

EXAMPLE Community Engagement Plan: Comprehensive Plan, Westwood, MA

PURPOSE AND GOALS

The Town of Westwood has engaged a team of **consultants** led by Community Circle to provide planning services to complete a Comprehensive Plan Update. This initiative will be developed through a process of community participation and conversation. This Community Engagement Plan articulates the principles and purpose of broad based and inclusive community outreach and engagement and provides a list of activities and forums to accomplish this. An Appendix provides a preliminary list of stakeholders and ways of accessing them and will be expanded and refined with the assistance of **Town of Westwood Planning staff** and the **Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee**.

APPROACH

It is important to provide multiple avenues for citizens and other stakeholders to participate in the planning process. The engagement process will include a variety of participation opportunities so that people can participate as their schedules and preferences permit. In addition, the different ways in which community members will be asked to participate in this planning process will also serve as an education and training process, fostering a group of community leaders who are well-informed about the values and goals of the community and best-practice approaches to achieve those goals, and who will work to implement the plan.

This Engagement Plan will take into account and build on previous engagement efforts conducted in the Town of Westwood.

A summary of public input will be provided and a vision statement and preliminary goals and policy objectives will be developed based on this. These in turn will be used to form the basis of the Comprehensive Plan.

GOALS FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

- Vision statement, goals & objectives
- Preliminary identification of issues
- A list of early action items
- Community building
- Consensus regarding the future
- Improved communication and working relationship among various constituents
- Shared understanding of concerns and desires
- Attention to process and enthusiasm for project
- Momentum for action
- Support for implementation of the Plan

TARGET AUDIENCES

- Residents
- Business community
- Community organizations
- Local Leaders
- Town Staff and volunteers
- Youth
- Institutions (including health and education)
- People who don't usually participate
- People with diverse backgrounds and points of view
- Regional and state agencies as relevant

“Tell me, I forget.”
“Show me, I remember.”
“Involve me, I understand.”

WHO ARE THE HARD TO REACH POPULATIONS IN WESTWOOD?

- Families with young children
- Seniors who stay home, single seniors
- People without internet access, who don't read local paper or subscribe to government email lists
- Young professionals
- Low income households
- Families with non-school aged children
- Families with private school children
- Newcomers
- Renters

OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT PARTNERS

Town staff assistance. The Planning Department and Steering Committee will be relied on for guidance in identifying stakeholders, ways of accessing them, and for help with introductions and logistics, including:

- Providing information on recent, ongoing and current planning events so that the Comprehensive Plan can build on these efforts.
- Advising on outreach and communication means
- Conducting outreach to Town departments, committees, boards and commissions
- Developing the master email list
- Assisting in scheduling and providing space for town-wide public forum
- Assisting in the posting and publicizing of workshops and forums
- Assisting in locating and securing appropriate venues, A/V resources, and other materials and supplies
- Providing refreshments at the Visioning Session

- Assisting in soliciting promotions from local merchants or others as incentives for participation
- Assisting in outreach and participation opportunities for children, youth, and senior citizens

Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee. The members of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee will be encouraged to help conduct outreach including:

- Members of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee will be asked to reach out to organizations, committees, boards and/or commissions of which they are members, as well as to their general contacts, friends, neighbors, and relatives.
- Members of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee will be encouraged to make personal invitations in the form of phone calls or texts to follow up on email blasts and other ways of distributing information in order to personally invite and encourage participation.
- Steering Committee members available to attend the visioning session will receive instructions and training to support them to facilitate and scribe the small group discussions at the forum.
- Helping with the distribution of flyers and other materials

CALLING ATTENTION TO THE PLANNING PROCESS AND MAKING IT MORE ACCESSIBLE

We recommend branding the planning process by using a logo and tagline. For example:

**Let's Talk - We're Listening:
Westwood Comprehensive Plan**

IDENTITY AND OUTREACH MATERIALS

- The Community Circle consulting team will produce all outreach graphic materials including flyers, educational/summary materials, etc.
- Messaging will be clear and when possible will relate to issues of concern.
- Branding (logo and tagline) will be used to present a cohesive and recognizable image for all communication related to the project, but also to make the process more accessible and inviting.
- Consider using the logo/tagline on T-shirts, refrigerator magnets, etc.

OUTREACH STRATEGIES

WHAT HAS WORKED WELL IN THE PAST

The Steering Committee and Planning Department has shared the following previous experiences:

Islington Center – about 70 participants

Housing Plan – about 15 – 20 participants

Open Space Plan – about 60 participants

“What usually works to get people to participate is when there is a tangible project and/or a controversial issue.”

Mass emails, Facebook, Reverse 911 calls

CONCERNS REGARDING THE PROCESS / CHALLENGES

People are busy – need to get their attention.

People may be turned off/not understand the relevance of Comprehensive Planning

The business community can't leave their businesses to attend a meeting

Hard to reach populations: young families

Seniors in senior housing tend to be self-contained

DIGITAL:

Project Website

There is no Town webmaster, so it will fall on the Planning Department Staff to post material created by Community Circle Team. We will use a project website in a number of ways, including:

- Posting announcements, status updates, invitations for participation, etc.
- The ability to review progress and comment on the public process
- Explore feasibility of providing opportunities for comment (“submit a comment” page)
- Town staff should work with the Public Library and the Senior Center to help make these digital tools accessible to the broadest spectrum of Town residents.

Email/E-blasts

A master e-mail list will be developed with Planning Department staff, to be continually updated as more people become involved, sign up and express an interest in staying in the loop. Email will be used to send out announcements, invitations to forums, to participate on-line as well as for periodic project updates. The database of emails will be updated by the Planning Department Staff.

- Survey list (350 emails)
- Westwood wire – email notification

Social Media

Planning Department Staff should use existing Town Facebook accounts to inform residents of progress on the project and of opportunities to participate.

Survey (on-line and hard copy)

The Community Circle team will review the results of the survey. A summary will be used to inform the Visioning questions.

INFORMATION HUBS AND OUTREACH MATERIALS

In addition to digital outreach and participation tools, Town staff and Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee should establish Information Hubs at appropriate locations, such as the public library, where residents and stakeholders can review hard copy information on the project and draft documents. The Community Circle Team will prepare information boards, maps, flyers, posters, and other relevant materials for posting on the website and in social media, for public meetings and for distribution to community centers and other appropriate locations.

COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA

Westwood Public Media. Cable TV is an important outreach tool. The consultant team will coordinate with Town staff to work out logistics and frequency of TV coverage and messaging.

- The visioning forum should be televised.
- Updates and announcements can be made at the start of board, commission, and committee meetings when they are televised.
- The Westwood Media Community Bulletin Board should be used for announcements
- Broadcasting events or an in-studio session such as a panel discussion may be useful.

Press Releases. The Consultant Team will prepare a press releases and project updates for newspaper and newsletter coverage. See APPENDIX for list of newspapers and newsletters.

PUBLIC FORUMS

All meeting logistics will be coordinated with Town staff who, along with support from the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, will help with Outreach and will have a role at the forums. The consultant team will provide training and support to Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee group members in their role at the forum.

The forum will be widely advertised. The Community Circle Team will develop all materials (hard copy and digital) for announcing the event. Staff and the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee will be expected to distribute widely to their networks and to additional ones identified in the Community Engagement Plan.

The **VISIONING SESSION** will be designed to solicit participants' thoughts and ideas regarding developing a vision for the future. Small group discussions will be facilitated where participants will be asked specific questions designed to result in identifying common values and the components of a common vision. This will be used as a basis for developing a preliminary set of goals.

Once a common vision and goals have been identified and articulated, policy objectives and ideas regarding strategies to achieve these will be identified.

It is recommended that at least 2 additional forums are held as part of the Comprehensive Planning process; these are as follows:

- A **second forum** to provide an opportunity to share the findings of the inventory and assessment of existing conditions as well as to refine the vision and goals developed from the first session. Also to begin to identify priority opportunities and challenges. The community conversation can be organized around the goals developed from the vision based on stakeholder's shared values solicited at the first forum. Alternatively, it can be organized around the Comprehensive Plan elements (e.g. Housing, Economic Development, Transportation, etc.)
- A **third forum** to present the draft implementation plan and give participants an opportunity to review the draft plan in "stations" organized around the Comprehensive Plan elements and/or goals. Here they can add to the action steps, comment, question and discuss the proposed recommendations.
- The second and third forums will be in the form of public open houses and will be hosted by the Committee prior to presenting to the Planning Board.

It is important to have the entire process in mind and to present it as such so that participants understand that this is a longer process and that the visioning session and what results from it are not the end result of the Comprehensive Plan.

WAYS TO FACILITATE ATTENDANCE AT PUBLIC FORUMS

Strategies for overcoming barriers and challenges that may impact the ability of some residents to come to meetings include:

It is strongly recommended that **refreshments** be provided at all town-wide public forums. Additionally, it is suggested that offering automatic eligibility to win a **raffle prize** for all who attend public meetings helps to boost attendance and enjoyment. Raffle should be drawn at the end of the meeting(s) and winners must be present to win.

Transportation challenges (no car, don't drive, ADA issues): If possible information on transportation options should be made available, such as a phone number for shuttle service, senior vans or similar options.

Childcare. Providing childcare at the forum can help to increase attendance of families with young children.

Language challenges: It seems that although the population of Westwood has recently become slightly more diverse, there are very few individuals with a potential language barrier to participation. Therefore, no translation or interpretation assistance is needed.

Outreach to low-income families and individuals: Work with the Westwood Housing Authority to reach lower-income groups and help overcome barriers to attending meetings. Scheduling meetings on a Saturday and providing childcare typically are the two important variables.

Pursue “go-to-them” strategies: Staff and/or Steering Committee members can give brief presentations and solicit input at existing meetings or locations such as the Senior Center, and so on, in order to reach people less likely to attend events or participate online.

TOWN EVENTS

It may be useful tap into existing events. Identify upcoming events and opportunities to reach residents and have Town Staff and/or volunteers attend events with informational materials.

- Town Elections – April 30 (have visioning flyer to distribute)
- Town Meeting – May 6, 2019
 - Have Visioning flyers
 - Put on “lull” slide
- Town Day – ?

SOME IDEAS FOR ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO PROVIDE INPUT

STUDENT/YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

Involving youth in the process is important in a number of ways including that the planning process is a teaching opportunity, it can help attract the attention of busy parents, and can result in innovative and creative ideas. A member of the Planning Department staff can be the point person representing youth. Together with the consultant team they can work to involve teachers and youth groups at the schools during school, after school, or in specific classes. Some ideas include:

- Civics class, core group of students
- Art Project
- Community Service Coordinator
- Scouts
- Community Center activities

NO TECH OPTION: COMMENT BOARDS

In addition to digital comment opportunities, physical comment boards are a way of raising awareness about the Comprehensive Planning process and providing an opportunity to people to participate that doesn't require attending a meeting. One no-tech Comment Board in Town Hall and another in both of the Westwood Public Library buildings can collect written comments to questions. A town staff person would be expected to check in on the Comment Boards to ensure that the language is appropriate, that there are adequate supplies (pens and Post-it notes) as well as to periodically compile the comments. The Consultant Team will produce the boards.

SOCIAL MEDIA: CALL FOR SELFIES OF YOUR FAVORITE WESTWOOD "SPECIAL PLACE"

"Identify those places in Town that define Westwood as a unique and special place. These could include outstanding views or landscapes, sites or buildings of historic value, or essential places in the community's life. These are places that give form to residents' internal images of community, are identified with cherished rituals, or contribute subconsciously to everyday life." (Phil Herr's definition, from Westwood Comprehensive Plan: 2000).

Steering Committee members could start it and post on Facebook.

Could also ask for response at Visioning Session

APPENDIX: LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS AND WAYS OF REACHING THEM

The following are lists in progress to be continually added to as we move forward in the process. It is expected that the Planning Department will help to complete the lists.

HOW IS THE COMMUNITY ORGANIZED?

RELEVANT TOWN DEPARTMENTS, ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS

Posted on website homepage – 4/18/19 (slideshow photo)
 Posted on meeting calendar, Committee webpage, Planning Board webpage – 4/18/19
 Flier to Committee Members – 4/18/19
 Posted on PB Facebook Page with Event – 4/18/19
 On Planning Board Agenda e-notification – 4/19/19
 Notification to all Dept. Heads asking to distribute to all boards and committees and announce at public meetings – 4/25/19
 Flier at voting poll locations (4) – afternoon of 4/30/19
 Email all Survey Responders – 4/23/19 (400 emails)
 Homepage “News” E-Notification – 4/25/19
 Posted on Homepage Slideshow – 4/18/19
 Sent to school bulletin – out on 5/1/19 and 5/8

Flyer locations:

- Main Library 4/17
- Islington Library 4/17
- Town Hall 4/17
- Senior Center 4/17
- Voting areas 4/30
- High St Market 4/30
- Toast Office 4/30
- Post Office Main and Islington 4/30
- BiBi’s Cafe 4/30
- Dunkin Donuts 4/30
- Starbucks 4/30
- Islington Pizza 4/30
- Wild Blossom 4/30
- CVS 4/30

CIVIC AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS/INSTITUTIONS

- Library
- Community Center
- Large area employers
 - Wegman's
 - Eversource
 - Car dealerships

- Social Clubs ? (e.g. Rotary Club, Lyons, etc.)
- PTAs
- Supermarkets
 - Roche Brothers
 - Wegmans

- Coffee Shops
- Fox Hill senior housing
- Fitness Centers (gyms, YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs)
- Girl Scouts/Boy Scouts
- Day Care Centers
- Pre-schools
- Metco Students
- Church youth groups
- Coaches of sports teams
- Neighborhood Associations (and/or on-line communities, e.g. NextDoor Neighbor, etc.)
- Houses of Worship
- Westwood artists
- Cultural Council
- Westwood Young Women's Group
- League of Women Voters
- CPAC
- Church youth groups
- Coaches of teams

WAYS TO REACH THE COMMUNITY

The following are some ways of getting the word out, keeping residents informed and letting them know how and when they can get involved. The consultant will work with Town Staff to develop a work plan to ensure effective and efficient outreach through multiple efficient vehicles of communication.

NEWSPAPERS

Weekly, local paper – delivered to all addresses

NEWSLETTERS

Westwood Wire – on-line, email newsletter
School District bulletin

CABLE TV CHANNEL

The Consultant Team will provide guidance regarding using Cable TV as a mode of communication

Inside Westwood Program
Cable TV has the ability to go outside

PROJECT WEB SITE

The Consultant Team will provide content to be posted on the Town's website. The website could be a separate page within the structure of the Town's website, or be integrated into the Planning Department's pages.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The consultant team will provide messaging and content for posting on existing Town's Facebook pages.

- Planning Department Facebook page
- Other existing Town Facebook pages?
- NextDoor Islington
- E-Democracy page

MASTER E-MAIL DISTRIBUTION LISTS?

- Planning staff will Identify existing Email distribution lists:
 - All Town Boards, Committees, and Commissions
 - List of all those that took the Comprehensive Plan survey (400 email addresses to date) – sent on
 - Westwood Wire (email notification) – April 1
 - Recreation Department database ??
 -
 - Provided to School Departments District Bulleting – Weekly on Wednesdays – May 1, and May 8
 - Other?
- Planning Staff will create a Master Email Distribution list to send E-blasts to inform people about project and process.
- Planning Staff will compile existing lists and continue to add to master list through sign-ups through the website, sign up at meetings and events.

SIGNS

Ensure that there are signs in the community to promote the Comprehensive Plan public forums. Signs include:

- Mobile flashing signs
- Sandwich boards at 3 locations
- Lawn signs
- OTHER?

COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARDS

- Cable TV
- All of the grocery stores
- School lobbies
- Community Center
- Town Hall
- Library

REVERSE 911

Need to check that it would be an allowable use of the sometimes only used in emergencies service.

FLYERS

The consultant will develop text, messages and graphics for flyers to be distributed through email and to Town locations with the assistance of the Planning Department.

- Libraries
- Town Hall
- Post Office
- Grocery stores
 - Roche Brothers
 - Wegmans
- Restaurants
- Popular retail establishments
 - CVS
- Community bulletin boards
- Coffee shops
- Convenience stores

HOUSES OF WORSHIP -

The consultant will provide materials and, if needed, guidance to Planning Staff to promote participation in the Comprehensive Planning process among members of Westwood's religious congregation.

Westwood has an **Interfaith Council**.

- First Baptist Church of Westwood, 808 High Street (Association: American Baptist)
- [First Parish of Westwood United Church](#), 340 Clapboardtree Street (Association: United Church of Christ, Unitarian Universalist Association).
- Temple Beth David, 7 Clapboardtree Street (Association: Union for Reform Judaism)
- St. Denis Parish, 157 Washington Street (Association: Catholic Archdiocese of Boston)
- St. John's Episcopal Church, 95 Deerfield Avenue (Association: Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Massachusetts) stjohnswestwood.org
- St. Margaret Mary Parish, 845 High Street (Association: Catholic Archdiocese of Boston)
- St. Timothy Catholic Church, 650 Nichols Street (Association: Catholic Archdiocese of Boston)

