

IDEA Committee Community Forum



TOWN OF MEDWAY

Committee Members

Select Board issued Committee Charge on December 7, 2020 (updated April 2021), specifying nine (9) members to be appointed as follows:

- One (1) member from the Select Board
- One (1) member recommended by the School Committee
- One (1) member recommended by the Council on Aging
- One (1) member who is a resident of Medway and an employee of the Medway Police Department
- One (1) Medway Business Owner or Civic Organization Member from an under-represented population
- Four (4) residents of the Town, one of whom shall be selected from and represent Medway's BIPOC population

Daniel Kerls	Chair, Resident
John Foresto	Vice-Chair, Select Board Representative
Lt. William Kingsbury	Police Department Representative
Judith Lane	Council on Aging Representative
Susan Dietrich	School Committee Representative
Andrea Crow Henry	Civic Leader
Khalid Abdi	Member
Marques Crosby	Member
Brian Sharkey	Member

Our Mission Statement

The mission of the Medway Inclusion, Diversity & Equity Advisory (IDEA) Committee is to **provide feedback and recommendations** to the Select Board geared toward policy development designed to continue and where appropriate **enhance the promotion and fostering of Medway as a community that is inclusive and welcoming to all peoples of all backgrounds, beliefs, and cultures.**

This mission statement shall in no way be construed to suggest that Medway does not excel in these efforts, but rather seeks to fully explore our standards, our practices, and our collective efforts today and to build upon them for an even better tomorrow.

Committee Timeline

PHASE I

APR '21 – NOV '21

COMMITTEE FORMATION

- Committee appointments and organization - April 2021
- Plan for gathering community feedback - June/July 2021
- Define common language and terms - October 2021
- Finalize projected timeline - November 2021

PHASE III

MAY '22 – SEPT '22

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

- Community Forum #2 – September/October 2022
- Conduct additional follow-up work as needed
- Draft final report and recommendations – September/October 2022

PHASE II

DEC '21 – APR '22

INFORMATION GATHERING

- Launch Community Feedback Form - December 2021
- Conduct focus groups with the organizations in committee charge – December - March 2022
- Community Forum #1 – May 2022
- Release Community Survey Medway Community – May 2022

PHASE IV

OCT '22 – NOV '22

FINAL PRESENTATION

- Final presentation to Select Board - November 2022

Our Definitions

Diversity

Diversity is the presence of differences within our community

Equity

Equity is the opportunity for equal outcomes for all

Inclusion

Inclusion is fostering a community where everyone belongs

Focus Group Agenda

Focus Group Process

Completed Focus Groups

- Town Administration & Select Board
- Medway Schools Teachers & Administrators
- Medway High School Students
- Medway Police Department
- Medway Marches
- Council on Aging and Housing Authority
- Small Business Community Representatives
- Affordable Housing Committee/Affordable Housing Trust

Discussion Topic

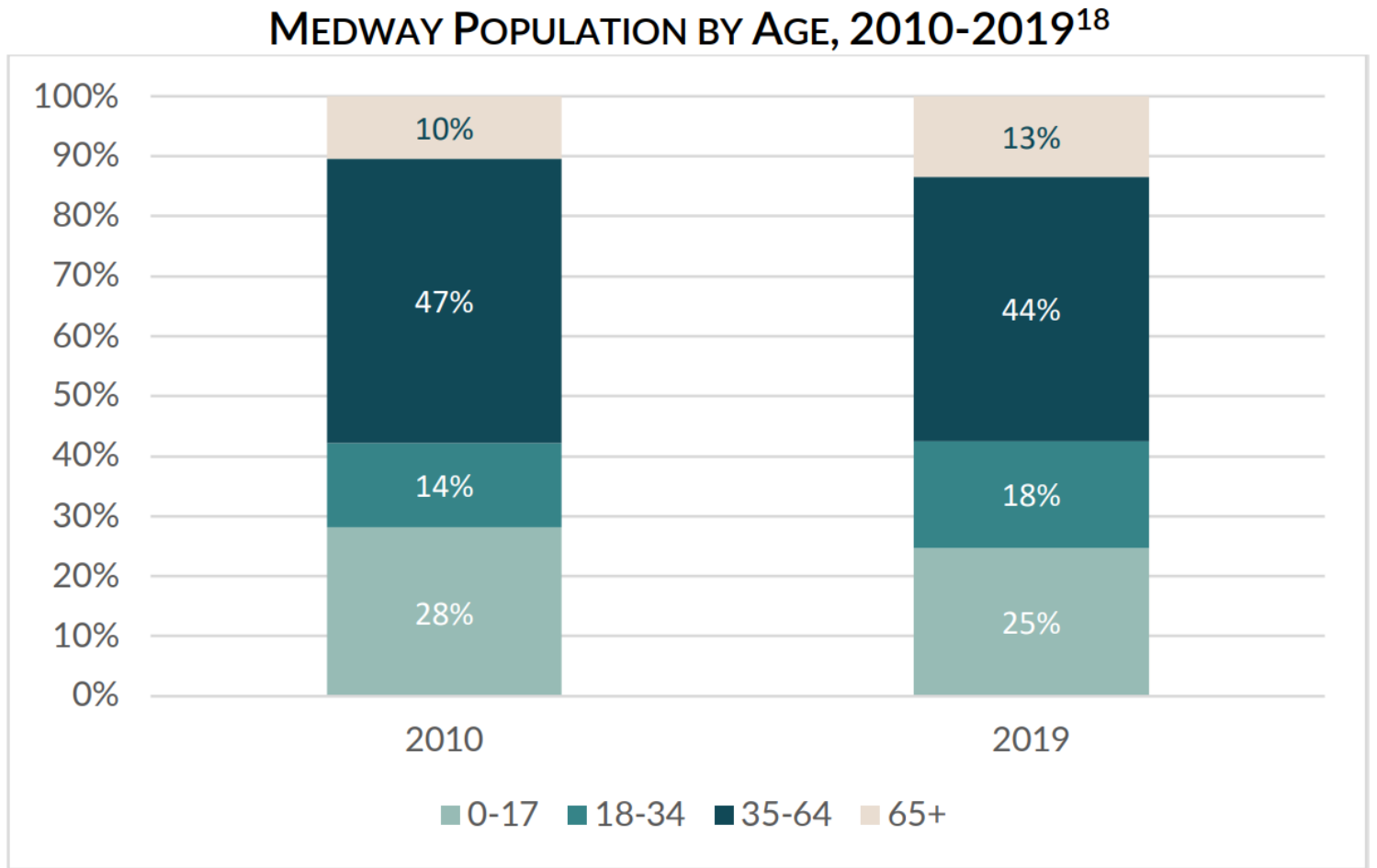
Tell us about the greatest challenges and opportunities facing your organization as it relates to each:

- Diversity
- Equity
- Inclusion



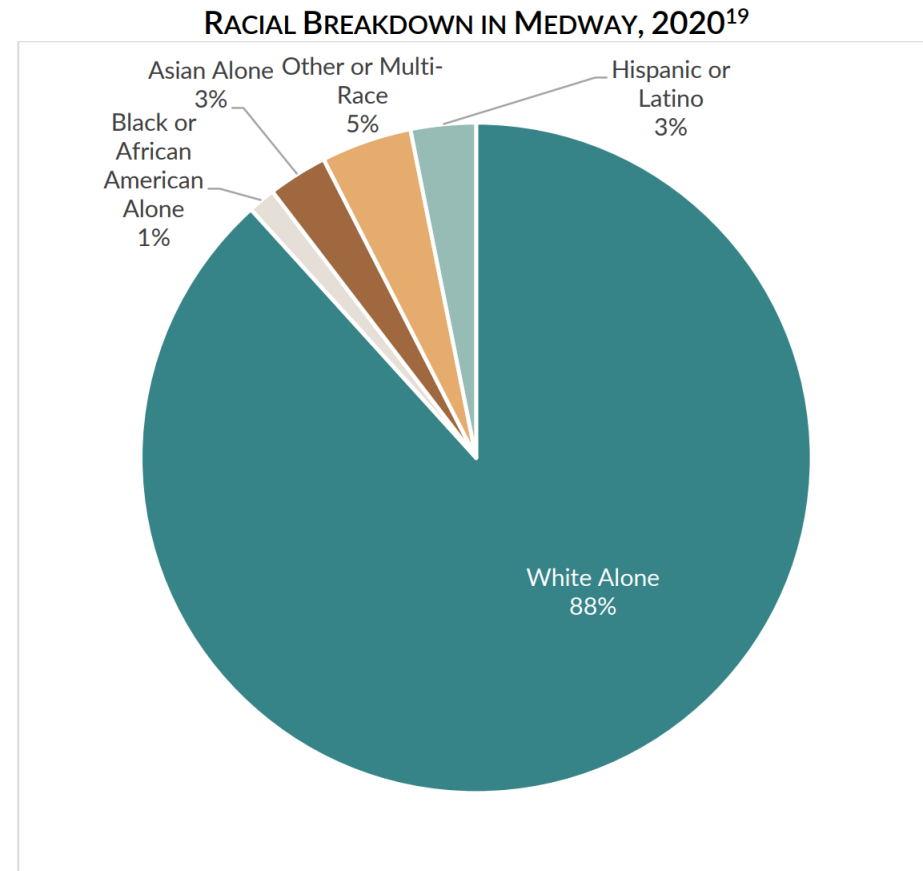
EXISTING CONDITIONS IN MEDWAY

Age Demographics



- Medway currently has 13,325 residents
 - **Increase** in residents over 65 and a **decrease** in residents under 18
 - This trend is projected to continue through 2030
- **Key Takeaway:** Medway's population is aging.

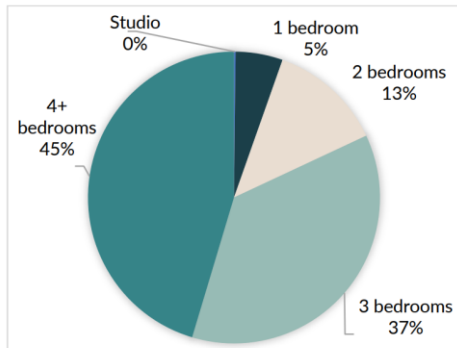
Racial Demographics



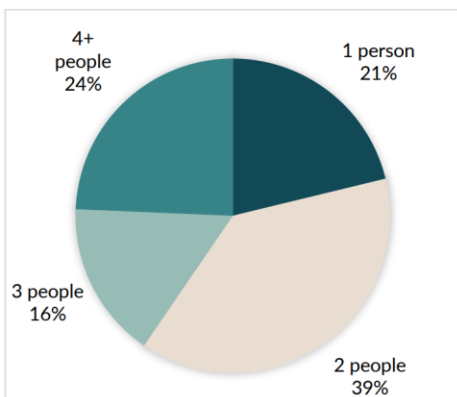
- In 2000, **over 97%** of Medway's population identified as White Alone
- In 2020, that number dropped to **88%**
- About 93% of Medway's population speaks English as their primary language
- **Key Takeaways:** Medway's population is becoming more racially diverse, and we have close to 1,000 residents for whom English is not primary.

Housing

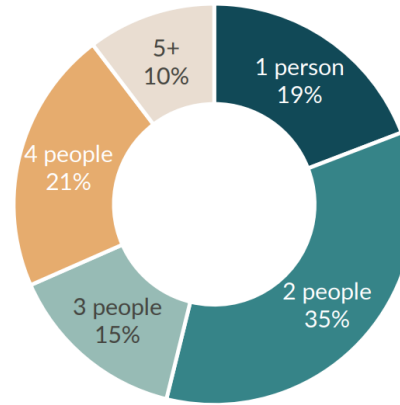
MEDWAY HOUSING UNITS BY NUMBER OF BEDROOMS, 2019³⁰



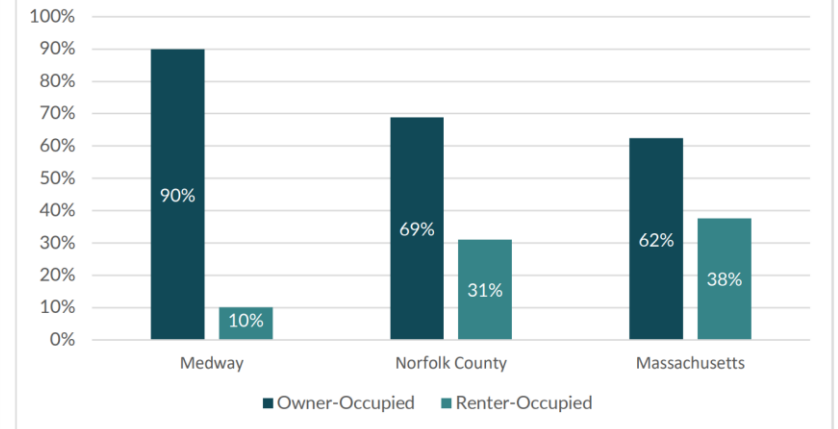
MEDWAY HOUSING UNITS BY HOUSEHOLD SIZE, 2019³¹



MEDWAY HOUSEHOLD SIZE, 2019¹⁷



OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS BY TENURE, 2019²³



- Over half of Medway households (54%) are estimated to be single or two-person households
- 90% of Medway's housing is owner-occupied (only 10% rental units), compared to 69% in Norfolk County and 62% across Massachusetts
- Smaller households tend to prefer alternatives to owner-occupied single family homes – rentals are smaller and more economically attainable
- 1,200 households in Medway (26%) are cost-burdened, meaning they spend more than 30% of their monthly income on housing costs
- Additional rental units coming online in the future (under construction)
- **Key Takeaways:** There is currently a mismatch between housing options and household sizes and needs – Medway needs more smaller housing options.

Accessibility & Transportation



Dial-a-Ride vehicles. *Source: JM Goldson*

- Sidewalk coverage in Medway is a bit disconnected
 - Some primary roadways like Route 109, West St, Winthrop St, and Holliston St, do not connect residents to each other or to activity centers across town
- Public transit (GATRA) has been significantly reduced due to the COVID-19 pandemic
 - Dial-A-Ride used to serve 2,000 passengers/year
 - Norfolk T shuttle used to serve over 7,600 passengers/year
- **Key Takeaways:** Medway has challenges with accessibility due to disconnected network of sidewalks, and public transit options have declined while needs have increased, especially among seniors.

The background is a dark blue gradient. A large, semi-transparent circle is positioned on the right side, overlapping the text. Two vertical lines of a slightly lighter blue shade run through the image, one on the left and one on the right, intersecting the circle.

OUR FINDINGS & COMMON THEMES

Defining Diversity

What Does Diversity Mean?

Diversity is a broad term that includes, but is not limited to, differences in:

- Mental Health
- Age
- Physical Ability
- Learning Ability
- Race/Ethnicity
- Accessibility Needs
 - Language
 - Transportation
 - Public Service Needs
- Gender/Identity
- Religion
- Socio-Economic Status
- Thought/Ideology/Politics

Key Takeaway: Diversity is about far more than race.

Core Themes

- Lack of awareness of Medway's diversity
- Town, schools, and police are committed to issues regarding diversity, equity, & inclusion
- Town has demonstrated willingness to make changes to support inclusivity
 - Formation of IDEA Committee
 - Inclusion of menorah & kinara at Choate Park in December
 - Banners in Thayer House during holiday season
- Expectations and realities can differ for residents who are part of under-represented populations
- Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion are “hot button”, politically-charged issues, making it difficult to define, discuss, and reach consensus on them
- Current social media climate in town creates hesitancy to speak up
- Mental health issues are a growing concern among residents of all ages
- Change is possible – will be incremental and require collective, collaborative effort

Specific Areas of Focus

- Housing
- Accessibility
 - Language
 - Transportation
 - Public Services
- Information Sharing
 - Communication
 - Education of Residents
 - “Social Capital” Gap
- Specific Populations
 - Police
 - Under-represented Populations
 - Schools
 - Seniors

Housing

Affordability

- Single-family homes make up the majority of housing stock in Medway
- Many cannot afford to stay in their homes (age in place) but lack options for where to go
- Limited stock of rental units currently, more under construction
- Price for rentals is unaffordable for many
- Mismatch between household size (majority one- or two-person households) and housing stock (majority 3+ bedroom single-family homes)

Affordable Housing

- Town has worked hard to meet state-mandated 10% threshold for affordable housing
- Relatively few existing Medway residents qualify or appear interested
- Affordable Housing in Medway may not be attractive to people who seek:
 - Public services
 - Public transportation
 - Translation services
 - Locally unavailable mental health resources
 - A more culturally-diverse population

Housing (cont'd)

Public Housing

- Medway maintains four public housing facilities.
 - Lovering Heights and Kenney Drive are Over-55 state-funded housing
 - Aging complexes with poor funding, accessibility & transportation
 - No elevators
 - Limited access ramps
 - Mahan Circle is federally-funded Over-55 housing.
 - Better funding, amenities and accessibility
 - Maple Lane is federally-funded family housing
 - Limited number of units
 - Limited accessibility
- Federally-funded properties offer better quality than state-funded locations

Housing Authority Issues

- The state 5% set-aside demographic mandate unworkable
- Lack of “minority” residents (as defined by state of MA DHCD) seeking housing in Medway
- Residents from other towns not seeking to relocate to Medway
 - Older complexes
 - Lack of services
 - Lack of transportation

Accessibility

Language

- English as a Second Language student population is rapidly increasing
- Schools and Municipal buildings designed for English-speaking population
 - Lack of multilingual signage and services
 - Lack of translation services
 - Affects student, elderly, and immigrant residents
 - Documents and interpersonal communication affected
 - Expensive solutions
 - Prevents full participation in the community

Transportation

- Limits students with unreliable transportation from participating in existing school programs, extracurricular activities
- Limited elder transportation services are stressed by demand
- Barrier to attracting new residents who rely on public transportation

Public Buildings & Services

- Limited accessibility for persons with physical impairments
- There is a lack of centralized resource and service delivery
- Social workers located at Housing Authority and Senior Center – no resources for general resident population
- No place for new residents to go when they arrive in Medway for direction
 - Often schools are the first interaction new families have
 - Schools not equipped to meet broad range of needs being presented

Information Sharing

Communication

- Many residents do not feel informed about important happenings in town
- Expand resources like business directory, centralized town calendar with events (not just board/committee meetings), more recorded meetings
- Medway-specific Facebook pages have created division among residents
- Lack of a platform for discussing DEI issues productively/respectfully

Education of Residents

- Many residents do not know how small towns in MA work / municipal regs
- Residents want to know how to become involved, what decisions they can impact, ways to elevate their ideas/concerns/questions
- Lack of awareness of municipal/school hiring practices and requirements

“Social Capital” Gap

- Long-time residents of Medway know who to contact with issues and how to get things done
 - Newer residents lack this knowledge, and there is currently no resource to help residents acquire it
 - Creates an inequity amongst residents based on who knows what/whom

Medway Police Department

- The Medway Police Department has steadily diversified in recent years
 - Diversity efforts are dependent on meeting archaic civil service hiring requirements
 - Must hire from resident preferred list
 - Very little diversity availability
 - Outstanding candidates excluded by residency and test scores
 - Civil Service currently under review by state commission
 - 30 by 30 program
 - National Program 30% of sworn officers be women by 2030
 - Medway not in position to meet this goal by 2030
 - 2040 is more likely due to the relative youth of Medway's force
 - Currently 12% of Medway's officers are women
 - School Resource Officer (SRO) program meets state regulations related to training, arrests, program requirements
 - National concerns related to juvenile arrests by SROs addressed by Massachusetts law change during 2017.
- Currently have a clinician (shared with Franklin), 3 years in and expecting to receive another.
 - Clinician is 100% grant funded by Dept. of Mental Health.
 - Second clinician will be split funded with Franklin
- Will have 14 officers with Crisis Intervention Training
- 20-25% is recommended; Medway is currently 56% and continuing to train
- MPD transparently shares data and statistics through annual reports

Under-Represented Populations

BIPOC and LGBTQ+

- BIPOC and LGBTQ+ residents are underrepresented in the population
 - Some struggle to find commonality and community
 - Lack of adult role models and mentors for youth
 - Challenges exist in attracting / retaining BIPOC and LGBTQ+ town and school employees
 - Schools seeing incidents targeted against students of color, students in the LGBTQ+ community, and other minority populations
 - These incidents can have a ripple effect throughout the community
 - Lack of opportunity for transparency can be misunderstood and lead to resentment or feelings of isolation

Mental Health Issues

- Significant rise in mental health issues among residents in recent years, especially during the pandemic
- Growing concern about lack of resources to support residents' mental health needs
- Mental health issues can affect anyone at anytime
 - Can have detrimental impact on individuals, families, and the community
 - Resources targeted at specific population groups is desired
 - Youth/Students
 - Seniors
 - Underprivileged
 - Veterans

Medway Public Schools

- Schools are seeing an increasingly diverse student population
- Excellent after-school sports and program availability
- Invested and caring teachers and staff
- Schools supportive of differing cultures, races, genders, sexuality
- More opportunity to expand learning exists
- Broader educational materials than in the past
- Excellent counselors
- Adults work hard to make students feel comfortable
- Surveys are common tools which sometimes fail to gain sought-after participation
- Students below high school level are less exposed to diverse materials, support, and programs
- Bullying between students in Middle School grades in particular is an ongoing issue
- Acceptance of differences among students is not universal
 - Special Needs
 - Sexuality
 - Gender
 - Race
 - Culture
- Difficulty attracting and retaining diverse teachers and staff
- Difficulty identifying needs of specific families and individuals
- Difficulty sharing resources with other districts
- Lack of longevity of successful efforts due to ever-changing school population

Seniors

- Seniors being priced out of Medway, many unable to live independently – can't afford housing, prescriptions, medical care, food, utilities, etc. – but do not have options for somewhere else to go
- Lack of smaller, more affordable housing options to meet their needs
- Role of Senior Center has changed dramatically over recent years
 - Used to be a place for connection, socialization, classes, lunches, and similar programming.
 - Now at least 70% of what Senior Center does is “putting out fires”, intervention, and providing human services resources
 - Applications for SNAP benefits
 - Fuel assistance
 - Mass Health
- Seniors being dropped off at Senior Center need more care/services than Senior Center can provide
- Many seniors lack access to/understanding of technology, risk falling victim to online scams
- Particularly impacted by transportation issues – increasing medical appointments at farther distances, Town unable to provide support

Summary of Key Takeaways

- Medway has become increasingly diverse in the last 20 years, but there remains a general lack of awareness about how the town has changed.
- The Town, Schools, and Police have started providing resources to support changing needs of residents, and more needs to be done.
- Specific areas of concern fall under the categories of:
 - Housing
 - Accessibility
 - Language/Translation Services
 - Transportation
 - Public Services
 - Information Sharing
 - Communication
 - Education of Residents
 - “Social Capital” Gap
- Current climate is highly politicized, making discussion of these issues more challenging
- There is a need for resources to help those in the majority consider the needs of those in the minority.
- Equity & Inclusion = Access
 - How do we ensure we continually consider the needs of others for access to all Medway has to offer?

Next Steps



- The IDEA Committee has created a survey for anyone who lives or works in Medway
- Survey Link: [IDEA Community Survey May 2022](#)
- Survey will be open until Friday, June 17, 2022
- Approximately 7-10 minutes to complete
- Opportunity to share feedback in open-ended format (no character limit), just as all focus group participants did:
 - Please provide any additional comments or suggestions that you have which may inform the IDEA committee's charge with gathering information related to diversity, equity, and inclusion here in Medway.

Questions?

