

Your Town – Your Future – Your Voice!



MASTER PLAN PUBLIC FORUM **February 9, 2012 at 7:00 PM in the Elementary School Cafeteria** (Snow Date: February 16, 2012)

The Town has begun a process to update its Community Master Plan, which was last revised in 2000. Westminster's new Master Plan will provide updated recommendations for Land Use, Zoning, Housing, Open Space and Recreation, Natural Resources, Municipal Services, Economic Development, and Transportation. The Master Plan will be used as the Town's guiding document for the next ten years.

Come out and talk with your elected officials, friends and neighbors and help us craft a vision of what our town should look like in the future. Help us answer the following questions:

- What are Westminster's **STRENGTHS**?
- What are Westminster's **WEAKNESSES**?
- What **OPPORTUNITIES** should Westminster pursue?
- What **THREATS** does Westminster face?

All this and more will be discussed at the February 9th Public Forum. **Please join us!**

Thank you – the Westminster Master Plan Committee.

(Light refreshments will be served)

**Westminster Master Plan
- Public Forum -
February 9, 2012, 7:00 PM
Westminster Elementary School**

All told, there were approximately 40 participants throughout the course of evening. The audience was broken up into four groups. Each group was instructed to develop a list of the Town'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 red dots and instructed to place a dot on what they considered to be Westminster's greatest Strength, Weakness Opportunity and Threat. The results of this effort are listed below.

Group 1

Strengths:

The people
Close to Route 2
Country atmosphere
Natural beauty
School system
No urban problems
Low crime/safe town
Wachusett Mountain ski area
Agricultural Commission
Historical heritage
Protected rural open space
Recreation

Opportunities:

Good support for artistic community
Available industrially-zoned land
Support for agriculture and farmer's market
Support for tourism
Promote renewable energy
Transportation infrastructure
Expand senior housing
Senior center
Biking/hiking trails

Weaknesses:

Impact of Route 2/140 construction
Limited economic anchors
Not business friendly
Not change friendly
High taxes
Traffic
Limited municipal water & sewer
Fitchburg owns municipal water/sewer
No community gathering place
Limited downtown retail

Threats:

Eventual closing of landfill
Overdevelopment
Taxes
Inadequate tax base
increased auto traffic
Lack of public transportation
Layover station
Regionalization of public safety services

Group 2

Strengths:

Quaintness – small town
Easy access to Route 2
Good schools
Well-funded services
Good recreation programs (kids)
Close to Wachusett Mountain

Weaknesses:

Road conditions
Street signs/route markings
Lack of park & recreation facilities
for young children
Lack of sidewalks
Harsh winter weather

Great farmer's market
Ponds in the summertime
Library
Low crime rate
Access to larger cities for commerce, health, culture
Good restaurants
Nearby schools & colleges
Lots of churches
Good new buildings & facilities
Neighbor to neighbor community
Very scenic
Good reputation
Townies remain in Town
Clean water
Free trash removal/drop-off

Opportunities:

Senior center & housing at 69 West Main Street
Seasonal events to draw visitors to Town
Tourist attractions and the opportunity
to promote ourselves
Old Town Hall
Preservation of stone walls
Bed & breakfast establishments

Downtown (needs a facelift)
Downtown is not pedestrian friendly
Lack of planning in downtown
Lack of elderly housing
High taxes
Red-tape hinders business development
Having to drive everywhere
Lack of public transportation
Increased water/sewer rates
Lack of historic district
Young people can't afford to live here

Threats:

Decline of schools
Big residential development
Rising taxes
State mandates
Creeping developments (all kinds)
Trade-offs (short term gains vs.
long-term impacts)
Big box/chain stores & restaurants
Short sightedness/lack of planning
Leino Park Bridge deteriorating
Layover station
Destruction of stone walls
Deteriorating infrastructure (roads)

Group 3

Strengths:

Small town character
Good location
Mount Wachusett (skiing, hiking, bird watching, etc.)
Recreational hiking trails
(Crocker Pond Mid-State Trail)
Decent downtown and area dining opportunities
Large amount of open spaces
Good farmer's market
Still operating farms (right to farm bylaw)
Good schools
Long-term residents
Good town services (police, fire, etc.)
Community involvement
Growth management has been pretty good so far

Weakness:

Layover station
No freight rail-spur for layover station
Dependence on other communities
No senior and/or community center
Lack of housing
Vacant buildings/foreclosures
(public and private)
Lack of architectural review - input
Limited design standards for Town Center
Limited public transportation
Economic development not encouraged
Traffic - cars

Opportunities:

Renewable energy
Interesting heritage
Open more restaurants
Make Main Street more attractive
Make Main Street “walker friendly”
Encourage business and foot traffic on Main Street
More Town events
Commercial land is available
Industrial land is available
Do more with Crocker Pond
Chance to do planning now (be proactive)
Diverse types of land
Develop around the train station
Foreclose on vacant homes for affordable housing

Group 4

Strengths:

Deep roots/community
Route 2/140 strategic location
Public services
Natural resources (preservation & recreation)
Support for arts & crafts
Support for agriculture (farmer’s market/coop)
Proper zoning for business development
Unique local businesses
New England-style downtown
43D Priority Development sites

Opportunities:

Attracting jobs
Industrial areas
Agricultural tourism
Recreation tourism
We have time to plan
Wind resources
Strong education-base for businesses

Threats:

Layover station
Landfill closing
Bad economy
Negativity
Mall development
State funding uncertainty
State imposed (unfunded) mandates
Future energy costs
40B housing developments
Infrastructure (water & sewer)
Loss of open space

Weaknesses:

Esthetics of downtown
Lack of downtown business
No historical district
Lack of community center
Lack of senior center
Limited municipal water & sewer
Few living-wage jobs
High taxes
Traffic
Located between cities
Anti-business/development reputation
Limited options for starter housing

Threats:

Layover station
No wind power bylaw
Improper development of agricultural lands
Regional competition to local agriculture
Managing rising costs (unfunded mandates)
Impatience/short-term planning
Landfill closing

Top Three Strengths

Country atmosphere/small town/very scenic (13 votes)

Strategic location (7 votes)

Natural resources (3 votes)

Top Three Weaknesses

Downtown needs improved esthetics (9 votes)

High taxes (7 votes)

Anti-business/too much red tape (4 votes)

Top Three Opportunities

Available industrial/commercial land (8 votes)

Tourist attractions and the opportunity to promote ourselves (6 votes)

The senior center (4 votes)

Encourage business and foot traffic on Main Street (4 votes)

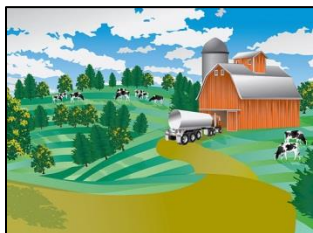
Top Three Threats

Inadequate Tax Base (7 votes)

Impatience/short-term planning (4 votes)

Layover station (4 votes)

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT!

January 23, 2013 at 7:00 PM in the Elementary School Cafeteria

(snow date will be January 30, 2013, same time, same place)

The Town is in the midst of updating its Community Master Plan, which was last revised in 2000. We are now starting work on the Economic Development chapter and we need your input!

Please come to this summit and hear from your local officials, local business owners, and a variety of State and regional economic development agencies as we discuss the future of economic development in Westminster.

Help us answer the following questions:

- What is the status of economic development today in Westminster?
- What areas of Town are available for economic development?
- What types of businesses and industries should we try to bring to Westminster?
- What types of assistance are available to Westminster's existing businesses?
- Who are our State and regional economic development partners, what do they do and how can they help Westminster?

All this and more will be discussed at the November 7th Economic Development Summit.

Please join us!

Thank you –

The Westminster Master Plan Committee & the Westminster Economic Development Committee

(Light refreshments will be served)

Your Town – Your Future – Your Voice!



Public Forum on Open Space & Recreation May 7, 2013 at 7:00 PM at the Forbush Memorial Library (Eloranta Room)

The Town is updating its Open Space & Recreation Plan and we need **your** input!

Please come to this public forum and....

- Learn what the Town has for recreation facilities.
- Learn what the Town has for open space land holdings.
- Learn about the various hiking trails in Town.
- Help the Town sets its goals for open space and recreation.
- Give us your input on what the Town needs for recreation facilities and what areas should be preserved for future generations.

All this and more will be discussed at the May 7th public forum. To review the goals of the Town's 2007 Open Space & Recreation Plan, please go to the Town's website (www.westminster-ma.gov), then go to the Open Space Committee page and look for the link entitled "Goals of the 2007 Open Space & Recreation Plan".

Please join us!

Thank you – The Westminster Open Space Committee and Master Plan Committee

(Light refreshments will be served)

Your Town – Your Future – Your Voice!



Public Forum on the Town's Updated Open Space & Recreation Plan March 4, 2014 at 7:00 PM at the Forbush Memorial Library (Eloranta Room)

The Town has finished updating its Open Space & Recreation Plan and we want to share the results with you! Please come to this public forum and....

- Learn what the Town has for recreation facilities.
- Learn what the Town has for open space land holdings.
- Learn about the various hiking trails in Town.
- Learn about the Town's new goals and plan of action for open space and recreation.

All this and more will be discussed at the March 4th public forum.

To review a full draft of the Town's 2014 Open Space & Recreation Plan, please go to the Town's website (www.westminster-ma.gov), then go to the Open Space Committee page and look for the link entitled "Draft 2014 Open Space & Recreation Plan".

Please join us!

Thank you – The Westminster Open Space Committee and Master Plan Committee

(Light refreshments will be served)

Westminster Master Plan: Your Town – Your Future – Your Voice!



TOWN CENTER DESIGN WORKSHOP

April 12, 2014 at 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM
in the Forbush Memorial Library

(snow date will be April 19 30, 2014, same time, same place)

Join the Westminster Master Plan Committee as it hosts a workshop on what our Town Center could look like in the future. We will begin with a presentation, conduct a walking tour of the Town Center along Main Street, then reconvene at the Library and conclude with a discussion about what **YOU** want our Town Center to look like in the future. The topics to cover include:

- cross-walks,
- sidewalks,
- pedestrian mobility,
- bike lanes,
- curb-cuts (driveways),
- on-street versus off-street parking,
- street lighting,
- landscaping and street trees,
- placing utilities underground,
- building facades,
- signage, and
- where buildings and parking should be located

All this and more will be discussed at the April 12th Workshop. Assisting with the Workshop will be a team of graduate students from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst Center for Economic Development.

Please join us!

Thank you –

The Westminster Master Plan Committee

(Light refreshments will be served)