

Some key questions for consideration as we begin this process to help take this through fruition.

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A Comprehensive Plan, often called a Master Plan, explains what a community is like today, where it wants to go in the future, and how it can get there. It includes: assessments of existing resources and issues, projections of future conditions and needs, and consideration of collective goals and desires. A Comprehensive Plan is a long-range policy document developed to express a community's intentions and to establish guidelines for its future growth and redevelopment. The Comprehensive Plan is essentially an all-inclusive approach to communicate a community's vision, goals, objectives, and strategies to achieve that vision. The Comprehensive Plan consists of several elements related to demographics, land use, housing, infrastructure and transportation, natural resources, community facilities, open space and recreation, and may include more specific topics. Westwood's Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2000. Efforts to update the Plan were undertaken in 2010 and 2013, but were not completed.

How long will the planning process last in weeks or months?

Starting work now in late fall 2018 with the goal of Planning Board adoption of the Comprehensive Plan Update in summer 2019 and Town Meeting endorsement in Fall 2019.

What future time horizon will the plan address: i.e. five, ten years, twenty years?

Typically 10 to 15 years. Recommend aiming for this time frame but include an objective to update the document every seven years. The plan can also call for an annual review of progress on implementation strategies.

Who will be charged with updating the plan?

The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee will be responsible for writing and updating each element of the 2019 Comprehensive Plan. The Steering Committee, Staff and the Planning Board will work closely together but the Steering Committee will be responsible for the core workload and be composed of individuals with particular interest and expertise in the specific plan elements. In August 2018, the Planning Board recommended the Board of Selectmen appoint approximately nine - eighteen (9-18) members to a Steering Committee. This allow for one or two individuals to focus on each of the nine plan elements. Planning Board members are available to serve as liaisons for specific elements.

Who is on the Steering Committee and what is its role?

The Steering Committee is comprised of individuals with expertise and interest in each of the specific plan subject areas. Steering Committee members will be principally responsible for writing each subject area element of the Comprehensive Plan Update.

The Board of Selectmen was the appointing authority, with the Planning Board assisting with an extensive public outreach program inviting residents to submit written expressions of interest in serving on the Steering Committee. Utilizing the town's website, Westwood Media Center, Facebook, Twitter, flyers, and a booth at Westwood Day to publicize the opportunity for resident involvement was employed in early fall 2018.

By early October, the Selectmen had received eighteen complete applications and, at their meeting on November 5, appointed all eighteen applicants. Based on the candidate's interest,

background, and relevant skills each member to try to match individuals to their preferred interest areas.. was assigned to a specific plan section. The eighteen members and their areas of responsibility are as follows:

Land Use – Jack Wiggin, Linda Walsh
Town Centers – Kate Wynne, John Rogers
Housing Element – Barbara Shea, Sheila Hanley Longval
Economic Development – Peter Neville, Phil Shapiro
Natural & Cultural Resources – Nancy Donahue, Janica Midiri
Community Facilities – Tom Viti, Phil Eramo
Open Space & Recreation – Charles Donahue, Paula Jacobson
Transportation – Steve Olanoff, Trevor Laubenstein
Resilience and Sustainability – Phil Shapiro, Peter Kane, Pam Kane

What subject matter will be included in the plan? Does it cover elements required to be included under the state planning enabling law?

State law requires eight specific subject area elements, as well as plan components related to policy and goal statements and implementation strategies. There are eight subject area elements in the 2000 Comprehensive Plan:

Land Use Element
Town Centers Element
Housing Element
Economic Development Element
Natural and Cultural Resources Element
Community Facilities Element
Open Space and Recreation Element
Transportation Element

Based on input from recent update efforts, we recommending adding a 9th subject area element with this update:

Resilience and Sustainability Element to assess Westwood’s vulnerabilities and develop ways for the town to become more sustainable and resilient in the future.

A 10th subject area for Government and Civic Engagement was proposed by one of the Planning Board members, but there was not consensus among the full board. This topic might better be addressed in the policy section of the Comprehensive Plan Update.

As in 2000, individual goals, objectives and implementation strategies will be set forth in each of the subject area elements. For compliance with current state requirements, this update will also include a separate Goals & Policies Element, which will be a compilation of the goals and objectives listed in each individual subject area element. The Comprehensive Plan Update will also include an Implementation Element, which will bring together all of the individual implementation strategies, in table form, identifying responsible parties and timeframes for each strategy.

How can I participate if I'm not on the Steering Committee?

All residents are encouraged to participate and stay involved by providing input and feedback throughout the planning process. One of the first opportunities to provide input will be a community wide survey. Next will be a community vision session held in early 2019. This will be widely publicized once the exact date, time, location is finalized. Steering Committee members will also be responsible for soliciting input by attending various other board, commission, and organizational meetings throughout the year. The Planning Board will have meetings focused on particular subject areas where everyone will be invited to attend to review findings, goals, and objectives.

Further, you will be able to follow progress of the plan on the Comprehensive Plan page of the Town's website.

Everyone is encouraged to sign up to the Town's email notification system to receive official meeting postings for all board and commission meetings at:

<http://www.townhall.westwood.ma.us/mytown>

And subscribe to the Westwood Wire to receive general updates at:
<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/MAWESTWOOD/subscriber/new>

Once draft plan sections are prepared they will be publicly posted to the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee's website and available for review and comment.

What is the proposed process for preparing the update?

We anticipate three or four meetings of the full Steering Committee. Steering Committee members will receive copies of the Initial Draft Update, which has been prepared by staff based on the 2000 Comprehensive Plan with revisions to reflect current conditions. Steering Committee members will be asked to read through the Initial Draft Update and to develop draft survey questions that would help inform their specific subject area elements. Each member will be asked to send their draft survey questions to Planning staff for compilation.

The Steering Committee will then come together for the first time in November where they will discuss a Comprehensive Planning community survey and refine the work plan. The Survey will be widely publicized and made available online and in paper format through the end of January. Survey responses will be forwarded to Steering Committee members in early February.

The Steering Committee will meet for a second time at a Visioning Session in February. The Visioning Session will be moderated by an outside consultant. Attendees will have an opportunity to review and debate goals, objectives and implementation strategies, as set forth in the Initial Draft Update, and to suggest additional goals, objectives and implementation strategies that have not yet been included.

Following the Visioning Session, Steering Committee members will work individually (or in pairs where two members are assigned to a single subject area element) to revise their Initial Draft Update elements by incorporating goals, objectives and implementation strategies that were brought forth at the Visioning Session, in Survey responses, and other means of community input. Steering Committee members will also be tasked with reaching out to boards, committees, organizations, and focus groups related to their subject area elements (i.e.: the Transportation Element member(s) would meet with the Pedestrian & Bicycle Safety Committee and the DPW Director; the Housing Element member(s) would meet with the Housing

Partnership; Natural & Cultural Resource Element members would meet with the Westwood Land Trust and Westwood Historical Commission; etc.) Steering Committee members will be assisted by Planning staff in making necessary connections and in obtaining data and information relative to their subject area elements. Planning Board members are also available to assist as liaisons to the steering committee for specific subject elements.

Beginning in March, the Planning Board will discuss one Comprehensive Plan element at each of its regularly scheduled meetings typically held on Tuesday evenings. Steering Committee member(s) responsible for the scheduled element will present their Revised Draft Update of that element to the Planning Board. Members of other boards, committees, organizations, and focus groups related to the particular subject area element, and any residents who expressed interest in that element during the Steering Committee appointment phase, will be invited to attend and participate in the meeting. All in attendance will have an opportunity to recommend further revisions to goals, objectives and implementation strategies. Steering Committee members will subsequently prepare and submit their Final Draft Update elements to staff for compilation.

The Steering Committee will meet as a full committee for a third time at a Planning Board meeting in late June to review the fully compiled draft update. This meeting will provide an opportunity for Steering Committee members to propose additional goals, objectives and implementation strategies that extend beyond their own subject area elements. This meeting should focus solely on the Comprehensive Plan Update, with no other Planning Board business on the agenda.

A fourth and final Steering Committee meeting may be needed following Planning Board adoption of the Comprehensive Plan Update and prior to Town Meeting endorsement of the Update at the Fall 2019 Town Meeting. This final Steering Committee Meeting would serve as a Public Information Session to explain the Comprehensive Plan Update and to answer any questions.

Who will be the key project manager?

The Town Planner will be the key staff person and the Steering Committee along with the Planning Board will spearhead the process. An outside consultant will be employed only to moderate the Visioning Session.

How much staff resources are available?

Planning staff will be the primary staff support for the update process but other town staff will provide the support and input. I anticipate involvement by staff from the Department of Public Works, Recreation Department, Library, Police Department, Fire Department, Council on Aging, Youth & Family Services Department, School Department, Finance Department, Building, Zoning, Conservation and Health Divisions.

Will some or all of the plan be developed by outside consultants?

The plan will be written by the volunteer Steering Committee members, based on significant public input and with assistance, as needed, from Planning staff. The Planning Board recommends engaging a consultant to help with the public facilitation and public engagement at the Visioning Session and at a possible public information session prior to Town Meeting endorsement. Planning Board members will be liaisons to specific sections and will assist with the update.

How much money will be earmarked for the planning process? Will the monies be linked to a particular time frame such as a fiscal year? Will contingency funds be available?

As of this date, no money has been budgeted for the specific purpose of updating the Comprehensive Plan. I estimate that a small budget (\$10,000-\$15,000) will be needed for a consultant to facilitate the Visioning Session and a possible public information session. This is recommended to encourage the most effective public input and to achieve a successful public participation process for this update.

What time commitment is committee members willing to make?

Steering Committee members will likely dedicate a significant amount of time working to write the plan section, attending public info sessions, attending Committee and Planning Board meetings. This may amount to a total of approximately 30-50 hours throughout the process. Planning Board members will dedicate time at regular meetings to discuss the process and answer any questions, comments or concerns. Planning Board members can serve as liaisons to certain sections of the plan.