

WELCOME TO



AMHERST, *NEW HAMPSHIRE*

September 13, 2020

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FY 2023-2027 STRATEGIC PLAN

MISSION

The Amherst Office of Community Development provides excellent customer service, professional assistance and technical expertise in a consistent and fair manner to all its users on:

- the implementation of land use ordinances, regulations and policies;
- the issuance of building permits and the provision of inspections during the construction process;
- the enforcement of codes and ordinances.

Through community outreach and engagement, and support to appointed and elected Boards and Commissions, the Amherst Office of Community Development works to plan for the future sustainable development of the community while respecting individual rights and protecting historical and cultural resources and the natural environment.

VISION FOR 2027

The Amherst Office of Community Development:

- is a streamlined and efficient point of service for all who seek to use and develop land in town;
- has worked with stakeholders to translate the vision of the updated Master Plan into a physical reality for the community;
- is a trusted source of information and guidance in the community.

VALUES

The following core values represent the beliefs and behaviors that guide us in all the Office of Community Development's activities:

- × **Customer service**
- × **Integrity**
- × **Equitable service**
- × **Support**
- × **Transparency**
- × **Efficiency**
- × **Knowledge**

OVERVIEW

The Amherst Office of Community Development includes building, code enforcement, planning, zoning, and economic development functions.

The Office provides support to the Town's Zoning Board of Adjustment, Planning Board, Historic District Commission, Conservation Commission, and the Heritage Commission. The Office also supports the Capital Improvement Program Committee, Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, and the Master Plan Steering Committee and assists other Town Departments and Boards as needed.

HISTORICAL TRENDS

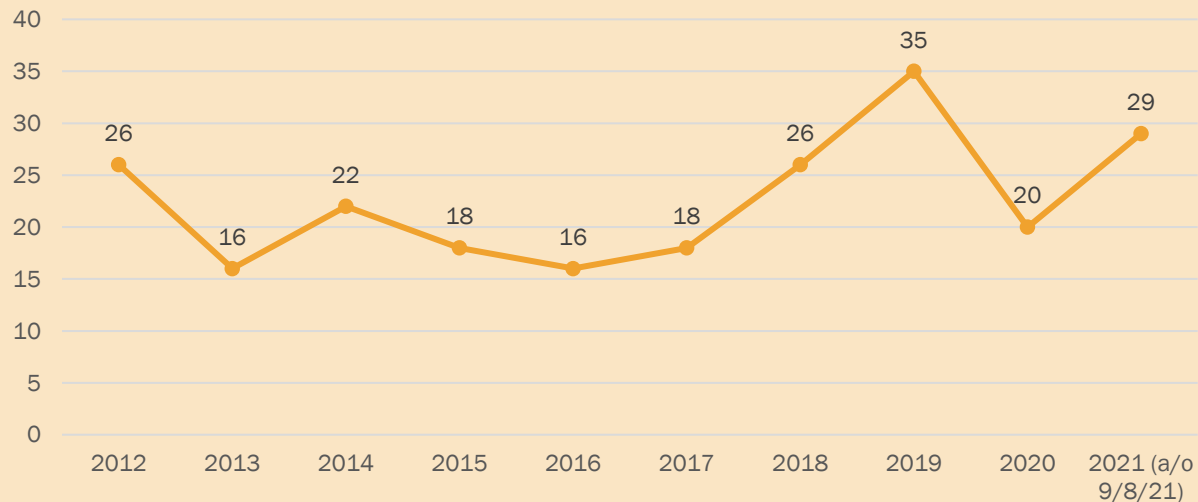
BUILDING PERMIT APPLICATION HISTORY

Building Permit Application History												
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 thru 9/8/21
New SF Residential (including Condos)	14	8	34	10	13	24	12	35	37	36	37	26
Residential Additions/Alterations	142	119	109	175	127	166	302	207	259	278	259	270
Commercial/Industrial new	0	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	1	3	2	3
Commercial/Industrial additions/alterations	15	13	25	19	15	18	18	14	12	13	28	23
Signs	22	26	32	34	39	50	52	22	17	14	17	10
Pools	15	8	7	5	10	6	1	3	9	4	22	17
Demolition	24	16	12	13	21	12	4	12	6	6	12	5
Septic Systems	47	60	50	48	92	58	40	53	56	71	69	65
Electrical	112	103	146	247	191	212	235	226	226	219	226	220
Electrical (for generator)						72	30	33	54	31	19	15
Plumbing	20	7	5	77	80	90	87	112	161	101	83	73
Mechanical	57	43	33	276	307	372	313	340	408	439	426	397
Home Occupations	7	1	7	4	3	6	8	2	4	3	7	1
Total	475	405	461	910	899	1088	1104	1060	1250	1218	1207	1125

PLANNING BOARD APPLICATIONS

Planning Board	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 (a/o 9/8/21)
Scenic Road Hearings	2	2	1	1	3	2	2	2	1	2
Non-Residential Site Plans (NRSP)	7	6	3	4	3	2	3	9	6	8
Subdivision	3	1	8	7	6	3	6	4	4	4
Lot Line Adjustment	6	1	4	2	0	0	0	4	1	3
Conceptual Discussions	3	4	2	2	2	8	9	3	1	4
Sign Master Plan	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Compliance Hearing	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Conditional Use Permit	0	0	4	2	2	3	6	11	6	7
Total	26	16	22	18	16	18	26	35	20	29

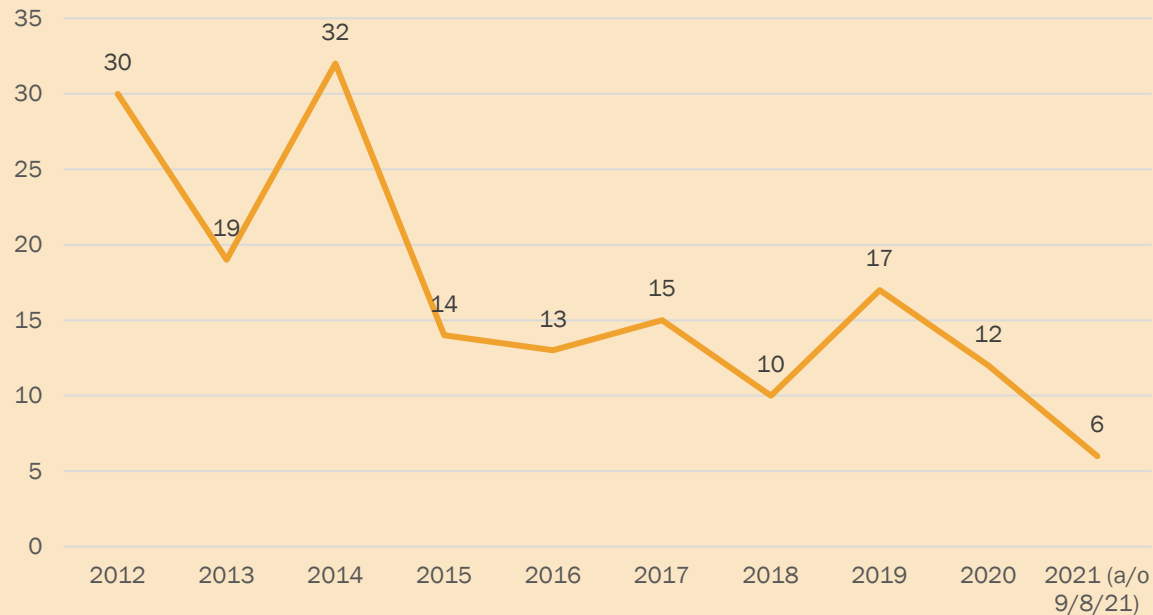
Total Planning Board Applications 2012 - 2021



ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT APPLICATIONS

Zoning Board of Adjustment	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 (a/o 9/8/21)
Variance	23	16	27	12	12	14	9	15	10	6
Special Exception	2	3	3	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Appeal of Administrative Decision	3	0	1	2	1	0	0	1	1	0
Equitable Waiver	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
Variance for the Handicapped	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rehearing Request	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	0	0
Total	30	19	32	14	13	15	10	17	12	6

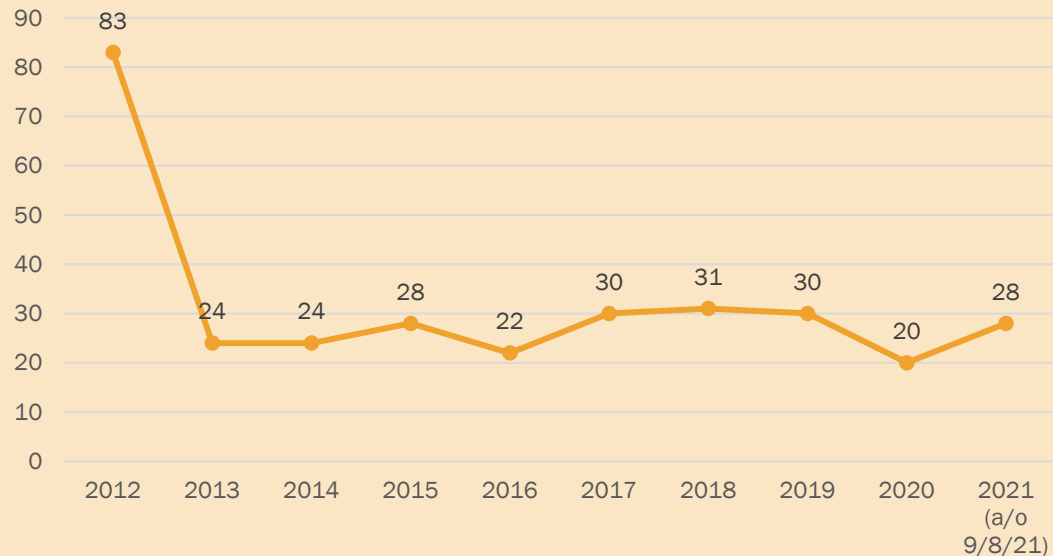
Total ZBA Applications 2012 - 2021



HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION APPLICATIONS

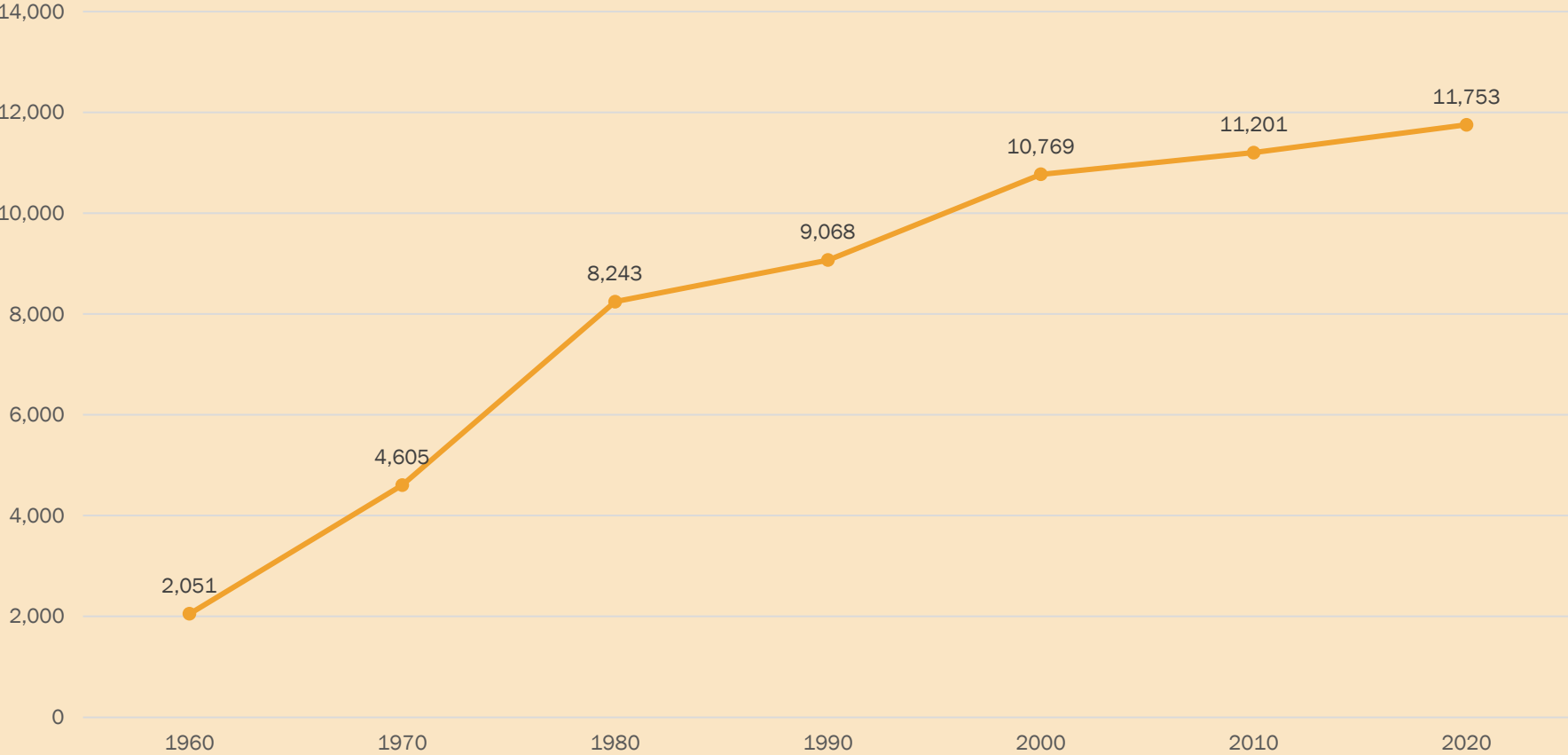
Historic District Commission	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 (a/o 9/8/21)
New Building	0	1	1	1	2	0	1	0	0	1
Ext. Building Mods/Alterations	36	7	10	14	10	9	14	10	9	15
Building Additions	0	0	0	4	5	4	1	1	2	1
Tree Removal	31	11	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fence/Landscaping	13	2	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	4
Mechanical Equipment	3	2	3	3	1	2	2	2	3	3
Demolition	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Sheds/Accessory Structures	0	0	3	2	0	2	9	5	5	2
Other	0	0	3	4	4	13	4	2	1	1
Total	83	24	24	28	22	30	31	30	20	28

Total HDC Applications 2012 - 2021



POPULATION

Amherst Population

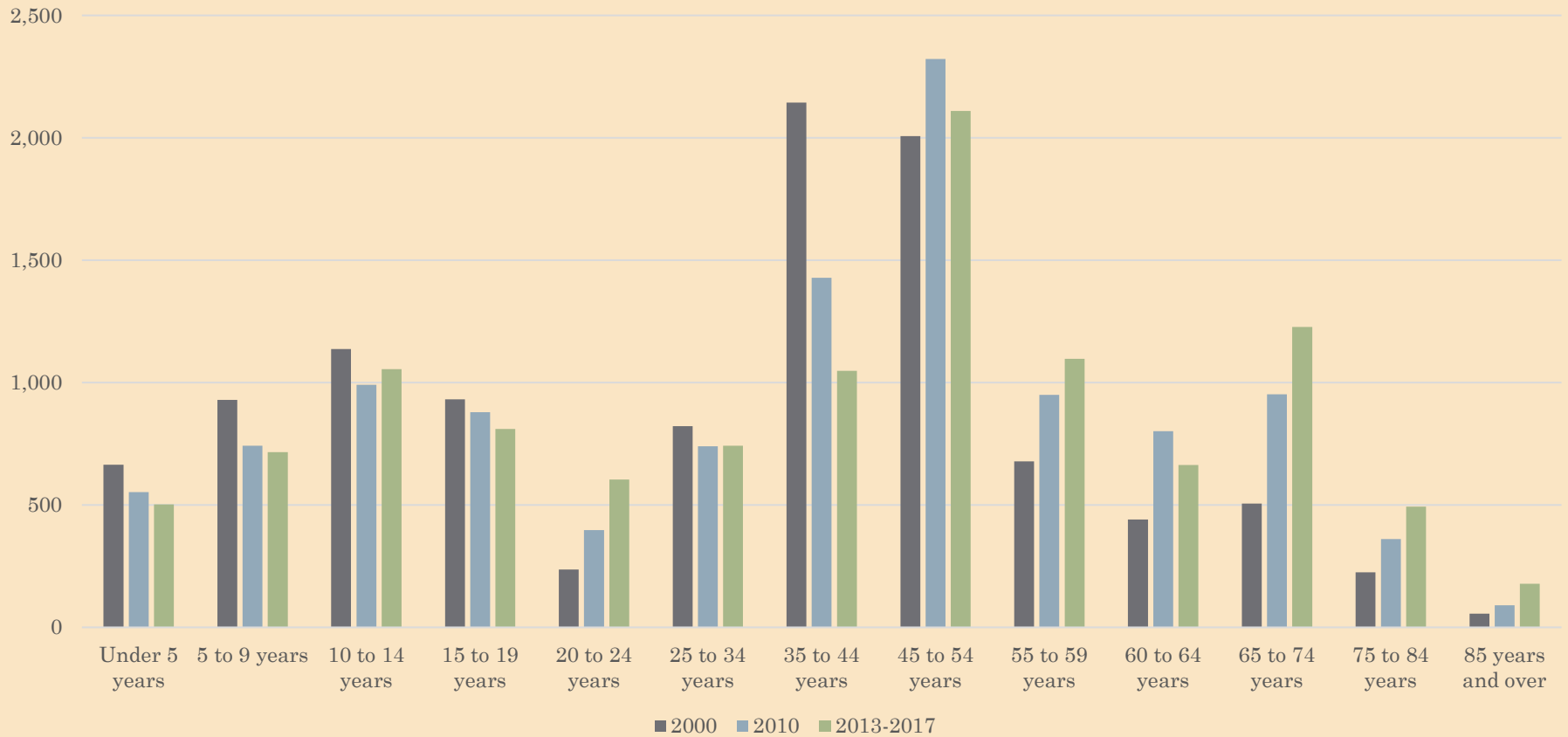


2020 CENSUS

Community	2010 Population	2020 Population	Difference	% Change
Amherst	11201	11753	552	4.93
Brookline	4991	5639	648	12.98
Hollis	7684	8342	658	8.56
Hudson	24467	25394	927	3.79
Litchfield	8271	8478	207	2.5
Lyndeborough	1683	1702	19	1.13
Mason	1382	1448	66	4.78
Merrimack	25494	26632	1138	4.46
Milford	15115	16131	1016	6.72
Mont Vernon	2409	2584	175	7.26
Nashua	86494	91322	4828	5.58
Pelham	12897	14222	1325	10.27
Wilton	3677	3896	219	5.96
	205765	217543	11778	5.72

AGE OF POPULATION

Amherst Population Age



ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

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The environmental scan is the opportunity to look at things that can impact the department from a variety of perspectives: economic, social, political, technological, demographic.

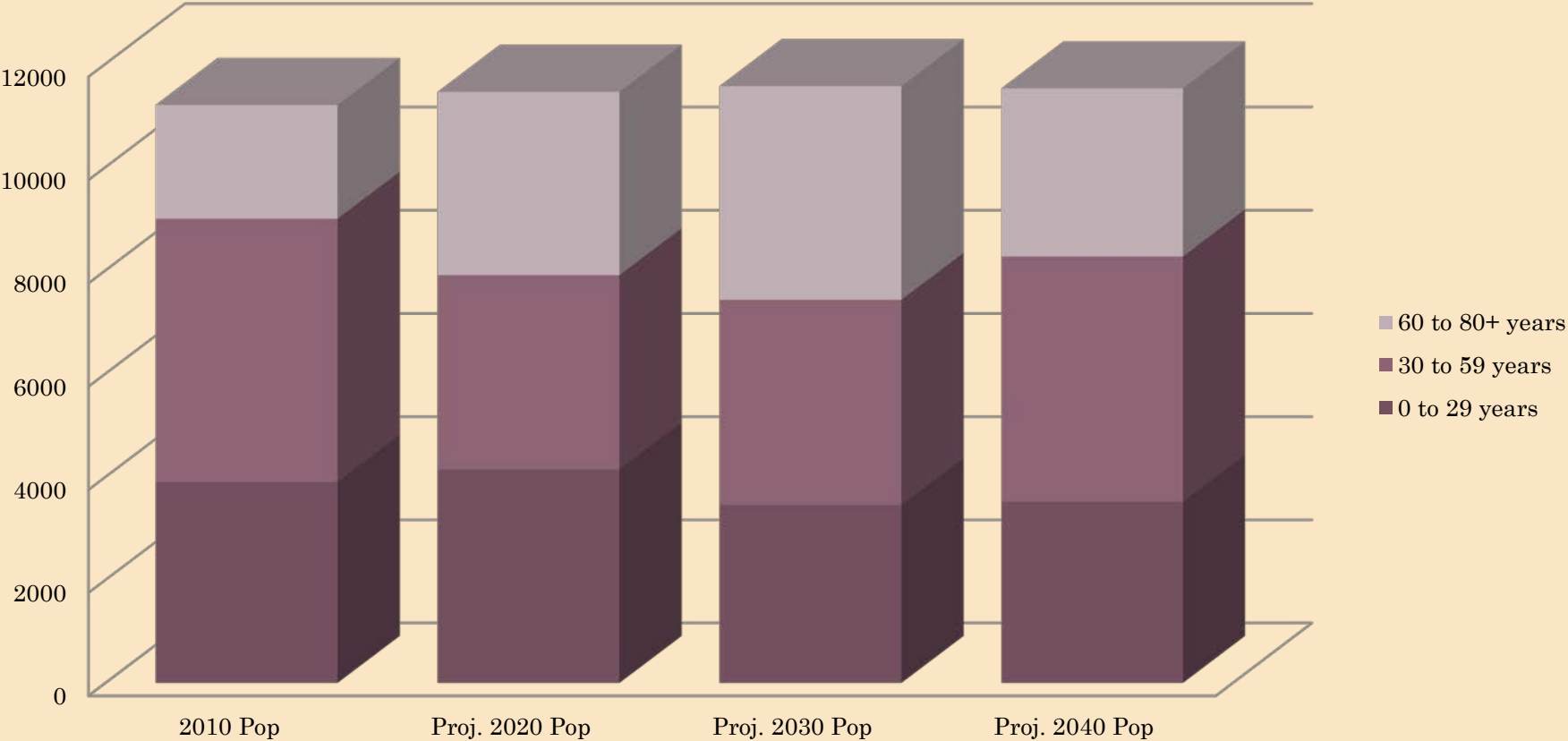
PROJECTED POPULATION

Projected Population
(NRPC Region - Nashua + New Boston + Bedford)



POPULATION PROJECTION BY AGE GROUP

Amherst Population Projections by Age Group



EMPLOYMENT/BUSINESS/DEVELOPMENT

- Changing working environment in Covid crisis.
- Market volatility.
- Environment for new/expanding businesses.

TECHNOLOGICAL

- Online permitting/applications.
- Hybrid meetings.
- Social media/website.

POLITICAL

- Legislative changes.
- Board member changes.
- Residents' votes and participation.

SWOT

Strengths

- Current full staffing
- Research skills and planning/zoning knowledge
- Customer service
- Responsive inspection scheduling
- Years of forward-thinking planning
- Dedicated and passionate Board and Commission members
- Staff support to Boards and Commissions
- Professional networks and continuing education
- Online permitting
- Inhouse plan review
- One stop shop for building, fire, planning, zoning, historic district, heritage, conservation

SWOT

Weaknesses

- Staff turnover
- Regulations and ordinances in need of update
- Filing and accessibility of data; previous digitizing choices
- Space needs and office layout
- Lack of communication with the public about Planning Board processes/decisions

SWOT

Opportunities

- Master Plan update
- Use of internet/social media to increase public awareness and understanding of OCD function
- Outreach and engagement
- Proactive communication between Boards, Commissions and Departments
- SOP's/FAQ's to assist in staff transitions and answer questions
- Map of pending applications with links to details
- Review fee schedule to make sure reasonable but can help cover departmental costs

SWOT

Threats

- Regional/nationwide trends forcing Amherst to have to react
- Outdated Master Plan, ordinances and regulations not achieving desired development
- Boards and Commissions working individually; Departments not knowing what others are doing
- Market driven development vs. tax base
- Changes in Board of Selectmen or Planning Board members
- Aging population
- Transportation/sprawl
- Lack of infrastructure for commercial/ industrial development

INTERNAL GOALS

INTERNAL GOALS

- ✘ **Goal 1: The filing system will continue to be improved.**
 - Strategy 1: Create a list of the important contents of a municipal land use file and the maintenance thereof.
 - Strategy 2: The existing physical files will be reorganized/refiled.
 - Strategy 3: Existing digitized files will be reviewed for filing/indexing protocols.
 - Strategy 4: A new plan for digitizing files will be created and reviewed for budgetary impacts and organizational utility.

INTERNAL GOALS

✘ **Goal 2: Office space will be re-evaluated.**

Strategy 1: Find alternative locations for a couple of staff members to provide enough space for working, storing files and spreading out plans for review.

INTERNAL GOALS

- ✘ **Goal 3: Create SOPs and FAQs for the Office of Community Development.**
 - Strategy 1: Brainstorm the most frequently asked questions that come to the Office on a regular basis.
 - Strategy 2: Assign questions to most appropriate staff person who will draft an answer to be reviewed by all staff.
 - Strategy 3: Post the FAQs and responses to the Office website page.
 - Strategy 4: Over the course of the next six months, each staff person to create detailed SOPs on job duties.
 - Strategy 5: Draft SOPs to be reviewed and tested by staff person unfamiliar with the process to make sure they are easy to follow.
 - Strategy 6: Create a binder for final SOPs to be stored; create a schedule for review and update as necessary.

EXTERNAL GOALS

EXTERNAL GOALS

- ✦ **Goal 1: Provide transparent information to the public.**
 - Strategy 1: Continue to upload documents and information to the website for public access re: land use board meetings.
 - Strategy 2: Evaluate ease of use and streamline upload procedures.
 - Strategy 3: Continue to remove outdated materials.

EXTERNAL GOALS

✘ **Goal 2: Review the Office of Community Development's fee schedule, application forms and checklists.**

Strategy 1: Assemble a list of all the Office's fees for applications and permits.

Strategy 2: Calculate fixed costs for any of the aspects of filing and processing applications and permits.

Strategy 3: Determine if there are additional aspects of the process that should be assessed a fee.

Strategy 4: Consider if the fees proposed are "reasonable".

Strategy 5: Have Planning Board and Board of Selectmen review and adopt as necessary.

Strategy 6: Review all application forms and checklists against the regulations to ensure they are accurate. Update as needed and have relevant Board/Commission approve the changes.

EXTERNAL GOALS

- ✘ **Goal 3: Create a map that shows pending applications before the Town's land use boards with links to supporting documentation.**
 - Strategy 1: Complete consultation with NRPC regarding feasibility of such a map and any costs involved in its creation and maintenance/upkeep.
 - Strategy 2: Receive appropriate training for staff to be able to upload data and maintain the map as well as remove details once an application is approved/denied/withdrawn.
 - Strategy 3: Evaluate results and make changes as needed.

EXTERNAL GOALS

✘ **Goal 4: Stormwater Management and MS4**

Strategy 1: Prepare a timeline for the life of the permit with all the annual reporting requirements.

Strategy 2: Create a tracking system for construction projects within the MS4 to meet the requirements of the MS4 permit.

Strategy 3: Ensure that the Town's ordinances and regulations require stormwater management techniques that meet the requirements of the MS4 permit.

EXTERNAL GOALS

✘ **Goal 5: Land Use Board Procedures and Regulations**

Strategy 1: Review each Board/Commission's Rules of Procedure and Regulations with the appropriate Board/Commission for compliance with statute and to ensure they are being followed.

Strategy 2: Propose amendments as needed per review above.

EXTERNAL GOALS

× **Goal 6: Master Plan Initiatives**

Strategy 1: Following the Master Plan Update, work on the recommendations and implementation strategies suggested for short- and long-term goals and objectives.

BUDGET IMPACT

BUDGET IMPACT

- Internal goals designed to maintain the Office of Community Development on solid footing to move confidently into future planning efforts with no concerns about underlying practices and procedures.
- External goals designed to assist the Office in its pursuit of the mission and vision of the department.
- Goals are achievable inhouse with minimal to no budgetary impacts.

DISCUSSION
