

# GREATER BOSTON CHURCH PLANTING PROFILES

## Town of Pembroke and Boston's South Shore

### GEOGRAPHY

The city of Pembroke is located 25 miles southeast of Boston, Massachusetts and 10 miles north of Plymouth, Massachusetts. It is surrounded by the communities of Hanover and Norwell to the north, Marshfield, Duxbury and Kingston to the east, Plympton and Halifax to the south, and Hanson to the west.

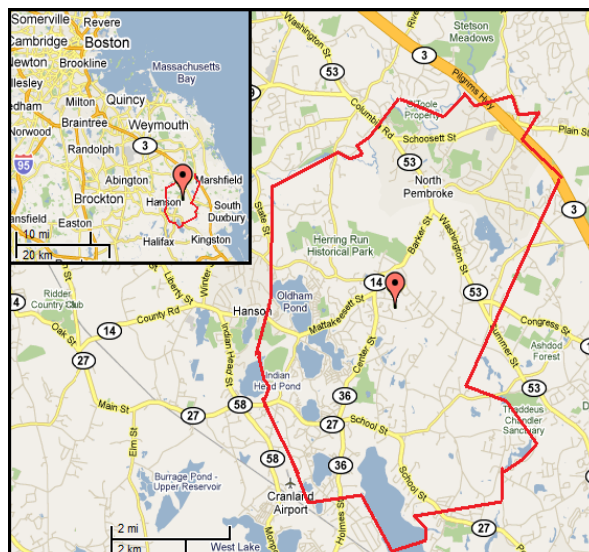
Pembroke is near the center of a region of metro Boston called the South Shore. Located between Boston and Cape Cod, the South Shore is comprised of a series of coastal communities along the Atlantic. It is a suburban area, with primarily residential towns, relatively high income and home ownership, and low racial diversity.

### HISTORY<sup>1</sup>

Pembroke and the surrounding towns developed as farming communities for the Plymouth Colony. The colony, established in 1620 by English separatists who arrived on the *Mayflower*, was the first sizable settlement in New England. Aside from agriculture, the area was famous among native peoples for its bountiful fish communities in the many streams and lakes, and this became a source of commerce and sustenance for the early settlers.

Primarily a farming community throughout the colonial period, Pembroke and the surrounding towns became a center for the shipbuilding industry during the first half of the nineteenth century. The industrial production in the area peaked early as the shipbuilding industry began to decline with the development of steamships and railroads in the mid-nineteenth century. Pembroke retained its importance as an agricultural area. River-powered mills and cranberry bogs would have been a common site at the beginning of the twentieth century. During this time period, the area became a favorite for city dwellers seeking a respite from the industry and density of nearby urban areas, who used the rail connections from Brockton and Boston to travel to vacation destinations in Pembroke and along the coast.

Like most communities in America, the advent of the automobile had a profound effect on Pembroke's development. The construction of Route 3 in the mid-twentieth century provided convenient access to the employment and cultural offerings of Boston. During the 1960's Pembroke's population tripled, and many of the



homes in Pembroke and the nearby South Shore communities were built during this period.

In the 1990's the South Shore continued to develop as a suburban community for Boston. In 1997, commuter railroad service was restored to the region, which contributed toward the area's accessibility. The population has increased by almost 30% since 1990, a dramatic number compared to the overall growth rate of 8% for the state of Massachusetts during this period.

### NEIGHBORHOODS AND POINTS OF INTEREST

Pembroke is a generally quiet and rural community. It has a town center with a small nearby shopping district. Most retail shopping is located along Washington Street or at one of several Route 3 interchanges in Pembroke or nearby Hanover.

Pembroke is known for its five ponds which offer recreational boating, fishing and swimming. Ice skating is popular in the winter. The Pembroke Country Club boasts one of the area's best public golf courses.

### DEMOGRAPHICS<sup>2</sup>

Pembroke is home to an estimated 18,500 people. 98% of people are white (non-latino). 93% of people over 25 have a high school education, and 29% of people over 25 have a bachelors degree or higher. More than 40% of families have children under 18 living at home. Over 75% of families have two or more cars, and the

<sup>1</sup> [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org), <http://www.townofpembrokmass.org/pembrokehistory.html>

<sup>2</sup> Factfinder.census.gov, [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org), [www.metrobostondatacommon.org](http://www.metrobostondatacommon.org)

average commute time to work is 36 minutes, 40% longer than the state and national average.

The median household income in Pembroke is \$65,000 and the median family income is \$75,000 (2000). 89% of all homes are single family homes, and 89% of homes are owner occupied. 5% of the population lives below the poverty level.

The general demographic characteristics of Pembroke are reflected by the other South Shore communities nearby, and the area shares a common cultural identity. Like Pembroke, the South Shore is generally populated by suburban families, the vast majority of which are white, financially secure, and homeowners.

### **TRANSPORTATION**

Route 3 is a regional highway that connects the South Shore area to metro Boston and points south. It passes along the northern edge of Pembroke. Two different commuter rail lines run near Pembroke, with stops accessible in the towns of Hanson, Halifax, Kingston, and Marshfield.

### **CHURCH PLANTING OUTLOOK**

For most, life is generally comfortable in Pembroke and its surrounding suburban towns. The pace of life is slower, relationships seem more important, and the urban city seems far away. Residents are blue collar and white collar, and across the South Shore towns there is a significant disparity between rich and poor. A church planter will need to understand how to engage both, and to root out the cultural idols of these communities and challenge them with the gospel.

A church plant here will need to be multi-generational and family-oriented. It will need to offer a picture of gospel renewal that goes beyond “being good”—where people are turned “inside out” spiritually, socially, and culturally as they respond to the good news.

Our prayers and church planting efforts would be well-directed toward the end of seeing His Kingdom come in these South Shore suburbs.

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