



Overview

This chapter of the Plan of Conservation and Development summarizes conditions and trends affecting Portland at the time the Plan was being prepared.

Historical Context

The landscape of Portland was formed over millions of years. In addition to the landform evident today, this area contains a number of special areas such as the “brownstone” rock formation, other rock quarries, extensive sand and gravel deposits, and other resources.

Human settlement has existed for only about 10,000 years or so. Native Americans of the Wangunk tribe are known to have inhabited this area on the east side of the Connecticut River with the Mattabassett tribe located on the west side of the Connecticut River.

European “discovery” of this area began in 1614 when Dutch explorer Adriaen Block sailed into Long Island Sound and up the long tidal river as far as present day Hartford. Trade between Europeans and Native Americans began soon thereafter. European settlement of New England began in 1620 at Plymouth Rock and in 1634 along the Connecticut River near present day Hartford. European settlement began in Middletown around 1650 and came to the east side of the river around 1690.

It is believed that the first settlers came to this area to exploit the brownstone resources. Other people came to this side of the river to set up shipbuilding operations and farmsteads.

Due to the challenge of crossing the river for weekly religious services, a separate parish was formed in East Middletown in 1714. This area became a separate municipality known as Chatham in 1767. Then, in 1841, Chatham split into two towns – Portland and East Hampton.

In addition to prosperous farms due to the fertile soils, Portland had a strong economy due to the quarry operations and shipbuilding enterprises and population grew. Over time, some of these locational advantages were lost due to construction changes (concrete) and technological advances (shipbuilding) and also due to regular flooding along the Connecticut River.

Following World War II, the proliferation of the automobile and a desire for suburban living brought changes to Portland. People could live in Portland and commute to jobs in Middletown, Hartford, and other areas. Population grew and, today, Portland is primarily a residential community with fewer jobs in the community (2,281 jobs) than residents who are in the work force (5,212 workers).

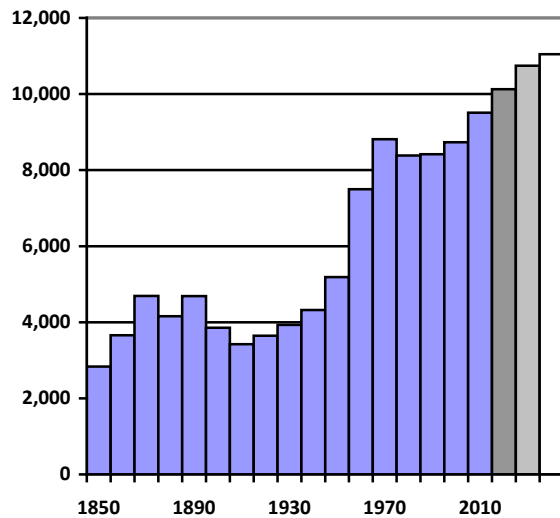
“If we could first know where we are and whither we are tending, we could better judge what to do and how to do it.”

Abraham Lincoln

Demographics

According to the Census, Portland had a population of 9,508 people in the year 2010. The increase of 776 people from the 2000 Census reflected a faster rate of growth than Portland had seen in the previous three decades.

Historic And Projected Population (1850 – 2040)



If this rate of growth were to continue, Portland might have a population of over 11,000 residents by the year 2040. It is not clear, however, whether this rate of growth will continue. The Connecticut State Data Center projects continued growth in the future but at a slower rate, mostly due to an aging population (households tend to get smaller as they age).

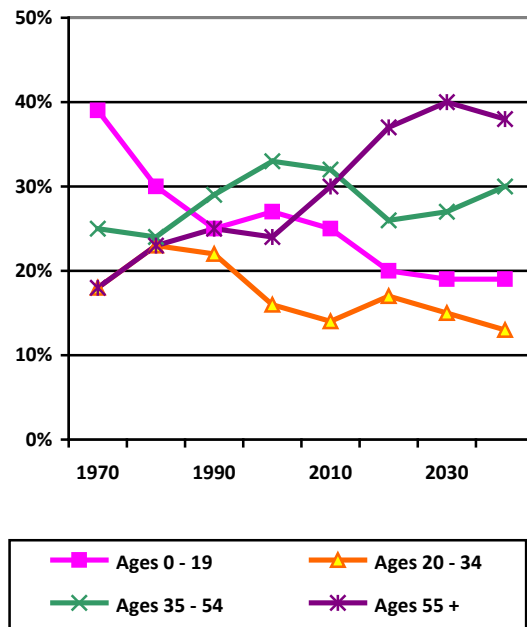
Although Portland had experienced net out-migration in prior decades, it experienced significant in-migration between 2000 and 2010.

Decade	Total Change	Natural Change	Net Migration
1970s	(429)	251	(680)
1980s	35	101	(66)
1990s	314	333	(19)
2000s	776	202	574
40-Year Total	696	887	(191)

Over the next twenty to thirty years, the major demographic trend in Portland is expected to be an increase in the number of older residents. The main reason for this is the aging of the “baby boomers” (people born between about 1945 and about 1965). In the year 2020, the “baby boomers” will be aged 55 to 75.

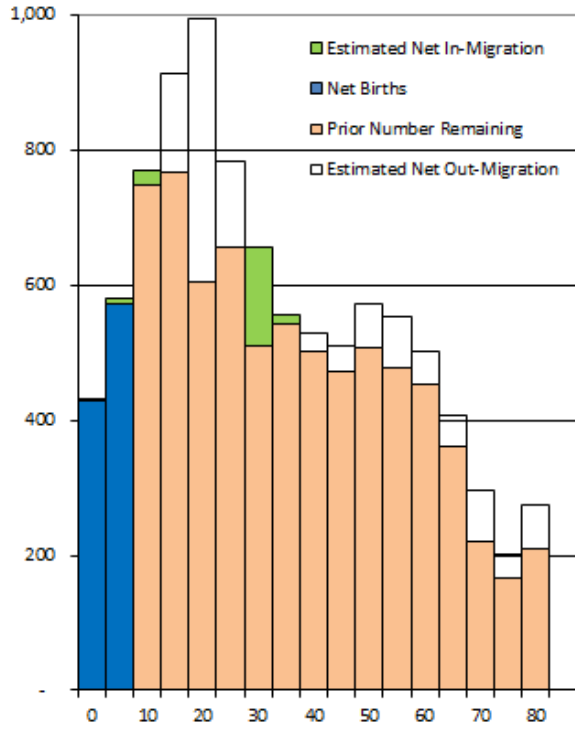
Since different age groups have different needs and desires, the changing age composition of Portland will likely be an important consideration.

Portland, like many communities, will transition from a community where 40% of the population in 1970 was younger than age 20 to a community where 40% of the population in 2030 may be over age 55. Portland might anticipate increased interest in housing options, tax relief and programs for older persons (adult education, passive recreation, social programs, etc.) over the next 20 to 30 years.

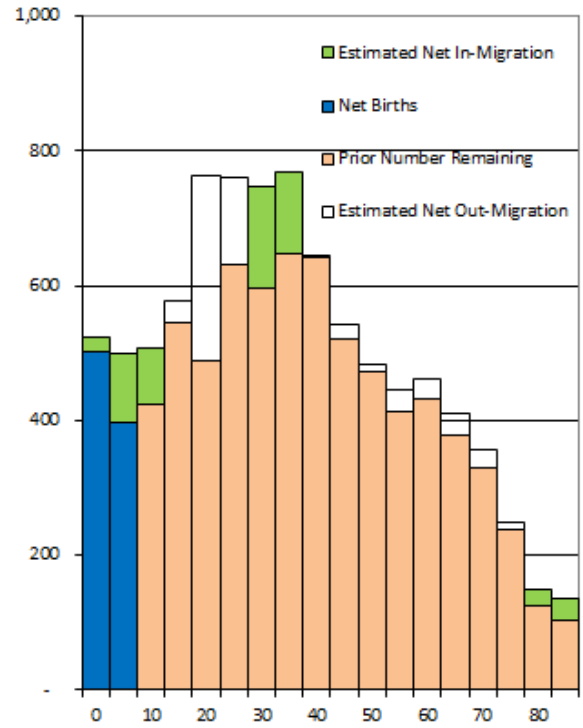


As can be seen from the charts on the facing page, Portland had been attracting younger households aged 30-39 and their children. Between 2000 and 2010, Portland attracted new residents in a range of age groups.

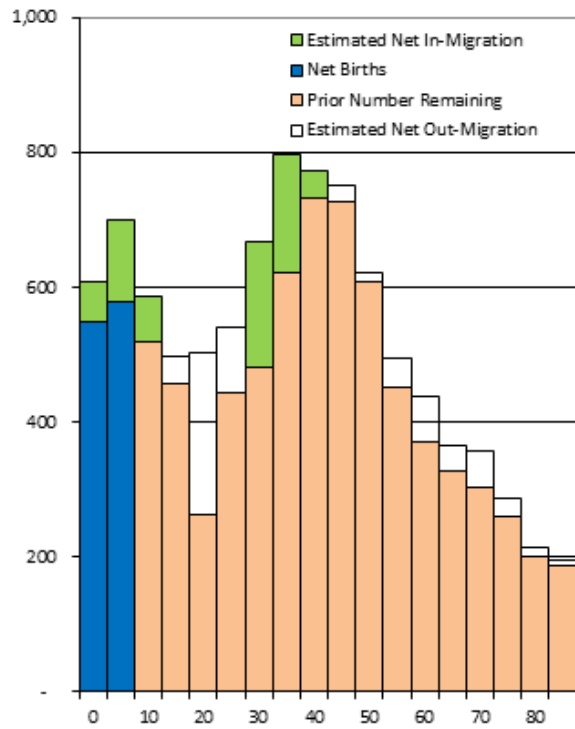
1970-80 Dynamics



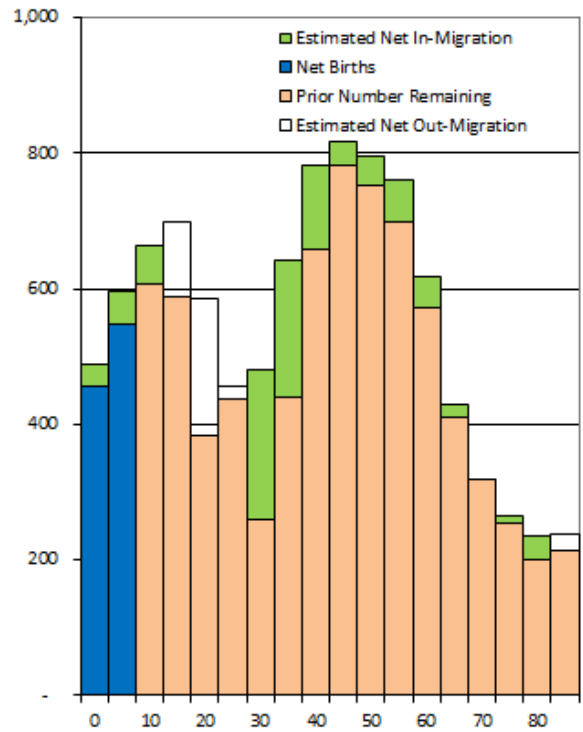
1980-90 Dynamics



1990-00 Dynamics



2000-10 Dynamics



Housing

Even though economic conditions slowed housing production in many communities in the last decade, housing growth continued, and even accelerated, in Portland.

Housing In Portland

Year	Units	Percent Change
1980	2,960	-
1990	3,289	11%
2000	3,528	7%
2010	4,077	16%

Source: 1980-2010 Census

Most housing in Portland is owner-occupied, detached housing. In terms of multi-family housing (which might be of interest to a younger household or an older household), Portland has fewer such units than some of the surrounding communities.

	Percent Multi-Family	Percent Affordable Units
Middletown	48%	22%
Cromwell	29%	7%
Glastonbury	17%	5%
Portland	17%	8%
East Hampton	12%	4%

Source: Partnership For Strong Communities (ACS)

Since less than 10 percent of the housing in Portland is governmentally assisted or deed-restricted to be affordable to persons earning up to 80 percent of the area median income, Portland is subject to the “affordable housing appeals process” (CGS Section 8-30g) whereby an affordable housing development may be proposed in almost any location, regardless of current zoning.

Economy

Due to structural changes in the economy and other factors, the number of jobs in Portland has contracted in the past several decades although it has increased from 2010 levels to 2,281 jobs in 2013 according to the Connecticut Economic Resource Center (CERC).

Jobs In Portland

Year	Employment	Percent Change
1970	2,287	-
1980	2,630	15%
1990	3,300	25%
2000	3,260	(1%)
2010	2,066	(37%)

Source: CT Labor Dept.

The median household income in Portland falls in between those of surrounding towns.

Median Household Income

Glastonbury	\$106,872
East Hampton	\$93,083
Portland	\$92,344
Cromwell	\$80,134
Middletown	\$60,542

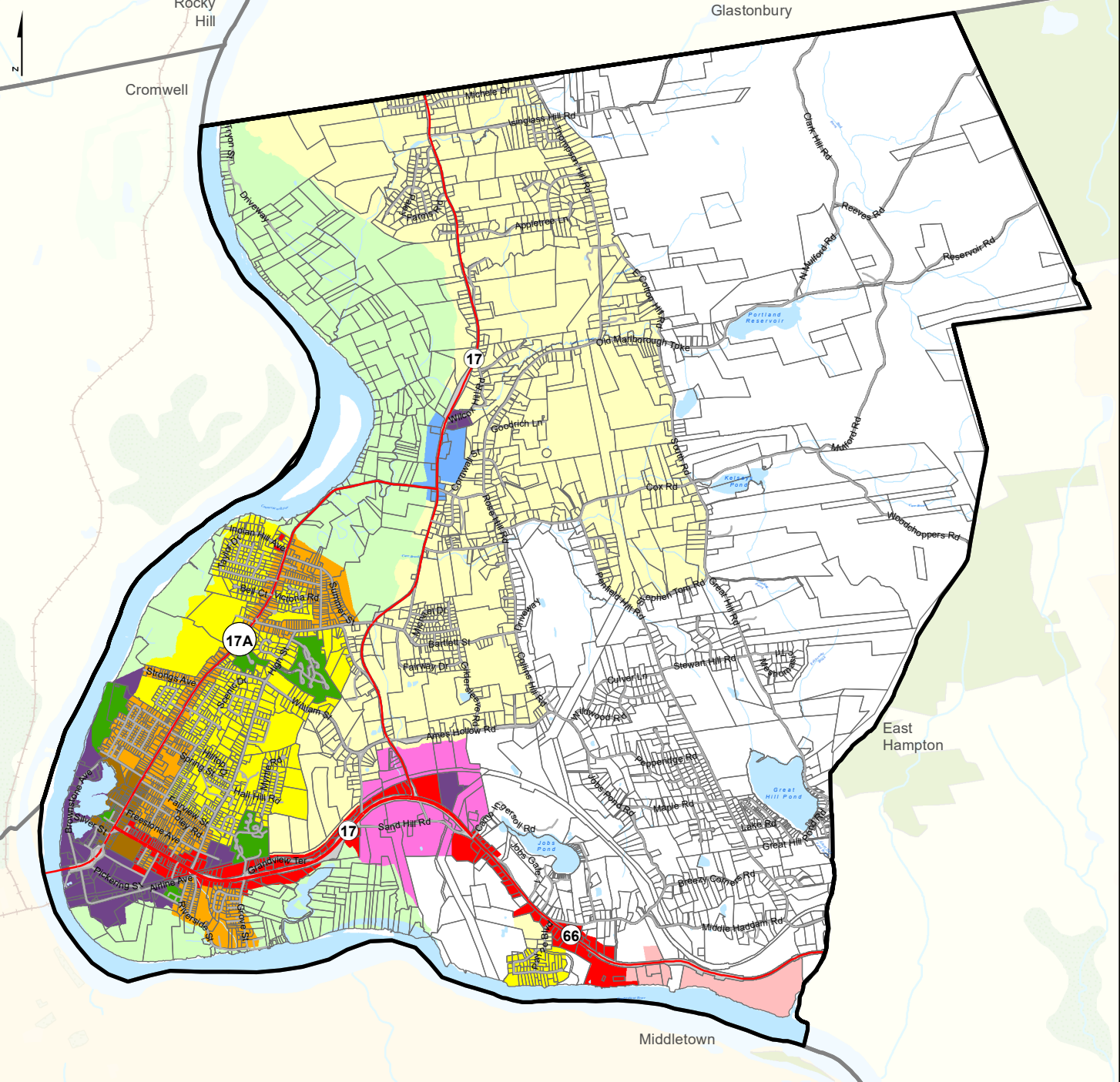
Source: American Community Survey, 2008-12

Zoning in Portland

As can be seen from the map on the facing page, most of Portland is zoned for residential development. Business areas are generally located in and near the Town Center and along Route 66.

Zoning Map

Portland, CT



Legend

RR Rural Residential 1 acre	B-1 Designed Business
R-25 Residential 25,000 sq. ft.	B-2 General Business
R-15 Residential 15,000 sq. ft.	B-3 Central Business District
R-10 Residential 10,000 sq. ft.	I Industrial
RMD Residential, Multi-Family	IP Planned Industrial
	RI Restricted Industrial
	FP Floodplain

3,250 Feet

Community Concerns

In spring 2015, a community meeting was held to learn about issues important to residents.

One of the exercises at the meeting asked people to think about things in Portland which made them “proud” of their community and “sorry” about their community and then:

- Write them on a card provided, and
- Place green dots (“prouds”) and red dots (“sorrys”) on separate maps of Portland to identify the location.

Some of the items identified as “prouds” included the following:

- Water / waterfront (river, ponds)
- Town Center
- Community facilities (recreation, schools, library)

Some of the items identified as “sorrys” included the following:

- Riverfront appearance / uses
- Elmcrest site
- Industrial/commercial area

The resulting maps are presented below.

“Prouds” Map



“Sorrys” Map



Another exercise asked people to allocate “planning points” among boxes representing topics normally considered as part of a POCD:

Conservation Issues	495 Points
Open Space	175
Historic Resources	135
Natural Resources	100
Community Character	85

Development Issues	315 Points
Business Development	180
Structure / Town Center	100
Residential Development	25
Housing Diversity	10

Infrastructure Issues	495 Points
Community Facilities	180
Walking / Biking / Bus / Train	120
Traffic and Circulation	115
Water/ Sewer / Utilities	80

The remainder of the meeting involved an open discussion of the topics that received the most planning points. Some of the points raised during that discussion are summarized on the following page.

Business Development

- We need more business development
 - Will lower property taxes
 - Will keep shopping local / bring new people
- Some areas not well suited for business development
- Some areas do not have infrastructure
- We need to create a healthy business environment / create opportunities, take advantage
- Must be done thoughtfully / need to keep character
- Some development has detracted from our character (large, metal buildings/big signs)
 - Need design standards town-wide
 - Need tougher standards

Community Facilities / Services

- Community facilities / services enhance the quality of life in Portland
- Some improvements may be warranted
 - Schools- some in need of repair, permanent “portable” classrooms
 - Some recreation facilities are not owned by the town (Ingersoll, Tomasso)
 - Some recreation fields are intensively used and this affects the quality
- Community facilities should be a cornerstone of the community / real community gathering places
 - Town Green / Band shell
 - Recreational complex on Route 17
 - Community center / Playgrounds

Open Space

- Open space enhances our character and quality of life
- We should continue to preserve forest, farmland, riverfront areas, habitat, waterfront
- Can we be more aggressive?
- Public access is key
- We need an inventory / we need a vision

Historic Resources

- Portland has an incredible historic fabric
- We need to protect this / show it off
 - Quarries are a key part of our history
 - Main Street residential is beautiful
 - Can't be too strict on historic preservation. Need to allow things to happen

Walking / Biking / Bus / Transportation

- More people are walking and cycling
- We need to support this
 - Safe sidewalks- good materials/well maintained
 - Bicycle paths
 - Crosswalks/safe routes are key
- Air Line trail- this could be key
- Have a “complete streets” citizen group
- Are working on recommendations
- Aging population- will need transit, dial-a-ride
- We need to accommodate traffic flow but slow them down to capture business potential

Community Structure / Town Center

- We are working to create and enhance the Town Center as an area with a “sense of place”
- We do not yet have a cohesive Town Center
- Should the village district, be enlarged?
- How do we make this stronger?
- Is higher density residential possible in the Town Center?
- Elmcrest is a key site/key location

Open Discussion

- How do we fund all this?
- Special services district in the Town Center?
- How can we upgrade the technological capability in Portland for residents and businesses?
- Resiliency will be important in the future
- Can we incentivize property maintenance / improvement?
 - i.e. waive permit fees, higher assessment, don't penalize people for improving properties
- Water/sewer needs to be looked at
 - Financial condition is not great
 - How can we improve this?
- Underground utilities
- Maintaining / enhancing community spirit is key

PZC Concerns / Priorities

At the time this POCD was being prepared, the Planning and Zoning Commission completed an exercise where they identified important issues and concerns and then characterized them as to which were:

- More important to address than other identified issues, and
- More urgent to address than other identified issues.

The results of this exercise are presented in the table below.

The issues identified as more important and more urgent are discussed in the next section of the POCD – ***Focusing On Priority Issues***.

The other identified issues are addressed in the remaining sections of the POCD organized around:

- ***Protecting Important Resources*** – things Portland would like to preserve or protect in the future (conservation strategies),
- ***Guiding Appropriate Development*** – how Portland would like to guide growth or change in the future (development strategies), and
- ***Addressing Infrastructure Needs*** – services or facilities Portland wants or needs in the future (infrastructure strategies).

		Urgency	
		More Urgent	Less Urgent
Importance	More Important	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town Center development • Elmcrest redevelopment • Riverfront / Quarries / Brownstone Ave. • Industrial zones (development / infrastructure) • Air Line Trail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rte. 66 – Grove to Gospel (development / infrastructure) • Preservation of historic architecture • St. Clements expansion • Green space and public access
	Less Important	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rte. 66 - Main to Grove (development) • “Complete Streets” • Agriculture / farm preservation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism • Sustainability (energy, conservation, etc.) • Main St./Glastonbury Tpke (Four Corners Intersection) • Rte. 66 – Gospel to East Hampton (development / infrastructure) • Technology infrastructure