

Memo:

Context Community Selection

Introduction

The Nahant Housing Production Plan (HPP) will include a comprehensive assessment of Nahant's housing needs. When evaluating quantitative data describing the town's demographics, housing stock, and housing affordability, the housing needs assessment will utilize data from "context communities" to compare with findings in Nahant. These communities will be useful when evaluating the significance of data findings and trends observed in Nahant. This memo describes the methodology used to select context communities.

Method

To select context communities, MAPC brings takes an approach of blending quantitative and qualitative data to best understand the local community and make accurate comparisons. Building from existing research and studies are also an important part of this process, which allows this HPP to be a continuation of prior planning efforts undertaken by Nahant.

The quantitative data gathered for the housing needs assessment is a combination of data provided by the United States Census Bureau, various state, and local public data sources, as well as private data sources MAPC acquires through purchase. These sources follow industry standards by urban planners and data scientists who work in the realms of planning, housing, or community development.

To put this data into perspective, it is combined with a qualitative data. Utilizing existing studies, including MAPC's in-house assessments, qualitative data indicators are applied to Nahant to help the planning team make comparisons on observations of the built environment. All this information is vetted through conversations with the project partner, allowing for additional context.

To execute this method, MAPC staff takes the following steps:

1. Generate a list of potential context communities using qualitative assessment (MAPC community types, communities cited in previous studies, etc.) as well as a submarket analysis to produce a list of potential communities.
2. Pull key indicators on communities identified in step one (1). These indicators are listed on Page 6.
3. For each indicator, qualitatively establish a range of values that count as similar to Nahant's value for that indicator.

4. Rate whether a community is similar or dissimilar to Nahant for each indicator, based on whether the value falls within the range established in step three (3).
5. For each community, sum the number of indicators for which it is similar to Nahant to create a “similarity score.”
6. Choose which communities will be context communities, based on their similarity score and other relevant qualitative and political factors.

Utilizing this method allows MAPC to conduct a comprehensive approach to community comparison and goes beyond comparison studies that may use a single or few quantitative indicators (such as proximity to Nahant or having a similar population), viewing the town through a limited lens. While the HPP is a focus on the town’s housing goals, a greater understanding of the town, the residents, and how the town fits into the fabric of Greater Boston’s communities are essential to assess the town’s housing need. In doing so, MAPC will work with the project partners to provide recommendations that will aid the town in achieving their housing goals and have expectations in-line with the day-to-day realities of the people who live in Nahant.

Potential Context Communities

The town's master plan from 1986, "Planning for Nahant: 1986 and Beyond" identified six (6) peer communities, largely based on geographic proximity. Those communities are:

- Lynn
- Marblehead
- Revere
- Salem
- Saugus
- Swampscott

Using a qualitative assessment of other communities based on MAPC community subtype, MAPC identified the following communities that match the community subtype "Maturing suburb" communities.

- | | | |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------|
| • Acton | • Marshfield | • Sudbury |
| • Ashland | • Maynard | • Swampscott |
| • Bedford | • Medfield | • Wakefield |
| • Braintree | • Milton | • Wellesley |
| • Burlington | • Natick | • Weston |
| • Canton | • Needham | • Westwood |
| • Concord | • North Reading | • Weymouth |
| • Danvers | • Randolph | • Wilmington |
| • Dedham | • Reading | • Winchester |
| • Holbrook | • Saugus | |
| • Hingham | • Scituate | |
| • Hull | • Sharon | |
| • Lexington | • Southborough | |
| • Marblehead | • Stoneham | |

MAPC Submarkets Filter

Reflecting the fact that housing contexts are not monolithic within municipal boundaries, MAPC has created an analysis of housing submarkets across greater Boston. “A housing submarket is a collection of neighborhoods—some next to each other, some not—with similar housing stock and housing market characteristics. These characteristics determine who can find, afford, and remain in suitable housing in that neighborhood. The neighborhoods in each submarket share common needs and challenges, regardless of geographic location.”¹ Nahant is entirely composed of submarket 4. Other communities in the MAPC region that are composed solely of submarket 4 include:

1. Holbrook
2. Maynard
3. Wakefield
4. Manchester
5. Rockport

The following communities have other submarkets but are composed primarily of submarket 4:

1. Stoneham
2. Saugus
3. Hull
4. Marblehead
5. Braintree
6. Danvers
7. Ipswich
8. Swampscott
9. Gloucester
10. Randolph

¹ (<https://housing-submarkets.mapc.org/submarkets>)

MAPC Population Size Filter

With a total population of just over 3,300, Nahant is smaller than any other community in the region (2020 Census Redistricting data). MAPC filtered the full list of potential context communities to those with a total population under 23,000, to yield a shorter list of communities with total populations sizes closer to Nahant.

Additionally, the community of Essex was added based on qualitative judgement from MAPC that the two coastal communities contain quantitative similarities even though it is not a match for the community subtype or part of the same housing submarket.

These 20 communities are included in the remainder of this analysis.

1. Ashland
2. Bedford
3. Concord
4. Essex
5. Holbrook
6. Hull
7. Ipswich
8. Marblehead
9. Maynard
10. Medfield
11. North Reading
12. Rockport
13. Scituate
14. Sharon
15. Southborough
16. Sudbury
17. Swampscott
18. Weston
19. Westwood
20. Winchester

Indicators and Similarity Scores

Key Indicators to Compare to Nahant

1. Total Population (Census Bureau Redistricting Data, 2020)
2. Percent Increase in Population, 2010–2020 (US Census, 2010; Census Bureau Redistricting Data, 2020)
3. Population Density per square mile (US Census 2020; MAPC)
4. Percent of population that is non-Latinx White (Census Bureau Redistricting Data, 2020)
5. Percent change in non-Latinx White population, 2010 - 2020 (Census Bureau Redistricting Data, 2010 and 2020)
6. Average household size (ACS, 2020 5-year estimates)
7. Children (under age 18) and seniors (age 65 and older) as a percent of total population (ACS, 2020 5-year estimates)
8. Percent of population with a disability (ACS, 2020 5-year estimates)
9. Percent of homes that are owner-occupied (ACS, 2020 5-year estimates)
10. Median household income (ACS, 2020 5-year estimates)
11. Percent of households low-income (CHAS data, 2015–2019)
12. Percent of low-income households that are housing cost-burdened (CHAS data, 2015–2019)
13. Change in median single-family home sale price, 2016 - 2021 (Warren Group, 2016 and 2021)
14. Change in median rent, 2016 – 2020 (ACS 5-year estimates 2016, 2020)
15. Percent of housing stock built before 1940 (ACS, 2020 5-year estimates)
16. Percent of housing stock that are detached single family buildings (ACS, 2020 5-year estimates)
17. Percent of housing on the state Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) (DHCD, 2020)
18. Is the city or town a coastal community (MAPC)
19. Multifamily Zoning for MBTA Communities Community Classification, Adjacent Community or Small Town (DHCD, 2022)

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Table 1: Indicators for all potential context communities

Community	Population	Pop Change 10-20	Pop Density	% Non-Hispanic White	NHW % Change 20 - 020	Avg Household Size	Child Population	Senior Population	Disabled pop	Homeownership Rate	Median Household Income	Low-income Population	% of Low-Income that are housing cost burdened	Housing Price Change 16-21	Rent Price Change 16-20	Homes Built Pre-1940	Detached Single Family	Homes on the SHI	Coastal Community*	MBTA Adjacent*
Ashland	18,832	12%	1,463	68%	-13%	2.5	20%	18%	8%	79%	\$118k	28%	61%	38%	-4%	7%	55%	6.3%	0.0	0
Bedford	14,383	7%	1,039	74%	-10%	2.6	24%	17%	9%	72%	\$134k	22%	57%	15%	9%	11 %	64%	18.5%	0.0	1
Concord	18,491	4%	716	82%	-5%	2.7	24 %	21%	9%	74%	\$160k	22%	73%	44%	11%	19%	67%	10.5%	0.0	0
Essex	3,675	5.%	258	92%	-4.0%	2.8	30%	15%	12%	82%	\$109k	29%	66%	45%	9%	32%	70%	2.7%	1.5	1
Holbrook	11,405	5%	1,549	66%	-15%	2.5	19%	18%	14%	79%	\$80k	45%	52%	57%	110%	23%	75%	10.2%	0.0	0
Hull	10,072	6%	3,309	92%	-3%	2.3	14%	21%	11%	77%	\$105k	37%	69%	37%	-21%	45%	69%	1.7%	1.5	1
Ipswich	13,785	-2%	417	91%	-4%	2.5	20%	21%	8 %	74%	\$104k	39%	59%	50%	47%	27%	61%	9.2%	1.5	0
Marblehead	20,441	4%	4,688	91%	-4%	2.5	23%	21%	7%	79%	\$131k	31%	66%	39%	-7%	48%	73%	3.9%	1.5	1
Maynard	10,746	6%	2,002	83%	-7%	2.5	23%	13%	12%	78%	\$108k	31%	55%	27%	41%	26%	58%	9.5%	0.0	1
Medfield	12,799	3%	873	87%	-6%	3.0	30%	13%	5%	87%	\$174k	20%	72%	27%	-5%	10%	83%	9.6%	0.0	1
Nahant	3,334	-2%	2,657	91%	-5%	2.0	13%	28%	10%	81%	\$94k	41%	70%	55%	19%	55%	72%	3.0%	1.5	1
North Reading	15,554	4%	1,153	89%	-5%	2.7	22%	13%	10%	85%	\$123k	19%	57%	44%	23%	7%	77%	9.6%	0.0	1
Rockport	6,992	1%	996	93%	-3%	2.1	14%	36%	14%	68%	\$87k	40%	64%	58%	60%	48%	68%	3.9%	1.5	0
Scituate	19,063	5%	1,101	93%	-2%	2.4	18%	26%	8%	89%	\$122k	29%	66%	49%	52%	26%	87%	5.0%	1.5	0
Sharon	18,575	5%	762	67%	-14%	2.9	26%	18%	8%	89%	\$144k	19%	72%	31%	-9%	16%	84%	10.6%	0.0	0
Southborough	10,450	7%	673	75%	-11%	2.8	27%	13%	6%	89%	\$157k	17%	72%	55%	-16%	14%	84%	8.6%	0.0	0
Sudbury	18,934	7%	765	81%	-8%	3.0	30%	15%	6%	91%	\$195k	16%	64%	80%	24%	6%	89%	11.3%	0.0	1
Swampscott	15,111	9%	4,873	86%	-7%	2.5	20%	19%	11%	74%	\$103k	27%	77%	46%	3%	48%	54%	3.7%	1.5	0
Weston	11,851	5%	684	74%	-9%	3.0	26%	21%	6%	86%	\$206k	26%	75%	56%	162%	25%	85%	8.4%	0.0	0
Westwood	16,266	10%	1,455	83%	-9%	3.0	25%	18%	9%	86%	\$160k	20%	69%	80%	37%	18%	82%	11.1%	0.0	0
Winchester	22,970	7%	3,619	75%	-11%	2.8	28%	18%	7%	84%	\$173k	20%	69%	34%	13%	38%	72%	5.5%	0.0	0

* Binary indicators assigned a numerical value

MAPC then determined a range of values for each indicator that would be considered similar to Nahant. This determination was qualitative based on the indicator used. (See Table 2) For most indicators, a community was given the score 1 if that indicator's value fell within the range determined to be like Nahant.

Table 2: Similarity range for all indicators

	Population	Pop Change 10-20	Pop Density	% Non-Hispanic White	NHW % Change 20 - 020	Avg Household Size	Child Population	Senior Population	Disabled pop	Homeownership Rate	Median Household Income	Low-income Population	% of Low-Income that are housing cost burdened	Housing Price Change 16-21	Rent Price Change 16-20	Homes Built Pre-1940	Detached Single Family	Homes on the SHI
Nahant	3,334	-2%	2,657	91%	-5%	2.0	13%	28%	10%	81%	\$94k	41%	70%	55%	19%	55%	72%	3.0%
Min Values	644	-4.2%	1,856.7	89.5%	-6.8%	1.83	9.9%	25.2%	8.6%	77.8%	\$76,789	35.9%	65.6%	44.5%	-6.3%	46.7%	66.7%	1.4%
Max Vales	8,714	1.5%	4,259.1	95.3%	-2.2%	2.55	19.6%	34.4%	13.2%	83.5%	\$111,697	45.6%	73.6%	66.0%	44.1%	63.1%	78.0%	4.6%

Two indicators were scored using binary comparisons, essentially saying “this community is” or “this community is not”. The first is “Coastal Community”, which weights a score of 1.5 for any municipality located along the Atlantic coast. The other is if the municipality was classified by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development to be an “adjacent community” or “adjacent small town” for the purposes of “Multifamily Zoning for MBTA Communities” requirements. These communities are not served by any T or Commuter Rail lines. As no similarity range can be defined for these values, their value is added to the similarity score.

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Table 3: Similarity to Nahant

(0 = does not fall in similarity range, 1 or 1.5 = falls in similarity range)

Community	Population	Pop Change 10-20	Pop Density	% Non-Hispanic White	NHW % Change 20 - 020	Avg Household Size	Child Population	Senior Population	Disabled pop	Homeownership Rate	Median Household Income	Low-income Population	% of Low-Income that are housing cost burdened	Housing Price Change 16-21	Rent Price Change 16-20	Homes Built Pre-1940	Detached Single Family	Homes on the SHI	Coastal Community*	MBTA Adjacent*
Ashland	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0.0	0
Bedford	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0.0	1
Concord	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0.0	0
Essex	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1.5	1
Holbrook	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0.0	0
Hull	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1.5	1
Ipswich	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1.5	0
Marblehead	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1.5	1
Maynard	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0.0	1
Medfield	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0.0	1
Nahant	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1.5	1
North Reading	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0.0	1
Rockport	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1.5	0
Scituate	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1.5	0
Sharon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	0
Southborough	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0.0	0
Sudbury	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0.0	1
Swampscott	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1.5	0
Weston	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0.0	0
Westwood	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0.0	0
Winchester	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0.0	0

The values in Table 3 were then summed to arrive at a “similarity score” relative to Nahant. The higher the similarity score, the more similar that community is to Nahant based on the indicators used. Table 4 is the final similarity scores for the potential context communities.

Table 4: Communities by similarity score

Community	Similarity Score
Essex	13.5
Hull	13.5
Rockport	13.5
Marblehead	10.5
Ipswich	8.5
Swampscott	8.5
Holbrook	7
Maynard	7
Scituate	6.5
North Reading	5
Concord	4
Medfield	4
Winchester	4
Ashland	3
Bedford	3
Westwood	3
Southborough	2
Sudbury	2
Sharon	1
Weston	1

Choosing Context Communities

MAPC and Town of Nahant staff reviewed the potential context communities, the values for each indicator, and the similarity scores. Based on this information, qualitative assessment of how these context communities would be received, and consideration of how useful each community's comparison to Nahant would be in this planning process, MAPC and Town staff narrowed the list to the following context communities:

- Essex
- Hull
- Rockport
- Marblehead
- Ipswich
- Swampscott

MAPC will conduct the Housing Needs Assessment portion of the HPP using these communities as comparison context communities.