

TOWN OF NORTH BROOKFIELD MASTER PLAN

AN INTRODUCTION

As with every entity, from the largest governmental and private organizations, to the individual family unit, the need to plan for the effective use of available resources is paramount. Without planning and structure, the chances of optimizing the best and highest value of human, natural and capital resources is diminished. In the case of community planning, small towns such as North Brookfield need a plan for managing its future growth. It is a fact of life that communities grow, whether through an increase in population, housing, and/or economic development activity. Managing growth has always been a considerable challenge for local governments. Towards this end, North Brookfield town planners have recognized the need for a community Master Plan in order to help local officials act in concert on a common agenda for the long-range good of the Town.

Chapter 41, Section 81-D of Massachusetts General law states that a community Master Plan shall be "...a basis for decision making regarding the long-term physical development of the municipality." It further states that such a plan "...identifies the goals and policies of the municipality for its future growth and development." In a practical sense, community Master Plans have always been intended to serve as a land use and future development policy guide for local decision makers. Typically, a community Master Plan does five things:

- ◆ Articulates the goals and objectives of the community (i.e., what the community wants for its future, what type of community it wants to be);
- ◆ Outlines the existing resources and conditions of a community (this is usually done through a review of existing data sources, collection of new data, and updates of inventory information);
- ◆ Evaluates and assesses the existing resources and conditions with an eye towards identifying shortfalls and deficiencies;
- ◆ Projects the current trends and conditions into the future in an effort to identify shortcomings that can be corrected through advanced planning, as well as the future needs of the community;
- ◆ Sets forth a strategy for addressing the needs of the community and helping the community become what it wants to be.

Although a community Master Plan has the latitude to deal with a variety of issues and concerns, there are several subjects that such a plan must address by law. Chapter 41, Section 81-D states that community Master Plans must contain the following elements: a goals and policies statement; a land use plan; chapters that deal with economic development, traffic circulation, natural resources, open space and recreation, community services and facilities; and an implementation plan.

This community Master Plan for the Town of North Brookfield sets forth the community's goals and provides the background data and analysis necessary for developing strategies to employ when guiding North Brookfield as it continues to grow and develop over the coming decades.



The Master Planning Process in North Brookfield: The Master Plan was prepared by the North Brookfield Master Plan Committee, which was appointed by the Board of Selectmen with input from the Planning Board. The Committee reported to the Planning Board throughout the process. The Master Plan Committee was composed entirely of North Brookfield residents, some with experience on local boards, and some with no previous municipal experience. The Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC)

provided technical assistance throughout the entirety of this project. The Master Plan Committee met on a monthly basis (often twice a month) and all meetings were open to the public. Several joint meetings were held with some of North Brookfield's municipal boards and committees including the Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, Water and Sewer Department Superintendents, and other municipal department heads. Interested citizens also stopped by on a regular basis to provide their input.

During the initial stages of the Master Plan's preparation, interviews were conducted with all key municipal committees, boards, commissions and personnel. Everyone contacted was very helpful in terms of assisting with the update of inventory information, identifying upcoming needs, and providing candid assessments of the challenges they face. The Master Plan Committee reviewed this input in detail and is very grateful for the assistance rendered.

To further increase the public's involvement in the Master Plan update process, the Committee prepared a citizen survey to solicit the opinions and desires of the people and businesses residing in North Brookfield. The survey was sent to every household and business in Town in early 2006 and received a very strong response rate of 34.8% (such surveys usually garner response rates anywhere from 15 to 25%). All told, the North Brookfield Master Plan Committee held close to fifty evening meetings (all open to the public) and four well-attended public forums. All Master Plan Committee meeting agendas and minutes are available for public review at the Planning Board's Office.