



Steve Magoon
Director

smagoon@watertown-ma.gov

TOWN OF WATERTOWN
Department of
Community Development and Planning
PLANNING OFFICE

Administration Building
149 Main Street
Watertown, MA 02472
Phone: 617-972-6417
Fax: 617-972-6484
www.watertown-ma.gov

To: Honorable Town Council
Town Manager
From: Steve Magoon, Director of Community Development and Planning, Assistant Town Manager
RE: Update of Comprehensive Plan
Date: February 22, 2019

In June of 2015, Town Council adopted the Watertown Comprehensive Plan, following two years of working with the public on a vision for Watertown's future. The 2015 Plan includes over 200 recommendations.

A lot has been done by this and other departments, and by Town Council and other Town Boards, to implement the Plan. While the implementation is certainly subject to interpretation, our evaluation reveals that approximately 75% of the recommendations are either completed or currently underway. Some of the major accomplishments that address more than one recommendation include:

- Adoption of Design Guidelines
- LEED requirements for new development
- Complete Streets Policy and Implementation Plan
- Solar requirements for new development
- Adoption of the Community Preservation Act
- The number of residential, commercial and mixed-use developments that Watertown has permitted helps to address the housing and jobs needs of the Town, and has helped fund infrastructure modernization and provided other public benefits.

About 25% of the recommendations have not been addressed. Some of these things include:

- Strengthen and diversify the retail sector, especially in Watertown Square
- Adopt expedited permitting to help new businesses get started
- Review zoning to allow more uses by right
- Create incentives to restore historic buildings
- Improve wayfinding signage and interpretive signage around natural resource areas
- Pursue affordable housing acquisitions, including 2-family dwellings
- Align school curriculum and provide training to connect students and workforce to employment opportunities
- Create an ombudsmen position for consumers/residents
- Upgrade the website to provide information about natural resource areas

Following is a review of each Comprehensive Plan chapter. Recommendations are divided into three categories—Completed, Underway, and Not Yet Addressed. Some recommendations have been consolidated.

<u>Comprehensive Plan Chapters</u>	Page
1. Land Use.....	2
2. Transportation, Circulation and Parking.....	3
3. Housing.....	5
4. Economic Development.....	6
5. Open Space and Recreation.....	6
6. Natural Resources.....	7
7. Historic and Cultural Resources.....	8
8. Public Services and Facilities.....	9
9. Energy.....	10

1. LAND USE

Completed

1. Adopted Design Standards and Guidelines, and zoning amendments, that address a number of issues raised in the Plan.
 - a. Design and landscape standards (1A)
 - b. Streetscape and street interface, including distance of buildings from the street (1C, 3B)
 - c. Sidewalks are required (5D).
 - d. Requirements for trees and other amenities
 - e. Business districts and signs
 - f. Step backs for upper stories of taller buildings (4B).
 - g. Taller buildings allowed, without increased massing and with community benefits (4C).
2. Pleasant Street Corridor District (PSCD) zoning addresses height in relation to the Charles River and the residential neighborhood to the north (4C).
3. New projects are required to be LEED Silver Certifiable and also have recommendations for green building practices (1B).
4. Parking requirements were amended for existing buildings to promote a mix of uses and discourage car usage (1D).
5. Arsenal Street Corridor Study is complete. Partial implementation of road improvements will occur this year. Regional Mixed-Use District (RMUD) was adopted for Arsenal Street Corridor to guide development (1H).
6. Mix of uses is encouraged. Planning Board considered requiring mixed use but decided against it to maintain flexibility (1H, 3C).
7. Numerous vacant and underutilized sites have been redeveloped, such as Verizon site, Ionics building, Fields Company building (2B).
8. Public access to the Charles River has been increased through special permit requirements on projects along Pleasant St. (4G).

Underway

1. Options for Watertown Square street enhancements under consideration, in keeping with Complete Streets policy. Parking is being studied for better management (1E, 1G, 1F, 3F, 3G)
2. Cultural planning has begun and will include Watertown Square, to encourage Watertown Square vitality (1D).
3. MBTA hosted a tour of Watertown Yard but no planning has been initiated. Developers are looking at adjacent lots but no projects have been proposed (3E)
4. Pedestrian links within Watertown Square and to the Charles River are being explored in Watertown Square redesign project, but not yet finalized (3I).
5. Town Council is in the process of discussing accessory units as part of affordable housing strategies (5B).

Not Yet Addressed

1. Expedited permitting (2A).
2. Strategies for diverse retail mix within the squares (2A).
3. Identify and design Town gateways (3H).
4. Clarify uses in Zoning Use table and Parking Table, for consistency, and review uses allowed by right vs. special permit (4A).
5. Create incentives for restoration of historic buildings (3D, 4F).
6. Moving utilities underground in the public rights of way (4H).
7. Look at options for refining conversions of single to two-family homes in all residential zones (5A).

2. TRANSPORTATION

Completed

1. A Complete Streets policy was adopted by the Town Council in 2017, and a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan was accepted by MassDOT in 2018 (1A, 4A, 4D).
2. In keeping with the Complete Streets policy, road planning and design for Mt. Auburn Street and Arsenal Street include new on-road bicycle lanes where feasible, and improved accommodations for pedestrians and transit riders (3B2, 3B3).
3. The Mt. Auburn Street design includes Coolidge Square placemaking elements and landscape buffers (4E, 3A10, 5G)
4. A Bike Share Program was successfully implemented with Lime Bike. Between June and December, 2018, more than 12,000 rides were taken (3B8).
5. A Transportation Demand Management ordinance was adopted in 2017 that requires projects to reduce single occupancy vehicle trips. All development is now encouraged to promote alternative modes of transportation (6E, 2H).
6. The Arsenal Yards project includes consolidation of surface parking lots into structured parking, and redevelopment of those lots with residential and commercial development (6G).
7. A new position was created, Senior Transportation Planner, in the Department of Community Development and Planning. Responsibilities include working with the MBTA to advocate for expanded transit service, among other things (2B).
8. A dedicated bus lane was installed on Mt. Auburn Street from Cottage Street to the Cambridge City line, along with 2 queue jump/right-turn-on-red lanes to provide priority to the bus at these intersections (2E).
9. Bus Rapid Transit service on Arsenal Street was explored. The road is not wide enough for a dedicated bus lane (2E).

10. Traffic/Transportation Impact Study Guidelines were developed in 2015 (4F).
11. Town-wide vehicle traffic counting is in effect (5A).
12. As part of adoption of Design Standards, parking requirements for multi-family projects were lowered. Parking reduction is allowed where alternative modes are provided through TDM. Reduced parking is allowed up to 25% with justification (6D) (6E).
13. Shared parking is encouraged through revised zoning/Design Standards. Watertown Square Parking Management Plan will also look at shared parking opportunities. (6F).
14. A Transportation Management Association (TMA) was formed to help reduce SOV travel, and coordinate the public and private sectors to explore shuttle operation on Pleasant St. and Arsenal Street (2D).

Underway

1. A Traffic Calming Policy is under discussion with DCDP, Public Works and Police Traffic Division. Traffic calming has been implemented on Church Street, Common Street, and on Main Street in front of the Library. A roundabout is under construction on Common Street at Orchard Street. A raised crossing is planned for Whites Ave. at the Linear Park, near the Watertown Boys and Girls Club (1A).
2. The Town and MBTA are looking at bus stop consolidation on Arsenal Street and Mt. Auburn Street, to improve efficiency for the bus. Bus shelters and benches will also be installed (2A, (2C).
3. Work is underway to explore shuttle bus service for commuters (2D).
4. Charlie Card Machines will be installed throughout Watertown as part of the MBTA's Automatic Fare Collection project, scheduled to go into effect in 2021 (2F).
5. Some crosswalks have been upgraded or replaced. Arsenal Street rebuild will include new crosswalks (3A2, 3A6).
6. There are many locations where trail connections are being planned or under construction. The Water Mills project (330-350 Pleasant Street) includes a connection to the DCR Charles River Greenway from Pleasant Street. The Arsenal Park will provide a connecting path between Arsenal Street and the Charles River Greenway. The Watertown-Cambridge DCR Greenway will connect East Watertown to Fresh Pond in Cambridge (3A9, 3B7).
7. The 2002 Bicycle Transportation Plan is proposed to be updated in 2019. DCDP is working with the Bike and Pedestrian Committee and DPW on a Scope of Work for a new Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, including recommendations for striping and roadway markings, locations for bike racks, identification of bike routes, and recommendations for wayfinding signage will be included. Baseline bicycle counts will be conducted in key locations (3B, 3B2, 3B5, 3B4, 5A).
8. Smart technology will be incorporated into the Mt. Auburn Street and Arsenal Street designs, including Transit Signal Priority and countdown pedestrian signal heads (3A7, 4C).
9. Timed traffic signals designed to move traffic along at a steady pace will be part of the Arsenal St. Corridor Project (5E).
10. Watertown Square and Coolidge Square Parking Management Plan is underway. Recommendations anticipated in spring/summer, 2019. Plan will evaluate parking policies, meter technology, hours of operation, enforcement, and signage to help make Watertown business districts more user-friendly and welcoming (6A, 6H).
11. Green design elements such as rain gardens, bio swales, paving materials and permeable surfaces have been incorporated into most private developments. (4B)

12. Many of the larger developments have included contributions to community benefits, such as paths connecting to the Charles River Greenway, bike paths along Arsenal Street and Howard Street, and rebuilding Arsenal Street (3E).
13. ADA compliant sidewalks are incorporated into several projects, and are part of the DPW annual CIP for sidewalks (3A).

Not Yet Addressed

1. Water transportation and light rail (2G).
2. Safe Routes to Schools not expanded (3A5).
3. EV charging stations--funding is in place but locations not yet determined (4C).
4. Access management/curb cuts, better separation between driveways (4F).
5. Better signage and wayfinding (4H).
6. Multi-modal level of service standards (5D).
7. Intersection improvements, using state HSIP money (Highway Safety Improvement Program) (5F).
8. Include public parking in private developments in Watertown Sq. There have been no opportunities to do this. It also can conflict with allowing reduced parking (6B).

3. HOUSING

Completed

1. The 156 subsidized units at Arsenal Apartment with expiring income restrictions have been re-certified until 2033 (1B).
2. The Community Preservation Act was adopted in 2016 (1G).
3. Parking requirements for multi-family projects were lowered in 2016 (2D).
4. The Inclusionary Zoning requirements were adjusted in a number of ways. Unit set aside was increased from 10% to 12.5%, and then to 15%. A tiered percentage was established to treat smaller projects differently. Requirements for rental units are now also tiered, with 1/3 at 65% Area Median Income (AMI) and the remainder at 80% of AMI (2E, 1A).
5. Department of Community Development & Planning (DCDP) staff apply dimensional criteria and the Design Standards/Guidelines to projects to maintain community character (1F, 2B).
6. DCDP staff discuss housing trends with Town Planners, MAPC staff and developers (1D).
7. DCDP staff and the Housing Partnership strongly encourage developments to contribute large, 3-bedroom units as part of a project's affordable unit set aside (2G).
8. The Reasonable Accommodations Policy is an administrative process to permit ramps and similar mobility aides within setbacks, which helps seniors and those with mobility problems remain in their homes (3A).
9. To help address seniors' needs, Watertown held a workshop in 2017 on resources that help seniors age in place (3A).
10. The Town's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) percentage (as recognized by the State) increased from 6.45% in 2014 to over 7% today (1A).
11. New opportunities for Mixed Use and Assisted Living have been created through zoning changes on Arsenal Street, Pleasant Street and in the I-3 zone (1C, 2B).

Underway

1. Reincorporating Accessory Units are being considered as part of a larger housing strategy (2F).

Not Yet Addressed

1. Invest in acquisition/rehab projects, and purchase existing two-family dwellings for affordable housing (1E).
2. Emergency repairs program for homeowners (3C).
3. Allow Multi-Family By-Right up to 4 units; Allow with Site Plan if affordable units provided (2A).
4. Explore opportunities to allow greater density in Cluster Residential; Density bonus for smaller unit sizes such as “cottage style” housing (2C).

4. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Completed

1. Good environment for Life Sciences has been established, evidenced by the growth in that sector (1A).
2. Arsenal Yards will provide housing, office and retail uses that support the “live-work-play lifestyle” (1C).
3. The Town is currently involved in design of 3 major roadways (Mt. Auburn St., Arsenal St., and Watertown Square), and will soon make major investments in its roadway and utility infrastructure (2A).
4. There has been significant private investment in vacant and underutilized properties on Pleasant Street and Arsenal Street, resulting in new housing, commercial, and Research and Development space (3A).

Underway

1. The Mt. Auburn Street Complete Streets project will have a positive impact on street life and sidewalk culture, by creating areas for people to congregate, with benches and greenery (5B).
2. The Parking Management Plan currently underway will recommend ways to better manage parking in Watertown Square and Coolidge Square to help support neighborhood retail (5C).
3. Watertown Public Arts and Culture Committee has installed and promoted public art. The Committee and DCDP are working with a consultant to develop an Arts and Culture Plan to enhance a sense of place and quality of life (5D).

Not Yet Addressed

1. The closing of the Watertown Belmont Chamber of Commerce reduced opportunities for businesses to work together and work with the Town to strengthen the retail and business sectors (2B, 3D, 6B).
2. Expedited permitting or One-Stop Shop to support businesses (3B, 6A).
3. Alignment of school curriculum with employment opportunities (4A).
4. Building relationships with state and regional agencies for infrastructure, training, education and networking (6C).
5. Connecting workforce to training has not occurred (4B).
6. Marketing of recreational opportunities has not occurred (5A).

5. OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

Completed

1. Providing publicly available open space is encouraged and sometimes required during permitting of redevelopment projects. A recent amendment to the requirements in the Pleasant Street Corridor District (PSCD) requires that a percentage of open space be open to the public. Along Arsenal Street and Irving Street, access through sites to the Charles River is a primary goal. Use of stormwater features in pocket parks is also encouraged. (1A, 3A).

2. Properties are rarely acquired by the Town due to tax default, so staff continues to monitor any opportunities (3B).
3. The DCR Charles River Basin Pedestrian and Bicycle Connectivity Study is complete. The Town continues to work on creating the key connections identified in the Plan (4A).
4. Connections to the Charles River continue to be encouraged, on both public land and private property. Paths through the Arsenal Yards and Arsenal Park have been incorporated into their designs. The Arsenal on the Charles Master Plan also incorporates connections to the Charles River (4B).
5. The Town created a position that focuses on wellness, including access to food, physical activity and mental well-being, through Live Well Watertown (LWW). The Senior Center and the schools are both members of LWW, where public health and physical fitness are primary goals (5B).
6. The Town completed two dog parks, at How Park and at Filippello Park. The Town has also encouraged developers to consider publicly accessible dog areas (5G).

Underway

1. ADA accommodations are incorporated into parks and recreation facilities as they are improved or upgraded (1C).
2. Planning for parks' capital improvements is done through the 5-year Capital Improvements Plan (CIP). The Recreation Department works with DPW to identify and address maintenance needs (2B).
3. The Town continues to coordinate with groups such as Watertown Community Gardens, Boy Scouts, and other partners to support park facilities (2D).
4. A portion of Walker Pond is open to the public and includes a path (3C).
5. Implementation of the Community Path continues. Design is underway for a section that will connect Arsenal Street at Irving Street to Taylor Street, and then to Mt. Auburn Street. The section planned to go through the municipal parking lot will be designed after the Arsenal/Taylor Street section and the Parking Management Plan are complete (5C, 5D).
6. The Town, working with MAPC, installed bike racks focusing on the Town's parks and elementary schools. A future Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan will identify priority locations for more bike racks (5E).
7. Live Well Watertown and the Recreation Department organized a kayak event on the Charles River in Watertown Square and hope to expand the program (5F).

Not Yet Addressed

1. Level of Service (LOS) standards for parks and recreation programs and fields (1B).
2. "Friends of Parks" groups to provide stewardship, clean-ups, and identify issues at an early stage (2A).
3. Sawins and Williams Ponds remain in private ownership with no public access or remediation (3C).
4. Development of a community center, including a swimming pool (5A).

6. NATURAL RESOURCES

Completed

1. Stormwater regulations have been adopted and the Town requires best management practices for all permits, to address non-point source pollution and protect the river (1A).
2. Zoning Ordinance encourages Low Impact Development to protect private storm water systems (1C).

3. Design guidelines include protecting access to the river for passive and active uses (1E).
4. The Charles River is recognized by the community as a defining feature and a valued asset. Live Well Watertown and committees including the Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee continue to develop walking and bicycle programming focused on the Charles River and its history and resource amenities. Development projects that abut the river are required to recognize it and incorporate it into the design (1F).
5. The Town has partnered with the Charles River Watershed Association and other groups to improve the water quality of the Charles River (1G).
6. The Town has elevated the protection of its public street trees by creating a full-time Tree Warden position (from part-time) and has integrated planning for trees and planting new street trees during full-depth street reconstruction projects (2A).
7. During redevelopment the location and type of existing trees are reviewed and appropriate protection is required during construction (2B).
8. The master plans of the two major Arsenal development sites do identify and require preservation of certain landscape features. Zoning also protects some of the critical buffers along the Charles River.

Underway

1. The Town continues to work with Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) on the GSA site, to ensure the restoration of wetlands and access to passive recreation areas (1D).
2. The Town provides education about the benefits of trees and partners with Trees for Watertown to encourage planting of trees on private property, and maintenance of the tree inventory (2B, 2C).
3. Community events provide information to residents about sustainability, energy efficiency, stormwater, recycling and composting (3B).
4. Educational and interpretive signage at the Town's natural resource areas is under consideration by the Conservation Commission for Whitney Hill. The Town is also including interpretive signage within Arsenal Park when it is renovated. DCR has some signage along the Charles River (3C).

Not Yet Addressed

1. The website does not provide information about the Town's natural resource areas (3A).
2. There is no "pocket park" program to establish public/private open space in neighborhoods (4C).

7. HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Completed

1. Design Standards and Guidelines were added to the Zoning Ordinance in 2015 which address community character on major road corridors. (1A)
2. The maximum period for a Demolition Delay that the Historic Commission can impose has been increased from 6 months to 12 months. (2C).
3. A member of the Historical Commission continues to add properties to the list of cultural and historic resources. This process could benefit from additional staff resources (2A).
4. In 2018, using a grant from the Watertown Cultural Council, the Watertown Public Arts and Culture Committee developed a brochure and toolkit that helps developers, architects, etc. explore opportunities for public art (3A).

5. Special events and programming supported by the Town include the Historic Preservation Awards, and events at the Commander's Mansion and Mosesian Arts Center, both owned by the Town (3B).
6. Murals and public art have been installed at Baptist Walk, Boys and Girls Club, Linear Park, and Coolidge Square (3C).

Not Yet Addressed

1. Mapping of historical and cultural resources (2A)
2. Marketing strategy to promote awareness and preservation of historic and cultural assets (2B, 3A).
3. Incentives to encourage redevelopment of historic buildings (2C).

8. PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Completed

1. Website has been updated (1B).
2. Complete Streets policy is now incorporated into all DPW projects (2A).
3. Public Facilities Department was created to consolidate DPW and School Department maintenance (2B, 6A)
4. The Town works extensively with MAPC on regional planning (2C).
5. DPCD works closely with the Health Department, especially with Live Well Watertown (LWW), on healthy transportation and land use initiatives. One Senior Planner sits on the Board of LWW. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee is collaborating with LWW on a newsletter to promote healthy, active transportation options (4A).
6. Wellness Coordinator provides educational programs on nutrition, exercise, and risks of alcohol, tobacco and drug use, and runs regular walking groups. A new Farmers Market was established in 2017 (4B).
7. Various programs are offered for elderly population through the Council on Aging. Youth are served by Recreation Department (4D).
8. Social Services Resource Specialist position is funded in Health Department budget (4E).
9. Edenfield, Beacon Park and Common St. projects have rain garden infiltration. Schools, park design also incorporate stormwater best management practices (5A).
10. Town organizational staffing review occurs as part of annual budget preparation (1D).
11. Annual Capital Improvement Program (CIP) preparation is done in consultation with 2008 Facilities Assessment Study (3C).
12. Permanent locations for community gardens were incorporated at Arsenal Park and at Elan Park on Irving Street (4G).
13. Outreach regarding stormwater management occurs through the Stormwater Advisory Committee and DPW at the schools, and Faire on the Square (5D).
14. Single stream/large container recycling adopted to simplify and therefore increase recycling. Plastic bag ban adopted to reduce solid waste (5C).

Underway

1. Town is seeking proposals for an IT study, to develop a plan for better use of technology to increase efficiency of all Town departments (1A).
2. Hazard Mitigation Plan was updated to maintain critical functions through weather and energy disturbances. Looking into Municipal Vulnerability Planning Grant (5B).

3. Exploring alternatives for renovating and replacing school facilities. Prioritizing projects and applying for funding is underway (6C, 6D).
4. Town nurtures cooperative relationships with community agencies such as Watertown Community Foundation and Trees for Watertown (4F).

Not Yet Addressed

1. Ombudsman position for consumers (1C).
2. Wellness Program for Town employees (4C).
3. New record-keeping procedures (2D).
4. New Building Committee to review short and long-term needs of Town buildings (3A).
5. Services for immigrants (4D).
6. Communication systems current (6B).

9. ENERGY

Completed

1. Watertown Environment and Energy Efficiency Committee (WE3C) developed recommendations for climate and energy action plan (1A).
2. Outreach to community, including tenants and landlords, regarding energy conservation opportunities, takes place at public meetings along with energy booths at Faire in the Square and the Farmers' Market. Programs include MassSave energy audits, energy efficiency incentives and Watertown Electricity Choice (residential electricity supply aggregation). (1B, 2A).
3. LEED Green Building requirements, and solar generation requirements, adopted in zoning. Regulations cover major remodeling and redevelopment, energy efficiency, water and wastewater efficiency (2B, 2C, 3C).
4. Municipal buildings retrofits for energy efficiency under the Performance Contract are complete. First year measurement and verification of energy reduction show achievement of goals. Energy savings are paying for energy conservation measures (3A).
5. Energy Manager attends regional meetings with Dept. of Energy Resources, and applicable webinars, for staying current on best practices (3B).
6. Town Hall generator was installed to plan for unexpected emergencies (3D).
7. All paper purchased by the town, including toilet paper and paper towels, contains recycled content (3F).
8. Green vehicles are being purchased as old vehicles are replaced. Fuel efficiency is tracked via Green Communities Annual Report (4A).

Not Yet Addressed

1. Green business and residential certification programs (1C).