



TOWN OF WINCHESTER

TOWN HALL

WINCHESTER, MASSACHUSETTS 01890

September 16, 2009

Dear Town Meeting Members, Property Owners, Business Owners and Interested Residents:

The Winchester Board of Selectmen and the Winchester Planning Board invite you to a series of community conversations to discuss the future of the town center.

Winchester has a compact and successful town center that functions as the heart of the community and was consistently identified in recent Master Plan meetings as one of Winchester's most important assets. It is the town's retail and service center, offering a combination of independent, locally owned clothing boutiques, toy stores, banks, restaurants, and bookstores along with regional and national chain stores. It is the transportation crossroads of the town and the main transfer point to commuter rail and bus services. It is the focal point for the farmers' market, concerts on the Common, and holiday events. The town center is also home to the Griffin Museum of Photography, a unique cultural organization that attracts residents and many out-of-town visitors.

The town center's architecture of one- to three-story brick buildings, churches, tree-lined streets, open green spaces along the Aberjona River, and water features such as the Mill Pond and the waterfall evoke Winchester's history and create a distinct sense of place. That sense of a traditional village center was enhanced by streetscape improvements made in the 1980s, and along with the area's pedestrian scale, makes it an attractive destination for Winchester residents.

Although the town center has a strong appeal and regularly attracts many people, town center merchants would like to recruit new businesses and increase the number of shoppers, creating enough attractions and activity to compete more effectively with larger retail areas in adjacent towns and malls. Parking is consistently identified as a problem for shoppers, visitors, employees, and commuters, and there are continuing concerns about flooding. With less than five percent of Winchester's tax base in commercial and industrial properties, the Town needs to insure that downtown businesses are doing well, serving the community, and receiving the community support they need to remain economically strong. This objective must be balanced against the equally important need for renewal, protection of open space and the river, and preservation of architecturally significant buildings.

The first conversation will be held on Wednesday, September 30, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. in the McCall School Auditorium. It will focus on the town center's retail, office, business, and housing markets. Ms. Peg Barringer, an economic consultant and principal of Finepoint Associates, will report on her economic and marketing study of the downtown.

A schedule for the community conversations is attached. We look forward to meeting with you.

Very truly yours,

Brian P. O'Connor, Chairman

Winchester Board of Selectmen

Lance R. Grenzeback, Chairman

Winchester Planning Board