

Exercise 1: Explore a Scenario

Your Guide to “Winds of Change”

With comparisons to “Let It Be,”
the scenario based on current trends

MetroFuture Working Sessions

December 5, 2006: Sheraton Ferncroft, Danvers

December 6, 2006: Lombardo's, Randolph



MAKING A GREATER BOSTON REGION
AN INITIATIVE OF THE METROPOLITAN AREA PLANNING COUNCIL



This is what the region might be like if communities made major efforts to address challenges regionally, with individual cities and towns sharing in the costs and benefits of growth. This alternative would **significantly change the regional distribution of growth** and would minimize many of the Current Trends, with just 30,000 acres of open space lost over the coming decades and a significant increase in the amount of high-skill labor and the overall labor supply. This alternative would require new land use planning tools and a great **increase in regional cooperation**, including some regional oversight of local planning and land use decisions. This scenario would present many challenges; in particular, the emphasis on redeveloping town centers and urban areas would require careful planning and investments to protect quality of life for existing residents, reduce local traffic impacts, and protect historic resources and community character.

Regional Growth Patterns

Instead of being dispersed across the region, **most growth would occur in areas that are already developed**. The region's **Developing Suburbs** would see **lower growth rates** than under Current Trends, and 65% of that growth would occur through development of **compact neighborhoods and multifamily housing in town centers**.

Semi-rural Developing Suburbs without a strong town center or redevelopment areas would experience a dramatic decrease in growth rates. **Growth rates in Maturing Suburbs would increase**, accommodated through redevelopment in town centers, business districts, and vacant commercial and industrial areas; only 10% of new housing here would be single-family homes. A **dramatic increase in the use of mixed use developments** (for example, housing located above shops) would help to revitalize local business districts, but would change the physical character of these areas, with taller buildings and a more “urban” feel.



The **Inner Core and Regional Urban Centers** would have **significantly higher growth rates** than under Current Trends, accommodating 50% of the region's new population growth (up from 37% under Current Trends), and there would be more diversity in the types of housing found in these communities, with an increase in the proportion of **townhouses and 2-4 family homes**.

In contrast to housing patterns, the distribution of jobs across the region's community types would be similar to Current Trends. However, new employment in Maturing and Developing suburbs would be **tightly concentrated in a limited number of towns** with transit access and robust infrastructure to support new growth.

Housing Choices

The diversity of housing types in suburban communities would create **many more choices for people looking for apartments, condominiums, and townhouses**. There would be more **opportunities for seniors to “downsize”** from their single family homes into new apartments and condominiums in town centers without having to leave their hometown. In order to ensure choices for families, cities and towns would encourage developers to create units with three or more bedrooms. The region would produce **relatively few single family homes** with large yards, possibly making this type of housing somewhat more expensive than it is under current trends. The increased number of apartments and condominiums in suburban communities would mean that more units might be affordably priced for working-class families; and **new rules allowing condominium conversion** of existing single family homes in suburban neighborhoods would create more opportunities for homeownership.

“Winds of Change”

As a result, many **suburban communities might become more economically and ethnically diverse.**

Due to an increased pace of development in urban communities and increased production of 2-4 family homes and townhouses, there would be **more housing opportunities for young professionals and their families.** This could lead to a resurgence of Regional Urban Centers, with more vibrant urban neighborhoods outside of Route 128, making the region more attractive to young professionals.

Labor and Prosperity

Dramatic **improvements to public school systems and a stronger network of community colleges** and adult education opportunities would help to increase the region’s educational attainment. Improved public education would **add another 50,000 high school graduates to the workforce,** and adult basic education (including GED programs, literacy and math programs, and English Language classes,) would add another 60,000 workers with a GED or equivalent skills. Attendance at community colleges and universities would together increase by 9,000 students per year. As a result, the **labor shortage at high skill levels would decrease significantly,** helping the region to attract and retain high-tech firms. As more people rise to higher educational attainment levels, communities would **expand services such as child care assistance and English Language classes,** helping 30,000 low-skill workers enter the labor force. As a result, the overall labor shortage in the region would decrease to 115,000 workers (from 170,000 under Current Trends.)

Communities would enact **strong land use regulations that focus job growth** in areas that are already developed and have adequate infrastructure. Fewer jobs would be located in undeveloped areas and more would occur through redevelopment, aided by **proactive planning policies that will help to reduce time spent in permitting.** The creation of new offices and retail shops in town centers and mixed use developments might create the kind of spaces attractive to very **small businesses and micro-enterprises** that play an increasingly important role in the region’s creative economy.

Community Vitality

Increases in **state aid will be directed to those areas with the largest expenses for new growth.** Because new jobs would be concentrated in already developed areas, some suburban communities would have less new tax revenue from commercial development, but also fewer demands for infrastructure extensions and roadway improvements associated with economic development. More cities and towns would pursue alternative sources of local revenue such as meal taxes and would save money through regionalization of municipal services (emergency dispatch, school administration, assessing, and public works) and participation in statewide insurance and pension programs.

A portion of state aid would be reserved for local and inter-municipal planning efforts. **Cities and towns would be required to have a local land use plan and to follow that plan** when making development decisions. Local plans would need to reflect best planning practices and the regional land use plan. In order to effectively focus growth, municipalities would use **new land use controls,** such as regional transfer of development rights programs and zoning rules that could limit development in outlying areas. **Increased planning and better urban design** would be necessary to manage the impacts associated with redevelopment and ‘infill’ development on vacant lots. Communities might need to expand the capacity of water and sewer systems serving developed areas, but





MAKING A GREATER BOSTON REGION
AN INITIATIVE OF THE METROPOLITAN AREA PLANNING COUNCIL

would make **few sewer and water extensions to currently unserved areas**. Residents without cars, particularly the elderly, would have more options to access the region's healthcare facilities since more new homes would be located near jobs and because transit service would be improved.

Increased growth rates in the Maturing Suburbs and in urban communities would increase the number of public school students, requiring funding to upgrade urban school buildings or build new schools (which might be difficult to site due to land constraints). More housing choices for middle class families in urban areas would **increase the proportion of middle class students in urban public schools**, potentially increasing the resources available to these schools. Slower overall growth rates in Developing Suburbs will slow the growth in school children in these towns, reducing the need for new schools.

Air, Water, and Wildlife

A **comprehensive approach to water conservation** would reduce per-capita and per-employee water use rates by 15%. New state regulations would allow the reuse of highly treated wastewater for many purposes, including irrigation, industrial processes, and toilet flushing in residential developments. The widespread use of rainwater collection systems (cisterns and rain barrels) and a shift away from large lawns in new development would help to reduce summertime water demand. More growth in the Inner Core would mean that **more people would be in communities served by the MWRA system**, which would have adequate capacity to support that growth. Increased growth rates in Maturing Suburbs might also increase demands on systems that are at or over their state withdrawal limits. Limited expansion of the MWRA—accompanied by careful land use planning and stringent conservation requirements—might be considered in order to reduce local watershed impacts, but would result in higher water bills for residents in new member communities.

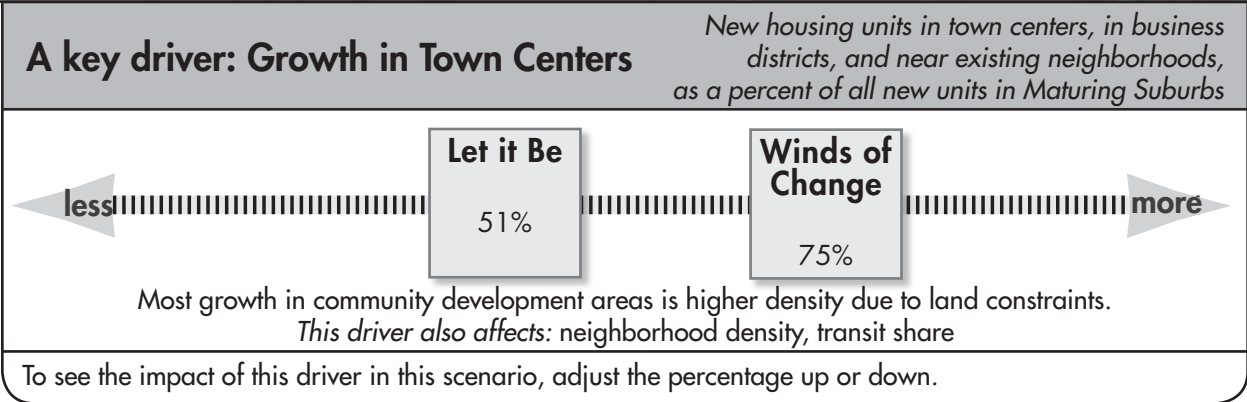
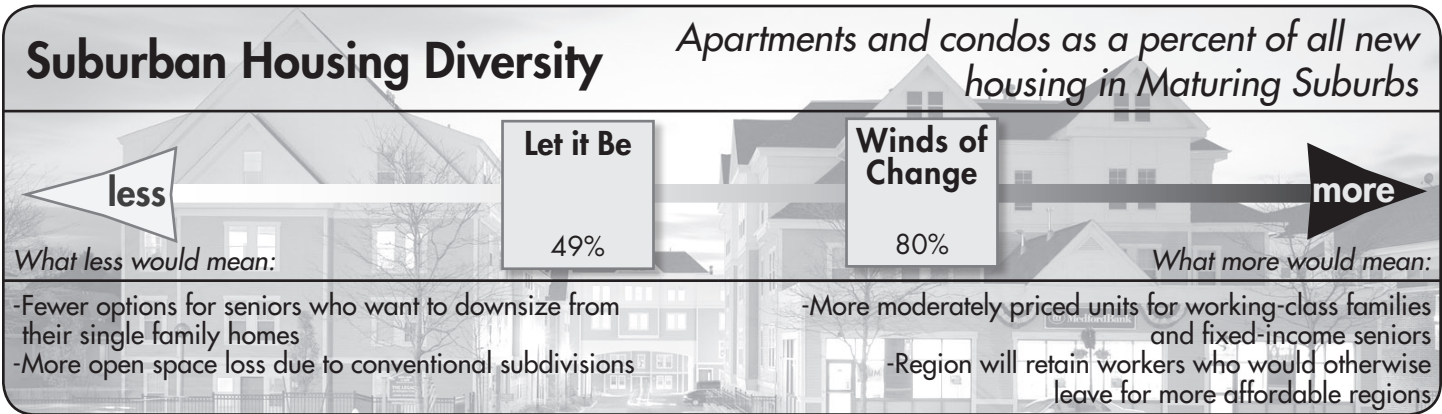
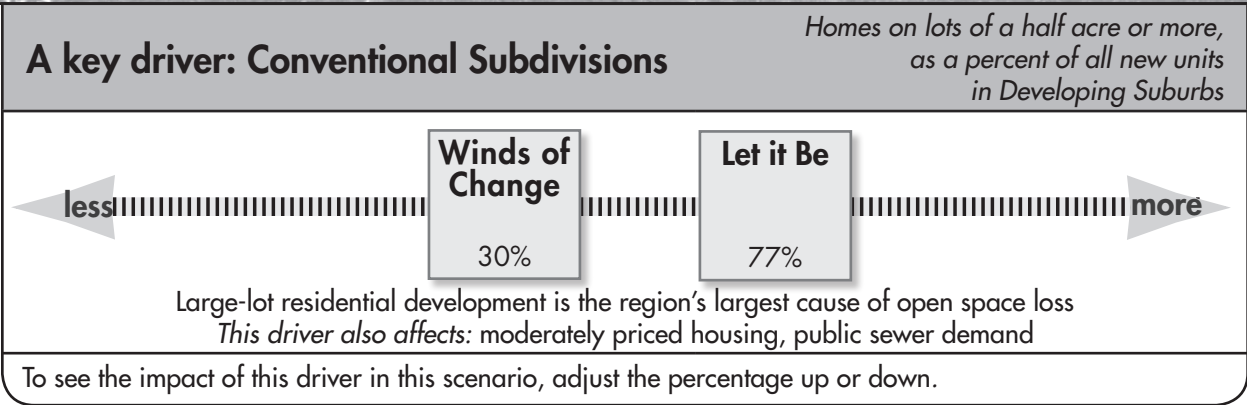
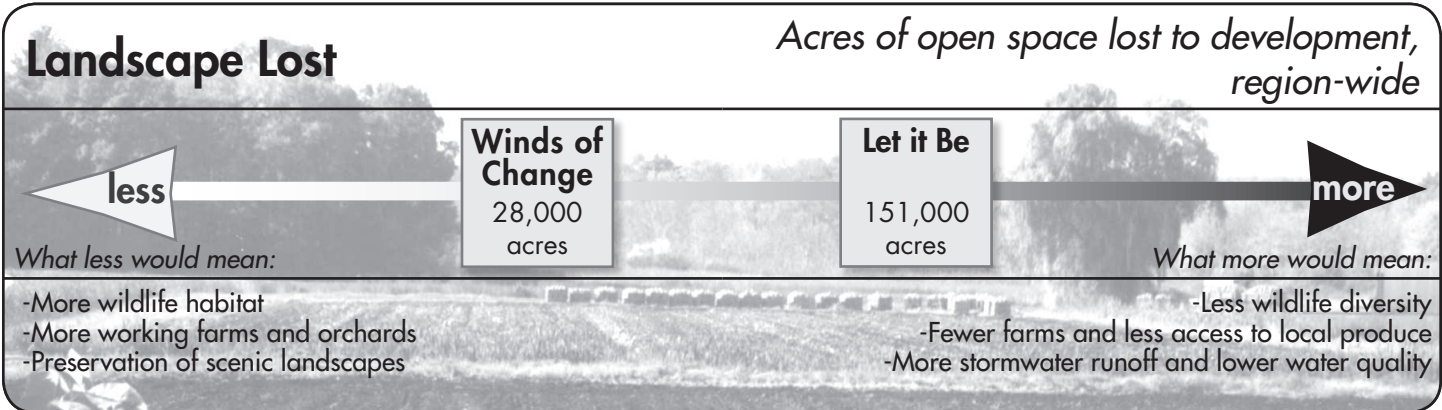
The state, municipalities, and conservation organizations would preserve 150,000 acres of land identified in the State Land Conservation Plan, and would create **more parks and playgrounds in urban areas** that currently have limited access to open space. Four thousand acres of land in urban areas would be purchased for parks, playgrounds, and community gardens.



Getting Around

The concentration of growth in existing town centers and commercial districts would **increase the potential for new transit service in suburban areas**, including local buses and 'feeder' service to commuter rail stops. Increased ridership in urban areas would drive service improvements, including increased frequency and new services. **Less money would be spent on expansion of major highways** and improvements to highway interchanges, but residents might have more alternatives to driving. Local traffic in town centers and downtown areas might increase with new jobs and housing, but pedestrian improvements and concentration of stores and services in these areas might make it **more convenient for people to conduct errands on foot or by bicycle**. An expanded network of bicycle and pedestrian routes and off-road trails would provide better access to regional open spaces.

"Winds of Change"



Explore a Scenario

High-Skill Workforce

Supply of workers with a 2- or 4-year college degree

Let it Be
-186,000 (shortage)

Winds of Change
-19,000 (shortage)

shortage

surplus

What a shortage would

What a surplus would mean:

- Firms might find it difficult to find high-skill labor and would have to pay higher salaries
- Employers might relocate to other regions with more skilled labor.
- Abundant skilled labor might attract more high-tech companies
- Many well-educated residents might not be able to find appropriate work and might leave the region

A key driver: Community Colleges

Students enrolled at community colleges, (increase over current levels, students per year)

Let it Be
no increase

Winds of Change
4,500 students

less

more

Community colleges provide important job skills and are often a stepping stone to a 4-year degree.
This driver also affects: Total labor shortage

To see the impact of this driver in this scenario, adjust the enrollment increase up or down.

Neighborhood Density

Current residents who would experience large increases in residential density

Let it Be
25,000 residents

Winds of Change
221,000 residents

less

more

What less would mean:

- More neighborhoods would stay the way they are with minimal disturbance from development
- Fewer impacts to historic resources
- Fewer housing opportunities

What more would mean:

- More changes to the appearance of a neighborhood
- Potential for increased traffic and construction impacts
- More customers for local businesses
- May reduce opportunities for new parks and playgrounds

A key driver: Housing on Redeveloped Land

Housing units created through redevelopment, as a percent of all new units in Regional Urban Centers

Let it Be
48%

Winds of Change
63%

less

more

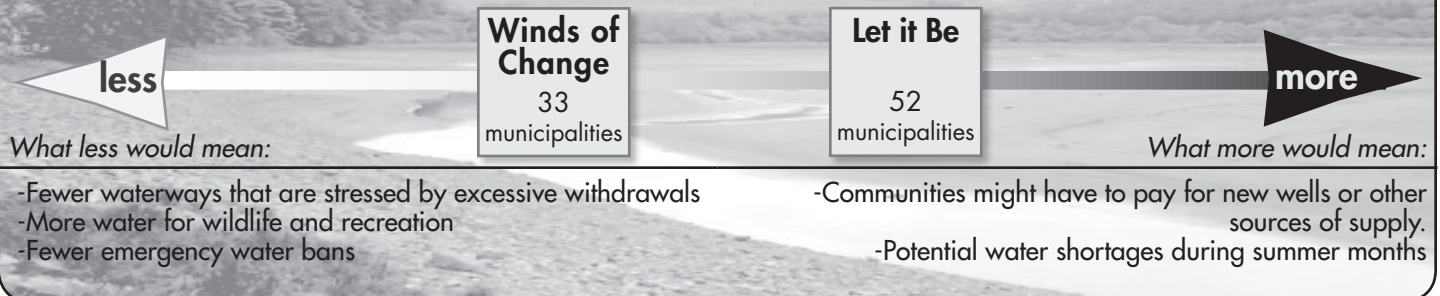
As the amount of redevelopment goes up, the number of impacted neighborhoods also increases.
This driver also affects: room for industry, transit share

To see the relative impact of this driver in this scenario, adjust the proportion up or down.

"Winds of Change"

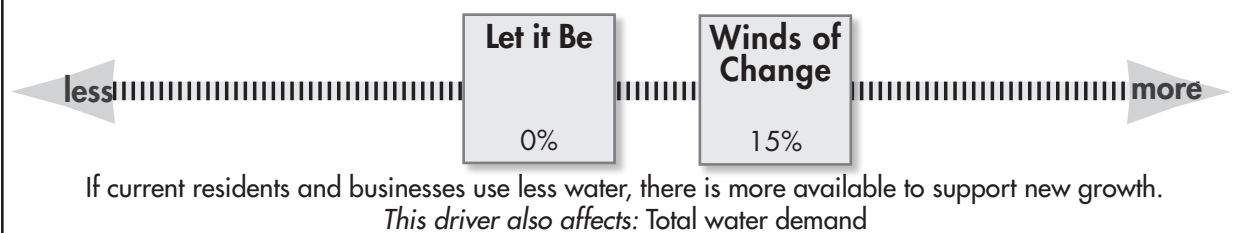
Water Shortages

Number of cities and towns that would exceed current state withdrawal limits



A key driver: Water Conservation Programs

Percent decrease in water use per resident and per employee



To see the relative impact of this driver in this scenario, adjust the conservation factor up or down.

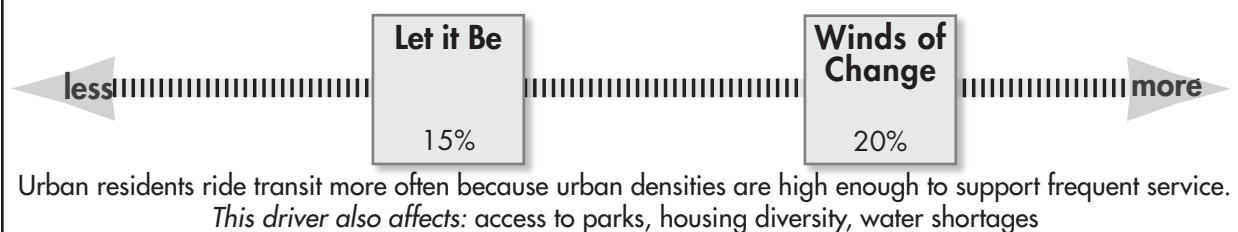
Transit Ridership

Transit use, as a percentage of all trips, region-wide



A key driver: New Urban Residents

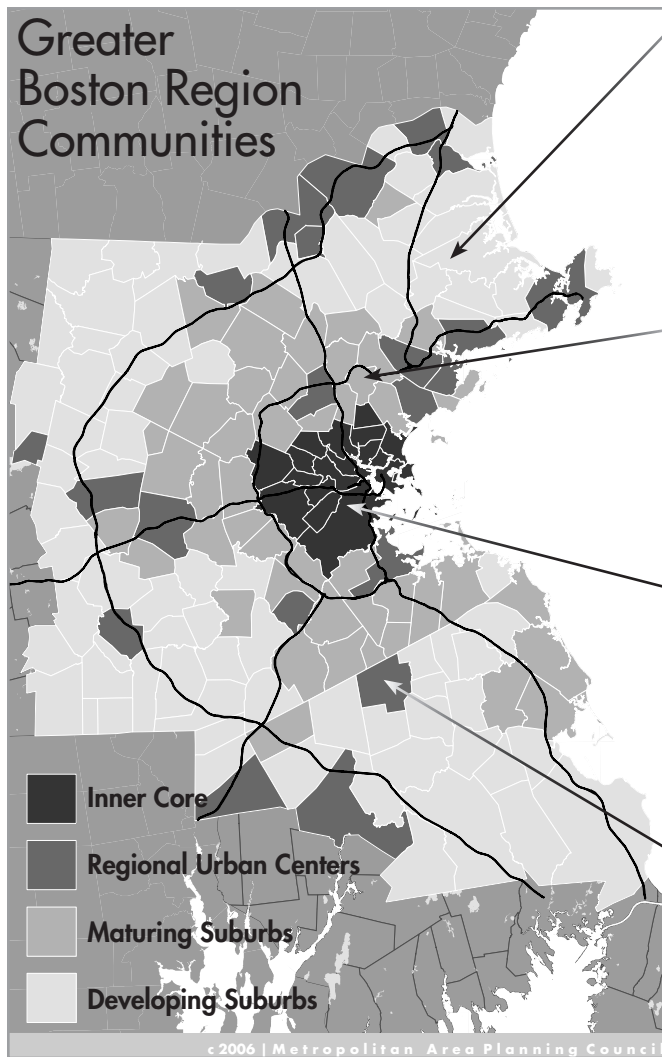
Residential growth in the Inner Core, as a percent of growth in the entire region



Due to time constraints, it is not possible to adjust this driver during the working session.

About MetroFuture Community Types

In order to understand how regional trends will affect the region's diverse communities over the coming decades, MetroFuture identified four basic community types. While each city and town is unique, communities within each type share important characteristics that will influence their development over the coming decades.



Developing Suburbs

- 77 towns, generally along I-495 and on the North and South Shores
- 900,000 residents (21% of current population)
- Above average growth rates (19% projected)
- Some have strong town centers and moderate density neighborhoods, others are more rural
- Plenty of vacant land available for development

Maturing Suburbs

- 50 towns, generally along Route 128
- 1.0 million residents (24% of current population)
- Average growth rates (11% projected)
- Mostly moderate density neighborhoods
- Dwindling supply of unprotected developable land

Inner Core

- 16 cities and towns, including the "streetcar suburbs" inside Route 128
- 1.3 million residents (31% of current population)
- Below average growth rate (6% projected)
- High density neighborhoods, multifamily housing, large immigrant populations

Regional Urban Centers

- 21 urban centers mostly outside of Route 128
- 1.1 million residents (24% of current population)
- Below average growth rate (9% projected)
- Urban neighborhoods, large immigrant communities
- Some still have large amounts of developable land

Some key definitions:

Community Development Areas: Areas that are most suitable for more housing and job growth, by virtue of their location, available infrastructure, and possibilities for redevelopment. Includes urban areas, most larger suburban town centers, commercial districts, and higher density neighborhoods. Also includes areas near transit stops and many areas with existing sewer systems. MetroFuture identified community development areas in all but the most rural of the region's towns. In total, these community development areas comprise approximately 30% of the region's total area.

Redevelopment: The reuse of already developed land for new housing and jobs. Commercial and industrial redevelopment involves rehabilitating older industrial and commercial land for new office parks, industrial uses, or mixed use developments of jobs and housing. In residential areas, redevelopment may take place on abandoned or vacant lots, or by subdividing larger homes into multiple units, or through the construction of taller buildings in place of lower density housing.

60 Temple Place
Boston, Massachusetts 02111
617-451-2770
www.mapc.org

