

# 1 | vision, goals, and policies

## Vision

Vision statements focus attention on a community's values, sense of identity, and aspirations. Developing a vision statement is an essential early step in creating a community comprehensive plan. The process of creating a vision statement brings community members together to identify what they want to preserve and what they want to change, to articulate their desires and hopes for the future, to develop a consensus on an ideal future and to commit themselves to working towards that ideal. The vision statement, accompanied by related principles or goals, becomes the guiding image for the community as it faces future challenges and complex choices.

### **Envision Winchester Goals**

#### **STRENGTHEN AND PROMOTE...**

- Our tradition of outstanding education
- Our commitment to being a caring and connected community
- Our economic vitality
- Our fundamental belief in respect by enhancing diversity

#### **PRESERVE, PROTECT, AND ENHANCE...**

- Our investment in capital assets
- Our access to the region and within our community
- Our historic architectural heritage
- Our distinctive landscape

\* The full Envision Winchester vision statement can be found in Appendix \_\_\_.

In 2002, a broad group of Winchester residents worked together under the name “Envision Winchester” to develop a vision statement to guide the Town into the future. Five years later, as the Comprehensive Master Plan got underway, Winchester residents continue to support this vision statement. Its basic commitments to maintaining the quality of outstanding assets such as the schools, Winchester’s strong sense of community, and distinctive neighborhoods and open spaces continue to resonate with residents, and its directions to enhance the town’s commercial districts, intra-town and regional connections, and community diversity remain relevant. For the Comprehensive Plan, however, a vision statement that is more clearly focused on the physical development of the Town is needed. The Winchester 2028 Vision Statement below reflects the results of the public participation events that began the comprehensive planning process.

# WINCHESTER 2028

A mature, suburban community located on the Aberjona River north of Boston, Winchester is proud of its rich history of farms, mills, and commerce and its enduring identity as a town of beautiful and historic residential neighborhoods. Winchester offers an excellent quality of life, an exceptional school system, a vibrant town center, a network of parks and conservation areas that reaches every neighborhood, and a welcoming, civic-minded community – all linked by easy train and road access to Boston and the region. It is a very good place to live, work, study, shop and play. Winchester provides excellent municipal services and infrastructure through efficient, cost-effective management and continues its commitment to the highest quality of life for its citizens through sound planning that protects the Town’s historic character while welcoming change that enhances opportunities for the future.



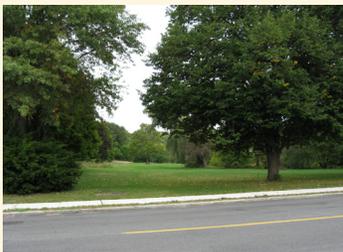
## Hometown Winchester

Winchester will continue to be a family-oriented community with a majority of single-family homes. Infill development and redevelopment compatible with the Town’s beautiful and cohesive neighborhoods, in the town center and other commercial areas, will enhance the diversity and affordability of housing, so that empty nesters, seniors, singles, and younger couples can call Winchester their hometown.



## Historic Winchester

Winchester will continue to protect the rich architectural and landscape heritage that bears witness to its past as a town of large family farms, water-driven mills, summer estates, both affluent and affordable neighborhoods, and a distinctive town center. As the Town moves into the 21st century, it will welcome changes that are compatible with its historic character.



## Green Winchester

Framed by the Middlesex Fells and the Mystic Lakes, Winchester has a green network of permanently-protected parks and open spaces that conserves natural resources and provides land for recreation, conservation and wildlife habitat. Winchester’s tree-lined streets bring green fingers into every neighborhood. The Town will continue to renew and revitalize its parks, fields, parkways, and waterways and promote environmental quality.



## Business-Friendly Winchester

Although Winchester will continue to be a predominantly residential community, the Town supports business development that enhances the tax base while remaining compatible with the Town's overall character. Winchester will build its economic vitality by fostering business retention and diversification, improving attractiveness and infrastructure, and facilitating and encouraging use of its commercial areas. Ensuring the success and attractiveness of Winchester's town center will always be a top priority, and enhancement of the character and success of businesses in the town's smaller commercial areas will be integrated with protection of residential neighborhoods.



## Accessible Winchester

Winchester's excellent road and rail access to the region has long been one source of its success. Winchester neighborhoods and the town center are pedestrian-friendly, providing for safe walking with sidewalks and trails to connect town destinations and open spaces. The Town will enhance mobility and accessibility through effective traffic management, new parking strategies, improved pedestrian and bicycle connections in neighborhoods and to the town center, connections to regional trails, and advocacy with the MBTA for excellent train service.



## Municipal Winchester

Efficient management allows Winchester to offer high-quality community services that are accessible to all residents. Winchester's school system continues to be one of the best in the state. Prudent financial management and development decisions ensure the provision of revenues adequate for maintenance and ongoing improvement of services and programs. The Town will continue to invest in capital assets, including its municipal and school facilities, public library, and utility infrastructure by making necessary improvements to address critical issues such as stormwater management, flooding, and deferred maintenance.



## Sustainable Winchester

Winchester will implement resource-efficient strategies and activities that will conserve energy and provide environmental benefits. The Town will promote sustainability through its own facilities, services, practices, and purchases and will encourage private sustainable activities, such as recycling, energy-efficient construction, and sustainable landscape practices.



## Goals and Policies

The Winchester 2028 Vision emerged from a public participation process that included a Town-Wide Workshop, three meetings focused on individual precinct issues, and a workshop for the business and institutional community. The themes that emerged from these public meetings form the basis of goals and policies that serve as the foundation for the Comprehensive Master Plan. Each goal relates to a major theme, and the policies are intended to guide decision makers as they face future challenges. Specific recommendations for each goal can be found in each of the plan element chapters.

Like many communities, Winchester must balance the interests of the town as a whole, neighborhoods and precincts, and individual property owners. Planning for issues such as affordable housing, economic development, and preservation of neighborhood character requires careful weighing of competing interests. In addition, the Town must ensure that the successful adoption of particular goals and policies will not prevent the realization of other important goals. Ideally, strategies to address town issues will allow Winchester to achieve many goals simultaneously.

### PLAN: PHASE ONE

Goal	Policies for Decision Makers
<b>HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS</b>	
<b>Sustain and maintain the physical character of established neighborhoods.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore new regulatory and advisory tools to maintain neighborhood character, such as zoning changes, advisory design guidelines, and neighborhood conservation districts (NCDs).</li> <li>• Encourage compatible residential infill development.</li> <li>• Preserve and enhance the walkable character of neighborhoods.</li> <li>• Continue to include neighborhood residents in the development process for projects that will have neighborhood impacts.</li> <li>• Ensure sensitive transitions from non-residential to residential areas.</li> <li>• Consider establishing local historic districts.</li> </ul>
<b>Enhance neighborhood appearance through attractive streetscapes.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote tree planting in areas without street trees or in which street trees have been damaged or lost.</li> <li>• Ensure that new development projects protect existing trees to the degree feasible and restore some trees removed during the construction process.</li> <li>• Provide adequate lighting and continuous sidewalks for pedestrians.</li> <li>• Consider underground utilities.</li> </ul>
<b>Provide sufficient housing for households at all stages of the life cycle.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide incentives for the development of a variety of housing types to serve different households.</li> <li>• Encourage mixed-use and accessory residential uses in appropriate locations.</li> <li>• Promote preservation of “starter homes.”</li> </ul>
<b>Promote the creation of permanently-affordable housing units.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the development of mixed-income housing that is compatible with the character of the surrounding neighborhood.</li> </ul>
<b>Promote the creation and preservation of an economically-diverse housing mix.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage the creation of affordable housing units throughout Winchester.</li> <li>• Continue to add housing units that are affordable to middle income households.</li> <li>• Continue to participate in assistance programs that support new homeownership and rental opportunities.</li> <li>• Discourage “teardowns” of smaller homes throughout Winchester.</li> </ul>

Goal	Policies for Decision Makers
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOWN CENTER</b>	
<p><b>Enhance existing commercial areas.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage economic growth and support local independent businesses.</li> <li>• Develop a proactive approach to business retention and recruitment.</li> <li>• Improve the function and design of the town’s commercial districts.</li> <li>• Maximize the potential of small commercial areas while mitigating impacts on adjacent residential neighborhoods.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Create mixed-use environments in the town’s commercial areas.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage redevelopment and new development projects that contain first-floor retail and upper-story office or residential uses.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Maintain and enhance the town center’s character.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that redevelopment preserves the design and scale of the town center.</li> <li>• Improve walkability by creating safe and pleasant pedestrian and bicycle connections to other parts of the town.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Attract new customers to the town center and other commercial areas.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the business mix by recruiting restaurants and other businesses that bring more nighttime activity.</li> <li>• Encourage owners to expand business hours.</li> <li>• Enhance joint marketing activities.</li> <li>• Manage parking in the town center.</li> <li>• Promote special events and programming in the town center.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Encourage the operation of home-based businesses.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider zoning changes that will allow home businesses while protecting neighborhood character.</li> </ul>
<b>FISCAL ENVIRONMENT</b>	
<p><b>Continue to evaluate costs and benefits of development projects.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider the value of services provided that can reduce operational costs for the Town in addition to potential revenues from new projects.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Reduce reliance on residential tax revenues by encouraging the redevelopment of and enhancing the build-out potential of non-residential properties.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the redevelopment of underutilized commercial and industrial areas by ensuring that regulations do not impede reuse of older, obsolete properties.</li> <li>• Consider allowing increased density in non-residential areas after conducting a study of the costs and benefits to the community and the potential impacts on nearby neighborhoods.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recover a reasonable share of the tax revenue lost to development projects undertaken by tax-exempt entities.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to negotiate development agreements with tax-exempt entities to provide compensation for foregone tax revenues, considering their social and economic benefits and the services they provide to the community, where applicable.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Continue to provide tax relief for seniors.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Market the availability of property tax exemptions, deferrals, credits, and tax breaks for seniors.</li> <li>• Consider petitioning the legislature to establish forms of tax relief or other types of housing cost relief for Winchester seniors.</li> <li>• Consider purchasing affordable housing restrictions in homes owned and occupied by seniors.</li> </ul>



Goal	Policies for Decision Makers
Explore new funding sources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider adopting the Community Preservation Act (CPA) to provide additional funds for affordable housing, historic preservation, and open space conservation.</li> </ul>
<b>LAND USE</b>	
Promote public awareness of land use issues in Winchester.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emphasize connections between land use and other town issues, such as housing, transportation, natural resources, and economic development.</li> <li>Plan for a rewrite of the Town's zoning by-law to eliminate inconsistencies and enhance user-friendliness.</li> <li>Make the Zoning By-Law consistent with Comprehensive Master Plan goals.</li> <li>Manage development in flood-prone and aquifer areas.</li> </ul>
Use strategic planning to address multiple town goals through redevelopment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen town zoning regulations and design guidelines to promote mixed-use development.</li> </ul>

The following preliminary Phase Two goals and policies are based on goals from the 2004 Community Development Plan (CDP) and comments from the Phase One public process. These goals and policies are intended to provide a starting point for Phase Two work, but they are subject to revision in the Phase Two process.

**PLAN: PHASE TWO**

Goal	Policies for Decision Makers
<b>NATURAL RESOURCES</b>	
Preserve and enhance open space and sensitive natural resources for wildlife habitat, biodiversity, protection of water resources, and a healthy environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protect natural corridors along creeks floodways, utility easements, and other appropriate areas for wildlife habitat and nature-based recreation.</li> <li>Protect water resources from non-point source pollution.</li> <li>Encourage the retention of street trees and trees on private lots and promote tree-planting on newly-developed lots.</li> </ul>
Balance conservation and recreation issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure open space protection while providing for community recreation needs.</li> </ul>
<b>OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION</b>	
Protect and enhance the Town's park and open space system. • Permanently protect and preserve existing open space.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support private and nonprofit open space protection and management strategies.</li> <li>Provide regular maintenance to ensure the ongoing quality of park and open space areas.</li> <li>Identify opportunities to acquire new open space.</li> </ul>
Provide a balanced park and open space system that allows for enjoyment and access by all town residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide opportunities for both passive and active use of parks and recreation areas.</li> <li>Improve access to Town-owned conservation land.</li> <li>Enhance connections between open space resources and create new connections between open space and town destinations.</li> </ul>
Expand recreation opportunities for residents of all ages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore collaboration with schools to provide after-hours access to recreation areas and facilities.</li> <li>Improve recreation programming.</li> <li>Consider the development of a community recreation center.</li> <li>Pursue connections to regional recreation amenities.</li> </ul>

Goal	Policies for Decision Makers
<b>HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES</b>	
<b>Maintain the integrity and character of Winchester's historic neighborhoods, landscapes, and the town center.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revise and update Winchester's inventory of historic resources and identify important resources for preservation.</li> <li>• Consider review of exterior changes to historic properties, such as local historic districts.</li> </ul>
<b>Enhance community understanding of Winchester's historic resources, including buildings and landscapes.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support preservation activities by municipal commissions and non-profit organizations.</li> <li>• Encourage property owners to pursue National Register designation for their historic properties.</li> </ul>
<b>Increase cultural opportunities.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and adopt programs that support arts and culture in Winchester.</li> </ul>
<b>TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION</b>	
<b>Reduce traffic congestion.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with neighboring communities and the state on regional solutions to congestion on major arterials, such as Route 3.</li> <li>• Pursue opportunities for transit-oriented development.</li> <li>• Investigate traffic mitigation options for the town's public schools.</li> </ul>
<b>Encourage alternatives to auto transportation.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include pedestrian and bicycle modes in traffic studies and development projects.</li> <li>• Explore use of a Town-sponsored shuttle for intra-town transit.</li> <li>• Work with regional partners to manage community impacts and encourage ridership on the MBTA Green Line extension.</li> </ul>
<b>Improve pedestrian safety throughout the town.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support traffic calming programs for areas that are hazardous to pedestrians.</li> <li>• Provide a continuous network of safe routes (sidewalks and other paths) for pedestrians, especially around the town center, the rail stations, schools, and other town destinations.</li> </ul>
<b>Improve parking availability in commercial districts, around the rail stations, and near hospital facilities.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify opportunities for additional parking in the town center.</li> <li>• Work with business owners and nonprofit entities to develop parking management plans.</li> <li>• Reduce commuter parking by encouraging walking and bicycling to the train stations.</li> </ul>
<b>MUNICIPAL FACILITIES, SERVICES, AND INFRASTRUCTURE</b>	
<b>Control flooding, drainage, and sewer infrastructure problems throughout the town.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve sewers and drainage infrastructure.</li> <li>• Manage new development to improve drainage systems.</li> </ul>
<b>Encourage resource-efficient activities.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the construction of "green" buildings, including municipal facilities.</li> <li>• Encourage retrofitting of existing buildings for sustainability.</li> <li>• Include energy standards in the revised zoning by-law.</li> <li>• Consider developing a climate change plan.</li> </ul>
<b>Maintain school excellence.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide appropriate facility maintenance and renovate aging facilities to meet classroom needs.</li> <li>• Ensure that the school system receives sufficient funds to provide a quality education.</li> </ul>
<b>Provide additional community meeting space.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to work with the school system to allow after-hours facility use for community activities.</li> <li>• Consider building a multi-purpose community meeting and recreation facility through a public-private partnership.</li> </ul>