

Concord's Long Range Plan: Envision Concord-Bridge to 2030

How will Concord Maintain a Resilient Economy in the Future?

The Comprehensive Long Range Plan Committee is continuing its work developing a new long range plan for Concord, "Envision Concord: Bridge to 2030", using the American Planning Association's (APA) "Sustaining Places: Best Practices for Comprehensive Plans" as its framework.

One of the APA's core principles, "Resilient Economy", calls for anticipating changes over time in economic health, development and redevelopment strategies, and other substantive areas. The comprehensive plan will identify recommendations within the Town's broader development agenda, including an emphasis on green business growth and reliance on local assets.

Best Practices for Resilient Economy include providing the physical capacity for economic growth, pursuing a balanced land use mix, coordinating transportation access to employment centers, and providing community based economic development.

The Committee has evaluated the principles and best practices, through a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis that is posted on the Committee's website and the Envision Concord 2030 website. The following themes with respect to the Resilient Economy principle and best practices, include:

- Concord faces constraints in physical capacity for economic development due to lack of land for development and historical and other restrictions. However, the town has developed areas that include in-fill opportunities, such as Virginia Road and Baker Avenue. Economic incentives and streamlined permitting may support these opportunities.
- Concord's varied land uses assist with fiscal sustainability. Recent center focused planning, particularly the West Concord Master Plan, identified mixed-use development opportunities. However, the town has significant tax-exempt land. Payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) programs are under discussion.
- Workers commuting to Concord benefit from rail and highway access. However, the town remains dependent on automobiles with challenges for improvements to multi-modal access, particularly bicycling and walking. Certain employment areas are located far from public transportation.
- Concord has advantages in attracting green businesses, including its reputation as a progressive community and its support for its agricultural base. High rents are an obstacle.

- The Town's strengths in community based economic development include positive planning efforts, the formula business bylaw and the number of locally owned businesses. New policies may provide support to businesses that serve local needs in a fashion consistent with the town's character and values.
- Concord's infrastructure is generally strong, but there are sewer capacity and cell service limitations. Parking capacity is subject to ongoing planning and implementation efforts.
- On the subject of post-disaster economic recovery, the Town has mutual aid arrangements and specific plans at the schools and hospital levels, but no town-wide economic recovery plan.

We ask citizens to please consider these points and other issues associated with Resilient Economy themes for Concord's future. One of the Committee's core objectives is public outreach. Please send your thoughts to the Envision Concord 2030 website - www.EnvisionConcord.org - or the Committee's page on the town website. We encourage you also to come to our meetings, generally every other Friday morning and posted on the town website.