

ECONOMIC REVIEW

School District Expenditure Fluctuations: Greater MetroWest



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The Greater MetroWest region is comprised of 13 communities: Ashland, Framingham, Holliston, Hopkinton, Hudson, Marlborough, Natick, Northborough, Sherborn, Southborough, Sudbury, Wayland, and Westborough. This article focuses on school district expenditures in the region, how the COVID-19 pandemic affected those expenditures, and how spending changed in the years that followed. Total expenditures include both in-district and out-of-district spending, as well as all funding sources except for community services, fixed assets, and debt services.

Figure 1 shows total annual expenditures in the Greater MetroWest region from 2013 to 2023. The average growth rate was about 5%, or nearly a \$32,500,000 increase per year. The region's total expenditures increased by over \$325 million, or 50.7%, over the ten-year period. In 2020, the growth rate was notably below average from 2019, having an increase of only \$20.9 million, or about a 2.6% increase, which was the smallest increase observed in the ten-year period, likely explained by the COVID-19 pandemic. A notably large increase in total expenditures occurred in 2022 (+6.5%), which is almost a \$55 million increase from 2021. Another notable rise occurred in 2023, with a \$61.8 million (6.8%) increase from 2022.

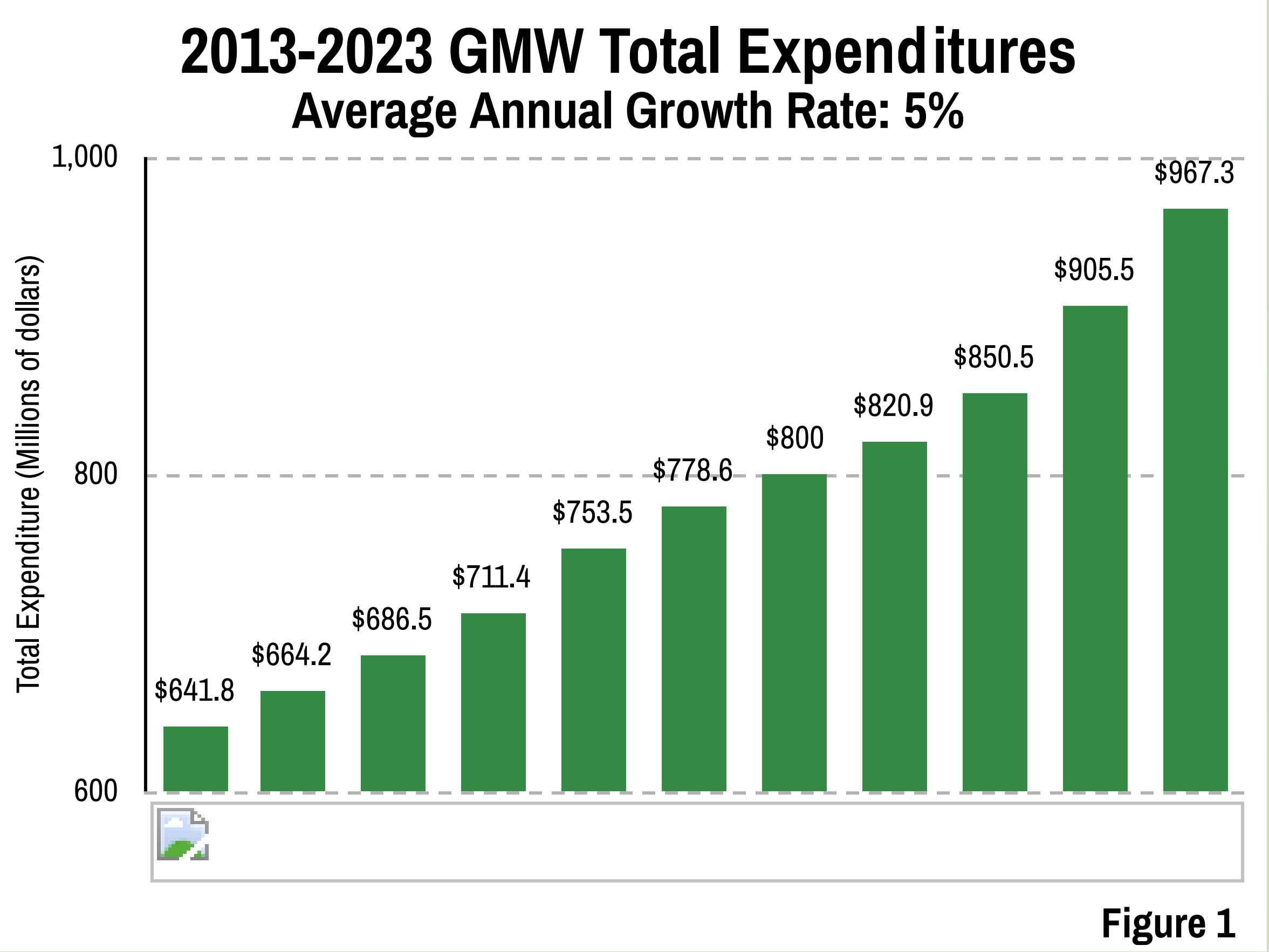


Figure 1

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Figure 2 shows total expenditures by community in the region for FY2023. Framingham has the largest total expenditure in the region, at just over \$242 million. Natick and Marlborough follow, with approximately \$112 million and \$103 million, respectively. Sherborn had the smallest total in 2023, at just under \$10 million. These differences among communities are largely attributable to differences in population.

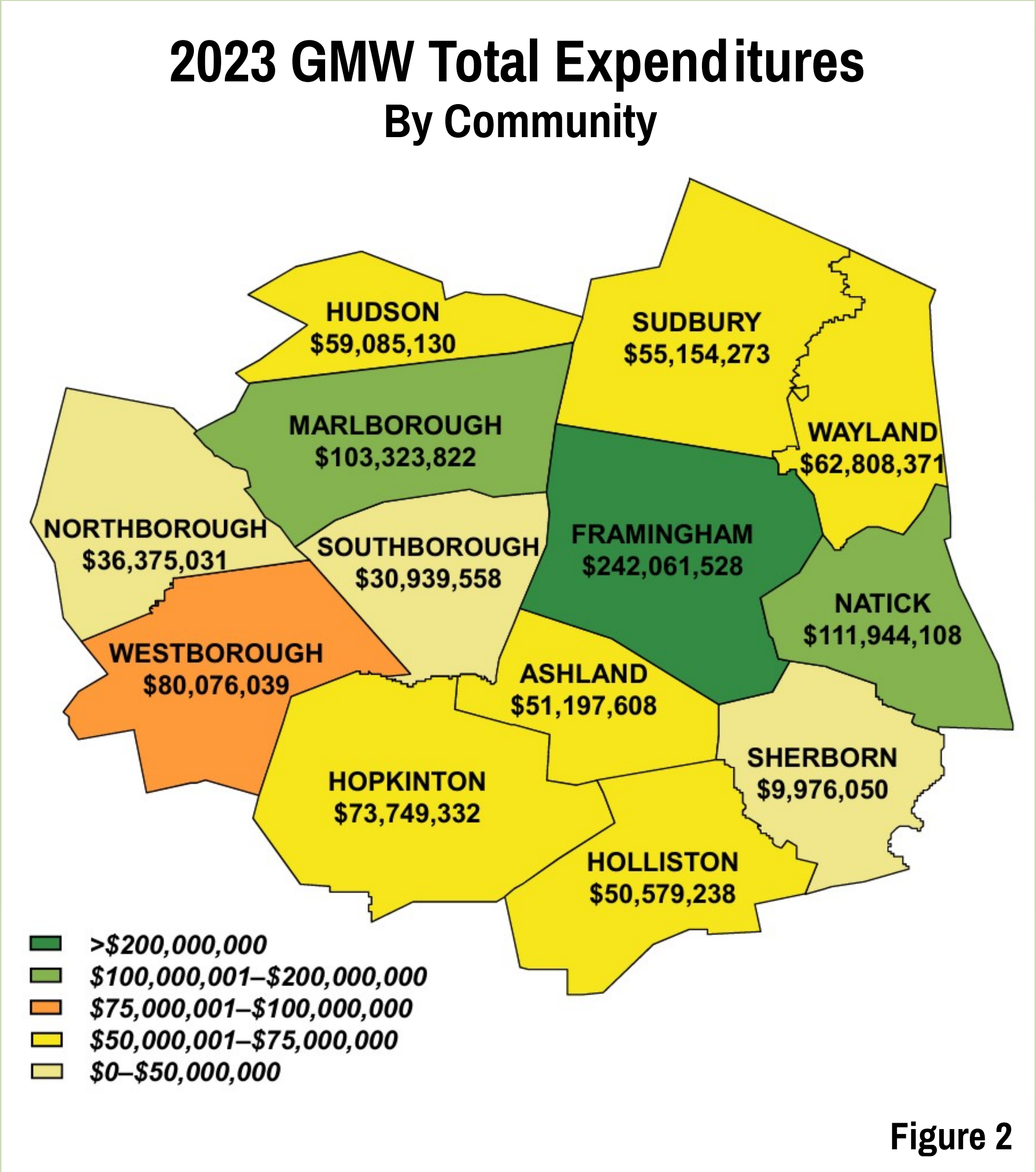


Figure 2

Figure 3 illustrates the percentage change in total expenditures by community from 2013 to 2023. Framingham had the highest percentage increase in total expenditures during this time period with a nearly 68% increase. Hopkinton was not far behind with a 63.6% rise. Sherborn had the smallest percentage growth, at 24.4%. Overall, the region had a 50.7% increase over the ten-year period.

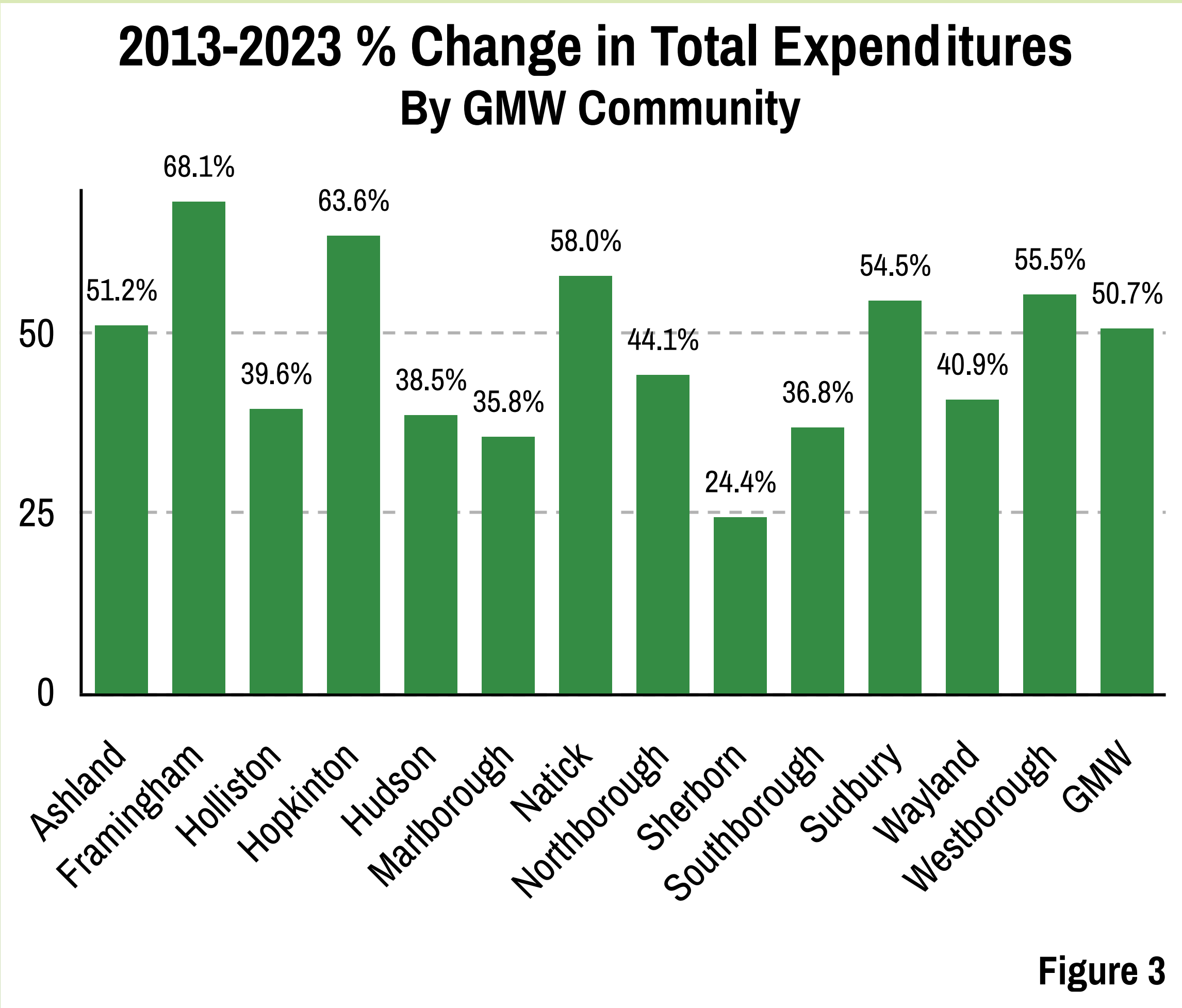


Figure 4 below reports total expenditures per pupil by community in the Greater MetroWest region in 2023. Framingham had the largest expenditure in this region at over \$24,000 per pupil. The communities with the lowest per-pupil expenditures were Ashland, Hopkinton, and Holliston. Ashland had the lowest expenditure per pupil, at \$17,354, followed closely by Hopkinton at \$17,372 and Holliston at \$17,507.

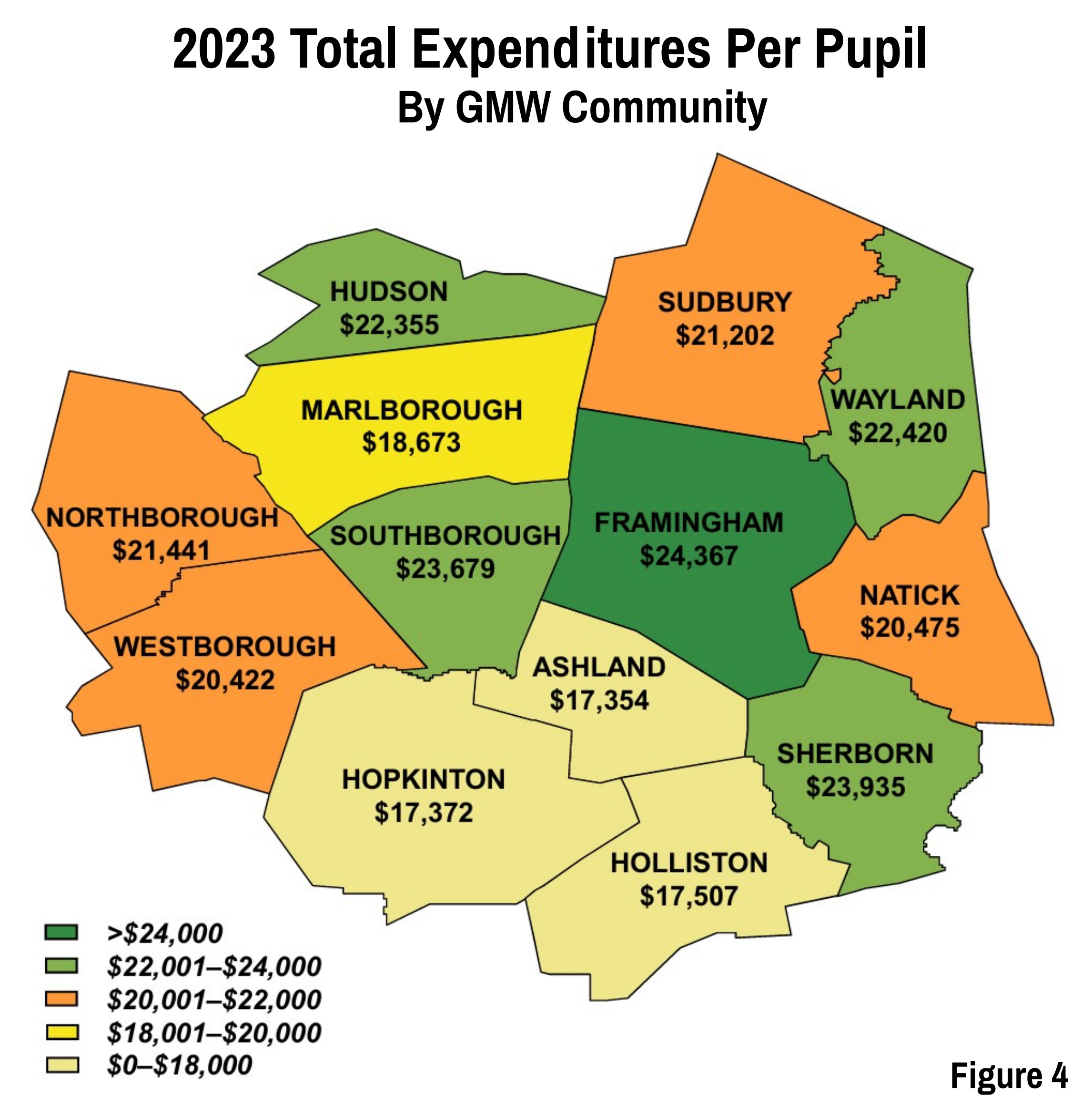
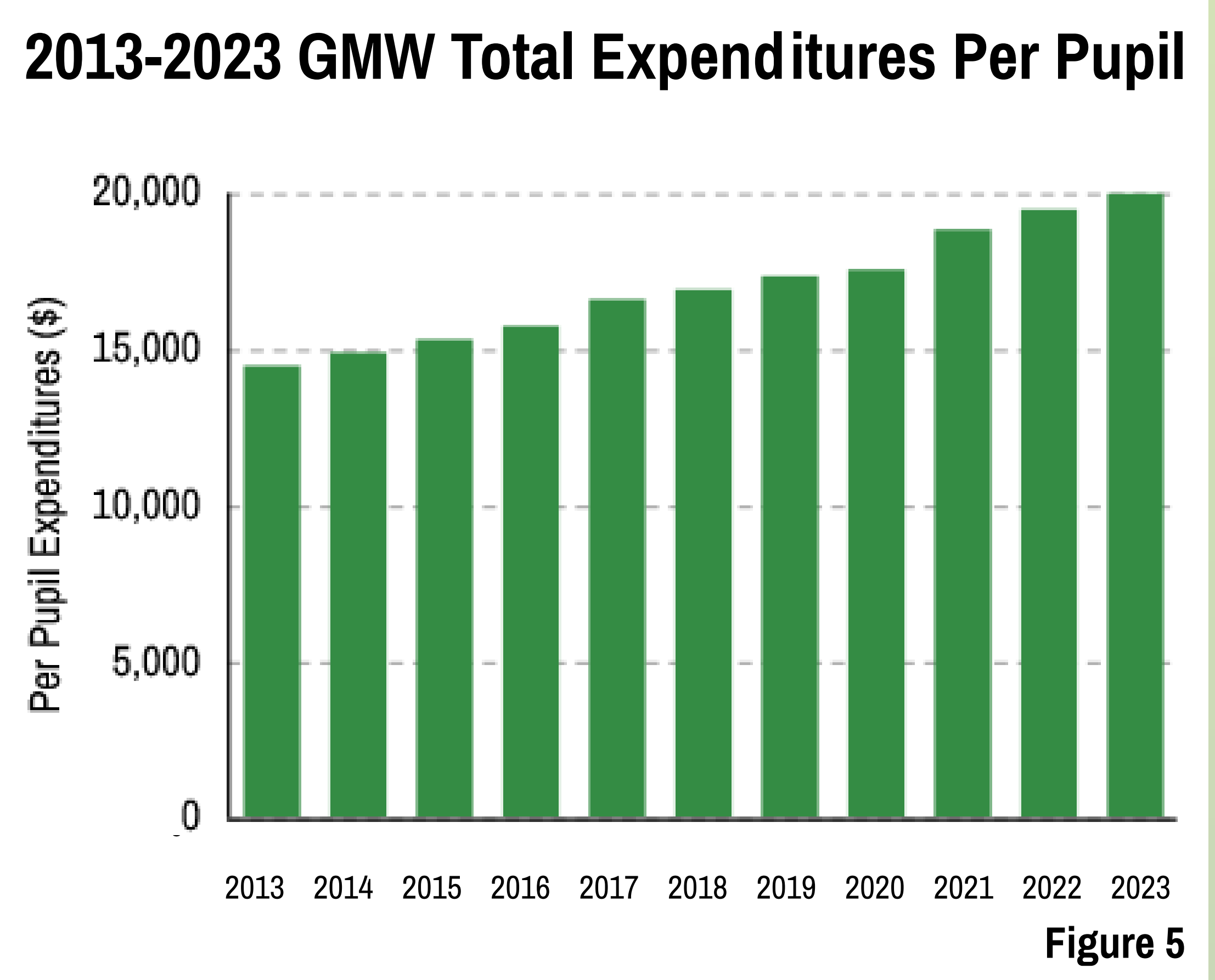


Figure 5 represents the increase in total expenditures per pupil from 2013 to 2023. The region’s ten-year increase from 2013 to 2023 was recorded at about \$6,400, which equates to a 44.4% increase, or an average of about 3.74% each year. Once again 2020 had a notably below average amount increase compared to previous years at only \$210 per pupil, which is only a 1.2% increase from 2019. The next year, 2021, saw a large increase from 2020, at 7.3% at above \$1,200 per pupil.



To summarize, Framingham leads the region for school expenditures in both its size and growth. Despite slower expenditure growth in 2020, expenditures increased substantially across the region over the ten-year period. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic with smaller increases in expenditures were short lived, and since 2020 the growth rate has recovered.