

MEMORANDUM

To: Dracut Master Planning Committee
From: Jay J. Donovan, Assistant Director, NMCOG
Subject: Dracut Master Plan Visioning Results
Date: November 28, 2017



As part of the public input process for the Dracut Master Plan, the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) worked with the Dracut Master Planning Committee to schedule the Dracut Master Plan Visioning Session at Harmony Hall. The purpose of the Visioning Session was to provide an overview of the Master Plan process, discuss the Visioning Process and then begin the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis exercise, in order to receive input from the participants as to the priorities for the community. The results of the SWOT Analysis exercise will be used in conjunction with the feedback from the community survey to determine the priority concerns to be addressed in the updated Master Plan. Additional input will be provided through the review of the Goals and Strategies, as well as the responses from the Dracut Master Planning Committee on the individual Technical Papers and the final sections of the Master Plan.

The Dracut Master Plan Visioning Session was held on October 5, 2017 and thirty-five (35) Dracut residents participated in the session. Phil Thibault, Chairman of the Dracut Master Planning Committee, welcomed the participants and Introduced Beverly Woods, NMCOG Executive Director, to provide an overview of the Master Plan process. Jay Donovan then proceeded to discuss the Visioning Process and begin the SWOT Analysis. The SWOT Analysis exercise provided an opportunity for the attendees to voice their opinions on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with Dracut. NMCOG staff recorded their thoughts, opinions and ideas on large sheets of paper, and after the discussion, participants were given an opportunity to indicate their priorities by placing colored dots next to each idea on the sheets of paper. For this exercise, red dots (4 points) indicated their first priority, green dots (3 dots), indicated their second priority, blue dots (2 points) indicated their third priority and yellow dots (1 point) indicated their fourth priority.

Based upon the tabulated point totals for each idea, the top five priorities for the Visioning Session for each category were as follows:

Strengths

- Low property taxes
- Natural open space
- Proximity to cultural assets in Lowell
- Proximity to higher education
- Local food

Weaknesses

- Quality of education
- Inadequate funding
- Lack of things to do

- No curb appeal
- Lack of community events/harvests or festivals

Opportunities

- Dog park
- Community center or visitor center with information on resources & activities
- Farmers market
- Walking trails & bike paths
- Develop a downtown with commercial businesses and downtown identity

Threats

- Exodus of young families due to poor schools
- Lack of special education
- Voter apathy
- Resistance to progress
- Lack of opportunities to socialize

The complete results for the Visioning Session, as well as the flyer, agenda and sign in sheets, are provided as an attachment to this brief memorandum. The results are summarized by category and the ideas are listed by total dots and points based upon the values assigned to each dot. While these results do not represent a scientific sampling of local opinion, they do represent the views of the participants who attended the Visioning Session. We will provide a more complete discussion of the results at tomorrow's Master Planning Committee meeting. While

Dracut Master Plan Visioning Session



The Dracut Master Plan Committee invites you to its first Public Input Session

Please attend this important event and help determine Dracut's future. The Master Plan will address land use, infrastructure, environmental resource protection, and housing and economic development policies. Strong community participation is the most important aspect in creating a document that best meets the needs of the town.

Make sure your voice is heard.

When: Thursday, October 5, 2017
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Where: Harmony Hall
1660 Lakeview Avenue
Dracut, MA

Light refreshments will be served.

DRACUT MASTER PLAN VISIONING SESSION

October 5, 2017

7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Harmony Hall

Program:

- I. Welcome and Introductions - Phil Thibault, Chairman, Master Plan Committee
- II. Overview of the Master Plan Process - Beverly Woods, Executive Director, Northern Middlesex Council of Governments
- III. The Visioning Process and Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis - Jay Donovan, Assistant Director, Northern Middlesex Council of Governments
- IV. Input Prioritization Exercise (using color coding dots)

Dracut Master Plan Update SWOT Session Results: 10-5-17

Strengths	Participant Priorities				Totals	
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Dots	Points
Low property taxes	5	0	1	0	6	22
Natural open space	4	2	0	0	6	22
Proximity to cultural assets in Lowell	3	1	3	1	8	22
Proximity to higher education	3	3	0	1	7	22
Local food	1	3	1	1	6	16
Low crime rate	0	4	1	0	5	14
Suburban town	2	1	1	0	4	13
Proximity to hospitals/healthcare	0	3	0	2	5	11
Use of historic properties	2	1	0	0	3	11
Close to NH shopping	1	0	2	2	5	10
Small town feel	0	2	2	0	4	10
People	0	3	0	0	3	9
Access to Routes 110, 113 & 38	0	2	1	0	3	8
Agricultural heritage	1	1	0	0	2	7
Location	1	1	0	0	2	7
Near state park	1	0	1	1	3	7
Large lots are affordable	0	1	0	4	5	7
Low-cost housing	0	1	0	2	3	5
Rich history	0	0	1	0	1	2
Beauty	0	0	0	1	1	1
More culturally diverse	0	0	0	0	0	0

Weaknesses	Participant Priorities				Totals	
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Dots	Points
Quality of education	27	8	7	14	56	160
Inadequate funding	19	3	0	9	31	94
Lack of things to do	9	15	6	0	30	93
No curb appeal	8	7	4	0	19	61
Lack of community events/harvest festivals	4	12	0	2	18	54
Not enough tax revenue / tax base is too small	2	2	11	1	16	37
Lack of technology education	6	1	3	1	11	34
Lack of walkability/sidewalks & pedestrian safety issues	1	2	5	13	21	33
Hodge-podge development	3	6	0	1	10	31
Lack of funding for fire department, services	1	6	2	5	14	31
Lack of new businesses	4	3	2	1	10	30
Lack of handicap accessibility	3	4	1	1	9	27
Traffic issues at school complex	2	3	3	1	9	24
Lack of traffic enforcement in neighborhoods	2	2	5	0	9	24
Lack of community	1	2	5	2	10	22
Commercial & residential taxes are same	0	1	8	2	11	21
Contention between town & school	1	4	0	4	9	20
Lack of adult education	0	3	4	1	8	18
Lack of satellite campus/dorms	0	3	3	1	7	16
Outdated zoning bylaws	0	2	3	3	8	15
Lack of downtown	1	2	0	4	7	14
Traffic	2	1	1	1	5	14
Lack of mixed use developments	2	1	1	1	5	14
Lack of technology use by local gov't	1	2	1	1	5	13
Lack of affordable housing	1	2	1	0	4	12
Lack of professional jobs	0	3	0	3	6	12
Facades & landscaping of new development	2	0	1	1	4	11
Lack of coordination with school activities	0	3	1	0	4	11
Clutter from phone/utility lines & signs	0	3	0	0	3	9
Lack of local media	1	1	0	2	4	9
Lack of identity	2	0	0	0	2	8
Lack of diversity	0	1	1	2	4	7
Too many signs	1	0	1	1	3	7
Lack of health care	0	0	1	2	3	4
Petty crime	0	0	1	2	3	4
Bedroom community	0	0	1	0	1	2
Presence of brownfields/quarries	0	0	0	0	0	0

Opportunities	Participant Priorities				Totals	
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Dots	Points
Dog park	9	8	0	6	23	66
Community center or visitor center with information on resources & activities	7	4	1	2	14	44
Farmers market	2	8	1	2	13	36
Walking trails & bike paths	4	4	3	0	11	34
Develop a downtown with commercial businesses and downtown identity	3	3	1	6	13	29
Encourage development along Merrimack River	2	2	6	1	11	27
Bring in young families & keep them here	1	3	2	4	10	21
Promote farms	3	1	2	0	6	19
Improved playgrounds	0	3	4	2	9	19
Utilize educational resources	1	3	2	1	7	18
Town beach	2	1	2	2	7	17
Enhance town website	2	2	0	0	4	14
Design for downtown	3	0	0	0	3	12
Utilize Grange	2	0	1	1	4	11
Bike path to Lowell train station	0	2	0	5	7	11
Safe, accessible recreation areas	0	3	0	1	4	10
Unique businesses	1	2	0	0	3	10
Develop plan to transition town to better place	1	1	0	1	3	8
More service businesses	1	1	0	1	3	8
Adaptive reuse of quarries	1	0	1	1	3	7
Improve public transportation	0	0	0	5	5	5
Better public transit information	0	0	1	2	3	4
Sidewalks in downtown	0	1	0	0	1	3
Flexibility in implementation of new project/developments	0	0	0	0	0	0

Threats	Participant Priorities				Totals	
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Dots	Points
Exodus of young families due to poor schools	13	4	2	3	22	71
Lack of special education	7	1	5	0	13	41
Voter apathy	6	3	2	1	12	38
Resistance to progress	5	0	1	3	9	25
Lack of opportunities to socialize	3	3	1	2	9	25
Lack of community participation	2	1	2	2	7	17
Lack of social compact	2	2	1	0	5	16
Dependence on state money	2	1	2	1	6	16
Doing nothing	1	2	2	1	6	15
Loss of character	3	0	1	0	4	14
Drugs/opioids	2	1	1	1	5	14
Health issues do to lack of pedestrian/bike paths and facilities	2	0	1	2	5	12
Lack of can-do attitude in town gov't	0	1	2	4	7	11
Lack of safety precautions	0	2	2	0	4	10
Crime	0	2	1	0	3	8
Too many residential developments	1	1	0	0	2	7
Downturn in economy	1	1	0	0	2	7
Gas pipeline	1	0	0	2	3	6
Lack of confidence in town gov't	0	1	0	2	3	5
Unreal expectations	0	0	0	1	1	1