



2 March 2022 DRAFT

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## A WORKING VISION AND GOALS FOR WALPOLE'S MASTER PLAN

A key component of a master plan is a Vision and related set of goals upon which the Plan is built – that is, the vision and goals serve as the Master Plan's foundation. These are developed by incorporating input from participants and articulating shared values that emerge through the public process. (See page 6 for a description of the public process.)

### Elements to include in the Vision and Goals

The following have been identified as key elements to include in developing a Vision and Goals that will help guide decision about the direction of Walpole's future. Key elements are those receiving the most frequent mention and seem to enjoy the strongest level of support. While participants in the planning process share many ideas about what they want to preserve, improve, or change, they also have different ideas about what the Town's spending priorities should be.

A majority of the visioning participants seemed to want to make improvements with an understanding that doing so will cost money. Still, others said, "we shouldn't spend money we don't have" and that taxes are already too high, so they were proponents of little or no change.

Participants want very much to preserve Walpole's small-town feel, open space, and natural resources, and some believe more development will threaten the town's way of life. Many also value the schools, recreational facilities, and local shops, all of which contribute to their sense of the town. Housing affordability seemed to be on the minds of most, along with reducing traffic congestion and making walking and biking safer. Downtown Walpole seems to be an area where all agreed, either that they very much enjoy it or that they saw great potential in making it even better.

#### Community Priorities

The **top three features** that participants identified as what they most appreciate about Walpole are:

- open space and natural features
- the small town feeling/sense of community
- Walpole's location that provides access (both MBTA and highway) to Boston, Providence and all they have to offer.

Schools and Downtown seem to follow. Safety and activities for kids are also mentioned.

When asked in a variety of forums (public meeting, survey, on-line platform), "**If you could do one thing to improve Walpole, what would it be?**" the following three responses were made in all three venues:

- Revitalize and make the downtown a destination
- Create more affordable housing
- Make streets safe and walkable



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**If you could do one thing to improve Walpole, what would it be?<sup>1</sup>**

Responses listed in no particular order

One thing to improve...	Public Forum	Miro Board	Survey
Revitalize the downtown (make a destination)	X	X	X
Invest in the schools	X		X
Increase commercial development	X		X
Diversity the population	X		X
Create more affordable housing	X	X	X
Address issues of pollution	X		
Simplify zoning bylaws	X		X
Make streets safe and walkable	X	X	X
Reduce traffic congestion	X		X
Control development	X		X
Lower taxes			X
Limit new housing construction (No more condos, no more huge homes)		X	X
Create a multi-sports complex / Pickleball courts			X
More winter outdoor activities (e.g. skating rink, winter carnival)			X
Create own electric supply using roof top solar panels			X
Develop a coherent plan for the town as a whole			X
Recruit new people to run and get involved in town government			X
Adopt the Community Preservation Act			X
Publish a Walpole-centric newspaper / website		X	X
Preserve green and open spaces and provide more information		X	X
Inclusionary zoning, multi-family by right		X	X
Preserve small town feeling			X
Senior housing in the center			X
Performance Center for plays, concerts, acting and voice lessons for kids and adults			X
Take action on climate change resilience / environmental sustainability			X
Restore Old Town Hall as a public building and meeting place		X	X
Restore kindness and respect for different opinions			X
Consider tax relief for seniors and long time residents			X
Add a bike path and make biking on roads easier/safer		X	X
Focus on clean and healthy environment			X
Stop spending money we do not have (no new schools)			X
More parking at the train station			X
Change to Town Council form of government		X	X
Maintain municipal buildings		X	

<sup>1</sup> Stakeholders were asked this question in a variety of forums



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**WORKING VISION**

A vision statement describes the kind of community where residents want to live. It is a broad-brush image of what a community values and sees as a desirable future. The following vision to guide Master Plan goals and policies is based on significant public input.

**Walpole is a town that . . .**

1. Supports the local economy and promotes Downtown Walpole as the civic, social, and cultural hub of the Town
2. Takes care of its open spaces and recreation areas through investment and stewardship
3. Appreciates and protects its natural resources
4. Preserves its small-town ambiance as it adapts to growth and change
5. Works to be more resilient to climate change through shared responsibility by government, residents, and businesses
6. Has a wide range of housing choices
7. Provides safe, pleasant streets that pedestrians, bicyclists, and cars can share, and easy access to public transportation
8. Protects and promotes its history and cultural resources
9. Takes pride in its municipal buildings and schools
10. Provides services to protect the health and safety of all residents

... has a vibrant, prosperous Downtown that attracts residents and visitors alike, with many options for shopping, dining, and community gathering. Economic investment and new development both in Downtown and East Walpole are in keeping with the scale and character of the surrounding area. Façade improvement programs and design guidelines work together to beautify Downtown, improve property values, and strengthen the local economy. Open space is protected and travel is made safer in South Walpole.

... preserves, manages, and connects its open spaces and recreation areas. Birds Park, Adams Farm, Jarvis Farm trails, the Town Forest and Memorial Pond, among many others serve the public's need for quiet places to enjoy, rest, and play. Well-maintained, equitably located recreation facilities offer a range of indoor and outdoor options for all ages.

... appreciates and protects its natural resources, encouraging residents to do their part to safeguard the environmental assets on which the health of the community depends.

... preserves its small-town feeling, strong sense of community, the character and value of its built environment, and New England charm by managing growth with sound land use policies, respecting its long-time residents, and welcoming new people. It is a town that remains a safe and great place to bring up children.

... protects its resources for future generations to enjoy by improving resilience to the impacts of climate change. Walpole works to increase recycling and the use of renewable energy sources in public buildings. Electric car charging stations exist in central locations. Residents and businesses are supported in their efforts to live and work sustainably.



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... has a wide range of homes that meet the needs of people at various stages of the life cycle. Walpole's housing options help to keep the town a welcoming place for all types of households and people of all ages, incomes, and abilities. Higher-density homes are located near the train station.

... provides ways to travel other than by car, with safe and pleasant infrastructure for walking and biking. Walpole has good access to public transit, including enough parking for commuters and efficient "first mile/last mile" connections between neighborhoods and the train.

... protects and promotes its history and cultural resources by increasing public awareness of local history in many ways and by protecting historic buildings and landscapes. The emphasis on arts and culture, especially in the Downtown and East Walpole, play an important part in the town's economy and respect for its heritage.

... a town that maintains and updates its municipal facilities, including those most used by the community such as the schools, the Senior Center, the Library, and Town Hall. Town-owned facilities are used to their full potential and enjoyed by many as well-loved venues for community building. Older buildings such as the Old Town Hall and Blackburn Hall have been put to new uses. Communication is improved and information regarding existing resources is easily accessible. Participation on town boards and committees is diverse, in terms of race, ethnicity, tenure in town, as well as age, including the town's youth.

... promotes the health and well-being of all residents with gathering places for social and cultural events and access to public services. Partnerships between town government, businesses, and local civic, social, and charitable organizations help to engage all neighborhoods in the life of the community and ensure that everyone who lives in Walpole feels welcome to be there. The town's website provides timely, easy-to-access information. Municipal services meet the needs of all residents and help to protect public health and safety by ensuring good air and water quality.

## **MASTER PLAN GOALS**

**GOAL 1: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:** Increase economic activity and diversify the tax base, provide more jobs, and more shops and restaurants for residents to enjoy.

**GOAL 2: OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION:** Preserve and connect open spaces and maintain and update existing and create new recreational facilities, ensuring equitable access to these for all residents.

**GOAL 3: NATURAL RESOURCES:** Conserve and protect the town's natural environment and biodiversity through land and water management, regulation, and public education.

**GOAL 4: LAND USE:** Ensure that new development is in keeping with the scale, uses, and characteristics of the specific neighborhoods, including the Downtown.

**GOAL 5: CLIMATE CHANGE:** Build local government's capacity in order to provide leadership for sustainability and climate change resilience, and engage community members to do their part.



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GOAL 6: HOUSING: Increase the range of housing types and the affordable housing supply to meet needs of people throughout various stages of the life cycle.

GOAL 7: TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION: Address traffic congestion and improve alternative modes of travel including walking, biking and connections to, and parking for public transit.

GOAL 8: MUNICIPAL FACILITIES AND SERVICES: Maintain and update municipal facilities and ensure that municipal services meet the needs of residents and protect public health.

GOAL 9: HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES: Celebrate Walpole's history, protect historic resources, and increase the presence of art and culture in Town.

GOAL 10: COMMUNITY HEALTH: Invest in resources and services to protect the health and well-being of Walpole residents, especially the town's most vulnerable people.

### CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

- ❖ Increase the **diversity of people** living and working in Town (age, race, income)
- ❖ Preserve and protect the **small town feel**
- ❖ Build bridges across polarized positions by creating and promoting a **unifying vision**.
- ❖ Ensure **fiscal accountability**

### PUBLIC PROCESS

The Master Plan Committee invited residents to help develop a preliminary vision and set of goals for Walpole's Master Plan. The same or very similar questions were presented in each forum or other opportunity for participants to engage in the visioning process. Participation occurred in the following ways:



- Public Forum: November 17, 2021 (approximately 45 participants)
- Miro Board (online; approximately 150 comments)
- On-line survey (approximately 750 respondents)
- Comment Board @ Farmer's Market (October 23, 2021)
- Comment Board @ Library (November 22 – December 13, 2021)
- Comment Board @ Senior Center (December 15, 2021 – January 5, 2022)
- Comment Board @ Recreation Center (January 5 – February 3, 2022)
- 8 Kitchen Conversations<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Steering Committee members held small group discussions with residents in order to provide additional opportunities to provide input. Discussions were supported with materials and discussion guides so that all conversations followed those held in other public forums.



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RESPONSES TO SELECTED QUESTIONS FROM TOWN-WIDE  
SURVEY

(approximately 750 respondents)

Q3 What are your favorite things about Walpole?

recreation vibe services cities proximity Boston Providence police  
Adams Farm Bird land nice New England feel lots community support Proximity  
friendly people town center Boston Providence family options Community events  
quaint neighbors fields Town access areas local businesses events  
outdoor spaces friendly pride Sense community live safe common  
Town Forest Size library activities neighborhoods friendliness  
parks spaces downtown great schools open space  
school system Bird Park town feel  
Small town feel safety community  
Adams Farm people easy access schools history  
Location Boston Small town strong restaurants  
highways Community feel place Great shopping center close  
green space house good schools suburban feel good businesses Open  
s Small atmosphere trails convenience small businesses Good restaurants quiet  
senior center downtown restaurants elementary schools feel quaint downtown etc COA  
home rural Walpole train Farm Bird Park cleanliness charm natural still kids



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Q6 What is your least favorite thing about Walpole?

new high rises High Property Taxes new construction new apartment buildings Lack sidewalks  
commercial tax base roads people want Way Walpole center politics improve population outdated  
growth huge increasing taxes always much living congestion residents  
new buildings big construction walk increase shopping center town spend  
sidewalks needs apartment buildings Property taxes center  
enough sidewalks downtown area town government housing feel  
people size many looks building crowded Taxes  
changed downtown community traffic Large town homes  
lack options schools Rebels new Recent development

Q9 What's missing in Walpole?

dining Thriving downtown people Bike lanes Lack town feel outdoor community events support  
commercial businesses bagel shop butcher Walpole base entertainment robust need Arts  
options Bigger Cafes Great food upscale downtown area fields area newspaper  
town center communication sidewalks kids Diversity offerings  
parking missing center Diverse brewery pool stores  
Breakfast places town local shops shops planning  
restaurants Enough downtown walkable  
better gift shops coffee shop complex businesses go  
small housing Bakery programs affordable housing senior  
schools Cute community quality small businesses new place old  
variety quick Nothing Development buildings easy ice cream sports space land  
residents Accountability retail diverse restaurants Vibrant downtown good playground bike path  
ethnic restaurants family open space local food markets Indoor high school things

Q15 If you could do one thing to improve Walpole, what would it be?

roads high school Preserve Old Town Hall downtown area don t Condos Increase diversity  
traffic put Limit Fix Bring value area Route residents construction  
Improve downtown huge people Lower property taxes downtown  
downtown businesses Improve Select Board Walpole Make downtown  
better way housing zoning new space buildings  
apartment buildings town apartment complexes make homes  
Stop Expand Stop building place schools Develop  
center affordable housing businesses Improve schools sidewalks  
small town feel apartments needs increase developments taxes restaurants attract  
street Change education Community parking Add large Lower taxes foot traffic keep  
Invest schools Update new middle school school system

