

Final Report of the June 18, 2015 Strategic Planning Retreat



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Executive Summary

Our fifth annual Strategic Planning Retreat was held on June 18, 2015 at Kimball Farm in Westford. We had perfect weather for the event and 192 participants joined us for an evening of information sharing, questions, and constructive input from our residents. We continued the with the interactive format introduced last year which included dividing the group discussions into picnic table-level conversations led by a facilitor knoweledgeable in the subject. This format provided a greater opportunity for residents to speak and allowed for a more interactive discussion. As shown in the group summaries below, these sessions produced new ideas and raised important questions for the community to consider. According to responses on the pre-registration survey approximately 40% of the participants attended the event for the first time. We had a vastly improved poster exhibit this year with nine impressive displays and representatives familiar with the projects avaiable to speak one-on-one with meeting participants. We also conducted a participant survey which indicated overall satisfaction with the event and provided constructive comments to help improve the retreat next year.

All of the materials distributed in the packet and presented in the meeting are available online at www.westfordma.gov/retreat.

Westford Cable Access Television (WCAT) produced an excellent video documenting the 2015 Strategic Planning Retreat. Below is the link to view the video:



<http://www.westfordcat.org/channels/government-channel/other-meetings/strategic-planning-retreat-2015/>



Summary of Group Discussions:

The following six pages provide brief summaries of the discussions that occurred in each of the four breakout sessions.

12 North Main Street

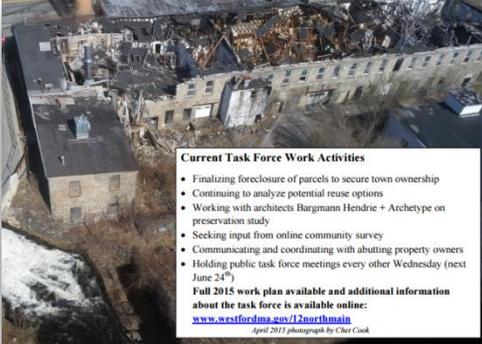
The 12 North Main Street Task Force members led multiple discussions regarding the ongoing activities of the task force and the potential future uses for the abandoned mill property located at 12 North Main Street in Graniteville. The fact sheet shown below was distributed to all participants and a series of questions were presented for discussion.

12 North Main Street Task Force

June 18, 2015 Strategic Planning Retreat

- Located in the Graniteville Historic District, the former Abbot Worsted mill building, with its bell tower and massive local granite walls, has been an iconic structure in the neighborhood and a driver of economic activity for generations.
- The Board of Selectmen prioritized the cleanup of this site as a critical goal for our town, and the 12 North Main Street Task Force was assembled to study alternatives to redevelop the property for productive reuse.
- The task force determined that the historical aspects of the property were significant, and that reuse alternatives that included revitalization of the historic building were preferable.
- The task force secured funding through the Brownfields Redevelopment Access to Capital (BRAC) program for 50% of the premiums for environmental insurance, and we are actively pursuing Environmental Protection Agency Brownfield funds and MassDevelopment Brownfield funds.
- We secured 60 hours of technical assistance from Northern Middlesex Council of Governments to assist with the process of applying for inclusion in the State's Expedited Local Permitting Program under Chapter 43D.
- Our 2015 Annual Town Meeting supported the use of \$75,000 in Community Preservation Act funds to conduct an historic preservation feasibility and building stabilization study, which is scheduled for completion in September 2015 to allow building stabilization recommendations to be implemented before winter.





Current Task Force Work Activities

- Finalizing foreclosure of parcels to secure town ownership
- Continuing to analyze potential reuse options
- Working with architects Bargmann Hendrie + Archetype on preservation study
- Seeking input from online community survey
- Communicating and coordinating with abutting property owners
- Holding public task force meetings every other Wednesday (next June 24th)

Full 2015 work plan available and additional information about the task force is available online:
www.westfordma.gov/12northmain
April 2015 photograph by Clair Cook

To download the fact use the following link:

http://www.westfordma.gov/pages/government/towndepartments/westfordma_townmanager/retreatdocs/2015spr/12NMTF_SPR_factsheet.pdf

A representative sampling of comments received in response to the questions are shown below.

1. Which aspects of the project are most concerning to you?
 - Environmental - impact on water, wildlife
 - Cost of cleanup
 - Potential loss of an iconic structure in Graniteville
 - Multiple ownership of parcels - 10 N Main St
 - Traffic impacts depending on future use

2. Which aspects of this project are most exciting to you?
 - Cleaning up an eyesore
 - Restoring building to its "former glory"
 - Historic preservation
 - Preserving the bell tower
 - Potential for alternative energy from hydro

3. In a scenario where the property is redeveloped to a new use, what features would you like to see incorporated into the design?
 - Public access to Stony brook
 - Trail connection to East Boston Camp and other Town trails
 - Nothing that attracts traffic

- Playground
- Swimming Pool
- Arboretum
- Community garden

4. How do you think it could be funded? What do you think about investing public funding in this site?

- Grants
- Private entrepreneur
- Community Preservation Act funds



5. What would like to see at the site?

- Mixed use development
- A town park
- Affordable housing
- A store similar to Parents Market
- A community center
- Offices
- Industrial is least attractive
- Artists' lofts
- An arboretum
- A dog park



6. What is your opinion of the potential use of this site for housing?

- Senior housing would be good or veterans with disability
- Some residents spoke in favor of affordable housing while others felt there was already enough affordable housing in Graniteville
- Only "few" units (otherwise too much traffic).
- Condos would have "more stable" residents

7. What is your opinion of the potential use of this site for municipal property? What type of municipal use do you envision?

- A park
- A recreation center with rowing tanks
- Not storage
- Offices
- Library annex
- A community center

New Center Fire Station/Combined Dispatch/Future Use of Current Fire Station Site:

The Permanent Town Building Committee were joined by architects, Dore and Whittier in leading a discussion of the concepts being considered for the new fire station. Participants reviewed images of multiple existing fire stations from the New England area and provided feedback to the architect on which architectural styles are preferred by Westford residents. The following summarizes some of the suggestions and observations at the discussion tables related to the discussion of potential reuse for the current center fire station after the new fire station is built on Boston Road:

- Move Board of Health and Planning Department with their files
- Provide more archival storage for Town Clerk
- Move Technology Department to the center of town
- Provide covered walkway from Police Station building
- Provide public toilets accessible for Town Common events
- Create a new Community Meeting Room
- Move Westford CAT to center location
- Add more parking to rear of Town Hall
- Add a bakery/café



Pedestrian Safety Committee

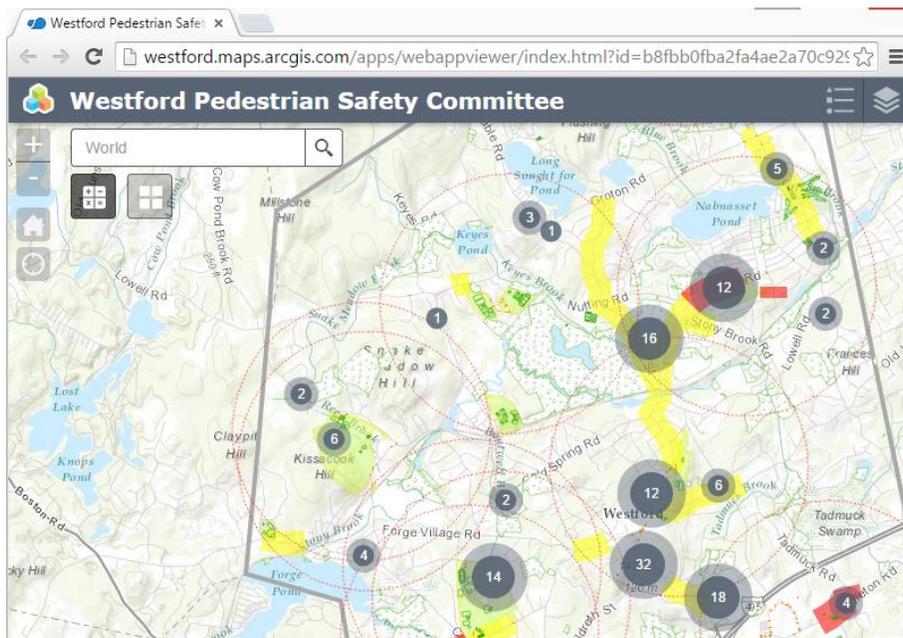
The pedestrian safety discussion session was well attended with over 60 participants in 10 small groups. Fifty seven comment cards were submitted as well as 10 maps of the town were used by session participants to mark areas of pedestrian safety concern. Judging by the comments there is a strong desire to see improvements in pedestrian safety in Westford. A large number of areas in the town were selected by participants as locations where safety was a problem.

Areas of town that received the most comments and/or stickers on the maps were:

- Boston Rd from the center to Littleton Rd
- Plain Rd
- Boston Rd from 110 to Carlisle Rd
- Carlisle Rd/Rt 225
- Main St
- Tadmuck Rd

The comment cards have been digitalized and are available on the Pedestrian Safety Committee website. Participant comments will be reviewed by the Pedestrian Safety Committee and used in evaluating which roads should be prioritize for safety improvements. The GIS department is has digitized the map data and created a web based map available to the public. The link to the map is shown below along with a view of the online map.

<http://westford.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=b8fbb0fba2fa4ae2a70c929bd2171455>



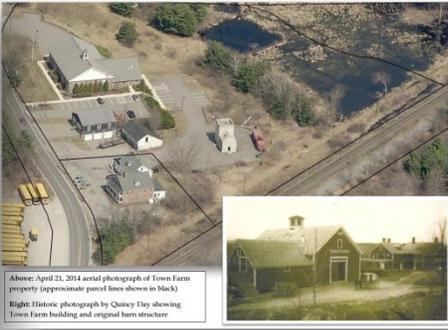
Town Farm Building and Property:

Facilitators from the Town Farm Task Force led lively discussions and heard from multiple viewpoints. The fact sheet shown below was distributed to all participants and a series of questions were presented for discussion. To download the fact use the following link:

http://www.westfordma.gov/pages/government/towndepartments/westfordma_townmanager/retreatdocs/2015spr/TFTF_SPR_factsheet.pdf

Town Farm Task Force Fact Sheet Strategic Planning Retreat Session June 18, 2015

- The Town Farm Task Force is charged with studying potential uses and opportunities for the Town Farm property, located at 32 Town Farm Road. The Task Force's primary goal will be to evaluate the potential options for the site and to make recommendations to the Board of Selectmen including things such as renovation costs, lease potential, razing of structures or other options that would benefit our community.
- The total site (two parcels) as shown on reverse page is approximately 6.2 acres containing 5 structures.
- The Town Farm property was acquired by the town in 1824 from John Road and was used to establish the Town Poor Farm. The property was listed on the National Register in 2008. The Town Farm is currently used by the Parks, Recreation, and Cemetery Department staff. There are also Westford Partnership for Children (WPC) employees that work out of this building. All of the offices are located on the first floor in the original building and in the small addition that replaced the rear porch. The older additions to the building are used primarily for storage. The second floor of the building is used for activities and storage and the third floor attic is not currently used. There is a small function room that is attached to the North side of the addition that is used for community activities and recreation programs.
- The 2014 facility study identified more than \$5M in needed repairs in the three structures pictured on this page:



1. Town Farm Building: built in 1857; addition of end porch in 1900; rear porch added in 1970



2. School Storage Barn: currently vacant, with garage underneath that is currently used by the Recreation Department for storage.



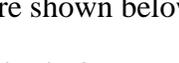
3. Fire Storage Barn: used for storage of reserve equipment



4. Fire Training Tower: used for training including live-fire training (see aerial photo on reverse)



5. Rogers Fire Station: built in 2000 (see aerial photo on reverse)



Above: April 21, 2014 aerial photograph of Town Farm property (approximate parcel lines shown in black)

Right: Historic photograph by Quincy Day showing Town Farm building and original barn structure



A representation of the responses and discussion are shown below.

1. What ideas do you have for the future use of this site?
 - Affordable housing/ Senior housing
 - Coffee shop/bakery
 - Function room /meeting spaces
 - Farmers market
 - Recreation facility with a pool and/or tennis courts
2. Should preserving the building be a priority?
 - Many said yes, but some thought the building could be removed and replaced with a commemorative marker
 - Concerned about the cost of rehabilitation
 - Keep the main brick portion of the building but the remaining portion can be demolished
 - Concerned that the national register listing may restrict future use.
3. Should the property or portions of the property be sold to a private buyer?
 - There was interest in keeping the property for a use that benefits the community whether it is owned publicly or privately.
4. What municipal needs could be addressed at this site?
 - Move the school department back into this building
 - a. Recreation, Storage



Recap of Poster Exhibits:

Town Buildings Facility Study/Roudenbush Project: Presented information received from the facility study, and discussed prioritization of our building projects. Present and discuss current Roudenbush historic rehabilitation and improvement project.

Library Feasibility Study:

Overview library feasibility project, including time line.

Economic Development: An update on Economic Development Committee activities such as the Westford Business Association, EDSAT, and village meetings.



Infrastructure/roads/dams/bridges: Overview of current projects, timeline, costs.

Energy Committee Initiatives: Information about energy efficiency initiatives the town is pursuing and the progress made towards our goal of a 20% reduction by 2017. Discuss what resources are available to residents interested in sustainability.

Community Preservation Act: The ABCs of CPA presentation provided information on current projects approved and input from residents and board members for future projects.

http://www.westfordma.gov/pages/government/towndepartments/westfordma_townmanager/retreatdocs/2015spr/cpafundspresentation.pdf

Recreation Master Plan: Discussed the town-wide survey and feasibility study to assist in determining wants and needs related to recreation.

Agricultural Commission Initiatives and Conservation Lands: Provided information about new community gardens, and other Agricultural Commission projects. Continuing with their watermelon example from 2014, they are still focused on localizing a larger 'slice' of our community's grocery bill. Sought resident input on ways to expand local food production and access for health, economic, and environmental benefits.

Perchlorate Remediation Update: Our Licensed Site Professional (LSP) from Woodard and Curran Inc., was be available to answer questions about the perchlorate remediation project in the area surrounding the highway facility on North Street. View perchlorate documents

Sample of Participant Comments from Survey

“It makes me feel like an important part of the community, and gain an understanding of how the town operates. I love being able to participate.”

“Strategic Planning Retreat gives Westford residents a chance to participate in town projects. Also gives residents the opportunity to meet town staff and provide input to them. Great job by all!”

“I really enjoyed this retreat I'm looking forward to next year.”

“I love Westford!”

“A great format for seeing the current and planned town projects!”

“Good selection of topics of interest to citizens. Glad to see so many town employees present and participating. I will definitely attend future events. Thanks.”

