



Town of East Bridgewater Digital Equity Charrette

August 15, 2023



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AGENDA

1. Introduction
2. What is Digital Equity?
3. Baseline Conditions
4. Digital Equity Charrette
5. Next Steps

STEERING COMMITTEE

- Charles Seelig, Town Administrator
- Nancy Hill, Council on Aging
- Jennifer Horton, Secretary, Community Coalition for Change
- Gina Williams, Assistant Superintendent of Schools
- Jessica Henderson, Director of Library Services

CONSULTANT TEAM



Luke Mitchell, VHB

Project Manager



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Deputy Project Manager



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Project Planner



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Technical Advisor



Steven Anderson, VHB

Technical Advisor

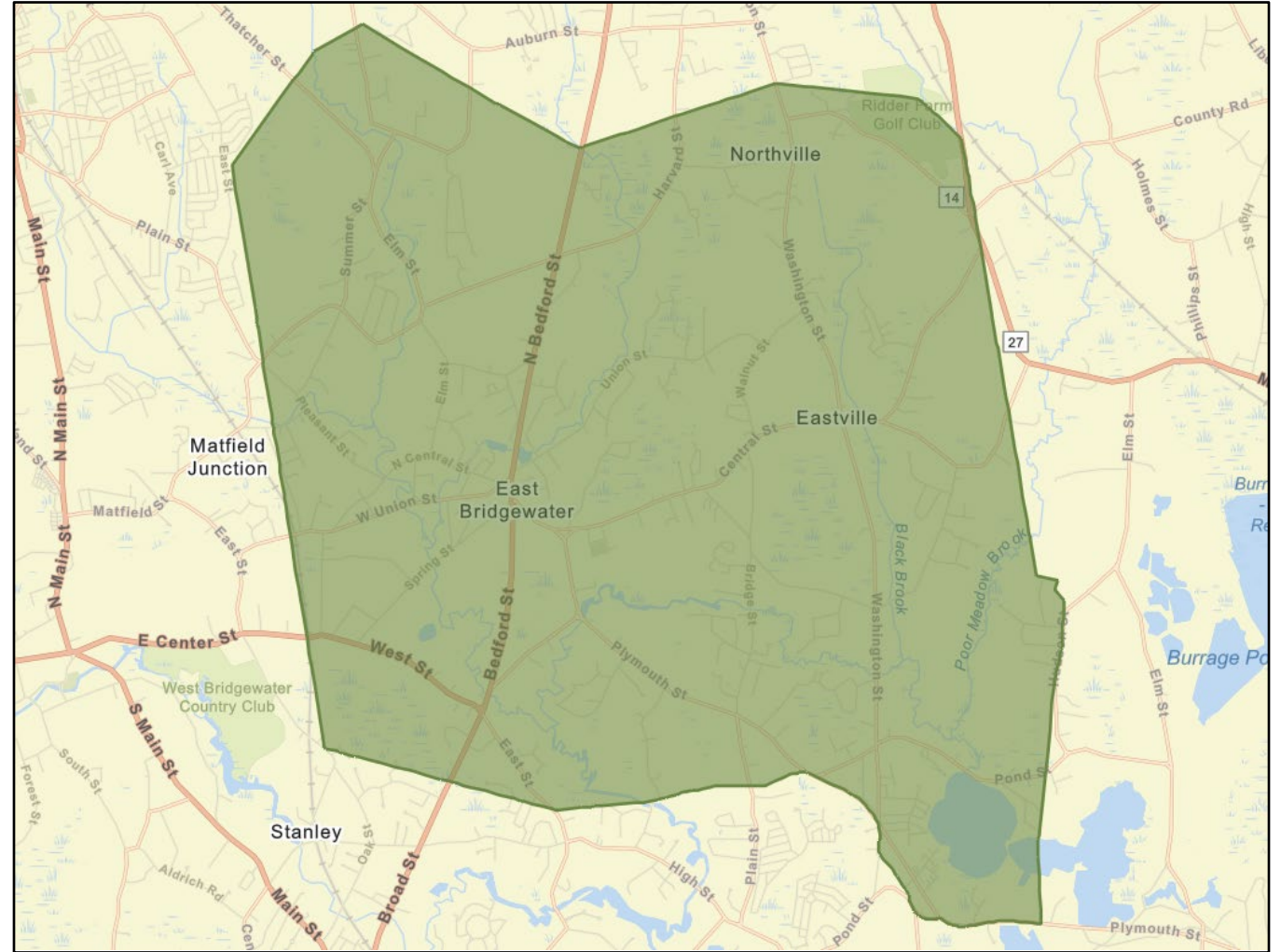
1. Introduction

Digital Equity Charrette – Overview

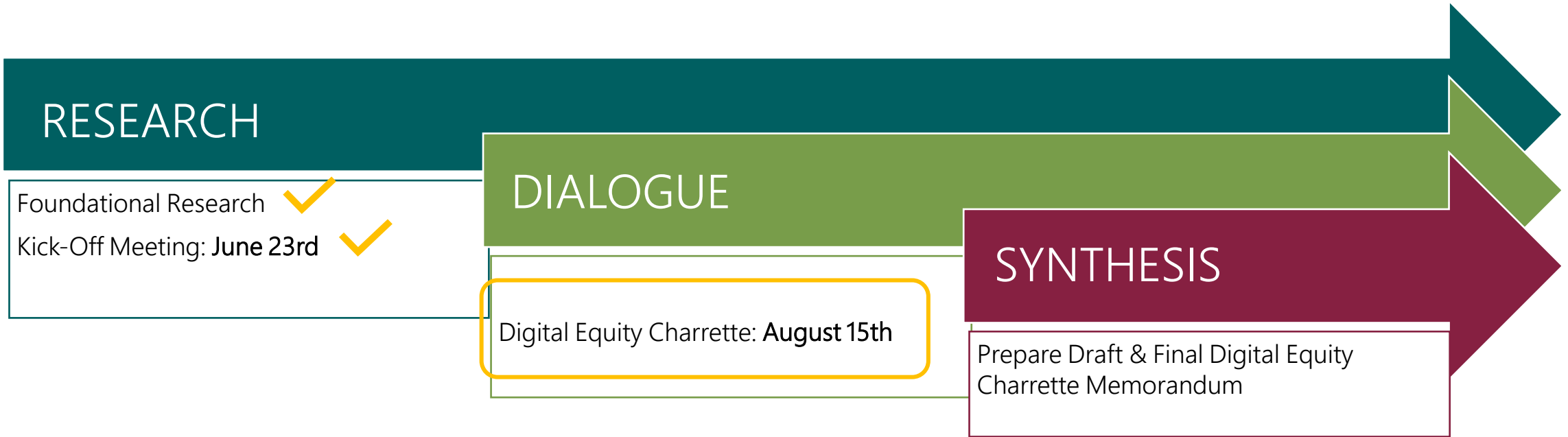
VHB is working with Mass Broadband Institute and the Town of East Bridgewater to conduct a Digital Equity Charrette and prepare a memorandum of findings.

The intent of the Project is to achieve the following:

1. Identify community needs
2. Provide high-level recommendations for the Town to increase access, adoption, and usage of the Internet throughout the community
3. Prepare the Town to apply for funding from existing or forthcoming state and federal programs



PROCESS



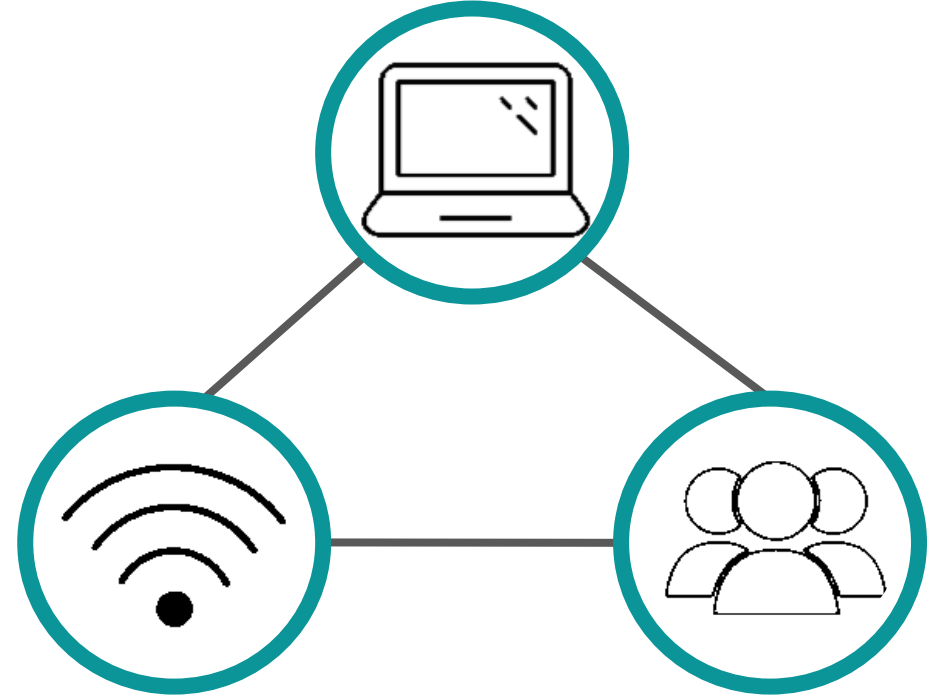
The Digital Divide:

The gap between those who have affordable access, skills and support to effectively engage online and those who do not.

The digital divide disproportionately affects marginalized groups including households with low incomes, older adults, minority households, people with disabilities, and people in rural areas.

Digital Inclusion:

The activities necessary to ensure that all individuals and communities, including the most disadvantaged, have access to and use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).



Digital Equity:

A condition in which all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in our society, democracy, and economy.

Digital divide is the issue.
Digital inclusion is the work.
Digital equity is the goal.

Key Barriers to Inclusion



BROADBAND

- ✖ Unaffordable
- ✖ Unreliable Services
- ✖ Digital Redlining



DEVICES

- ✖ Unaffordable
- ✖ Outdated software
- ✖ No access to device
- ✖ Device is not matching the needs of the user



DIGITAL SKILLS

- ✖ Limited digital skills
- ✖ Trainings are not accessible
- ✖ Fear & shame
- ✖ Privacy concerns

Devices



- ✓ Most Portable device
- ✓ Multiple connection options
- ✓ Long battery
- ✗ Does not replace a laptop



- ✓ Great for accessibility
- ✓ Long battery
- ✗ Cannot make calls without a cellular data plan



- ✓ Mandatory for many jobs and applications
- ✓ Large storage
- ✗ Shorter battery life
- ✗ Least affordable option

3. Baseline Conditions

Public Facilities

Public Facilities in East Bridgewater include the following:

- Schools
 - Central Elementary School
 - East Bridgewater Jr/Sr High School
 - Gordon W. Mitchell School
- East Bridgewater Public Library
- Center at Sachem Rock Senior Center/Community Center
- East Bridgewater Housing Authority
 - Riddell Road (Elderly/handicapped one-bedroom units)
 - Prospect Street (667 elderly/handicapped one-bedroom units)
 - Prospect Street (705 eight three-bedroom family duplex units)

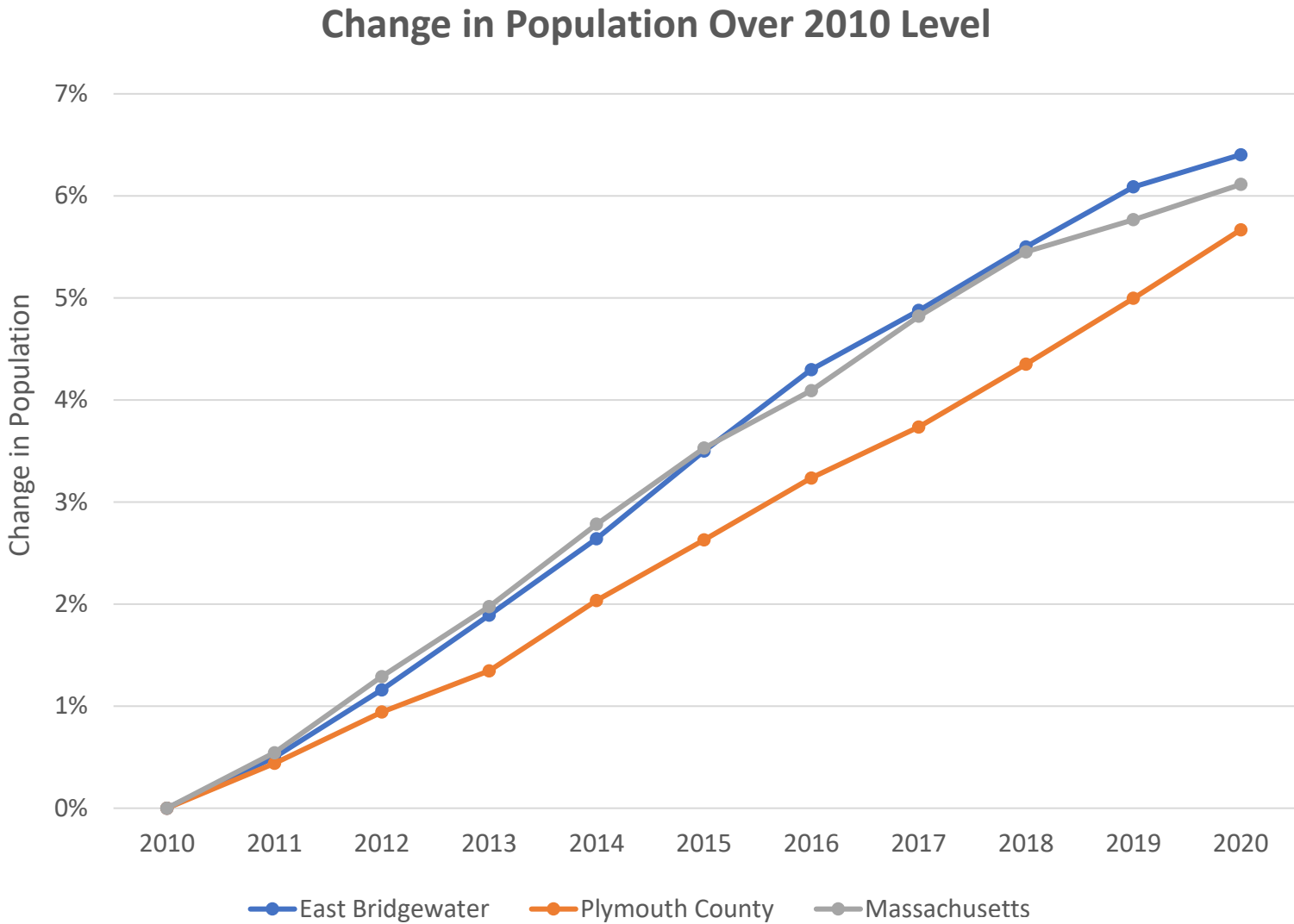


Interior of the East Bridgewater Public Library

3. Baseline Conditions

Population Growth (2010-2020)

- **Since 2016, East Bridgewater’s population has been growing at a faster rate than Plymouth County and Massachusetts.**
- As of 2020 East Bridgewater’s population was greater than 14,500.
- East Bridgewater’s population has increased 6.4% over the past decade.



Source: U.S. Census, 2010-2020 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates (DP05)

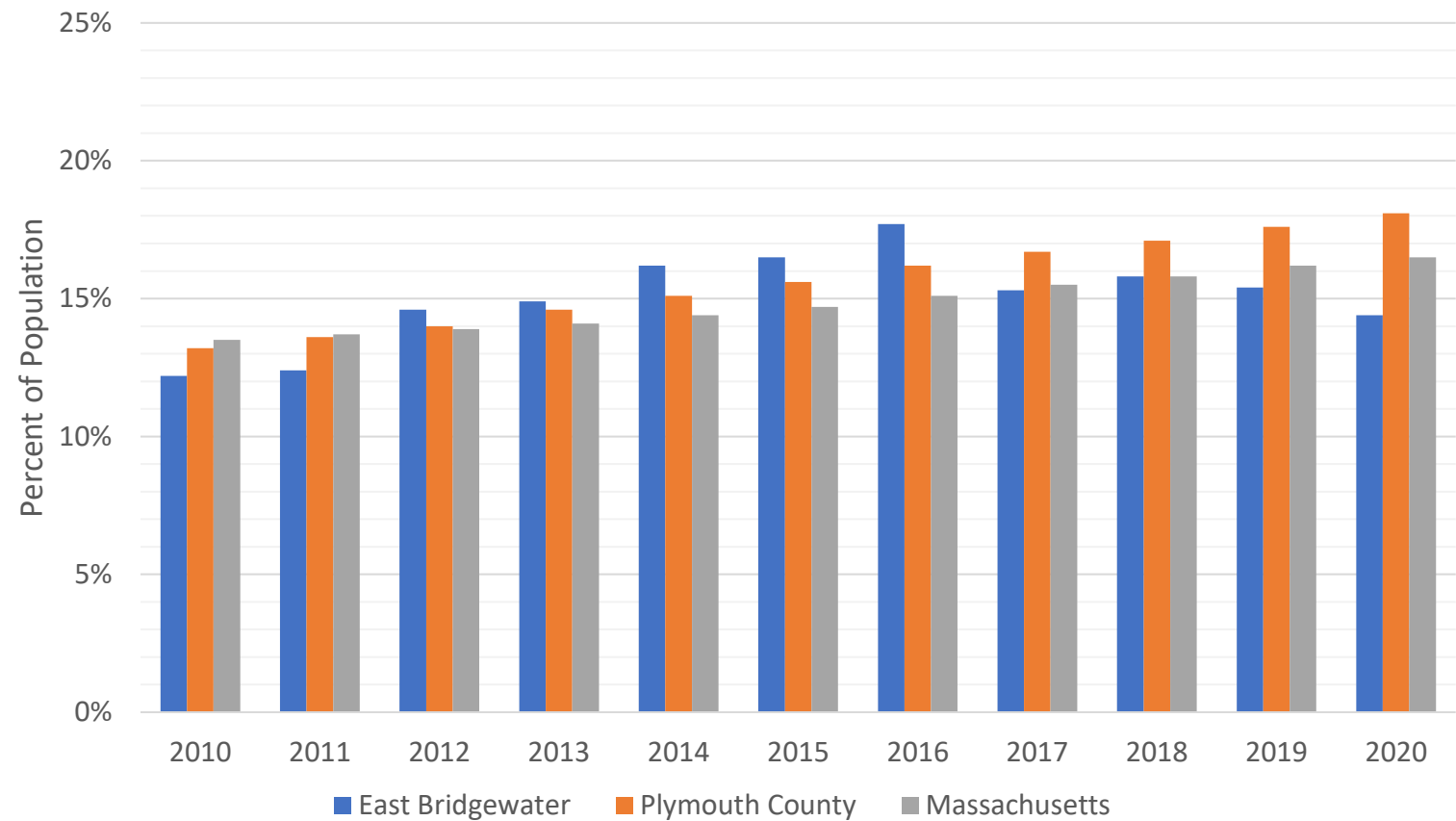


3. Baseline Conditions

Age Distribution

- Between 2010 and 2016, the percent of East Bridgewater’s population over the age of 65 rose 5.5% (from 12.2% to 17.7%) while Plymouth County and Massachusetts each experienced a 3% increase.
- While the population over the age of 65 continued to rise in the County and State from 2016 to 2020, East Bridgewater experienced a 3.3% decrease.

Percent of Population Over 65 in East Bridgewater, Plymouth County, and Massachusetts (2010-2020)



Source: U.S. Census, 2010-2020 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates (DP05)

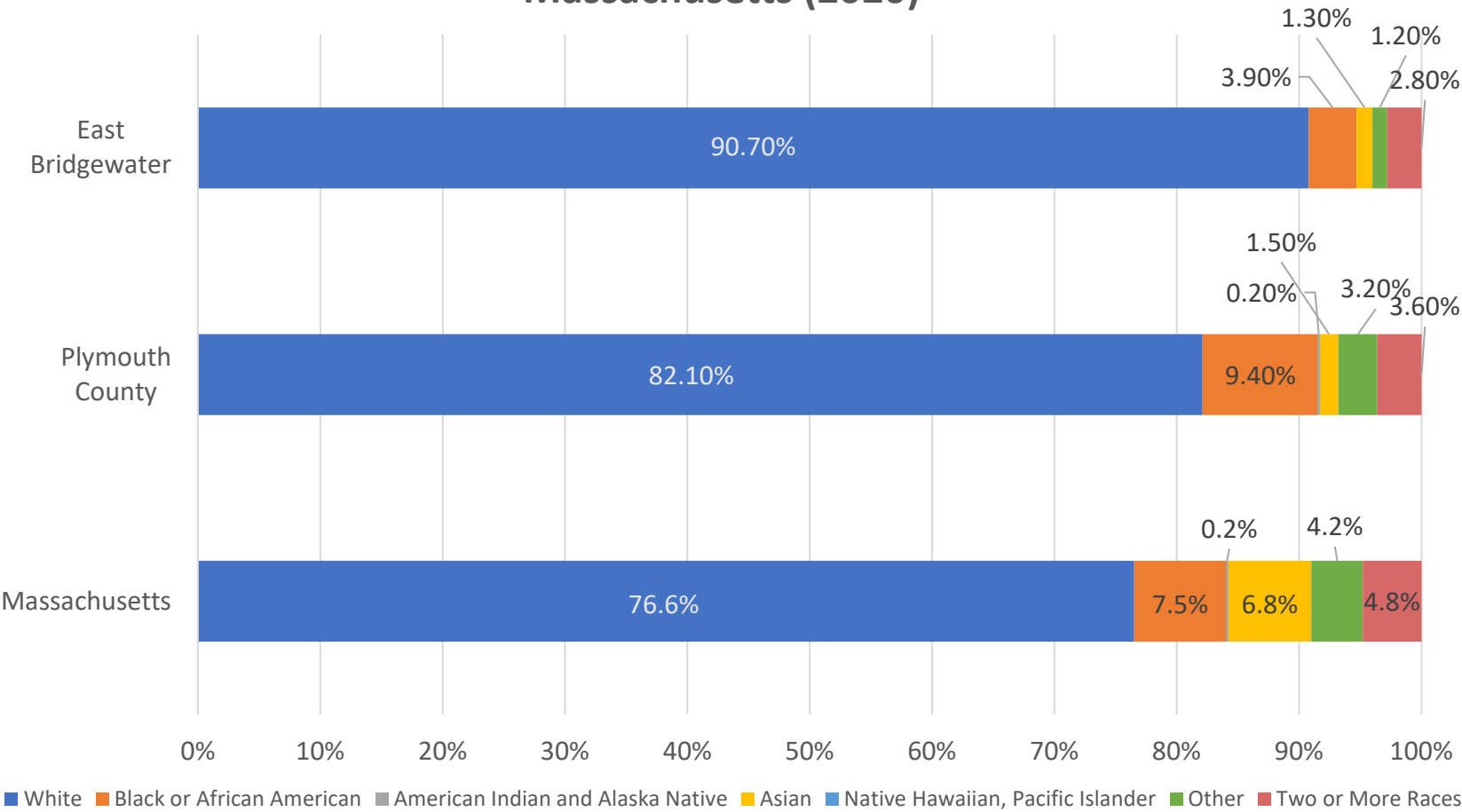


3. Baseline Conditions

Race Distribution (2020)

- **The racial composition of East Bridgewater is less diverse, with 90.7% of the population identifying as white,** 9% more than that of the county and 14% more than that of the state.
- In the past decade, the group with the greatest increase was those reporting as “Black or African American.”

Race Distribution in East Bridgewater, Plymouth County, and Massachusetts (2020)

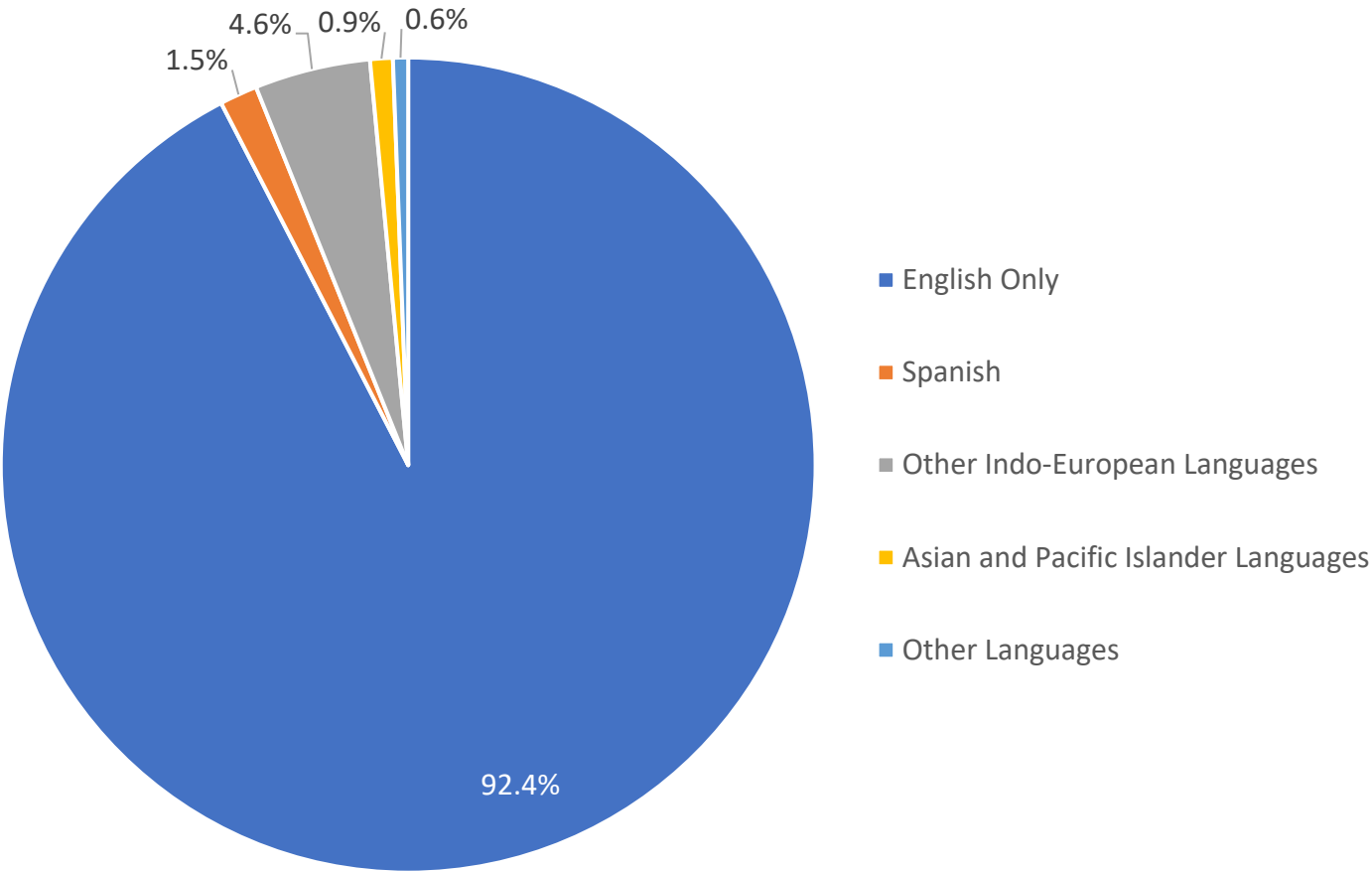


Source: U.S. Census, 2020 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates (DP05)

Languages Spoken at Home

- Over 90% of East Bridgewater’s population speaks English only.

East Bridgewater Languages Spoken at Home (2020)



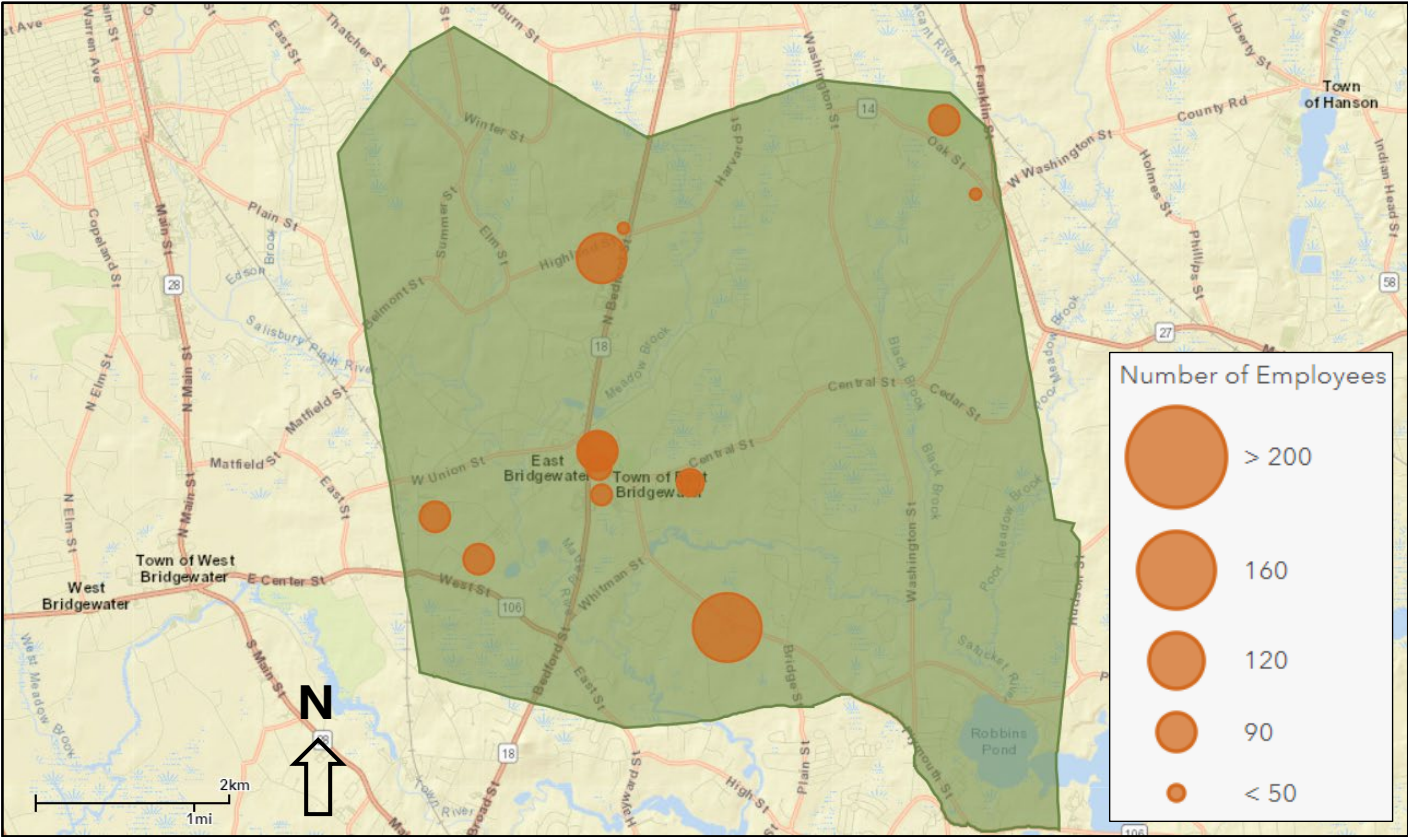
Source: U.S. Census, 2020 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates (DP02)



3. Baseline Conditions

Employment

- In 2022, East Bridgewater had an estimated **438 businesses** and an estimated **3,421 employees**.



Source: Esri and Data Axle

3. Baseline Conditions

Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)

- As of May 1, 2023, there were 292 households participating in the ACP, including 17 new households enrolled from the month prior.
- **Six percent of East Bridgewater’s total households** are currently enrolled in the ACP Program, as compared to **nine percent at the County Level.**

ACP Adoption in East Bridgewater and Plymouth County (May 2023)

	East Bridgewater	Plymouth County
<i>Net New Enrollments Alternative Verification Process</i>	0	-10
<i>Net New Enrollments Verified by School</i>	0	0
<i>Net New Enrollments Lifeline</i>	0	26
<i>Net New Enrollments National Verifier Application</i>	17	1,025
<i>Net New Enrollments total</i>	17	1,041
<i>Total Alternative Verification Process</i>	2	243
<i>Total Verified by School</i>	0	1
<i>Total Lifeline</i>	43	3,745
<i>Total National Verifier Application</i>	247	14,518
Total Subscribers	292 (6% of households)	18,507 (9% of households)

Source: Universal Service Administrative Co.: ACP Enrollment and Claims Tracker



3. Baseline Conditions

MBI Statewide Digital Equity Survey

- The Statewide Digital Equity Survey, as processed on August 9, 2023, received 93 responses from the Town of East Bridgewater.
- All respondents are Town residents and are aged 18 and over.
- Current survey data trends indicate that respondents have a high level of access to internet service and devices, with the potential to improve awareness of existing affordability programs.

99% of respondents **have internet service in their home** and 78% indicated their service works “**Good enough to meet [their] household needs.**”

37% of respondents indicated it is “**Somewhat Hard**” to pay their internet bill and 9% indicated it is “**Very Hard.**”

87% of respondents indicated that everyone in their household has **access to computer devices supporting everyday needs.**

INTERNET & DEVICE ACCESS

3. Baseline Conditions

MBI Statewide Digital Equity Survey

- Current survey data trends indicate potential and support for improved digital literacy among respondents, including cybersecurity and accessing community resources and services.
- Nearly 50% of respondents reported they were not aware of the ACP Program.

44% of respondents indicated they are “Very concerned” about **internet safety** and 74% indicated they are most concerned that their “**data could get stolen or used without [their] consent.**”

40% of respondents indicated they would be most interested in “A **do-it-yourself training module**” for **digital skills support.**

53% of respondents indicated that **online government services** are “**Very accessible**” for them to access.

DIGITAL LITERACY

3. Baseline Conditions

Existing Library Services

- The East Bridgewater Public Library provides resources and services to support essential Internet and device access.
- East Bridgewater Public Library Resources include:
 - Computers for public use that offer a wide range of services to support basic word processing and research needs
 - In-person/wireless black and white printing (10c per page), faxing (\$1 per page), photocopying (15c per copy), and scanning
 - Free Public Internet Access for persons with wireless-enabled portable computers, tablets, or smartphones
 - A Homebound Delivery Service providing library materials to East Bridgewater residents who cannot visit the library due to physical, mental, or mobility limitations.



East Bridgewater Public Library

3. Baseline Conditions

Council on Aging

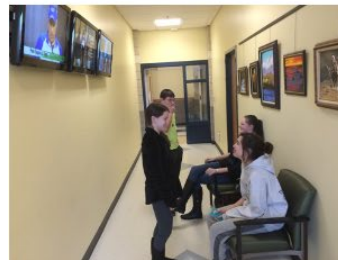
- The East Bridgewater Council on Aging (EBCOA) serves older persons, disabled persons of all ages and their caregivers, and others in need of services and referrals.
- EBCOA services include:
 - Programs that enhance dignity, support independence and encourage general wellness
 - Assistance with applications (e.g., fuel assistance, food stamps)
 - Monthly newsletter (emailed or mailed)
 - Educational Seminars and Fairs
- EBCOA resources include:
 - 18 Chromebooks
 - Indoor and outdoor Wi-Fi at the Senior Center (recently updated during the COVID-19 pandemic allowing for indoor and outdoor programming)



3. Baseline Conditions

Existing Digital Literacy Programming

- East Bridgewater Community Access Media (EBCAM) is a non-profit corporation that oversees public & educational access TV programming in East Bridgewater.
- Resident and business donations and a yearly grant from Comcast Cable Company fund EBCAM's operations.
- EBCAM resources include:
 - Basic Field/Studio Production
 - Adobe Photoshop
 - How to Effectively Use Your Home Camcorder
 - EB Jr/Sr High School Multi-Media Club



Please **circulate around the three stations** with flip pads, focusing on the following three topics:

- (1) Broadband Access
- (2) Device Access
- (3) Digital Literacy

At each station, please add a post-it note with your ideas, comments, and questions to the flip pad, including **major challenges and opportunities for Digital Equity.**

Please join one of our facilitators for a **group discussion** regarding the following questions:

- What are the greatest barriers to digital equity in East Bridgewater?
- What steps should be taken to address these barriers?

Following a 20-minute discussion, each group will **report back** on major topics of discussion.

Statewide Digital Equity Survey

- MBI recently launched the Massachusetts Statewide Digital Equity Survey to better understand the needs of Massachusetts residents when it comes to internet access and digital equity.
- The survey will take about 5 minutes to complete
- The survey is available in nine languages: English, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Vietnamese, Russian, Arabic, and Khmer (participants can select their language of choice when they access the survey)



‘Internet for All’ Listening Tour

- MBI is conducting a statewide ‘Internet for All’ listening tour to gather input from Massachusetts residents about ways to address digital equity and to identify barriers to internet access.
- Community members are invited to attend and provide feedback to state leaders, input which will directly inform state proposals tied to federal funding that will identify digital equity gaps, help grow the availability of internet-connected devices, boost digital literacy statewide, and increase access to affordable and reliable broadband service.
- **The first regional listening session in the series will be hosted at the Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro South in Brockton on September 7, 2023, from 5-7 p.m. Scan the adjacent QR code to register.**

