

TOWN OF HOLLISTON

Comprehensive Long Range Planning Committee Report



May 9, 2022

Executive Summary

Background

The Town of Holliston last updated its Master Plan in 1999, before that 1965. A best practice amongst MA towns is to update master plans every 10 years, Holliston has had one (1) in the last 57 years and counting.

A lack of plan or updated plan makes it challenging for various town committees, volunteers and elected officials to make integrated, long-term decisions. Furthermore, needed change is slow and in some instances, opportunity costs for inaction are great.

Given this, town residents proposed and passed an article at the Annual Spring Town Meeting in May 2021 to create the Comprehensive Long Range Planning Committee (hereinafter “CLRPC”).

Task Before Us

The Town needs a vision and out of that vision, one comprehensive plan that can link together the policies, plans and studies from the many boards and committees to help shape future decision-making. The vision is to be aspirational and not bound by the realities of finances. The final plan will account for the financial implications.

Our committee is to build consensus within the community, across multiple populations, groups, and stakeholders. The vision needs to be developed with active participation of all residents and community members via surveys, forums, and data discovery. We will identify goals from prior strategic initiatives that have been met, goals that can move forward and new goals for consideration.

What’s Been Accomplished

We’ve rebranded as Envisioning Future Holliston and are building awareness through the town website, local media, town committees/events and registration for residents/business owners for email updates.

We launched Survey #1 before Thanksgiving, had it open for 8 weeks and over 400 individuals responded. The purpose of this survey was to gain an understanding of what matters. We believe we have statistically reasonable results for a collective vision. A report and presentation have both been developed and are available to view for all on the town's website “*FutureHolliston.com*”.

Challenges

- **Outreach** - When the article was approved at the Annual Town Meeting in Spring 2021, the purpose of CLRPC was clearly defined, however there was \$0 funding approved for outreach. For example, to send a future survey out to 5,700 Holliston households, the cost could be upwards of \$3,500 with bulk discount postage and materials.
- **Resource Constraints** - We realize we are walking the fine line between “need” and “want”. Aspirational exercises create ideas, however when everything is allowed to be aspirational, little is accomplished finding consensus on priorities as well as within available financial and human resources.

What's Ahead

We are working on Survey #2 to be released this summer. It will focus on gaining an understanding of how to achieve the vision and attempt to gain a framework of priorities from respondents. We are aiming for at least 1,000 respondents and are looking for more ways to reach under age 30, over age 80 and business owners. We intend to come to Fall Town Meeting 2022 to report our findings from Survey #2 along with recommendations.

Additionally, we are attempting to build fact sheets on key areas within the town (i.e. municipal services, open space, local economy) highlighting: 1) Background & Data 2) Existing Programs & Initiatives 3) What's In The Works 4) Things To Think About

History of Comprehensive Long Range Planning Committee

The Comprehensive Long Range Planning Committee was created from a Citizen's Petition at the May 2021 Spring Town Meeting. This petition was born out of a conversation that has been going on in silos across Town boards and committees for the past several years. The goal of the petition was to have Town Meeting (the townspeople) own this initiative and see it through to fruition.

The Town needs a Vision and out of that vision, one comprehensive plan that links together the policies, plans and studies from the many boards and committees. The vision needs to be developed with active participation of all community members via surveys, forums, and any other methods that the CLRPC puts together.

The Committee came together in June 2021 and began to meet monthly. Four sub-committee groups were formed to share work efficiently amongst the committee of 17:

- Branding - created awareness throughout the community about this initiative.
- Outreach - reached out to the community to encourage Survey #1 participation
- Data - reviewed all planning/visioning data from past and present and analyzed data from Survey #1.
- Survey - created Survey #1.

Branding: Updated the team's name to "Envisioning Future Holliston". Branding also worked with the Director of Technology to create a presence on our town website; townofholliston.us. Two domain names were purchased on behalf of CLRPC via the Town's Technology department- futureholliston.com and envisioningfutureholliston.com. Populated Google Search Engine Optimization (SEO) onto the Town of Holliston landing page for Envisioning Future Holliston (CLRPC). Created "Get updates on Envisioning Future Holliston", an email distribution list where residents/business owners could register to be informed of upcoming surveys, updates and results. As of April 2022, 228 individuals have registered with email addresses.

Outreach: Hosted a table at Celebrate Holliston in Sept 2021. Put forth multiple communications on social media, HollistonReporter.com, newsletters (Council on Aging, Holliston Public Schools, and our new Town Administrator newsletter), and in Holliston: Local Town Pages. Team members also did their own outreach. Members appeared on "Ask the TA", a program on HCAT.

Data: Reviewed existing studies such as the 1999 Master Plan and the 2021 Local Rapid Response Planning report. Studied and analyzed the results of Survey #1. This analysis is summarized below, and the details are attached as an appendix.

Survey: Created Survey #1 (modeled after other town surveys). Survey #1 was created with the purpose of determining what matters to the residents of the town. This survey received 400 responses. Survey #2 is currently in the draft stages and will seek further input and ideas on priorities identified in Survey #1.

DATA AND FINDINGS

The survey went live on November 8, 2021 and closed on January 22, 2022. There were 4 open-ended questions, a ranked order question, and demographic questions.

- Survey #1 was online and accessible via QR code or through the town's website. 3 responses were on paper at the senior center and entered by hand.
- 400 total responses (statistically reasonable result); 380 unique emails: 10 emails had 2 responses.
- Schools, environment (water, open space & agriculture) and business are ranked as the top 3 issues.
- 45% of responders were between 35-49 years old. 28% of responders were between 50 - 64 years old.

Survey #1 and results can be found here:

<https://www.townofholliston.us/envisioning-future-holliston-clrpc/pages/findings>

The committee had a plethora of historical data from the different committees and boards (Strategic Plan for Holliston Public Schools, 1999 Master Plan, 1998 Downtown Plan, 2005 Affordable Housing Plan) to review and explore. Existing studies, by-laws, and information was mined for policy and gaps in information and law were found. With this information, a draft vision statement has been created.

Proposed Draft Vision 2022 and Beyond

Like Holliston's historical 8-Arch Bridge, our vision is the path from the past to the present and towards the future. The arches represent the values that we hold: Holliston is, and should continue to be, a great place to LIVE, WORK, PLAY, LEARN and CREATE.



Vision:

Holliston will be an attractive, affordable, agricultural, and inclusive small-town community with a clean, healthy environment; provide excellent education, have a strong economic base with diverse business interests; civic minded residents who value civil discourse; picturesque locations for exercise, leisure and socializing; and be the vibrant cornerstone for the arts.

Our Values

LIVE

Holliston should... Celebrate a rich history through many community events. Improve and protect its unique natural environment, water resources and open spaces; and maintain the "small town" feeling. Support local farms and agriculture. Enjoy and value a strong sense of community that fosters belonging and inclusivity. Be aesthetically pleasing with attractive residential developments, commercial corridors and historic districts. Offer quality housing. Be a safe place to live with high quality municipal services, facilities and infrastructure. Care for the more vulnerable members of the community. Communicate effectively and transparently. Offer robust senior services and facilities. Minimize adverse impacts on the environment through planning and mitigation.

WORK

Holliston should... Have a thriving, diverse economy with a variety of quality job opportunities and businesses. Promote our quaint, picturesque, and historical landscape. Protect the environment while promoting economic development. Be a business-friendly community. Embrace walkability, bike ability and public transit access.

PLAY

Holliston should... Have an abundance of recreational opportunities, programs and entertainment for all ages. Have opportunities to socialize through civic/social clubs, volunteerism and community events. Appreciate our volunteers and opportunities for neighbors to care for neighbors. Offer public access to beaches, miles of rail trail access, and natural resources for recreation.

LEARN

Holliston should... Have an innovative mindset in our schools that allows educators to feel empowered to design personalized learning experiences for students. Support our educators so they feel confident to take risks, work together for students, and create learning experiences that encourage student agency and self-discovery. Strive for educational excellence and well maintained public school facilities in a cost effective way. Provide opportunities for life-long learning. Has modernized facilities (this could be library, rec center, senior center) that offer a variety of activities and programs for all ages.

CREATE

Holliston should... Support the Arts in all forms and be a community that inspires and fosters expression.

NEXT STEPS

- Implement Survey #2

- Hold forums/meet, greets/coffee, conversation sessions
- Report findings at Fall Town Meeting in October 2022
 - Provide recommendation at Fall Town Meeting
 - Financial request
 - What does CLRPC look like in the future?

The CLRPC Committee

Board of Health: Josh Mann

Conservation Commission: Ann Marie Pilch

Council on Aging: Peter Eagan

Economic Development: Glenn Brown

Finance Committee: Sue Nersessian

Historical Commission: Frank Chamberlain

Housing Trust: Diane McDermott-Roy

Open Space: Lixy Carey

Parks and Recreation: Steve Bigelow

Planning Board: Barbara Peatie

Rail Trail: Ken Henderson

School Committee: Stacey Raffi

Select Board: Ben Sparrell

Sustainability: Rich Rosenberry

Youth & Family Services: Matt Putvinski

Non-voting members at large:

Patricia Boyd and Kathleen Buckley,

(Assistant Town Administrator)

The Committee Reports to Travis Ahern, Holliston Town Administrator

Appendix

The Comprehensive Long Range Planning Committee was formed from a citizen's petition at Annual Town Meeting in May 2021. The full article can be found on the website.

Survey #1 Questions:

- Please provide your email address; street address/neighborhood
- What qualities of Holliston do you value the most and want to see preserved and strengthened?
- Where are areas of improvement you would like the town to focus on?
- What is your future vision for Holliston?

Please rank in order (1-11) what you see as the most pressing issues currently facing Holliston? (Scroll all the way to the right to see all the choices)

- Environment (Water resources, open space, agriculture)
- Community character & design including historic, current heritage and cultures.
- Housing (affordability and availability)
- Town services (DPW, Fire, Police, Ambulance, etc.)
- Senior-friendly
- Climate resiliency and sustainability
- Business economy
- Connectivity and mobility (traffic, traffic safety, pedestrian and bike walkways)
- Libraries
- Schools
- Assets for public recreation (parks, rail trail, etc.)

Are there other areas not listed above that you would like addressed in a survey about Holliston's future? Open-ended responses received available online:

https://www.townofholliston.us/sites/g/files/vyhlf706/f/uploads/values_of_holliston_responses.pdf

What is your age?

0-19 Years Old
20-34 Years Old
35-49 Years Old
50-64 Years Old
65-79 Years Old
80+

Do you have school-aged children living at home? Yes/No

How long have you lived in Holliston?

0-5 years
6-10 years
11-19 years
20+ years

