

## **APPENDIX B**

### **- MASTER PLAN PUBLIC FORUMS -**

# **North Brookfield Vision of the Community Forum**

**What do you like about North Brookfield?**

**What don't you like about the town?**

**What would you change?**

**What would you keep the same?**

Will we have more people living here? Will we have more or less businesses providing jobs? Will many of the farms and orchards become housing developments? Will we have a Wal-Mart or Home Depot? Will we have new police and fire buildings? Will we need more schools? Can we control our future? These and many other important questions must be asked and answered in order to create a master plan which can guide North Brookfield over the next 10-20 years.

Please join the North Brookfield Master Planning Project team on Saturday morning, March 4, 2006 to provide your vision of what our town should look like in the future.

We will need your thoughts on housing needs, employment and economic development, open space and recreation, farming and agricultural businesses, town services, education, zoning, and land use as well as transportation and traffic issues.

Through small group discussions we will look at four specific elements on which we can develop plans:

What are North Brookfield's **STRENGTHS**?

What are North Brookfield's **WEAKNESSES**?

What are the **OPPORTUNITIES** which North Brookfield has?

What are the **THREATS** faced by North Brookfield?

You have the power to shape the future. Your feelings thoughts ideas and desires are needed to outline our future for North Brookfield.

**Please attend the first VISION OF THE FUTURE discussion on**

**Saturday, March 4, 2006**

**(Snow date March 25)**

**9:00 Am – 12 noon**

**North Brookfield Elementary School Cafeteria**

**For further information please contact the Master Plan  
Project Team at [NBMP1812@AOL.COM](mailto:NBMP1812@AOL.COM).**

**North Brookfield Master Plan – Community Visioning  
Forum  
Saturday March 4, 2006  
9:00 – 12:00 AM  
North Brookfield Elementary School Cafeteria**

**Forum Agenda**

- 9:00 AM     Registration and Coffee
- 9:15 AM     Welcome and Introductions  
(Steve Cummings and Mary Walter, Master Plan Committee)
- 9:20 AM     An Overview of the Master Planning Process  
(Stephen Wallace, Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission)
- 9:30 AM     Program Outline and Goals for the Morning  
(Stephen Wallace, Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission)
- 9:40 AM     Group Discussions Regarding North Brookfield's Strengths,  
Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
- 11:00 AM    Presentation of Discussion Comments
- 11:30 AM    Prioritizing Citizen Concerns
- 11:45 AM    Morning Wrap-Up and Next Steps  
(Steve Cummings and Mary Walter, Master Plan Committee)

**North Brookfield Master Plan  
- Community Visioning Forum -  
March 4, 2006, 9:00AM  
North Brookfield Elementary School**

**Public Forum Comments**

All told, there were 35-45 participants throughout the course of the morning. The audience was broken up into three groups. Each group was instructed to develop a list of North Brookfield's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. At the end of the breakout sessions, the participants were reconvened together and a speaker from each group went through their comments. At the end, each participant was given four blue dots and instructed to place a dot on what they considered to be North Brookfield's greatest strength, weakness opportunity and threat. The results of this effort are listed below.

**Group 1**

Strengths:

Rural character

Open spaces

Small town

Center of Town – good layout/center of commerce

Mixed land use

Rich history

North Brookfield Cares (website)

Town Beach

Recreation Commission activities

Good safety

Friendliness

Good farm areas/special landscapes/views

Fresh air

Peaceful

Municipal services

Reservoir – clean drinking water

Town sewer and water

Good school system – small classes

Recycling program

Weaknesses:

School choice (choosing “out” of North Brookfield schools)  
Residential tax base versus commercial  
No youth recreation activities  
No winter activities (open gym, skating, etc.)  
Some roads are in bad condition  
Drainage  
Drug abuse  
Not enough parental involvement  
Zoning Bylaw – subdivision control  
Sewer system  
Apathy – resistance to change  
Lack of employment opportunities  
Problems between natives & transplants (communication gap)  
No public transportation  
No plan for defining the Town  
Loss of farmers/farms  
Municipal facilities

Opportunities:

Agricultural Commission  
The Town’s weaknesses  
Stay in front of change/Master Plan  
New businesses – keep in character with the Town  
Performing arts/arts/movie theater  
Safety complex – Town house  
Reuse of Aztec property  
Capital budgeting & priorities – Town Manager/Administrator  
Location  
Brookfield Orchards  
Communication (NB Cares, Town website)  
Education  
Business development (Gilbert Street, Main Street, East Brookfield Road)  
Revitalize downtown (businesses & services)  
Protection of farmland (preservation)  
Rail-trail  
Bell Hill – recreation area  
CSA

Threats:

Uncontrolled/unplanned growth  
Lack of communication  
Lack of accountability of Town boards/elected officials  
Lack of citizen interest  
Lack of sense of community (too much litter)  
Parental apathy  
Lack of community service by citizens  
Loss of open space  
Education – challenge students more  
Lack of ownership  
Lack of participation  
Loss of youth  
Negative attitude about the Town  
Loss of existing industry

## **Group 2**

### **Strengths:**

Sense of community  
Open space – farms, orchards  
Small population (people know each other – focus on community)  
Natural beauty  
Home  
Infrastructure planning and implementation  
“Small town” feel  
Municipal control of basic services  
Recreational opportunities (Town beach, orchard)  
Agricultural heritage  
Recycling program  
Library  
Local industry has potential  
Historic architecture (churches, library, town hall, homes)  
Location  
Public safety, highway, emergency services  
Safe environment  
Rural roads minimizes speed of traffic  
People of North Brookfield  
School system

Weaknesses:

School system (class sizes are small)  
Lack of recreation opportunities  
Language/enforceability of Zoning Bylaw  
Public apathy  
School image problem  
Lack of understanding of municipal financing  
Town Meeting process (lack of voter knowledge/understanding)  
Lack of public transportation  
Old Town Hall  
Crisis-to-crisis approach to capital needs  
Lack of centralized emergency services (police, fire, emergency in far-flung locations)  
Understanding of budgetary needs  
Lack of appreciation for historic image of Town (Town Center)  
Lack of downtown meeting places/park space/places to eat  
Downtown shopping, congregating  
Street lighting  
Lack of understanding of Town needs  
Lack of higher wage employment opportunities  
Lack of Town Planner  
Lack of strong zoning  
Lack of arts opportunities

Opportunities:

Waterbodies  
“Neighborhood” feel  
Infrastructure (water, sewer, schools)  
Aztec property – limits on use, planning needed  
Resident education regarding municipal services, business development, etc.  
    (“Town prospectus”)  
Agricultural Commission  
Recreation opportunities in center of Town and in outlying areas – walking, hiking, (year-round use), protecting opportunities to use the land  
Railway bed  
Parking development  
Downtown development  
Library

Open space (its management during development)  
Expanding influence of Historic Commission (a new town history)  
Upcoming Town bicentennial (2012)  
Better growth management  
Expansion of municipal sewer and water systems  
Regional solution opportunities (sharing staff with East Brookfield, etc.)  
Town website

Threats:

Excessive land development  
Lack of planning, vision  
State mandates without State funding  
Crisis management  
Lack of continuity in local government – no Town Administrator  
Lack of information  
Lack of grant writing  
Commercial development  
School choice – choosing “out” of North Brookfield schools  
Perceived image  
Beaver activity  
Public apathy  
Overworked Conservation Commission  
Lack of remuneration for volunteer boards/commissions  
(especially when State certification is required)  
Demands on public (municipal) officials  
Use of special town meetings for major financial decisions  
Lack of communication of important Town information  
Lack of coordination between/among Town departments  
Being a caboose and not an engine (reactive instead of proactive)

**Group 3**

Strengths:

Location  
Open space  
Family oriented  
Churches  
Education  
Quiet  
Infrastructure



Police, Fire and Emergency services  
Volunteers  
Town Meeting government  
Reasonable tax rate  
Historic buildings  
Agricultural  
Town Common  
Railroad right-of-way  
Cemeteries – recent and historic  
Neighborhoods  
Senior Center  
Meals on Wheels  
Quabaug Rubber  
Sportsman's Club  
Knights of Columbus  
Masons  
Rotary Club  
Lions Club  
Organized sports  
Educational plant  
Cultural Committee  
Valley View School  
Recycling of hazardous materials/landfill  
Water Department  
Wastewater treatment plant  
Fire training area  
Emergency management team  
Food pantry  
Town Beach (swimming lessons)  
Boat instruction  
Library  
Supermarket/pharmacy  
Brookfield Orchards

Weaknesses:

Location  
Roads  
Lack of public transportation  
Empty stores  
Limited tax base & services

Adverse school choice  
Lack of senior housing  
Infrastructure issues/problems (Town Hall, sewer, fire, police)  
Small school system  
Latent capital expenditures  
Lack of capital improvement plan  
Lack of coordinated Town government  
Lack of open space plan  
Lack of light industries  
Lack of business development plan  
Spot zoning versus planned zoning  
Resistance to change  
Lack of communication on Town government issues  
Lack of representation  
Location of Town offices  
Lack of youth employment  
Lack of centralized mail for Town offices  
Lack of medical care

Opportunities:

Leadership in emergency management  
Farmers market  
Special events (flea market, seasonal events)  
High-end homes  
Sidewalks  
Sharing Town Planner/Administrator  
Pursuing grant money  
Agricultural Commission  
Human capital inventory  
Aztec site  
Town Hall  
Better use of Main Street  
Open space  
Master Plan process  
Senior housing potential  
Light industry  
Cultural development  
Medical facility  
Movies  
Proactive zoning

Threats:

Encroaching on open space  
Poor school performance  
Loss of agricultural base  
Loss of Quabaug Rubber  
Lack of community involvement  
Lake Lashaway degrading  
Loss of volunteers for Town programs  
Loss of volunteers for Fire Department  
Overdevelopment  
Resistance to change  
Small tax base  
Vulnerable residential tax base  
School choice deficit  
Condition of infrastructure  
Limited water capacity  
Lack of diverse population  
Government bureaucracy  
Crime  
Pollution  
Lack of Master Plan

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Top Three Strengths

Rural character, natural beauty, open spaces (13 votes)  
Small town feel (6 votes)  
Public safety, emergency services (4 votes)

Top Three Weaknesses

Zoning Bylaw (6)  
Public apathy (5 votes)  
Latent capital expenditures (5 votes)

Top Three Opportunities

Revitalize downtown/better use of Main Street (7 votes)  
Aztec property (6 votes)  
Master Plan process (3 votes)

Capital budgeting/planning (3 votes)

Top Three Threats

Uncontrolled development/growth (6 votes)

Lack of coordination between municipal departments (5 votes)

Public apathy (3 votes)

Lack of planning/vision (3 votes)

Tax base (3 votes)

**North Brookfield Master Plan Update Forum**  
**Thursday May 18, 2006**  
**7:00 PM – 9:00 PM**  
**North Brookfield Junior Senior High School**  
**Kiva Room**

**Forum Agenda**

- 7:00 PM     Registration**
- 7:15 AM     Welcome and Introductions**  
**(Steve Cummings and Mary Walter, Master Plan Committee)**
- 7:20 PM     North Brookfield Community Survey and SWOT Exercise**  
**Data**  
**Presentation**  
**(Jim Metcalf, Master Plan Committee)**
- 8:30 PM     Public Comment - Questions and Discussion**
- 8:45 PM     Next Steps**  
**(Steve Cummings and Mary Walter, Master Plan Committee)**

## **North Brookfield Master Plan Committee has discovered ideas to preserve open spaces without cost to the town.**

- Before a chapter 61 farm property is offered for sale the town has first refusal to buy the property.
- Each time the selectmen are offered these properties they have to turn down the offer because the town does not have the funds to preserve desirable open space properties.
- Once the town refuses the chapter 61 property can be sold to the highest bidder who after repayment of the chapter 61 tax reduction can develop the land to meet their needs.
- There are new and creative ways to provide towns, without the ready cash, the opportunity of obtaining historic or desirable properties for preservation as open space lands for future town use.
- These methods are also welcomed by current owners of chapter 61 properties who need to resolve the conflict of selling their land while keeping it as the beautiful open space which they have enjoyed.

We have invited Attorney Robert Levite of the UMass Natural Resources and Conservation Program and Ken Crater of the Grafton Land Trust to answer everyone's questions regarding how the town and landowners may preserve our beautiful open spaces. This invitation has been extended to neighboring towns and seating is limited.

Date: Wednesday August 23, 2006 7:00 PM

Location: North Brookfield High School Kiva Room

Do not miss this great opportunity to help determine our future.

# **Town of North Brookfield**

## **Public Forum: How to Make Open Space Preservation Pay for Itself**

**August 23, 2006**

**7:00PM to 9:00PM**

**Kiva Room – North Brookfield High School  
School Drive (off of Oakham Road/Route 148)**

### **Forum Agenda**

- |         |  |
|---------|--|
| 7:00 PM | Sign In  |
| 7:10 PM | Welcome and introductions<br>Mary Walter, Chairperson – North Brookfield Master Plan Committee   |
| 7:15 PM | Program outline for the evening<br>Stephen Wallace, Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission   |
| 7:20 PM | Using the Town's Right of First Refusal on Chapter Properties<br>Robert Levite, UMass Extension Coordinator, Natural Resources & Environmental Education |
| 7:45 PM | Using "Limited Development" to pay for Open Space Preservation<br>Ken Crater, Grafton Land Trust   |
| 8:15PM  | Question and Answer Session  |
| 8:45PM  | Adjournment  |



**North Brookfield**  
200<sup>th</sup> Birthday 2012

**MASTER PLAN MEETING**  
**on**  
**OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION**

**Wednesday May 2, 2007**

**North Brookfield High School**  
**Kiva Room 7-9 pm**



# **North Brookfield Open Space Plan Community Input Forum May 2, 2007, 7:00 PM North Brookfield Junior/Senior High School**

This forum brought about 15 participants together to discuss the open space goals and priorities of North Brookfield. The session began with a review of the 1995 Goals and Objectives and a discussion about what changes should be made. This was followed by a discussion of what recreation facilities and programs residents desired. Finally the group identified areas in North Brookfield that should be priorities for conservation efforts.

## Goals and Objectives:

### Goal 1: Maintain North Brookfield's Rural Character

- There was a general feeling that the Town should make every effort to aid local farmers in continuing to operate a thriving and profitable business.
- This was further discussed in the context that farms and farming enhance the rural character that is so important to residents of North Brookfield.
- Some strategies to aid in the furtherance of this goal and the expressed objectives are
  - Partnering with a regional land trust
  - Passing the Community Preservation Act
  - Forming a local Ag Commission

### Goal 2: Preserve and Enhance North Brookfield's Water Resources

- The discussion focused around the new Drinking Water Protection Bylaw that will be brought before Spring Town Meeting and whether this covered all of the water resources in Town.
- It was decided that this bylaw only covered drinking water and it was important that all the water resources in Town be protected. The Goal will stay as it reads.
- There was some discussion about taking advantage of the resources that North Brookfield has, specifically selling water to neighboring communities as a revenue stream to possibly fund the purchase of future open space.
- Also, there was interest in getting some testing done of the waterways in Town. There was mention of contacting local Colleges and Universities or possibly seeing if the Audubon Stream Team © would be available to come and do some testing.

### Goal 3: Maintain and Protect North Brookfield's Land Resources Objectives:

- It was decided that this goal was better served as an objective of Goal 1.
- The new Goal 3 was decided to be an education component geared toward enhancing the knowledge about open space of all those in North Brookfield.
- Those present felt that creating a map and packet about the open space, historically significant land marks and other pertinent information would be of great benefit to the Town and citizens.

- The creation of website to allow those locally and across the world to access open space information about the Town was discussed. This would appeal to younger adults and children but would also be a first step to attracting out-of-towners to visit North Brookfield.
- It was also mentioned that providing a variety of educational materials for teacher to incorporate into the existing curriculum might act as a way to interest children in what is going on locally and bring an appreciation of open space.
- The interesting local fauna was also discussed. Those at the forum felt it would behoove North Brookfield to explore a way to maximize the benefit of this to the Town. There was a discussion of self-guided bird watching hikes and form of ecotourism.

Goal 4 was to be left untouched.

#### Recreational Wants:

The following is a list of those facilities and programs that were expressed a needed or wanted in the Town.

- Boat Launch @ Brooks Pond Dam
- Rail Trail into East Brookfield
- Indoor Pool
- Summer Camps (basketball, theater etc.) It was mentioned that perhaps a joint effort with the other Brookfields may be beneficial for all the towns
- Lights at the Basketball Court on the Town Common
- Paintball Facility
- Town wide Competition (i.e. bake off, best beard etc.)
- North Brookfield Day, this was ended due to problems including over consumption of alcohol. Perhaps this would be a good opportunity to bring Town wide competition into the fold and create a family friendly environment.

#### Conservation Priorities:

Below are the areas identified by the forum participants as places they would like to see as conservation priorities.

- Brookfield Orchards
- Lake Lashaway
- Brooks Pond
- 5 Mile River and area around the banks
- Bennet's Hill
- Small Pox Cave
- The area between Routes 67 and 148 adjacent to Brookfield and the Audubon Land
- Slab City Area
- Area North of Mud Pond
- The unnamed Tax Title Property (1,000 ft of frontage approx. 8 acres).

# Master Plan Public Forum: Smart Growth Options for North Brookfield

August 23, 2007

7:00PM to 9:00PM

Kiva Room – North Brookfield High School  
School Drive (off of Oakham Road/Route 148)

The North Brookfield Master Plan Committee has been working on the Town's first ever Master Plan for almost two years now. We've completed our research and have identified three major issues to address for North Brookfield's future:

- Preserving existing farmlands before they are turned into house lots.
- Ensuring that new housing developments permanently preserve open space.
- Revitalizing North Brookfield's town center area.

Please join us for this public forum to learn what options we have for addressing these issues, and learn from other communities that have successfully dealt with the same issues.

Our speakers for the evening will include:

- Ronald Hall, Coordinator of the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program for the MA Department of Agricultural Resources. Mr. Hall will present a variety of **Farmland Preservation Techniques** that may be suitable for North Brookfield.
- Cassandra Acly, Director of the Southbridge Economic Development and Planning Department will discuss **Downtown Revitalization Techniques** that may be applicable to North Brookfield's town center. Southbridge has spent the last decade aggressively pursuing a downtown revitalization plan and tonight Ms. Acly will share with us how they've done it.
- Laurie Connors, Planning Director for Millbury, MA will discuss the concept of **Open Space Preservation Subdivision Design**. This technique helps to ensure that new housing developments build in open space preservation as part of their plans. The bylaw that Ms. Connors put together for Millbury is one of the best examples of Open Space Subdivision Designs in the State.

Please attend this public forum and learn more about these exciting Smart Growth ideas and what they could mean for North Brookfield's future.

# **Master Plan Public Forum: Smart Growth Options for North Brookfield**

**August 23, 2007**

**7:00PM to 9:00PM**

**Kiva Room – North Brookfield High School  
School Drive (off of Oakham Road/Route 148)**

## **Forum Agenda**

- |         |  |
|---------|--|
| 7:00 PM | Sign In  |
| 7:05 PM | Welcome and introductions<br>Mary Walter, Chairperson – North Brookfield Master Plan Committee   |
| 7:10 PM | Master Plan progress report and program outline for the evening<br>Stephen Wallace, Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission                         |
| 7:15 PM | Farmland Preservation Techniques<br>Ronald Hall, Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program Coordinator, Mass<br>Department of Agricultural Resources |
| 7:50 PM | Downtown Revitalization Techniques<br>Cassandra Acly, Economic Development and Planning Department, Southbridge,<br>Massachusetts                              |
| 8:30PM  | Open Space Preservation Subdivision Design<br>Laurie Connors, Planning Director for Millbury, Massachusetts  |
| 9:15PM  | Adjournment  |



## **Important Meeting on North Brookfield's Future!**

The North Brookfield Master Plan Committee invites all North Brookfield residents to attend the fourth and *final* public forum for the Master Plan:

### **Master Plan Public Forum**

**October 1, 2007**

**7:00 PM to 9:00 PM**

**at the North Brookfield Elementary School (cafeteria)**

The Master Plan Committee has just completed a full draft of North Brookfield's first ever Master Plan. As the foundation for the Town's planning and zoning efforts, the Master Plan will be instrumental in setting forth a vision for North Brookfield's future. At this forum, the Master Plan Committee will present the Plan's most significant findings and go over the recommendations with the public. The Master Plan's recommendations cover the following topics:

- Town Government
- Open Space & Recreation
- Housing
- Economic Development
- Transportation
- Land Use & Zoning

This interactive forum will give North Brookfield residents an opportunity to review the Plan's major findings and recommendations, ask questions, and share their concerns with the Master Plan Committee before the Plan is brought before the voters at the fall Town Meeting. All residents with an interest in shaping North Brookfield's future are invited to attend and encouraged to participate. Hope to see **YOU** there!

# **Town of North Brookfield Master Plan Public Forum**

**October 1, 2007  
7:00PM to 9:00PM  
North Brookfield Elementary School (cafeteria)**

## **Forum Agenda**

- |        |  |
|--------|--|
| 7:00PM | Sign In  |
| 7:10PM | Welcome and Introductions<br>(Mary Walter, Chairman of the Master Plan Committee)                                      |
| 7:15PM | Program Outline and Goals for the Evening<br>(Stephen Wallace, Central Mass Regional Planning Commission)              |
| 7:20PM | Presentation of Master Plan's key findings, goals, objectives and recommendations.<br>(the full Master Plan Committee) |
| 9:00PM | Evening Wrap-Up and Next Steps<br>(Mary Walter, Chairman of the Master Plan Committee)                                 |

**North Brookfield Master Plan**  
**- Presentation of Findings, Goals & Recommendations -**  
**October 1, 2007, 7:00 PM - 9:00PM**  
**North Brookfield Elementary School**

**Public Forum Comments**

All told, there were 35-45 participants in attendance. Master Plan Committee members took turns going through the major findings, goals and recommendations for each chapter. Outlined below are the public's comments.

**Town Government** (Committee Presenter: Metcalf)

- Provide incentives for writing grants.
- What is holding up the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)?

**Economic Development** (Committee Presenter: Metcalf)

- What is happening with the Optivac property?
- Why would new businesses move to North Brookfield?
- There needs to be public transportation to bring workers into town and residents to where they work.
- Please remember that people move here for the rural atmosphere and may not want more economic development.

**Natural Features, Open Space & Recreation** (Committee Presenter: Walter)

- Use the Town-owned railroad bed as a Rail Trail.
- Will new open space be public or privately owned?
- Make North Brookfield bicycle friendly.
- Would you entertain rezoning proposals for other areas than the ones investigated as part of the master planning process?

**Housing** (Committee Presenter: Zegarra)

- Remember that North Brookfield has many elderly homeowners on fixed incomes.
- We need strategies for helping people stay in their homes.

**Transportation** (Committee Presenter: Avery)

- Lack of public transportation is an important concern.

**Land Use & Zoning** (Committee Presenter: Cummings)

- For new businesses and industries, make sure the area has the demographics to support them.