



Winthrop Development Principles Project

Funding provided by the
District Local Technical Assistance program

Prepared for
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Executive Summary

The Town of Winthrop requested District Local Technical Assistance funds to enable Metropolitan Area Planning Council staff to work with the Planning Board and other town officials to review existing planning documents, draft town-wide Development Principles, and facilitate a Public Forum to review and discuss the Development Principles. The purpose of adopting Development Principles is to guide Town Board and Committees in their review and permitting of projects.

At the December 11, 2012 Public Forum, meeting participants endorsed the following six Development Principles:

1. Increase the Tax Base
2. Strengthen Waterfront Commercial Areas
3. Strengthen the Town Center and Village Square Areas
4. Increase Connectivity
5. Maintain Housing Choices
6. Emphasize quality site design

Participants also endorsed continued public discussions about redevelopment options, particularly related to planning and rezoning for the town center.



Aerial view of the Town of Winthrop, looking north.

An aerial photo of Winthrop is on the following page.

Winthrop Air Photo

DRAFT



-  Schools
-  Town Hall
-  MBTA Stations

Data Sources:
Parcels: Town of Winthrop
Roads and Train Tracks:
Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT),
Massachusetts Geographic Information System (MassGIS)
Wetlands: Massachusetts Department of Environment Protection (DEP)
Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)

Date: 10/12/2012



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Chapter One: Introduction and Background

The Town of Winthrop is one of the most compact communities in Massachusetts. It is located on a 1.64 sq. mile peninsula that separates Boston Harbor and Logan Airport to the west from Massachusetts Bay to the east. With a population of 17,497 in 8,320 housing units¹, the community is fully developed so new economic development opportunities are limited to parcel re-use.

One of the community's priorities is to expand the tax base by encouraging appropriate re-development, particularly in the town center and selected waterfront locations. Winthrop applied for District Local Technical Assistance funds for planning assistance to identify and draft Development Principles that reflect the community's goals for future development activity. The Development Principles will guide members of town boards in making decisions and provide for more predictable and streamlined permitting processes.

The Winthrop Planning Board had a strong desire to improve the community's understanding of the links between the achievement of various community goals (fiscal stability, public access, commercial district revitalization) and the day to day implementation of the town's land use policies and regulations. The Board believed these links have not been well understood due to a lack of comprehensive planning and the absence of planning/community development staff.

In addition to working with the Planning Board to write the Principles, MAPC was asked to facilitate a community meeting to present the draft Principles and solicit comments from residents, business owners and town officials. There was general consensus among the Dec. 11, 2012 Public Forum attendees that the Draft Development Principles reflected the community's goals and should be adopted.

¹ 2010 U.S. Census

Chapter Two: Project Overview

MAPC conducted several meetings with the Planning Board to review previous studies and development concepts, prepared draft Development Principles, and hosted the Public Forum.

Past Planning

MAPC reviewed prior planning studies with the Planning Board for background information to inform the current project. At the October 22, 2012 meeting with the Planning Board, the following plans and studies were identified and evaluated for their relevancy to prepare the Development Principles:

Winthrop Community Development Plan May, 2004

This Plan was prepared by MAPC as part of the Executive Order 418 project funded by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development. While not as comprehensive as a Master Plan, the Community Development Plan includes chapters on Natural Resources and Open Space, Housing, Economic Development, Transportation and summary strategies in map format. For many communities, including Winthrop, the Community Development Plan effectively functions as a Master Plan.

The Plan provided excellent background information on the community, particularly for Transportation information related to commuter boat (ferry) service between Winthrop and Boston. In 2001, Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. completed a feasibility study for ferry service. As part of the Community Development Plan, the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) of the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) conducted a follow-up study to examine options for maximizing ridership on the Winthrop commuter boat. As part of the continuing planning work with the town, the CTPS Study should be reviewed for its relevance to several of the Development Principles.

Cecil Group, Community Opportunities Group, Inc. and Glenn Garber Associates 2007

In 2006, the Winthrop Planning board received a Smart Growth Technical Assistance Grant from the MA Executive Office of Environmental Affairs. The project goal was to improve the zoning bylaw and permitting processes, and the town's capacity to respond to development.

The Cecil Group provided site-specific technical assistance to the Planning Board on two potential development sites, the Winthrop Hospital and Crystal Cove.

Community Opportunities Group and Glenn Garber Associates reviewed the existing zoning and provided recommendations to update the zoning. The recommendations included establishing five overlay districts: Crest/Revere Overlay; Winthrop Shore/Shirley Drive Overlay; Gateway Overlay; Harbor/Crystal Cove Overlay and the Center Business Overlay. None of the proposed overlay districts has been adopted by Winthrop.

A major goal of the zoning review was to encourage additional, appropriately scaled development, including mixed use development in selected areas.

Walk Winthrop

Winter 2010

David Hickey, Jr., PE the (then) Public Works Director and Town Manager James McKenna contacted the Conway School of Landscape Design² in Conway, MA to study to create a long-term, town-wide strategic vision to make the compact community more hospitable to non-motorized travel. The resulting report, ***Walk Winthrop A Plan for a More Walkable Community*** identified a comprehensive system of paths, trails, and on-road segments that encircles the entire town and links public open space, civic, and commercial resources across and throughout town. The implementation toolkit includes bicycle and pedestrian facilities, signs and roadway markings, traffic calming measures and stormwater management techniques.

Community goals included the need to support greater interconnection with recreation and transportation facilities in order to advance tourism, a key opportunity identified in the town's economic development strategy.

Because the development of ***Walk Winthrop*** included a survey and community meetings, and was initiated by the town, it should be embraced as a significant planning document to inform future development decisions.

Walk Winthrop: A Greenway Action Plan

Nov. 2011

Following up on the ***Walk Winthrop Plan*** (noted above) the town applied for a District Local Technical Assistance grant to prioritize the implementation recommendations in the Plan. The town desired an assessment of feasibility and phasing of the Walk Winthrop strategies. MAPC identified Implementation Priorities based on the ***Walk Winthrop Plan*** as well as additional recommendations, including adding bicycle parking, improving street conditions for cycling, implementing a bike share program, applying for the Safe Routes to School program and developing a trail network.

The following page includes a map showing the generalized ***Walk Winthrop*** trail/path system.

² The Conway School of Landscape Design is the only institution of its kind in North America. It focuses on teaching sustainable landscape planning and design to 19 students in a 10-month graduate program. ***Walk Winthrop*** was researched and written by Kerri Culhane, Jordan Fink and Tabitha Kaigle.



Walk Winthrop

- Existing trail/path —
- Future trail/path —
- On road/sidewalk —

- Train station
- Town hall
- Municipal boundary
- Water bodies
- Open Space

0.5 Miles

Source:
 MAPC & MAPC Municipalities,
 MassGIS, MassDOT, OpenStreetMap.
 October 2011



Chapter Three: Draft Development Principles and Public Forum

In addition to the initial meeting with the Planning Board on October 22, additional meetings to discuss the draft Development Principles were held on November 6 with a Planning Board working group and November 19 with the full Board.

The Public Forum was held on December 11, 2012 at the Cummings School. It was attended by approximately 45 residents, business owners and town officials, including the Town Manager, and members of the Town Council and Planning Board. The purpose of the forum was to present the draft Development Principles. The draft Principles prompted significant additional discussion about guiding development and redevelopment in Winthrop to maximize the community's economic development potential.

Draft Development Principles

MAPC's presentation included an introduction to the existing development conditions, including land use, zoning and flood zones. These maps are included at the end of this Chapter. MAPC also provided a description of what Development Principles are, why they are important, and how they would be used.

After an overview of the following six draft Development Principles, each Principle was discussed in detail.

1. Increase the Tax Base
2. Strengthen Waterfront Commercial Areas
3. Strengthen the Town Center and Village Square Areas
4. Increase Connectivity
5. Maintain Housing Choices
6. Emphasize quality site design

Meeting participants supported the draft Development Principles. Consensus points included:

- There was a need for continuing public discussions on the benefits and issues related to potential future development in town
- The town should pursue redevelopment within the village center
- Additional work was needed to illustrate the potential for redevelopment of waterfront sites, to enable discussion of the tax benefits versus the neighborhood impacts of such development

A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is included in the Appendix at the end of this report.

Unedited comments from participants are also included, after the PowerPoint.

1. Increase the Tax Base

- Provide incentives (through zoning – in the form of additional uses, allowances for shared or on-street parking for some uses, etc.) to redevelop less valuable, underutilized properties.
- Increase residential development in select areas. The results will include:
 - Additional customers to support a broader commercial base.
 - Increased viability for reconstruction/redevelopment proposals based upon residential element of the project.
- Simplify the approval processes needed for the types of development desired in specific locations in town.
- Undertake an economic development analysis to determine missing elements of commercial tax base. Write zoning, seek options for undertaking land assemblage, undertake public infrastructure improvements, etc., to support the missing uses.

2. Strengthen Waterfront Commercial Areas

- Support development of additional water dependent uses along immediate shoreline.
 - Marinas/Boat hauling facilities
- Support development of water-enhanced commercial facilities immediately inland of water dependent uses.
 - Restaurants, Inns, retail, condominiums
- When considering redevelopment of any waterfront parcels/uses, ensure that water dependent uses are required to be maintained/established as part of overall development plan.
- As part of any waterfront redevelopment, negotiate to ensure public access under Chapter 91 tidelands regulations.
- To the maximum extent possible, ensure that views to the water from public places (roads, sidewalks) are maintained by appropriate design of any redevelopment.

3. Strengthen the Town Center and Village Square Areas

- Provide incentives for landowners to upgrade commercial properties.
 - Provide tax abatements for first few years after reconstruction?
 - Consider high land tax and low structure tax as a means of providing incentives for redevelopment?
 - Consider a density incentive if developers provide public realm improvements (e.g., town of Canton bonus density in exchange for publicly accessible open space - benches, paths, gardens, etc.).
- Support mixed use development for underutilized properties.
- Manage on-street and municipal parking (e.g., appropriate time limits to ensure turnover of spaces) to support existing/proposed businesses. Where adequate on-street/municipal parking exists, require parking only for residential elements of mixed use projects, and do not require parking for first floor retail/commercial space.
- Selectively expand areas available for general retail, service and small business outside of town center (Expansion at Shirley St./Veterans Road redevelopment).

4. Increase Connectivity

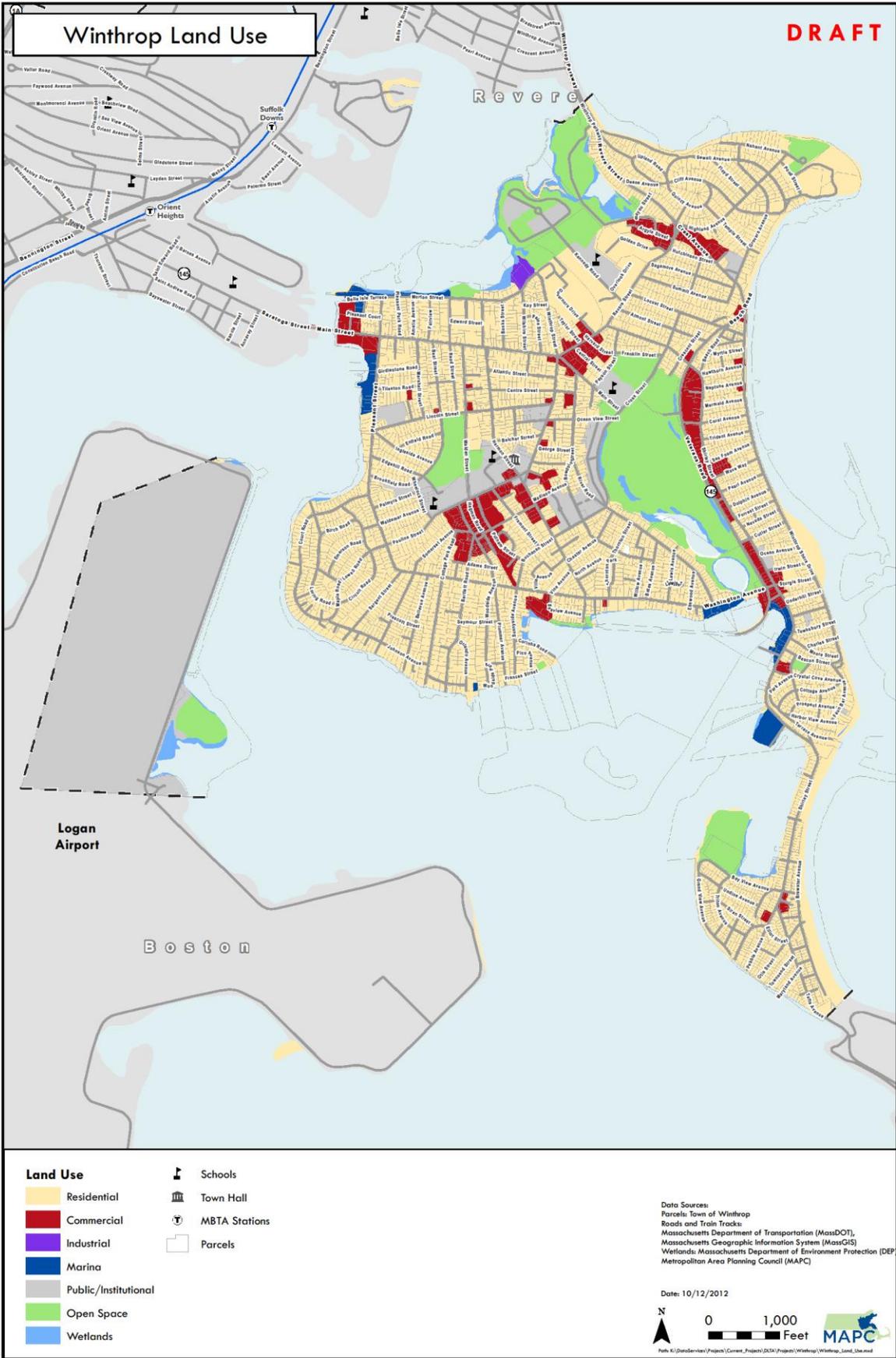
- *Increase pedestrian connections.*
 - *Town should work to ensure adequacy, safety and connectivity of sidewalk and crosswalk system to ensure walking as a viable option for residents to access businesses in local squares and town center.*
 - *Ensure redevelopment includes Walk Winthrop plan provisions, including rights of way as appropriate.*
- *Develop and revitalize public spaces.*
 - *Focus municipal investment of Chapter 90 funds to improve public realm facilities to encourage private investment in redevelopment.*
 - *Focus municipal investment of staff time to prepare PWED and other state grant applications for re-investment in infrastructure necessary to support core areas proposed for redevelopment.*
- *Improve bus connections with the ferry service.*
 - *Coordinate bus and ferry schedules.*
 - *Provide signage so ferry riders know where the bus stop is, and where bus routes go.*
- *Maximize revenue from publicly-owned leased properties (golf course, mooring fields, etc.).*

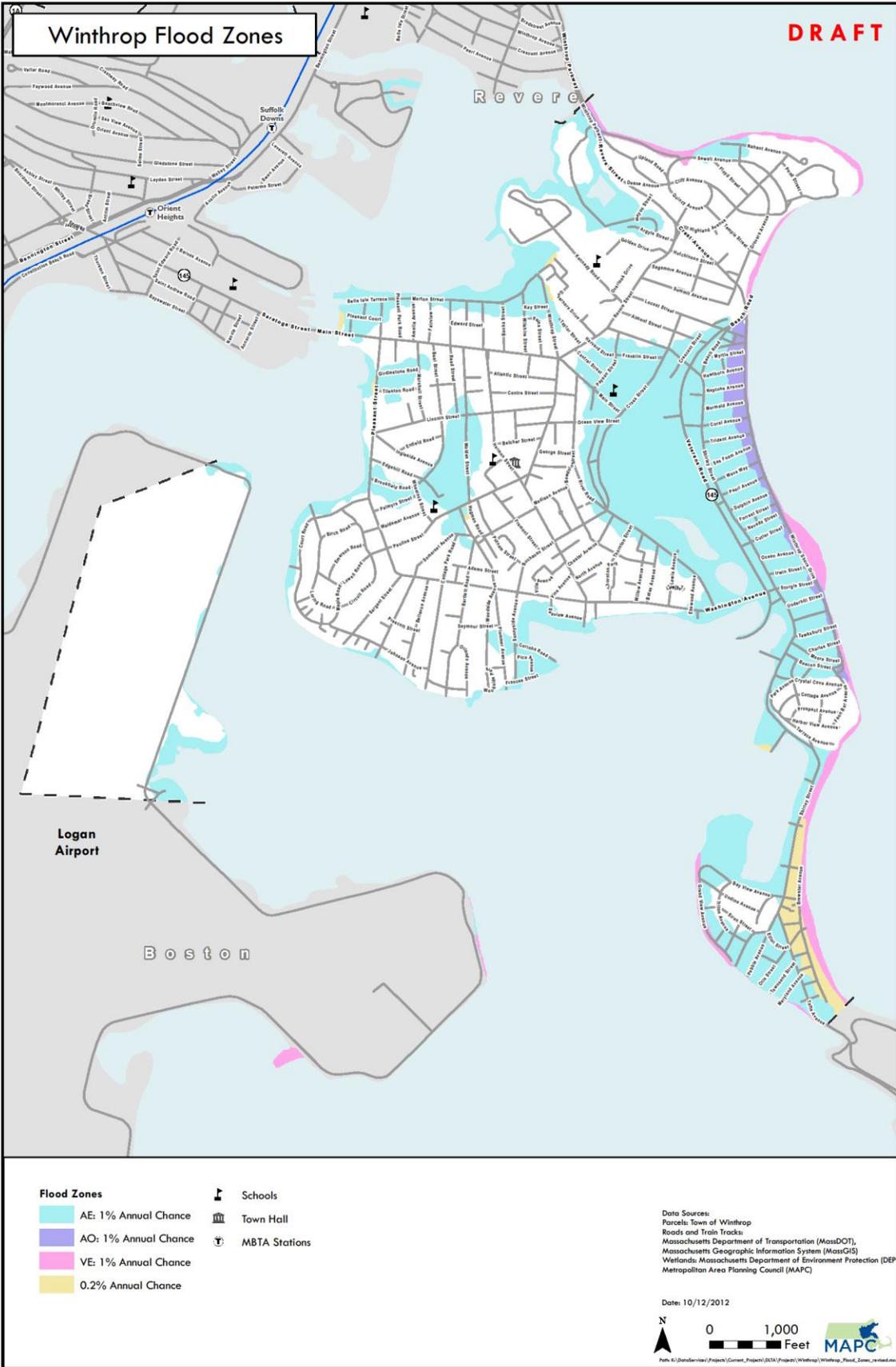
5. Maintain Housing Choices

- *Maintain historic fabric of the neighborhoods.*
 - *Support developments that respect scale, character and aesthetics of each neighborhood.*
 - *Explore Neighborhood Conservation District as an option to preserve existing character and density of neighborhoods.*
 - *Minimize adverse development impacts on neighborhoods i.e. shadows; preserve view corridors.*
- *Support developments that include additional market rate housing options for empty nesters and young families.*
- *Amend zoning to make it easier to develop mixed use in areas determined appropriate by the town.*

6. Emphasize quality site design

- *Environmentally sound design is also called “Low Impact Design” or LID.*
 - *LID treats stormwater locally, on site, maintains water balance, reduces impervious ground cover, and preserves natural areas.*
 - *Aesthetics and design quality of new development proposals are important. Town should establish adequate design guidelines and use site plan review and special permit approval processes to ensure quality and appropriateness of design for new developments.*





Chapter Four: Next Steps

The Town of Winthrop has begun a robust planning process that included the participation of key town officials. The consensus Development Principles initiated a broader discussion about the desirability and impacts of development on the community. The planning should be continued as soon as possible to build on the momentum of the December Forum. The town could request 2013 funding from the DLTA program for:

- Additional community meetings related to development in Winthrop
- Visioning, visualizations and preparing zoning changes for the Town Center to implement the vision
- Review proposed changes to the Winthrop Zoning Bylaw drafted by the Zoning Ordinance Review Working Group in coordination with the Development Principles

Additional steps

Seek legislative action to enable Winthrop to provide Tax Increment Financing (TIFs) to promote redevelopment of key areas of the community.

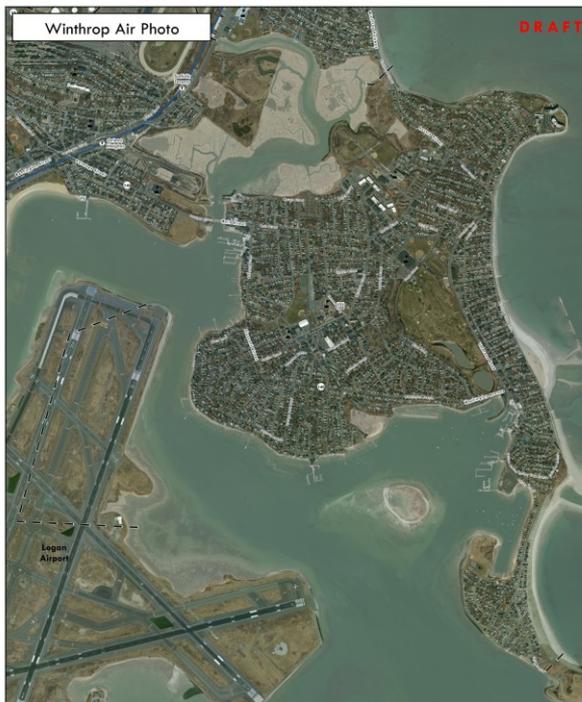
Examine the 2004 Community Development Plan Transportation section (Page 38 – 62) for recommendations to maximize ferry/bus operations.

Determine a schedule for implementing the recommendations in ***Walk Winthrop: A Greenway Action Plan***. These recommendations included securing a trail easement through the municipally-owned land at the Golf Course as part of lease negotiations when the current lease expires in 2013.



Appendix

The Appendix includes the PowerPoint presentation followed by comments made by participants at the December 11, 2012 Public Forum.



Winthrop Public Forum

December 11, 2012

Funded by MA District Local Technical Assistance Program



Tonight's Agenda

Project Context

Development Principles

How do we approach change?

Next Steps

3



Project Context

- Planning process – the First Step
- Discussion – not decisions

4



Development Principles

What are development principles?

Why are they important?

How do we use development principles?

5



How?

How can the Town use the Development Principles to guide development?

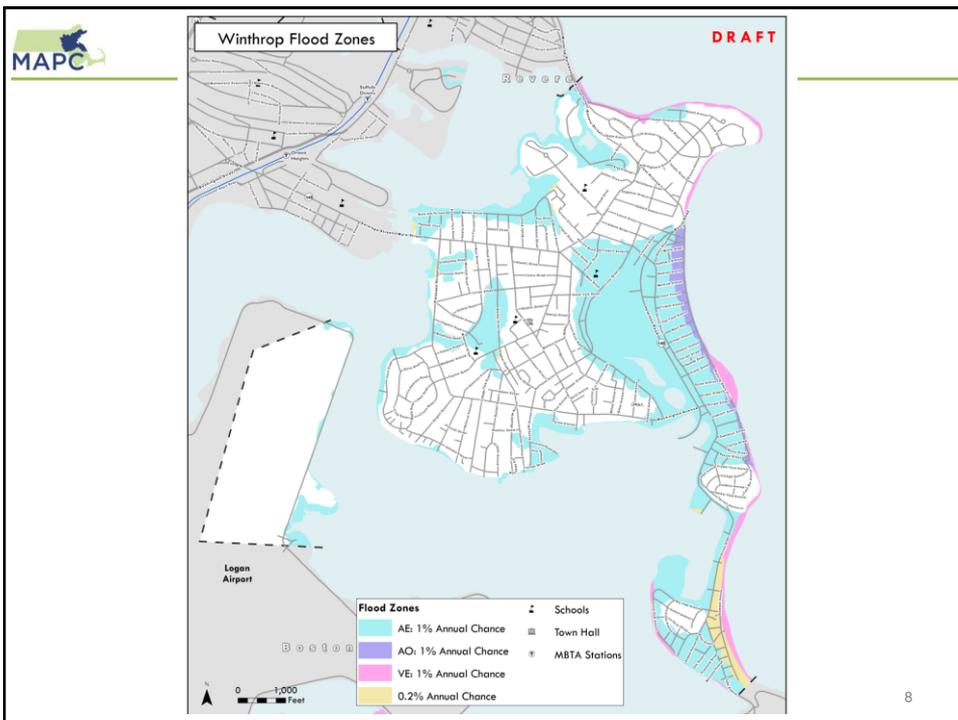
- Regulations
 - Zoning, for uses and dimensions, parking, signage
 - Environmental, for flood zones, wetlands
- Policies
 - Permitting requirements

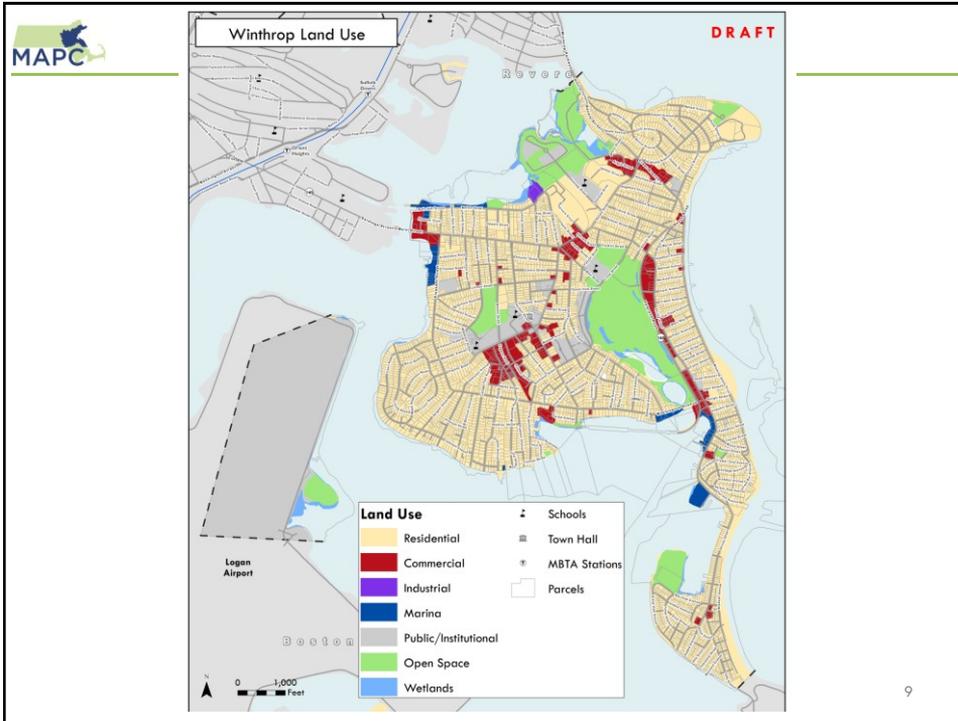
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For Example

Regulations can be written to:

1. Allow additional uses
2. Reduce parking requirements
3. Allow higher buildings in some areas
4. Control construction in flood zones
5. Provide design guidelines
6. Create incentives for development in exchange for public benefits





DRAFT Development Principles

1. Increase the tax base
2. Strengthen waterfront commercial areas
3. Strengthen the town center
4. Increase connectivity
5. Maintain housing choices
6. Emphasize quality site design

Draft Development Principle # 1

Increase the tax base

- Provide incentives
- Increase residential development
- Conduct an economic development analysis





Draft Development Principle # 2

Strengthen waterfront commercial areas

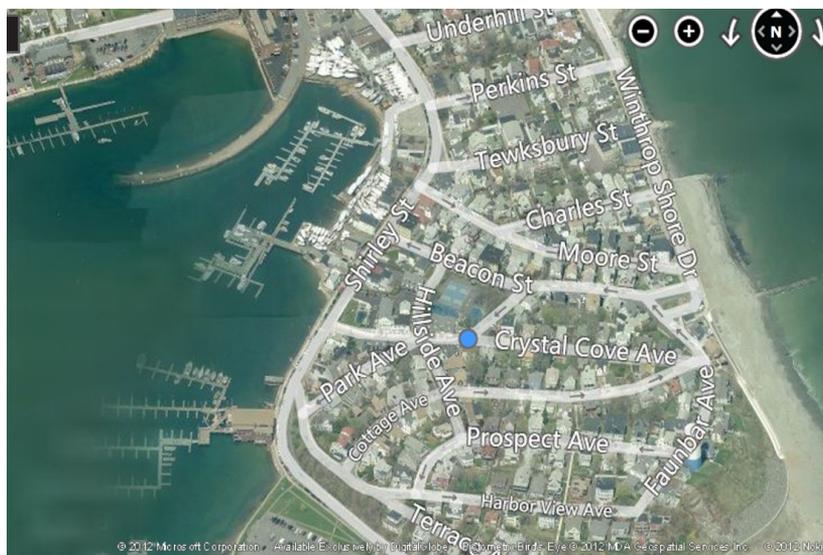
- Support development of additional water dependent and water-enhanced uses
- Ensure public access and views

Example: Crystal Cove area could be developed more intensely

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Crystal Cove Area



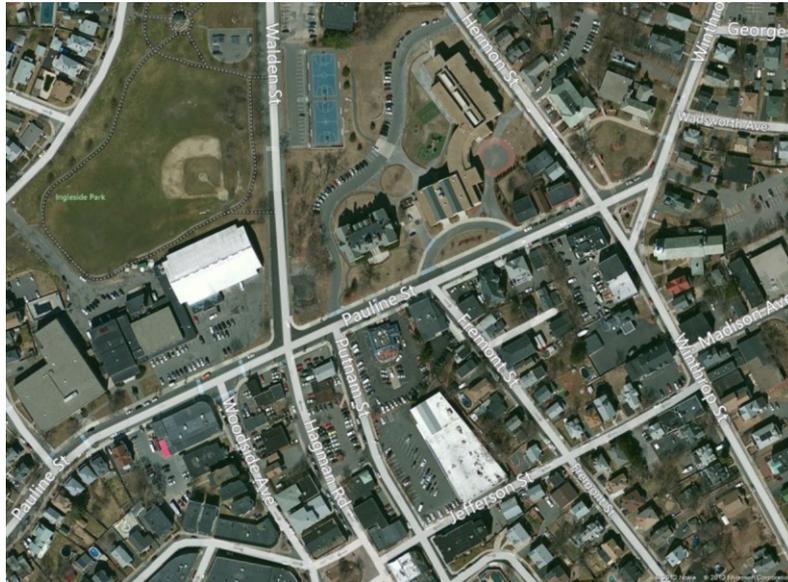
14



Draft Development Principle # 3

Strengthen the Town Center

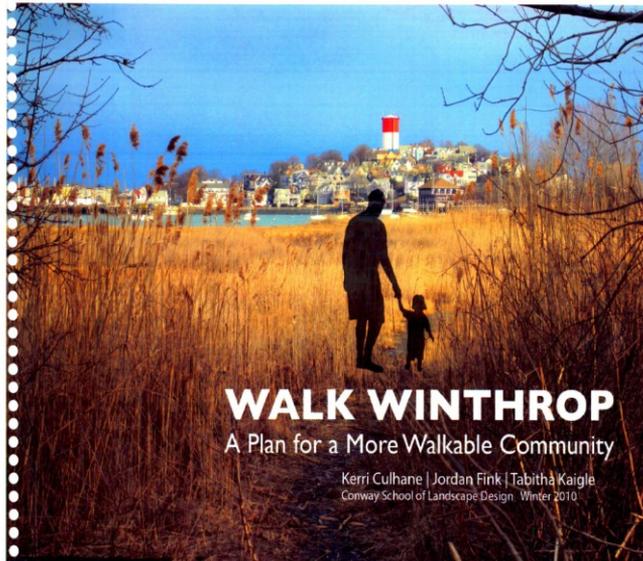
- Provide incentives to upgrade properties
- Support mixed use
- Manage parking
- Selectively expand retail business outside of the Town Center



Draft Development Principle # 4

Increase connectivity

- Increase pedestrian connections
- Follow the Walk Winthrop Plan
- Revitalize public spaces
- Improve bus connections with the ferry service





Draft Development Principle # 5

Maintain housing choices

- Maintain historic fabric of neighborhoods
- Support development for market rate options for empty nesters and young families
- Encourage mixed use development

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Draft Development Principle # 6

Emphasize quality site design

- Low Impact Design (LID)
- Design Guidelines



Rain Garden for Stormwater Detention



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LID Site Design



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Your Suggestions

What else?

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Next Steps

If you have further questions or comments
please contact
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THANK YOU

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Appendix

Winthrop Public Forum

Participant Comments

December 11, 2012

- Want smaller residential on the beach instead of high rise residential. Also additional housing
- Strengthen housing on the waterfront
- Redevelopment / re-lot/ pool lots - non owner occupied areas for smaller units, # of bedrooms
- Leverage: Tax increment financing
 - Redevelop areas with tax incentives (utilize this)
- Consider bold action for “CVS corner” – car repair lots at entrance to town center (consider eminent domain)
- Attracting developers is an issue
 - We have regulations in place
- Need more town support for developer / permitting process
- Focus on site plan review process
- Explore new approaches to opportunity
- Encourage a vision for the community / think differently
- Need incentives for business. Not density. Tax incentives
- Continue discussion on trade-offs
- Middle school site is an opportunity
- Review the Frank Keith Company, 1997, study of downtown area
 - Need to figure how to attract development
- Developers coming into town
 - No info available for developers
 - No professionals to help
 - Planning Board acts as planner
 - Parking
 - Height
 - Neighborhood Resistance
- Town Manager: process issues need to be worked out
 - We need to think differently
 - Need to think about alternatives
 - Tools for Planning Board to look at opportunities
 - Muni parking adjacent to redevelopment parcels downtown
 - Need a vision for the overall community
 - In particular the key development areas and specific tools for each area

- Winthrop Beach – failed due to parking issue
 - Proposed project on waterfront: Too high @ 4 stories due to loss of views
- 53G Site Plan review
 - More focus on this - use existing professional staff
- Review possibility of FT Economic Development Director
- Incentives are Critical
 - Economic / tax incentives mostly
- Economic Redevelopment of Middle School
 - Site as part of overall economic development plan (for schools)
- Shore Drive Area
 - Look into trying to upgrade into 3+ story redevelopment
- Density is an issue
 - How to unlock development
 - Needs a clear vision for future development