

Date: January 29, 2025
To: Matthew Wojcik, Town Administrator
From: Community Development Director
Re: Charge to Master Plan Committee for creating and updating Douglas Master Plan

Composition

The Master Plan Committee has been formed as a subcommittee of the Planning Board. It therefore must comply with the Open Meetings Act, and be comprised of Douglas residents.

The Planning Board, per MGL Ch. 41 Section 81D, shall make a master plan of such city or town or such part or parts thereof as said board may deem advisable and from time to time may extend or perfect such plan. Such plan shall be a statement, through text, maps, illustrations and/or other forms of communication, that is designed to provide a basis for decision making regarding the long-term physical development of the municipality. The comprehensive plan shall be internally consistent in its policies, forecasts and standards and shall include each of the following elements:

(1) Goals and policies statement which identifies the goals and policies of the municipality for its future growth and development. The Town of Douglas shall conduct an interactive public process, to determine community values, goals and to identify patterns of development that will be consistent with these goals.

(2) Land use plan element which identifies present land use and designates the proposed distribution, location and inter-relationship of public and private land uses. This element shall relate the proposed standards of population density and building intensity to the capacity of land available or planned facilities and services. A land use plan map illustrating the land use policies of the municipality shall be included.

(3) Housing element which identifies and analyzes existing and forecasted housing needs and objectives including programs for the preservation, improvement and development of housing. This element shall identify policies and strategies to provide a balance of local housing opportunities for all citizens.

(4) Economic development element which identifies policies and strategies for the expansion or stabilization of the local economic base and the promotion of employment opportunities.

(5) Natural and cultural resources element which provides an inventory of the significant natural, cultural and historic resource areas of the municipality, and policies and strategies for the protection and management of such areas.

(6) Open space and recreation element which provides an inventory of recreational and resources and open space areas of the municipality, and policies and strategies for the management and protection of such resources and areas.

(7) Services and facilities element which identifies and analyzes existing and forecasted needs for facilities and services used by the public.

(8) Circulation element which provides an inventory of existing and proposed circulation and transportation systems.

(9) Implementation program element which defines and schedules the specific municipal actions necessary to achieve the objectives of each element of the master or study plan. Scheduled expansion or replacement of public facilities or circulation system components and the anticipated costs and revenues associated with accomplishment of such activities shall be detailed in this element. This element shall specify the process by which the municipality's regulatory structures shall be amended so as to be consistent with the master plan.

Such plan shall be made, and may be added to or changed from time to time, by a majority vote of such Planning Board and shall be public record. The Planning Board shall, upon completion of any plan or report, or any change or amendment to a plan or report produced under this section, furnish a copy of such plan or report or amendment thereto, to the executive office of housing and livable communities.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the Master Plan Committee be made up of a maximum total of 15 members; with a minimum of one each from the Select Board, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, Economic Development Committee (or its staff representative), Open Space Committee, Building Facilities and Construction Committee, Finance Committee, Historical Commission, School Committee, and three members of the public at large. It is also recommended that the Planning Board shall be the appointing authority for members to the Master Plan Committee.

Staff/Consultant Role

Staff/Consultants will provide support, most likely in a much more focused and proactive manner than typical for our various boards. Staff/Consultants are charged with providing the committee with technical expertise, recommendations for updating the master plan, data sets, plans, and draft documentation. Staff can provide meeting facilitation help, minutes, postings and other support.

Charge of the Committee

The Douglas Master Plan document was last updated in 1998 with a Final Report issued in 2007. The Town of Douglas applied for and received a Community One Stop for Growth grant in the amount of \$115,000 and matched with \$30,000 for a total of \$145,000 to complete the Douglas Master Plan. The Central Mass Regional Planning Commission has been awarded a contract to assist the Town of Douglas with updating the Douglas Master Plan. The Committee has two fiscal years to complete expenses in accordance with the grant, so an anticipated completion date will be June of 2026. An extension of the grant may be requested at that time, if needed.

The task of the committee is to review and update each element of the Master Plan with assistance from CMPRC while holding monthly meetings and scheduling charrettes, workshops, conducting surveys, conducting site walks, and engaging in general open interaction with the public to acquire data pertinent to the Master Plan. Progress will be updated to the Planning Board at each Board meeting.

Upon completion of the Master Plan (including Planning Board acceptance and Town Meeting vote), the Committee can dissolve or work with the Planning Board to create a new charge and become the Master Plan Implementation Committee with its existing or new members.