

2018 FAIRHAVEN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

BACKGROUND: Fairhaven is a seaside community, situated on Buzzards Bay in the southeastern corner of Bristol County, 56 miles south of Boston and 35 miles southeast of Providence. It shares its harbor with the City of New Bedford. Fairhaven has 12.41 square miles of land area, 29.4 miles of shoreline, and significant rural areas that are still home to a number of working farms. Town wide, commercial uses are mainly strip mall-style retail establishments, and residential densities are typical of suburban and rural neighborhoods.

PLANNING TOOLS: Fairhaven has been engaged since December 2016 in updating its 1996 Master Plan. The new Master Plan, anticipated to be completed in spring 2018, incorporates public input as well as recent planning documents such as the Town's Draft Open Space and Recreation Plan (2017), New Bedford/Fairhaven Harbor Plan (2010) and Housing Action Plan (2010).

The Town utilizes town appropriations and borrowing, MaDOT funding, local aid and targeted grant programs, such as CDBG, Seaport Economic Council, MassWorks, Mass Historic grants to achieve its goals and objectives.

HOUSING: Fairhaven seeks to encourage residential development in or near existing residential areas to maintain its village character; to continue to provide affordable and age-appropriate housing options for senior populations; and to maintain and encourage development of affordable housing for families of non-elderly income levels. Key objectives include:

- Encourage infill residential developments in existing residential neighborhoods that reflect the historic and cultural characters of various neighborhoods.
- Explore conversion to housing of existing municipal and commercial buildings as well as utilization of vacant municipal and private properties for affordable housing development, both elderly and non-elderly; also, support housing rehabilitation of blighted properties.
- Support use of Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) program to fund affordable housing development.
- Consider revisions to the Zoning bylaws to encourage increased production of affordable housing, including adoption of inclusionary zoning bylaw, revision of Accessory Dwelling Unit, approval of mixed-use residential and commercial developments in established service and employment centers, and adoption of performance zoning and density bonuses.
- Support construction of additional senior housing options at the two-acre site adjacent to existing Oxford Terrace Public Housing complex.

PUBLIC FACILITIES & SERVICES: Fairhaven goals for its facilities and infrastructure include developing plans and funding to rebuild, expand or replace key public facilities and the staff needed to support Town operations, providing adequate facilities for public safety, developing plans to improve key infrastructure elements, utilizing sustainable energy opportunities within Town facilities, investing in public education facilities and enhancing facilities and services for Fairhaven seniors. Fairhaven historically has evaluated and upgraded infrastructure (roadways, sidewalks, drainage, water and sewer) on a neighborhood basis in order improve interlinked public facilities and transportation networks and encourage economic development. Neighborhoods targeted are Cushman Park, East Fairhaven, North Fairhaven and Anthony School. Objectives to meet these goals include:

- Continue infrastructure improvements in the Anthony School Neighborhood; priority streets are North Street, Hedge, Green and various sidewalk improvements through the neighborhood.
- Make infrastructure improvements to the North Fairhaven Neighborhood; priority streets are Sycamore, Main, Garrison and various sidewalk improvements through the neighborhood.

- Development of Facilities Master Plan, including Police, Fire, Senior Center and School Department, and Staffing Needs Assessment.
- Undertake energy audit of all municipal buildings and incorporate findings into Facilities Master Plan; undertake vehicle fleet assessment for opportunities for fuel efficiency.
- Align Town's Capital Improvement Plan with priorities identified in Facilities Master Plan and Staffing Needs Assessment.
- Identify key infrastructure elements for roadways improvements, develop Master Plan for Water Department, and incorporate cost-effective Green Infrastructure strategies for storm water management and drainage.
- Encourage increased recycling and reduction of solid waste disposal; prepare long term plans for use for Sludge Digester System and Sewage Treatment Plant.
- Maintain and foster harbor and marine uses and undertake projects that sustain the viability of the harbor area such as dredging, improvements at Union Wharf, and land use planning.

TRANSPORTATION: Fairhaven's goals are to provide safe, affordable and energy efficient options for transportation by becoming a bicycle and pedestrian friendly community, encouraging use of public transportation, and improving traffic flow and condition of the Town-wide transportation system.

Objectives include:

- Develop a Town-wide Complete Streets policy that includes a Town-wide on-street bicycle network, a bicycle connection to City of New Bedford, and new sidewalk construction in areas with missing segments.
- Prepare Sidewalk Inventory and construction/maintenance plan to include ADA/AAB compliance, update Pavement Management plan
- Improve traffic signals on Route 6 and Routes 240 and upgrade pavements markings and signage town-wide.
- Join regional efforts to support the South Coast Rail extension.
- Work with the Southcoast Regional Transit Authority to enhance local shuttle services and transit support facilities such as benches, shelters, parking, etc. at existing bus stops.
- Expand door-to-door services for disabled and aging residents.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Fairhaven's goals include preserving the financial viability of the working waterfront, maintaining healthy commercial occupancies along Route 6 and other commercial areas, supporting mixed-use projects, support of small business incubation and growth and collaboration with New Bedford and other area towns on workforce training and regional economic development. To address these issues the Town will:

- Work with the New Bedford Harbor Development Commission on Harbor Plan Update and coordinate with the Army Corps of Engineers on all waterfront permitting.
- Continue infrastructure upgrades to the waterfront, in concert with the recommendations of the Hazard Mitigation Plan effort concerning foreseeable sea level rise.
- Consider creation of a redevelopment plan for the working waterfront, including improved vehicular circulation and pedestrian access.
- Consider introduction of tax credit/tax abatement programs for job creation.
- Encourage mixed use redevelopment through land use, zoning and development incentives, including a Route 6 mixed-use overlay district, encouragement of upper story reuse, and a detailed revitalization plan to guide redevelopment of commercial areas in town.
- Evaluate zoning bylaw updates that encourage small business development

OPEN SPACE, RECREATION & NATURAL RESOURCES: Fairhaven strives to preserve and protect its agricultural resources and landscapes, cultural and historic places, open space, recreational, and forest and marine resources. The Town strives to meet these goals thru the following objectives:

- Protect and preserve agricultural resources through acquisition or protection, using Massachusetts approved preservations programs under MGL 61, 61A and 61B and APR.
- Establish a permanent Open Space Committee.
- Improve Watershed protection through coordination with the Mattapoisett River Valley Water Supply Protection Committee and revision of Water Protection Overlay Zoning District.
- Protect inland and coastal wetlands, marine resources and wildlife habitats.
- Enhance recreational opportunities for Fairhaven residents, including development of recreational and athletic facilities, including ADA accessibility standards, upgrades to Town Beach on West Island and additional bikeway connections.

CULTURAL & HISTORIC RESOURCES: Fairhaven endeavors to preserve its unique historical and cultural heritage through expanded awareness and protection of historic buildings and landscapes and linking historic preservation and economic development. Objectives include:

- Propose enactment of a demolition review bylaw.
- Completion of additional historic inventories of at least two neighborhoods.
- Creation of local historic district study committee, which may lead to establishment of a local historic district.
- Nomination of threatened historic resources to the National Register
- Encourage use of historic tax credits by real estate developers
- Use wayfinding and signage to promote Fairhaven's historic resources.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY PRIORITY GOALS:

1. Maintain and foster harbor and marine uses and undertake projects that sustain the viability of the harbor area such as dredging, business development of marine uses, and land use planning.
2. Incorporate Hazard Mitigation Plan into planning, zoning and public construction initiatives.
3. Re-evaluate zoning bylaw for possible changes that will encourage increased supply of affordable housing, economic development and the preservation of open space, natural, marine and historic resources.
4. Evaluate the Town's facilities and vehicle fleet for energy efficiency and consider obtaining a Green Community designation.
5. Undertake infrastructure projects throughout neighborhoods, particularly in the Anthony School (priority streets are North Street, Hedge, and Green) and North Fairhaven (priority streets are Sycamore, Main, and Garrison) as well as sidewalk improvements in both neighborhoods.
6. Provide affordable housing for all residents of the community.
7. Continue to provide adequate public safety and municipal services.
8. Support efforts to provide Fairhaven seniors through services, transportation options and additional affordable housing options.
9. Open Space & Recreation strategies include improving existing sites for recreational and athletic access.
10. A continued preservation effort of historic buildings is the cornerstone of the Cultural and Historic strategy.