at the time of preparing this Chapter, the world is in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is unknown, at this time, what impacts the pandemic will have on the following economic trends, which should be considered when utilizing this data in future planning.

LABOR FORCE, EMPLOYMENT, AND UNEMPLOYMENT

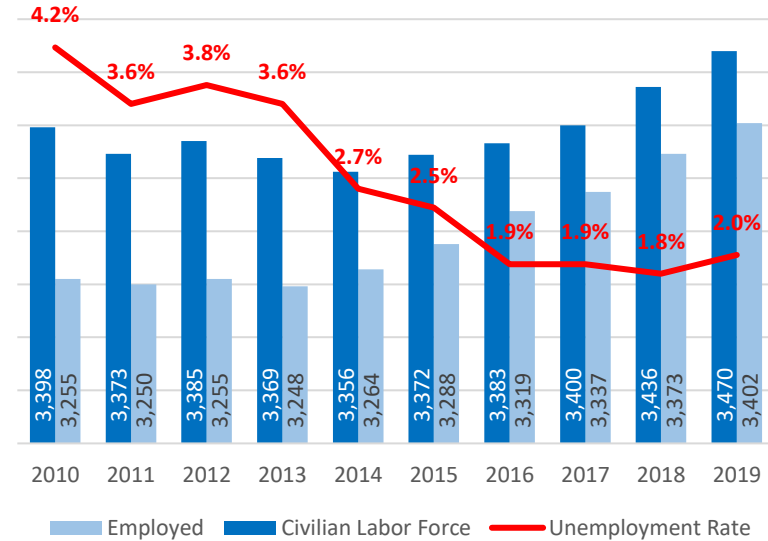
Figure 3-1 shows that the civilian labor force residing in Hopkinton has fluctuated over the past ten years. The highest numbers reported since 2010 were in 2019, with a civilian labor force of 3,470 people, 72 people more than the 2010 civilian labor force of 3,398. In 2020, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the civilian labor force declined to 3,401 people, and by December of 2021, it was reported at 3,333 people.

The number of employed residents increased steadily between 2013 and 2019, with 3,402 employed residents reported in 2019. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, the number of employed residents decreased to 3,260 in 2020.

Hopkinton's unemployment rate has decreased over the past ten years, except for a slight uptick in 2012 and again in 2019 (Figure 3-1). In recent years, Hopkinton's unemployment rate has remained lower than the county and statewide levels, with an unemployment rate of 2.0% in 2019, as compared to Merrimack County (2.3%) and the state of New Hampshire (2.5%). Despite the sharp increase in unemployment due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, Hopkinton's 2020 unemployment rate of 4.8% remained lower than Merrimack County (5.8%) and the State of NH (6.7%).

Figure 3-1: Historic Civilian Labor Force, Employed Labor Force, & Unemployment Rate for Hopkinton

GraniteStats, New Hampshire Employment Security



It is also worth noting that unemployment trends changed dramatically after the 2008 financial crisis and during the subsequent recession. Although New Hampshire fared better than other states, it was not immune from the economic downturn.

New Hampshire and Federal unemployment rates in 2009 and 2010 were more than double the 2000 rates, and Hopkinton was no exception. While unemployment rates continued to decline until 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic caused a sharp uptick in unemployment in 2020. While the data for 2021 is still preliminary, it appears that Hopkinton unemployment rates have recovered to pre-pandemic levels, with unemployment at just 1.2% in December of 2021.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment by industry sector indicated that most jobs in Hopkinton are in wholesale trade (40.7%), followed by educational services (18.9%) and manufacturing (8.2%), respectively, as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2019. Other common industry sectors include construction, public administration, accommodation and food service, retail trade, health care, and social assistance.

Figure 3-2 displays the highest density of jobs in Hopkinton in the area of Exit 6 on I-89 (along NH 127) and in Contoocook. There are several other areas of employment located throughout the Town.

Table 3-1: Annual Average Employment & Wages, Private Plus Government Industries, 2020

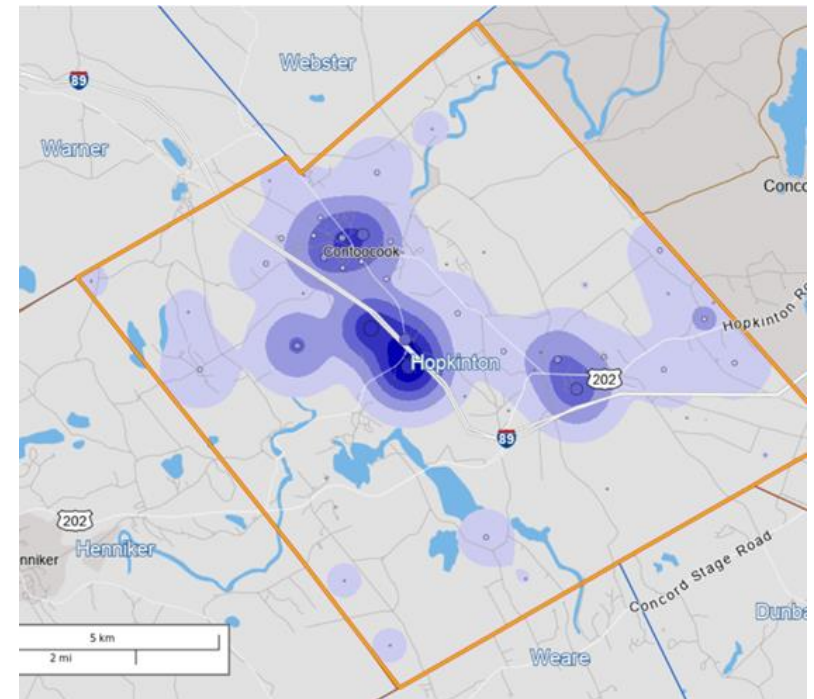
Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau, New Hampshire Employment Security

Community	Annual Average Covered Employment	Average Weekly Wage (Covered Employment)
Bow	3,799	\$1,217.30
Concord	38,152	\$1,188.75
Dunbarton	338	\$1,367.52
Henniker	1,494	\$890.88
Hopkinton	1,635	\$1,106.07
Warner	871	\$721.99
Weare	1,810	\$1,005.99
Webster	151	\$1,072.37

Comparing wages paid by employers in Hopkinton to those in the surrounding communities gives a better understanding of the types and quality of the jobs located in Hopkinton. As seen in Table 3-1, as of 2020, among adjacent towns, Hopkinton employers offer one of the highest annual average weekly wages (\$1,106). Please note the figures display the average annual weekly wage for those employed in Hopkinton, not the average weekly wage of a Hopkinton resident.

Figure 3-2: Location & Density of Jobs in Hopkinton, 2019

U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics



Map Legend

Job Density [Jobs/Sq. Mile]	Job Count [Jobs/Census Block]
■ 5 - 60	● 1 - 4
■ 61 - 228	● 5 - 31
■ 229 - 507	● 32 - 105
■ 508 - 897	● 106 - 248
■ 898 - 1,400	● 249 - 485

COMMUTING PATTERNS

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's Center for Economic Studies, the majority of employed residents in 2019 were employed in a community outside of Hopkinton. Residents employed outside of Hopkinton numbered 2,513, while 348 residents were employed within Hopkinton

(Figure 3-3). As shown in Figure 3-4, many residents commute in the southeast direction, with approximately 27% of residents working in Concord and 10.4% of residents working in Manchester in 2019. Other locations, though at smaller percentages, included Nashua, Lebanon, Portsmouth, Laconia, Boston, New London, Keene, and others.

In 2019, an estimated 1,466 non-residents commuted into Hopkinton for work, most from Concord (14.6%) and Manchester (4.4%).

Figure 3-3: Employment Inflow and Outflow, 2019

U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics

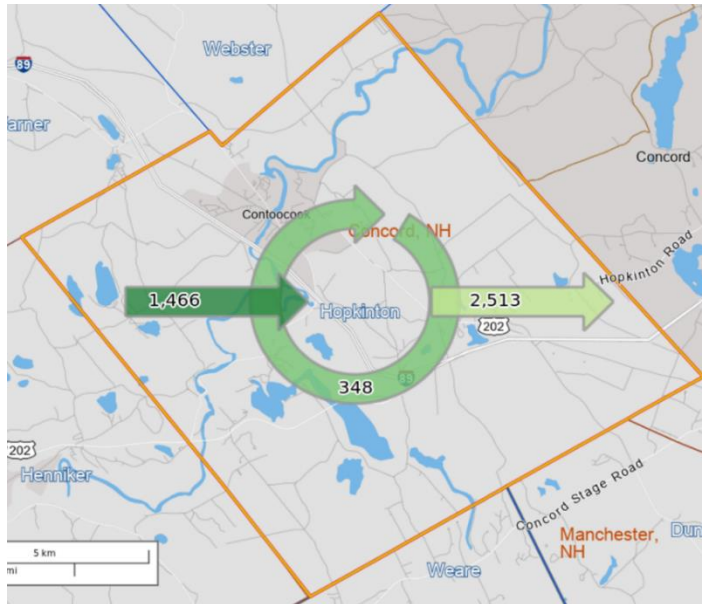


Figure 3-4: Job Count by Distance and Direction of Hopkinton Residents, 2019

U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics

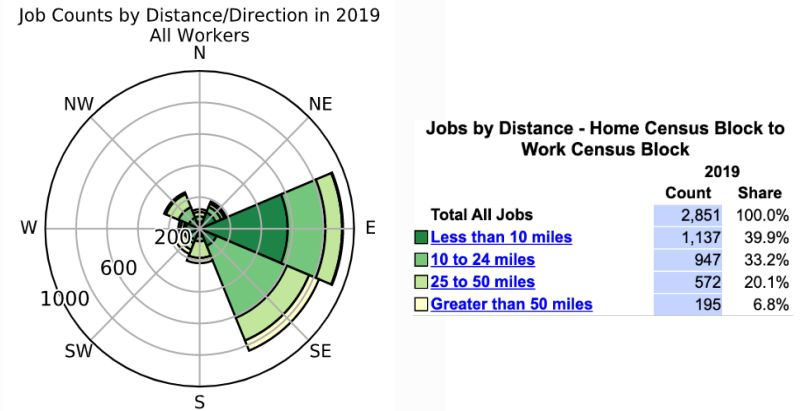
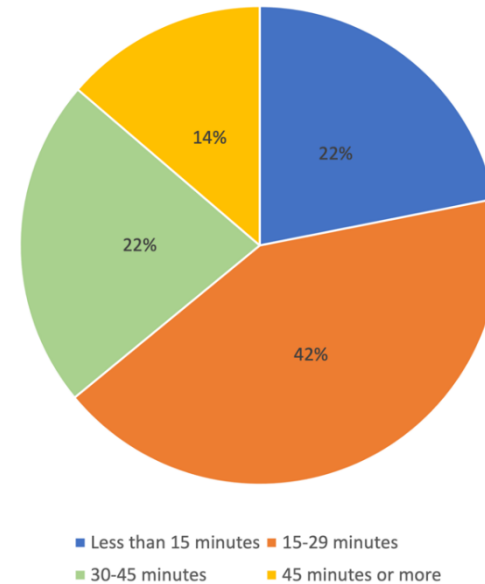


Figure 3-5: Residents Travel Time to Work, 2019

U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2015-2019



TOWN TAX RATE AND VALUATION

A review of Hopkinton's overall tax rate per \$1,000 of valuation displayed in Table 3-2 between 2010 and 2020 shows that the rate increased overall from \$26.72 in 2010 to \$30.87 in 2020. During this time, increases occurred every year except for 2016 and 2019. Fluctuations of the municipal, county, local, and state school rates occurred over the decade, with the highest total tax rate per \$1,000 valuation occurring in 2018 at \$34.74.

Compared to its adjacent communities, Hopkinton's total valuation falls near the middle at \$867,408,150 in 2020, as shown in Table 3-3. Hopkinton's 2020 tax rate of \$29.25 was the second-highest of the adjacent communities, less than only Henniker (\$31.24). Hopkinton's full value or equalized tax rate was (\$26.26), less than both Henniker (\$28.04) and Warner (\$26.46).

Table 3-2: Hopkinton's Tax Rate, 2010-2020

New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration

Year	Municipal Rate per \$1000	County Rate per \$1000	State Education Rate per \$1000	Local Education Rate per \$1000	Total Tax Rate per \$1000
2010	\$5.05	\$2.72	\$2.68	\$16.27	\$26.72
2011	\$5.06	\$2.88	\$2.43	\$17.17	\$27.54
2012	\$5.10	\$2.80	\$2.52	\$17.77	\$28.19
2013	\$5.10	\$2.67	\$2.44	\$18.53	\$28.74
2014	\$5.94	\$2.99	\$2.54	\$21.09	\$32.56
2015	\$6.92	\$3.04	\$2.51	\$21.15	\$33.62
2016	\$7.09	\$2.87	\$2.52	\$21.07	\$33.55
2017	\$7.09	\$3.04	\$2.35	\$21.81	\$34.29
2018	\$7.36	\$3.06	\$2.37	\$21.95	\$34.74
2019	\$6.25	\$2.47	\$1.90	\$18.50	\$29.12
2020	\$6.54	\$2.52	\$1.89	\$19.92	\$29.25

What is equalization?

Equalized valuation, or equalization, is an adjustment of the Town's local assessed values, either upward or downward, to approximate the full value of the Town's property. Calculated by the NH Department of Revenue Administration, an equalization rate of 100 means the municipality is assessing property at 100 percent of market value. A ratio less than 100 means the municipality's total market value is greater than its assessed value. The full value tax rate can then be used to make a limited comparison of what a property in one municipality would pay for taxes to a property of equal value in another municipality. This process is due to an imbalance caused by varying local assessment levels. The full value tax rate is the equalized tax rate for a town.

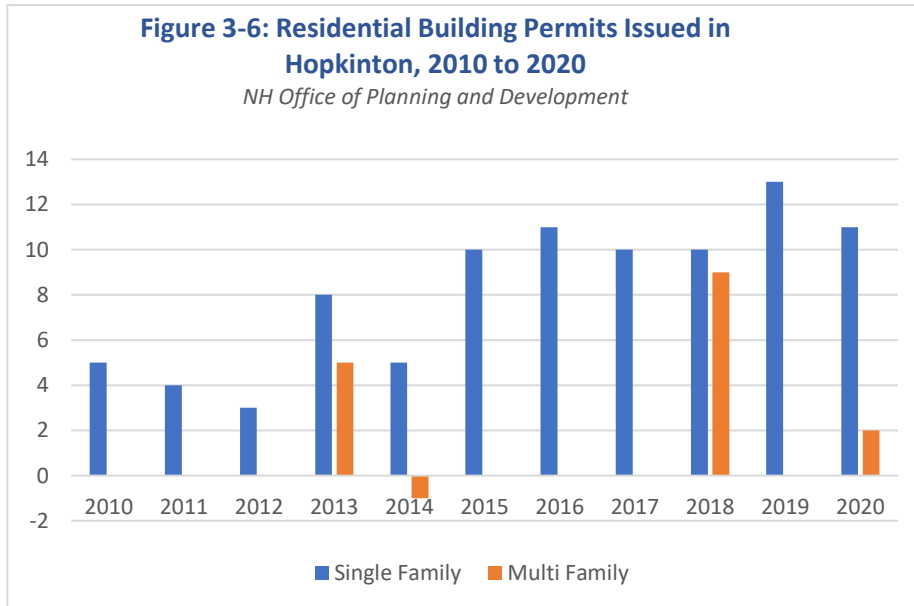
Table 3-3: Equalized Tax Rates of Hopkinton and Surrounding Communities, 2020

New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration

Community	Total Equalized Valuation including Utilities & Railroad	Tax Rate per \$1000	2020 EQ Ratio	Full Value Tax Rate
Bow	\$1,384,994,273	\$25.58	93.4	\$23.36
Concord	\$5,031,850,447	\$26.76	94.5	\$24.84
Dunbarton	\$441,154,324	\$22.28	90.2	\$19.80
Henniker	\$524,799,011	\$31.24	92.0	\$28.04
Hopkinton	\$867,408,150	\$29.25	93.0	\$26.26
Warner	\$345,417,565	\$28.40	94.3	\$26.46
Weare	\$1,138,533,136	\$23.95	78.7	\$18.64
Webster	\$293,494,015	\$22.19	81.5	\$17.81

DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

Figure 3-6 displays the number of residential building permits issued in Hopkinton from 2010 through 2020. The data demonstrate the net change in permits and includes both permits for construction and for demolition. The majority of new permits over the period were single-family units, with a notable number of permits issued each year. The year 2018 had the highest number of single-family permits with a net change of 19 permits. A fewer number of multi-family unit permits were issued over the period, with a net change of 5 permits issued in 2013 and a net change of 9 permits issued in 2018. In 2014, there was a net change of negative 1 unit, indicating at least one demolition permit issued that year.



The Role of the Economic Development Committee

It takes a great deal of effort and momentum to undertake an appropriate level of economic development in a small community. Hopkinton has an active, all-volunteer Economic Development Committee (EDC) that works to promote economic development in Hopkinton through implementation of available tools and programs. In addition, the EDC guides the work of the Economic Development Director, a part-time Town position established in 2021. Specific tasks and goals of the Economic Development Committee include:

- Coordinate with other town boards to educate residents and businesses about the available economic development tools described in this chapter and work towards implementation.
- Engage in strategic economic development planning and policy development and recommend zoning changes when needed to encourage sound economic development.
- Continue efforts to evaluate potential water/sewer service extensions along Maple Street.
- Develop promotional materials about economic development information on the Hopkinton town website.
- Utilize available resources to promote potential commercial/industrial properties that are currently on the market.
- Prepare, adopt, and implement a town-wide Economic Development and Marketing Strategy.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TOOLS

There are several economic development tools available for use by municipalities in New Hampshire. The tools already in use in Hopkinton include (1) the Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive (RSA-79-E), (2) the Economic Revitalization Zone (ERZ) program, and (3) Tax Increment Finance (TIF) districts.

In addition to these programs already in place, the Commercial and Industrial Construction Exemption could be used in the future to provide further incentives for commercial or industrial development.

While different in their application (some offer temporary local property tax relief, while others offer a possible reduction in New Hampshire business profits tax), these tools can be used to help further Hopkinton's economic development goals. A summary of the tools follows.

COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION TAX RELIEF INCENTIVE (RSA 79-E)

The provisions of NH RSA 79-E were adopted at the 2009 Town Meeting, giving the Select Board authority to delay any increase in taxes for property owners in the Contoocook Village area if they replace or substantially rehabilitate their property. Its goal is to encourage the rehabilitation and active reuse of underutilized buildings in historic villages and downtown centers.

How the Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive works:

- A property owner who wants to substantially rehabilitate a building located in the 79-E district may apply to the Select Board for a period of temporary tax relief.
- The temporary tax relief, if granted, would consist of a finite period of time during which the property tax on the structure would not increase as a result of its substantial rehabilitation.

- In exchange for the relief, the property owner grants a covenant ensuring there is a public benefit to the rehabilitation.
- Following expiration of the tax relief period (up to five years), the structure would be taxed at its full market value taking into account the rehabilitation.

ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION ZONES (ERZs)

The Economic Revitalization Zone (ERZ) program is enabled in the State of New Hampshire through NH RSA 162-N. The program allows municipalities to establish certain zones in a community where a business can then seek a credit on its New Hampshire Business Profits Tax. To establish a zone or zones, the Town may apply to the program (administered by the N.H. Division of Economic Development) following a process outlined in NH RSA 162-N:8.

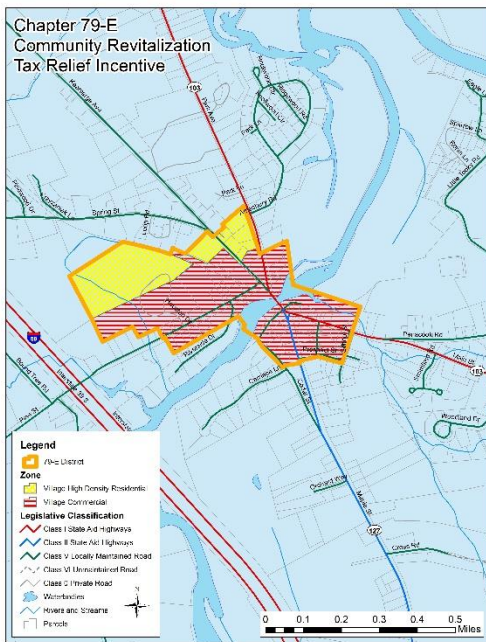
The ERZ program seeks to foster employment growth and investment in infrastructure that can lead to additional employment. The ERZ program currently has \$825,000 available per year for tax credits throughout the State of New Hampshire.

To date, the Town of Hopkinton has received approval for the Exit 6 and Contoocook Village ERZs.

TAX INCREMENT FINANCING (TIF) DISTRICTS (NH RSA 162-K)

The creation of a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district permits the financing of public improvements with the incremental taxes created either by new construction, expansion, or renovation of property within a defined area of Town. In 2018, the Hart's Corner Tax Increment Financing District and the Exit 6 Tax Increment Financing District were approved at Town Meeting (The Hart's Corner TIF was amended in 2020).

The overall goal of a TIF is to proactively address necessary improvements to help attract or retain economic development activity in a particular part of the Town. At its most basic level, when a TIF is established, the taxable value of the parcels in the district is identified. Increases above that assessed value are then used to fund infrastructure improvements. A TIF doesn't take money out of the tax base; it merely defers new taxes in a particular area as the increased tax base is used to pay for physical improvements needed for economic development. Once the improvements are paid for, the additional tax revenue is directed to the Town's tax base.



Although the development of a TIF can be a difficult economic tool to develop and administer due to its complexity and long-term approach, it can be a valuable tool to finance infrastructure improvements that would not otherwise be undertaken, such as the extension of water/sewer or other necessary infrastructure to the Exit 6 or Hart's Corner areas.

This tax incentive is similar to the Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive (NH RSA 79-E) described above in that it seeks to promote investment through the short-term reduction of local property taxes, although this tool extends the approach to commercial or industrial uses.

If adopted at Town Meeting, the Commercial and Industrial Construction tax exemption shall be a specified percentage on an annual basis of the increase in assessed value attributable to the construction of new structures and additions, renovations, or improvements to existing structures to not exceed 50 percent per year. The Town Meeting vote must specify the percentage of new assessed value to be exempted and the number of years duration following construction. The vote to adopt remains in effect for five years, though exemptions shall continue for the rate and duration granted.

The maximum period for the exemption is ten years following the new construction and only applies to municipal and local school property taxes. The exemption can be limited to specific zones or apply to all commercial/industrial properties. Also, similar to the NH RSA 79-E zone, the exemption is approved on a case-by-case basis based on the project's public benefit.

COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL CONSTRUCTION EXEMPTION (NH RSA 72: 80-83)

Central NH Regional Planning Commission Brownfields Assessment Program

For nearly six years, CNHRPC has been utilizing EPA brownfields assessment grant funds to help communities assess abandoned or underutilized commercial, industrial, and light industrial sites to position them for cleanup and reuse.

The assessment program could be utilized in the future to assess areas in the CCOD overlay district to foster redevelopment in the district.

Some of the key factors include:

- A “brownfields” is a site that is or is perceived to be contaminated. This contamination or perception prevents it from being reused.
- CNHRPC to date has been awarded \$700,000 dollars in assessment funds and is the process of applying for another \$300,000. These funds can fund 100% of assessment activities for a site.

Assessment involves the following steps:

- Phase 1: research of historic documents to develop “leads” on what contamination may exist
- Phase 2: soil, water, or building material testing (scientifically quantify levels of contamination)
- Phase 3: reuse planning (develops plan for cleanup and reuse). Completion of this step opens the door for cleanup grant funds and can generate interest from developers.

OTHER ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Economic development efforts are not limited to available tax incentives or the outreach and promotion to existing or potential businesses. Other topics can affect the Town's economic wellbeing, including the trail network, schools, potential improvements to the transportation network, and the predictability of the planning process.

ZONING CHANGES

As noted in the Housing and Land Use chapters, the recent adoption of the "Commerce and Community Overlay District (CCOD)" in West Hopkinton along NH 127 (Maple Street) to the north of the US 202/NH 9 provides a future opportunity for a range of residential housing choices and small-scale neighborhood retail and services in a planned development that incorporates open space. Those changes, in coordination with potential investment in infrastructure through the Hart's Corner TIF District, offer a great opportunity for a mixed-use development that could both serve to widen housing choices while increasing the Town's tax base.

Another key opportunity to expand the tax base includes the examination of options to modify permitted uses and zone boundaries within the Burnham Intervale M-1 zone (see Existing and Future Land Use Chapter).

HOPKINTON'S TRAILS

Trails and recreational opportunities can contribute to the attractiveness and quality of life in any community, and Hopkinton is well-positioned to capitalize on the trails and open spaces it has to offer. These trails are attractive amenities that enhance the quality of life. Having an option to walk or ride a bicycle on an off-street trail to the local store or farmers' market is a potentially attractive selling point for the Town. So are options for recreational

walking, hiking, and bicycling in a natural environment within a short distance of your home, school, or workplace. For others, a wintertime network of snowmobile and ski trails is especially attractive.

Among examples of trails in Hopkinton that boost the Town's attractiveness is the Stevens Rail Trail. The rail-trail has a smooth, wide, and flat surface making it an attractive place to ride a bicycle, separate from car and truck traffic. It can also be a transportation corridor, providing access to residents, businesses, schools, and the library as the trail passes through Contoocook Village. The trail is just a small part of a planned trail that will one day stretch from downtown Concord to Lake Sunapee, called the Concord to Lake Sunapee Rail Trail. Once substantially completed, the trail's length can draw tourists and day visitors to the Village.

The Hopkinton Village Greenway is a natural trail that loops around Hopkinton Village, passing through landscapes and scenic views. Its proximity to the residents and businesses in the Village enhances its potential economic development benefits to the Town. A number of other trails exist in Town for year-round use.

These trails, the trail users, and the volunteers who build and maintain them contribute to a sense of place and community in Hopkinton, an attractive selling point of the Town.

HOPKINTON'S SCHOOL SYSTEM

Hopkinton's schools are a strong draw to prospective residents with school-age children, and they help to retain families with their educational, athletic, and extracurricular opportunities. The School Administrative Unit #66 on Maple Street manages the Harold Martin School on Main Street for pre-school to grade 3, the Maple Street Elementary School for grades 4-6, Hopkinton Middle School for grades 7-8, and Hopkinton High School for grades 9-12 on Park

Avenue. The total district enrollment for the 2020-2021 school year start was 933 students, which remains a stable number over time, unlike many other districts in New Hampshire that saw a net loss of students.

The number of Hopkinton high school seniors who took an Advanced Placement (A.P.) exam in 2019 was in the highest percentile, 30% or greater, for the state. Hopkinton seniors also scored in the highest percentile during this year. A feat met by only ten other school districts. These metrics suggest the quality of education is higher than average at Hopkinton High School. U.S. News and World Report ranked the school #3 in New Hampshire high schools in 2020.

The athletic programs are popular and competitive. Sports are a common component of student life. Middle and high school students compete as the Hopkinton Hawks in over a dozen varsity and junior varsity sports like alpine skiing, cross country running and skiing, baseball, basketball, track and field, football, lacrosse, swimming, soccer, and more. The Hopkinton Youth Sports Association enables younger children to participate in football, soccer, baseball, softball, tennis, basketball, and more.



POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS TO HOPKINTON'S TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

There are a variety of short- and long-term opportunities to improve the transportation network, including sidewalks, in Hopkinton.

Beyond improving safety and the condition of roads and sidewalks, the projects can play a role in supporting and enhancing Hopkinton's long-term economic wellbeing. The potential improvements include:

1. Expand and upgrade sidewalks in Contoocook Village and Hopkinton Village.
2. Employ modifications to the Park Avenue/Pine Street and Fountain Square intersections in Contoocook Village that follow up on the recommendations included in the 2000 Contoocook Village Charrette.
3. Employ modifications to the NH 103/Main Street intersection in Hopkinton Village.
4. Employ modifications to US 202 at the I-89 Exit 4 interchange as part of the state Ten-Year Transportation Improvement Plan (TYP) update process.

For more information on these projects, please see the Transportation Chapter.

PLANNING BOARD PROCESS STUDY

The Planning Board approval process, primarily the site plan approval process, is often at the forefront of business development for a community. In a very real sense, this drives what new businesses and expanding businesses will exist in a community. It represents a new business's "first impression" of the community, and, for an existing business looking to expand, the process impacts their perception of how the Town views their value to the community. In short, it becomes the primary vehicle for interaction

between the businesses and the municipality while directly impacting what business growth looks like in Town.

All municipalities deal with a similar set of requirements stipulated by state law for the site plan approval process. These include public and abutter notice, required timelines, zoning compliance, and several votes by the Planning Board, including completeness, regional impact, waivers, and finally, the merits of a project. Other factors include department head comments, legal concerns (i.e., easements, condominium declarations, right-of-way dedications), and state permits to name a few. While all municipalities deal with these issues, the most successful communities find ways to make the process as predictable and efficient as possible. This is accomplished by getting as much feedback on all the potential issues as early in the process as possible.

To achieve more predictability, many Central NH communities have undertaken a review of their regulations and planning board approval process. The process study looks for clarity, consistency with the regulations, the accuracy of application forms, and how easy it is to communicate with the Board/Chair/Staff to get questions answered in a timely fashion. It also includes developing strategies to get feedback on plans submitted, including feedback on checklist items, necessary waivers, and department head/Town Engineer comments. There should also be an opportunity to revise plans and submittal materials prior to the first Planning Board meeting based on this feedback. In the end, the process should result in a plan, as complete as possible, with the relevant department head and engineering concerns, being before the Board at its first meeting.

This level of predictability and efficiency helps the Board, the applicant, abutters, and the public get to the merits of the proposal as soon as possible, which can position a town for economic development success.

Central NH Regional Planning Commission undertook such a review for the Town of Hopkinton in 2021. Many worthwhile suggestions for process improvements were made, which the Planning Board could consider implementing in the coming years.

OBJECTIVES & RECOMMENDATIONS

This Chapter focuses on the Town's economic base and strives to identify the connections between Hopkinton's economy and its current land use, community infrastructure, and natural resources. There are many opportunities available to enhance Hopkinton's economy while maintaining the character of the Town that is so highly valued by residents.

The following is a summary of proposed economic development-related efforts which can be undertaken by the Select Board, Planning Board, and Economic Development Committee over the next few years. A key element of the proposed efforts is close coordination between Hopkinton's Boards and Committees as well as the Town of Henniker and regional economic development planning efforts such as future regional comprehensive economic strategy (CEDS) updates.

OBJECTIVE 1:

Proactively examine options for infrastructure improvements to foster sustainable economic development and Hopkinton's quality of life.

- Review the streetscape design recommendations included in the 2000 Contoocook Village Charette. Consider future improvements to the Park Avenue/Pine Street and Fountain Square intersections.
- Utilize the Harts' Corner and Exit 6 Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts as appropriate to foster mixed-use and commercial development (including extending water and sewer service from Contoocook Village toward Exit 6).
- Consider future improvements to the US 202/NH 103 Intersection Improvements (Hopkinton Village Store) and the US 202/Exit 4 Intersection Improvements (East Hopkinton Village).
- Consider overall transportation improvements, specifically for non-motorized transit, as exemplified by Complete Streets.

OBJECTIVE 2:

Support and promote appropriate commercial and mixed-use development in suitable areas of Hopkinton.

- Promote mixed-use development opportunities in the Commerce and Community Overlay District (CCOD) in West Hopkinton along NH 127 (Maple Street) to the north of the US 202/NH 9/NH 127 intersection.
- Promote the availability and use of the Exit 6 and Contoocook Village Economic Revitalization Zones (ERZs) to property and business owners.

- Promote the availability of and use the Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive (RSA 79-e) in Contoocook Village and Hopkinton Village.
- Examine options to modify permitted uses and zone boundaries within the Industrial (M-1) zone.
- Consider the adoption of the Commercial and Industrial Construction Exemption (NH RSA 72: 80-83) within select M-1 zone areas.

OBJECTIVE 3:

Undertake activities and studies to foster sustainable economic development and implement economic development-related tools and projects.

- Undertake continued Economic Development Committee activities, including drafting and adopting a town-wide Economic Development and Marketing Strategy, preparing economic development promotional materials, and utilizing state resources.
- Investigate applying for CNHRPC Regional Brownfields Assessment Program funding to assess areas within the CCOD district to foster redevelopment in the district.
- Continue efforts to evaluate potential water/sewer service extensions in the Exit 6 TIF District and other appropriate areas.
- Participate in future regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) updates.