

Town of Southwick Master Plan

Pathway to the Future

Description: A Master Plan provides a long range (10-20 year) vision and framework for decisions that will affect the physical, social and economic condition of the community. The plan describes current conditions, presents projected changes and evaluates future options.

Background: Currently, the Town of Southwick has an outdated Master Plan that was adopted in 1967. There was a planning process conducted in the late 1990's that was intended to update the Master Plan, but no official plan was adopted. Since then, various functional plans have been prepared to meet the planning needs of specific Departments, Boards, Committees and Commissions.

Master Plan Elements: Requirements for a Master Plan under Massachusetts General Law Chapter 41, Section 81D include the following elements:

- Goals and Policies - Interactive public process to determine desired future
- Land Use - Inter-relationship of public and private lands
- Housing - Needs and opportunities for all citizens
- Economic Development - Local economy and employment opportunities
- Natural and Cultural Resources - Inventory and future conservation
- Open Space and Recreation - Inventory and future management
- Services and Facilities - Public needs and use
- Circulation - Transportation system and infrastructure
- Plan Implementation - Actions to achieve specific objectives

Future Direction: In FY 2022 the Planning Board will have funding available to begin a planning process for the development of a Master Plan. Specifically, \$25,000 of Community Preservation Act funds to prepare the Housing element and an initial \$25,000 from the Town budget to begin a public planning process that will include an analysis of current conditions, drafting of goals and policies and presentation of alternative futures. The Town will contract with a consulting firm(s) to manage the planning process and prepare specified elements of the draft Master Plan. Additional funding will be needed to complete the remaining plan elements and prepare for the adoption of the final Master Plan. These funds may be obtained either through available grant opportunities and/or from the FY 2023 Town budget.

Planning Process: The planning process will include public involvement, geographic information mapping and preparation of a draft Master Plan for review and approval.

Existing planning documents will be reviewed by the contractor(s) for any useful information and the 2020 census data will be utilized to develop various elements of the Master Plan.

It is anticipated that the planning process will take about two years and include the following key components:

- Formation of a Master Plan Committee with 10 to 15 members that represent a range of community interests;
- Preparation of two Requests for Proposals to facilitate awarding contract(s) for preparation of a Housing Plan and other selected elements of the Master Plan;
- Public involvement sessions for the collection of information from residents to help inform the preparation of draft goals and policies;
- Development of baseline information, maps and illustrations to describe current and future conditions of the Town; and
- Ongoing communication on the planning process and review of draft forecasts and findings.

Expected Outcomes: The preparation of a Master Plan will result in the following benefits:

- A comprehensive document that provides the basis for informed decision making on future land use and patterns of development;
- An interactive public planning process that identifies community values and helps to establish agreed upon goals and future conditions;
- Improvement of communication among Town Departments, Boards, Committees and Commissions on policies, regulations and infrastructure;
- Description of specific actions and schedules that will be used to provide and maintain needed community services and facilities; and
- A current source of information to facilitate the completion of competitive State or private grant applications for financial resources.

For Additional Information Contact:

Southwick Planning Board
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