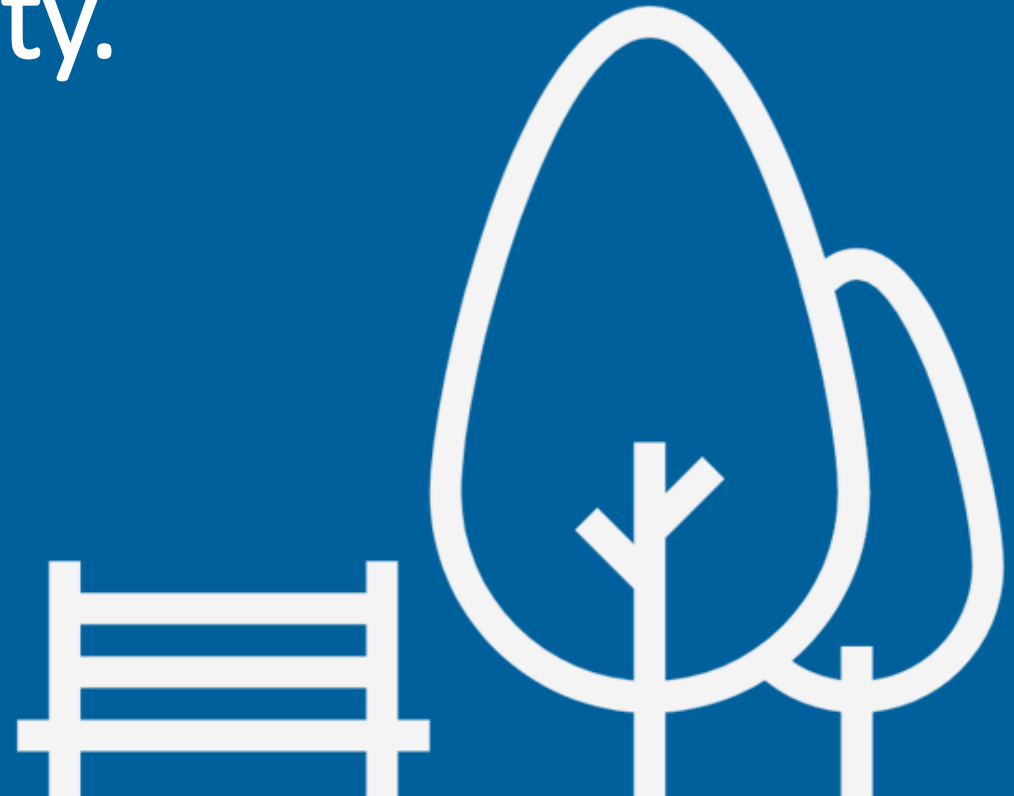


We're all in this together Climate. Health. Community.

Jillian Wilson Martin, Natick
Barry Keppard, MAPC
MEHA 2023





Jillian Wilson Martin

Sustainability Director
Town of Natick



Barry Keppard

Director of Public Health
MAPC

Sustainability on Staff

- Manage sustainability projects
 - Solar and battery storage
 - Green infrastructure
 - Energy efficiency and electrification
 - Climate adaptation planning
 - Waste reduction
- Integrates sustainability/climate planning across departments
- Leads grant applications (\$\$\$\$!)
- 12x annual return on investment

Municipalities with Sustainability Staff, by Population*

- Less than 25,000
- 25,000 – 40,000
- 40,000+

*Sample, not an exhaustive analysis of every MA community



Natick, MA

- Settled in 1651
- 37,000 residents
- 16 square miles
- Mix of corporate and residential zoning
- Tax levy of \$121M in FY22
- Town Administrator and representative Town Meeting



More than a mall!



2004

Natick joins ICLEI Local Governments for Sustainability, which required the Town to establish a baseline greenhouse gas emissions inventory for school and municipal operations and set reduction goals.

2010

Natick is designated as a founding Green Community by the MA Department of Energy Resources. Over the next decade, Natick will receive more than \$1.5 million in grants to support energy efficiency projects from this program.

2014

Natick achieves a 20% reduction in energy use from school and municipal operations. The Town also becomes the first MetroWest community to hire a Sustainability Coordinator.

2017

Natick passes a Solar Bylaw and is designated as a SolSmart Gold community, the highest SolSmart designation offered by the SolSmart Foundation and the U.S. Department of Energy. Natick also begins sourcing more renewable energy to support its electricity aggregation program.

2019

Natick works with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) and the communities of Arlington and Melrose to develop a publicly available, community-wide GHG inventory tool and completes its first community-wide GHG inventory.

2020

The Natick Sustainability Committee partners with community members to draft its first net zero action plan, with the goal of finalizing the plan in 2021.

Natick establishes a staff-led Energy Task Force, focused on implementing energy efficiency measures such as lighting retrofits, in school and municipal buildings.

2007

Natick becomes one of the first MA municipalities to install solar on public buildings, including Natick High School, Kennedy Middle School, Wilson Middle School, Bennett-Hemenway Elementary, Memorial Elementary and the Community Senior Center. In future years, solar is added to the Department of Public Works, the Chase Arena, Lilja Elementary School and West Natick Fire Station.

2012



Natick adds its first electric car to the municipal fleet and begins installing public electric vehicle charging stations.

2015

Natick runs the state's most successful Solarize Mass campaign as measured in terms of capacity. The program adds more than one megawatt of new solar, across 156 properties in the community.

2016

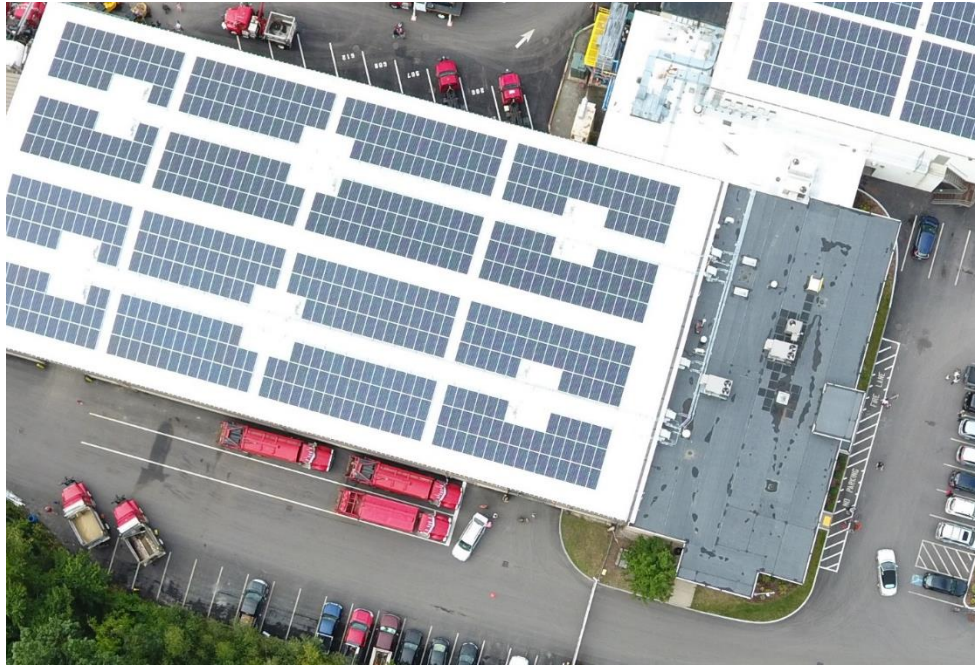


Natick Fall Town Meeting passes a non-binding resolution to adopt a goal to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and receives a grant from the MA Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs to develop a net zero plan. The Town also becomes a founding member of the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program.

2018

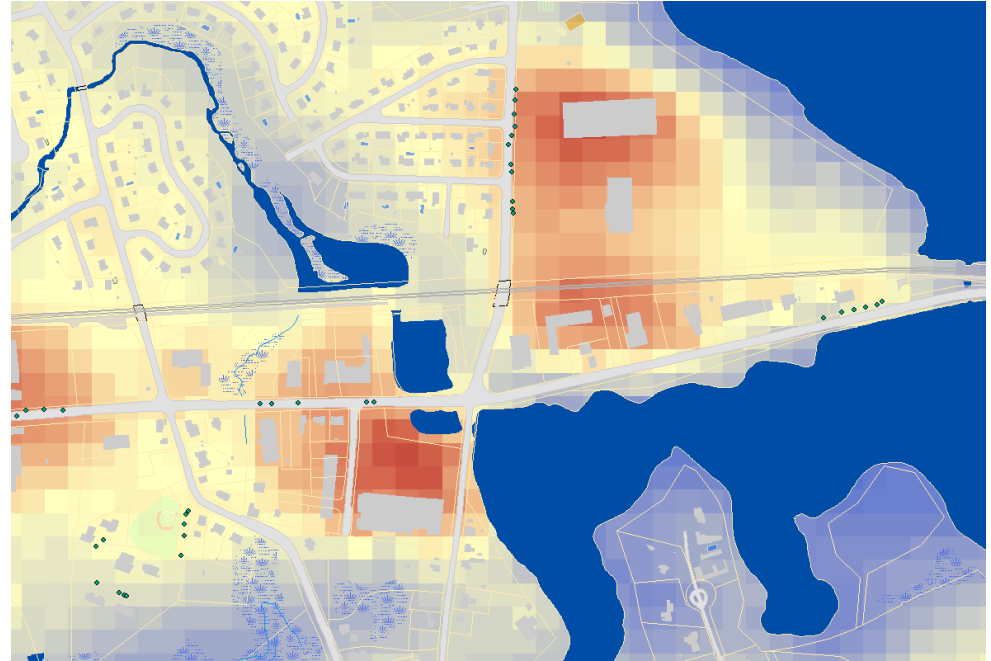


What I Work On



PREVENT

Prevent the worst outcomes from climate change by reducing emissions



PREPARE

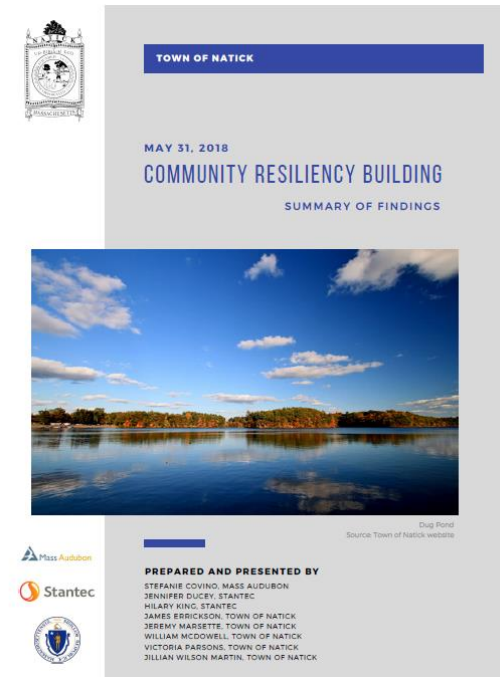
Prepare for the unavoidable impacts of climate change

What I Work On



PREVENT

Prevent the worst outcomes from climate change by reducing emissions



PREPARE

Prepare for the unavoidable impacts of climate change

What I Work On



PREVENT

Prevent the worst outcomes from climate change by reducing emissions



PREPARE

Prepare for the unavoidable impacts of climate change

What I Should Be Working On

The City of Providence's **CLIMATE JUSTICE PLAN**

Creating an equitable, low-carbon, and climate resilient future.



Photo Credit: Sarah Thomas and RECYCLE-A-DIKE

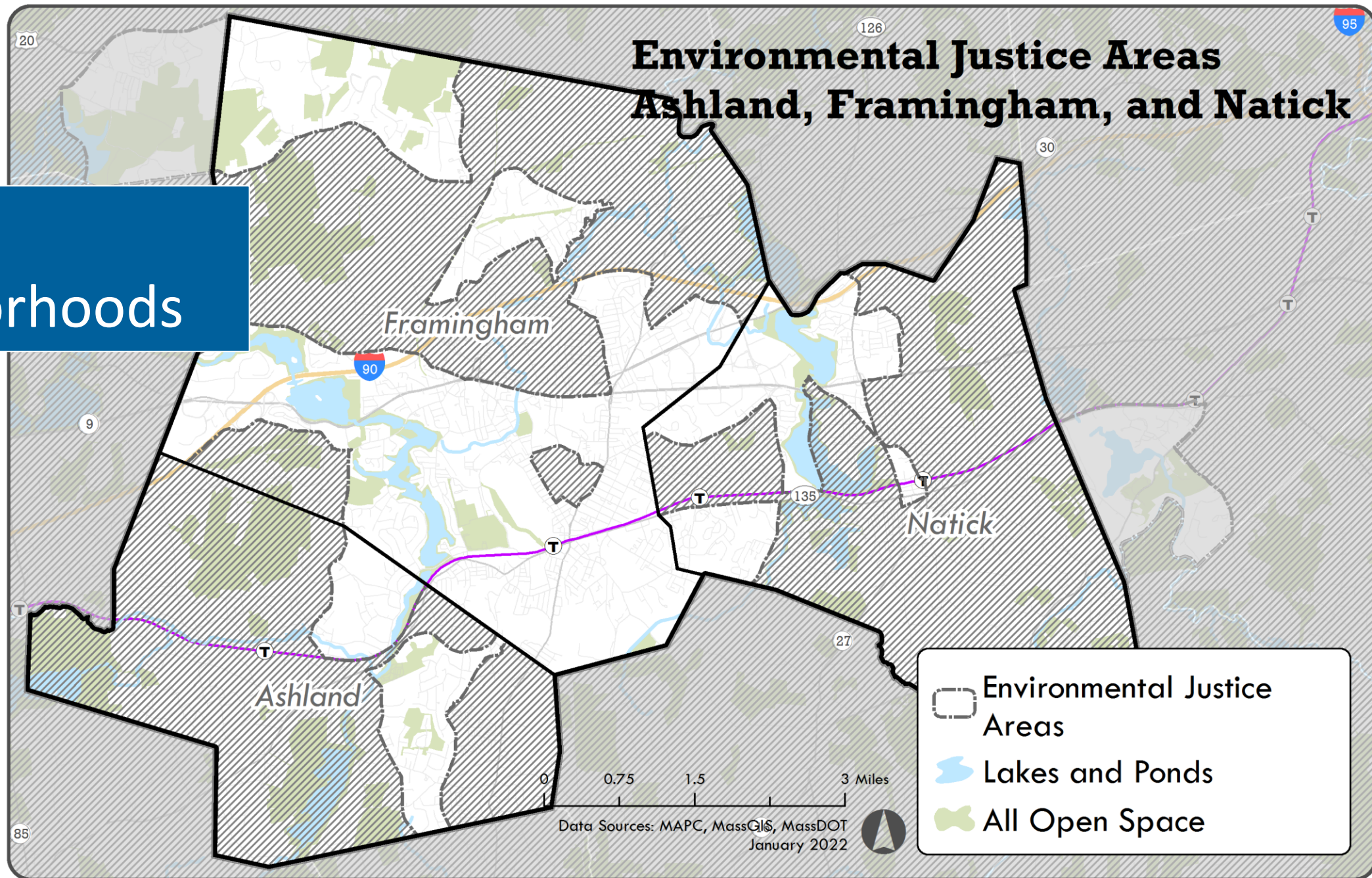


EQUITY IN SUSTAINABILITY

A collaborative initiative by the
City of Providence and its frontline,
communities of color to bring a racial equity
lens to the City's sustainability agenda.



Priority Neighborhoods



Environmental Justice Communities

- Massachusetts defines an **environmental justice population** as a neighborhood where one or more of the following criteria are true:
 - the annual median household income is 65 percent or less of the statewide annual median household income
 - minorities make up 40 percent or more of the population
 - 25 percent or more of households identify as speaking English less than "very well"
 - minorities make up 25 percent or more of the population and the annual median household income of the municipality in which the neighborhood is located does not exceed 150 percent of the statewide annual median household income.
- Created "to help address the **disproportionate share of environmental burdens** experienced by lower-income people and communities of color who, at the same time, often **lack environmental assets in their neighborhoods**"

Climate change
does not impact
everyone equally.

Some people are
more vulnerable to
climate change
than others.



Source: AP Photo/Mary Altaffer

Climate Vulnerability in Metro West

3 - 7%

Workers exposed
to heat outdoors

19 - 28%

People born outside the US

1960

Large share of homes built
before 1960



More health conditions
in EJ neighborhoods
south of I-90

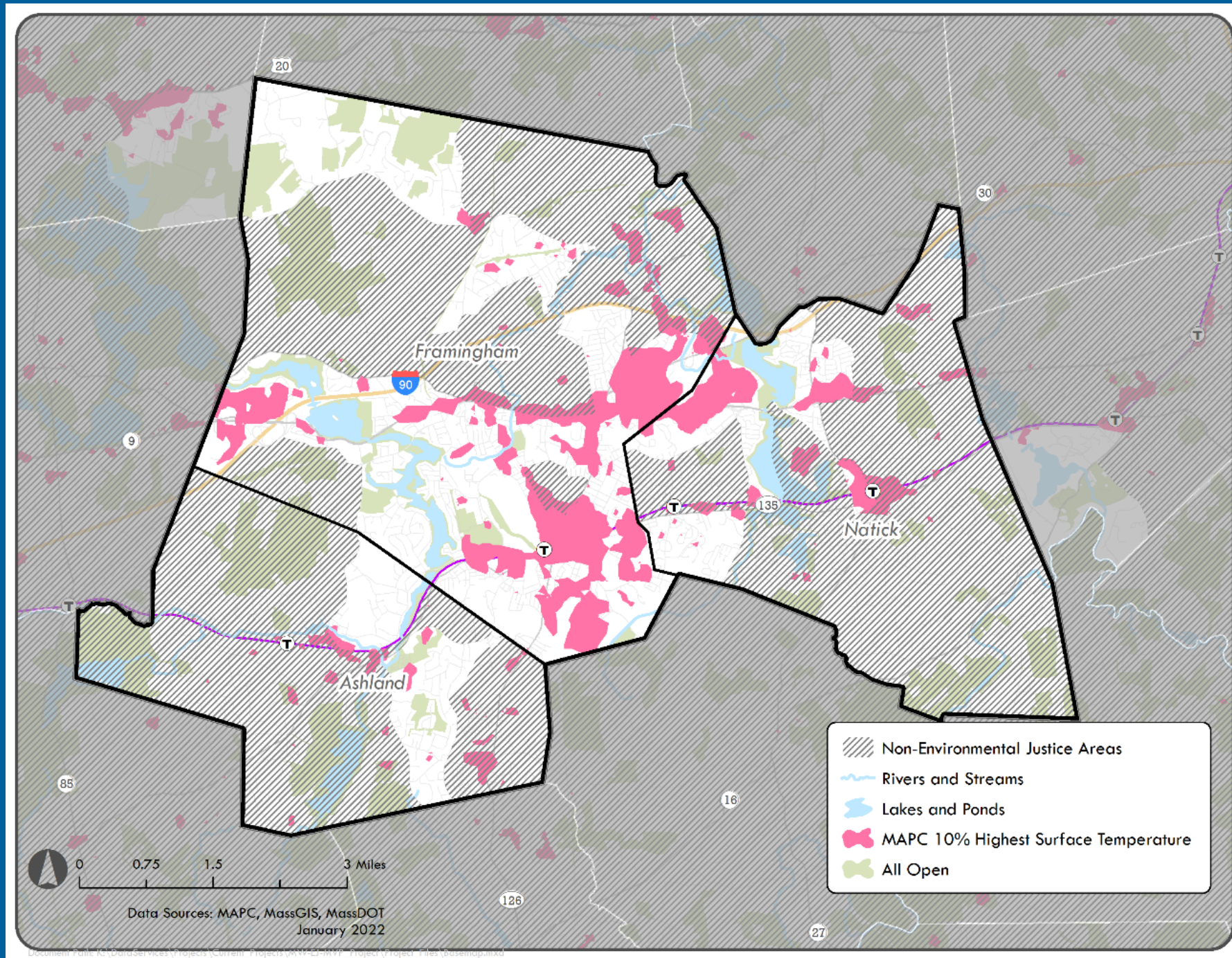


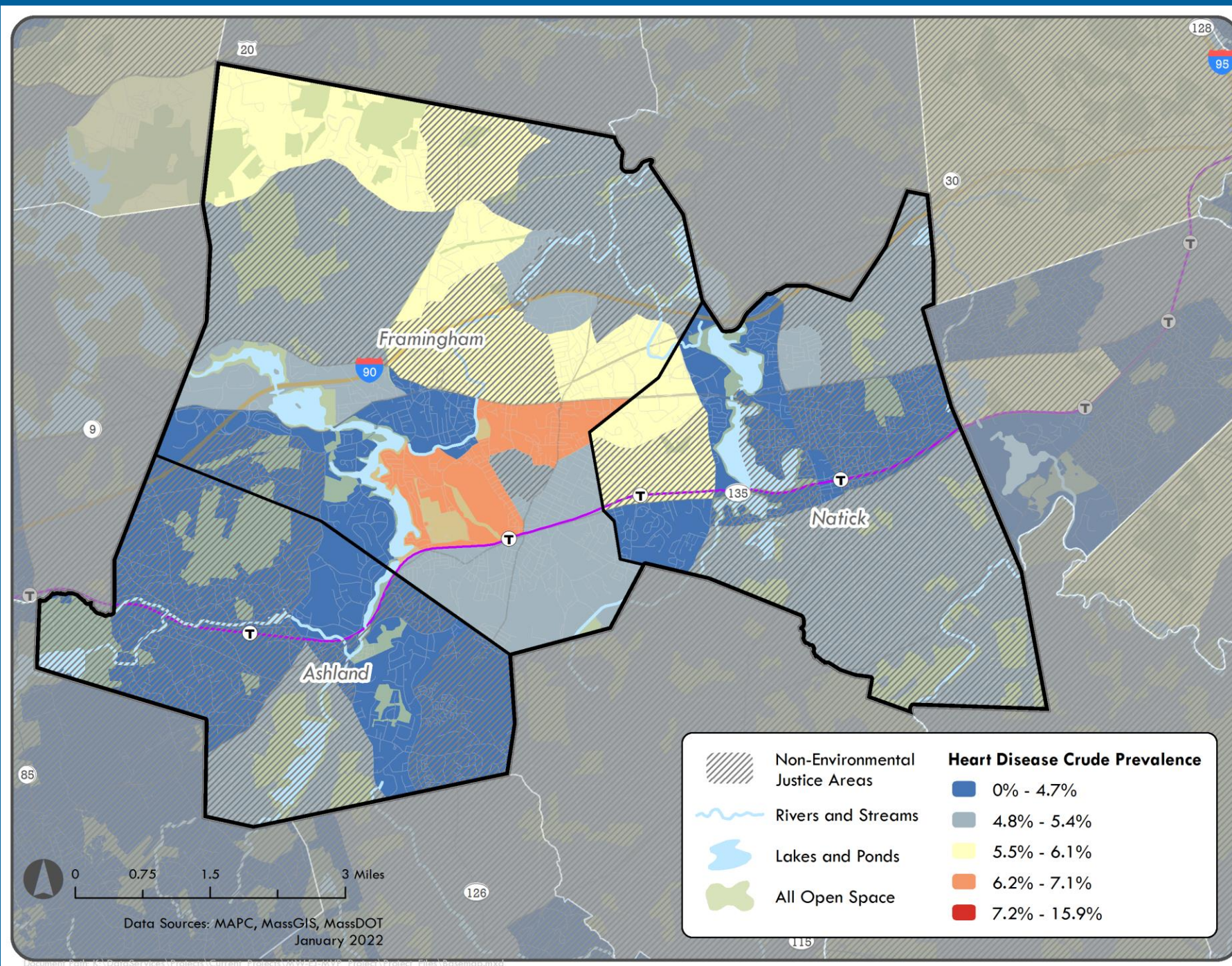
More children under age
5 in south Framingham
and central Natick



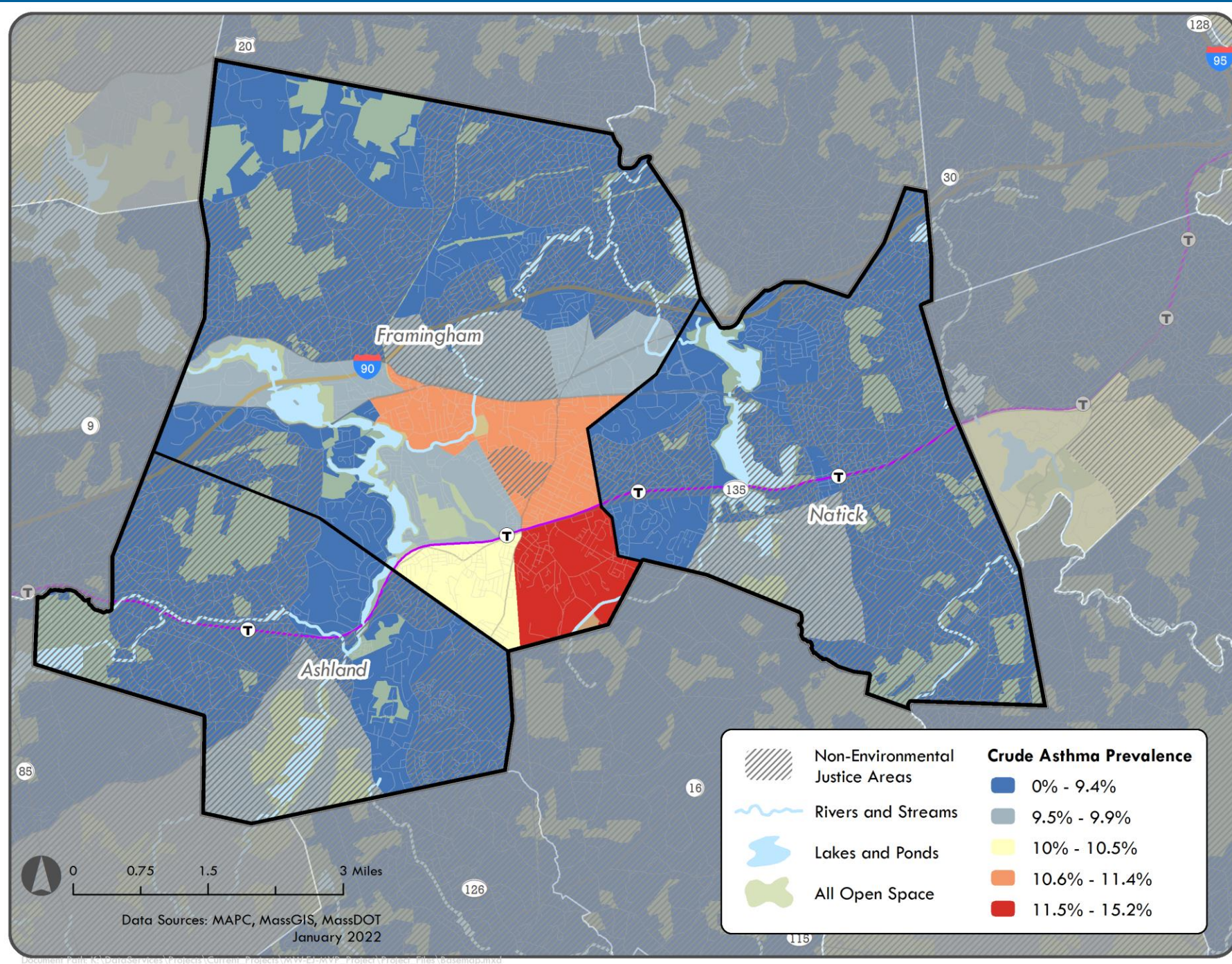
More adults over 65 in
north Framingham and
west Natick

“Hot spots” or
areas with high
temperatures
are spread
across the three
communities



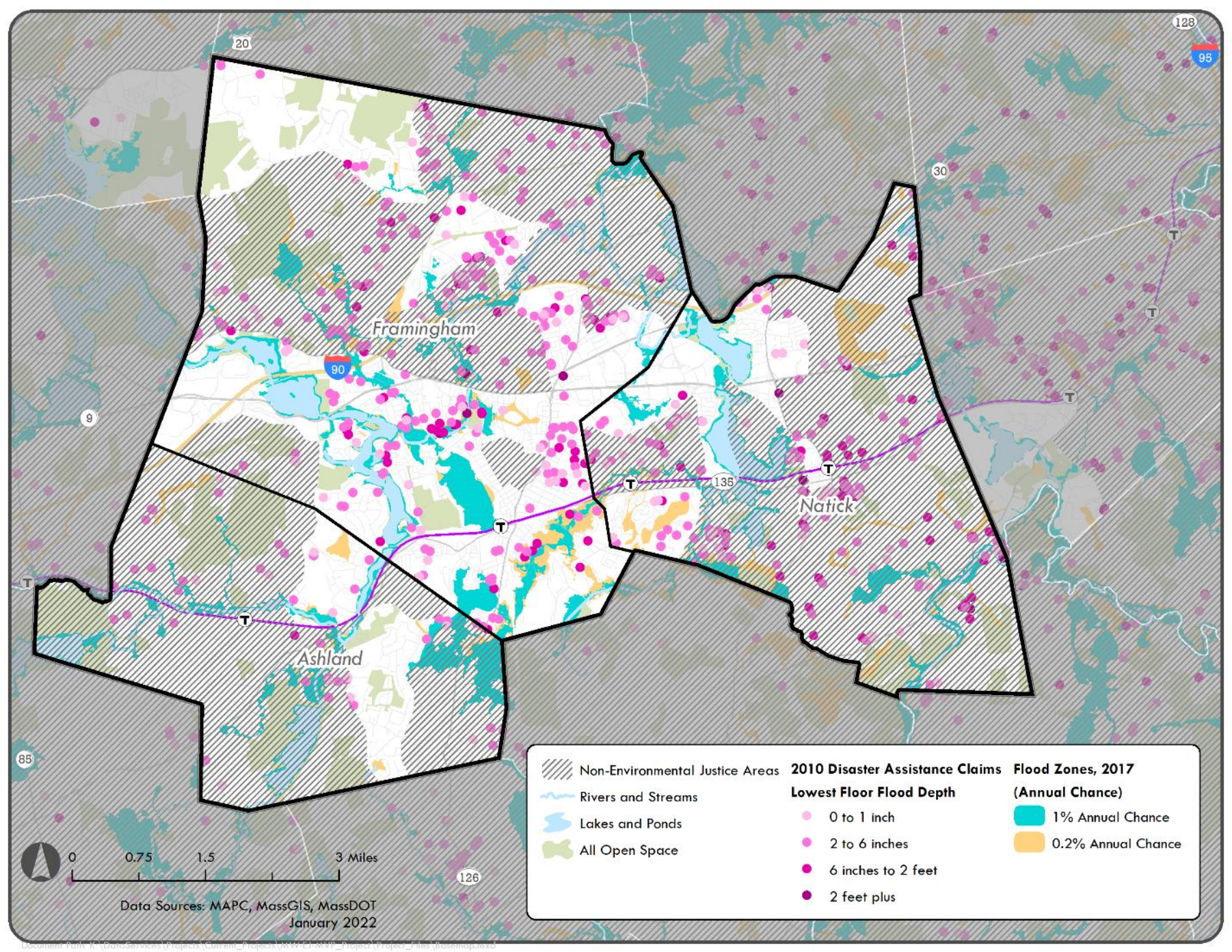


Health conditions, like **heart disease** and **asthma**, can make it harder to cope with extreme weather events



Health conditions, like **heart disease** and **asthma**, can make it harder to cope with extreme weather events

Flood damage has affected areas beyond those identified as “flood zones.”



MetroWest Climate Equity Project



CLIMATE CONVERSATION SURVEY

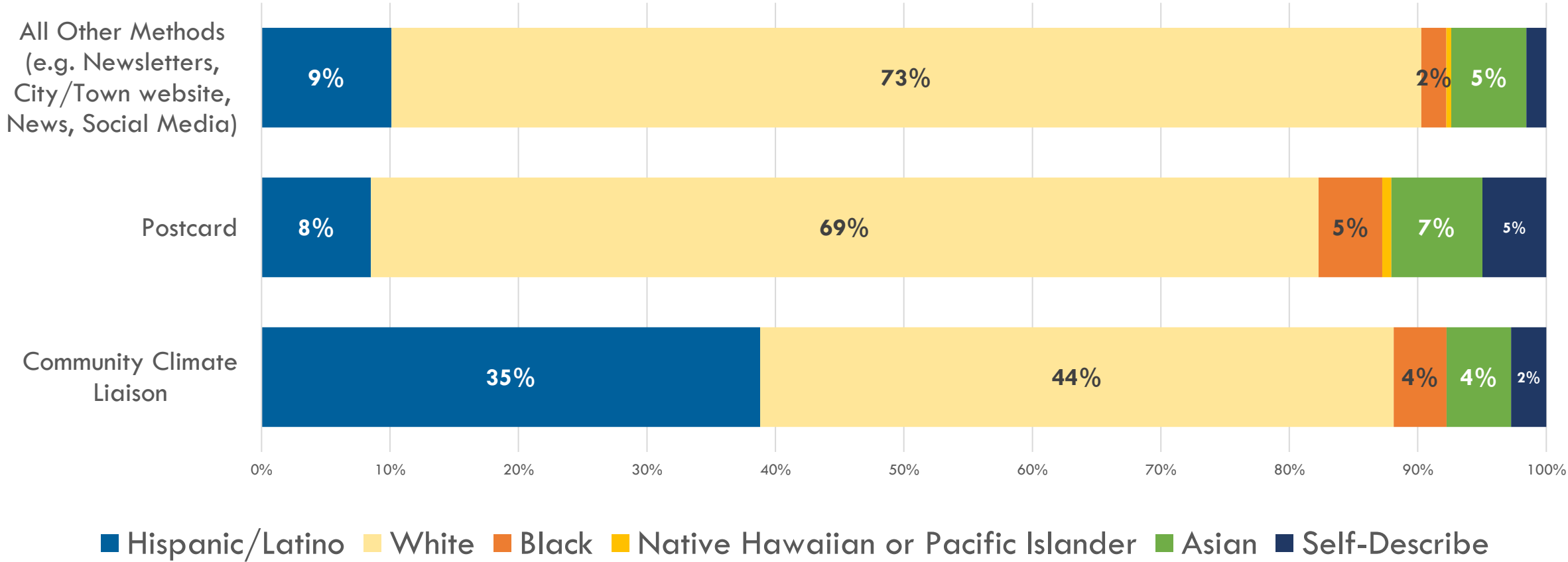
882 people took the survey

Community Climate Liaisons were the #1-way people found out about the project

Focused on connecting with those residents who:

1. Are not normally heard in city/town processes
2. Are impacted first & worst by climate hazards

Climate Liaisons focused on connecting with frontline communities



Important climate actions survey takers would like their city/town to lead

“Helping residents and community groups
prepare for emergencies”



“Helping residents, especially lower income residents and renters/landlords, **access programs for reducing energy use.**”

“Making it easier **to get around without a car**
(expanding public transit and fixing/ adding
sidewalks and bike lanes)”



“Addressing summer **water quality in the ponds** in the city (if no one can safely get in the water during the hottest weeks of the summer that is a problem)”

From Conversation to Action

Initiatives underway

*NACCHO grant to develop translated
emergency communications; Heat island
mapping*



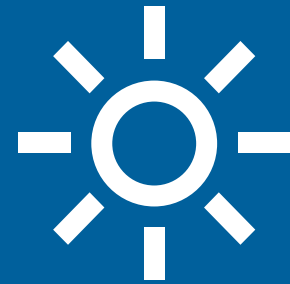
*Energy assistance fairs
in Natick and Framingham*

*MWRTA extended hours
and AARP translation services grant*



*Community-informed green
infrastructure projects*

Community-Driven Planning Values



COMMUNITY-DRIVEN PLANNING

A definition

The process by which residents of vulnerable and impacted communities define for themselves the challenges they face, and the solutions most relevant to their unique assets and threats.

Adapted from National Association of Climate Resilience Planners

Community-Driven Planning Model

Traditional Planning	Community-Driven Planning
Municipalities engage residents through public meetings, forums, and surveys	Residents engage neighbors and other community members in mutually convenient ways
Community members volunteer their time to provide feedback	Community members are compensated for their time
Municipal and academic expertise is prioritized	Community expertise is prioritized and supported by technical expertise from municipal staff
Tends to emphasize planning	Tends to emphasize practice and action
Tends to be more linear	Tends to be more iterative

WHY USE COMMUNITY-DRIVEN PLANNING?

- **Builds resident leadership & civic engagement** with members of the community who may have experienced barriers to participating in traditional municipal processes
- Creates a platform for municipal staff & community members to **learn from and teach one another** new ideas and skills
- **Builds connections between residents** to create more social cohesion in the community
- **Includes community members from the outset of project planning** – moves beyond consulting community members after an action has been decided
- Implements actions & solutions that **the community defined for themselves and support**

Community-driven planning respects and honors certain values:



Power-Sharing



Mutual Respect for Experience/Expertise



Informed Decision-Making



Maximum Involvement



Relationship Building

Power-Sharing

- Planners relinquish decision-making authority to the group as a whole
- Community Liaisons shape the planning process
 - For example, they decide how information will be collected and interpreted
 - They are also included in follow-up implementation projects
- Just as planners are paid for their time, Community Liaisons should be offered compensation
 - Demonstrates that all types of expertise are valued
 - May permit individuals to participate who might not be able to otherwise

MetroWest Climate Equity Project Example



- Which of these tools would you be most comfortable using?
- Where and how would you reach people with this tool?
- What other tools should we maybe use?

Mutual Respect for Experience/Expertise

- Community Liaisons and planners each have **unique and equally important contributions**
- Partnership should present an **opportunity and space for co-learning**
- Planners should foster an atmosphere of respect that **emphasizes the dignity and importance of each team member**
- Planners should make a concerted and conscious effort to **not use professional jargon and acronyms**

Informed Decision-Making

- Given the group's different areas of expertise, incorporate training as an ongoing function within the research project
- Allows for collaboration and informed decision-making among the entire group

MetroWest Climate Equity Project Example

WEATHER

The minute-by-minute and daily change in temperature, humidity, and wind.

Weather is always changing and changes quickly.

CLIMATE

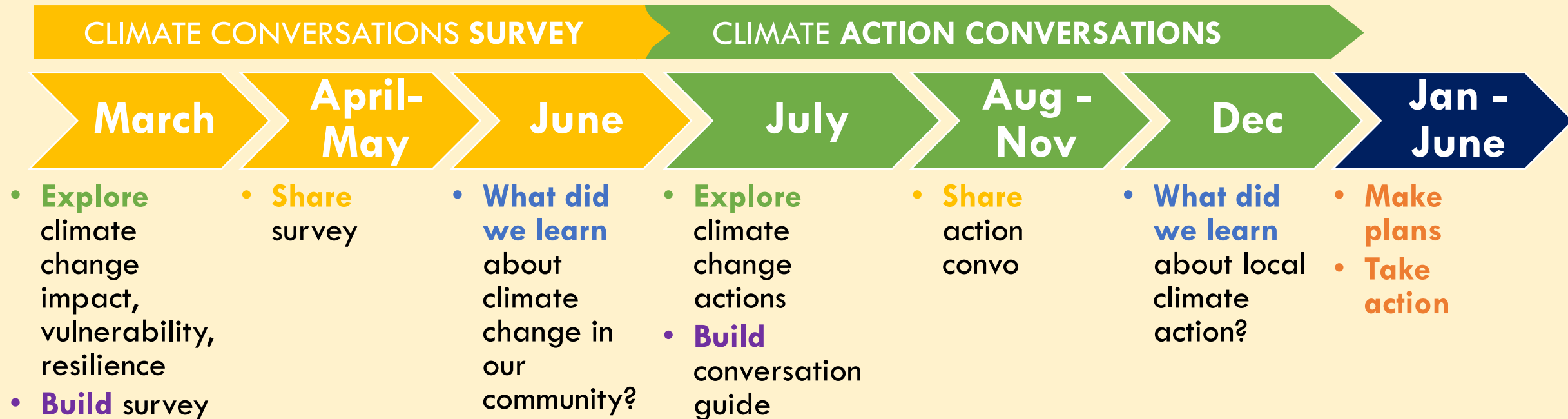
What the weather is like over a longer period of time in a specific region.

Massachusetts has a wet, seasonal climate with hot, humid summers and cold, snowy winters and lots of rain throughout the year.

Maximum Involvement

- Community Liaisons are brought into all areas of phases of a project: planning, administration, implementation, and completion

MetroWest Climate Equity Project Example



Relationship Building

- Emphasizes non-transactional relationships
- Focus is beyond time-limited engagement and planners seek to continue relationships after the project “ends”
- Can mean investing more of ourselves into the work and personalizing the work, which can feel taxing at times
- The trust that comes with relationships allows us to probe more deeply and to make changes that improve services and programs





Thank you!

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