

EAST BROOKFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS COMMUNITY MASTER PLAN

- GOALS & OBJECTIVES -

The East Brookfield Master Plan Committee began its work in the fall of 2003 and completed its work in late 2007. Originally formed as a Bylaw Review Committee, the participants quickly realized that working on Bylaw revisions without an overall community strategy would be pointless. The Committee decided to reorient itself and begin work on East Brookfield's first ever Community Master Plan. The Committee's first task was to complete the Open Space & Recreation component, and they were able to secure a grant from the Opacum Land Trust to cover the cost of this initiative. Since then, the Town has annually appropriated funds to complete the remainder of the Master Plan, and the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) was hired to provide technical assistance throughout the process.

The Committee held monthly meetings all along the way and sponsored several public forums to solicit public input into the process. Public forums were held on the following dates:

- December 4th, 2003 (Topic: Open Space & Natural Resources).
- March 23rd, 2005 (Topic: Presenting a draft of the Open Space & Recreation Plan).
- January 25th, 2006 (Topic: Community Goals Visioning Forum).
- October 3rd 2007 (Topic: Presentation of the Master Plan's Findings & Recommendations).

In addition to the public forums noted above, the Master Plan Committee also employed a townwide citizen survey, asking each East Brookfield household a series of questions covering such topics as: housing, economic development, town government, open space, recreation, natural resources, zoning, land use and transportation. The Master Plan Committee also reached out to other local boards, committees, commissions and departments along the way, with each entity providing valuable input. In the end, the Master Plan Committee is proud to set forth the following goals and objectives aimed at plotting a smart and prudent direction for East Brookfield's future development.

Open Space & Recreation: Goals

- Maintain the Town's rural, small town nature.
- Preserve existing open lands and wildlife habitat.
- Promote opportunities for the linkage of East Brookfield's open space.
- Promote the efficient management and maintenance of the open space and recreation areas of East Brookfield.

- Improve the town's existing parks and playing fields as well as develop new recreation trails.
- Improve quality of ponds and protect the Town's water aquifer.

Open Space & Recreation: Objectives

- Modify zoning and regulations to encourage open space subdivisions so as to preserve more open space.
- Modify zoning and regulations to encourage new housing development and, in certain areas, to set aside required open space.
- The Town should raise funds and obtain grants to protect open lands and wildlife habitat. The Town should obtain consensus as to the best manner to obtain funds, via grants, the town raising its own funds, or both.
- Focus the priority of open space land purchases or preservation in state defined "core habitat" areas.
- Exercise the Town's right of first refusal on Chapter lands.
- Work to link local open spaces to each other
- Work with the state and other private land conservation agencies to develop a plan for the maintenance and management of open space and recreation areas in East Brookfield.
- Utilize existing right of ways for recreation trails for walking and bicycling.
- Determine improvement needs required for existing Town parks, playing fields and other recreational areas.
- Implement improvements needed for existing Town parks, playing fields and other recreational areas.
- Improve handicap accessibility to East Brookfield recreational facilities.
- Purchase open watershed lands with water tributaries into Quaboag Pond, Quacumquasit Pond and Lake Lashaway via grants or the town raising funds.
- Coordinate and support private lake association efforts in protecting pond water quality.
- Preserve the lands adjoining rivers and streams.
- Protect the Town's water aquifer.

- Enhance the administrative capacity of Town officers to inspect septic systems and enforcing existing regulations.
- Work with state and adjoining towns towards eradicating invasive weed problems within the ponds.

Town Government – Goal

Ensure that East Brookfield’s town government is professionally managed, responsive to citizen concerns, fosters citizen participation, is proactive instead of reactive, and maintains the Town’s high quality of life through sound planning in all aspects of town government.

Town Government – Objectives

- Promote long-range capital planning for the Town’s infrastructure and public facilities.
- Increase the Town’s grant writing capacity and its ability to qualify for state and federal funding opportunities.
- Ensure a stable and affordable tax rate for East Brookfield’s property owners.
- Follow through on the recommendations contained in this document.
- Promote two-way communication between East Brookfield’s town government and the citizenry, with the Town making a greater effort to share important municipal information with the citizens as well as providing options for citizens to offer feedback to municipal officials.
- Fund training and certification classes for all applicable municipal employees and pay them to attend said training.

Housing – Goal

Provide a diversity of housing choices for a population having a broad range of income levels that will enable longtime residents to stay in town, created in a controlled manner consistent with the town’s ability to provide municipal services and in harmony with East Brookfield’s rural character.

Housing – Objectives

- Redevelop first by rehabilitating existing structures and underutilized properties.
- Revive and beautify the town center area by concentrating a mixture of residential and commercial development and extending public sewer service to this area.

- Provide affordable housing opportunities for longtime residents, first-time homebuyers and senior citizens.
- Ensure that new residential development helps the town achieve its State-mandated affordable housing responsibility by providing its fair share of affordable housing opportunities.
- Adopt the Community Preservation Act (CPA) and utilize a portion of the funds raised for the purpose of providing affordable housing.
- Utilize the Town’s right-of-first-refusal on Chapter properties and utilize the limited development concept to both protect significant amounts of open space and provide a few buildings lots earmarked for affordable housing.

Economic Development - Goal

In an effort to expand the economic sector’s contribution to the local tax base without jeopardizing East Brookfield’s quality of life, the Town should leverage its strengths (good highway access, low tax rate, good schools, open spaces, natural beauty) to encourage economic development in targeted locations and in a manner that is appropriate for a rural community.

Economic Development – Objectives

- Educate residents on the importance of economic development for its contribution to the local tax base and the creation of in-town jobs.
- Have town planners learn about available economic development resources and pursue grant and funding opportunities when appropriate.
- Develop the infrastructure necessary to encourage new economic development within the Town Center area.
- Encourage the reuse of existing structures and vacant properties within the Town Center area for the purpose of new economic development.
- Revise zoning standards for the Town’s Commercial zoning districts to foster new economic development that is compatible with East Brookfield’s small town rural New England character.
- Rezone targeted areas of Town for new economic development where appropriate and where the necessary infrastructure exists to service such development.

Transportation - Goal

Continue to provide an efficient, safe and well-maintained circulation system in keeping with East Brookfield's rural character, one that reduces negative impacts on residential areas while encouraging non-automotive modes of transportation.

Transportation - Objectives

- Create a safe and walkable town center, one that encourages foot traffic.
- Focus traffic enforcement efforts on problem roadways (Podunk Road, Shore Road, Howe Street and Harrington Street).
- When reconstructing local roadways (including those roads already scheduled for reconstruction), give consideration to those methods and mechanisms that will reduce speeding.
- Adopt new pavement width standards that are based on the density proposed and the anticipated traffic of new developments while ensuring that all new roadways provide adequate access for emergency vehicles.
- Establish minimum safety standards for private dirt roads and ensure that new development taking place along these roads contribute their fair share of the cost necessary to bring these roads up to the minimum safety standards.
- Preserve the scenic nature of East Brookfield's roadways.
- Encourage pedestrian and bicycle traffic by designing facilities and systems that safely accommodate such traffic.
- Promote regional mass transit options.

Land Use – Goals

- Create a vibrant and attractive Town Center.
- Preserve the rural nature of the Podunk area of Town.
- Encourage new economic development in those areas where appropriate, at a scale and design that is in keeping with East Brookfield's rural character.

- Promote open space preservation for the purposes of habitat protection, improving the quality of the Town's unique water resources, and linking large tracts of open space together.

Land Use – Objectives

- Define the boundaries of what will be East Brookfield's Town Center and limit the eventual expansion of municipal sewer service to this area only.
- Enact traditional New England Village Center zoning for the Town Center.
- Provide incentives for new commercial and residential development in the Town Center.
- Promote the rehabilitation of old and underutilized buildings in the Town Center.
- Utilize Lake Lashaway as the Town Center's primary visual component.