

Section 1

GOALS AND VISION

INTRODUCTION

A comprehensive or master plan is a body of statements or recommendations on public policies that are broad in scope and long-range in perspective, designed as a framework for the guidance of town officials and the community at large. It embraces a spectrum of ideas from citizens and becomes a proactive working tool that helps improve the quality of life in a town.

Article 56 at the 1995 Annual Town Meeting, created a committee to review the master plan process and either update Kingston's 1970 Comprehensive Plan or draft a new master plan. All towns need to adopt a master plan to comply with Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 41, Section D.

The fourteen person Kingston Master Plan Committee is composed of a representative from the Board of Selectman, Finance Committee, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Water Commission, Board of Health, School Committee, a local environmental organization, the local business community and three residents at large and two alternate resident representatives. The Committee initially convened in September 1995.

Funded with a grant of \$7,500 from the Executive Office of Communities and Development, the Committee held several public forums which drew large numbers of participants. The citizens at these forums voiced the viewpoints which constitute *Kingston Visioning: Goals, Policies and Proposals*. This document, in turn, guided the drafting of the Master Plan.

The 1996 Annual and Special Town Meetings provided \$40,000 to complete the Master Plan, enabling the Master Plan Committee to hire as consultants Beals and Thomas, Inc., in cooperation with Parsons Brinkerhoff Quade and Douglas, Inc., to assist in completion of the Plan.

The Committee convened several more town wide forums and workshops to discuss issues involving transportation, sewerage, public services and facilities, land use and the projected "build out" of the Town. These additional insights were incorporated into the 1998 Kingston Master Plan.

The Committee recognizes that planning is a continuous process. This 1998 Master Plan is a statement of "strategic intent" which will provide Kingston citizens and officials a reference and "benchmarking" tool. It is anticipated that the Master Plan will be adopted by the Planning Board during March 1998 and ratified by the 1998 Annual Town Meeting. Following the Plan's

ratification, a Master Plan Implementation Committee should be formed. The charge of this committee will be to implement the recommendations outlined in the Master Plan.

By implementing these recommendations, the goals outlined in this plan can be achieved through community activism and municipal cooperation

KINGSTON VISION STATEMENT

The Town of **Kingston** envisions itself as an extremely vibrant community with

- its **small town atmosphere** maintained as it matures in the twenty-first century,
- its natural system of waterways extending from Kingston Bay and the Jones River throughout the town preserved and improved through pollution abatement and open space preservation,
- the beauty of its **cranberry bogs and wooded roadside character** maintained,
- its **historic Main Street** and other architectural resources preserved and enhanced, and
- its **downtown area** revitalized;

where the town pro-actively directs its development through a **planning approach** which is supported by the actions of public officials, citizen boards, and town citizens who continue to develop and reinforce their consensus through public forums;

where the school system provides a **superior education** in state of the art facilities employing current technology in all grades and offers an exemplary adult education program;

where **economic development** results in expanded and new light industry and high-tech businesses in designated areas, providing jobs and generating an expanded tax base to provide needed public services, without increasing the tax burden of residents;

where different types of **housing** are available and **affordable**;

where a range of **social and recreational opportunities** is available to all residents; and

where Kingston citizens take **pride** in their community.

GOALS AND VISIONING PROCESS

The vision and goals statements for Kingston were developed through a public participatory planning process consisting of two Saturday morning workshops and a follow-up evening work session over a three-month period in the spring of 1996. This project is envisioned to be a first step towards updating the town's 1970 Comprehensive Plan. Thus, this visioning effort enables the Town to structure its future master plan within the context of the consensus achieved.

At the outset, the consultant reviewed current planning documentation and recent studies. He conducted a preliminary assessment of the town from field observations through a reconnaissance process perfected over many assignments. During this several day period, the Town Planner spent a day in the field with the consultant to share his insight about the town. Next, the consultant met with the Master Plan Committee and the Town Planner to prepare for the public visioning workshop sessions.

At the organizational meeting, steps were taken to obtain participation by people representing the entire spectrum of interests and diverse opinions about the future of the town. Special efforts were made to inform various groups and individuals about the planning process. General publicity included articles in the newspaper, cable and radio announcements, and posters placed in public buildings and business locations around town. A training session was also conducted for committee members so they would feel comfortable in their role as facilitators at the two workshop sessions.

The visioning process included the following steps.

1. Workshop Number 1 on March 23, 1996, which was attended by 98 people, addressed the topic of "Issues for the Future." The first of two segments of the workshop addressed Kingston as a place; what are its assets or the positive characteristics to build upon and what are its drawbacks or those things that need fixing? The second segment identified issues and then all the citizens in attendance prioritized the issues identified.
2. After the workshop, the identified issues were organized into major categories and a summary was prepared indicating the priorities established by workshop participants. The resulting document was mailed to all persons attending the workshop. Additional copies were made available in public locations.
3. Workshop Number 2 on April 6, 1996, which was attended by 56 people, addressed the topic of "Answers for the Future". The first of two segments of this workshop addressed solutions for the most important issues identified in the first workshop. They included: Schools; Traffic and Transportation; Planning, Growth Control and Zoning; Town Character and Historic Preservation; Open Space and Recreation; Environmental Protection; and Town Government and Services. The second segment of the workshop continued to build solutions for all of the

other categories of issues identified in the first workshop. All attendees then participated in identifying the most prized solutions and recorded their top three goals.

4. Based on the issues and ideas generated during the two workshops, a draft vision statement and a set of goals or principles for the future was prepared and mailed to all participants at both workshops. Instructions were included for making changes by mail or by attending the final public evening work session. Additional copies of the vision statement and goals were also made available in public locations.
5. Lastly, an evening public work session was held by the Master Plan Committee on May 8, 1996, which was attended by 38 people, to receive responses and suggestions. The good turnout resulted in numerous adjustments that achieved a consensus among attendees. The Master Plan Committee reviewed all documentation. The resulting vision and goals statement will be used as an essential input to the preparation of the Master Plan and as a check to see that proposals are in line with the aspirations of the town.

GOALS, POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

The following Goals, Policies and Proposals were developed during the public planning process that occurred in the spring of 1996.

Goals express the most basic community values that reflect the general agreement of the community and can be considered as relatively permanent. In the Goals, Policies and Proposals section of this element, goals are in *Italics*.

Policies are general guidelines or principles that are the basic recommendations of the plan and are meant to be relatively permanent, changing only rarely over the years. In the Goals, Policies and Proposals section of this element, policies are in underlined regular typeface.

Proposals are specific suggestions or actions to carry out policies. There are generally several alternative methods of implementing a policy. By intention, proposals are flexible and subject to modification. A particular proposal may fail or be rejected without compromising the policy. If one proposal is not approved, you would go to other alternatives to carry out the goal and policy. In the Goals, Policies and Proposals section of this element, proposals are in regular typeface and preceded by a bullet.

Land Use and Growth Management

Plan residential and commercial growth with the desired objective of protecting the small town character of Kingston.

Protect the integrity of residential, historic and natural resource areas.

- Allow more creative, interactive land use development i.e. Cluster Development, Planned Residential Developments, and a wide range of housing types providing additional life-style options.
- Develop and/or protect natural resources.
- Consider architectural review board for all new construction and substantial rehabilitation.

Limit commercial and industrial development to appropriate areas.

- Control adverse impacts of commercial development including peak hour traffic, large open paved parking areas, the visual chaos of signs, and degradation of the natural environment.

Control and plan growth taking into account its impact on services and infrastructure.

- Prepare a master plan that is pro-active as well as responsive to growth and development pressures.
- Provide the mechanism to ensure that the master plan is used as a continual working document and referenced when setting town policy.
- Enhance capital planning process to include additional infrastructure considerations (example: sewerage).

Housing

Ensure that the town remains an affordable and enjoyable place to live for everyone.

Encourage the creation of housing that spans the spectrum of incomes.

Economic Development

Provide for a sound local economy which provides suitable employment opportunities for residents and which expands the tax base.

Revitalize the downtown area.

Promote economic development for both existing commercial enterprises and to attract new light industrial/high-tech companies.

- Establish an economic task force and business development office to promote economic development in Kingston.

Develop jobs from the natural resources of the Jones River and Kingston Bay.

- Restore shellfish beds for recreational and commercial use.
- Investigate aquaculture opportunities in town and possible state and/or federal funding to broaden the economic base.

Environmental Protection and Open Space

Preserve and protect natural resources and natural systems.

Eliminate pollution of our water resources and protect our drinking water.

- Investigate all sources of pollution and degradation that affect our aquifer and waterways.

Protect the town's natural resources: open space, water bodies, and waterways such as Silver Lake, the Jones River estuary, its tributaries, and Kingston Bay.

Restore the natural resources of shellfish beds, fishing in rivers and the bay.

- Provide sewerage of Rocky Nook, Town Center, Landing Road, the Town Landing, and all other areas that adversely impact Jones River and Kingston Bay.

Develop an interconnected system of permanently protected open spaces.

- Preserve and enhance the beach, waterfront and Jones River area for public use and enjoyment.
- Develop a system of bike path/walking areas.
- Provide greater public access to town ponds.

Balance open space acquisition with future development.

- Continue to fund and purchase open space at least at the present rate in order to provide for municipal needs.

Community Character and Historic Preservation

Enhance the overall aesthetics and appearance of Kingston, maintain the small town quality we enjoy, and protect our heritage.

Establish measures necessary to preserve and protect the historical properties and sites in town.

- Complete inventory of historic resources in town.
- Create a local exhibit area for Town historical artifacts.

Establish historic districts where appropriate for protection of our heritage.

- Explore designating Kingston Center an historic district.

Retain the sense of spaciousness and rural surroundings.

- Maintain agricultural uses such as cranberry bogs.

Recreation

Provide opportunities for active and passive, formal and informal participation in recreational activities by all age groups and abilities.

Create additional recreational facilities for all ages to keep up with expanding population, i.e. bike path, community pool, parks, etc.

- Develop an area(s) for “sports and recreation” (for youth and adult) to include areas for family and civic activities.
- Develop and implement a plan for a facility and program for recreation/community use that would be used for all age groups from the youngest citizens through teen and up to our senior citizens.
- Establish an arts center that provides studios, art classes, dance, theater, music, art displays, etc.

Expand Kingston recreation youth program.

Establish town Parks Department with paid administrator to maintain facilities.

Community Facilities and Services

Provide a full range of public facilities for present and future residents, and ensure that the necessary municipal services and public utilities are provided to serve existing and proposed development.

Formulate and implement a master plan for the town.

Promote community participation in planning.

- Continue Town public planning forums at key points but at least annually in order to foster community communications, consensus, and energize momentum for action in accordance with the plan.
- Create mechanism for amendment for master plan.

Create contemporary zoning provisions (e.g. impact fees: transfer of development rights) and conduct better enforcement of zoning.

- Encourage open space/cluster development especially in environmentally sensitive areas.
- Enforce and develop regulations regarding signage and commercial displays in residential areas to preserve and enhance visual character of town.

- Continue to address the regulation of adult entertainment.

Explore impact fees to defray extraordinary impacts on community.

- Continue to look into ways to have developers contribute to the town's infrastructure to help pay for new demands on public services and facilities.

Prioritize the Capital Improvements Plan to be consistent with the Master Plan and the Goals, Policies and Proposals.

Work within water supply capacity constraints relative to capability to accommodate future development.

- Protect existing water supply resources.
- Identify and acquire additional well sites, protect aquifer and develop wells in order to provide for adequate water supplies for full development (build-out).
- Address the adequacy of fire protection facilities to keep pace with growth including service to the far northwest or southwest corners of the town.
- Encourage water conservation.

Institute town sewer system to attract business, respond to residential growth, and protect water.

- Solve sewer problems in Rocky Nook, Town Center, Landing Road, and the Town Landing because of failure of existing septic systems.

Enhance community policing to make more visible presence and improve image, visibility and support.

Expand and enhance governmental relationships with citizens.

- Provide activities for senior citizens.
- Promote greater involvement by residents in town affairs.
- Seek better ways to use existing communications (E-mail, newspapers and cable) to keep residents informed.
- Establish more family community and town gatherings to develop a greater sense of "Community".

Expand recycling.

Public Education

Work toward an exemplary public school system from K-12, using regional resources as appropriate.

Provide state of the art elementary school facilities.

Investigate and reassess regional school structure.

Provide a wide range of extracurricular programs.

- Enhance programs within the schools to foster tolerance and celebrate diversity.
- Continue to invest in school sports and other extracurricular activities.
- Encourage student involvement in community service projects.

Establish new, timely educational programs.

- Involve industry in the education process (school-to-career) to improve competitiveness and expose students to career options.

Maintain and increase continuing professional development for teachers.

Establish a self-supporting after school program that provides care for small children of working parents.

Provide high quality relevant education for all citizens throughout their life to address continual changes in the work force.

Traffic and Circulation

Ensure that transportation systems meet local and regional needs with acceptable levels of service.

Prepare a comprehensive traffic infrastructure plan.

- Develop parking for downtown or spaces available to downtown.
- Address traffic congestion around Kingston Center and Independence Mall.
- Work with developers and MBTA to upgrade major road access to MBTA station.

Develop plans for travel throughout the town for bikes and pedestrians.

- Build a bike/walk path at least 20 miles long connecting neighborhoods and convenience centers for transportation and recreation.

Create alternative modes within the Town other than the private automobile.

- Develop public transportation for train access, i.e. shuttle to train station to minimize local street traffic, and allow local residents access.