

January 21, 2020

Mr. Nathan Poore, Town Manager
Town of Falmouth
271 Falmouth Road
Falmouth ME 04105

Hello, Nathan,

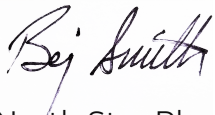
The Vision Statement is the foundation of Comprehensive Plans in Maine. It is the basis for the Future Land Use Map and Plan and identifying the locally important priorities that go beyond the standard, state-mandated goals and strategies to include in the Plan. Getting the Vision right is more than just an exercise in wordsmithing. It is about the process to solicit input, receive feedback, and engage residents and business owners in a discussion about issues that matter most to the community.

The public participation process has moved from a focus on legal advertising and public presentations just to check the box for state requirements. Technology and web-based interactions can augment face-to-face interactions. Helping the community understand and weigh the pros and cons of plausible future scenarios can get beyond the generic, mom-and-apple-pie vision statements common in the early 2000s, and hopefully get to genuine participation and community building.

We look forward to an opportunity to discuss this project with you and to refine the proposed scope for Phase 1 work that best meet your needs, and also hope to assist with Phase 2 work on the Comprehensive Plan when the time comes for that portion of the project.

Sincerely,

Ben Smith, Principal



North Star Planning

Project Understanding

The Town of Falmouth is going to be updating its 2013 Comprehensive Plan, but is separating out the Vision Statement work, described as Phase 1 in the RFQ, from the other elements of the Comprehensive Plan. These other elements described as Phase 2 work items, and will be required for the Plan Update to gain a finding of consistency with the Growth Management Act. The selected consultant for Phase 1 work may or may not be selected for Phase 2 work, and there is no timeline provided for the start of Phase 2 work in the RFQ.

Over the last couple of years, Falmouth has been unwinding much of the implementation work that earlier elected officials put in place between 2014 and 2018. Stalled projects in West Falmouth and on Route 1 that seem to fit with the adopted vision and priorities of both the 2013 Plan as well as earlier planning work have fallen by the wayside. Residential projects that add density in identified growth areas have resulted in building moratoria.

Separating the community visioning process from the rest of the work to update the comprehensive plan could in lower the stakes of the visioning process. Separating the conversations around community and change from the process of creating a Future Land Use Plan and potential zoning changes will allow people to freely think about which parts of Falmouth should change the most over the next 20 years and which parts should change the least.

Another advantage of keeping the focus on visioning work only, at this point is that it allows the Town to go back to the plan and take a fresh look at the 2013 Plan recommendations from the perspective of fresh visioning input. As much as this Phase 1 work offers a chance to change or modify the Vision Statement, it is also an opportunity to restate or reaffirm basic values and attitudes that haven't changed much over time. This could shape the approach for Phase 2 planning in a way that keeps and expands on certain elements of the 2013 Plan.



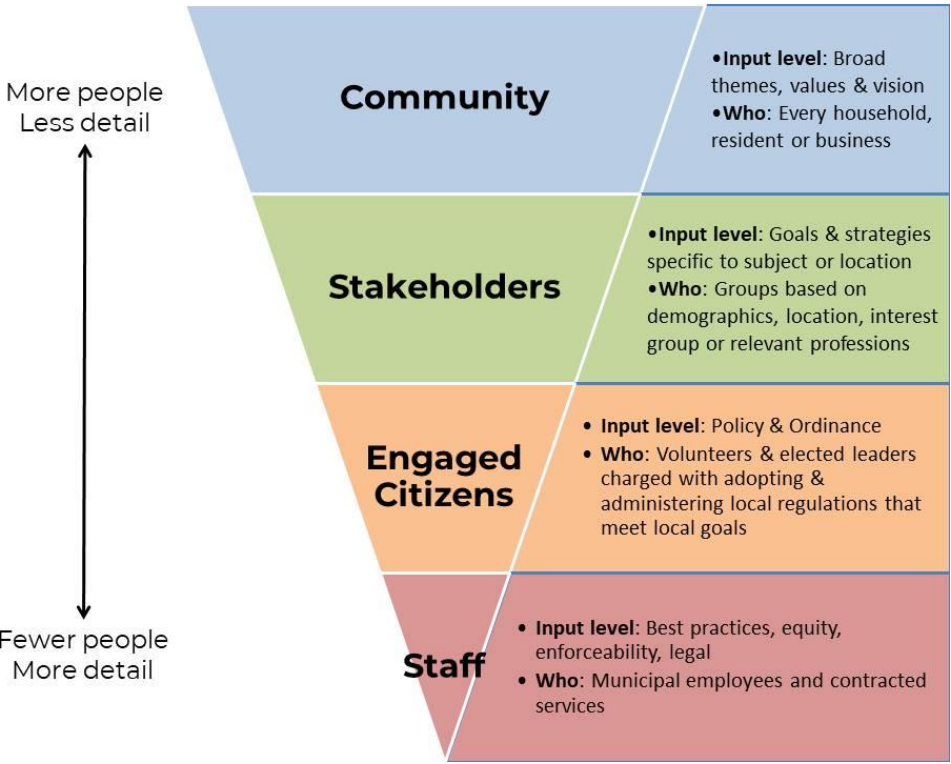
Project Approach

Deliverables

North Star Planning envisions a Values & Vision Statement that can be presented to the Town Council for an official adoption as the final product for this work. That Values and Vision Statement will be the launching point for Phase 2 work to update the other parts of the 2013 Comprehensive Plan.

Process

North Star Planning is committed to a process that will give all Falmouth residents an opportunity to contribute to the Vision Statement, which will then be used as the basis for an update to the Comprehensive Plan. We understand that discussions about how to balance community land use decisions and land use rights are some of the most personal conversations a Town can have with individual residents. When considering the specific public outreach methods for a planning effort like this, we keep the overall goals of the planning project in mind.



For a planning project at this level of visioning, all members of the community need to be considered and engaged. Most of the public engagement effort should be spent on the upper two levels and deal with broad themes, community values and vision. A public participation plan at this stage should focus on making it possible to hear from as many residents and businesses as possible.

A key role of the Town Council and other Boards, as noted in the RFQ, will be to ensure that staff and the North Star Planning team are hearing from the broadest possible range of voices in the community and not just the usual people who show up for public meetings held at the Town Office on weekday evenings. The objective is to make sure that all public input is fairly considered and represented in the final Comprehensive Plan document. Nothing is more frustrating to people who invest time and effort to provide feedback only to have it ignored.

The role of the consultant should be well defined at the beginning of this project and so too should the role of town staff. In projects such as this, planning staff serve as the project managers of the planning project, and also handle meeting and workshop logistics, create and maintain a project web page with agendas, schedules, meeting materials and planning products as they are created. Staff members are the day-to-day contacts for community members with questions, ideas, or concerns.

Outreach

We expect there will be a number of larger, community-scale meetings and potentially a handful of smaller group meetings based on specific user groups. The purpose of these smaller group meetings are to engage with people where they are and ensure that as many community perspectives are considered in the development of a Values and Vision Statement as possible. For example, holding an event or facilitating a focus group at the high school will help ensure that younger resident voices are part of this larger conversation.

Finally, Comprehensive Plan products need to move beyond paper documents. Thinking about a reader's experience when accessing the plan online is critical, as is thinking about how to get input and communicate plan recommendations on the web. The link below goes to a YouTube channel for the Town of Windham. Three videos were produced to present the updated Plan recommendations to the community. Together, these videos received over 7,000 views during the lead up to the community meeting to present the plan:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC2FVGSnwMi3CXCXc4kZfTYQ>

Considerations Regarding Scope of Work

The proposed tasks outlined below are reflective of an anticipated 4-6 month project timeframe. We remain flexible with regard to the final work plan and expect that the project tasks could be modified as part of the evaluation and contracting process as we continue a conversation to better fit the overall needs of the project.

Each sub-item in the task list below represents a check-in point with the Town Council. The Council will be updated in the form of a memo at the completion of each sub-task item and in person by North Star Planning at the completion of each Task. Memos can be submitted directly to the Town Council or through town staff or the CPSC.

Task 1 – Foundation for Visioning

This task includes the preliminary work to set the stage for effective visioning work. This work includes getting the consulting team up to speed with some of the most important issues to think about and to get the community ready to engage productively on these issues.

Task 1.1 –Update of key inventory data

North Star staff will update key data to identify trends and facts related to residential building permits and growth, new developments within business districts and conservation efforts. The purpose of this effort will be to establish a baseline narrative that will be used as the foundation for a common understanding of recent Falmouth growth and land use issues.

Product = “What we’ve learned” presentation for use in Task 2



Task 1.2 – Department Head and Senior Staff interviews

Working through the Town Manager, North Star Planning will conduct 30-minute interviews with all department heads and identified senior staff members over the course of a day or two. These interviews will provide insight from the professionals who work through community issues on a daily basis. The focus of the interviews will be on Falmouth's issues and opportunities over the next five years from a departmental perspective, as well as specific departmental items that should have some level of public awareness as planning for the community progresses.

Product = Interview Summary Report

Task 1.3 – Community Survey

Falmouth should consider administering a survey designed to capture values, attitudes and vision for Falmouth from community members. This could take the form of a primarily web-based survey designed and administered by the North Star team or an effort that looks more like the 2011 survey administered by a professional polling firm that gave the Town a high degree of confidence that the results were representative of the community at large. A North Star survey would be faster to develop, and with a good response rate would provide valuable data and insight. Involving a professional polling firm would be much more expensive but it would also be very interesting to see how responses change or stay the same over the almost 10 years since the last formal survey.

Regardless of the approach selected, the survey should be promoted on the Town's website, Facebook page, and through school newsletters and other channels available to the Town. Paper copies of the surveys should be available at key locations or events.

Product = Survey Summary Report from North Star or detailed statistical analysis of results if the survey is managed by a polling firm.

Task 1.4 – Idea Boards

Idea boards with questions and prompts such as, “What is your big idea for Falmouth?” and “What do you love about Falmouth?” are a great way to start an interaction with the public. This methodology provides a short, high-level question and uses Post-It notes for the public to write short responses. This can be used to get early public input, build awareness of the project, and serve as notice boards for upcoming events and more in-depth participation opportunities.

Idea boards can be changed easily and as often as necessary. They can also be moved and reused at various public locations (town office, library, school sporting events, and more) and also be used throughout a visioning process as opposed to a one-time event or meeting.

Product = Idea board analysis and summary



Task 2 – Community Engagement

The work of this task is focused on interactions and conversations with the Falmouth community, meaning residents and business owners, and people of all ages. Providing an opportunity for Falmouth community members to provide input outside of traditional face-to-face meetings and workshops will be critical to ensuring broad participation that is as representative of the community as possible.

Task 2.1 – Community Visioning Workshops

North Star Planning envisions 2-3 community-scale workshops for Falmouth residents and business owners. These meetings would likely be scheduled at a school or large hall where both presentations and smaller group work would be possible. The goal of these sessions will be to get people to think about “What We’ve Learned” and provide their ideas and thoughts on a vision for the future, the core values of the community, and attitudes regarding various planning issues in the community.

A short online video is envisioned at this sub-task to share “What We’ve Learned” information with the community and promote the Community Workshops described here in Task 2.1. This video should be posted on the Falmouth website, the Town’s Facebook page, and promoted on YouTube and through Facebook. It will be similar to videos produced for Windham’s Comprehensive Planning process; which received over 7,000 views prior to the public meeting presenting recommendations in the Windham Comprehensive Plan Update -

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC2FVGSnwMi3CXCXc4kZfTYQ>

Another example is the video currently posted on the Town of Gray Facebook page promoting their Future Land Use Plan Open House and earlier video promoting a visioning survey and workshops last fall -

<https://www.facebook.com/townofgrayme/>

*Product = Visioning Workshops Summary
Online Video #1*

Task 3.2 – Focus Group facilitation

These sessions will address the same types of issues as the large format Visioning Sessions in smaller, more interest-specific group. North Star will work with the staff to analyze attendance at the community-wide sessions and think about who was not part of those conversations. Examples could include members of the agricultural/fishing communities, recreation or youth sports representatives, school-age residents, or members of the business community. North Star anticipates facilitating 2-4 focus groups with selected groups to further develop a well-rounded process that hears from as many perspectives as possible.

Product = Focus Group Summaries

Task 3.3 – Draft Statement of Values and Vision

This sub-task represents the final step in the Phase 1 project. Working with the staff and relevant committees, North Star Planning staff will synthesize all of the information received through public participation, key data and trends, and interviews with town staff. The resulting Draft Statement of Values and Vision will be the basis for discussions around Future Land Use, town-specific Policies & Strategies, and new chapters to be developed in a Phase 2 project. This is also an appropriate point in the process to develop a second online video to communicate the draft Values and Vision Statement

*Products = Draft Statement of Values and Vision
Online Video #2*



Qualifications

Project Team

Ben Smith, AICP: Project Manager & Principal Planner

Ben is the Principal of North Star Planning, a planning and development firm based in North Yarmouth, Maine. He will be the primary point of contact for Falmouth during this project. Ben will be responsible for overall project management and will attend all CPSC meetings, Council updates and other public workshops and meetings.

Ben has 15 years of experience as a community planner, state and local levels as well as in the private sector. Until April 2018, Ben was the Planning Director in Windham, Maine, where he managed long-term planning and policy work. His work there included an update to the Comprehensive Plan and support for the Land Use Ordinance Committee (pre-Comp Plan) and the Long-Range Planning Committee (post-Comp Plan). These committees were responsible for ordinance updates to reflect town policies and the goals and priorities of the Comprehensive Plan.

Sarah DelGizzo: Planner

Sarah DelGizzo joined North Star Planning in July. Sarah is working on a wide variety of projects with North Star and the Musson Group (Noel Musson on MDI), including comprehensive planning, open space planning, ordinance and policy development, organizational strategic planning, project management, and the design and facilitation of public participation programs. Prior to her move to Maine, Sarah was the Housing Development Assistant for a nonprofit affordable housing organization in Massachusetts. She holds a master's degree in Urban Affairs from Boston University. Sarah works out of the North Star Planning office in New Gloucester.

BEN SMITH, AICP

PRINCIPAL PLANNER

NORTH STAR PLANNING

Ben is the owner and principal of North Star Planning. He is a certified planner with a broad range of experience in public and private sector planning. This experience includes community and neighborhood master planning, land use and transportation planning, watershed and regional planning, public outreach and participation, development review and permitting, infrastructure and facility planning, zoning and ordinance development, and project management.

EDUCATION

- M.A. Muskie School of Public Service at the University of Southern Maine
Community Planning & Development
- B.A. Bates College
Psychology

PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT

- 2017 - present North Star Planning
Owner and Principal Planner
North Yarmouth, ME
- 2014 - 2018 Town of Windham, ME
Planning Director
- 2007 - 2014 Town of Windham, ME
Assistant Town Planner
- 2005 - 2007 HNTB Corporation
Transportation Planner
Westbrook, ME

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

American Planning Association, Northern New England Chapter
Maine Association of Planners
Growsmart Maine, Board member & current Treasurer

SELECTED PROJECT EXPERIENCE

TOWN OF WINDHAM COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE, Windham, ME. Project manager for complete update of 2003 plan. Responsible for committee support, development of public participation outline, visioning work, development of a future land use plan, drafting inventory chapters, drafting goals and strategies, and developing the plan summary.

TOWN OF LISBON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE, Lisbon, ME Assisted the Planning Board with an update of the inventory chapters, developing a vision statement, updating the future land use plan, and the plan summary.

TOWN OF GRAY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE, Gray, ME. Project manager for this major update to existing 2003 plan. Responsible for committee support, development of public participation outline, visioning work, development of a future land use plan, and drafting goals and strategies.

TOWN OF YARMOUTH OPEN SPACE PLAN, Yarmouth, ME. Provided technical support and guidance to Open Space Task Force committee to bring multi-year planning process to completion. Plan provides guidance for future acquisitions, improvements for existing open spaces and policy recommendations.

TOWN CENTER PLAN, Town of Hampden. A downtown revitalization and placemaking plan focused on transportation and land use recommendations.

21ST CENTURY DOWNTOWN PLAN FOR NORTH WINDHAM, Town of Windham. Implementation includes ordinance updates, major infrastructure improvements. Maine Association of Planners Plan of the Year, 2014.

KATADHIN WOODS AND WATERS NATIONAL MONUMENT MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN, Northern Maine The Management Framework Plan will provide broad direction for the types of activities and management approaches for the Monument and priorities for action.

GATEWAY I PROJECT, Maine Department of Transportation. Regional transportation/land use project for 21 mid-coast Maine communities along US Route 1. Tasks included comparative comprehensive plan and zoning analysis, traffic studies, and public participation.

BEN SMITH, AICP

PRINCIPAL PLANNER

NORTH STAR PLANNING

CERTIFICATIONS & TRAININGS

American Institute of Certified Planners

Sustainable Comprehensive Planning.
APA Training

MaineDOT Local Project Administration (LPA)

ORDINANCE REVISIONS BASED ON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, Gorham, ME. Zoning and ordinance changes to implement portions of Town of Gorham Comprehensive Plan

BUSINESS PARK ORDINANCE, Hampden, ME. Business Park covenant revisions and ordinance updates for the Town of Hampden.

ORDINANCE CONSOLIDATION, Naples, ME. Consolidation of seven ordinances into a single Land Use Ordinance for the Town of Naples.

RECODIFICATION LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT CODE, Kittery, ME. Includes organizational and substantive changes to the existing land use and development code for the Town of Kittery.

CONTRACT ZONING, Windham, ME. Contract zoning & land use ordinance amendments for impact fees, tax increment financing, and design standards and guidelines for the Town of Windham.

NORTH ROUTE 302 TRANSPORTATION PLAN, Town of Windham. Maine Turnpike Authority. Toll Plaza Diversion Studies, Maine. Designed methodology for measuring percentage of traffic on local roads in vicinity of York and New Gloucester barrier tolls.

ROADSIDE SIGNAGE INVENTORY & ANALYSIS, Maine Turnpike Authority. GIS and asset management project to locate and document conditions of sign assets.

COMPLETE STREETS POLICY, Town of Windham. Developed 4th such policy in Maine with the goal of considering all users of transportation infrastructure when improvements are planned.

SARAH DELGIZZO

PLANNER

NORTH STAR PLANNING

Sarah is a planner at North Star Planning. She has served as a planning consultant for municipalities and has worked in the nonprofit sector developing affordable housing. This experience includes community planning, zoning and ordinance development, community engagement, development review and permitting, and project management.

EDUCATION

M.A. Metropolitan College
Boston University
Urban Affairs

B.A. Saint Michael's College
Political Science

PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT

2019 - present North Star Planning
Planner
North Yarmouth, ME

2018 - 2019 Metro West Collaborative
Development
Housing Development
Assistant

2016 - 2018 Boston University
Assistant Director, Admissions
Advisor

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

American Planning Association, Northern
New England Chapter
Maine Association of Planners
Growsmart Maine

CERTIFICATIONS & TRAININGS

Applied Sustainability Graduate Certificate,
Metropolitan College, Boston University

Mel King Institute:
Introduction to Community Economic
Development
Introduction to Program and Project
Management
Community Engagement: Tools for
Inclusive Participation
Aging in Community and Supportive
Housing

SELECTED PROJECT EXPERIENCE

TOWN OF GRAY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE, Gray, ME.
Responsible for visioning group facilitation, survey administration, and stakeholder interviews.

TOWN OF BELFAST COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE, Belfast, ME.
Responsible for inventory chapter drafting and committee support in the update of Belfast's Comprehensive Plan.

TOWN OF YARMOUTH OPEN SPACE PLAN, Yarmouth, ME. Provided technical support and guidance to Open Space Task Force committee to bring multi-year planning process to completion. Plan provides guidance for future acquisitions, improvements for existing open spaces and policy recommendations.

KATADHIN WOODS AND WATERS NATIONAL MONUMENT MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN, Northern Maine The Management Framework Plan will provide broad direction for the types of activities and management approaches for the Monument and priorities for action.

ORDINANCE REVISIONS BASED ON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, Gorham, ME. Zoning and ordinance changes to implement portions of Town of Gorham Comprehensive Plan

STANDARDS AND DEFINITIONS FOR A SOLAR ORDINANCE. Town of Freeport. Drafting standards and definitions for a solar ordinance.

RECODIFICATION LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT CODE, Kittery, ME. Includes organizational and substantive changes to the existing land use and development code for the Town of Kittery.

SOMESVILLE LANDING, Mount Desert Island, ME. Management and facilitation of Shoreland NRPA permitting application.

HERRING BROOK HILL, Norwell, MA. Project management for the development of a family and senior subsidized housing.

AUBURN STREET, Newton, MA. Project management for the development of ongregate housing development in Newton, MA.

GLEN BROOK WAY, Medway, MA. Family and senior subsidized housing development.

Representative Projects & References

Comprehensive Master Plan Update –Windham, Maine (2017).

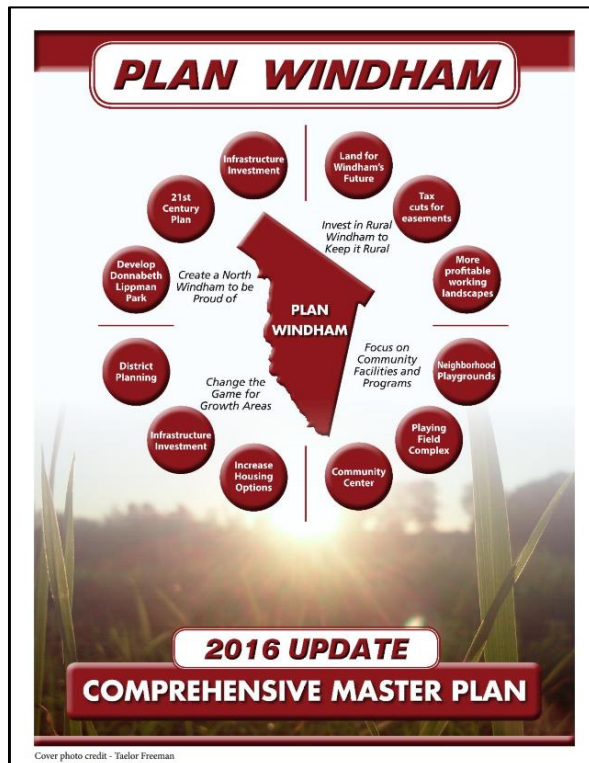
The Town's previous 2003 Comprehensive Plan was adopted by the Town but never certified by the state as consistent with the Growth Management Act. The implementation committee only met for a year or two, and by 2007, the plan was not the relevant planning document the Town needed.

Through an extensive public input process and review of local and regional data, the Comprehensive Plan Committee determined that the challenges facing the Town of Windham over the next 10-15 years are likely to be the same problems that the town has faced for much of the previous 20-30 years. These problems are associated with growth pressures on local and arterial roads, and loss of open space and valued rural character.

The innovative approach to communicating the main recommendations of the Plan through print, the internet, and multimedia has been well received by the public and town leadership. The “4 Big Things” can be communicated on a single page, with the aim of simplifying the messaging in order to make progress on longstanding challenges and new demands. The plan was certified consistent with the GMA and adopted by the Town Council in 2017.

Contacts: Tony Plante
Former Windham Town Manager
Current Director of Municipal Collaboration, GPCOG
207-774-9891, ext. 216
tplante@gpcog.org

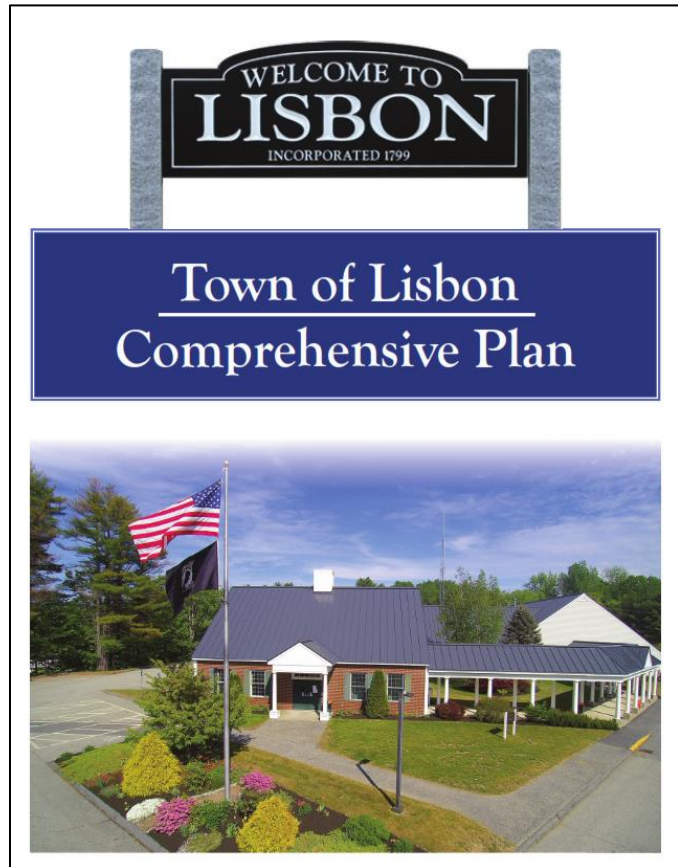
Amanda Lessard
Windham Planning Director
207-894-5900, ext. 6162
allessard@windhammaine.us



Comprehensive Plan Update – Lisbon, Maine (2019).

As part of a General Planning Services Agreement, North Star Planning provided support for the Planning Board's efforts to update the Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 2007 and updated in 2011. This project required extensive updates to the Inventory Chapters that were not brought up-to-date in the 2011 process, as well as the development of a Vision Statement for Lisbon, which was absent from the prior Plan document. This Vision was based on the input received from the public and town staff through an online survey, community workshops, and department head interviews.

This project was a good example of a true update to a plan, as opposed to a brand new Plan. That said, one of the most important outcomes of the update was a focus on developing a Vision Statement for the town, as well as updating the design and production value of the Plan's introduction. The Board wanted to focus policy recommendations on a few Spotlight Topics to help communicate the goals of the plan and keep a focus on implementation. That information, along with the Vision Statement and updated Future Land Use Plan, can be found in the Plan Introduction. Adopted 2019.



Contact: Don Fellows
Former Planning Board Chair,
Current Town Councilor
dfellows@lisbonme.org

Town Center Plan – Hampden, Maine (2019)

The Town of Hampden identified a need to develop a district plan for the Town's original settlement areas, known in earlier days as Upper and Lower Corner. This is generally the area of Main Road from Kennebec Road to Western Avenue, and out Western Avenue to US Route 202. Today, the Town Center is the heart of Hampden's downtown. The Town Center Area is a mix of historic buildings, suburban-style commercial development, established neighborhoods, and the regional school district campus. It is subject to heavy local traffic when school is in session, commuter traffic between Bangor and points south, and heavy haul truck traffic on Main Road (Route 1A).

A series of three community meetings, an online survey, staff meetings, and outreach to the school administration and a large property owner made up the core of the first public planning process since the 2010 Comprehensive Plan.

Recommendations included land use and transportation interventions as well as increasing communication and cooperation between the Town, schools, residents, and business owners in the area. These connections will build capacity to carry out recommendations in the plan and result in more public access to open space, a community gathering place, and a coordinated approach to traffic issues.



Contact: Karen Cullen, AICP
Planning Director
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