

Master Plan Update

At the April 25, 2012 Annual Town meeting voters approved funding for updating the Town's Master Plan. The Planning Board will be retaining the services of a multidisciplinary consulting firm, VHB, to oversee the update of the Master Plan.

The Town Charter states: *“A master plan for the Town is to be updated or revised in its entirety every 10 years or as the Planning Board or others deem advisable out of funds to be provided by appropriation. In carrying out its tasks the Planning Board may employ the Town Engineering Department or outside consulting firms when special skills are required.”*

Background

The first master plan for the Town was done in 1962. The plan has been updated about every 10 years since then. The last update to the Master Plan was done in 1998. The town has a 50 year history of thoughtfully planning for its future.

Reasons for Doing a Master Plan

1. Change is inevitable – master planning proactively manages change.
2. Helps the town determine how it would like to change or evolve in the future by following an inclusive, consensus building public participation process.
3. Process for identifying future public needs, such as a new public water supply well or additional sewer plant capacity.
4. Master planning is a way to identify future problems such as traffic at an intersection, and planning ahead to avoid, minimize or mitigate the problem.
5. It will help the town budget for expensive, big ticket items in advance, to avoid more expensive emergency repairs or replacements - such as replacing crumbling sea walls in advance of their collapse.
6. Towns that have up to date plans receive points on grant applications. An investment in planning now can pay dividends later in the form of state & federal grants.
7. An approved Master Plan guides the decisions of Town boards, committees and departments to ensure that everyone is following the same plan.

Planning Process

1. **Build Out Analysis** – Planners at the Metropolitan Area Planning Council are conducting a build-out study that will estimate the number of new homes and businesses that could be built under the land use regulations. The build-out study will provide projections on:

- How many new homes can be built;
- How many millions of square feet of commercial & industrial development is possible; and
- How many more people could be living in town at the full build-out.

These projections will be used to determine future community needs for the town such as:

- The number and size of Town buildings – schools, library, Town Hall;
- The need for new or expanded Town facilities such as – wells and wastewater treatment plant.
- The adequacy of the Town’s roads and intersections based on additional vehicles traveling.
- Expanded municipal services and staffing to meet the needs of a growing population.

2. Public Participation – is the other cornerstone of good community planning. The public participation plan includes:

- A public opinion survey conducted by Suffolk University.
- A series of workshops will be held around Town to ask people what is important in planning for the future, more open space, more ball fields, high tech industry?

Plan Topics or Chapters

1. Transportation
2. Land Use
3. Natural Resources
4. Economic Development
5. Historical Preservation
6. Capital Facilities
7. Community Services
8. Housing
9. Adaptation to Climate Change
10. Open Space & Recreation
11. Harbor Management Plan

Roles & Responsibilities

The Planning Board will serve as the Steering Committee, making key policy decisions. The Town Planner will serve as the Project Manager.

Schedule

The project is expected to take one and a half to two years; starting in July 2012.