

groton master plan



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1 introduction

Purposes and scope

The Groton Master Plan is a plan to guide Groton's future by balancing economic opportunity and social equity with protecting the natural resources on which the town and its region depend. Designed to comply with G.L. c. 41, § 81D, this plan establishes goals for eight core elements of community development and calls for a coordinated approach to addressing Groton's present and future needs. The elements include:

- **Natural Resources, Water, and Energy:** an assessment of ecological and water resource systems that influence the health and well-being of Groton and its neighbors, a review of local energy conservation measures, an analysis of policy, regulatory, and programmatic approaches available to Groton; and recommendations for future action, tailored to the community's goals and capacity.
- **Cultural and Historic Resources:** an overview of local historic resources, including areas, buildings, structures, objects, and landscapes; an assessment of local preservation capacity and policies; an analysis of needs; and recommendations for stewardship of the historic resources that make an irreplaceable contribution to the quality of Groton's built environment.
- **Open Space and Recreation:** an inventory of Groton's open space and recreation lands; a review of the town's past and present measures to protect critical open spaces and provide recreation amenities for residents; an analysis of local capacity and needs; and recommendations to address additional land protection, open space land management, and recreation facilities and programs.
- **Transportation:** an inventory of Groton's existing transportation infrastructure; a review of the condition and adequacy of local transportation components to support safe, efficient mobility for pedestrian, bicycle, and automobile traffic; an analysis of needs; and recommendations to enhance mobility and safety as the town continues to grow.
- **Land Use:** an analysis of growth trends and land use change in Groton; a statistical compilation of land uses by type, including the town's remaining vacant land; an estimate of future residential and commercial growth potential under existing zoning; a detailed review of the Groton Zoning Bylaw and the relationship between existing regulations and sustainability; and recommendations to align Groton's land use regulations with more sustainable development patterns.
- **Housing and Residential Development:** an inventory of housing in Groton, including housing types, tenure, and costs; a demographic profile of the town and a look at the relationship between Groton's population and housing characteristics; an analysis of the town's residential development patterns and their relationship to sustainability; and recommendations to provide for housing diversity and affordability.
- **Economic Development:** a detailed economic profile of the town, considering its labor force characteristics, its employment base, the types of businesses operating in Groton today, and the role of agriculture and agricultural businesses in the local economy; a review of the zoning requirements that encourage or constrain commercial and industrial development; an analysis of local capacity, needs, potential opportunities, incentives, and barriers to economic growth; and recommendations to build a vital local economy.
- **Community Facilities:** an inventory of Groton's municipal and school facilities, focusing on buildings, public grounds, and non-transportation in-



frastructure; a review of the size and organization of Groton's local government and inter-local or regional affiliations; an assessment of existing and near-term needs; and recommendations to address facility and service demands as the town grows and its population continues to change.

Groton's master plan project is a two-phase endeavor. Under the Planning Board's direction, the Phase II process will extend the recommendations of Phase I to a detailed implementation plan that identifies priorities, roles, responsibilities, "guidance" timelines, and interim measures (where applicable) for each major action.

Sustainability and the master plan

Sustainability is the overarching focus of Groton's Master Plan and a common thread in all of the plan's elements. To facilitate a wide-ranging discussion of sustainability, the Groton Planning Board adopted the well-known Brundtland Commission's definition of sustainable development, originally published in *Our Common Future* (1987): "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Sustainability calls for a comprehensive and integrative approach to community planning. Accordingly, each Groton Master Plan element includes a "sustainability policies" review that explores the connection between that element's scope and purposes and the principles of sustainable development.

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citizen participation

Groton has a long history of participatory planning. Its people have a strong sense of efficacy, and its government has been designed to provide many points of access to public policy decisions. Keeping with this tradition, the Planning Board sought to include as many residents as possible throughout the development of this Master Plan. The following summarizes the citizen participation structure instituted and overseen by the Planning Board.

Master plan advisory groups

The Planning Board created eight advisory groups that provided an important support system for this Master Plan. Through a broadly conducted outreach process, the Planning Board invited residents to request appointment to the advisory groups based on interest areas. One Advisory Group was created for each Master Plan element, and each group consisted of four to six members. To ensure good communication and sharing of ideas, both a Planning Board and Sustainability Committee member were appointed to each group.

The Advisory Groups were asked to complete three tasks:

- To respond to a set of policy questions from the consultants for each element. The purpose of this activity was to get additional information and direction on important policy issues related to each element. For the complete set of policy questions, see Appendix B.

- To provide feedback on the working papers submitted by the consultants for each element. These papers, once revised by the Advisory Groups and further edited by consultants, form the heart of the Phase I Master Plan.
- To create goals for each element. Once drafted, the goals were vetted at a February 2011 workshop, described below. The Advisory Groups continued to refine their goals after the workshop, providing additional revisions and edits where necessary.

All Advisory Groups made an extraordinary commitment to the Master Plan and contributed immensely to its development. The Plan - both in content and process - benefited from their participation.

Community meetings

Groton held two town-wide community forums and one specialized workshop as part of the Master Plan process.

May 2010

As the first community-wide meeting for the Master Plan, the Community Forum on May 13, 2010 served to introduce the public to the Master Plan process and provide an opportunity for feedback on Groton's future development pattern. The event was well-attended, with over eighty people arriving to participate. The forum began with a presentation by the consultants on the Master Plan, followed by a brief question-and-answer session.

After that, participants broke into small groups to undertake a mapping exercise in which they identified areas for preservation, conservation, and change in Groton. A spokesperson from each group presented their map to the larger assembly and the consultants facilitated a general discussion about the results. For a complete description of the activity, a composite of the small group maps, and notes from the large group discussion, see Master Plan Appendix C, D, and E.

November 2010

The Community Forum on November 16, 2010 sought to elicit feedback on a selection of priorities for the Master Plan. Several weeks before the meeting, the Advisory Groups were asked to create and submit three specific “proposals” for projects or programs they considered important for inclusion in the Master Plan. The proposals were assembled and distributed to all sixty-one participants at the forum.

Working at first in small groups, participants read and discussed the proposals, and picked their top three for inclusion in the Master Plan. Having reviewed all the proposals, the consultants led participants in a large-group trade-offs-and-choices exercise. Here, large-scale proposal cards were held up and participants voted on which proposal they thought was more important. Starting with three proposals, participants deemed one - constructing a new Central Fire Station - to be more important than adopting Town-wide design guidelines and undertaking alternative transportation initiatives. Since it was considered a higher priority, the Central Fire Station proposal card was hung on the wall above the other two. After that, proposal cards were introduced one or two at a time for comparison with the other proposals. Participants discussed and voted on each, and the proposal cards were placed on the wall accordingly. From this process grew a “tree” of proposals

that reflected community priorities. See Master Plan Appendix F.

Due to time constraints, participants were unable to evaluate and discuss all of the proposals. Originally, this exercise was to be continued at a Planning Board workshop in February 2011. However, the Planning Board decided later to focus on a Goals Workshop, described below.

February 2011

On February 12, 2011, members of the Advisory Groups, the Planning Board, and the general public who had demonstrated a strong commitment to the Master Plan, gathered for a Goals Workshop. Prior to the meeting, the Advisory Groups had completed goal statements for each element and the Planning Board wanted to capitalize on this effort by holding a workshop.

The purpose of the workshop was to clarify the goal statements, revise them if necessary, and decide whether to include or not include each in the draft Master Plan. To start, the twenty-six participants worked in randomly selected groups on a set of goals drawn from various elements. For each goal, the groups completed a form that asked for feedback on several questions and revisions to the goal if necessary. After evaluating the goals in small groups, a spokesperson summarized their discussion for all participants. Following a break for lunch, the entire group reconvened to review each goal, debate and decide on appropriate revisions, and vote on the final set of goals to be included in this draft Master Plan.

Interviews, focus groups, and other

Stakeholder interviews

In February 2010, the consultants conducted a series of interviews with key stakeholders in Groton. The purpose of the interview was to gain insight on past planning processes, current issues, and stakeholder concerns. The consultants interviewed twenty-six stakeholders, including residents, business owners, farmers, neighborhood group leaders, and Town staff and board and committee members.

Department heads meeting

Also in February 2010, the consultants attended a Department Heads meeting to facilitate a discussion about issues related to the Master Plan. The consultants led a discussion that focused on the following areas:

- The structure and operation of local government in Groton, including the relationship between local officials and Town boards and commissions, and how local decisions are made.
- Issues associated with Groton’s community services and facilities.
- Pressing departmental needs or long-term initiatives in Groton’s local government.

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natural resources, water, and energy

Key findings

- Groton has an impressive legacy of preserving and protecting natural resources. The town can now focus on filling gaps in natural resource protection and ensuring that key natural resources, such as drinking water and agricultural land, are secured for future generations.
- Mapping Groton's natural assets illustrates how natural systems are related, interconnected, and interdependent. This structure should be used as the framework for future preservation, conservation, and growth.
- Groton has done much to conserve energy through its municipal electric light department. Extending energy conservation efforts to private properties will require new efforts and levels of political will.
- Groton has successfully managed water withdrawals and achieved water conservation goals as defined by the state. A more difficult problem



is controlling stormwater runoff, which will require Groton to assess and integrate its various of stormwater-related regulations and policies.

Goals and recommendations

GOAL: PROTECT THE INTEGRITY OF GROTON'S NATURAL RESOURCE SYSTEMS AS GROTON CONTINUES TO DEVELOP.

Recommendations:

- Develop ecological baseline inventories.
- Identify the most important contributing parcels and make them preservation priorities.
- Based on the ecological inventory and analysis, reassess the effectiveness of existing environmental regulations and, where appropriate, consider modifying them.

GOAL: USE BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES TO PRESERVE AND PROTECT GROTON'S GROUNDWATER AND SURFACE WATER RESOURCES.

Recommendations:

- Analyze the hydrologic function of Groton's natural water systems, especially the relationship between groundwater, wetlands, and surface water features, to determine safe groundwater removal quantities.
- Investigate all potential future sources of water supply and establish acquisition and conservation plans to ensure their protection.

- Continue and expand public education around water conservation issues for local residents and business owners.

- Develop a clear policy on Low Impact Development (LID) within Town departments and better integrate LID requirements into subdivision control and site plan review requirements.

GOAL: REDUCE GROTON'S DEPENDENCE ON NONRENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES THROUGH INCREASED ENERGY CONSERVATION EFFORTS AND ALTERNATIVE ENERGY GENERATION.

Recommendations:

- Organize a more effective approach to funding and implementing energy conservation projects and alternative energy projects.
- Establish regulations to encourage renewable energy generation projects.
- Consider adopting the Massachusetts Green Communities Criteria.
- Consider adopting the Stretch Code.
- Continue to support GELD's energy efficiency and energy generation programs and encourage them to further develop and promote their demand reduction system to reduce peak period electricity use.
- Reduce energy consumption in Groton's commercial and residential buildings through a public education campaign.



GOAL: IDENTIFY AND PROTECT AGRICULTURAL LAND RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE CONTINUATION AND EXPANSION OF AGRICULTURE IN GROTON.

Recommendations:

- Work with the information in Map 3.3 (Agricultural Resources) and Map 3.5 (Gaps in Natural Resource Protection) to develop preservation priorities that address both natural and water resource protection needs and needs to protect Groton's remaining farmland.
- Recognize that the long-term viability of agriculture will require ongoing support from all levels of government, including local government.
- Recognize that farms are businesses.

4 cultural & historic resources

Key findings

- Groton needs to cultivate a stronger sense of stewardship for historic resources, similar that which exists for natural resources.
- An effective preservation program hinges on understanding and appreciating historic resources - buildings, structures, objects, landscapes, archaeological sites, and historic records and artifacts.
- Historic preservation efforts such as creating heritage tourism programs and protecting the character of historic retail centers can complement and contribute to the town's economic development interests.
- With proper standards and oversight and municipal regulations in place, historic buildings can be adapted for new uses.

Goals and recommendations

GOAL: PURSUE ADAPTIVE REUSE OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES.

Recommendations:

- Provide flexibility in zoning to encourage the reuse and restoration of historic buildings, particularly for housing.
- Require projects that affect Town-owned historic structures to adhere to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation.

- Continue to seek funding for reuse and preservation of Town-owned historic resources.
- Identify appropriate reuse options for Town-owned historic structures through collaborative problem-solving between the GHC and other Town boards and departments.

GOAL: PROTECT GROTON'S CULTURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES.

Recommendations:

- Review Groton's existing preservation bylaws for opportunities to strengthen and expand resource protection.
 - Strengthen the Demolition Delay Bylaw.
 - Develop historic design guidelines.
 - Work with residents to identify and create additional local historic districts.
 - Consider Architectural Preservation Districts for some areas of Groton.
- Encourage collaboration between Groton's preservation groups.
- Work with regional, state, and national preservation groups on local preservation issues.
- Continue to pursue a central facility to store and exhibit Groton's historic artifacts and create a database that identifies Groton's archival resources and their locations.

- Continue the Groton Historical Commission's efforts to complete a comprehensive inventory of Groton's cultural and historic resources, including areas, structures, buildings, objects, and historic landscapes.
- Develop a comprehensive database of historic resources that includes local historic districts, National Register properties, and inventoried properties, and integrate the database with the Groton's Geographic Information System (GIS).
- Provide efficient public access to historic resources information.
- Increase the effectiveness of Scenic Roads review.

GOAL: INTEGRATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OBJECTIVES INTO GROTON'S DEVELOPMENT REVIEW AND PERMITTING PROCEDURES.

Recommendations:

- Institute a regular, formal role for the Groton Historical Commission in the review of projects that affect historic resources.
- Adopt recommendations in Groton's Archaeological Reconnaissance Survey for integrating archaeological resource protection into the development review process.

GOAL: DEVELOP ECONOMIC AND EDUCATION STRATEGIES THAT CAPITALIZE ON GROTON'S HISTORIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES.

Recommendations:

- **Make information on Groton's cultural and historic character, buildings, districts, cemeteries, and other heritage treasures widely available to**

residents and visitors in formats that are attractive and easily understood.

- Make Groton's informational and educational materials on historic resources available online.
- Continue to identify eligible buildings and districts for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and pursue designation.



5 open space & recreation

Key findings

- Groton has a long and successful history of protecting open space, but ecologically significant parcels remain unprotected, particularly along waterways. Finding new ways to protect them will remain challenging due to competing demands for funding.
- By identifying and protecting some key parcels, Groton could develop a connected trails system that supports both passive recreation and alternatives to driving within the town.
- Groton is trying to manage conservation land and address issues such as invasive species, abutter encroachment, and sustainable forestry management. However, the town's collection of small, scattered open space parcels and the timber harvesting concerns residents have raised in the past will continue to make land management a challenging endeavor.



- Groton's private recreation groups provide a significant benefit through programming and field maintenance. However, Groton has few opportunities for non-competitive sports or recreation programs for adults, and the town needs more affordable recreation activities. A municipal recreation department would provide a better way to meet these needs.
- Despite local interest and effort, Groton has not been able to develop and sustain a community garden. This remains an important open space goal.

Goals and recommendations

GOAL: ENSURE THAT GROTON'S AGRICULTURAL, FORESTED, AND RECREATIONAL OPEN SPACES ARE PROTECTED, ENHANCED, AND EXPANDED FOR PRESENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS.

Recommendations:

- Continue to develop and maintain a comprehensive open space inventory database that will identify and assess all of the town's open space parcels and associated resource value.
- Develop a ranking system to prioritize unprotected open space parcels.
- Protect priority open space parcels.
- Pursue development of a town-wide trail system.
- Continue to fund land protection with CPA revenue and the Conservation Fund.
- Continue to review the Town's conservation parcels for opportunities to allow agricultural use.

GOAL: IMPROVE MANAGEMENT OF OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PARCELS.

Recommendations:

- Develop management strategies and individual management plans for the Town's conservation lands.
- Conduct educational outreach on the benefits of sustainable forestry management.
- Encourage developers to consolidate open space set-asides, rather than create small, fractured conservation properties.

- Maintain Groton's recreational facilities in a manner that limits environmental impacts.

GOAL: EXPAND AND REVITALIZE GROTON'S RECREATIONAL RESOURCES, INCLUDING PARKS, ATHLETIC FIELDS, GREENWAYS, AND WATERWAYS.

Recommendations:

- Review Groton's private and public recreation offerings to ensure that programming is inclusive, diverse, cost-effective, and sustainable.
- Create new recreations facilities for Groton residents.
- Expand and publicize the offerings of the Groton Pool and Golf Center as a recreational facility for all age groups.

GOAL: ENABLE AND SUPPORT THE CREATION AND MAINTENANCE OF COMMUNITY GARDENS FOR PUBLIC USE.

Recommendations:

- Review Groton's Town-owned properties, both developed and undeveloped, for suitability as community gardens.
- Appoint a municipal representative or group to advocate for development of a chosen community garden site.

6 transportation



Key findings

- Groton's narrow roadways contribute to its visual character, reduce maintenance costs, and slow traffic speeds. However, these types of roadways may not always process traffic efficiently and do not easily or safely accommodate pedestrian and bicycle facilities.
- One of Groton's major policy choices will be to balance the need to maintain traffic flows while increasing capacity and safety for bicycles and pedestrians and preserving the aesthetic qualities of its roadways. This will require a thoughtful and flexible approach to roadway design, rather than a one-size-fits-all policy.
- Groton has a decent inventory of existing sidewalks, trails, and paths, but many are disconnected. Increasing connectivity to create an alternative transportation network is a major challenge and goal of this Master Plan.
- Groton's low-density land use pattern and small population make it very difficult to provide public transit. However, there is potential for some

small-scale, multi-passenger motorized transportation to increase mobility for those who cannot or do not want to drive.

Goals and recommendations

GOAL: DESIGN STREETS AND ROADS THAT ACCOMMODATE AS MANY MODES OF TRANSPORTATION AS POSSIBLE, GIVEN ROADWAY CHARACTERISTICS AND TRANSPORTATION DEMANDS.

Recommendations:

- Implement a 'Complete Streets' policy, which requires the design and upgrading of new and existing streets to accommodate a range of transportation modes and users of all ages and abilities.
 - Join the national Complete Streets Coalition.
 - Adopt for local use, as much as possible, the MassDOT Highway Division's Project Development and Design Guide.
 - Establish an active liaison with Bay State Roads, a cooperative effort of the Federal Highway Administration, MassDOT, and the University of Massachusetts, to educate Town officials and the public about ways to make Groton streets and roads more efficient and accessible.
 - Ensure that impacts on the town's natural and cultural environment and rural character are considered with potential transportation enhancements and future roadway

system maintenance needs, to ensure a balanced approach to roadway design.

- Provide bicycle facilities on roadways where feasible and appropriate.
- Consider traffic calming techniques to reduce cut-through traffic in residential neighborhoods.
 - Gay Road
 - School Street
 - Whitman Road
 - Martins Pond Road
 - Higley and Peabody Streets
- Pursue bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure funding opportunities.

GOAL: CREATE AN ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION NETWORK BY CONNECTING ROADS AND SIDEWALKS WITH TRAILS AND PATHS.

Recommendations:

- **Create new sidewalk and trail connections.**
 - Main Street (Route 119) from Groton Center to the Post Office on one side of the street. A longer term goal could be to continue the sidewalk past the CVS and Post Office to Johnson's Restaurant and Skyfields Drive.

7 land use

Key findings

- Very low-density single-family development is the dominant land use in Groton. However, Groton also has regulations for alternative approaches to site planning, which provide a range of environmental, aesthetic, and functional benefits.
- Groton's four villages provide important land use lessons for the town.
 - In Groton Center and West Groton, zoning development patterns demonstrate the importance of denser, mixed-use development for enhanced quality of life.
 - For Lost Lake, the transition from a seasonal summer enclave to year-round residential area presents infrastructure challenges.
 - In Four Corners, a continually evolving development pattern provides opportunities for new businesses and community service establishments.
 - The challenge in each village will be to preserve existing assets while accommodating additional growth and change.
- Groton has zoned an extremely small amount of land for business use, and this makes any substantial business expansion unlikely. The Station Avenue area provides some options for new businesses, but without land use policy changes the

town's economic development interests will be very difficult to pursue.

- Under existing zoning, Groton's vacant, developable land and large properties with additional development potential could support approximately 1,956 additional house lots. The town needs to decide how best to accommodate residential and commercial growth and still protect functional landscape systems with ecological, agricultural, and recreational value. These landscape systems should serve as a frame around nodes or clusters of housing and mixed uses, thereby protecting Groton's natural and cultural resources while providing for the development of distinctive neighborhoods and activity centers.

Goals and recommendations

GOAL: PROMOTE A SUSTAINABLE LAND USE PATTERN IN GROTON BY ENCOURAGING VIBRANT, MIXED-USE, AND VISUALLY DISTINCT ACTIVITY CENTERS IN THE TOWN'S VILLAGES. (SEE ALSO, MAP 7.6: FUTURE LAND USE.)



Recommendations:

- Define the boundaries and roles for each village.
- Create specific plans for each village to shape growth.
- Plan and provide for additional housing density in each village.

- Establish land use policies that encourage greater connectivity and promote use of alternative transportation modes, and identify existing and former railroad right-of-ways for acquisition and use for alternative modes of transportation.

- Make Groton's villages are comfortably walkable.

GOAL: COORDINATE LAND USE AND INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING.

Recommendation:

- Consider Groton's capital improvements plan in all relevant land use planning efforts. Infrastructure installation often encourages development.

GOAL: ESTABLISH DESIGN GUIDELINES THAT ENCOURAGE CREATIVE, THOUGHTFUL DESIGN IN COMMERCIAL AND MULTI-FAMILY DEVELOPMENTS.

Recommendations:

- Create and adopt design guidelines for commercial construction and multi-family housing.
- Consider creating design guidelines for each of Groton's villages.
- Establish a design review process.

GOAL: ENSURE GROTON'S ZONING BYLAW SUPPORTS AND IS CONSISTENT WITH OTHER MASTER PLAN GOALS.

Recommendations:

- **Business Districts.** When the Planning Board updated the 2002 Master Plan, a key component of its work plan was an economic development strategy for the town. While zoning is only one aspect of building a stronger local economy, zoning can facilitate economic development or frus-

trate it. If Groton wants to encourage economic development, it has to provide adequate land, articulate clear use regulations, and establish dimensional regulations that acknowledge the needs of the business community.

- **Off-Street Parking.** Groton needs to modernize its off-street parking requirements in order to reduce the environmental and aesthetic impacts of over-sized parking areas and also reduce burdens on small business owners.

- **Dimensional Regulations in the Residential Districts.** Although the dimensional regulations in the R-A and R-B districts call for an inherently unsustainable growth pattern, they also serve a valid planning objective: managing Groton's overall build-out potential. Simply reducing the existing requirements to more common standards such as a minimum lot area of 40,000 sq. ft. and minimum frontage of 125 or 150 linear feet will not eliminate the risk of sprawl - as evidenced by conditions in many suburbs with these requirements. Groton's best option for avoiding conventional developments that waste land is to make the Flexible Development bylaw and subdivision tools such as Residential Compound as attractive as possible to developers. This is especially important because the MRD bylaw, which requires Residential Compound and Flexible Development submissions for projects that meet specified thresholds, is unlikely to stand when challenged in court.

- **Flexible Development.** Some possibilities for making Flexible Development more attractive to developers and more effective for the town without subjecting projects to the MRD process:

- Eliminate the special permit requirement and offer, instead, an as-of-right approach to Flexible Development.

- Increase the density bonus for Flexible Developments that include a transfer lot.
- Replace the existing “over-55” density bonus with a bonus for projects that include small detached condominiums and duplexes.
- **Planned Multi-family Residential Development (PRD)** needs to be reconceived and made more effective for providing housing choices.
- **Transfer Lots/Transfer of Development Rights.** Groton adopted TDR in 1980, and it is considered one of the more successful TDR programs in Massachusetts. As with most TDR programs, Groton’s has been used most effectively when the Town was actively involved as a partner. One barrier to more successful use of TDR in Groton has been a lack of consensus on the location of sending and receiving zones.



8 housing & residential development

Key findings

- Outside of its village, Groton’s residential development pattern is generally land-consumptive i.e., it consumes a large amount of land per dwelling unit. While this type of development pattern offers privacy and high asset value to homeowners, it also exacerbates the scarcity of land, increases the cost of housing, encourages excessive use of energy and water, and promotes dependency on cars.
- Groton’s housing development pattern also meets some needs at the expense of other needs that already exist, both locally and regionally. Sustainable housing policy must address these inequalities.
- To create a more sustainable framework for housing development, Groton may need to look beyond its borders and collaborate with other communities to address housing policy on a regional basis.

Goals and recommendations

GOAL: ENCOURAGE A DIVERSITY OF HOUSING TYPES FOR A RANGE OF INCOME LEVELS AND AGES.

Recommendations:

- Prepare a new Affordable Housing Plan.
- Think regionally. Groton should explore options for working collaboratively with adjacent towns on a regional affordable housing plan.
- Provide housing for people with disabilities.
- Encourage the production of more rental housing, both affordable and market rate, for a broad range of people.
- Use CPA funds to address a broader range of affordable housing needs, even if the CPA-assisted units do not qualify for the Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory.
- Promote racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity.

GOAL: ENCOURAGE AND PROMOTE NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS THAT CREATE A SENSE OF PLACE, PROMOTE SOCIAL INTERACTION, AND A SENSE OF COMMUNITY.

Recommendations:

- Consider additional zoning techniques to promote neighborhood developments that meet the town’s social, economic, and aesthetic objectives. For example:
 - Offer an as-of-right approach to Flexible Development that includes a higher minimum open space requirement and meaningful density incentives for compact form, mixed residential uses, and percentage of affordable units, and use the special permit process only to consider alternatives to the specifications for a by-right development.
 - Allow single-family to multi-family conversions, up to three units, by right, subject to site plan review and design review, and retain



a special permit requirement for conversions involving more than four units;

- Change the Planned Multi-Family Development bylaw by eliminating the existing Concept Plan Approval process and replacing it with a concept plan special permit granted by the Planning Board; establishing clear inclusionary housing requirements; and establishing unambiguous minimum (or maximum) dimensional requirements and providing for design review.
- Set clear, realistic guidelines for Chapter 40B developments and provide attractive incentives for developers to comply.

GOAL: ENCOURAGE A GREATER VARIETY OF ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN AND DIVERSITY OF HOUSING TYPES.

Recommendations:

- Encourage construction of “green” energy efficient homes.
- Consider a “large-house review” bylaw to institute for design review of single-family homes exceeding a certain size threshold.
- Provide meaningful alternatives to demolition of older single-family homes.

9 economic development

Key findings

- Groton’s major industries include educational services, manufacturing, and healthcare and social assistance. While the educational service sector provides jobs that align well with the skills and occupations of Groton residents, most other local industries do not. For these reasons, the majority of Groton’s labor force travels outside of the community for work.
- Groton’s zoning and other land use regulations have a major impact on both current and future levels of commercial and industrial activity. The most obvious zoning constraint is the lack of land zoned for commercial uses. The Town Center Overlay District area could provide for a substantial infusion of new commercial activity, which in turn could bolster existing local businesses in Groton Center.
- Groton has a decent foundation of local businesses, with owners interested in increasing their breadth and reach. But local businesses also face challenges, including a perceived lack of support from Town Hall and substantial regional competition.
- Many residents want to see Groton’s agriculture continue and expand, and many realize that to do this, agriculture must be a viable economic activity. The Town can develop the agricultural sector of its economy, but doing so will require work at the policy level as well as additional efforts to organize agricultural businesses and increase community support for local agriculture.

Goals & recommendations

GOAL: MAKE CERTAIN THAT GROTON IS, AND IS RECOGNIZED AS, A BUSINESS-FRIENDLY TOWN.

Recommendations:

- Establish a liaison for Groton local businesses.
- Develop business owners and developer guidance materials.
- Support the development of GBOT.

GOAL: EXPLORE AND RECOMMEND REGULATORY CHANGES THAT ENABLE BUSINESS GROWTH WITHIN IDENTIFIED AREAS OF GROTON.

Recommendations:

- Provide more land for business development and mixed uses contiguous to the existing B-1 and M-1 districts.
- Revise and update the B-1 district’s use and dimensional regulations:
 - *Divide the B-1 district into distinctive village business districts.*
 - *Provide for mixed uses, both vertical (within a building) and horizontal (more than one building on a lot, with uses distributed among the buildings), in each village business center. The allowed mix and scale need to be tailored to each area.*

- *Reduce the potential for land use conflicts in the B-1 district by discouraging single-family home development and limiting agricultural uses to properties exempt under the Zoning Act (commercial agriculture on parcels of five or more acres).*
- *Eliminate the minimum front yard setback of fifty feet, which discourages compact, pedestrian-oriented development, and consider establishing a maximum front yard setback instead.*
- Establish a study committee to evaluate and make recommendations for the future of the M-1 district.
- Replace the existing Concept Plan Approval process with a Concept Plan submission directly to the Planning Board.
- Reduce off-street parking requirements.

GOAL: PROVIDE EFFECTIVE INCENTIVES TO ENCOURAGE NEW BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND TO RETAIN EXISTING BUSINESSES.

Recommendations:

- Institute and aggressively promote “buy local” initiatives.
- Open discussions with GBOT and Groton Center businesses in particular about the possibility of establishing a BID.
- Approach the regional planning commission about options to forge a North-Central regional economic development partnership or investigate the possibility of joining the 495/MetroWest Corridor Partnership.

GOAL: DETERMINE WHAT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MEANS FOR GROTON RESIDENTS AND EDUCATE THE COMMUNITY ON THE IMPACT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TO GROTON.

Recommendations:

- Create and conduct an educational outreach program on economic development for Groton residents. The Economic Development Committee should lead a series of workshops to establish an economic development framework for Groton. Though the purpose of these workshops would be, in part, to educate residents, they should also serve as an opportunity to listen to resident priorities and concerns regarding various aspects of economic development.

GOAL: ENCOURAGE MEASURES SO THE LOCAL AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY WILL BE ABLE TO PRODUCE ENOUGH AFFORDABLE, HIGH-QUALITY FOOD TO MEET A GREATER PERCENTAGE OF THE TOWN’S FUTURE NEEDS.

Recommendations:

- Support GBOT in its efforts to organize local agricultural businesses.
- Galvanize support for local agriculture.
 - Increase participation in CSA programs.
 - Strengthen ties between local farms and schools. Promote “buy local” initiatives for local agricultural products.
 - Promote agritourism.



GOAL: DEVELOP POLICIES AND PROGRAMS THAT CREATE A NETWORK OF LOCAL AGRICULTURAL BUSINESSES INCLUDING CAREER FARMERS, ORCHARDS, SMALLER “BACKYARD” FARMS, ROADSIDE STANDS, AND RESTAURANTS.

Recommendations:

- Review the Agricultural Commission’s roles and responsibilities.

10 community services & facilities

Key findings

- Groton provides basic municipal services for its residents. Changing economic and fiscal conditions, community desires, and opportunities for regional partnerships mean that Groton should continually review and assess the services it offers and how it delivers them.
- Changing information technology (IT) requirements present a significant challenge for Groton. Keeping pace with these requirements and exploring IT opportunities will allow the Town to increase its internal efficiency and offer new and more convenient ways to provide services for residents.
- Groton has consistently employed a capital planning process, but it does not incorporate the full breadth of Groton's facilities and infrastructure needs. To effectively plan for the future, the Town needs to think more broadly about the future of its municipal facilities, expand the planning time horizon, and prioritize critical projects, such as a new central fire station.
- Groton has critical wastewater infrastructure needs, some of which are being addressed and others which require increased attention. This is a key area of focus for the town, for it affects environmental health, as well as land use and economic development consequences for different areas of town.



Goals and recommendations

GOAL: CONTINUE TO ASSESS MUNICIPAL SERVICES TO ENSURE THAT LOCAL NEEDS ARE MET.

Recommendations:

- Consider opportunities to consolidate additional Town departments and improve interdepartmental communication.

- Consider establishing a Parks, Recreation, and Community Education Department to provide a range of affordable recreation opportunities for all ages.

GOAL: IMPROVE GROTON'S MUNICIPAL FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE, CONSIDERING ENERGY CONSERVATION, TECHNOLOGY, AND UNIVERSAL ACCESSIBILITY (ADA COMPLIANCE).

Recommendations:

- Review, plan, and provide for Groton's IT infrastructure needs.
 - Install a fiber optic network that would allow Town-owned facilities located within certain proximity to Town Hall - including the Police Station, GELD, the Public Library, the Legion Hall and the Center Fire Station - to share a central system.
 - Install a permitting software system to integrate Town's regulatory departments.
 - Update the Town website to allow easier maintenance by individual departments, and continue to accept electronic payment transactions and permit applications.
- Continue to pursue development of a central archival facility to store and manage municipal records and a central index to track and access them.

- Complete remaining energy audits for all public buildings and work with local officials to develop an implementation plan.

GOAL: PROVIDE PUBLIC SAFETY FACILITIES AND RESOURCES TO MEET DESIRED READINESS AND RESPONSE TIMES.

Recommendations:

- Complete an assessment of town's public safety operational needs and plan for expansion of personnel when the municipal budget allows.
- Continue to pursue opportunities for development of a new central fire station.

GOAL: ENSURE THAT GROTON'S WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE CAN MEET CURRENT AND FUTURE NEEDS.

Recommendations:

- Continue to pursue funding and implementation for a Lost Lake wastewater treatment facility, and study the potential for wastewater treatment in West Groton.

GOAL: DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE, LONG-RANGE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PLAN (CIP).

Recommendations:

- Develop a comprehensive, long-range CIP that addresses urgent repairs, ADA accessibility requirements, and energy efficiency improvements.
- Conduct a thorough assessment of all municipal properties to determine building needs and identify possibilities for shared facility use.
- Continue to explore options for reuse of vacant and underutilized municipal facilities.



GOAL: CONTINUE TO PURSUE REGIONALIZATION OF COMMUNITY SERVICES WHERE APPROPRIATE.

Recommendations:

- Develop criteria for evaluating opportunities to regionalize town services.