

6.0 Community Vision

A. Description of Process

Community input has been vital to the process of preparation and the ultimate success of this OSRP. The Southampton Master Plan Survey and Visioning Workshops were the primary tool used to determine public opinion regarding open space and recreational issues in the town. Residents and town officials made numerous suggestions at the five public meetings.

Minutes from these meetings are provided on the Southampton website at http://www.town.southampton.ma.us/minutes.php#*18. Additionally, the Master Plan Committee administered a public questionnaire available in the month of April 2010 and held three public visioning sessions during April 2010 at the Norris School in Southampton.

Southampton residents were encouraged to complete the questionnaire as well as to attend the public visioning session through flyers posted around town, a notice on the town website, and an article in the Daily Hampshire Gazette newspaper that appeared on Tuesday, April 8, 2010. Questionnaires were available at both town libraries, at the Town Clerk's office in the Town Offices in Southampton, and on the town website. Committee members also personally handed out questionnaires to town residents on three different days at various establishments in Town.

Survey Results are available on the Southampton Master Plan Website at: <http://southamptonmasterplan.org/html/docs.html>.

The concerns voiced by town officials and the community at these meetings, along with survey results, helped to shape the basis for recommendations in this report. In addition, the OSRP relies on statistical data from the PVPC Southampton Master Plan draft chapters prepared for Southampton in 2010 – 2012 by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC). The five chapters are the Open Space and Natural Resources, Housing, Cultural, Land Use and Public Service and Facilities chapters. In addition, most of the maps prepared for the OSRP were created from MassGIS data. The "Points of Interest" Map updates the Conservation Commission Map originally printed in 1967.

The Southampton Master Plan Committee held several informal meetings of its own. The committee helped to prepare and distribute the survey. The survey was also available on-line on the Official Town website. Surveys were also distributed to individuals and collected during November. The process took longer than anticipated, but was worth the effort by stimulating additional community interest and awareness.

In general, the public expressed overwhelming support for open space preservation in general. With respect to specific questions, responses mirrored the diverse interests of the

open space user groups, which include hunters, bikers, horseback riders, and nature lovers, to list just a few. Most significantly, the community supports a greenway that is open to the public and the need for a bicycle path.

Themes/Comments

Residents have expressed a desire to retain the rural character of Southampton while minimizing sprawl development and providing a greater variety of housing types and transportation options. A future *growth pattern* that concentrates new development around mixed-use centers and limits growth in outlying areas is compatible with residents' desires as well as smart growth principles. However, in practice, it can be difficult to make the zoning changes that are necessary to encourage this type of development pattern, due to a common public aversion to higher density development, as well as opposition from private landowners in outlying areas who perceive that their property will lose value as a result of the proposed changes. In addition, in Southampton, higher density mixed-use centers could require costly infrastructure improvements.

One final critical issue is that of services and how new services might impact the existing community character. Services cost money to provide, and some services, such as sewer, are capable of allowing for new development that affects the town's character. Residents would like to see more pedestrian amenities, passive and active recreation opportunities (including a bike path), gathering spaces, traffic calming, and public safety, sewer and library services.

Key Visioning Workshop's Open Space and Recreation Points

Residents:

- like Southampton's rural feel, community, schools, and location
- are concerned about sprawl development patterns
- support design and development standards
- are concerned about housing affordability
- support clustered residential development with open space protection
- support mixed-use centers with open space preservation

Based on the vision statements developed by residents during the visioning workshop, the following is a summary of the open space and recreation vision:

Southampton is a community with balanced growth that promotes economic development yet maintains its rural character.

Southampton has retained the feel of a small New England village that preserves its historic, cultural and rural character by implementing smart growth zoning and preserving open space and scenic views.

Southampton is a community where residents have many transportation options, including walking, biking and public transit.

Southampton is:

- a town with passive recreation, gathering spaces, and programs for all ages, environmentally friendly.
- a welcoming, caring, thriving community for all ages with a well-planned Village Center that provides community, cultural, and commercial amenities.
- concerned about preserving its historic buildings, open spaces and agricultural lands.
- a close-knit and vibrant community with residents who are committed to sustainability, volunteerism, and each other.
- a community with many small, local businesses, a well-developed agricultural tourism economy, and a vibrant Village Center that welcomes people of all ages.

B. STATEMENT OF OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION GOALS

Residents want:

- balanced growth
- a vibrant Village Center with lots of things to do and a small-town feel
- College Highway to remain rural, agricultural and scenic and to have passive recreation activities and multiple transit options
- to see more public involvement in decision-making
- more transportation options, including options for cyclists and pedestrians
- the town to be proactive about acquiring open space
- to protect Conant Memorial Park
- to secure access to use the Tighe-Carmody reservoir area
- to connect existing open space areas to each other
- to preserve farms and orchards, and support farming activities

- to create a farmer's market
- to promote agricultural and cultural tourism
- to assess the costs and benefits of services and infrastructure
- to focus future commercial development on the north/Easthampton side of town