

Town of Northfield
Community Development Strategy
Adopted November 13, 2007

Overview

The Town of Northfield is governed by over 100 volunteers who serve as elected or appointed members of various boards and committees. These individuals work with staff and residents to carryout the Town's community development and strategic planning efforts. The activities in the Town's FY 2008 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application for funding are consistent with the priorities and needs identified through local and regional community assessment and strategic planning processes, and with the Commonwealth's Sustainable Development Principles. This Community Development Strategy (CDS), including the prioritized list, was presented for public comment at a public informational meeting held on October 30, 2007 and revised as a result of public input at the meeting. The Strategy was discussed and adopted at a meeting of the Board of Selectmen held on November 6, 2007. At a meeting of the Board of Selectmen held on November 13, 2007 the Strategy was revised to incorporate the Commonwealth's amended Sustainable Development Principles.

Community Planning Entities

Northfield residents, through their involvement in a variety of local and regional planning efforts, help clarify and coordinate the Town's priorities. Needs assessments and community-based planning activities are conducted by the Agricultural Commission, Board of Health, Board of Library Trustees, Board of Selectmen, Board of Sewer Commissioners, Conservation Commission, Council on Aging, Cultural Council, Energy Committee, Finance Committee, Historical Commission, Open Space Committee, Planning Board, Pioneer Valley Regional School District Committee, Northfield Elementary School Local Education Council and Recreation Commission. Various specialized committees working under these municipal boards are also involved in needs identification and goal setting.

Northfield is assisted in its planning and community development efforts by several regional organizations including the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG), the Franklin Community Development Corporation, the Franklin County Home Care Corporation, the Franklin County Solid Waste Management District, the Franklin Regional Transit Authority and the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority. Northfield residents serve as representatives to these and other organizations, carrying out local and regional planning initiatives.

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, the Massachusetts Highway Department, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency and the Massachusetts Historical Commission also assist the Town, providing guidance and funding to help meet community needs.

Plan Identification and Implementation

Community development projects are identified through a planning process that includes the solicitation of input at public meetings held by town boards, committees and commissions. Once a project is identified and the need for the project is established, the project is incorporated into an existing or a newly created planning document. Project implementation includes the identification of a timeline, potential sources of funding, if required, and the identification of who will carryout the project (staff, volunteers, regional agency, consultant, etc). In addition, the Town takes into consideration whether the project is included in a local or a regional plan and the possibilities for collaboration among Town departments, boards, committees or commissions or with neighboring communities.

Planning Processes and Documents

The Town is involved in a variety of planning processes, as follows:

Community Development Plan (CDP): The Northfield Community Development Committee, with assistance from the FRCOG, completed a comprehensive Community Development Plan May 2003. This plan, developed under Executive Order 418, addresses four principal areas: open space and natural resources, housing, economic development, and transportation. The CDP uses the information collected and maps created to establish options and strategies for addressing future development. The Plan emphasizes community development that balances the preservation of natural, historic, and scenic resources and Northfield's character and reflects a vision for Northfield's future, which is to:

- “Preserve the town's rural character, special qualities, and natural resources;
- Address current development pressures through land use planning and zoning; and
- Support a more diverse mix of businesses and housing for residents which will stabilize the tax base.”

Master Plan: Northfield undertook a Master Planning process between 1975 and 1977, and the ensuing report entitled: *Pathway to Tomorrow, a Master Plan for Northfield* was published in 1977. The purpose of the plan was “to find the best ways of using the resources available to the town for fulfilling the needs and desires of the townspeople...and help the many town officials and departments to coordinate their activities...” Over 180 residents participated in this planning process. The Master Plan contains details on the local economy, town government, community facilities and services, transportation, land use and conservation, and housing. In 1993, the Northfield Master Plan Review Committee reviewed and updated the Plan. The Committee sent a written survey to residents, met with boards and committees and sponsored six neighborhood discussion meetings. The resulting update serves as a guide for community development in Northfield.

Open Space and Recreation Plan: In June 2005, the Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee, with the assistance of the FRCOG, completed an Open Space and Recreation Plan for the town. Over the course of a year Northfield residents came together to identify and prioritize Northfield's landscapes and ecosystems that are threatened by development pressures. The purpose of the Plan is to provide a framework for decisions dealing with land use, which may affect ecosystems and the lands that contain unique forest, agricultural, historical, recreational and scenic values. The Five-Year Action Plan provides concrete substance to the goals and objectives, which were developed from the result of the 2005 Open Space and Recreation Planning Survey and from the community members' understanding of their town's significant yet vulnerable natural and cultural resources base.

ADA Transition Plan: In 1999, with the help of *AccessPlus*, a program of the Stavros Center for Independent Living, Northfield adopted a plan to achieve compliance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The plan is updated regularly by the Town's ADA Coordinator with involvement from residents and municipal officials and actions to make Town buildings ADA compliant are ongoing.

Capital Planning: Each year the Finance Committee coordinates citizen, board and committee input into the Town's capital plan. The Plan projects the Town's major capital spending needs for five years into the future. The Building Utilization & Planning Committee identifies planning, space and capital needs for the coming 10-15 years for each Town building. The School Use Committee identifies and makes recommendation regarding capital projects at the elementary school. The Board of Selectmen and the Superintendent of Streets meet regularly to identify maintenance priorities for the Town's roadways.

Northfield Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan: With the assistance of the FRCOG, in September 2004 the Northfield Natural Hazards Mitigation Planning Committee completed a Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan. The Plan emphasizes actions that can be taken before natural disasters such as flooding, storms, high winds, hurricanes, wildfires, earthquakes, etc. occur. The Plan includes a mitigation program that addresses Northfield's unique geography, demography, economy, and land uses within the context of each specific potential natural hazard that may threaten the community.

Planning for Results: The Planning for Results process was developed by the Public Library Association as a tool for looking both at the community and at the library. In 2001 a Planning for Results Committee made up of residents from each of Northfield's five rural "neighborhoods" was formed. The ten-person committee met with representatives from the Library Trustees and staff to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the Dickinson Memorial Library. The process provided the Library with the direction it needs to create a Long Range Plan compatible with the needs of the community. As a result of this process, the Board of Library Trustees is pursuing ways to make the Library comply with the ADA.

Annual Town Report: Each year the Town produces an Annual Town Report that contains detailed information about Town processes, highlights progress made on a number of community development and planning projects, and identifies needs and priorities related to Town governance, community development, social services, and public safety. Reports from various boards, committees, commissions and trustees are reviewed and accepted at each Annual Town Meeting.

Regional Plans: The Town's needs and priorities were taken into consideration during the development of the following regional plans:

- Regional Policy Plan 1998. This policy document guides the growth and protection of the natural and cultural resources of Franklin County. The Plan was produced by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) with significant input from a 23-member committee.
- Franklin County Regional Water Supply Study 2003. This study assesses the short and long-term capacity of 17 community water supplies to support growth in the region and provides a region-wide context for water conservation. The Study was produced by the FRCOG with funding from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs.
- The Regional Hazardous Materials Emergency Plan (HMEP) 2006: The (HMEP) was developed by the Franklin County Local Emergency Planning Committee's (LEPC) Planning Sub-Committee with support from the FRCOG Planning Department and Regional Preparedness Program. The HMEP includes: a Hazard Analysis for pre-event planning, standardized concept of operations for emergency response, institutionalization of the Incident Command System, guidance on how and when to request assistance from the District HAZMAT Team, institutionalization of protocols for needed local, state and federal notification and a Resource Directory for emergency response.
- The Greater Franklin County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2006 Annual Report. The CEDS program is coordinated by the FRCOG and guides economic development activities throughout Franklin County and neighboring communities. The program is directed by a committee of 35 business and community leaders. Every five years, the CEDS committee solicits economic development projects from all towns in the region and creates a regional list of priorities. Northfield submitted two projects for inclusion in the 2005 CEDS.
- Regional Transportation Plan 2006. This plan, coordinated by the FRCOG with input from all 26 Franklin County towns, provides a comprehensive look at transportation needs, facilities and potential funding over a 25-year time horizon. The plan is updated every three years and promotes ways to develop transportation alternatives to the automobile, while supporting the improvement and more efficient use of traditional facilities.
- Connecticut River Scenic Farm Byway Corridor Management Plan 1998 In 1995 Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont were awarded Federal Scenic Byway funds to study the creation

of a Scenic Farm Byway along the Connecticut River. The purpose of the project was to recognize, interpret, preserve and promote the unique scenic, cultural, and recreational resources along the byways adjacent to the Connecticut River. The resulting Connecticut River Scenic Farm Byway Corridor Management Plan was created by a 24-member committee with the assistance of the FRCOG and the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission. The Plan provides Northfield and other Connecticut River towns with planning goals and strategies.

Strategic Action Plan

The planning processes described above were used to develop and update a comprehensive list of projects the Town intends to undertake between 2007 and 2012. This Community Development Strategy, including the prioritized list, was presented for public comment at a public informational meeting held on October 30, 2007 and revised as a result of public input at the meeting. The Strategy was discussed and adopted at a meeting of the Board of Selectmen held on November 6, 2007. At a meeting of the Board of Selectmen held on November 13, 2007 the Strategy was revised to incorporate the Commonwealth's amended Sustainable Development Principles.

The projects included in this Community Development Strategy demonstrate the Town's endorsement of the Commonwealth's Sustainable Development Principles. From its inception, the Town has participated in the state's Commonwealth Capital program, scoring 90 points in FY 2006. At a meeting of the Board of Selectmen held on January 10, 2006, the Board formally adopted the Sustainable Development Principles. At a meeting of the Board of Selectmen held on November 13, 2007 the Board voted to adopt the Commonwealth's revised Sustainable Development Principles. Wherever possible the Town will continue to incorporate the Sustainable Development Principles into plans and action steps.

The activities included in the following list of projects promote compact development, help preserve existing housing stock and implement recommendations from the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan, EO 418 Community Development Plan, ADA Transition Plan, Master Plan, and other town and regional plans. The projects reflect a focus on maintenance and improvement of existing Town facilities, and infrastructure, a commitment to improving the economic conditions and quality of life for town residents and a dedication to conserving the town's natural resources.

Resources

Northfield will address its community needs and priorities using a variety of local, regional, state and national resources including:

- Local property taxes
- State aid through school programs, lottery funds, library programs, PILOT and special funds
- Technical assistance and grants from regional organizations including the Franklin County Community Development Corporation, Franklin Regional Council of Governments, Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority, and Franklin County Solid Waste Management District. Federal and state highway and other transportation programs
- State grant and loan funding through the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency and other state agencies
- Federal grant and loan funding through the US Department of Agriculture, US Department of Housing and Community Development, Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Emergency Management Agency and other federal agencies
- Private foundations
- Volunteer labor and donated materials
- Community fundraising activities (book sales, auctions, etc.)