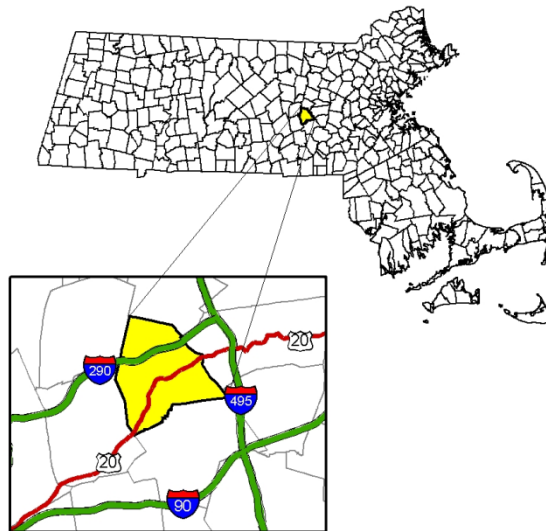




# Town of Northborough, MA Financial Trend Monitoring Report Fiscal Year 2021



FTM Report covers the period July 1, 2010 (FY2011) through June 30, 2021 (FY2021)



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## I. INTRODUCTION—THE FINANCIAL TREND MONITORING SYSTEM

Welcome to the Town of Northborough’s Financial Trend Monitoring System (FTMS) Report. The purpose of the FTMS is to analyze key financial indicators in order to assess the financial direction of the Town. The report is designed to bring issues and opportunities to the attention of decision-makers through a systematic method of trend analysis. If employed correctly, the FTMS will help Town officials:

- Gain a better understanding of the Town’s current financial condition.
- Identify hidden and emerging problems before they reach serious proportions.
- Present a straightforward picture of the Town’s financial strengths and weaknesses to elected and appointed officials, citizens, and credit rating firms.
- Reinforce the need for long-range considerations during the annual budget process.
- Provide a starting place for setting, reviewing and updating of financial policies that guide financial decision-making.

The ultimate goal of the FTMS is to help local officials better assess and protect the Town of Northborough’s overall financial condition.

### What is Financial Condition?

Financial condition is broadly defined as the ability of a Town to maintain existing service levels, withstand local and regional economic disruptions, and meet the demands of natural growth, decline and change. It is often discussed from the perspectives of cash solvency, budgetary solvency, long-run solvency and service-level solvency.

In the narrowest sense, financial condition means the ability of the Town to pay its immediate obligations over the next 30 to 90 days in order to maintain operations. This is typically referred to as “cash solvency.”

Beyond meeting its monthly cash obligations, a Town must also be able to generate enough revenues during a fiscal year to meet all its expenditures, without incurring operational deficits. With few exceptions, such as snow and ice overdrafts, the Town is legally obligated to maintain “budgetary solvency,” or a balanced fiscal year budget, while providing services to residents.

In a broader sense, financial condition means the Town’s ability in the long-run to pay all the costs of doing business, including those which may not appear during the current fiscal year, such as pension costs and liabilities for other post-employment benefits. This long-run balance

### *Aspects of Financial Condition*

- *Cash Solvency: A government's ability to pay immediate obligations,*
- *Budgetary Solvency: Its ability to pay financial obligations within the current fiscal period,*
- *Long-Run Solvency: Its ability to continue paying obligations in future fiscal periods, and*
- *Service-Level Solvency: The government's ability to continue providing the level of services expected by its constituents.*

between revenues and costs is referred to as “long-run solvency” and includes items such as debt commitments and investments designed to maintain capital facilities such as buildings and roads. As many municipalities know all too well, it is possible to defer such costs in the short-run, but failure to adequately invest in capital needs will cost more in the future and could even create issues of budgetary solvency if the needs go unmet for too long.

Lastly, financial condition must also be viewed from the perspective of the services that residents desire. “Service-level solvency” refers to the level and quality of the services that residents expect in order to maintain the health, safety and welfare of the community. A Town lacking service-level solvency might in all other respects be in sound financial condition, but be unable to support critical services at an adequate level. In a financial crisis situation, trying to maintain service-level solvency might result in a municipality experiencing cash, budgetary, or long-run solvency problems. That is why it is important to view the issue of financial condition from all four perspectives. During a prolonged period of fiscal constraint, the goal is to prevent fiscal distress, which is a temporary imbalance, from becoming fiscal crisis where obligations can no longer be met.

#### ***Fiscal Distress vs. Fiscal Crisis***

- *Fiscal Distress: imbalance between the level of financial resources the Town has committed and its potential available resources*
- *Fiscal Crisis: occurs when the local government can no longer pay its bills or provide existing levels of service*

Although unforeseen events can sometimes create a fiscal crisis, the signs of fiscal distress are often revealed in several recurring indicators. These include structural, economic, demographic and institutional factors. The indicators might manifest in an erosion of the economic base, a significant change in population size, or an interruption in the tax base. A loss of financial independence (through a greater reliance on intergovernmental revenues), a decline in productivity, or a large amount of immediate local government costs can also be indicative of the development of financial imbalances. For the Town of Northborough, which is in relatively good financial condition, the FTMS will help provide a systematic way to monitor changes and anticipate future problems.

#### **What is a Financial Trend Monitoring System?**

The Financial Trend Monitoring System (FTMS), as adapted from the system developed by the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), “identifies the factors that affect financial condition and arranges them in a rational order so that they can be more easily analyzed and measured.” It is a management tool that pulls together the pertinent information from the Town’s budgetary and financial reports, mixes it with the appropriate economic and demographic data, and creates a series of Town-specific financial indicators that, when plotted over a period of time, can be used to monitor changes in financial condition. The financial indicators include such things as revenue and expenditure trends, financial reserves, changes in the tax base, one-time revenue dependencies, debt, capital investments and external revenue dependencies.

## What are Financial Indicators?

Financial indicators are the primary tools of the Financial Trend Monitoring System. They represent a way to quantify changes in the factors with which they are associated. Many aspects of financial condition cannot be measured explicitly; however, by quantifying indicators and plotting them over a period of time, decision-makers can begin to monitor and evaluate the Town's financial performance. The use of these indicators will not provide answers as to why a problem is occurring or what the appropriate solution is, but it may provide the opportunity to make an informed management response.

### Expenditure Indicators

Expenditures are a rough measure of a local government's service output. Generally, the more a local government spends in constant dollars, the more services it is providing, although this axiom does not take into account how effective the services are or how efficiently they are delivered. To determine whether a government is living within its revenues, the first issue to consider is expenditure growth rate.

Because local governments are required to have a balanced budget, it would seem unlikely that expenditure growth would exceed revenue growth. Nevertheless, the annual budget can be balanced in a number of subtle ways that will create a long-run imbalance in which expenditure outlays and commitments grow faster than revenues. Some of the more common ways are to use non-recurring revenues (one-time monies), to borrow (pay for operating capital through a long-term capital improvement plan), or make use of reserve funds (Stabilization or Free Cash) to fund operational expenses. Other ways are to defer maintenance on capital items or to defer funding of a future liability, such as a pension obligation or other retiree benefits. In each case, the annual budget remains balanced, but the long-run budget develops a deficit. Although long-run deficits might, conceivably, be made up through windfalls such as additional State Aid, grants, or other revenue surges, allowing such deficits to develop is risky.

A second issue to consider is expenditure flexibility. Expenditure flexibility is a measure of a local government's freedom to adjust its service levels to changing conditions, and considers the level of mandatory or fixed costs. Ideally, a government's expenditure growth rate will not exceed its revenue growth rate, and the government will have maximum flexibility to adjust spending. An increase in mandatory costs, such as debt service, employee benefits, and property and other insurances, renders a government less able to adjust to change.

### ***Objectives of the FTMS***

- *Predict: so that the Town can be prepared to deal with fiscal distress before it becomes fiscal crisis,*
- *Avert: and take action to avoid fiscal crisis,*
- *Mitigate: through corrective action and/or policy changes regain sound financial footing, or at least contain the problem, and*
- *Prevent: a recurrence of fiscal distress after the Town addresses the current issue or crisis (i.e., reliance on one-time revenues or health insurance increases).*

### Revenue Indicators

Revenues determine the capacity of a local government to provide service. Important issues to consider in revenue analysis are growth, flexibility, dependability, diversity, administration, and elasticity. Under ideal conditions, revenues would grow at a rate equal to or greater than the combined effects of inflation and expenditures. They would be sufficiently flexible (free from spending restrictions) to allow adjustments to changing conditions. They would be balanced between elastic and inelastic in relation to inflation and the economic base; that is, some would grow with inflation and the economic base and others would remain relatively constant. Revenue sources would be diversified—not overly dependent on residential, commercial, or industrial land uses, or on external funding sources, such as discretionary State Aid. User fees would be regularly evaluated to cover cost increases.

Analyzing revenue structure will help to identify the following types of problems:

- Deterioration of the revenue base
- Practices or policies that may adversely affect revenue yields
- Poor revenue-estimating practices
- Inefficiency in the collection and administration of revenues
- Overdependence on obsolete or intergovernmental revenue sources
- User fees that are not covering the cost of services

This analysis may be used to provide the framework for the development of new, and update of existing fiscal policies to guide budget development.

### **Which Fiscal Indicators are included in the report?**

Although the comprehensive ICMA model contains dozens of potential indicators for measuring municipal financial condition, a relevant sample has been selected as part of Northborough's Financial Trend Monitoring Report (FTMR). Others were omitted because either they are not applicable to Northborough's situation or because we do not have the data to be able to consistently develop these indicators at this time. In FY2015 we added a new indicator, Capital Investment, to the report, and hope to further expand the indicators included in the report in the future. The fourteen indicators that have been selected for use in monitoring the Town of Northborough's financial condition are displayed graphically on the following pages and were chosen based upon the availability of data and their appropriateness for Northborough.

The selected indicators include:

1. Property Tax Revenues
2. Uncollected Property Taxes
3. Revenues & Expenditures per Capita
4. State Aid (Intergovernmental Revenues)
5. Economic Growth Revenues
6. Use of One-Time Revenues
7. Personnel Costs
8. Employee Benefits
9. Pension Liability
10. Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) Liability
11. Debt Service Expenditures
12. Financial Reserves/Fund Balance
13. Capital Investment – Overall Fixed Assets
14. Capital Investment – Pavement Management

The FTMR is intended to assist the Town’s Administration, Board of Selectmen, Appropriations Committee and the Financial Planning Committee in setting long-range policy priorities, and can provide a logical way of introducing long-range considerations into the annual budget process. The following report has been developed using the ICMA manual entitled Evaluating Financial Condition, A Handbook for Local Government.

#### **What Methodology was used to compile the data in the report?**

The Financial Trend Monitoring System (FTMS) analysis covers the period of July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2021. Actual data has been presented for the Town’s General Fund for the Fiscal Years 2011 through 2020. The actual data is taken from the Audited Financial Statements, Budget Comparison Schedules and Department of Revenue (DOR) Tax Rate Recapitulation reports, as well as from various other reports. Adjustments and exceptions are noted in the report.

Constant dollars are nominal dollars adjusted for inflation using data from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics for the “Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH” statistical area. Six months of calendar year 2020 was used for FY2021. CPI-U data is the Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers in the New England region. For the purpose of this analysis, FY2011 is the base year beginning at 100.

Population data used in the per capita computations is taken from the Massachusetts DOR’s Databank.



## Section II

# Executive Summary

## FTMR Executive Summary

- **Current Financial Condition**

Northborough is in relatively good financial condition. The Town's financial reserves are strong and the use of the \$5.1 million Stabilization Fund has been unnecessary. Debt is manageable and our bond rating was upgraded to Aa1 in May of 2015. The Town continues to have favorable economic growth, a strong diversified tax base and reliance on one-time revenues in the operating budget has been significantly curtailed. Further, the impact of rising health insurance costs has been mitigated by negotiation of plan design changes with our local bargaining units. From a service level solvency standpoint, the Town increased staffing levels in police, fire, and general administration following a comprehensive staffing study. The incremental staffing expansions were completed over several years.

- **Identify Emerging Problems**

Based on the analysis, it is apparent that long-run solvency surrounding unfunded pension liability, OPEB obligations and capital investment in Pavement Management are potential emerging problems. Uncertainty surrounding the level of State Aid and future health insurance premium increases remain significant areas of exposure for the annual operating budget. It appears the Town may be heading into another period of significant health insurance increases that have the potential to significantly impact the annual budget process.

- **Financial Strengths and Weaknesses**

The adoption of the Free Cash Policy in 2010 strengthened the Town's financial condition with less reliance on one-time revenues in the operating budget. In addition, the use of Free Cash for significant capital investment has ensured that one-time funds are only utilized for one-time expenditures. The growth in revenue from property taxes, which has kept pace with inflation, as well as excellent tax collections are financial strengths for the Town. While expenditures per capita have risen, indicating an increase in service needs, the Town's revenues per capita have increased at a comparable rate.

- **Long-Range Budget Considerations**

The Town must continue to make annual investments in its facilities, infrastructure and unfunded liabilities.

- **Policy Updates**

Moving forward it will be important for the Town to return to funding the OPEB liability, which was an action taken to provide tax relief relative to the COVID-19 crisis. The OPEB Trust Fund was established at the April 2011 Town Meeting for this purpose, and annual appropriations of \$500,000 from FY2015 through FY2019 were made increasing to \$550,000 in FY2020 prior to the postponement in FY2021. Identification of additional revenue sources like the Meals Tax or Room Occupancy surcharge (adopted in FY2014), should also be explored to alleviate the tax burden on residents. Economic development policies and programs should be reviewed in response to potential reduced future development as the Town approaches buildout.

<b>Financial Indicator</b>		<b>FY2021</b>
1	Property Tax Revenues	Favorable
2	Uncollected Property Taxes	Favorable
3	Revenues & Expenditures per Capita	Favorable
4	State Aid (Intergovernmental Revenues)	Unfavorable
5	Economic Growth Revenues	Unfavorable / Uncertain
6	Use of One-Time Revenues	Favorable
7	Personnel Costs	Stable
8	Employee Benefits	Stable / Uncertain
9	Pension Liability	Unfavorable
10	Other Post Employment (OPEB) Liability	Unfavorable / Improving
11	Debt Service Expenditures	Favorable
12	Financial Reserve/Fund Balance	Favorable
13	Capital Investment – Overall Fixed Assets	Favorable
14	Capital Investment – Pavement Management	Improving

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## Section III

# Fiscal Indicator Analysis

## Indicator 1: Property Tax Revenues

### Formula:

Net Property Tax Revenues  
Consumer Price Index

### Northborough Trend

X	Favorable
	Marginal
	Unfavorable
	Uncertain

**Warning Trend:** A decline in property tax revenues (measured in constant dollars).

### Description:

Property tax revenue is the primary source of revenue for municipal government and accounts for approximately 80% of Northborough's revenue. A decline in or diminished growth rate of property taxes can have a number of causes. It may reflect an overall decline in property values, a decline in economic health, default on property taxes by property owners, or the movement of retail or industrial operations to other communities. Increases to property taxes are limited by the confines of Proposition 2 ½ and any potential revenue increases from an override would need to be weighed carefully with the additional tax impact upon residents.

**Analysis:** The analysis shows that property tax revenue adjusted to constant dollars is positive and therefore has kept pace with inflation. Further, the Town's revenue growth has occurred with minimal operating Proposition 2 ½ overrides, the most recent being in FY2009 in the amount of \$316,047 to provide additional school funding. The other years that had property tax revenue increases over the Proposition 2 ½ limit used excess levy capacity from the preceding year to increase the tax levy. This excess levy capacity was generated from conservative budget estimates of new growth.

Fiscal Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021*
Property Tax Collections **	\$ 36,555,771	\$ 38,335,354	\$ 39,581,324	\$ 41,265,841	\$ 42,786,189	\$ 45,305,861	\$ 46,802,957	\$ 48,389,360	\$ 50,241,380	\$ 52,588,582	\$ 53,732,447
Less Debt Exclusions ***	\$ (1,855,884)	\$ (2,401,767)	\$ (2,439,581)	\$ (1,636,032)	\$ (1,581,420)	\$ (1,908,307)	\$ (2,335,989)	\$ (2,370,816)	\$ (2,253,350)	\$ (2,189,192)	\$ (2,196,729)
Net Property Tax Revenues (nominal dollars)	\$ 34,699,887	\$ 35,933,587	\$ 37,141,743	\$ 39,629,809	\$ 41,204,769	\$ 43,397,554	\$ 44,466,968	\$ 46,018,544	\$ 47,988,030	\$ 50,399,390	\$ 51,535,718
Percent increase Tax Revenues over prior year	2.0%	3.6%	3.4%	6.7%	4.0%	5.3%	2.5%	3.5%	4.3%	9.5%	7.4%
CPI-U, 2011 Base Year ****	240.0	245.8	249.6	253.3	256.1	258.1	263.7	271.3	278.8	283.4	284.8
CPI-U adjustment for constant dollars	100.0%	97.6%	96.1%	94.8%	93.7%	93.0%	91.0%	88.5%	86.1%	84.7%	84.3%
Net Property Tax Revenues (constant dollars)	\$ 34,699,887	\$ 35,084,632	\$ 35,707,334	\$ 37,551,960	\$ 38,617,553	\$ 40,348,293	\$ 40,468,206	\$ 40,705,320	\$ 41,307,797	\$ 42,677,709	\$ 43,433,277
Percent increase Tax Revenues over prior year	0.6%	1.1%	1.8%	5.2%	2.8%	4.5%	0.3%	0.6%	1.5%	4.8%	5.1%

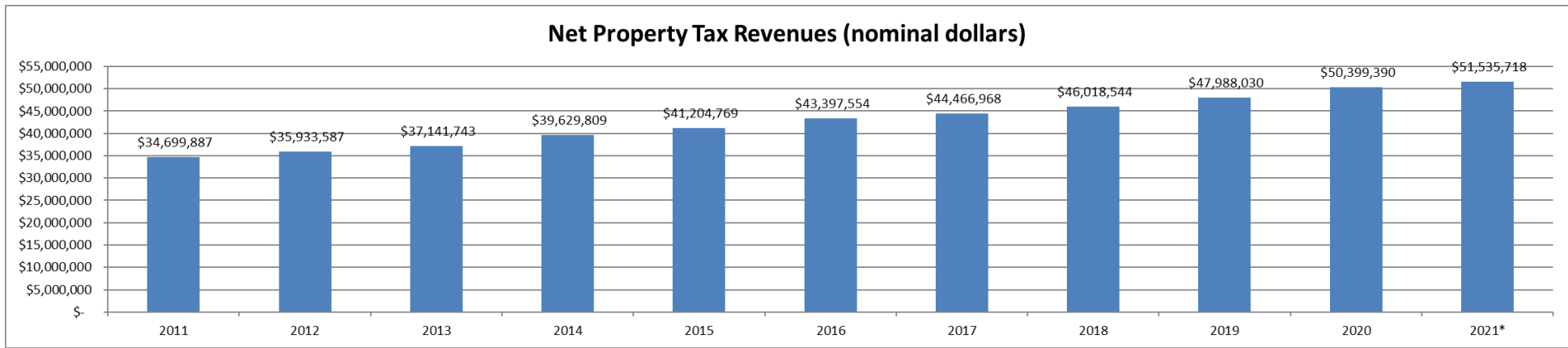
Notes:

\*FY2021 shows budget numbers rather than actual, Source: Mass. DOR Tax Recap

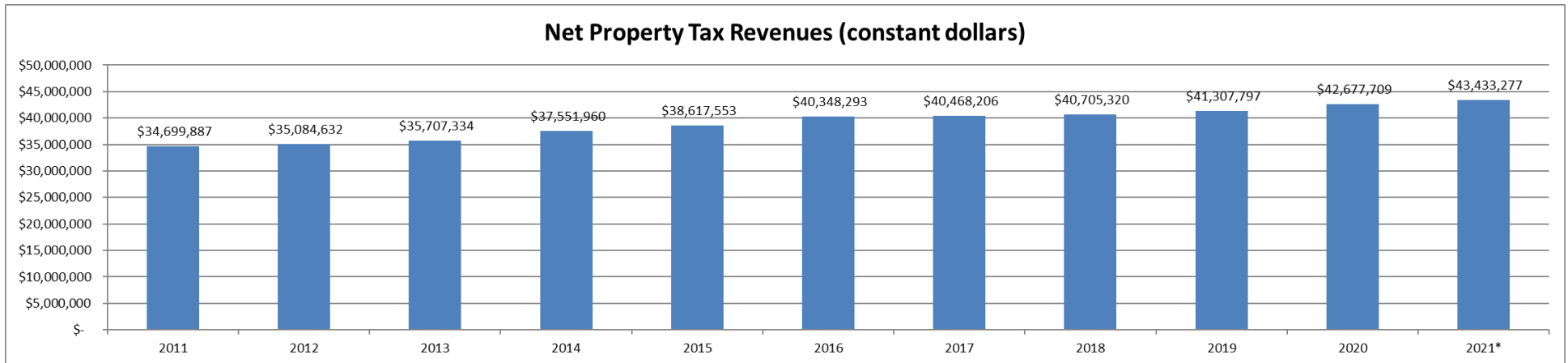
\*\* Source: Audited Financial Statements, General Fund, Budget Comparison Schedule

\*\*\* Source: Mass. DOR, Tax Recaps

\*\*\*\* Source: U.S. Dept. of Labor - Bureau of Labor Statistics (Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH region), 6 months of calendar year 2020 used for FY2021



Note: The chart above shows net property tax revenues that have not been adjusted for inflation



Note: The chart above shows net property tax revenues adjusted for inflation using FY2011 as the base year

## Indicator 2: Uncollected Property Taxes

### Formula:

$\frac{\text{Uncollected Property Taxes (as of June 30)}}{\text{Net Property Tax Levy}}$

### Northborough Trend

X	Favorable
	Marginal
	Unfavorable
	Uncertain

**Warning Trend:** Increasing amount of uncollected property taxes as a percentage of net property tax levy.

### Description:

Uncollected property taxes as a percentage of the net tax levy of 5% or more is considered negative by bond rating organizations. An increase in uncollected property taxes could signal an overall decline or potential instability in the tax base of the town. As uncollected property taxes rise, liquidity is decreased and there is less cash on hand to pay bills or to invest. This early warning indicator is particularly critical to watch during periods of economic decline or uncertainty.

### Analysis:

Property taxes provide approximately 80% of Northborough's operating revenue, representing the single most important source of revenue. The analysis below indicates that Northborough's property tax collection rate is excellent. The Town consistently collects 99% of property taxes in each fiscal year. While the slight dip in 2020 is attributable to COVID-19 relief measures, the trend remains both positive and stable.

Fiscal Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Property Tax Levy *	\$ 36,695,635	\$ 38,402,738	\$ 40,143,508	\$ 41,333,959	\$ 42,977,124	\$ 45,068,900	\$ 46,873,992	\$ 48,585,577	\$ 50,434,582	\$ 53,019,704
Less Reserve for Abatements & Exemptions *	\$ (342,209)	\$ (351,739)	\$ (679,291)	\$ (530,787)	\$ (462,432)	\$ (623,081)	\$ (365,355)	\$ (280,000)	\$ (335,593)	\$ (587,104)
Net Property Tax Levy	\$ 36,353,426	\$ 38,050,999	\$ 39,464,217	\$ 40,803,172	\$ 42,514,692	\$ 44,445,819	\$ 46,508,636	\$ 48,305,577	\$ 50,098,989	\$ 52,432,600
Uncollected Taxes as of June 30 **	\$ 336,037	\$ 284,981	\$ 351,243	\$ 318,536	\$ 317,223	\$ 269,696	\$ 329,592	\$ 459,886	\$ 454,284	\$ 852,246
Uncollected taxes as a Percentage of Net Property Tax Levy	0.92%	0.75%	0.89%	0.78%	0.75%	0.61%	0.71%	0.95%	0.91%	1.63%
Percentage Collected in Current Year ***	99.08%	99.25%	99.11%	99.22%	99.25%	99.39%	99.29%	99.05%	99.09%	98.37%

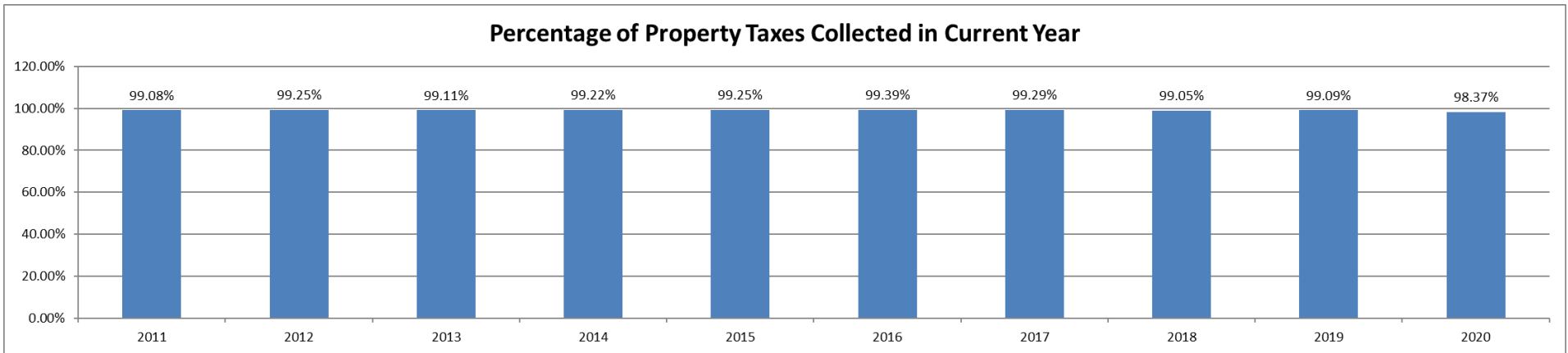
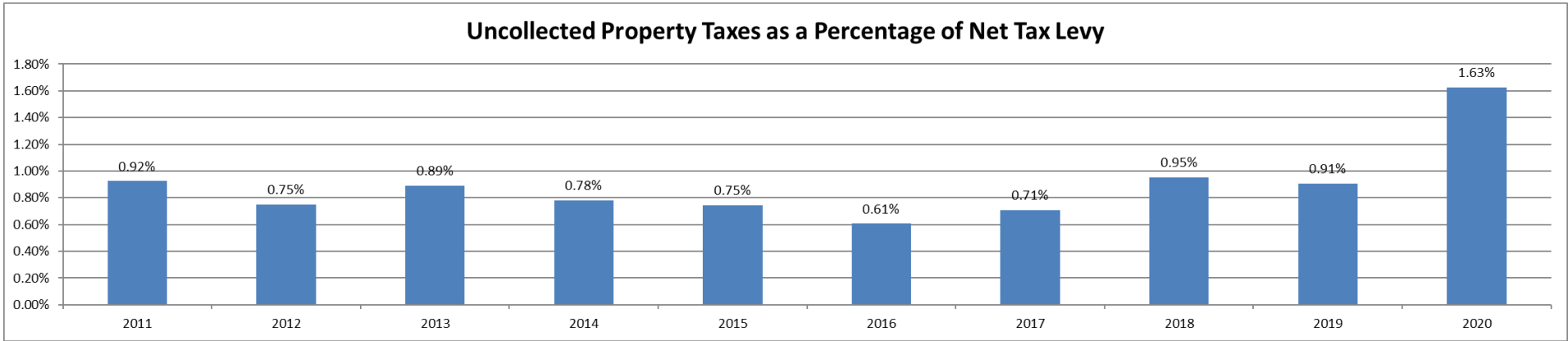
Notes:

\* Source: Mass. DOR, Tax Recaps

\*\* Source: Mass. DOR Outstanding Receivables Report

\*\*\* Percent of Net Levy collected, abated, and/or taken during current year





Note: Property tax collections are shown net of reserves for abatements and exemptions, which the Town assumes will not be collected.

### Indicator 3: Revenues and Expenditures per Capita

**Formula:**  

$$\frac{\text{Net Operating Revenues or Expenditures (constant dollars)}}{\text{Population}}$$

**Northborough Trend**

X	Favorable
	Marginal/Improving
	Unfavorable
	Uncertain

**Warning Trend:** Decreasing revenues per capita and increasing operating expenditures per capita (measured in constant dollars) is considered a warning trend, especially if spending is increasing faster than revenues or if one-time revenues are consistently needed to achieve budgetary balance.

**Description:**

Revenues and expenditures per capita show changes relative to population. For enhanced analysis, revenues and expenditures per capita charted together provide a method to measure both sides of the municipal budget. As population increases, it might be expected that revenues and the need for services would increase proportionately and therefore the level of per capita revenues would remain constant. If per capita revenues are decreasing, the municipality may not be able to maintain existing service levels unless cost savings or new revenue sources are identified. Changes in per capita expenditures that reflect an increase may indicate that the cost of providing municipal services is outpacing the community’s ability to pay for those services, especially if spending is greater than can be counted for by inflation or the addition of new services.

**Analysis:**

Through FY2008, expenditures per capita exceeded revenues per capita due to the use of one-time funds in the operating budget, primarily from Free Cash. With a significant reduction in the Free Cash available for the FY2009 operating budget, the need for a policy revision was apparent. With the subsequent adoption of the Free Cash Policy in November 2010, the use of one-time revenue for the operating budget was phased down and capped at \$500,000, with an additional \$175,000 used annually for the Appropriations Committee Reserve Fund<sup>1</sup>. Therefore from FY2010 forward, the Town’s revenues per capita exceed expenditures per capita. The funds represented by the difference are now closed to surplus (i.e. Free Cash ) and are then available to fund capital items and other one-time expenditures in accordance with the Free Cash Policy.

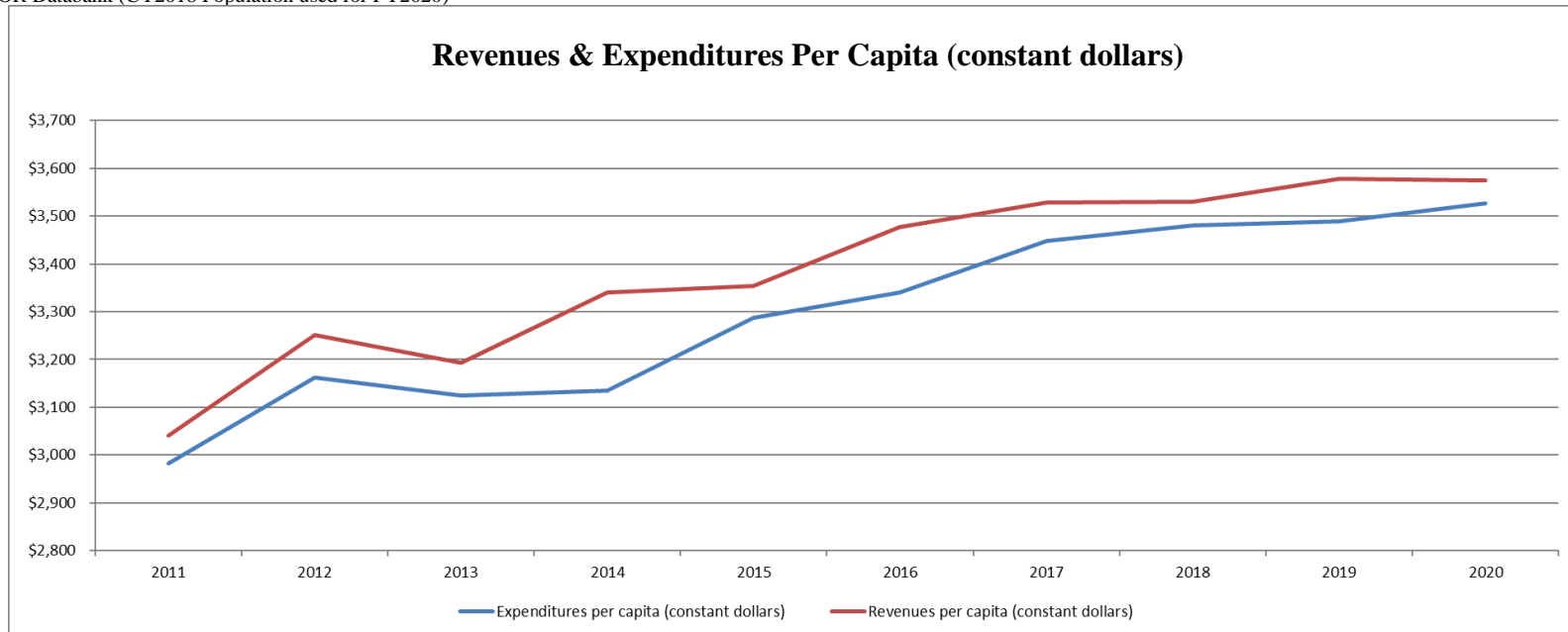
<sup>1</sup> The Reserve Fund is an amount set aside annually within the budget of the town to provide a funding source for extraordinary or unforeseen expenditures. The Appropriations Committee can authorize transfers from this fund. If unused, these funds return to Free Cash at the close of the Fiscal Year. Beginning in FY2016 the Reserve Fund was increased from \$150,000 to \$175,000.

Fiscal Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Expenditures (Net of Capital Transfers)*	\$ 44,332,468	\$ 45,832,802	\$ 47,661,629	\$ 48,704,150	\$ 51,777,346	\$ 53,590,732	\$ 56,979,306	\$ 58,864,722	\$ 60,945,786	\$ 62,881,306
Revenues *	\$ 45,181,626	\$ 47,132,299	\$ 48,704,343	\$ 51,912,939	\$ 52,817,953	\$ 55,768,963	\$ 58,308,478	\$ 59,719,452	\$ 62,504,877	\$ 63,756,218
One Time Revenues Budgeted **	\$ 661,703	\$ 791,479	\$ 650,000	\$ 650,000	\$ 870,000	\$ 675,000	\$ 675,000	\$ 675,000	\$ 675,000	\$ 675,000
CPI-U, 2010 Base Year ***	240.0	245.8	249.6	253.3	256.1	258.1	263.7	271.3	278.8	283.4
CPI-U adjustment for constant dollars	100.0%	97.6%	96.1%	94.8%	93.7%	93.0%	91.0%	88.5%	86.1%	84.7%
Expenditures (constant dollars)	\$ 44,332,468	\$ 44,749,971	\$ 45,820,944	\$ 46,150,521	\$ 48,526,286	\$ 49,825,264	\$ 51,855,353	\$ 52,068,299	\$ 52,461,753	\$ 53,247,274
Revenues (constant dollars)	\$ 45,181,626	\$ 46,018,767	\$ 46,823,388	\$ 49,191,068	\$ 49,501,554	\$ 51,850,445	\$ 53,064,997	\$ 52,824,344	\$ 53,803,809	\$ 53,988,141
Population ***	14,863	14,155	14,667	14,724	14,762	14,914	15,042	14,962	15,038	15,101
Expenditures per capita (nominal dollars)	\$ 2,983	\$ 3,238	\$ 3,250	\$ 3,308	\$ 3,507	\$ 3,593	\$ 3,788	\$ 3,934	\$ 4,053	\$ 4,164
Revenues per capita (nominal dollars)	\$ 3,040	\$ 3,330	\$ 3,321	\$ 3,526	\$ 3,578	\$ 3,739	\$ 3,876	\$ 3,991	\$ 4,156	\$ 4,222
Expenditures per capita (constant dollars)	\$ 2,983	\$ 3,161	\$ 3,124	\$ 3,134	\$ 3,287	\$ 3,341	\$ 3,447	\$ 3,480	\$ 3,489	\$ 3,526
Revenues per capita (constant dollars)	\$ 3,040	\$ 3,251	\$ 3,192	\$ 3,341	\$ 3,353	\$ 3,477	\$ 3,528	\$ 3,531	\$ 3,578	\$ 3,575

Notes:  
\* Source: Audited Financial Statements, General Fund, Budget Comparison Schedule, including operating transfers but adjustments were made to exclude transfers to capital project funds: \$804,000 in FY2012, \$615,000 in FY2013, \$2,202,807 in FY2014, \$2,194,000 in FY2015, \$1,813,460 in FY2016, \$1,497,000 in FY2017, \$1,360,000 in FY2018, and \$861,167 in FY2019 following Town's Free Cash Policy. The amounts do include transfers for the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund subsidy: \$301,447 in FY2011, \$247,570 in FY2012 & FY2013, \$239,099 in FY2014, \$217,160 in FY2015 through FY2019, and \$417,160 in FY2020. The amounts also include transfers to Stabilization: \$200,000 in FY2015 through FY2019. FY2015 & FY2016 also include \$20,000 transferred to the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Fund. The FY2015 through FY2019 transfers to Stabilization and FY2015 & FY2016 transfers to the Anniversary Fund came from Free Cash. FY2016 was also adjusted to negate effect of a \$375,760 Mass Land Grant transferred to Conservation Fund.

\*\* Source: U.S. Dept. of Labor - Bureau of Labor Statistics (Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH region)

\*\*\*Source: DOR Databank (CY2018 Population used for FY2020)



## Indicator 4: State Aid (Intergovernmental Revenues)

**Formula:**  

$$\frac{\text{Net State Aid Revenues}}{\text{Operating Revenues}}$$

**Northborough Trend**

	Favorable
	Marginal
X	Unfavorable
X	Uncertain

**Warning Trend:** Volatility of State Aid (Intergovernmental Revenues) as a percentage of operating revenues.

**Description:**

A reduction in State Aid as a percentage of operating revenues is generally perceived as a warning trend. However, intergovernmental revenues as a percentage of the operating budget are also important because an overdependence upon such revenues can be harmful. State governments struggle with their own budget problems and when the economy is not robust, frequently they have reduced aid to local governments. The reduction of intergovernmental funds leaves the municipal government with the dilemma of cutting programs or funding them from general fund revenues. Any decline in intergovernmental funding is difficult for a municipality to absorb.

**Analysis:**

The level of State Aid and other intergovernmental revenues provided to municipalities is a continuing concern in Massachusetts<sup>2</sup>. State mandates are imposed on already strained municipal budgets with no corresponding funding. State Aid to Northborough generally represents approximately 10% of total municipal revenue. Northborough’s State Aid peaked in FY2003, when controlling for inflation (constant dollars) it represented 13.1% of revenues. As a percentage of revenue it has steadily declined from 10.6% in FY2009 to 8.3% in FY2021. Due to the uncertainty in the level of State Aid provided from year to year, this represents an unfavorable trend with an uncertain outlook for the Town of Northborough. The potential for the Commonwealth to cut State Aid requires the Town to carefully monitor these revenues, and to have contingency plans if State Aid were reduced.

<sup>2</sup> This indicator does not reflect changes in Federal/State grant programs that are reported outside of the General Fund.

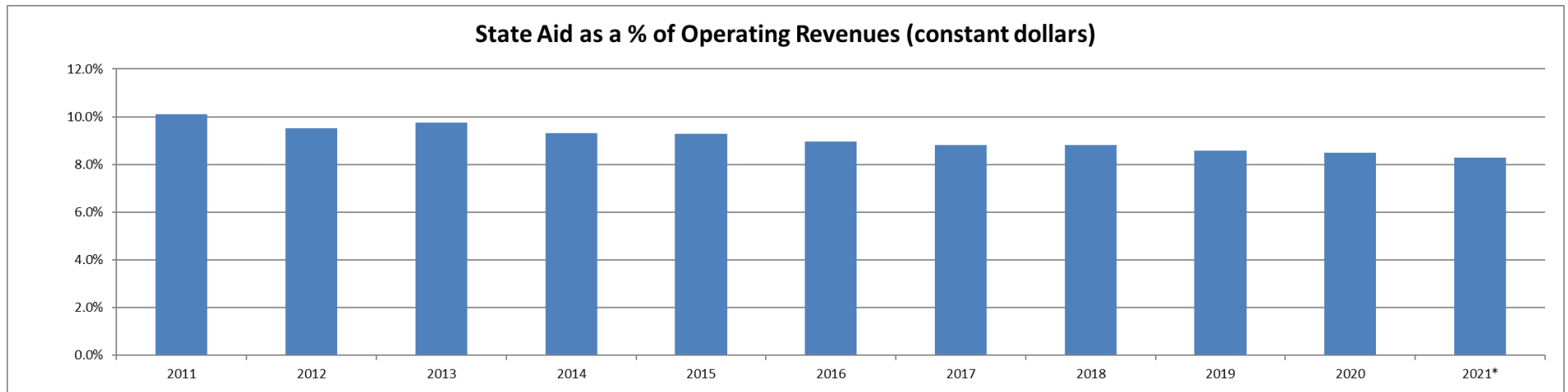
Fiscal Year*	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021*
Operating Revenues**	\$ 45,181,626	\$ 47,132,299	\$ 48,704,343	\$ 51,912,939	\$ 52,817,953	\$ 55,768,963	\$ 58,308,478	\$ 59,719,452	\$ 62,504,877	\$ 63,756,218	\$ 65,527,747
State Aid Revenues**	\$ 4,945,569	\$ 4,873,203	\$ 5,134,652	\$ 5,211,800	\$ 5,283,338	\$ 5,380,417	\$ 5,519,526	\$ 5,650,296	\$ 5,738,517	\$ 5,790,033	\$ 5,434,115
Less School Building Reimbursement	\$ (382,543)	\$ (382,543)	\$ (382,543)	\$ (382,543)	\$ (382,543)	\$ (382,543)	\$ (382,543)	\$ (382,543)	\$ (382,543)	\$ (382,543)	\$ -
Net State Aid Revenues	\$ 4,563,026	\$ 4,490,660	\$ 4,752,109	\$ 4,829,257	\$ 4,900,795	\$ 4,997,874	\$ 5,136,983	\$ 5,267,753	\$ 5,355,974	\$ 5,407,490	\$ 5,434,115
CPI-U, 2011 Base Year ***	240.0	245.8	249.6	253.3	256.1	258.1	263.7	271.3	278.8	283.4	284.8
CPI-U adjustment for constant dollars	100.0%	97.6%	96.1%	94.8%	93.7%	93.0%	91.0%	88.5%	86.1%	84.7%	84.3%
Operating Revenues (constant dollars)	\$ 45,181,626	\$ 46,018,767	\$ 46,823,388	\$ 49,191,068	\$ 49,501,554	\$ 51,850,445	\$ 53,064,997	\$ 52,824,344	\$ 53,803,809	\$ 53,988,141	\$ 55,225,480
Net State Aid Revenue (constant dollars)	\$ 4,563,026	\$ 4,384,565	\$ 4,568,583	\$ 4,576,052	\$ 4,593,078	\$ 4,646,706	\$ 4,675,032	\$ 4,659,547	\$ 4,610,389	\$ 4,579,010	\$ 4,579,764
State Aid as a % of Operating Revenues (constant dollars)	10.1%	9.5%	9.8%	9.3%	9.3%	9.0%	8.8%	8.8%	8.6%	8.5%	8.3%

Notes:

\* FY2021 reflects budgeted revenues per Mass. DOR Tax Recap

\*\* Source: Audited Financial Statements, General Fund, Budget Comparison Schedule (adjustment to exclude FEMA/EMMA, Mass Landscape Grants, and School Medicaid)

\*\*\* Source: U.S. Dept of Labor - Bureau of Labor Statistics (Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH region), 6 months of calendar year 2020 used for FY2021



\*Note: FY2021 reflects budgeted revenues per the Mass. DOR Tax Recap

## Indicator 5: Economic Growth Revenues

<p><b>Formula:</b>  <math display="block">\frac{\text{Economic Growth Revenues}}{\text{Net Operating Revenues}}</math></p>
--

	Favorable
	Marginal
	Unfavorable
X	Uncertain

**Warning Trend:** Decreasing amount of economic growth operating revenues as a percentage of net operating revenues

### Description:

Revenues related to economic growth (elastic revenue sources) include tax levy growth from new development, motor vehicle excise taxes, local option hotel and meals tax, as well as building permits and construction related permit fees. These revenues are sensitive to changes in the level of economic activity. A decrease in new economic development and building permit fees may be a leading indicator of smaller future increases in the tax levy.

### Analysis:

Northborough's revenues from economic growth increased from FY2009 through FY2013 despite a weak State and national economy. An important component was the construction of a 382 unit apartment complex known as Avalon Bay beginning in FY2010 and the completion of the 640,000 square foot Northborough Crossing Shopping Center in FY2013. Although recent years have seen a positive trend in Northborough's economic revenues, future growth is uncertain as these major projects are now completed and there are fewer significant developments currently in the permitting stage. Looking forward, the Town's future revenue from economic growth remains uncertain. All of the variables that have contributed to the Town's past economic development success, including available land, preferential business tax structure, streamlined development process and prime location all remain. However, it will be important for the Town to monitor the amount of available land for economic development and begin to plan for the inevitable implications of build-out. New growth trends for the past five years indicate that Northborough is maturing and the period of rapid economic development is plateauing.

Fiscal Year	2011	2012	2013	2014*	2015*	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Revenues **	\$ 45,181,626	\$ 47,132,299	\$ 48,704,343	\$ 51,912,939	\$ 52,817,953	\$ 55,768,963	\$ 58,308,478	\$ 59,719,452	\$ 62,504,877	\$ 63,756,218
Less Debt Exclusions ***	\$ (1,855,884)	\$ (2,401,767)	\$ (2,439,581)	\$ (1,636,032)	\$ (1,581,420)	\$ (1,908,307)	\$ (2,335,989)	\$ (2,370,816)	\$ (2,253,350)	\$ (2,189,192)
Net Revenues (nominal dollars)	\$ 43,325,742	\$ 44,730,532	\$ 46,264,762	\$ 50,276,907	\$ 51,236,533	\$ 53,860,656	\$ 55,972,489	\$ 57,348,636	\$ 60,251,527	\$ 61,567,026
Building Related Fees & Permits ****	\$ 405,896	\$ 388,874	\$ 297,249	\$ 349,709	\$ 354,927	\$ 423,959	\$ 272,656	\$ 444,276	\$ 679,954	\$ 254,331
Motor Vehicle Excise ***	\$ 2,019,845	\$ 2,040,212	\$ 2,080,090	\$ 2,401,053	\$ 2,454,484	\$ 2,469,504	\$ 2,659,943	\$ 2,642,515	\$ 2,710,612	\$ 2,576,894
Other Excise ****	\$ 57,196	\$ 92,342	\$ 69,372	\$ 314,356	\$ 421,973	\$ 441,201	\$ 507,883	\$ 450,667	\$ 491,287	\$ 442,135
Levy Growth (New Growth) ***	\$ 975,576	\$ 1,229,983	\$ 1,439,307	\$ 826,728	\$ 629,818	\$ 529,520	\$ 694,155	\$ 583,208	\$ 638,625	\$ 1,127,966
Total Economic Growth Revenues	\$ 3,458,513	\$ 3,751,411	\$ 3,886,019	\$ 3,891,846	\$ 3,861,201	\$ 3,864,185	\$ 4,134,637	\$ 4,120,666	\$ 4,520,478	\$ 4,401,327
Economic Growth Revenues as a % of Operating Revenues	8.0%	8.4%	8.4%	7.7%	7.5%	7.2%	7.4%	7.2%	7.5%	7.1%

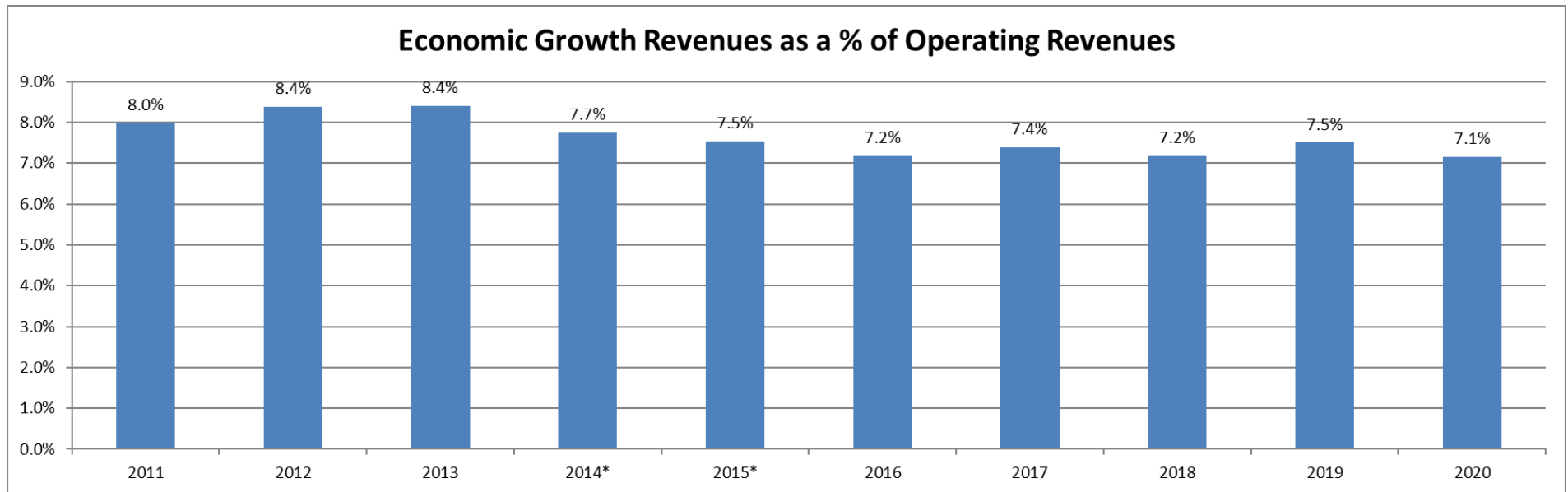
Notes:

\*Meals Tax Surcharge (.75%) added & Hotel/Motel excise increased (from 4-6%) in FY2014 (10 Months), full year of these excise taxes are recognized starting in FY2015

\*\* Source: Audited Financial Statements, General Fund, Budget Comparison Schedule

\*\*\* Source: Mass. DOR Tax Recaps

\*\*\*\* Source: General Ledger Detail, Revenue from Building, Wiring, Planning Board, ZBA Fees & Permits; Other Excise includes Hotel/Motel and Meals Tax



\*Note: FY2014 reflects 10 months of an adopted excise tax increase on hotel rooms (from 4-6%), and the adoption of a restaurant meals tax (.75%). FY2015 reflects a full 12 months of these enhanced revenues.

## Indicator 6: Use of One-Time Revenues

**Formula:**

$$\frac{\text{One-Time Operating Revenues}}{\text{Operating Budget}}$$

**Northborough Trend**

X	Favorable
	Marginal
	Unfavorable
	Uncertain

**Warning Trend:** Increasing use of one-time operating revenues as a percentage of operating budget.

**Description:**

One-time revenues are sources that cannot reasonably be expected to recur, such as a single-purpose federal grant, an inter-fund transfer, or use of reserves. Municipalities will sometimes use reserves and one-time revenues to balance an operating budget. However the continued use of one-time revenues to support operations is not sustainable. Continual use of one-time revenues to balance the annual budget can indicate that the revenue base is not strong enough to support current service levels. It can also mean that the municipality is incurring operating deficits and would have little room to maneuver if there were a downturn in revenue. Use of one-time revenues also increases the probability that a municipality will have to make significant cutbacks if such revenues cease to be available as may happen when reserves are depleted. Therefore, increased dependence on one-time revenues to support operations can place operations and municipal services at risk.

**Analysis:**

Northborough’s use of one-time revenue to fund the operating budget was significantly curtailed during recent years. The Free Cash Policy adopted in 2010 limited the use of Free Cash to one-time expenditures with a limited amount to be used toward the operating budget. Any additional Free Cash above this level is used to fund one-time capital expenditures, or for emergency spending. The Town’s reserve fund is designed to be accessible for extraordinary and unforeseen expenses, and this is funded with transfers from Free Cash. One-time revenue in the operating budget has declined from a high of 4.1% or \$1.5 Million in FY2005 to 1.4% or \$875,000 in FY2020, where it remained stable in accordance with the Free Cash Policy. Noting that FY2021 reflected a one-time increase to 2% or \$1.253 Million, which was designed to negotiate the COVID-19 crisis. From FY2016 to FY2020, Free Cash was also used to fund transfers of \$200,000 to Stabilization each year. FY2016 and FY2017 included \$20,000 transfers from Free Cash to a special 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration fund. In addition to its use in the operating budget, Free Cash has been used to fund \$12.1 million in pay as you go capital investment from FY2012 through FY2021.



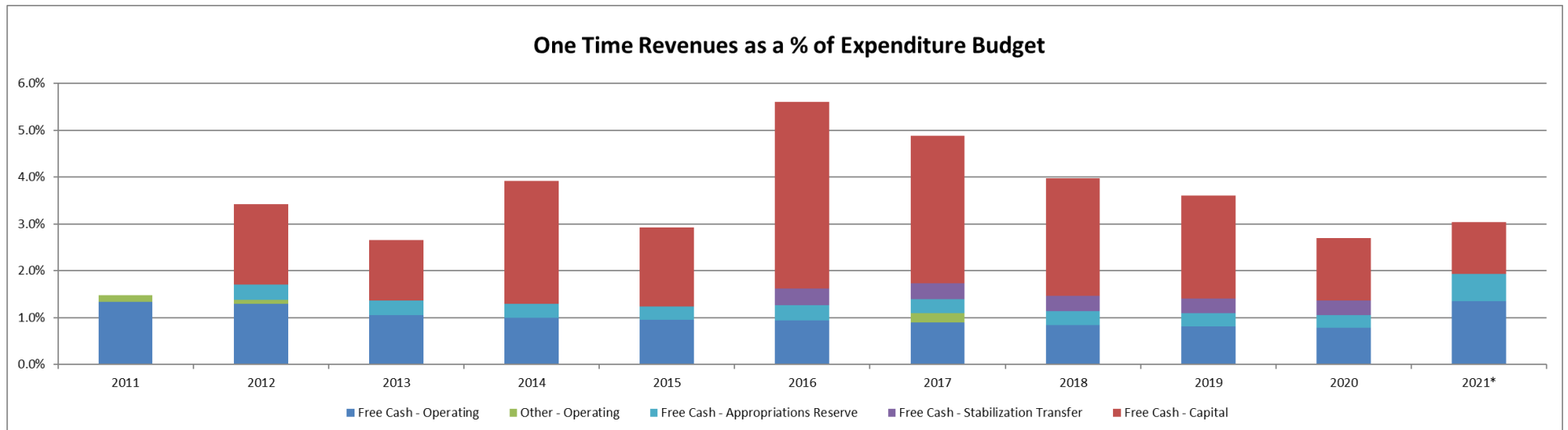
Fiscal Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021*
Expenditure Budget **	\$ 44,910,225	\$ 46,565,590	\$ 47,769,858	\$ 49,997,242	\$ 52,697,038	\$ 55,128,393	\$ 57,855,289	\$ 59,634,331	\$ 61,919,509	\$ 64,298,984	\$ 64,853,454
Revenues Budgeted **	\$ 44,248,522	\$ 45,874,111	\$ 47,734,858	\$ 49,347,242	\$ 51,827,038	\$ 54,233,393	\$ 57,069,081	\$ 58,959,331	\$ 61,244,509	\$ 63,623,984	\$ 63,600,454
One Time Revenues Budgeted **	\$ 661,703	\$ 1,554,000	\$ 1,265,000	\$ 1,959,307	\$ 1,543,500	\$ 3,089,000	\$ 2,708,460	\$ 2,372,000	\$ 2,235,000	\$ 1,736,167	\$ 1,965,775
Free Cash Used for Operating Budget ***	\$ 600,000	\$ 600,000	\$ 500,000	\$ 500,000	\$ 500,000	\$ 520,000	\$ 520,000	\$ 500,000	\$ 500,000	\$ 500,000	\$ 878,000
Free Cash Used for Appropriations Reserve Fund	\$ -	\$ 150,000	\$ 150,000	\$ 150,000	\$ 150,000	\$ 175,000	\$ 175,000	\$ 175,000	\$ 175,000	\$ 175,000	\$ 375,000
Free Cash Used for Stabilization Transfer	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000	\$ -
Free Cash Used for Capital	\$ -	\$ 804,000	\$ 615,000	\$ 1,309,307	\$ 893,500	\$ 2,194,000	\$ 1,813,460	\$ 1,497,000	\$ 1,360,000	\$ 861,167	\$ 712,775
Other One Time Revenues Used for Operating Budget ****	\$ 61,703	\$ 41,479	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 111,208	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Percentage Free Cash Used for Stabilization Transfer	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.0%
Percentage Free Cash Used for Appropriations Reserve	0.0%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.6%
Percentage Free Cash Used for Operating Budget	1.3%	1.3%	1.0%	1.0%	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%	1.4%
Percentage Free Cash Used for Capital	0.0%	1.7%	1.3%	2.6%	1.7%	4.0%	3.1%	2.5%	2.2%	1.3%	1.1%
Percentage Other Reserves used for Operating Budget	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total Percentage of One time Revenue Used	1.5%	3.3%	2.6%	3.9%	2.9%	5.6%	4.7%	4.0%	3.6%	2.7%	3.0%

Notes: \*Fiscal Year 2021 Source: Mass. DOR Tax Recap

\*\* Source: Audited Financial Statements, General Fund, Budget Comparison Schedule, including operating transfers but adjustments were made to exclude transfers to capital project funds (CIP) shown in the table, while many of the Free Cash transfers are made during the year voted and reflected in the financial statements vs. the budget year proposed (i.e. year early). The amounts do include transfers for the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund subsidy: \$301,447 in FY2011, \$247,570 in FY2012 & FY2013, \$239,099 in FY2014, \$217,160 in FY2015 through FY2019, \$417,160 in FY2020, and \$337,160 in FY2021. The amounts also include transfers to Stabilization: \$200,000 in FY2015 through FY2020. FY2016 & FY2017 also include \$20,000 transferred to the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Fund. The FY2015 through FY2020 transfers to Stabilization and FY2016 & FY2017 transfers to the Anniversary Fund came from Free Cash. FY2016 was also adjusted to negate effect of a \$375,760 Mass Land Grant transferred to Conservation Fund.

\*\*\* In FY2011, the amount reflects solely direct operating budget support. In FY2012 - FY2020 \$500,000 is for direct operating budget. For FY2012 \$100,000 supplemental appropriation made from Free Cash for Emergency Expenses. Starting FY2012, the Reserve Fund is funded from Free Cash, and FY2012 - FY2015 includes \$150,000 while FY2016-FY2019 include \$175,000 and FY2020 includes \$375,000 for the Reserve.

\*\*\*\* Other One Time Revenues from FY2008-2010 are Overlay Surplus and from FY2011-2012, & 2017 are Debt Exclusion Reserves.



\*Note: FY2021 reflects budgeted revenues per the Mass. DOR Tax Recap

## Indicator 7: Personnel Costs

<p><b>Formula:</b>  <math display="block">\frac{\text{Personnel Wages \&amp; Benefits}}{\text{Net Operating Budget}}</math></p>
---

	Favorable
X	Stable
	Unfavorable
	Uncertain

**Warning Trend:** Increasing personnel costs as a percentage of operating expenditures.

**Description:**

Increasing salaries and wages as a percent of operating expenditures may be an indicator of two trends. First, it may point to future increased pension and health insurance costs since both of these items are related to the number and compensation level of employees. Second, if salaries and wages as a percentage of operating expenditures are increasing, it may be an indicator that resources are not available to adequately fund capital and/or infrastructure needs.

**Analysis:**

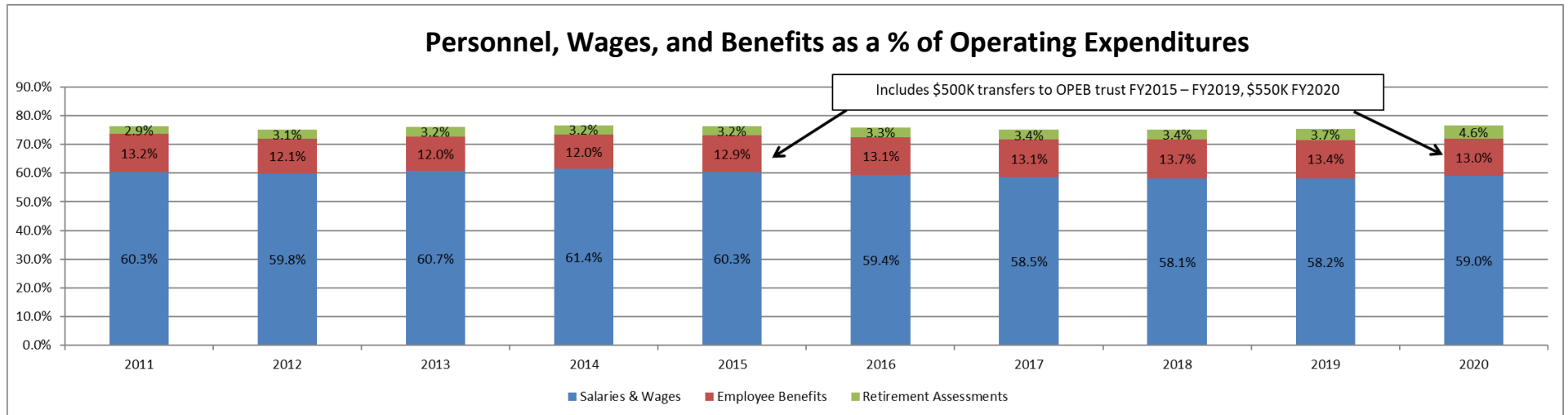
Overall, personnel wages and benefits represent approximately 75% of the Town’s operating budget and remain relatively stable. Health Insurance plan design changes and carrier consolidation were negotiated with employee groups, but it is anticipated to be an exposure for the foreseeable future given that the Town’s carrier has announced departure from the commercial market at the conclusion of FY2022. More detail regarding the Health Insurance changes is explained under Indicator #8.

Wages, salaries and employee benefits as a percentage of operating expenditures decreased 1.4% from 76.4% in FY2011 to 75.2% in FY2019, though it has increased back to 76.6% in FY2020. During this period the largest increase was in retirement assessments, for which the Town is part of a multi-employer plan that is on a funding plan to be fully funded by 2036. Employee benefits includes annual contributions toward OPEB of \$500,000 starting FY2015 which increase to \$550,000 in FY2020. Overall wages and salaries have decreased by 1.3% from 60.3% in FY2011 to 59.0% in FY2020. Looking forward, the rate of growth is contingent upon negotiating future collective bargaining agreements that are sustainable, as well as balancing the addition of any new staff with new, recurring revenue sources.

FY2022 is the last year of the previously negotiated collective bargaining agreements for Police Patrol Officers, Police Sergeants, Dispatchers, Fire and the Northborough Municipal Employees Association. A significant amount of time will be devoted to negotiating fair and sustainable increases for personnel during the contract period of FY2023 through FY2025.

Fiscal Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Expenditures (Net of Capital Transfers)*	\$ 44,332,468	\$ 45,832,802	\$ 47,661,629	\$ 48,704,150	\$ 51,777,346	\$ 53,590,732	\$ 56,979,306	\$ 58,864,722	\$ 60,945,786	\$ 62,881,306
Less Education Assessments **	\$ (9,508,787)	\$ (9,602,833)	\$ (9,978,962)	\$ (10,096,005)	\$ (10,500,042)	\$ (10,961,605)	\$ (11,662,283)	\$ (11,986,834)	\$ (12,673,210)	\$ (13,710,265)
Expenditures (Net of Capital Transfers & Education Assessments)	\$ 34,823,681	\$ 36,229,969	\$ 37,682,667	\$ 38,608,145	\$ 41,277,304	\$ 42,629,127	\$ 45,317,023	\$ 46,877,888	\$ 48,272,576	\$ 49,171,041
Municipal & K-8 School Department Wages **	\$ 21,007,614	\$ 21,670,351	\$ 22,885,953	\$ 23,714,419	\$ 24,902,080	\$ 25,322,987	\$ 26,510,041	\$ 27,221,285	\$ 28,077,495	\$ 28,997,088
Employee Benefits ***	\$ 4,600,048	\$ 4,381,576	\$ 4,537,088	\$ 4,643,198	\$ 5,305,019	\$ 5,588,201	\$ 5,942,633	\$ 6,406,254	\$ 6,455,845	\$ 6,403,296
Retirement Assessment **	\$ 1,006,365	\$ 1,118,191	\$ 1,210,083	\$ 1,241,407	\$ 1,306,702	\$ 1,415,244	\$ 1,546,598	\$ 1,612,608	\$ 1,790,753	\$ 2,275,596
Total Wage & Benefit Costs	\$ 26,614,027	\$ 27,170,118	\$ 28,633,124	\$ 29,599,024	\$ 31,513,801	\$ 32,326,432	\$ 33,999,272	\$ 35,240,147	\$ 36,324,093	\$ 37,675,980
Salaries & Wages as a percentage of Operating Expenditures	60.3%	59.8%	60.7%	61.4%	60.3%	59.4%	58.5%	58.1%	58.2%	59.0%
Benefits as a percentage of Operating Expenditures	13.2%	12.1%	12.0%	12.0%	12.9%	13.1%	13.1%	13.7%	13.4%	13.0%
Retirement Assessments as a percentage of Operating Expenditures	2.9%	3.1%	3.2%	3.2%	3.2%	3.3%	3.4%	3.4%	3.7%	4.6%
Total Wage & Benefit Costs as a percentage of Operating Expenditures	76.4%	75.0%	76.0%	76.7%	76.3%	75.8%	75.0%	75.2%	75.2%	76.6%

Notes:  
 \* Source: Audited Financial Statements, General Fund, Budget Comparison Schedule, adjustment made to exclude transfers to capital project funds  
 \*\* From Mass. DOR Schedule A report - General Fund Salaries; Does not include Enterprise Funds; Note that Education assessments are deducted because the underlying percentages of the assessments related to salaries and wages are not available. It would not be accurate to view the education assessments as an expenditure without recognizing that a large percentage of regional school districts expenses are salaries and wages, therefore the related totals are removed from this calculation.  
 \*\*\* Source: Audited Financial Statements, General Fund, Budget Comparison Schedule, Retirement and Education Assessments taken from detail, FY2015-2019 include \$500,000/year transfers to OPEB trust fund. FY2020 reflects a \$550,000 transfer to the OPEB trust fund.



## Indicator 8: Employee Benefits

**Formula:**  
Employee Benefits  
 Wages & Salaries

### Northborough Trend

	Favorable
	Marginal
	Unfavorable
X	Uncertain

**Warning Trend:** Increasing employee benefit costs as a percentage of salaries and wages.

### **Description:**

The two most significant benefit items to consider in personnel discussions are health insurance and pensions. Both of these are, for the most part, prescribed by Commonwealth law, and municipalities are limited in the changes they can make to these items (pensions more so than health insurance). As employers, municipalities must offer health insurance to all benefit-eligible employees and current employees become vested in the pension system after ten years of creditable service. Municipalities do have some ability to manage and control both health insurance and pension costs. For example, communities can work to reduce their health insurance premium contribution rates, increase co-pays/deductibles, or move to the State Group Insurance Commission (GIC). Prudent management of staffing levels is also critical as increases in staffing increase both health insurance and pension costs.

### **Analysis:**

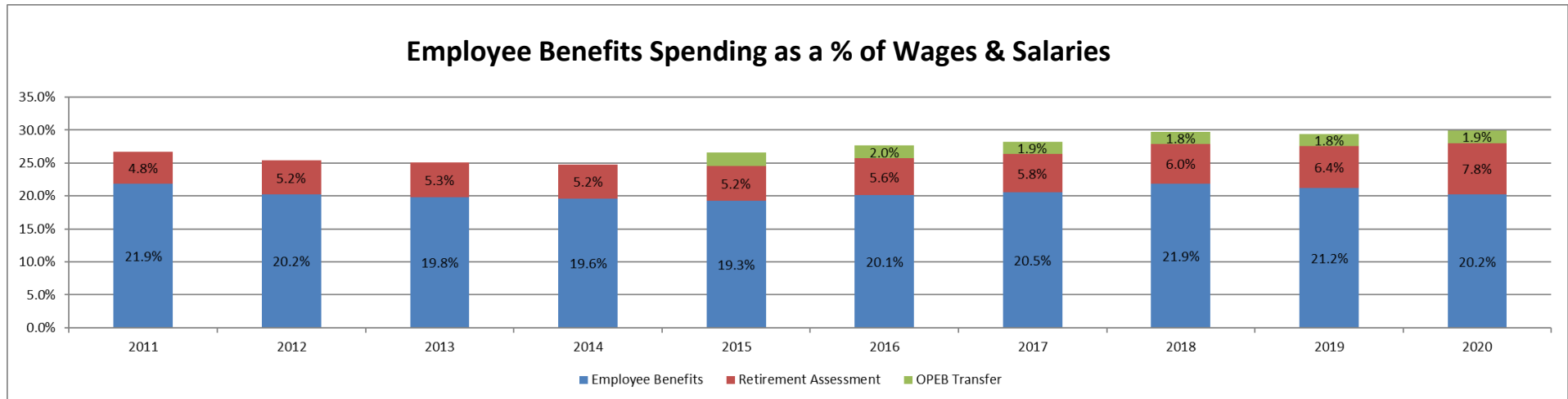
Overall, employee benefits as a percentage of wages and salaries increased 3.24% from FY2011 to FY2020. This includes the retirement assessment, which rose from 4.8% in FY2011 to 7.8% in FY2020, primarily due to implementation of a funding plan to eliminate the unfunded liability by 2036. Employee benefits alone, which are primarily composed of the cost of health insurance, increased to a peak of 22.9% in FY2010. Health insurance plan design changes implemented in FY2010 halted that increasing trend, and FY2020 employee benefits are less than FY2010 at 20.2%, excluding the contributions to the OPEB liability trust that started in FY2015. It should be noted that a return to 10-15% annual increases in health insurance premiums, would significantly impact future operating budgets for all departments.

Overall plan design changes and the adoption of a Mandatory Medicare statute (MGL Ch.32B §18) in FY2010 helped limit budgetary increases over time. In addition, the Town worked with the School Department to increase teacher contributions during FY2012 from 20% to 25% for Health Insurance. However, escalating market trends necessitated further plan design changes negotiated with all employee groups in FY2017 and FY2018. During FY2019 the Town issued a bid for a sole carrier to limit the overall budget increase to 3.8%, with the move to the sole carrier resulting in a 0% renewal with a 2% budget increase for FY2020, a modest premium increase with a 2.6% budget increase for FY2021,

and a 0% renewal with a 2.1% budget increase for FY2022. Though uncertainty in health insurance costs will continue to be an area of uncertainty and exposure moving forward given that the Town’s carrier has announced departure from the commercial market at the conclusion of FY2022.

Fiscal Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Municipal & K-8 School Department Wages *	\$ 21,007,614	\$ 21,670,351	\$ 22,885,953	\$ 23,714,419	\$ 24,902,080	\$ 25,322,987	\$ 26,510,041	\$ 27,221,285	\$ 28,077,495	\$ 28,997,088
Employee Benefits **	\$ 4,600,048	\$ 4,381,576	\$ 4,537,088	\$ 4,643,198	\$ 4,805,019	\$ 5,088,201	\$ 5,442,633	\$ 5,962,161	\$ 5,955,845	\$ 5,853,296
Transfer to OPEB Trust Fund **	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 500,000	\$ 500,000	\$ 500,000	\$ 500,000	\$ 500,000	\$ 550,000
Retirement Assessment ***	\$ 1,006,365	\$ 1,118,191	\$ 1,210,083	\$ 1,241,407	\$ 1,306,702	\$ 1,415,244	\$ 1,546,598	\$ 1,628,232	\$ 1,790,753	\$ 2,275,596
Total Benefit Costs	\$ 5,606,413	\$ 5,499,767	\$ 5,747,171	\$ 5,884,605	\$ 6,611,721	\$ 7,003,445	\$ 7,489,231	\$ 8,090,393	\$ 8,246,598	\$ 8,678,892
Benefits as a percentage of Wages & Salaries	21.9%	20.2%	19.8%	19.6%	19.3%	20.1%	20.5%	21.9%	21.2%	20.2%
OPEB Transfer as a percentage of Wages & Salaries	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%	2.0%	1.9%	1.8%	1.8%	1.9%
Retirement as a percentage of Wages & Salaries	4.8%	5.2%	5.3%	5.2%	5.2%	5.6%	5.8%	6.0%	6.4%	7.8%
Total Benefits Spending as percentage of Wages & Salaries	26.7%	25.4%	25.1%	24.8%	26.6%	27.7%	28.3%	29.7%	29.4%	29.9%

Notes:  
 \* From Mass. DOR Schedule A report - General Fund Salaries; Does not include Enterprise Funds  
 \*\* Source: Audited Financial Statements, General Fund, Budget Comparison Schedule, FY2015-FY2019 include \$500,000 transfers to the OPEB trust fund; FY2020 includes \$550,000 transfer to OPEB trust fund.  
 \*\*\* From General Ledger Detail, General Fund Retirement Assessment



## Indicator 9: Pension Liability

<b>Formula:</b>
$\frac{\text{Pension Assets}}{\text{Pension Liability}}$

	Favorable
	Marginal
X	Unfavorable
	Uncertain

**Warning Trend:** Unfunded liability or increase in unfunded liability.

### Description:

An unfunded liability is one that has been incurred during the current or prior year, which does not have to be paid until a future year and for which reserves have not been set aside. It is a legal commitment to pay at some time in the future. If such obligations are permitted to grow over a long period of time, they can have a substantial effect on a government's financial condition.

### Analysis:

Northborough is one of 100 governmental units that comprise the Worcester Regional Retirement System (WRRS). This regional system provides pension benefits for the retired municipal employees of the Town of Northborough. As of January 1, 2018, there were 398 Northborough participants with 227 active, 63 inactive, and 108 retired members.

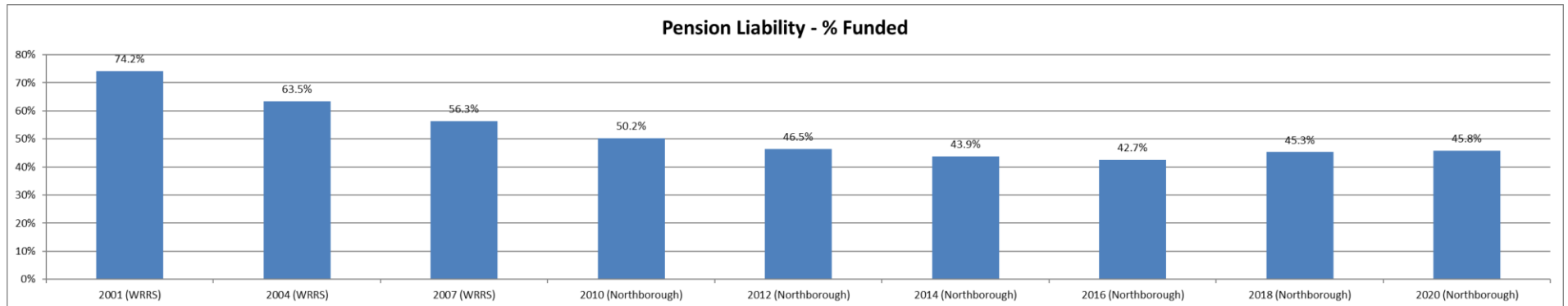
The majority of the Worcester Regional Retirement System's assets were transferred to the Massachusetts Pension Reserve Investment Trust (PRIT) Fund in July 2007. The \$75 Billion PRIT Fund manages the pension investments for the Massachusetts State Employees, the Teachers Retirement System as well as several local retirement systems. The PRIT Fund is professionally managed by the Pension Reserves Investment Management Board.

Actuarial valuations are now individually prepared for each member unit and are completed every two years starting in 2010. Recent pension reform legislation introduced benefit changes intended to reduce the Town's future pension liability. In accordance with MGL, Ch. 32, §22F, the retirement system is required to be fully funded by the year 2040; however, the Worcester Regional Retirement System has implemented a more ambitious funding schedule and plans to be fully funded in 2036, well in advance of the mandatory deadline.

Northborough's unfunded pension liability remains an area of concern to be monitored. The system is funded through employee contributions, investment performance and assessments to member communities. The overall decrease in funding level of our pension liability represents a negative trend for Northborough. Investment performance has been volatile and as we progress toward the full funding plan for 2036 and the mandate of 2040, annual assessments to member communities may increase. It is important to note that while Town of Northborough officials must continue to track progress toward full funding, they do not control the funding schedule directly.

Year	1/1/2001	1/1/2004	1/1/2007	1/1/2010	1/1/2012	1/1/2014	1/1/2016	1/1/2018	1/1/2020
Worcester Regional Retirement System - Estimated Accrued Liability	426,280,953	552,773,550	692,768,325	863,002,067	982,796,782	1,087,769,903	1,369,390,456	1,459,223,833	1,676,488,626
Worcester Regional Retirement System - Pension Assets	316,389,108	350,879,900	389,758,785	413,976,785	436,671,982	488,346,471	594,790,118	685,488,133	777,921,762
Worcester Regional Retirement System - Pension Liability - Unfunded	109,891,845	201,893,650	303,009,540	449,025,282	546,124,800	599,423,432	774,600,338	773,735,700	898,566,864
Worcester Regional Retirement System - Percent Funded	74.2%	63.5%	56.3%	48.0%	44.4%	44.9%	43.4%	47.0%	46.4%
Northborough - Estimated Accrued Liability				33,802,878	37,199,035	41,707,744	51,820,717	55,013,423	60,930,667
Northborough - Pension Assets				16,976,508	17,296,679	18,293,648	22,102,030	24,929,162	27,922,594
Northborough - Pension Liability - Unfunded				16,826,370	19,902,356	23,414,096	29,718,687	30,084,261	33,008,071
Northborough - Percent Funded				50.2%	46.5%	43.9%	42.7%	45.3%	45.8%

Sources:  
Public Employee Retirement Administration Annual Report  
Worcester Regional Retirement System Valuation Results Report



## Indicator 10: Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) Liability

**Formula:**  

$$\frac{\text{OPEB Assets}}{\text{OPEB Liability}}$$

**Northborough Trend**

	Favorable
	Marginal
X	Unfavorable/Improving
	Uncertain

**Warning Trend:** Unfunded liability for Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB).

**Description:**

An unfunded liability is one that has been incurred during the current or prior year, which does not have to be paid until a future year and for which reserves have not been set aside. It is a legal commitment to pay at some time in the future. If such obligations are permitted to grow over a long period of time, they can have a substantial effect on a government’s financial condition.

**Analysis:**

Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEBs) are the set of benefits offered to retirees and their dependents other than pensions. These benefits mainly consist of medical insurance. Currently, employees who retire at age 55 having worked for at least 20 hours per week for at least ten years are eligible to receive these medical benefits for life. Unlike pensions, these medical benefits are not adjusted to account for full or part-time work, years of service, or age of the recipient at the time of retirement. Obligations for OPEBs represent a \$30 billion liability for municipalities in the Commonwealth. The magnitude of these costs becomes even more relevant as the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) now requires that OPEB liabilities be reported on municipal balance sheets. This information is of particular interest to bond rating agencies and investors.

In 2011, the state enacted municipal health insurance reform, giving municipal officials a set of tools to change plan design features for active employees and retirees. But even with this authority, municipalities have little or no control over the primary drivers of general health care costs. With communities having little or no recourse for raising revenues in the Proposition 2 ½ era, if unaddressed, this unsustainable cost will crowd out funding for other key line items in municipal budgets, threatening jobs and core municipal services.

On December 20, 2012, a special commission charged with studying OPEBs issued its final report which recognized that the current thresholds for benefits are unsustainable. If adopted, the Commission’s recommendations to increase eligibility standards are estimated to save communities between \$9 billion and \$12 billion in OPEB costs over the next 30 years. Legislation, which contains many of the Commission’s recommendations, has been proposed but is still being debated by the Legislature.



In terms of what has been done to date in Northborough, in addition to plan design changes, the Town also unanimously adopted a Mandatory Medicare statute (MGL Ch. 32B, §18) at the Annual Town Meeting in April 2009. The adoption of §18 required Medicare eligible retirees to move out of the HMO active health plans on and into Medicare supplement or “Senior Plans,” which are specifically designed for the medical needs of seniors and effectively shares costs with the Medicare program. By adopting §18 the Town’s Unfunded Actuarial Accrued Liability (UAAL) for OPEB was immediately reduced from \$90.4 million to \$34.3 million. Upon the first revaluation the liability was further reduced to an estimated \$28.1 million, however without committing funds to an irrevocable trust fund the UAAL grew upon revaluation. GASB has since issued statements 74 and 75, changing the standards moderately. Most recently the Town’s Net OPEB Liability was measured to be \$36.32 million under the new GASB standards, which include the Town’s contributions to the OPEB Trust Fund.

The Town created the OPEB Trust Fund at the April 2011 Annual Town Meeting to set aside funds to reduce the liability, and then appropriated \$500,000 annually from FY2015 through FY2019 with an increase to \$550,000 in FY2020. The liability is calculated based on the intent to continue that level of funding, with contributions increasing upon the pension systems’ full funding by 2036. The trust funds have been invested with the Pension Reserves Investment Trust (PRIT) Fund. The PRIT Fund is a pooled investment trust fund established to invest the assets of the Massachusetts Teachers and Employees Retirement Systems as well as the assets of various County, Authority, District and Municipal Retirement Systems throughout the Commonwealth. The PRIT Fund is professionally managed by the Pension Reserves Investment Management Board. Based upon these Trust Fund contributions, the funding ratio improved to 9.33% in FY2020.

While waiting to assess the outcome of possible legislative changes at the State level as described above, the Town continues to work with an actuary to determine future funding plan options. Discussion on how best to address OPEB liabilities will continue to be a key issue during future budget cycles. In response to the COVID-19 crisis, contributions were postponed for FY2021 & FY2022 to provide tax relief to residents, however current trust fund investment returns seem are outpacing benchmarks therefore the hope is that the delay in funding will not materially impact the Town’s funding position until principal contributions can be returned to the budget.

Reporting Period*	FY2009 Original	FY2009 Revised	FY2011	FY2013	FY2015	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020
<b>Total OPEB Liability</b>	\$90,444,000	\$34,289,000	\$28,072,976	\$32,638,652	\$35,381,934	\$36,566,852	\$39,143,474	\$47,326,709	\$37,749,985	\$40,050,623
<b>Actuarial Value of Assets</b>	-	-	-	-	\$500,000	\$1,051,207	\$1,734,723	\$2,438,590	\$3,114,040	\$3,735,099
<b>Net OPEB Liability</b>	\$90,444,000	\$34,289,000	\$28,072,976	\$32,638,652	\$34,881,934	\$35,515,645	\$37,408,751	\$44,888,119	\$34,635,945	\$36,315,524
<i>Discount Rate</i>	4.00%	4.00%	4.00%	4.00%	4.00%	4.00%	6.00%	5.25%	6.25%	6.25%
<b>Funded Ratio</b>	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	1.43%	2.87%	4.43%	5.15%	8.25%	9.33%

\*Note liabilities calculated per GASB 45 from FY2009-2015, GASB 74/75 from FY2016-2020

Source: Town Actuarial Valuation Studies, Original study conducted effective July 1, 2008 (FY2009), and revaluations conducted per GASB requirements

## Indicator 11: Debt Service Expenditures

<p><b>Formula:</b>  <math display="block">\frac{\text{Debt Service Expenditures}}{\text{Operating Expenditures}}</math></p>
---

X	Favorable
	Marginal
	Unfavorable
	Uncertain

**Warning Trend:** Increasing debt service expenditures as a percentage of total net operating expenditures.

**Description:**

Debt service is defined here as the amount of principal and interest that a municipality must pay each year on bonded long and short term debt. Increasing debt service reduces expenditure flexibility by adding to the Town’s obligations. Overlapping debt is the bonded debt of another jurisdiction that is issued against the tax base of the community. Taken together, the total debt service represents a significant part of a municipality’s fixed costs and its increase may indicate excessive debt and fiscal strain.

**Analysis:**

The total debt service for Northborough is comprised of both the general obligation bonds of the Town, as well as the overlapping debt associated with the Northborough’s share for the Algonquin Regional High School (ARHS) and the Assabet Valley Regional Vocational High School. Once permanent bonds are issued, these fixed expenses are mandatory. Therefore, significant levels of debt service can serve to limit flexibility in funding operating budgets. The Town’s Debt Policy provides that the Town will endeavor to manage debt so as not to exceed a ratio of 5% to 10% of the net general fund debt service to total general fund expenditures. Since FY2004, levels of debt service have remained well within this range with the exception of FY2004 which was the first year of the \$10 Million, 10-year bond issued for the ARHS Building Project with the debt structured with a significant \$1,850,000 principal payment in the first year.

Overall, the Town’s level of debt service is within the 5% to 10% recommended by the debt policy and represents an appropriate level of capital investment in infrastructure. The credit rating agency, Moody’s Investors Service, indicated in a recent review that the Town’s “overall debt burden will remain manageable.” Debt service as a percentage of the budget decreased from 7.24% in FY2015 to 4.51% in FY2015 due to the \$10 Million ARHS Building project bond being fully satisfied. However, the percentage increased in FY2016 and FY2017 as \$7.390 Million of the \$14.85 Million total debt for the Lincoln Street School building project was issued in June 2015 and \$7.354 Million issued in January 2016. Even with the addition of the Lincoln Street School bonds and the anticipated debt associated with a new fire station, debt is projected to remain well within policy limits.

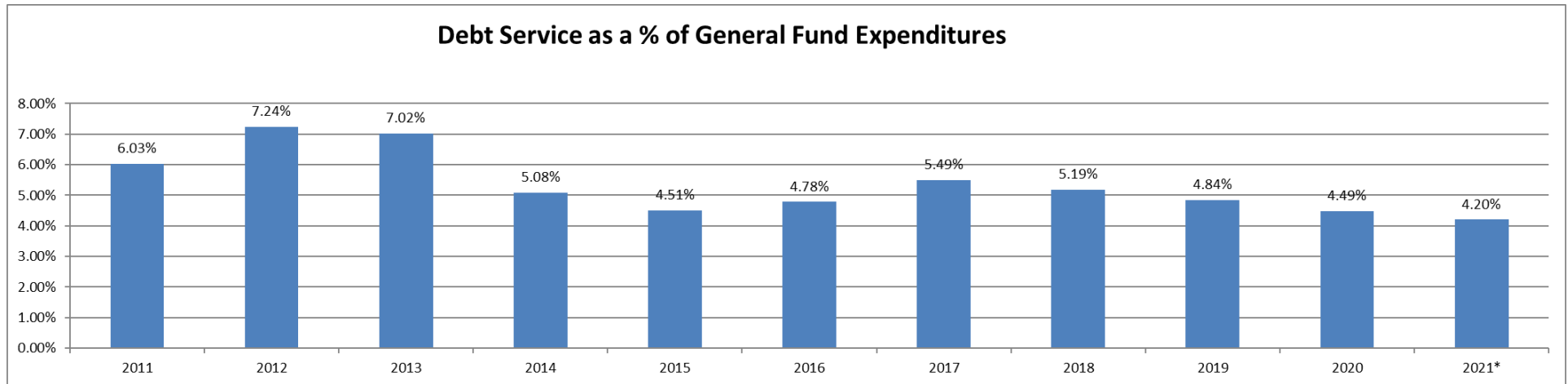
Fiscal Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021*
Debt Service**	\$ 1,923,505	\$ 2,489,898	\$ 2,481,623	\$ 2,307,032	\$ 2,050,723	\$ 2,488,169	\$ 2,923,647	\$ 2,842,319	\$ 2,796,193	\$ 2,666,160	\$ 2,202,532
Less School Building Reimbursement	\$ (382,543)	\$ (382,543)	\$ (382,543)	\$ (382,543)	\$ (382,543)	\$ (382,543)	\$ (382,543)	\$ (382,543)	\$ (382,543)	\$ (382,543)	\$ -
Net Debt Service	\$ 1,540,962	\$ 2,107,355	\$ 2,099,080	\$ 1,924,489	\$ 1,668,180	\$ 2,105,626	\$ 2,541,104	\$ 2,459,776	\$ 2,413,650	\$ 2,283,617	\$ 2,202,532
Overlapping Debt - Assabet Debt Assessment				\$ 1,044	\$ 8,186	\$ 15,006	\$ 192,135	\$ 151,232	\$ 145,316	\$ 141,488	\$ 137,660
Overlapping Debt - ARHS Debt Assessment	\$ 1,131,427	\$ 1,267,629	\$ 1,289,094	\$ 659,761	\$ 657,234	\$ 656,493	\$ 661,206	\$ 660,574	\$ 610,774	\$ 621,442	\$ 632,229
Less ARHS Legal Settlement ***						\$ (213,831)	\$ (215,948)	\$ (217,999)	\$ (220,659)	\$ (223,108)	\$ (227,586)
Net Overlapping ARHS Debt Assessment	\$ 1,131,427	\$ 1,267,629	\$ 1,289,094	\$ 659,761	\$ 657,234	\$ 442,662	\$ 445,258	\$ 442,575	\$ 390,115	\$ 398,334	\$ 404,643
Total Debt Service	\$ 2,672,389	\$ 3,374,984	\$ 3,388,174	\$ 2,585,294	\$ 2,333,600	\$ 2,563,294	\$ 3,178,497	\$ 3,053,583	\$ 2,949,081	\$ 2,823,439	\$ 2,744,835
General Fund Expenditures	\$ 44,332,468	\$ 46,636,802	\$ 48,276,629	\$ 50,906,957	\$ 51,777,346	\$ 53,590,732	\$ 57,855,289	\$ 58,864,722	\$ 60,945,786	\$ 62,881,306	\$ 65,307,567
Net Debt Service as % of GF Expenditures	3.48%	4.52%	4.35%	3.78%	3.22%	3.93%	4.39%	4.18%	3.96%	3.63%	3.37%
Overlapping Debt - ARHS as % of GF Expenditures	2.55%	2.72%	2.67%	1.30%	1.27%	1.23%	1.14%	1.12%	1.00%	0.99%	0.97%
Total Debt Service as a % of GF Expenditures	6.03%	7.24%	7.02%	5.08%	4.51%	4.78%	5.49%	5.19%	4.84%	4.49%	4.20%

Notes:

\* FY2021 as Budgeted

\*\* Source: Audited Financial Statements, General Fund, Budget Comparison Schedule, as budgeted (adjusted for principal paid down)

\*\*\* Court judgement following over-assessment, payments to come annually from FY2016 through FY2023



## Indicator 12: Financial Reserves/Fund Balance

**Formula:**  

$$\frac{\text{Financial Reserves}}{\text{Net Operating Revenues}}$$

### Northborough Trend

X	Favorable
	Marginal
	Unfavorable
	Uncertain

**Warning Trend:** Declining financial reserves as a percentage of net operating revenues.

### Description:

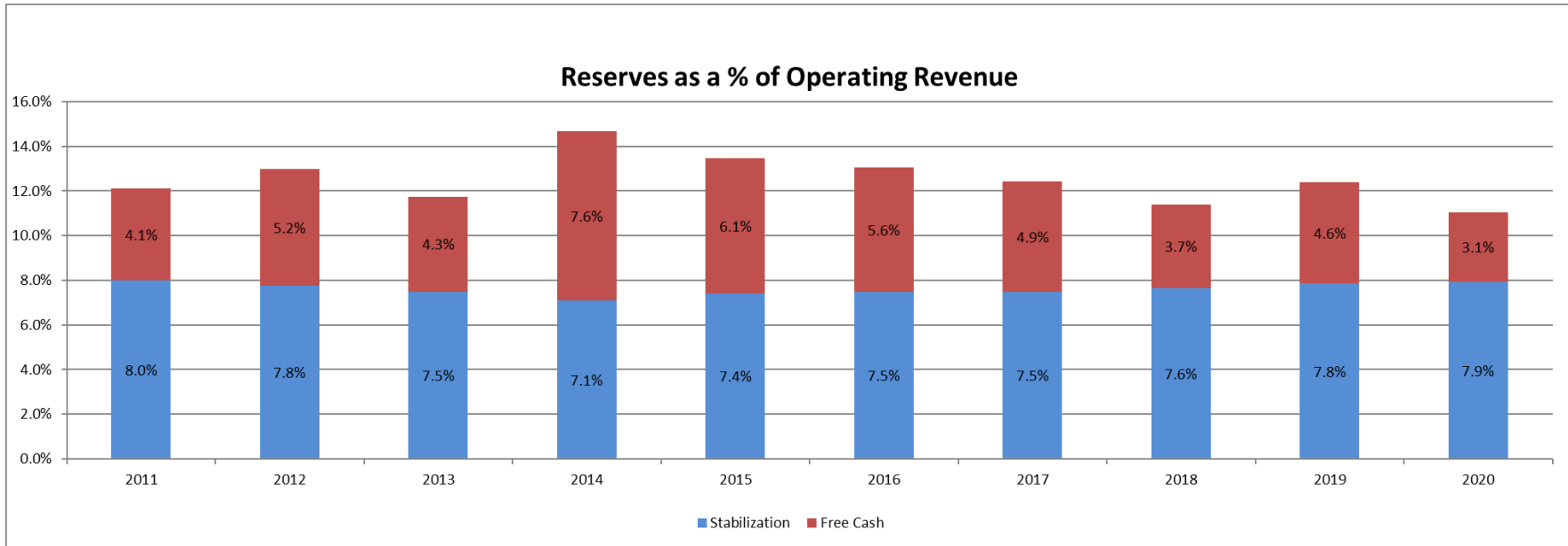
The size of a local government's fund balance can affect its ability to withstand financial emergencies. It can also affect its ability to accumulate funds for capital purchases without having to borrow. Municipalities usually try to operate each year at a surplus to maintain positive fund balance and thus maintain adequate reserves. An unplanned decline in fund balance may mean that the municipality will be unable to meet a future need.

### Analysis:

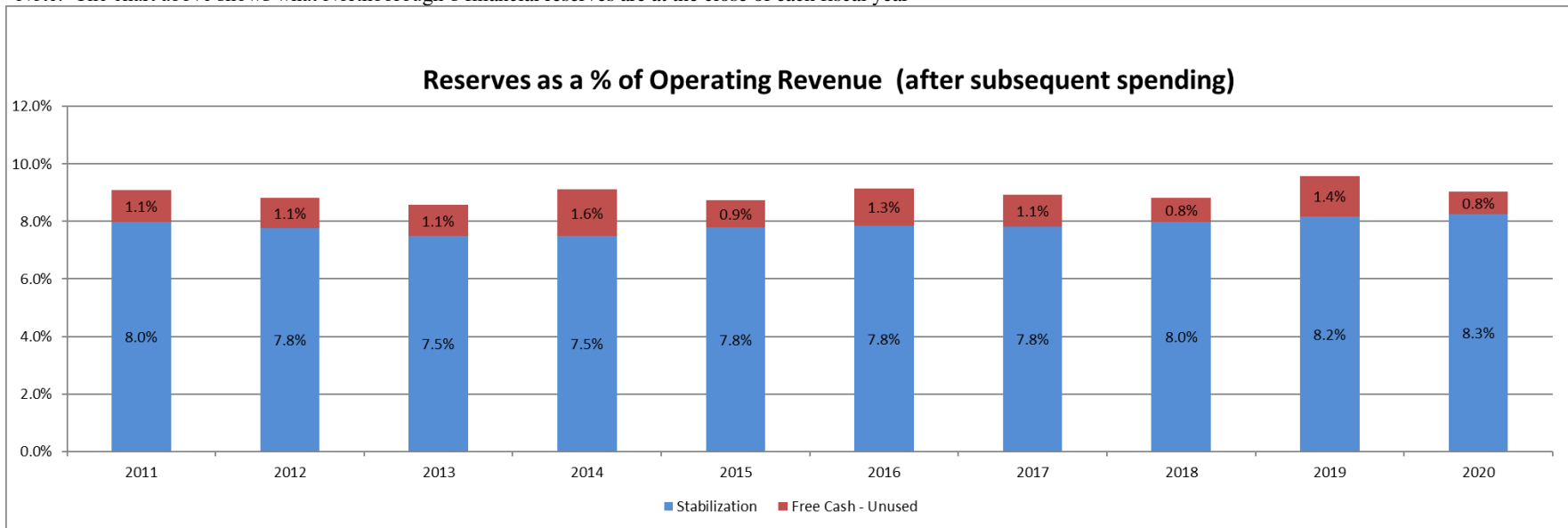
The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) recommends an undesignated fund balance between 5% and 15% of operating revenues. Northborough's financial policy provides for reserves to average between 5% and 10% of the Town's General Fund (Operating Budget) expenditures. The reserves are defined to include the Town's Stabilization Fund and Free Cash. The Town's level of reserves adheres to this policy. During FY2016-FY2019, \$200,000 was added to the Stabilization Fund to ensure appropriate levels are maintained.

Fiscal Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Certified Free Cash *	\$ 1,869,209	\$ 2,459,307	\$ 2,074,920	\$ 3,932,028	\$ 3,208,889	\$ 3,104,766	\$ 2,877,855	\$ 2,236,167	\$ 2,854,397	\$ 1,980,662
Stabilization Fund Balance *	\$ 3,605,888	\$ 3,660,077	\$ 3,646,820	\$ 3,686,792	\$ 3,913,018	\$ 4,173,427	\$ 4,364,697	\$ 4,567,834	\$ 4,900,853	\$ 5,061,660
Operating Revenues **	\$ 45,181,626	\$ 47,132,299	\$ 48,704,343	\$ 51,912,939	\$ 52,817,953	\$ 55,768,963	\$ 58,308,478	\$ 59,719,452	\$ 62,504,877	\$ 63,756,218
Free Cash Percentage of Operating Revenue	4.1%	5.2%	4.3%	7.6%	6.1%	5.6%	4.9%	3.7%	4.6%	3.1%
Stabilization Percentage of Operating Revenue	8.0%	7.8%	7.5%	7.1%	7.4%	7.5%	7.5%	7.6%	7.8%	7.9%
Net Reserves Percentage of Operating Revenue	12.1%	13.0%	11.7%	14.7%	13.5%	13.1%	12.4%	11.4%	12.4%	11.0%
Free Cash Subsequently Used***	\$ 1,365,000	\$ 1,959,307	\$ 1,543,500	\$ 3,089,000	\$ 2,708,889	\$ 2,372,000	\$ 2,235,000	\$ 1,736,167	\$ 1,965,775	\$ 1,480,000
Free Cash Subsequently Used-Operating	\$ 750,000	\$ 650,000	\$ 650,000	\$ 895,000	\$ 895,000	\$ 875,000	\$ 875,000	\$ 875,000	\$ 1,253,000	\$ 675,000
Free Cash Subsequently Used-Capital	\$ 615,000	\$ 1,309,307	\$ 893,500	\$ 2,194,000	\$ 1,813,889	\$ 1,497,000	\$ 1,360,000	\$ 861,167	\$ 712,775	\$ 805,000
Free Cash Not Used	\$ 504,209	\$ 500,000	\$ 531,420	\$ 843,028	\$ 500,000	\$ 732,766	\$ 642,855	\$ 500,000	\$ 888,622	\$ 500,662
Percent Free Cash Subsequently Used	3.0%	4.2%	3.2%	6.0%	5.1%	4.3%	3.8%	2.9%	3.1%	2.3%
Percent Free Cash Not Used	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	1.6%	0.9%	1.3%	1.1%	0.8%	1.4%	0.8%
Projected Stabilization Balance after transfer	8.0%	7.8%	7.5%	7.5%	7.8%	7.8%	7.8%	8.0%	8.2%	8.3%
Percent of Reserves after subs spending	9.1%	8.8%	8.6%	9.1%	8.7%	9.2%	8.9%	8.8%	9.6%	9.0%

Notes: Source: \*Free Cash & Stabilization at end of fiscal year, Mass. DOR Databank; \*\* Source: Audited Financial Statements, General Fund, Budget Comparison Schedule, \*\*\* Source: Mass. DOR Tax Recaps, amounts subsequently spent by Town Meeting, e.g. 2016 Free Cash voted for use by April, 2017 ATM toward FY2018 budget; Figures shown for FY2020 include projected uses for FY2022 budget



\*Note: The chart above shows what Northborough’s financial reserves are at the close of each fiscal year



\*Note: The chart above shows Northborough’s financial reserves at the start of the new fiscal year after a portion of Free Cash is spent in accordance with the Town’s Free Cash Policy.

## Indicator 13: Capital Investment – Overall Fixed Assets

**Formula:**  

$$\frac{\text{Fixed Asset Values}}{\text{Consumer Price Index}}$$

**Northborough Trend**

X	Favorable
	Marginal
	Unfavorable
	Uncertain

**Warning Trend:** Declining values

**Description:**

The majority of the Town’s Assets shown on its balance sheet are its fixed assets. These are sometimes referred to as “physical assets” or the “capital plant.” The assets consist of town-owned land, buildings, equipment and its entire infrastructure, which includes roads, sidewalks, catch basins, water/sewer mains, etc. For the financial statements most gross values are then “depreciated” over the useful life of the asset, meaning that the expense for purchasing the asset is recorded incrementally over its useful life rather than solely in the year it was acquired, while the value of the asset is lessened over time.

Local governments will frequently defer investment in capital assets, in order to devote resources to operating expenses in the face of scarce resources. When maintenance is deferred, it can lead to increased costs for replacement rather than maintenance.

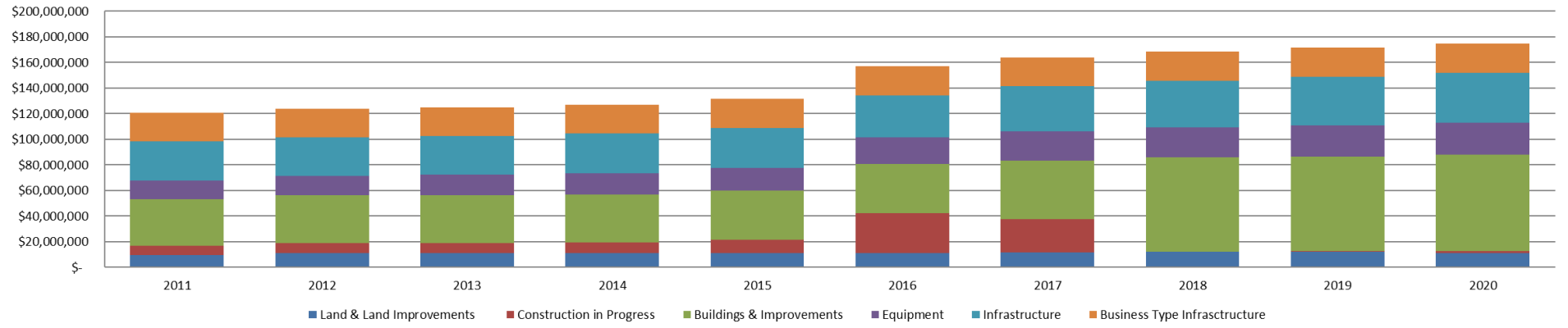
**Analysis:**

The analysis reflects that the Town has continued its effort to maintain its fixed asset values, while adjusting for the effects of inflation and depreciation. The first graph on page 38 reflects the gross value of the assets, and the underlying categories that make up the Town’s assets, while the second graph reflects that the net values of the assets in service remain relatively constant after accounting for depreciation and inflation.

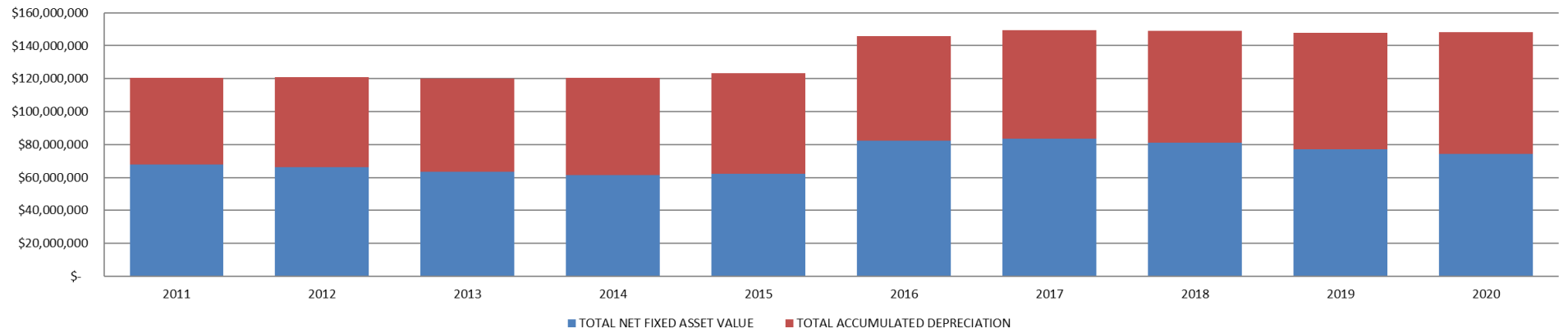
The large increase in value during FY2016 and FY2017 was directly related to the \$25 Million Lincoln Street School building project, which increased the category of “Construction in Progress.” The bulk of the project was conducted over a relatively short period of time and was in use during FY2017. The project was completed in FY2018 and was moved to “Buildings & Improvements” and depreciation has begun.

Fiscal Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>Governmental Activities</b>										
Land & Land Improvements	\$ 6,893,175	\$ 8,133,175	\$ 8,133,175	\$ 8,133,175	\$ 8,133,175	\$ 8,133,175	\$ 8,677,043	\$ 9,257,707	\$ 9,257,707	\$ 8,183,671
Construction in Progress	\$ 6,487,688	\$ 7,051,508	\$ 7,414,195	\$ 7,620,105	\$ 10,613,372	\$ 30,053,278	\$ 24,531,608	\$ 71,829	\$ 530,743	\$ 1,575,864
Buildings & Improvements	\$ 32,028,074	\$ 32,564,954	\$ 32,590,754	\$ 32,597,691	\$ 32,707,691	\$ 32,957,457	\$ 40,495,673	\$ 66,743,793	\$ 66,771,155	\$ 68,095,309
Equipment	\$ 13,247,370	\$ 13,799,152	\$ 14,333,553	\$ 15,463,209	\$ 16,071,873	\$ 17,809,356	\$ 19,072,190	\$ 19,591,386	\$ 20,499,937	\$ 21,326,911
Infrastructure	\$ 30,325,194	\$ 30,373,250	\$ 30,423,281	\$ 30,902,882	\$ 31,230,260	\$ 33,071,226	\$ 35,554,210	\$ 36,846,945	\$ 38,012,777	\$ 39,016,436
Gross Fixed Asset Value	\$ 88,981,501	\$ 91,922,039	\$ 92,894,958	\$ 94,717,062	\$ 98,756,371	\$ 122,024,492	\$ 128,330,724	\$ 132,511,660	\$ 135,072,319	\$ 138,198,191
Less Accumulated Depreciation	\$ (39,313,220)	\$ (42,024,286)	\$ (44,587,392)	\$ (47,180,124)	\$ (49,695,524)	\$ (52,462,991)	\$ (55,423,074)	\$ (59,214,063)	\$ (63,705,154)	\$ (68,046,909)
Net Fixed Asset Value	\$ 49,668,281	\$ 49,897,753	\$ 48,307,566	\$ 47,536,938	\$ 49,060,847	\$ 69,561,501	\$ 72,907,650	\$ 73,297,597	\$ 71,367,165	\$ 70,151,282
<b>Business-Type Activities</b>										
Land & Land Improvements	\$ 2,771,038	\$ 2,771,038	\$ 2,771,038	\$ 2,771,038	\$ 2,771,038	\$ 2,771,038	\$ 2,771,038	\$ 2,771,038	\$ 2,771,038	\$ 2,771,038
Construction in Progress	\$ 493,087	\$ 840,138	\$ 840,138	\$ 840,138	\$ 185,526	\$ 1,203,064	\$ 1,556,110	\$ 147,189	\$ 20,002	\$ 139,985
Buildings & Improvements	\$ 4,703,635	\$ 4,703,635	\$ 4,703,635	\$ 4,703,635	\$ 5,389,390	\$ 5,389,390	\$ 5,389,390	\$ 6,951,736	\$ 7,342,936	\$ 7,342,936
Equipment	\$ 1,289,093	\$ 1,305,449	\$ 1,393,986	\$ 1,575,046	\$ 1,882,889	\$ 3,095,678	\$ 3,494,134	\$ 3,525,563	\$ 3,701,479	\$ 3,701,479
Infrastructure	\$ 22,360,279	\$ 22,360,279	\$ 22,360,279	\$ 22,360,281	\$ 22,472,937	\$ 22,472,937	\$ 22,499,620	\$ 22,563,548	\$ 22,850,910	\$ 22,850,910
Gross Fixed Asset Value	\$ 31,617,132	\$ 31,980,539	\$ 32,069,076	\$ 32,250,138	\$ 32,701,780	\$ 34,932,107	\$ 35,710,292	\$ 35,959,074	\$ 36,686,365	\$ 36,806,348
Less Accumulated Depreciation	\$ (13,434,041)	\$ (13,919,503)	\$ (14,412,089)	\$ (14,899,201)	\$ (15,411,023)	\$ (16,059,245)	\$ (16,785,790)	\$ (17,490,599)	\$ (18,302,959)	\$ (19,108,501)
Net Fixed Asset Value	\$ 18,183,091	\$ 18,061,036	\$ 17,656,987	\$ 17,350,937	\$ 17,290,757	\$ 18,872,862	\$ 18,924,502	\$ 18,468,475	\$ 18,383,406	\$ 17,697,847
<b>Governmental &amp; Business-Type Activities</b>										
Land & Land Improvements	\$ 9,664,213	\$ 10,904,213	\$ 10,904,213	\$ 10,904,213	\$ 10,904,213	\$ 10,904,213	\$ 11,448,081	\$ 12,028,745	\$ 12,028,745	\$ 10,954,709
Construction in Progress	\$ 6,980,775	\$ 7,891,646	\$ 8,254,333	\$ 8,460,243	\$ 10,798,898	\$ 31,256,342	\$ 26,087,718	\$ 219,018	\$ 550,745	\$ 1,715,849
Buildings & Improvements	\$ 36,731,709	\$ 37,268,589	\$ 37,294,389	\$ 37,301,326	\$ 38,097,081	\$ 38,346,847	\$ 45,885,063	\$ 73,695,529	\$ 74,114,091	\$ 75,438,245
Equipment	\$ 14,536,463	\$ 15,104,601	\$ 15,727,539	\$ 17,038,255	\$ 17,954,762	\$ 20,905,034	\$ 22,566,324	\$ 23,116,949	\$ 24,201,416	\$ 25,028,390
Infrastructure	\$ 30,325,194	\$ 30,373,250	\$ 30,423,281	\$ 30,902,882	\$ 31,230,260	\$ 33,071,226	\$ 35,554,210	\$ 36,846,945	\$ 38,012,777	\$ 39,016,436
Business Type Infrastructure	\$ 22,360,279	\$ 22,360,279	\$ 22,360,279	\$ 22,360,281	\$ 22,472,937	\$ 22,472,937	\$ 22,499,620	\$ 22,563,548	\$ 22,850,910	\$ 22,850,910
Gross Fixed Asset Value	\$ 120,598,633	\$ 123,902,578	\$ 124,964,034	\$ 126,967,200	\$ 131,458,151	\$ 156,956,599	\$ 164,041,016	\$ 168,470,734	\$ 171,758,684	\$ 175,004,539
Less Accumulated Depreciation	\$ (52,747,261)	\$ (55,943,789)	\$ (58,999,481)	\$ (62,079,325)	\$ (65,106,547)	\$ (68,522,236)	\$ (72,208,864)	\$ (76,704,662)	\$ (82,008,113)	\$ (87,155,410)
Net Fixed Asset Value	\$ 67,851,372	\$ 67,958,789	\$ 65,964,553	\$ 64,887,875	\$ 66,351,604	\$ 88,434,363	\$ 91,832,152	\$ 91,766,072	\$ 89,750,571	\$ 87,849,129
TOTAL GROSS FIXED ASSET VALUE	\$ 120,598,633	\$ 123,902,578	\$ 124,964,034	\$ 126,967,200	\$ 131,458,151	\$ 156,956,599	\$ 164,041,016	\$ 168,470,734	\$ 171,758,684	\$ 175,004,539
TOTAL ACCUMULATED DEPRECIATION	\$ (52,747,261)	\$ (55,943,789)	\$ (58,999,481)	\$ (62,079,325)	\$ (65,106,547)	\$ (68,522,236)	\$ (72,208,864)	\$ (76,704,662)	\$ (82,008,113)	\$ (87,155,410)
TOTAL NET FIXED ASSET VALUE	\$ 67,851,372	\$ 67,958,789	\$ 65,964,553	\$ 64,887,875	\$ 66,351,604	\$ 88,434,363	\$ 91,832,152	\$ 91,766,072	\$ 89,750,571	\$ 87,849,129
CPI-U, 2010 Base Year ****	240.0	245.8	249.6	253.3	256.1	258.1	263.7	271.3	278.8	283.4
CPI-U adjustment for constant dollars	100.0%	97.6%	96.1%	94.8%	93.7%	93.0%	91.0%	88.5%	86.1%	84.7%
TOTAL GROSS FIXED ASSET VALUE	\$ 120,598,633	\$ 120,975,297	\$ 120,137,941	\$ 120,310,125	\$ 123,203,994	\$ 145,928,291	\$ 149,289,371	\$ 149,019,384	\$ 147,848,806	\$ 148,192,129
TOTAL ACCUMULATED DEPRECIATION	\$ 52,747,261	\$ 54,622,080	\$ 56,720,930	\$ 58,824,416	\$ 61,018,557	\$ 63,707,629	\$ 65,715,369	\$ 67,848,470	\$ 70,592,073	\$ 73,802,347
TOTAL NET FIXED ASSET VALUE	\$ 67,851,372	\$ 66,353,217	\$ 63,417,012	\$ 61,485,709	\$ 62,185,438	\$ 82,220,662	\$ 83,574,002	\$ 81,170,914	\$ 77,256,733	\$ 74,389,782

**Gross Fixed Asset Value Nominal Dollars - Governmental & Business-Type Activities**



**Fixed Asset Values Constant Dollars - Governmental & Business-Type Activities**





## Indicator 14: Capital Investment - Pavement Management

**Formula:**  
Average Road Service Rating (RSR)

	Favorable
	Marginal
X	Improving
	Uncertain

**Warning Trend:** Declining overall average Road Service Rating (RSR)

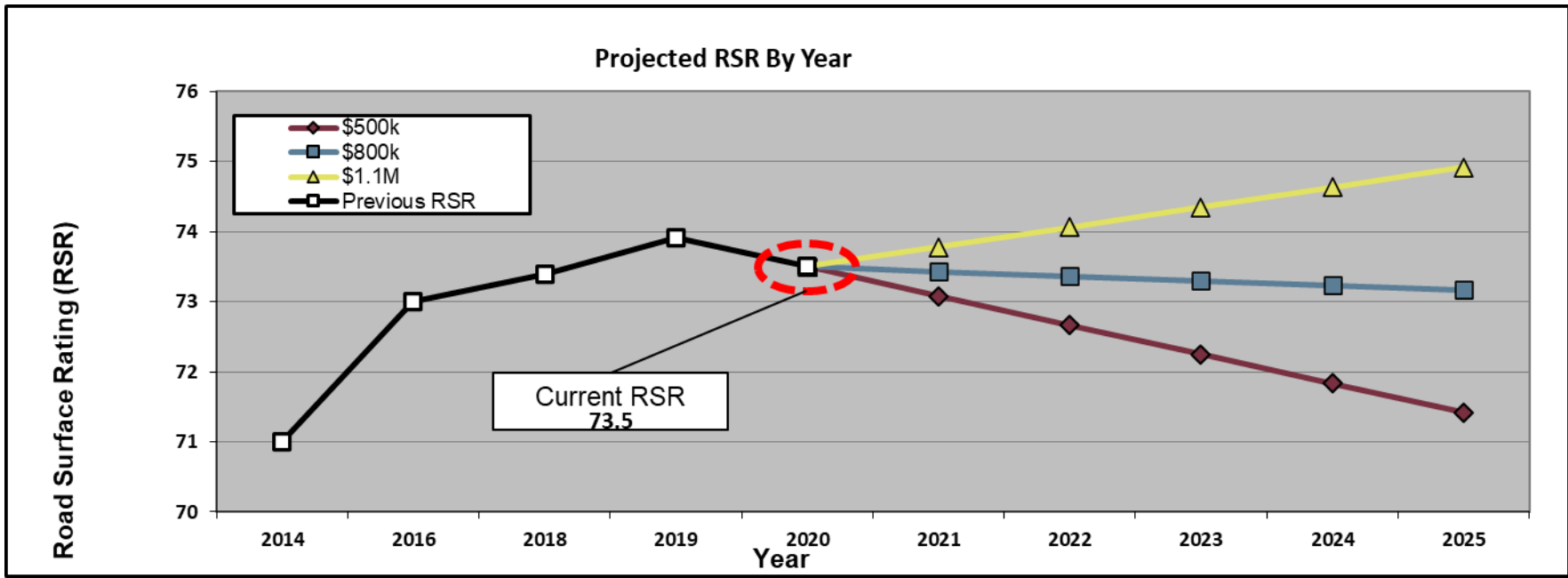
### **Description:**

One of the Town's most significant assets is its pavement network, or its roadways. Pavement management is the practice of planning for pavement maintenance and rehabilitation with the goal of maximizing the value and life of a pavement network. Pavement management involves inventorying, assessing, evaluating and scoring roads using a Road Service Rating (RSR) calculation on a 0 - 100 scale. This process ultimately allows the Town to define treatment options and test various budget scenarios and projects the impact on the Town's overall RSR based upon funding scenarios. Local governments often defer investment in capital assets, in order to devote resources to operating expenses in the face of scarce resources. When maintenance is deferred, it can lead to increased costs for replacement rather than maintenance.

### **Analysis:**

During FY2015, the Town completed its first comprehensive pavement management study which assessed the condition of all the Town's roadways. The results of the study were used to develop a multiyear maintenance and rehabilitation plan for Northborough's roadways. The study determined that the Town's initial overall RSR of 71 would deteriorate over time if it continued to only invest the State's Chapter 90 Roadway Funds, which are approximately \$500,000 per year. The study determined that the Town must spend at least \$1.1 Million annually to prevent further deterioration of its roadways. Ultimately, deferring investment in our roadways would negatively impact the Town's financial condition by increasing future costs and reducing the Town's ability to fund other services.

Based upon the study the Town implemented a Pavement Management Plan (PMP) in FY2016 with a budget of approximately \$1.1 Million. Following a one-time increase in Chapter 90 Funds, the State reduced its support back to approximately \$500,000 in FY2017, where it remains today. The Town's \$1.1 Million PMP consists of approximately \$500,000 in State Chapter 90 funds, \$300,000 in roadway maintenance funds from the DPW operating budget, and \$300,000 in Free Cash appropriated in the Capital Budget. Based upon the increased level of infrastructure investment since FY2016, the Town's overall RSR has improved to 73.5. The chart on the following page projects the Town's overall average RSR for its roads based upon three funding scenarios with the middle line representing the current \$1.1 Million plan. Future progress will require identification of additional resources, including a commitment from the State Legislature to increase Chapter 90 Funds statewide from \$200 million to \$300 million. If that occurs, Northborough would receive an estimated \$275,000 in additional roadway funds.



Section IV  
Five-Year Financial Forecast—  
Revenue and Expenditure Projections

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#### **IV. FIVE-YEAR FINANCIAL FORECAST—REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE PROJECTIONS**

The following pages contain the Five-Year Financial Forecast of revenue and expenditures along with a projected financial outlook for the Town of Northborough.

A revenue driven model was the methodology used to prepare the financial projections. The projections began with FY2021 as the base and were calculated out five years using the Proposition 2 ½ allowable annual budget growth. The projections focused on the top three revenue sources, which are real estate taxes, state aid and motor vehicle excise taxes. Together these sources represent approximately 95% of total revenue.

The revenue projections were calculated with the following assumptions:

- Real estate taxes increase by the allowable amount under Proposition 2 ½
- New growth is estimated at \$40 million for FY2022 and \$30 million annually for remaining years
- Existing unused levy capacity is available for use to maintain service levels
- State aid is level funded for FY2022 and increased by 1% annually
- Local receipts such as motor vehicle excise return to FY2020 levels by FY2024 and are level funded
- Adherence to our comprehensive financial policies (no one-time gimmicks)

The expenditure projections were calculated with the following assumptions:

- OPEB funding is returned to budget in FY2023
- Major capital projects, including debt exclusions for Fire Station, proceed in accordance with the six-year Capital Improvement Plan
- Key budgets increase in FY2022 to a forecasted 3% for Town Governments and School Departments, and then 3.5% annually for all each year after

#### **Financial Outlook**

Additionally, a market adjustment has been applied to the valuation of an Average Single Family Home and Total Valuation. The model assumes a 5% increase in FY2022 in the Single Family Home category, then 2% through FY2026. Given these assumptions, the revenue and expenditure projections indicate that real estate taxes will increase between 3.7% to 7.1% annually. This model assumes no major “budget surprises” and no significant staffing or increase in service levels. It is important to note that with these conservative estimates, the model indicates that the existing levy capacity will not be depleted by FY2026, therefore a Proposition 2 ½ operating over-rides would not be needed during this period while indicating increasing reliance on property taxes. Based upon the model it will be important to revisit and update these forecasts annually and make adjustments as needed to protect the Town’s financial condition.

# Five-Year Revenue Projections

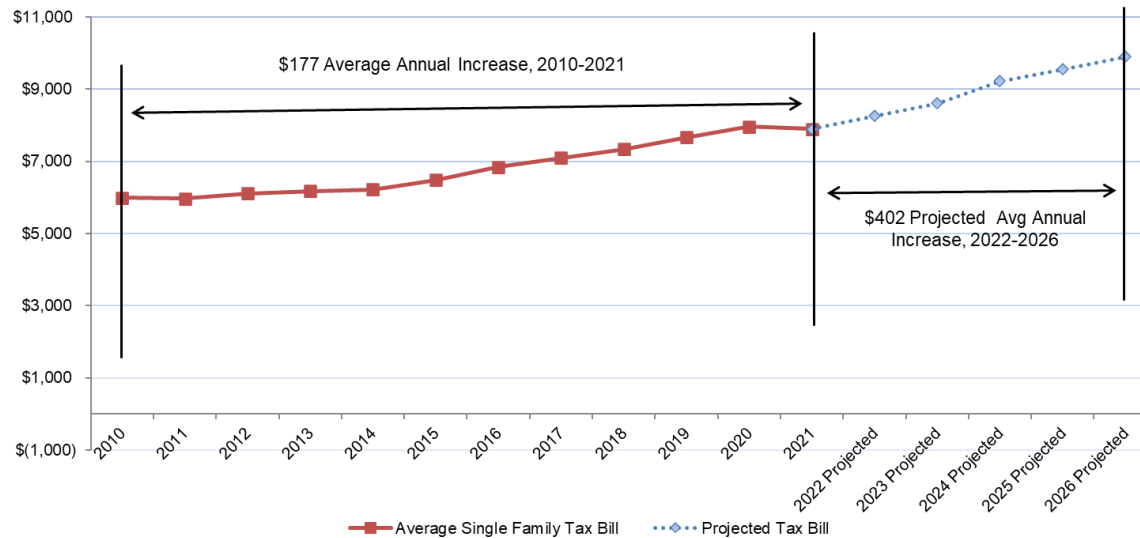
		FY2022 Projection	FY2023 Projection	FY2024 Projection	FY2025 Projection	FY2026 Projection
<b>General Fund Revenues</b>						
	Prior Year Levy Limit	55,450,240	57,521,296	59,470,944	61,480,498	63,566,526
	2.5%	1,386,256	1,438,032	1,486,774	1,537,012	1,589,163
	New Growth	684,800	511,616	522,779	549,017	557,581
	Levy Limit	57,521,296	59,470,944	61,480,498	63,566,526	65,713,271
	Other Debt Exclusions	705,771	687,391	668,623	649,474	624,463
	ARHS Debt Exclusions	412,229	435,976	658,876	655,356	655,356
	Lincoln St Sch Bldg Debt Exclusion	1,026,182	998,130	973,476	948,821	924,167
	Fire Station Debt Exclusion	52,750	142,750	2,095,400	2,046,960	1,998,520
	Maximum Levy	59,718,228	61,735,191	65,876,872	67,867,137	69,915,776
	Unused Levy Capacity	(3,399,223)	(3,011,379)	(2,970,820)	(2,725,456)	(2,403,010)
	<b>Total Tax Levy</b>	<b>56,319,005</b>	<b>58,723,812</b>	<b>62,906,052</b>	<b>65,141,681</b>	<b>67,512,766</b>
State Aid	Cherry Sheet	5,434,115	5,488,456	5,543,341	5,598,774	5,654,762
Local Receipts		4,158,413	4,337,000	4,468,000	4,468,000	4,468,000
<b>Fund Balance Allocations &amp; Transfers</b>						
	Free Cash - Operating Budget	500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000
	Free Cash - Appropriated Reserve	175,000	175,000	175,000	175,000	175,000
	Free Cash - Transfer to Stabilization	-	-	200,000	200,000	200,000
	Free Cash - Capital/Other	805,662	500,000			
	Other Available Funds	775,526	800,000	900,000	900,000	900,000
	<b>Total General Fund Revenues</b>	<b>68,167,721</b>	<b>70,524,269</b>	<b>74,692,393</b>	<b>76,983,456</b>	<b>79,410,528</b>

# Five-Year Expense Projections

		FY2022 Projection	FY2023 Projection	FY2024 Projection	FY2025 Projection	FY2026 Projection
<u>General Fund Expenses</u>						
<u>Education</u>						
	Northborough K-8	25,933,179	26,840,840	27,780,270	28,752,579	29,758,919
	Algonquin 9-12 Operating	13,216,984	13,679,578	14,158,364	14,653,906	15,166,793
	ARHS Debt Service	632,229	655,976	658,876	655,356	655,356
	Assabet	1,042,186	1,078,663	1,116,416	1,155,490	1,195,932
	Assabet Debt Service	133,832	130,004	126,176	122,348	122,348
	Education Subtotal	40,958,410	42,385,061	43,840,101	45,339,680	46,899,349
<u>Town Budget</u>						
	General Government Budget	23,601,110	24,427,149	25,282,099	26,166,973	27,082,817
<u>Debt Exclusions</u>						
	Lincoln St School Debt Service	1,026,775	998,675	973,975	949,275	949,275
	Fire Station Debt Service	52,750	142,750	2,095,400	2,046,960	1,998,520
	Other Debt Excluded Debt Service	772,488	695,633	675,818	655,568	655,568
<u>Other Funds</u>						
		775,526	700,000	900,000	900,000	900,000
<u>OPEB Trust</u>						
		-	500,000	550,000	550,000	550,000
<u>Stabilization Fund</u>						
		-	-	200,000	200,000	200,000
<u>Reserve Fund</u>						
		175,000	175,000	175,000	175,000	175,000
<u>Capital Articles</u>						
		805,662	500,000	-	-	-
<u>Assessment Adjustments / Rounding</u>						
<b>Total General Fund Expenses</b>		<b>68,167,721</b>	<b>70,524,268</b>	<b>74,692,393</b>	<b>76,983,455</b>	<b>79,410,528</b>

# Projected Tax Impact

		FY2022 Projection	FY2023 Projection	FY2024 Projection	FY2025 Projection	FY2026 Projection
<b>Projected Tax Impact</b>						
Tax Base / Valuation		3,302,416,579	3,369,900,917	3,437,385,255	3,504,869,593	3,572,353,931
Avg Single Fam		484,504	494,194	504,078	514,160	524,443
Tax Rate		17.05	17.43	18.30	18.59	18.90
Avg Tax Bill		8,263	8,612	9,225	9,556	9,911
Increase (\$)		363	349	613	331	355
Increase (%)		4.6%	4.2%	7.1%	3.6%	3.7%
Note: Tax Impact assumes a 5% increase in FY22, 2% increase in Single Family Home Values annually FY2023-FY2026; Valuation reflects \$40M newgrowth in FY2022 and \$30M from FY2023-2026 and corresponding growth in overall Single Family Home values						





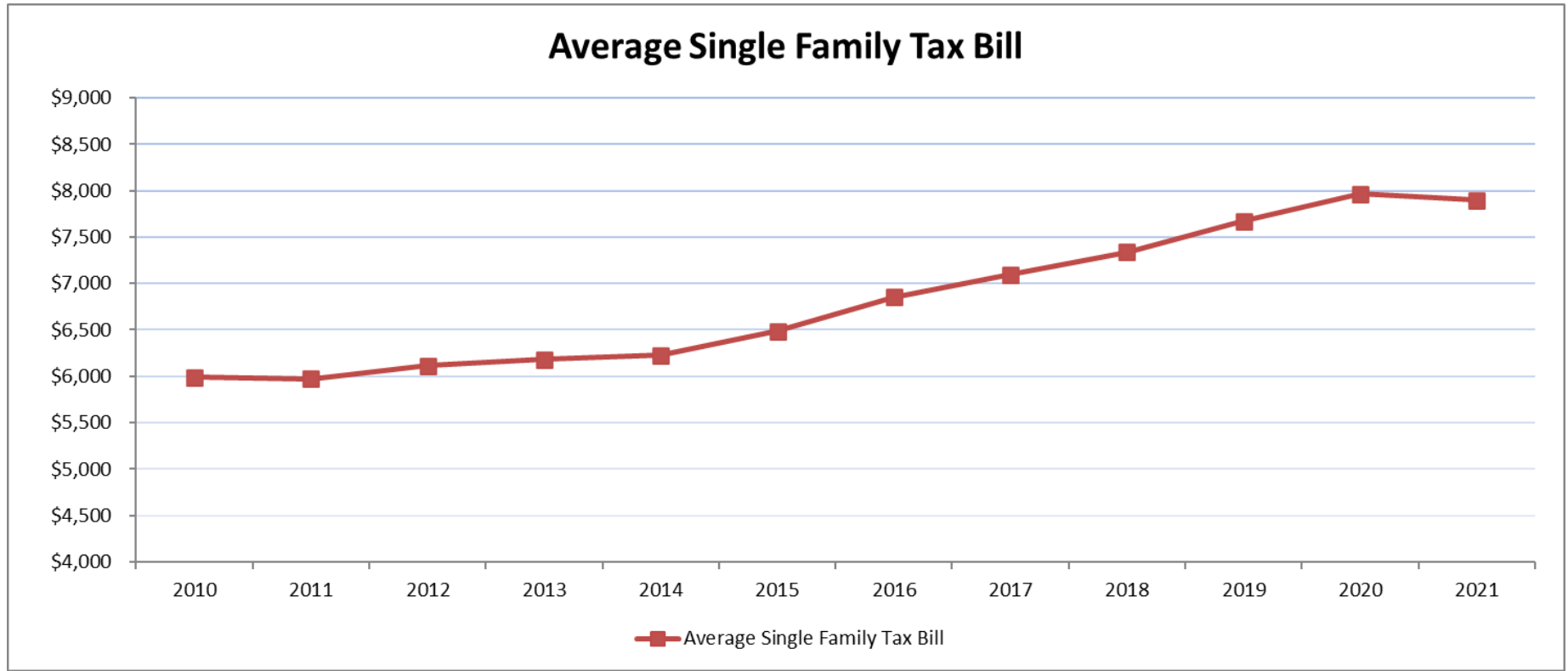
# Section V

## Appendices

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## Appendix A: Average Residential Tax Bill



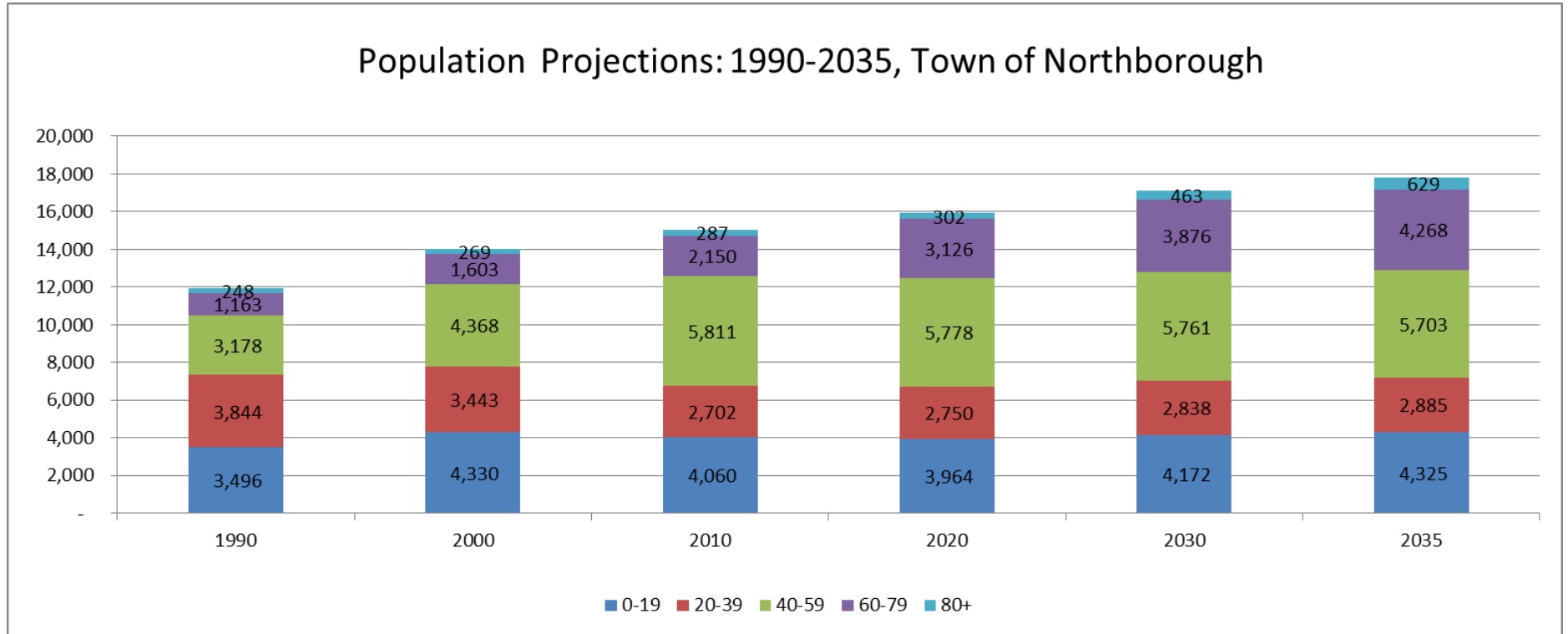
Fiscal Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Assessed Value	\$ 1,669,159,700	\$ 1,583,648,800	\$ 1,581,989,200	\$ 1,536,502,300	\$ 1,506,142,900	\$ 1,558,995,700	\$ 1,608,609,300	\$ 1,649,717,300	\$ 1,706,883,000	\$ 1,813,690,200	\$ 1,874,216,900	\$ 1,874,797,000
Parcels	4,006	4,007	4,008	4,005	4,014	4,022	4,032	4,042	4,044	4,055	4,059	4,063
Average Single Family Home Value **	\$ 416,665	\$ 395,221	\$ 394,708	\$ 383,646	\$ 375,222	\$ 387,617	\$ 398,960	\$ 408,144	\$ 422,078	\$ 447,273	\$ 461,744	\$ 461,432
Tax Rate Per Thousand	\$ 14.38	\$ 15.11	\$ 15.49	\$ 16.11	\$ 16.59	\$ 16.73	\$ 17.17	\$ 17.39	\$ 17.39	\$ 17.15	\$ 17.25	\$ 17.12
Average Single Family Tax Bill	\$ 5,992	\$ 5,972	\$ 6,114	\$ 6,181	\$ 6,225	\$ 6,485	\$ 6,850	\$ 7,098	\$ 7,340	\$ 7,671	\$ 7,965	\$ 7,900
Increase over prior year	\$ 218	\$ (20)	\$ 142	\$ 67	\$ 44	\$ 260	\$ 365	\$ 247	\$ 242	\$ 331	\$ 294	\$ (65)
Hi-Lo Rank**	49	53	55	59	63	63	63	62	62	61		

The FY2021 real estate tax bill for an average single family home in the Town of Northborough is \$7,900. This represents a \$177 average annual increase over the 12 years since FY2010. The Massachusetts Department of Revenue’s (DOR) “Hi-Lo” ranking, which is the rank of Massachusetts Cities and Town’s average single family tax bills, indicates Northborough’s tax bill dropped to a low point in FY2014 relative to most other Massachusetts cities and towns. Northborough had the 63rd highest tax bill in the state from FY2014 through FY2016, and while that ranking has risen to 62nd highest for FY2017 & FY2018 and 61<sup>st</sup> for FY2019, the Town’s rank has fallen from being the 49th highest in FY2010. The DOR has ceased producing this ranking in recent years, which is why it is not listed past FY2019. Northborough’s Board of Selectmen have established a budget goal to minimize the tax impact during the most recent 10 years, while preserving current service levels.

Notes:

\* Source: Mass. DOR Tax Recap; \*\* Source: Mass. DOR Databank

## Appendix B: Population Projections



Age	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030	2035	Percent Change 2010-2035
0-19	3,496	4,330	4,060	3,964	4,172	4,325	6.53%
20-39	3,844	3,443	2,702	2,750	2,838	2,885	6.77%
40-59	3,178	4,368	5,811	5,778	5,761	5,703	-1.86%
60-79	1,163	1,603	2,150	3,126	3,876	4,268	98.51%
80+	248	269	287	302	463	629	119.16%
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,929</b>	<b>14,013</b>	<b>15,010</b>	<b>15,920</b>	<b>17,110</b>	<b>17,810</b>	<b>18.65%</b>

Population data and trends are extremely important to review and understand for the future allocation of resources. The projections provided by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council indicate that Northborough is expected to grow in population by 18.65% or 2,800 people over the next 25 years. The projections indicate Northborough's population is expected to rise gradually and will allow officials and policymakers to plan carefully for future needs. The school age population (0-19) is estimated to increase by 6.53%, and any future changes will need to be correlated with the estimates from the School Department to plan for the future needs of the children of Northborough. The largest growth is estimated in the over age 60 segment of the population with 2,460 more people over age 60 living in Northborough in the next 25 years.