

Yarmouth Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee (CPSC)
 November 28, 2023
 7:00 PM
 Meeting Summary

Name	Attendance
John Auble	Y
Daniel Backman	Y
Crispin Bokota Bolese	N
Emily Bryson	Y
Judy Colby-George	N
Hildy Ginsberg, Co-Chair	Y
Kevin Hartnett	Y
Miriam Markowitz	N
Tim McGonagle	Y
Tred McIntire	Y
Neena Panosso	N
Todd Rich	N
Bill Richards, Co-Chair	N
Lynne Seeley	Y
Sophie Wentzell	Y
Jamie Whittemore	Y
Sarah Witte	N
Karin Orenstein, Town Council Liaison	Y
Erin Zwirko, Planning Director	Y
Julie Dubovsky, Assistant Planner	Y
Ben Smith, North Star Planning	Y
Kate Burch, North Star Planning	Y

I. Public Comment

None received. No members of the public were in attendance.

II. Review Meeting Summary from October 24

The Committee unanimously approved the meeting summary from October 24, 2023.

III. Debrief on Future Land Use Workshop and Community Engagement

a. Presentation and Discussion on Feedback from Future Land Use Workshop

Kate thanked all the volunteer facilitators for the community conversations and provided an overview of the feedback received at the workshop by geography/typology and the

renderings. For new housing in residential neighborhoods, the top choices were historic homes converted to multifamily, single-family homes on small lots, and single-family homes with Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). For improvements to Route 1, the top choices were landscaping and street trees, more bike infrastructure and increased public transit/benches, and small public spaces was tied with traffic calming. Other suggestions for mixed-use development, redeveloping the Exit 15 Park n Ride, and limiting housing near the highway due to air pollution. For Main Street/Village Enhancements, the top choices were outdoor dining, more small businesses, and public transit service. Kate created a “heat map” to show the overlaps in perceptions of the village area, which showed that about 75% of the participants agreed that the village area extends all the way down to the I295 overpasses. The group discussed how these findings and the map correlated with the existing Growth Area.

For the rural crossroads rendering, most people liked it and suggested it would work well on Route 1, at North Road and on Main Street. For the Live/Work Complex, overall people liked it, but there was some preference for smaller scale, and the most popular recommendation for it was along Route 1. Other top locations were East Main Street, West Elm, Hillside, and East Elm Street. The group discussed how they heard feedback at the event that people had a hard time separating the literal recommendation of where the rendering would fit in to what it included conceptually. Many people were not aware of the different densities, scales and setbacks already existing in town that were representative of the renderings.

Other themes discussed were bike/pedestrian infrastructure, the need for balancing open space with growth, and, surprisingly, concern about short-term rentals (STRs). While short-term rentals did not come up at the Housing Community Conversation, there was a lot of discussion about them – for and against – and for many attendees they were tangled up with ADUs. Erin shared her prior research that the number of STRs has not drastically increased and they can be found all over town, not just the islands. The CPSC agreed that the dominant opposition to being or becoming a “vacation town” should be included in the draft plan that would help support the Town Council’s exploration of short-term rental regulations.

Kate added that the 50 post-workshop survey responses indicate the importance of balance, which Ben noted is a common dichotomy about change being inevitable vs. guiding it. CPSC discussed how the opposition was a response to incremental poor land use decisions that created sprawl from the 1960s-1990s and how to communicate this in the plan.

IV. Moving from Vision and Feedback to Goals, Policies, Strategies

a. Presentation and Discussion on next steps developing local goals

Ben explained that the last meeting of 2023 would focus on the CPSC identifying the desired outcomes for the town, which would be high level and aspirational, and often relate to a vision or values statement. Below the bigger picture goals are the policies (the best practice for how to reach a goal) and then the actions to be taken. Developing local goals can involve taking the 2022 Vision Statement and the Vision Statement from

the 2010 Comprehensive Plan and common threads from public input received. The CPSC's homework for the next meeting will be to think individually about this and then regroup for focused work on each of the inventory topics and interrelated themes. A required component is a big spreadsheet and table with state requirements and local policies, but the key is to organize the document clearly, so readers don't have to go to a big spreadsheet unless they prefer to. Ben opened the discussion to the group for general discussion.

John noted that the economic shift of the last ten years and its impacts on the town has stood out from all the feedback. The group discussed how it has impacted every facet of the community and how the plan can incorporate regional coordination and collaboration to address larger, free market externalities. Emily noted that while housing affordability was heard repeatedly, in the same breath people prioritized preserving open space, walkability, "bikability," and being a sustainable community. The challenge is showing how that all ties into a desire for community resilience. Erin noted that preserving wildlife corridors has also been heard a lot. These are not siloed themes but are connected by resiliency overall – Yarmouth's natural and human resiliency.

Another reoccurring theme is the desire for vibrancy and the way people experience the corridors (natural and man-made) to get to the everyday and special (like Sandy Point) places in town. The more equitable distribution and condition of these resources – such as sidewalks – is another aspect of this theme. The 2010 theme of civic engagement also ties into the desire to maintain and improve vibrancy. Small businesses are still an integral part of this.

The staff and NSP gave some more details on the homework and encouraged committee members to attend in person.

V. Report on Other Events

a. Com-plan-ion Event: Historic Village Walking Tour

Erin gave a recap of the event with 20-25 people and interviews with 3 property owners. The group stayed within 10–15-minute walk of Latchstring Park. The group didn't get into a formal discussion about zoning, but Lynne did point it out to folks along the walk. She noted there is a need to add context about zoning into the video and Dan agreed that more education is needed beyond the video about what the zoning, lot sizes and setbacks translate into at the streetscape. Dan noted that people were interested in interpreting what they saw for their own properties, related to downsizing, and how there was interest in doing another one in the spring in a different part of the town.

b. Other events in the planning stage

Erin added that other events in development were at the harbor front, with the Bike & Pedestrian Committee, Climate Action, and storytelling in the winter.

- VI. **CPSC Meeting Schedule**
 - a. **Upcoming Date: December 19**

- VII. **Adjournment**
 - The meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM.