

GOALS AND POLICIES

Introduction

In 2010, Franklin Town Council established a Master Plan Committee (MPC), and charged it with the task of updating the Town's Master Plan. Given the tremendous amount of growth and change the Town had experienced since its last Master Plan in 1997, time had come for an updated roadmap for Franklin's future.

A Master Plan is a long-term, comprehensive document that helps the residents and governing bodies of a community understand: current conditions and issues; the direction a community wants to go; and the specific actions needed in order to get there.

Master Plans are envisioned and developed by townspeople, committees, and municipal departments. In developing Master Plans, municipalities and citizens allow themselves the time to think about the issues they are facing and how best to handle them.

According to M.G.L. Chapter 41 Section 81D, Master Plans are:

"A statement through text, maps, illustrations or other forms of communication that is designed to provide a basis for decision making regarding the long-term physical development of the municipality..."

Elements of a Master Plan include:

- Land Use;
- Natural, Cultural and Historic Resources;
- Open Space and Recreation;
- Circulation (Transportation);
- Housing;
- Economic Development; and
- Community Services and Facilities.

In addition, the Master Plan contains two additional Elements: the Goals and Policies Element, which provides broad goals for the Town; and the Implementation Element, which organizes the actions into a plan for fulfilling each element's goals.

Discussing these elements and organizing them into plans helps to produce consistent, informed, and predictable use of land and other resources. These plans also help communities preserve their appearance and character, and promote efficient and effective economic development.

Through extensive research, analysis, and interdepartmental consultations, the Master Plan Committee with the assistance of the Department of Planning & Community Development (DPCD) completed the existing conditions reports, and the goals, objectives and actions for each element in the Master Plan.

Mission and Vision

Early in the Master Plan rewrite process, the Master Plan Committee worked to develop general goals and a vision for the Town. One source used in the visioning process was the Town of Franklin's Mission Statement:

"It is the mission of the Town of Franklin's governmental entities to provide all of its citizens with the greatest possible spectrum of basic services, directed at publicly expressed community needs, at the least possible cost. This includes providing: the children of our community with the ability to attain a higher plane of

achievement within the school system; the less fortunate with a variety of assistance and support programs; the elderly with services directed to meet their ever increasing leisure and health needs; and providing the public as a whole with a high degree of services, from infrastructure support to recreational possibilities. As a corollary strategy to providing excellent services, the adequate maintenance of existing facilities must also be accomplished on a priority basis. All this must be concluded within the scope of affordability in order to not burden our taxpayers beyond their financial capacities.”

The Master Plan Committee (MPC) developed the following Master Plan Mission Statement, which it used as a guide throughout the Plan development process:

“Franklin is a community committed to high quality education and the superb delivery of public services. We strive to attract and retain businesses, both profit and non-profit, that grow our economy, create jobs, and contribute to a vibrant downtown center. We are committed to cultivating accessible open space, a sense of neighborhood, and a desire to preserve the character of our New England town. We support the safe and efficient movement of people and goods within the Town of Franklin, and across the regional transportation network, by providing a range of integrated transportation options. We are a community dedicated to effective planning, responsible land use, balanced growth, responsive government, racial, religious and economic diversity, and care and concern for its citizens and the environment. We value our arts, cultural and natural resources, heritage, and history, in order to foster a well-balanced community.”

The MPC also developed a vision statement for Franklin:

“To be a vibrant community that supports the arts, non-profit organizations, higher education and businesses in an atmosphere that allows growth and prosperity while at the same time conserving our heritage, natural resources, and history. We will build on and celebrate our uniqueness as a community and maintain the quality of life that is a strength and competitive advantage.”

The Master Plan Committee recommends the Town Council adopt the MPC’s Mission and Vision Statements as the Town’s new Mission and Vision Statements.

Finally, the MPC developed goals to further define and implement the vision:

- Act as a part of a broader region through the resources connecting us beyond our municipal borders, such as watersheds, rivers, roads, economy, culture, or common goals;
- Make Franklin a Green Community and significantly improve energy efficiency in town buildings and programs, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and encourage conservation and use of alternative and renewable energy sources throughout the community;
- Support artists and the arts, local culture, history, and education at all levels as vital to a successful, well-balanced community;
- Recognize and foster the unique history, character and function of each residential, commercial, mixed use, and open space neighborhood;
- Recognize that a diverse and vibrant economy is integral to a successful community and supports businesses and job development that contribute to the community and the city’s long-term sustainability;
- Make the city increasingly more walkable, bikeable, and transit-oriented;
- Improve citizens’ lives through continuous, high quality education; and

- Operate the Town as a democratic enterprise that is responsive and responsible to the fiscal, economic, social, and environmental interests of its citizens.

Guiding Values

Master Plan Committee members were guided by several overarching values about the kind of community they wanted Franklin to be.

Public Input

The MPC's most important value was to obtain input from the Town's residents and organizations. The Master Plan must be Franklin's residents' plan for the Town's future. The MPC pursued many avenues to obtain public input, including:

- Representation of the public on the MPC;
- Multiple Public Hearings/workshops;
- Regular MPC meetings open to the public;
- Town of Franklin's Web Site – Master Plan Committee's Page;
- Franklin's Master Plan Committee's *facebook* Page;
- Request for written Public Input; and
- Public Hearing and related public Comment Period on the Draft Master Plan.

The purpose of this main value is to ensure that the Master Plan is based on a substantial amount of public input.

Sustainability

Another important value informing the Master Plan Committee's decision making process was a commitment to making Franklin an environmentally sustainable community. In light of this, the MPC agreed Franklin should seek Green Communities designation under the Massachusetts Green Communities Act, and tasked themselves with incorporating green strategies into each of the Plan's Elements. The MPC also tasked themselves with reducing the amount of paper that the Master Plan renewal process used. Members made a personal commitment to cut back on the amount of paper they used by bringing their computers with them to view materials electronically. The Committee also agreed to use "Dropbox" and email to store and share drafts of documents being reviewed.

During creation of the Economic Development related goals, objectives, and actions, the current priorities of the Franklin Downtown Partnership as well as other organizations were considered. Franklin recognizes the value of having a strong relationship between municipalities and small businesses, which ultimately provide the most "things-to-do" in a community. A constant dedication to small businesses also continues to establish Franklin as an attractive place for young-professionals and families to live and work.

Other goals that guided the MPC were to retain the New England small-town character of Franklin, and incorporate smart growth techniques to deter unnecessary and wasteful development. The MPC agreed to accomplish these goals through supporting adoption of the Community Preservation Act, and developing strategies and actions that support sustainable development principles.

The Master Plan Committee

The Master Plan Committee was formed through the solicitation of Town Committees, Commissions and Departments to submit names for appointment as well as through a public request for volunteers to assist in the Master Plan process. The Town Administrator forwarded these nominations for appointment to the Town Council and from these nominations a 14 member committee was established. The members were sworn in by the Town Clerk at their

first meeting on January 17, 2012. During the course of this meeting, the group elected Jeff Roy as Chairman, Matt Kelly as Vice Chairman, and Andy Bissanti as Secretary. The Committee's main task was to develop goals, objectives, and actions for each of the Master Plan's seven elements, using information in the existing conditions reports to inform their work. In order to streamline this process the group was divided into four sub-committees, each focusing on only one or two of the elements.

Master Plan Sub-committees:

1. Land Use and Economic Development;
2. Open Space & Recreation and Natural, Cultural & Historic Resources;
3. Community Services & Facilities; and
4. Circulation and Housing.

The sub-committees met as needed, and the MPC met at least once a month for a year and a half to see the plan through to its completion.

As the completion of a draft Master Plan was drawing near, members discussed the plan and its future implementation, deciding an Implementation Committee should carry out completion of the specific Goals, Objectives and Actions that were developed by the MPC. The MPC indicated it would be the responsibility of an Implementation Committee to assign priorities and schedules to each section's Goals, Objectives and Actions, and identify who will gain the support of Town Department Heads in order to see Actions through to their completion.

Public Hearing Process

In order to gather public input into the Master Plan process three public hearings were held. The first two gave Franklin residents an opportunity to become involved early on, and allowed suggestions on various topics to be included in the Master Plan. The first public hearing was held on Wednesday, May 9, 2012, in the Franklin Municipal Building at 7 p.m., and for those unable to attend a weeknight meeting, the second hearing was held on Saturday, May 13, 2012, in Franklin's Public Library at 10 a.m. The third public hearing was held on Saturday, August 10, 2013, in Franklin's Public Library at 10 a.m.; this hearing, held within a 30 day public comment period, was held specifically to obtain input on the draft Master Plan.

Goals and Policies

This section of the Master Plan contains the broadest, most overreaching goals of the Master Plan, and is intended to provide a basic direction for each section.

Land-Use

The following policy statement and general goals were developed by the Land Use and Economic Development subcommittee. The focus of these goals is to establish the Town as a center for development while deterring unnecessary growth.

Policy Statement: Adopt long-term sustainability, and start-growth principles to attain fuller, more efficient development, protecting natural resources and the New England, small town character of Franklin.

General Goals:

- Designate areas for workforce housing in order to retain existing businesses and attract new industries;
- Minimize the occurrence of new development by focusing on Brownfield re-development; and
- Protect the health of our citizens and help sustain our businesses by preserving natural lands and the resources they provide.

Natural, Cultural & Historic Resources

This element's policy statement and general goals were drafted by the Open Space & Recreation and Natural, Cultural & Historic Resources subcommittee. The focus of these goals is to protect and support Franklin's history, character, and creative and cultural resources.

Policy Statement: Preserve Franklin's New England, small town character through controlled growth, preserving scenic vistas, supporting local arts and culture, and protecting historic architecture.

General Goals:

- Protect and preserve the integrity of natural resources in town;
- Provide resources for the arts, and support cultural initiatives in town to foster education and creativity;
- Maintain the Town's historic appeal by identifying and protecting trademark land and historic characteristics.

Open Space & Recreation

The Open Space & Recreation and Natural, Cultural & Historic subcommittee developed this policy statement and general goals, which acknowledge the importance of open space and recreational resources for the physical and emotional health of Franklin's residents. The policy statement and general goals aim to: increase open space and recreational availability and accessibility; maintain existing facilities and spaces for these resources; and make knowledge of these resources more abundantly available in Franklin.

Policy Statement: Open space and recreational resources are a key contributor to the quality of life in Franklin and an important aspect of the community's appeal. Open lands help protect the Town's water supply, manage flood waters, provide wildlife habitat, and provide opportunities for passive and active outdoor recreation within the Town.

General Goals:

- Document the Town's open space and recreational resources, and improve public awareness of these resources through increased education, signage, publicity, and events;
- Preserve existing unprotected natural and open space resources in Franklin;
- Provide opportunities for passive and active recreation to meet the community's evolving needs;
- Implement sustainable practices in the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of Franklin's public parks and playgrounds; and
- Investigate grant programs and other revenue sources available to provide funding for the goals and objectives of this chapter.

Circulation

The Circulation and Housing subcommittee championed this section's policy statement and general goals. This subcommittee made sure all of the Town's priorities in transportation were up-to-date and comprehensively covered. The subcommittee and DPW were also heavily involved in the development of the specific Circulation goals, objectives and actions, for moving forward.

Policy Statement: Assure the safe and efficient movement of goods and people within the Town of Franklin, and across the regional transportation network, by providing a range of integrated transportation options.

General Goals:

- Provide the necessary infrastructure to keep Franklin's citizens and businesses moving and growing in town;
- Support green, sustainable transportation initiatives by accommodating pedestrians and cyclists throughout town;
- Reduce the dependence on single passenger vehicles by improving public transportation and ridesharing options; and
- Improve access and circulation in the Downtown.

Housing

The Circulation and Housing subcommittee created this section's policy statement and general goals, ensuring the equal treatment of all of Franklin's residents, while protecting natural resources and welcoming new industry for continued growth and development within Franklin.

Policy Statement: Support in-fill housing practices and provide for all affordability options, giving Franklin's residents the opportunity to maintain a decent standard of living.

General Goals:

- Provide sufficient affordable housing;
- Encourage clustered and mixed-use housing to minimize land-clearing as well as conserve open and natural lands;
- Encourage the development of small scale housing units in and around the Downtown; and
- Welcome new industrial development by designating areas for workforce housing.

Economic Development

The Economic Development policy statement and general goals were developed by the Land Use and Economic Development subcommittee, and address the long-term financial strength and growth for the Town of Franklin. These general goals, along with the specific Goals, Objectives, and Actions outlined in the Implementation Element, are tailored to be in-line with the State's Economic Development Plan which addresses five initiatives: advancing education and workforce development for middle-skill jobs through coordination of education; economic development and workforce development programs; supporting innovation and entrepreneurship; supporting regional development through infrastructure investments and local empowerment; increasing the ease of doing business; and addressing cost competitiveness.

Policy Statement: Adopt strategies for business and workforce retention and attraction to diversify Franklin's economic foundation, and increase its property tax yields.

General Goals:

- Actively pursue the improvement of infrastructure to attract large industry, small businesses, and skilled workers;
- Further incentivize the biotechnology, medical device, and research industries to come to Franklin; and
- Advocate for the small business community, especially within and around the Downtown area.

Community Services and Facilities

The Community Services and Facilities subcommittee, with the assistance of Town Department Heads and other staff members, developed this section's policy statement and general goals. The main priorities influencing this section were to serve Franklin's residents and make sure any new services were developed sustainably.

Policy Statement: Provide adequate and appropriate facilities and infrastructure necessary to accommodate current and future community needs by maximizing use of existing resources and adding new assets in an economically prudent manner.

General Goals:

- Continue to provide quality police, fire, and emergency medical services to keep Franklin's residents safe;
- Invest in Franklin's future by increasing funding for all Town Departments;
- Increase the capacity of the Town's water and sewer supply as needed to accommodate new industrial development and strengthen Franklin's economic and social infrastructure; and
- Support the safe and timely movement of people and goods throughout town.