

Concord's Long Range Plan: Envision Concord – Bridge to 2030

What is the Livable Built Environment for Concord's Future?

What does the Livable Built Environment mean to you? What could it look like in 2030? The Comprehensive Long Range Plan Committee is asking these questions as part of the new Long Range Plan: **Envision Concord – Bridge to 2030**. Based on the American Planning Association's Sustaining Places Principle, the Committee did a Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat (SWOT) analysis for a *Livable Built Environment*, which ensures that all elements of the built environment – including land-use, transportation, housing, energy and infrastructure – will work together to provide sustainable, green places for living, working and recreating with a high quality of life. The Committee's came away with the following summary includes:

- Concord's three village centers are accessible to transit and pedestrian friendly, but the majority of town is low density and automobile dependent. Altering our existing road network and adding bike lanes and sidewalks presents challenges.
- Mixed-use development is one way to reduce car trips, but the lack of available land and pedestrian/bike infrastructure, along with lack of awareness and motivation by residents, can stand in the way.
- Infill development - increasing density within existing village centers and other areas that could be further built-out - but the high cost of land and "greenfield" development sites may limit potential.
- Retaining the Town character is a priority concern of Town residents. Refining and simplifying our zoning by-laws should continue to provide developers consistency and flexibility and by avoiding conflicting regulations.
- Concord's "hazard zones" include areas vulnerable to future flooding due to climate change and partially remediated brownfields. We need to strengthen our planning for flood vulnerability, and brownfield development requires robust planning and regulatory coordination.
- Concord has two transit stops, but our historic layout and suburban character limit intra-town connectivity. We could connect some of our existing parks and open space, but there are conflicting opinions on how to balance preservation of our historic and suburban character with increased connectivity.
- Few of Concord's areas of high employment density have multi-modal connections, which poses challenges to increased economic development.
- Historic conservation and re-use is a clear strength in Concord, but we must coordinate historic preservation and sustainability goals while we align modern needs, uses and tourism opportunities with specific locations.
- Concord consistently enforces Americans with Disability Act (ADA) requirements, but the cost of achieving complete access in an old, historic town is high, and challenges remain with increasing demand inherent in an aging population.
- Concord has taken proactive steps to towards sustainability. Many opportunities remain, but we need financing strategies for projects with sustainability features.

Do you agree or disagree? What will it mean to your children or grandchild in 2030? The Committee wants to hear from you. Citizens may share ideas any time and respond to the suggestions of others at the Envision Concord website – www.EnvisionConcord.org. All are welcome to attend our public meetings that are usually held about every other Friday morning as well as other upcoming public forums this fall. Dates and times are posted on the Town website.

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What do you love about Concord's natural resources?

People in Concord love to walk – and bike, and swim, and boat, and ski, and birdwatch, and engage in all other manners of outdoor activities. Our connection to the natural world is important to all of us, and the Comprehensive Long Range Plan Committee (CLRP) wants to make sure that **Envision Concord – Bridge to 2030**, Concord's Long Range Plan, acknowledges this importance. Using American Planning Association principles, the CLRP has summarized the following about the current status of Concord's natural resources.

Some of our strengths:

- 35% of Concord is open space.
- We have a strong green infrastructure.
- There are many systems to protect wetlands and other environmentally sensitive areas.
- We comply with EPA standards and have programs in place to reduce pollution.
- We have installed solar fields, offer incentive programs for homeowners to use solar power, and are working towards a conversion to more renewable energy sources.
- Concord has multiple voluntary recycling programs.
- The Town has an active water management program.

Opportunities to improve our natural resource use include:

- Encourage public/private partnerships to further protect open space.
- Consider zoning bylaw changes to protect natural resources while meeting future housing demands.
- Focus on connecting existing green spaces and promote access to those spaces.
- Encourage innovative responses to address climate change.
- Investigate single stream recycling.
- Investigate state and federal programs to encourage water conservation efforts.

The committee has also identified threats to Concord's natural resources.

- Undeveloped and unprotected land is increasingly scarce and rising in cost.
- The pace of development - including affordable and market priced housing - is not abating.
- Climate change has the potential to create significant and new vulnerabilities for property owners.

What do you love about Concord's natural resources? What are your concerns? Do you have ideas for the future? Be a part of the long-range plan **Envision Concord – Bridge to 2030** by letting us know. Citizens may share ideas any time and respond to the suggestions of others at the Envision Concord website – www.EnvisionConcord.org. All are welcome to attend our public meetings, held the 2nd and 4th Fridays of the month. Dates and times are posted on the Town website. A great plan depends on you!

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What is needed to keep Concord a Healthy Community in the future?

What does Healthy Community mean to you? What does that look like in 2030?

These are questions The Comprehensive Long Range Planning Committee is asking as part of the Long Range Plan: Envision Concord-Bridge to 2030. Based on the American Planning Association's Healthy Community Principle and the World Health Organization's definition of health, the Committee did a Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat(SWOT) analysis for Healthy Community. The analysis focused on ensuring that public health needs are recognized and addressed through provisions for healthy foods, physical activity, access to recreation, healthcare, environmental justice, and safe neighborhoods. The Committee's analysis resulted in the following summary:

- Concord residents have access to a diversity of recreational and physical activity spaces including conservation land, state and national parkland, public biking and hiking trails, and public exercise facilities. It lacks pocket neighborhood parks, ride out playgrounds, and a town common.
- The Town needs to improve bike parking, connecting pedestrian and bike systems including Route 2 crossings, street completions, and removal of sidewalk obstacles.
- The Town has many strengths in providing its citizens access to health, safety, cultural, and educational facilities in a community hospital with outpatient facilities, good public services, access to schools, museums, libraries, and multiple art organizations which receive generous support from Concord citizens. Improvements are needed in providing transportation linkage to these facilities and increasing funding to the arts.
- Concord citizens are proactive and environmentally aware regarding the health hazards of toxins and pollutants. Public water is tested and several brownfield sites have or are being remediated. However, the Sudbury River remains polluted, Route 2 traffic impacts air quality, pesticides are in use, and leaf blowers create noise pollution. There is a need for a strategic approach to by-laws and regulations regarding these problems, and Concord should continue to monitor the remediation and development plans for all remaining brownfield sites.
- Concord has a low crime rate, but nighttime lighting for public safety needs continual assessment, and existing "crime prevention through environmental design" principles should be utilized.
- Local surveys document that Concord residents value the health benefits afforded by access to fresh locally grown and healthy foods. Concord has eighteen local farms, ten local farm stands, and there are community programs engaging citizens in local agriculture. Affordability, lack of refrigeration at the food pantry, the need for CSA access and produce delivery systems, and difficulties in West Concord access to existing resources remain problematic.

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How will Concord Maintain a Resilient Economy in the Future?

The Comprehensive Long Range Plan Committee is continuing its work developing a new long range plan for Concord, "Envision Concord: Bridge to 2030", using the American Planning Association's (APA) "Sustaining Places: Best Practices for Comprehensive Plans" as its framework.

One of the APA's core principles, "Resilient Economy", calls for anticipating changes over time in economic health, development and redevelopment strategies, and other substantive areas. The comprehensive plan will identify recommendations within the Town's broader development agenda, including an emphasis on green business growth and reliance on local assets.

Best Practices for Resilient Economy include providing the physical capacity for economic growth, pursuing a balanced land use mix, coordinating transportation access to employment centers, and providing community based economic development.

The Committee has evaluated the principles and best practices, through a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis that is posted on the Committee's website and the Envision Concord 2030 website. The following themes with respect to the Resilient Economy principle and best practices, include:

- Concord faces constraints in physical capacity for economic development due to lack of land for development and historical and other restrictions. However, the town has developed areas that include in-fill opportunities, such as Virginia Road and Baker Avenue. Economic incentives and streamlined permitting may support these opportunities.
- Concord's varied land uses assist with fiscal sustainability. Recent center focused planning, particularly the West Concord Master Plan, identified mixed-use development opportunities. However, the town has significant tax-exempt land. Payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) programs are under discussion.
- Workers commuting to Concord benefit from rail and highway access. However, the town remains dependent on automobiles with challenges for improvements to multi-modal access, particularly bicycling and walking. Certain employment areas are located far from public transportation.
- Concord has advantages in attracting green businesses, including its reputation as a progressive community and its support for its agricultural base. High rents are an obstacle.

- The Town's strengths in community based economic development include positive planning efforts, the formula business bylaw and the number of locally owned businesses. New policies may provide support to businesses that serve local needs in a fashion consistent with the town's character and values.
- Concord's infrastructure is generally strong, but there are sewer capacity and cell service limitations. Parking capacity is subject to ongoing planning and implementation efforts.
- On the subject of post-disaster economic recovery, the Town has mutual aid arrangements and specific plans at the schools and hospital levels, but no town-wide economic recovery plan.

We ask citizens to please consider these points and other issues associated with Resilient Economy themes for Concord's future. One of the Committee's core objectives is public outreach. Please send your thoughts to the Envision Concord 2030 website - www.EnvisionConcord.org - or the Committee's page on the town website. We encourage you also to come to our meetings, generally every other Friday morning and posted on the town website.

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How Will Concord Engage in Responsible Regionalism in the Future?

Concord's destiny is influenced by priorities of its citizens, the actions of local government and by the plans and policies of adjacent jurisdictions including the State and Federal governments. Examples of regional influences include Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (MAGIC), the MA Department of Transportation's expansion of Route 2, MBTA, Minuteman National Park, Massport at Hanscom Field, MA Department of Corrections and our neighboring towns.

The Comprehensive Long Range Planning Committee is considering aspects of regional planning, as part of the Long Range Plan: Envision Concord-Bridge to 2030. Based on the American Planning Association's Responsible Regionalism Principle, the Committee did a Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat (SWOT) analysis. The analysis focused on ensuring that local proposals account for, connect with, and support the plans of adjacent jurisdictions and the surrounding region. The Committee's analysis resulted in the following summary:

- Concord has regional connections to public and private transportation systems and has the opportunity to participate regionally to broaden services to improve the daily transportation needs of its residents and visitors.
- Concord maintains a Housing Production Plan, participating with neighboring towns to support the Regional Housing Services Office to administer affordable housing in several towns.
- Concord actively registers conservation and agricultural land and collaborates with regional conservation organizations to maintain and expand open spaces and green corridors across the Town's borders, and to provide river stewardship.
- The housing, transportation, health and economic needs of Concord's aging population may benefit from robust regional systems and developments with increased density adjacent to public transportation.
- Regional sharing of resources occurs with the CCRHS and Minuteman Regional High School, the Minuteman Library System, Emergency Medical Services and disaster cooperation between towns, and the Board of Health and Building Department. Participation in the Green Communities Program and Community Preservation Act has provided statewide economic resources to Concord. Opportunities for increased regional cooperation exist through MAPC and MAGIC grants.

- Limited transportation connectivity to regional destinations maintains Concord's reliance on the automobile. Enhancing public transportation connections to neighboring towns and employment centers will diminish the impact of traffic on our roadways.
- Evaluating benefits from opportunities to share costs regionally may require a systems approach including identifying regional opportunities for resource sharing arrangements for infrastructure system improvements such as district heating systems.
- Cleaning up Brownfields with EPA, shared regional infrastructure priorities with MA DOT, and other regional public private partnerships require multi-year financial plans coordinated with the Town's annual budget cycle.
- Concord must be alert to changes in regional visions of state and federal agencies that control land in the Town that may be beneficial or detrimental to the Town's goals.

We ask citizens to please consider these points and other issues associated with Responsible Regionalism themes for Concord's future and to send your thoughts to the Envision Concord 2030 website – www.EnvisionConcord.org. A great plan depends on you!

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How will Concord Establish Interwoven Equity in the Future?

Concord's Comprehensive Long Range Plan: Envision Concord - Bridge to 2030, will seek to ensure fairness and equity in providing for the housing, services, health, safety and livelihood needs of all citizens and groups. Based on the American Planning Association's Interwoven Equity Principle, the Committee did a Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat (SWOT) analysis, resulting in the following summary:

- Providing a range of housing types to accommodate varying lifestyle choices and affordability needs makes it possible for households of different sizes and income levels to live in close proximity. Concord has successfully met its state-mandated 10% affordable housing index but continues to face challenges over maintaining flexibility of housing options for residents of all generations.
- Due to its amenities and services, Concord is a desirable town in which to live. High property values and zoning remain barriers to diversifying housing. Increasing the Town's economic and demographic diversity will depend on providing flexible housing choices for people who work in town and who hope to remain here.
- Concord is well served by the Regional Housing Services Office that coordinates the administration needs of affordable housing for several towns. Additionally, the neighborhoods in Concord have equal access to town services and resources thereby decreasing factors that may lead to disinvestment and physical deterioration.
- Concord's social services are available to all residents. Hugh Cargill Trust, Tax Relief funding, Tax exemption programs, Council on Aging services and support for MinuteMan ARC are indications of a caring community. Improved access to transportation and safety for at-risk residents will enhance our Healthy Community.
- Transportation linkages to village centers and community services provide an opportunity for improvements to benefit all residents. Concord benefits from the proactive services of the Public Works Department and Light Plant to maintain safe roadways, adequate and secure water and wastewater treatment facilities, and electric power. Potential for infrastructure development, and planning for drought, severe storms, and cyber security as well as energy challenges is an opportunity.
- Given Concord's relative homogeneous population with a relative lack of economic diversity, future planning may provide workforce diversity and development by targeting business segments attractive to millennials, expanding vocational training opportunities

and considering zoning opportunities to incentivize business development.

- Concord's emergency response system is strong and has been tested. Additional connections between neighborhoods, a strengthened Council on Aging as well as resiliency planning for natural disasters will be beneficial.
- Concord has taken a proactive approach to remediating brownfield sites and removing environmental degradation. Redevelopment opportunities for sites such as 2229 Main Street could further strengthen environmental justice.

We ask citizens to please consider these points and other issues associated with Interwoven Equity themes for Concord's future and to send your thoughts to the Envision Concord 2030 website – www.EnvisionConcord.org. A great plan depends on you!