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## Introduction

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Northborough is a suburban community located in central Massachusetts, less than 15 road miles to the east of the City of Worcester in eastern Worcester County. The Town is bordered by Berlin to the north, Westborough to the south, Marlborough to the east along the I-495 MetroWest corridor, Southborough to the southeast, and Boylston and Shrewsbury to the west. It has a population of approximately 15,000 spread across 18.5 square miles (sq. mi.) of land (USCB, 2010) for a population density of roughly 810 persons per sq. mi. or 1.3 persons per acre.

In 2017, the Town of Northborough, acting through its Planning Board, launched an approximately year-long process to prepare a Town-wide master plan with extensive community participation. The Town had not undertaken such an extensive planning process since its last Master Plan in 1997. This Master Plan Update, with a horizon of 10 to 15 years, refreshes and provides a basis for decision-making concerning land use planning and redevelopment, budget preparation and capital improvement planning for public facilities and services, and economic development for Northborough's future.

The planning process for this Master Plan Update was designed and executed with the following objectives:

- Proceed with a maximum amount of community involvement and public participation;
- Be consistent with the goals, vision, and aspirations of the community;
- Recognize the unique history, attributes and needs of Northborough;
- Build on existing plans, studies, and reports; and
- Coordinate with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and other regional plans.

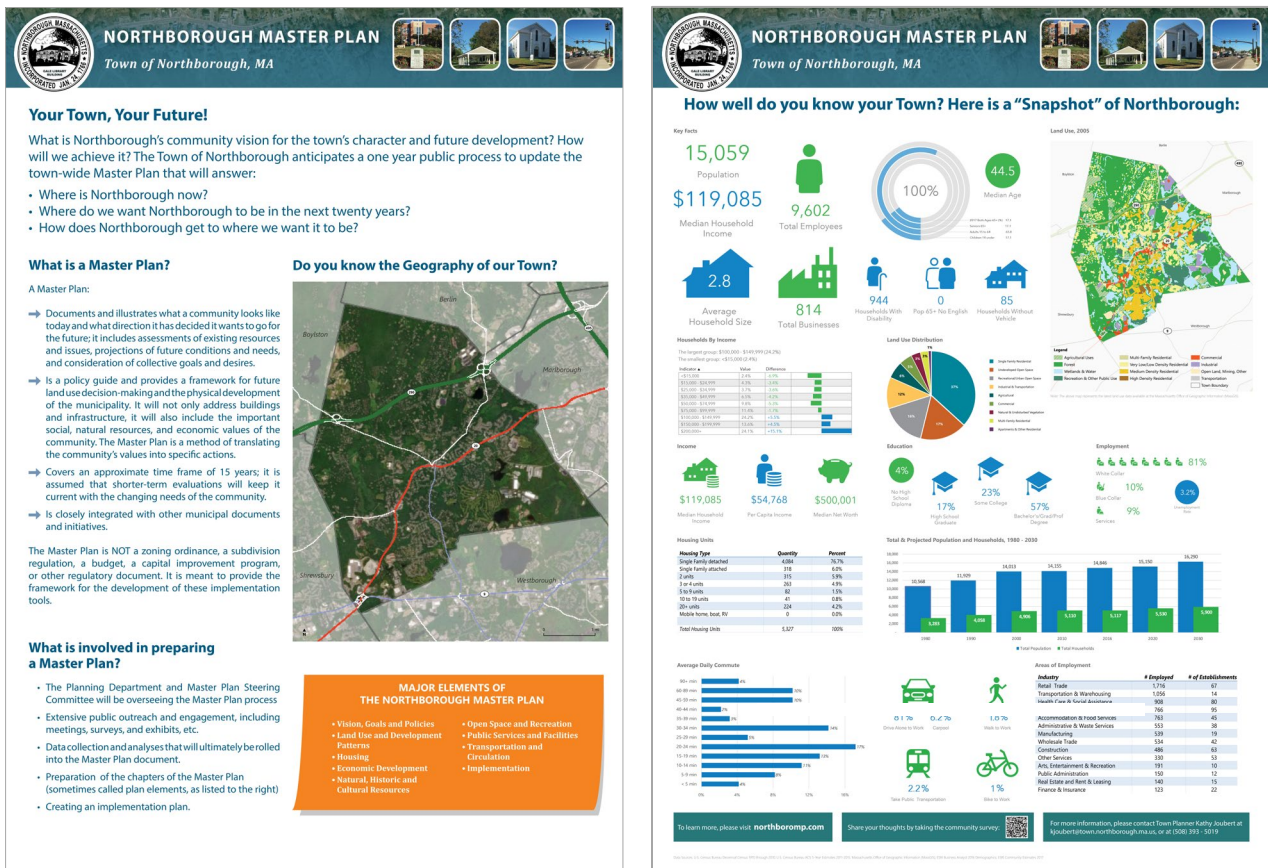
# Master Plan Process

## What is a Master Plan?

A community-wide master plan is a living, dynamic document meant to document and illustrate where a community is currently and where it wants to be in the future. A master plan typically covers a timeframe between 10 to 15 years.

This Master Plan includes a comprehensive baseline assessment describing the Town of Northborough's existing resources and issues, projects future conditions and needs, and considers collective goals and desires. It serves as a policy guide, as well as provides a framework for land use decision-making with respect to balancing the community's development and preservation. It is worth noting that a master plan is not a zoning ordinance, a subdivision regulation, a budget plan, a capital improvement program, or other regulatory document; rather, it is meant to provide the framework for the development of these implementation tools.

Figure 1-1 Presentation Boards Illustrating Northborough's Baseline Assessment



According to Chapter 41 Section 81D of the General Laws of Massachusetts, a master plan is defined as a comprehensive town-wide plan that addresses the following elements: Statement of Goals and Policies; Land Use; Housing; Economic Development; Natural and Cultural Resources; Open Space and Recreation; Services and Facilities; and Circulation.

Implementation is another key element that details how a community will accomplish specific actions; for example, when should actions get carried out, who should carry them out or play a supporting role, and what financial and/or technical resources are available. The Northborough Master Plan includes all these elements.

## Contents of this Master Plan

This Master Plan is comprised of nine chapters. These chapters, including a general description of their content, are provided below. In addition to what is described, Chapters 2 through 8 offer topic-specific goals along with accompanying recommendations.

- Chapter 1, *Introduction*: This chapter provides an overview of the master planning process and framework.
- Chapter 2, *Land Use*: This chapter reviews recent past and existing land use conditions. It includes a summary of the Town's zoning, as well as provides a summary of potential build-out conditions.
- Chapter 3, *Natural, Cultural, and Historic Resources*: This chapter offers a summary of the Town's natural, cultural, and historic resources, including the entities and mechanisms that support their preservation and protection.
- Chapter 4, *Housing*: This chapter presents recent past, existing, and trending population and housing data. A focus of this chapter is on housing affordability.
- Chapter 5, *Economic Development*: This chapter looks at economic data within a local and regional context. It identifies specific and prominent opportunities for development, as well as the internal and external programs that support economic development in the Town more broadly.
- Chapter 6, *Open Space and Recreation*: This chapter summarizes the Town's open space and recreation assets and efforts.
- Chapter 7, *Public Facilities and Services*: This chapter provides an overview of the Town's facilities and services. Departmental needs (e.g., capital and staff time) are identified, where applicable. Sustainability and resiliency concerns are also discussed.
- Chapter 8, *Transportation*: This chapter summarizes and assesses the existing transportation system (e.g., roadways, bicycle, and pedestrian accommodations, etc.) in Northborough.
- Chapter 9, *Implementation*: This chapter lays out a framework for accomplishing the recommendations that support achieving this Master Plan's overall vision and supporting goals.

## Stakeholder and Public Engagement

The Northborough Master Plan embraced an extensive and inclusive stakeholder and public engagement process. To facilitate its development, the Town established a Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC) and retained professional planning services from VHB with support from Landwise. The MPSC, led by a chair and co-chair, was comprised of fifteen members representing residents and various Town boards and commissions. The MPSC had the following representation:

- Board of Selectmen
- Planning Board
- Zoning Board of Appeals
- Historic District Commission
- Open Space Committee
- Conservation Commission
- School Committee
- Parks & Recreation Commission
- Design Review Committee

Throughout the planning process, the MPSC worked closely with the Town Planner and consultants to guide and advise on the development of the Master Plan. The MPSC met on an approximately bi-monthly schedule, with all meetings open to the public.

Wide ranging efforts were made to inform and obtain input from the general public. Three public meetings were organized during different phases of the Master Plan process. The first public meeting was held on June 12, 2018 at the Robert E. Melican Middle School (145 Lincoln Street). It involved a Post-it Note exercise that solicited input on the community's assets and issues, as well as vision for the future; a formal presentation on the baseline assessment, which included an audience polling exercise; and break-out group discussions focusing on visioning and goal setting. A total of 82 participants attended this meeting.

**Figure 1-2 Community Members Participating at the Second Public Meeting**



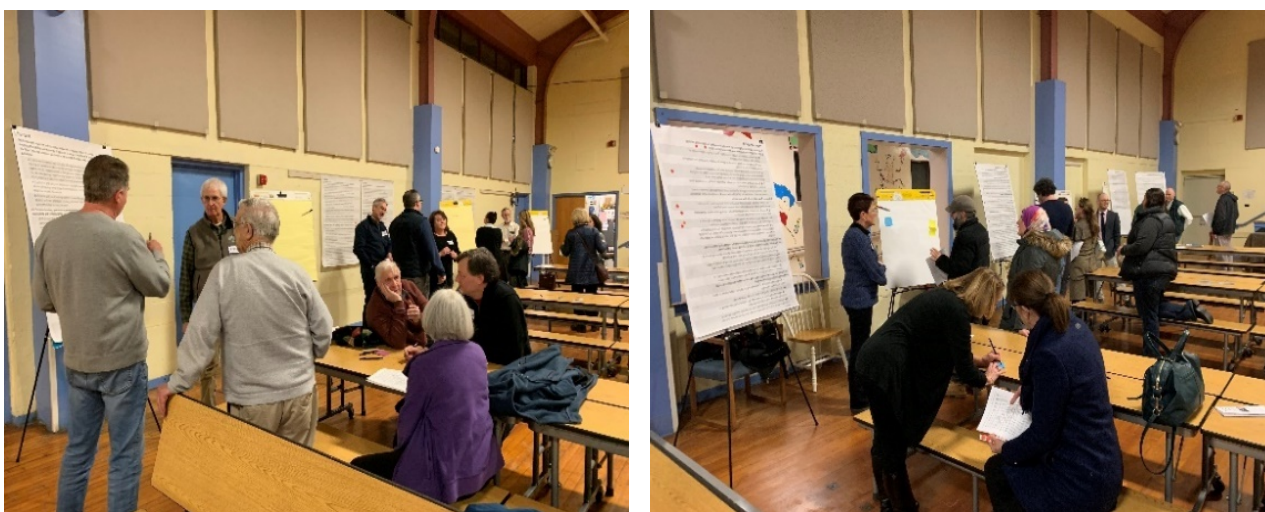


## Introduction

The second public meeting was held on October 4, 2018 at the Algonquin Regional High School (79 Bartlett Street). It offered the public an opportunity to review and discuss a draft vision statement along with draft goals informed by the findings of the baseline assessment and input received from the MPSC and the community at-large. Thirty-five participants joined this meeting.

The final public meeting was held on February 13, 2019 at the Zeh School (33 Howard Street) and presented revised draft goals and preliminary recommendations. This meeting's 23 participants were asked to engage in conversations with MPSC members and the consultants through an open house format. A dot-voting exercise allowed participants to identify their priority recommendations for implementation.

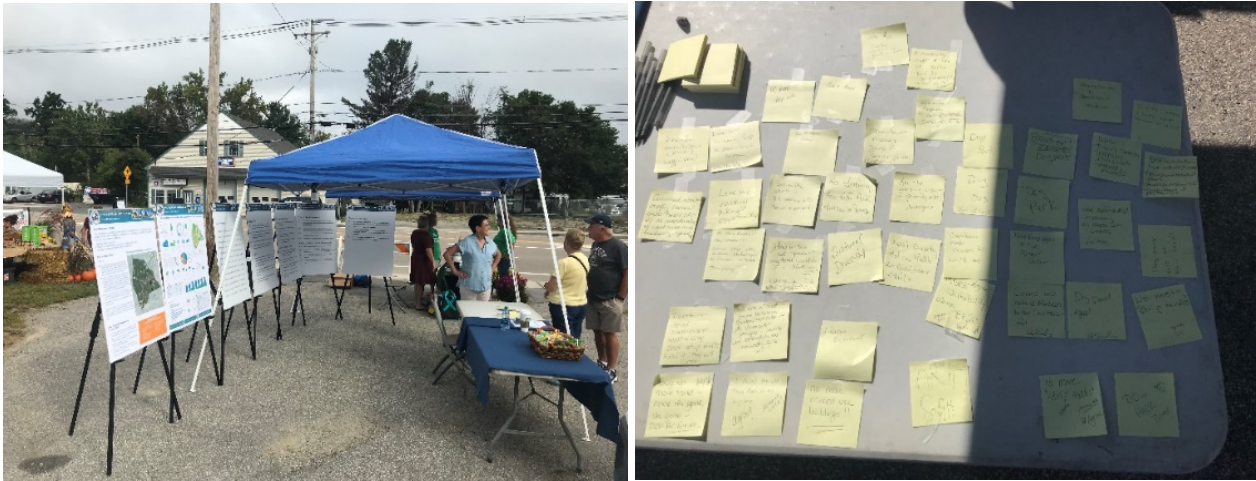
**Figure 1-3 Community Members Participating at the Final Public Meeting**



In addition to the three public meetings, the Town administered three community-wide surveys; all surveys were primarily conducted online, with print copies made available as requested (see Appendix B). The first survey, with a total of 559 responses, asked questions pertinent to the major issues and opportunities facing the Town. The second survey, with a total of 215 responses, asked the community to provide feedback on a draft vision statement and goals. The third survey, with a total of 378 responses, presented revised draft goals and afforded the public an opportunity to review, react, and prioritize draft recommendations.

The Town made efforts to reach out to the public in creative ways, including having a presence at Applefest, an important annual community-gathering event celebrating the Town's agricultural heritage. At this event, MPSC members and the consultants engaged in discussions with community members, who provided their thoughts and ideas on Post-It Notes. MPSC members also performed outreach at social events put on by the Community Affairs Committee (e.g., concerts and movie nights). Lastly, poster boards graphically conveying the purpose of the Master Plan along with key community profile facts and figures were placed in prominent locations (e.g., Town Hall).

Figure 1-4 Community Members Participating in Applefest



All stakeholder and public input collected throughout the Master Plan process was evaluated and integrated into the development of the Master Plan.

## Planning Framework

In synergy with the above mentioned stakeholder and public engagement process, the Master Plan took a four-step process that started with a comprehensive review of the existing baseline conditions of the community, then moved on to the establishment of collective vision and goals for the Town's future, and proceeded toward identifying more focused recommendations. The final step was to develop an implementation plan to support the Town in accomplishing the recommendations designed to achieve the vision and goals.

Upon formal completion of this Master Plan, the Northborough Master Plan Steering Committee will submit the document to the Northborough Planning Board for its review and acceptance. The next step will be for the Board of Selectmen to establish a Master Plan Implementation Committee. The committee will be responsible for assisting the Town in implementing recommendations in the Plan and reporting on the progress of Plan implementation.