

An aerial photograph of Amherst, Massachusetts, showing a mix of historic brick buildings, modern structures, and green spaces. The town is nestled in a valley with rolling hills in the background. The text "Amherst" and "State of the Town" is overlaid in white, with a white line separating the two lines of text.

# Amherst State of the Town

**Town Hall – Amherst, Massachusetts**

December 4, 2023

# Paul Bockelman

AMHERST TOWN MANAGER

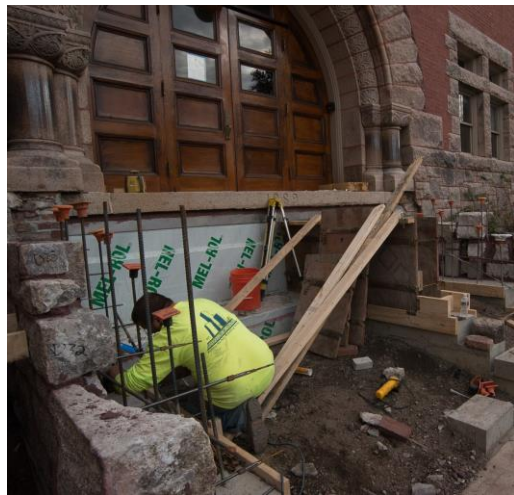
## CHARTER SECTION 2.2

State of the Town Address:

“Each year the Town Council President and the Town Manager shall address the elected bodies, officers of the Town, and the public on the state of affairs of the Town.”









# Finances: Fundamentals

- Standard and Poors Global Credit Rating = AA+ (May 2021)

*“We view the town's management as very strong,  
with strong financial policies and practices...”*

- “Strong budgetary performance.”
- “Very strong budget flexibility.”
- “Very strong liquidity.”
- “Very strong debt and contingent liability profile.”
- Strong working relationship with Schools and Library



# Finances: Accomplishments

## MANAGED FY22 BUDGET SUCCESSFULLY

No additional appropriation was needed to balance FY22 budget

## Capital Planning

Increased allocation to 10.5% of levy

## DISCIPLINED ABOUT GROWING RESERVES & REDUCING DEBT

Reserves are \$24 million as of July 1, 2023 (26.7% of the operating budget)

## BOND RATING SECURED

S&P Global rated the Town at AA+

## ADOPTED & IMPLEMENTED FY23 BUDGET

No reserves were needed to balance FY23 budget

## Capital Investment

Addressing deferred maintenance of existing infrastructure

# Finances: Challenges

- Predicting the future - cautious optimism
- Beginning major capital projects
- Demand for facilities and services
- Pressure on taxpayers
- Balancing investments in new initiatives and fiscal sustainability



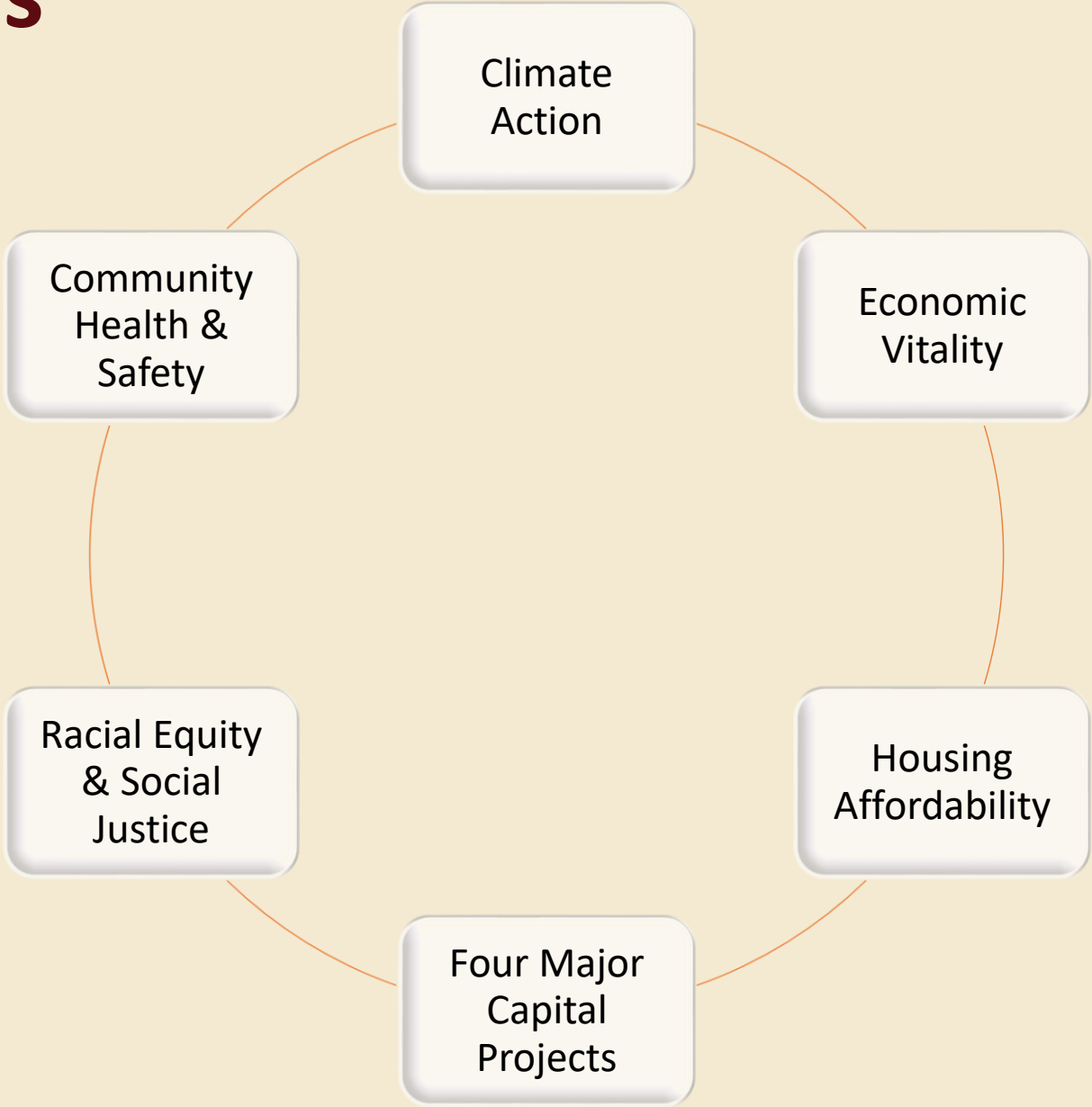


TOWN OF AMHERST

# Accomplishments

2023

# Policy Goals





# Climate Action

- Climate Action, Adaptation and Resiliency Plan (CAARP)
- Updated greenhouse gas inventory
- Community Choice Aggregation
- Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE)
- Solar on the Landfill completed
- Historic investment in sustainability initiatives
- Vehicles purchased that are hybrid and with idle reduction technology
- Activated three EV charging stations at no cost to the Town
- Operating budgetary commitment to energy conservation and retrofits
- 5-year Capital Plan includes assessment on climate
- Completed Town-wide feasibility study for solar
- Developed Draft Solar Bylaw
- Issued RFI for waste-hauler bylaw



# Community Health & Safety

- Supported review and revisions to Residential Rental Bylaw
- Continued implementation of CRESS Department
- Initiated work on establishing a Resident Oversight Board
- Secured services of an Ameri-Corps member to work exclusively on initiatives serving youth





# Economic Vitality

- Negotiated five-year Strategic Partnership Agreement with the University of Massachusetts providing \$5 million in funds to the Town and Schools
- Completed new \$2 million roundabout at Pomeroy Village Business District funded primarily with a MassWorks grant
- Obtained \$775,000 grant for sidewalk and other improvements near the East Village Business District
- Obtained two grants (\$827,000 and \$986,000) to rehabilitate the North Common
- Installed new wayfinding signs and welcome signs at various locations
- Completed construction of new crosswalks, walkways, and roadway improvements on Kellogg Avenue and other locations in Downtown Amherst
- Secured funding for new sidewalk on the east side of the South Common
- Installed infrastructure for a new restroom in Kendrick Park near the new playground; installation in 2024
- Worked to address zoning issues including demolition delay, flood plain, etc.



# Housing Affordability



Worked with Craig’s Doors to ensure year-round shelter at multiple locations



70 1-2-3 bedroom units on Belchertown Road/East Street



28 units of single-resident supported housing at 132 Northampton Road



Year-round shelter site at former VFW on Main Street



30 units of homeownership opportunities on 8 acres on Ball Lane





# Racial Equity & Social Justice

- Continued development of the Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Department
- Introduced policy and operational changes in hiring and purchasing practices
- Conducted DEI assessments of Town departments
- Maintained budget commitment to support racial equity work
- Reparations – supported the work of the African Heritage Reparation Assembly
  - Adopted Reparations Stabilization Fund
  - Council appropriated \$210,000 in FY22 and \$134,330 in FY23 to the Fund
- Numerous staff trainings led by the DEI staff and including staff-led Core Equity Team
- Community workshops in conjunction with National Day of Racial Healing





## MAJOR CAPITAL PROJECTS

### Overview:

- Maintained fiscal discipline to ensure the ability to fund the capital needs of the Town
- Continued to build reserves (Increase from 14% in FY16 to 27% in FY23)
- Continued to reduce debt service

### Projects:

- **School:** On track to meet all deadlines; Town Council has authorized borrowing; \$10 million in additional funds from the MSBA; secured positive vote from the Town Council
- **Library:** On track to meet all deadlines; awaiting final Town Council authorization to move to the next phase; \$1.7 million in additional funds from the MBLC secured; private fundraising moving forward including \$1 million gift from Amherst College
- **DPW:** RFP for site; pursuing site additional options; conducting due diligence
- **Fire:** Pursuing site options; building reserves to fund the project from Capital Stabilization Fund
- **North Amherst Library:** Finalizing punch-list items; ribbon-cutting in the very near future
- **Centennial Water Treatment facility:** On track to meet all deadlines; \$21m plus additional funds from State Revolving Fund secured
- **North Common:** On track to meet all deadlines; \$1.8m grant funds secured
- **Wastewater Treatment facility:** Investment in Gravity Belt Thickener designed/in progress; \$3.1m funds secured
- **Roads:** \$2m worth of work in spring 2024; new additional \$1m to be bid for 2024; additional funds for FY25



# Operations – Maintain High Quality Services

It's the  
People!







TOWN OF AMHERST

Thank You!