



WINCHESTER MASTER PLAN **PHASE I**

POCKET BOOK

Learn about the Master Plan process and explore the trends and challenges identified in Phase I's *Existing Conditions Analysis*.

Join the conversation today at courb.co/winchester

Say hello!

Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC): Diab Jerius, Heather von Mering, Elizabeth Cregger, Heather Hannon and Maureen Meister (*Planning Board*); Denis Collet (*Precinct 1 Representative*); Keri Layton (*Precinct 2 Representative*); Robin Wolf (*Precinct 4 Representative*); Joyce Westner (*Precinct 5 Representative*); James Johnson (*Precinct 6 Representative*); Magda Ferrari (*Precinct 7 Representative*); Sherry Winkelman (*Precinct 8 Representative*); John Clemson (*Historical Commission*); Tracy Burhans (*Design Review Committee*); Zeke Nims and David Miller (*Conservation Commission*); Brian Szekely (*Town Planner*)

Project Team: JM Goldson community preservation + planning (*Project Lead; Housing and Demographics; Historic and Cultural Resources; Open Space, Natural Resources, and Recreation*); RKG Associates Inc. (*Land Use; Economic Development; Public Facilities and Services*); Toole Design Group (*Transportation and Circulation*); Bob Mitchell, FAICP (*Land Use and Zoning*)

WHAT IS A MASTER PLAN?

WHEN THE TOWN'S LAST FULL MASTER PLAN WAS COMPLETED IN 1953, APPROXIMATELY 15,500 PEOPLE WERE LIVING IN WINCHESTER (U.S. CENSUS BUREAU). SINCE THAT TIME, THE TOWN'S POPULATION HAS GROWN ROUGHLY 45 PERCENT, ADDING ABOUT 7,000 RESIDENTS.

WHAT ELSE HAS CHANGED? WHAT REMAINS THE SAME? WHAT DO COMMUNITY MEMBERS VALUE? HOW DO THEY ENVISION THE TOWN'S FUTURE?

The Town of Winchester is creating a Master Plan to answer key questions like these. It will also provide local policy-makers with a rational path to prepare for and shape future development and preservation of the community—paying particular attention to areas of Winchester undergoing intensive 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.

Winchester's Master Plan will comply with all statutory requirements per MGL c.41 s.81D. The Master Plan must be locally approved by the Planning Board and filed with the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).

A Master Plan is meaningful only 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**

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.

A master plan must include the following elements:



Land Use



Housing
and
Demographics



Economic
Development



Historic
and
Cultural
Resources



Open
Space,
Natural
Resources
and
Recreation



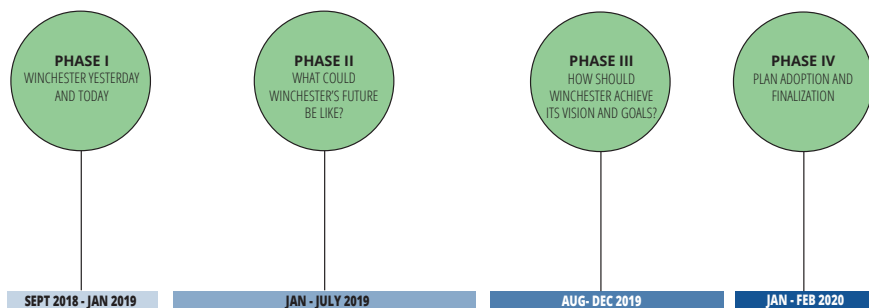
Circulation
and
Transportation



Public
Facilities
and
Services

PLANNING PROCESS

The 18-month Master Plan process launched in September 2018 with Phase I. The town's consultant reviewed all relevant plans and studies and gathered current data, including focus groups with relevant stakeholders, to understand existing conditions and identify key issues and opportunities. The process is expected to wrap up by February 2020.



Overview Schedule and Process

September 2018 - February 2020

Phase I - Existing Conditions Analysis

Analysis of Past Planning Documents,
*Including 1953 Master Plan; 2018 Community Needs Assessment;
2018 Housing Production Plan; 2013 Open Space and Recreation
Plan; and many others*



Community Engagement

Public Forum 1 - Feb 26

7 Community Events

6 Focus Groups

5 Town Dept Interviews

Meeting-in-a-Box Kits

Online Survey

Interactive Project Website:
courb.co/winchester

Ongoing Feedback and Public Comment

Phase II

Winchester Community Vision + Goals

June 2019

Phase III - Strategies + Implementation Plan

August - December 2019

Phase IV - Plan Adoption and Finalization

February 2020

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

January 2019 - June 2019

EXPLORE THE TRENDS + CHALLENGES FROM PHASE 1

Winchester is an attractive, mature suburban community¹ with easy access to regional employment centers via highways and commuter rail; a variety of coherent, primarily single-family, residential neighborhoods; an attractive town center that serves as the institutional, cultural, and commercial hub for the town; and remarkable historic fabric that expands beyond its extensive stock of well-preserved historic homes. Winchester, while largely developed, has a significant amount and quality of protected conservation areas; parks, playgrounds, and play fields; and natural features that include large and small water bodies.

Winchester's population is growing and changing. More families with children are moving into the community—drawn by the performance and reputation of the public schools. The increase in school-age children in Winchester has added to an already over-stressed school system. The population is also somewhat more racially/ethnically diverse than in the past with a growing proportion of residents identifying as Asian, primarily Chinese. New services, programs, and organizations have sprung up to serve these new communities.

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.

¹ "Mature suburb" communities are classified as having mid-century suburb 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 on other community types can be found here: www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Massachusetts-Community-Types-Summary-July_2008.pdf.

Most Winchester residents commute to other communities in the region 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 several repercussions, such as increased traffic congestion, and impacts to social dynamics, such as reinforcing Winchester's reputation as a privileged community.

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 tear-downs to build new single-or two-family houses on properties once occupied by older, smaller houses. This out-of-scale development has threatened Winchester's historic fabric and the character of the town's individual neighborhoods.

Flooding has been an ongoing issue in Winchester that the town has been actively addressing with mitigation measures. With the increased frequency and intensity of storms, flooding will likely become more severe.

The *Existing Conditions Analysis* points to a few key challenges and opportunities that warrant further consideration and discussion in Phase II of the Master Plan process. This information is used to identify community sentiment, values, and priorities and to set the direction for a community vision and goals. The following pages discuss these eight challenges and opportunities in further detail.

1

FINDING AN APPROPRIATE BALANCE BETWEEN PRESERVATION + DEVELOPMENT



PARTICULARLY IDENTIFYING STRATEGIC REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES THAT REINFORCE AND ENHANCE NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER, INCREASE ECONOMIC VITALITY, AND STRENGTHEN THE COMMUNITY'S RESILIENCY.

Winchester has many modest-size houses, including many post-World War II capes, split-levels, and ranches. However, tear downs of these smaller houses to build new, larger single-family or duplex units has been an ongoing trend in the community—resulting in the loss of these more economically-attainable and smaller units.

About 38 percent of all new housing units in Winchester since 2008 were replacement of existing supply.

The town has looked at the Waterfield parking lot site and Washington and Swanton Street site as potential redevelopment opportunities. Industrial districts in the Holton Street and Cross Street area are two potential redevelopment locations to improve the economic value of the land.



Waterfield Parking Lot Site



Washington and Swanton Street Site



Holton Street Site

Winchester Redevelopment Opportunities

Top Photo: JMG 2018

Middle Photo: Mariya Manzhos, Winchester Star
2018

Bottom Photo: RKG 2018

2 CREATING STRONGER PROTECTION FOR HISTORIC RESOURCES

TO MORE EFFECTIVELY PROTECT THE HISTORIC, ARCHITECTURAL, AND VISUAL CHARACTER OF WINCHESTER'S NEIGHBORHOODS.



Winchester is blessed with a robust collection of high-quality architect-designed institutional and residential buildings surrounded by a picturesque Olmsted-suburban landscape designed by Herbert Kellaway.

In 2016, the demolition delay bylaw was strengthened, and the number of properties protected under the bylaw expanded to include all inventoried properties and properties built prior to or during 1940. These buildings are subject to special review by the Historical Commission which determines whether a home is historically significant and eligible for a one-year demolition delay.

ALMOST 42 PERCENT OF WINCHESTER'S 7,423 BUILDINGS ARE SUBJECT TO THE REVISED DEMOLITION DELAY BYLAW.

In 2018, the WHC completed another historic resource survey of the Old West Side neighborhood—increasing the number of properties subject to review prior to demolition.

Many of the town's historic resources have been inventoried (1,182 resources) and listed on the State Register of Historic Places (503 resources) and on the National Register of Historic Places (68 resources) for their architectural or historic importance. Few structures are appropriately protected at the local level—the strongest preservation level.

WINCHESTER LACKS MANY OF THE LOCAL PRESERVATION PROTECTIONS AND PROGRAMS TYPICAL FOR A HISTORIC TOWN, SUCH AS THE FORMATION OF A LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT OR ADOPTION OF THE COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT.



Historic single-family House on Wildwood Street, circa 1920

Photo: JMG 2018

3 ENABLING DEVELOPMENT OF APPROPRIATELY-SCALED + DESIGNED HOUSING OPTIONS



TO HELP MAINTAIN AND SUPPORT SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIVERSITY OF THE TOWN'S POPULATION AND INCREASE THE ECONOMIC VITALITY OF LOCAL COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL BUSINESSES.



Winchester's low stock of rental housing (13 percent) coupled with high rents creates an environment that is not affordable to most of Winchester's renter households.

Multi-family housing options, especially rental units and smaller units, can provide more economically attainable housing.



Winchester has the *lowest* percentage of units on the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) compared to any other surrounding and similar town with only 1.9 percent of total housing stock on the SHI.



THE MAJORITY OF RENTAL HOUSEHOLDS ARE NON-FAMILY INCLUDING SENIORS AND FAMILIES WITH SINGLE-MALE HOUSEHOLDS.

More rental housing is needed to help meet demand for rental units and provide more housing alternatives—especially for non-family households; older adults seeking economically-attainable options to age in the community; and family households with single householders.

Winchester's share of multi-family housing options is lower than any neighboring or comparison communities, except for Lexington.

THERE IS ONE UNIT ON SHI FOR EVERY 9.5 LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS IN TOWN.

To increase the availability of affordable housing, developers can apply for Comprehensive Permits that streamline the permitting process and allow developers to request waivers to the town's local regulatory requirements, including zoning, in return for providing at least 20 or 25 percent affordable units.

72 PERCENT OF WINCHESTER'S HOUSING STOCK IS DETACHED SINGLE-FAMILY.



4 FOCUSING COMMERCIAL AND/OR MIXED-USE REDEVELOPMENT + REVITALIZATION EFFORTS



ALONG NORTH MAIN STREET, IN TOWN CENTER, + WITHIN THE TOWN'S INDUSTRIAL DISTRICTS.



Many residents visit businesses outside Winchester to fulfill their needs. Winchester may not currently have enough businesses in these retail categories or a merchandise mix that meets consumer preferences

Mixed-use development provides an opportunity to blend housing and commercial development to create active and vibrant spaces. Under current zoning, the General Business District (GBD2) allows mixed-use for buildings that include up to 4 residential units and the Center Business District (CBD) allows residential over commercial by-right.

TO SHIFT THE COMMERCIAL TAX BASE 1 PERCENT, IT WOULD REQUIRE 360,000 SQUARE FEET OF NEW COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT AT AN AVERAGE ASSESSED VALUE OF \$200 PER SQUARE FEET.

As a development typology, mixed-use development can fill in the urban fabric, especially in North Main Street where existing buildings are low-rise and mostly single-use commercial.

THE AVERAGE WINCHESTER HOUSEHOLD HAS A POTENTIAL SPENDING CAPACITY* OF \$64,800/YR ACROSS ALL RETAIL CATEGORIES.

*The average U.S. household is closer to \$25,000-\$30,000/yr.



North Main Street

North Main Street is an older commercial corridor that requires some attention from a zoning perspective. The key questions for residents of Winchester are: *What type(s) of uses do you want to see along this corridor? What incentives could be put in place to encourage positive changes?*

5

IMPROVING THE QUALITY AND ACCESSIBILITY OF THE TOWN'S CURRENT OPEN SPACE INVENTORY



PARTICULARLY AS DEVELOPMENT + REDEVELOPMENT PRESSURES WILL INCREASE DENSITY IN MANY AREAS OF TOWN.



Similar to other urbanized suburban communities, much of the Town's original forestland and agricultural land has been developed.

Some new development projects, such as the recent Winning Farm design has incorporated conservation areas into the site plan. This model can be followed to continue to preserve open space within a developable site while accommodating future growth and make open space sites more accessible by foot or by bike.

Winchester is largely built-out already, making it unlikely that the Town's open space will increase substantially beyond its current inventory.

FIFTEEN PERCENT OF THE TOWN'S TOTAL LAND AREA IS PERMANENTLY PROTECTED OPEN SPACE UNDER FEDERAL, STATE, OR LOCAL JURISDICTION.



Participants in the Metropolitan Area Planning Council's 2018 Community Survey expressed concerns over the lack of natural open space and noted that many of Winchester's open space sites are highly-programmed, such as recreational fields, agricultural land, parks, or cemeteries.

Although the Tri-Community Greenway increases bike and pedestrian access to many parks and athletic fields, including Ginn Field, Skillings Field, and the fields at Muraco School, other open space and recreational land can be difficult to access by non-car transportation.

THE CHALLENGE WILL BE TO PRESERVE THE QUALITY OF THE TOWN'S EXISTING OPEN SPACE—PARTICULARLY AS DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT PRESSURES WILL INCREASE DENSITY IN MANY AREAS OF TOWN.

6

CREATING CIRCULATION NETWORK CHANGES THAT ALLOW FOR LESS RELIANCE ON VEHICLES + PROVIDE SAFE, PLEASANT, NON-MOTORIZED MOBILITY OPTIONS



TO ENHANCE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN DESTINATIONS WITHIN WINCHESTER INCLUDING COMMERCIAL AREAS, TOWN BUILDINGS AND SERVICES, AND OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION AREAS, IN ADDITION TO REGIONAL DESTINATIONS.

Winchester's transportation network is comprised of streets, sidewalks, public transit via bus and commuter rail services, a dedicated bike path connecting Winchester to neighboring towns, and recreational trails.

Continued improvements to the bicycle and pedestrian network could encourage commuter-use in addition to shorter and more local trips within town, reducing reliance on vehicular transportation.

Bike-share programs, a more extensive network of bike paths, and dedicated bike infrastructure on major routes would create safer cycling routes. Separated and/or protected bike lanes create the most comfortable and safest bike route.

OVER 70 PERCENT OF COMMUTING RESIDENTS USE SINGLE-OCCUPANCY VEHICLES TO GET TO WORK WHICH ADDS APPROXIMATELY 7,000 VEHICLES TO THE ROADS DURING MORNING AND EVENING COMMUTING HOURS



Bike parking at Winchester High School

Photo: Toole Design Group 2018

7 INTEGRATING TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS WITH NEW DEVELOPMENTS, REGULATORY CHANGES IN LAND USE, + INCREASED DENSITY.



Improving connectivity to—particularly to desired destinations such as schools and public transportation centers—should be included in future planning efforts.

Many parents opt to drive the short distance rather than allow kids to walk or bike—leading to significant congestion during the morning commute and school drop-off times. Walking and biking to school programs, like “Walk to School Wednesdays,”

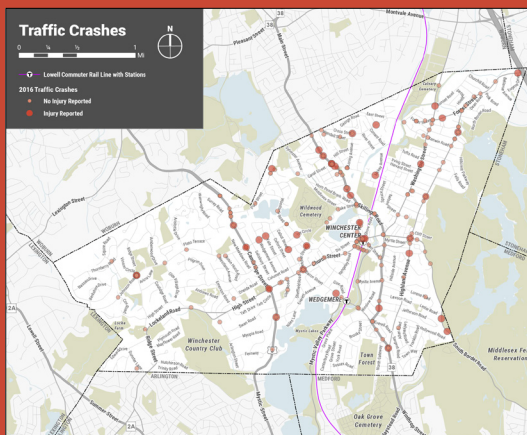
coupled with improvements to sidewalks and crosswalks along the school routes, could encourage an increase in these alternative modes of transportation and reduce drop-off congestion.

There is an ongoing town-wide policy to include traffic studies with future school expansion projects, like the McCall Middle School expansion project.

Traffic Safety

Two serious pedestrian vs. vehicle accidents occurred in 2018, one resulting in a pedestrian fatality. MassDOT's Crash Portal data from 2016 reports a total of 221 vehicle crashes in Winchester, including 39 injury-related crashes.

Intersections with the highest number of injury crashes were recorded at the traffic circle in the town center and at the intersections of Johnson Road at Ridge Street, Main Street at Canal Street, and Highland Avenue at Mystic Valley Parkway—each reporting two such incidents.



Map: Toole Design Group 2018

8

PROVIDING ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR CAPITAL COSTS OF PUBLIC FACILITIES



INCLUDING SCHOOLS, OTHER TOWN PROPERTIES, STREETS, SIDEWALKS, AND OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE, AS WELL AS OPERATIONAL AND MAINTENANCE COSTS TO ENSURE THE LEVEL OF FACILITIES AND SERVICES THAT RESIDENTS EXPECT.

Over the next several years, voters will be faced with additional capital investments choices, including school needs with costs projected in the tens of millions of dollars. The Town has already invested considerably in capital projects such as school facilities, roads and infrastructure, and flood mitigation.

THIS CHALLENGE HAS ALREADY BEEN BROUGHT TO FOREFRONT THROUGH THE CURRENT DISCUSSIONS ON THE \$10 MILLION OVERRIDE PROPOSAL TO MAINTAIN CURRENT OPERATING SERVICES AND REPLENISH THE CAPITAL AND BUILDING STABILIZATION FUNDS.

School enrollment is projected to reach a high of 5,248 students over the next eight years—an 11 percent increase. The Town is looking into two new elementary school building projects, a second phase of renovations at the McCall Middle School, and potentially

reconfiguring space in the newly constructed High School to accommodate growing class sizes.

Capital projects are necessary for moving the community forward, but maintenance for buildings and infrastructure must be adequately funded to ensure the useful life of capital projects are realized.



Winchester Public Library



Vinson-Owen Elementary School

Photos: JMG 2018

MATERIALS
PREPARED BY:

J M Goldson

community preservation
+ planning

Stay Involved!

Join the Conversation Online. Join the conversation today at courb.co/winchester. Visit our project website to receive updates on the Winchester Master Plan Process and provide feedback on Winchester's opportunities and challenges.

Attend an Event. Members of the Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC) and our consultant team will be tabling at community events around town. Check our project website, courb.co/winchester, as we add other community events to our schedule this spring!

Sunday March 3rd | League of Women Voters' Day at the Races (1-3 PM) at the Jenks Center

Monday March 25th | Winchester High School Student Event (11:30 AM - 1:15 PM)

Saturday April 6th | Morning at the Transfer Station (10 AM - 12 PM)

Friday April 19th | Morning at the Jenks Center (10 AM - 12 PM)

Saturday May 11th | Wright-Locke Farm's Mother's Day Plant Sale

Saturday June 1st | Town Day (8 AM - 9PM)

In addition to these community engagement opportunities and events, members of the public are welcome at any of the MPSC meetings, which are publicly noticed in advance. The Committee meets regularly in Town Hall.

Host a Meeting. Use one of the project's meeting-in-a-box kits to host a meeting in your living room! Download the kit and learn more at: courb.co/winchester.

Write to Us. Submit a comment by email or in writing to bszekely@winchester.us. All comments become part of the public record.