

# Envision Milford Community Input Sessions

## Key Themes From Both Sessions

### STRENGTHS

- Sense of community and small-town feel
- Community events – Pumpkin Festival, family activities, parades
- The Oval and historic downtown with shops and businesses
- Unique features such as the swinging bridge and drive-in theater
- Good geographical location, intersection of major roads, proximity to Nashua/Manchester.
- Volunteer resources

### WEAKNESSES

- Lack of sidewalks and walkability
- Lack of effective communication for the entire community
- Deferred maintenance of government buildings
- Infrastructure, parking and deferred maintenance
- Affordable housing

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Take advantage of fixing infrastructure with federal funds and grants
- Multi-modal transportation/improved connections
- Expand retail/commercial/industrial tax base and use tax breaks to attract businesses and offset the tax burden on homeowners
- Untapped grants – grant writer for schools and Town
- New decision makers
- Create new sidewalks – have walking clubs
- Opportunity to increase communication with residents, newspaper, TV, knowledgeable voters

### THREATS

- Economic vulnerability that can change the feel of Milford (economic crash, decisions by legislation)
- Community water, speed of development, growth management, need for industrial development
- Not maintaining the small-town feel/interpersonal relationship/community spirit
- Short-term thinking by leadership on economic decisions
- Aging infrastructure
- Inability to change from the way things have been done (innovation)
- Community education/communication, need more positive community engagement

# Envision Milford Community Input Sessions

## Zoom Community Input Session Summary - 4/11/2023

<p><b>STRENGTHS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small town feel in a great location</li> <li>• Volunteer resources, community, small town vibes</li> <li>• Good geographical location, intersection of major roads, proximity to Nashua/Manchester. Rural but close to Urban</li> <li>• Sense of community</li> </ul>	<p><b>WEAKNESSES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of parking and walkability</li> <li>• Connecting communication in community</li> <li>• Deferred maintenance of government buildings</li> <li>• Infrastructure and parking</li> </ul>
<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take advantage of fixing infrastructure with federal funds and grants</li> <li>• Multi-modal transportation</li> <li>• Expand retail/commercial/industrial tax base and use tax breaks to attract businesses to offset the tax burden on homeowners</li> <li>• Outdoor recreation</li> </ul>	<p><b>THREATS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic vulnerability that can change the feel of Milford (economy crash, decisions by legislation)</li> <li>• Community water, speed of development/growth management, need for industrial.</li> <li>• Not maintaining the small-town feel/interpersonal relationship/community spirit</li> <li>• Short-term thinking by leadership on economic decisions</li> </ul>

**List of Additional Answers:**

**Strengths** – Community programs that appeal to a multitude of different people; the Oval; natural resources/trails; affordable / workforce housing; broad demographics; friendly people/comfortable atmosphere; lower cost of housing vs. Nashua; easy access jobs; good schools; recreation department and events (Pumpkin Festival).

**Weaknesses** – Non-ADA compliant sidewalks, curb ramps, crosswalks, and parking spaces (Town Hall); need more businesses in Town to offset tax rate; empty store fronts; affordable/workforce housing; communication about town affairs/community-wide communication; trees on powerlines; loss of the Cabinet (quality is gone); division/political issues; transportation for residents who are not able to drive; more activities for adults that are reasonably priced; lack of big business; rental vacancy is very low; housing is expensive and

young people move out of town; lack of voting.

**Opportunities** – high speed internet capabilities in town; solar power; electric charging stations; working remotely; add a grant writer to Town staff; extend library facilities; heritage; Brox property; pothole repair; better bike/ped infrastructure.

**Threats** – social media negativity; loss of community identity; short-term thinking (voting); aging infrastructure; only a handful of major employers in town; superfund sites; safety/gun violence – police leaving due to low pay; need for schools/improve schools; industry needs/workers; perceived high taxes; exclusion of diversity; commercial space left unrented; people isolated; inflation; zoning does not protect environment.

# Envision Milford Community Input Sessions

## In-Person Community Input Session Summary - 4/15/2023

### STRENGTHS

- **Community events – pumpkin festival / Family Activities\***
- **The Oval and downtown district / Historical Sites**
- **Unique features – swinging bridge, drive-in, Oval with shops/businesses, parades, activities**
- Safety – feel safe walking, low crime
- Sense of community
- Geographic location/proximity
- Small town character
- Walkability
- School/CTE Center
- Souhegan River – scenic beauty
- Restaurants
- Community Leaders
- “Norman Rockwell” town of NH
- Keyes Field, Recreation, Trails

### WEAKNESSES

- **Infrastructure & deferred maintenance\***
- **Affordable housing**
- **Lack of sidewalks**
- **Lack of communication to residents**
- Political short-sited vision
- Lack of parking
- Traffic – speeding and pedestrian safety
- Leadership follow-up (repairs, schools, library, not spending on old infrastructure)
- Traffic flow/dangerous environment in the Oval
- Community diversity/participation engagement
- School performance/proficiency
- Car dependency

**\*Bold Items have been prioritized by votes.**

### List of Additional Answers:

**Strengths** – Diverse businesses (manufacturing, small businesses, farm stands); community organizations (Boys and Girls Club, etc.); preschool to 12<sup>th</sup> grade in Town; parks – skate park/pool, music in the parks; working farms/agriculture; outdoor resources and open space; bus service; old/historic buildings and history; access to medical care; growing population; emergency services; community leaders/volunteers; community resources – SHARE; convenient services; mix of commercial and residential land uses; historical society; seasons/weather; DPW/landfill; things for kids to do (B&G, HH); larger companies with employment opportunities; progressive spirit.

**Weaknesses** – Empty businesses/no business variety in Oval; public transportation; overdevelopment; property taxes/tax structure; no local newspaper; lack of accessible indoor event space; lack of designated space for seniors and youth; overworked volunteers in Town; distance to major medical; cell service/dead spots; lack of hotel/conventions space; lack of adult education programs.

## Envision Milford Community Input Sessions

### OPPORTUNITIES

- **Untapped grants – grant writer for schools and Town\***
- **New “blood” at the decision – making table**
- **Create new sidewalks – have walking clubs**
- **Opportunity to have more communication with residents, newspaper, TV, knowledgeable voters**
- Library is a great resource – promote and update it (not just books)
- More space/activities for seniors
- 127 Elm/Brox/other undeveloped spaces
- Fill retail space in the Oval
- Multipurpose schools – adult education, MHS/CTE renovation (state funding)
- Community Center (low-cost childcare, senior center, Keyes Field)
- Federal grants and capital reserve to fund “match”
- Multimodal transportation alternatives
- Get more people involved in Town
- Townwide Wi-Fi

### THREATS

- **Aging Infrastructure\***
- **Inability to change from the way things have been done (innovation)**
- **Better community education/communication, need more positive community engagement**
- Cost of living – assessment practices, perceived high taxes
- Lack of affordable housing/rents (workforce)
- Inflation/rising costs
- Overdevelopment/high density development
- Retaining talent
- Town water quality
- Energy costs
- Housing costs
- Increasing taxes/cost of living

**\*Bold Items have been prioritized by votes.**

### List of Additional Answers:

**Opportunities** – Attract more diverse businesses; housing - affordable single-family homes attract people who work from home; signage zoning reform; vacancies; social services to balance growing population and needs; energy committee/solar farms; marketing/promotion of Milford; better collaboration in Town, school administration, and other communities in region; diversity of education (tech schools, charter schools, homeschooling, private schools); community service requirement for students to graduate; use available space for meeting/events/maker spaces; incorporate Souhegan more into Town (access, recreation, events); more winter recreational activities; solar energy; more facilities for electric cars; grow outdoor space/recreation opportunities; bell (promote).

**Threats** – Environmental (storms, flooding); potential drugs/crime due to proximity to Manchester/Nashua; population growth; water supply – drinking wells; capacity at the water/sewage plant; Nimby-ism; changing job opportunity/working from home; crime rate; lack of mental health resources; political will/lack of leadership/short-sighted leadership; bonding requirements; social media negativity, misinformation, reducing civil discourse, and unwillingness to find common ground; becoming a city (newcomers expect city services); lack of creative leadership in town; climate change; transportation at capacity; keeping people in town after school-age; worker shortages; emergency services are a less desirable career; dwindling trade labor force, organizations have less money to help offset other costs.