

THE COMMONWEALTH'S RURAL TOWNS

A report to the Rural Policy Advisory Commission developed by the Demographics and Economic Development Committees with support from the Franklin Regional Council of Governments.

Version 05/09/2017

Rural Towns in Massachusetts

This presentation contains:

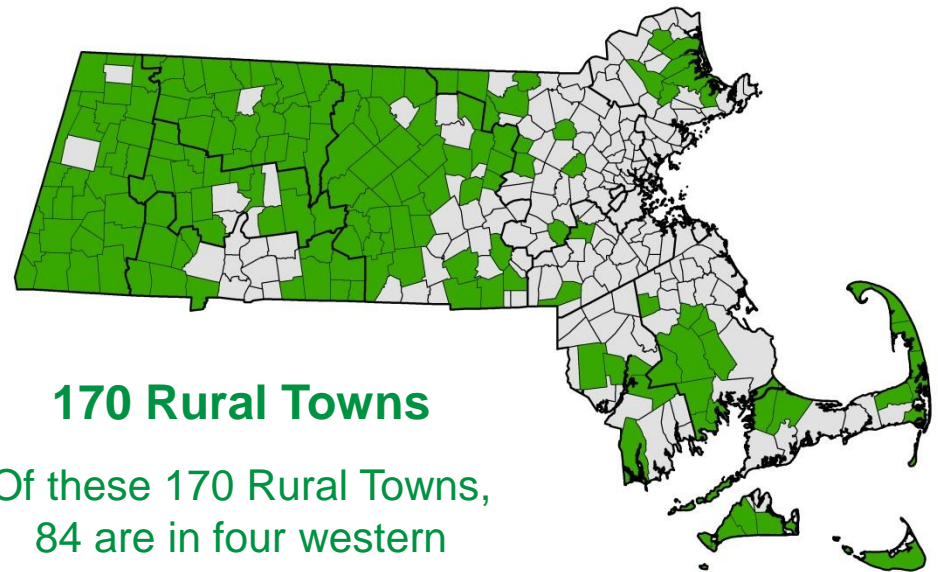
- An overview of demographic and socio-economic trends in Rural Towns, including:
 - Comparisons of the aggregate of Rural Towns to the State
 - Comparisons of regional differences among Rural Towns
- Sub-regions with shared characteristics, which may influence how strategies are implemented.
- Potential approaches for economic development in different types of Rural Towns.



View of Sunderland's village center from Mt. Sugarloaf.

Rural Towns in Massachusetts

- The definition of “rural” is a municipality with a population density of less than 500 people per sq. mile.
- Nearly half of all municipalities are Rural Towns.
- Population of Rural Towns is 830,000 (13% of state).
Equivalent to the population of Boston + Worcester + Lexington
- 59% of the State’s total land area.



170 Rural Towns

Of these 170 Rural Towns, 84 are in four western counties, and 86 are in nine eastern counties.

Rural Towns in Massachusetts

In *aggregate*, demographic and socio-economic trends in Rural Towns are comparable to the State with some exceptions.

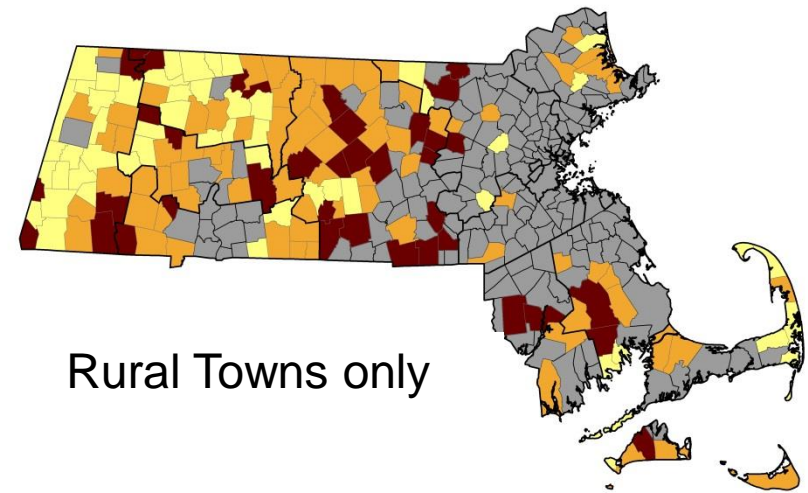
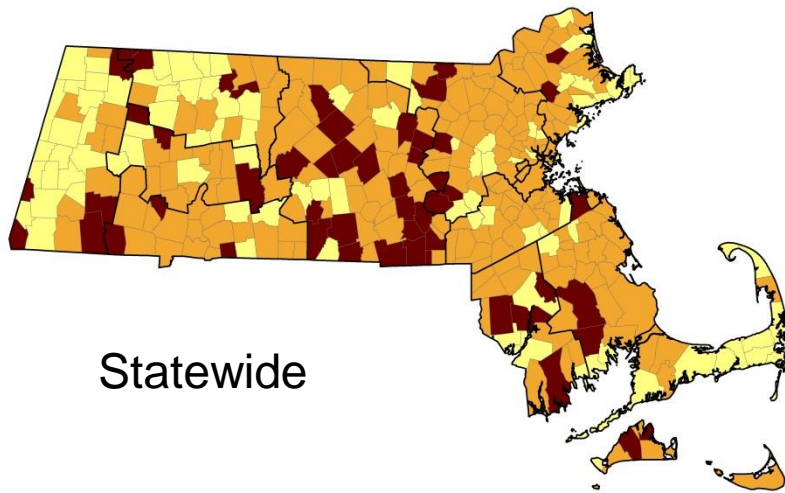
Often, the greatest differences are between *east* and *west* Rural Towns.

Categories

- Recent population change
- Population by age cohort
 - Under 18 years
 - 65 years and older
- Median household income
- Average Home Value
- Highest educational attainment
 - High School Diploma or less
 - Some college or more
- Employment by selected industry
- Self-employed workers
- Workers in private, for-profit sector

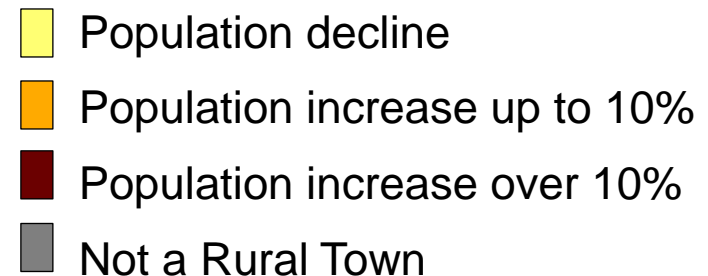
Data Sources: US Census Bureau, Decennial Census Program, 2000 and 2010; US Census Bureau, 2011-2015 ACS, Five-year Estimates Program; MA Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services, FY2016; and MassGIS, Land Use, 2005.

Rural Towns in Massachusetts

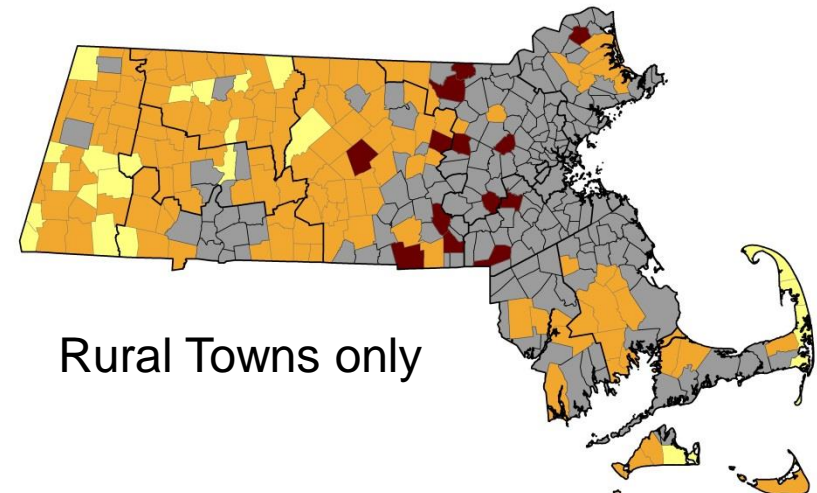
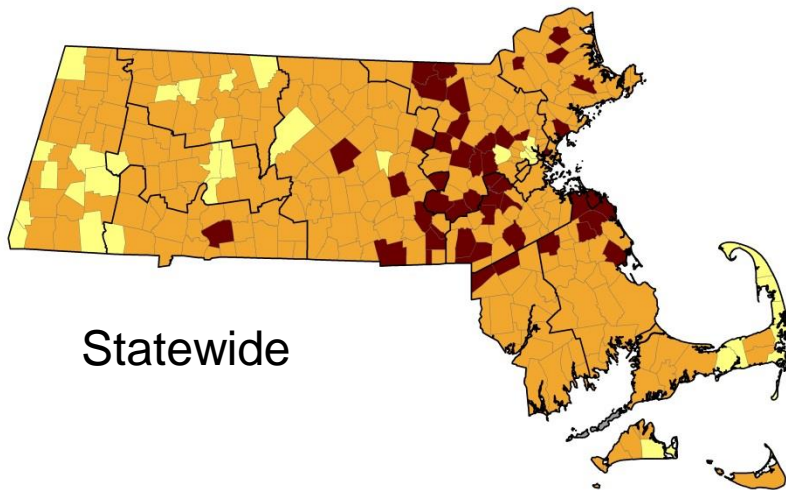


2000-2010 % Population Change:

- 3% growth Statewide
- 5% growth in Rural Towns only
- More Rural Towns with population decline in west, than in east.

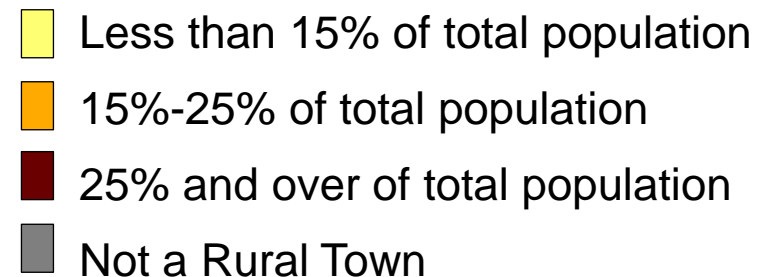


Rural Towns in Massachusetts

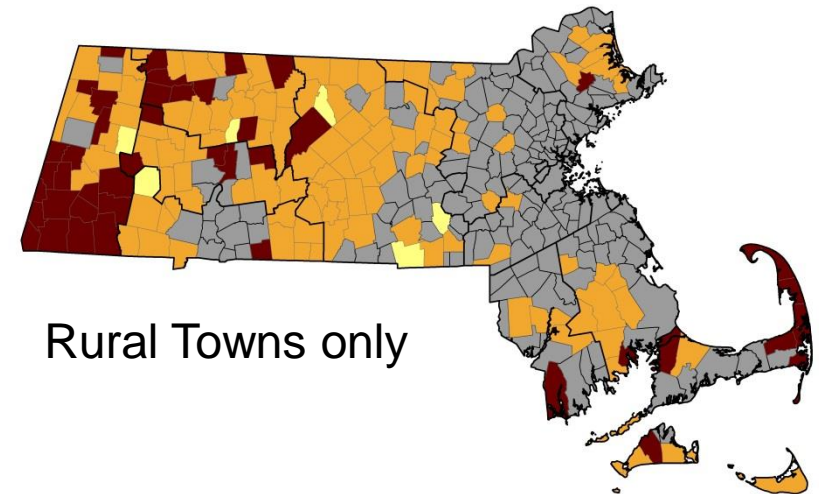
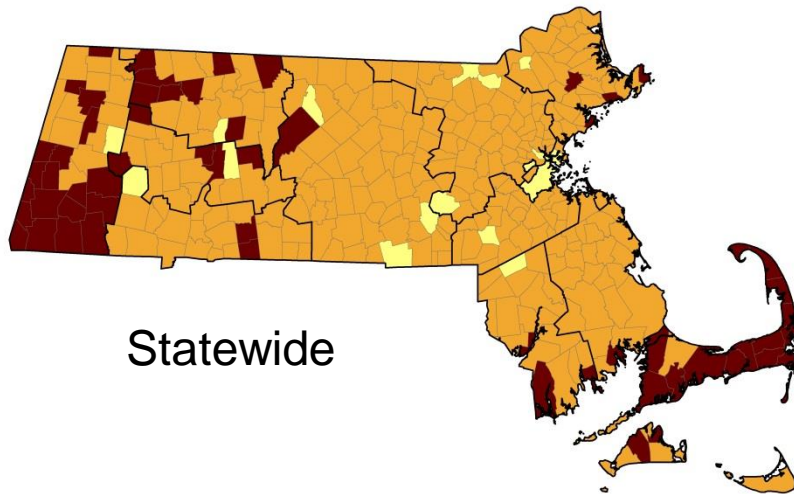


Population Under 18 Years:

- 21% Statewide
- 21% in Rural Towns only
- More Rural Towns with high percentage in east, than in west.

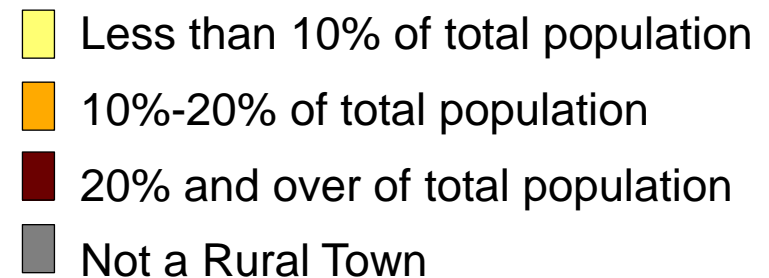


Rural Towns in Massachusetts

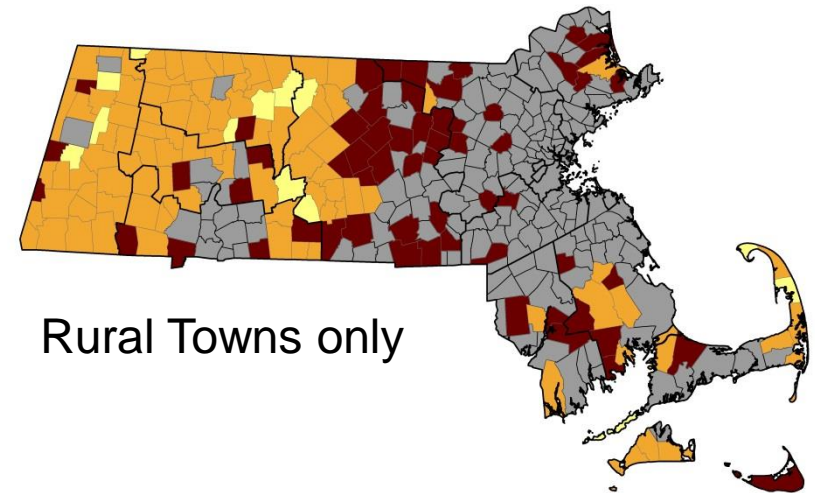
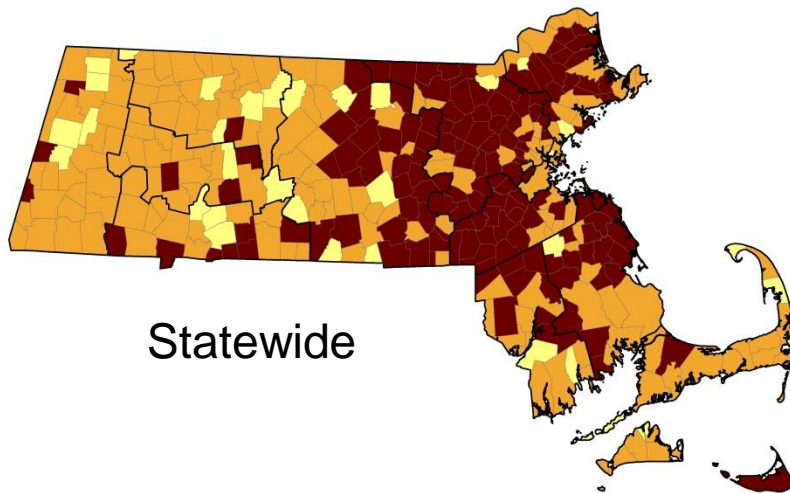


Population 65 Years and Over:

- 15% Statewide
- 17% in Rural Towns only
- More Rural Towns with a high population in west, than in east.

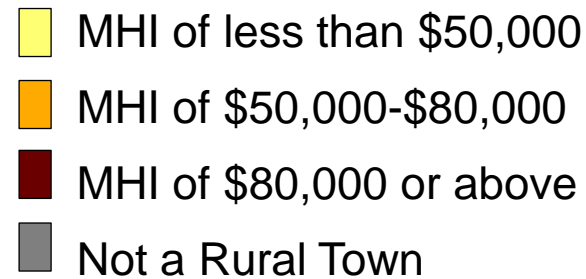


Rural Towns in Massachusetts

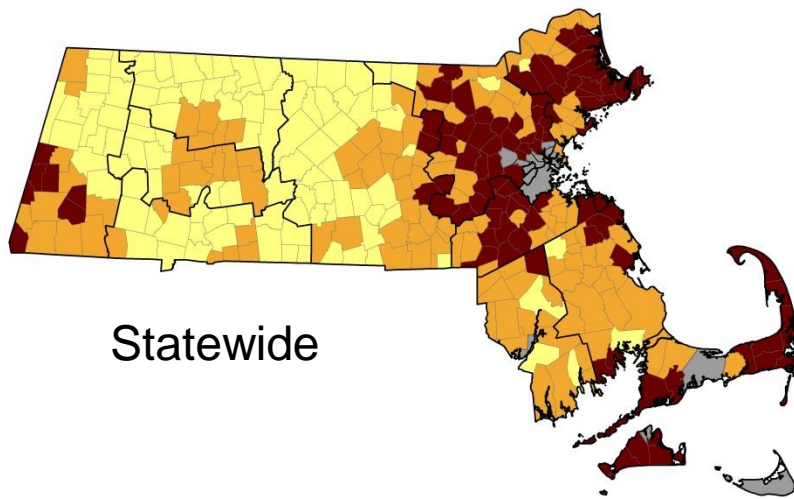


Median Household Income (MHI):

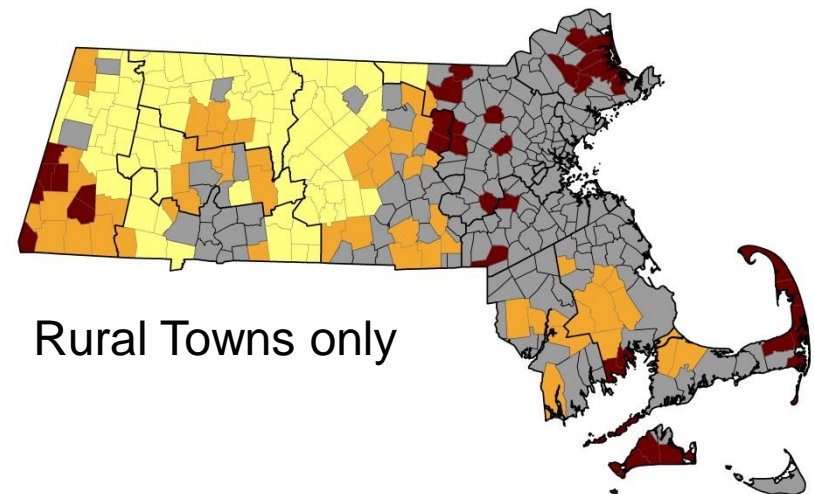
- \$68,653 for Massachusetts
- Data not available for aggregate of Rural Towns only
- More Rural Towns above statewide MHI in east, than in west.



Rural Towns in Massachusetts



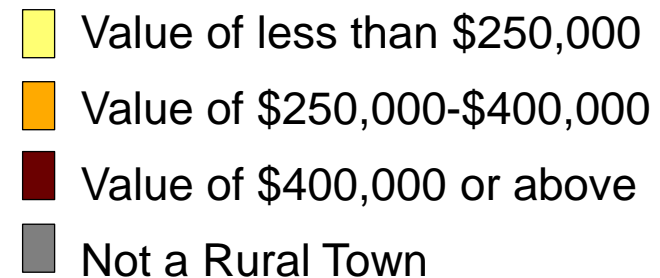
Statewide



Rural Towns only

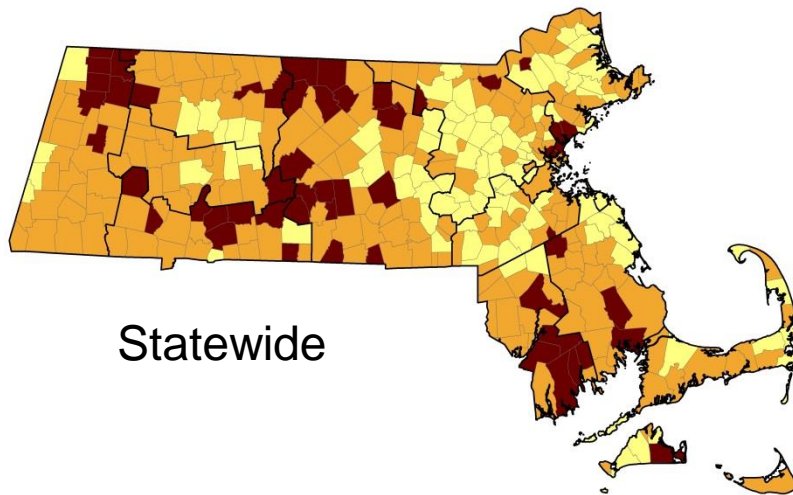
Average Single Family Home Value:

- Statewide average not available
- Median of the municipalities' average is about \$306,000
- More Rural Towns above municipalities' median in east, and than in west.

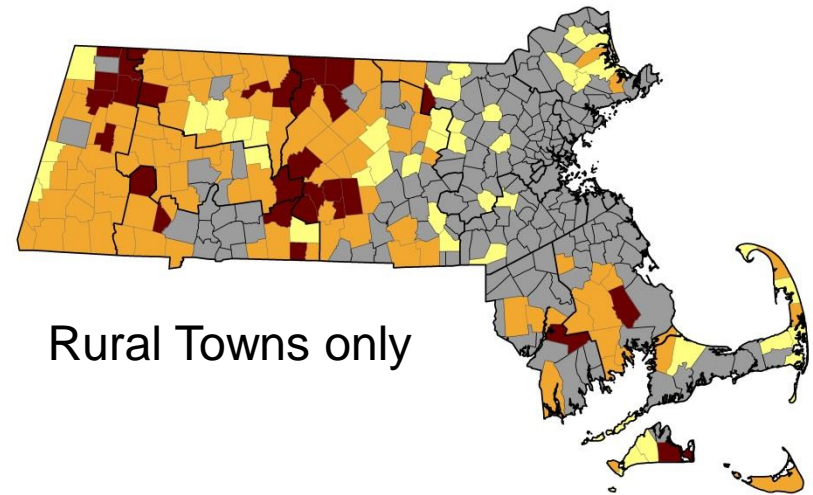


Note: Data not available for all municipalities.

Rural Towns in Massachusetts



Statewide

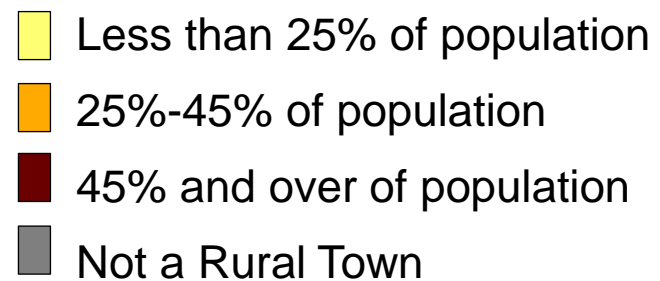


Rural Towns only

Highest Educational Attainment:

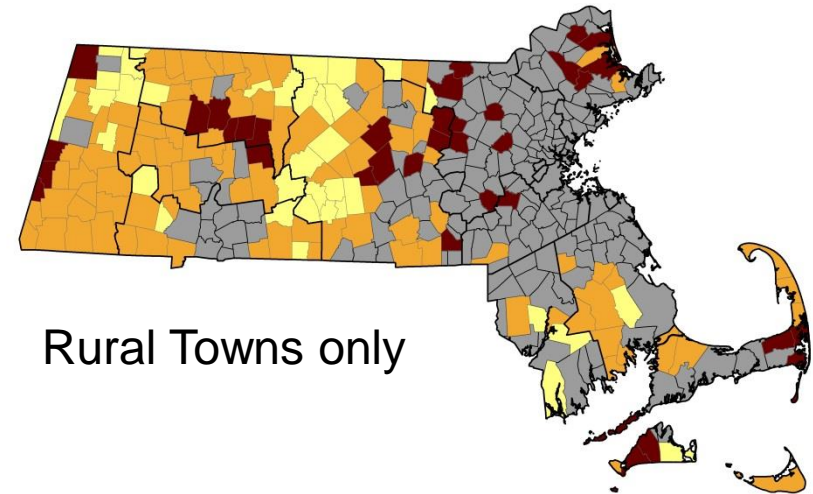
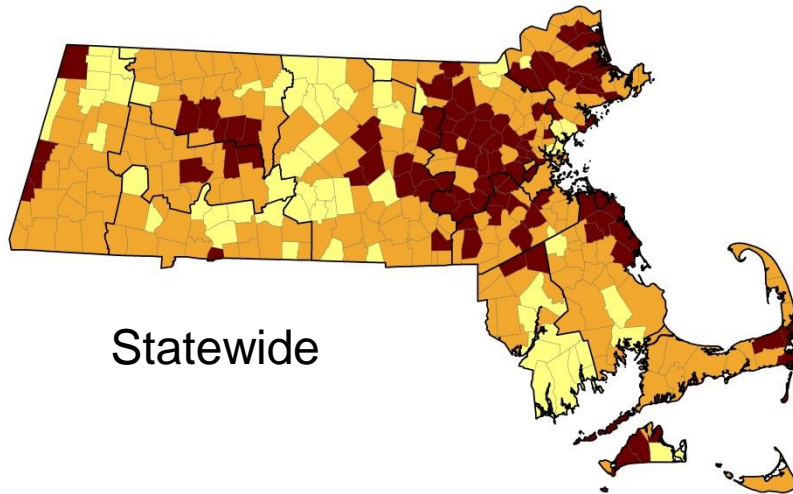
High School Diploma or Less

- 36% Statewide
- 33% in Rural Towns only
- More Rural Towns with high percentage in west, than in east.



Note: Highest educational attainment for population 25 years and older. Multiple categories are collapsed.

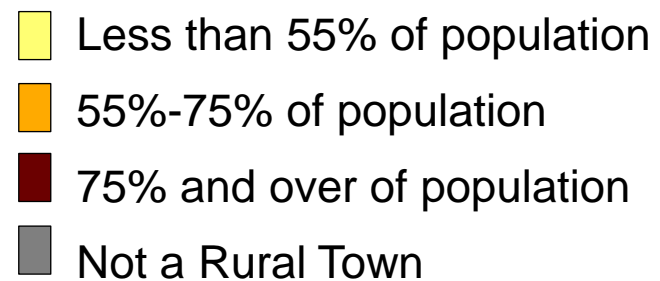
Rural Towns in Massachusetts



Highest Educational Attainment:

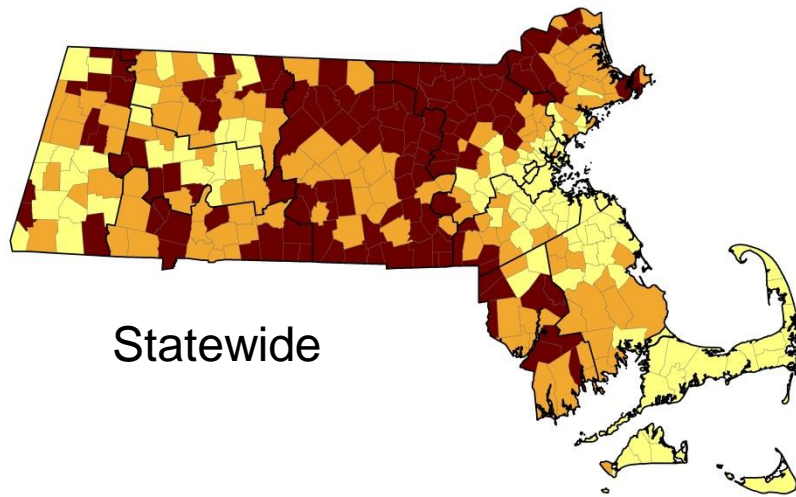
Some College or Higher

- 64% Statewide
- 67% in Rural Towns only
- More Rural Towns with high percentage in the east, than in west.

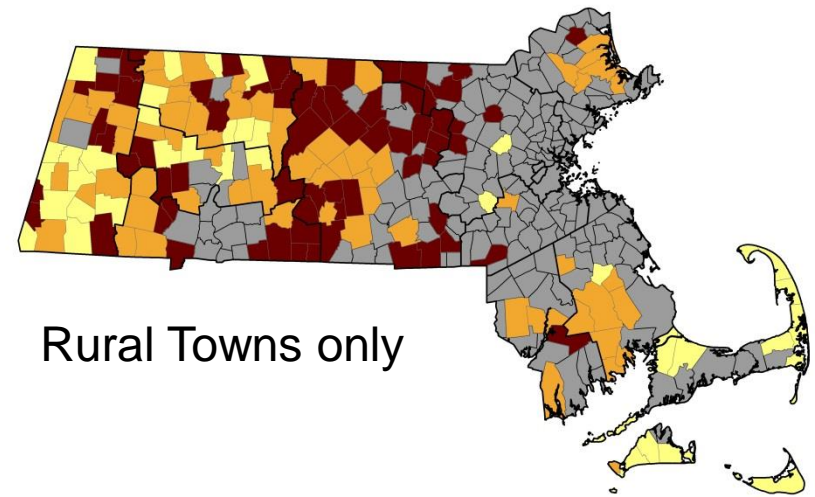


Note: Highest educational attainment for population 25 years and older. Multiple categories are collapsed.

Rural Towns in Massachusetts



Statewide

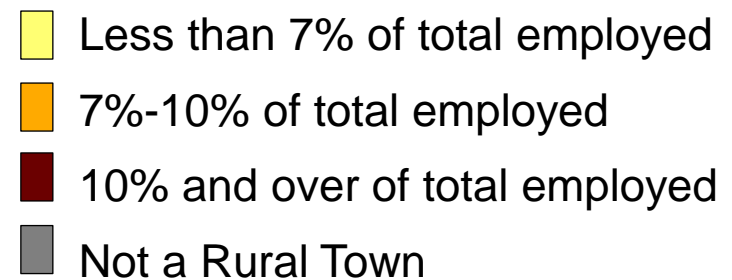


Rural Towns only

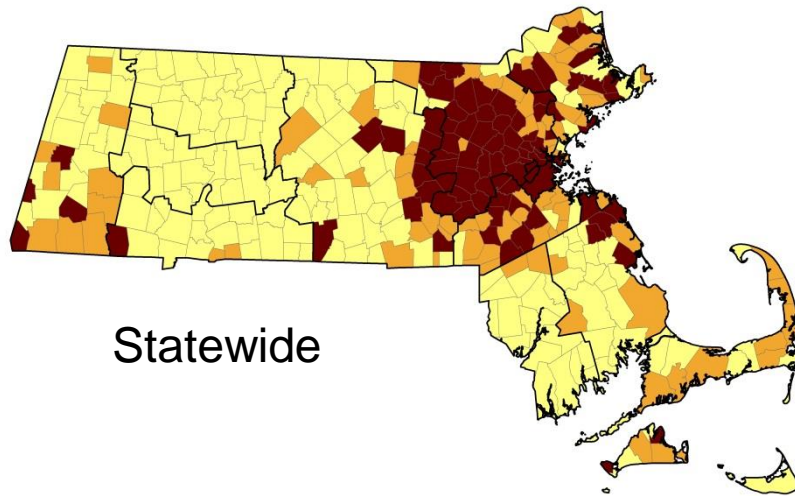
Employment by Industry:

Percent Employed in Manufacturing

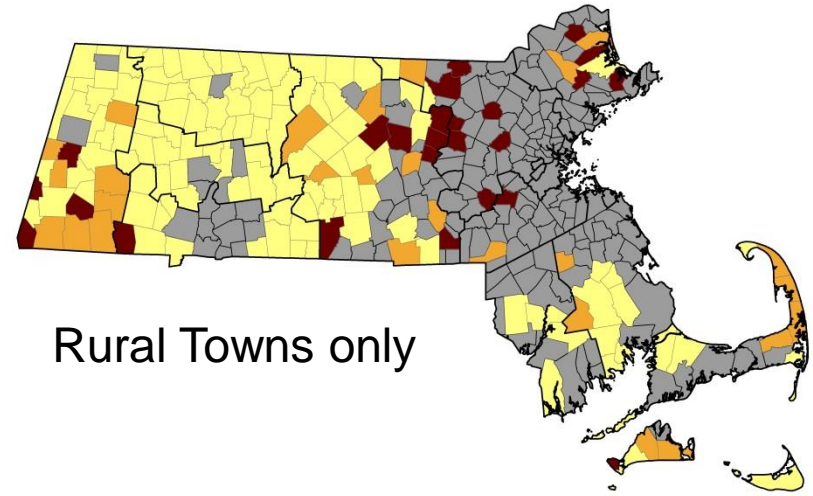
- 9% Statewide
- 11% in Rural Towns only
- About the same number of Rural Towns in east and west with a high percentage.



Rural Towns in Massachusetts



Statewide

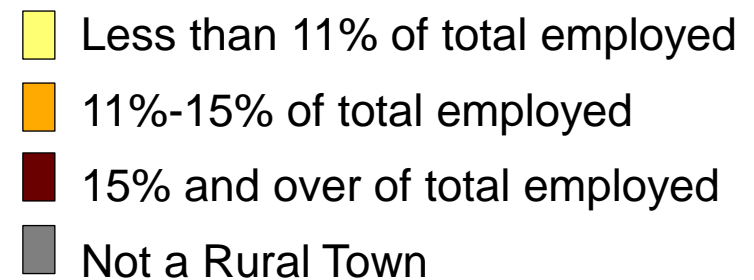


Rural Towns only

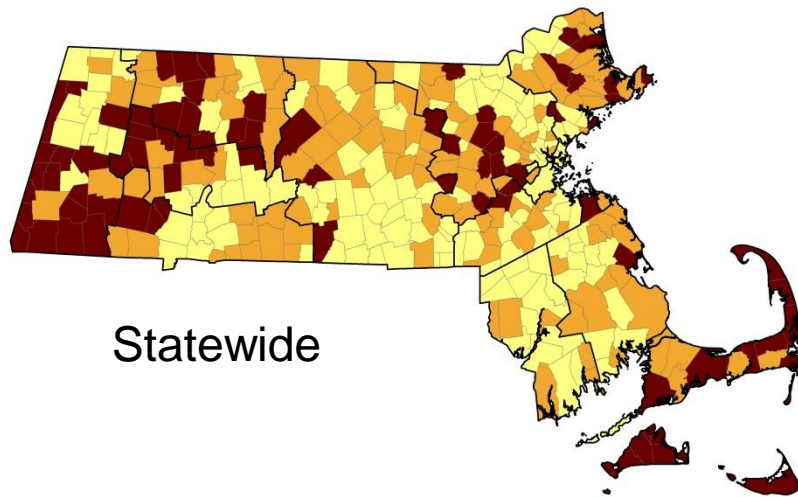
Employment by Industry:

Employed in Professional, Scientific, & Management Services

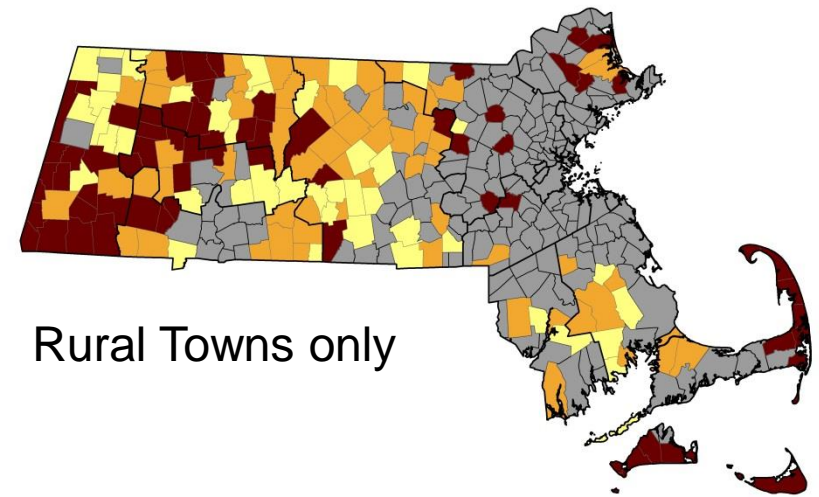
- 13% Statewide
- 11% in Rural Towns only
- More Rural Towns in east with a high percentage, than in west.



Rural Towns in Massachusetts



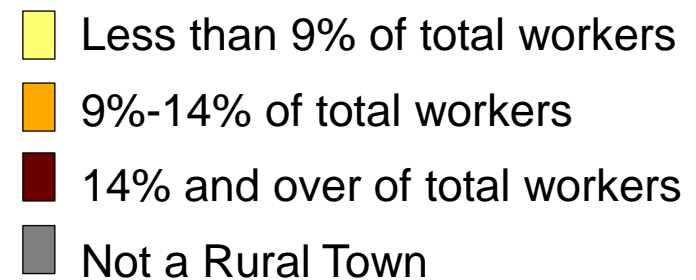
Statewide



Rural Towns only

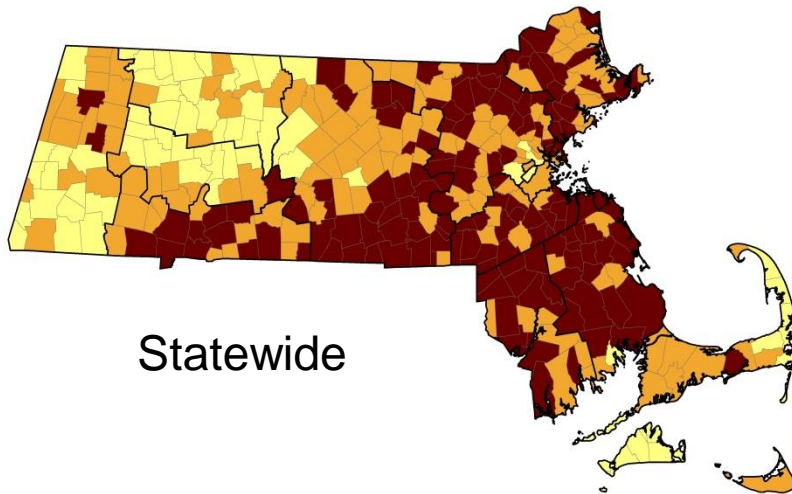
Self-Employed Workers:

- 9% Statewide
- 12% in Rural Towns only
- More Rural Towns in west with high percentage, than in east.

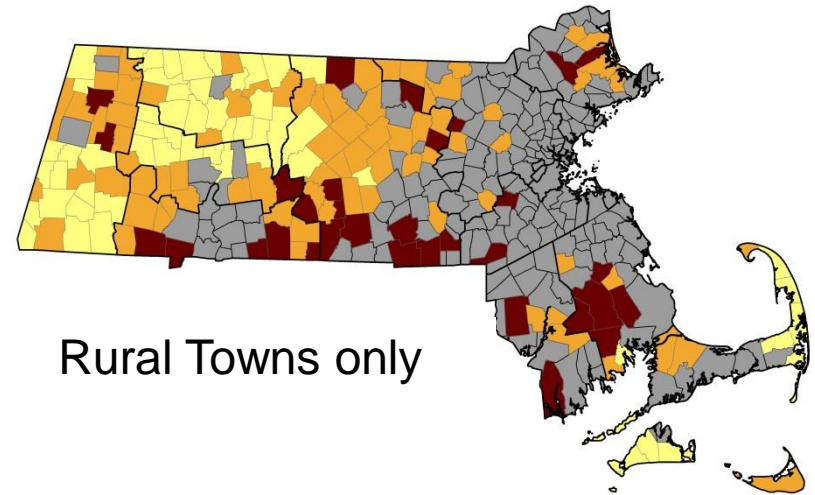


Note: Includes all industries, such as construction, agriculture, professional services, arts/entertainment, and etc..

Rural Towns in Massachusetts



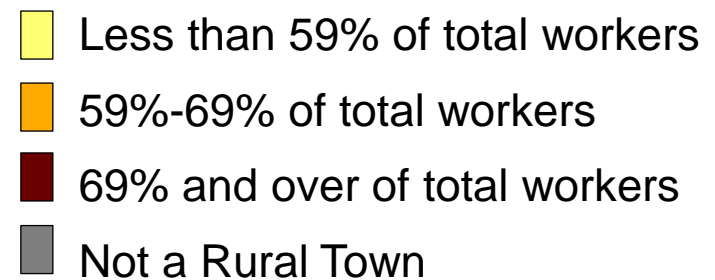
Statewide



Rural Towns only

For-Profit Workers:

- 69% Statewide
- 66% in Rural Towns only
- More Rural Towns in east with high percentage, than in west.



Note: Includes all industries, such as construction, professional services, education, and etc..

Rural Towns in Massachusetts

What are the conditions needed to access jobs and to create jobs?

To Access Jobs -

- Workers require access to career services, skills training and higher education opportunities.

Such as provided by:

- Community Colleges and Public Higher Education
- Career Centers

- Workers require the ability to connect to jobs in person or online.

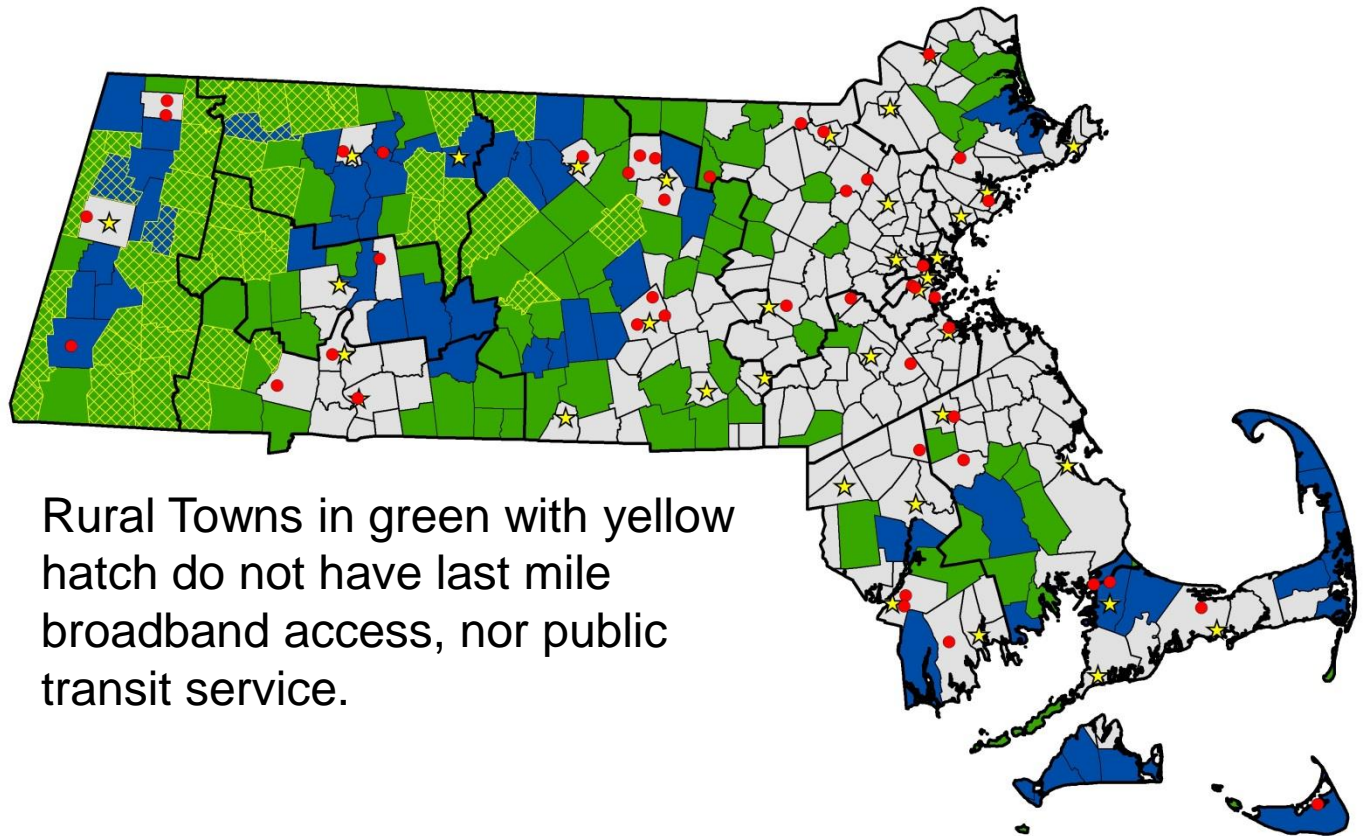
Such as provided by:

- Transit services
- Broadband access

Rural Towns in Massachusetts

Access Jobs

- Rural Towns (green)
- Public Transit Service in Rural Towns (blue)
- Unserved by Broadband (yellow hatch)
- Career Centers (yellow stars)
- Public Higher Education (red dots)



Rural Towns in green with yellow hatch do not have last mile broadband access, nor public transit service.

Note: The public transit service available varies, for example there is no weekend service for FRTA and BRTA.

Rural Towns in Massachusetts

What are the conditions needed to access jobs and to create jobs?

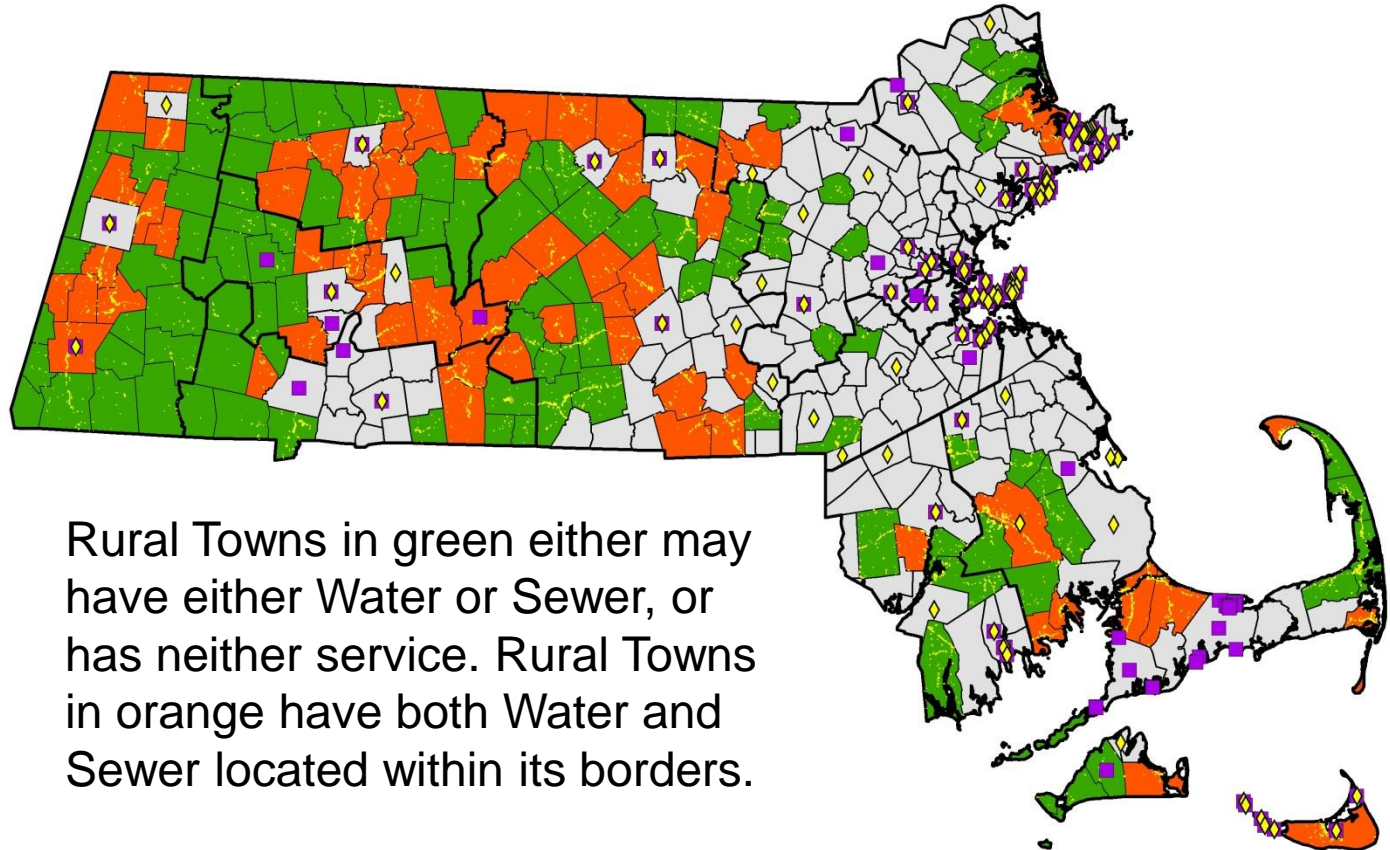
To Create Jobs -

- Suitable locations with infrastructure to support business development.
Such as having:
 - Water and Sewer systems
- Technical assistance to help entrepreneurs to develop a business.
Such as services provided by:
 - Community Development Corporations (CDCs)
 - Massachusetts Small Business Development Center Network (MSBDCN)
- Leverage opportunities in the community to develop businesses that attract customers (as well as prospective employees and other entrepreneurs).
Such as:
 - Natural assets – scenic landscapes and villages, outdoor recreation, farm & food system, etc.
 - Housing affordability
 - Quality of life – culture, environment

Rural Towns in Massachusetts

Create Jobs

- Rural Towns (green)
- Rural Towns with Water and Sewer (orange)
- Rural Towns Commercial / Industrial Land Use (yellow areas)
- Business development: CDCs (purple squares) and MSBDCN sites (yellow diamonds)



Rural Towns in green either may have either Water or Sewer, or has neither service. Rural Towns in orange have both Water and Sewer located within its borders.

Note: Some CDCs primarily work on housing, and do not provide access to business development services. Some MSBDCN sites are locations with only periodic office hours.

Rural Towns in Massachusetts

Sub-regions of Shared Characteristics.

While each town and region is different, when looking at the data **shared characteristics at the sub-regional level emerge** that are beyond “east” and “west”.

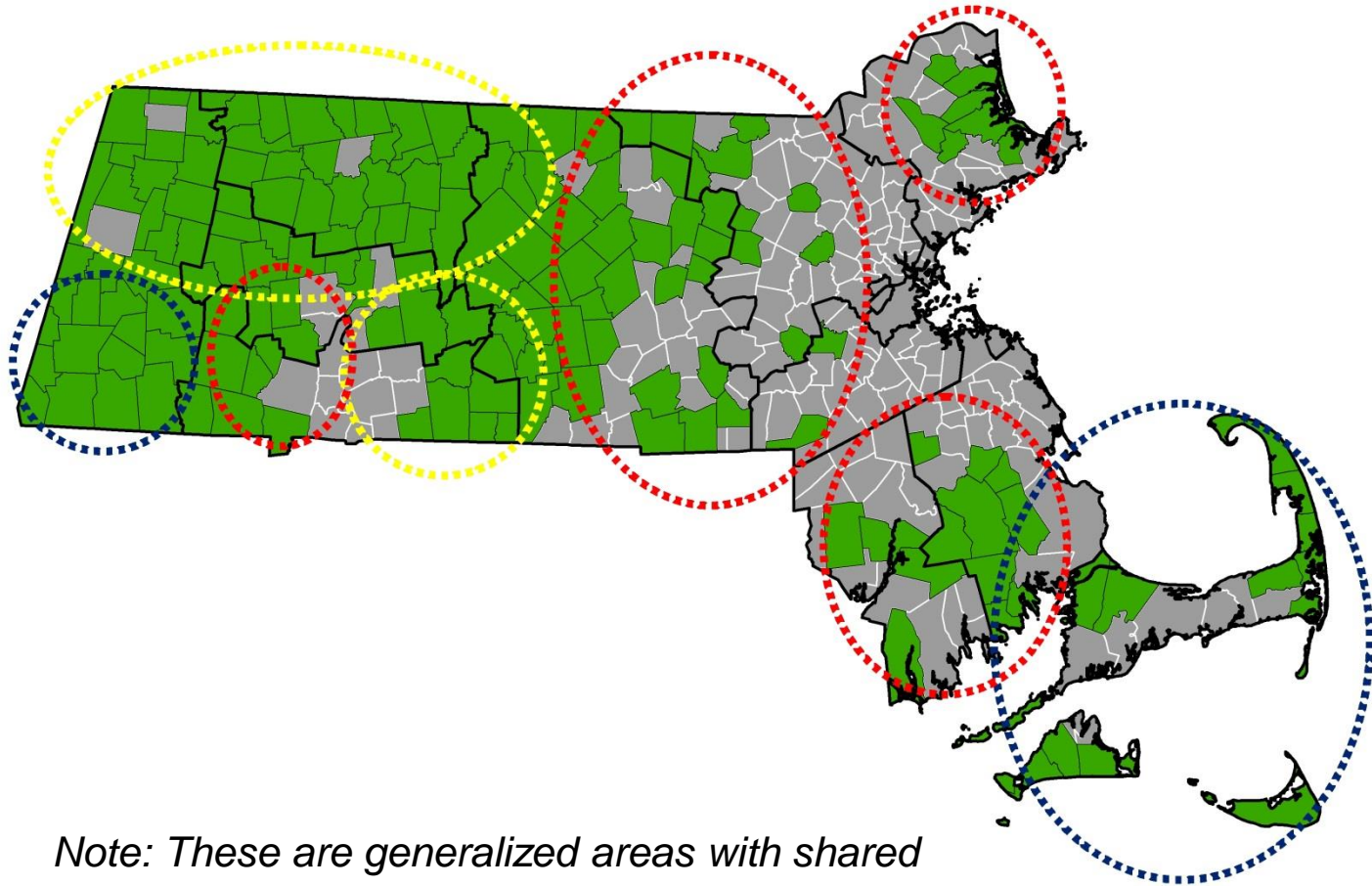
Each of these characterizations have their own challenges and opportunities for economic development, which may **provide a useful lens** for developing and implementing strategies.

- Economic Distress
- Suburbs/Bedroom Communities
- Concentrations of Second Homes

Rural Towns in Massachusetts

Areas with Shared Characteristics

- Suburbs/Bedroom Communities (red)
- Areas of Economic Distress (yellow)
- Concentrations of Second Homes (dark blue)



Note: These are generalized areas with shared characteristics, which may or may not be applicable to all individual Rural Towns.

Approaches for Economic Development

What is the best approach for supporting residents in Rural Towns in accessing and creating economic opportunities?

- *Not all approaches may be suitable for all Rural Towns.*
- Where are there gaps of needed services?
- What communities can support new business growth?
- How can rural residents access opportunities?
- Propose three approaches to categorize Rural Towns and then apply economic development strategies.

Approaches for Economic Development

Anchor Communities

- Identify lead Rural Towns that serve as an employment or population centers to smaller Rural Towns, in traditionally underserved or gap areas.
- Target support to extend services and resources to these communities.

Targeted Town Centers

- Identify Rural Towns with defined town centers that could support commercial development.
- Assess infrastructure and support needed to enhance economic activity in the town center.

Low Density Rural

- Identify Rural Towns without defined town centers.
- Implement projects to support home-based opportunities (such as through broadband access).

Approaches for Economic Development

Which Rural Towns could serve as.....

- Anchor Communities?
- Targeted Town Centers?
- Low Density Rural?

