

WESTWOOD COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

A Preliminary Vision, Goals and Objectives

(Based on the community conversation as of May 18, 2019)

Our Town. Our Future



Prepared for:

The Town of Westwood

Prepared by:

Community Circle with Barrett Planning Group, LLC

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Community Circle

Planning, Programming & Public Participation



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Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

Jack Wiggin, Chair
Steve Olanoff, Vice Chair
Charles Donahue
Nancy Donahue
Phil Eramo
Sheila Hanley Longval
Paula Jacobson
Pam Kane
Peter Kane
Trevor Laubenstein
Janica Midiri
Peter Neville
John Rogers
Barbara Shea
Tom Viti
Linda Walsh
Kate Wynne

Westwood Planning Department Staff

Abigail McCabe, Town Planner

Karyn Flynn, Land Use Specialist

Consultant Team

Daphne Politis, Principal, Community Circle

<http://communityDcircle.com>

Barrett Planning Group, LLC

<http://www.barrettplanningllc.com>

And a special *Thank you!* to **Steven Kane**
for designing the logo and tagline (see cover)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose

The purpose of undertaking a visioning process for the Comprehensive Plan is to understand shared values by involving stakeholders in crafting a Vision Statement and Goals for the future. As the process evolves strategies will be identified for achieving these goals. These too will be developed with stakeholder input.

Process

The visioning process was comprised of one town-wide forum and a town-wide survey. There was also an on-line social media platform (Facebook page) made available. Input was gathered and a vision and set of goals were developed based on participants' desires and concerns. The discussion during this phase of the process is focused on **"What do we want?"** At later phases, an assessment of existing conditions will be conducted answering the questions *"What do we have?"* and *"What is most important."* Finally this last stage of the process, the development of an Implementation Plan responds to the question: *"How do we get there?"*

This vision and set of related goals will form the foundation for developing an action plan in subsequent stages of the planning process.

Goals of public process

Involving the public in creating a vision and goals to guide future decisions is critical to the process. It is important for the Plan to reflect taxpayer's concerns and desires. It is also important in order to garner support for the Plan's implementation. The Vision and Goals that result from the visioning process are the foundation upon which an action

THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PROCESS

- What do we have?
- **What do we want?**
- What is most important?
- How do we get there?

A Comprehensive Plan looks at:

- Developing a shared vision
- What to preserve?
- What to change?
- Concerns?
- Improvements?
- New and/or updated tools needed?

Goals for the public process include:

- Identify critical issues
- Define shared goals
- Establish priorities for the future
- Build support for Plan

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plan is built. They provide guidance and direction to future decision-making.

The following is the product of the input to the Steering Committee to date. It is anticipated that the Vision and Goals will go through several iterations before the completion of the Plan as the Committee gathers additional input from a continued community conversation and conducts research into existing conditions and future needs and trends.

PRELIMINARY GOALS

The order in which the goals are presented here do not in any way imply ranking or priority.

- 1.0 Work to UNIFY Westwood, to reduce the sense that it is two towns.
- 2.0 Improve TRANSPORTATION so that it is safe and pleasant and so that reliance on the automobile is reduced.
- 3.0 Support residents of ALL AGES.
- 4.0 Provide a wide range of HOUSING options to accommodate people at various stages in the lifecycle and with a range of income levels
- 5.0 Improve the existing TOWN CENTERS so that they are destinations for residents to shop and dine and experience casual encounters in public spaces.
- 6.0 Promote additional ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT in order to increase the tax base as well as to provide more opportunities for shopping and dining.
- 7.0 Protect and maintain the Town's NATURAL RESOURCES including its beautiful woods, ponds, parks and other open space and increase opportunities for RECREATION for all ages.
- 8.0 Preserve Westwood's HISTORIC resources and expand opportunities for CULTURAL activities.
- 9.0 Ensure that Town FACILITIES and SERVICES adequately meet the needs of the Town's residents.
- 10.0 Implement measures to protect the environment so that it is SUSTAINABLE and available for the next generation to enjoy.

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this first phase of the Comprehensive planning process was to identify shared values regarding the future development of Westwood. These are used to develop a vision and set of goals upon which to build an action plan with strategies to achieve these. The Comprehensive Plan will help guide future decision-making.

Process

The public's input was used to develop the Preliminary Vision and Goals set forth in this document. Residents were invited to a town-wide public forum on May 18, 2019. The purpose of the forum was to discuss their concerns and desires regarding the future of Westwood. A town-wide survey was also distributed to all households by the Planning Department. Additionally, a request was made for residents to post their favorite "Special Place" in Westwood on Facebook.

Developing a Shared Vision for Westwood's Future

Crafting a vision statement is a way of understanding and describing the desired future as envisioned by a group of people. It is by definition aspirational and should embody a community's shared values and be inspiring.

What is a Comprehensive Plan

- A basis for decision-making for future development
- A process leading to a plan of action based on a town's shared values and goals
- A set of priorities for addressing the full range of issues facing a town



Community Conversation: What were the key themes?

The following is a brief overview of the key themes that emerged from the discussions at the Visioning Session. ***It should be noted that there seems to be a significant degree of consensus between those present at the public forum and those who responded to the town-wide survey.***

- A desire to preserve the **small town feeling** many appreciated about the Town while simultaneously providing more opportunities for community gathering, recreation, entertainment and dining.
Almost half (47%) of SURVEY respondents reported that Westwood's small town character is among their favorite things about living in Town.
- Consensus regarding a strong desire for a **Community /Recreation Center**. Additionally a strong interest was expressed in expanding opportunities for both active and passive, indoor and outdoor recreation.
- A desire for a more traditional town center, but also to **improve existing Town centers** especially in terms of aesthetics and the range of businesses located there. Especially desired are additional dining options.
Almost half (40%) of SURVEY respondents report that town center revitalization is most important to them.
- A desire to **reduce the feeling that the Westwood is two towns** by better connecting the two "sides," providing equal access to services and facilities and by creating spaces and activities for all to participate in.
- A strong interest in **improving and expanding options for transportation** including providing safe and pleasant opportunities for walking, biking and a town shuttle.
More than one-third (38%) of SURVEY respondents reported that addressing issues related to traffic is most important to them.
- A very strong **appreciation for Westwood's natural features** including Hale Reservation, Lowell Woods, and Buckmaster Pond among the most frequently mentioned.
- Much appreciation was expressed for the **public schools**, although there seemed to be a lack of consensus or at least some mixed feelings regarding the issue of consolidating or keeping the neighborhood elementary schools.
- A concern regarding providing **support and services for the senior population**, including affordable housing and additional Council on Aging services.

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- An appreciation of Westwood's **historic buildings** and a desire to preserve and protect these.
- A desire to preserve the **town character**, especially in new development and redevelopment through more oversight of the development process and design appears to be a shared value as is the desire to improve aesthetics in existing commercial areas.

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES (2019)

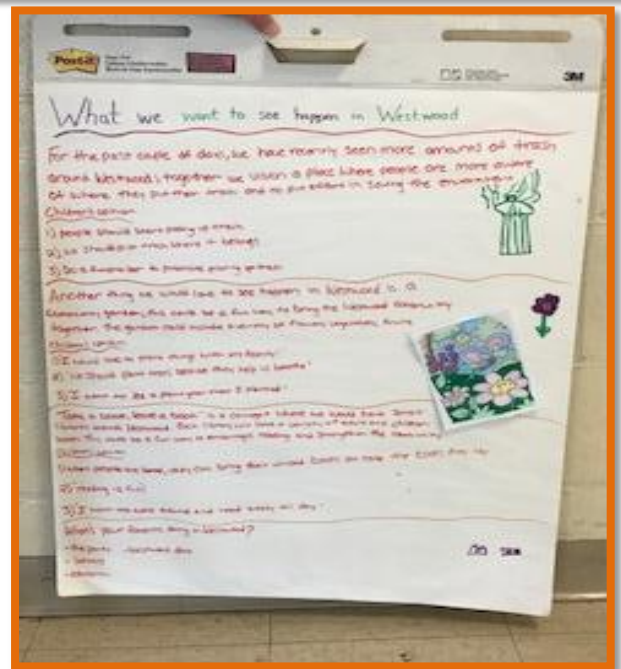
Some of the shared values identified in the visioning process 2019

- Preserve and connect open spaces and natural resources
- Improve aesthetics and expand range of businesses in commercial areas
- Provide a wide range of housing options
- More opportunities for recreation (active and passive)
- Support for the senior populations
- More for teenagers to do
- Increased opportunities for community gathering
- Improved and increased options for transportation (especially walking and biking)
- Preservation of small town character
- New development in keeping with Westwood's character
- Reduction in the divide between the "two towns" feeling
- "Greener" Westwood

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES (2000)

Some of the key community priorities in the 2000 Comprehensive Plan

- Preserve Open Space
- Manage Growth
- Diversify Residential Development
- Increase Commercial Tax Base
- Preserve Historic Character
- Improve Town Centers



Youth Voice

Elements of the Vision for Westwood's Future

A vision describes the kind of community participants imagine as a best possible outcome of their collective actions. A vision is a broad-brush image of what a community values and sees as the future. A vision statement should inspire and challenge a community's citizenry and leadership to reach toward common aspirations and communicate to newcomers and outsiders the direction in which the community intends to move.

A vision affirms a community's commitment to a set of values to be used as a lens through which to view information and make future decisions. Having a vision helps to frame subsequent discussions regarding how to achieve a desired future and helps to keep these discussions focused.

The following represents a compilation of ideas suggested by community members who participated in the planning process. The ideas included here are topics that gained relative consensus or were consistent with other thoughts expressed by participants.

PUBLIC FORUM PARTICIPANT PRIORITIES

Favorite Things

- Open space
- Town character
- Schools

Priorities

- Traffic
- Fiscal stability to maintain tax base
- Walking/biking infrastructure
- Recreation/Community Center
- Improvements to Town Centers (aesthetic and mix of businesses, especially more restaurants)
- Needs of senior population
- Reduce feeling of being two towns

TOWN-WIDE SURVEY (811 responses)

Favorite Things

- Safety
- Schools
- Location
- Good place to raise a family

Most important planning topics

- Community character
- Preservation of open space
- Public facilities
- Town center revitalization
- Traffic

Priorities

- Preservation of open space and natural resources
- Pedestrian infrastructure (crosswalks, sidewalks, bike paths)
- More restaurants and dining options

VISIONING SESSION: MOST FREQUENT RESPONSES

Favorite Things

- Open space
- Small town character
- Schools

Also:

- Balanced growth
- Transportation options (out of Town)
- Location/convenience
- Residents /friendly neighbors
- Library
- Youth-oriented community

Least Favorite Things

- Traffic
- Taxes (too high)
- Poor walkability

Also:

- High Street Business Area
- Two towns feeling
- Lack of transportation options (within Town)
- Lack of connectivity

Missing from Westwood

- Walking/biking infrastructure
- Recreation Center
- Mix of businesses (especially dining options)

Also:

- More and better no-car transportation options
- Outdoor active and passive recreation opportunities

Future Opportunities for Westwood

- Demographic changes
- Solid tax base/bond rating
- Excellent schools “brand”

Future Challenges for Westwood

- Income inequality
- Balancing schools and growth
- Neighborhood schools vs. consolidated
- Town budget
- Traffic
- Aging population

If you could do one thing to Improve Westwood...

- Improve traffic conditions
- Lower taxes
- Recreation/Community Center
- Improve pedestrian/bike safety
- Act as one town

Also:

- Open-mindedness
- Town-wide shuttle
- Make Westwood more “green”

Special Places

One of the key goals of a comprehensive plan is to protect and enhance those qualities that make a place special, that separate it from other places. With the spread of strip mall development and chain stores, many municipalities have begun to lose their uniqueness. One of the objectives of the comprehensive plan is to understand what those who live and work in a municipality most appreciate and to make recommendations to protect and even enhance these features.

“Identify those places in Town that define Westwood as a unique and special place. These could include outstanding views or landscapes, sites or buildings of historic value, or essential places in the community’s life. These are places that give form to residents’ internal images of community, are identified with cherished rituals, or contribute subconsciously to everyday life.”
(Definition from Westwood Comprehensive Plan: 2000)

The 2000 Comprehensive Plan identified what it called “special places” that define Westwood as a unique and special place. As part of this visioning process, participants were asked on Facebook and at the Public Forum what they consider to be their “favorite special place.” There was much consensus regarding what participants regard as their favorite special places.

Participants’ favorite “special places”

- Open space and conservation lands
- Hale Reservation
- Lowell Woods
- Hiking/walking trails
- Library
- School Street playground
- High & Washington Streets
- University Avenue
- Lyman’s Pond
- Iconic white church & steeple
- Tree-lined entrance to High Street
- Gay Street’s scenic character



*Participants’ Facebook selfies and written responses to “What is your **favorite special place** in Westwood?”*

A VISION FOR WESTWOOD'S FUTURE

IMAGINE...a Westwood that feels like a **unified town** with **beautiful and vibrant town centers** where Westwood residents go to shop and dine at a variety of establishments. A Westwood that even though has additional development manages to preserve its **small town character**. Historic buildings are preserved and new development and redevelopment is managed so that it is compatible with the New England charm that is desired.

IMAGINE....a Westwood where **walking and biking is safe and pleasant** and town centers, public facilities, schools, recreational areas and open spaces are connected by a continuous sidewalk system, crosswalks, bike paths and trails. Reliance on the automobile is further reduced by the availability of a **town shuttle** that helps move people around town.

IMAGINE....a Westwood that continues to preserve its treasured **open space and conservation lands**. That protects its beautiful woods, lakes and ponds, and stone walls and where the walking and hiking **trails have been extended** and are well maintained so they can be enjoyed by all.

IMAGINE... a Westwood that continues to **support excellence in education** not only at its **schools**, but also at the library and other establishments, such as the Senior Center and Community Center that offer **opportunities for lifelong learning** for all ages.

IMAGINE... a Westwood where a **wide range of housing types** is available to individuals and families at different stages of the lifecycle as well as a range of incomes, including affordable and appropriate housing for the Town's **senior citizens** as well as **starter homes** for first time homebuyers.

IMAGINE... a Westwood with an approach to **economic development** that helps to enhance the tax base with desirable economic activity in appropriate locations in ways that are compatible with the Town's character.

IMAGINE... a Westwood that provides a wide **range of indoor and outdoor recreational facilities** including a **Recreation/Community Center** where both physical activities as well as a variety of artistic and other interests can be pursued. A Westwood where there is a variety of **opportunities to gather** at a number of town events, concerts, movie nights, etc.

IMAGINE... a Westwood that continues to provide **excellent community services and facilities** by maintaining existing facilities and updating in whatever ways are necessary, including continuing to incorporate technology and exploring regional opportunities in order to increase efficiency.

IMAGINE... a Westwood where there is **broad-based participation** on the part of the many residents that volunteer to work on Boards and Committees, where technology continues to help government activities to be **transparent** and where the public is kept abreast of progress on the comprehensive plan goals and asked to provide **input into decision-making** as relevant.

IMAGINE... a Westwood that **prioritizes future resilience**, that develops Town goals to address the potential negative impacts of climate change, provides information and incentives to residents and businesses for their use of alternative energy sources, increases its recycling rate, and implements other **measures that protect the environment**.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The order in which the goals are presented here do not in any way imply ranking or priority.

GOAL 1.0 Work to UNIFY Westwood, to reduce the sense that it is two towns

Objective 1.1. Improve physical CONNECTIONS between the Town centers

Objective 1.2. Increase opportunities for COMMUNITY GATHERING

Objective 1.3. Reduce feelings of DIVISIVENESS

GOAL 2.0 Improve TRANSPORTATION so that it is safe and pleasant and so that reliance on the automobile is reduced

Objective 2.1. Improve the safety and ease of WALKING and BIKING

Objective 2.2. Improve and increase PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION options

Objective 2.3. Reduce AUTOMOBILE TRAFFIC

GOAL 3.0 Support residents of ALL AGES

Objective 3.1. Provide facilities, programs and services to meet the needs of SENIORS

Objective 3.2. Support YOUTH

GOAL 4.0 Provide a wide range of HOUSING options to accommodate people at various stages in the lifecycle and with a range of income levels

Objective 4.1. Provide housing for ALL STAGES in the lifecycle

Objective 4.2. Provide housing for a range of INCOME LEVELS

GOAL 5.0 Improve the existing TOWN CENTERS so that they are destinations for residents to shop and dine and experience casual encounters in public spaces

Objective 5.1. Improve EXISTING COMMERCIAL AREAS

6.0 Promote additional ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT in order to increase the tax base as well as to provide more opportunities for shopping and dining

Objective 6.1. Develop a LONG-TERM VISION

Objective 6.2. Support NEW USES

GOAL 7.0 Protect and maintain the Town's NATURAL RESOURCES including its beautiful woods, ponds, parks and other open space and increase opportunities for RECREATION for all ages

Objective 7.1. Increase ACCESS to the Town's natural features

Objective 7.2. Increase OPPORTUNITIES for recreation for all ages

GOAL 8.0 Preserve Westwood's HISTORIC resources and expand opportunities for CULTURAL activities

Objective 8.1. Protect HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Objective 8.2. Expand CULTURAL RESOURCES

GOAL 9.0 Ensure that Town FACILITIES and SERVICES adequately meet the needs of the Town's residents

Objective 9.1. MAINTAIN Town facilities and provide STATE-OF-THE-ART services

Objective 9.2. Improve COMMUNICATION between residents and Town government

Objective 9.3. Continue to support the SCHOOLS and the focus on excellence on education

GOAL 10.0 Implement measures to protect the environment so that it is SUSTAINABLE and available for the next generation to enjoy

Objective 10.1. Prepare for the potential negative impacts of CLIMATE CHANGE

Objective 10.2. Take measures to PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT

GUIDING PRINCIPLE

The main underlying theme of the community conversation was the desire to preserve the small town feeling and the character of the town while unifying the two parts of Town and creating more opportunities for coming together as a community.

GOALS OBJECTIVES & IDEAS FOR STRATEGIES

The goals and objectives that follow have been developed based on input gathered at the public forum held on May 18, 2019. Over sixty (60) people attended and participated in small group discussions. Additionally the input from a town-wide survey was incorporated. Eight-hundred and eleven (811) people responded to the survey. Of these, the majority have lived in Westwood for more than 20 years (46%), are between the ages of 36 and 55 (53%) and currently have children in the Westwood School System (53%). Of interest is the degree to which there were common themes in the responses of those attending the forum and those responding to the survey. As a result there can be relative confidence that these can be considered shared values.

Participants sometimes offered specific suggestions regarding the ways to accomplish the goals and objectives. These are labeled “Ideas for Strategies” and should be revisited in subsequent phases of the planning process.

As previously mentioned, the following is the product of the input to the Steering Committee to date. It is anticipated that the Vision and Goals will go through several iterations before the completion of the Plan as the Committee gathers additional input from a continued community conversation and conducts research into existing conditions and future needs and trends.

The order in which the goals are presented and are numbered do not in any way imply ranking or priority.



GOAL 1.0: ONE WESTWOOD

Work to unify Westwood, to reduce the sense that it is divided into two parts.

OBJECTIVE 1.1. IMPROVE PHYSICAL CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE TOWN CENTERS

IDEAS FOR STRATEGIES

- Improve walking and biking connections
- Establish a town shuttle to help to connect the parts
- Increase the connectivity of the trail system.

“We need more connectivity with more sidewalks, bike lanes and an in-town shuttle bus.” – FORUM PARTICIPANT

OBJECTIVE 1.2. INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITY GATHERING

IDEAS FOR STRATEGIES

- Hold town concerts and events that are free for all and widely publicize these
- Create Village Commons
- Create a Dog Park
- Establish Community Gardens
- Develop a Community Center and/or Recreation Center for all ages
- Establish a music venue for all to share
- Encourage theater and other cultural activities

Youth Voice

“Another thing we would love to see happen in Westwood is a community garden; this could be a fun way to bring the Westwood community together. The garden could include a variety of flowers, vegetables and fruits.”

OBJECTIVE 1.3. REDUCE FEELINGS OF DIVISENESS

IDEAS FOR STRATEGIES

- Explore and explain the reasons for divisiveness
- Increase transparency, education and communication
- Create a community space together
- Encourage unity
- Work to “heal the divide”

“We need to come together for mutual decisions. This divide needs to heal, needs to end. We are the Town of Westwood.” – FORUM PARTICIPANT

GOAL 2.0: TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

Improve transportation so that it is safe and pleasant and so that reliance on the automobile is reduced.

78.8% of SURVEY respondents report using a car most often to get to work or school.

OBJECTIVE 2.1. IMPROVE THE SAFETY AND EASE OF WALKING AND BIKING

IDEAS FOR STRATEGIES

- Provide continuous sidewalks, crosswalks and walkways in high pedestrian traffic locations (including schools, town facilities, recreational facilities, commercial areas, etc.)
- Maintain and repair the existing sidewalks
- Provide bike paths, Bike Share, and bike racks
- Enforce waiting times for pedestrians to cross at cross walks
- Connect the trails and trail areas
- Install smart traffic signals on 109
- Develop a Town-wide pedestrian safety plan

Almost two-thirds (60%) of SURVEY respondents prioritized improving pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure over improving other community facilities and 62% said they would like to see more sidewalks, 43% more walking trails and 43%, would like to see more bike paths.

“Walkability is also something that benefits all community members.”
– SURVEY COMMENT

OBJECTIVE 2.2. IMPROVE AND INCREASE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

IDEAS FOR STRATEGIES

- Explore options for a town shuttle
- Coordinate/collaborate with surrounding towns on regional solutions
- Better connections with the T
- Improve Islington Train Station
- Restore commuter bus service on 109/High Street

Over one third of residents (36%) responding to the SURVEY said that improving public transportation was a “very important” or “important” goal.

OBJECTIVE 2.3. REDUCE AUTOMOBILE TRAFFIC

IDEAS FOR STRATEGIES

- Increase safety on new lanes on High Street at Town Pond
- Restrict truck traffic
- Enforce speed limits
- Enforce parking rules
- Provide alternatives to automobile travel
- Develop a comprehensive traffic mitigation plan
- Install speed humps to slow traffic and reduce the cut through traffic
- Reduce cut through traffic especially in residential areas

GOAL 3.0 SUPPORT RESIDENTS OF ALL AGES

Meet the needs specific to various demographics including Westwood’s senior citizens and youth.

OBJECTIVE 3.1. PROVIDE FACILITIES, PROGRAMS AND SERVICES TO MEET NEEDS OF WESTWOOD’S SENIOR CITIZENS

IDEAS FOR STRATEGIES

- Support the development of affordable and appropriate housing for seniors
- Provide opportunities for life long learning
- Increase the capacity of the Council on Aging and programming at the Senior Center
- Consider an Islington branch Senior Center

OBJECTIVE 3.2. SUPPORT YOUTH

IDEAS FOR STRATEGIES

- Provide additional opportunities for recreation
- Provide support for learning life skills (e.g. balancing checkbook, etc.)
- Provide entertainment options
- More (extra-curricular) classes for teens
- Need a place for teens to hang out (e.g. teen center)

“Provide a place for teens to gather instead of them hanging out at Dunkin’s or Starbucks. A bowling alley or place with pool tables or skateboard park.”

–SURVEY RESPONDENT

GOAL 4.0: HOUSING

Provide a range of housing options to accommodate people at various stages in the lifecycle and with a range of income levels.

OBJECTIVE 4.1. PROVIDE HOUSING FOR ALL STAGES IN THE LIFECYCLE

IDEAS FOR STRATEGIES

- More accessory apartments for seniors
- Support for first-time homebuyers
- Affordable and appropriate housing for seniors

“It is very hard to downsize and stay in Westwood.” – SURVEY RESPONDENT.

“Important to keep the character of existing homes – do not allow oversized homes/lot size and limit approvals of knockdowns as needed.” – SURVEY RESPONDENT

One fifth (22%) of SURVEY respondents felt that 55+ housing units are needed. Additionally, respondents identified other housing types needed that could be occupied by a variety of individuals, including seniors; these include “smaller housing types,” “accessory apartments,” and “duplex style,” “tiny homes,” “condos,” among others.

OBJECTIVE 4.2. PROVIDE HOUSING FOR A RANGE OF INCOME LEVELS

IDEAS FOR STRATEGIES

- More accessory apartments
- Encourage the development of moderately-priced homes
- Encourage the development of starter homes

“Facilitate converting larger homes into condominiums.” – SURVEY RESPONDENT

“I do not support high rise multi-story apartment/condo buildings.” – SURVEY RESPONDENT

Almost half (42%) of SURVEY respondents felt that more “moderately priced housing” is needed while almost one-third (28%) felt that more “starter homes” are needed while another fifth (20%) felt that more affordable and low-income homes are needed.

GOAL 5.0 MAKE TOWN CENTERS MORE ATTRACTIVE PLACES

Improve the existing town centers so that they are destinations for residents to shop and dine and experience casual encounters in public spaces.

OBJECTIVE 5.1. IMPROVE EXISTING COMMERCIAL AREAS

IDEAS FOR STRATEGIES

- Attract more coffee shops and restaurant choices
- Improve aesthetics of the buildings (e.g. “New England charm”)
- Provide better walking and biking infrastructure
- Add more outdoor seating opportunities
- Attract a more diverse mix of uses (e.g. Hardware store, more unique shops)
- Make town centers more of a destination
- Establish a Design Advisory Board to help preserve the Town’s character

Over three-fourths (76.29%) of SURVEY respondents reported that they would like to see more restaurants while 38% would like to see specialty retail in the commercial areas.

Additionally, over half (52%) said they would like to see an improvement in the physical appearance of buildings, and almost half (46%) would like more green space and pedestrian areas (45%).

A majority of respondents support allowing housing over retail (combination of those responding “Yes” and “Maybe if designed appropriately”)

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- Better define the boundaries of the town centers
- Relax liquor license regulations to support restaurants
- Better enforce signage regulations
- Provide municipal parking lots rather than lots at each business
- Improve signage, landscaping and other streetscape features.

“I do 90% of dining and shopping outside Westwood due to a lack of options.” – SURVEY RESPONDENT

“I would like a more charming town center.” – FORUM PARTICIPANT

GOAL 6.0 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Promote additional economic development in order to increase the tax base as well as to provide more opportunities for shopping and dining.

OBJECTIVE 6.1. DEVELOP A LONG-TERM VISION

IDEAS FOR STRATEGIES

- Be proactive to attract development
- Recruit desired businesses
- Increase transparency regarding developer selection process
- Limit development to locations with adequate infrastructure (roads, water, sewer, etc.)

“Retail is scattered and there is a lack of good restaurants.” – FORUM PARTICIPANT

OBJECTIVE 6.2. SUPPORT NEW USES

IDEAS FOR STRATEGIES

- Need for local spaces (co-work) and coffee shops for those working remotely
- Consider regulations for Air B&B-type rentals

“More people will be working remotely and will need local spaces and businesses (cafes) that people can work from.” – FORUM PARTICIPANT

GOAL 7.0 NATURAL RESOURCES, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE

Protect and maintain the Town’s natural resources including its beautiful woods, ponds, parks, and other open space and increase opportunities for recreation for all ages.

OBJECTIVE 7.1. INCREASE ACCESS TO THE TOWN’S NATURE FEATURES

IDEAS FOR STRATEGIES

- Provide additional trails and connect existing ones
- Create outdoor learning opportunities (coordinate with schools and Hale)
- Develop a tree ordinance to preserve trees
- Maintain and clean trails (invite school groups and trail program to help)
- More open space protection (Land Trust)

One-third (33%) of SURVEY respondents reported issues related to open space as being most important to them.

“Sen-Ki Woods is one of my favorite special places in Westwood. I would love it to be more accessible by foot and public transportation.” – FORUM PARTICIPANT

OBJECTIVE 7.2. INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES FOR RECREATION FOR ALL AGES

IDEAS FOR STRATEGIES

- Playgrounds need maintenance and improvements
- Consider developing a Recreation/Community Center (indoor track, indoor and outdoor swimming pool, movie nights)
- Provide more outdoor recreation (ideas include tennis courts, basketball courts Co-curriculars with Hale, fitness course, ice skating rink, pickle ball courts, multi-use recreational space)
- Provide more artificial turf fields
- Make high school gym facilities available to adults for membership

Almost half (46%) of SURVEY respondents said that “providing more recreational facilities” was a “very important” (17%) or “important” (28%) goal.

Almost half of SURVEY respondents reported desiring an indoor Recreation/Community Center (46%) and more outdoor recreational facilities (43%).

“Students need a recreational center to go to after school. The library is over capacity and the kids need a safe and fun place to congregate, especially on “short Wednesdays.”
– SURVEY RESPONDENT.

“One of the things that makes Westwood unique is the focus on welfare, growth and safety of children. Green spaces, especially public spaces and trails.” – FORUM PARTICIPANT

GOAL 8.0 HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Preserve Westwood’s historic features and expand opportunities for cultural activities.

One fifth (20%) of SURVEY respondents said that “preserving historic structures and sites” is a “very important” goal. An additional 29% said it is an “important” goal.

OBJECTIVE 8.1. PROTECT HISTORIC BUILDINGS

IDEAS FOR STRATEGIES

- Strengthen historic building protection
- Find a new use for the Obed Baker House

“My favorite special place is the drive on East Street and the view of the iconic white church and steeple.”

- FORUM PARTICIPANT

OBJECTIVE 8.2. EXPAND CULTURAL RESOURCES

IDEAS FOR STRATEGIES

- Encourage theater and other cultural activities

“It would be great to have town concerts and events free to all residents.”

- FORUM PARTICIPANT

GOAL 9.0 TOWN FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Ensure that Town facilities and services adequately meet the needs of the Town's residents.

OBJECTIVE 9.1. MAINTAIN TOWN FACILITIES AND PROVIDE STATE-OF-THE-ART SERVICES

IDEAS FOR STRATEGIES

- Town Hall should be renovated in order to better accommodate town offices
- Develop reuse plan for the Deerfield School
- Keep up with changes in technology and continue to update and make improvements
- Repair and improve the main Fire Station
- Consider regionalizing services/facilities by partnering with surrounding towns where relevant
- Provide more parking at the Library
- Create an indoor recreation facility/Community Center for all
- Expand and improve outdoor recreational facilities (including parks, playgrounds, athletic fields, etc.)
- Install solar powered traffic warning lights at crosswalks
- Maintain the solid tax base and bond rating in order to support and update town facilities and services

"Maintain current facilities before starting new projects" – SURVEY RESPONDENT

"Why don't we share costs with Dover and use their transfer station?" – SURVEY RESPONDENT

OBJECTIVE 9.2. IMPROVE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN RESIDENTS AND TOWN GOVERNMENT

IDEAS FOR STRATEGIES

- Establish means to tailor communication to individual interests
- Reach people through multiple channels of communication
- Establish an on-line platform where residents can report on conditions that Town Departments should respond to

Comprehensive Plan, Westwood, MA

- Encourage more and broader resident participation and involvement in town governance
- Consider expanding the Select Board (see other towns ratio to population)
- Establish a communication hub: one place for access of community information

“I would like to see more involvement from more people, not always the same faces on Committees, voting, etc.” - - FORUM PARTICIPANT

OBJECTIVE 9.3. CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE SCHOOLS AND THE FOCUS ON EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

IDEAS FOR STRATEGIES

- Support decision-making process regarding consolidating elementary schools versus having smaller, neighborhood schools
- Better coordinate planning and decision-making between the Town and the School Department
- Invest more in the schools; renovate the schools that need it
- Plan for decreased student enrollments

78% of SURVEY respondents reported that the schools were among their favorite things about living in Westwood.

Additionally, “schools” were mentioned as one of the top three favorite features of the Town by the public FORUM participants.

“The schools and their maintenance should be a top priority.” SURVEY RESPONDENT

Youth Voice

“Take a book, leave a book” is a concept where we would have small libraries around Westwood. Each library will have a variety of adult and children’s books. This could be a fun way to encourage reading and strengthen the community.”



GOAL 10.0: MAKE WESTWOOD “GREENER”

Implement measures to protect the environment so that it is sustainable and available for the next generation to enjoy.

OBJECTIVE 10.1. PREPARE FOR THE POTENTIAL NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

IDEAS FOR STRATEGIES

- Develop Town-wide climate change goals
- Town should lead by example
- Require plantings that can tolerate predicted conditions due to climate change impacts

“I like the Town’s commitment to conservation and green energy.” SURVEY RESPONDENT

Almost half (49%) of SURVEY respondents said that “preparing the community to be ready for and resilient to natural disasters and environmental changes is a “very important” (17%) or “important” (32%) goal.

OBJECTIVE 10.2 TAKE MEASURES TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT

IDEAS FOR STRATEGIES

- Curbside composting
- Increase recycling to once a week
- Provide alternatives to automobile travel
- Implement sustainable energy sources
- Provide subsidies and incentives to residents and businesses using alternative energy sources

Youth Voice

“For the past couple of days, we have recently seen more amounts of trash around Westwood. Together we envision a place where people are more aware of where they put their trash and to put effort in saving the environment. We should all try to recycle more.”

“I like that Westwood is environmentally conscious.” - - FORUM PARTICIPANT

NEXT STEPS

Articulating a vision and set of related goals is the first step in the comprehensive planning process. In order for this to have any meaning, the plan needs to include an inventory and assessment of existing conditions and an implementation plan that outlines action steps necessary to achieve the vision and goals.

The **inventory of existing conditions** consists of an assessment of the Town's resources:

- Population and Housing
- Economic Development
- Historic and Cultural Resources
- Natural Resources, Open Spaces and Recreation
- Transportation and Circulation
- Public Facilities and Services
- Land Use and Zoning

Identifying **key opportunities and challenges** as well as **priorities** is a critical part of the process.

The **implementation plan** includes strategies and action steps to achieve the vision and goals as well as the parties responsible for implementing these, potential partners, phasing/timing, priorities, existing resources, and potential funding sources.

The public should be involved throughout the planning process, with opportunities to provide input and to be kept up to date with progress.

The next step in Westwood's comprehensive planning process is to identify any portions of the population that the Committee feels are not adequately represented in the vision and goals and to conduct targeted outreach to these groups if relevant.

For more information see the Comprehensive Plan page on the town's website:

WWW.BIT.DO/WWCOMPRESHENSIVEPLAN

Why a Comprehensive Plan?

- Define a vision for the future
- Take stock
- Update
- Respond to demographic & other changes
- Be proactive, coordinate Town actions
- Anticipate future challenges
- Ensure Westwood's desirable features are preserved
- Define direction and steps to take towards a desired future
- Create a tool to aid in decision-making



Continue to invite stakeholders to participate throughout the process