

ASHLAND, MA

TOWN PLANNER

Position Profile



The Community

The Town of Ashland is a municipality of approximately 18,000 residents located in eastern Massachusetts. The Town enjoys a strong sense of community with high quality government services, robust citizen engagement, and respect for its history.

Settled in the mid-18th century and previously known as “Unionville”, Ashland was incorporated as a town in 1846. The Town is 12.9 square miles in size, located in Middlesex County and bordered by Framingham to the northeast, Sherborn to the east, Holliston to the south, Hopkinton to the southwest, and Southborough to the northwest. Ashland is centrally located between the cities of Boston and Worcester at a distance of approximately 20 miles. The Town benefits from its central location and convenient transportation access to Routes I-90 and I-495. The Town also has its own stop on the Framingham/Worcester Commuter Rail line.

The rail line and the Sudbury River, both of which run through the center of Ashland, were key to the development of the Town in the mid to late 1800’s, attracting numerous shoe and boot mills, and creating a bustling town center within the generally rural community. By the early 20th century, these mills began closing but were soon replaced as the major employer within the Town by Telechron, which produced the first electric clocks using technology invented by local inventor Henry Warren.

In the 1950’s, the Town’s population boomed from 3,500 to nearly 8,000 in 1960, changing from a primarily rural town to a residential suburb by the 1980’s.

In spite of the rapid growth in development and population, the Town was able to preserve large tracts of open space and forest-land including the Ashland Town Forest, Ashland State Park, Warren Woods and portions of the Hopkinton State Park. Significantly, the Town has retained its core town center, that includes a number of small retail establishments and close knit residential uses within a substantial pedestrian friendly district.

Ashland has two major routes that pass through the Town and have significance for the Town’s history and development. Route 135 runs through the southern edge of the Town’s center connecting Ashland with its neighbors of Hopkinton and Framingham. There is some commercial development along this roadway, especially around the Town center. The route is particularly significant each April as it is the route of the Boston Marathon, which initially had its starting line in in Ashland before its relocation to Hopkinton in 1924.

Route 126 is located on the southern edge of the Town border along the Sherborn boundary but connecting Ashland with Holliston and Framingham. Rt. 126 has become a major commercial corridor within the Town with substantial retail and multi-family developments.

Throughout the substantial growth and development of the past seventy years, growing from a population of 3,500 to 18,000, the Town has maintained its sense of community and small New England town feel. This sense has been maintained through traditional community events, scalable development within the Town center, support for maintaining accessible open space, and active community engagement.

The Town’s municipal website, which provides substantial information about Ashland, can be found at <https://www.ashlandmass.com>

Government

Ashland has an Open Town Meeting form of government with a five-member Board of Selectmen that serves as the chief elected officers of the Town. The Board of Selectmen appoints a Town Manager who is responsible for the overall operation of the Town. The Town has several other elected bodies including a School Committee, Board of Assessors, Board of Health, Library Trustees, Housing Authority and Planning Board, which is charged with guiding the physical growth and development of Ashland.

The Planning Board is legally mandated to carry out certain provisions of the Subdivision Control Law (M.G.L., Chapter 41) and of the Zoning Act (M.G.L., Chapter 40A). These legal responsibilities are reflected in the Subdivision Rules and Regulations and in the Town's Zoning By-law. The Board is assisted in its work by the [Planning Department](#) staff and consultants, which are led and managed by the Town Planner.

Position Responsibilities

The Town Planner, who reports to the Town Manager, is responsible for directing programs regarding municipal planning, zoning, and subdivision matters within the Town as delineated by state statute, local zoning bylaws, and subdivision rules and regulations. The Town Planner works closely with other departments and officials of the Town as well as various boards and committees, and the public.

The Town Planner is responsible for coordinating all planning activities in the Town; serves as staff support to the Planning Board; reviews all development plans for compliance and ensures plans are developed as approved; and facilitates all long-range planning efforts. The Town Planner provides technical advice to citizens and support to the Planning Board, and seeks and secures grants to support planning-related activities. The full job description is available upon request.

Town Finances

The FY19 operating budget, including general and enterprise funds, for the Town is approximately \$68.6 million. The Town does utilize the Community Preservation Act to raise funds for eligible purposes of open space, historic preservation and affordable housing. At the beginning of FY19 the CPA fund had a balance of nearly \$2.8 million. The Town has also been diligent in building its reserves through a stabilization fund with a current balance of \$5.7 million, and an OPEB Trust Fund of \$1.8 million. Ashland holds a AAA/stable bond rating from Standard and Poor's.

Development Projects

Ashland's location, high quality services, and its access to highways and commuter train service make it an attractive place to live and work. As a result, the Town is experiencing ongoing growth and investment with a number of development projects underway throughout the Town that are in line with the Ashland's [Strategic Plan](#).

The Town Planner will be responsible for initiating and continuing to advance a number of [transformative projects](#) in town, including:

Downtown Improvements: In an attempt to combine the historic elements of Ashland's downtown with a vision for the future, Ashland is going through a renaissance in its small downtown including innovative business incubators like the [Corner Spot](#) and [Ashland Farmers Market](#). Since 2015, Ashland's downtown has seen over \$10 million in private investment, and an additional \$3 million permitted in 2018. This private capital has been inspired by public sector projects like the \$1.4 million [Sudbury Riverwalk](#) project approved in 2017 and currently under construction, and a \$12 million [downtown streetscape improvement project](#) scheduled to start in 2020. Additionally In 2018, the town approved design funding for a [new joint public safety building](#), which will open up two critical parcels in downtown for reuse likely in 2021. The planner will be responsible for leading and developing a comprehensive zoning rewrite in the downtown area through a recent grant award to continue the progress that has resulted from these various initiatives.

Route 126 Corridor: The entire stretch of [Pond Street](#) (Route 126) from the Holliston to Framingham lines is scheduled to be reconstructed in 2021 as part of the state's Transportation Improvement Program. Accompanying this work will be significant opportunities to redevelop portions of the parcels along the roadway to make it Ashland's primary commercial corridor. These redevelopment projects will result in an increase in developments requiring review by the Planning Board and Planning Department staff.



Warren Historic District: Outside of downtown, the Town has also started the process of preserving its last remaining agricultural area by combining a number of parcels into the Warren Historic District, which will create a function hall in a historic barn adjacent to Framingham State University's Warren Center, a museum/educational center on Eliot Street, and restoring and preserving a historic home on Chestnut Street. The district combines these new property acquisitions with the 120-acre Warren Woods property, which was purchased in 2010. A project manager is being hired specifically to manage the operational

aspects of the project. In 2018 the Town also approved the acquisition of an historic 7-acre parcel, known as the Valentine Estate. The planner will be involved in helping determine a re-use of this property and the implementation of that plan.

Rail Transit District: In 2018 the Town voted to acquire 120 acres of open space that is adjacent to the commuter rail station. This [Rail Transit District](#) will be anchored by [398 luxury apartments](#), a regional full-service YMCA facility, a 120-180 unit senior apartment community with an affordable component, and significant open space areas with passive recreational amenities such as walking and biking trails. The Town Planner will be intricately involved in this development.

The Ideal Candidate

Ashland is seeking a Town Planner with municipal experience. The successful candidate must be able to demonstrate knowledge, skills and prior success in directing programs regarding community and economic development, municipal planning, zoning, and subdivision matters.

The Town Planner must work collaboratively with the various interests of the Town. He or she is expected to work cooperatively with all constituencies within the Town, including residents, elected and appointed officials, volunteers, and business owners. He or she must have strong communication skills.

The Town Planner must be a creative problem-solver who is energetic, accessible, trustworthy, collaborative, and a consensus-builder. He or she must be highly motivated, innovative, and ethical.

The successful candidate should possess a Bachelor's degree in land use, community, regional or urban planning, landscape architecture, engineering or a closely related field with five years of experience; Master's degree preferred; or any equivalent combination of education, training and experience which provides the required knowledge, skills and abilities to perform the essential functions of the job. American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) certification is desired.

Compensation

The Town of Ashland will offer a compensation package that is competitive with comparable Massachusetts' communities. The current salary of the Town Planner is \$86,000. A comprehensive benefits package is part of the Town Planner's total compensation. Residency is not required.



How To Apply

Interested applicants should provide résumés, in confidence, by 5:00 p.m. on February 22, 2019, via email to:

Apply@communityparadigm.com

Subject: Ashland Town Planner

Submit a **single PDF** with cover letter and resume

Following the closing date, resumes will be reviewed according to the outlined qualifications. An internal team will interview the most qualified candidates in confidence. Based upon these interviews, a selection of finalists will be chosen for further evaluation and reference checks and then forwarded to the Town Administrator. Finalists will be contacted for references and approval of background reviews before their selection is advanced to the Town Administrator.

Questions regarding the position should be directed to Bernard Lynch, Principal, Community Paradigm Associates, at: blynch@communityparadigm.com or 978-621-6733.

The Town of Ashland is an AA/EOE employer.