

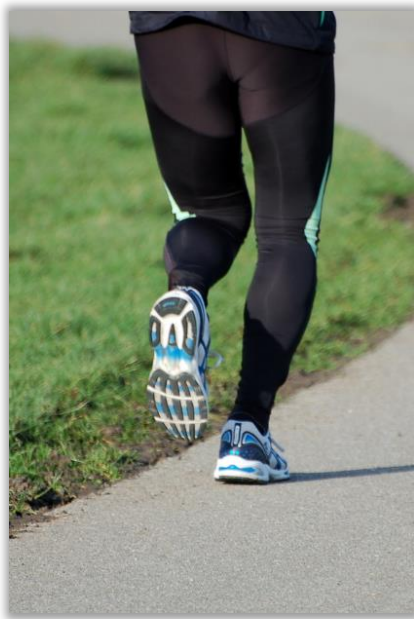


The Central Mass Indicators Project

Community Profile: Blackstone, MA

Project Overview

In February of 2016, the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) was awarded a mini-grant of \$8,000 through The Massachusetts Association of Health Boards (MAHB) and Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) to launch the *Central Mass Indicators Project*. In alignment with the Mass in Motion Municipal Wellness and Leadership Program, this project is intended to increase opportunities for active living and healthy eating by creating conditions that support and reinforce beneficial behaviors for people of all ages and abilities.



CMRPC has 40 member communities across Central Massachusetts, of which only two, Worcester and Northborough, participate in the Mass in Motion program. This gap alone calls for the promotion of Mass in Motion strategies across Central Massachusetts. Many of these municipalities are rural, and Worcester County is home to over 1,500 farms. However, lack of multi-modal transportation options limit the ability of low-income and minority populations to participate in healthy eating options and active living. This project allowed CMRPC to assist its member municipalities in selecting health indicators that provide insight into how well their community promotes healthy eating and active living.

CMRPC engaged with three municipalities within the Central Massachusetts region¹ to identify indicators of active living, healthy eating, and safe physical environments. The three partnering municipalities were Barre, Blackstone, and Charlton. The participating towns assisted with determining health indicators and

providing data to the project team. For the purposes of this project, indicators are defined as measurable data points that “monitor progress on economic and social goals. [They] describe observed societal problems or assets and help represent a normative stance on related issues.”² The goal of the project is to help our communities integrate health into their municipal planning processes through the use of indicators. Indicators allow policymakers and the general public to not only better understand the community they live in, but to also track the progress of that community on a variety of levels and sectors. The data collected and reported provides in-depth snapshots that allow municipalities to track longitudinal trends, set community goals, and prioritize action.



¹ Defined as the combined Regional Planning Agencies of CMRPC and the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)

² Boston Indicators Project. Boston Foundation. Web. <http://www.bostonindicators.org/>

CMRPC conducted outreach to its 40 member communities to recruit participants via email blasts and targeted emails/phone calls. CMRPC also introduced the project at a Quarterly Manager's Meeting in February 2016 and heard back from seven communities that were interested in participating. We selected three towns to be included in this project: Barre, Blackstone, and Charlton. Towns provided letters of interest to confirm their partnerships.

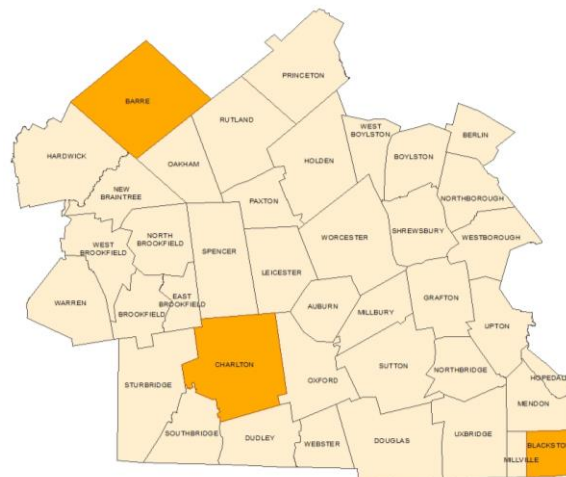


Figure 1: Participating Communities

Technical Assistance

CMRPC engaged with a number of organizations and individuals to obtain technical assistance. CMRPC held a project kickoff with three community organizations, including Heywood Hospital, Montachusett Opportunity Council, and Pernet Family Health of Worcester. The organizations served in an advisory role and assisted with the project planning, identification of health indicators, and in the finalization of deliverables. The project team also collaborated with Dillon Sussman of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) and Halley Reeves of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) to receive recommendations on indicator development, healthy community design initiatives, and web-visualization tools. This assistance provided the foundation for CMRPC to build a logic model to assess the indicators we wanted to use in this project.

Indicator Development

Indicators were determined based on a combination of data collection and survey analysis. In March 2016, CMRPC distributed a survey via Survey Monkey to better understand the needs and concerns of the study towns related to health and the built environment. The survey asked users to rate the towns' overall health and to identify key health issues, risky behaviors, and social/environmental determinants that have the greatest impact on the community's well-being. The goal of the survey was to identify the most pressing problems that can be addressed through municipal planning and community action. The survey can be viewed here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CMRPCIndicators2016>

The project team then collected and analyzed demographic, health-related, and spatial datasets from a number of sources including the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH), Massachusetts Office of Geographic Information (MassGIS), Massachusetts Community Health Information Profile (MassCHIP), Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), the Central Mass Grown. CMRPC staff also utilized transit and traffic data collected in-house by the Transportation Division to assess roadway conditions and transportation trends.

The selection of indicators depended on a variety of factors including availability of data, connection to existing health trends, and relationship to community goals and/or planned projects. In order for a data point to be determined as a valid indicator, the following questions³ were asked:

- Can the indicator be measured? (i.e. is the data reliable and readily available?)
- Can the indicator be understood by the community?
- Does the indicator reflect a value widely held by community members?
- Can the indicator be linked to other social, economic and environmental issues?

³ Adapted from the Cape Cod Sustainability Indicators Report. 2003. Web. <http://www.sustaincapecod.org/indicators>

- Does the indicator help inform existing and/or planned projects?
- Can an outcome be defined for the indicator?
- Can the indicator be influenced by changes in policy and/or individual behavior?

If all questions received a “yes” answer, the data point was deemed appropriate for indicator development. The project team also consulted with the technical advisers for further guidance and recommendations. Building on this, the project team analyzed all of the information obtained to finalize the set of indicators for each municipality specific to their community needs and assets.

Location and Demographics

The Town of Blackstone is located in central Massachusetts and is bordered by Mendon on the north, Bellingham on the east, North Smithfield and Woonsocket, Rhode Island, on the south, and Millville on the west. Blackstone is 22 miles southeast of Worcester and 37 miles southwest of Boston.

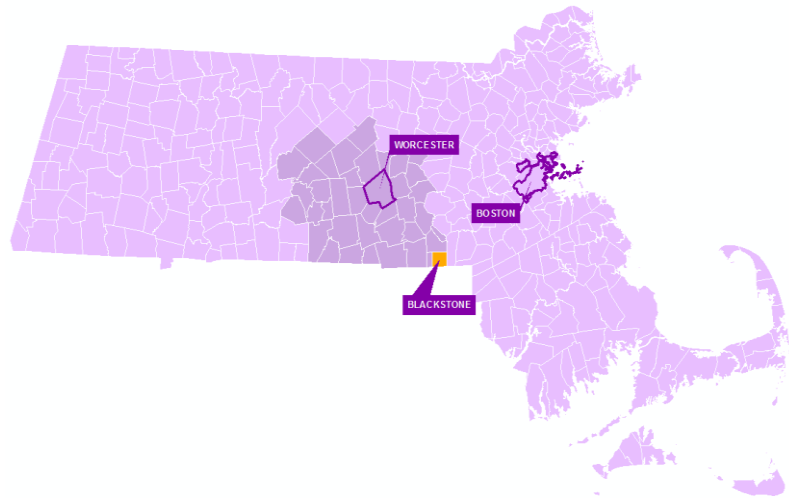


Figure 2: Regional Context

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the Town of Blackstone has a population of 9,026 residents, which grew by 2.5% percent between 2000 and 2010. The Town’s total area is 11.23 square miles with land making up 97 percent of the area, and a density of 804 people per square mile.

Table 1. Demographic Information

	Participating Communities			Worcester County	State	National
	Barre	Blackstone	Charlton			
Population ⁴	5,398	9,026	12,981	798,552	6,547,629	308,745,538
Unemployment ⁵	6.1%	5.2%	4.4%	6.20%	5.8%	5.3%
Poverty Rate ⁶	4%	5%	5%	11.60%	11.6%	11.3%
Minority ⁶	2.2%	6.6%	2.5%	23%	28.2%	36.7%
Median Household Income ⁶	\$66,250	\$72,699	\$42,538	\$65,453	\$67,846	\$53,046
Female Population ⁶	50%	52%	51%	50.70%	51.6%	50.8%
Children ⁶	26%	24%	25%	22%	20.6%	23.1%
Elderly (65+) ⁶	14%	13%	13.3%	13.40%	14.4%	13.7%
High School Graduate ⁶	94%	91%	94%	89.60%	89.5%	86.3%
Owner-Occupied Housing Units ⁶	80.2%	68%	80.7%	65.20%	62.3%	64.4%
Renter-Occupied Units ⁶	19.8%	32%	19.3%	34.80%	37.7%	35.6%

⁴ Data are from the 2010 U.S. Census and are available at <http://www.census.gov/>

⁵ Data are from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and are available at www.bls.gov.

⁶ Data are from the 2010 – 2014 American Community Survey and are available on American FactFinder at http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_13_5YR_DP03&src=pt and http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_13_5YR_DP05&prodType=table

Survey Results

The survey results for Blackstone depicted a strong need for improved transportation options throughout Town. Blackstone does not currently have a transit/bus route and this was noted as a contributing factor to conditions of healthy and active living, such as accessibility. Sidewalk and road infrastructure were described to be in adequate shape, however the lack of transportation options were indicated as having the greatest impact on the town's overall health.

Regarding community amenities, access to affordable and nutritious foods, availability of farmer's markets, and farmlands were all listed as assets enabling healthy eating throughout town. In addition, the need to expand existing healthy food efforts through the implementation of a community garden program was mentioned across all participating towns.

The identified social determinants of negative impact included availability of community-based resources in support of community living and opportunities for recreational and leisure-time activities, lack transportation options, and lack of social support. The identified environmental determinants of negative impact include housing and community design, physical barriers, and aesthetic elements (i.e. good lighting, trees, and benches).

Top 3 Major Health Concerns:

- Aging issues (arthritis, hearing/vision loss, etc.)
- Heart disease and stroke
- High blood pressure.

Top 3 Risky Behaviors:

- Tobacco Use
- Poor Eating Habits
- Sedentary Lifestyles

Overall, the survey user rated Blackstone as a healthy community and noted the following as priority areas in planning for healthy and active living:

- ❖ **Access to Transportation**
- ❖ **Increase in or Improvement of Existing Open Space and Recreational Facilities**
- ❖ **Increase in Physical Activity for Children and Adults**



Figure 3: Daniels's Farmstead Farmer's Market located at 286 Mendon St. in Blackstone, MA



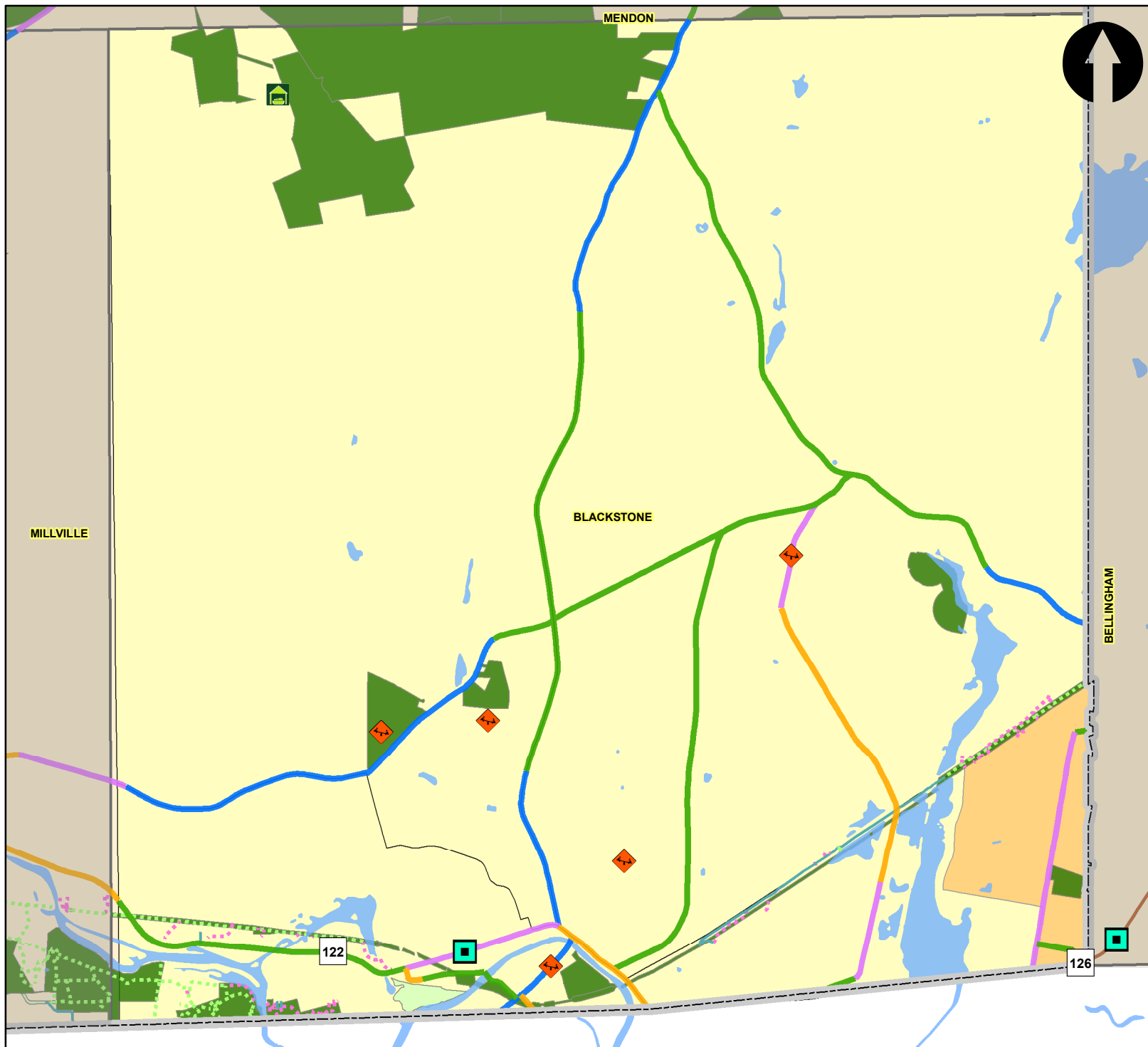
Figure 4: Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA)



Figure 5: Blackstone River Bikeway

Map 1: Built Environment Factors in Blackstone, MA

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Healthy Food/Active Living Resources

- Farmers Markets
- Winter Markets
- Fitness Centers
- Play Areas

Built Environment Factors

Pavement Condition

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- Very Poor

DCR Trails

- Forest Road/Trail
- Trail
- Other

Water Bodies

-

Open Space

- Full Public Access
- Limited Public Access

Vulnerable Populations: Household Level

- Low Income (-\$50,259)
- CMRPC Region Outline

Pavement conditions are measured along Federal-Aid eligible roadways.

Vulnerable Populations were calculated by CMRPC as part of the 2015 Mobility2040 Study. Vulnerable populations includes groups that are 150% above the CMRPC regional averages, as shown in parentheses.



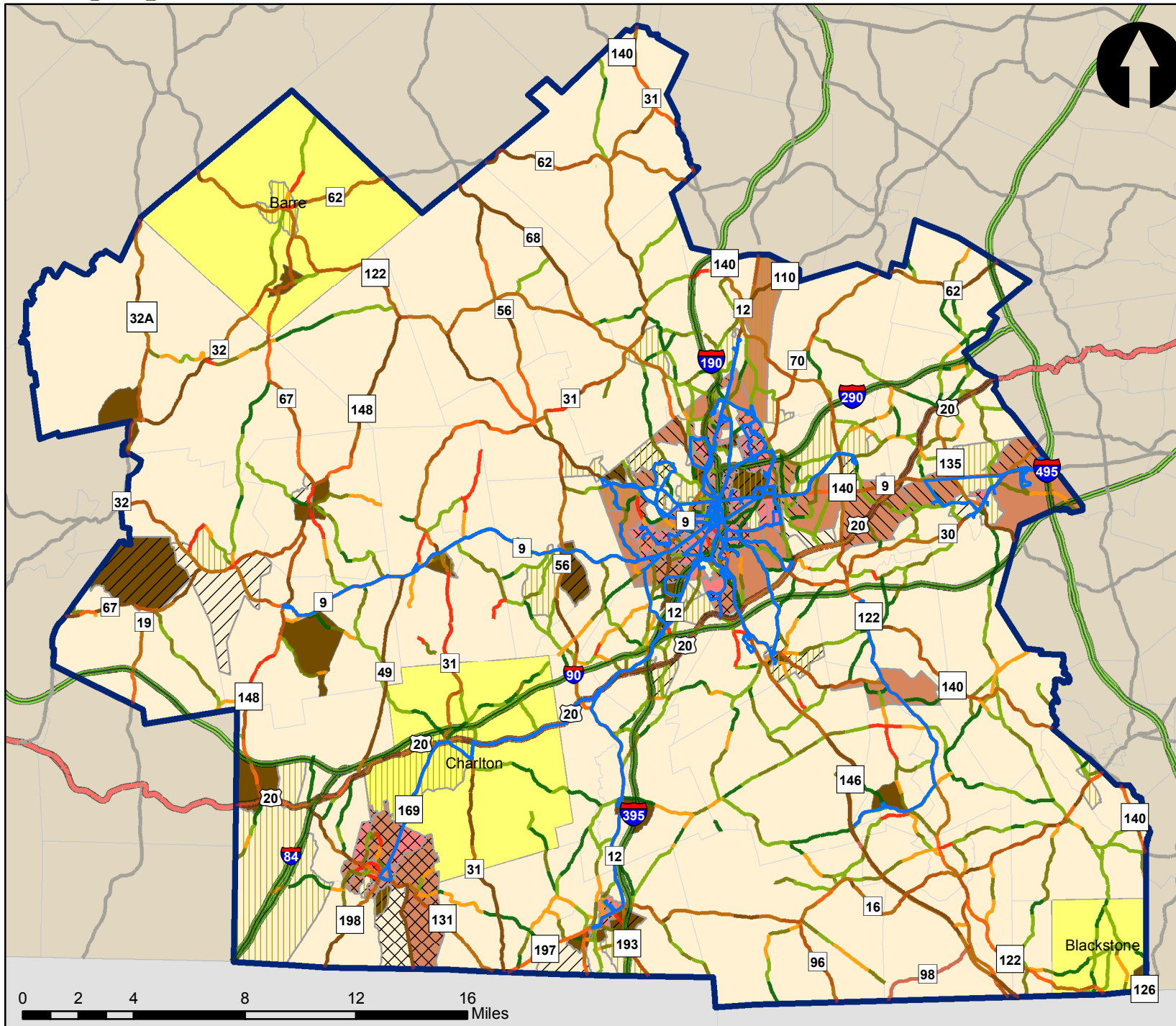
Information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. This information is not adequate for legal boundary definition, regulatory interpretation, or parcel-level analysis. Use caution when interpreting positional accuracy.

Participating towns: Barre, Blackstone, Charlton

This project was funded by the Massachusetts Association of Health Boards (MAHB) and the Massachusetts Department of Health (MDPH) 2016 Healthy Community Design & Mass in Motion Mini-Grant Program.



Map 2: Transportation Vulnerability



WRTA Routes



Pavement Condition

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- Very Poor

Road Inventory

- Interstate
- U.S. Route
- State Route

Vulnerable Populations: Household Level

- Zero Vehicle Households (+12.75%)
- Hispanic or Latino (+14.0%)
- Language Isolated Households (+9.45%)
- HH with persons 75+ age (+18.8%)
- Minority & Low Income
- Low Income (-\$50,259)
- Minority (+20.3%)

- CMRPC Region
- Participating towns

Pavement Conditions are measured along Federal-Aid eligible roadways.

Vulnerable Populations were calculated by CMRPC as part of the 2015 Mobility2040 Study. Vulnerable populations includes groups that are 150% above the CMRPC regional averages, as shown in parentheses.



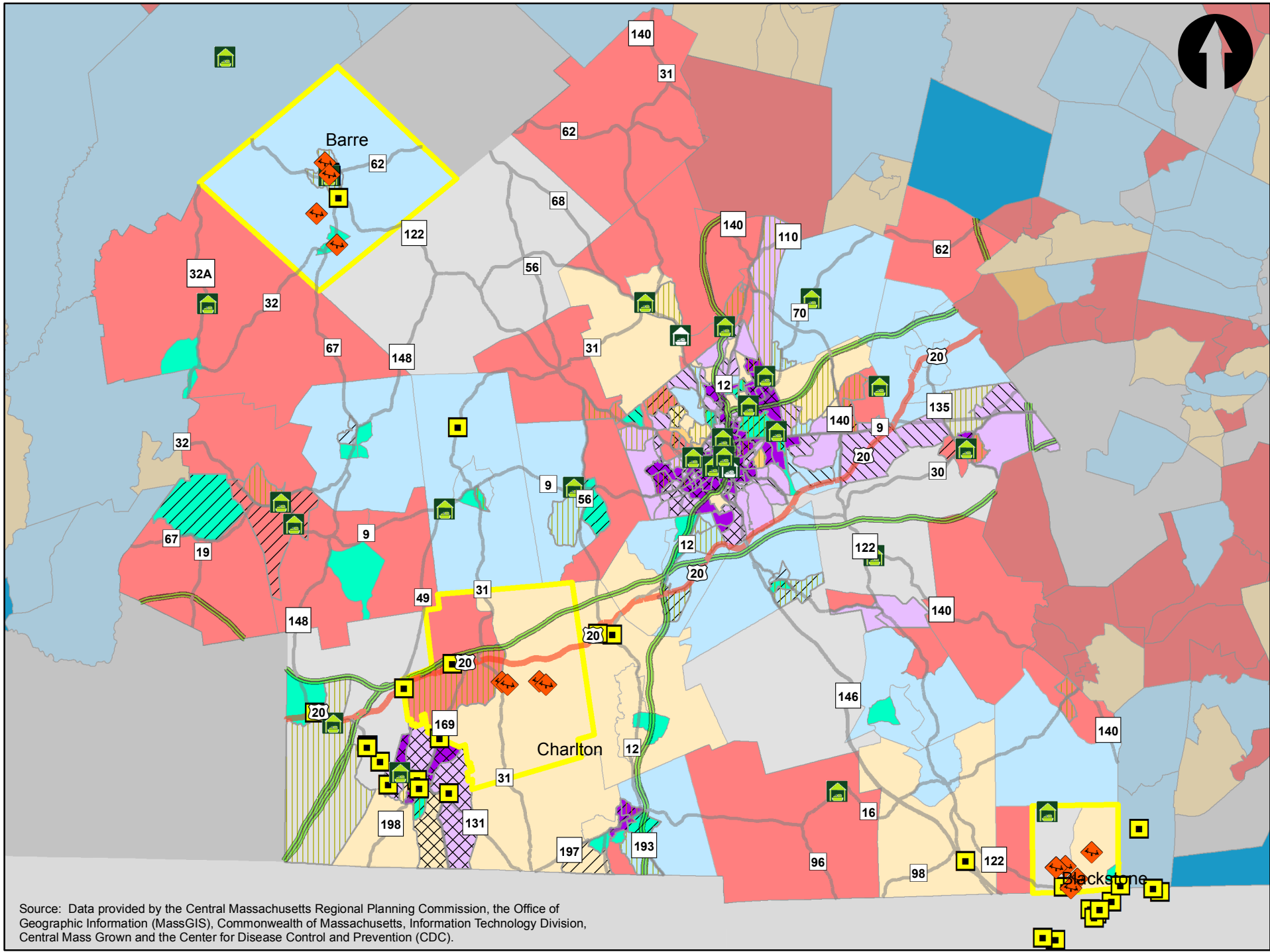
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Participating towns: Barre, Blackstone, Charlton

This project was funded by the Massachusetts Association of Health Boards (MAHB) and the Massachusetts Department of Health (MDPH) 2016 Healthy Community Design & Mass in Motion Mini-Grant Program.



Map 3: Healthy Food and Fitness Resources



Healthy Food/Active Living Resources

- Play Areas
- Farmers Markets
- Winter Markets
- Fitness Centers

mRFEI* Score by Census Tract

- No healthy food outlet within census tract
- 0.1-5
- 5.1-10
- 10.1-37.5
- 37.5-100
- Null Value

*Modified Retail Food Environment Index (mRFEI)

Lower mRFEI scores indicate census tracts that contain many convenience stores and fast food restaurants compared to the number of healthy food retailers. See diagram below the legend for details on how the index score was calculated.

Vulnerable Populations: Household Level

- HH with persons 75+ age (+18.8%)
- Hispanic or Latino (+14.0%)
- Language Isolated Households (+9.45%)
- Zero Vehicle Households (+12.75%)
- Low Income (-\$50,259)
- Minority (+20.3%)
- Minority & Low Income

Vulnerable Populations were calculated by CMRPC as part of the 2015 Mobility2040 Study. Vulnerable populations includes groups that are 150% above the CMRPC regional averages, as shown in parentheses.

Road Inventory

- Interstate
- U.S. Route
- State Route
- Participating Towns
- CMRPC Region Outline

$$mRFEI = 100 \times \frac{\# \text{ Healthy Food Retailers}}{\# \text{ Healthy Food Retailers} + \# \text{ Less Healthy Food Retailers}}$$

Information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. This information is not adequate for legal boundary definition, regulatory interpretation, or parcel-level analysis. Use caution for interpreting positional accuracy.

This project was funded by the Massachusetts Association of Health Boards (MAHB) and the Massachusetts Department of Health (MDPH) 2016 Healthy Community Design and Mass in Motion Mini-Grant Program.



Source: Data provided by the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, the Office of Geographic Information (MassGIS), Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Information Technology Division, Central Mass Grown and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Discussion of Indicators

Access to Transportation

Goal → *Engage with the Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) and/or the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) to establish a bus route through Town and improve existing means to ensure affordable and reliable transportation.*

Why is This Important?

Lack of access to transportation creates barriers to essential services including employment, health care, and nutritious foods. These barriers result in health disparities that traditionally isolate minority populations, low-income families, households in rural areas, and people with disabilities. Lack of transportation can lead to unemployment, delayed care, unhealthy diets, malnourishment, etc. Neighborhoods served by adequate transit access to more distant amenities connect residents to jobs, health care facilities, and other services throughout the community.

Indicators

- **WRTA Bus Routes**

The Town of Blackstone does not currently have a Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) bus route. As shown in Maps 1 and 2, Charlton is the only community among the three participating towns with a WRTA Route (#29) that passes through the community. The route can be depicted in blue and travels along and Route 169.

- **Miles of Bike Lanes on Existing Roads**

This data is not yet available, however it is anticipated that this information will be collected as part of CMRPC's regional bicycle and pedestrian planning and pavement management efforts. This inventory will include the location of bike lanes along federal-aid eligible roads as well as descriptive information such as width and general condition. Data collection efforts in Blackstone are anticipated to begin in August 2016.

Pavement Conditions

Goal → *Identify priority segments for pavement maintenance and/or repair to help support accessibility and mobility throughout Town.*

Why is This Important?

All roadways are in a constant state of deterioration because of time, weather, and traffic load. As a result, neighborhoods with inadequate road infrastructure and limited access to walkable streets present a major barrier to pedestrian activity and accessibility. Streets and highways without sidewalks and/or bike lanes discourage walking and/or biking. This contributes to unhealthy, sedentary lifestyles and obesity rates, putting individuals at serious risk for chronic illnesses such as diabetes.

Indicators

- **Pavement Conditions along Federal-Aid Eligible Roadways**

The key to having an efficient and effective pavement management program lies in the prioritization process. As depicted in the Map 1 the pavement in Blackstone is overall in excellent to good condition (shown in blue and green lines). However, there are a few road segments towards the Rhode Island border that are in poor condition, particularly on Farm Street and Main Street. These segments could be identified as priority areas for pavement maintenance. Priority segments can be

used to inform decision makers choosing projects for the *Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)* and *Long-Range Transportation Plan*. It also assists with determining the most cost-effective strategies to address the region's deteriorating roadway conditions.

Access to Parks

Goal → Provide residents of all ages with safe, physical activity opportunities in parks and improve access to outdoor space to increase fitness and wellbeing.

Why is This Important?

Access to parks allows people to improve their health and wellness through interaction with nature and outdoor spaces. Physical activity opportunities (i.e. green exercise, personal and/or community gardening, and nature-based recreational activities) help combat overweight and obesity while promoting general wellness. This results in lower levels of illness and mortality, and improved quality of life. Trees and vegetation can also help mitigate climate, air, and water pollution impacts on public health. However, fees for use of recreational facilities and activities, neighborhood safety, and access to walkable spaces continue to be major challenges to active living.

Indicators

- **Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Roads and Trails**

In the Town of Blackstone, there is a concentration of public trails in the southern third of the town. The DCR Roads and Trails data layer, provided by MassGIS, contains all legal roads and trails as identified by DCR staff and consultants on DCR DSPR properties. In Blackstone, these trails primarily include the Southern New England Trunkline Trail and trails within the Blackstone River and Canal Heritage Park, which crosses the border of Blackstone and Millville.

- **Open Space and Recreational Facilities**

As reported by MassGIS, open space data is represented in *Map 1* in two colors. The darker green indicates open space with full public access and the lighter green indicates limited public access, which is defined as open space where “members only” have access to the space. The Town of Blackstone has only a very small portion of land, nearing Rhode Island, where the open space is only available to a limited population; the majority of the open space is available with full public access, including the Quisset Hill Wildlife Management Area which borders Mendon.

- **Number of Parks within Half-Mile**

The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) Livability Index is a web-based tool created by the AARP Public Policy Institute used to track community livability across seven categories: housing, neighborhood, transportation, environment, engagement, and opportunity. Livability is measured at the neighborhood level on a scale of 0 to 100, with higher values illustrating greater livability for people of all ages.

Collectively, the town of Blackstone has an AARP Livability score of 50. While the US average for a score in regards to distances to parks is 0.0, the Town of Blackstone has a score of 0.7, indicating a higher number of parks within a half-mile of neighborhoods than the average US neighborhood score. The Town of Blackstone currently has no policy towards a commitment of livability, whereby state and local plans are aimed at creating age-friendly communities, as defined by the AARP Livability Index.

Physical Activity

Goal → Establish pedestrian friendly and walkable neighborhoods by ensuring safe, equitable access to physical activity opportunities for people of all ages.

Why is This Important?

Insufficient physical activity is a risky behavior associated with overweight and obesity, which may lead to preventable chronic illnesses. According to the CDC, regular and adequate participation in physical activity offers a wide range of health benefits such as reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, weight control, strengthening of bones, and improved mental health⁷.

Indicators

- **Walk Trips per Household**

Healthy transit options, such as walking and/or biking, provide residents with convenient, accessible, and low-cost alternatives to public transit and driving. Table 2 shows the number of estimated walk trips per household per day measured at the neighborhood scale by the AARP Livability Index. Blackstone has a value of 0.61, which is approximately 10% less than the average US neighborhood. However Blackstone's score is in line with Barre and Charlton suggesting that these towns are somewhat walkable areas.

Table 2. Estimated Walk Trips per Household per Day (AARP Livability Index)

Geographic Location	Score
Barre	0.55
Blackstone	0.61
Charlton	0.61
Median U.S. Neighborhood	0.73

- **Adult Participation of Regular Physical Activity**

Individuals who participate in regular physical activity and eat nutritious foods have a better quality of life and are less likely to develop preventable chronic illnesses.

Table 3 represents the percentage of adults lacking regular physical activity over a five-year average, as calculated by the BRFSS. Approximately 44% of residents in Blackstone reported lacking regular physical activity, compared to 49% in Charlton, 50% in Worcester County, and 48% across the state. There was no data available for Barre.

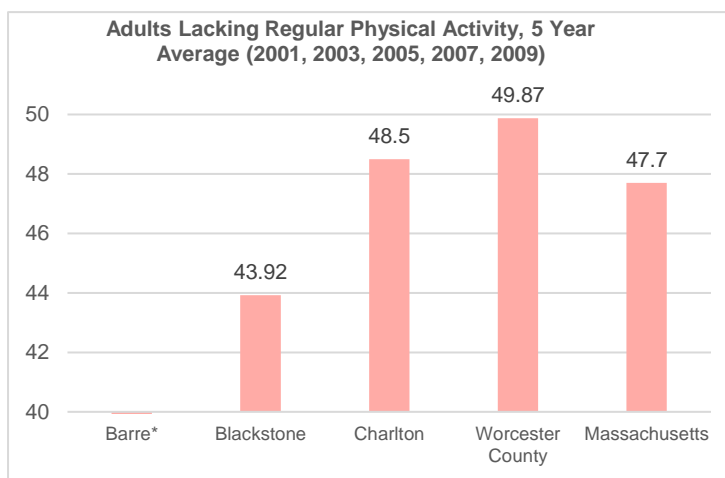


Table 3. Adults Lacking Regular Physical Activity on 5-Year Average (BRFSS)

- **Fitness Centers**

CMRPC collected locational data of both public and private fitness centers for each community via Yellow Pages and geo-coded the locations. As shown on Map 1, Blackstone currently has one fitness

⁷ "Physical Activity." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Web. <https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/pa-health/index.htm>

center in Town; however, there are five fitness centers located within one mile of the town, including one fitness center in Bellingham and four in Rhode Island.

- **Play Areas**

CMRPC collected locational data of play areas via <http://mapofplay.kaboom.org> for each community, confirmed the data with the towns' DPW Departments, and geo-coded the locations in ArcGIS. Play areas refer to indoor and outdoor spaces designed for children and youth to participate in recreational activities. Blackstone has four available playgrounds and two play fields/tracks (See Map 1). Two of these playgrounds, the running track, and the field, are located in public schools in Blackstone. The playgrounds are located at AF Maloney Elementary School and John F Kennedy Elementary School, while the Millville Regional High School does not offer a playground, it has a running-track. Similarly, Frederick W. Harnet Middle School does not offer a playground, but it has a field which can be used as a play space. Two additional playgrounds are located in Blackstone at Turbesi Park and Roosevelt Park.

Overweight and Obesity

Goal → Reduce the prevalence of adult/childhood obesity and chronic disease by increasing physical activity opportunities in schools, businesses, and outdoor spaces while decreasing exposure to high-calorie intake or unhealthy foods.

Why is This Important?

Diet and body weight are directly linked to individual health status. According to Healthy People 2020, obesity is a major risk factor for high-cost, preventable chronic diseases such as hypertension, asthma, type II diabetes, heart disease, strokes, and some cancers⁸. Weight gain also impacts mental health and wellbeing, which may increase the risk of stress, depression, social detachment, and suicide.

Indicators

- **Adult Obesity**

As our society is becoming increasingly sedentary, the rates of obesity in the nation are rising. Table 4 represents the prevalence of obesity among Massachusetts adults as calculated by BRFSS. The data compares obesity rates on a three-year average between the participating towns, Worcester County, and Massachusetts. In Blackstone, approximately 25% of adults are obese, similar to the percentage for adults across Worcester County.

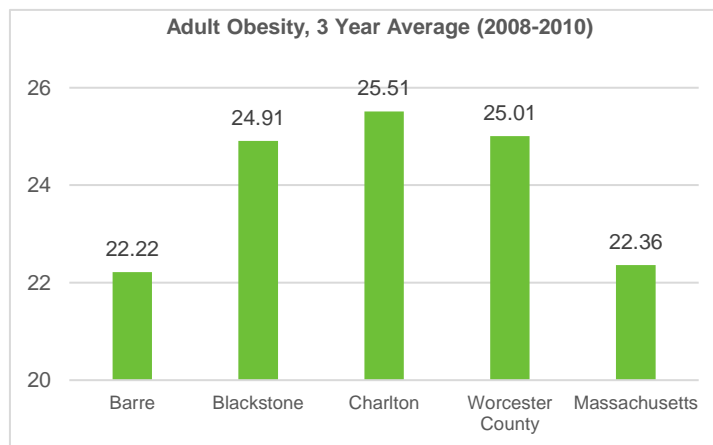


Table 4. Percent of Adult Obesity on a 3-Year Average (BRFSS)

⁸ "Nutrition and Weight Status." Healthy People 2020. U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Online. <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/nutrition-and-weight-status>

Nutrition

Goal → *Ensure all people in town have equal access to nutritious foods and produce by connecting local farmers to corner store initiatives, community gardens, and/or mobile grocers; and implement educational shopping/cooking programs in schools to encourage healthy food decision-making.*

Why is This Important?

Limited access to and high costs of healthy foods are major barriers to active living for underserved groups such as low-income, minority, single-family households, elderly, and disabled populations. These individuals often live in food insecure locations that inhibit them from accessing local fruits and vegetables. As a result, alternative food options may result in unhealthy items found in gas stations, fast-food restaurants, and grocers. Although all Towns noted in the survey that the availability of nutritious/local produce was not a major barrier to healthy eating, there are still groups that are disproportionately affected due to high food costs and lack of transportation.

Indicators

- **Food Deserts**

The Modified Retail Food Environment Index (mRFEI)⁹ is a composite measurement of the retail food environment and represents the percentage of healthy food vendors located within a 0.5 mile buffer of a Census Tract. The mRFEI score indicates the number of healthy food retailers divided by the number of healthy and less healthy food retailers, providing an index score of the balance of healthy to non-healthy food resources. The lower the mRFEI score, the more convenience stores and fast food restaurants (and less healthy food resources) that are present in that area.

The Town of Blackstone has an mRFEI score of 9.5 in Census Tract 25027747101 and null score in Census Tract 25027747102 (see Map 3: *Healthy Food and Fitness Resources*). While it is not on the higher end, it is the same as the majority of Charlton and Uxbridge. Blackstone could improve their mRFEI score by either decreasing the number of non-healthy food resources in the town, or working to increase the number of healthy food retailers available locally.

- **Adults Consuming Five or More Fruits and Vegetables per day**

Regular fruit and vegetable intake contributes to an overall healthy diet. Table 5 depicts the percentage of adults consuming five or more fruits and vegetables per day in Massachusetts on a three-year average, as calculated by the BRFSS. The table shows the percentage of adults consuming five or more fruits and/or vegetables per day, on the scale of a three year average, with a comparison between the three participating towns, Worcester

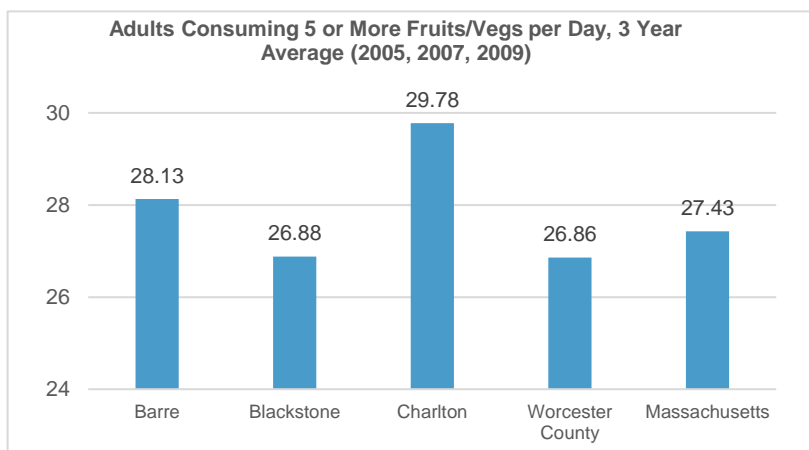


Table 5. Adult Daily Intake of Fruits/Vegetables on a 3-Year Average (BRFSS)

⁹ Census Tract Level State Maps of the Modified Retail Food Environment Index (mRFEI). National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity, 2012. Web. http://ftp.cdc.gov/pub/Publications/dnpao/census-tract-level-state-maps-mrfei_TAG508.pdf

County and the State of Massachusetts. The percentage of adults in Blackstone who are consuming 5 or more fruits and/or vegetables is almost 27% and remains almost equal to the average of Worcester County.

- **Farmer's Markets**

The data shows the locations of Farmers Markets and Winter Markets across Central Massachusetts, as provided by the Central Mass Grown, a community-based organization of farmers and buy local advocates. This data was adapted from the existing farmer's market layer from MassGIS, and modified to include additional markets in the central mass region that were not part of the initial analysis. The markets are the only measurement of available healthy food options for this project.

Blackstone currently has one farmer's market coordinated by the Daniel's Farmstead located at 286 Mendon St. Daniel's Farmstead is located in northern Blackstone, less than half a mile from Mendon. This market is typically open from July 10 to October 3 on Sundays at 11:00 am to 3:00 pm. The market offers a wide variety of events including musical performances, civil war reenactment, tractor and car show, mushroom walks, and tours.

Next Steps and Recommendations

Table 6. Recommendations and Strategies to Ensure Community Livability

What Can We Do?	
RESIDENTS	MUNICIPALITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer and serve on local boards and committees including Open Space and Recreation Plan Committees and Master Plan Committees • Participate in the Safe Route's to School Program • Attend Town Meeting as well as meetings of local boards and committees such as the Planning Board to ensure that your voice is heard on matters related to transportation, healthy eating and active living • Support local farms by buying local whenever possible. • Assist with local community projects such as community gardens. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase bus service to areas of need by. Resources include Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMMPO) and Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA). • Implement the Complete Streets Program in partnership with CMRPC. • Participate in the Mass Safe Routes to School Program to increase sidewalk connectivity and safety around schools. • Consider participating in the Worcester Bike Rack Program in partnership with CMRPC. • Ensure the town has an updated Open Space and Recreation Plan and Master Plan and ensure that a public health advocate serve on the committee for each plan. CMRPC is available to assist with coordinating and writing these plans. • Revise zoning regulations to remove barriers to agriculture, promote walkable smart growth development, encourage mixed-use districts, and reduce parking requirements. Consider adopting a version of the Model Village Center by-law, which CMRPC can assist with. • Develop a sidewalk inventory and maintenance program • Conduct a connectivity study to connect open space and critical health resources. • Improve design of existing open space and municipal buildings to encourage walkability. For example, allow the stairs to be easily accessible to residents. • Work with Central Mass Grown to increase fresh produce retail and distribution. • Facilitate and establish joint use agreements and public-private partnerships between communities and areas of local open space including schools and local gyms. • Encourage the use of local produce in schools and in local convenience stores