

MAY 12, 2026



Watertown City Council

Administration Building
149 Main Street
Watertown, MA 02472
Phone: 617-972-6470

**CITY COUNCIL MEETING
TUESDAY, MAY 12, 2026, 7:00 P.M.
RICHARD E. MASTRANGELO COUNCIL CHAMBER
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, 149 MAIN STREET**

MINUTES

ACCESS INFORMATION:

- A. This meeting will be held on May 12, 2026 at 7:00 PM in the Richard E. Mastrangelo Council Chamber
- B. The meeting will be televised through WCATV (Watertown Cable Access Television): <http://vodwcatv.org/CablecastPublicSite/?channel=3>
- C. The Public may join the virtual meeting online: <https://watertown-ma.zoom.us/j/92991331344>
- D. Public may join the virtual meeting audio only by phone: (877) 853-5257 or (888) 475-4499 (Toll Free) and enter Webinar ID: 929 9133 1344
- E. Public may comment through email: vpiccirilli@watertown-ma.gov
- F. Please Visit the City Council Website here: <https://www.watertown-ma.gov/350/City-Council>

1. ROLL CALL

Council President Sideris called to order a regular meeting of the City Council at 7:00 p.m. in the Richard E. Mastrangelo Chamber, Administration Building. Those present were Councilors Caroline Bays, Lisa J. Feltner, John G. Gannon, Nicole Gardner, Emily Izzo, Theophilus Offei, Anthony Palomba, Vice President Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr., and Council President Mark S. Sideris. Also present were George Proakis, City Manager, Mark Reich, City Attorney, Doug Newton, Council Analyst and Brendan T. McCarthy, Council Clerk.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. PUBLIC FORUM

Elodia Thomas – 57 Marian Road – Remarked that there is great variety in “age”, and noted that she worked with focus groups in the past which proved there was much variety in services wanted. She then brought attention to a lack of clarity on the ADU code in town. She cited a specific example on Hubby Street of an ADU that was leveraged for sale purposes.

Joan Gumbleton – 32 Falmouth Road – Raised question with the assessments of ADUs and voiced that it should be closer examined.

4. EXAMINATION OF RECORDS OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

A. Minutes from City Council Meeting April 28, 2026

Councilor Piccirilli moved to adopt the minutes and Councilor Feltner seconded.

The motion carried unanimously in a Voice Vote.

5. PRESIDENT’S REPORT

A. Endorsement of Policy Statement from Previous City Council Meeting

President Sideris remarked on the importance of having the full City Council weigh in on the remarks he made pertaining to immigration enforcement at the previous meeting.

Councilor Piccirilli moved to endorse the policy and Councilor Feltner seconded.

Councilors Bays, Gannon, Palomba, and Offei all voiced their appreciation for the policy.

The motion carried unanimously in a Voice Vote.

6. PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. Public Hearing and Vote on a Proposed Ordinance Amending the Code of Ordinances Regarding Non-Union Personnel Compensation and Leave

City Manager Proakis stated that this item is in response to discussion of including safeguards for non-union personnel.

Councilor Piccirilli moved to approve ordinance and Councilor Feltner seconded.

Councilor Gannon stated that all union contracts have a just cause provisions for the

enforcement of discipline, and asked if those standards prevent unnecessary discretion of punishment.

City Manager Proakis asked City Attorney Reich if there was any previous ordinance requiring the use of just cause, and asked if that would create a risk for the city.

City Attorney Reich replied that that sort of provision would elevate the cause of termination and process, and weakens the flexibility of an employer.

Councilor Gannon stated that his aim is to prevent different employees from being treated differently regardless of whether they are union or not.

City Manager Proakis stated that he has worked hard to create the leadership team he has in the administration. He remarked that he believes a successor City Manager would recognize that and not effectively clean house, however, a successor should also have the ability to change a situation should they deem it appropriate.

Councilor Bays pointed out a small typo in the ordinance.

Councilor Gannon stated that his concern is with what happens 30 or 40 years down the line, and so, he cannot support the ordinance as currently constructed.

The motion carried 8 (Bays, Feltner, Gardner, Izzo, Offei, Palomba, Piccirilli, Sideris) to 1 (Gannon) in a Roll Call Vote.

- B. Public Hearing and Vote on a Proposed Loan Order that the sum of \$2,300,000 is appropriated to pay costs of reconstructing Forest Street and Springfield Street, as more fully described in Line 289 of the City's Fiscal Year 2026 through 2031 Capital Improvement Plan, and the payment of all costs incidental and related thereto; and that to meet this appropriation, the Treasurer, with the approval of the City Manager, is authorized to borrow said amount under and pursuant to M.G.L. c.44, §7(1), or pursuant to any other enabling authority, and to issue bonds or notes of the City therefor.

Director of Public Works Brady stated that the DPW is catching up with the street program. This is a two season construction plan, so the funding represents two years. He added that they received a favorable bid, and they are excited to move forward with this item.

Councilor Piccirilli moved to approve the loan order and Councilor Feltner seconded.

Councilor Offei asked when there will be work done on Riverside Street.

Mr. Brady replied that Riverside will be part of the Fiscal Year 2028 projects along with Fayette Street.

The motion carried unanimously in a Roll Call Vote.

- C. Public Hearing and Vote on a Proposed Loan Order that the sum of \$2,100,000 is appropriated to pay costs of constructing and overseeing the connector roads and longer streets project at Forest Street and Springfield Street, as more fully described in Line 318 of the City's Fiscal Year 2024 through 2028 Capital Improvement Plan, and the payment of all costs incidental and related thereto; and that to meet this appropriation, the Treasurer, with the approval of the City Manager, is authorized to borrow said amount under and pursuant to M.G.L. c.44, §7(1), or pursuant to any other enabling authority, and to issue bonds or notes of the City therefor.

City Manager Proakis presented the item as a partner item to 6B.

Councilor Piccirilli moved to approve the loan order and Councilor Feltner seconded.

Councilor Palomba for more context on the relationship between the two items.

Director of Public Works Brady replied that it is a long stretch of road that requires a lot of time, and they are pulling from a previous fiscal year's funding that was intended for this project but hadn't been used yet, to complete it.

The motion carried unanimously in a Roll Call Vote.

7. MOTIONS, ORDINANCES, ORDERS, AND RESOLUTIONS

- A. Consideration and Action on the Expenditure of \$100,000 in Community Preservation Act Funds for One Off-Cycle Project - Old Burying Ground and Common Street Cemetery Landscape Architecture Services

Robert Derico – Watertown Community Preservation Committee – presented the item as a historic restoration of two municipally owned cemetery that are a part of the National Register of Historic Places. He stated that the Old Burying Ground can date back to 1642, and that both cemeteries includes notable veterans from every American war. The work is expected to begin in July 2026 and finish in 2027.

Councilor Offei noted the possibility of looking at federal grants.

Councilor Piccirilli moved to appropriate \$100,000 from the community preservation funds from the historic preservation reserve for the cemetery project and Councilor Feltner seconded.

The motion carried unanimously in a Roll Call Vote.

- B. Resolution Authorizing a Transfer of Funds in the amount of \$75,000 from the Fiscal Year 2026 City Council Reserve to the Fiscal Year 2026 Litigation Account

City Manager Proakis stated that this item represents the impending overage in the litigation funds.

Councilor Piccirilli moved to approve the transfer of funds and Councilor Feltner seconded.

The motion carried unanimously in a Roll Call Vote.

- C. Resolution Authorizing a Transfer of Funds in the amount of \$824,277 from the 2026 City Council Reserve to various Fiscal Year 2026 Snow and Ice accounts

City Manager Proakis stated that this fund has not had to run in a deficit for the past several years, but this year's winter brought a large amount of snow, and the listed funds are to cover the costs of resources and services spent.

Councilor Piccirilli moved to approve the transfer of funds and Councilor Feltner seconded.

The motion carried unanimously in a Roll Call Vote.

- D. Resolution Authorizing a Transfer of Funds in the amount of \$14,768,576 from the Fiscal Year 2026 Watertown High School Stabilization Transfer Out to Other Funds account to the Fiscal Year 2026 Watertown High School Transfer In from Other Funds account

City Manager Proakis stated that this is an exciting moment as this item represents the funds needed to close the budget for Watertown High School. They await tax credits and reimbursements from state and federal government, but effectively it is closed.

Councilor Piccirilli moved to approve the transfer of funds and Councilor Feltner seconded.

The motion carried unanimously in a Roll Call Vote.

8. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

- A. Committee on Rules and Ordinances Report regarding its meeting on March 12, 2026 - Gardner, Chair

Councilor Gardner read the report.

Councilor Piccirilli moved to accept the report and Councilor Feltner seconded.

The motion carried unanimously in a Voice Vote.

- B. Committee on Rules and Ordinances Report regarding its meeting on April 21, 2026 - Gardner, Chair

Councilor Gardner read the report.

Councilor Piccirilli moved to accept the report and Councilor Feltner seconded.

The motion carried unanimously in a Voice Vote.

- C. Committee on Rules and Ordinances Report regarding its meeting on May 5, 2026 - Gardner, Chair

ACTION ITEM:

To recommend the City Council refer the matter of vibration to the Committee on Rules and Ordinances for further study, including the legal considerations, and report back with a recommendation

Councilor Gardner read the report.

Councilor Piccirilli moved to accept the report and Councilor Feltner seconded.

The motion carried unanimously in a Voice Vote.

Councilor Piccirilli moved to approve the action item and Councilor Feltner seconded.

The motion carried unanimously in a Voice Vote.

9. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CITY MANAGER

- A. Request for Confirmation of Appointment to the Historical Commission

City Manager Proakis requested the confirmation of appointment for Kevin Lee to the Historical Commission.

President Sideris stated that this gets referred to the Committee of Economic Development and Planning.

- B. Request for Confirmation of Appointments to the Watertown Cable Access Corporation – Board of Directors

City Manager Proakis requested the confirmation of appointments for Christopher McKenzie, Adrienne Roberts, and Lindsey Graham to the Watertown Cable Access Corporation Board of Directors.

President Sideris stated that this gets referred to the Committee on Education and School System Matters.

- C. Request for Confirmation of Reappointment to the Cultural Council

City Manager Proakis requested the confirmation of reappointment of Phyllis Perrone to the Cultural Council.

President Sideris stated that this gets referred to the Committee on Economic Development and Planning.

D. Request for Referral – Watertown Housing Plan 2026- 2030

City Manager Proakis requested the referral.

President Sideris stated that this will be referred to a joint committee of the Committee on Human Services and the Committee on Economic Development and Planning.

E. Request for Referral – Affordable Housing Incentive Studies

City Manager Proakis requested the referral.

President Sideris stated that this item gets referred to the Committee on Human Services.

F. Request for Extension of Contract Negotiation Period

City Manager requested an extension for his contract negotiations as his current contract is running out of time.

Councilor Piccirilli moved to grant the extension and Councilor Feltner seconded.

The motion carried unanimously in a Voice Vote.

City Manager Proakis shared that, since the position of Grant Specialist was created in 2024, the City has been awarded 51 grants totaling over \$4 million – this figure does not include school grants. He then noted that there has been a lot of underground work for Victory Field, and that Saltonstall Park is completed with the exception of the roof of the stage, much to the frustration of the City and general contractor. He continued to announce that the USPS is not currently seeking to relocate a store in Watertown Square as part of a wider strategy shift despite efforts to do so from the developers of 104 Main Street and the City. The administration is still seeking options to get a USPS store in the square as he sees it as a part of a vibrant downtown.

10. REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION/REVIEW OF LIST OF PENDING MATTERS

There were no requests for information.

11. ANNOUNCEMENTS

President Sideris announced an open house for the Watertown Square Demonstration Project on May 20th.

Councilor Gannon announced a reminder of Watertown Porchfest taking place on May 16th.

Councilor Feltner announced a Historical Commission meeting which will be hearing demolition delay items.

12. PUBLIC FORUM

Elodia Thomas – 57 Marion Road – Voiced frustration with navigating the phone system in City Hall. She remarked on different formats within different departments and asked if there could be a unified format of the call structure. She stated that she isn't the only person who sees this as an issue with communication.


13. RECESS OR ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Piccirilli made a motion to adjourn and Councilor Feltner seconded.

The motion was adopted unanimously in a Voice Vote.

The meeting adjourned at 8:19 p.m.

I hereby certify that at a regular meeting of the City Council for which a quorum was present, the above minutes were adopted by a vote of 9 for, 0 against, and 0 present on May 26, 2026.



Mark S. Sideris, Council President
s:/BTM

ELECTED OFFICIALS

Mark S. Sideris,
Council President

John G. Gannon,
Councilor At Large

Nicole Gardner,
District A Councilor

Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr.,
Vice President &
District C Councilor

Theophilus Offei,
Councilor At Large

Lisa J. Feltner,
District B Councilor

Caroline Bays,
Councilor At Large

Anthony Palomba,
Councilor At Large

Emily Izzo,
District D Councilor

City Council Meeting

Tuesday, May 12, 2026 at 7:00 PM

Richard E. Mastrangelo Council Chamber

Administration Building, 149 Main Street

List of Documents

- 1. Statement on Immigration Enforcement – Item 5A**
- 2. Non-Union Personnel Compensation and Leave Ordinance – Item 6A**
- 3. Loan Order – \$2,300,000 Forest & Springfield St – Item 6B**
- 4. Loan Order - \$2,100,000 Street Connectors – Item 6C**
- 5. Community Preservation Act – Cemetery Restoration – Item 7A**
- 6. Transfer of Funds - \$75k – FY26 Litigation – Item 7B**
- 7. Transfer of Funds - \$824,277 FY26 Snow and Ice – Item 7C**
- 8. Transfer of Funds - \$14,768,576 High School Stabilization – Item 7D**
- 9. Committee on Rules and Ordinances Report 26-03-12 – Item 8A**
- 10. Committee on Rules and Ordinances Report 26-04-21 – Item 8B**
- 11. Committee on Rules and Ordinances Report 26-05-05 – Item 8C**
- 12. Request for Confirmation to the Historical Commission – Item 9A**
- 13. Request for Confirmation to the Watertown Cable Access Corporation Board of Directors – Item 9B**
- 14. Request for Confirmation to the Culture Council – Item 9C**
- 15. Request for Referral – Watertown Housing Plan 2026-2030 – Item 9D**
- 16. Request for Referral – Affordable Housing Incentive Studies – Item 9E**
- 17. Request for Extension of Contract Negotiation Period – Item 9F**

**ADDENDUM TO THE
MINUTES OF THE MAY 12,
2026 CITY COUNCIL
MEETING**



City Council Meeting

Tuesday, May 12, 2026 at 7:00 PM
Richard E. Mastrangelo Council Chamber

Agenda

ACCESS INFORMATION:

- A. This meeting will be held on May 12, 2026 at 7:00 P.M. Location: Richard E. Mastrangelo Council Chamber - 149 Main Street, Watertown, MA 02472
- B. This is an in-person meeting - any remote access is provided solely as a courtesy and may not be relied upon as alternative access. Therefore, any interruption in remote access technology shall not interrupt the meeting, and the meeting will proceed accordingly in person. In the event of such interruption, in-person attendance is available and encouraged.
- C. The in-person meeting will also be televised through WCATV (Watertown Cable Access Television): <http://vodwcatv.org/CablecastPublicSite/watch-now?site=3>
- D. The public may join the in-person meeting online: <https://watertown-ma.zoom.us/j/92991331344>
- E. The public may join the in-person meeting audio only by phone: (877) 853-5257 or (888) 475-4499 (Toll Free) and enter Webinar ID: 929 9133 1344
- F. Public may comment through email: wscd@watertown-ma.gov
- G. Please Visit the City Council Website here: <https://www.watertown-ma.gov/350/City-Council>

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- 1. ROLL CALL
 - 2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
 - 3. PUBLIC FORUM
 - 4. EXAMINATION OF RECORDS OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS
 - A. Minutes from City Council Meeting April 28, 2026
 - 5. PRESIDENT'S REPORT
 - A. Endorsement of Policy Statement from Previous City Council Meeting
 - 6. PUBLIC HEARINGS
 - A. Public Hearing and Vote on a Proposed Ordinance Amending the Code of Ordinances Regarding Non-Union Personnel Compensation and Leave
 - B. Public Hearing and Vote on a Proposed Loan Order that the sum of \$2,300,000 is appropriated to pay costs of reconstructing Forest Street and Springfield Street, as more fully described in Line 289 of the City's Fiscal Year 2026 through 2031 Capital Improvement Plan, and the payment of all costs incidental and related thereto; and that to meet this appropriation, the Treasurer, with the approval of the City Manager, is

authorized to borrow said amount under and pursuant to M.G.L. c.44, §7(1), or pursuant to any other enabling authority, and to issue bonds or notes of the City therefor.

- C. Public Hearing and Vote on a Proposed Loan Order that the sum of \$2,100,000 is appropriated to pay costs of constructing and overseeing the connector roads and longer streets project at Forest Street and Springfield Street, as more fully described in Line 318 of the City's Fiscal Year 2024 through 2028 Capital Improvement Plan, and the payment of all costs incidental and related thereto; and that to meet this appropriation, the Treasurer, with the approval of the City Manager, is authorized to borrow said amount under and pursuant to M.G.L. c.44, §7(1), or pursuant to any other enabling authority, and to issue bonds or notes of the City therefor.

7. MOTIONS, ORDINANCES, ORDER, AND RESOLUTIONS

- A. Consideration and Action on the Expenditure of \$100,000 in Community Preservation Act Funds for One Off-Cycle Project - Old Burying Ground and Common Street Cemetery Landscape Architecture Services
- B. Resolution Authorizing a Transfer of Funds in the amount of \$75,000 from the Fiscal Year 2026 City Council Reserve to the Fiscal Year 2026 Litigation account
- C. Resolution Authorizing a Transfer of Funds in the amount of \$824,277 from the 2026 City Council Reserve to various Fiscal Year 2026 Snow and Ice accounts
- D. Resolution Authorizing a Transfer of Funds in the amount of \$14,768,576 from the Fiscal Year 2026 Watertown High School Stabilization Transfer Out to Other Funds account to the Fiscal Year 2026 Watertown High School Transfer In from Other Funds account

8. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

- A. Committee on Rules and Ordinances Report regarding its meeting on March 12, 2026 - Gardner, Chair
- B. Committee on Rules and Ordinances Report regarding its meeting on April 21, 2026 - Gardner, Chair
- C. Committee on Rules and Ordinances Report regarding its meeting on May 5, 2026 - Gardner, Chair

ACTION ITEM:

To recommend the City Council refer the matter of vibration to the Committee on Rules and Ordinances for further study, including the legal considerations, and report back with a recommendation

9. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CITY MANAGER

- A. Request for Confirmation of Appointment to the Historical Commission
- B. Request for Confirmation of Appointments to the Watertown Cable Access Corporation - Board of Directors
- C. Request for Confirmation of Reappointment to the Cultural Council
- D. Request for Referral - Watertown Housing Plan 2026 - 2030
- E. Request for Referral - Affordable Housing Incentive Studies
- F. Request for Extension of Contract Negotiation Period

10. REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION/REVIEW OF LIST OF PENDING MATTERS
11. ANNOUNCEMENTS
12. PUBLIC FORUM
13. RECESS OR ADJOURNMENT

ELECTED OFFICIALS

Mark S. Sideris,
Council President

John G. Gannon,
Councilor At Large
Nicole Gardner,
District A Councilor

Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr.,
Vice President &
District C Councilor
Theophilus Offei,
Councilor At Large
Lisa J. Feltner,
District B Councilor

Caroline Bays,
Councilor At Large

Anthony Palomba,
Councilor At Large
Emily Izzo,
District D Councilor

**CITY COUNCIL ATTENDANCE
MEETING DATE: MAY 12, 2026**

	YES	NO	PRESENT
CAROLINE BAYS	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
LISA J. FELTNER	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
JOHN G. GANNON	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
NICOLE GARDNER	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
EMILY IZZO	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
THEOPHILUS OFFEI	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
ANTHONY PALOMBA	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
VINCENT J. PICCIRILLI JR.	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
MARK S. SIDERIS, COUNCIL PRESIDENT	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

**CITY COUNCIL ROLL CALL VOTE
MEETING DATE: MAY 12, 2026**

	YES	NO	PRESENT
CAROLINE BAYS	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
LISA J. FELTNER	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
JOHN G. GANNON	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
NICOLE GARDNER	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
EMILY IZZO	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
THEOPHILUS OFFEI	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
ANTHONY PALOMBA	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
VINCENT J. PICCIRILLI JR.	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
MARK S. SIDERIS, COUNCIL PRESIDENT	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Motion to endorse Council President Sideris' statement on Immigration Enforcement



Watertown City Council

Administration Building
149 Main Street
Watertown, MA 02472
Phone: 617-972-6470

THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT WAS MADE BY COUNCIL PRESIDENT SIDERIS AT A CITY COUNCIL MEETING ON APRIL 28TH, 2026. IT WAS THEN ENDORSED BY THE FULL CITY COUNCIL AT A CITY COUNCIL MEETING ON MAY 12, 2026.

As I stated during our last meeting, I felt it important that I speak with the City Manager and Police Chief about what we are doing to keep our community safe and share those discussions with the community tonight.

I have heard from members of the community in these meetings, over email, and face-to-face around town that have expressed concerns about federal immigration enforcement activities here, and they are expecting action from our City to ensure our neighbors feel safe and are safe being in Watertown.

And I echo those concerns myself. Guiding principles of this City's charter include "Safety & Tranquility" and "Equity & Diversity". It is not lost on me, or this Council, the importance of upholding and using these principles to guide our decisions and actions.

And it is the actions of this Council that are most important to me in protecting our community members.

We have been asked to make a resolution on the matter. I want to be honest in sharing that I worry about making a resolution – not because this Council does not firmly stand behind protecting the safety of our residents – but because of my fear in what unintended consequences will be felt in heightening the attention on our community by making one.

Furthermore, I am confident in the tangible actions of our City to protect our neighbors against unlawful actions that put them in harm's way.

Our Police Department does not enforce federal immigration law. They do not detain people at the request of ICE, they do not share information with government registries based on immigration status, they do not participate in civil immigration raids.

Our Schools do not ask for family's immigration status. They do not coordinate with ICE. They do not share student records with ICE without consent from a parent or court order from a federal judge.

While I do acknowledge there are things we as a Council and City cannot stop, as ICE has authority to enforce federal immigration laws within our City, I do want to share a message to ICE: unless you have a judicial warrant - you may not enter our schools. You may not enter our classrooms. You may not enter our private offices within City buildings.

You also may not use City property for enforcement operations, staging, or processing individuals. If you do so, you will be directed to leave.

I want our community to trust this elected body. I want them to entrust in our schools, our police department, our staff members, our Library. I want our residents to feel comfortable and proud that Watertown is their home, where they can raise a family, work in our businesses, enjoy the services we provide.

And that is why I encourage my colleagues on the Council, our City Administration, and neighbors, to put action first to ensure those around us feel welcome and safe.

We are not done talking about this with you – the community. And I hope that our residents still feel empowered to share their expectations with us at this table. And I hope that our actions to this point encourage you that we are working as hard as we can to deliver on the promises our community expects from us.

ELECTED OFFICIALS

Mark S. Sideris,
Council President

John G. Gannon,
Councilor At Large
Nicole Gardner,
District A Councilor

Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr.,
Vice President &
District C Councilor
Theophilus Offei
Councilor At Large
Lisa J. Feltner
District B Councilor

Caroline Bays,
Councilor At Large

Anthony Palomba,
Councilor At Large
Emily Izzo,
District D Councilor

**CITY COUNCIL ROLL CALL VOTE
MEETING DATE: MAY 12, 2026**

	YES	NO	PRESENT
CAROLINE BAYS	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
LISA J. FELTNER	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
JOHN G. GANNON	<u> </u>	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
NICOLE GARDNER	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
EMILY IZZO	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
THEOPHILUS OFFEI	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
ANTHONY PALOMBA	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
VINCENT J. PICCIRILLI JR.	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
MARK S. SIDERIS, COUNCIL PRESIDENT	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Motion to approve an ordinance regarding non-union personnel compensation and leave



Watertown City Council

Administration Building
149 Main Street
Watertown, MA 02472
Phone: 617-972-6470

ORDINANCE # 48

2026 - O - 48

ORDINANCE AMENDING THE CODE OF ORDINANCES REGARDING NON-UNION PERSONNEL COMPENSATION AND LEAVE

WHEREAS, The City of Watertown adopted a new Administrative Code on March 24, 2026; and,

WHEREAS, The Administrative Code is developed to replace certain sections of the Code of Ordinances for the City of Watertown; and,

WHEREAS, The City desires to have codes that are clear and unambiguous well organized; and,

WHEREAS, The Honorable City Council desires to ensure that non-union personnel continue to have policies in place that regulate their compensation and leave schedules,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT,

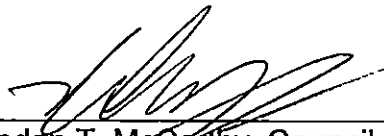
The following be added to the Code of Ordinances:

The Human Resources Department of the City of Watertown shall maintain employee policies for all employees that are not directly employed by the City Council and that are not otherwise covered by a collective bargaining unit. These policies shall include, but are not limited to, the following:

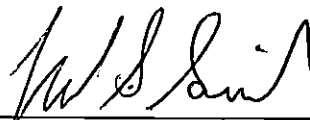
- a. A classification and compensation system establishing a grade and salary steps for each position
- b. A policy for accruing vacation leave
- c. A policy for accruing sick leave
- d. A policy for accruing personal leave
- e. A schedule of employee holidays

Council Member

I hereby certify that at a Meeting of the City Council for which a quorum was present, the above order was adopted by a vote of 8 for, 1 against, and 0 present on May 12, 2026.



Brendan T. McCarthy, Council Clerk



Mark S. Sideris, Council President

ELECTED OFFICIALS

Mark S. Sideris,
Council President

John G. Gannon,
Councilor At Large
Nicole Gardner,
District A Councilor

Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr.,
Vice President &
District C Councilor
Theophilus Offei
Councilor At Large
Lisa J. Feltner
District B Councilor

Caroline Bays,
Councilor At Large

Anthony Palomba,
Councilor At Large
Emily Izzo,
District D Councilor

**CITY COUNCIL ROLL CALL VOTE
MEETING DATE: MAY 12, 2026**

	YES	NO	PRESENT
CAROLINE BAYS	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
LISA J. FELTNER	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
JOHN G. GANNON	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
NICOLE GARDNER	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
EMILY IZZO	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
THEOPHILUS OFFEI	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
ANTHONY PALOMBA	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
VINCENT J. PICCIRILLI JR.	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
MARK S. SIDERIS, COUNCIL PRESIDENT	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Motion to authorize a loan order in the amount of \$2,300,000 for Forest Street and Spring Street reconstruction.



Watertown City Council

Administration Building
149 Main Street
Watertown, MA 02472
Phone: 617-972-6470

ORDER # 49

2026 - O - 49

ORDER TO APPROVE THE BORROWING OF FUNDS FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION OF FOREST STREET AND SPRINGFIELD STREET

ORDERED: That the sum of \$2,300,000 is appropriated to pay costs of reconstructing Forest Street and Springfield Street, as more fully described in Line 289 of the City's Fiscal Year 2026 through 2031 Capital Improvement Plan, and the payment of all costs incidental and related thereto; and that to meet this appropriation, the Treasurer, with the approval of the City Manager, is authorized to borrow said amount under and pursuant to M.G.L. c.44, §7(1), or pursuant to any other enabling authority, and to issue bonds or notes of the City therefor.

BE IT FURTHER ORDERED: That a copy of said Order be forwarded to the City Auditor and City Treasurer/Collector

Council Member

I hereby certify that at a Meeting of the City Council for which a quorum was present, the above order was adopted by a vote of 9 for, 0 against, and 0 present on May 12, 2026.

Brendan T. McCarthy, Council Clerk
Mark S. Sideris, Council President

ELECTED OFFICIALS

**Mark S. Sideris,
Council President**

**John G. Gannon,
Councilor At Large
Nicole Gardner,
District A Councilor**


**Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr.,
Vice President &
District C Councilor
Theophilus Offei
Councilor At Large
Lisa J. Feltner
District B Councilor**

**Caroline Bays,
Councilor At Large**

**Anthony Palomba,
Councilor At Large
Emily Izzo,
District D Councilor**



WATERTOWN
MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

To: Honorable City Council
From: George J. Proakis, City Manager 
Date: April 23, 2026
RE: Agenda Item – Proposed Loan Order

Attached is a request from Thomas D. Brady, Director of Public Works, seeking authorization for the Treasurer to borrow \$2,300,000 for the reconstruction of Forest Street and Springfield Street, consistent with Line 289 and Conceptual Recommendation #42 of the FY 2026–2030 Capital Improvement Program. This request is submitted alongside a separate \$2,100,000 loan order for the Forest Street connector roads and longer streets project, scheduled for the April 28, 2026 City Council agenda.

I respectfully request the attached proposed Loan Order be placed on the April 28, 2026 City Council Agenda as a First Reading.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.



28 State Street
Boston, MA 02109-1775
p: 617-345-9000 f: 617-345-9020
hinckleyallen.com

Chelsea A. Tryder
(617) 378-4209
ctryder@hinckleyallen.com

April 23, 2026

George J. Proakis
City Manager
Administration Building
149 Main Street
Watertown, Massachusetts 02472

RE: Draft Loan Order – Street Reconstruction Bonds

Dear George:

As requested, I suggest the following form of loan order in connection with the reconstruction of Forest Street and Springfield Street project:

ORDERED: That the sum of \$2,300,000 is appropriated to pay costs of reconstructing Forest Street and Springfield Street, as more fully described in Line 289 of the City's Fiscal Year 2026 through 2031 Capital Improvement Plan, and the payment of all costs incidental and related thereto; and that to meet this appropriation, the Treasurer, with the approval of the City Manager, is authorized to borrow said amount under and pursuant to M.G.L. c.44, §7(1), or pursuant to any other enabling authority, and to issue bonds or notes of the City therefor.

The order must be published at least five days prior to the holding of a public hearing with respect to the order and its final passage and requires the affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of all members of the City Council, as in the case of any other loan order for bonds.

Please call me if there are any questions about the suggested proceedings.

Sincerely,

/s/ Chelsea A. Tryder

Chelsea A. Tryder



WATERTOWN
MASSACHUSETTS
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

TO: Mr. George Proakis, City Manager
FROM: Mr. Thomas Brady, Director of Public Works ^{TB}
Mr. Michael Albano, Director of Administration & Finance
Mr. Nathan Chin, PE, Acting City Engineer
DATE: April 14, 2026
RE: Public Works Department – Road Reconstruction Funding Request

The Department of Public Works (DPW) respectfully requests that the necessary actions be taken to authorize the Treasurer to borrow \$2,100,000 for the construction and oversight of the connector roads and longer streets project at Forest Street, at approximately 1,875 linear feet, and Springfield Street, at approximately 1,050 linear feet. This request corresponds with Conceptual Recommendation #15 of the Fiscal Year 2026 Annual Budget.

In addition, the DPW requests that the necessary actions be taken to authorize the Treasurer to borrow \$2,300,000 for the reconstruction of Forest Street and Springfield Street in conjunction with Line 289 of the Fiscal Year 2026-2031 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and Line 42 of the Fiscal Year 2026 Annual Budget.

The City Council reviewed and approved the above mentioned projects on December 13, 2022, pursuant to the Public Works Committee's report. DPW selected each street by evaluating its pavement condition index, history of utility replacement, traffic impact, and need for safety improvements. Reconstructing each street is necessary to ensure the safe and efficient flow of vehicle and pedestrian traffic.

All goods and services related to these projects will be procured in compliance with Massachusetts law. Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request.

Order Confirmation

Brendan McCarthy
 Watertown City Council
 149 Main Street
 Watertown, MA 02472

Thank you for placing your Legal Notice in The Boston Globe.

Your order information and a preview of your notice are displayed below for your review. If there are any changes or questions, please contact the Classified Department at 617-929-1314 or email legals@globe.com.

Any and all proposed edits, revisions, and/or other changes to the notice must be communicated to us in writing prior to the deadline specified in the Advertising Specs + Deadlines page located at <https://www.bostonglobemedia.com/specs-deadlines>.

Thank you,
 Boston Globe Classified Sales

617-929-1314
 Monday - Friday 9:30 am - 4:30 pm
legals@globe.com

Order Number	766798	Order Price	\$708.35
Sales Rep.	Jackson Kocak	PO No.	
Account	3028420	Payment Type	
Publication	Boston Globe	Number of dates	1
First Run Date	05/02/2026	Last Run Date	05/02/2026
Payment Type			

AD PREVIEW:


**CITY COUNCIL ROLL CALL VOTE
MEETING DATE: MAY 12, 2026**

	YES	NO	PRESENT
CAROLINE BAYS	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
LISA J. FELTNER	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
JOHN G. GANNON	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
NICOLE GARDNER	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
EMILY IZZO	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
THEOPHILUS OFFEI	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
ANTHONY PALOMBA	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
VINCENT J. PICCIRILLI JR.	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
MARK S. SIDERIS, COUNCIL PRESIDENT	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Motion to appropriate \$100,000 from the community preservation funds for the cemetery projects

**CITY COUNCIL ROLL CALL VOTE
MEETING DATE: MAY 12, 2026**

	YES	NO	PRESENT
CAROLINE BAYS	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
LISA J. FELTNER	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
JOHN G. GANNON	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
NICOLE GARDNER	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
EMILY IZZO	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
THEOPHILUS OFFEI	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
ANTHONY PALOMBA	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
VINCENT J. PICCIRILLI JR.	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
MARK S. SIDERIS, COUNCIL PRESIDENT	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Motion to authorize a loan order in the amount of \$2,100,000 for the Forest Street Connector Roads and Longer Streets Project



Watertown City Council

Administration Building
149 Main Street
Watertown, MA 02472
Phone: 617-972-6470

ORDER # 50

2026 - O - 50

ORDER TO APPROVE THE BORROWING OF FUNDS FOR THE FOREST STREET CONNECTOR ROADS AND LONGER STREETS PROJECT

ORDERED: That the sum of \$2,100,000 is appropriated to pay costs of constructing and overseeing the connector roads and longer streets project at Forest Street and Springfield Street, as more fully described in Line 318 of the City's Fiscal Year 2024 through 2028 Capital Improvement Plan, and the payment of all costs incidental and related thereto; and that to meet this appropriation, the Treasurer, with the approval of the City Manager, is authorized to borrow said amount under and pursuant to M.G.L. c.44, §7(1), or pursuant to any other enabling authority, and to issue bonds or notes of the City therefor.

BE IT FURTHER ORDERED: That a copy of said Order be forwarded to the City Auditor and City Treasurer/Collector

Council Member

I hereby certify that at a Meeting of the City Council for which a quorum was present, the above order was adopted by a vote of 9 for, 0 against, and 0 present on May 12, 2026.

Brendan T. McCarthy, Council Clerk

Mark S. Sideris, Council President

ELECTED OFFICIALS

**Mark S. Sideris,
Council President**

**John G. Gannon,
Councilor At Large
Nicole Gardner,
District A Councilor**


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Vice President &
District C Councilor
Theophilus Offei
Councilor At Large
Lisa J. Feltner
District B Councilor**

**Caroline Bays,
Councilor At Large**

**Anthony Palomba,
Councilor At Large
Emily Izzo,
District D Councilor**



WATERTOWN
MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

To: Honorable City Council
From: George J. Proakis, City Manager 
Date: April 23, 2026
RE: Agenda Item – Proposed Loan Order

Attached is a request from Thomas D. Brady, Director of Public Works, seeking authorization for the Treasurer to borrow \$2,100,000 for the Forest Street connector roads and longer streets project, consistent with Conceptual Recommendation #15 of the FY 2026–2030 Capital Improvement Program. This request is submitted alongside a separate \$2,300,000 loan order for the reconstruction of Forest Street and Springfield Street, scheduled for the April 28, 2026 City Council agenda.

I respectfully request the attached proposed Loan Order be placed on the April 28, 2026 City Council Agenda as a First Reading.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.



28 State Street
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hinckleyallen.com

Chelsea A. Tryder
(617) 378-4209
ctryder@hinckleyallen.com

April 23, 2026

George J. Proakis
City Manager
Administration Building
149 Main Street
Watertown, Massachusetts 02472

RE: Draft Loan Order – Street Bonds

Dear George:

As requested, I suggest the following form of loan order in connection with the connector roads and longer streets at Forest Street and Springfield Street project:

ORDERED: That the sum of \$2,100,000 is appropriated to pay costs of constructing and overseeing the connector roads and longer streets project at Forest Street and Springfield Street, as more fully described in Line 318 of the City's Fiscal Year 2024 through 2028 Capital Improvement Plan, and the payment of all costs incidental and related thereto; and that to meet this appropriation, the Treasurer, with the approval of the City Manager, is authorized to borrow said amount under and pursuant to M.G.L. c.44, §7(1), or pursuant to any other enabling authority, and to issue bonds or notes of the City therefor.

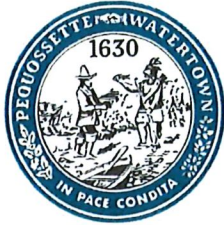
The order must be published at least five days prior to the holding of a public hearing with respect to the order and its final passage and requires the affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of all members of the City Council, as in the case of any other loan order for bonds.

Please call me if there are any questions about the suggested proceedings.

Sincerely,

/s/ Chelsea A. Tryder

Chelsea A. Tryder



WATERTOWN
MASSACHUSETTS
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

TO: Mr. George Proakis, City Manager

FROM: Mr. Thomas Brady, Director of Public Works ^{TB}

Mr. Michael Albano, Director of Administration & Finance

Mr. Nathan Chin, PE, Acting City Engineer

DATE: April 14, 2026

RE: Public Works Department – Road Reconstruction Funding Request

The Department of Public Works (DPW) respectfully requests that the necessary actions be taken to authorize the Treasurer to borrow \$2,100,000 for the construction and oversight of the connector roads and longer streets project at Forest Street, at approximately 1,875 linear feet, and Springfield Street, at approximately 1,050 linear feet. This request corresponds with Conceptual Recommendation #15 of the Fiscal Year 2026 Annual Budget.

In addition, the DPW requests that the necessary actions be taken to authorize the Treasurer to borrow \$2,300,000 for the reconstruction of Forest Street and Springfield Street in conjunction with Line 289 of the Fiscal Year 2026-2031 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and Line 42 of the Fiscal Year 2026 Annual Budget.

The City Council reviewed and approved the above mentioned projects on December 13, 2022, pursuant to the Public Works Committee's report. DPW selected each street by evaluating its pavement condition index, history of utility replacement, traffic impact, and need for safety improvements. Reconstructing each street is necessary to ensure the safe and efficient flow of vehicle and pedestrian traffic.

All goods and services related to these projects will be procured in compliance with Massachusetts law. Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request.

Order Confirmation

Brendan McCarthy
 Watertown City Council
 149 Main Street
 Watertown, MA 02472

Thank you for placing your Legal Notice in The Boston Globe.

Your order information and a preview of your notice are displayed below for your review. If there are any changes or questions, please contact the Classified Department at 617-929-1314 or email legals@globe.com.

Any and all proposed edits, revisions, and/or other changes to the notice must be communicated to us in writing prior to the deadline specified in the Advertising Specs + Deadlines page located at <https://www.bostonglobemedia.com/specs-deadlines>.

Thank you,
 Boston Globe Classified Sales

617-929-1314
 Monday - Friday 9:30 am - 4:30 pm
legals@globe.com

Order Number	766797	Order Price	\$733.57
Sales Rep.	Jackson Kocak	PO No.	
Account	3028420	Payment Type	
Publication	Boston Globe	Number of dates	1
First Run Date	05/02/2026	Last Run Date	05/02/2026
Payment Type			

AD PREVIEW:

Legal Notice

The City Council of Watertown hereby gives notice of a public hearing and vote to be held on Tuesday, May 12, 2026 at 7:00 PM in the Richard Mastrangelo Chamber Administration Building, 149 Main Street, Watertown, MA and online at the following link: <https://watertown-ma.zoom.us/j/92991331344> which may be found on the City of Watertown's website, on a proposed Loan Order as follows:

ORDERED: That the sum of \$2,100,000 is appropriated to pay costs of constructing and overseeing the connector roads and longer streets project at Forest Street and Springfield Street, as more fully described in Line 318 of the City's Fiscal Year 2024 through 2028 Capital Improvement Plan, and the payment of all costs incidental and related thereto; and that to meet this appropriation, the Treasurer, with the approval of the City Manager, is authorized to borrow said amount under and pursuant to M.G.L. c.44, §7(1), or pursuant to any other enabling authority, and to issue bonds or notes of the City therefor.

Interested parties are encouraged to participate in this public hearing. A copy of the proposed Loan Order is available for inspection at the Administration Building, 149 Main Street, Watertown, MA 02472 in the City Clerk's Office Monday through Thursday 8:30 a.m. through 5:00 p.m., on Tuesday evening up to 7:00 p.m., and Friday 8:30 a.m. through 12:30 p.m., and on the City's website page: www.watertown-ma.gov.



FY 2026 CPA FUNDING RECOMMENDATION

Submitted to the City Council
by the Community Preservation Committee

March 30, 2026



CITY OF WATERTOWN

Community Preservation Committee

Bob DiRico, Chair
 Dennis J. Duff
 Allison Eck
 Allen Gallagher
 Abigail Hammett
 Marissa Mayo
 Amy Plovnick
 Marilyn Salvat
 Matthew Walter

Date: March 30, 2026

To: The Honorable City Council

At its March 19, 2026, meeting, the Community Preservation Committee voted to recommend to the City Council a total expenditure of \$100,000 in CPA funds for one phased project. The CPC had previously determined that the Old Burying Ground and Common Street Cemetery historic preservation project would meet the goals expressed in the Community Preservation Plan, provide a public benefit, address a need, and demonstrate ability to leverage non-CPA funds, among other factors.

If approved by the City Council, the Department of Community Development and Planning must comply with the terms of the Memorandum of Agreement with the CPC and submit regular progress and budget reports. Additional specific conditions are listed as applicable to this project.

CPA FY 2025 PROJECT RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY			
CPA CATEGORY	RECOMMENDED SOURCE	RECOMMEND AMOUNT	ACCOUNT BALANCE (less recommendation)
Historic Preservation	Historic Preservation Reserve	\$100,000	\$1,699,637

Category Reserves are one of three eligible CPA spending purposes. 10% of CPA total annual revenue was allocated to each category reserve in FY2026. The **Budgeted Reserve**, to which 65% of CPA annual revenue was allocated in FY 2026, is available for any CPA spending purpose. The **CPA Fund Balance** is available for appropriation for any CPA spending purpose. At the end of the year all unspent funds, including administrative funds (5% allocated) and the budgeted reserve funds drop to the CPA fund balance. At the time of this recommendation, the CPA Fund balance is \$14,025,166. There is \$1,799,637 in the Historic Preservation Category Reserve.

PROJECT TITLE:	Old Burying Ground and Common Street Cemetery Landscape Architecture Services
PROJECT LOCATION:	264 Arlington Street; 154 Mount Auburn Street
APPLICANT/ORGANIZATION:	Department of Community Development and Planning
CO-APPLICANT:	Historical Society of Watertown
PROJECT MANAGER:	Michele Moon, Open Space Planner
CPA CATEGORY:	Historic Preservation
CPC RECOMMENDED FUNDING AMOUNT:	\$100,000
CPC RECOMMENDED FUNDING SOURCE:	Historic Preservation Reserve

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Department of Community Development and Planning requests \$100,000 to hire a landscape architect for the second phase of this multi-phased project. This second phase entails the development of schematic drawings and construction documents. Both the Old Burying Ground and Common Street Cemetery are owned and maintained by the City of Watertown. They are the oldest ones located in the city and border Watertown’s major thoroughfare, Mount Auburn Street. Each cemetery holds the distinction of being listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Work to be detailed in the construction documents, resulting from this project, will be drawn from the [Old Burying Ground and Common Street Cemetery Historic Preservation Plan](#). The Plan was funded with CPA dollars as the first phase of this project. Historic preservation work will include restoration of gravestones, tombs, stone walls, piers, signs, paths, and a service road. As described in the initial application, several factors such as harsh New England weather conditions, climate change, and lack of maintenance or repair of the older gravestones, tombs, and crypts, have led to a dire need for restoration and preservation of these historic assets. While there will be no added paths and the lawn will not be

accessible, the Plan recommends improvement to the service road at the Common Street Cemetery for accessibility through removal of dead roots and treatment of living roots to level the road.

During this second phase, the Department of Public Works (DPW) will perform tree removal and pruning recommended in the Old Burying Ground and Common Street Cemetery Historic Preservation Plan as an in-kind service. Continued tree care was recommended in the Historic Preservation Plan as part of the cemeteries’ maintenance plan..

At the end of March, an RFQ will be issued to obtain a qualified architectural firm with experience in the historic restoration and preservation of cemeteries. Additional members of the project team are Michelle Moon, Open Space Planner, Bob Dirico, Cemetery Supervisor for DPW, Joyce Kelly, Historical Society of Watertown, and Mike Micieli Tree Warden for DPW. Other city staff from DPW and DCDP will be involved as stakeholders and participate in key project meetings as necessary.

RECOMMENDED FUNDING

On March 19, 2026, by a vote of 9-0, the Community Preservation Committee recommended appropriation of \$100,000 for the project in accordance with the terms and conditions of a Memorandum of Agreement and the overall purposes summarized in this document.

ALIGNMENT WITH COMMUNITY PRESERVATION PLAN 2021-2025

The project would align with the guiding principles and priorities outlined in the Community Preservation Plan as well as the following community historic preservation goals:

- Demonstrates support from municipal bodies—the Watertown Historical Commission, Watertown Historic District Commission, Historical Society of Watertown, and individual community members.
- Addresses a longstanding and urgent need as markers and tombs are rapidly deteriorating.
- Demonstrates feasibility through high quality project management, historic preservation team expertise, a reasonable and informed budget, and a realistic timeline.
- Addresses two CPA funding categories by preserving existing open space and planning for the rehabilitation and preservation of historic resources.
- Restores and preserves a city-owned historic resource.

PROJECT OUTCOME

This project will result in construction drawings and bid documents to advance the project to the construction phase. In the end, the properties would be preserved for the benefit of history enthusiasts, genealogists, people with an interest in funerary and folk art, and the larger public. As a valuable historic resource, the cemeteries include the graves of historic figures and military veterans in Watertown and beyond, holding a crucial place in the city’s cultural heritage. In addition, as cemeteries were some of the first public open spaces enjoyed for passive recreation, these properties offer opportunities for walking, bird watching, and quiet contemplation in largely developed areas of the city.

STANDARD FUNDING CONDITIONS

- Prior to disbursement of any CPA funds, the grantee shall enter into a Memorandum of Agreement with the CPC for the project as set out in the grantee’s application.
- Notification of Community Preservation Coordinator about key events of project implementation such as project kick-off events, initial site meetings with contractors, initial plan reviews, and site visits when construction milestones are reached.
- No disbursements of funds may occur until the project has received all necessary governmental and third-party approvals, the project budget has been approved by the CPC, and all other sources of funds have been committed, as necessary, to complete the project.
- Any CPA funds appropriated but not used for the stated purposes of this project must be returned to the Watertown Community Preservation Fund.
- Other conditions as deemed necessary and defined within the Memorandum of Agreement.

SPECIFIC FUNDING CONDITIONS

- The grantee shall produce documents that comply with the Secretary of Interior Preservation Standards for historic landscapes and cemeteries.

APPLICANT’S PROPOSED TIMELINE

Date	Task
Spring 2026 - 2027	In-kind Tree Services (DPW)
Summer 2026 - Winter 2027	Design Development, Construction and Bid Documents
Winter and Spring 2027	Bid Administration
Fall 2026 – Winter 2027	Select Gravestones for Restoration Old Burying Ground (OBG) Cost Estimates for Gravestone Cleaning and Restoration

PROJECT BUDGET

Item	Other Sources	CPA Request
Landscape Design Services		\$100,000
Project Management and Support DCDP Historical Society of Watertown volunteer labor	\$2,000	
Tree Work	In-kind \$50,000	
Gravestone Restoration/Cleaning	\$50,000 Monument Fund	
TOTAL	\$102,000	\$100,000

The full proposal is available at: <https://watertownma.viewpointcloud.com/records/373404>

**CITY COUNCIL ROLL CALL VOTE
MEETING DATE: MAY 12, 2026**

	YES	NO	PRESENT
CAROLINE BAYS	__X__	_____	_____
LISA J. FELTNER	__X__	_____	_____
JOHN G. GANNON	__X__	_____	_____
NICOLE GARDNER	__X__	_____	_____
EMILY IZZO	__X__	_____	_____
THEOPHILUS OFFEI	__X__	_____	_____
ANTHONY PALOMBA	__X__	_____	_____
VINCENT J. PICCIRILLI JR.	__X__	_____	_____
MARK S. SIDERIS, COUNCIL PRESIDENT	__X__	_____	_____

Motion to approve a transfer of funds in the amount of \$75,000 from the FY26 City Council Reserve to the FY26 Litigation account



Watertown City Council

Administration Building
149 Main Street
Watertown, MA 02472
Phone: 617-972-6470

RESOLUTION # 52

2026 - R - 52

RESOLUTION APPROVING A TRANSFER OF FUNDS FROM THE FISCAL YEAR 2026 CITY COUNCIL RESERVE TO THE FISCAL YEAR 2026 LITIGATION ACCOUNT

BE IT RESOLVED: That the City Council of Watertown hereby approves the transfer of funds in the amount of \$75,000 from the Fiscal Year 2026 City Council Reserve to the Fiscal Year 2026 Litigation account.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That a copy of said transfer is forwarded to the City Auditor and City Treasurer/Collector.



Council Member

I hereby certify that at a meeting of the City Council for which a quorum was present, the above resolution was adopted by a vote of 9 for, 0 against, and 0 present on May 12, 2026.



Brendan T. McCarthy, Council Clerk



Mark S. Sideris, Council President

ELECTED OFFICIALS

Mark S. Sideris,
Council President

Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr.,
Vice President &
District C Councilor

Caroline Bays,
Councilor At Large

John G. Gannon,
Councilor At Large

Theophilus Offei,
Councilor At Large

Anthony Palomba,
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Nicole Gardner,
District A Councilor

Lisa J. Feltner,
District B Councilor

Emily Izzo,
District D Councilor



WATERTOWN
MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

To: Honorable City Council
From: George J. Proakis, City Manager *George J. Proakis*
Date: May 5, 2026
RE: Agenda Item – Transfer of Funds

Attached please find a spreadsheet listing expenditures of \$283,345.60 for the first nine months of the current fiscal year from the City Attorney Litigation and Technical Support Account. This proposed transfer of funds request to the City Attorney Litigation/Legal Services Fund is necessary to sufficiently fund services for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2026.

Therefore, I respectfully request a transfer of funds be placed on the May 12, 2026 City Council Agenda.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

FISCAL YEAR 2026

	General Legal	General School	General Labor	By pass, grievances	Collective bargaining	Litigation Matters	Licensing Board	City Council	Misc. Disburs.	Total
July	\$18,663.00		\$4,823.00		\$1,987.50		\$2,014.00	\$1,351.50	\$380.91	\$29,219.91
August	\$8,189.00		\$10,308.50		\$6,254.00	\$5,830.00	\$6,333.50	\$1,749.00	\$4,911.14	\$43,575.14
September	\$4,152.00		\$5,353.00		\$11,315.50	\$10,600.00	\$1,855.00	\$159.00	\$1,030.32	\$34,464.82
October	\$7,056.00		\$5,724.00		\$12,216.50	\$10,812.00	\$5,008.50	\$795.00	\$717.47	\$42,329.47
November	\$4,883.94		\$2,597.00		\$8,188.50	\$6,042.00	\$2,703.00	\$848.00	\$602.92	\$25,865.36
December	\$17,212.59		\$2,067.00		\$18,682.50		\$5,061.50	\$636.00	\$184.28	\$43,843.87
January	\$5,523.50		\$1,961.00		\$5,273.50		\$4,187.00	\$397.50	\$441.21	\$17,783.71
February	\$11,154.00		\$3,286.00		\$7,605.00		\$3,127.00	\$980.50	\$322.21	\$26,474.71
March	\$12,776.00		\$5,194.00		\$848.00		\$159.00	\$318.00	\$493.61	\$19,788.61
April										\$0.00
May										\$0.00
June										\$0.00
Totals	\$89,610.03	\$0.00	\$41,313.50	\$0.00	\$72,371.00	\$33,284.00	\$30,448.50	\$7,234.50	\$9,084.07	\$283,345.60



CITY OF WATERTOWN
Auditor

Administration Building
149 Main Street
Watertown, MA 02472-4410

Megan Langan
City Auditor

Telephone: (617) 972-6460
Facsimile: (617) 972-6563

TO: GEORGE PROAKIS, CITY MANAGER
FROM: MEGAN LANGAN, CITY AUDITOR *M*
DATE: MAY 04, 2026
RE: AGENDA ITEM - TRANSFER OF FUNDS REQUEST

Per your request, please find attached a Transfer of Funds request in the amount of \$75,000 from FY 2026 City Council Reserve to FY 2026 Litigation to ensure adequate funds are in place to cover City Attorney expenses through the end of Fiscal Year 2026.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

TRANSFER AMOUNT: \$ 75,000

FROM: FY 2026 CITY COUNCIL RESERVE \$ 75,000
0111152-570780

TO: FY 2026 LITIGATION \$ 75,000
0115152-530309

I hereby certify to the availability, authority of funding source, mathematical accuracy and appropriate fiscal year.

05/04/2026
DATE


CITY AUDITOR

**CITY COUNCIL ROLL CALL VOTE
MEETING DATE: MAY 12, 2026**

	YES	NO	PRESENT
CAROLINE BAYS	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
LISA J. FELTNER	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
JOHN G. GANNON	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
NICOLE GARDNER	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
EMILY IZZO	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
THEOPHILUS OFFEI	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
ANTHONY PALOMBA	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
VINCENT J. PICCIRILLI JR.	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
MARK S. SIDERIS, COUNCIL PRESIDENT	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Motion to approve a transfer of funds in the amount of \$824,277 from the FY26 City Council Reserve to various FY26 Snow and Ice accounts



Watertown City Council

Administration Building
149 Main Street
Watertown, MA 02472
Phone: 617-972-6470

RESOLUTION # 51

2026 - R - 51

RESOLUTION APPROVING A TRANSFER OF FUNDS FROM THE FISCAL YEAR 2026 CITY COUNCIL RESERVE TO VARIOUS FISCAL YEAR 2026 SNOW AND ICE ACCOUNTS

BE IT RESOLVED: That the City Council of Watertown hereby approves the transfer of funds in the amount of \$824,277 from the Fiscal Year 2026 City Council Reserve to various Fiscal Year 2026 Snow and Ice accounts.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That a copy of said transfer is forwarded to the City Auditor and City Treasurer/Collector.


Council Member

I hereby certify that at a meeting of the City Council for which a quorum was present, the above resolution was adopted by a vote of 9 for, 0 against, and 0 present on May 12, 2026.


Brendan T. McCarthy, Council Clerk


Mark S. Sideris, Council President

ELECTED OFFICIALS

Mark S. Sideris,
Council President

Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr.,
Vice President &
District C Councilor

Caroline Bays,
Councilor At Large

John G. Gannon,
Councilor At Large

Theophilus Offei,
Councilor At Large

Anthony Palomba,
Councilor At Large

Nicole Gardner,
District A Councilor


Lisa J. Feltner,
District B Councilor

Emily Izzo,
District D Councilor



WATERTOWN
MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

To: Honorable City Council

From: George J. Proakis, City Manager 

Date: May 5, 2026

RE: Agenda Item – Transfer of Funds

Attached is correspondence from City Auditor Megan Langan regarding the requested transfer of funds to address the Fiscal Year 2026 Snow & Ice deficit. I respectfully request that this transfer be added to the agenda for the City Council meeting on May 12, 2026.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.



CITY OF WATERTOWN


Auditor

Administration Building
149 Main Street
Watertown, MA 02472-4410

Megan Langan
City Auditor

Telephone: (617) 972-6460
Facsimile: (617) 972-6563

TO: GEORGE PROAKIS, CITY MANAGER

FROM: MEGAN LANGAN, CITY AUDITOR 

DATE: APRIL 30, 2026

RE: AGENDA ITEM – TRANSFER OF FUNDS REQUEST

As you recall, at the February 24, 2026 City Council Meeting, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 44, Section 31D of the Massachusetts General Laws, the Honorable City Council voted to authorize expenditures in excess of available appropriations for snow and ice removal for the remainder of the fiscal year. As stated that evening, action on the Fiscal Year 2026 Snow & Ice deficit needs to be taken prior to the end of the Fiscal Year in order to avoid raising the deficit in the Fiscal Year 2027 Budget/Recap.

The Revised Fiscal Year 2026 Snow & Ice Removal Budget, excluding the Replacement of Equipment account is \$1,420,000. Expenditures and Encumbrances to date total \$2,217,815 and results in Snow and Ice Removal deficit of \$797,815 (see attachment).

In addition to the excess costs incurred by our Department of Public Works, our Public Buildings department also saw an unanticipated increase in costs related to snow removal this winter. Per discussions with Denise Moroney, Director of Public Buildings, an additional cost of \$6,827 was incurred for snow blower maintenance and ice melt used for City Buildings as well as \$19,635 additional overtime costs incurred for snow removal.

Therefore, in order to fund this deficit, I respectfully request the attached transfer of \$824,277 be placed on the May 12, 2026 City Council Agenda.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

cc. Tom Brady, Director of Public Works
Denise Moroney, Director of Public Buildings

SNOW AND ICE ACTIVITY AS OF APRIL 30, 2026

	ORIGINAL APPROP	TRANSFERS/ ADJUSTMENTS	REVISED BUDGET	YTD EXPENDED	ENCUMBRANCES	AVAILABLE BUDGET
0142351 SNOW & ICE - PERS. SVC						
510130 OVERTIME	\$ 375,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 377,000	\$ 612,033.72	\$ -	\$ (235,033.72)
510192 MEALS ALLOWANCE	\$ 2,000	\$ (2,000)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
TOTAL SNOW & ICE - PERSONNEL SERV.	\$ 377,000	\$ -	\$ 377,000	\$ 612,033.72	\$ -	\$ (235,033.72)
0142352 SNOW & ICE - EXPENSES						
520271 RENTAL OF EQUIPMENT	\$ 485,000	\$ 30,000	\$ 515,000	\$ 937,600.00	\$ 13,000.00	\$ (435,600.00)
530380 WEATHER REPORTS	\$ 4,000	\$ -	\$ 4,000	\$ 3,975.00	\$ 25.00	\$ -
540480 GASOLINE	\$ 30,000	\$ (30,000)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
540481 VEHICLE PARTS & SUPPLIE	\$ 124,000	\$ -	\$ 124,000	\$ 41,840.20	\$ 82,159.80	\$ -
550533 SAND & SALT	\$ 400,000	\$ -	\$ 400,000	\$ 438,687.33	\$ 88,493.77	\$ (127,181.10)
TOTAL SNOW & ICE - EXPENSES	\$ 1,043,000	\$ -	\$ 1,043,000	\$ 1,422,102.53	\$ 183,678.57	\$ (562,781.10)
0142358 SNOW & ICE - CAPITAL						
580870 REPLACEMENT OF EQUIPMENT	\$ 80,000	\$ -	\$ 80,000	\$ 10,960.72	\$ 41,633.07	\$ 27,406.21
TOTAL SNOW & ICE - CAPITAL	\$ 80,000	\$ -	\$ 80,000	\$ 10,961	\$ 41,633	\$ 27,406
					<i>Less Capital App.</i>	\$ (27,406)
TOTAL SNOW & ICE	\$ 1,500,000	\$ -	\$ 1,500,000	\$ 2,045,097	\$ 225,312	\$ (797,815)

TRANSFER AMOUNT \$824,277

FROM: FY 2026 CITY COUNCIL RESERVE 0111152-570780	\$ 824,277
TO: FY 2026 SNOW & ICE OVERTIME 0142351-510130	\$ 235,034
FY 2026 SNOW & ICE RENTAL OF EQUIPMENET 0142352-520271	\$ 435,600
FY 2026 SNOW & ICE SAND & SALT 0142352-550533	\$ 127,181
FY 2026 PUBLIC BUILDINGS OVERTIME 0119551-510111	\$ 19,635
FY 2026 PUBLIC BUILDINGS GROUNDSKEEPING SUPPLIES 0119552-540462	\$ 6,827

I hereby certify to the availability, authority of funding source, mathematical accuracy and appropriate fiscal year.

4/30/2026
DATE

Megan Fry
CITY AUDITOR

**CITY COUNCIL ROLL CALL VOTE
MEETING DATE: MAY 12, 2026**

	YES	NO	PRESENT
CAROLINE BAYS	__X__	_____	_____
LISA J. FELTNER	__X__	_____	_____
JOHN G. GANNON	__X__	_____	_____
NICOLE GARDNER	__X__	_____	_____
EMILY IZZO	__X__	_____	_____
THEOPHILUS OFFEI	__X__	_____	_____
ANTHONY PALOMBA	__X__	_____	_____
VINCENT J. PICCIRILLI JR.	__X__	_____	_____
MARK S. SIDERIS, COUNCIL PRESIDENT	__X__	_____	_____

Motion to approve a transfer of funds in the amount of \$14,768,576 from the FY26 Watertown High School stabilization transfer out to other funds account to the FY26 Watertown High School transfer in from other funds account



Watertown City Council

Administration Building
149 Main Street
Watertown, MA 02472
Phone: 617-972-6470

RESOLUTION # 53

2026 - R - 53

RESOLUTION APPROVING A TRANSFER OF FUNDS FROM THE FISCAL YEAR 2026 WATERTOWN HIGH SCHOOL STABILIZATION TRANSFER OUT TO OTHER FUNDS ACCOUNT TO THE FISCAL YEAR 2026 WATERTOWN HIGH SCHOOL TRANSFER IN FROM OTHER FUNDS ACCOUNT

BE IT RESOLVED: That the City Council of Watertown hereby approves the transfer of funds in the amount of \$14,768,576 from the Fiscal Year 2026 Watertown High School Stabilization Transfer Out to Other Funds account to the Fiscal Year 2026 Watertown High School Transfer In from Other Funds account.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That a copy of said transfer is forwarded to the City Auditor and City Treasurer/Collector.

Council Member

I hereby certify that at a meeting of the City Council for which a quorum was present, the above resolution was adopted by a vote of 9 for, 0 against, and 0 present on May 12, 2026.

Brendan T. McCarthy, Council Clerk

Mark S. Sideris, Council President

ELECTED OFFICIALS

Mark S. Sideris,
Council President

Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr.,
Vice President &
District C Councilor

Caroline Bays,
Councilor At Large

John G. Gannon,
Councilor At Large

Theophilus Offei,
Councilor At Large

Anthony Palomba,
Councilor At Large

Nicole Gardner,
District A Councilor

Lisa J. Feltner,
District B Councilor

Emily Izzo,
District D Councilor



WATERTOWN
MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

To: Honorable City Council

From: George J. Proakis, City Manager 

Date: May 5, 2026

RE: Agenda Item – Transfer of Funds

Attached is correspondence from City Auditor Megan Langan regarding the requested transfer of funds needed to close the remaining funding gap and fully support the final phase of the High School Construction Project. I respectfully request that this transfer be placed on the May 12, 2026 City Council agenda.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.



CITY OF WATERTOWN

Auditor

Administration Building
149 Main Street
Watertown, MA 02472-4410

Megan Langan
City Auditor

Telephone: (617) 972-6460
Facsimile: (617) 972-6563

TO: GEORGE PROAKIS, CITY MANAGER
FROM: MEGAN LANGAN, CITY AUDITOR *ML*
DATE: MAY 05, 2026
RE: AGENDA ITEM – TRANSFER OF FUNDS REQUEST

Please find attached a Transfer of Funds request in the amount of \$14,768,576 from the Watertown High School Stabilization Fund to the High School Capital Project Fund. This action will bridge the remaining funding gap and ensure the final phase of the High School Construction Project is completely funded.

As you are aware, the Watertown High School Construction Project is nearing completion. A detailed breakdown of the total project budget and its current funding sources is provided below:

- Total Project Budget (per April 15, 2026, School Building Committee): \$220,538,835
- Committed & Anticipated Funding Sources:
 - \$151,600,000 – Total borrowing completed by the City (Construction & Feasibility)
 - \$44,283,365 – Minimum anticipated MSBA Reimbursements
 - \$1,802,660 – Transfer from 3 Elementary School Project Closeout
 - \$1,000,000 – Federal ARPA Funding allocated to the PV Array
 - \$5,201,221 – Transfer of Funds towards the Feasibility
 - \$2,861,212 – Anticipated IRA Tax Credits & Mass Save Energy Rebate
- Total Funding Secured/Anticipated - \$206,748,458
- Net Funding Gap - \$13,790,377

The WHS Stabilization fund currently has a balance of \$14,768,576. Transferring the complete balance achieves two key fiscal objectives. The first being that it eliminates the deficit and fully closes the active \$13,790,377 shortfall. The second establishes a cash buffer by retaining a \$978,166 surplus contingency to protect the City while awaiting the final MSBA reimbursements and tax credits.

As such, I respectfully request the attached transfer be placed on the May 12, 2026, City Council Agenda.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

TRANSFER AMOUNT \$14,768,576

FROM: FY 2026 WHS STABILIZATION TRANS OUT TO OTHER FUNDS \$ 14,768,576
50365-596000

TO: FY 2026 WATERTOWN HIGHSCHOOL TRANSF IN FROM OTHER FUNDS \$ 14,768,576
50364-497000

I hereby certify to the availability, authority of funding source, mathematical accuracy and appropriate fiscal year.

5/5/06

DATE



CITY AUDITOR

**CITY COUNCIL ROLL CALL VOTE
MEETING DATE: MAY 12, 2026**

	YES	NO	PRESENT
CAROLINE BAYS	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
LISA J. FELTNER	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
JOHN G. GANNON	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
NICOLE GARDNER	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
EMILY IZZO	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
THEOPHILUS OFFEI	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
ANTHONY PALOMBA	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
VINCENT J. PICCIRILLI JR.	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
MARK S. SIDERIS, COUNCIL PRESIDENT	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Motion to accept the report of the Committee on Rules and Ordinances from its meeting on March 12, 2026



Report of the Rules & Ordinances Committee

Meeting Date: March 12th, 2026

The Committee convened on Thursday, March 12th, in the Third Floor Conference Room, City Hall, Watertown MA, with remote participation by Zoom.

1. Call to Order

Councilor Gardner called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM. Present were Nicole Gardner, Chair, Lisa Feltner, Vice Chair, and John Gannon, Secretary. Also present were City Manager George Proakis and Municipal Policy Analyst Doug Newton. Present in the audience were Councilors Vinnie Piccirilli and Caroline Bays. Resident Rita Colafella was also present in the room, as were Linda Scott and Elodia Thomas by zoom.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the proposed Noise Ordinance.

2. Discussion

Manager Proakis began the meeting by discussing the proposed noise ordinance. (Attachment A: current noise ordinance. Attachment B: proposed noise ordinance.) Mr. Newton then presented slides discussing the current and proposed noise ordinances. (Attachment C) The Committee also received public comment from Rita Colafella in advance of the meeting (Attachment D).

The Committee then began discussion. Councilor Lisa Feltner expressed disappointment that the proposed ordinance does not address the following:

- Caps on total noise levels
- Noise duration
- Definition of various sources of noise
- Vibration

She also said that the statement of purpose describing some fleeting noise as inherent to life in Watertown suggests that noise is being accepted. Councilor Gannon said that construction and demolition has led to vibrations being felt, particularly in dense areas. The Committee asked staff to conduct research into the issue of vibrations and report back at a future meeting. Councilor Gardner raised the issue of tonal noise. Some other communities restrict this to no more than 5 dbA above ambient level. She asked for additional research to be conducted with neighboring towns regarding tonal noise limits, since the draft does not include it, and our current ordinance and the ordinances in some neighboring towns do include it.

The Committee then discussed the matter of commercial and residential lawn maintenance, with discussion centering around if the current ordinance exempts commercial lawn maintenance from enforcement. Manager Proakis and Mr. Newton shared that their understanding is that the current ordinance has a gap which does not cover commercial maintenance, and that this is also the understanding of the Health Department. Councilor Gardner said she felt it was important that the new ordinance cover this gap. On the issue of lawn maintenance, Mr. Proakis said that the Watertown

Environment and Energy Efficiency Committee has expressed interest in an ordinance specifically on gas-powered lawn equipment. The Manager views this as a separate issue from the noise ordinance meriting its own referral. The Committee then begin discussing the definitions in the ordinance. They discussed the necessity of defining both “emergency” and “emergency work” and asked staff to provide revised language at a future meeting. As to the definition of “construction and demolition,” the Committee asked staff to make the language more concise and avoid listing out specific examples.

The Committee asked staff to provide a better definition of “plainly audible.” While it is defined in the draft as “Any sound that can be detected by a person of normal hearing ability using his or her unaided hearing facilities,” the Committee agreed that the word “normal” is not appropriate and asked staff to edit the definition for the next meeting.

Finally, the Committee began discussion of the Section 95.03: Prohibition of Noise Pollution. Councilor Gannon raised the issue of enforcement, as health department staff are not exempt from the state trespassing statute. Manager Proakis noted that he views it as a core responsibility of his to ensure that his staff are properly trained on all applicable laws and regulations and will ensure that this remains the case.

3. Adjournment

Councilor Feltner made a motion, seconded by Councilor Gannon, to continue the meeting. The motion passed three to zero and the meeting concluded at 6:29 PM.

Report prepared by Doug Newton

Chapter 95

NOISE REGULATIONS

§ 95.01.	Prohibition of noise emissions.	§ 95.04.	Exceptions.
§ 95.02.	Definitions and measurements of noise.	§ 95.05.	Enforcement.
§ 95.03.	Duties and responsibilities of City departments.	§ 95.99.	Penalty.

§ 95.01. Prohibition of noise emissions. [Ord. 6, passed 9-13-1983; amended Ord. 14, passed 3-12-1996]

- (A) No person owning, leasing or controlling a source of sound shall willfully, negligently, or through failure to provide necessary equipment, service, or maintenance or to take necessary precautions cause, suffer, allow or permit unnecessary emissions from said source of sound that may cause noise.
- (B) Division (A) of this section shall pertain to, but shall not be limited to, prolonged unattended sounding of burglar alarms, construction and demolition equipment which characteristically emit sound but which may be fitted and accommodated with equipment such as enclosures to suppress sound or may be operated in a manner so as to suppress sound, suppressible and preventable industrial and commercial sources of sound, and other man-made sounds that cause noise.
- (C) All devices employed in construction or demolition shall be prohibited from use during the hours of:
 - (1) 7:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. from Monday through Friday;
 - (2) 7:00 p.m. on Fridays through 8:00 a.m. on Saturdays; and
 - (3) 7:00 p.m. on Saturdays through 8:00 a.m. on Sundays.

§ 95.02. Definitions and measurements of noise. [Ord. 6, passed 9-13-1983]

- (A) The City hereby incorporates into and makes a part of this chapter the provisions of Chapter 310 Code of Massachusetts Regulations, Section 7.00 entitled Air Pollution Control Regulations.
- (B) These regulations shall govern the definitions, measurement and restriction of sources of noise emission.
- (C) For the purposes of this chapter, a "condition of noise pollution" shall be a noise source which increases noise levels 10 dB or more above the background noise level. If the noise level is judged by ear to have a tonal sound, an increase of 5 dB above background noise level is sufficient to cause noise pollution.

§ 95.03. Duties and responsibilities of City departments. [Ord. 6, passed 9-13-1983]

- (A) All City departments and agencies shall, to the fullest extent consistent with other laws, carry out their programs in such a manner as to further the policy of this chapter.

- (B) All City departments and agencies shall comply with Federal and State laws and regulations and the provisions and intent of this ordinance respecting the control and abatement of noise to the same extent that any person is subject to such laws and regulations.

§ 95.04. Exceptions. [Ord. 6, passed 9-13-1983]

This chapter shall apply to the control of all sound originating within the limits of the City of Watertown except the following:

- (A) The emission of sound for the purpose of alerting persons to the existence of an emergency or to the emission of sound in the performance of emergency work or in training exercises related to emergency activities.
- (B) Noncommercial public speaking and public assembly activities as guaranteed by state and federal constitutions.
- (C) Domestic equipment such as lawn mowers and power saws between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m.

§ 95.05. Enforcement. [Ord. 6, passed 9-13-1983]

The Board of Health shall be the primary enforcement agency of the terms of this chapter. In addition, any Police Department or Fire Department official or building inspector or their designee, acting within their jurisdictional area, is authorized to enforce this chapter.

§ 95.99. Penalty. [Ord. 6, passed 9-13-1983]

- (A) Any person who violates any provision of this chapter, if convicted, shall be fined no less than \$50 nor more than \$100 for the first offense and not less than \$200 nor more than \$500 for each succeeding offense.
- (B) Each subsequent day or part thereof of violation of this chapter, whether the violation be continuous or intermittent, shall be construed as a separate and succeeding offense.

WHEREAS noise pollution is a hazard to public health, welfare, safety, and quality of life; and whereas a substantial body of science and technology exists by which noise pollution may be measured and abated; and,

WHEREAS a substantial body of science and technology exists by which noise pollution may be measured and abated; and,

WHEREAS people have a right to and should be ensured an environment free from excessive noise pollution that may jeopardize their health, welfare, or safety.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT ORDAINED by the City Council of Watertown that Title IX, Chapter 95 of the Watertown Code of Ordinances, inclusive of all sections, is hereby repealed and replaced in its entirety with a new Chapter 95 as follows:

95.01 Statement of Purpose

- A. Noise pollution is a hazard to public health, welfare, safety, and quality of life. A substantial body of science and technology exists by which noise pollution may be measured and abated, and the people have a right to and should be ensured an environment free from excessive noise pollution that may jeopardize their health, welfare, or safety. This chapter serves to address persistent noise pollution rather than fleeting noise inherent to life in a densely populated community such as Watertown.

95.02 Definitions:

- A. Construction and demolition: Any of the following:
1. excavation, highway construction, land development or land clearing work;
 2. the erection, demolition, alteration, repair, or relocation of any building or structure, which uses powered equipment including, but not limited to, backhoes, trucks, tractors, excavators, earth moving equipment, compressors, motorized or power hand tools, manual tools, or equipment of a similar nature as well as two-way radios or other communication equipment;
 3. the use of any equipment for recycling, screening, separating, or any other processing of soil, rocks, concrete, asphalt or other raw material
- B. Emergency: Any occurrence or set of circumstances involving actual or imminent physical hazard or property damage which demands immediate action
- C. Emergency work: Any work performed for the purpose of preventing or alleviating the physical hazard or property damage threatened or caused by an emergency
- D. Noise pollution: A noise source which increases noise level above ambient to the level prescribed in 95.03 (A)
- E. A-weighted decibels (dbA): The A-weighted sound-pressure level expressed in decibels

- F. Ambient noise level: The sound level associated with a given environment, being a composite of sounds from all sources excluding the alleged offensive noise, at the location and approximate time at which a comparison with the alleged offensive noise is to be made
- G. Plainly audible: Any sound that can be detected by a person of normal hearing ability using his or her unaided hearing facilities

95.03 Prohibition of Noise Pollution

- A. Any activity, other than those exempted by 95.03(B) below, which creates or produces sound measured at 10 dbA above ambient noise level at any of the following locations shall be deemed a violation of this section:
 - 1. The property line of any residential property or of any condominium or apartment house
 - 2. At least fifty feet away from the source of noise if in a non-residential setting if applicable
- B. Noise emanating from the operation of the following is exempt from the application of this section 95.03:
 - 1. Motor vehicles on a public highway
 - 2. Equipment used for construction and demolition
 - 3. Equipment used in domestic or commercial maintenance
 - 4. Domestic animals on a residential or commercial property
 - 5. Noncommercial public speaking and public assembly as protected by state and federal constitutions
 - 6. An emergency or emergency work
 - 7. City-sponsored events
- C. No person owning, leasing or controlling a source of sound shall cause, suffer, allow or permit unnecessary emissions from said source of sound that causes noise pollution via any of the following manners:
 - 1. Willfully
 - 2. Negligently
 - 3. Or through failure to provide necessary equipment, service, or maintenance or to take necessary precautions

95.04 Construction and Demolition

- A. All devices employed in construction or demolition which are plainly audible at any of the following locations shall be prohibited from use during the hours of 7:00 PM to 7:00 AM on weekdays, from 7:00 PM to 8:00 AM on Saturdays, and at any time on Sundays and legal holidays:
 - 1. The property line of any residential property or of any condominium or apartment house
 - 2. At least fifty feet away from the source of noise if in a non-residential setting, if applicable

- B. Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit noise emanating from vehicles used in construction or demolition for the purposes of safety such as backup alarms on a vehicle.

95.08 Domestic and Commercial Maintenance

- A. All devices employed in domestic or commercial lawn, garden, or grounds maintenance which are plainly audible at any of the following locations shall be prohibited between the hours of 7:00 PM and 7:00 AM on weekdays and from 7:00 PM to 8:00 AM on Saturdays, Sundays and legal holidays:
 - 1. The property line of any residential property or of any condominium or apartment house
 - 2. At least fifty feet away from the source of noise if in a non-residential setting, if applicable

95.09 Noise Waiver

- A. The Director of Public Health or his or her designee may grant a waiver for any activity otherwise forbidden by the provisions of this chapter upon a determination that compliance in the conduct of such activity would cause undue hardship on the person or persons conducting such activity or on the community, taking into account the extent of noise pollution caused by not requiring such compliance and whether reasonable efforts have been made to abate the noise. The Director of Public Health shall establish appropriate procedures for the processing of requests for such waivers, including such hearings as he or she deems appropriate. The Director of Public Health may seek the input of the Superintendent of Public Works in noise waiver requests related to construction or demolition. In granting any such waiver, the Director of Public Health may impose such appropriate conditions as he or she deems necessary pursuant to this section. Copies of all such waivers shall be filed with the clerk of the city council and to each ward city councilor whose ward is affected by the waiver promptly after issuance.

95.10 Enforcement

- A. The provisions of this chapter may be enforced by the Director of Public Health or his or her designee. The provisions of this chapter may also be enforced by the Chief of Police or his or her designee. Each violation shall be deemed as a separate offense.

95.99 Penalty

- A. Any person who violates any provision of this chapter shall be issued a verbal warning for the first offense, then fined as follows:
 - 1. \$100 for the second offense
 - 2. \$200 for the third offense
 - 3. \$300 for the fourth offense and each subsequent offense
- B. Nothing in this section shall be deemed to limit the use of other lawful methods of abating violations of this section, including but not limited to application for equitable relief from a court of law.

The background features a series of concentric circles, some solid and some dashed, radiating from the center. A large red speech bubble shape is centered on the page, containing the title and author information.

Noise Ordinance

Doug Newton

Clarity on Noise Pollution & How it is Measured

- **Noise pollution is noise measuring 10 dbA or more above ambient (background) noise level as measured at:**
 - The nearest residential property line
 - At least 50 feet from the source of noise if in a non-residential setting
- **Measurement of ambient noise taken from the nearest spot at which the offending noise is inaudible**
- **This is the procedure the Health Department has been using and can still use with new ordinance.**

Current Ordinance

- Prohibits noise “10 db or more above the background noise level. If the noise is judged by ear to have a tonal sound, an increase of 5 db above the background noise level is sufficient to cause noise pollution.”
- Exempts emergencies, protected free speech, and domestic lawn equipment from 7AM to 9PM.
- Prohibits construction & demolition outside of 7AM-7PM Monday-Friday, 7PM-8AM on weekends).
- Department of Public Health designated as primary enforcement agency. Police, Fire, and Building Inspector also allowed to enforce.
- \$50-\$100 fine for first offense, \$200-\$500 for each succeeding offense.

Goals of New Ordinance

- **Clarity, consistency, fairness**
- **Making noise ordinance consistent with other modern ordinances**
- **Provide a tool to limit noise pollution while understanding that some level of noise is inherent to life in Watertown**
- **Use clear standards for enforcement**
 - **Decibel limits, plainly audible**

Key Change:
Lawn
Maintenance

- Prohibited from 7am-7pm weekdays, 8am-7pm on Saturdays. Currently allowed 7am-9pm in Watertown.
 - “Plainly audible” standard
 - Same hours as construction & demolition but prohibited entirely on Sundays
- Commercial lawn maintenance now prohibited outside of such hours alongside domestic.
 - Current ordinance is silent on commercial lawn maintenance.

Other Key Changes

- “db” to “dbA”
- Language & formatting consistent with other modern ordinances
- Waiver process: Health Department to create a procedure to grant waivers. District Councilor for the event receiving a waiver to be informed.
- City-sponsored events exempted
- Penalties brought in line with other modern ordinances
 - Verbal warning for first offense, then \$100 for second, \$200 for third, \$300 for fourth and each subsequent offense.

Issues NOT
addressed in
ordinance

■ Gas vs. Electric Leaf blowers

- Also no decibel limits on leaf blowers during permissible hours
- Ordinance seeks to improve consistency and fairness between domestic and commercial in leaf blower noise regulation
- Additional leaf blower concerns could be addressed in a separate referral

■ Dogs and other animals

- Covered by Animal Control Ordinance & Keeping of Animals Ordinance

Summary

- **Goal is to create a simple, enforceable noise ordinance**
- **Does not attempt to unreasonably limit noise in a densely packed community**
- **Does limit untimely lawn noise and clarify enforcement procedure**
 - **Waiver process for any necessary exemptions**

Public Comment Received Prior to the Meeting:

Hi Rules & Ordinance Committee,

I will be attending today at 5pm. I wanted to make sure you got my thoughts in writing because I probably won't be able to speak to every single one. Please excuse typos since I was copying and pasting from the draft and then from other ordinances and organizations online. Some changes are explicitly called for because there are many vague words in the draft like "domestic" and "audible." You don't need to read into the record.

Thanks,

Rita

SECTION 95.01: STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The current text damages community health by isolating neighbors and criminalizing the joy of being outside, which does not bode well for physical or mental health. It treats "quiet" as a luxury good and "noise" as a crime, favoring those who can afford large lots and soundproofed homes. Furthermore, this ordinance claims noise is a "hazard to public health", yet it does nothing to lower that high baseline from the highway or industry. It only penalizes the neighbors for adding to it.

- Amend to include: "This chapter shall not be used to change Watertown's vibrancy. Noise inherent to high-density living—including disagreements, moving furniture, music, dancing, or children running—is evidence of a healthy community and shall never be deemed 'Persistent Noise Pollution'."
 - This prevents the law from being used to sanitize or gentrify the city and to ensure differences in cultures, music or kids running around the playground are recognized as the sounds of a vibrant, human community.

SECTION 95.02: DEFINITIONS

"Ambient Noise Level"

- Add to 95.02(F): "In neighborhoods or areas within 500 feet of industrial/highway zones (e.g., The Pike), Ambient Noise shall be calculated as the average daytime noise of the entire block, not the lowest possible quiet moment."
 - Low-income areas are already louder. Without this change, newcomers moving next to a loud highway can report a neighbor for a "10 dBA spike" that is actually quieter than the existing background traffic. We must not penalize neighbors for a baseline created by zoning. Otherwise the law allows the loudest areas to remain loud, while strictly protecting the quietest areas. It fails the very people it claims to protect from "health hazards."

"Persistent Noise"

- Define strictly as: "A continuous, unchanging sound lasting longer than 30 minutes."
 - Anything less than 30-minutes must be "Fleeting." This prevents 311 from becoming a digital neighborhood watch; a 10-minute basketball game, a car with the radio on and the top, a car in a driveway being warmed up during a winter morning
 - The law must explicitly protect "The sounds of a healthy community" as "Fleeting Noise" inherent to the city. It must prioritize community overall health.

"Plainly Audible"

- Delete subjective "unaided hearing" standards. Add: "Audibility must be verified by a calibrated Type 1 Sound Meter at the complainant's property line."
 - Subjective "hearing" is a tool for discrimination. It allows "lifestyle referees" to decide a backyard BBQ or rap music is "offensive" while a private generator hum is ignored.

SECTION 95.03: PROHIBITION OF NOISE POLLUTION

Sub-section A (The 10 dBA Rule):

- A fixed limit (e.g., "nothing over 60 dBA") would make it illegal for someone in a loud area to even mow their lawn. However, 10 dBA is too low for dense areas where a simple radio or loud laughter hits 65–70 dBA.
- We can keep a relative standard but add massive protections and/or increase the threshold for domestic and social activities.

Sub-section A (The 10 dBA / Tonal Clause):

- The 5 dBA "Tonal" rule (hums, whines, buzzes) criminalizes older equipment.
- Exempt residential equipment (ACs, pool pumps) older than 10 years from the tonal clause.
 - A wealthier resident buys a \$10,000 "ultra-quiet" system; a working-class resident gets a \$100 fine for an old unit with a "hum."

Sub-section B (Mandatory Exemptions) - Add these:

- Childhood & Youth Play: All vocalizations and play (screaming, laughing, playground use) during non-night hours.
 - We need people to be enjoying the outdoors more and those are not always quiet activities.
- Youth Recreation: Sports activities, unamplified yelling, or social gatherings of teens during non-night hours (7:00 AM to 9:00 PM).

- Safety & Help-Seeking: Any yelling/screaming intended to deter crime, signal for assistance, or prevent kidnapping/assault.
 - High-volume screaming or whistles are often used by women and children to prevent or interrupt a crime.
- Cultural Heritage: Traditional unamplified singing, church bells, community festivals and “loud” conversational styles.
 - Protect cultural differences because low volume is a cultural preference, not a universal norm.
- Honest Conflict: Spontaneous arguments or vocal disagreements that don't involve a crime.
 - We shouldn't pressure people to "quietly" voice arguments to avoid a noise fine.
- Small Businesses: Outdoor dining, live music at a local pub, or even a busy storefront can be shut down by a single complaining neighbor.

Sub-section C (Negligent Noise):

- Remove "Negligent Noise" as a violation for tenants; keep it strictly for landlords regarding only structural equipment (elevators, furnaces).
 - Low-income renters shouldn't be evicted because they can't afford to "maintain" a quiet lifestyle or high-end appliances.
 - Similarly, landlords should not be discouraged from alarming a place with smoke alarms and CO2 detectors because tenants Let's not contribute to Watertown’s current issues regarding renting.

SECTION 95.04: CONSTRUCTION AND DEMOLITION - Add:

- All noise mitigation requirements for all new construction must be established during the Preliminary Site Plan Review, NOT during the Special Permit or Building Permit phase. The Planning Board must provide a "Noise Impact Specification" upfront. If a developer meets these crystal-clear specs (using muffling tech, acoustic enclosures, or low-noise fans) at the start, the city cannot later deny a permit or change the goalposts based on neighbor complaints during the middle of the process.
 - This removes the "Regulatory Hurdle" that makes housing and labs too expensive to build. Developers need to know the cost of muffling technology before they commit to a project.

SECTION 95.09: NOISE WAIVERS

- Reform the Waiver process to be a Pre-Approved Variance.
 - Currently, waivers are "expensive and difficult" to get after a problem starts. A developer or homeowner should be able to apply for a "Technological Hardship Waiver" upfront if

the cost of silencing a specific piece of equipment (like a backup generator) is disproportionate to the benefit.

- Add - Noise complaints may only be filed by a verified resident directly impacted and located within 150 feet of a construction/demolition.
 - To stop opposition to affordable housing and anti-growth reporters from patrolling the whole city via 311 to stall affordable housing projects they aren't even near.
- Create an Automatic Waiver for any residential property owner whose household income is below the area median.
 - Current waivers are "expensive and difficult," favoring large developers over small homeowners. Homeowners shouldn't face "daily \$100 fines" because they can't afford a \$5,000 muffler for a generator or AC unit.

SECTION 95.10: ENFORCEMENT & SURVEILLANCE - Add:

- The Police Department should not enforce Chapter 95. Enforcement is a civil matter for the Health Department.
 - Certain residents use city services as a private security force to change active neighborhoods. We must not allow lifestyle policing.
 - Also, the police are trained for other more important things
- The City shall not use permanent noise-monitoring microphones or automated 'shot-spotter' style tech for municipal enforcement.
 - Prevent anymore surveillance
- Establish that a pattern of false or excessive anonymous reporting against a single property will be investigated as a form of neighbor-to-neighbor harassment.

."

SECTION 95.XX: SHIELDS- Add:

- Domestic Violence Safe Harbor: No noise from a domestic dispute or emergency call shall be used as a 'nuisance strike,' a basis for a fine, or as evidence in an eviction.
 - Aligns with the MA Domestic Violence Leave Act. Abusers use the threat of a noise fine/eviction to keep victims silent: This shield stops that psychological control.
- Eviction Shield: Explicitly ban landlords from using municipal noise citations as grounds for eviction.
 - This should prevent discrimination against renting to families with young children.

- Disability and Mental Health Shield: Vocalizations or mechanical sounds (motorized wheelchairs) related to physical/mental handicaps or tics (e.g., Tourette's, Autism) are 100% exempt
 - We need to protect the involuntary sounds of those with a condition such as being hard of hearing, having dementia or that need equipment to get around.

**CITY COUNCIL ROLL CALL VOTE
MEETING DATE: MAY 12, 2026**

	YES	NO	PRESENT
CAROLINE BAYS	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
LISA J. FELTNER	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
JOHN G. GANNON	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
NICOLE GARDNER	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
EMILY IZZO	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
THEOPHILUS OFFEI	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
ANTHONY PALOMBA	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
VINCENT J. PICCIRILLI JR.	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
MARK S. SIDERIS, COUNCIL PRESIDENT	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Motion to accept the report of the Committee on Rules and Ordinances from its meeting on April 21, 2026



Report of the Rules & Ordinances Committee

Meeting Date: Tuesday, April 21st, 2026

The Committee convened on Tuesday, April 21st, in the Phillip Pane Lower Hearing Room, City Hall, Watertown, MA, with remote participation by Zoom.

1. Call to Order

Councilor Gardner called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM in the Phillip Pane Lower Hearing Room. Present were Nicole Gardner, Chair, Lisa Feltner, Vice Chair, and John Gannon, Secretary. Also present was Municipal Policy Analyst Doug Newton. Present in the audience were Councilors Vinnie Piccirilli, Caroline Bays, and Council President Mark Sideris. Residents Bob Miller, Jack Bartley, and Rita Colafella were present in the room as were several additional residents on zoom.

2. Discussion

a. Discussion on a Proposed Noise Ordinance

Councilor Gardner began the meeting by recapping where the Committee left off at the prior meeting. She pointed out that Mr. Newton had worked on several items as requested by the Committee in between the two meetings and asked the Committee to go through that list.

The Committee began by discussing Section 1, Statement of Purpose, with the Committee agreeing to come back to the statement of purpose with Councilor Feltner's proposed changes.

The Committee next turned to Section 2, Definitions, and Mr. Newton began going through the items he had worked on.

2A, Construction and demolition. In the last meeting, the Committee wanted this definition shortened. Mr. Newton suggested eliminating the list of specific examples laid out in the proposed ordinance. The definition would then be: "Any of the following:

- excavation, highway construction, land development or land clearing work;
- the erection, demolition, alteration, repair, or relocation of any building or structure,
- the use of any equipment for recycling, screening, separating, or any other processing of any raw material"

Councilor Feltner shared the following proposed alternative language: "any site preparation, assembly, erection, substantial repair, alteration, destruction, or similar action for public or private rights of way, structures, utilities, or similar property." Councilor Gannon shared that he feels it is important not to list too many specific examples within a definition so as not to accidentally create exemptions. He proposed the following language: "the erection, demolition, alteration, or repair of any building or structure." After a discussion, Councilor Gardner proposed that the Committee approve the following language: "any site preparation, assembly, erection, substantial repair, alteration, destruction, or similar action for public or private rights of way, structures, utilities, or similar property, and also the use of any equipment for any processing of any material." This is the

language that Councilor Feltner proposed with an addition. The Committee agreed to adopt this language.

2C, Emergency and emergency work: At the last meeting, the Committee wanted the definitions simplified. Mr. Newton mentioned that Waltham's noise ordinance uses a similar definition of emergency but defines emergency work as simply "work which must be performed to alleviate an emergency." Councilor Gannon shared that he prefers the definition in Watertown's proposed ordinance as it encompasses more. After a discussion, Councilor Gardner proposed the following language for the definition of emergency work: "any work performed to prevent or alleviate the physical hazard or property damage threatened or caused by an emergency." The Committee agreed to adopt this language.

Mr. Newton then mentioned that the proposed ordinance sometimes uses the word "sound" instead of "noise," and that it may be sensible to change mentions of "sound" to "noise" for internal consistency given that the ordinance defines "noise pollution." The Committee reviewed the where the word "sound" is used, which includes technical definitions. After discussion, the Committee agreed to keep the word "sound."

2G, plainly audible: At the last meeting, the Committee agreed the word "normal" should not be used. Mr. Newton shared the following language, drafted by Councilor Gardner: "any sound that is detectable and distinguishable from ambient or background noise at a specified location, such that the sound's source or character can be reasonably identified under ordinary conditions. A determination of plainly audible sound may be made by direct observation." Councilor Gannon and Councilor Feltner agreed that this definition was appropriate. Councilor Gannon then suggested that "direct observation" may not be strong enough to hold up to a legal challenge. After a discussion, the Committee agreed to keep the definition proposed by Councilor Gardner pending review by KP Law.

The Committee then discussed tonal noise, since the retention of the restrictions on tonal noise from our current noise ordinance was proposed during the last meeting. In Mr. Newton's discussions with Public Health Director Abbey Myers, she said that doing so may require some additional training or equipment but that it could be done if it is decided by the Council. Mr. Newton said that Waltham and Newton both cover tonal noise in their ordinances and define it as "any noise that is judged by a listener to have the characteristics of a pure tone, whine, hum, or buzz" He suggested using same definition, and the Committee agreed. Next the Committee turned to Section 3. Prohibition of Noise Pollution.

Councilor Gannon again raised a concern regarding city staff enforcing the noise ordinance on private property, given that they are not exempt from the trespassing statute. Councilor Gardner said that this is something KP Law can be asked to review. Mr. Newton added that the ordinance specifies that determinations can be made "at least" fifty feet away and only "if applicable," which is intended to protect the city from such circumstances. The Committee agreed to have KP Law review this matter further.

New section 3B: Returning to the matter of tonal noise, the Committee discussed the proposed new language for tonal noise, which would limit the noise measured at 5 dbA above ambient noise, consistent with Watertown's current ordinance. Councilor Feltner suggested that the Committee

review whether to restrict tonal noise to a lower number such as three. Mr. Newton shared that Ms. Myers said it makes the most sense to use 5 dbA. After a discussion, the Committee agreed to ask Ms. Myers to attend the next meeting on this topic.

The Committee then discussed the matter of vibrations. Mr. Newton shared that based on his discussions with Ms. Myers it would not be possible for the Health Department to enforce against vibrations as of now. Further, doing so would require a sound specialist which is costly. The equipment owned by the city currently is also not capable of measuring vibrations. Councilor Feltner said that while she can appreciate how difficult it is to enforce, she has heard from residents with concerns about vibrations and is in more information on the matter. Councilor Bays said that that Newton has a separate ordinance covering vibrations and that Cambridge covers vibrations in its noise ordinance. Councilor Gardner suggested that the Committee could ask for a vibration ordinance referral if they feel it is an issue in the community, and that she would be happy to have Ms. Myers discuss this further when she comes to the Committee.

Councilor Feltner then raised the issue of barking dogs, and said she would like to hear from the Health Department whether barking dogs can be included in the noise ordinance. She would further like to make sure that there is a referral for an ordinance to cover barking dogs if the topic cannot be covered in the noise ordinance.

On 3C, Councilor Gardner then asked about exempting city sponsored events. She suggested that some events such as the Greek Festival and others may not be covered as “city-sponsored” though they are somewhat comparable. Mr. Newton said that any events which are borderline could seek a noise waiver as prescribed in the proposed ordinance. Councilor Gannon added that individual vendors within city-sponsored events could be much noisier than expected or permitted and ought to be covered. Mr. Newton said the city events staff would be able to handle this situation if it were to arise.

On 3D, Councilor Gannon, expressed concern that the language could be too lenient in permitting people to accidentally cause noise pollution. The Committee agreed that this should also be reviewed by KP Law.

3. Adjournment

Councilor Gannon made a motion, seconded by Councilor Feltner, to continue the meeting. The motion passed three to zero and the meeting concluded at 7:37 PM.

These minutes were prepared by Doug Newton.

Chapter 95

NOISE REGULATIONS

§ 95.01.	Prohibition of noise emissions.	§ 95.04.	Exceptions.
§ 95.02.	Definitions and measurements of noise.	§ 95.05.	Enforcement.
§ 95.03.	Duties and responsibilities of City departments.	§ 95.99.	Penalty.

§ 95.01. Prohibition of noise emissions. [Ord. 6, passed 9-13-1983; amended Ord. 14, passed 3-12-1996]

- (A) No person owning, leasing or controlling a source of sound shall willfully, negligently, or through failure to provide necessary equipment, service, or maintenance or to take necessary precautions cause, suffer, allow or permit unnecessary emissions from said source of sound that may cause noise.
- (B) Division (A) of this section shall pertain to, but shall not be limited to, prolonged unattended sounding of burglar alarms, construction and demolition equipment which characteristically emit sound but which may be fitted and accommodated with equipment such as enclosures to suppress sound or may be operated in a manner so as to suppress sound, suppressible and preventable industrial and commercial sources of sound, and other man-made sounds that cause noise.
- (C) All devices employed in construction or demolition shall be prohibited from use during the hours of:
 - (1) 7:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. from Monday through Friday;
 - (2) 7:00 p.m. on Fridays through 8:00 a.m. on Saturdays; and
 - (3) 7:00 p.m. on Saturdays through 8:00 a.m. on Sundays.

§ 95.02. Definitions and measurements of noise. [Ord. 6, passed 9-13-1983]

- (A) The City hereby incorporates into and makes a part of this chapter the provisions of Chapter 310 Code of Massachusetts Regulations, Section 7.00 entitled Air Pollution Control Regulations.
- (B) These regulations shall govern the definitions, measurement and restriction of sources of noise emission.
- (C) For the purposes of this chapter, a "condition of noise pollution" shall be a noise source which increases noise levels 10 dB or more above the background noise level. If the noise level is judged by ear to have a tonal sound, an increase of 5 dB above background noise level is sufficient to cause noise pollution.

§ 95.03. Duties and responsibilities of City departments. [Ord. 6, passed 9-13-1983]

- (A) All City departments and agencies shall, to the fullest extent consistent with other laws, carry out their programs in such a manner as to further the policy of this chapter.

- (B) All City departments and agencies shall comply with Federal and State laws and regulations and the provisions and intent of this ordinance respecting the control and abatement of noise to the same extent that any person is subject to such laws and regulations.

§ 95.04. Exceptions. [Ord. 6, passed 9-13-1983]

This chapter shall apply to the control of all sound originating within the limits of the City of Watertown except the following:

- (A) The emission of sound for the purpose of alerting persons to the existence of an emergency or to the emission of sound in the performance of emergency work or in training exercises related to emergency activities.
- (B) Noncommercial public speaking and public assembly activities as guaranteed by state and federal constitutions.
- (C) Domestic equipment such as lawn mowers and power saws between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m.

§ 95.05. Enforcement. [Ord. 6, passed 9-13-1983]

The Board of Health shall be the primary enforcement agency of the terms of this chapter. In addition, any Police Department or Fire Department official or building inspector or their designee, acting within their jurisdictional area, is authorized to enforce this chapter.

§ 95.99. Penalty. [Ord. 6, passed 9-13-1983]

- (A) Any person who violates any provision of this chapter, if convicted, shall be fined no less than \$50 nor more than \$100 for the first offense and not less than \$200 nor more than \$500 for each succeeding offense.
- (B) Each subsequent day or part thereof of violation of this chapter, whether the violation be continuous or intermittent, shall be construed as a separate and succeeding offense.

WHEREAS noise pollution is a hazard to public health, welfare, safety, and quality of life; and whereas a substantial body of science and technology exists by which noise pollution may be measured and abated; and,

WHEREAS a substantial body of science and technology exists by which noise pollution may be measured and abated; and

WHEREAS people have a right to and should be ensured an environment free from excessive noise pollution that may jeopardize their health, welfare, or safety.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT ORDAINED by the City Council of Watertown that Title IX, Chapter 95 of the Watertown Code of Ordinances, inclusive of all sections, is hereby repealed and replaced in its entirety with a new Chapter 95 as follows:

95.01 Statement of Purpose

- A. Noise pollution is a hazard to public health, welfare, safety, and quality of life. A substantial body of science and technology exists by which noise pollution may be measured and abated, and the people have a right to and should be ensured an environment free from excessive noise pollution that may jeopardize their health, welfare, or safety. This chapter serves to address persistent noise pollution rather than fleeting noise inherent to life in a densely populated community such as Watertown.

95.02 Definitions:

- A. Construction and demolition: Any of the following:
1. excavation, highway construction, land development or land clearing work;
 2. the erection, demolition, alteration, repair, or relocation of any building or structure,
 3. the use of any equipment for recycling, screening, separating, or any other processing of any raw material
- B. Emergency: Any occurrence or set of circumstances involving actual or imminent physical hazard or property damage which demands immediate action
- C. Emergency work: Any work performed for the purpose of preventing or alleviating the physical hazard or property damage threatened or caused by an emergency
- D. Noise pollution: A noise source which increases noise level above ambient to the level prescribed in 95.03 (A)
- E. A-weighted decibels (dbA): The A-weighted noise-pressure level expressed in decibels
- F. Ambient noise level: The noise level associated with a given environment, being a composite of noises from all sources excluding the alleged offensive noise, at the location and approximate time at which a comparison with the alleged offensive noise is to be made

- G. Plainly audible: any sound that is detectable and distinguishable from ambient or background noise at a specified location, such that the sound's source or character can be reasonably identified under ordinary conditions. A determination of plainly audible sound may be made by direct observation.
- H. Tonal noise: any noise that is judged by a listener to have the characteristics of a pure tone, whine, hum, or buzz

95.03 Prohibition of Noise Pollution

- A. Any activity, other than those exempted by 95.03(B) below, which creates or produces noise measured at 10 dbA above ambient noise level at any of the following locations shall be deemed a violation of this section:
 - 1. The property line of any residential property or of any condominium or apartment house
 - 2. At least fifty feet away from the source of noise if in a non-residential setting if applicable
- B. When a tonal noise, as defined in 95.02 (H) above, is emitted, the creation or production of noise measured at 5 dbA above ambient noise level at any of the following locations shall be deemed a violation of this section:
 - 1. The property line of any residential property or of any condominium or apartment house
 - 2. At least fifty feet away from the source of noise if in a non residential setting if applicable
- C. Noise emanating from the operation of the following is exempt from the application of this section 95.03:
 - 1. Motor vehicles on a public highway
 - 2. Equipment used for construction and demolition
 - 3. Equipment used in domestic or commercial maintenance
 - 4. Domestic animals on a residential or commercial property
 - 5. Noncommercial public speaking and public assembly as protected by state and federal constitutions
 - 6. An emergency or emergency work
 - 7. City-sponsored events
- D. No person owning, leasing or controlling a source of noise shall cause, suffer, allow or permit unnecessary emissions from said source of noise that causes noise pollution via any of the following manners:
 - 1. Willfully
 - 2. Negligently
 - 3. Or through failure to provide necessary equipment, service, or maintenance or to take necessary precautions

95.04 Construction and Demolition

- A. All devices employed in construction or demolition which are plainly audible at any of the following locations shall be prohibited from use during the hours of 7:00 PM to 7:00 AM on weekdays, from 7:00 PM to 8:00 AM on Saturdays, and at any time on Sundays and legal holidays:
 - 1. The property line of any residential property or of any condominium or apartment house
 - 2. At least fifty feet away from the source of noise if in a non-residential setting, if applicable
- B. Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit noise emanating from vehicles used in construction or demolition for the purposes of safety such as backup alarms on a vehicle.

95.05 Domestic and Commercial Maintenance

- A. All devices employed in domestic or commercial lawn, garden, or grounds maintenance which are plainly audible at any of the following locations shall be prohibited between the hours of 7:00 PM and 7:00 AM on weekdays and from 7:00 PM to 8:00 AM on Saturdays, Sundays and legal holidays:
 - 1. The property line of any residential property or of any condominium or apartment house
 - 2. At least fifty feet away from the source of noise if in a non-residential setting, if applicable

95.06 Noise Waiver

- A. The Director of Public Health or his or her designee may grant a waiver for any activity otherwise forbidden by the provisions of this chapter upon a determination that compliance in the conduct of such activity would cause undue hardship on the person or persons conducting such activity or on the community, taking into account the extent of noise pollution caused by not requiring such compliance and whether reasonable efforts have been made to abate the noise. The Director of Public Health shall establish appropriate procedures for the processing of requests for such waivers, including such hearings as he or she deems appropriate. The Director of Public Health may seek the input of the Superintendent of Public Works in noise waiver requests related to construction or demolition. In granting any such waiver, the Director of Public Health may impose such appropriate conditions as he or she deems necessary pursuant to this section. Copies of all such waivers shall be filed with the clerk of the city council and to each ward city councilor whose ward is affected by the waiver promptly after issuance.

95.07 Enforcement

- A. The provisions of this chapter may be enforced by the Director of Public Health or their designee. The provisions of this chapter may also be enforced by the Chief of Police or their designee, the Fire Chief or their designee, and the Building Inspector or their designee.. Each violation shall be deemed as a separate offense.

95.08 Penalty

- A. Any person who violates any provision of this chapter shall be issued a written and verbal warning for the first offense, then fined as follows:
 - 1. \$100 for the second offense
 - 2. \$200 for the third offense
 - 3. \$300 for the fourth offense and each subsequent offense

- B. Nothing in this section shall be deemed to limit the use of other lawful methods of abating violations of this section, including but not limited to application for equitable relief from a court of law.

Public Comment Received in Advance of Meeting:

“Good morning councilors and city leadership,

I’ve written in the past, requesting common-sense noise ordinances for Watertown. We still get woken up by 5am dumpster maintenance on Pleasant St. and the systems on top of labs and other buildings still dominate the river landscape along Watertown.

A Google search leads to noise dampeners that are widely available- and in fact these quieting systems are in place in our neighboring towns (like Waltham).

This morning at Watertown dam, the rush of water and sounds of birds are impossible to hear over the blasting of the mechanical system on the roof of 64 Pleasant st. See attached video.

This is an important place for wildlife breeding and migration and for people to feel connected to nature. This is a depressing impact that is not hard to remedy. I’m asking the council to please immediately put in noise ordinances that ensure nighttime rest for people and wildlife and a common-sense noise limit during daytime that does not drown out all other sounds.

Sincerely,
Cedar Pruitt”

Dear Councilor Gannon,

I hope this message finds you well.

I am writing as a Watertown resident of over 10 years, residing on Spring Street for the past 6 years, to share an ongoing concern regarding noise disturbances in my neighborhood. Over the past two years, there have been recurring instances of very loud music coming from the Maude Terrace area, often lasting for hours at a time and frequently extending late into the night.

This has become a persistent issue. The police have been called on multiple occasions, and I have also reached out to Abbey Myers, Director of Public Health for Watertown, in an effort to address the situation. Unfortunately, the problem continues without meaningful improvement.

In fact, as I am writing this email, there is currently loud music coming from Maude Terrace.

Given this experience, my wife and I strongly support the new noise ordinance currently being considered by the Council. We are hopeful that it will be approved and, importantly, consistently enforced so that residents can enjoy a reasonable level of peace in their homes.

I understand that the City is actively reviewing updates to the noise ordinance, and I wanted to share my experience as a resident directly affected by these disturbances. I would greatly appreciate any guidance you may have, as well as your continued attention to this matter.

Thank you very much for your time and for your service to the community.

Sincerely,
Samuel Akerman

**CITY COUNCIL ROLL CALL VOTE
MEETING DATE: MAY 12, 2026**

	YES	NO	PRESENT
CAROLINE BAYS	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
LISA J. FELTNER	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
JOHN G. GANNON	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
NICOLE GARDNER	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
EMILY IZZO	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
THEOPHILUS OFFEI	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
ANTHONY PALOMBA	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
VINCENT J. PICCIRILLI JR.	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
MARK S. SIDERIS, COUNCIL PRESIDENT	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Motion to accept the report of the Committee on Rules and Ordinances from its meeting on May 5, 2026

**CITY COUNCIL ROLL CALL VOTE
MEETING DATE: MAY 12, 2026**

	YES	NO	PRESENT
CAROLINE BAYS	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
LISA J. FELTNER	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
JOHN G. GANNON	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
NICOLE GARDNER	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
EMILY IZZO	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
THEOPHILUS OFFEI	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
ANTHONY PALOMBA	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
VINCENT J. PICCIRILLI JR.	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
MARK S. SIDERIS, COUNCIL PRESIDENT	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Motion to approve the action item from the report of the Committee on Rules and Ordinances from its meeting on May 5, 2026



Report of the Rules & Ordinances Committee

Meeting Date: May 5, 2026

The Committee convened on Tuesday, at 6:30 pm in the third-floor conference room, with remote participation by Zoom.

Present were Councilors Nicole Gardner, Chair, Lisa Feltner, Vice Chair, and John Gannon, Secretary. Also present in the room were Councilor Vinnie Piccirilli and Municipal Policy Analyst Doug Newton. Joining by Zoom were Public Health Director Abbey Myers, Councilor Tony Palomba, Angie Kounelis, George Skuse, Linda Scott, and Joan Gumbleton.

Councilor Gardner called the meeting to order at 6:30pm. The purpose of the meeting was to continue discussion of a proposed noise ordinance.

The Committee began by reviewing open items raised in prior meetings.

- Attachment A is the current Watertown noise ordinance
- Attachment B is a document with proposed edits provided by Councilor Feltner
- Attachment C is the original draft ordinance provided by staff.
- Attachment D is a revised version coming out of the Committee's second meeting.
- Attachment E is an updated table of benchmarks from local communities, with formatting changes only.
- Attachment F is public comment received prior to this meeting

Statement of Purpose: The Committee agreed to discuss the Statement of Purpose in greater detail and consider proposed changes at the next meeting on May 13th.

Vibration. The question of whether the noise ordinance should cover non-audible vibrations was discussed. During the discussion, the following points were made:

- Two neighboring towns, Cambridge and Newton, regulate vibration, one in a stand-alone ordinance and one by including it in the noise ordinance.
- Councilor Gardner said that audible vibrations would, by definition, be covered under the noise ordinance. So the question is limited only to non-audible vibrations, which she felt was not within the scope of a noise ordinance.
- Councilor Feltner noted that vibrations can have negative health effects.
- The Director of Public Health expressed concerns about including vibration in the noise ordinance. Vibration is difficult to prove or disprove, making enforceability challenging. Furthermore, Public Health staff are not trained in this field. Specialized and sophisticated equipment and expertise are required, such as sound engineers and structural engineers.
- When vibration is alleged to cause structural damage, it falls under the purview of the Building Inspector.

- Councilor Gannon expressed concerns about the legality of regulating non-audible vibration.

The Committee concluded that vibration should not be covered in the Noise Ordinance, but the matter warrants further investigation.

→ Action Item: Councilor Feltner made a motion, seconded by Councilor Gannon, to recommend the City Council refer the matter of vibration to the Rules & Ordinances Committee for further study, including the legal considerations, and report back with a recommendation. The motion passed unanimously.

Tonal Noise. The question of whether the threshold for tonal noise should be 5dbA above ambient noise, or 3dbA. Ms. Meyers said she felt it should be 5dbA for the following reasons:

- It is a meaningful step above ambient, making it easier to measure and determine if there is a violation or not.
- 3dbA is too small a distinction, creating measurement uncertainty. Further, it would be prone to challenges.

In the course of discussion she also shared the following:

- Staff are trained on equipment, and a measurement takes two people, herself or her deputy, and a second person. Measurements can include multiple readings, and can include multiple locations. If needed, staff will go over the jurisdictional line to take measurements. Measurements are taken in different seasons since sound can be affected by many factors. Ambient noise level is measured in the neighborhood in an area where the tone is no longer audible.
- They average one or fewer complaints per month.
- Equipment is recalibrated after every reading.
- They are most often called for mechanical and consistent noise.
- If there is a dispute or challenge, they invite the DEP to do a second reading.

The Committee concluded that 5dbA was the appropriate measurement to be used for tonal noise.

During the course of the discussion, Councilor Gannon asked about repeated noise complaints from Ms. Cedar Pruitt of Newton. Ms. Myers said that staff had taken measurements and at the time the difference in noise level was below regulatory limits.

Exclusion for domestic animals on residential and commercial property. The Committee agreed that residents should not be subject to continuous loud animal noise, whether from a neighbor's home, or a business nearby. The Committee concluded that domestic animals, whether on residential or commercial property, should not be exempted from this ordinance, and agreed to strike this exclusion in its entirety.

Boundary determining a violation of the noise ordinance.

- The Committee agreed that the measurement should be taken at the property line of any property (residential, commercial, non-profit, etc.).
- The Committee discussed the fact that in large properties that are publicly accessible, such as a large mixed use development, the public has the right to expect ambient noise consistent with the neighborhood. Sometimes machinery can bring the noise level more than 10dbA or 5 dbA (if tonal) above ambient. Therefore the Committee added a clause stipulating that measurement will be taken 50 feet away from the source of noise within any property that has publicly accessible space.

Manner in which a violation occurs. Councilor Gannon said that he felt it was important to strike the words “willfully, negligently, or through failure to provide necessary equipment, service, or maintenance or to take necessary precautions” from the ordinance, for simplicity. Councilor Gardner felt these words might help the staff explain why someone was responsible if in violation, regardless of their reason. When asked, Ms. Meyers said that she didn’t think the proposed change would change the enforceability of the ordinance either way. The Committee agreed to strike this language.

Construction and Demolition and Domestic and Commercial Maintenance – allowed hours.

- The Committee agreed to change the language to say when these activities were allowed, rather than when they were not allowed, since it would be simpler to understand.
- The Committee removed the language on where measurements take place since it is not applicable in this section.

Waiver.

- The Committee asked Ms. Meyers and Mr. Newton to prepare Departmental Regulations for the Committee to review.
- The Committee agreed that all councilors should receive copies of waivers issued.
- Minor wording changes were made, for clarity and accuracy.

Penalty. Councilor Gannon recommended the following language be added: Each subsequent day or part thereof of violation of this Chapter, whether continuous or intermittent, shall be construed as a separate and succeeding offence. The Committee agreed.

Right of Appeal. Councilor Feltner asked that this be placed on the agenda of the next meeting.

The meeting was continued with a unanimous vote at 8:52 pm.

Report prepared by Nicole Gardner

Chapter 95

NOISE REGULATIONS

§ 95.01.	Prohibition of noise emissions.	§ 95.04.	Exceptions.
§ 95.02.	Definitions and measurements of noise.	§ 95.05.	Enforcement.
§ 95.03.	Duties and responsibilities of City departments.	§ 95.99.	Penalty.

§ 95.01. Prohibition of noise emissions. [Ord. 6, passed 9-13-1983; amended Ord. 14, passed 3-12-1996]

- (A) No person owning, leasing or controlling a source of sound shall willfully, negligently, or through failure to provide necessary equipment, service, or maintenance or to take necessary precautions cause, suffer, allow or permit unnecessary emissions from said source of sound that may cause noise.
- (B) Division (A) of this section shall pertain to, but shall not be limited to, prolonged unattended sounding of burglar alarms, construction and demolition equipment which characteristically emit sound but which may be fitted and accommodated with equipment such as enclosures to suppress sound or may be operated in a manner so as to suppress sound, suppressible and preventable industrial and commercial sources of sound, and other man-made sounds that cause noise.
- (C) All devices employed in construction or demolition shall be prohibited from use during the hours of:
 - (1) 7:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. from Monday through Friday;
 - (2) 7:00 p.m. on Fridays through 8:00 a.m. on Saturdays; and
 - (3) 7:00 p.m. on Saturdays through 8:00 a.m. on Sundays.

§ 95.02. Definitions and measurements of noise. [Ord. 6, passed 9-13-1983]

- (A) The City hereby incorporates into and makes a part of this chapter the provisions of Chapter 310 Code of Massachusetts Regulations, Section 7.00 entitled Air Pollution Control Regulations.
- (B) These regulations shall govern the definitions, measurement and restriction of sources of noise emission.
- (C) For the purposes of this chapter, a "condition of noise pollution" shall be a noise source which increases noise levels 10 dB or more above the background noise level. If the noise level is judged by ear to have a tonal sound, an increase of 5 dB above background noise level is sufficient to cause noise pollution.

§ 95.03. Duties and responsibilities of City departments. [Ord. 6, passed 9-13-1983]

- (A) All City departments and agencies shall, to the fullest extent consistent with other laws, carry out their programs in such a manner as to further the policy of this chapter.

- (B) All City departments and agencies shall comply with Federal and State laws and regulations and the provisions and intent of this ordinance respecting the control and abatement of noise to the same extent that any person is subject to such laws and regulations.

§ 95.04. Exceptions. [Ord. 6, passed 9-13-1983]

This chapter shall apply to the control of all sound originating within the limits of the City of Watertown except the following:

- (A) The emission of sound for the purpose of alerting persons to the existence of an emergency or to the emission of sound in the performance of emergency work or in training exercises related to emergency activities.
- (B) Noncommercial public speaking and public assembly activities as guaranteed by state and federal constitutions.
- (C) Domestic equipment such as lawn mowers and power saws between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m.

§ 95.05. Enforcement. [Ord. 6, passed 9-13-1983]

The Board of Health shall be the primary enforcement agency of the terms of this chapter. In addition, any Police Department or Fire Department official or building inspector or their designee, acting within their jurisdictional area, is authorized to enforce this chapter.

§ 95.99. Penalty. [Ord. 6, passed 9-13-1983]

- (A) Any person who violates any provision of this chapter, if convicted, shall be fined no less than \$50 nor more than \$100 for the first offense and not less than \$200 nor more than \$500 for each succeeding offense.
- (B) Each subsequent day or part thereof of violation of this chapter, whether the violation be continuous or intermittent, shall be construed as a separate and succeeding offense.

95.01 Statement of Purpose

A. Noise (and vibration) is a (are) serious hazard(s) to public health, welfare, safety, and quality of life. A substantial body of science and technology exists by which noise (and vibration) may be measured and substantially abated, and the people have a right to and should be ensured an environment free from excessive noise (and vibration) that may jeopardize their health, welfare, or safety, or degrade the quality of life. This chapter serves to address the control of noise (and vibration) originating within the limits of the City of Watertown.

Note: discussion about including tonal as well as max. allowable w/duration, and zones; send table/chart.

95.02 Definitions

A. Construction and demolition: any site preparation, assembly, erection, substantial repair, alteration, destruction or similar action for public or private rights-of-way, structures, utilities, or similar property.

B. Emergency: George-Doug to clarify /refine

C. Emergency Work: keep this? George-Doug to clarify/refine

D. Noise pollution: a noise source which increases noise levels 10 dBA or more above the background noise level “prescribed in 95.03(A)” -discuss this further... If the noise source is a tonal sound, 3 dBA above background noise [discussion included seeing Max. Allowable exterior sound level standards table/chart, which includes duration]

E. The sound pressure level in decibels as measured on a sound level meter using the A-weighting network **and Fast response setting**. The level so read is designated dB(A) or dBA.

F. Ambient noise level: -changes? To be confirmed next R&O mtg

G. Plainly Audible: **Any sound that can be detected by a person using ~~his or her~~ their unaided (typical? TBD) hearing faculties. As an example, if the sound source under investigation is a portable or personal vehicular sound amplification or reproduction device, the enforcement officer need not determine the title of a song, specific words, or the artist performing the song. The detection of the rhythmic bass component of the music is sufficient.**

H. Tonal Noise -consider Newton and Waltham examples.

Next R&O mtg, determine need for additional Definitions or edits to draft.

WHEREAS noise pollution is a hazard to public health, welfare, safety, and quality of life; and whereas a substantial body of science and technology exists by which noise pollution may be measured and abated; and,

WHEREAS a substantial body of science and technology exists by which noise pollution may be measured and abated; and,

WHEREAS people have a right to and should be ensured an environment free from excessive noise pollution that may jeopardize their health, welfare, or safety.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT ORDAINED by the City Council of Watertown that Title IX, Chapter 95 of the Watertown Code of Ordinances, inclusive of all sections, is hereby repealed and replaced in its entirety with a new Chapter 95 as follows:

95.01 Statement of Purpose

- A. Noise pollution is a hazard to public health, welfare, safety, and quality of life. A substantial body of science and technology exists by which noise pollution may be measured and abated, and the people have a right to and should be ensured an environment free from excessive noise pollution that may jeopardize their health, welfare, or safety. This chapter serves to address persistent noise pollution rather than fleeting noise inherent to life in a densely populated community such as Watertown.

95.02 Definitions:

- A. Construction and demolition: Any of the following:
1. excavation, highway construction, land development or land clearing work;
 2. the erection, demolition, alteration, repair, or relocation of any building or structure, which uses powered equipment including, but not limited to, backhoes, trucks, tractors, excavators, earth moving equipment, compressors, motorized or power hand tools, manual tools, or equipment of a similar nature as well as two-way radios or other communication equipment;
 3. the use of any equipment for recycling, screening, separating, or any other processing of soil, rocks, concrete, asphalt or other raw material
- B. Emergency: Any occurrence or set of circumstances involving actual or imminent physical hazard or property damage which demands immediate action
- C. Emergency work: Any work performed for the purpose of preventing or alleviating the physical hazard or property damage threatened or caused by an emergency
- D. Noise pollution: A noise source which increases noise level above ambient to the level prescribed in 95.03 (A)
- E. A-weighted decibels (dbA): The A-weighted sound-pressure level expressed in decibels

- F. Ambient noise level: The sound level associated with a given environment, being a composite of sounds from all sources excluding the alleged offensive noise, at the location and approximate time at which a comparison with the alleged offensive noise is to be made
- G. Plainly audible: Any sound that can be detected by a person of normal hearing ability using his or her unaided hearing facilities

95.03 Prohibition of Noise Pollution

- A. Any activity, other than those exempted by 95.03(B) below, which creates or produces sound measured at 10 dbA above ambient noise level at any of the following locations shall be deemed a violation of this section:
 - 1. The property line of any residential property or of any condominium or apartment house
 - 2. At least fifty feet away from the source of noise if in a non-residential setting if applicable
- B. Noise emanating from the operation of the following is exempt from the application of this section 95.03:
 - 1. Motor vehicles on a public highway
 - 2. Equipment used for construction and demolition
 - 3. Equipment used in domestic or commercial maintenance
 - 4. Domestic animals on a residential or commercial property
 - 5. Noncommercial public speaking and public assembly as protected by state and federal constitutions
 - 6. An emergency or emergency work
 - 7. City-sponsored events
- C. No person owning, leasing or controlling a source of sound shall cause, suffer, allow or permit unnecessary emissions from said source of sound that causes noise pollution via any of the following manners:
 - 1. Willfully
 - 2. Negligently
 - 3. Or through failure to provide necessary equipment, service, or maintenance or to take necessary precautions

95.04 Construction and Demolition

- A. All devices employed in construction or demolition which are plainly audible at any of the following locations shall be prohibited from use during the hours of 7:00 PM to 7:00 AM on weekdays, from 7:00 PM to 8:00 AM on Saturdays, and at any time on Sundays and legal holidays:
 - 1. The property line of any residential property or of any condominium or apartment house
 - 2. At least fifty feet away from the source of noise if in a non-residential setting, if applicable

- B. Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit noise emanating from vehicles used in construction or demolition for the purposes of safety such as backup alarms on a vehicle.

95.08 Domestic and Commercial Maintenance

- A. All devices employed in domestic or commercial lawn, garden, or grounds maintenance which are plainly audible at any of the following locations shall be prohibited between the hours of 7:00 PM and 7:00 AM on weekdays and from 7:00 PM to 8:00 AM on Saturdays, Sundays and legal holidays:
 - 1. The property line of any residential property or of any condominium or apartment house
 - 2. At least fifty feet away from the source of noise if in a non-residential setting, if applicable

95.09 Noise Waiver

- A. The Director of Public Health or his or her designee may grant a waiver for any activity otherwise forbidden by the provisions of this chapter upon a determination that compliance in the conduct of such activity would cause undue hardship on the person or persons conducting such activity or on the community, taking into account the extent of noise pollution caused by not requiring such compliance and whether reasonable efforts have been made to abate the noise. The Director of Public Health shall establish appropriate procedures for the processing of requests for such waivers, including such hearings as he or she deems appropriate. The Director of Public Health may seek the input of the Superintendent of Public Works in noise waiver requests related to construction or demolition. In granting any such waiver, the Director of Public Health may impose such appropriate conditions as he or she deems necessary pursuant to this section. Copies of all such waivers shall be filed with the clerk of the city council and to each ward city councilor whose ward is affected by the waiver promptly after issuance.

95.10 Enforcement

- A. The provisions of this chapter may be enforced by the Director of Public Health or his or her designee. The provisions of this chapter may also be enforced by the Chief of Police or his or her designee. Each violation shall be deemed as a separate offense.

95.99 Penalty

- A. Any person who violates any provision of this chapter shall be issued a verbal warning for the first offense, then fined as follows:
 - 1. \$100 for the second offense
 - 2. \$200 for the third offense
 - 3. \$300 for the fourth offense and each subsequent offense
- B. Nothing in this section shall be deemed to limit the use of other lawful methods of abating violations of this section, including but not limited to application for equitable relief from a court of law.

WHEREAS noise pollution is a hazard to public health, welfare, safety, and quality of life; and

WHEREAS a substantial body of science and technology exists by which noise pollution may be measured and abated; and

WHEREAS people have a right to and should be ensured an environment free from excessive noise pollution that may jeopardize their health, welfare, or safety.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT ORDAINED by the City Council of Watertown that Title IX, Chapter 95 of the Watertown Code of Ordinances, inclusive of all sections, is hereby repealed and replaced in its entirety with a new Chapter 95 as follows:

95.01 Statement of Purpose

- A. Noise pollution is a hazard to public health, welfare, safety, and quality of life. A substantial body of science and technology exists by which noise pollution may be measured and abated, and the people have a right to and should be ensured an environment free from excessive noise pollution that may jeopardize their health, welfare, or safety. This chapter serves to address persistent noise pollution rather than fleeting noise inherent to life in a densely populated community such as Watertown.

95.02 Definitions:

- A. Construction and demolition: Any site preparation, assembly, erection, substantial repair, alteration, destruction, or similar action for public or private rights of way, structures, utilities, or similar property, and also the use of any equipment for any processing of any material.
- B. Emergency: Any occurrence or set of circumstances involving actual or imminent physical hazard or property damage which demands immediate action
- C. Emergency work: Any work performed to prevent or alleviate the physical hazard or property damage threatened or caused by an emergency
- D. Noise pollution: A noise source which increases noise level above ambient to the level prescribed in 95.03 (A)
- E. A-weighted decibels (dbA): The A-weighted sound-pressure level expressed in decibels
- F. Ambient noise level: The sound level associated with a given environment, being a composite of sounds from all sources excluding the alleged offensive noise, at the location and approximate time at which a comparison with the alleged offensive noise is to be made
- G. Plainly audible: any sound that is detectable and distinguishable from ambient or background noise at a specified location, such that the sound's source or character can be reasonably identified under ordinary conditions. A determination of plainly audible sound may be made by direct observation.

- H. Tonal noise: any noise that is judged by a listener to have the characteristics of a pure tone, whine, hum, or buzz

95.03 Prohibition of Noise Pollution

- A. Any activity, other than those exempted by 95.03(B) below, which creates or produces sound measured at 10 dbA above ambient noise level at any of the following locations shall be deemed a violation of this section:
 - 1. The property line of any residential property or of any condominium or apartment house
 - 2. At least fifty feet away from the source of noise if in a non-residential setting if applicable

- B. When a tonal noise, as defined in 95.02 (H) above, is emitted, the creation or production of noise measured at 5 dbA above ambient noise level at any of the following locations shall be deemed a violation of this section:
 - 1. The property line of any residential property or of any condominium or apartment house
 - 2. At least fifty feet away from the source of noise if in a non residential setting if applicable

- C. Noise emanating from the operation of the following is exempt from the application of this section 95.03:
 - 1. Motor vehicles on a public highway
 - 2. Equipment used for construction and demolition
 - 3. Equipment used in domestic or commercial maintenance
 - 4. Domestic animals on a residential or commercial property
 - 5. Noncommercial public speaking and public assembly as protected by state and federal constitutions
 - 6. An emergency or emergency work
 - 7. City-sponsored events

- D. No person owning, leasing or controlling a source of noise shall cause, suffer, allow or permit unnecessary emissions from said source of noise that causes noise pollution via any of the following manners:
 - 1. Willfully
 - 2. Negligently
 - 3. Or through failure to provide necessary equipment, service, or maintenance or to take necessary precautions

95.04 Construction and Demolition

- A. All devices employed in construction or demolition which are plainly audible at any of the following locations shall be prohibited from use during the hours of 7:00 PM to 7:00 AM on

weekdays, from 7:00 PM to 8:00 AM on Saturdays, and at any time on Sundays and legal holidays:

1. The property line of any residential property or of any condominium or apartment house
 2. At least fifty feet away from the source of noise if in a non-residential setting, if applicable
- B. Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit noise emanating from vehicles used in construction or demolition for the purposes of safety such as backup alarms on a vehicle.

95.05 Domestic and Commercial Maintenance

- A. All devices employed in domestic or commercial lawn, garden, or grounds maintenance which are plainly audible at any of the following locations shall be prohibited between the hours of 7:00 PM and 7:00 AM on weekdays and from 7:00 PM to 8:00 AM on Saturdays, Sundays and legal holidays:
1. The property line of any residential property or of any condominium or apartment house
 2. At least fifty feet away from the source of noise if in a non-residential setting, if applicable

95.06 Noise Waiver

- A. The Director of Public Health or his or her designee may grant a waiver for any activity otherwise forbidden by the provisions of this chapter upon a determination that compliance in the conduct of such activity would cause undue hardship on the person or persons conducting such activity or on the community, taking into account the extent of noise pollution caused by not requiring such compliance and whether reasonable efforts have been made to abate the noise. The Director of Public Health shall establish appropriate procedures for the processing of requests for such waivers, including such hearings as he or she deems appropriate. The Director of Public Health may seek the input of the Superintendent of Public Works in noise waiver requests related to construction or demolition. In granting any such waiver, the Director of Public Health may impose such appropriate conditions as he or she deems necessary pursuant to this section. Copies of all such waivers shall be filed with the clerk of the city council and to each ward city councilor whose ward is affected by the waiver promptly after issuance.

95.07 Enforcement

- A. The provisions of this chapter may be enforced by the Director of Public Health or their designee. The provisions of this chapter may also be enforced by the Chief of Police or their designee, the Fire Chief or their designee, and the Building Inspector or their designee. Each violation shall be deemed as a separate offense.

95.08 Penalty

- A. Any person who violates any provision of this chapter shall be issued a written and verbal warning for the first offense, then fined as follows:
 - 1. \$100 for the second offense
 - 2. \$200 for the third offense
 - 3. \$300 for the fourth offense and each subsequent offense
- B. Nothing in this section shall be deemed to limit the use of other lawful methods of abating violations of this section, including but not limited to application for equitable relief from a court of law.

Noise Ordinance Benchmarks - Watertown & Neighboring Towns								
March, 2026								
		Newton	Belmont	Waltham	Current Watertown	Proposed Watertown	Arlington	
Prohibited at all times as persistent noise pollution; not a fleeting sound. NB: Construction, Demolition, and Maintenance equipment exempt.								
	Above ambient noise	10 dbA	5 dbA*	10 dbA	10 db	10 dbA	85 dbA total noise level (not above ambient)	
	Above tonal noise	5 dbA	--	5 dbA	5 db			
Construction & Demolition allowed hours of use								
	Weekday	7am-7pm	7am-8pm	7am-5pm	7am-7pm	7am-7pm	8am-6pm	
	Saturday	8am-7pm	7am-8pm	8am-4pm	8am-7pm	8am-7pm	9am-5pm	
	Sunday	Prohibited	dbA limited	Prohibited	8am-7pm	prohibited	9am-5pm	
	Holiday	Prohibited	dbA limited	Prohibited	not specified	prohibited	9am-5pm	
			no louder than 70/80/90 dbA at 50 ft from activity, depending on device					
 Measured from	not specified	50 feet from activity	not specified	not specified	at property line or 50ft from activity (non residential setting)	at property line	
Lawn Maintenance allowed hours of use								
	Weekday	7am-8pm	7am-8pm	7am-9pm	Commercial exempt	Residential 7am-9pm	Both Comm'l + Res'l. 7am-7pm	7:30am-6pm
	Saturday	9:30am-8pm	7am-8pm	7am-9pm	exempt	7am-9pm	8am-7pm	8am-4pm
	Sunday	9:30am-8pm	9am-8pm	9am-9pm	exempt	7am-9pm	8am-7pm	8am-4pm
	Holiday	9:30am-8pm	9am-8pm	9am-9pm	exempt	7am-9pm	8am-7pm	8am-4pm
			no louder than 80 dbA at 50 ft from activity, dbA limited outside of such hours					
*Belmont has also two "noise zones." Zone 1 is "All residential properties and the grounds of any school, hospital or similar health care institution, house of worship or library while the same is in use, and any Cemetery or Open Space Subdistrict." Zone 2 is all other properties.								
Prepared by Doug Newton								

Public Comment Received Prior to the meeting:

“Dear Councilor Gardner, Councilor Feltner, and Councilor Gannon:

I am writing as a Watertown resident to express my support for the 2026 draft noise ordinance currently under review by the Committee on Rules and Ordinances.

Updating Chapter 95 has been a long time coming. The 1983 ordinance and its subsequent 2022 revisions have left residents with few practical remedies for sustained, disruptive noise, and enforcement has remained difficult for exactly that reason. I appreciate the work that has gone into crafting an approach that is scientifically grounded, proportionate to Watertown's mixed residential and commercial character, and actually enforceable.

I would encourage the committee to pay particular attention to tonal noise as the ordinance is finalized. This is not a peripheral concern. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection released a discussion document on March 2, 2026, proposing significant revisions to its 1990 Noise Policy (under 310 CMR 7.10), and among its central areas of focus is the treatment of tonal or "pure tone" conditions — situations where a sound source produces a frequency that stands out sharply from surrounding background noise. MassDEP is proposing to update its tonal sound evaluation guidance to align with current acoustical best practices under ANSI S12.9-2005. Watertown's ordinance would benefit from language that harmonizes with this evolving state framework, particularly with respect to how tonal noise is defined and measured. MassDEP is also proposing that compliance be evaluated at the location of actual affected receptors — residences, schools, and similar sensitive uses — rather than solely at property lines. Adopting this receptor-based approach in Chapter 95 would strengthen the ordinance's practical reach and align it with the direction state policy is heading.

The importance of tonal noise treatment as well as amplified noise/music is not abstract to residents in this city. Those living near the outdoor hockey rink at Casey Park have experienced precisely the kind of tonal and impact noise that a well-drafted ordinance should address. Combined with loud profanity, this affects citizens' health and stress levels. I am grateful the committee is aware of how qualitatively different this kind of noise is from ordinary ambient sound. It is a textbook example of why both the character and the intensity of a noise source matter, not just its decibel level in isolation.

This also raises a point worth preserving in the final ordinance: city-owned and city-operated facilities should be held to the same standards as any private actor. The principle that all city departments must comply with the ordinance to the same extent as any person is a sound one, and it should be applied in practice, not just on paper.

I am also encouraged that the 2026 draft takes a more balanced approach than earlier versions, avoiding the rigid fixed caps and vague subjective standards that made prior drafts difficult to enforce. A framework grounded in objective, measurable criteria — consistent with what MassDEP itself is now moving toward at the state level — serves Watertown residents far better.

Thank you for the considerable effort your committee has invested in this work. I hope the ordinance moves forward, and that Watertown finally has a noise framework equal to the reality of how our

neighborhoods actually sound and feel.

Respectfully,
Annette Farrell
59 Union Street
Watertown, MA”

“Dear Rules and Ordinances Committee,

I attended Tuesday’s meeting and want to thank Doug for his thorough work on the noise ordinance draft. While his due diligence is clear, I am concerned that some discussion points will expand the draft in ways that may make it more restrictive than necessary. I hope it was an attempt to ensure a comprehensive review. To remain functional, the ordinance needs to be adjusted for realism rather than further expansion.

I rushed home after the meeting to test Councilor Gannon’s 50-foot "buffer" proposal. My measurements show that 50 feet consistently crosses property lines: reaching neighbors' backyards across the street and the middle of adjacent houses, as well as my backyard. In a dense area like C-9, this distance isn't a buffer, but trespassing, and potentially dangerous.

If smoke detectors go off, any neighbor could likely file a legitimate noise complaint. In a multi-family like mine, someone is always tripping it, and repeatedly in a short period. I am now looking into alarms that are less likely to trip. However, residents might disarm them to avoid fines or trespassers. In dense areas like ours, this is a major fire risk. It would be prudent to consult the Fire Department and consider exempting detectors or increasing the threshold to 100 feet (roughly two houses away) for realism.

Regarding tonal noise, I appreciate the Health Department’s commitment to securing the proper equipment, training, and annual calibration. These are the essential prerequisites needed for effective enforcement. Councilor Fletner’s insights on the harm caused by tonal noise were also very helpful. I look forward to the Department’s analysis on whether the enforcement threshold should be 3 dBA or 5 dBA above ambient levels.

Even though the discussion never got to leaf blowers and HVAC systems, I think they belong elsewhere. I agree with the City Manager that leaf blowers are primarily an energy issue; however, I recommend implementing a grace period alongside city-funded incentives or noise-reduction attachments. For residents aiming to eliminate or reduce their usage, it is only fair that they contribute to the solution through tax-based support.

Meanwhile, commercial HVAC units present complex structural and land-use challenges that are best managed by our planning and zoning boards. As Councilor Gannon noted, from his experience, these boards are in the business of addressing these systems. This is not merely a noise concern; it involves critical factors such as materials, coverage, clearance, and accessibility. Poorly conceived enclosures can cause severe operational failures. Restricted airflow leads to overheating, spikes in energy consumption, and the risk of voiding manufacturer warranties. These units are precision engineered for open-air

operation, any structural screening must strictly adhere to specific clearances to ensure proper heat rejection. Moving forward, these technical and safety requirements should be comprehensively addressed through a more robust mitigation plan during the Site Plan review process.

The discussion briefly addressed fleeting noise and amplification. A sensible filter in which any noise exceeding decibel or tonal limits is sustained for 20 to 30 minutes before action should be the standard. This timeframe accounts for the practical travel time required for enforcement to reach a location. It is equally important that these standards remain source-neutral to prevent subjective enforcement. Regarding amplification, while signal strength can be measured technically, the "plainly audible" standard within established limits is a practical benchmark that I believe reflects Councilor Feltner's comments.

The discussion never touched upon filing a complaint. Please consider the following. To ensure accountability and prevent harassment, we need a transparent process for managing complaints. For example, requiring that all reports be filed within 48 hours and include the reporter's name, the specific source, location, date, and a formal signature to trigger an investigation may prove beneficial. To discourage false reporting, the department should maintain logs to identify patterns of unfounded complaints. Additionally, requiring corroboration from multiple households would ensure that enforcement remains objective and fair.

When the discussion got to the matter of vibration, the noise ordinance began to lose practicality. The proposal to add vibration limits to the noise ordinance, whether as a section or a standalone rule, risks compromising practicality and balance. As Councilor Feltner and the Health Department have highlighted, measurement is very difficult; implementing such a standard would require specialized training, expensive equipment, and likely a dedicated consultant for every project. Beyond the lack of established regulatory standards, vibration is characterized by high variability. Vibrations travel through diverse mediums (such as soil, sand, clay, etc.), and as a result measurements exhibit low predictability and inconsistent impact.

Furthermore, such a restriction could trigger significant ADA concerns. For the Deaf community, vibration is not a nuisance but a vital sensory substitute for sound, aiding in safety, communication, and social participation. A friend, a former audiologist, explained that the brain's auditory cortex can process tactile information as a replacement for lost auditory input, effectively allowing individuals to "hear" through these physical signals. Adopting these standards would be unreasonable for our community. And the thought of issuing citations merely to fund the hiring of a vibration consultant could be seen as rent-seeking. We must prioritize practicality over technical overreach and adoption does not do that.

Finally, Ms. Pruitt is not a resident. Nor is she an expert in engineering, architecture, or economics, yet she is wielding influence over Watertown's Noise Ordinance. After the Nonantum residents were 'rightfully' silenced during the Columbus Delta debate, her treatment has the appearance of impropriety.

This isn't a renaming ceremony; it's a policy that jeopardizes our culture, safety, and local economy. The council decides policy but residents elect the council. If she isn't residing in Watertown, her opinions should be discounted accordingly.

We cannot sacrifice Watertown's community vibrancy for a sterile, over-regulated environment that penalizes residents for simply living their lives. Our noise ordinance needs to be **measurable, balanced, and practical**. It must account for the reality of our city's layout, high density, and economic viability. If we fail to protect our diverse culture and demographics, we aren't 'protecting the peace', we are choking the soul of our city.

Thank you,

Rita"

Dear Councilors,

"Thank you for your ongoing work to update Watertown's noise ordinance. I am writing to highlight two potential loopholes in the currently proposed draft ([link](#)) regarding the accumulation of noise and its long-term impact on our neighborhoods.

1. The Compounding Effect of Increases in Ambient Noise

The noise from several buildings in town has been an ongoing topic of discussion, including several letters published by Watertown News (below):

- [Industrial Noise Pollution from Watertown Impacting Newton Neighbors](#)
- [Noise from Buildings in Watertown Drowning Out Charles River](#)

While it's unclear whether any of the buildings mentioned are in violation of the existing noise ordinance, I think we can agree that their impact on quality of life should be considered. Further, if a *new* development were to *double* the loudness of those areas *above that already* experienced, that would certainly be concerning - yet, that's exactly what our ordinance allows.

Under the proposed ordinance (95.03.A), "*any activity... which creates or produces sound measured at 10 dbA above ambient noise level*" is prohibited. However, because 10 decibels represents a tenfold increase in sound intensity - which we humans perceive as approximately twice as loud - this allowance creates a compounding problem. It permits each new development to be twice as loud as the existing (ambient) baseline. Consequently, the next development can then be twice as loud as the newly raised baseline, allowing ambient noise to steadily snowball out of control without technically breaking the rules.

During the Broder approval process (former Cannistraro lot), sound levels were a constant concern. It became clear then that developers will adhere strictly to Watertown's regulations as written, but they will not voluntarily hold themselves to quieter standards. If we rely solely on a relative +10 dBA limit, several such developments could drastically and permanently alter a neighborhood's noise profile.

Proposed Solution: Other municipalities address this issue by defining maximum sound levels for subject areas (for example, Table 8.16.060E in [Cambridge's Noise Control Ordinance, linked](#)). I urge the committee to recommend such a table to be utilized alongside the proposed 10dba limit - allowing a relative increase only provided it does not exceed the absolute limits expressed in the table.

TABLE 8.16.060E
 TABLE OF ZONING DISTRICT NOISE STANDARDS
 Maximum Allowable Octave Band Sound Pressure Levels

Octave Band Center Frequency Measurement (Hz)	Residential Area		Residential in Industrial		Commercial Area	Industry Area
	Daytime	Other Times	Daytime	Other Times	Anytime	Anytime
31.5	76	68	79	72	79	83
63	75	67	78	71	78	82
125	69	61	73	65	73	77
250	62	52	68	57	68	73
500	56	46	62	51	62	67
1,000	50	40	56	45	56	61
2,000	45	33	51	39	51	57
4,000	40	28	47	34	47	53
8,000	38	26	44	32	44	50
Single Number Equivalent (dB(A))	60	50	65	55	65	70

2. Aggregate Noise from Multiple Sources on a Single Lot/Site

I am also concerned that the current phrasing could allow total noise from a single site to exceed the threshold if multiple, distinct activities on that lot are measured individually. Because the proposed ordinance limits "any activity" to +10 dBA over ambient, a developer could argue (for example) that HVAC noise and manufacturing noise are two distinct activities. If both produce a +9 dBA increase, the aggregate noise emitted from the property would exceed the intended limit, even though the individual "activities" technically comply.

Proposed Solution: A simple fix would be to amend the language from "any activity..." to instead read: "any activity or combination of activities on a single lot..."

Thanks in advance for your consideration,

Sincerely,

George Skuse

43 Pilgrim Rd

c: (617) 319-1865

Municipal employee; all comments are my own personal opinions and not made on behalf of another.

URLs for the embedded links:"

1. <https://watertownma.portal.civicclerk.com/event/9462/files/attachment/5562>
2. <https://www.watertownmanews.com/2023/10/10/letter-industrial-noise-pollution-from-watertown-impacting-newton-neighbors/>
3. <https://www.watertownmanews.com/2026/04/21/letter-noise-from-buildings-in-watertown-drowning-out-charles-river/>
4. https://library.municode.com/ma/cambridge/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT8HESA_CH8.16NOCO_8.16.050GEPRNODI

"Dear Nicole,

Thank you for your quick response. Absolute noise limits differentiated by time-of-day and impacted district class (residential vs. commercial/industrial) seem very common. I've included relevant sections of ordinances from [Belmont](#), [Somerville](#), and [Billerica](#) below (in addition to [Cambridge](#)). There are many others across the state (and nation), I just stopped at three (...*limited time*...).

I've highlighted some interesting nuances of each:

- **Stricter Standards:** Belmont and Billerica limit sound levels to 5 dB over background (rather than our proposed +10 dB). Since +10 dB is perceived as a *doubling* of volume, a +5 dB limit provides a more reasonable "buffer" for residents.
- **Duration-Based Limits:** Somerville recognizes that a noise is more disruptive the longer it lasts, setting lower decibel caps for sounds lasting over 2 hours.

- **Protected Areas:** Belmont and Billerica extend residential-level protections to cemeteries, houses of worship, and open spaces - recognizing that these "quiet zones" are essential.
- **Aggregate Noise Solution:** By measuring total noise at the complainant's property line (as seen in Belmont and Billerica), these ordinances naturally account for "aggregate noise" from a site rather than looking at individual "activities".

Additionally, Somerville includes vibrations in their sound ordinance:

"Vibration perception threshold shall mean the minimum ground, or structure, borne vibration motion necessary to cause a normal person to be aware of the vibration by such direct means as, but not limited to, sensation by touch or visual observation of moving objects.

(17) Vibration. Operating or permitting the operation of any device that creates vibration which is above the vibration perception threshold of an individual at or beyond the property boundary of the source if on private property or at 50 feet from the source if on a public space or public right-of-way."

If we're to continue to welcome and encourage redevelopment of our city's underutilized industrial and commercial properties, it's important for our noise ordinance to keep pace by providing meaningful protections for the abutting neighborhoods' quality of life. As you're revising the ordinance, please consider all of the underlined ideas (above).

Thanks again for all you do.

Sincerely,

George Skuse

43 Pilgrim Rd

c: (617) 319-1865

Municipal employee; all comments are my own personal opinions and not made on behalf of another.

PS: I've pasted content from several disparate sources; please refer to the original documents for clarity and context

#####

Belmont

<https://ecode360.com/27111806#27111825>

§ 60-610 Designated noise zones.

The properties hereinafter described are hereby assigned to the following noise zones:

A.

Noise Zone I: All residential properties and the grounds of any school, hospital or similar health care institution, house of worship or library while the same is in use, and any Cemetery or Open Space subdistrict.

B.

Noise Zone II: All other properties.

§ 60-615 Exterior noise standards.

A.

It shall be unlawful for any person at any location within the area of the Town to create any loud noise, or to allow the creation of any noise, on property owned, leased, occupied or otherwise controlled by such person, which causes the sound level when measured on any other property to exceed the greater of:

(1)

The maximum allowable exterior sound level outlined in Table I; or

(2)

Five dB over the background sound level.

Table I, Maximum Allowable Exterior Sound Level

Noise Zone	Daytime Level 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.	Nighttime Level 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.
I	55 dBA	45 dBA
II	65 dBA	60 dBA

B.

If the intruding noise source is continuous and cannot reasonably be discontinued or stopped for a time period whereby the background sound level can be determined, the measured sound level obtained while the source is in operation shall be compared directly to the maximum allowable exterior sound level outlined in Table I.

#####

Sec. 9-117. Noise levels.

It shall be unlawful to make, continue, or cause to be made or continued, any noise in excess of the noise levels set forth in subsection (1) unless such noise is reasonably necessary to the preservation of life, health, safety or property.

1. (1)

Measurement of noise. Any activity, not expressly exempted by this section, which creates or produces sound, regardless of frequency, exceeding the ambient noise levels at the property line of any property, or if a condominium or apartment house, within any adjoining apartment, above the ambient noise levels as designated in the following table, at the time and place and for the duration then mentioned, shall be deemed to be a violation of this article, but the following enumeration shall not be deemed to be exclusive:

<i>Duration of Sound</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>II</i>	<i>III</i>
	7 AM – 6 PM (all districts)	6 PM – 10 PM (residential districts)	10 PM – 7 AM (residential districts)
		6 PM – 7 AM (all other districts)	
Less than 10 minutes	75 db	70 db	60 db
Between 10 minutes and 2 hours	70 db	60 db	50 db
In excess of 2 hours	60 db	50 db	40 db

2. (2)

In determining whether a particular sound exceeds the maximum permissible sound level in the table set out in subsection (1):

a. a.

Sounds in excess of the residential district limitations as measured in a residential district are violations of this section whether the sound originates in a residential district or any other district.

b. b.

During all hours of Sundays and state and federal holidays, the maximum allowable decibel levels for residential districts are as set forth in column III of the table

#####

Billerica

<https://billerica.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/General-By-Laws-Updated-10-2023-1.pdf>

23.3 Designated Noise Zones. The properties hereinafter described are hereby assigned to the following noise zones:

NOISE ZONE I: All properties utilized as residential uses in accordance with the Town of Billerica Zoning By-Laws and the grounds of any school, hospital or similar health care institution, house of worship or library while the same is in use, and any Cemetery or Open Space.

NOISE ZONE II: All other property used in accordance with the Town’s Zoning By-Law.

23.4 Exterior Noise Standards: It shall be unlawful for any person at any location within the area of the Town to create any loud noise, or to allow the creation of any noise, on property owned, leased, occupied or otherwise controlled by such person, which causes the sound level when measured on complainant's property to exceed the greater of:

- A. The maximum allowable exterior sound level outlined in Table I; or
- B. Five dB over the background sound level.

Table 1.

Table 1. Maximum Allowable Exterior Sound Level		
	Daytime level	Nighttime level
Noise Level	7:00AM to 10:00 PM	10:00PM to 7:00AM
I	60 dBA	50 dBA
II	70 dBA	65 dBA

If the intruding noise source is continuous and cannot reasonably be discontinued or stopped for a time period whereby the background sound level can be determined, the measured sound level obtained while the source is in operation shall be compared directly to the maximum allowable exterior sound level outlined in Table I. “

“Hi Nicole, Lisa, and John,

First, John, I sent you a message about a remark you made regarding Watertown’s ability to control this activity in industrial and commercial areas. I was (finally) able to locate your remark in the R&O meeting on January 27, 2025, so I’m all set now, but any further knowledge you can add to this would be appreciated.

The gist of your comment is that we, as a City, are not allowed to put restrictions on this activity per State law. Our only recourse is to ask these folks to be reasonable when they schedule pickup times. However, they don’t have to comply.

Here’s a question for all of you to consider going forward with the noise ordinance process:

You can’t control these trucks’ comings and goings, but don’t they have to abide by our noise standards while doing their work?? That may be the way to modify some of this late night/early morning activity that is so disruptive to our residents.

I encourage you all to think about this as you craft the new ordinance.

Thanks again for all of the effort you are exerting on our behalves!

Linda”



WATERTOWN
MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

To: Honorable City Council
From: George J. Proakis, City Manager 
Date: May 5, 2026
RE: Request for Confirmation – Appointment to the Historical Commission

Pursuant to the provisions of the Watertown Home Rule Charter and Town Council Ordinance 2007-46, An Ordinance on the Timing and Process of Appointments to Town Boards, Commissions and Committees, I am transmitting herewith a request for appointment to the Historical Commission which requires Council confirmation. This appointment will be to fill the unexpired term of Marilynne Roach.

- Kevin Lee - Appointment as a member of the Historical Commission to a term expiring October 1, 2026.

Thank you for your anticipated cooperation in this matter.



WATERTOWN
MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

To: Honorable City Council
From: George J. Proakis, City Manager 
Date: May 5, 2026
RE: Request for Confirmation – Appointments to the Watertown Cable Access Corporation – Board of Directors


Pursuant to the provisions of the Watertown Home Rule Charter and Town Council Ordinance 2007-46, An Ordinance on the Timing and Process of Appointments to Town Boards, Commissions and Committees, I am transmitting herewith a request for appointment to the Watertown Cable Access Corporation – Board of Directors which requires Council confirmation. The appointment of Adrienne Roberts will be to fill the unexpired term of Christopher McKenzie.

- Adrienne Roberts - Appointment as a member of the Watertown Cable Access Corporation – Board of Directors to a term expiring September 15, 2027
- Lindsay Graham - Appointment as a member of the Watertown Cable Access Corporation – Board of Directors to a term expiring September 15, 2029

Thank you for your anticipated cooperation in this matter.



WATERTOWN
MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

To: Honorable City Council
From: George J. Proakis, City Manager 
Date: May 5, 2026
RE: Request for Confirmation – Reappointment to the Cultural Council


Pursuant to the provisions of the Watertown Home Rule Charter and Town Council Ordinance 2007-46, An Ordinance on the Timing and Process of Appointments to Town Boards, Commissions and Committees, I am transmitting herewith a request for reappointment to the Cultural Council which requires Council confirmation.

- Phyllis Perrone - Reappointment as a member of the Cultural Council to a term expiring May 15, 2029

Thank you for your anticipated cooperation in this matter.



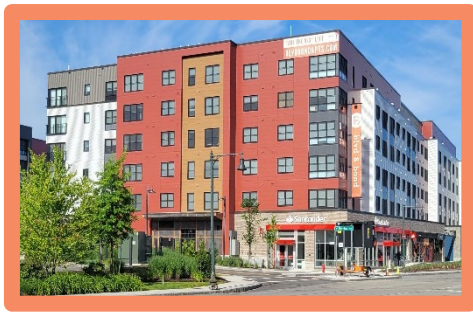
WATERTOWN
MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

To: Honorable City Council
From: George J. Proakis, City Manager 
Date: May 6, 2026
RE: Watertown Housing Plan 2026-2030

Please find attached the Watertown Housing Plan adopted by the Watertown Affordable Housing Trust.

The Watertown Affordable Housing Trust during their April 21, 2026 meeting voted 5-0 to adopt the attached 2026-2030 Watertown Housing Plan and authorized the Chair and staff to make necessary changes to put the final plan before City Council for endorsement. This plan is the result of a year of work on the part of the AHT and staff, including discussion and opportunities for public comment on individual sections and the plan as a whole during the Trust's February, March and April 2026 meetings, and the May, June, July, and October 2025 meetings.

I will bring this up under Communications from the City Manager at the May 12, 2026. City Council Meeting and respectfully request the matter be referred to Committee for further review and consideration.



Watertown Housing Plan

April 2026

Prepared by:

Watertown Affordable Housing Trust

Clifford Cook, Chair

Jill Hyde

David Leon

Helen Oliver

Leo Patterson

George Proakis (City Manager)

Zoe Weintrobe

City of Watertown

Community Development & Planning

Kenan Rhyne, Assistant City Manager

William Downie, Senior Planner

Larry Field, Senior Planner

(With Thanks to Steve Magoon, former
Assistant City Manager)

Photos in order from left: Blvd & Bond, Housing along Galen Street, and Marshall Place

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the 2023 Comprehensive Plan observed, Watertown is a dynamic community experiencing “growth and change.” Although the pace of economic development has slowed since the Plan was adopted, it is still true that Watertown will continue to see new jobs, “increasing the demand for housing of all types (including affordable housing).¹” Watertown’s diversity continues to deepen. Our vision of an “inclusive and sustainable” city requires that we plan for housing that meets the diverse needs of those who live here, and want to live here, so they can contribute to our community.

The chief purpose of Watertown’s Housing Plan is to set housing goals for the next five years (2026-2030) and identify specific strategies for achieving them. While this plan focuses on affordable housing--homes with deed-restricted affordability—the City’s policies and programs can make it easier for a wide range of households to live and prosper here. The process of goal-setting first requires an analysis of where housing opportunities in Watertown stand today. Our key findings include:

- Watertown is growing slowly in population and growing significantly in diversity.
- Our population skews more to those in the 25-39 and 55+ age ranges.
- A relatively affluent median household income that masks the significant percentage of lower-income households residing here.
- The majority of our housing stock consists of older single-family and two-family homes, but a significant and growing percentage of homes are in larger apartment buildings.
- Approximately 7.5% of our housing stock consists of deed-restricted affordable housing, primarily public housing units and inclusionary units in market rate buildings.

¹ 2023 Comprehensive Plan, <https://portal.laserfiche.com/Portal/DocView.aspx?id=87541&repo=r-5ece5628>

- Rents and home prices continue to rise, with 39% of our renters and 28% of our owners “cost-burdened,” i.e., spending more than 30% of their income on housing.

The Plan also provides information on residential zoning, recent development trends, funding sources for affordable housing, and constraints. The findings include:

- Watertown has zoned for residential growth in the mixed-use districts along the Arsenal Street and Pleasant Street corridors; since the Great Recession, development in these districts has resulted in over 1,700 units.
- The 2024 zoning amendments created new mixed-use districts in Watertown Square, including a by-right overlay district with a zoning capacity of 3,754 units. The new zoning reduced residential parking requirements and provided incentives for affordable developments. This rezoning has triggered a wave of new residential projects in and around the Square.
- Watertown’s inclusionary zoning requirements have produced almost 300 affordable units.
- The City’s capacity to provide local funding for affordable housing has increased substantially in the last five years. Sources now include Community Preservation Act money, city budget allocations, and the potential for linkage fee collections in the future.
- Watertown is aware of natural and physical constraints that may limit particular projects, but with the potential for continued redevelopment of formerly commercial sites these constraints are not a barrier to achieving our housing goals.

Watertown has made significant progress toward the goals set in the 2020 Housing Plan and the housing goals in the 2015 and 2023 Comprehensive Plans. Many of the related strategies identified in those documents have been fully or partly implemented. Nevertheless, there is more to do, and this Plan proposes the following goals and strategies for the next five years:

GOAL 1: Increase, deepen affordability of, and preserve deed-restricted affordable housing

GOAL 2: Encourage the private market to create a variety of housing types at different price points

GOAL 3: Continue to build a welcoming community for all, creating housing opportunities for both residents and those who want to move to

◆ STRATEGY 1: IDENTIFY POTENTIAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING SITES AND WORK WITH DEVELOPERS ON PROJECTS

1A: Continue current efforts to identify sites through locational metrics and preliminary assessments by on-call professionals, and through encouraging affordable developers to work in Watertown

1B: Explore additional methods to find suitable sites, such as using a real estate agent, and/or publicly highlighting the site search

1C: In considering opportunities for new affordable housing, consider the need for units that serve a range of households, placing particular focus on households with children and with seniors on a fixed income

◆ STRATEGY 2: Promote the use of public land for affordable housing development

2A: Consider locating an affordable housing development on the City's 148 Waltham Street site

2B: Work with the MBTA to consider affordable housing as a significant component of development on its Watertown Yard site

2C: Consider including a significant affordable housing component on the City's parking lots in Watertown Square

◆ **STRATEGY 3: Support the Watertown Housing Authority and others in the effort to rehabilitate public housing inventory and create new units on its existing land.**

3A: Assist the Watertown Housing Authority in evaluating the potential for redevelopment of existing properties

3B: Continue to support the proposed Willow Park redevelopment project

3C: Consider financial assistance for other WHA redevelopment and/or modernization projects

◆ **STRATEGY 4: Consider adoption of the measures discussed in the final affordable incentives study report**

◆ **STRATEGY 5: Increase the City's capacity to implement the strategies listed in the Plan**

5A: Employ a full-time housing planner within three years

5B: Continue to include \$250,000 in the annual budget for the affordable housing trust as a bridge to the availability of linkage fees

5C: Consider participating in a regional housing program that would monitor inclusionary zoning units and review requested rent increases for the city

5D. Increase collaboration between the Affordable Housing Trust and Community Preservation Committee, while recognizing each body's particular statutory goals and process

◆ **STRATEGY 6: Promote the production and preservation of housing types that meet the needs of underserved populations**

6A: Encourage affordable developments that include supportive services for seniors and individuals with disabilities

6B: Address the needs of individuals with disabilities by incorporating or encouraging, as appropriate universal design and visitability standards for large residential development projects, possibly through the city's design guidelines and/or peer review, in consultation with the Council on Disability (COD)

6C: Encourage the creation of more 3+ bedroom units in both affordable and market rate developments to meet the needs of larger family households

6D: Consider a program to support capital improvements that preserve the viability of older housing stock for households not in deed-restricted affordable housing

◆ **STRATEGY 7: As part of the City's upcoming general zoning review, evaluate the impact of current zoning and parking requirements on residential development as well as the existing inclusionary zoning policy**

7A: Consider changes in current zoning and parking requirements if needed to further housing production in zoning districts where that is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan

7B: Evaluate existing inclusionary zoning policy

◆ **STRATEGY 8: Anticipate and potentially help meet the need for capital improvements and/or major recapitalizations in existing affordable housing developments**

8A: Regularly discuss capital needs and funding sources with Watertown's existing affordable housing providers

8B: Plan for potential use of HOME funds (WestMetro consolidated pool and/or Watertown allocation) to minimize the need for emergency funding for critical repairs

◆ **STRATEGY 9: Promote fair housing**

9A Continue to fund fair housing testing programs and publicize results

9B Continue to work with the Human Rights Commission to offer education to owners, property managers, real estate agents, tenants and the public on fair housing

9C Work with local brokers to promote acceptance of housing vouchers

◆ **STRATEGY 10: Help educate cost-burdened tenants and homeowners about available housing resources**

10A: Increase and periodically update housing resources identified on the city's website.

10B: Consider ways for the community development and human services departments to work together in providing housing-related educational assistance to income-qualified tenants and homeowners.

◆ **STRATEGY 11: Adopt an accessory dwelling unit ordinance.**

◆ **STRATEGY 12: Evaluate the housing production impact of new city zoning at appropriate intervals, including the Watertown Square re-zoning in November 2024**



Watertown City Hall

WATERTOWN HOUSING PLAN

INTRODUCTION

The City of Watertown has a strong track record of producing multifamily housing with robust affordability²—and remains acutely aware that an affordability crisis continues both here and throughout the Greater Boston region. Since adopting the City’s 2020 Housing Plan,³ Watertown has worked diligently to expand capacity to address the affordability crisis. The City now has a municipal housing trust, substantially greater ability to fund affordable development through the Community Preservation Act, and anticipates revenue from linkage fees. In 2024 transformative rezoning was adopted for the Watertown Square area.⁴ For the first time since 2012, Watertown has a major affordable project (Willow Park) in the state’s funding round for affordable rental developments. Nevertheless, there remains a pressing need to create housing affordable for households at varying income levels, particularly low incomes.

In formulating this plan, the Trust considered input provided over the last year, as each section came up for discussion at regular monthly meetings. The Trust also considered comments received after the Housing Plan draft was made publicly available in March 2026. The plan contains: an assessment of Watertown’s housing needs; a description of its zoning, development trends, funding sources, and constraints; places the current plan in the context

² The term “affordable housing” refers to units targeted to and affordable by households that meet specific income eligibility levels, with a legally-enforceable restriction limiting occupancy to households meeting eligibility requirements. This term—and many others—are defined in the Glossary (Appendix A). Affordability can also be achieved through housing vouchers that allow tenants to cover the gap between their incomes and the rent, or through loans or grants that help eligible households purchase homes

³ The 2020 Housing Plan, adopted by the City Council in March 2021, was designed to propose a comprehensive housing strategy for the years 2021-2025. As Watertown has met its obligations under Chapter 40B in 2019 through the 1.5% land area threshold, neither that Plan nor this one is a “Housing Production Plan” under Chapter 40B. Watertown’s status under Chapter 40B is discussed further at Section IB3.

⁴ This rezoning, hereinafter called the “Watertown Square rezoning,” is described at Section IIA5 .

of Watertown's 2023 Comprehensive Plan and the 2020 Housing Plan; sets goals and specific strategies; and includes an implementation plan for the next five years.

The audience for the Plan is local officials, housing experts and the full range of Watertown residents. Since affordable housing is a technical field, a glossary of terms is attached as

Appendix A.



E. Joyce Munder Apartments

I. CURRENT HOUSING NEEDS⁵

Watertown’s housing needs are shaped by both demographic characteristics (size, age distribution, racial and immigrant profile, and household income distribution) and housing market (existing housing stock, subsidized housing inventory, rent and home price trends, and the affordability of its housing compared with household income). Watertown is also part of a region—Greater Boston—and an inner core of communities just outside the City of Boston. Both Watertown and the Greater Boston region face rising costs and declining affordability, which has only become more pronounced since adoption of the 2020 Housing Plan. The growing affordability crisis across the region is driven by converging demographic trends (e.g., smaller household sizes), lower housing production over decades (historically hampered by restrictive zoning), and possibly short-term factors that have increased construction costs and interest rates.

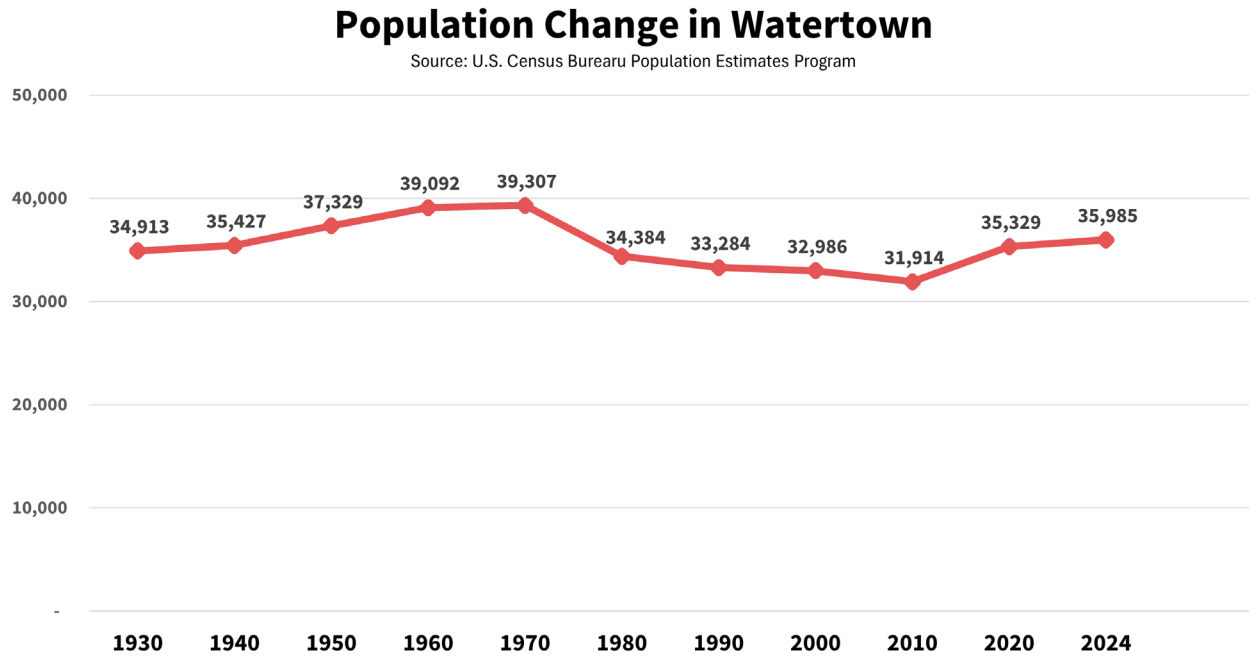
A. Characteristics of the Population and Households

1. Population Growth

Watertown’s population peaked in 1970 at about 40,000 residents, then steadily declined over the next decades to 31,915 in 2010. After 2010, the population stabilized and began to increase. In 2020, Watertown’s population rose to 35,338, the first period of growth since 1970 and reflecting housing production over the prior decade. American Community Survey (ACS) estimates show that Watertown has continued to grow slowly since 2020, with an estimated population of 35,985 in 2024. (U. S. Census Bureau 2020-2024 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates). The City has already exceeded the Metropolitan-Area Planning Commission (MAPC) population projections for 2035.

⁵ The data in this section comes from a variety of federal, state and local sources. The main source is the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, 5-year estimates (2020-2024). In order for the Census Bureau to provide data between the census years, it samples data on a rolling 5-year basis. Because this is sampling and not a full count, there is both a margin of error and inclusion of data over a 5-year period.

Figure 1



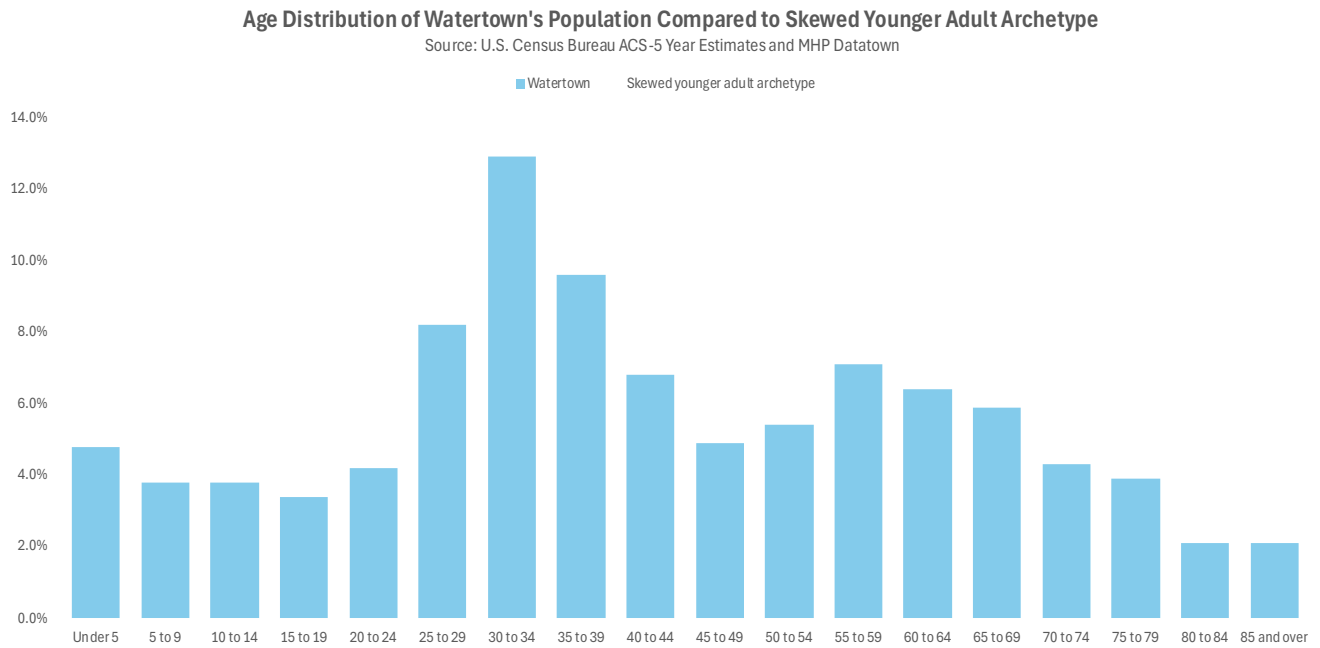
2. Age Distribution of Population and School Enrollment

Watertown’s population is currently skewed towards adults in the 25-39 and 55+ ranges. There is also a much lower percentage of school-age children than the state average (11 percent of Watertown’s population, compared to 17.4 percent statewide). The Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP) identifies Watertown’s population profile as part of the “skewed younger adult” archetype used by the MHP,⁶ which reflects Watertown’s appeal to Millennials looking for a more affordable place to live within Greater Boston’s inner core. Approximately 30 percent of Watertown’s population is 55 or older, matching the share across Massachusetts. Watertown is also losing younger adults, as the population shifts away from younger adults. From 2019-2024, the population of adults over the age of 29 grew as a share of the total population (from 68% to 72%), while the share of children and young adults under 30 has declined. The population shift is being driven by both a growing

⁶ MHP has identified six population topologies that comprise all Massachusetts towns and cities. (See <https://mhpcenterforhousingdata.shinyapps.io/DataTown/>).

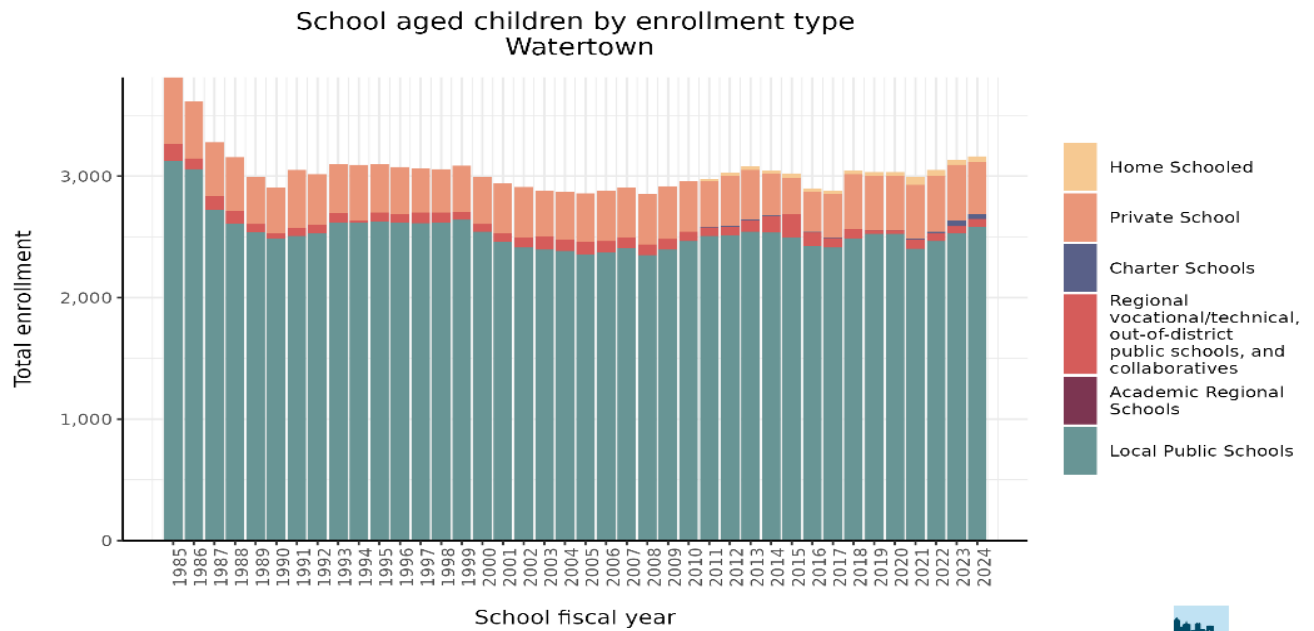
number of adults over 30, and a decline in children and adults under 30. Since 2019, the population of adults over 30 has grown by about 6%, while the number of residents under 30 has declined 11%.

Figure 2



While Watertown maintains a large share of young adult residents, the rising share of current seniors, and residents who will become seniors in the next 10-15 years means the City must think carefully about how the needs of this growing population are met. As more of the population ages, the City must ensure there are housing options to meet this group’s changing needs. This can mean both housing targeted specifically to seniors, and housing that meets the needs of a range of users , such as smaller housing options, single-story living options, supportive services, and ADA accessible housing.

Figure 3



Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education



The age distribution in Watertown is a major factor in the City’s stable school enrollment. Most households in Watertown do not include children, and the number of families with children is decreasing. The percentage of family households with children in 2010 was 38.9% and is estimated at 34.7% in 2024. The number of children per household has also declined. Between 2019 and 2024 the number of residents 19 years or younger declined by 5%, driven largely by fewer children under the age of 5.

3. Race, Ethnicity, and National Origin

Consistent with trends experienced across Massachusetts, Watertown is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. Over the last ten years, the share of Caucasian residents decreased while the share of Asian and Hispanic or Latinx residents increased. Compared to the state overall, Watertown has a much smaller share of African American residents and Hispanic or Latino residents, and a slightly greater share of Asian or Pacific Islander residents. Since the previous Housing Plan, the share of Asian, Black or African American, two or more races, and other populations grew, while the Caucasian and Hispanic or Latino

populations decreased. Watertown is likely to become more diverse overtime, as the children enrolled in the Watertown School District are even more diverse than the population as a whole. In particular, a larger share of school children are Hispanic or Latino (23.7%), and fewer students are white (55%).

Table 1: Race and Ethnicity						
	Watertown			Massachusetts		
	2014	2019	2024	2014	2019	2024
Asian or Pacific Islander	7.4%	9.9%	11.7%	5.8%	6.6%	7.3%
Black or African American	3.3%	1.6%	3.8%	7.0%	7.6%	6.8%
White or Caucasian	83.9%	82.8%	71.3%	80%	78.1%	68.6%
Other (including American Indian or Native)	2.6%	3.0%	4.0%	4.1%	4.2%	6.1%
Two or more races	2.8%	2.5%	9.2%	2.9%	3.3%	11.1%
Hispanic or Latino any race ⁷	8.4%	9.2%	6.0%	10.2%	11.8%	13.3%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2009– 2014, 2015-2019, and 2020 – 2024.

Table 2: Watertown Public Schools Enrollment by Race & Ethnicity School Year 25-26	
	Percent of Enrolled Students
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.1%
Asian	8.4%
Black or African American	3.6%
Hispanic or Latino	23.7%
Multi-Race, Not Hispanic or Latino	9.3%
White	55.0%

Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Watertown Public School District Profile School Year 2025-2026.

Watertown also has a relatively high and increasing percentage of foreign-born residents. The 2024 ACS estimates that 25.7% of Watertown residents were born in another country and 31.7% speak a language other than English at home. Based on ACS data, about 5.8% of Watertown households are limited in their ability to speak English⁸, double the share in 2019.

⁷ The percentages in this chart will not add up to 100% because the Hispanic/Latino percentages are independent of the preceding percentages.

⁸The U.S. Census Bureau determines a household is limited in their ability to speak English if no household member over the age of 14 speaks English “very well.”

Approximately 2.9% of residents self-identify as speaking English “Not Well,” and 1.1% do not speak English at all. Limited English language proficiency in these households may affect their ability to find suitable housing and access services. (ACS 5-Year Estimates 2020-2024).

4. Individuals with a disability

The Census Bureau reports 11.8% of Watertown households include at least one individual with a disability,⁹ consistent with the state-wide rate (12%). It is important to consider this population while thinking about a community’s housing needs, because people with disabilities often need

Table 3: Age Distribution of Watertown Residents with a Disability	
Age	Percent of age group with a disability
Under 17	4.8%
18 to 64	7.1%
64 to 74	22.2%
Over 75	50.7%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2020-2024.

housing that is accessible or which includes supportive services. Of Watertown’s population, 6.0% have an ambulatory difficulty, 2.8% have a self-care difficulty, and 5.2% have an independent living difficulty. In addition, such households are more likely to be economically vulnerable. Approximately 22% of Watertown residents with a disability live below the poverty line, compared to 7.5% of the population at large. (ACS 5-Year Estimates 2020–2024).

The percentage of those with a disability steeply increases with age, which suggests that with Watertown’s growing 60+ population, this factor remains important for the City to consider in its housing policy. The growing share of adults over the age of 40 also suggests that the share of older adults will continue to increase over the next decades.

⁹ The most common disabilities are: difficulty with independent living, cognitive, ambulatory, hearing, difficulty with self-care, and vision.

5. Household Income

The median household income in Watertown is estimated at \$126,265, slightly below the median for Middlesex County as a whole (\$130,848) (ACS, 5-year estimates, 2020-2024). Median household income, however, obscures the very real differences between households in Watertown and in our region.

The age of the head of household strongly predicts median income. The median income for households

Table 4: Age and Median Income Among Watertown Residents	
Head of Household Age	Household Median Income
15-24 years	\$76,161
65 years and over	\$77,060

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2020– 2024.

headed by persons younger than 25, and older than 65 is almost half the City-wide median.

Race and Ethnicity also impact median income. In Middlesex County, the median household income for Black or African American households is 65% (\$84,945) of the county-wide median (\$130,847), and the median household income for Hispanic or Latino households is 70% (\$91,163). White households have a median income 4.5% higher (\$136,859) than the county median. (ACS 5-Year Estimates 2020-2024).

Living as a female alone with children is a strong predictor of lower median income. The median household income for a single-parent female household is less than one-third the

median for all family households (\$61,224 v. \$204,231). Most single-parent households are single female headed, comprising 19.2% (1,692) of Watertown family households.

Finally, as is true in many Massachusetts communities, there is a significant difference between the incomes of renters and homeowners in Watertown. The median

Table 5: Household Income Distribution for Watertown Renters	
Household Income	Percent of Households
\$0 -- 24,999	16.0%
\$25,000 -- 49,999	9.0%
\$50,000 -- 74,999	8.8%
\$75,000 -- 99,999	13.9%
\$100,000 --\$149,999	18.1%
\$150,000 +	34.3%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2020– 2024.

income of renter households in Watertown was estimated at \$105,360, while the median for owner households was estimated at \$144,712. A

significant portion of renter households have very modest incomes. Approximately 25% of these households are estimated to have incomes of less than \$50,000 annually and about 16% have incomes of less than \$25,000.

A significant percentage of Watertown households fall within the income limits used for determining eligibility for affordable housing programs.¹⁰ The income limits used for most federal and state housing assistance programs are as follows:

- Extremely low-income households (ELI) – Earn at or less than 30% of area median income (AMI), adjusted for household size¹¹
- Very low-income households (VLI) –between 30% and 50% of AMI
- Low-income households (LI) –between 50% and 80% of AMI

In addition, households with incomes from 80% to 100% of area median income are considered “Moderate-income households (MI)” and are eligible for community housing that is funded through the Community Preservation Act (CPA). However, units subsidized for households at this income level are not eligible for inclusion on the Subsidized Housing Inventory.¹²

The percentage of households in Watertown earning less than 80% of area median is about 38.1%. An additional 9.6% of households in Watertown qualify for moderate-income housing. The share of households eligible for affordable housing in Watertown is significant and similar to surrounding communities¹³ but smaller than the state-wide percentages.

¹⁰ While the starting point for these income limits is area median income data from the U.S. Census, there are many adjustments made by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). One cannot use the income distribution discussed earlier to determine the percentage of Watertown households falling into the HUD categories identified here.

¹¹ Income limits differ by household size because that income must cover the costs of more household members as the household grows in size. For example, 30% of AMI for a one-person household is \$34,750 while 30% of AMI for a four-person household is \$49,600 (FY2025 HUD income limits).

¹² The Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) is used to determine whether a community has met Chapter 40B's requirement that 10% of each community's year-round housing be deed-restricted affordable housing. Chapter 40B is discussed further at Section IIA5.

¹³ The WestMetro HOME Consortium's Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing puts the percentage at 31.5% for its 13 communities (including Watertown). <http://www.newtonma.gov/civicax/filebank/documents/107601> (11/24/20).

Table 6: Households by Qualifying Housing Income Limits					
	ELI Households (<30% AMI)	VLI Households (30-50% AMI)	LI Households (50-80% AMI)	Total ELI, VLI & LI Households	MI (80-100% AMI) Households
Watertown: # of Households	2,085	1,315	2,685	6,085	1,400
Watertown: % of all Households	13.1%	8.2%	16.8%	38.1%	8.7%
Massachusetts: # of Households	444,630	308,665	414,130	1,167,425	269,610
Massachusetts: % of all Households	16.2%	11.2%	15.1%	42.5%	9.8%

Source: 2018-2022, Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy Data.

Using a four-person household as the benchmark, an “Extremely Low Income” family is earning at or less than \$49,600 and a “Very Low Income” family is earning \$82,700 (FY2025 HUD income limits). To put these income levels in context, many of the wage earners in households in the “Extremely Low Income” and “Very Low Income” tiers work in healthcare support, food preparation and service, and other major low wage occupations.¹⁴

6. Destination and Origins of Watertown Workers and Residents

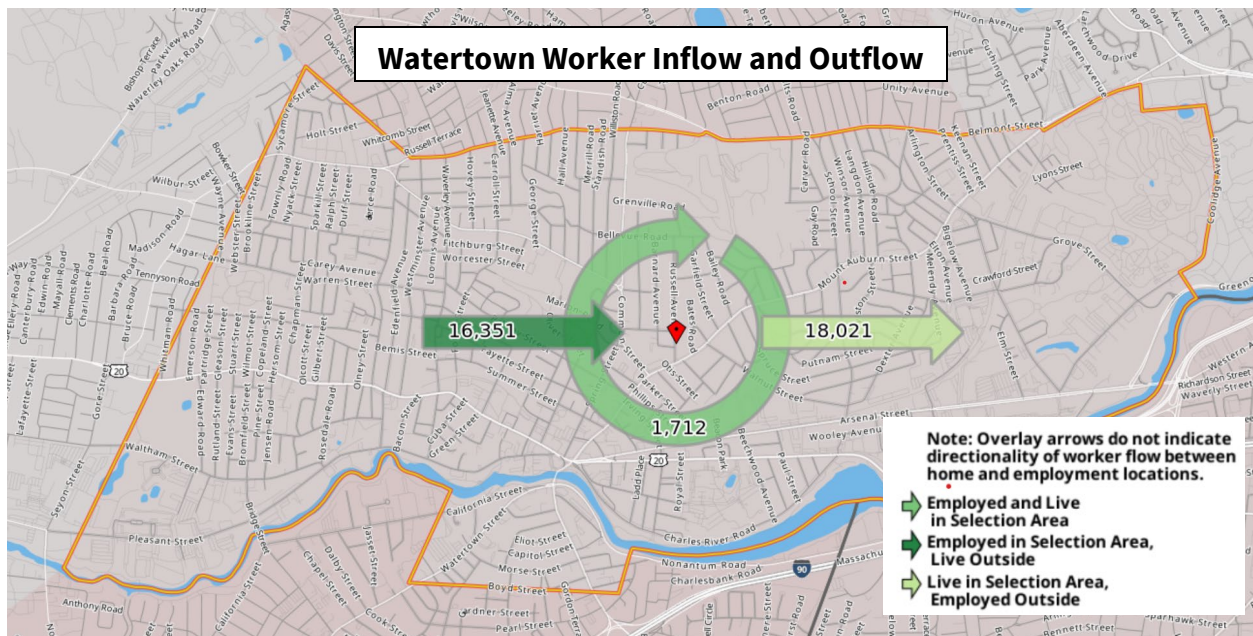
2023 U.S. Census Bureau economic data shows that Watertown is a small net generator of employment in the region. Approximately 18,063 workers are employed in Watertown full or part-time, while 18,021 Watertown residents are employed outside the City. Of the 18,063 people employed in Watertown, 9.5% live and work in the City. The other 90.5% live outside the City, and many are residents of adjacent communities. More than a quarter of all Watertown employees live in Boston, Belmont, Cambridge, Newton, or Waltham. Watertown residents are also mostly employed in or near the City. Approximately 8.7% of Watertown residents are employed full or part time in Watertown, and 55.6% are employed in an

¹⁴ Healthcare support, which employs almost 200,000 workers in the state, has a mean annual wage of \$44,900. Other major occupations with low wages include food preparation and service at \$42,040; building and grounds/maintenance at \$47,220; personal care and service at \$46,570; transportation at \$40,930; and production at \$51,470. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, May 2024 State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates for Massachusetts.

adjacent community. The single largest destinations for Watertown commuters are Boston (29.1%), Cambridge (13.3%), and Watertown (8.7%).

The largest industries by employment in Watertown are Professional, Scientific, and Technical Service (4,177), Health Care and Social Assistance (2,293), Retail (2,131), and Educational Services (1,705). Almost 70% of people employed in Watertown earn more than \$3,333 per month (\$39,996+ per year). The largest employing industries for Watertown residents are Professional, Scientific, and Technical Service (3,406), Health Care and Social Assistance (3,179), Educational Services (2,761), and Retail Trade (1,470). Over 72% of employed Watertown residents earn more than \$3,333 per month. (Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics Data, 2023).

Figure 4



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics EHD Data 2023

B. Housing Characteristics and Trends

1. Housing Unit Type

Most of Watertown’s land area is occupied by one- and two-family homes. Approximately 27.5% (4,724) of the City’s housing units are single-family homes,¹⁵ and an additional 34.7% (5,969) are 2-family homes. The housing stock includes a significant percentage of larger apartment and condo buildings. Approximately 7.9% of units (1,366) are in 3-4 unit buildings. The remaining 29.9% (5,147) of units are in buildings with 5 or more units.

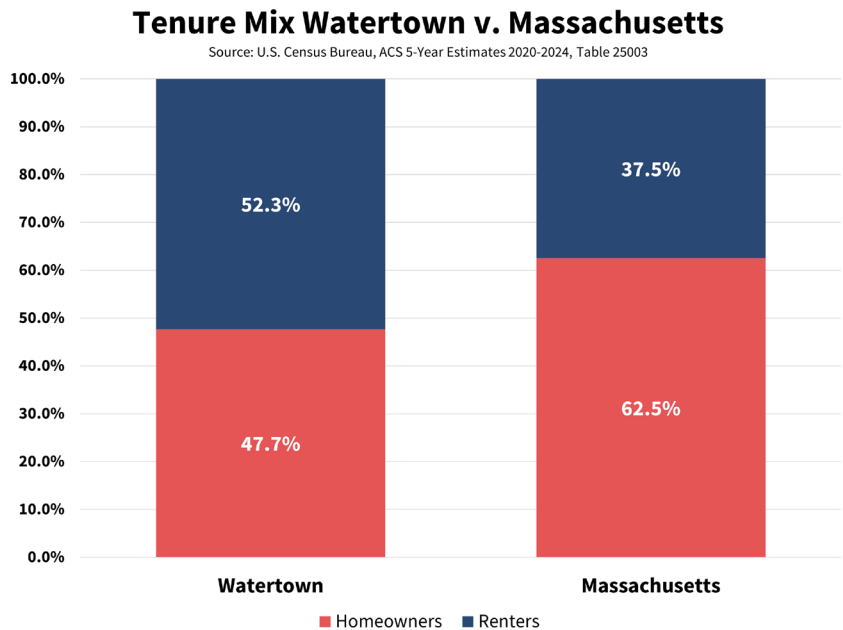
Many of the larger apartment and condo buildings have been added since the Great Recession, as discussed in Section IIB below.

Just under 53% of the Watertown housing stock is renter-occupied. This is higher than the state average and higher than in the previous

Housing Plan (48.4%). The increase in rental households is a common trend over the past decade in Watertown, and across many other Greater Boston communities.

Average household size fell consistently since 2000 and is now estimated at 2.15 persons per household (ACS 5-year Estimates 2020-2024). This is consistent with a similar decline at the state-wide level, though Watertown’s average household size remains smaller than the state average (2.44), and smaller than many surrounding communities.¹⁶ The median family size

Figure 5



¹⁵ The figure for single-family homes includes both single-family detached homes and single-family attached homes, sometimes referred to as townhomes or rowhouses.

¹⁶ The average household size in Middlesex County is 2.49. Watertown’s average household size is smaller than Arlington, Belmont, Newton, Waltham, Brookline, and Boston, but larger than Cambridge.

has also declined over time, though it remains higher than the median household size at 2.8 persons.¹⁷ As suggested by the relatively low median size, a large majority (90.0%) of families with children have two or fewer children, while only 10% have three or more.

2. Age of Housing Stock

About 78% of the housing in Watertown was built prior to 1979 and over 44% was built before World War II. This is a much larger share than in similar communities nearby, or statewide. The age of the housing stock can present challenges related to accessibility, the presence of lead paint and pipes, and energy efficiency, among other considerations.

Table 7: Year Built							
	Built 2020 or Later	Built 2010 to 2019	Built 2000 to 2009	Built 1980 to 1999	Built 1960 to 1979	Built 1940 to 1959	Built 1939 or Earlier
Watertown	1.3%	6.3%	5.5%	9.3%	14.4%	18.9%	44.4%
Massachusetts	1.0%	6.2%	7.1%	18.2%	20.9%	16.0%	30.5%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2020 – 2024.

3. Subsidized Housing Stock

Watertown has 1,263 units of affordable housing included on the State’s Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI). The SHI is managed by the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC), successor to the Department of Housing and Community Development. These units meet the requirements of the state’s affordable housing law (Chapter 40B) and are operated and maintained as affordable through long-term deed restrictions, covenants, regulatory and operating agreements, or other restrictions. Occupants of this housing must meet income eligibility requirements, and the government regulates rents or sales prices. This figure includes the 589 public housing units operated by the Watertown Housing Authority.¹⁸ It does not include an additional 28 inclusionary units

¹⁷ The difference in median size between households and families is due to the Census defining a family as a group or two or more people related by birth, marriage, or adoption residing together, while a household is defined as all individuals who inhabit a housing unit, regardless of their relationship. Therefore, by definition families do not count people living alone or roommate arrangements.

¹⁸ There are 539 state-funded public housing units and 50 federally-funded units. The Watertown Housing Authority is proposing to convert the 50 federal units into Section 8 project-based vouchers.

under construction or recently built.¹⁹

Watertown has complied with Chapter 40B through one of the two statutory benchmarks. The most common metric is for at least 10% of the year-round housing units to be deed-restricted “affordable” units for households earning up to 80% of area median income. Watertown is presently at 7.46%.²⁰ The alternative metric is for 1.5% of its land area to be devoted to affordable housing as defined in Chapter 40B. EOHLC agreed in December 2019 that Watertown has dedicated 2.07% of land area to affordable housing and, therefore, has met the “General Land Area Minimum.”

Although there are affordable units in Watertown on the Commonwealth’s Expiring Use Inventory, these units are not presently at risk. Brigham House (46 assisted living units) is covered by a regulatory agreement and a local permit restricting use of the property. Saint Joseph Hall (25 units) is a Community Housing Development Organization and HOME-assisted property.

Watertown’s affordable units vary in the type of household they are targeted to support. The 589 public housing units serve as a safety net for seniors and families with the lowest incomes (327 and 228 units, respectively, as well as 35 units for individuals with special needs). On the other end, the rental and ownership units created through Watertown’s inclusionary zoning ordinance are based on area median income and not the particular tenant’s income. This has two important implications. First, since properties require new tenants in affordable units to show ability to pay rent, this means that only a narrow band of households can afford the 80% AMI and 65% AMI units.²¹ Second, if a tenant’s income does not keep up with area median income, it will be increasingly difficult to pay rent increases. Overall, 47% of our subsidized units are in public housing, 24% are inclusionary units in market rate

¹⁹ Affordable units under construction include 21 at 104 Main Street and 7 at 101 Morse Street (still operating with a temporary certificate of occupancy).

²⁰ The year-round housing count as of 2020, used in the SHI calculation throughout the decade, was 16,936 units.

²¹ For example, using 2025 maximum rents for a one-person household, if that person’s income is \$60,000, they do not qualify for a 65% AMI unit, but will have difficulty paying for a 80% AMI unit that assumes an income of \$67,400.

developments, and 29% are in other categories.²² The number of inclusionary units is certain to grow while it is unlikely that the number of public housing units will significantly increase because federal and state policy has shifted away from that model.



Rendering of Willow Park Redevelopment

Notwithstanding the financial limits on growth in public housing units, the Watertown Housing Authority (WHA) has been working to improve its existing housing and expand the supply of affordable units. Recently, WHA partnered with Preservation of Affordable Housing (POAH) to redevelop WHA's Willow Park property. The redevelopment will replace the existing 60 public housing units with new, modernized public housing units and add an additional 78 units of affordable housing affordable to households earning up to 60% and 80% AMI. WHA has also received local funding for the creation of a new group home at 103 Nichols Ave,

²² Most of these are in 100% affordable developments such as St. Joseph Hall or Brigham House, but 15 are single family homes.

which will provide supportive housing for 5 adults with disabilities. Both of these projects received critical local funding (the CPC recommended a \$6 million commitment for Willow Park and up to a \$1.5 million commitment for 103 Nichols Avenue; both these recommendations were approved by the City Council).

Appendix C is a complete list of units currently listed on the Subsidized Housing Inventory.

4. Recent Housing Production

Recent development in Watertown has been predominantly either two-family homes or large-scale development of 20 or more units. Based on building and demolition permits issued over the last five years, the number of two-family and large multi-family homes has increased, while Watertown has seen a net loss of single-family homes. Between 2020 and 2025, Watertown permitted a net increase of 295 units. Of those new units, 25% were in two-family homes, and the remaining 79.6% were in large multi-family buildings (Watertown Building and Demolition Permits). The creation of two-family homes has been through a mix of new construction, and the conversion of single-family homes into two-family homes.

Over the last 25 years, Watertown has seen significant multifamily development, concentrated along the Arsenal Street and Pleasant Street corridors. Much of the multi-family development has been on²³ formerly commercial or industrial parcels. While several projects were started prior to the Great Recession,²⁴ most of this development occurred after the Commonwealth emerged from that slump. In the last 13 years, 14 projects representing 1,795 units have been completed²⁵ and another 142 units are under construction.²⁶ The Watertown Square re-zoning in November 2024 has helped trigger a new round of proposed

²³ 33 Mt. Auburn Street (40 rental units) and 108 Water Street (52 condominium units).

²⁴ Completed prior to 2011: Archstone/Watertown Square Apartments (134 units) and Riverbank Lofts (57). Repton Place (179) was under construction before 2011.

²⁵ Construction began 2011 or later: Charlesbank Residences (44), Watertown Mews (206), Riverbend on the Charles (170), Alta/Bell Watertown (155), St. Joseph Hall (25), The Gables (296), Riverpark Lofts (65), Union Market/Elan (282), WaterMills (99) and 385-393 Pleasant (58), Arsenal Yards (302), 101 North Beacon (28), 166 Main Street (34), and 101 Morse Street (36).

²⁶ 53 Pleasant Street/104 Main Street (137 rental units and five renovated townhomes) is under construction.

development, with two projects totaling 92 new units permitted, and multiple projects in the pre-application pipeline.

Watertown’s increasing housing production has also led to a number of new affordable units entering the market. New developments brought online since 2020 have created 99 new units of inclusionary housing for the City, with more than a dozen additional units receiving zoning approval in 2025. Development in Watertown is expected to continue, as 2024 zoning changes in Watertown Square and the passage of the Transit Oriented Development Overlay have created considerable residential development interest.

Nearly all of the new units built since 2012 are rental. The bedroom mix has tended toward 1BR and 2BR units. Both are consistent with regional trends. Millennials and Baby Boomers have increased demand for smaller apartments (fewer bedrooms and less square footage) .

Table 8: Net Unit Change Based on Building and Demolition Permits							
Year	Single-family Units	2-family Units	3-4 family Unit	5-19 Units	20+ Units	Total Multi-family Units	Net Total Units
2020	-12	14	0	0	64	78	66
2021	-9	18	0	0	0	18	9
2022	-6	12	0	0	34	46	40
2023	-5	10	-3	0	0	7	2
2024	-6	14	0	0	137	151	145
2025	1	6	0	-11	0	-5	-4
Total	-37	74	-3	-11	235	295	258

Source: City of Watertown Building and Demolition Permits.



166 Main Street

C. Housing Market Characteristics

1. Rent and Home Price Trends

Like all of Greater Boston, Watertown has experienced a significant increase in the price of both rental and homeownership housing over the last 20 years and particularly since 2020. Most researchers have agreed that housing costs have been rising in the region because of population and job growth, changes in preferences for household size and location, and housing production that has not kept up with this demand.²⁷ Since 2020, housing prices began to rise at an even higher rate than pre-pandemic, as construction, materials, and interest rates all increased. Rising housing costs put pressure on households at most income

²⁷ See, e.g., The Greater Boston Housing Report Card 2019, *Supply, Demand and the Challenge of Local Control*, <https://www.tbf.org/news-and-insights/reports/2019/june/greater-boston-housing-report-card-2019>; Urban Institute, *Housing and Housing Finance* June 2018, <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/bostons-housing-market-three-charts>; Glaeser EL, Ward BA. *The Causes and Consequences of Land Use Regulation: Evidence from Greater Boston* (2006).

levels throughout the region. Many households must rent for the long-term, as they are unable to buy. Households that cannot afford to rent or buy where they presently live will look for communities that have historically proven more affordable. This, in turn, has increased demand in those more affordable communities (such as Watertown).

Based on 2024 ACS 5-year estimates, over 85% of Watertown renters were paying over \$1,500 in gross monthly rent, significantly more than just five years before (76%).

Table 9: Gap between Income and Price Facing Watertown Renters Trying to Buy			
Unit Type	Price Affordable to Renter Earning Median Household Income	Median Sales Price (2024)	Price Gap
Single-family Home	\$435,000	\$850,000	\$415,000
Condominium	\$370,250	\$675,000	\$304,750

Sources: City of Watertown Assessor’s Records FY2026. Affordable purchase prices based on housing costs not to exceed 30% of the monthly income for the median household’s income. Monthly mortgage payments for a 30-year fixed rate mortgage assume 6.31% interest, a 5% downpayment, \$1,500 in annual home insurance, and yearly property taxes of \$12.20 per \$1,000 of value. Condominium costs include a \$500 monthly HOA fee.

At the same time, the median sales price of homes in Watertown has increased substantially. By one measure—median home value as estimated by the U.S. Census—values have risen 25% from \$559,700 in the 2019 5-year estimate to \$784,600 in the 2024 5-year estimate. Redfin estimated the November 2025 median sale price for a single-family home at \$815,000 and the median price for a condominium at \$655,250.²⁸

How unattainable is homeownership in Watertown to a renter? The table below shows that there is a substantial gap between what a household with median income can afford and what is available to them. This “price gap” means even a relatively affluent individual or family must stay in the rental market (or look elsewhere). Even with this large price gap, Watertown is considered more affordable for buying a home than many communities in the region.²⁹ A high price gap for renters forces more households to remain in the rental market,

²⁸ The U.S. Census and firms like Redfin estimate value or sales price. While actual Watertown data could be compiled or purchased and be more accurate, it would not change the conclusion that home prices are rising substantially.

²⁹ Based on an analysis in WestMetro Consortium’s 2026-2030 Consolidated Plan, Watertown’s price gap was 11th for single families and 9th for condos within the 13 communities using 2023 Warren Group sales data.

increasing demand and limiting supply that would have historically become available to younger and lower-income renters as higher-income renters transitioned into homeownership.

2. Housing Cost Burden and Affordability Analysis

One of the most common measures of housing need is whether a household is cost-burdened, i.e. whether more than 30% of their gross income is spent on housing.³⁰ About 39.3% of Watertown renters and 27.7% of owners are cost burdened. A growing portion of households in Watertown are also considered ‘severely cost-burdened,’ paying more than 50% of their monthly income on housing expenses. In 2024, 20.3% of renters and 11.3% of homeowners were severely cost burdened.³¹

Because cost burden is a direct reflection of household income, the impact of being cost-burdened is more acute for lower-income households that have fewer financial resources available to meet other necessary household expenses (food, transportation, health care, student loans, etc.). While households are cost-burdened across all income groups, most striking is the very high incidence of housing cost burden among those with the lowest incomes. Between 70 and 80% of Watertown residents at the two lowest income levels are cost-burdened.

³⁰ As discussed earlier, cost burden is measured as the share of household income spent on housing, whether total ownership costs or total rental costs. Households spending more than 30% of their gross income on housing are considered **cost-burdened**; households spending more than 50% of their gross income on housing are considered **severely cost-burdened**.

³¹ U.S. Census Bureau, Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy Data (CHAS), 2018-2022.

Table 10: Cost Burden Incidence by Household Income Group for Renter Households						
	ELI	VLI	LI	MI	HI	Total
# renting households in income group	1,540	880	1,385	630	3,340	7,770
# of cost-burdened households in income group	1,110	700	765	220	130	2,925
% of cost-burdened households in income group	72.1%	79.5%	55.2%	34.9%	3.9%	37.6%

Source: Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy Data, 2018 – 2022

Table 11: Cost Burden Incidence by Household Income Group for Ownership Households						
	ELI	VLI	LI	MI	HI	Total
# households in income group	760	415	765	750	5,215	7,910
# of cost-burdened households in income group	605	335	295	400	630	2,265
% of cost-burdened households in income group	79.6%	80.7%	38.6%	53.3%	12.1%	28.6%

Source: Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy Data, 2018 – 2022



The Apartments at Coolidge School

II. DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS, TRENDS, FUNDING SOURCES AND CONSTRAINTS

A. Residential Zoning

Residential uses are permitted in Watertown either by right, or through a special permit process, within 11 zoning districts. The majority of this land allows only for single-family and two-family structures. However, Watertown has been notable in Greater Boston for creating new and substantial multifamily zoning districts. The Arsenal Street and Pleasant Street corridor districts have been cited as leading examples of planned and well-located “growth districts.”³² The Watertown Square mixed-use districts allow multifamily housing and the “by right” portion of these districts substantially exceed the multifamily unit capacity required by the Commonwealth’s MBTA Communities law.

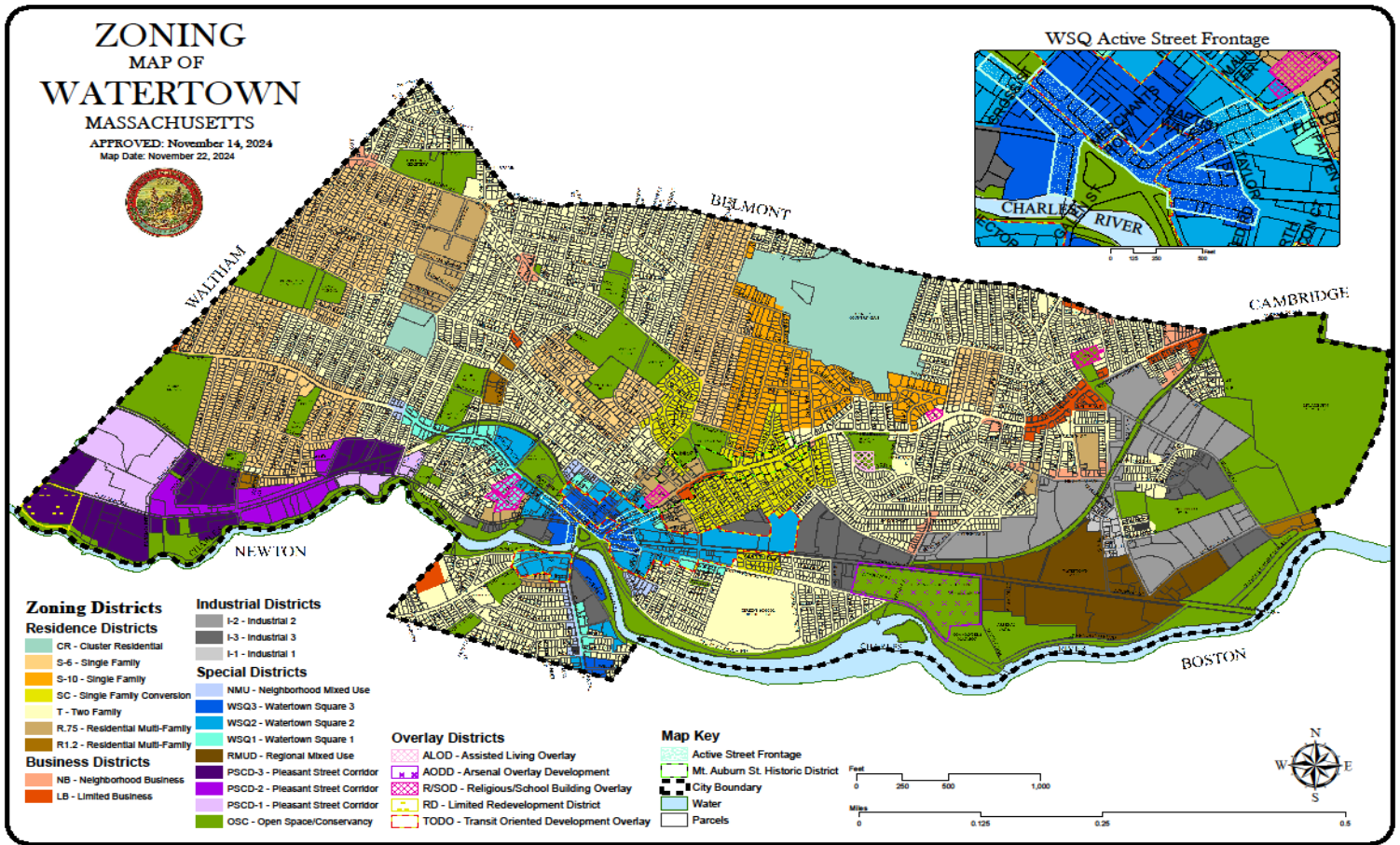
The zoning districts that allow housing are described below, followed by separate subsections that cover parking requirements, design guidelines and standards, and inclusionary housing requirements that apply to some or all of these districts.



Brigham House

³² Amy Dain, The State of Multi-Family Zoning in Greater Boston, 93-95 (June 2019) <https://ma-smartgrowth.org/resources/resourcesreports-books/>.

Figure 6



1. Single- and Two-Family Zoning Districts

The single-family S-6 and S-10 zoning districts are intended only for single family residential structures. The S-6 district, which sets a minimum lot area of 6,000 sf per dwelling unit, allows for greater densities (approximately 7.25 units per acre) than the S-10 district, which sets a minimum lot area of 10,000 sf per dwelling unit (approximately 4.4 units per acre).³³

The two-family zoning district (T) makes up nearly a third of all land in Watertown and allows for single and two-family dwelling units with a minimum lot area of 5,000 sf (approximately 14 units per acre).

³³ There is also a Cluster Residential District which has an intensity of use similar to the S-10, but is limited to two areas (Oakley Country Club and the former Rosary grounds).

The SC zoning district allows single-family conversion to a two-family structure and new two-family structures, with a Special Permit.

Since nearly all parcels within these districts have already been developed, most of the recent activity in these districts has been either intensifying the existing uses (e.g., conversions to two-family, dormers and additions) or tear downs of single-families within the T zoning district on lots where housing is allowed (5000 sf. or larger with 50 feet of frontage). In the last five years, over 30 lots with single-family homes have been converted to two-family uses by demolition or renovation.

2. Residential Zoning Districts that allow Multifamily Housing

There are two residential zoning districts within Watertown that allow multifamily housing. The R.75 allows multi-family development up to .75 FAR, and the R1.2 allows for a higher density multi-family residential up to 1.2 FAR. However, although these are multi-family districts, only single- and two-family development is allowed as of right. Any development of 3 or more units requires a special permit,– converting an existing structure to a 3-family dwelling requires a special permit, and new construction of 3 or more units requires a special permit with site plan review.



Housing along Summer Street

3. Pleasant Street Corridor District (PSCD)

The Pleasant Street Corridor District (PSCD) was adopted in 2008 to encourage redevelopment of this industrial corridor with more focus on urban design and placemaking.³⁴ A key goal within the corridor is to “facilitate a mix of uses including residential, office, research and development...” and it allows for multifamily residential of 4+ units by special permit with site plan review. After this area resulted in significant residential development without a mix of uses, amendments were adopted in 2015 to encourage several commercial clusters along the corridor.

The amendments created three sub-districts: PSCD-1 allows residential use with changes in dimensional and other requirements; PSCD-2 requires residential projects to include a commercial component of at least 15% of the gross floor area; and PSCD-3 allows for a mix of commercial uses and does not allow for residential use. The base zoning for PSCD-1 provides for FAR of 1.0, with a maximum of up to 1.5 by special permit if certain development incentives are met. The base zoning for PSCD-2 allows FAR between 1.0 and 2.0 if the development incentives are achieved. Both sub-districts require a minimum of 1000 sf/unit.

The PSCD offers adjustments to dimensional requirements and/or parking requirements to projects that achieve one or more of six specified goals: (1) a minimum of 50% of the designated open space is “publicly usable,” (2) a “significant contribution” for connections to the bike path along the Charles River, (3) underground or structured parking, (4) a demonstration of reduced demand for cars (for example, by offering sheltered bicycle parking, participating in a shuttle service, or constructing an on-site bus stop) (5) “significant conformance” with design and environmental sustainability guidelines, and (6) “development of desirable uses” at “key opportunity sites” designated in the corridor plan.

³⁴ While residential had been allowed in the I-3 corridor by special permit since 1988, the PSCD substantially changed the applicable zoning.

4. Regional Mixed-Use District (RMUD)

The Regional Mixed-Use District was created in 2016 for “transformative development” with a “mix of larger and smaller scale retail, office, hospitality, multifamily residential and research and development uses” in a “major gateway.” The district is intended to be of sufficient scale and range of uses to serve regional demand. With respect to housing, the district is intended to provide a “continuum of housing options” with “opportunities for lower- and middle-income households” as one of the particular goals.

While development in the RMUD ordinarily requires a special permit,³⁵ applicants may seek a Master Plan Special Permit with site plan review if the proposed project site is over 2 acres. Under this alternative process, there is approval of a proposed master plan which determines land uses (including mass and scale) and then site review as particular elements are ready for permitting. Applicants may propose a FAR of up to 2.0. There is no minimum lot size per dwelling unit.

5. Watertown Square Mixed-Use Districts

In November 2024, the City created four new mixed-use districts in the Watertown Square area. The City used a “form-based” approach in these districts, with each differing in scale and form requirements. The three core districts are Watertown Square (WSQ) 1, 2 and 3, while the Neighborhood Mixed Use (NMU) was designed as a transitional district.³⁶ WSQ 3 is the most intensive, with a maximum building height of five “plus” floors/82 feet for a flat roof.³⁷ The maximum heights in the other districts are: WSQ 2 four plus floors/66 feet; WSQ 1 three plus floors/53 feet; and NMU three floors/38 feet. The new zoning eliminated the former Central Business (CB) district. As discussed elsewhere, the new zoning included bonuses for affordable housing developments in these districts.

³⁵ There are some by-right uses, such as a drive-in bank or light industry of less than 4,000 sf. However, none of these uses can exceed a 1.0 FAR without seeking a special permit or Master Plan Special Permit.

³⁶ The maximum building height for the NMU and WSQ districts does not include rooftop mechanicals. Mechanicals must be set back at least 10 feet from any façade, must be adequately screened, and may be no taller than the number of feet set back from all façades or 15 feet, whichever is less.

³⁷ The “plus” floor has a seven-foot stepback from the building perimeter. The maximum height of a building with a pitched roof is higher.

The new zoning included a significant Transit-Oriented Development Overlay District that allows multifamily housing by right. The overlay consists of portions of the three WSQ zones and forms an approved MBTA Communities law district. The multifamily housing unit capacity of the TODO District is 3,754 units, above the 1,701 unit requirement under the MBTA Communities law.

6. Other Relevant Zoning Districts

There are two business zoning districts in Watertown – Neighborhood Business (NB), and Limited Business (LB). The NB and LB districts allow multi-family residential of 3 or more units by special permit, and 4+ units by special permit with site plan. All business districts also allow mixed-use structures with up to three residential units by special permit, or mixed-use structures with four or more units by special permit with site plan review.

Multi-family and mixed-use residential development are allowed in the I-3 zoning District by special permit and with site plan review.

The Assisted Living Overlay District (ALOD) allows assisted living residences and other permitted uses at an FAR of 1.0 and a minimum lot size per unit of 1,200 square feet on all development within the overlay district. The Revitalization Overlay District (RO) is a “floating” district that can be applied by special permit to a mixed-use or residential project with a minimum lot size of 10,000 square feet. The maximum FAR is 2.0 for a residential development. So far, the RO has only been applied to parcels around the northern end of the Galen Street corridor.



Watertown Square Apartments

7. Parking Requirements

Except in the new WSQ and NMU Districts, the parking requirements for residential uses are:

- One and two-family homes: 2/unit or 3/unit if more than 4 bedrooms.
- Town and rowhouses: Minimum of 2/unit and maximum of 2.5/unit.
- Multi-family: Minimum of .75 spaces for every studio unit, 1 per 1-BR apartment, 1.5 per 2-BR apartment and 2 per 3+BR apartment. Maximums are 1/studio, 1.25/1BR, 1.75/2BR and 2.25/3BR+.
- Mixed Use: sum of commercial and residential requirements.

The minimum parking requirement for residential uses in the WSQ and NMU Districts is .5 spaces per unit, while the maximum is 1/unit. There is also a parking reduction in these districts for affordable developments (discussed at Section IIB).

The new zoning included a new special permit section allowing flexibility in the minimum and maximum parking requirements based on specified criteria. For minimum parking requirements to be reduced, the criteria include evidence of: reduced parking demand;

shared/offsite parking; the ability to increase the number of residential units with lower requirements; and management that serves to minimize use of on-street parking.

Parking requirements, if excessive, can be a barrier to housing production, as they may decrease the buildable area on a given lot, or create need for structured parking, which is expensive to build. In July 2023, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council released a study done with the WestMetro HOME Consortium on parking utilization rates at new residential developments. The study found a 66% parking utilization rate at the 17 developments built in Watertown since 2000. Over the last 10 years, the City's parking requirements for multifamily development have been substantially reduced and become more flexible.

8. Design Guidelines and Standards

Watertown adopted a comprehensive set of Design Guidelines and Standards in June 2015. The intent is to “enhance building, parking and public realm interface” along the major corridors and Watertown and Coolidge Squares. The City is in the process of formulating design guidelines focused on so-called “missing middle” housing types (smaller multifamily developments). Design standards are increasingly recognized as a critical tool to achieve quality and a more holistic review of new development. It is also important to monitor whether the standards or process used become a development constraint.

9. Inclusionary Zoning

Watertown's zoning ordinance has included a provision for inclusionary housing (Section 5.07) since 1989. The purpose of the ordinance is to encourage the expansion and improvement of Watertown's housing stock; provide housing choices for a diversity of households; prevent displacement of low- and moderate-income residents; provide opportunities for mixed-use development; and more. Inclusionary requirements have increased over time, with the most recent changes in December 2016.

Currently, the inclusionary provision requires all new residential or mixed-use developments with six or more residential units to provide deed-restricted affordable units. Developers of smaller projects (6-10 units) may provide units on site or they can provide a payment-in-lieu

of units.³⁸ Developments with 10+ units must provide units on site. Density bonuses are available to developers who target lower income households. The chart below sets forth the particular requirements.³⁹

Table 12: Watertown’s Inclusionary Zoning Requirements			
Total Project Size	Affordable Units	Rental Price	Ownership Price
1 to 5 units	0	N/A	N/A
6 to 10 units	Option for cash in-lieu payment		
6 to 19 units	12.5%	80% AMI	80% AMI
20 and over units	15.0%	No less than 5% of the total units at 65% AMI 10% of total units at 80% AMI	80% AMI

Note: Current HUD income limits are listed in **Appendix B**.

Affordable units must be of comparable size to the market rate units, within a range of 20%. The affordable units also must be comparable to market-rate units with respect to quality of construction, energy efficiency, and exterior finishes and to “base” market-rate units with respect to interior finishes. The deed-restrictions must be permanent.

B. Development Trends

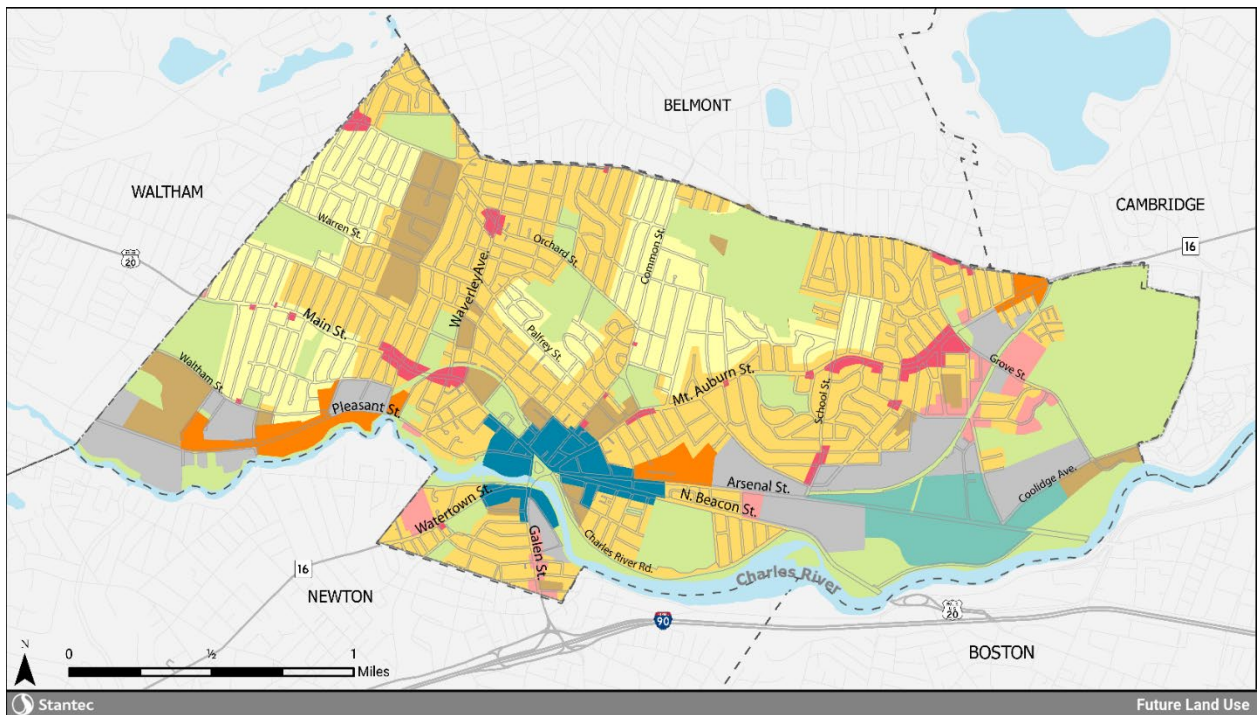
With significant residential development since 2012 and an established life science cluster, it has become hard for affordable developers to find suitable parcels. Over the last three years, the Watertown Affordable Housing Trust has actively searched for affordable housing opportunities. Based on an internal review, City staff has reached out to multiple property owners and used “on-call” professionals to assess promising sites. While there have been useful discussions, this initiative has underscored the need for incentives promoting affordable development.

³⁸ The payment must equal the applicable total development cost/unit in DHCD’s Qualified Allocation Plan.

³⁹ Inclusionary requirements are somewhat different for projects with assisted or independent living units. For independent living units, the project size thresholds and affordable unit requirements are the same but 80% AMI applies to all such projects. For assisted living units, there are different size tiers and required percentages, and units serving those with dementia and/or skilled nursing are exempt.

Competition for land in Cambridge—driven by the Kendall Square life sciences cluster—led city leaders there to enact a city-wide affordable housing overlay district in October 2020 with more advantageous dimensional and permitting requirements for 100% affordable proposals. The Watertown Square re-zoning included a targeted version of this approach. The zoning provides two bonuses for “affordable developments,” which are defined as projects with 50% or more of the homes deed-restricted affordable units at 80% AMI or lower.⁴⁰ The first incentive, for all affordable developments, is a lower parking ratio (.25/unit). The second incentive is additional building height: one floor if the project is set at an average of 80% AMI or lower, and an additional floor if the average is below 60% of AMI.

Figure 7



Legend

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|
| Community Amenities Schools | High Density Residential | Commercial Mixed-Use | Regional Mixed-Use |
| Low Density Residential | Residential Mixed-Use | Office-Industrial | |
| Medium Density Residential | Neighborhood Commercial | Watertown Square Mixed-Use | |

Source: MassGIS
February 2023
Future Land Use
Watertown, MA



⁴⁰ Developments with that level of affordability require substantial public subsidy and, therefore, have a funding model similar to 100% affordable projects. The 50% threshold allows for the flexibility to include so-called “workforce” housing (typically deed-restricted units at 80 to 100% AMI) and/or market rate units.



104 Main Street Under Construction



101 North Beacon Street

C. Funding Sources for Affordable Housing⁴¹

Other than general funds, existing sources to fund affordable housing are limited. These sources can be divided into two categories: funds that the City controls, and funds that require competitive applications. In the first category, are the following:

- Affordable Housing Trust Fund. The City accumulates funds paid by developers “in lieu of” inclusionary units where the total number of homes in the proposed development are between 6 and 10. There is approximately \$269,000 in this fund.
- City Operating Budget. Since 2022, the City budget has included an annual appropriation of \$250,000 to augment the Affordable Housing Fund. There is currently \$615,000 available from this source.
- Federal HOME Investment Partnerships program. Watertown is allocated around \$110,000/year from the HOME program as a sub-recipient to Newton, which is the lead community in the WestMetro Consortium. The City also has program income totaling around \$120,000 earned through past HOME activity.⁴² HOME funds support building, buying, and/or rehabilitating affordable housing or providing direct rental assistance to low-income people.
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program Income. The City also has program income totaling approximately \$138,000 earned through past CDBG activity. CDBG monies support local housing and economic opportunity initiatives for low and moderate-income households.
- Community Preservation Act (CPA) Funds. Watertown adopted CPA in 2016, allowing the City to raise money for eligible uses through a local property tax surcharge supplemented by a varying state match. The property tax surcharge/state match is

⁴¹ This sub-section describes only the principal funding sources. There are other sources, e.g., pre-development assistance from the Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation (CEDAC), that can be tapped.

⁴² The City has previously used HOME and CDBG funding to provide homebuyer assistance, with the condition that appreciation upon resale is shared with the City. The funds received by the city are termed “program income.”

likely to produce an annual revenue stream above \$3.5 million. The eligible uses are: open space and recreation, historic preservation and community housing. A municipality must reserve 10% of its annual CPA spending for each of the three eligible uses. CPA funds can be used to acquire, create, preserve or support community housing for households with incomes at or below 100% of AMI, or to rehabilitate such housing acquired or created through CPA. As of March 31, 2026, the City's CPA Fund had an "Available Balance" of \$ 19.436 million. This balance includes the "category" reserves for open space and historic preservation.⁴³ Access to CPA funds is highly competitive, with proposed projects chosen by the City's Community Preservation Committee and subject to City Council approval.

- Linkage Fees. In 2023, the City Council approved an affordable housing linkage fee on new, large-scale commercial development. The fee attaches upon permitting but is not collected until after occupancy begins. The fee level changes each year based on cost-of-living data, currently \$11.81/sf. Given the current life sciences market, it is unlikely that the City will begin collecting linkage fees before 2030.

In the second category—funds controlled by outside entities—are the following programs:

- Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) funding. At least once each year, EOHLC announces funding of proposed affordable housing projects after a statewide competition. EOHLC funding decisions usually include allocation of federal and state tax credits, grants, subsidies, and loans. This is the largest single source of affordable housing resources in the state—and the most competitive. EOHLC last awarded affordable housing money to a Watertown project in 2013.⁴⁴

⁴³ There currently are \$2.538 million in reserves for the open space and historic preservation categories. The \$7.5 million in commitments to the Willow Park and 103 Nichols Avenue projects have "depleted" the existing 10% reserve for community housing.

⁴⁴ Metro West Collaborative Development was awarded \$1.6 million in DHCD housing subsidies and \$153,243 in federal Low Income Housing Tax Credits to preserve 25 units of affordable housing at Saint Joseph Hall. As previously noted, the Willow Park project was invited to apply in the 2026 state funding round.

- EOHLC award of federal CDBG money. While most CDBG funds go directly to certain “entitlement” communities—Watertown is not one of them—the state makes awards to other communities through a competitive round each year.
- “Pooled” federal HOME monies. The WestMetro Consortium pools a certain amount of its HOME monies each year and awards this sum to a non-profit developer proposing a project within the 13 Consortium communities. The pooled monies are generally under \$500,000.⁴⁵

D. Natural and Physical Constraints

For the purposes of this Housing Plan, protected open space and natural resources such as wetlands, surface water, and endangered species habitats may be considered as constraints to potential residential development, and will be discussed as such, since their presence on a parcel may render that portion of the property unbuildable, or may require mitigation measures.

1. Wetlands and Floodplains

Wetlands provide floodwater retention, groundwater recharge and wildlife habitat. However, these areas also constrain housing and other development because development activity that occurs in a Wetland Resource Area is subject to state and City wetlands protection requirements. They often cannot be developed, or significant portions cannot.

According to MassGIS data, there are 87 acres of wetlands in Watertown. The majority are the channel of the Charles River and adjacent land, particularly an unnamed island at Charles River Road and Beacon Street, and another area on the border with Boston at the North Beacon Street Bridge. Additional wetland pockets were identified in other locations near Walker Pond (city-owned) on the western edge of the city between Waltham Road and Pleasant Street, and Sawins and Williams Ponds (both privately-owned) in east Watertown at Arlington Street and Coolidge Avenue. Given the limited wetland areas that are privately-

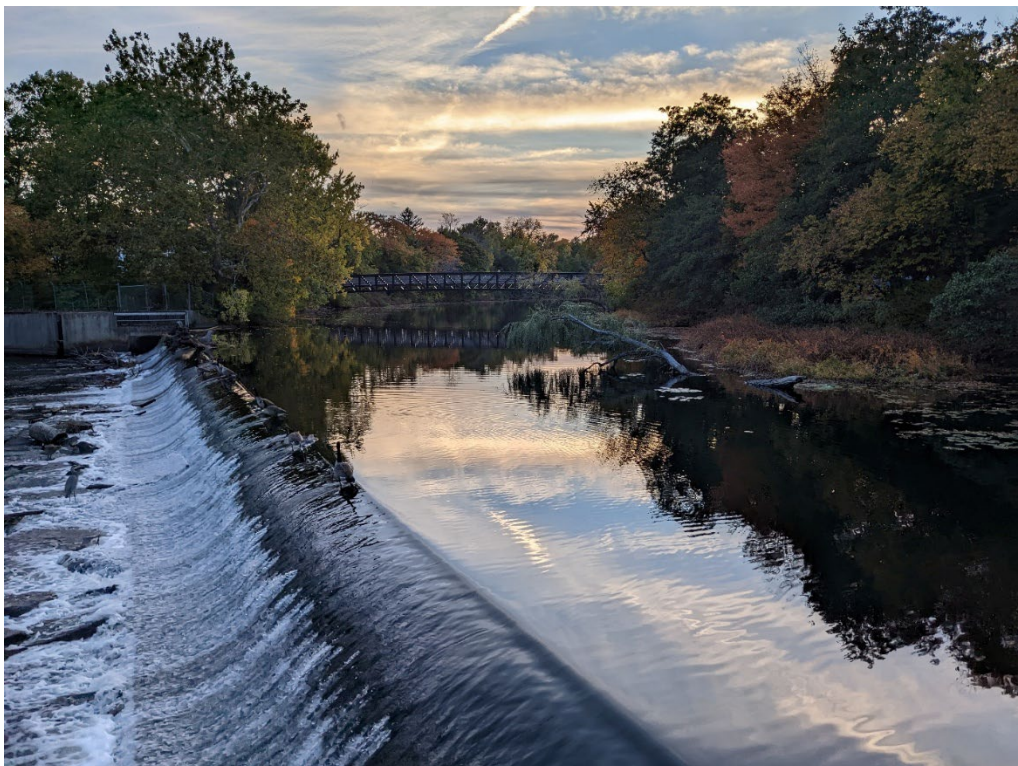
⁴⁵ A Watertown project last received a consolidated pool award in 2022, when the WestMetro HOME Consortium awarded \$224,000 for the St Joseph Hall elevator replacement.

owned within Watertown, they do not act as a significant constraint to residential development.

2. Floodplains and Inland Flooding

Several areas along Watertown's southern border with the Charles River pose 100-year flood hazards. The majority of floodplain affected land is found west of the Watertown Dam with four multi-acre areas between Bacon Street and Paramount Place. The site of the Stop & Shop at the western end of Pleasant Street also includes approximately 11 acres within the 100-year floodplain. East of the Watertown Dam, the 100-year floodplain does not extend beyond the banks of the Charles River with the exception of a section of Greenough Boulevard north of Arsenal Street.

As climate change becomes more severe, Watertown is at risk of increased inland flooding due to extreme storms. Regional efforts are underway to better understand the locations of inland areas most vulnerable to flooding through advanced modeling. This emerging issue may constrain residential development in certain areas of the city or alter how those developments must be designed in order to safeguard inhabitants from flood impacts.



Charles River Greenway at the Watertown Dam

3. Rare and Endangered Species Habitat

Estimated Habitats for Rare Wildlife are regulated under the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act, and any developments within the Habitat must be reviewed under the State's Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. Although the City has no known endangered or threatened species, it is believed that the City includes five potential vernal pools, including three in the Mt. Auburn Cemetery. However, while the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife has identified these sites as potential vernal pools, they are not confirmed and therefore are not protected under Wetland Protection Act regulations.⁴⁶ Vernal pools, which collect water from rain or seasonal flooding, dry up in the later spring and early summer. They provide essential habitat for several species. It is suspected that there may also be undocumented vernal pools near the ponds in the west end of Watertown. However, given the minimal areas noted, endangered species habitats do not act as a significant constraint to residential development.

4. Municipal Infrastructure

The City of Watertown has an older infrastructure system consisting of approximately 72 miles of roadway, 80 miles of water line, 82 miles of drain line, and 84 miles of sewer line. When development projects come before the City, special attention is paid to the impact of the project on the infrastructure system, and mitigation is implemented where warranted. Stormwater Management is a critical response that is important to the future success and vitality of the Charles River and is practiced and implemented with current and proposed development of infrastructure projects. Although Watertown relies on the Metropolitan Water Resource Authority (MWRA) for its potable water supply, well water was once plentiful and provided both drinking water and irrigation for agricultural ventures. Artesian springs near Whitney Hill were noted in historic journals and were used for irrigation for pear groves along Orchard Street. Because the City no longer depends on groundwater for its sustenance, systematic ground-water testing has not been conducted. The extent to which groundwater

⁴⁶ City of Watertown, Open Space and Recreation Plan 2023-2030, p.34.

has been affected by land use changes and/or industrial/ residential pollution over the past several centuries is not fully known, but testing at the Arsenal site showed significant contamination in that area.

III. EXISTING WATERTOWN PLANS

Watertown’s 2023 Comprehensive Plan essentially incorporated and amplified the 2020 Housing Plan’s goals and proposed strategies. In addition, the 2024 Watertown Square Area Plan contained many housing-related recommendations. This section briefly summarizes relevant aspects of those plans.

One of the eight 2023 Comprehensive Plan goals is “5. Facilitate a range of housing types and affordability” (pgs 58-62). Strategy 5A is to “implement the Housing Plan and to regularly revisit and update the plan as needed.” The other six strategies (with some sub-strategies highlighted) are:

5B: Focus multifamily housing within walking distance of high-frequency transit stops, major employers and daily services. Actions include creating an MBTA Communities law zoning district and evaluating the city’s parking requirements.

5C: Maintain and expand the range of housing types. Actions include exploring an accessory dwelling unit ordinance and ways to promote “missing middle” housing.

5D: Participate in regional and state advocacy efforts to support greater housing production and affordability.

5E: Leverage available resources for affordable housing. Actions include use of Community Preservation Funds and, when available, linkage fees, as well as use of underused or surplus municipal land.

5F: Evaluate regulatory tools for affordability housing. Actions include re-evaluating the inclusionary zoning requirements and considering ways to promote 100% affordable development.

5G: Expand housing that caters to needs of older residents. Actions include encouraging universal design and visibility standards in new development.

The Watertown Square Area Plan process began in fall 2023 and culminated in final adoption in August 2024.⁴⁷ The effort built off Comprehensive Plan recommendations for the Watertown Square area that covered housing, transportation and economic development elements. The most significant housing recommendations in the Watertown Square Area Plan were:

- Using a form-based zoning approach for four new zoning districts (as previously discussed WSQ 1, 2, 3 and NMU) with specific site and building standards;
- Reducing parking minimums and maximums in the new zoning districts;
- Providing incentives for “affordable development” (defined as developments where 50% or more of the units provide for deed-restricted affordability); and
- An overlay zoning district to comply with the MBTA Communities law.

The City Council adopted the Watertown Square zoning recommendations in November 2024.

Perspective View - Mt Auburn St Looking South



IV. Affordable Housing Incentives Study

During the City Council’s review of the proposed Watertown Square rezoning in November 2024, the City said a study of incentives to further promote affordable developments and promote affordability in market rate developments with inclusionary units would be a next step.

The study consultants, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) provided preliminary findings in December 2025 and March 2026, with the final report expected in late April 2026. MAPC’s study included research into examples around the country, the local housing market, interviews with affordable and market rate developers and the Commonwealth’s main funder of affordable housing, a focus group discussion with Planning and Zoning board members, public comments, and testing of particular incentives in financial models for affordable and market rate development.

The study highlighted certain differences between affordable and market rate developments. Affordable developments require strong local funding—and, therefore, city support-- to leverage the state resources needed to close the funding gap. Measures that increase certainty and reduce development costs are often more attractive to affordable developers than additional units (which decrease the cost/unit but increase the funding gap). Affordable developers often have capacity for—and interest in—serving households who need deeper affordability and supportive services. In comparison, market rate developers receive no local funding, find increased density very attractive, and approach affordable households purely from a business perspective.

Based on the preliminary findings presented to the public, staff expect the report to discuss possible incentives in the following categories:

- Measures that could be applied city-wide for affordable developments, such as streamlined permitting, waiver of the first floor commercial requirement, waiver of permit fees and a lower base parking ratio.
- Density and further parking reductions on a district-specific basis for affordable and/or market rate developments with more or deeper affordability. Such incentives for affordable developments are already in place for the Watertown Square zoning districts, but are not available to market rate developments or for affordable developments elsewhere in the city.
- Buy-downs to achieve more and/or deeper affordability of inclusionary units, through cash payments negotiated on a case-by-case basis.
- Further property tax relief for affordable units in new affordable and/or market rate developments. Affordable units are already taxed based on their reduced rents.

A full copy of the MAPC report is available here: [to come]



St. Joseph Hall



Watertown Square looking North from 66 Galen Street

V. GOALS AND STRATEGIES

To achieve its housing vision for 2030, Watertown must make it easier for people to find a home and remain here. This plan articulates three broad goals—and identifies multiple strategies to advance those goals. This section also notes certain key assumptions and continuing responsibilities that should be read as context for the enumeration of strategies.

A. Goals

GOAL 1: Increase, deepen affordability of, and preserve deed-restricted affordable housing

We know that over 38% of Watertown households qualify for federal or state housing assistance because their incomes are at or below 80% of area median income. We know that a high percentage of those residents are struggling with their housing costs. Housing needs are particularly acute for those households that are “very low income” or “extremely low income,” and those with particular housing needs like seniors and individuals with disabilities. Goal 1 is for the City to address these needs by increasing, deepening the affordability of, and preserving deed-restricted affordable housing.

GOAL 2: Encourage the private market to create a variety of housing types at different price points

Deed-restricted affordable housing, though critical, cannot solve the affordability crisis that cuts across income levels alone. The private market plays the central role in increasing housing supply. We know there is a need for a wide variety of housing types and at different price points that has been historically limited by restrictive zoning practices. Goal 2 focuses on encouraging the private market to provide that full range of housing.

GOAL 3: Continue to build a welcoming community for all, creating housing opportunities for both residents and those who want to move to Watertown

Watertown is, and must continue to be, a welcoming community for all. Continuing to uphold fair housing principles is critical to Watertown’s identity. Goal 3 is about creating

housing opportunities so that both current and future residents can find the homes that allow them to grow and retain roots in our community.

B. Key assumptions and relationships

The Trust and city staff operate with certain assumptions and relationships that are key to achieving the Plan's goals. While not separately identified as "strategies," it is useful to articulate them. They include the following:

1. Prioritizing opportunities for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), as TOD locations are good for tenants and homeowners and serve the City's Climate Plan goals.
2. Promoting consistency between housing development and the City's Comprehensive Plan and Climate Plan
3. Using local resources (land and/or funding) is a key lever to obtain substantial federal and state affordable housing awards.
4. Partnering with affordable housing developers on specific projects and other shared initiatives.
5. Building a strong working relationship between the Affordable Housing Trust and the Community Preservation Committee is important to achieving the City's goals for the production and preservation of affordable housing

C. On-going responsibilities related to housing

The Trust and/or city staff have ongoing regulatory and planning responsibilities related to housing, apart from strategies intended to encourage new housing development. These include the following:

1. Ensuring that proposed developments comply with the city's inclusionary zoning requirements; this includes review of affordable housing plans, Trust recommendations to the permit-granting authority, and obtaining state approval of the inclusionary units.
2. Monitoring affordable housing stock placed on the Subsidized Housing Inventory.
3. Tracking affordable units that have expiring deed-restrictions.

4. Collecting data on affordable housing lotteries, including demographic information that sheds light on the impact of local preference, and periodically re-evaluating local preference policy.
5. Re-evaluating the City's linkage fee policy on a periodic basis.
6. Participating in the WestMetro HOME Consortium, including submission of annual action plans, annual CAPER report, and five-year plans and analysis of fair housing impediments studies.
7. Participating in MAPC's Metro Mayors Housing Task Force, including submission of building permit data and participation in working groups.

D. Strategies

The goals and strategies identified in this plan are for the City as a whole though, because of their expertise and position, many of them will be implemented by the Trust and DCDP staff. Many of the following strategies refer to the Trust when they are to be the lead actor, understanding that they will frequently require cooperation between multiple parties. The Implementation Plan includes a more detailed identification of responsible parties.

STRATEGY 1: Identify potential affordable housing sites and work with developers on projects

1A: Continue current efforts to identify sites through locational metrics and preliminary assessments by on-call professionals, and through encouraging affordable developers to work in Watertown

Over the last three years, the Trust's highest priority has been identifying sites for affordable development. The Trust will continue to use the following methods to find such sites:

- Periodically assessing parcel suitability through locational metrics, such as lot size, zoning, existing uses, and proximity to transit, jobs and daily services;

- Making it known to affordable developers that the City is keen to work with any party with a suitable site and encouraging them to look for Watertown sites;
- Reaching out to property owners of suitable sites to determine their willingness to discuss sale to an affordable developer; and
- Using on-call architectural and/or environmental firms to evaluate particular sites.

1B: Explore additional methods to find suitable sites, such as using a real estate agent, and/or publicly highlighting the site search

The Trust will consider other methods to identify affordable housing sites. These include retaining a “buyer’s agent” to assist in the search and making the Trust’s interest known more generally to property owners and the public.

1C: In considering opportunities for new affordable housing, consider the need for units that serve a range of households, placing particular focus on households with children and with seniors on a fixed income

Watertown needs affordable housing for a range of households. Two significant demographic groups that require particular focus are households with children because of the need for more bedrooms (see Strategy 6C) and households with seniors on a fixed income since senior-oriented developments offer peers and needed services (see Strategy 6A).

STRATEGY 2: Promote the use of public land for affordable housing development

2A: Consider locating an affordable housing development on the City’s 148 Waltham Street site

The City’s ownership of the 148 Waltham Street parcel offers the potential to include an affordable development. The lot is large enough to accommodate more than one use. One combination that would work well is a new senior center and an affordable development geared to seniors. The City is currently studying multiple sites for a future senior center.

2B: Work with the MBTA to consider affordable housing as a significant component of development on its Watertown Yard site

The MBTA and the City have discussed potential redevelopment options for the Watertown Yard for many years. The site is large enough to accommodate both the MBTA's future transit needs and other uses. The site offers excellent proximity to public transit, jobs and daily services. Using part of the site for an affordable development as defined in the Watertown Square zoning (i.e., 50% or more are affordable units) should be strongly encouraged.

2C: Consider including a significant affordable housing component on the City's parking lots in Watertown Square

The Watertown Square Area Plan recommended using the parking lots immediately behind the municipal buildings on Main Street (and several commercial buildings just east of the complex). The site would be an excellent location for an affordable development as defined in the Watertown Square zoning (i.e., 50% or more are affordable units). However, any redevelopment here will require structured parking and other infrastructure; this significant cost will require leveraging the site's private development value. As the City continues to plan for redevelopment, opportunities to include affordable housing should be considered.

STRATEGY 3: Support the Watertown Housing Authority and others in the effort to rehabilitate public housing inventory and create new units on its existing land.

3A: Assist the Watertown Housing Authority in evaluating the potential for redevelopment and expansion at sites of existing properties

The Trust should assist the WHA in evaluating the opportunities for redevelopment and/or modernization of its sites. The Trust can assist in evaluating the funding opportunities necessary for such projects.

3B: Continue to support the proposed Willow Park redevelopment project.

The Willow Park redevelopment project is the City's most significant affordable housing development in decades. The City has supported the WHA and POAH through approval of a Chapter 40B comprehensive permit in May 2025 and significant local funding commitments (\$6M in CPA funds and \$400,000 from the Trust). The City must continue to support the project as it seeks state funding and navigates the present mortgage interest and construction environment, which is challenging for all developers.

3C: Consider financial assistance for other WHA redevelopment and/or modernization projects

As the WHA proposes redevelopment and/or modernization of its sites, the Trust should consider financial assistance that it can provide. The proposed 103 Nichols Avenue group home (which received a commitment for financial support in 2025) is one such site.

STRATEGY 4: Consider adoption of the measures discussed in the final affordable incentives study report***STRATEGY 5: Increase the City's capacity to implement the strategies listed in the Plan*****5A:** Employ a full-time housing planner within three years

The City's planning staff has historically been lean. There has never been a full-time housing planner. As the City continues to grow its planning department to an appropriate level, it is important that such a position be created. Ideally, the position will emerge over the next three years as hiring in other areas allows one planner to focus on the housing work.

5B: Continue to include \$250,000 in the annual budget for the affordable housing trust as a bridge to the availability of linkage fees

Over the last three years, the City budget has included a \$250,000 allocation for affordable housing. This annual allocation has been important for the Trust's ability to act on

affordable housing opportunities. This annual allocation should continue, at least until the Trust begins to collect linkage fees.

5C: Consider participating in a regional housing program that would monitor inclusionary zoning units and review requested rent increases for the city

The City's housing planner monitors affordable units created by the inclusionary zoning ordinance or through public funding of affordable units (excluding housing authority units). A recent MAPC "Metro Mayor's" working group suggested the potential for a third-party monitoring such units on a regional basis. Consolidating the monitoring function would be more efficient and provide more uniformity. This idea should be considered by the City if there is interest elsewhere in the region.

5D: Increase collaboration between the Affordable Housing Trust and Community Preservation Committee, while recognizing each body's particular statutory goals and process

The Trust and the CPC overlap in their role of funding affordable housing projects. Both can fund new affordable development. The CPC, however, is more limited than the Trust in its ability to fund rehabilitation of existing projects. The Trust and CPC have informally coordinated over the last three years and held a joint meeting to hear a presentation on the Willow Park redevelopment project. There are opportunities for the two bodies to collaborate more formally, e.g., through joint application forms, and these should be explored. The Trust should also consider seeking CPA funds for a site control and pre-development reserve. Such a reserve would provide the Trust with the nimbleness needed to take advantage of market opportunities as they arise and facilitate strong funding applications to the CPC.

STRATEGY 6: Promote the production and preservation of housing types that meet the needs of underserved populations

6A: Encourage affordable developments that include supportive services for seniors and individuals with disabilities

Given the Trust's role in nurturing affordable developments, it should recognize and act on the opportunity to match developers who provide robust supportive services with suitable sites.

6B: Address the needs of individuals with disabilities by incorporating or encouraging, as appropriate universal design and visitability standards for large residential development projects, possibly through the city's design guidelines and/or peer review, in consultation with the Council on Disability (COD)

Large residential developments need to comply with federal and state requirements that provide accessibility. The City should consider ways to encourage developments to do more; this would benefit both seniors and individuals with disabilities. Non-binding design guidelines would lay out specific criteria that could inform decisions by the development team early in the process. Use of a peer review and/or consultation with COD throughout the permitting process would allow for case-by-case project evaluation by a third-party expert in the field.

6C: Encourage the creation of more 3+ bedroom units in both affordable and market rate developments to meet the needs of larger family households

There continues to be a need for more 3+ bedroom units in Watertown and throughout the Greater Boston region. The mix of units should continue to be a significant factor in the funding of affordable developments and, where appropriate, the permitting of market rate developments.

6D: Consider a program to support capital improvements that preserve the viability of older housing stock for households not in deed-restricted affordable housing

Watertown's older housing stock often serves owners and renters who cannot afford the cost of newer units. This older housing stock, however, requires capital improvements to maintain its habitability and the cost of those improvements can affect its continued affordability. The City should consider whether targeted assistance is a feasible approach to addressing this issue.

STRATEGY 7: As part of the City's upcoming general zoning review, evaluate the impact of current zoning and parking requirements on residential development as well as the existing inclusionary zoning policy

7A: Consider changes in current zoning and parking requirements if needed to further housing production in zoning districts where that is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan

The City is planning to undertake a general zoning review. As was the case with Watertown Square, this review should include a major focus on how the current zoning and parking requirements affect housing production.

7B: Evaluate existing inclusionary zoning policy

This is an appropriate time for a comprehensive review of the City's inclusionary zoning policy. This review should include the growing need for deeper affordability. While inclusionary zoning has been highly effective in creating units that are affordable for a certain band of household incomes, these units do not serve those with incomes much lower than 65% AMI. The City should evaluate whether the need for deeper affordability can be addressed without risking future housing production.

STRATEGY 8: Anticipate and potentially help meet the need for capital improvements and/or major recapitalizations in existing affordable housing developments

8A: Regularly discuss capital needs and funding sources with Watertown's existing affordable housing providers

Affordable developments inherently operate with tight margins and may require additional funding to address capital needs as the structures and units age. The City should take a proactive role in discussing these issues with affordable housing providers.

8B: Plan for potential use of HOME funds (WestMetro consolidated pool and/or Watertown allocation) to minimize the need for emergency funding for critical repairs⁴⁸

⁴⁸ The Trust used this approach, in collaboration with Metro West Collaborate, to approve use of HOME funds for interim capital improvements at 1060 Belmont St (approximately \$219,000, approved April 21, 2026), subject to underwriting/environment reviews and HUD's approval of amended planning documents.

Virtually all of Watertown's existing affordable housing developments include HOME-assisted units. Capital repairs and improvements on existing developments are not eligible for CPA funds. However, while use of HOME funding for these repairs and improvements therefore makes sense, the HOME approval process is lengthy and is best suited for planned, rather than emergency, needs.

STRATEGY 9: Promote fair housing

9A: Continue to fund fair housing testing programs and publicize results

The Trust used the City's HOME administrative funds to support the WestMetro HOME Consortium's fair housing testing program, which resulted in a February 2025 report documenting discriminatory conduct. The Trust has approved a further round of testing in 2026. Deterrence-- through testing, referring violations to state agencies, and publicizing results—is one of the best ways to combat housing discrimination. The City should continue using these tools.

9B: Continue to work with the Human Rights Commission to offer education to owners, property managers, real estate agents, tenants and the public on fair housing

The Trust and Human Rights Commission worked together to hold training sessions on fair housing during fall 2025. The two bodies should continue to collaborate on educational programs on fair housing.

9C: Work with local brokers to promote acceptance of housing vouchers

The City should explore collaboration with local real estate agents on fair housing issues. One potential area of collaboration is promoting acceptance of housing vouchers by their clients. Agents can use their access to individual clients to educate them on fair housing law and to address perceived issues in renting to voucher holders.

STRATEGY 10: Help educate cost-burdened tenants and homeowners about available housing resources

10A: Increase and periodically update housing resources identified on the city's website.

The City’s website should provide robust information on housing resources. Staff should develop the content, ensure that it stays up to date, and should publicize its availability. Online content (as well as the educational assistance discussed in Strategy 10B) should be more available to households with limited English language proficiency.

10B: Consider ways for the community development and human services departments to work together in providing housing-related educational assistance to income-qualified tenants and homeowners.

In addition to online housing resources, the City should provide housing-related educational assistance to income-qualified tenants and homeowners. Given the City’s limited capacity to provide individual counseling, the community development and human services departments should consider ways to provide assistance through educational programs. Such education should include current information about potential subsidy sources and how to apply for them.

STRATEGY 11: Adopt an accessory dwelling unit ordinance.

The City has adopted “interim” accessory dwelling unit language in November 2024 and has been seeing its first permitted ADUs since the 1990s. Comprehensive language that complies with state law and fits particular circumstances in Watertown is necessary. Watertown should have ADU rules that are easy for owners to use and for the city to administer.

STRATEGY 12: Evaluate the housing production impact of new city zoning at appropriate intervals, including the Watertown Square re-zoning in November 2024

The City’s new Watertown Square zoning (including the by-right overlay) is likely to have a substantial effect on housing production in the next few years. The City should conduct an in-house evaluation of the zoning’s impact and, if necessary, consider amendments. Given the time needed to advance individual projects, evaluation during 2029 seems appropriate.

VI. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The time frame used in the below implementation plan refers to when the strategy should be implemented. Strategies targeted for the next 1-3 years are “Near-Term,” while those targeted for the next 2-4 years are “Mid-Term” and for the next 3-5 years are “Long-Term.” “Ongoing” refers to continuing a strategy already being pursued.

Housing Implementation Plan, 2026-2030

Strategy	Responsible Entities	Time Frame	Page #
STRATEGY 1: Identify potential affordable housing sites and work with developers on projects			
STRATEGY 1A: Continue current efforts to identify sites through locational metrics and preliminary assessments by on-call professionals, and through encouraging affordable developers to work in Watertown	Department of Community Development & Planning, Affordable Housing Trust	Ongoing	p. 54
STRATEGY 1B: Explore additional methods to find suitable sites, such as using a real estate agent, and/or publicly highlighting the site search	Department of Community Development & Planning, Affordable Housing Trust	Near Term	p. 55
STRATEGY 1C: In considering opportunities for new affordable housing, consider the need for units that serve a range of households, placing particular focus on households with children and with seniors on a fixed income	Department of Community Development & Planning, Affordable Housing Trust	Ongoing	p. 55

STRATEGY 2: Promote the use of public land for affordable housing development			
STRATEGY 2A: Consider locating an affordable housing development on the City's 148 Waltham Street site	Department of Community Development & Planning, Affordable Housing Trust, Community Preservation Committee, City Manager, City Council	Mid-Term	p. 55
STRATEGY 2B: Work with the MBTA to consider affordable housing as a significant component of development on its Watertown Yard site	Department of Community Development & Planning, Affordable Housing Trust, MBTA	Long-term	p. 56
STRATEGY 2C: Consider including a significant affordable housing component on the City's parking lots in Watertown Square	Department of Community Development & Planning, Affordable Housing Trust, City Manager, City Council	Long-term	p. 56
STRATEGY 3: Support the Watertown Housing Authority and others in the effort to rehabilitate public housing inventory and create new units on its existing land.			
STRATEGY 3A: Assist the Watertown Housing Authority in evaluating the potential for redevelopment of existing properties	Department of Community Development & Planning, Affordable Housing Trust	Mid- to Long-Term	p. 56
STRATEGY 3B: Continue to support the proposed Willow Park redevelopment project	Department of Community Development & Planning, Affordable Housing Trust	Near-Term	p. 57
STRATEGY 3C: Consider financial assistance for other WHA redevelopment and/or modernization projects	Department of Community Development & Planning, Affordable Housing Trust, Community Preservation Committee	Ongoing	p. 57
STRATEGY 4: Consider adoption of the measures discussed in the final affordable incentives study report			
Consider adoption of the measures discussed in the final affordable incentives study report	Department of Community Development & Planning, Affordable Housing Trust, Planning Board, Zoning Board of	Near-Term	p. 57

STRATEGY 5: Increase the City’s capacity to implement the strategies listed in the Plan			
STRATEGY 5A: Employ a full-time housing planner within three years	Department of Community Development & Planning, City Manager, City Council	Mid-Term	p. 57
STRATEGY 5B: Continue to include \$250,000 in the annual budget for the affordable housing trust as a bridge to the linkage fees	Department of Community Development & Planning, City Manager, City Council	Ongoing	p. 57
STRATEGY 5C: Consider participating in a regional housing program that would monitor inclusionary zoning units and review requested rent increases for the city	Department of Community Development & Planning, Affordable Housing Trust	Mid-Term	p. 58
STRATEGY 5D: Increase collaboration between the Affordable Housing Trust and Community Preservation Committee, while recognizing each body’s particular statutory goals and process	Affordable Housing Trust, Community Preservation Committee	Near-Term	p. 58
STRATEGY 6: Promote the production and preservation of housing types that meet the needs of underserved populations			
STRATEGY 6A: Encourage affordable developments that include supportive services for seniors and individuals with disabilities	Department of Community Development & Planning, Affordable Housing Trust, Commission on Disability	Ongoing	p. 58
STRATEGY 6B: Address the needs of individuals with disabilities by incorporating or encouraging, as appropriate universal design and visitability standards for large residential development projects, possibly through the city’s design guidelines and/or peer review	Department of Community Development & Planning, Affordable Housing Trust, Commission on Disability, Council on Aging, Department of Human Services, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals	Mid-Term	p. 59
STRATEGY 6C: Encourage the creation of more 3+ bedroom units in both affordable and market rate developments to meet the needs of larger family households	Department of Community Development & Planning, Affordable Housing Trust, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals	On-going	p. 59

<p>STRATEGY 6D: Consider a program to support capital improvements that preserve the viability of older housing stock for households not in deed-restricted affordable housing</p>	<p>Department of Community Development & Planning, Affordable Housing Trust</p>	<p>Mid-term</p>	<p>p. 59</p>
<p>STRATEGY 7: As part of the City’s upcoming general zoning review, evaluate the impact of current zoning and parking requirements on residential development as well as the existing inclusionary zoning policy</p>			
<p>STRATEGY 7A: Consider changes in current zoning and parking requirements if needed to further housing production in zoning districts where that is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan</p>	<p>Department of Community Development & Planning, Affordable Housing Trust, Planning Board, City Council</p>	<p>Near-Term</p>	<p>p. 60</p>
<p>STRATEGY 7B: Evaluate existing inclusionary zoning policy</p>	<p>Community Development & Planning Department, Affordable Housing Trust, Planning Board, City Council</p>	<p>Near-term</p>	<p>p. 60</p>
<p>STRATEGY 8: Anticipate and potentially help meet the need for capital improvements and/or major recapitalizations in existing affordable housing developments</p>			
<p>STRATEGY 8A: Regularly discuss capital needs and funding sources with Watertown’s existing affordable housing providers</p>	<p>Department of Community Development & Planning, Affordable Housing Trust</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>p. 60</p>
<p>STRATEGY 8B: Plan for potential use of HOME funds (WestMetro consolidated pool and/or Watertown allocation) to minimize the need for emergency funding for critical repairs</p>	<p>Department of Community Development & Planning, Affordable Housing Trust</p>	<p>Near-Term</p>	<p>p. 60</p>
<p>STRATEGY 9: Promote fair housing</p>			
<p>STRATEGY 9A: Continue to fund fair housing testing programs and publicize results</p>	<p>Department of Community Development & Planning, Affordable Housing Trust</p>	<p>Near-Term</p>	<p>p. 61</p>

STRATEGY 9B: Continue to work with the Human Rights Commission to offer education to owners, property managers, real estate agents, tenants and the public on fair housing	Department of Community Development & Planning, Affordable Housing Trust, Human Rights Commission	Ongoing	p. 61
STRATEGY 9C: Work with local brokers to promote acceptance of housing vouchers	Community Development & Planning Department, Affordable Housing Trust	Ongoing	p. 61
STRATEGY 10: Help educate cost-burdened tenants and homeowners about available housing resources			
STRATEGY 10A: Increase and periodically update housing resources identified on the city’s website	Department of Community Development & Planning, Human Services Department, Affordable Housing Trust	Near-Term then Ongoing	p. 61
STRATEGY 10B: Consider ways for the community development and human services departments to work together in providing educational assistance to income-qualified tenants and homeowners.	Community Development & Planning Department, Human Services Department, Affordable Housing Trust	Near-Term	p. 62
STRATEGY 11: Adopt an accessory dwelling unit ordinance.			
Adopt an accessory dwelling unit ordinance.	Department of Community Development & Planning, Affordable Housing Trust, Planning Board, City Council	Near-Term	p. 62
STRATEGY 12: Evaluate the housing production impact of new city zoning at appropriate intervals, including the Watertown Square re-zoning in November 2024			
Evaluate the housing production impact of new city zoning at appropriate intervals, including the Watertown Square re-zoning in November 2024	Department of Community Development & Planning, Affordable Housing Trust	Long-Term	p. 62

APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Below is a short list of key terms used in the Housing Plan. Underlined items are terms defined elsewhere in this glossary.

Affordable Housing – Housing targeted to and affordable by households that meet specific income eligibility levels, with a legally-enforceable restriction limiting occupancy to households meeting eligibility requirements. Affordable housing varies by program on such elements as what incomes are eligible, the length of the restriction, and whether the units are owned or rented. “Affordable housing” does not refer to the design, type, or method of construction of a housing unit or development, but to the cost of the housing to the consumer.

American Community Survey or ACS—Since the U.S. Census counts population (and certain other information) only once every ten years, the Census Bureau is continually surveying to provide more timely and comprehensive data. This national program is called the American Community Survey or ACS. Because it is survey, not a count, all ACS data is an estimate with a margin of error. ACS data is released yearly. However, many estimates on a municipal level use multi-year data to increase the sample size and lower the margin of error. This report uses ACS estimates for five-year period covering the years 2020 through 2024. 5-year estimates are released annually.

Area Median Income or AMI – HUD annually publishes area median income limits for local areas, and these are used for eligibility in most housing programs. HUD estimates the median family income for an area for a family of four then adjusts that figure for household size.

Affordable Housing Restriction - There are many forms of restrictions, but they must contain some language to document the income levels of the resident selection, the rent/sale price methodology, the supervising entity and identify on-going compliance requirements. The restrictions are recorded at the registry of deeds. The phrase “deed-restricted” is a shorthand for affordable housing restrictions recorded at the registry of deeds.

Chapter 40B – Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40B was enacted in 1969 to address the shortage of affordable housing statewide by eliminating barriers created by local zoning and approval processes. There are two statutory metrics for complying with Chapter 40B. One is having 10% of the community’s year-round housing stock on the state’s Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI); units qualify for inclusion if they have a long-term Affordable Housing Restriction that limits occupancy to households at or below 80% of Area Median Income. The other metric is having 1.5% of the community’s land area occupied by units on the SHI. If a community has yet to comply with Chapter 40B and at least 20-25% of the units in a permit application have a long-term affordability restriction, *Chapter 40B* substantially limits the ability of the Board of Appeals to reject or condition the project.

Community Development Block Grants or CDBG-- The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program was created by Congress in 1974 to provide annual grants on a formula basis to states, cities, and counties for housing and community development purposes, principally for low- and moderate-income persons. Certain communities, based on economic indicia, are “entitlement” or “mini-entitlement” communities that receive annual grants. Watertown is neither and must compete with other non-entitlement communities whenever the state advertises a funding opportunity.

Cost Burden – The percentage of household income spent on mortgage costs or gross rent. According to HUD, households spending more than 30% of income on housing costs are considered “cost-burdened,” while those spending more than 50% are “severely cost-burdened.”

Community Preservation Act or CPA – The Community Preservation Act (MGL Ch. 44B) helps communities preserve open space (passive or active), historic resources, and create affordable housing by creating a dedicated funding stream. A minimum of 10% of the annual fund revenues must be reserved for each of the three categories, while the remaining 70% may be allocated to any one of, or any combination of, the allowed uses. Watertown adopted CPA in 2016. Housing units created with CPA funds must be available to households under 100% AMI, and must be deed-restricted.

Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy Data or CHAS—Since income data is critical to HUD’s work, the agency obtains a special product from the Census that focuses on the housing needs of lower income households. This product is called Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy Data or CHAS. The CHAS provides data about the housing cost burden and other housing problems experienced by different subpopulations.

Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities or EOHLC – The state agency responsible for promulgating housing regulations, overseeing completed developments and units, and offering programs and funding targeted at income eligible households. EOHLC was formerly a sub-cabinet agency known as the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).

HOME Program – Administered by HUD, the HOME Investment Partnerships Program is the largest Federal block grant to State and local communities used to fund the construction, purchase, and/or rehabilitation of affordable housing units, or direct rental assistance to low-income households. Watertown is one of 13 communities that participate in the HOME program through its membership in the WestMetro HOME Consortium.

HUD – The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) mission is to increase homeownership, support community development, and increase access to affordable housing free from discrimination.

Inclusionary zoning—Many communities, including Watertown, require that new developments above a certain size (typically measured by the number of units) include a certain percentage of Affordable Housing units. Each community designs its own inclusionary zoning requirements and they differ by such elements as the percentage required, the threshold that triggers inclusionary units, the income levels and whether the developer is required to include the units on-site or may pay into a municipal fund to produce units elsewhere.

Income Eligibility Levels / Limits – Various programs use different income levels, or limits, to both qualify the household and to set the rent/sales price, usually tied to some percentage of AMI, adjusted for family size. The most important classifications relating to income limits are 30% AMI, 50% AMI, and 80% AMI. Because HUD “adjusts” the income limits based on a number of factors, the AMI percentages cannot reliably be calculated from 100% AMI.

Local Preference - Local Preference is the term used to denote a local selection preference when offering housing to applicants (typically when a lottery is needed to select between income-eligible applicants). This can be for either rental or ownership housing and for either initial housing lotteries or waiting lists. Local preference must be approved by the state agency subsidizing the project.

Municipal affordable housing trust—State law (M.G.L. Chapter 44, Section 55C) authorizes municipalities to form a municipal affordable housing trust to create and preserve housing for low- and moderate-income households. The trust is governed by a board of trustees appointed by the municipality and is a municipal agency (e.g., it is tax exempt, is subject to public procurement laws, and its trustees are special municipal employees).

Subsidized Housing Inventory or SHI – The Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) is the official measure of a community’s stock of low-or moderate-income housing for the purposes of Chapter 40B. While housing developed under Chapter 40B is eligible for inclusion on the SHI, many other types of housing also may qualify to count toward a community’s affordable housing stock.

APPENDIX B: HUD INCOME LIMITS

Below is a chart showing the income limits used by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in Fiscal Year 2026 for the area including Watertown (the Boston-Cambridge-Quincy region). Income limits in each tier are adjusted by HUD and not solely derived from the 100% Area Median Income (AMI) figure. HUD has limits that vary for each household size, not just the four shown below for illustrative purposes.

	One-person	Two-person	Three-person	Four-person
30% AMI	\$36,000	\$41,150	\$46,300	\$51,400
50% AMI	\$60,000	\$68,600	\$77,150	\$85,700
60% AMI	\$72,000	\$82,320	\$92,580	\$102,840
65% AMI	\$78,000	\$89,180	\$100,295	\$111,410
80% AMI	\$96,000	\$109,700	\$123,400	\$137,100
100% AMI	\$120,000	\$137,200	\$154,300	\$171,400

APPENDIX C: SUBSIDIZED HOUSING INVENTORY (WATERTOWN UNITS)

Below is the Watertown portion of the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) used by the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC, formerly DHCD) to track subsidized housing units. The SHI does not include units until they receive a certificate of occupancy from the municipality and are approved by EOHLC for inclusion. This document therefore does not include a number of units currently under construction or with temporary certificates of occupancy, including, respectively, 142 units at 104 Main Street and 36 units at 101 Morse Street.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF HOUSING AND LIVABLE COMMUNITIES CH40B SUBSIDIZED HOUSING INVENTORY

Watertown

DHCD ID #	Project Name	Address	Type	Total SHI Units	Affordability Expires	Built w/ Comp. Permit?	Subsidizing Agency
3276	100 Warren St	100 Warren Street	Rental	50	Perp	No	HUD
3277	Lexington Gardens	Lexington/Garden/Quimby	Rental	168	Perp	No	EOHLC
3278	Willow Park	Willow Park	Rental	60	Perp	No	EOHLC
3279	100 Warren St State Building	100 Warren Street	Rental	72	Perp	No	EOHLC
3280	McSherry Gardens	Quirk/Forest/Waverly	Rental	40	Perp	No	EOHLC
3281	Woodland Towers	Waverly Ave.	Rental	164	Perp	No	EOHLC
3282	n/a	Union St.	Rental	7	Perp	Yes	EOHLC
3283	n/a	Green St.	Rental	16	Perp	Yes	EOHLC
3284	n/a	scattered sites	Rental	10	Perp	No	EOHLC
3285	n/a	Siena Village	Rental	2	Perp	No	EOHLC
3286	Arsenal Apartments	465 Arsenal Street	Rental	156	2033*	No	MassHousing
3287	Beaverbrook STEP	16 Irving St.	Rental	14	2045*	No	HUD
3290	St. Joseph's Hall	2 Rosary Drive	Rental	25	2054	No	EOHLC
3733	Brigham House Assisted Living	341 Mount Auburn Street	Rental	62	2052	No	EOHLC EOHLC
3734	Quimby Street Condominiums	28, 30, 32 and 34 Quimby Street	Ownership	4	2101	No	EOHLC EOHLC
4499	DDS Group Homes	Confidential	Rental	80	N/A	No	DDS
4618	DMH Group Homes	Confidential	Rental	0	N/A	No	DMH

4/28/2026

Watertown
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This data is derived from information provided to the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) by individual communities and is subject to change as new information is obtained and use restrictions expire.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF HOUSING AND LIVABLE COMMUNITIES CH40B SUBSIDIZED HOUSING INVENTORY

Watertown

DHCD ID #	Project Name	Address	Type	Total SHI Units	Affordability Expires	Built w/ Comp. Permit?	Subsidizing Agency
4790	First Time Homebuyers	Rutland Avenue	Ownership	1	2092	No	HUD
4791	First Time Homebuyers	Piermont Street	Ownership	1	2092	No	HUD
4792	First Time Homebuyers	Pierce Street	Ownership	1	2092	No	HUD
4793	First Time Homebuyers	Copeland Street	Ownership	1	2092	No	HUD
4794	First Time Homebuyers	Rutland Street	Ownership	1	2092	No	HUD
4795	First Time Homebuyers	Spring Street	Ownership	1	2092	No	HUD
4796	First Time Homebuyers	Mt. Auburn Street	Ownership	3	2092	No	HUD
4797	First Time Homebuyers	Berkeley Street	Ownership	1	2092	No	HUD
4798	First Time Homebuyers	Hillside Road	Ownership	1	2092	No	HUD
4799	First Time Homebuyers	Pleasant Street	Ownership	1	2092	No	HUD
4800	First Time Homebuyers	Ralph Street	Ownership	1	2092	No	HUD
4802	First Time Homebuyers	Walnut Street	Ownership	1	2092	No	HUD
4803	First Time Homebuyers	Riverside Street	Ownership	1	2092	No	HUD
4804	First Time Homebuyers	Russell Street	Ownership	1	2092	No	HUD
4805	First Time Homebuyers	Berkeley Street	Ownership	1	2092	No	HUD
4807	First Time Homebuyers	Highland Avenue	Ownership	1	2092	No	HUD
7884	Marshall Place Apartments	120 Mt. Auburn St	Rental	11	Perp	NO	HUD
8699	Repton Place	555 Pleasant St	Ownership	28	Perp	NO	EOHLC

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF HOUSING AND LIVABLE COMMUNITIES CH40B SUBSIDIZED HOUSING INVENTORY

Watertown

DHCD ID #	Project Name	Address	Type	Total SHI Units	Affordability Expires	Built w/ Comp. Permit?	Subsidizing Agency
9548	120 Pleasant Street	120 Pleasant Street	Rental	4	Perp	NO	EOHLC
9549	Nally Estates	Waverly Avenue	Rental	2	Perp	NO	EOHLC
9557	1060 Belmont	1060 Belmont Street	Rental	18	2041	NO	EOHLC
9578	The Coolidge	319 Arlington Street	Rental	38	Perp	NO	EOHLC HUD MassHousing MHP
9838	Alta at the Estate	Waltham Street (aka Woodview Way)	Rental	16	Perp	NO	EOHLC
9839	Riverbend on the Charles	270 Pleasant Street	Rental	17	Perp	NO	EOHLC
9862	Mill Creek/Watertown Mews	555 Pleasant Street	Rental	32	Perp	NO	EOHLC
10277	The Gables	202-204 Arsenal St	Rental	30	Perp	NO	EOHLC
10355	River Park Lofts	45 Bacon St/60 Howard St	Rental	7	Perp	NO	EOHLC
10356	Elan Union Market	56 Irving St/284 Arsenal St	Rental	35	Perp	NO	EOHLC
10458	Amstel Watertown	385 Pleasant St	Rental	8	Perp	NO	EOHLC
10662	101 North Beacon	101 North Beacon Street	Ownership	4	Perp	NO	EOHLC
10663	485 & 615 Arsenal Street, Arsenal Yards	485 & 615 Arsenal Street	Rental	45	perp	NO	EOHLC
10712	Watermills	330-350 Pleasant Street	Rental	15	Perp	NO	EOHLC
11196	166 Main St	166 Main St	Rental	5	Perp	NO	EOHLC

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF HOUSING AND LIVABLE COMMUNITIES CH40B SUBSIDIZED HOUSING INVENTORY

Watertown


DHCD ID #	Project Name	Address	Type	Total SHI Units	Affordability Expires	Built w/ Comp. Permit?	Subsidizing Agency
Watertown Totals				1,263			
						Census 2020 Year Round Housing Units	16,936
						Percent Subsidized	7.46%

APPENDIX D: INCLUSIONARY ZONING UNITS

Development Name	Address	Total units	Affordable	Approval	Tenure	Notes
Watertown Square Apts	20 Watertown St	134	13	2001	Rental	
Riverbank Lofts	290 Pleasant St	57	7	2004	Ownership	
Repton Place	555 Pleasant St	179	28	2006	Ownership	
Nally Estates	77 Waverly Ave	18	2	2008	Rental	
Riverbend	270 Pleasant St	170	17	2011	Rental	
Charles Bank Residences	120-140 Pleasant St	44	4	2011	Rental	
Mews	555 Pleasant St (3 Repton Cr)	206	32	2012	Rental	
Alta/Bell Properties	10-300 Woodview Way	155	16	2012	Rental	
River Park Lofts	60 Howard St & 45 Bacon St	65	7	2013	Rental	
Gables	204 Arsenal St	296	30	2014	Rental	
Elan	160 Arsenal St	282	35	2015	Rental	
Watermills	330-350 Pleasant St	99	15	2017	Rental	
The Aver	345-385 Pleasant St	53	8	2018	Rental	
The Beacon	101 N. Beacon St	28	4	2019	Ownership	
101 Morse St	101 Morse St	36	6	2019	Rental	
166 Main St	166 Main St	34	5	2020	Rental	
Arsenal Yards	485 Arsenal St	302	45	2017	Rental	Date of Master Plan approval
The Maximillian	53 Pleasant St/104 Main St	142	21	2023	Rental	Under construction
		1,861	295			



WATERTOWN
MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER


To: Honorable City Council
From: George J. Proakis, City Manager 
Date: May 7, 2026
RE: Affordable Housing Incentives Study

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) is finalizing their Affordable Housing Incentives Study for the City of Watertown to present to the City Council. The study focuses on incentives to encourage affordable housing development, and incentives to encourage market rate developers to include more affordable units or more deeply affordable units, than required under the City's Affordable Housing Ordinance. MAPC previously shared preliminary findings related to this study at public meetings in December 2025 and March 2026.

I will bring this up under Communications from the City Manager at the May 12, 2026. City Council Meeting and respectfully request the matter be referred to Committee for further review and consideration.



WATERTOWN
MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

To: Honorable City Council
From: George J. Proakis, City Manager 
Date: May 7, 2026
RE: Request for Extension of Contract Negotiation Period

Section 2(a) of the City Manager's contract states: "In the event the parties are unable to reach agreement on a successor contract by May 14, 2026, this Agreement shall expire on August 14, 2026 unless mutually extended by the parties."

To support continued progress in negotiations, I am requesting additional time for the parties to complete this work. Extending the negotiation period will allow discussions to continue without triggering the automatic expiration timeline.

At the May 12, 2026 City Council Meeting, under Communications from the City Manager, I will respectfully request that the Council mutually agree to extend the negotiation period through June 30, 2026. This extension will help maintain continuity of operations and provide adequate time to finalize a successor agreement.

**CITY COUNCIL ROLL CALL VOTE
MEETING DATE: MAY 12, 2026**

	YES	NO	PRESENT
CAROLINE BAYS	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
LISA J. FELTNER	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
JOHN G. GANNON	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
NICOLE GARDNER	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
EMILY IZZO	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
THEOPHILUS OFFEI	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
ANTHONY PALOMBA	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
VINCENT J. PICCIRILLI JR.	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
MARK S. SIDERIS, COUNCIL PRESIDENT	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Motion to adjourn