

# **NORTH BROOKFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS COMMUNITY MASTER PLAN**

## **- GOALS & OBJECTIVES -**

The North Brookfield Master Plan Committee began its work in the fall of 2005 and finished this Master Plan document in time for the November 2007 Town Meeting. Completing the Town's first ever Community Master Plan in a mere two years is a testament to the hard work and dedication of the Master Plan Committee, both its existing and former members. Since 2005, the Town has annually appropriated funds for the Plan's completion and the Master Plan Committee was able to supplement the project funding by successfully obtaining a Smart Growth Technical Assistance Grant from the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) to complete several chapters. The Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) was hired to provide technical assistance throughout the process.

The Committee held monthly meetings all along the way (sometimes meeting two or three times in a single month) and sponsored several public forums to solicit public input into the process. Public forums were held on the following dates:

- March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2006 (Topic: Community Goals Visioning Forum).
- August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2006 (Topic: Open Space Preservation Techniques).
- August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2007 (Topic: Smart Growth Techniques for North Brookfield's Future).
- October 1<sup>st</sup> 2007 (Topic: Presentation of the Master Plan's Findings & Recommendations).

In addition to the public forums noted above, the Master Plan Committee also employed a townwide citizen survey, asking each North Brookfield household a series of questions covering such topics as: housing, economic development, town government, open space, recreation, natural resources, zoning, land use and transportation. The Master Plan Committee also reached out to other local boards, committees, commissions and departments along the way, with each entity providing valuable input. In the end, the Master Plan Committee is proud to set forth the following goals and objectives aimed at plotting a smart and prudent direction for North Brookfield's future development.

### **Town Government – Goal**

North Brookfield's town government must be professionally managed, emphasize customer service, provide a coordinated delivery of municipal services, be fiscally responsible, accessible to all citizens, foster citizen participation, and be proactive instead of reactive.

### **Town Government - Objectives**

- The Town must commit itself to following through on the recommendations contained here in and strive to maintain the Master Plan as a living document.

- Municipal departments must develop annual work plans based on the needs identified in the Master Plan and establish measurable goals and objectives.
- The Town must have a long-range Capital Improvement Plan for its municipal facilities and capital equipment.
- Municipal departments must all use a single standard format for preparing their annual operating budgets, with the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee serving to coordinate and prioritize departmental budget requests within the constraints of Proposition 2 ½.
- The Town must investigate its options for professional management, whether it is through the form of a Town Administrator, Town Services Coordinator or a Town Manager.
- Increase inter-department communication and coordination by holding monthly staff meetings under the leadership of the Board of Selectmen.
- Improve public safety by enhancing the Town's inspection and enforcement capacities.
- Increase the Town's grant writing capacity and its ability to qualify for state and federal funding opportunities.
- Document community resources for the benefit of future municipal officials.

### **Open Space & Recreation: Goals**

- Maintain North Brookfield's Rural Character.
- Preserve and Enhance North Brookfield's Water Resources.
- Enhance the Community's Knowledge About Open Space in North Brookfield.
- Provide North Brookfield with Varied and Well Maintained Recreational Opportunities and Facilities.

### **Open Space & Recreation: Objectives**

- Minimize development impacts by implementing appropriate zoning controls and strategies.
- Preserve the scenic resources for future generations by facilitating the placement of conservation easements and purchasing land outright.

- Ensure the future prosperity of local farms.
- Encourage appropriate development siting, design and landscaping to further enhance the existing character of North Brookfield.
- Protect the municipal water supply.
- Identify additional/alternate sources for municipal water supply.
- Protect and improve the quality of surface waters.
- Protect important wetland areas.
- Protect ground water resources.
- Create an informational packet, including a map, about North Brookfield's open spaces, to introduce new residents and visitors to the Town's resources.
- Compile a collection of educational materials to be made available to teachers, at various levels, that can be incorporated into a variety of different curriculums (i.e. science, history etc.).
- Create a website or a page on the Town website dedicated to open space in North Brookfield.
- Explore opportunities for ecotourism in North Brookfield.
- Maintain existing facilities, with improvements where necessary.
- Construct new Facilities as needed.
- Expand opportunities for passive outdoor recreation (hiking, fishing, canoeing, etc.).
- Existing or planned facilities and opportunities should accommodate all age groups and user groups within the community.

### **Housing – Goal**

Provide housing opportunities for a diversity of income levels while ensuring that new residential development is created in a controlled and well-planned manner that is consistent with the Town's ability to provide municipal services and the preservation of North Brookfield's rural small-town character.

### **Housing - Objectives**

- Maintain the 66,000 square-foot lot size requirement for the R-66 zoning districts that cover the rural portions of North Brookfield.
- Coordinate new housing development with North Brookfield's municipal service providers.
- Provide a variety of housing options that will allow residents to remain in Town throughout all stages of life and allow children of residents to establish families in North Brookfield.
- Require developers to incorporate open space preservation into new housing projects.
- Implement a stronger review process for new residential development through increased training for land use boards and increased application fees to cover legitimate administrative costs and professional review assistance.
- Ensure the enforcement of the Town's housing-related bylaws and regulations.
- Adopt Zoning Bylaw provisions that will ensure that future housing development helps the Town achieve and maintain compliance with the State's 10% affordable housing stock requirement.

### **Economic Development – Goal**

Establish an economic development growth plan for North Brookfield based businesses, agriculture and home based business that will balance resident's preferences for selective commercial/business growth with the need to expand the tax base beyond a 92% dependence on residential property taxes.

### **Economic Development - Objectives**

- Develop plans and methods to grow North Brookfield's business and commercial sectors with an ultimate aim of increasing the economic sector's contribution to the Town's tax base by 5% over the course of the next decade.
- Create an Economic Development Commission that will serve as an advocate for economic development in North Brookfield. The charge for this entity will be to prepare, coordinate and implement an overall comprehensive economic development program on behalf of the Town, including assisting existing businesses and encouraging new businesses.

- Review the provisions of the Zoning Bylaw that regulate economic development and revise as necessary, including the adoption of site plan design standards that will ensure that new economic development is in keeping with North Brookfield's small town New England character.
- Expand those commercial and industrial zoning district having potential for expansion (adjacent vacant land free of environmental constraints, good highway access, and access to the water and sewer infrastructure).
- Identify an area of Town that is suitable for new business development according to the desires expressed by citizens in the Master Plan citizen survey.
- Plan for new economic development in a comprehensive manner that discourages the use of spot zoning for individual businesses.

### **Transportation - Goal**

Provide an efficient, safe and well-maintained circulation that adequately provides for North Brookfield's transportation needs and is in keeping with the Town's rural character.

### **Transportation – Objectives**

- Create a safe and pedestrian-friendly town center that allows for centralized parking and where foot traffic is encouraged.
- Promote regional mass transit options whenever possible.
- Establish a multi-year, prioritized roadway improvement plan with cost estimates and integrate each year's plan into the Town's annual Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).
- Establish minimum safety standards for private dirt roads and ensure that new development taking place along these roads contribute their fair share of the cost necessary to bring these roads up to the minimum safety standards.
- Initiate a sign installation/replacement program for the various safety-related signs and roadway name signs.
- Maintain the scenic quality of North Brookfield's rural roadways.

### **Land Use – Goal**

Utilize Smart Growth planning and zoning techniques to preserve the quality of life for North Brookfield residents by strengthening the existing land use pattern of a densely settled mixed-use town center and rural outlying countryside.

### **Land Use – Objectives**

- Enact zoning tools that will create a vibrant and lively town center containing a mixture of residences, businesses, service providers, municipal government offices and institutional uses.
- Ensure that new growth does not outstrip the Town's ability to provide quality municipal services to its residents.
- Recognize farming as an integral part of North Brookfield's economy and rural character, and work towards preserving the long-term viability of the Town's agricultural resources.
- Use the Town's infrastructure, particularly municipal sewer and water, to direct growth to the most suitable locations and discourage infrastructure expansions into rural North Brookfield.
- Enact zoning techniques that will require the preservation of open space as part of new development activity in rural North Brookfield.
- Expand the North Brookfield's industrial tax base by adding new industrial development options to the Zoning Bylaw.
- Expand the North Brookfield's commercial tax base by identifying and rezoning new areas of Town for commercial development.