

# Identifying Comparable Towns (II)

Rob Carver

Prepared for Nov 29, 2021 meeting

Town Meeting Subcommittee of Governance Study  
Committee

# Recall: “Study – Comparative & Neighboring Communities 2021”

Sharon	
Stoughton	Hanover
Canton	Sudbury
Norwood	Medway
Walpole	Westford
Foxborough	Hopkinton
Mansfield	Holliston
Easton	Hingham
Wayland	Medfield
Duxbury	Westwood
Pembroke	Lynnfield
Concord	
Scituate	

- Variables considered (DOR/ MTF data)
  - Population
  - Median Household Income
  - Res/Open Space land as % of total valuation
  - Eq. Valuation per capita
  - Student enrollment % of population
  - Population Density
  - Total Road miles

## Takeaways and Next Steps

- Choice of variables heavily influences resulting list
- We can/should think about attributes that are relevant to our mission
- Master Plan is one guide (changing demographics, appeal of Open Space, Education, etc.)
- What other data would be helpful?
- Who else wants to work on this aspect?

# Question raised in prior meeting

- Can we identify factors that account for variation in Town Meeting attendance?
- Problem: no readily accessible centralized records of TM turnout across state

# 2-stage Analysis Plan for this round

- Stage 1: Use available data to model **Voter Turnout in 2018 Gubernatorial election**, as a *proxy* for citizen engagement
  - Statewide median turnout 64% (Range 33 - 77)
  - Sharon turnout 68%
  - Data sources:
    - NY Times election results
    - Mass. Dept of Revenue
    - Mass Taxpayers Foundation
  - Find variables most strongly associated with election turnout, using several standard methods
- Stage 2: Use those variables to identify peer communities using *cluster analysis*
- Omitted Boston, but included all other 350 cities and towns
- Caveats: Data from different years, some towns have incomplete data

# 5 Variables Selected in Turnout Analyses

- **Income per capita (2020)**
- *Equalized Valuation per Capita (2018)*
- *Population 2020 (projected)*
- *Low Income Students % (2020)*
- *White% 2020*

# 16 Peer Town Candidates

Acton

Westford

Bedford

Boxborough

Milton

Canton

Ashland

Belmont

Hopkinton

Westborough

Burlington

Harvard

Andover

Shrewsbury

Natick

Grafton

# Profiles

Variable	Sharon	Peer Towns Median	Rest of State Median
EQV per capita	\$ 193,548	\$ 211,613	\$ 146,462
Population 2020 (est)	17,656	22,506	9,750
Income Per Capita	\$ 64,477	\$ 60,301	\$33,617
Low Income Students %	9.8 %	11 %	29 %
White %	67 %	71 %	88 %



# Governance 17 towns

Name	Legis	Charter	SelectSize
Sharon	OTM		3
Acton	OTM	1969	5
Westford	OTM		5
Bedford	OTM	1974	5
Boxborough	OTM		5
Milton	RTM	1927	5
Canton	OTM		5
Ashland	OTM		5
Belmont	RTM	1926	3
Hopkinton	OTM		5
Westborough	OTM	1974	5
Burlington	RTM		5
Harvard	OTM		5
Andover	OTM		5
Shrewsbury	RTM		5
Natick	RTM	1980	5
Grafton	OTM	1987	5

Feature	Count
OTM	12
RTM	5
3-member	2
5-member	15
Charter	7

# Available variables

- Population % over Age 18
- Population 2018
- Population 2020
- Population Density (2018)
- Population Growth (2010-2020)
- Income per capita (2020)
- Low Income Students % (2020)
- White%
- Asian%
- Black%
- Total Road Miles (2018)
- Housing Occupancy Rate
- Population % living non-group housing
- Total Housing Units
- Comm/Indust as % of total value
- Debt% of expend
- Educ % of expend
- Equalize Valuation per Capita (2018)
- Res/Open Space as % of total value
- Single Family Tax Bill (2020)
- Single Family Tax Bill (2021)
- Tax Levy as % of budget
- Total Expenditures (2018)
- Reg voters as % of population
- RegVoters 2018
- Turnout in 2018 election