

Town of Wendell

Community Development Strategy

January 2005

Overview

Volunteers and paid staff serving as elected or appointed members of various boards and committees undertake Wendell's governance, community development, and strategic planning efforts. The activities contained within this application for funding are consistent with the priorities and needs identified through several local and regional community assessment and strategic planning processes. This Community Development Strategy is derived most recently from the June 2004 Community Development Plan (E.O.418 plan) introduced at the August Wendell Old Home Days and discussed at a November 9, 2004 Public Forum. The Draft Community Development Strategy was reviewed at a public forum on January 20, 2005. The Final Community Development Strategy was accepted by the Wendell Board of Selectmen on January 26, 2005.

Community Planning Entities

Town residents are involved in a variety of local and regional planning efforts to help clarify and coordinate the town's priorities. Needs assessments and community-based planning activities are conducted by the Board of Selectmen, Town Coordinator, Board of Assessors, Board of Health, Council on Aging, Conservation Commission, Finance Committee, Fire, Police and Highway Departments, Library Trustees, Open Space Committee, Planning Board, Recreation Commission, Treasurer, Town Accountant, Town Clerk, School Committee, Community Development Plan Committee, Town Building Committee and Library Building Committee. Various ad-hoc and sub-committees working under these municipal boards are also involved in needs identification and goal setting.

The Town is assisted in its planning and community development efforts by several regional organizations, including the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG), Franklin Community Development Corporation (FCDC), and the Franklin Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority (FRHRDA). The Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) and the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) also assist the Town, providing guidance and funding to help meet community needs.

Planning Processes and Documents

The Town is and has been involved in a variety of planning processes, including the following:

Community Development Plan (CDP) June 2004: This document addresses housing, economic development, open space and transportation. Its findings and recommendations provide the primary support for this Community Development Strategy. The entire Plan is available at the Town of Wendell website at www.wendellmass.us.

Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSP) 2002: In 2002, the Wendell Open Space Plan Committee completed an ASP which inventories town resources, analyzes long-term development patterns, and establishes priorities for open space preservation, zoning and land use and recreation. This Plan was discussed at a public forum. An annual town meeting voted to approve this Plan and it was later approved by the EOEA Division of Conservation Services. A Regional Open Space Plan for the western portion of the Millers River watershed (2002) incorporated many of the same findings and recommendations.

Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan (Draft 2005): The Town is updating its Emergency Management Plans. Proposed actions under consideration include bylaw/regulation updates, logistics; dam oversight, and stabilizing municipal buildings (for shelters) and mobile homes.

Capital Plan: Each year, members of the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee meet to discuss long-range capital needs and priorities for the Town, as outlined in its Capital Improvement Plan. Recommendations for capital planning, prioritization of needs and allocation of resources are recommended and discussed at Town Meeting.

ADA Transition Plan: Wendell has adopted a plan to achieve compliance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The Town administrative staff updates the plan regularly with involvement from residents and municipal officials.

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:

- ❑ *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. Produced by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments with funding from MA EOE.
- ❑ *The Greater Franklin County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2003 Annual report.* The CEDS program is operated 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.
- ❑ *Regional Transportation Plan, 2003.* This plan, coordinated by the FRCOG with input from all 26 towns, promotes ways to develop transportation alternatives to the automobile, while at the same time supporting the improvement and more efficient use of traditional facilities.

Strategic Action Plan

The planning processes described above have resulted in specific action plans that the Town will undertake over the next three to five years. The Town's priorities, projects, and identified resources and funding sources are described in detail in the relevant planning documents. Methods to meet some of the Town's specific goals are described in this proposal for funding and are summarized below:

Housing Rehabilitation as a Priority:

The Town's housing goals, as described in the Vision Statement and CDP 2004 include "Encourage efforts to make Wendell's housing inventory both affordable and energy efficient." The proposed 2005 priority project specifically focuses on the correction of code violations, lead paint removal, removal of asbestos, access to address disabilities and repairs to septic systems and private wells.

Preservation of existing housing stock is a high priority for the Town, and ensuring energy efficiency and affordability are linked priorities. A majority of Wendell's residents live in single-family homes (10% are mobile homes) with about 33% of the housing stock more than 35 years old and 17% more than 64 years old (CDP, 2004). The housing rehabilitation activity will preserve existing housing stock, particularly for elderly residents, through a no-interest, deferred payment loan program. An estimated 13% of Wendell households have burdensome housing costs based on their income (CDP 2004). These households struggle to make rent or mortgage payments and lack resources for needed rehabilitation. Also, the 2000 US Census reports that 4% of Wendell's occupied housing has incomplete plumbing and 5% is reported to lack complete kitchen facilities. The homes with incomplete plumbing include homes with outhouses.

Source of Funding: The Town seeks 2005 CDBG funding as part of a multi-town application to address this high priority. Wendell will work with the Franklin County Regional Housing Authority to implement a no-interest, deferred payment loan program, providing outreach and other supporting services.

Relationship to Sustainable Development Principles: Wendell has focused on housing rehabilitation for the last few years. Given the condition of housing in Wendell and income levels, it was an obvious choice. This activity clearly is an example of "Redevelop First" (Principle #1). However, this activity also expands housing opportunities (Principle #6), particularly for the disabled, and ensures safety and public health are protected

(Principle # 4). The rehabilitation does not come at the cost of another environmental, health or development goal. In fact, energy efficiency (Principle #5) is furthered with improvements in insulation and existing infrastructure is used more fully.

Priorities Established by the Wendell Vision Statement (2002, Revised in CDP 2004):

Our primary vision for the Town of Wendell is to preserve its rural and unique community character while seeking to improve the quality of life for its residents. We recognize that the careful management of land use and population growth will help the town protect its natural, historic, and scenic assets while enhancing people's abilities to enjoy these valuable resources. We envision land planning and regulation of development as key tools to meet our specific community needs, while at the same time allowing for a more controlled population increase over the long term that is sustainable for the Town of Wendell.

Through careful and sustained proactive planning, we hope to encourage the kinds of land use which will maintain and improve the overall health and well-being of the aquatic, forest, and open-field ecosystems, and wildlife habitats and which will help the town to permanently protect and manage its open spaces. The Open Space and Recreation Plan for Wendell will contribute to this undertaking. We actively support the development of small scale commercial, economic growth as well as encourage cottage industries that will blend with Wendell's rural environment. We recognize the need to research the status and condition of our current road situation and to consider access to public transportation and to current and proposed bicycle paths and trails within the region. Future planning should consider the adverse impact that a rising tax rate has upon residents with limited incomes.

In order to achieve the concepts outlined in this vision statement, the Wendell Community Development Plan Advisory Committee along with the Planning Board have identified a number of shared goals and objectives to help guide the preparation and implementation of the Town of Wendell's Community Development Plan. By including as many of the town's residents as possible, to make this vision a reality, we hope to foster more active participation in town affairs and promote more involvement in activities which will strengthen our unique community.

The Planning Board recognizes that many of the goals listed below are conflicting. However, these goals represent general concepts considered important by a significant number of townspeople. The Planning Board, in proposing future changes to the town bylaws, will hold these goals in mind.

Goal – To preserve Wendell's rural character by preserving its diversity of wildlife and open spaces

- Preserve and increase amount of protected land
- Create greenways both within town and connecting with greenways in surrounding towns
- Enhance scenic roads bylaw to further protect byways
- Preserve the dark night sky by minimizing light pollution
- Promote community based ecological education and related activities
- Insure that zoning bylaws continue to be protective of natural resources and quality of life
- Implement the Open Space Plan

Goal – Diversify tax base and increase community services through the facilitation of economic development

- Promote the development of cottage industries and the use of local resources
- Promote ecologically sound development
- Maintain and improve appropriate bylaws to ensure sound development practices
- Create business district(s) to allow the separation of businesses from land uses with which they may not be entirely compatible, and to encourage the establishment of new businesses.
- Explore alternatives to present tax and revenue structure

Goal – Improve transportation options for residents

- Maintain roadways in keeping with their designation as scenic and rural roads (This incorporates maintaining stone walls, trees, proper drainage, minimal road width, guard rails and minimal lighting)
- Retain and maintain dirt roads
- Determine the legal status of all roads to clarify issues of development and maintenance
- Increase access to coordinated and/or public transport, especially for seniors and keep the community informed of these options.
- Explore means to control the speed of traffic, including education, traffic calming and enforcement of speed limits

Goal – To encourage diverse housing and rental options while preserving Wendell's rural character and unique community

- Encourage efforts to make Wendell's housing inventory both affordable and energy efficient
- Encourage the development of housing for our elders and low to moderately priced rental units
- Review current sub-division regulations and cluster development options
- Determine a sustainable rate of residential growth, that the town and its residents can manage, without creating adverse fiscal impacts, to aid in the development of future bylaws.
- Consider the creation of traditional neighborhood districts(s) that allow a mix of residential and business land uses.

Resources for Implementing the Community Development Strategy

- Wendell will address its community needs and priorities using a variety of local, regional, state and national resources including:
- Local property taxes
- Volunteer labor and donated materials
- Community fundraising activities (bake sales, book sales, silent auctions, etc.)
- State aid through school and transportation programs, lottery games, library programs and special status exemption funds
- Technical assistance and grants from regional organizations including Franklin County Community Development Corporation, Franklin County Council of Governments, Franklin Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority, and Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
- Grant and loan funding through the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, Office of Commonwealth Development, Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, and other state agencies
- Grant and loan funding through US Department of Agriculture, US Department of Housing and Urban Development and other federal agencies.

Other Community Development Activities Planned for 2005-2010:

The table on page five describes other planned activities, the source for these priority activities, their relationship to one or more Sustainable Development Principles, and potential resources/funding to implement the activities.

Community Development Activities Planned for 2005-2010:

YEAR(S)	ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	SOURCE	SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLE	RESOURCES &/OR FUNDING
2005	Selected Open Space: Fisk Pond & acres & Town Forest lands	Conserve for habitat & recreation; Rare sand plain pond (Fiske Pond) Forest Mgt Plan/implementation (2003+)	OSP2002; CDP2004	#4 Restore/enhance Environment #10 Plan Regionally #5 Conserve Natural Resources #9 Foster Sustainable Businesses	Individuals; MA EOE; local taxes
2004-2008	Selected Open Space: Access Millers River	Consider Town land for fishing Public access; may transfer to state	OSP2002	#4 Restore/enhance Environment #10 Plan Regionally	Taxes; town staff
2005	Housing Rehabilitation	Access for homeowners to means for rehabilitation of housing	CDP2004; Select Board	#1 Redevelop First #5 Conserve Resources #6 Expand Housing Opportunities #10 Plan Regionally	CDBG; town staff; Regional effort
2005-2006	Study Area for Higher Density	Traditional Neighborhood Design; Depot & Village Common Area to be studied	CDP2004	#1 Redevelop First #5 Conserve Natural Resources #2 Concentrate Development #9 Foster Sustainable Businesses	Town staff; unknown State/federal technical assistance funds
2004-2006	Village Common Septic Study	Study & follow-up action re: failed/failing septic @ town center, including town facilities; may assist w/density of area	CDP 2004	#1 Redevelop First #5 Conserve Natural Resources #2 Concentrate Development	Local taxes; MDC/DCR; USDA; MA CWSRF
2004-2006	Town Offices	Study & follow-up to ensure offices sufficient & safe for use now/future	Capital Plan-ning	#5 Conserve Natural Resources #2 Concentrate Development #1 Redevelop First	Local taxes; town staff; Volunteers; USDA; MA Funding
2005-2007	Building Guide	Brochure to clarify building, zoning, health, other code rules; clarify do-it-yourself building/rehab possibilities	CDP2004	#1 Redevelop First #3 Be Fair #6Expand Housing opportunities	Town staff; local taxes; Unknown technical support
2005-2007	Town Library	Locate, design, construct new Library; current is too small; site not OK; propose Green building @ town office site/save historic features	Capital; Library	#5 Conserve Natural Resources #2 Concentrate Development #1 Redevelop First	Local taxes; town staff; Volunteers; USDA; MA funding
2005-2006	Classify Roads	Ensure town roads in proper status: County, private, public	CDP2004	#7 Provide Transportation Choice	Town staff; unknown State/federal funds
2005-2010	Smaller Units for Young & Aged	Study & follow-up to encourage accessible smaller units; secondary dwellings or duplexes	CDP2004	#6Expand Housing opportunities #5 Conserve Natural Resources #2 Concentrate Development #1 Redevelop First	USDA; DHCD; unknown state/federal funds
2004-2010	Support Cottage Small Businesses	Sponsor Holiday/Business Fair; access high speed internet; link w/ area resources; Form Business Assn;	CDP2004	#9 Foster Sustainable Businesses #3 Be Fair; #10 Plan Regionally #8 Increase Job Opportunities	Local & regional staff; Individuals; unknown resources