

# WINCHESTER MASTER PLAN 2030



**DRAFT**  
1/31/2020



## TOWN OF WINCHESTER PLANNING BOARD

January 31, 2020

**Dear Fellow Members of the Winchester Community,**

After two and a half years of work involving dozens of people, the Winchester Planning Board is excited to share with you today the last **Draft** for **Winchester's Master Plan 2030**, a plan that will carry Winchester forward to 2030 and beyond with confidence and a united voice.

The visions established to this point were shaped and supported by an impressive array of Winchester citizens, sometimes in harmony, sometimes in disagreement, but always with the best interests of and hopes for our common future in mind.

The Planning Board, Town Planner, Master Planning Steering Committee, and Master Plan Consulting Team have been working relentlessly since 2017 to reach this point, the penultimate step in a very long process. This work has focused on how best to balance the community's many voices to create a roadmap that will help guide Winchester toward a future maximizing our town's strengths to help the town maintain its essence while accommodating the many unknowns in its near- and long-term future.

In the next two months we will be holding further discussions regarding this draft, making final changes toward a finished plan for formal adoption. Even if you have already contributed your thoughts, we ask that you be part of this final push toward conclusion.

To that end, please review the attached draft and share with us your comments, concerns, questions or words of support by emailing us at: [planningboard@winchester.us](mailto:planningboard@winchester.us). Your comments will be shared with the Master Plan Steering Committee and the Master Plan Consulting Team.

Winchester is an amazing community that offers so much to its members while also providing tremendous opportunities in our common future. We look forward to continuing this conversation.

**All the best,**

Heather R. von Mering  
Winchester Planning Board, Chair



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*"People move here because they love the feel of the village and nature that surrounds. We need to bring that mindset back... into our lives."*

*-Resident*

# INTRODUCTION

Winchester is an attractive, historic, mature suburban community<sup>1</sup> with easy access to regional employment centers via highways and commuter rail. Its variety of coherent, primarily single-family, residential neighborhoods are part of a remarkable historic fabric that extends beyond its extensive stock of well-preserved historic homes. Its attractive Town Center serves as the Town's institutional, cultural, and commercial hub. Although largely developed, Winchester has a significant amount and quality of protected conservation areas; parks, playgrounds, and recreational fields; and natural features that include large and small water bodies.

When the Town's last full Master Plan was completed in 1953, approximately 15,500 people were living in Winchester. Since that time, the town's population has grown roughly 45 percent, adding about 7,000 residents.

## *What has changed? What remains the same? What do community members value? How do they envision the Town's future?*

The Town's Master Plan seeks to answer key questions like these. It provides local policy-makers with a rational path to prepare for and shape future development and preservation of the community—paying particular attention to areas experiencing development pressure.

A master plan is a way to respond to change over time. It is a long-term (10 year) visionary plan for the community's physical evolution. Only by first imagining where we want to go, can we figure out how to get there.

But a master plan is only meaningful if it is implemented. That is why it is vital to develop a realistic plan that is thoroughly vetted and, ultimately, embraced by residents, town officials, and other community members.

## COMPONENTS OF A MASTER PLAN

1. an analysis of existing conditions that builds on past and current plans with the most current available data
2. a ten-year community vision with measurable goals to support the vision
3. specific regulatory, programming, and physical improvement strategies
4. a five-year implementation action plan

## MASTER PLAN STATUTORY ELEMENTS<sup>2</sup>



Land Use



Housing and Demographics



Economic Development



Historic and Cultural Resources



Open Space, Natural Resources and Recreation



Transportation



Public Facilities and Services

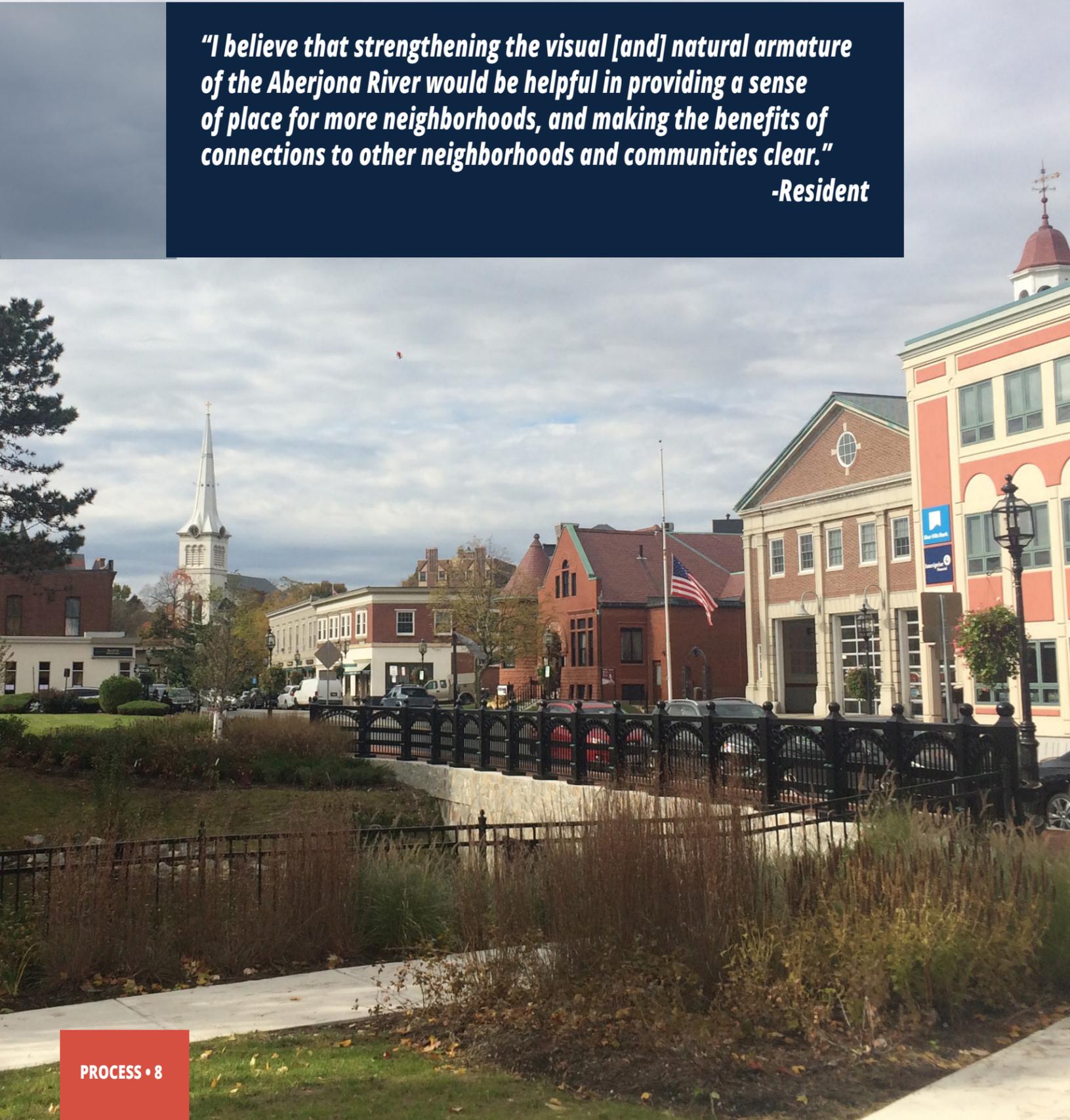
<sup>1</sup> "Mature suburb" communities are classified as mid-twentieth-century communities of moderate density with owner-occupied single family homes on ¼ - ½ acre lots. New development occurs primarily through infill, redevelopment, and tear-downs. More information can be found on the Metropolitan Area Planning Council's (MAPC) website.

<sup>2</sup> Winchester's Master Plan will comply with all statutory requirements per MGL c.41 s.81D.



# PROCESS

*"I believe that strengthening the visual [and] natural armature of the Aberjona River would be helpful in providing a sense of place for more neighborhoods, and making the benefits of connections to other neighborhoods and communities clear."*  
-Resident



## 2018

**Phase I: Winchester Yesterday and Today**  
September - December

### **Phase I: Winchester Yesterday and Today**

The 18-month Winchester Master Plan process launched in September 2018 with a study of the community's key challenges and opportunities through an existing conditions analysis in Phase I. The Town's consultant team, led by JM Goldson LLC, reviewed relevant plans, studies, and current data—including a community survey conducted by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) in early 2018—and held focus groups with key stakeholders, to understand and identify the community's trends and challenges. This information was used to identify community sentiment, values, and priorities and set the direction for a community vision and goals developed during Phase II.

## 2019

**Phase II: What Could Winchester's Future Be Like?**  
January - June

### **Phase II: What Could Winchester's Future Be Like?**

Phase II kicked off with the project's first public forum in February 2019. Winchester residents weighed in on the community's key assets, concerns, and challenges—and how they envision the future of Winchester over the next ten years. Through two community workshops; six community events; three facilitated discussions with local interest groups; four independently organized meeting-in-a-box submissions; hundreds of comments collected through the project's website (courb.co/Winchester) and many individual emails, phone calls, and conversations with members of the project team and/or Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC) members—the project team developed a draft vision statement and set of draft goals.

**Phase III: How Should Winchester Achieve Its Vision and Goals?**  
July - December

### **Phase III: How Should Winchester Achieve Its Vision and Goals?**

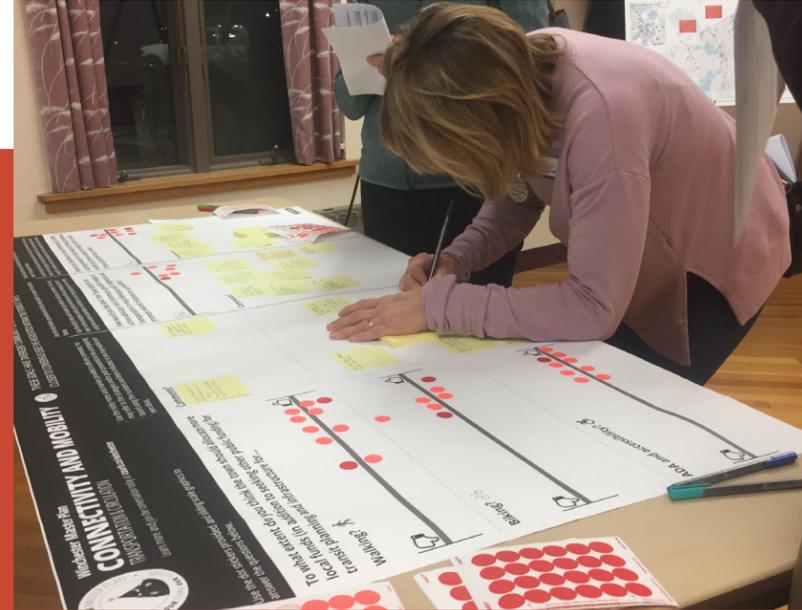
As the master plan entered Phase III, the project team took a deeper look into areas that may require significant choices and substantive collaboration between Winchester's leaders and organizations, including three geographic locations—Town Center, the North Main Street Corridor, and the Holton/Cross Street Neighborhood— and two overarching themes—Sustainability and Traffic Safety. The project team consulted with various stakeholders, community leaders, and other interest groups to think critically about these areas and recommend specific strategies to achieve the goals identified in Phase II. The engagement process in Phase III—culminating in a third public workshop and a Town Government department head meeting—was structured to identify tensions, choices, and alternative visions and goals.

## 2020

**Phase IV - Plan Adoption and Finalization**  
January - March

### **Phase IV: Plan Adoption and Finalization**

A draft master plan was released for public comment in early February. The Master Plan Steering Committee and town leadership, including key boards and committees also continued vetting the plan. The plan was locally approved by the Planning Board in late March and filed with the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).



2018

Phase I: Winchester Yesterday and Today  
September - December



2019

Phase II: What Could Winchester's Future Be Like?  
January - June



2019

Phase III: How Should Winchester Achieve Its Vision and Goals?  
August - December 2019



2020

Phase IV: Plan Adoption and Finalization  
January - March



# ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

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# OVER 2,500 PEOPLE\* HELPED SHAPE THIS PLAN

\*This number includes the total raw number of all the people who attended any event and the number of "unique visitors" to the project site. It does not account for people who may have participated through multiple engagement methods.

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# WINCHESTER IN CONTEXT

Winchester is a mature suburban town located eight miles northwest of Boston in Middlesex County, and encompasses close to 6.5 square miles. It is bordered by the municipalities of Arlington, Medford, Lexington, Stoneham, and Woburn. As a town-form of government, Winchester's local legislative body is a representative town meeting, its chief executive body is the Select Board, and it is administered by a town manager.

Like many historic New England towns, Winchester was shaped by its geography, habitable land, and water resources. Of its 4,062 acres, approximately 893 acres, or 22 percent of the total land area, is covered by water bodies, protected open space, or otherwise undevelopable land. Bounded by hilly terrain on the east and west, Winchester's colonial-era development pattern began in the lowland valley areas of the Town's north/south transportation routes.

## Growing and Changing Population

The population, which was just under 22,500 in 2018, is projected to grow over the coming years. More families with children are moving into the community—drawn by the performance and reputation of the public schools—while the proportion of residents that are older adults or younger adults is declining. The increase in school-age children in Winchester

has added to an already over-stressed school system. The population has grown somewhat more racially/ethnically diverse, with an increasing proportion of residents identifying as Asian (primarily Chinese). New services, programs, and organizations have sprung up to serve these new communities.

## Increasing Housing Costs

Winchester household incomes, high in the past, are now even higher—median household income grew almost 60 percent between 2000 and 2016, while the median for households across the state grew about 41 percent in the same period. Housing costs in Winchester are growing at an even faster rate than household income with median sale prices for all single-family house and condo sales increasing about 115 percent between 2000 and 2018.

## Mismatch in Commuting Patterns

Most Winchester residents commute to other communities for employment while most of Winchester's workers commute in from somewhere else. About 10,000 people leave the community daily for work, while just over 8,000 people enter the community for work. Many people who work in Winchester cannot afford to live there. The lack of housing affordability and mismatch of resident skill set with the available jobs in Winchester leads to physical repercussions, such as increased traffic congestion, and impacts social dynamics, such as reinforcing Winchester's reputation as a privileged community.

## Eroding Neighborhood Character

Overall, new development has been slow due to limited viable development sites and strong regulatory controls. Most new residential development has been the result of demolition to build new single- or two-family houses on properties once occupied by older or smaller houses. This out-of-scale development has threatened Winchester's historic fabric and the character of the Town's individual neighborhoods.

## Changing Weather Patterns

Once called "Waterfield", Winchester's chain of lakes, ponds, and waterways helped shape its landscape—acting first as sources of irrigation and water power, and, now, as recreational and aesthetic amenities. The Town has been actively addressing flooding issues for over a decade through mitigation measures. However, changing weather patterns that result in rapid flooding, extreme and extended temperatures, ice and wind storms, and other unprecedented phenomena, may require more complex engineering strategies and mitigation measures.

Winchester's Town Center is the historic, cultural, and commercial hub for the town. Balancing new development opportunities while maintaining the character of the area is an ongoing challenge.

The North Main Street corridor offers a great opportunity for the Town to look at redevelopment options that could include a mix of retail, offices, and residential uses.

Winchester's desirability and extremely high home values has created a market for tear down-rebuilds which threatens the scale and aesthetics of many established neighborhoods. This redevelopment pattern also takes lower-cost starter homes off the market in favor of much larger—and far more expensive—housing.

Winchester's industrial areas house a mix of industrial, commercial, office, and recreation-based businesses. Changes in the market have led to other users occupying these spaces.

Increasing school enrollment stresses the Town's budget and quickly fills space in schools.

The Town has undertaken several large-scale capital building projects in recent years while operational and staff budgets have remained relatively unchanged.

Adequately maintaining town and school facilities is challenging but critical to extending their life.

Police, Fire, and EMS staff are well-trained but challenges exist with staff retention, succession planning, and dispatch services.

Single occupancy vehicle drivers make up over 70 percent of commuting traffic.

Lack of adequate MBTA bus service.

Middle and high school start times have recently changed to coincide with elementary schools creating parent drop-off traffic congestion and pedestrian-safety issues in the downtown area.

The new Tri-Town Community Bike Path offers a multi-use pathway to neighboring towns.

Cambridge (Route 3), Main, and Washington Streets act as pedestrian barriers, creating safety concerns for kids walking to elementary schools west of Cambridge Street. There are also few safe bike routes to schools.

Winchester adopted a *Complete Streets* Policy and Plan in 2016. *Complete Streets* are streets designed for all ages and users, including pedestrians, cyclists, transit rides, motorists.



An increase in non-permeable land in Winchester and upstream contributes to stormwater runoff and flooding in town. Stronger and more frequent storms will increase flooding, particularly around the Aberjona River. Winchester's location in a floodplain places critical infrastructure and historic resources at risk.

## TRENDS, CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

The loss of many modest-sized houses through redevelopment into larger, more expensive houses has made it difficult to maintain neighborhood character.

Lack of housing options—including smaller, rental, accessible, and affordable units—creates barriers for people in a variety of life stages to thrive in the community and to achieve greater socio-economic diversity in the community.

Winchester has limited resources to encourage housing development.

Winchester has far fewer permanently affordable units than the state's mandated 10 percent requirement—shortchanging the needs of its residents and leading to loss of zoning control over the design of affordable developments.

Housing supply has not kept up with demand, contributing to high housing costs.

Winchester Hospital is the largest employer—employing nearly 2,500, including 816 physicians. Potential consolidation of the hospital into the Beth Israel Deaconess Health System may adversely impact local employment.

Only 4 percent of Winchester's tax base is non-residential.

Winchester's housing market prices out individuals who work but do not live in town. Much of the workforce lives in other communities.

Increased development pressure puts many historic resources at risk and contributes to out-of-character development.

Winchester's many community groups and non-profits heavily rely on a small shared number of volunteers.

Recent initiatives, such as expanding the buildings protected under the *Preservation of Historically Significant Buildings Bylaw*, have helped strengthen historic resource protections.

The *Local Historic District* and *Cultural District* initiatives can increase the protection and public visibility of these resources as well as their funding streams.

Funding for cultural programs and events tend to be driven and funded by community groups and non-profits.

As Winchester's population has grown more diverse, community groups, such as the Network for Social Justice and Winchester School of Chinese Culture, have grown to support these new populations.

**A CIVICALLY-ENGAGED, CLOSE-KNIT COMMUNITY THAT IS WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE WITH REPRESENTATIVE LEADERSHIP AND TOWN GOVERNMENT. THE COMMUNITY BALANCES NEW GROWTH WITH ITS HISTORIC CHARMS AND MAINTAINS HIGH-QUALITY TOWN SERVICES IN A FISCALLY RESPONSIBLE MANNER.**

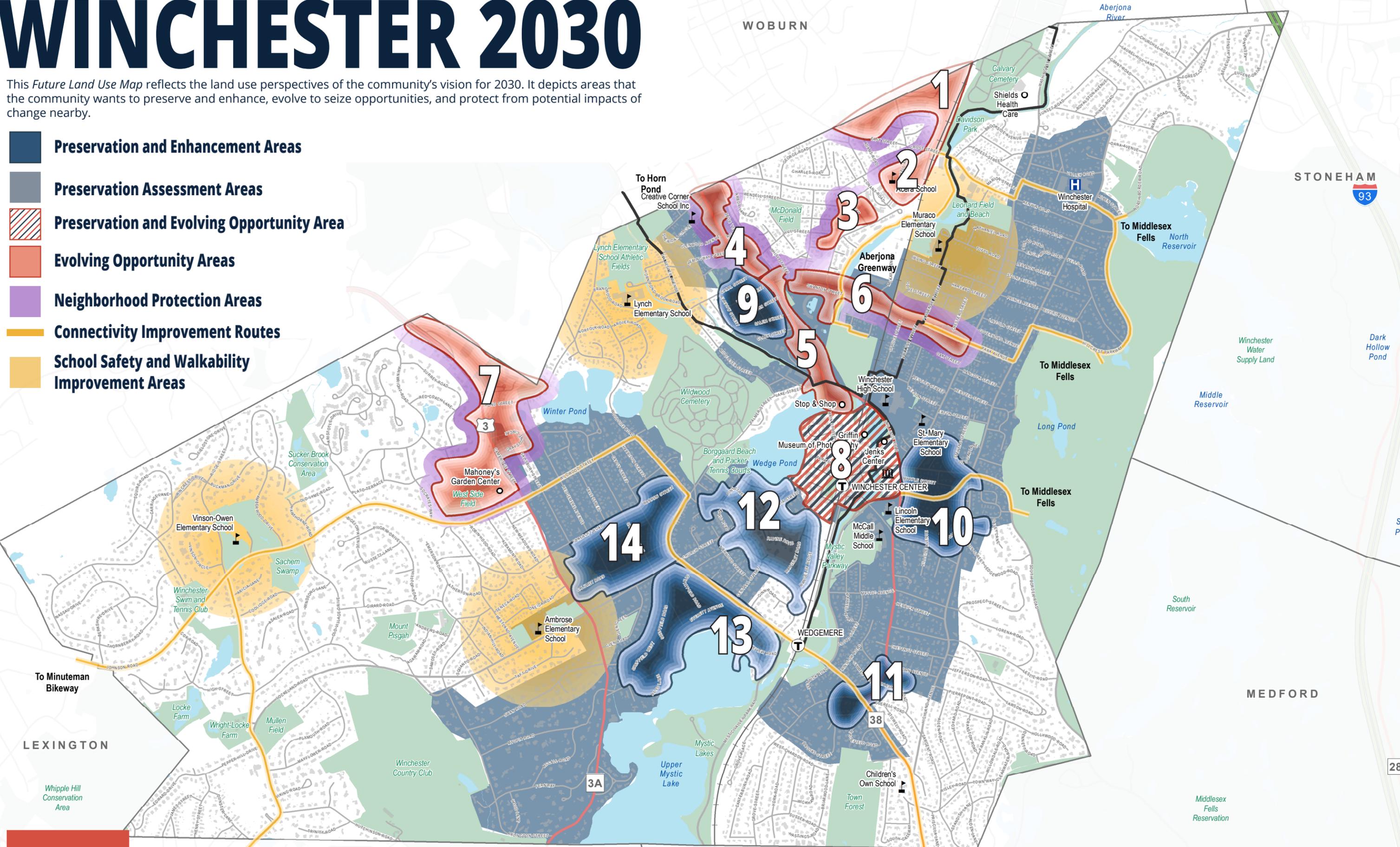
**VISION 2030**



# WINCHESTER 2030

This *Future Land Use Map* reflects the land use perspectives of the community's vision for 2030. It depicts areas that the community wants to preserve and enhance, evolve to seize opportunities, and protect from potential impacts of change nearby.

- Preservation and Enhancement Areas**
- Preservation Assessment Areas**
- Preservation and Evolving Opportunity Area**
- Evolving Opportunity Areas**
- Neighborhood Protection Areas**
- Connectivity Improvement Routes**
- School Safety and Walkability Improvement Areas**



# WINCHESTER 2030

## Evolving Opportunity Areas

- 1** The Holton/Cross Street area presents opportunities to increase the non-residential tax base by thinking beyond town boundaries through collaboration with Woburn.
- 2** The Lowell Ave. area could offer opportunities for mixed-use development that incorporates commercial and residential uses.
- 3** The River Street area could also offer opportunities for mixed-use development that incorporates commercial and residential uses.
- 4** The northern portion of N. Main Street could provide opportunities for contextual infill and redevelopment for commercial, office, and mixed-use, coupled with streetscape and walking and biking safety improvements.
- 5** The southern portion of N. Main Street, closest to Town Center, presents redevelopment and public investment opportunities to promote economic vibrancy, walkability, traffic safety, and aesthetic enhancements.
- 6** A primary connection between N. Main and Washington Streets, Swanton Street presents opportunities to foster redevelopment of key sites, coupled with public streetscape and wayfinding improvements.
- 7** The northern area of Cambridge Street offers opportunity to promote continued commercial uses or mixed-use redevelopment.

## Neighborhood Protection Areas

These neighborhood areas are in close proximity to *Evolving Opportunity Areas*, calling for protection from potential impacts of nearby development. Through sensitive design and site planning, impacts can be minimized to protect these neighborhoods.

## Preservation and Evolving Opportunity Area

- 8** Some areas of Town Center could offer opportunities for contextual infill, including mixed-use development that incorporates commercial and residential uses. But the area's historic resources and character should be protected through sensitive design and site planning—and for some areas of Town Center, stronger preservation protections may also be needed.

## Preservation and Enhancement Areas<sup>1</sup>

These areas are historic residential neighborhoods, have a wealth of irreplaceable properties that shape Winchester's beloved character and tie the community to its roots. These neighborhoods call for stronger preservation protections and enhancements with sensitive infill.

- 9** The Canal Street and Richardson Subdivision in Winchester's North End was developed through the last half of the 19th century with small houses for workers in local industries.
- 10** East of Town Center contains a collection of individual historic architecture clustered on Mount Vernon Street, Myrtle Street, and Mystic Valley Parkway.
- 11** Symmes' Corner includes all the houses built by the Symmes Family, one of the original settlers in Winchester, on the land of their original 17th century farm.
- 12** Firth - Glengarry and Rangely Road areas contains notable examples of mid-nineteenth to early-twentieth century architecture. It includes the Firth-Glengarry National Historic District and Rangeley Road Heritage District, which contains homes designed by a single architect, George D. Rand. The latter showcases the idealized park-like suburban development of the 19th century.
- 13** Everett Avenue - Sheffield Road contains houses in the Colonial Revival, Medieval Revival and Neo-Rationalist styles and showcases Winchester's turn-of-the-century development as a fashionable suburb for wealthy Boston businessmen. It contains the Everett Avenue-Sheffield Road National Historic District.
- 14** Wedgemere is Winchester's finest turn-of-the-century residential neighborhood, reflecting the town's move from an industrial to a suburban focus. It contains the Wedgemere National Historic District and is characterized by a gridded street plan, broad streets, large lots, mature shade trees, and generous setbacks.

## Preservation Assessment Areas

These historic residential neighborhoods likely contain key historic and cultural assets but require additional assessment. After further assessment, these neighborhoods may also require stronger preservation protections and enhancements with sensitive infill.

## Connectivity Improvement Routes

These are bike and pedestrian routes that help connect Winchester to key destinations in and out of town, such as Middlesex Fells, Town Center, along the Aberjona River, the Minuteman Bikeway trail, the Green Line Terminus.

- Linking to Middlesex Fells from Town Center, Swanton St. and Cross St. (aligned with existing trailheads)
- Providing a new multi-use path along the Aberjona River, from Cross St. to Ciarcia Field
- Following Rt. 38 towards the Green Line Extension to Tufts in Medford
- Extending the bike network towards the Minuteman trail to the south and west

## School Safety and Walkability Improvement Areas

These target the areas surrounding four of Winchester's elementary schools (Ambrose; Vinson-Owen; Lynch; and Muraco) to improve walkability and safety, as well as traffic issues. Through strategic network design and programming, these areas can be made safer for students and minimize traffic congestion to streamline morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up.

<sup>1</sup> Information on individual areas comes from Winchester's MACRIS Inventory Forms

*To create a meaningful and effective Master Plan, the elements of the plan are not planned in silos, but rather integrated systematically so that they consider and reinforce one another—and support the regional planning framework. The structure—and flexibility—of the planning process is critical to reaching a substantive understanding of the system as a whole.*

## VISION:

An aspirational view of what residents hope the community will be like in the future, at its very best. Before a meaningful plan can be created, the community needs to imagine the future it is aiming for. The vision statement then becomes the driving force behind the plan. An overarching vision statement is shown on Page 14, while pillars (or key components) of the vision are shown with their corresponding theme on the following pages: balanced growth and housing choices; sustainability and governance; community connections and public education; and multimodal and regional connections.

## CORE THEMES:

Four core themes emerged through the planning process based on the community's values and priority issues that the community is facing: 1) balancing development; 2) ensuring sustainability, 3) building community; and 4) connecting people to places.

## STATUTORY ELEMENTS:

Massachusetts master plans, per MGL c.41 s.81D, require seven statutory elements to be included. In addition to these seven, the project team included an eighth element—sustainability—to recognize Winchester's recent commitment to climate resiliency through its Climate Action Plan. Unlike traditional Master Plans, this plan is not organized by the statutory elements so as to better reflect the community values and priorities that emerged from the planning process and to highlight the synergies and connections between the elements. However, all elements are covered in the substance of the plan and the report includes these icons to indicate where they are addressed.



## GOALS:

Goals are conditions to aim for that help the community achieve its vision over time. Goals are often measurable. This plan includes metrics so that the town can measure its progress towards achieving the goals.

## STRATEGIES:

Strategies are ways that the town will work to achieve one or more of the goals. They are actionable and will involve funding, regulations, programs, and/or use of other town resources, such as staff or volunteer time.

# FRAMEWORK

## CORE THEMES

## STATUTORY ELEMENTS

## VISION PILLARS

## GOALS

## STRATEGIES

### BALANCING DEVELOPMENT WITH PRESERVATION

The goals and strategies in this category address balancing preservation and development, including appropriately-scaled development; affordable housing options; and commercial and mixed-use redevelopment opportunities.



BALANCED GROWTH + HOUSING CHOICES

7 GOALS

21

### ENSURING SUSTAINABILITY

The goals and strategies in this category address how the Town can best maintain its resources and be best equipped to meet future challenges, including climate resiliency and adequate funding and planning for capital improvements.



SUSTAINABILITY + GOVERNANCE

5 GOALS

20

### BUILDING COMMUNITY

The goals and strategies in this category address how to better engage residents and the services, events, and programs that bring Winchester together.



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS + PUBLIC EDUCATION

5 GOALS

13

### CONNECTING PEOPLE TO PLACES

The goals and strategies in this category address creating a safe circulation network that relies less on vehicles and provides safe and pleasant alternative transportation options to key destinations.



MULTIMODAL + REGIONAL CONNECTIONS

3 GOALS

12

# BALANCING DEVELOPMENT



## 2030

### BALANCED GROWTH

In 2030, Winchester has expanded commercial diversity and mixed-use development where strategic, including Town Center, the Holton/Cross Street area, along North Main Street, and the northern portion of Cambridge Street. Winchester balances commercial and residential growth with special attention on celebrating and maintaining its historic character and natural green spaces. Well-designed new development offers new amenities, entertainment, and retail opportunities to residents and has increased the Town's commercial tax base. The Town prioritizes walkability to increase foot traffic to local businesses, accessibility to services, and community interactions. Through responsive design and site planning, new development of all types is carefully integrated, strategically located, and appropriately scaled, with a focus on creating more compact development in some areas.

### HOUSING CHOICES

Winchester's housing stock in 2030 has more economically-attainable options and a balanced mix of apartments, condominiums, and houses that can accommodate a variety of households, including large families, young adults, older adults, and people with disabilities. The stock of older modestly-sized homes are valued and protected from teardowns to preserve Winchester's historic neighborhood-scale and offer more economically-attainable housing options.

## Goals



Encourage more commercial, mixed-use, and compact development in areas that support economic vibrancy, including strategic redevelopment parcels in Town Center and the identified *Evolving Opportunity Areas*.



Cultivate active support by town leadership for the continued success of existing businesses and in seeking opportunities for new businesses in Winchester.



Create and preserve housing that is affordable, especially small-scale development that harmonizes with Winchester's character and provides easy access to everyday amenities and needs.



Promote housing types that allow residents to age within the community. Housing should be located near community gathering spaces and enable access to everyday amenities and needs.



Encourage contextually-responsive new development. New development will be carefully planned and appropriately scaled, with a focus on creating denser development in some areas.



To capture a larger share of the estimated retail leakage, promote economic development in Town Center and the identified *Evolving Opportunity Areas*.



Maintain the Town's visual beauty and historic neighborhoods, structures, and architecture through stronger local protections.



## Strategic Redevelopment in *Evolving Opportunity Areas*



**Increase community planning staff capacity** to strengthen the Town's ability to promote desired development objectives and expand survey, planning, and regulatory support to further protect historic resources.



**Work with property owners in the Holton/Cross Street Area to support marketing for commercial, industrial, and/or office uses** (as determined by the *Holton/Cross Area Plan*).



**Adopt the community's desired future land uses and real estate market potential for key commercial and potential redevelopment sites along the Cambridge Street Corridor;** amend zoning and design guidelines to reflect these findings.



**Strengthen Swanton Street as a primary connection between North Main and Washington Streets through zoning amendments** to foster redevelopment opportunities and through public streetscape and wayfinding improvements.



**Create development concepts for strategic infill or redevelopment sites in Town Center** to inspire property owners, businesses, and residents to see contextually appropriate development possibilities within the existing zoning allowances.



**Create an area plan for the North Main Street Corridor**

to envision public realm improvements and to identify development opportunities, zoning amendments, and design guidelines to help shape future development.



**Consider establishing a District Improvement Financing (DIF) program in the southern portion of the North Main Street corridor**

to allow the Town to borrow funds to target physical improvements in the district based on future tax revenue increases.



**Collaborate with neighborhood residents to create an area plan for the Holton/Cross Street Area**

to increase the value of the non-residential tax base, including updated zoning that strategically responds to the market, and to create more cohesive neighborhood buffering.



## Economic Development Support and Leadership



**Create a Main Streets organization** to promote Town Center, the Cultural District, and local businesses, and to collaborate with businesses and other entities to organize events that draw people to Town Center and catalyze business activity.



**Establish a town Economic Development Task Force** to spearhead ongoing town efforts to promote and strengthen the economic health of local businesses.



## Affordable and Context-Responsive Housing



**Strengthen the existing zoning and design review process for large houses and consider amendments to dimensional regulations** to further ensure new houses or additions reinforce the existing neighborhood development pattern.



**Expand and strengthen Winchester's inclusionary housing zoning requirements to apply town-wide** to better support the creation of affordable housing units through large-scale residential or mixed-use developments and to generate funds for the Winchester Affordable Housing Trust.

**Net square footage of new development or redevelopment that incorporates a commercial, industrial, or mixed-use component within the Evolving Opportunity areas.**

### Strategy Type Key



physical/  
design



regulatory/  
policy



programmatic



capacity  
building

**% of total building space in GBD1, GBD2, GBD3, and CBD zoning districts that is occupied by restaurant, retail, or other businesses.**

**% of low-moderate income residents spending more than 30% of income on housing**

**% low-moderate income seniors spending more than 30% of income on housing**

**% of housing units that are included on the state's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI)**

**# of state or federal rental vouchers available and used**



### Age Within Winchester



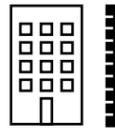
#### Consider more flexible conversions of existing houses

to create smaller and more financially attainable housing options without increasing building density or significantly altering the appearance of existing buildings and neighborhoods.



#### Expand areas that zoning allows for townhouses, two-family houses, and multifamily developments

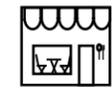
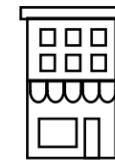
to increase Winchester's diversity of housing options—especially for smaller households such as young professionals and older adults.



### Context-Responsive Development



#### Promote new infill development that reinforces the existing neighborhood development patterns with design guidelines tailored to neighborhood character.



### Increase Retail Diversity and Vibrancy



#### Update dimensional and use regulations to help protect the nonresidential tax base

while better aligning with Winchester's market and potential future uses in the identified Evolving Opportunity Areas.



#### Update and enforce sign regulations to promote creative and attractive signage in Town Center.



#### Leverage the Town's new Cultural District status, streetscape improvements, wayfinding, and new branding to increase visitation in Town Center

and to reinforce synergies between economic activity areas in Winchester.



### Historic Character



#### Adopt one or more Local Historic Districts

to protect historic structures and resources that are critical components of neighborhood character and to ensure the compatibility of new development.



#### Complete the Town's inventory of historic resources

to lay the foundation for further historic designations and other preservation protections.



#### Provide more resources to adequately beautify and maintain public streetscapes, and integrated open spaces and passive recreation opportunities.

*% of housing units that are accessible and/or provide supportive services*

*% of senior population living within 1/4 mile of the Jenks Center, commercial areas, medical facilities, or a grocery store*

#### Strategy Type Key



physical/  
design



regulatory/  
policy



programmatic



capacity  
building

*#of net new businesses in the top retail leakage categories<sup>1</sup>*

*Proportion of retail spending at establishments in Winchester*

<sup>1</sup>Currently including restaurants, department stores, clothing stores, grocery store, and building material and supplies, but to be adjusted based on updated analysis

*% of historic structures designated as local historic landmarks, in Local Historic Districts or a Heritage District or protected with a permanent Preservation Restriction*



***"Winchester has a strong sense of community and residents who feel a sense of pride in supporting local businesses. Town Center offers a unique meeting ground in which businesses can be a fabric of everyday life...."***

**-Business Owner**

# ENSURING SUSTAINABILITY



## 2030

### SUSTAINABILITY

In 2030, Winchester is celebrating a 40 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, relative to its 2017 baseline. Winchester's homes, businesses and municipal operations are powered by clean, renewable energy through WinPower 100, new solar installations, and other new technologies to improve building energy efficiency. Town officials and schools display leadership in a town-wide effort to become a zero waste community. Winchester has implemented additional climate adaptation strategies to minimize the exposure of critical infrastructure, historical properties, and vulnerable populations to flooding, extreme heat, and other natural hazards. There is a healthy diversity of indigenous flora and fauna.

### GOVERNANCE

In 2030, Winchester provides services in a streamlined and equitable manner by effectively managing and maintaining town-owned facilities and implementing capital improvements at the optimal time in order to sustain a growing and changing community. Town departments, staff, and elected leaders work in a collaborative and systematic manner to achieve the community's vision and goals.

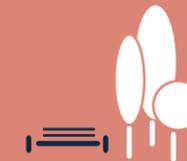
## Goals



**Integrate sustainability initiatives within town structures, new development, rehabilitation of existing buildings, and other infrastructure to reduce greenhouse gases and become climate-prepared.**



**Seek out and seize opportunities to leverage funding with local, regional, and national partners to invest in Winchester.**



**Preserve and improve Winchester's existing open space, street trees, water quality, and natural resources.**



**Prepare for climate impacts by protecting public infrastructure and properties, and prioritizing health, especially for the community's most vulnerable populations.**



**Provide town services in a streamlined and equitable manner to serve a growing and changing community.**



## Sustainable Infrastructure

 **Create a new Sustainability Director position** for the town and incorporate well-defined and measurable sustainability objectives into municipal job descriptions and duties.

 **Assess municipal buildings and facilities through efficiency and sustainability ratings** to determine which should be prioritized and create a *Green Improvement Plan*.

*% of public and private properties certified through comprehensive green building programs or energy programs*

*Pounds of trash and recycling collected per household per week<sup>2</sup>*

*Greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs by sector) and % reduction from 2017 baseline data*

*% of households enrolled in the WinPower 100 program*

*% of households enrolled in waste reductions, such as SMART<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>2</sup>The Town could also track the difference of trash and recycling for those participating in the SMART program based on the pay-as-you-throw bags.

 **Develop a comprehensive climate communications plan** that provides educational materials on local climate issues, such as becoming a zero-waste community, guidance on energy and water saving measures and subsidies, and natural hazard preparedness and strategies to increase resiliency.

 **Adopt regulatory requirements and zoning or financial incentives to promote sustainable development practices**, including the re-use of existing buildings over new development and environmentally-conscious new development.

 **Create a town-wide or neighborhood-based solar conversion program** with volume discounts and a retrofitting program to convert cooling and heating systems to energy-efficient and sustainable alternatives.

 **Replace town fleet with electric or hybrid vehicles and install e-charging stations at public buildings/facilities** (excluding public safety vehicles, if not feasible).

  **Prioritize becoming a zero-waste community.**

 **Encourage and incentivize more residents to opt into WinPower, especially WinPower 100.**

### Strategy Type Key




## Seek Funding Opportunities

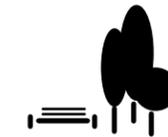
 **Hire a Grants Writer** to pursue and coordinate various federal, state, and private grants to support community goals.

 **Adopt the Community Preservation Act** to create a local funding source to support Master Plan goals related to open space, recreation, historic preservation, and affordable/community housing.

 **Qualify for Certified Local Government (CLG) status to expand funding for historic preservation initiatives.**

 **To gain preference for state grants/programs, Winchester should strive to become designated as a Housing Choice Community.**

*% of total annual town funding secured from private, state, or federal grants*



## Open Space and Natural Resources Conservation

 **Enhance passive open spaces with improved water quality, invasive species management, and green infrastructure** to reduce pollution to surface water bodies and to maintain and enhance habitats for flora and fauna.

 **Update Winchester's street tree inventory** and coordinate with the DPW and Tree Committee to prioritize appropriations from the Street Tree Fund for new plantings and maintenance.

 **Amend zoning to include a new comprehensive Landscaping Requirements subsection** that includes provisions to protect existing trees from potentially harmful impacts of construction.

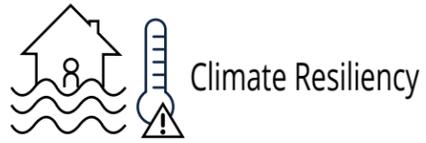
*% of surveyed residents that visit a park at least once a year*

*# of days that public water bodies are closed to swimming or fishing due to algal blooms or other contamination*

*% of tree canopy coverage*

*Diversity of flora and fauna observed during annual BioBlitz<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>3</sup>A BioBlitz is an annual event that focuses on finding and identifying as many species as possible in a specific area over a short period of time. Learn more: [www.nationalgeographic.org/projects/bioblitz/](http://www.nationalgeographic.org/projects/bioblitz/)



Climate Resiliency

**Conduct a hydrogeology study** to update FEMA flood hazard maps to reflect recent flood mitigation projects, and evaluate future flood vulnerability considering long-term changes in precipitation and river sedimentation.

**Evaluate the flood risk for all properties** and strategically implement further flood mitigation measures to protect these resources.

**Develop a local hazard mitigation and municipal vulnerability preparedness and response strategy** to support residents, private landowners, and businesses as climate threats increase and begin to have greater impacts locally, especially environmental justice populations and other groups that are particularly vulnerable.



Streamlined and Equitable Services

**Work with town departments to understand and address their high rates of turnover and develop a longer-term succession plan to ensure stability.**

**In accordance with the Maintenance and Replacement Schedule from the Town's Facility Study, create a funding stream dedicated to maintaining municipal buildings.**

*% of population living within 100-year floodplain*

*% of critical infrastructure within 100-year floodplain*

*# of cases of heat-related stress per 1,000 residents*

*Average permitting turnaround time (in days) to start a new business*

*Average permitting turnaround time (in days) for new building construction/occupancy*





*In 2030, I envision.....*

*“empowered residents taking on climate change and sustainability in a meaningful way.”*

*-Website Visitor*

# BUILDING COMMUNITY



## 2030

### COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

In 2030, Winchester's new community spaces help to build and sustain social networks and celebrate diversity by providing gathering spaces for town events, community groups, and performances as well as programs for community members of all ages.

Winchester's public facilities, such as its school buildings near Town Center, are shared by the broader community for events, performances, or other evening or weekend use. Improved and expanded neighborhood parks, athletic fields, and other outdoor public spaces encourage informal neighborly interactions and offer attractive places to enjoy spending time outside. Community-wide collaboration and connections improve civic life, foster synergies across local groups, resources, and initiatives, and build a network of engaged citizens.

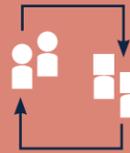
### PUBLIC EDUCATION

In 2030, Winchester public schools continue to be a prized asset and one of the main factors in attracting newcomers to the community. Winchester's students are supported through a variety of opportunities, including extracurriculars, that reflect the many cultures and learning styles of its students. Classrooms offer more multilingual opportunities and any student can participate in sports, music, theater, or other activities without the risk of financial barriers.

## Goals



**Establish robust and effective communication between residents and town government to increase community participation in town decisions with elevated awareness of town issues and initiatives.**



**Expand community initiatives that increase cultural, ethnic, religious, and economic diversity and collaboration.**



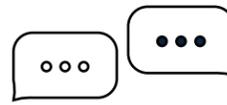
**Maintain Winchester's investment in its teachers, school facilities, and students to offer a high-quality and well-rounded K-12 public education in and out of the classrooms.**



**Increase and improve spaces for community events, artistic ventures, athletic fields, and recreational facilities that encourage residents to gather and interact.**

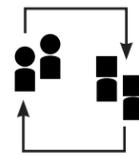


**Build a welcoming and supportive community that promotes well-being and positive mental health for all.**

 Robust Communication

 **Hire a town Communications and Engagement Coordinator** to administer, coordinate, and expand town communications, to act as a town liaison for community groups, and to enhance avenues for meaningful resident participation in town government.

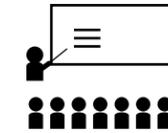
 **Explore opportunities to digitize town files and communications**, including the Town's permitting system.

 Diversity

 **Update zoning bylaws and regulations with modernized and inclusive language.**

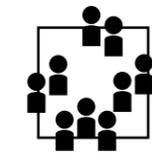
 **Conduct mandatory trainings for town staff** and volunteer boards to increase awareness of topics related to diversity, racial equity, and inclusivity.

 **Increase outreach and recruitment efforts** to attract more diverse employment in town government and representation on Winchester's town boards, committees, and local commissions.

 Schools

 **Create a long-term maintenance and replacement plan and allocate funding for school facilities and equipment.**

 **Determine how the Parkhurst School facility and the Sanborn Carriage House should be used in the future** to support education and administration for Winchester Public Schools.

 Community Events and Spaces

 **Increase visibility and use of existing outdoor areas**, particularly those that are underutilized, such as the lawn behind the library or neighborhood vacant lots, by hosting community-wide events and adding/improving infrastructure and amenities.

 **Expand the purview of Jenks Center to serve as a multigenerational community center** to provide educational and cultural opportunities, event space, and to support the wellness of all residents.

 **Allow and schedule weekend and summer performances at the Lincoln School auditorium.**

 Community Well-being

 **Develop a coordinated campaign to promote positive mental health and well-being** through programming, services, and resource-sharing.

 **Improve the availability of prevention and care service resources for substance abuse and mental health.**

 **Conduct mandatory trainings for town staff** and volunteer boards and committees to increase awareness of topics related to mental health, substance abuse, and overall well-being.

*# of people who have attended Town Meetings or other public meetings in Winchester*

*# of visitors per month to the Town website*

*# of post engagements on Town-sponsored social media sites*

*# of total annual participants in town surveys*

*Degree to which composition of town boards and commissions represent demographic composition (e.g., race, ethnicity, etc.)*

*Degree to which town meeting members represent demographic composition (e.g., race, ethnicity, etc.)*

*% of surveyed students indicating high level of satisfaction with supportive school environment*

*# of community event spaces, artist studios, and galleries*

*% of housing units within half-mile walking distance of recreation areas*

*Rate of cultural participation (i.e. # of cultural experiences per household per year)*

*% of surveyed residents indicating high level of happiness*

*# of residents with access to mental and behavioral health services*

*In 2030, I envision...*

*"[an] expanded Jenks Center as a home for all community non-profit groups and space for community gatherings and events. [It] serves as a civic center bringing groups and individuals into synergy instead of silos."*

LEADING  
EDGE

*In 2030, I envision...*

*"every student is able to participate in activities (sports, music, etc.) and not be restricted by fees/expenses."*

*-Forum Participant*

# CONNECTING PEOPLE TO PLACES



## 2030

### MULTI-MODAL

In 2030, residents can safely walk or bike around the community using a transportation network built for users of all types. Anybody of any age and a variety of abilities can get anywhere in Winchester without a car thanks to the expanded and protected bikeway, improved pedestrian path, and shuttle system network that takes locals to businesses to Town Center as well as the library, grocery store, Wright-Locke Farm, the Hospital, the Fells, and other parks and recreation areas. Throughout Winchester, user safety is prioritized over vehicle movement through physical design improvements such as traffic calming strategies, designated bike lanes, and highly-visible crosswalks.

### REGIONAL CONNECTIONS

In 2030, regional transportation options have improved. At least fifty percent of Winchester commuters use the commuter rail or bus to get to work. Younger adults—priced out of the more expensive Boston, Cambridge, and Somerville housing markets—are drawn to centrally-located units in Town Center and the community's small-town feel that provides easy transit connection to Boston and neighboring communities in the Greater Boston region.

## Goals



**Improve walking and biking safety throughout Winchester for all ages and abilities, connecting people safely to schools, parks, public transit, commercial areas, and other key destinations.**



**Work closely with the MBTA to improve public transportation service to encourage more ridership and alleviate parking concerns.**



**Create and support a comprehensive transportation network to provide safe and viable connections to key destinations and to encourage the use of alternative transportation modes.**



Safe Walking and Biking Routes



MBTA Transit



Comprehensive Transportation Network

 **Improve accessibility and safety for pedestrians in Town Center.**

 **Track progress for and actively participate in MassDOT's Rail Vision commuter rail planning project.**

 **Undertake a town-wide transit demand management study** to better understand the feasibility of alternative transit options.

 **Ensure the continued achievement of local Complete Streets goals** by updating the Town's *Complete Streets Prioritization Plan* and expanding capacity (staffing and funding) for oversight and implementation.

 **Undertake a strategic town-wide bicycle and pedestrian plan** to establish a phased approach to creating a network connecting residents and visitors to key town destinations.

 **Work with the MBTA to improve accessibility and user experience of regional bus service.**

 **Consider increasing the subsidy for school bus service** (making it more affordable) to encourage more participation.

 **Provide alternative last mile options** to/from local MBTA mass transit stations to increase the viability of their use and to alleviate traffic congestion and parking pressures.

 **Create and distribute local maps that illustrate key walking and biking transportation connections as well as recreational areas in town.**

 **Establish semi-remote school drop-off areas to disperse traffic congestion.**

 **Promote walking and carsharing options to foster connections between students and address traffic congestion issues.**

 **Include clear requirements for developers to incorporate transportation mitigation,** including robust analysis of single-occupancy-vehicle alternatives and Transportation Demand Management Plans.

*# minutes of reduced headway during peak commute between buses on Route 134 and Route 350*

*Excess journey time, excess wait time (difference between actual and scheduled)*

*Average daily ridership on bus routes 134 and 350*

*Average daily boardings at Winchester Center and Wedgemere stations on Commuter Rail*

*# of pedestrian and bicycling fatalities or serious injuries caused by vehicle crashes*

*% of streets with sidewalks*

*% of ADA-compliant crosswalks*

*% of major streets with separated bike lanes*

*% of work commutes by walking, cycling, or public transit*

**Strategy Type Key**



physical/  
design



regulatory/  
policy



programmatic



capacity  
building

~~The world~~ I would like to ride  
to school



*In 2030, I envision...*  
**"Walkability, including more crosswalks in key locations to connect neighborhoods."**  
*-Website Visitor*

# IMPLEMENTATION

More information on each of the strategies—in addition to case studies, maps, and diagrams—are included in the supplementary *Action Plan* for Winchester’s Master Plan. The example below shows how to read the pages in the *Action Plan*.

**Primary Goal**  
This icon references the main goal the strategy helps achieve. Goals are conditions to aim for that help the community achieve its vision over time.



**Strategy**  
Strategies are actionable ways that the town will work to achieve one or more of the goals.

**Strategy:** Create an area plan for the North Main Street Corridor to envision public realm improvements and to identify development opportunities and zoning amendments and design guidelines to help shape future development.

**Secondary Goals**  
If there are additional goal(s) that this strategy helps achieve, the icon for the goal is shown here.



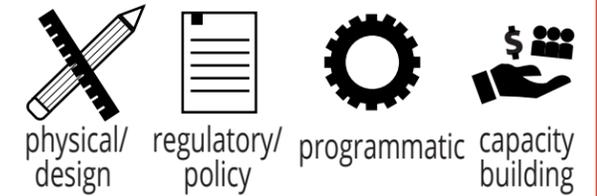
A combination of physical improvements along the corridor and less restrictive zoning with development incentives, including more allowable development intensity, may be necessary to entice existing property owners to consider redevelopment options for the North Main Street corridor. The vision for these options should be grounded in a community-led process. The process would bring together residents and stakeholders to share their respective wants and needs. This information would then be synthesized with empirical data such as a residential/commercial market study to determine the viability of the overall vision.

**Strategy Narrative**  
The narrative explains the strategy and what it could entail in greater detail.

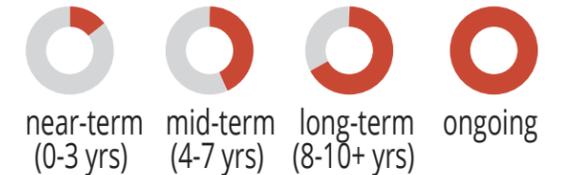
Ideally, the changes along the southern North Main Street corridor would increase housing choice, establish a more robust commercial and jobs base, and increase visitation to the area. To garner investment in the corridor, the Town will likely have to make zoning changes to allow higher intensity development, parcel consolidation, increased building heights, and a wider range of uses as-of-right. Mixed-use residential should be given consideration as a development typology based the current demand for housing in Winchester. As the corridor starts to see more investment, it is possible that some all-commercial buildings may be proposed. Coupling zoning changes with design guidelines would help ensure new development adheres to consistent design standards.

**BALANCING DEVELOPMENT • 1**

**Strategy Type**  
Strategies can fall into one or multiple types of projects: physical/design improvements; regulatory/policy changes; program/service provision; and/or capacity building.



**Timing**  
Strategies are either near-term (0-3 years); mid-term (4-7 years); long-term (8-10+); or ongoing.



**Strategy Type**



**Timing**



**Responsible Party (% responsible)**  
Identifies the primary and supporting departments, boards and committees, and other organizations that could complete the strategy.

**Responsible Party (% responsible):**

Planning Board (75%)  
Planning and Design Review Boards; TTAC; Chamber of Commerce; and Other Committees and Departments as needed (25%)

**Funding Cost**

\$

**Funding Cost**  
An estimated cost range for each strategy.

\$	\$\$	\$\$\$	\$\$\$\$
less than \$50K	\$50K to \$250K	\$250K to \$1M	more than \$1M

**Funding Sources**

Town Budget

**Funding Sources**  
Identifies how a strategy could be funded, either from existing sources, such as the Town Budget, or outside sources, such as grants.

# THANK YOU!

**Thank you to all the community members who gave their time and insights to this project by participating in person and online.**

**Planning Board:**

Heather von Mering, Chair  
Elizabeth Cregger  
Heather Hannon  
Diab Jerius  
Maureen Meister

**Town Planner:** Brian Szekely

**Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC):**

All members of Planning Board plus:  
Samantha Allison (*Precinct 3 Representative/Finance Committee*)  
Tracy Burhans (*Design Review Committee*)  
John Clemson (*Historical Commission*)  
Denis Collet (*Precinct 1 Representative*)  
Pamela Cort (*Precinct 5 Representative*)  
Magda Ferrari (*Precinct 7 Representative*)  
James Johnson (*Precinct 6 Representative*)  
Keri Layton (*Precinct 2 Representative*)  
David Miller (*Conservation Commission*)  
Zeke Nims (*Conservation Commission*)  
Sherry Winkelman (*Precinct 8 Representative*)  
Robin Wolf (*Precinct 4 Representative*)

**Town Manager:** Lisa Wong

**Town Staff:**

Phillip Beltz, Jenks Center Director  
Jay Gill, Director of Public Works  
Matt Griffin, IT Director  
Ellen Knight, Archivist  
Mary Ellen Lannon, Town Clerk

Peter MacDonnell, Police Chief  
Dan McGurl, Assessor  
Jennifer Murphy, Board of Health Director  
Beth Rudolph, P.E., Town Engineer  
James Sullivan, Interim Recreation Director  
Sheila Tracy, Treasurer  
Rick Tustin, Fire Chief  
Mark Twogood, Assistant Town Manager  
Michelle Vibert, HR Director  
Elaine Vreeland, Conservation Agent  
Stacie Ward, Town Comptroller  
Al Wile, Building Commissioner  
Ann Wirtanen, Library Director

**Local Representatives and Organizations**

John Suhrbier and the Housing Partnership  
Select Board  
Climate Action Plan Committee  
Finance Committee  
Jenks Center  
League of Women Voters  
Multicultural Network\*  
Rotary Club of Winchester  
Town Common Task Force (TCTF)  
Transportation and Traffic Advisory Committee (TTAC)  
Winchester Chamber of Commerce  
Winchester Cultural Council  
Winchester Farmer's Market  
Wright-Locke Farm Conservancy

**Project Team:**

JM Goldson LLC (*Project Lead; Housing and Demographics; Historic and Cultural Resources; Open Space, Natural Resources, and Recreation*)  
Jennifer M. Goldson, AICP, Founder and Managing Director, Project Manager  
Anna Callahan, Community Planner, Project Manager  
Barry Fradkin, Community Planning Analyst  
Avery Wolfe, Community Planning Associate

RKG Associates Inc. (*Land Use; Economic Development; Public Facilities and Services*)  
Eric Halvorsen, AICP, Vice President and Principal  
Jahangir Akbar, Senior Planner and Analyst

Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates Inc. (*Transportation Phase III and IV*)  
Bill Schwartz, AICP, Principal

Bob Mitchell, FAICP, Planning Consultant (*Land Use and Zoning*)

Toole Design Group (*Transportation Phase I and II*)  
Jason DeGray, P.E., Boston Office Director  
Karen Fitzgerald, Senior Landscape Architect

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Pg 36 - Wright Locke Farm  
Pg 40 - Zeina Marchant

\*Network for Social Justice

**Photo of MPSC?**

