



Ayer Comprehensive Plan Update

KICKOFF MEETING

September 29, 2015

Agenda



- ▶ Introductions
- ▶ The Future of Ayer –Visioning Exercise
- ▶ 2005 Plan – Process, Implementation and Lessons Learned
- ▶ What is a Comprehensive Plan
- ▶ Consultant's Role and Selection Process
- ▶ Committee Organization and Schedule
- ▶ Q & A

Introductions

Visioning Exercise

1. What are the top 3 issues that you feel the comprehensive plan should address?
2. What do you value most about living in Ayer?
3. If you were to leave Ayer and return in 10 years, what would you hope to see?

2005 Comprehensive Plan

- ▶ Process
- ▶ Implementation
- ▶ Successes
- ▶ Lessons Learned

AYER

Comprehensive Plan Update 2005



Submitted to:
Office of Community Development
Comprehensive Plan Committee

Consultants:
Community Opportunities Group, Inc.
Boston, Massachusetts

BSC Group
Boston, Massachusetts

What is a Comprehensive Plan ?

- ▶ A long-range vision for the Town
- ▶ A context for making key land use and public investments
- ▶ A tool to guide Town priorities and directions, including capital improvement programming
- ▶ A living document
- ▶ Creates goals and objectives for the Town and ways to implement them

It's Not Your Father's Comprehensive Plan

New Issues, Ideas and Solutions

- ▶ Planning Buzz - Smart Growth, Livable Community, Sustainable Development, Smart Cities, Complete Streets, Green Community, Transit Oriented Development
- ▶ Technology Advances
- ▶ Social Media
- ▶ Aging Infrastructure
- ▶ Expectation of Services



Common municipal strategic planning & Implementation practice



Integrated approach



Keys to Success

- ▶ Select a strong planning committee
- ▶ Appoint the right chairperson
- ▶ Understand the different roles involved in public participation
- ▶ Foster leadership
- ▶ Develop a creative and effective public participation strategy
- ▶ Avoid over-reliance on meetings and surveys
- ▶ Create “buy in”
- ▶ Overcome problem issues
- ▶ Seek professional help
- ▶ Maintain enthusiasm and momentum
- ▶ Get visual
- ▶ Coordinate with Town and Regional staff
- ▶ Bring your plan to successful closure...
- ▶ And effectively follow through on its implementation

Background

- ▶ Required by the state's master plan law, M.G.L. c. 41, § 81D.
- ▶ Existing Plans
 - ▶ Ayer Comprehensive Plan Update - 2005
 - ▶ Open Space and Recreation Plan – 2015
 - ▶ Community Development Strategy – 2014
 - ▶ MRPC Economic Development Strategy – 2014
 - ▶ MRPC Strategic Framework Plan – 2011
- ▶ Proposed Zoning Bylaw - 2015

Traditional Plan Components

- ▶ Goals and policies statement
- ▶ Land use plan
- ▶ Housing
- ▶ Economic development
- ▶ Natural and cultural resources
- ▶ Open space and recreation
- ▶ Services and facilities
- ▶ Transportation
- ▶ Implementation

New Components

- ▶ Quality of Life
- ▶ Sustainability
- ▶ Resiliency
- ▶ Diversity
- ▶ Public Health
- ▶ Place Making
- ▶ Energy
- ▶ Technology
- ▶ Citizen Engagement

Not Preferred



- A poor pedestrian environment results from the lack of interaction between the building and the sidewalk
- Few windows and entrances interacting with the street reduces pedestrian activity and safety
- A lack of shade, because of greater spacing between trees, also deters pedestrians

Preferred



- Windows and doors provide articulation and detail of buildings
- Wide sidewalk allows for various users
- Active ground floor uses
- Shading for pedestrians provided by tighter spacing of trees

The Planning Process



- ▶ Develop a community vision
- ▶ Evaluate existing conditions
- ▶ Identify the issues / objectives
- ▶ Develop strategies to address the issues
- ▶ Establish definable and measurable goals
- ▶ Develop action plans
- ▶ Implement the plan

Creating the Vision

- ▶ Community visioning is the process of developing consensus about what future the community wants
- ▶ A vision statement captures what community members most value about their community, and the shared image of what they want their community to become
- ▶ A thoughtful vision statement is one of the elements needed to form a forward looking strategic framework
- ▶ Community vision statements are typically crafted through a collaborative process that involves a wide variety of community residents, stakeholders and elected officials.

Vision Statement Examples

PEPPERELL'S VISION

A family-oriented community with an abundance of open space and sensitive natural resources, the Town of Pepperell enhances its rural small-town character, municipal infrastructure and services, and housing options for families and its aging population by channeling growth into village settings near municipal facilities and services.

Harvard's Vision

In twenty years, the Town of Harvard will be a town with:

A Sense of Community

—Active participation of citizens in the town's civic life combined with small town celebrations and traditions will forge a strong sense of community.

—Harvard will be home to all ages and a broad range of household sizes and incomes.

—The cooperation of highly motivated staff, caring Town personnel and actively involved parents will contribute to schools that provide both a nurturing environment and high quality education.

A Sense of Place

—The Town Center will serve as the social, governmental and cultural heart of the community, with other thriving village centers further strengthening Harvard's economic and community base.

—Harvard will support working orchards and farms and preserve its landscape of woodlands and fields, rural roadways and scenic vistas, and will connect these features and the Town and village centers with walking trails.

—The town will have clean air and an ample supply of clean water.

A Sustainable Future

—Diversified commercial and residential bases will enable the town to realize its vision and provide the flexibility to adjust to changes in the economy.

—Close cooperation with neighboring towns and organizations involved in regional planning and resource protection will provide opportunities for realizing an expanded vision.



What is our Vision for Andover?

QUALITY EDUCATION

We will offer a rich and challenging public education that builds essential skills and knowledge that support a broad range of academic and vocational options, enable successful participation in our society and culture, and sustain curiosity and learning in a world of new and ever changing opportunities. We will cultivate the public library as a resource for lifelong learning and enrichment and as a facilitator for the flow of information throughout the community. We will find ways to protect the quality of these institutions through fluctuating economic cycles.

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

We will continue to acquire and protect open space as a crucial natural resource that helps to maintain the character of the town, offers access to both active and passive recreation, and provides an important natural system for water recharge, flood control, and wildlife habitat.

VIBRANT DOWNTOWN

We will maintain our downtown as an attractive and vibrant center with a mix of commercial and public activities, historical elements, and parks. We will use permits, zoning guidelines, and planning approvals to attract and keep pedestrian-friendly street-level enterprises.

SMALL-TOWN CHARACTER

Even as the Town continues to grow, we will actively seek to identify and preserve those elements — town layout and scale, central focus, community-wide activities, respect for historical structures, and housing mix, that give Andover so much of its appeal and character.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

We will govern ourselves in a manner that encourages participation by all, that consistently provides adequate information for making informed choices, and that acts to preserve our investment and the interests of the community as a whole. We will acknowledge the needs of others and consider compromises that are in the best interest of the Town and region.

HISTORICAL HERITAGE

We will maintain strong and consistent zoning that protects historic buildings and places, and we will support the institutions that protect and promote Andover's historical heritage.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

We will be respectful of Andover's many races, ethnicities, religious beliefs, and lifestyles. We will facilitate public events that celebrate diversity and provide opportunities for sharing cultural traditions. As a community, we will not tolerate acts of hatred or persecution.

FINANCIAL STABILITY

We will follow prudent financial practices that balance consistent high-quality services, private vs. public responsibility, stable tax rates, and responsible levels of debt. We will set ambitious goals but live within our means. In making financial decisions, we will include an understanding of long-term costs and consequences, particularly to the environmental integrity of the Town. We will consider regional partnerships that offer more effective and economical options, and we will manage the impact of our decisions on property values relative to similar communities.

HEALTHY AND SAFE ENVIRONMENT

We will protect public health and safety through careful monitoring and enforcement of environmental, health, and safety regulations and by continuing to provide effective and responsive fire and police protection and beneficial public health services.

MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

We will manage and protect our natural resources, particularly water, in a manner that acknowledges our responsibility to future generations and to other communities that share those resources. We will monitor air quality and take measures to mitigate negative effects of emissions from vehicles, regional incinerators, and industrial facilities.

TOWN SERVICES

We will provide effective and efficient services that build and maintain Town infrastructure, handle Town business, and assist citizens. We will develop effective technologies to facilitate interdepartmental communication and efficiency, and to provide public access to Town information.

HUMAN SERVICES

Through our department of community services, other Town programs, and religious institutions, we will sponsor services and programs, facilities, outreach, and recognition to veterans, seniors, youth, and the disabled or disadvantaged among us. We will foster connections among all citizens to help us to appreciate, learn from, and support one another.

TRANSPORTATION

We will monitor changing commuting patterns and side-effects on air and water quality, noise, and traffic. We will work within the region to strengthen opportunities for regional transit, rail travel, commuter buses, and improved connections with mass transit hubs. We will seek solutions to local needs for downtown and commuter parking, for safe and efficient traffic flow, and for shuttle service to local facilities and services. We will encourage foot and bicycle travel as an alternative to automobiles, whenever feasible.

Guiding Principles

- ▶ Guiding Principles build the Plan's key priorities of prosperity, equity, health, and resiliency into the Comprehensive Plan and its implementation
- ▶ The Principles encourage balanced, integrated multi-disciplinary approaches among topics such as housing, economic development, and transportation.
- ▶ The Guiding Principles provide an anchor or reference point to consider when making trade-offs and compromises.

PLACEMAKING & RESILIENCY PRINCIPLES

- ▶ PRINCIPLE 1: Create distinctive destinations that attract people and encourage social interaction.
- ▶ PRINCIPLE 2: Create great streets with human-scaled architecture, walkability and attractive amenities.
- ▶ PRINCIPLE 3: Build for the long term value of both the development and the community with safe streets and neighborhoods, high-quality buildings that can adapt easily to the changing demands of the marketplace, a range of housing options and a variety of gathering spaces.
- ▶ PRINCIPLE 4: Encourage a mixture of land uses in an active pedestrian environment and a network of sidewalks and trails that links people of all ages and physical abilities to their destinations.
- ▶ PRINCIPLE 5: Encourage environmental responsiveness, preserving and enhancing natural areas for the health, aesthetic, infrastructure and economic benefits the community will receive.

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Develop and Evaluate Strategies to Address the Issues

- ▶ Brainstorm ideas to address the goals and issues
- ▶ Solicit ideas from public
- ▶ Develop short term and long term actions
- ▶ Some actions may address several goals / issues (integrated actions)
- ▶ Look for actions that are easy to implement – **demonstrate success**
- ▶ Establish definable and measurable goals and actions - “**SMART**” Goals -**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**esource-based, and **T**ime-assessed

Resources

Parks & Recreation

Recreation

What's it all about?

Public spaces bring Somerville residents together, and serve as a stage to showcase our legendary civic pride. They also encourage our residents and children to lead healthy and active lifestyles. We must continue to build new parks, plazas and gardens, while maintaining older public spaces and making sure that they are actively used.

VI. Goal: Create and program a network of vibrant public open spaces and shared use paths throughout the city that are multi-purpose, promote healthy living, and reflect changing recreational interests and cultural opportunities.

A. Policy: *The City should partner with local neighborhood organizations on the design, programming, and increased volunteer participation in public parks and open spaces.*

1. Action: Analyze existing parks and recreation spaces for cultural relevancy, changing neighborhood demographics and needs, and site-specific ecological, social and recreational opportunities.
2. Action: Notify community members and stakeholder groups of opportunities to participate in the design and renovation of parks and recreation facilities.
3. Action: Increase multilingual announcements and publicity for public events in parks and recreational areas.
4. Action: Partner with neighborhood community organizations, the Somerville Police Department, local businesses and interested residents to establish "Friends of the Park" groups to help with maintenance, neighborhood security, and parks programming.

Develop Action Plans

- ▶ *Complete Parking Management Study for Downtown Area-*
Complete by July 1, assigned to DPW
 - ▶ Implement Parking Permit Program - Complete by Dec. 31,
assigned to Ayer PD
- ▶ *Develop Sidewalk Improvement Plan.* Complete by May 1,
assigned to Walkable Ayer Committee
 - ▶ Reconstruct sidewalk on Washington Street – Complete by Dec. 31 – assigned to DPW
 - ▶ Apply for Safe Routes to School Funding for Sidewalk Improvements – Complete by June 30 – assigned to DPW and ASRSD

Implement the Strategic Plan

- ▶ Have strong champions to lead the process
- ▶ Communicate the plan to everyone
- ▶ Make the plan easy to read / use / understand – graphics / summaries / maps
- ▶ Pass out copies of the plan and post it in town reports, Web pages, and other public documents
- ▶ Follow up on progress on a regular basis
- ▶ Revise the plan on an annual basis

Key Implementation Strategies

- ▶ Guidelines
 - ▶ Update or enhance design guidelines to support Place Making in key places
 - ▶ Type areas and the use of natural areas and resources in the design of neighborhoods and amenities.
- ▶ 2. Regulations
 - ▶ Review and update regulations for private developments and infrastructure projects to ensure wise water use.
- ▶ 3. Financial Incentives
 - ▶ Review and /or develop incentive programs to maximize support for Plan implementation.
- ▶ 4. Capital Investments
 - ▶ Review and revise street design standards as necessary to follow Place Making principles.
- ▶ 5. Education and Communication
 - ▶ Establish a process for regular review of progress on plan implementation.
- ▶ 6. Partnerships
 - ▶ Identify regional public and private entities to support and assist in implementation

Goals, Objectives and Actions for Transportation, Mobility and Access

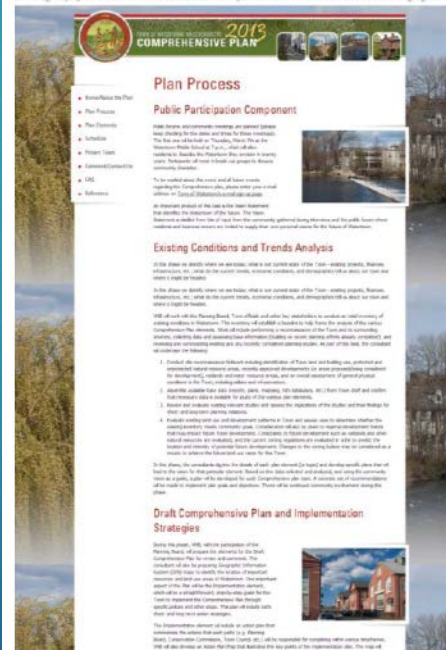
		Lead Agency	Time Horizon (1-2 years; 2-5 years; 5-10 years)
Goal TMA-1:	A safe transportation system for all users.		
Objective 1.1	Improve dangerous intersections and roadways.		
Action 1:	Review, update, and prioritize the previously composed list of Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) high-accident locations. Identify MassDOT improvement projects that address high-accident and congested locations, and actively pursue funding.	Board of Selectmen, DPW, traffic Safety Committee	Ongoing
Action 2:	Conduct studies/safety audits to identify and prioritize potential improvements for locations not part of planned projects through MassDOT.	Board of Selectmen, DPW	1-2 years; then ongoing
Action 3:	Ensure participation in design of at-grade crossings proposed for SouthCoast Rail reconstruction.	Public Safety, DPW	TBD
Action 4:	Identify potential locations for and implement appropriate targeted traffic calming measures.	Public Safety, DPW	Ongoing
Objective 1.2	Ensure that all users and motorists know how to use the road and how to interact with other users.		
Action 1:	Review best practices for multimodal education campaigns.	Bike and Pedestrian Working group, Public Safety	5-10 years
Action 2:	Create and implement a comprehensive education program that targets users of all ages and modes.	Bike and Pedestrian Working group, Public Safety	5-10 years
Action 3:	Implement a school education program on transportation rules and etiquette.	Bike and Pedestrian Working Group, Public Safety	5-10 years
Objective 1.3	Improve pedestrian visibility.		
Action 1:	Identify locations for improved lighting and include these locations in future projects.	Public Safety; Planning and Community Development	2-5 years; then ongoing
Action 2:	Review pedestrian sign inventory. Identify locations where signage	Bicycle and Pedestrian	5-10 years

Public Involvement

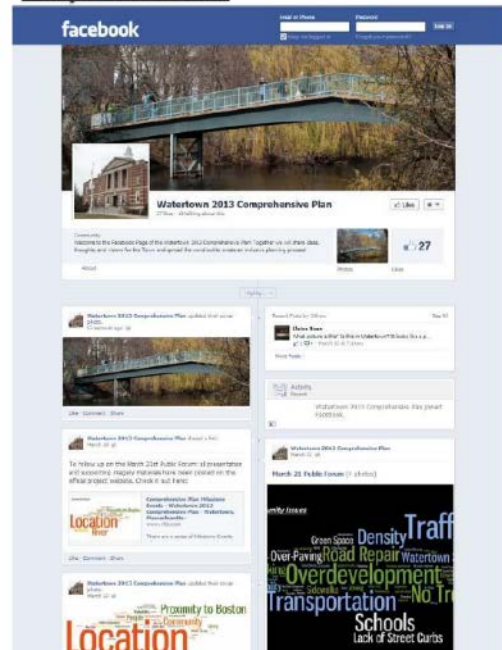
- ▶ The Steering Committees
- ▶ Interactive Websites
- ▶ Stakeholder Groups
- ▶ Web-based Questionnaires
- ▶ Youth Workshops
- ▶ Public Open Houses

Project Website & Facebook Page

<http://www.vhb.com/watertowncompplan/>



<https://www.facebook.com/Watertown2013ComprehensivePlan>



How to Get Involved

- ▶ Sign up for our email list to receive regular updates and meeting notifications.
 - ▶ If you provided your email on the sign-in sheet, you will be provided with an email containing these links.
- ▶ Visit our page on the Town of Ayer website at www.Ayer.MA.US
- ▶ Take our survey at www.surveymonkey.com
- ▶ Email AyerCompPlan@Ayer.MA.US

Planning Tools

- ▶ Past reports, census data, MRPC data
- ▶ Historical Commission
- ▶ Town Department Head summaries / capital budgets
- ▶ GIS mapping – Town and MassGIS
- ▶ Planning Guidances / manuals
- ▶ Internet / Web Sites
- ▶ Comprehensive Plans developed by other communities

