

Memo

To: Advisory & Finance Committee
Select Board

From: Planning Board

Date: July 6, 2023

Re: Plymouth Master Plan

The Planning Board is pleased to present to Town Meeting this request to fund the next Plymouth Master Plan.

The Plymouth Master Plan is intended to serve as guidance for Town leaders in enacting and implementing policies that reflect the goals and priorities of the entire community, not just a select few serving on Town boards or committees. The current Plymouth Master Plan was adopted in 2006. While the sentiments and aspirations of that document are still relevant, its conclusions are based on outdated information, and it is missing critical mandatory sections. Recognizing the need address these areas, the Planning Board, in conjunction with the Master Plan Task Group, has developed a scope of services for the next Plymouth Master Plan, tentatively titled “Charting Plymouth’s Future Together” (see attached).

The Master Plan Task Group interviewed numerous stakeholders, reviewed previous planning efforts, and studied a number of master plans from other communities. Based on this work, and the invaluable professional guidance from Town staff and the Old Colony Planning Council, the Master Plan Task Group drafted the scope of services for the next Plymouth Master Plan. It is important to note that unlike previous master plans, this scope of services requires a Plymouth Master Plan that addresses issues unique to our Town and includes implementation strategies for Town goals that are both measurable and trackable.

The estimated cost of this effort is \$500,000. Thanks to Senator Susan Moran and our state delegation, the Commonwealth has already committed \$70,000 to Plymouth. Therefore, the Planning Board is respectfully asking for \$430,000 from Town Meeting to complete the Master Plan. Once Town funding is in place, we will continue to explore additional grant opportunities to further reduce the cost to the Town.

The process to complete the next Plymouth Master Plan will take between 1 ½ and 2 years. The update will have 10-year horizon, so as to be actionable without being overly speculative.

In closing, the Planning Board looks forward to working with the entire community to establish a master plan with a vision for Plymouth’s future.

Thank you.

CHARTING OUR FUTURE TOGETHER
Town of Plymouth's Comprehensive Master Plan 2025-2035
June 22, 2023

OVERVIEW

The Town of Plymouth (Town) seeks a qualified consultant or team of consultants (Consultant) to provide professional services supporting the development of a town-wide, long-range, comprehensive plan (Master Plan). Charting Our Future Together is the name established for this planning initiative, emphasizing a collaborative effort to collectively move the community further toward a sustainable, healthy, inclusive, and prosperous future.

INTRODUCTION TO PLYMOUTH

Plymouth, known as “America’s Hometown,” holds a place of great prominence in American history and culture. The community is the oldest continuously occupied English-speaking settlement in the United States and has a rich Wampanoag tribal history. Conveniently located about 40 miles southeast of Boston, Plymouth is the largest municipality in Massachusetts by land area (about 100 square miles) and the second largest town by population (about 61,000 in 2020). The Town includes four Environmental Justice Block Groups.

The Town’s natural beauty is one of its most appealing features, drawing visitors from near and far to explore its beaches, parks, and other scenic areas. This coastal community has many distinct geographical features, including one of only three Coastal Pine Barrens left in the world, ecologically significant barrier beaches, and over 365 ponds. As such, the Town is particularly concerned with extreme climate-related hazards, including coastal erosion and flooding.

Once known primarily as a place of historical and archeological significance, Plymouth has become a year-round destination for shopping, dining, and entertainment. Plymouth Harbor, along with other waterfronts, remains an important economic hub for boating, fishing, and tourism as well as an important natural resource supporting a diversity of plant and animal life. The Town has evolved into an all-ages and all-interests destination for local, national, and international visitors alike.

Plymouth has a strong Town Manager-Select Board form of government. The legislative branch consists of Representative Town Meeting and the executive branch is composed of the Select Board and Planning Board. Additionally, the Town relies on a variety of citizen-led boards and committees that help provide community input and guidance. Even with traditionally low voter turnout, the town system is characterized by a high level of citizen participation, with regular town meetings and public hearings providing opportunities for residents to have a voice in local government. In addition, the community has a strong civil society with active community organizations, volunteer groups, and non-profit organizations working to address a variety of local issues and promote social, cultural, and economic well-being.

Plymouth continues to be one of the fastest growing communities in the Commonwealth. Historically, agriculture was a significant source of employment for Plymouth, especially the cranberry industry. The 1960s and 70s saw the beginning growth of industrial and commercial bases, which remain stable today. The Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station (currently being decommissioned), Plymouth's Industrial Park, and Camelot Industrial Park all developed during this time. However, as cranberry prices have dropped that industry has declined, and many acres of formerly farmed land are being developed.

Plymouth still has significant amounts of open space, drawing in residents and developers. Population projections show continued residential growth in the coming decades. Increasing housing values (faster than inflation) and new housing construction at higher price points are displacing modest income households and accommodating wealthier households. Plymouth is also seeing significant increases in its older population (age 55+), even outpacing the trend seen state and nationwide. Plymouth remains predominantly White (about 93%) but, like the surrounding region, is experiencing a modest increase in its Latino population.

PLYMOUTH PLANNING

Throughout the years, Plymouth has undertaken many planning efforts including topic focus plans at different levels (Appendix 1). Since adopting its first Community Master Plan in 1980, the Town has focused most of its planning efforts at Village Center level, which are unique areas of development, but share common features. The Village Center areas of Plymouth today include North Plymouth, Plymouth Center, West Plymouth, Manomet, and Cedarville. Plymouth now needs to account for other emerging areas of residential growth such as Pinehills and Redbrook, plus expansion of residential development in the historically rural areas of Federal Furnace, Bourne Road, and Ellisville. Additionally, it needs to factor in multifamily growth which, in recent years, has been spurred by state mandates.

The Town's most recent master plan, Growing Smarter in Plymouth's Fifth Century, was approved in 2006 to cover the period through 2024. Therein, the Town sought to elaborate on the same two-fold goal originally set by the 1980 Master Plan:

- To achieve a balance of natural resource preservation, residential growth, economic development, and financial stability through the judicious use of land use controls that respect development rights, and
- To ensure that future growth is responsive to a carefully considered assessment of the Town's functional areas, including village centers, growth areas, rural areas, and environmentally sensitive areas

CURRENT MASTER PLAN PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The overall goal of this master planning process remains to balance the social, economic, and environmental needs and wants of the community of Plymouth while considering emerging concerns and changing conditions.

The Master Plan must be completed in accordance with the requirements of M.G.L. Chapter 41 Section 81D; however, the Town emphasizes that it is seeking to create a final plan which is accessible, informative, concise, and implementable, with a clear 10-year vision forward for this community.

- Consultants are discouraged from submitting boilerplate proposals for master plans that do not meet the expectations set out herein.

It is expected that the Master Plan will build upon existing relevant plans, many of which are listed in Appendix 1. The Master Plan should highlight consistencies and inconsistencies between these other plans and the final Master Plan and make recommendations on resolving any inconsistencies.

- Consultants should produce extensive chapters only when necessary. The Town favors concise chapters for topics that other planning documents already cover in-depth. For topics needing more planning, the Master Plan will serve as the overarching vision that will guide identified future planning needs.

The Master Plan must be implementable, and the Town expects a strong section addressing how the plan should be used, by whom, when, etc. To be implementable, recommendations must be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound).

- Where appropriate, Consultants should make use of visuals in the Master Plan to communicate complex messages and strategies effectively and efficiently.

Public Participation and Community Engagement

This master planning process is expected to improve Town communication with residents and is seen by the Town and its Master Plan Committee as an important opportunity to engage the community in meaningful conversations about the future direction of Plymouth. 'Community' encompasses residents, employers and employees, schools and other institutions, community groups and non-profit organizations, regional entities, appointed and elected public officials, town staff, and others. True engagement of the community through open, transparent, inclusive processes as well as strong facilitation that leads to the articulation of a shared vision for the community are expected. The Town hopes such a process will lead to continued civic participation in implementation, break down any silos in the community, and further build community trust. To that end:

- Consultants should make use of various good practices resources to develop their engagement plan for this project; for example, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council’s (MAPC) community engagement resources¹ and the Commonwealth’s MVP Toolkits².
- Consultants should consider how best to ensure equitable participation so everyone may participate in the process regardless of access to transportation, income level, disability, racial inequity, health status, or age. Often missing at the table in Plymouth are parents of school-aged children and those aged 18 to 35, for example. The Town expects proposals to include engagement strategies that meet people where they are, not expecting them to only come to consultants.
- Consultants should propose the best ways to encourage participation, which could include incentives for community liaisons, providing transportation to meetings, translating materials, etc. The Town is especially interested in proposals that include partnerships, subcontracts, and/or other arrangements with local active community organizations, volunteer groups, and non-profit organizations to meaningfully engage a diversity of residents in the master planning process. A non-exhaustive list of groups and organizations in town is provided in Appendix 2.

Consultants should not limit themselves to surveys and public presentations. Collaborative, participatory methods are encouraged when appropriate, especially when used to dive deeper into some of the key areas of interest noted further below.

- The Town is especially interested in build-out analyses combined with scenario-planning as a method to explore and evaluate different possible future scenarios for land use in the community, and consequent potential social, economic, and environmental impacts.
- Technology is also encouraged when appropriate – software and tools such as Bang the Table, Maptionnaire, text surveys, and other technological options should be considered. Social media and web-based outreach will be important, but Consultants should not rely on online tools only.
- Consultants should be clear in their proposals how findings from community engagement initiatives will be reviewed, prioritized, and incorporated into the Master Plan.

While each Plymouth resident holds a unique vision for their own future, there are common desires and concerns for the community that have been repeatedly expressed through various public meetings and planning initiatives. In addition to the required master plan topics, additional themes identified by the community shall be incorporated within the Master Plan:

¹ <https://www.mapc.org/our-work/services-for-cities-towns/community-engagement/#resources>, accessed April 20, 2023

² <https://resilientma.mass.gov/mvp/>, accessed April 15, 2023

- *Land use decisions.* For every square foot of land in Plymouth, there are at least a handful of competing needs and interests. What is the right balance for Plymouth when it comes to land conservation, residential development, and commercial/industrial development? Significant land use decisions will be made over the next decade, including possible reuse of decommissioned nuclear power plant land, the future of the cranberry industry and associated land holdings, and the strategy for Plymouth industrial lands. What can Plymouth do to maintain and increase control over land use decisions and/or guide development in line with the Master Plan vision?
- *Environmental protection and climate resilience.* The community is concerned about the impact of climate change such as coastal erosion and flooding as well as broader environmental protection issues such as deteriorating water quality in the community's iconic ponds, maintaining a sustainable supply of drinking water and protecting the Sole Source Aquifer, the impacts of earth removal, and more. Consultants are encouraged to address these issues in a standalone chapter, but environmental protection and climate resilience should be fundamentally incorporated throughout the Master Plan.
- *Community character.* Plymouth's diverse natural and built landscapes include historic sites and neighborhoods, village settlements, waterfront harbors, rural landscapes, forests, pine barrens, coastline, ponds, streams, wetlands, and cranberry bogs. These landscapes define Plymouth's character – how can they best be preserved?
- *Inclusivity.* With changing demographics and housing development skewed toward wealthier incomes, how can Plymouth continue to be an inclusive community serving the needs of all of Plymouth's diverse residents?
- *Property taxes.* What impact will the actions recommended in the Master Plan have on property taxes that are already of concern to residents? How can costs be balanced with the vision, needs, and wants of the community?

EXISTING REPORTS AND STUDIES ALREADY UNDERWAY

Since adoption of its master plan, *Growing Smarter in Plymouth's Fifth Century*, in 2006, the Town has continued to conduct planning efforts across a range of topics, such as addressing municipal climate-related vulnerabilities, housing, open space, redevelopment, water resources, and more. Some of these plans are current and should be incorporated into the Master Plan, but others may be outdated – needing to be addressed in more depth through the master planning process.

Plymouth is currently updating their Housing Production Plan and planning for compliance with the Multi-Family Zoning Requirement for MBTA Communities. The Town would like to dive more

in-depth and holistically into housing through the master planning process, particularly with respect to land use decision-making.

The Town is also striving to address age and dementia concerns. AARP Age-friendly Communities designation has been achieved and an Action Plan is currently being developed. It is expected that the Master Plan will include these themes throughout as well, aligning and complementing the parallel work being done.

The Town has several Village Center plans, as described in sections above. The master planning process should consider these as representative of the goals of those regions of Town, but at the same time consider whether village-based planning continues to be an effective approach for the community as a whole.

The most recent significant update to the zoning bylaws was completed in 2019, after several years of planning, community input, and review. This update was aimed at addressing some of the needs and issues in the community, including affordable housing, economic development, and environmental sustainability. Similarly, the most recent update to the subdivision control bylaw was completed in 2017, aimed at modernizing the subdivision process, improving the consistency and clarity of the bylaw, and aligning it with current state regulations. The master planning process should review these updates and identify any actions necessary to further refine or expand these bylaws considering master plan process findings.

SCOPE OF WORK

The Town anticipates the master planning process to take up to two years from hiring of consultants to adoption of final Master Plan. Work is expected to begin early in 2024. The Consultant will submit a project schedule suitable to producing the expected deliverables.

The Consultant will work under the guidance and day-to-day supervision of the Town's Director of Planning and Development and will maintain regular communications with the Director. The Department of Planning and Development will support coordination of meetings as needed, including posting public meetings and attending as needed. Municipal staff will be closely involved, but the Consultant will be expected to devote the time needed to conduct research, write documents, produce materials, conduct outreach, and participate in meetings as needed with town staff, boards, committees, and the public. Due to staffing constraints, municipal staff will not be able to devote significant time to supporting, for example, public participation beyond scheduling support; the Consultant should plan accordingly to ensure sufficient capacity to undertake all aspects of this extensive project. Consultants should consider in their proposals how best to incentivize and use volunteers from the community to support outreach efforts.

The Town has formed a Master Plan Committee that will continue to meet monthly throughout the duration of the master planning process. The Consultant is expected to attend these meetings to provide progress updates and receive additional guidance as the project develops.

The Director of Planning and Development will organize these public meetings, which will be held either in-person, virtually, and/or in hybrid format.

The master planning process has been conceptually structured into two integral processes with three stages, as follows:

	<i>Process A Technical Work</i>	<i>Process B Public Participation</i>
<i>Stage 1: Where We're At</i>	1A: Review of existing conditions	1B: Development of public participation plan
<i>Stage 2: Where We Want to Be</i>	2A: Development of plan elements	2B: Development of community vision statement and goals; extensive public participation process
<i>Stage 3: Charting Our Future</i>	3A: Development of implementation plan	3B: Continued public participation process; plan adoption

1A: Review of Existing Conditions

The Town envisions that the project will kick-off with research to establish existing conditions and analyses of demographic and other community trends through review of existing planning studies, interviews with municipal staff, and meetings with the Master Plan Committee. This will enable the Consultant to familiarize themselves with the community, identify common themes and contradictions, and begin to consider options for the ultimate Master Plan document structure.

1B: Development of Public Participation Plan

Alongside 1A, the Consultant is expected to develop an engaging web presence for the project that will evolve as the master plan process progresses. The Consultant should recommend in their proposals whether a website is best done through the Town’s official website or via a separate website. In either case, content will be developed and maintained by the Consultant throughout the duration of the project.

In addition, in close consultation with Town staff and the Master Plan Committee, the Consultant will develop a Public Participation Plan for implementation during the master planning process. As part of this work, outreach materials, such as flyers and brochures, are expected to be developed with consistent branding. The Consultant is expected to develop the brand for Charting Our Future Together.

2A: Development of Plan Elements

Consultants are encouraged to propose a Master Plan structure they believe makes most sense for Plymouth. This may be the traditional, theme-based chapter format or an alternative better suited to Plymouth's needs. Although it may be tempting to have many chapters specific to topics in silo (e.g., Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion), Consultants are encouraged to include overarching topics across the whole master plan. A holistic, concise, usable plan is the aim.

At minimum, the Master Plan must meet requirements in M.G.L. Ch. 41, §81D and align with the guidance included in this RFP. The Master Plan Committee is expecting Environmental Protection and Resilience to have its own section in the plan as well as be integrated throughout the whole plan. Other topics, which may be identified through the public participation process, may necessitate their own sections as well.

The final plan must include a summary that is able to stand alone as a high-level, easy-to-read, visually engaging Executive Summary.

2B: Development of Community Vision Statement and Goals, and Extensive Public Participation Process

While developing plan elements, the Consultant should be implementing the Public Participation Plan to develop a common vision and community goals for Plymouth. The vision should reflect the desired future state of Plymouth in broad and aspirational terms. The goals should identify outcomes sought by community members and stakeholders and serve as guidance for community planning and development efforts. The vision and goals statement should be available as a standalone document in addition to being incorporated into the Master Plan.

3A: Development of Implementation Plan

Once the Vision and Goals Statement and Plan Elements have been drafted, the Consultant will produce an Implementation Plan that should be able to be 'pulled out' from the Master Plan and used as a quick reference for action. It should include the following:

- List all SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound) actions necessary to achieve Master Plan goals and objectives.
- Specifically identify critical sites and topics needing future detailed study or planning and note what those studies or plans should aim to achieve, prioritized in a logical, easy-to-understand way, and include a schedule with target dates for implementation.
- Identify town officials and departments, or others, responsible for implementation of actions.

- Identify resource needs and opportunities for the implementation of actions, linking to the Town's long-range capital plans and operating budgets when appropriate.

For high priority actions, the Consultant shall provide examples of documents, ordinances, etc. as well as identify resources such as toolkits that may support implementation.

3B: Continued Public Participation and Plan Adoption

The public participation process shall include activities and public engagement through adoption of the final Master Plan by the Planning Board and acceptance by the Select Board and Town Meeting.

Deliverables

1. Website
2. Public Participation Plan
3. Vision and Goals Statement
4. Executive Summary
5. Master Plan
6. Implementation Plan

All documents shall be provided electronically to the Town in editable format as well as searchable PDF formats. This includes all Deliverables as well as materials used for public participation, including slides, posters, maps, etc. Geographic data underlying all maps shall also be provided in an electronic format compatible with the Town's software. Any example bylaws, regulations, and/or policies as may be recommended in the Master Plan should also be provided. Twenty-five bound copies of the final adopted Master Plan shall be provided at the end of the project.