



Master Plan Implementation Committee Report to Town Meeting May 2013

The Master Plan Implementation Committee (MPIC) was formed in 2011 by the Selectboard and Planning Board to advance the goals of South Hadley's Master Plan (aka Comprehensive Plan), which was adopted by the Town and approved by Town Meeting in 2010. MPIC's operating principles include:

- *Ensuring that officials, departments, committees and other groups in town are aware of the Plan and its goals;
- *Overseeing implementation of the Plan by Town committees, departments and boards and assisting in setting priorities;
- *Facilitating communication and collaboration among entities with overlapping interests and potential interests.

This report has three sections:

1. Summary Observations
2. Report on priorities, and plans for 2013-14
3. The Master Plan matrix that lists recommended actions for each board or commission, annotated to reflect progress to date. The matrices, as well as this section of the report, are available on the Town website, southhadleyma.gov/Pages/SouthHadleyMA_CPAC/AnnualReports, and are annotated to reflect progress to date.

1. Summary Observations

MPIC members continue to be impressed by the energy and dedication of volunteers, elected officials and employees as they work to enhance the quality of life for all of us in South Hadley. Everyone in town owes them enormous thanks. Last

year we noted a significant shortage of volunteers, and we are pleased that many of the vacancies on boards and commissions are now filled, although we regret that the Agricultural Commission is not currently functioning. We are also delighted that a new Town Administrator has been hired, and look forward to working with him as we encourage efforts to complete the tasks described in the Master Plan.

Many boards and commissions have made significant progress towards at least some of the tasks assigned to them. The Plan itself continues to serve as a useful tool in enabling groups to structure their activities. However, many groups face challenges as they continue their work:

Scarce resources, including funds and workers. A number of initiatives simply cannot proceed without funding and/or more staff hours, including upgrades to and expansion of the town website; developing bike paths; developing a watershed study and other recommended large-scale projects. It may be possible to use interns from Mt Holyoke and UMass to carry out some tasks, but this will require staff time to recruit, train and supervise them.

Overlapping responsibilities. The Master Plan assigns responsibility for some tasks to multiple boards and commissions, each of which would have a stake in the task's completion. For example, establishing a Community Preservation Act (CPA) as a long term funding mechanism for the preservation of open space and historic structures is assigned to both the Historical Commission and the Open Space Committee, and several other boards and commissions would need to have a role in getting a CPA in place. The Master Plan doesn't set forth any mechanism or framework within which this cooperation would take place. A formal structure designating a lead agency could ensure that such joint tasks don't fall to the bottom of the list.

Emerging new priorities. A plan is not a straitjacket. The Master Plan was adopted three years ago, and reflected priorities put forth during the study period before its adoption. Inevitably, some boards and commissions have identified issues not listed in their matrix of tasks that they consider of higher priority than some of the listed tasks.

In other instances, boards have decided that tasks assigned to them in the plan should actually be the responsibility of other boards or commissions. A challenge for the boards, and for MPIC, is how to decide when (or whether) to put aside a Master Plan task and substitute another. Is it imperative that all Master plan tasks are completed before tackling anything new? There is no enforcement mechanism for this. We contend that each board and commission should examine every task assigned to it and, if members decide not to pursue a task, or to add another one, they should provide justification to be approved at the appropriate level.

2. Report on Priorities for 2012-2013

In the fall of 2012 the MPIC identified four Master Plan priorities: completing and adopting revised zoning bylaws; continuing to work for Falls revitalization; focusing on sustainability; and developing and adopting plans for a new elementary school. Additionally, hiring a new Town Administrator was seen as a step crucial to completing many of the tasks described in the Master Plan.

Revised zoning bylaws are complete and will be presented for a vote at a special town meeting on June 19, 2013.

Falls revitalization: many entities and individuals have been involved this year in developing plans and initiating activities that will have a positive impact in the Falls. The Northeast Utilities/Texon buildings have been demolished, and ground has been broken for the new library. At least one Falls business has been retained, and will be expanded. The Cultural Council and the Rise of the Falls Facilitation group have hosted cultural and other events designed to bring people to the Falls. And the Community Economic Development Commission will be hiring a consultant to assist in bringing new business to the Falls, as well as other parts of town.

Sustainability: The Sustainability Committee has been reinvigorated and is planning action on several items. A Bicycle/Walkway Subcommittee was formed in March, and is planning a public forum on May 13.

New school: In January voters approved funding for a new elementary school, to replace Plains School. Groundbreaking will take place in fall 2013, with completion targeted for 2014.

Town Administrator: Mike Sullivan was hired as the Town Administrator and started work on April 1, 2013. The Selectboard and residents of South Hadley have high expectations that he will help the Town move forward.

In 2013-14 MPIC will continue to meet periodically with each board and commission, encouraging them to choose priorities and helping to identify and overcome barriers to progress. Specifically, committee members will:

Encourage the use of student interns, especially from Mt Holyoke and UMass, facilitating connections when necessary;

Attempt to develop procedures enabling boards and commissions to work together on issues requiring the participation of multiple groups (e.g. adopting a CPA). Such procedures will require the endorsement of the

Selectboard and – at least in some cases – the active participation of the Town Administrator.

Clarify MPIC's responsibility when a board or commission is not pursuing tasks assigned to it in the Master Plan, and/or when a board or commission adopts priorities other than those in the Master Plan.

Consider how, or if, the Master Plan should be revised, and in what timeframe.

The Committee is also considering a survey of town residents to assess their perceptions of the quality of life in South Hadley. The ultimate goal of the Master Plan is to enhance residents' experience of the town. A professionally designed and conducted survey would establish a baseline against which we can measure progress towards that very broad goal. The survey could also assist in identifying new or emerging issues that Town Government may wish to address.

Respectfully submitted,

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Ann Eaton
Carl Geitz
Margaret Jodoin
Dan Kelleher

3. Master Plan Task Matrices

(southhadleyma.gov/Pages/SouthHadleyMA_CPAC/AnnualReports)

Agriculture Commission	Public Library Commission
Board of Health	Recreation Commission
Capital Planning Commission	School Committee
Community and Economic Development Commission	Selectboard
Conservation Commission	Sustainability Committee
Cultural Committee	South Hadley Electric Light Department
Department of Public Works	Town Administrator
Fair Housing/Housing Trust	Tree Warden
Golf Commission	Zoning Board of Appeals
Historical Commission	
Open Space Committee	