



# Dartmouth Week

## Residents weigh in on town's future at master planning workshop

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After breaking up into groups, master plan meeting attendees rank the top 10 ideas or issues brought up using stickers. Photo by: Douglas McCulloch

Protecting Dartmouth from overdevelopment while keeping it affordable. Attracting new business while keeping traffic under control. These are just a few suggestions residents want to see in a blueprint of Dartmouth's future, which is now under development.

It's called the Town of Dartmouth Master Plan, a guiding document produced every decade or so to assess where the town is now, how it got here, and where to go from here.

On June 13, more than 50 residents gathered at Town Hall to brainstorm initial ideas at the official kickoff of the master planning process. The plan is being developed with resident input front and center, explained Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District planner Helen Zincavage. SRPEDD and the town are working together to develop the plan.

"Really, it's your ideas and community driven goals," Zincavage said. "It's providing a basis for decision making."

As an icebreaker, every resident in attendance identified what they like the most about Dartmouth, and what they are most concerned about. Access to beaches and nature, the quaint, rural nature of the town, and being free from big city traffic topped the positives.

What are residents concerned about? The rate of development in town, traffic along Faunce Corner Road and Route 6, the loss of farmland and natural resources to developments, and the consequences of climate change, especially along the coastline.

Under state law, the town's master plan must include nine components: goals and policies, land use, housing, economic development, natural and cultural resources, open space and recreation, services and facilities, circulation (transportation infrastructure), and an implementation section outlining specific policy changes and timelines.

Dartmouth's master plan will include a tenth component addressing climate change, due to the impact it will have on Padanaram harbor and the South Dartmouth coastline.

Divided into groups, residents identified and discussed important issues in nine areas the master plan will identify, from housing to economic development. A theme that came up frequently was the idea of smart developments, particularly along the town's commercial center.

With the retail landscape changing, liquidation sales have become a common sight in town: Benny's and Toys 'R' Us both closed in the past years, and a liquidation sale is ongoing at the Dartmouth Mall Sears. Creatively reusing vacant storefronts should be encouraged, residents said.

The need for a clear and understandable business development plan was a major focus of several group discussions. Could Dartmouth use a Chamber of Commerce? Incubator space? Support for the medical sector along Faunce Corner Road that provided nearly five times the number of new jobs than any other industry in town?

At the same time, residents were also concerned with natural resources in town. Residents felt the town and the nonprofits which help protect land in Dartmouth need better support, as does protecting the town aquifer and waterways like the Slocums River, Cedar Dell Lake, and Lake Noquochoke.

In housing, many residents said they don't want to see suburban sprawl overtake the town's rural character. One of the groups suggested more affordable starter homes for new families, 55-plus housing for seniors, and more mixed-use developments similar to Lincoln Park.

With South Coast Rail close to becoming a reality, the town's transportation infrastructure was another major talking point. Residents felt bus service and public transportation is needed, especially to service the potential commuter rail stations to Boston and for UMass Dartmouth students. Several residents said the town's roadways need to better support cyclists and pedestrians.

The June 13 meeting was a broad, introductory meeting intended to develop a focus point for future workshops around specific topic areas. Additional workshops will be held in October, January, March,

and May before a final open house in June 2020. The goal is to have the master plan completed by the end of 2020.

For more information about the master planning process, visit [srpedd.org/Dartmouth-Master-Plan](http://srpedd.org/Dartmouth-Master-Plan)(<http://srpedd.org/Dartmouth-Master-Plan>).