

TOWN OF WEST BOYLSTON

PEER COMMUNITY COMPARISON

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DLS

DIVISION OF LOCAL SERVICES
MA DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE

PREPARED BY:

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PEER COMMUNITY COMPARISON

The Division of Local Services (DLS) Technical Assistance Bureau compiled a peer community comparison at the request of the Town of West Boylston. To do so, DLS analyzed an extensive dataset using the [DLS databank](#) that included financial, property tax-related, and socioeconomic attributes on all 351 communities in the Commonwealth. We then defined a standard from which our peer models were formed by analyzing municipalities whose proximity, population, and other factors corresponded in a meaningful way to West Boylston. Selected “peer” communities had to be within +/- 10 percent of the metric being ranked against West Boylston. We did not weigh certain data, such as department spending levels, as part of our evaluation because it did not universally correlate across communities. We encourage local officials to review the final peer comparison presented here and apply whatever additional analyses or other qualitative traits they feel most similarly match West Boylston.

Model 1: Worcester County – Our first data model includes all 60 communities in Worcester County. Even though the town requested an emphasis on Worcester County, all but three communities in this data model can be unilaterally excluded because, other than boundary lines, there are few non-budgetary characteristics in common with West Boylston. Douglas and Lancaster qualify for consideration based upon population, location, and per capita income. Sterling could also be included based on population and location.

Model 2: Bordering Communities Model – Our second data model focuses on those communities that share a common border with West Boylston, including Sterling, Holden, Boylston, Worcester, and Shrewsbury. Except for Sterling, the list of adjacent towns does not yield any meaningful results beyond their shared boundary, as these communities vary widely in structure, size, and income levels.

Peer Model #2: Neighboring/Bordering Communities

This peer model set includes all 5 communities sharing geographical borders with West Boylston

Communities selected based on these data elements						
	2013 Population	2013 Income per capita	EQV Per Capita 2016	ASFTB as % of Per Cap Income FY2017	Average Single Family Tax Bill FY2017	R/O % of Total Levy FY2017
West Boylston	7,901	29,939	113,454	17.1%	5,123	79.74
Low (90%)	7,111	26,945	102,108	15.4%	4,611	71.77
High (110%)	8,691	32,933	124,799	18.8%	5,635	87.71

DOR Code	Municipality	County	Planning Council	City or Town	2013 Population	Population Estim 2015	Population Estim 2020	2013 DOR Income Per Capita	EQV Per Capita 2016	Average Single Family Tax Bill FY2017	Average Single Family Value FY2017	ASFTB as % of Per Cap Income FY2017	R/O % of Total Levy FY2017	Expenditures per capita [FY2015]
321	West Boylston	WORCESTER	Central Mass	TOWN	7,901	7,669	7,671	29,939	113,454	5,123	272,484	17.1%	79.74	2,880
282	Sterling	WORCESTER	Montachusett	TOWN	7,894	7,808	7,907	42,222	131,083	5,441	301,793	12.9%	86.15	2,616
039	Boylston	WORCESTER	Central Mass	TOWN	4,431	4,355	4,435	49,893	154,922	6,214	385,500	12.5%	91.30	3,030
348	Worcester	WORCESTER	Central Mass	CITY	182,544	181,045	185,318	19,780	67,040	3,898	202,793	19.7%	60.37	2,749
134	Holden	WORCESTER	Central Mass	TOWN	17,995	17,346	18,147	39,203	118,311	5,155	293,092	13.1%	93.95	2,315
271	Shrewsbury	WORCESTER	Central Mass	TOWN	36,309	35,608	37,223	48,242	152,535	5,274	411,046	10.9%	86.61	2,953

Model 3: Comparative Peer Model – Our third model applies filters ranking population, per capita income, and equalized valuation per capita to extract communities that were between 90 and 110 percent of West Boylston’s value for each metric. Although several communities share common data points, such as population, we removed municipalities whose particular characteristics yielded disparate and incomparable results including mid-tier cities and more densely populated urban areas. Next, we ranked communities with similar service levels and ability to pay. After narrowing the focus and considering other common characteristics, we developed a final set of ten comparative peer communities as shown below.

Peer Model #3: Comparative Peer Models

This peer model set includes 10 communities located across the Commonwealth who share relatively similar financial characteristics as West Boylston.

Communities selected based on these data elements						
	2013 Population	2013 Income per capita	EQV Per Capita 2016	ASFTB as % of Per Cap Income FY2017	Average Single Family Tax Bill FY2017	R/O % of Total Levy FY2017
West Boylston	7,901	29,939	113,454	17.1%	5,123	79.74
Low (90%)	7,111	26,945	102,108	15.4%	4,611	71.77
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321	West Boylston	WORCESTER	Central Mass	TOWN	7,901	7,669	7,671	29,939	113,454	5,123	272,484	17.1%	79.74	2,880
118	Halifax	PLYMOUTH	Old Colony	TOWN	7,606	7,518	7,534	30,147	110,825	5,516	297,695	18.3%	89.79	2,642
076	Dighton	BRISTOL	Southeastern Regi	TOWN	7,214	7,086	7,558	30,275	123,823	4,279	286,393	14.1%	76.31	2,246
077	Douglas	WORCESTER	Central Mass	TOWN	8,624	8,471	9,002	32,669	108,978	4,604	275,346	14.1%	93.35	2,974
332	Westminster	WORCESTER	Montachusett	TOWN	7,404	7,277	7,379	35,445	124,594	4,556	250,448	12.9%	82.35	2,553
341	Williamstown	BERKSHIRE	Berkshire	TOWN	7,599	7,754	7,421	30,560	133,177	6,079	356,732	19.9%	89.33	2,436
223	Orange	FRANKLIN	FRCOG	TOWN	7,756	7,839	7,924	16,849	63,431	3,100	146,043	18.4%	78.80	2,419
019	Ayer	MIDDLESEX	Montachusett	TOWN	7,821	7,427	7,853	29,417	141,030	4,282	297,582	14.6%	46.95	2,911
187	Millis	NORFOLK	Metropolitan Area	TOWN	8,047	7,891	8,075	37,799	143,984	6,629	359,864	17.5%	89.86	3,261
147	Lancaster	WORCESTER	Montachusett	TOWN	8,054	8,055	8,763	30,836	110,843	6,043	305,340	19.6%	85.29	2,176
192	Montague	FRANKLIN	FRCOG	TOWN	8,377	8,437	8,392	20,699	97,786	3,218	193,053	15.5%	59.41	2,065

We believe Halifax, Dighton, and Douglas are most closely aligned to West Boylston. Halifax resembles West Boylston based on population, income per capita, equalized valuation per capita, and average single-family tax bill per capita. While not a core standard, they are also within +/- 10 percent of total expenditures per capita. Dighton also shares many of the same characteristics as West Boylston, including income per capita, equalized valuation per capita, and percent of the tax levy borne by the residential parcel class. We encourage the town to explore the organizational structures and the types of services offered in these peer communities to ensure they are a good overall fit for comparative analyses.

Included with this report, we have provided a Microsoft Excel workbook containing the following worksheets:

Raw Data	Descr of Data	Map	Peers 1 - County	Peers 2 - Neighbors	Peers 3 - Comparative	Charts
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