

BREWSTER'S 2018 VISION PLAN

How the Community's Vision for the Future is Taking Shape

Prepared by the
Brewster Vision Planning Committee
June, 2021

INTRODUCTION

Brewster's Vision Plan is the expression of community preferences for the Town's social, physical, and economic evolution. Approved by the Select Board in July 2018, the Plan provides a vision for the future and includes goals and actions to guide decision making of Town government, community organizations, and citizens. The Vision Planning Committee was established by the Select Board in late 2019 to "foster public outreach and communication around the implementation of the 2018 Vision Plan and work with Town staff and the community to develop a Local Comprehensive Plan (LCP) based on the Vision Plan goals." This is the first Annual Report to the community on Vision Plan implementation.

THE VISION PLAN

Over 18 months in 2017 and 2018, Brewster residents engaged in a series of workshops and a public survey to identify key issues facing the community, goals for the future, and actions to achieve the goals. These activities were designed to identify community values and build consensus around priorities.

Through this process, the community identified eight key issues facing Brewster which became the 'building blocks' for the Vision Plan: community character, open space, housing, local economy, coastal management, water resources, governance, and community infrastructure. For each of these building blocks, the Plan identifies a goal with related purposes and actions to achieve the purpose. In many cases, actions on one building block will help advance the goals of other building blocks.

This first Annual Report is structured around the building blocks, reporting on actions that have been taken or are underway to achieve Vision Plan goals. It draws on over 50 interviews with Town boards, committees, and departments and with not-for-profit organizations and businesses in town, all selected because of their role in implementing elements of the Vision Plan.



IMPLEMENTING THE VISION PLAN

Vision Plan implementation has faced challenges and change, including a financial management crisis that forced the Town to freeze spending and programming; a change in leadership with a new Town Administrator and a new approach to strategy and operations; and finally the effects of the COVID pandemic on every facet of community life and Town operations.

Despite these conditions, there has been surprising progress in implementing the Vision Plan. Those interviewed credit dedicated staff and volunteers, the commitment and character of citizens, and the leadership of the Town administration. The Select Board now uses the Vision Plan framework to guide its two-year strategic planning. Many felt that the Vision Plan reinforces their charge and direction, a fortunate alignment of citizens' priorities with the direction of Town government and community organizations.

At the same time, the interviews revealed many barriers to implementation. Not surprisingly, a major barrier has been the COVID pandemic which closed facilities, prevented face to face contacts, and slowed the pace of operations. In addition, the current zoning and permitting process are constraints to many of the innovative development ideas expressed in the Vision Plan and to growing small, local businesses. Others identified small staff and reliance on volunteers as a constraint on their capacity to undertake new programs. Similarly, the lack of facilities has constrained programming, particularly for youth and older residents. Finally, the rising cost of land represents a serious brake on the acquisition of land for housing and open space in Town.

NEXT STEPS

While this Report documents the many actions that have been taken or are underway, much more remains to be done to achieve the goals in the Vision Plan. Some actions have been started but need more time for completion, others remain to be started, and still others require further design to adapt to evolving conditions in Town, including climate change. The community, and particularly Town government, will have to remain focused on the Vision Plan goals if its real impact is to be achieved.

The Town is starting the development of a Local Comprehensive Plan (LCP) following the guidelines of the Cape Cod Commission. The LCP will be built on the framework of the Vision Plan, and it will further detail actions to achieve those goals. Particularly related to Brewster's physical development, the LCP will provide guidance for regulatory change and further housing and open space development. Once certified by the Cape Cod Commission, the LCP also will provide access to resources and technical assistance from the Commission. Work on the LCP will begin in the fall of 2021.

THE VISION PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Vision Planning Committee was appointed by the Select Board in December 2019, but its start was delayed because of COVID. Current members of the committee include Hal Minis (chair), Sharon Tennstedt (vice chair), Amanda Bebrin, Andi Genser, Patricia Hess, Garran Peterson, Fran Schofield, and Paul Wallace. Ryan Bennett, Town Planner, assists the Committee. Previous members include Kari Hoffmann and Sue Searles. Support is provided by the Planning Department.

ACTIONS BY BUILDING BLOCK

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Purpose 1: Provide social opportunities and services for all

- Town Meeting approved a feasibility study for a community center (need, site options, programming), but start-up delayed by COVID.
- "Age friendliness" is part of decision making (Council of Aging-COA).
- Intergenerational lunches and ice cream socials have been held (COA).
- Farmers market was started as a community-wide event (Brewster Historical Society-BHS).

Purpose 2: Maintain the Town's historic heritage and style

- Town Planning Board (PB) considers how proposals fit Brewster's community character.
- Conservation properties with scenic value are managed for scenic vistas and rural character (Brewster Conservation Trust-BCT).
- Trails have been expanded for varying population needs (BCT).
- Inn keepers maintain historic properties to contribute to Town character (Chamber of Commerce-CoC).
- 300 houses were documented as "Historic Houses" to help homeowners preserve historic structures (Brewster Historic Commission-BHC).
- BHC worked with Ocean Edge to save Nickerson House on the original Rte. 6A property.
- A display of historic East Brewster was mounted at the Brewster Ladies Library; articles on historic Brewster have been published in the *Cape Codder* (BHC).
- Tours of Main Street historic houses, area farms and cemeteries were created (BHS).
- Virtual tours of historic properties were created for schools and the website (BHS).

Purpose 3: Maintain the Town's small-town feel and scale through appropriate development

- Town Meeting approved an accessory dwelling unit by-law, expanding housing opportunities without impacting community character (PB).

WATER RESOURCES

Purpose 1: Protect Town wellfields by expanding open space acquisition and other measures

- Between 2018-2020, 13 parcels totaling 113 acres within Zone II drinking water supply areas have been protected (Open Space Committee-OSC & BCT).
- "Drink Brewster Tap" campaign was developed and hydrations stations installed at Town offices and recreation facilities to decrease use of plastic bottles.

Purpose 2: Improve pond water quality through public education, regulation and mitigation activities

- Weed harvesting was conducted at Walkers Pond (Brewster Ponds Coalition-BPC & Department of Natural Resources-DNR).
- Sediment analysis was studied at Walkers Pond to better understand poor water quality (DNR).
- Permitting criteria was developed for rain gardens (Conservation Commission-CC).
- Upper Mill Pond was treated with alum (DNR).
- Brewster Ponds Overview was published (BPC).

Purpose 3: Protect water quality of marine watersheds

- Fertilizer use at Captains Golf Course was monitored and reduced to mitigate nitrogen loading to Pleasant Bay.
- State DEP Watershed Permit was obtained for Pleasant Bay (Pleasant Bay Alliance-PBA, Town Planner, & DNR).
- State Grant was obtained for alternatives analyses in the Pleasant Bay watershed management plans for Orleans, Brewster, Harwich and Chatham (Pleasant Bay Alliance-PBA).

OPEN SPACE

Purpose 1: Improve public access to and expand the use of recreational areas

- Parking capacity at Crosby landing was expanded (Department of Public Works-DPW).
- CCRT extension to Linnell Landing is at final design; funding not yet identified (DNR).
- New public trails were opened at Bakers Pond and No Bottom Pond (DNR & BCT).
- A new version of the Guide to Brewster Walking Trails was distributed (DNR & BCT).
- Land purchases at Long Pond Woodlands and McGuerty Road offer future trail networks (Town).
- State Oliver/GIS system has been used to identify areas of high environmental sensitivity-habitat and drinking water supply (Town & BCT).
- Update of the Drummer Boy Park Master Plan is underway (DNR).
- Update of the Open Space and Recreation Plan is underway (OSC & DNR).
- "Walking Wednesday" series were started to familiarize people with Brewster trails (BCT).
- Eddy School classes use Vernal Pool trail for science study (Eddy School & BCT).

Purpose 2: Prioritize environmentally sensitive areas for preservation

- Between 2018-2020, 13 parcels totaling 113 acres within the drinking water supply areas (Zone II) have been protected (Town & BCT).
- Areas of highest priority for natural resource protection (habitat and drinking water supply) and housing have been mapped, with Brewster as a pilot community (Association to Preserve Cape Cod-APCC & Housing Assistance Corporation-HAC).
- Funding partnerships for acquisitions have included Community Preservation Committee (CPC), State grants, individual donations, foundations, and conservation tax credits (Town & BCT).
- Brewster Water Department (BWD) created funding within its tariff structure for land protection in the drinking water supply areas.
- Identification of encroachments and redress actions on conservation lands has been increased (Town & BCT).
- Trail marking, signage, and stewardship of conservation lands has been increased (DNR & BCT).

Purpose 3: Maintain open space through density and development standards

- Coastal Management Plan identifies need to reduce coastal threats through zoning and other regulations.
- Application of Natural Resource Protection Bylaw made acquisition of Long Pond Woodlands affordable for conservation.

HOUSING

Purpose 1: Promote Housing Choices to allow families to live, work, prosper.

- CPC funded Housing Coordinator position.
- Town Meeting adopted (2018) an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) bylaw; 20 units (both ADU and "in-law") approved as of 2021.
- Municipal Affordable Housing Trust was established in 2018.
- Millstone Road housing development feasibility study is in progress.
- Home ownership buy-down assistance program was established in 2018; Rental & Home Repair assistance program funding through CPC and HAC; \$250,000 in short-term rental tax funds to Housing Trust.
- Education forums for the public are on-going through BHP, CPC, HAC, CDP, AHT, and include annual Housing Institute.
- CPC supported housing projects, including Paul Hush Way, Brewster Woods, Red Top Road, Veteran's Housing.

Purpose 2: Provide opportunities for an aging population

- Former Wingate property is being redeveloped as Serenity Brewster, with 131 units of 55+ Senior Housing and 20% deed restricted affordable, as a public/private partnership (no public funds, but local guidance and permitting support).

Purpose 3: Address housing needs of year-round and seasonal workforce

- Ocean Edge workforce housing was developed as a public/private partnership.

COASTAL MANAGEMENT

Purpose 1: Protect Coastal Resources

- The Natural Resources Advisory Commission was formed in 2020 to implement Coastal Resources Management Plan (SB).
- The Town partnered on a Cape Cod Commission and State EEA grant to develop a model coastal resiliency bylaw (Town Planner).
- Partnerships with non-profits on coastal resiliency demonstration projects include Crosby Landing culvert replacement (DNR & DPW); Pleasant Bay Watershed Permit for nitrogen mitigation and watershed restoration (PBA, Town Planner, DNR, & Health Agent)
- Stormwater Management zoning bylaw, consistent with State MS4 permit requirements, will be presented at Fall 2021 Town Meeting (PB & Town Planner).

Purpose 2: Maintain and expand public access for all through public consensus and explore alternative modes of transportation and access points

- CCRT extension to Linnell Landing is at final design; funding not yet identified (DNR & PB).

Purpose 3: Adapt to Climate Change

- Model Coastal Resiliency bylaw, including zoning amendments to minimize development scale, is under development with assistance from the Cape Cod Commission (Town Planner, PB, & CC).
- Town has obtained grant funds (MVP, Hazard Mitigation, Model Resiliency Bylaw, etc.) to further climate adaptation efforts (TA, Town Planner, & DNR).
- NRAC has been tasked with viewing all actions through a Climate Change lens.

LOCAL ECONOMY

Purpose 1: Build a "green" economy based on the town's natural beauty and resources

- Brewster was designated a "Green Community" (Town).
- New Cultural Trail was introduced in April 2021 to highlight cultural amenities of Brewster (CoC).
- Recycling has been actively promoted to all summer rentals (CoC).
- Brewster businesses, departments, non-profits and committees collaborated to promote Brewster in Bloom, Conservation Day, Beach Clean-up and Brewster for the Holidays (CoC).
- Two solar panel arrays have been installed at the Captain's Golf Course (Town & PB).
- Importance of the local marine economy, particularly the shellfish grants at Ellis and Mant's Landings, was communicated as part of the "Blue Economy" (Town & DNR).

Purpose 2: Foster small businesses compatible with the town's character and promote year-round employment

- "Small Business Saturday" was promoted with small businesses (CoC).
- Small businesses were supported to lengthen their season from early spring through autumn (CoC).
- Town worked to help Ocean Edge stay open year-round (Town & Ocean Edge).
- Work was started on an on-line permitting platform to improve timeliness of issuance and for a guide to "Doing Business in Brewster" (Town).

GOVERNANCE

Purpose 1: Expand and improve communication to citizens about Town plans and activities.

- Town Meeting approved the Town Charter (SB, Town Administration-TA).
- A new user-friendly Town website was developed; rollout is expected soon. (TA, IT Director, & COA Director).
- Announcements about Town affairs are now cross-posted on the Town website through social media (TA, IT Director, & Channel 18).
- PBGTV and LCTV programming for older residents was increased (COA).
- A new "Citizens Forum" was added to many Town Committee's standing meeting agendas.
- Select Board's improved communications policies include "Public Engagement Policy" (2019), "Responding to Public Comment Policy" (2019), and "Rules of Order Policy" (2020).
- Town and CoC have enhanced communication with business owners and customer service (TA & CoC).

Purpose 2: Expand the volunteer base to increase the use of citizen expertise and build diversity in decision-making.

- COA Volunteer Coordinator program has been expanded (COA).
- "Serve Your Community" form is used for open volunteer positions (TA & Town Clerk).
- "Citizens Leadership Academy" is in planning stages (TA).

Purpose 3: Strengthen the customer service approach to Town services.

- Customer service training is provided to staff. The Town Administrator holds quarterly meetings with staff; monthly meetings with Department Heads.
- Town Hall "Greeter" position was created during summer of 2019 (TA).
- E-permitting for building, health and planning departments is soon to launch. (TA, IT Director, & Dept. Heads).

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Purpose 1: Create a community center to house activities and interaction for people of all ages

- Town Meeting approved feasibility study for a community center (need, site options, programming) but start up delayed by COVID.
- Town Meeting approved a feasibility study of school consolidation; Request for Proposals has been issued for a consultant (TA).

Purpose 2: Expand bike and pedestrian trails and paths for recreation and transport throughout town

- Complete Streets approach was adopted; public outreach to determine priorities will start in Fall 2021 (SB).
- Re-paving of Rte. 137 between Rte. 6A and Rte. 124 was designed according to Complete Streets guidelines [sidewalk, bike access] (DPW).
- Extension of the CC Rail Trail from Nickerson State Park to Linnell Landing is at 75% design, but funding is not yet identified (DNR).
- Flashing lights were installed on CC Rail Trail crossings (DPW & Bikeways Committee-BC).
- Bike safety cards are being distributed at Town Information Center (CoC & BC).
- Bike safety information is provided on website and in *Best of Brewster* magazine (CoC).
- Mapping bike routes across town has started (BC & CoC).
- Brewster Bike Day was held with bike rodeo and bike education activities (BC & Recreation Dept-RD).
- Resurfacing the gravel path between Stony Brook and Eddy Schools is under study (DPW & BC).
- Outdoor Club at Eddy School held bike ride of the CC Rail Trail (RD).

Purpose 3: Provide active recreation opportunities and facilities, including those for youth

- Eddy School gym has been used for senior activities (COA & RD).
- Town 5-Year Capital Plan includes expanded recreation facilities such as playground and ADA access at Freeman's Way ballfields (RD).
- Update of the Drummer Boy Master Plan is underway (DNR).
- RD uses were examined to determine summer camp and other programming needs.