



Public Forum Summary Report

Winchester Master Plan

Prepared by JM Goldson 3/15/2019

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

Participants primarily feel connected to:

- open space and recreation areas
- their homes
- downtown Winchester
- local gathering places, shops, and schools

Participants reported being primarily hopeful for a future Winchester that:

- retains the existing size and character
- preserves historic architecture
- offers a more diverse housing stock
- is home to a more diverse population
- has less traffic congestion
- is safer and more friendly to pedestrians
- offers greater retail diversity
- is more sustainable and climate resilient
- offers a local shuttle system
- and balances new development with open space preservation

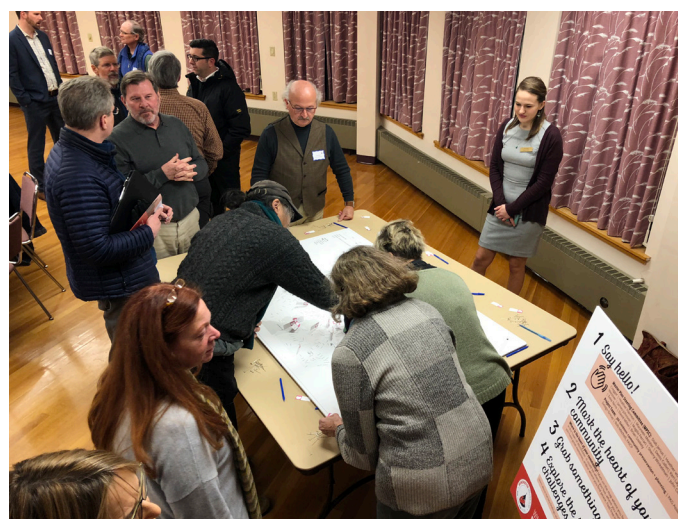
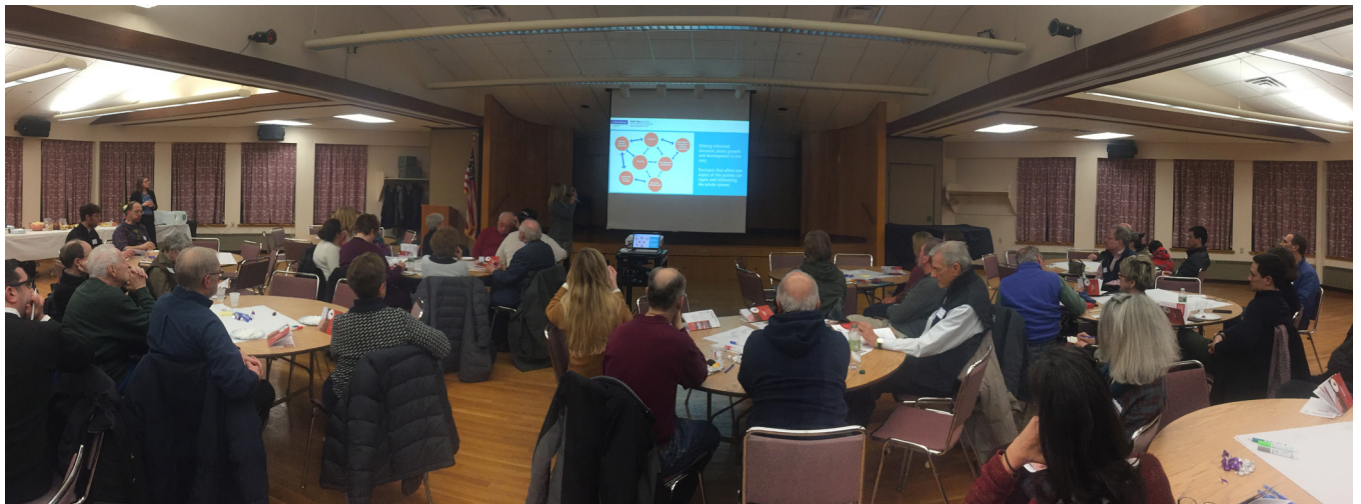
Participants are primarily worried about:

- local funding, financial stability, and taxes
- preservation of historic architecture
- preservation of high-quality schools
- lack of housing options and affordability
- traffic congestion and mobility
- access to healthcare, services, and recreation opportunities
- community fabric and culture
- limited community diversity

SUMMARY & BACKGROUND

On February 26, 2019, the Town of Winchester Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC) and project consultants JM Goldson community preservation + planning (JM Goldson) hosted a public forum to solicit feedback from community members. The purpose of forum was to distribute information about the Master Plan process and highlight the work that has been accomplished to-date on analyzing Winchester's existing conditions (*Phase I: Winchester Yesterday and Today*). The forum was also held to solicit feedback from the public as the project team begins preparing a draft community vision statement and set of corresponding goals for the next ten years (*Phase II: What Could Winchester's Future Be Like?*).

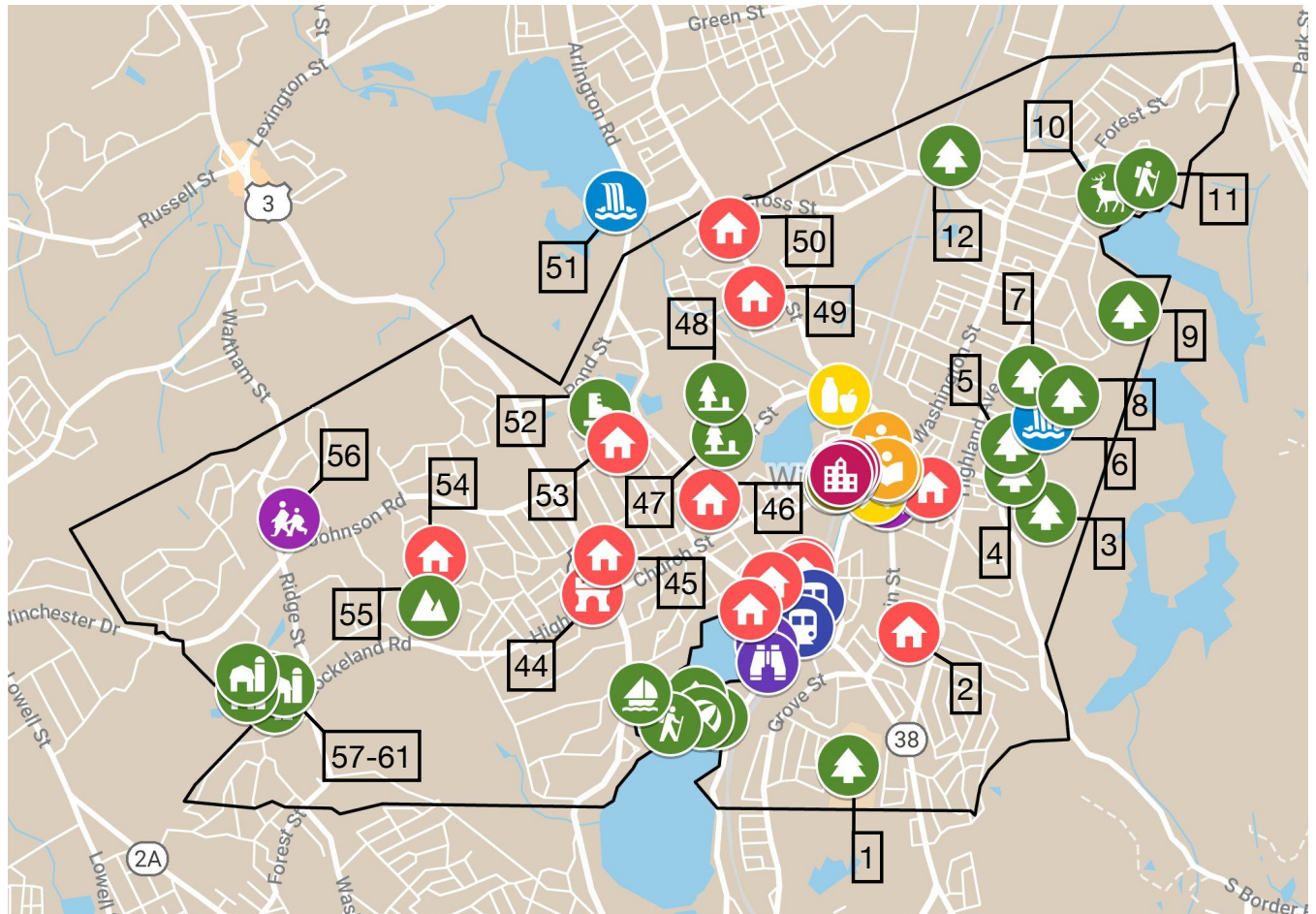
The night began with opening remarks from MPSC chair, Diab Jerius, followed by a presentation from Jennifer Goldson of JM Goldson about the master planning timeline and process. The project team also reported back to the community about the trends and key findings of *Phase I: Winchester Yesterday and Today*. During the presentation, participants were asked to respond to a series of polling questions. The presentation was followed by a series of small group activities and discussions centered around envisioning the future of Winchester. Participants identified "the heart of their community" on a map of Winchester and received Phase I informational pocket books as they arrived. Approximately fifty people participated in the public forum.



All photos by JM Goldson unless otherwise noted

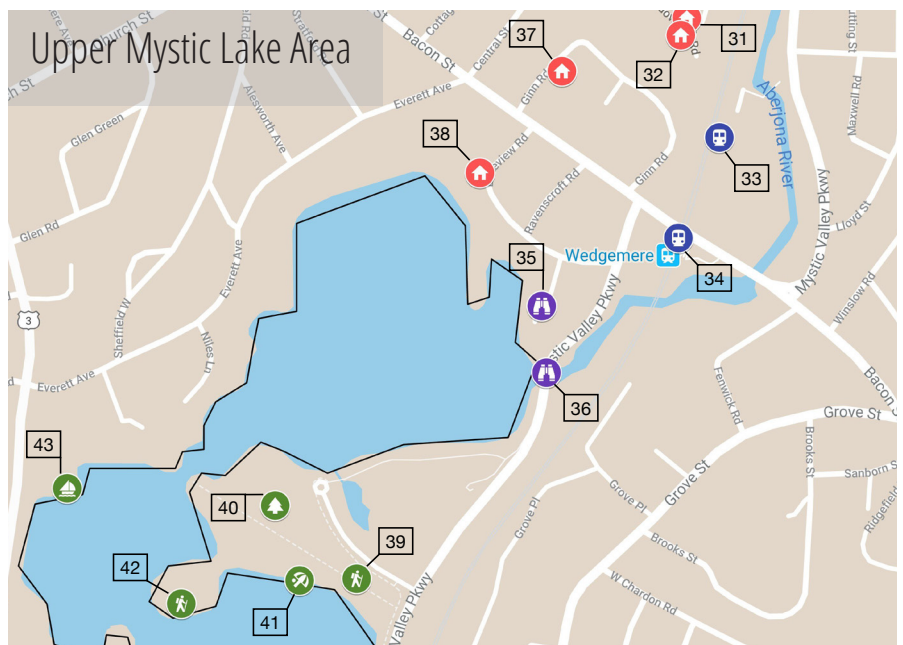
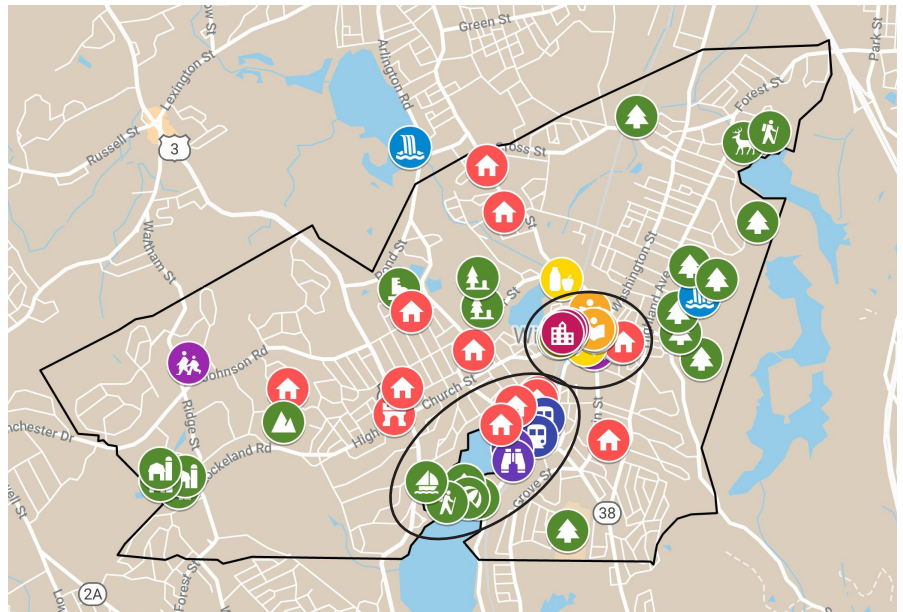
WHERE IS THE HEART OF YOUR COMMUNITY?

Participants were asked to indicate the location of the “heart of their community” on a map of Winchester. The many hearts of Winchester represent places and spaces that residents feel are special, iconic, and/or where they feel particularly connected to Winchester.



- | | | | | | |
|----|---------------------------|----|--|----|-------------------|
| 1 | Town Forest | 44 | Sanborn House - Historical Society | 52 | Skating! |
| 2 | My Back Yard | 45 | [Blank Card] | 53 | Home Sweet Home |
| 3 | Middlesex Fells | 46 | Home Base - 32 Years | 54 | V.C. |
| 4 | Beautiful Outdoors! | 47 | Dad's Resting Spot - in view of tennis courts :) | 55 | Mount Pisgah |
| 5 | My Favorite! | 48 | Gov. McCall | 56 | Vincent Owen |
| 6 | Long Pond | 49 | D.J. | 57 | Wright Locke Farm |
| 7 | Middlesex Fells | 50 | Home Sweet Home | 58 | Wright Locke Farm |
| 8 | The Fells | 51 | Horn Pond | 59 | Wright Locke Farm |
| 9 | Get Away to Nature! Fells | | | 60 | Wright Locke Farm |
| 10 | Nature, Animals, Trees | | | 61 | Wright Locke Farm |
| 11 | Open Space for Walking | | | | |
| 12 | Davidson Park | | | | |

- 13 Lincoln School
- 14 So many but ultimately - home is where the heart goes
- 15 Anthony L.
- 16 Love the Center: it feels like the collective heart
- 17 Catch a Falling Star & Comella's
- 18 Library
- 19 Downtown, Commons
- 20 Stop n Shop
- 21 Jenks Library
- 22 Winchester Public Library
- 23 Downtown Commons
- 24 Winchester Public Library
- 25 The Fuller Cup
- 26 Love The Center
- 27 Downtown <3
- 28 The Farmer's Market
- 29 Farmer's Market
- 30 Town Common
- 31 N. T. - great location
- 32 Love my neighbors
- 33 Ginn Field Train
- 34 Boston 2 Stops Away!
- 35 Beautiful!
- 36 Sunsets from the Bridge
- 37 Family Home
- 38 My neighborhood <3
- 39 E.K.
- 40 Secret Clearing
- 41 Shannon Beach
- 42 Path Through the Woods by the Lake
- 43 Boat Club

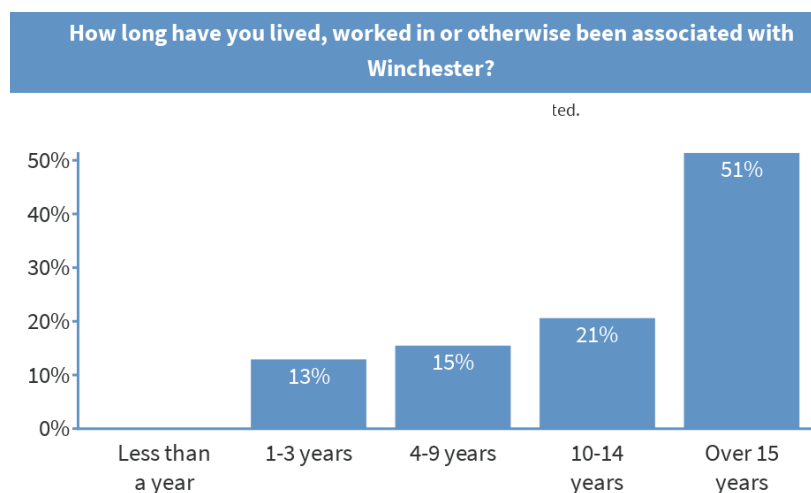


As illustrated in the maps on the previous pages, many residents feel connected to Winchester's natural landscapes and recreation spaces (21); local restaurants, businesses, and services, such as Wright Locke Farm, the Farmer's Market, and the Library (14); their homes and neighborhoods (13); Downtown Winchester and the Town Common (6); local historic sites and cemeteries; the local train stations and easy transit access (2); and Winchester's schools (2).

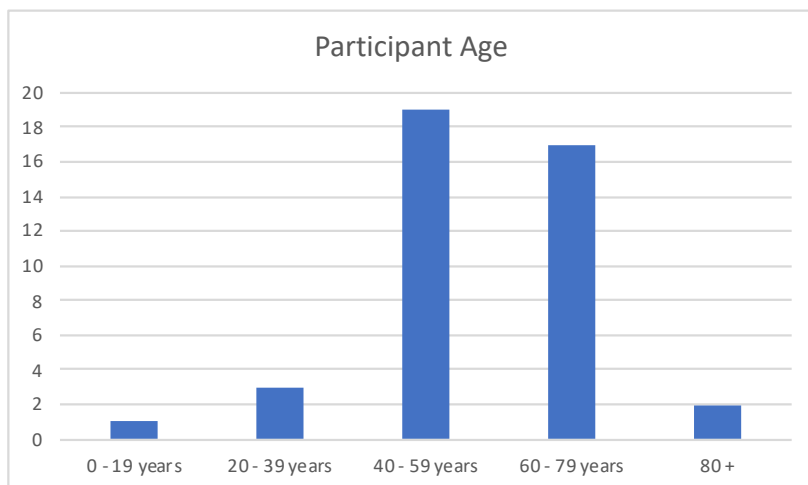
PARTICIPANT POLLING

Participants were asked several questions to get a sense of the perspectives and experiences of those in the room and to get people into the mindset of thinking towards Winchester's future.

Most participants have lived, worked, or otherwise been associated with Winchester for fifteen years or more (fifty-one percent). Few participants have lived in Winchester less than three years.



Most participants were between the ages of forty and sixty. The second largest number of participants were between the ages of sixty and eighty. Age demographics were deduced from a question that asked participants to report what age they will be in 2030. Responses also included "39 again" and "1,000."



Participants were asked to think about some of the spaces and places in Winchester that are unique and special to the Winchester community. Responses are illustrated below: Larger words represent those that were most commonly shared and expressed by participants.

What are some things you love about Winchester that distinguish it from other communities?



The most common responses included sentiments about the Town's built environment and natural beauty, including its quaint, small town feel, natural open spaces, architecture, and the historic character. Other common responses highlighted Winchester's great schools; its walkability; and its proximity to Boston.

When a visitor comes to Winchester, where do you take them?



The most common responses included Middlesex Fells; downtown Winchester; Wright Locke Farm; specific restaurants and downtown businesses; the library; Mystic Lake; and others.

In 2030, I imagine Winchester will be....

EXERCISE FORMAT

In small groups of approximately six to eight people, participants were asked to discuss, and respond to the following question:

In 2030, I imagine Winchester will be....

Many groups chose to categorize their responses based on those that were hopeful and those that more accurately reflect the potential reality.

Word Cloud from All Responses:



The majority of responses were centered around housing options and affordability; community culture; transportation; architecture and density; services and resources; and economic development, among others. Responses fell largely into thirteen categories, which included both “hopeful” and “reality” responses. Examples of the most common responses as well as tensions between the two response types (hopeful and reality) are provided on the following pages.

Density	Diversity	Retail & Commercial Diversity	History & Architecture	Transportation	Housing	Green Space	Environment & Sustainability	Local Finance & Funding	Affordability
11	9	27	13	19	21	5	5	6	12

Local Politics & Community Character	Resources & Services (including schools)	Same/Similar
21	16	5

EMERGING THEMES FOR WINCHESTER 2030

DENSITY

- More “built up” with taller buildings
- Overdeveloped
- Denser
- Increased population
- Condensed
- Likely to be more crowded
- Dense housing (small & cute)

DIVERSITY

- More diverse
- More cultural and ethnic diversity
- More diverse population (racial/ethnic)
- Less diverse (economic and ethnic)*

RETAIL & COMMERCIAL DIVERSITY

- More variety of take-out food
- Restaurants on waterfront
- Fewer real estate offices
- Improved shopping options/commercial use in downtown area
- Diverse retail (theater, cannabis, salons)
- Mixed-use development
- Innovative commercial development

HISTORY & ARCHITECTURE

- Preserve historic character/stop residential teardowns
- Preserved historic districts
- No architects hired for house and building design*
- Continued opposition to effective historic preservation*
- Deterioration of “Historic Winchester”*

TRANSPORTATION

- Car-free downtown area
- Better maintenance of sidewalks and intersections
- More traffic*
- Shuttle/ride-share and improved bus/train
- Pedestrian and bike friendly
- Less traffic congestion
- All electric cars
- Anybody of any age could get anywhere at any time without a car

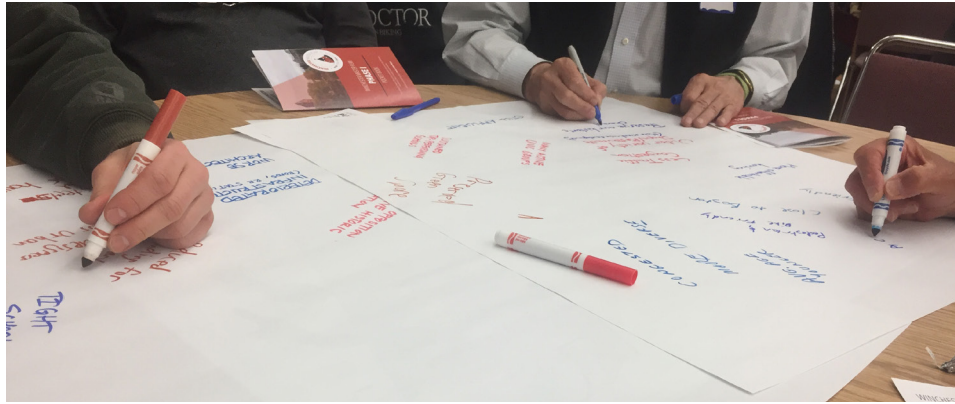
HOUSING

- Tiny house village
- More rental housing
- Range of housing options (price/size)
- No accessory units / add accessory units
- More “mcmansions”*
- Affordable housing (esp. for seniors)
- Mixed-use development
- Co-housing

OPEN SPACE, NATURAL RESOURCES, AND RECREATION ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

- More trees
- Less open space / maintain green space
- No landscape architects hired*
- Unpreserved green canopy (trees)*
- Edible landscaping
- Large homes with little grass space*
- Net zero
- Climate resilient
- All electric cars
- Carbon neutral

*An asterisk denotes a “reality” response



LOCAL FINANCE AND FUNDING

- Less money spent on school building
- Ongoing financial struggle*
- Fiscally-challenged*
- Reduced funding for library, Wright Locke farm, cultural places*
- Tight school budget*
- Struggle to balance finances, including taxes, schools, history, transportation, open space, services, etc.*

OVERALL AFFORDABILITY

- Affordable for current demographic mix
- Affordable housing
- Unaffordable for seniors*
- Seniors will have to move out*
- More expensive housing*
- Harder for current residents to afford living here

LOCAL POLITICS AND COMMUNITY CHARACTER

- More culture and Arts
- Less power in the conservation commission
- Statue of Kevin in Town Common
- More socialistic
- Libertarian*
- Too wealthy*
- Intergenerational connections
- Community of life-long learners
- Gated community *
- Friendly to families, single residents and seniors
- Younger average age

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

- Fewer public services from town government*
- Continued strong schools
- New Lynch and Muraco schools
- Upgrade train stations
- Public pool/athletic facilities
- More services for seniors
- Greater variety of services
- Better/ more centralized after school program
- Microgrid (local electricity)

SAME/SIMILAR

- Similar but more “modern” options for working remotely
- Not very different*
- Same ambiance*
- Still affluent

What are your biggest concerns about the future in Winchester?

EXERCISE FORMAT

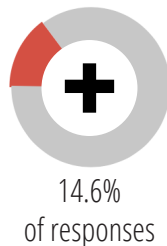
In small groups of six to eight, participants were given a matrix to guide the level of priority and different scales for each concern (see example on the next page). Similar to the visioning exercise, participant responses were grouped into categories within different concern scales (me, my family, Winchester, and Boston region).

Some categories were consistent across all scales while some themes emerged that were specific to one or two scales. For example, issues of housing and land use emerged across all four scales, while issues of health only emerged for the “me” and “my family” scales and environmental concerns emerged only for the “Boston Region” scale.

SCALE: ME

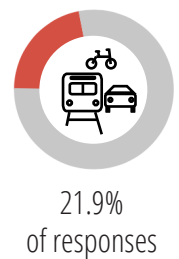
HEALTH

- access to walking and recreation opportunities
- access to healthcare
- safety
- access to healthy food
- physical activity



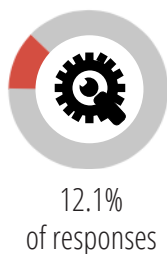
MOBILITY

- local public transit
- local connections to maintain social fabric
- walkability
- access to places, needs, and services



TOWN SERVICES, FACILITIES AND CHARACTER

- advanced education
- green space/network
- quality of life
- light up the Falls downtown
- wider range of presentations, workshops, and historic information



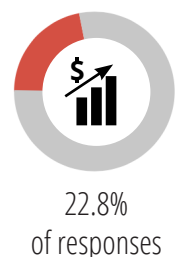
HOUSING AND LAND USE

- age in place
- affordable housing
- dock in town center
- smaller homes
- mixed-use rental
- multi-family units
- homes appropriate for seniors (first floor living)
- housing prices















FINANCES AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

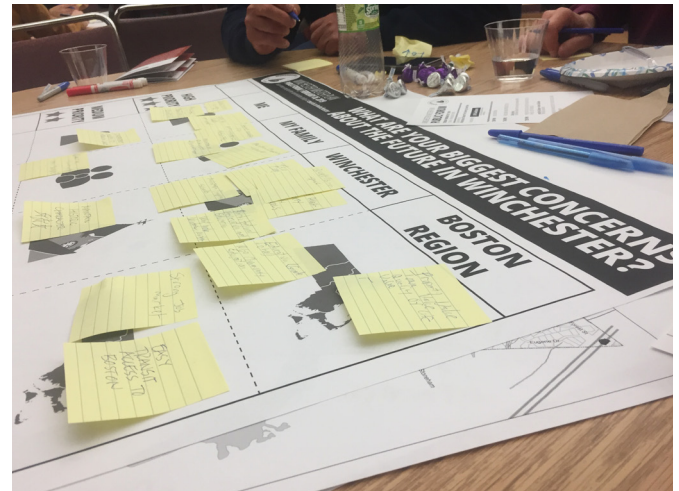
- minimize property tax escalation
- tax burden
- unaffordable
- tax breaks for seniors
- fiscal stability
- jobs for seniors
- small business opportunities and incentives
- local economic opportunities



WINCHESTER MASTER PLAN
PUBLIC FORUM / FEBRUARY 25, 2019
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WHAT ARE YOUR BIGGEST CONCERNS ABOUT THE FUTURE IN WINCHESTER?

	ME	MY FAMILY	WINCHESTER	BOSTON REGION
HIGH PRIORITY ★★★★				
MEDIUM PRIORITY ★★★				
LOW PRIORITY ★				



SCALE: MY FAMILY

COMMUNITY CULTURE

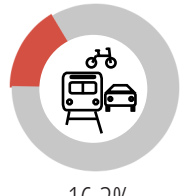
- future happiness
- within a community bubble (limited diversity)
- busy lives
- [keeping] connection with family and friends elsewhere
- low priority is making money



16.2%
of responses

TRANSPORTATION

- safety
- maintain train stations
- transportation for seniors
- traffic calming
- pedestrian and bicycle safety (esp. school routes)
- downtown safety



16.2%
of responses

PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES, AND SCHOOLS

- maintain quality public education system
- innovative/globally relevant education
- college affordability/ student loans
- overcrowding in schools
- maintain fields
- increasing taxes
- low crime



30.2%
of responses

HEALTH

- access to healthcare and emergency services
- keep local hospital
- mental well-being



9.3%
of responses

HOUSING AND LAND USE

- downsize
- out-priced
- age in place
- affordable housing for the next generation
- affordability of nice houses
- big energy inefficient houses



25.5%
of responses

COMMUNITY CULTURE

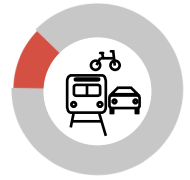
- cultural district
- divisiveness in politics
- lack of cultural, ethnic, religious, and economic diversity
- social/cultural connections
- social isolation (seniors)
- retain well-educated population
- ethnic and economic groups
- becoming a temporary place to raise a family
- attitude of disconnect from Boston Region



9.2%
of responses

TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

- safety
- congestion/traffic
- walkability
- accessibility
- public transportation (esp. for seniors)
- sidewalk quality
- vehicle speed



12%
of responses

HOUSING AND LAND USE

- density
- more mcmansions
- affordable housing
- overdevelopment
- small houses/units
- large, ugly apartment buildings
- maintain size and character of downtown
- waterfront access/dock
- ice rink
- appropriate zoning/remove power from developers



19.8%
of responses

OPEN SPACE, NATURAL RESOURCES, AND RECREATION

- water quality
- sustainability/resilience
- flood mitigation
- preserve green space/care for trees
- recreation opportunities/fields
- more natural/passive green space
- preserve waterfront and green space in downtown
- effects of climate change



18.4%
of responses

PUBLIC SERVICES AND FACILITIES

- town infrastructure
- maintain/improve services
- maintain low crime
- school funding
- school enrollment and adequate services
- green energy
- Master Plan [is] not implemented



9.2%
of responses

TOWN FINANCING

- tax burden (esp. for seniors)
- financial viability
- capital finance development
- financial stability
- funding
- too many overrides



7.8%
of responses

HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND BUILT CHARACTER

- preserve beauty, history, and character of town
- utility wires underground
- loss of historic structures and architecture
- housing stock (esp. historic)
- small town feel
- maintain unique character



12%
of responses

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- new retail and restaurants
- diversity of [retail] options
- commercial tax base
- new amenities and activities
- local employment opportunities
- economic viability and sustainability of downtown stores
- need economic diversity



9.9%
of responses

SCALE: BOSTON REGION

POLITICS AND CULTURE

- liberty and justice for all
- less racism
- polarized politics
- keep progressives in power
- retaining young people
- restore North Atlantic community
- sports teams/Patriots



16.3%
of responses

JOBS AND ECONOMY

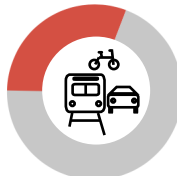
- jobs
- affordability
- attract high-income non-white tech workers



10.2%
of responses

TRANSPORTATION

- traffic
- cut through community
- mass transit/commuter trains and bus connections
- Winchester as visitor destination
- access to Boston and other northeast regions



30.6%
of responses

PUBLIC SERVICES AND FACILITIES

- equity in education
- community education
- high-quality education



6.1%
of responses

ENVIRONMENT

- climate change
- sea level rise
- green energy
- clean air/water
- funding for sustainability and resilience



20.4%
of responses

HOUSING

- affordability
- property value
- quality-of-life
- affordable housing



8.1% of responses

LAND USE

- congestion
- overcrowding
- development
- zero growth



8.1% of responses