Manchester-by-the-Sea
Visioning for the Master Plan
December 2016
Manchester-by-the-Sea Visioning for the Master Plan was developed by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) in partnership with the Town of Manchester-by-the-Sea, Massachusetts. Funding for this project was provided by the Town and a District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) grant through the Metropolitan Area Planning Council.

**Town of Manchester-by-the-Sea**

**Master Plan Committee**
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**Manchester Master Plan**

A Stronger Manchester Starts With Us
Greetings fellow Manchester citizens!

The Manchester Master Plan Committee is pleased to present this report as the culmination of *Phase I: The Vision*, of the 2017-2027 Master Plan for Manchester-by-the-Sea, Massachusetts.

In 2015, this committee was appointed by the Board of Selectmen and the Planning Board with a charge to draft a ten-year Master Plan that would engage the community and build consensus around the future direction of Manchester-by-the-Sea. Throughout the last year, numerous opportunities were made available to stakeholders in order to gather thoughts, opinions, hopes, and ideas for a stronger Manchester. Residents and others who participated have clearly been heard. Thanks to everyone who contributed to this process, whether attending meetings with Town boards and committees, taking the on-line survey, attending the community forums, or coming to the Open House.

This Vision, and the in-depth community process behind it (described in the report), will serve as the basis for *Phase II: The Master Plan*, which will help inform our priorities on how the Town spends taxpayer money to provide for facilities, services, and support for our community.

In this Vision and report we have strived to present your collective opinions, hopes and ideas as completely and concisely as possible, recognizing and respecting differences we heard, but focusing on the common values and priorities you identified. We hope the Vision and report reflect what we all cherish about the town and will serve to enlist your ongoing support and participation as we move forward with Phase II.

*Phase II: The Master Plan* will present issues and identify strategies for addressing land-use, housing, historic preservation, transportation, economic development, public facilities and services, open space and recreation, and sustainability, and will be presented to the town in Fall 2017. Throughout Phase II, we will continue to work with you as well as enlist technical experts to help us create a Master Plan that reflects our Vision while recognizing we will face some unavoidable challenges. Some issues will present tensions between identified priorities and we will all need to work together to identify the paths most aligned with our Vision.

Earlier residents of Manchester have been bold... preserving such gems as Singing Beach, Tuck’s Point, the Manchester Essex Woods, fostering community involvement, and building an excellent and competitive school district. Now we too have an opportunity to be courageous and bold—to leave a legacy for future generations—starting with a shared Vision and moving confidently toward a Manchester where all prosper and thrive.

**The Master Plan Committee**

Susan Beckmann, Co-Chair  
Gary Russell, Co-Chair  
Lisa Bonneville  
Jay Bothwick  
Sarah Hammond Creighton  
Josh Crosby  
Gary Gilbert  
Susan Baker Leavitt  
Axel Magnuson  
Regina Villa  
Laura Winn
**Master Plan Project Timeline**

- **March 2, 2015**: Master Plan Committee (“MPC”) Formed
- **February - October 2016**: Internal Visioning: Boards, Committees, & Departments
- **July - September 2016**: Community Visioning: Focus Groups, Survey, & Open House
- **October - November 2016**: Internal & Community Review of Draft Vision & Report
- **December 2016**: Adopt Final Community Vision & Report
- **January - March 2017**: Identify, Assess, & Illustrate Scenarios; Continue Community Engagement
- **April & May 2017**: Review of Draft Master Plan: Vision, Priorities, Goals, & Scenarios
- **June - November 2017**: Identify Preferred Scenarios & Recommendations
- **December 2017**: Adopt Final Comprehensive Master Plan
- **2017 - 2027**: Align Policies, Budgets, Regulations, & Initiatives to Master Plan
- **2017 - 2027**: Annual Assessment & Update (Town Meeting Report)
- **2017 - 2027**: Annual Master Plan Report
- **2028**: Update Master Plan

**Legend**
- **Blue**: Vision
- **Red**: Master Plan
- **Gray**: Implementation
A Vision for Manchester-by-the-Sea

In 2027, Manchester-by-the Sea embodies the character, beauty and resilience of a small New England town.

Our fiscally responsible and transparent Government manages growth and development to honor the town’s authentic character and balance revenues to sustain public services and infrastructure.

Accessible open space and well-managed green spaces, harbor, shoreline, and beaches reflect the town’s long-term commitment to its natural resources.

Balanced and diverse housing options, a strong local economy, walkable neighborhoods, a dynamic downtown, and an exceptional public school system are the foundation that we have built for our healthy community.

Respect for the ideas and contributions of residents, volunteers, and Town employees is a fundamental principle for working together and sustaining community spirit.
From the Community

At the beginning of the visioning process, the Master Plan Committee identified a number of reoccurring themes based on interviews with Town staff, boards, and committees, as well as the Manchester Essex Conservation Trust and the Chamber of Commerce. The MPC categorized their findings into five themes, or areas of interest or concern: natural, built, social, financial management, and working together.

The conversations and the input received throughout the visioning process continued to align well with these themes, and each is discussed in depth in this section. MAPC’s online survey specifically asked residents to identify which six community values are most important to them as well as to identify what the town’s greatest assets and challenges may be by choosing six of each. Residents were also asked how often they do/participate in various Manchester-specific activities, ranging from walking in town to attending Town Meeting. Their answers to these questions are detailed in this section.

Overall, most of the survey respondents feel informed about the issues the Town is facing: 17% indicated they are very informed, 53% are somewhat informed, 10% feel neutral, 16% feel somewhat uninformed, and 4% feel very uninformed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strong Community values are most important to you?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Well maintained public infrastructure (water, sewer, stormwater, roads and sidewalks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open space and natural resources including the harbor, beaches, water resources, and conservation areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A high quality school system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiscally responsible local government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managed growth/development to balance revenues and sustain public services, facilities, and infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusive and supportive community for people of all ages and walks of life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong local economy with a variety of commercial activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation facilities including parks, playgrounds and playing fields</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental sustainability and climate change resiliency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to get around using different modes of transportation (walkable/bikable community)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing options for a range of household incomes and life stages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active community participation, communication, and spirit of volunteerism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich variety of civic and cultural programs, events, and facilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Good Governance

**Financial Management:** Management of the Town’s finances to fund public infrastructure and facilities requires that the Town identify and assess spending, funding opportunities, and choices.

**Working Together:** The Town’s best chance for success in meeting its challenges is creating a process that is transparent, engages more residents, and focuses on working together respectfully.

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**greater asset votes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asset</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>natural landscape/scenic views</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beaches</td>
<td>443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>harbor</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>housing options</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exceptional buildings</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>variety of neighborhoods</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>town center</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>low crime/personal safety</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>small town/rural character</td>
<td>312</td>
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<tr>
<td>support for seniors</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recreational programs</td>
<td>55</td>
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<tr>
<td>level of public services</td>
<td>74</td>
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<tr>
<td>transportation options</td>
<td>99</td>
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<tr>
<td>recreational resources</td>
<td>174</td>
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<td>schools</td>
<td>321</td>
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<tr>
<td>public facilities</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>community spirit</td>
<td>163</td>
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**greater challenge votes**

<table>
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<th>Votes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>beaches</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>harbor</td>
<td>55</td>
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<tr>
<td>housing options</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exceptional buildings</td>
<td>182</td>
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<tr>
<td>variety of neighborhoods</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>town center</td>
<td>130</td>
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<tr>
<td>low crime/personal safety</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>small town/rural character</td>
<td>55</td>
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<tr>
<td>support for seniors</td>
<td>79</td>
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<tr>
<td>recreational programs</td>
<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td>level of public services</td>
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<tr>
<td>transportation options</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recreational resources</td>
<td>115</td>
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<tr>
<td>schools</td>
<td>141</td>
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<tr>
<td>public facilities</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community spirit</td>
<td>94</td>
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</tbody>
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**how often do you...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Regularly</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>walk in town?</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bicycle in town?</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go to a local beach?</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>get out on the harbor?</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shop or dine in town?</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attend town meeting?</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attend board or committee meetings?</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In regard to the built environment of Manchester-by-the-Sea, having “well maintained public infrastructure (water, sewer, stormwater, roads, and sidewalks)” was the community value selected most by respondents; 420 people, or 77% of survey takers, selected it as one of the community values most important to them. The maintenance of “a high quality school system” as one of the Town’s primary critical facilities was also clearly a top value given the 389 votes it received.

When asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement, “Fixing aging water and sewer pipes is one of the Town’s highest priorities,” 87% of respondents strongly or somewhat agreed with the statement. To the statement, “Dredging Manchester Harbor is one of the Town’s highest priorities, 38% of survey takers strongly or somewhat agreed. Close to 50% of respondents agreed that repairing seawalls is one of the town’s highest priorities.

Survey takers mentioned facilities and infrastructure 213 times when generating their visions for Manchester-by-the-Sea. They offered a number of ideas and opinions for how to fund necessary improvements aside from increasing residential property taxes. One suggestion was to increase the commercial tax base by moderating the current limited commercial zoning district into a “wise growth” commercial district that features diverse retail and commercial uses. Other suggestions included making non-residents pay more for parking and beach use, increasing sewer use fees, and regionalizing public safety services.

Over a third of survey respondents voted for the community values of “managed growth and development to balance revenues and sustain public services, facilities, and infrastructure” (38%) and “strong local economy with a variety of commercial activity” (34%). “Providing housing options for a wider range of household incomes and life stages” found support amongst 28% of survey taker and was widely supported by boards, committees, and staff.

Community character in the form of Manchester’s rural feel and low crime were seen as very highly favorable assets, with an asset to challenge approval rate of 85% for small town/rural character and a 93% rate for low crime/personal safety. The town center was also seen as quite favorable amongst respondents, and is reflected by the fact that 98% of survey respondents shop and dine in town at least occasionally.

This stood in contrast to the most negative ratings for public facilities that received 22 asset votes compared to 179 challenge votes, and housing options that had only 12 asset votes compared to 182 challenge votes. Clearly public facilities and housing are considered areas of need by survey respondents.

148 survey respondents mentioned elements of the built environment within their visions for the town and they highlighted points that are common to once small, rural communities like Manchester that have evolved into outlying suburban bedroom communities within a growing metro region.

Having the “ability to get around using different modes of transportation other than a car,” was ranked highly by 31% of survey respondents. While 99 people thought that the town’s transportation options are assets, 109 thought they are challenges. Many people who took the survey expressed the desire for a more walkable/bikable community with updated facilities (sidewalks, bikelanes) for doing so. The majority (70%) of survey respondents regularly walk in town, with another quarter doing so occasionally; more than half use a bike to get around town at least occasionally.

Many people highly value the town’s safety and abundant open space and coastal amenities but, with a limited commercial tax base, the town is challenged to meet the need for additional public services, facilities, and housing options. This is because it must rely heavily on its residential property tax receipts to fund nearly all of its needs.

Several comments reflected the desire to keep the town as it is or for how some remember it in the past, while others see the need to augment the town’s tax base and diversify the town’s economy, improve services, pay for needed water and sewer infrastructure repairs, and increase housing options, particularly for seniors and working people in town.

What did residents have to say?

“Preserve the distinctive character of this town. That means ... getting back to walkability and bikeability. In the twenty years we’ve been here, the town has become much less hospitable to pedestrians and bikers (to do this, we need
to force commercial traffic down Pine Street, as designed).”

“Move from a ‘if it’s not broken, don’t fix it’ to a scheduled maintenance plan for our infrastructure. This includes schools, public buildings, utilities, recreational facilities, roads and waste management.”

“Limit the large homes being built, tearing down small homes and making McMansions, changing the balance of our community. Young people who have lived here all their lives cannot continue to live here or come back.”

“I have lived here for 23 years and the best thing about Manchester is that it has not changed. It is stuck in time and that is a good thing.”

“We need a wider variety of shops, especially restaurants that cater to families.”

The value of “open space and natural resources, including the harbor, beaches, water resources and conservation areas” was the second highest value identified on the survey, with 72% of respondents making it one of their top choices. The value of “environmental sustainability and climate change resiliency” was chosen by 32% of the respondents. Combined, these two values reflect a high concern for natural resource protection and a growing desire to encourage sustainability and climate resiliency within the town.

The aggregate grouping of natural resource categories — beaches, harbor, and natural landscapes/views—received the highest number of votes as the town’s greatest assets, with a very high cumulative ratio of these areas seen as assets (85%) versus being voted for as challenges. Nearly all those who responded (98%) use the beach regularly or occasionally. Similarly, most survey takers (76%) get out on the harbor at least occasionally.

Social values overlap with built and natural values as the themes are integrated with one another. Providing a “rich variety of civic and cultural programs, events, and facilities” appeared within the top values of 21% of survey takers, while 38% rated highly providing an “inclusive and supportive community for people of all ages and walks of life.” A third of residents selected “high quality recreational facilities including parks, playgrounds, and playing fields.”

What did residents have to say?

“Better access to harbor for all users: resident and non-resident.”

“Keep open space open - stop building everywhere there is a bit of space.”

“...we also need a vision of how we adjust to future sustainability needs around energy, environment, water and climate change.”
Financial Management

Closely tied to concerns about facilities, infrastructure, and public services, “a fiscally responsible local government” rated high, with a majority (61%) including it as a top community value. There is a concern by Town boards, committees, and residents that there is not a clear understanding of Manchester-by-the-Sea’s revenue sources, whether the Town can impact those sources or not, and how the Town will manage itself by lifting revenues, controlling costs, or both.

While many respondents strongly or somewhat agree that they are satisfied with municipal services (69%), only 31% agreed strongly or somewhat that the town makes the best use of its revenues, indicating the tension that exists at times between local boards and town residents on how the Town is managed financially.

Only 28% of respondents strongly or somewhat supported limiting or cutting public services to help balance revenues with expenses. Over 50% supported continuing the annual property tax increases in the 2.5% range in order to maintain the current level of public services in Manchester-by-the-Sea.

How the Town’s revenue sources and expenditures will impact future land use, services, and the quality and character of life in town remains unclear. Additional information on anticipated infrastructure, housing, facilities and public service expenses going forward, as well as revenues and fees that could be anticipated under various growth scenarios or bylaw changes, all need to be considered by Town boards, committees and managers, as well as town residents, to have a more complete understanding of how financial management decisions could impact Manchester-by-the-Sea in the future.

Topics related to financial management came up 68 times when survey respondents described their vision for the town’s future. While less than 30% of survey takers felt that...
existing Town services should be reduced to help balance revenues with expenses, there were mixed feelings about increasing residential property taxes to raise revenue. While many respondents supported annual tax increases and overrides, others felt that increasing taxes would not be necessary if the Town were more fiscally responsible.

What did residents have to say?

“The town does not manage expenses well. There is ample room within most of the town budgets to streamline without cutting services. Those savings could be applied to help service debt on much needed repairs of infrastructure. It’s a sad statement that MBTS, with its abundant tax roll from high end properties, finds itself at its levy limit and at the top of the heap in expenditures per capita.”

“Our Town financials need to be in line with other comparable communities.”

“Our community has a very fair tax rate - regardless of comments made to the negative.”

Working Together

The value of “active community participation, communication, and spirit of volunteerism” was selected by 123 respondents to the online survey, about a quarter of survey takers.

While there is little doubt that Manchester-by-the-Sea residents highly value these attributes of a strong community and enjoy a high degree of positive community spirit, this value did rank lower than some of the more pressing, tangible value areas offered as choices within this portion of the survey. Community spirit was ranked moderately high under assets and challenges, with 163 respondents feeling it is an asset to the town and 94 seeing it as a challenging area that needs improvement.

When describing their visions for Manchester-by-the-Sea’s future, 98 survey respondents mentioned working together and they provided many thoughtful comments about it. The boards and committees working with the Master Plan Steering Committee identified the working together theme as being an important key to helping the town and its residents identify issues, share information, work through making decisions in a transparent manner, and find ways to keep people involved with the town governance, planning, and initiatives.

Some responders felt that Manchester has already been successful at community engagement and loved the sense of living in a small community where people are willing to help out their neighbors; some comments reflected an old school, inherent sense that living in town comes with an expectation that each resident will pitch in to help the Town work and save money.

Other commentors shared that Town government needed to continue to work on increasing transparency in its decision-making as well as be sure to be reach out to hear the voices of all town residents on a regular basis.

In terms of actual involvement in Manchester-by-the-Sea’s local government, 43% of respondents regularly attend Town Meeting. A little over a third attend it occasionally. Further, only 13% of respondents attend local board or committee meetings regularly, compared to 47% of those who do so occasionally and 40% of those who never do.

Town staff, boards, and committees also noted the importance of improving communications and coordination to create efficiency and improve the decision making process.

What did residents have to say?

“I think MBTS already has an incredible spirit of volunteerism. I’ve never seen anything like how everyone seems to show up and pitch in here!”

“Continued enhanced transparency in town government and a focused effort on community planning as to how town resources will be used for projects. There is a tendency for it to appear that a small group controls the use of town resources such that it could appear that special interests... have too large a say in how resources are used, at the expense of others.”

“Balance the needs of the quiet majority against the desires of a vocal minority. Outreach is important and this survey is a very good option, among the many ways it will be important to reach out to the community. Neighborhood meetings, attending local civic group meetings, postings in the Cricket are some other options I’ve heard discussed.”

“A town that is PROactive and not REactive.”
Manchester-by-the-Sea at a Glance

Who Are We?

As of the 2010 U.S. Census, Manchester-by-the-Sea’s total population was 5,136 people, though the 2014 Town Survey estimated the population at closer to 5,800. Manchester-by-the-Sea’s population is older than that of Massachusetts and Essex County; about 20% of residents are 65 and older, compared to 14% of residents in the state and the county.

The 2,147 households in Manchester-by-the-Sea are expected to increase 9.5% by 2030, with the biggest growth in households for householders over the age of 60. With the increase in households over the next few decades, but stagnant or declining population, it is expected that household sizes will decrease, while the median age of householders increases.

The median household income for Manchester-by-the-Sea is $89,313, compared to $67,846 for Massachusetts and $68,776 for Essex County. About a quarter of households make more than $200,000 a year, though over 20% of households make less than $35,000 a year. The town has a low poverty rate (6.6%) compared to the county (10.7%) and the state (11.6%).

The vast majority of Manchester-by-the-Sea residents live in single-family homes; this housing type makes up three-quarters of the housing stock in town. Two-thirds of residents own their homes while the other third rents.

Stakeholder Interviews

From February through October of 2016, members of the MPC met with Boards, Committees, Department Heads, and two local organizations (see below) to share information about the master planning process and begin to understand the issues staff and volunteers address on a regular basis and those of interest and importance to them. The interviews focused on priority goals for creating a stronger community and also provided an opportunity to identify what needs to be accomplished to meet the goals.

The interview participants represented a wide variety of interests; however, in synthesizing the information shared, the MPC found that the primary goals that were identified could be captured within a more limited number of recurring themes generally representing elements of a “strong community” and “good governance.” In addition to the shared goals, the interviews also generated questions.

The **BUILT** environment consisting of public infrastructure and facilities such as roads and sidewalks, water and sewer systems, schools, the library, Town Hall, community housing, seawalls, and the Town’s historic structures are important for the town to function effectively and also to retain its authentic character. The built environment also includes the businesses that provide goods and services to residents and guests and the Town should support them. Improving the quality of the town’s existing water and sewer systems is seen as most critical at this time.

*How do we prioritize needed improvements to water and sewer infrastructure, roads and public buildings?*

*How do we develop the capacity to best preserve and manage our open space, harbor, water resources, habitat, and community character?*

*How do we balance access to resources thoughtfully and fairly?*

*How do we address the impacts of climate change?*

The **SOCIAL** environment consists of elements and ideals that allow all community members to enjoy life here. Housing that is affordable and meets the wide variety of life stage needs, support for seniors, access to recreational facilities and programs, walkable neighborhoods and downtown, and opportunities for social and civic interactions are all important.

*Where do we stand on diversity (generational, social, cultural)?*

*How do we best support our seniors so they can remain in our community?*

*How do we encourage and support young families?*

*How do we improve the quality of life for all who choose to live here?*

*How do we maintain and build on sense of community?*

The **NATURAL** environment is a defining element of our community and contributes to the high quality of life available in Manchester. Our harbor, beaches, conservation lands and water resources support recreation, our economy, and our health.

*How do we develop the capacity to best preserve and manage our open space, harbor, water resources, habitat, and community character?*

*How do we balance access to resources thoughtfully and fairly?*

*How do we address the impacts of climate change?*

**Good Governance**

Sound **FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT** is critical for the Town to address public infrastructure and facilities needs. The Town must identify and assess spending, funding opportunities, and choices.

*How do we increase understanding of revenue sources and our ability to impact them?*

*Do we prefer to grow revenues or limit spending, and how?*

*How do these decisions impact land use, services, quality of life, and the character of town?*

**WORKING TOGETHER** in an honest and respectful way will create the trust and goodwill needed to address the variety of challenges the town is facing and will face. We will be more successful in identifying solutions by engaging with each other more and sharing ideas, concerns, and opportunities on an on-going basis and within a clear process.

*How do we engage more community members in the work that needs to be done?*

*How do we communicate more effectively?*

*How do we increase cooperation, transparency, and interest?*

**These goal based themes and questions helped create the framework for important community dialogue.**

**Strong Community**

Bike and Pedestrian Committee
Board of Assessors
Board of Health
Board of Selectmen
Chamber of Commerce
Community Preservation Committee
Conservation Agent
Conservation Commission
Council on Aging
Downtown Improvement Committee
Finance Committee
Harbor Advisory Committee
Historic District Commission
Housing Authority
Library Director
Manchester Energy Efficiency Advisory Committee
Manchester Essex Conservation Trust
Parks and Recreation Committee
Planning Board
Police Department
School Committee
Town Administrator
Town Department Heads
Zoning Board of Appeals
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The Master Plan Committee alerted residents about the survey via announcements in the Cricket, a notice in quarterly water bills, posts on the Town’s website and Facebook pages, notices via the Council on Aging’s and Harbormaster’s newsletters, and announcements at all community outreach events.

For the most part, respondents to the online visioning survey matched the population of Manchester-by-the-Sea as a whole, though some differences stood out. For example, the younger demographic was largely missed by this survey. While around 8% of the town’s residents are between the ages of 20 and 35, only 3% of survey respondents were less than 30 years old. Of participants who answered this demographic question, four were below the age of 20 and 11 were between 20 and 29.

Like Manchester-by-the-Sea’s residents, survey respondents also have high incomes, though they are even higher than that of all residents; 37% of survey respondents have a household income of over $200,000 a year, compared to 24% of town residents. Perhaps more significant is the fact that while 21% of residents make less than $35,000 a year, only 4% of survey respondents do.

Lastly, fewer survey respondents rent their homes than the overall town population: only 7% of respondents rent their home or apartment, compared to 34% of all residents. The gaps identified in this survey will provide targeted outreach for the Manchester Master Plan process.

### Who Took the Survey?

549 people responded to the online visioning survey. 1,250 comments were collected from the survey.

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### Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>70 or Better</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 20</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Household Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Range</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Over $200,000</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$140,000 - $199,999</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$85,000 - $139,999</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$55,000 - $84,999</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$35,000 - $54,999</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25,000 - $34,999</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$0 - $24,999</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Household Size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More than 5</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Years Lived in Manchester

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don't live in MBtS</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 20 years</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 20 years</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10 years</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 5 years</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Housing Tenure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenure</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I rent my home/apartment</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I own a condominium</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I own a multi-family home</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I own a single family home</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Months Per Year in Manchester

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Months</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-12 months</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-9 months</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6 months</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-3 months</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Focus groups are designed to obtain input from a broad array of constituents during small group sessions. MPC led stakeholder interviews at the beginning of the visioning process highlighted the need for hearing from other stakeholders: business owners and managers, along with natural resource managers and advocates.

MAPC staff, with the assistance of the Town’s Master Plan Committee and Town Planner, facilitated the two focus group meetings at the Manchester Community Center, bringing together local stakeholders with common interests.

### Business

On August 9, around 20 attendees gathered to share the strengths, challenges, and opportunities they face doing business in Manchester-by-the-Sea. Participants included retail and restaurant owners, in addition to owners of other local service businesses.

Focus group attendees agreed that, from a business perspective, **Manchester-by-the-Sea has a great deal to offer in terms of a beautiful and walkable downtown, a strong community network, and a cooperative Town government.** However, there are challenges to doing business in the town, specifically regarding a lack of parking, foot traffic, and community events that bring people downtown.

Ideas to improve business included holding a farmer’s market and other outdoor festivals downtown that can generate increased foot traffic in the area.

### Natural Resources

About 16 attendees gathered on Tuesday, September 13, to discuss the strengths and opportunities regarding Manchester-by-the-Sea’s open spaces, including the harbor and beaches, as well as the vulnerabilities and challenges these resources are facing. Participants represented a number of nonprofit conservation organizations, Town committees and advisory groups, local maritime businesses, and others.

There was common consensus that, between the Harbor, beaches, woodlands, and wetlands, **Manchester-by-the-Sea has incredible natural resources that must remain and be further protected.** However, there are serious concerns regarding natural hazards (like flooding, sea level rise, drought, invasive species, and more) and human disturbances (ranging from capacity issues in the Harbor to overall growth and development).

Participants acknowledged the tensions between protecting and managing resources and finding funding to sustain these efforts; protecting land and resources and allowing controlled growth; limiting and accommodating access to non-residents; and limiting and accommodating change to downtown, neighborhoods, and the harbor.

Focus group participants offered an array of potential opportunities for combating these challenges such as: encouraging better collaboration amongst the many environmental groups and Town officials, implementing green infrastructure to duplicate natural processes, and finding ways to integrate natural resource education into the local public schools.
Tabling Events

Music at Masconomo Park

MAPC joined Manchester-by-the-Sea residents for Music in Masconomo Park on August 9. With assistance from the Town’s Master Plan Steering Committee and the Town Planner, MAPC created a Manchester Master Plan Visioning Booth to engage attendees of the event – and to provide them with free Italian ice!

The highlight of the booth was an activity that included buckets which represented community values; participants could allocate six poker chips amongst the community values most important to them. At the booth, visitors could also browse data posters about Manchester-by-the-Sea, offer their comments on a large sheet of paper, and use iPads to fill out the Master Plan Visioning Survey.

Community values that received the most votes were:

- Open space and natural resources including the harbor, beaches, water resources, and conservation areas;
- Preserving a high quality school system; and
- Well maintained public infrastructure (water, sewer, stormwater, roads and sidewalks)

School Open Houses

In addition, over the course of three nights, members of the Master Plan Committee greeted parents at open houses at the elementary, middle, and high schools in town and shared information about the master planning process, the Visioning Survey, and the upcoming Open House. Over 400 survey and Open House reminder cards were distributed.
The Manchester Master Plan Vision Open House was held during the evening of September 26 at Manchester-Essex Regional High School. Over 70 people gathered to learn about the Master Plan visioning process, discover current conditions within Manchester-by-the-Sea, and provide their input and suggestions for the town going forward.

When attendees first arrived, they had the opportunity to enjoy food, mingle, and browse the open house stations. The MPC welcomed participants and MAPC gave a short overview of the master plan process and next steps for the Manchester Master Plan.

After the presentation, attendees could choose to spend time at each of the five open house stations and participate in the activities at each of them. MAPC staff and MPC members were available to answer questions and guide attendees through the stations.

**Open House Overview**

**Stations**

**Manchester-by-the-Sea at a Glance**

At this station, attendees could browse a number of boards and maps about current conditions in Manchester-by-the-Sea pertaining to demographics, housing, economic development, transportation, land use and zoning, open space, and climate change resiliency. They then had the opportunity to answer the questions, “What about this data surprises you? What concerns you about this data?” on brown paper. Sample responses included:

- “Age of population.”
- “Surprised that 2/3 of lots are nonconforming.”
- “Population and households growing, but not our traffic/commuting infrastructure.”
- “Don’t want the town to grow, I like the small town feel.”
Dot Exercises

Participants were asked to visually represent where they live, where they work, how they heard about the meeting, and how they usually commute to work.

Event participants live all over Manchester-by-the-Sea and they mainly work in town. Most people commute by car to work, though many work from home.

Multiple sources informed attendees of the Open House event, with local newspapers reaching the most people.

What We’ve Heard So Far

This station recapped the community engagement that had occurred leading up to the Vision Open House. Attendees could learn about the two focus groups held by MAPC and the MPC, the tabling events, and see the online survey results.

Mark the Map

On a large map, attendees could use green sticky dots to indicate places they love and red dots to indicate areas that have issues or need improvements. They could also leave comments on post-its about these areas - on the following page, check out what people had to say!
What are the plans for the “burn dump” site? The “landscaping is a joke.” We must do something with this space!

I love Singing Beach because there are so many fun things to do! I love Singing Beach because the land is so pretty.

New zoning in LCD Screwed up big time not getting Donovan recreational land

Need for commercial developments Huge opportunity for commercial developments Let’s not overbuild. Let’s preserve our open space.

City Hall Library

Concentrate growth in downtown. Need to jumpstart commercial downtown. Need better mix of businesses. Need service businesses like travel + insurance on ground floor. Need to look at Richdale basically a waste of space.

Company business mix needs to be re-thought. There are service businesses like travel + insurance on ground floor and the area of Richdale basically a waste of space

Expand sewer along Raymond, protect our oceans


Keep resident parking spaces at Masconomo Park for townspeople/boating

Downtown business mix needs to be re-thought. Need to look at downtown. Need to look at downtown.

Need public restrooms

Out of towners using Beacher area, picnic area

This new building on Elm St. should have had more seniors in mind. There is very little for those wanting to live on 1 floor near town.

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Parks, conservation lands, and beaches throughout the town are the most loved areas.

Key areas for improvement include Town facilities, such as the Pine Street burn site and Town Hall area, as well as downtown.

Transportation and parking issues exist throughout town and specifically on Pine Street, School Street, around the schools, and downtown.

Place a green dot on the places that you love, and a red dot on the areas that have issues or need improvements. Use post-its to leave your comments about these areas. Why do you love a certain place? Why does another place need to be improved? We want your feedback!
Assets, Challenges, Opportunities/Legacy

This station provided the opportunity for attendees to voice what they like best about Manchester-by-the-Sea (greatest assets), what they think is missing in the community (greatest challenges), and what they think would most improve quality of life in town (greatest opportunities).

Greatest asset sample comments:

- “Land, trails, ocean, shared/open natural beauty.”
- “Small New England town character, safe.”
- “Close proximity to Boston, New Hampshire and Maine.”
- “The sense of community—knowing people in every arena of town life. Feeling of belonging. People are watching our children.”
- “The people (who) work/volunteer to help run the town.”
- “Schools.”

Greatest challenge sample comments:

- “Town infrastructure: aging water pipes, roads, sidewalks, old trees.”
- “Protecting land and resources—limit growth. Balance in favor of maintaining what we have vs. funding money for what we may not really need.”
- “Maintaining town character while being fiscally responsible.”
- “Small tax base.”
- “Need more varied housing options—not just for low income but for mid-income and seniors.”
- “Very big challenge from climate change. Most people won’t pay attention to it soon enough.”

The last prompt specifically sought to encourage attendees to think about ways to leave a legacy in and for Manchester-by-the-Sea.

Many voiced that a legacy “project” could simply be protecting what they have for future generations and making sure those to come can enjoy the town as much as those who currently live here. Others offered more specific recommendations such as:

- Building a senior center;
- Constructing a bike path that could run through Cape Ann communities; and

Creating affordable housing for future generations.

Overall, the Assets, Challenges and Opportunities/Legacy comments received at the Vision Open House largely reflected the themes outlined by the MPC in its interviews with town stakeholders. Main themes that emerged included:

- Addressing infrastructure repairs and replacement, including those related to climate change, in a fiscally responsible manner;
- Keeping the small town character and natural heritage of Manchester as its core identity while seeking ways to grow the tax base to address prioritized needs;
- Creating more affordable housing opportunities for all Manchester residents; and
- Building on the town traditions of volunteer service and open government to get things done.
Stay in Touch!

MANCHESTER MASTER PLAN
A Stronger Manchester Starts With Us

This is only the first phase of an extensive planning process with many opportunities for engagement from the community. We hope you will continue to be part of this important process that will help decide the future of Manchester-by-the-Sea. We sincerely believe that “a stronger Manchester starts with us.”

For more information, to be added to the Master Plan mailing list, or to share additional ideas, please contact:

Sue Brown
Town Planner
browns@manchester.ma.us
(978) 525-6436

Please also visit the Master Plan website at www.manchester.ma.us/391/Master-Plan-Committee