

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Maura T. Healey, Governor

Kimberley Driscoll, Lieutenant Governor



**District Local Technical Assistance**

Annual Report

2025

Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities

Edward M. Augustus Jr., Secretary

# District Local Technical Assistance 2025

Report of activities pursuant to MGL, c. 29, s. 2XXX

District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) is funded by the Division of Local Services (DLS) at the Department of Revenue (DOR) and administered by the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC), formerly the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). To jointly administer the program, DLS and EOHLC executed a Memorandum of Understanding. EOHLC executes an Agreement with each of the thirteen (13) Regional Planning Agencies (RPA) to provide technical assistance to their member communities. RPAs distribute the DLTA allocation for projects among three general categories: 1) “Planning Ahead for Housing” (or to help reach the Statewide Housing Production Goal) or “Planning Ahead for Growth”; 2) Community Compact Cabinet; and 3) Housing Choice Initiative. In the 2025 DLTA program, a total of one hundred eighty-nine (189) projects statewide from a variety of activity areas (housing, economic development, zoning, regional services, and environmental) are funded with the \$3 million allocation. This Annual Report contains a sample of DLTA projects from each RPA.

## **Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC):**

**Clarksburg:** Master Plan and Open Space and Recreation Plan – Assist the Town of Clarksburg to develop a Master Plan and Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP). The Town’s last Master Plan was developed in 1968 and the previous OSRP was adopted in 2002. Funds supplement a larger grant that the town received to complete this work.

**Sheffield:** Workforce Housing Planning and Zoning – Assist the Town of Sheffield to continue recent efforts to create new housing options. Identify specific zoning amendments with the Planning Board. Develop a report on potential options related to creating a municipal wastewater system. These DLTA funds supplement existing grant funding that include new zoning changes and developing a case study on potential options for wastewater solutions.

**Region-wide:** Planning Board and Zoning Board Training – Develop informational materials as well as live training for Boards. With significant volunteer turnover and shortages in many Berkshire communities, accessible training opportunities are needed now more than ever. Create a new Planning Board and Zoning Board manual and develop a live training session(s) to support local volunteers.

## **Cape Cod Commission (CCC):**

**Falmouth:** Design Guidelines – Develop design guidelines for Falmouth’s mixed use residential-commercial overlay district. Support the Town boards and community members to understand and explain the Town’s existing and desired architectural character. Translate key elements into guidelines that address building siting, building form, pedestrian-scale features, and signage. The design guidelines assist the Town’s Planning Board with project review and serve as a source of good design examples for property owners and developers.

**Orleans:** Master/Comprehensive Plan – Assist Orleans to finalize and gather support for Orleans’s Comprehensive Plan. Work with the Town and its consultants to develop public outreach materials including surveys and online tools to gather feedback. Create TV-ready materials and a podcast episode to garner public support for the Comprehensive Plan anticipated for Town Meeting this Fall.

**Region-wide:** Comprehensive Strategy to Incentivize Year-Round Occupancy of Housing - Develop a comprehensive strategy to establish a program to incentivize year-round occupancy of housing units. Work with a consultant to create deed restrictions, tax incentives, and short-term to long-term rental programs. Identify the types of organizations best suited to execute these programs, outline an approval and implementation process, develop an outline of program structures, and identify potential funding streams. Perform stakeholder engagement with interviews with Cape Cod residents, homeowners, town staff, and businesspeople from a range of backgrounds to gather information about the short-term rental market, the broader housing landscape, and to assess anticipated support for different possible incentives.

## **Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC):**

**Shrewsbury:** Transit Corridor Feasibility Study – Work with the Town to increase visibility and awareness of the fixed bus and on-demand transit services in Shrewsbury to increase ridership and use of public transit options. Low ridership in Shrewsbury was identified in the 2024 Worcester Regional Transit Authority study (*Connecting Communities*) that examined Shrewsbury’s public transportation services.

**Multiple Communities:** (Auburn and Berlin) Mall Re-use Study – For Auburn, examine the entire Auburn Mall area, including zoning, traffic flow, parking, adjacent parcels, and current and potential uses. Prepare a plan that Auburn can use to market the area to developers and investors. For Berlin, assist the Town to determine the highest and best use for the Solomon Pond Mall property. Assess the potential effects of redevelopment on the community and its residents. Collaborate with the Town of Berlin, the Berlin Planning Board, and the adjacent community of Marlborough on the potential reuse of the mall.

**Region-wide:** Shared Services – Prepare, distribute, and collect survey results for the Shared Services Survey. Assess each town’s interest in sharing municipal services of all types. Analyze survey results and match towns with aligned interests. Facilitate discussions around the most urgent service sharing needs. Prepare a report, complete with maps to initiate discussions on shared services throughout the region. Prepare a memo with progress on cross-jurisdictional cooperation.

## **Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG):**

**Conway:** River Corridor Zoning - Create a model river corridor zoning bylaw to focus on river flow, health, and resilience rather than the land uses around it. Discuss options for managing the South River corridor for flood resiliency, infrastructure protection, and habitat benefits. Create an interactive ArcGIS map to facilitate discussion of the issues facing the South River. Conduct public engagement to build support for this new zoning approach. Assist with documents to prepare the bylaw for Town Meeting in 2026. This project has other funding allocated to bring it to fruition.

**Multiple Communities (Buckland, Montague, Northfield, Shelburne):** Rural Downtown District Support – With other funding, perform an analysis of and a model for how to support and enhance rural village economic development for the 4 towns. Work with these rural communities to encourage them to invest their limited revenue into an effort that could spur economic activity. Set up a pilot, along with Franklin County Chamber of Commerce, to create a 4-village shared Rural Downtown Coordinator and assess, refine and subsidize the position for at least a year or 2 to prove its worth and value. Prepare a funding model and assist the Chamber with hiring and assessment.

**Region-wide:** Housing Assistance – Work with Towns to amend their zoning bylaws to meet a recommendation from the completed 2024 *Franklin County Regional Housing Plan*'s to increase housing production. Provides technical assistance to towns as they take on this complicated work with volunteer boards and committees. Assist with drafting zoning bylaws for the Towns of Ashfield, Deerfield, and Gill and has also review and comment on draft housing bylaws for numerous other towns.

### **Martha's Vineyard Commission (MVC):**

**Multiple Communities:** State Forest Initiative – Work with a multi-disciplinary team to protect and enhance the Correlus State Forest. Coordinate with DCR and the team to hire a resident superintendent to repave the pathways in the forest, identify and eliminate non-native species of trees and plants, and implement a fire management plan.

**Region-wide:** Housing Production Plan – Work with Barrett Planning Group to help each town on Martha's Vineyard prepare a Housing Production Plan (HPP) in 2025. Support each Town's Planning Board, Select Board, and Affordable Housing Committee to collaborate with each other and their Town residents to understand the kinds of homes a community needs, including homes for low- or moderate-income people; determine what stands in the way of addressing those needs; set goals to increase the types and supply of homes in a community; adopt a five-year action plan to meet those goals, including specific steps to increase the supply of affordable homes for low- or moderate-income people; and achieve the best possible alignment between each town's housing development policies.

**Region-wide:** MBTA Communities Compliance - Assist 11 of the region's communities and provide supplementary assistance to the remaining communities to achieve MBTA Communities Compliance. Perform compliance model analysis, bylaw drafting, and most importantly, community engagement.

**Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC):**  
Present regularly to Planning Boards, Select Boards, and City Councils on the topic to help communities understand the regulations and their paths to compliance. Attend and present at Town Meetings across the region to help inform residents ahead of their vote.

**Region-wide:** Climate Resiliency and 319 Match: Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness/Hazard Mitigation Planning – Facilitate projects surrounding Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness, Hazard Mitigation Planning, and non-point source pollution mitigation. Support multiple communities in applying for MVP Action Grants, as well as advancing our own MVPC application (Beat the Heat).

Developed and advance a Request For Proposal for Merrimack River to support regional projects to improve water quality in the Merrimack.

**Region-wide:** GIS Technical Assistance Services - Provide GIS Technical Assistance to municipalities with a Community Compact pursuant DLTA Community Compact best practices. Work with communities on the Early Alert Tool to monitor Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) events along the Merrimack River. Provide GIS zoning updates and revisions as requested by member communities. This provides municipalities across the region with the ability to utilize GIS mapping technology to inform robust land use planning and further guide future development. (Note: if fulfilling best practices.)

**Ashland:** Community Resiliency Hub Plan – Work with the Town to identify a community hub where residents could sustain power and access resources as they rebuild from an emergency, such as extreme heat and flooding. Develop a plan to establish the existing Ashland Community Center as a resiliency hub for residents.

**Dedham:** Open Space and Recreation Plan - Provide technical assistance to the Town of Dedham to update their Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) to reflect significant changes in the town’s staffing and resources since the completion of the previous plan.

**Gloucester:** Digital Equity Public Wifi Feasibility Study – Implement a key short-term recommendation of Gloucester’s Digital Equity Plan by establishing a pilot for a publicly accessible outdoor Wi-Fi network in downtown Gloucester. Support the City with technical assistance to define one or more geographic areas in downtown Gloucester for the implementation of an outdoor public wi-fi network.

**Multiple Communities (Natick, Framingham, Ashland):** Metrowest Climate Equity Outreach – Continue the ongoing initiative between Framingham, Ashland, and Natick to engage residents on the impacts of climate change to community health. Partner with municipal Staff to work with residents to assist in identifying action opportunities related to policy, systems and environmental changes that can address community specified impacts from climate change and resiliency in environmental justice communities.

**Region-wide:** MetroMayors Coalition Housing Task Force – Meet regularly with the Metro Mayors Coalition Housing Task Force to advance housing production and affordability goals. Work with the Task Force to advance its two local implementation projects: Rightsizing Zoning and Leveraging Public Land for Affordable Housing. MAPC's Data Services staff presented recent research conducted with Housing Navigator and worked with the Coalition to track and analyze housing production data for the upcoming annual release.

## **Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC):**

**Athol:** Economic Development Evaluation – Assist the Town to evaluate a portion of Route 2A heading west to the Orange town line. Review existing land use patterns, existing zoning districts with allowed uses, infrastructure availability, and provide a set of recommendations to pursue additional economic

development opportunities in this Route 2 corridor. Make recommendations for additional housing as housing is an important component of economic development.

**Shirley:** Affordable Housing Trust - Assist the Town of Shirley to create and approve an Affordable Housing Trust. Provide the documentation required for Town Meeting approval of an Affordable Housing Trust, including a declaration of trust, affordable trust bylaw and all required attachments. Town Meeting approved the creation of and staffing the Trust.

**Westminster:** Design Guidelines - Work with the Westminster Planning Board to create design guidelines or standards to be used in the Village Center Zoning District. Explore how the bylaw can be improved to have a clear, concrete set of design standards that promote the New England character that is desired, while promoting mixed use growth.

## **Nantucket Planning and Economic Development Commission (NP&EDC)**

**Region-wide:** Master Plan Update – Partner with Barrett Planning Group, Inc. to prepare an update to the Master Plan. Perform public outreach to gather feedback on housing, transportation, social, demographic, etc. Draft a vision statement for the Master Plan update.

**Region-wide:** Subdivision Rules and Regulation Update - Update the Rules and Regulations Governing the Subdivision of land. Usher the new rules and regulation through the review and approval process.

**Region-wide:** Build Out Analysis – Work with consultant to continue research work for a build out analysis for the Island. Review draft findings for comment in advance of a public presentation. Consultants will present their results to the Nantucket Planning and Economic Development Commission in summer/fall 2025.

## **Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG):**

**Dunstable:** Open Space and Recreation Plan for 2025-2035 – Update Dunstable’s current Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) which expires this year. Ensure the plan update conforms to the current OSRP requirements and also serves as a guide for Dunstable as the Town works over the next ten years to protect natural resources; preserve open space; and provide recreational opportunities in town. Create a plan that will be specific enough to guide future decision making and provide policy direction, while allowing the flexibility needed to respond to changing opportunities, programs and constraints. Work with the Town Administrator and Open Space and Recreation Planning Working Group, anticipating completing an OSRP with a ten-year action plan, maps, and narrative submitted to the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA). Prepare plan maps based on the new OSRP Workbook guidelines. Present a draft OSRP to the Town for public review.

**Westford:** Tiered Site Plan Review Update - Develop a three-tiered Site Plan Review process (Administrative, Minor, and Major) that allows Town staff to administratively review smaller projects while ensuring that minor and major projects receive appropriate Planning Board oversight. Recommend amendments to the Town’s Zoning Bylaw focused on streamlining development approvals, reducing unnecessary delays for small projects, and aligning the Town with best practices in zoning and land use regulation. Prepare a memo analyzing Westford's existing zoning bylaws for site plan review, best practices from peer communities, and recommended thresholds for future zoning amendments. Meet with Westford Planning Board to present the memo and ask critical questions necessary to move forward with

final recommended amendments. Draft zoning amendments to Westford's site plan review bylaw, which will be presented to the Planning Board.

**Multiple Communities (City of Lowell and Towns of Billerica, Chelmsford, Dracut, Dunstable, Pepperell, Tewksbury, Tyngsborough, and Westford):** At Home in Greater Lowell: A Regional Housing Strategy - Undertake a strategic planning effort with stakeholders at local and neighborhood levels to address housing needs on a regional level. Develop a scope for a regional housing strategy - *At Home in Greater Lowell* - including measurable, achievable benchmarks for each community based on data analysis and community input and strategies to achieve those goals. Document the first-hand experiences of people living in diverse housing situations in their own words and create a toolkit of implementation and educational materials that can be used by communities to enact the strategies. Prepare two reports, one with a detailed housing needs assessment and associated goals and strategies, and a second with municipal toolkits and step-by-step guides for plan implementation. Present draft strategies to eight community Select Boards, engage with a storytelling consultant for the project. Create the final draft of the Phase 1 report based on input from municipal boards and finalize edits and formatting the report.

### **Old Colony Planning Council (OCPC):**

**Kingston:** Age-Friendly Action Plan - Assist with committee development, research, public outreach, and listening sessions to gather information that will inform the development of an Age-Friendly Action Plan. Identify the needs of the aging population under the Age and Dementia-Friendly Best Practices. Conduct focus groups for transportation, housing, communication and information, and mental health. Complete and summarize a community survey, conduct monthly committee meetings, conduct two public workshops, a Council On Aging and also a select board presentation to gather support for the action plan.

**Multiple Communities: (East Bridgewater and West Bridgewater)** Rail Trail Connection - Work with the Natural Resources Trust of Bridgewater and partners to develop the Old State Farm Trail, a new 1.8-mile trail. Support East and West Bridgewater to connect their communities through trails in a “Bridging the Bridgewaters” initiative.

**Region-wide:** Regional Water Study – Prepare the Old Colony Regional Water Plan with a shared vision and action plan. Collaborate with member communities to bring together the perspectives of 17 municipalities, the Herring Pond Wampanoag Tribe, watershed groups, water suppliers, private well owners, businesses, farmers, and residents. Collect data and input from these stakeholders, along with engineering analysis and public engagement, to shape a practical, forward-looking roadmap for water supply, efficiency, and environmental protection.

### **Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC):**

**Chesterfield:** Visioning Process – Assist the Town of Chesterfield to conduct a visioning process to gather public input on town priorities, goals, and key challenges. Use the information gathered to set the foundation for the Town to begin work on a Comprehensive Plan.

**Granby:** Zoning Diagnostic Report - Assist the Town of Granby to review their Zoning Bylaw and provide a Zoning Diagnostic Report. Work with the Planning Board to identify conflicts with Chapter 40A, within the Zoning Bylaw, and to provide recommendations for consideration and revisions based on community planning documents and best practices.

**Springfield:** Historical Research - Assist with the document and historical research for projects funded under the Springfield Historic Preservation Trust Fund (Mass Gaming Commission and MGM mitigation funds) for historic preservation in proximity to the MGM Springfield site.

## **Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD):**

**Taunton:** Active Shooter Hostile Event (ASHE) Response – Assist Taunton Public Schools with the development of an ASHE Response Plan. Create a toolkit, along with other TPS plans, policies, and procedures. Partner in the design, development, and facilitation of a Full-scale Active Shooter Hostile Event exercise.

**Multiple Communities (New Bedford and Dartmouth):** Land Alternatives and Redevelopment Study – Partner with the Greater New Bedford Regional Refuse District (“The District”) to produce a Land Use Alternatives and Redevelopment Study. Explore, over 15-months, The District’s assets and determine potential opportunities for economic development, while supporting its operations, fiscal sustainability, and ability to serve New Bedford and Dartmouth.

**Region-wide:** Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Bylaw – Provide technical assistance to member communities to update or create new ADU bylaws and ordinances to conform to the new requirements set forth by the Healey-Driscoll administration.

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