

# What is Planning and Community Development?

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One of the most visible roles the Planning Department plays is in providing technical and administrative support to a variety of the Town's regulatory boards including Planning & Zoning Board, the Conservation Commission and the Historical Commission. But, that support is only one component of Town Planning. The Planning Department plays an important role in helping the town develop short and long range plans that are used to guide growth and development in Easton in a way that is desirable for its residents. In that role, we:

- 1) Help Easton envision its future 10, 20, even 30 years out – a future Easton that is desirable, sustainable, affordable and livable.
- 2) We help the town ask and answer questions that begin to define the Town's vision of its future. Questions like:
  - a. Where do you want to see future development concentrated and what should that development look like?
  - b. Are there opportunities for increased development, infill or redevelopment; what parts of town should be afforded greater protection from development; what cultural, natural and historical resources should be preserved?
  - c. What type of housing does the Town feels it needs to attract a retain a variety of residents?
  - d. How does the town remain economically viable? What kind of business and industry can the town and does the town want to attract and where should it be located?
  - e. Does the infrastructure exist to support this growing vision?

Then we need to look at the external factors that influence life in Easton, such as regional population growth or decline, regional and national economic cycles and climate change. These questions, along with a variety of answers are considered as a vision of the Future is formed.

- 3) Once that future is visualized the Department helps develop a plan with strategies and action steps to move that vision forward. As the plan is implemented there is an ongoing process of evaluating how its working and if any changes or adjustments should be made. This process involves regular interaction with various town boards as well as with a number of the other municipal departments. The Department also needs to stay abreast of current trends, conduct, research, and analyze and understand the implications of relevant data such as census updates, housing trends, and population projections.

To summarize, the Planning Department helps the town define what it wants to look like in the future, and helps ensure there is a good balance between development and preservation and that the Town can deliver the essential services its residents come to expect.