

APPENDIX 1
PUBLIC COMMENTS



PUBLIC COMMENTS

Since the PlanAshland process began, the Comprehensive Plan Committee (and their consultant, Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)) have been asking the public to share their thoughts, opinions and concerns with us. Some of you may have spoken with us at the Farmers Market, others of you attended the October 27, 2014 visioning session or responded to our lightning poll questions on Facebook or on the PlanAshland.com website. We also visited the Senior Center and held coffee klatches at residents' homes. We thank you for your interest and active participation. We wanted to share with you the many comments we have received so that you can see what your neighbors are thinking. These comments were used to develop the Community Vision Statement.

These comments are verbatim as recorded by transcribers at meetings and as submitted. We have not edited the content of any comment.

Comments

**Focus Group for Town Staff, Boards and Committees
Land Use, Housing and Development**

August 5, 2014

Strengths

- Rural character – hometown feel; great for families.
- Schools.
- Location.
- Variety and number of people who volunteer.
- Safety.
- Proximity to Boston.
- Public transit.
- State parks.
- All open space – 25% open.
- Public services – water and sewer.
- Nyanza has been remediated.
- Relative affordability.
- Diversity of population.
- Farmers Market.
- Designated a Green Community.

- Responsive town staff.
- History.
- Access to agriculture and employment centers in neighboring towns.
- Good business climate and single tax rate.
- Variety of recreational activities.
- Community pride – Ashland Day, summer concerts.
- Not overly developed compared to surrounding towns.
- Strong local and regional arts scene.
- Library programs.
- Proximity to regional highway network.
- Passionate people.
- Friendly police and fire departments.
- Market Basket.
- New Dairy Queen.
- Mini-golf.
- Two turf fields and fields in general.
- Warren Conference Center.
- Diversity of religions.
- Handicapped accessible beach at the state park (but needs upgrading).
- State legislators live in town.
- Large library.
- Community and senior center.
- Close to YMCA outdoor family center.
- Historic buildings.
- Relationship with Northeastern University.
- Original start of the Marathon and the Marathon itself.
- Upgraded town hall, library and high school.
- Multiple cable vendors and WACA – local cable access channel.

Challenges

- Rail crossings – noise pollution from whistles, traffic back-ups, divides the town.
- Town relies on a single source for water supply.
- Water infrastructure needs updating.
- Water restrictions could hinder economic development.
- The water recharge rate is too slow.
- Cost of being on the MWRA sewer system.
- Disconnected amenities – downtown, the train, the commercial center are nodes that need better connectivity.
- Lack of walkability and safe biking.
- Distance from major highways affects economic development.
- Contaminated sites – Nyanza Super Fund site has been capped but Cadillac Paint needs further remediation and is privately owned.

- Major developments next door have traffic impacts but town has no control – Legacy Farms, Whitney Street.
- Growing student population creating school capacity issues.
- Fire and Police have outgrown their buildings.
- Continuing to work on regional fire with Hopkinton.
- Growing population is a strain on municipal services.
- Tension between maintaining character and new development.
- 40Bs because still below the 10%.
- High property tax rates.
- Commercial competition from Route 9 and proximity to larger commercial centers.
- Inadequate commercial tax base but how much does Ashland want?
- Threat of losing business and industrial base.
- Site constraints and environmental regulations make it difficult for businesses to expand.
- Passionate residents.
- Old vs. new Ashland.
- Younger households aren't always vocal.
- Difficult to build consensus.
- Outdated, ineffective form of government – what form is best for Ashland?
- Poor attendance at town meeting – town needs to do more outreach to get more participation.
- Town meeting is driving the budget.
- Would an elected town meeting change town character?
- Is poor town meeting attendance apathy or lack of faith in the form of government?
- Infrastructure and energy consumption maintenance costs.
- Memory of the Nyanza problem and police scandal – perception of Ashland as “country bumpkins” and need to overcome negative publicity.
- Low per capita funding of library.
- Inaccessibility of the Sudbury River – underutilized asset. Water quality needs treatment by EPA.
- Difficulty of balancing the need to provide good services and education with the tax rate.
- Need more awareness of the cost of services.
- Downtown lacks charm and a consistent look.
- The condition of Route 126.
- Megunko Road industrial area.
- Need more quality restaurants and outdoor eating areas.
- Lack of sidewalks.
- Decisions driven by a minority with agendas and aren't necessarily representative.
- Disconnect between what zoning allows and resident expectations.
- Residents don't understand the zoning and are surprised by new development that's permitted.
- Disconnect as shown by opposition of abutters to mixed-use development.
- Need zoning education for residents (during neutral times), not when part of a development controversy. Need to orient citizens to zoning.

- Potential issue is medical marijuana.
- New Dunkin Donuts on Route 126 is impacting many houses. Silenced voices during the appeal.
- Reactive rather than proactive planning boards and processes.
- Too many boards – not always clear who’s responsible for what. Hard for developers to navigate.
- No mandatory training for board members.
- Elected officials need more clarity on what boards do.
- Lack of communication between boards and town departments – siloed.
- Need more of a regional approach to common problems as happened during the casino proposal.
- Impact of other communities on Ashland – the town can’t control this.
- Town website needs more improvement.
- Lack of bike infrastructure and facilities.
- Lack of on-street and municipal parking downtown (and disconnect).
- Limited CPA funds.
- Limited developable land zoned commercial/industrial to increase the tax base.
- Need to answer the question does Ashland want to be a bedroom community? Need visioning.

Barriers

- Apathy/non-participation/uncontested elections.
- Not sure if this means people are happy with how things are or just apathetic. It seems that the loudest voices carry the day.
- Town meeting attendance is article-based.
- Pond Street had a good turnout because it directly affected so many but when there is lack of progress on a project, it drives people away.
- People are not looking long-term anymore.
- Negativity triggers “never going to happen” thoughts – town needs to look at the cause of apathy.
- People are busy with work, kids, etc.
- Need to explore an idea, not just assume it can’t be done but recognize that it does take effort by people proposing the idea and town staff.
- Don’t classify active people as vocal minority – they bring ideas to the table but there needs to be a place to air/discuss those ideas.
- Need more communication with more residents.
- Discussion about town meeting attendance or form of government could be helpful.
- People spend time on their phones – a distraction as well as a way to reach them.
- Town meeting is embarrassing.
- Town meeting tends to be middle aged.
- Young families don’t attend town meeting. Either they trust the town to do the right thing or they aren’t willing to do work.
- Younger crowd not willing to work.
- Active people have a “twisted” view – but when issues are controversial the average resident more likely to come out. Harder to get turnout on routine issues.

- Land use issues – is it the sense of the room that residents like the development that is going on?
- Community-wide survey to build picture of what residents want. Surveys tend to have a low response rate and self-selected respondents.
- Worth the risk – need to promote – is it worth the time/effort?
- There was a town-wide survey for the 2003 comprehensive plan.
- Survey for the Route 126 project.
- People don't really know the issues – need both sides to write a summary like with statewide ballot questions.
- \$ - lack of dollars or lack of priorities?
- The budget pie is constrained so budget doesn't vary much.
- Tax bills fall in the middle of where surrounding towns are.
- Residents can't always afford tax increases.

Visioning Brainstorm

- Visuals are important.
- Email list from Pond Street.
- Manipulatives.
- Break out by topic areas.
- Hands-on worked better.
- Signs.
- Robo calls.
- Info tents, twitter, canvassing.
- Critical questions: tax vs. services.
- What's the real priority 5, 10, 50 years vision.
- Bring in the larger perspective.
- Would be happy if we met strangers, young people we've never seen.
- School newsletters.
- Provide day care.
- Growth vs. non-growth in a granular way.
- Make an implementation plan.
- Safe Routes to school.
- Open houses at the schools.
- Newsletter approach.

Focus Group for Town Staff, Boards and Committees Open Space, Recreation and Natural Resources

August 14, 2014

Strengths

- Ashland Reservoir.
- Warren Woods/Conference Center.
- Town Forest.

- Community gardens and the Farmers Market.
- Sibson Property and the Weston Nurseries parcel.
- Stone Park.
- Mill Pond.
- Gryncel Park.
- 125 Front Street.
- Marathon Park.
- Community Center playing fields.
- Open Space Committee.
- Riverwalk Trail.
- Sudbury River and adjacent reservoirs.
- Bay Circuit Trail.
- Cluster Development open space at Great Bend Farm Trust – oldest cluster in the state.
- Audubon Trails – Cross Street/Weston Nurseries.
- Boy Scout trail – including camping area at Indian Brook.
- Girl Scout Camp.
- Woods behind Warren School.
- Future open space at Tri Mount Aggregate site.
- Wildwood Cemetery – part of Bay Circuit.
- Devils Den archeological site.
- Hopkinton State Park.
- Ashland Fish and Game – ball field – private but part of Rail Transit District.
- Squares – Green and Montenegro.
- Cold Spring and Chemical Brooks.
- Summer Concerts.
- Skate park.
- Stone Park Pavilion.
- Kidspot.
- Stone Park – sledding – also at Hopkinton State Park.
- Lake Waushakum- swimming.
- Ashland bike club.
- Library has a wide variety of recreation programs.
- Community Center programs.
- Solar Challenge.
- Ashland High School has green features.
- Designation as a Green Community.
- Regulations to prohibit underground sprinklers.
- Rail access.
- Howe Street landfill.
- Parcel off Independence Lane.
- DPW has solar.
- Recycling – one of the first, spurred by Nyanza.
- Ashland Day.

- LED Street lights.
- Green Up Ashland Day.
- Dragonfly festival – arts and the environment.
- Youth Sports.
- Corporate and adult sports leagues.
- Half Marathon.
- No Frills Turkey Trot to raise money for the food pantry.
- Ashland Community Theater.
- Town Manager Forums.
- Ashland Creative.
- Ashland Cultural Council.
- Ashland Garden Club.
- Youth group recreation.
- Lions Triathlon.
- Coalition for Teens.
- Bingo.
- Historical Society Forums.
- Christmas Tree lighting.
- Boy Scouts Super Bowl pancake breakfast.
- Halloween Parade.
- Open Space Committee sponsors walks.
- Tuesday night concerts/movies.
- Ashland Extended Day program.
- Moms Club.
- Safe Routes to Schools.
- ASAP – Middle School.
- ACT.
- SADD: Students Against Destructive Decisions.

- Leos (junior Lions) club at the High School – helps with seniors.
- There are two Lions Clubs in town.
- Ashland Music Association.
- Scouting.
- VFW/American Legion.
- Memorial Day parade.
- Doggie parade.
- 4H Center.
- ARC.
- State representatives are open space advocates.
- Transition Ashland.
- The town's recreation program.

Additional non-open space related strengths.

- MWRTA – Metro West Regional Transit Authority.
- The number of condos.

Challenges

- Open space inaccessible by sidewalk.
- ¼ mile of sidewalk missing on Route 135 between Middle School and the Community Center but this will be fixed in the near future.
- Cluster by-law is deficient.
- Low density in general – lack of complete buildout.
- Cluster needs incentives with more flexibility.
- Zoning isn't allowing what people want.
- There is little open space on the east side of town but there are privately owned wetlands.
- Auto-centric design.
- Bike-ped retrofits needed for health and vitality.
- Keefe Tech area pedestrian access – many people walk there and could use a cantilevered bike/ped path.
- Inter-community pedestrian linkages.
- 126 side – lack of parks and gathering spaces.
- Biking safety.
- Re: buildout – rural character – needs infill development rather than expansion – compact development.
- Intensify use of developed land rather than develop more land.
- Transitional communities – people who move on from started homes versus the people who come and stay.
- Lack of restaurants, vibrant downtown. Need specialty shops like butchers, connective arc “sense of shared recreation” as hook.
- Need more but also better marketing.
- Align zoning with community values.
- Mandate larger commercial biz for revenue.
- Empty storefronts – mixed use developers have pushed Town Meeting but those developers have failed.
- Have design standards and enforce them.
- Be aware of HUD standards for mixed use.
- Disconnect between TM and abutters – part of issue is timing – people arrive after the decisions have been made.
- School facilities (except the HS) are not that great.
- Restaurants are lacking.
- Train station is “hideous”.
- There is no life around the train station.
- Transitional may be ok – ok that people upgrade to other towns as their income increases.
- Don't frame the vision around the people who leave.
- Taxes must be kept affordable for elders.

- Inconsistent approach to assets discourages commercial development.
- Voters may not understand \$ value of open space. Requires education re: value of unimproved open space versus recreation.
- One question is are more jobs needed in town or become more a part of the MetroWest economy.
- Gainer/Rail Transit district T.O.D.
- Plans should sunset after certain period (but this is regulated by state law).
- Best to engage with developers early in the process; i.e. early intervention re: community values.

Visioning Plan

- Interactive works.
- Childcare available and involve children and younger people.
- You are an abutter – way to draw people in.
- Refreshments.
- Clear, colorful visuals even if conceptual.
- Contest between schools.
- Neighborhood engagement; coffees re: specific questions.
- Forums – go to young families – Moms clubs, library.
- Focus specifically on regions within town – neighborhoods.
- Train the trainers for canvassing.
- Five precincts in town – no precinct captains but maybe street captains?
- Strong wording of questions.
- Define open space.
- Education re: pros and cons of issues.
- Specific questions such as should we widen or narrow Route 135.
- Present future scenarios such as full build out, stay rural.
- How much development do people want? Where?
- Sense of services and programs.
- Why move here, why do they stay?
- How do we keep aging people here?
- How to reconcile taxes vs. services?
- What do you want to see in ten years and what will it take to get there?
- What is the price and what are the paths to get there?
- How do you feel about Ashland now: Not enough open space? Not enough commercial space?
- This will shape delivery of services.
- What are the drivers of different populations? (Downtown, schools, town green?)
- Pick the five things that mean the most.
- ARA has found this out.
- Don't be too general or it might seem shallow.
- What are the trade-offs and under what conditions? What are the costs?
- Need to look at it from small to big picture and big picture back to small.

- Website – position papers? What is the cost of services?
- What is the population of elderly vs. young?
- Compare Ashland to other towns with same demographics but that are perceived as being more desirable – i.e. Wakefield.
- Live stream and take questions.
- Have a smaller forum but with meeting televised.

Visioning Session October 27, 2014

Participants placed dots next to public comments made during the session. The dots indicate priority concerns for those attending.



Breakout Group #1

Comment	# of Dots
Develop a clear vision statement and then develop an implementation plan	16
Continue to acquire more open space	13
Improve appearance of downtown commercial development including landscaping	12
Prioritize downtown and Pond Street before other areas of town	12
More options for employment/more services	11
Establish a town green	11
Develop a short and long term traffic plan that addresses current and future population levels (especially on W. Union with school in session)	10
Investigate tax incentive plan to attract new businesses	10
Develop a business marketing plan	10
Improved recreational connectivity for walking and biking	10
Centralized walkable clusters of merchants (including creative economy and eateries (e.g. at the Mall of the Americas	9
Develop business incubation centers to encourage start-ups (e.g. Gamewell)	8
Move forward more quickly with revitalization of Pond Street area	8
Ensure high quality education and use to promote the town	8
Develop high quality affordable/workforce housing plan	6
Library should provide more cultural and educational activities	6
Year round Farmers Market	5
Encourage more employment from light manufacturing and professional services	4
Develop a long term strategic plan for government facilities and infrastructure (e.g. water and sewer)	4
Ensure adequate funding for education	4
Balancing development	4
Develop a plan for high quality affordable/workforce housing and implement plan	3
Team with Framingham on train issues (such as noise, traffic, grade changes to tracks) and incorporate into current planning ideas	2
Require improved quality of residential and commercial development	2
Allow zoning changes to allow more housing variety	2
Add a dog park	2

Expand and improve transit system	2
Route 135 40B should be used for walking trails	1
Mitigate environmental concerns of new businesses	1
Increase in tax base	0
Encouraging residential building that fits in better with neighborhoods	0
Improved train schedule	0
Add professional offices at appropriate locations on Route 135	0

Breakout Group #2

Comment	# of Dots
Need to look at water shortage	24
Make sure affordable housing is developed sensibly	15
Pond Street: want to feel more connected to Ashland	14
Connected rail trail with surrounding area	10
Traffic is getting thicker- morning, afternoon, all day	10
Like the safety	9
Train schedules through downtown; depress the rails (or raise)	8
Need more walk-ability, bike-ability, less auto dependency	8
Need more local jobs	8
Affordable senior housing	8
Town budget needs to be sustainable	8
Potential/appetite for culture/arts	7
Downtown streetscape – fix up coffee shops, local café, bakery	6
Lack of planning between towns (Legacy Place traffic) – need better coordination	6
Benches	6
Empty commercial spaces	5
Development potential on 126	4
More mixed-use; increase non-residential tax base	4
Maintain small town feel	4
State aid is flat or diminishing	4
Historic homes	4
Sense of neighborhood	4
Diversity	4
Ashland: a destination, not a pass-through	3
Take advantage/utilize under-used spaces	3
Library	3
Town green	3
Green atmosphere	3
Starter homes	3
Create a 2 year junior college using existing facilities in off-hours	3
More sidewalks	3
Development versus traffic	3
Value	3
Schools	3
Accessibility to Boston	2
No north/south public transportation infrastructure (limited to Boston)	2
Need more adult education	2

Comment	# of Dots
Number of people at commuter rail has exploded	2
Small enough scale – can interact with government	2
Community involvement	2
Safety for students and seniors	2
Year round Farmers Market	2
Shrubs in my garden survived (H2O)	2
Impact studies for more future buildings (Pond Street)	2
Impacts of new developments	1
Sense of community	1
Recreation	1
Treacherous at 135 and Frankland	1
What if NEU sells conference center?	1
New/improved tennis courts	1
Co-housing; some shared space	1
Intimacy	0
Quality of life	0
Bottleneck at Pleasant Street	0
Schools take 75-80% of budget	0
The people	0
Absentee property owners	0
Need a reason to cross town to 126	0
Streets designed for past use, not for future	0
Connections within town	0

Breakout Group #3

Statement	# of Dots
Downtown: Renovated downtown with design guidelines	12
More open space	11
Rail Transit District: More middle level restaurants like the Ashland Ale House	8
Downtown: Lower RR tracks	8
More bike trails	6
Walkability – sidewalks on Route 135 and other locations	6
Downtown: Mixed-use housing/development/local developers	6
Downtown: Move police and fire and redevelop the space	5
Lower property taxes	5
Less traffic through town	5
Continue and expand Farmers Market	5
Creative housing types	5
Town squares – Pond Street/Butterfield Drive, other locations	5
Library – funding (stack, programs)	4
Pleasant Street: Mixed-use re: development with riverwalk	4
Pond Street: Active recreation i.e. bowling/hockey rink	4
UMASS – like transportation system	4
Rail Transit District: Bike trails	3
Pond Street: Professional buildings	3

Improved water supply – volume (potential MWRA connection)	3
Community theater	3
Access from downtown to train station	3
Downtown: Basic food store	2
Co-housing	2
Ashland a preeminent location for education (buildings and programs)	2
Downtown: Sync traffic lights	2
More support for ACTA (teen programs)	2
Rail Transit District: Preserve it	2
Rail Transit District: Community gardens	2
Downtown parking	1
Control destiny with water/sewer	1
Rehab neighborhood schools	1
Dispose old schools/replacement new	1
Downtown: Medical offices	1
Public open space east of Route 126	1
Ashland a preeminent location for taking care of each other	0
Preservation of historical structures	0
Larger commercial base/more diverse	0
Downtown: Quiet zone for trains	0
Downtown: Coffee shop	0
Downtown: Pleasing to the eye housing and buildings	0
Rail Transit District: Commercial/industrial on the other 130 acres	0
Rail Transit District: Commuter oriented commercial	0
Rail Transit District: Incorporate open space in development	0

Breakout Group #4

Statement	# of Dots
Transportation (Con Rail)	
Country-fy	
Extended sidewalks	
Destination downtown: more places to go/draw	
Road safety (dark and no sidewalks); need a plan, can't do it all at once.	
Bike trails	
Multi-use path	
Lacking goods and services – expand service offerings	
Strong schools	
Commercial focus – not residential	
In-law apartments in single family homes	
Strong community activities	
Incentives for bringing biz in	
Figuring out what businesses we want here and how to get them here	
Farmers Market	
Fixing our water supply issue	
Street lights	
Housing	
Disruptive rail	
Highest Priorities	

Water supply	6
Business draw/goods and services	5
Downtown as a destination – creating historic district	4
Bike/walk path/multi-use	4
Sustainability	4
Farmers Market	2
Population control	2
Redevelop existing buildings	2
Sidewalks	2
School system	2
Finding/defining an image	0
Managing development	0
Housing density	0
Open space	0
Rail schedule	0
Walkability	0
Housing impact on schools	0

Breakout Group #5

Statement	# of Dots
Depress railroad tracks	15
Downtown revitalization that will foster community including retail	14
Rail/trail connection to parks	13
Bike path connect to downtown and other towns (network include schools	12
Theatre/arts/culture downtown	12
Algonquin light/126 int	10
Keep Ashland affordable	10
Stability of taxes	8
Cluster development as opposed to subdivisions	8
Water status/plan	7
Eliminate blight	7
Town green	7
Noise control	7
Scale up municipal services to match growth	7
Maintain sidewalks on downtown and Pond Street	7
Sustainability in water management	6
Aesthetic vision	6
Downtown	6
Retain more attractive industry and appropriately placed	6
Youth activities/center	6
Affordable mixed throughout town	5
Sustainability/resilience	5
Mixed-use development	5
Make train regular stop/hub for commuters	5
Park/public gathering area	5
Retail including woman's clothing stores	5
Water treatment facility/recharge	4
Put trees back	4

Route 126/Pond Street	4
Trees	4
Light retail	4
Community farm	4
Development proportional to locations	3
Professional park/recreational services	2
Increase capacity of roads	2
Better walkability	2
Elder medical services	2
Property owner accountability	2
Kids toy stores	2
Affordable housing strategy	2
Wide variety of housing	2
Technology	1
Town pool	1
Roller skating rink	1
Statement	# of Dots
Infant to 12/tech	1
Dog park	1
Tech start ups	1
Infill	0
Pleasant Street	0
Schools can meet capacity	0
TOD	0
Regional transit	0
Design standards (more power)	0
Historic preservation (more power)	

Senior Center Lunch

November 3, 2014

- Downtown; need bigger draw than "Lunkers". Need new Fire/Police Station. Place supermarket in downtown area. More family restaurants. Water table too high to depress railroad tracks.
- Pond St; stop 3/4 story buildings, need small commercial, make more business area, retail outlets, clothing stores and eliminate need to go to Framingham.
- RTW 135; what will go in old DQ and Marathon Deli? Have buildings blend in with community; have quality not like Fafard! Increase quality of construction and validate.
- Pleasant St.; have 2 families, yes to office buildings. What is going into old Fenwall Building?
- Rail Station; have enough light commercial businesses (cleaner, food etc); Reduce residential tax base by development. Concerned about health issues of Nyanza.
- Youth & Schools; open gyms for kids; repair schools as regular maintenance/little at a time.
- General Townwide; more sidewalks to community center; more sidewalks in town!; address town's water issues and why do we sell to Hopkinton? What will cost be to homeowner for MWRA? Water is always an issue of quality/quantity. Will there be a break for cost to senior citizens ?

This focus group was comprised of stay-at-home mothers whose main concerns were related to the schools and children's activities. Some of their comments included:

- Space limitations and overcrowding in the schools.
- There should be one school building for K-8 so that parents with multiple aged children can make just two trips to drop off and pick up their children.
- Parents with 3 small children who are 3 years apart must currently make 6 trips per day to drop off and pick up their children at different times and at different schools. This is a waste of energy and does not tie into the "Green Community" vision.
- There needs to be sidewalks and bike paths for children to safely walk and bike to schools.
- There is a need in town for a recreation center with a pool for children's activities, gatherings, birthday parties, etc. Currently parents must take their children to Framingham locations, and some children do not like the YMCA.
- Ashland State Park – Include boat rentals like at Hopkinton State Park for recreation.
- Sustainable public transportation is important.
- The current public transportation needs to be expanded and improved.
- There is no direct bus route to the Framingham mall. Passengers must change buses in downtown Framingham and wait for another bus, which takes too long.
- There are no bus stop signs and there should be kiosks for people to wait.
- Routes, timetables and bus stop locations are not properly advertised in town (including at the train station) which discourages people from using public transportation.

Additional Comments

No mixed use on Front street

Eliminate train horns

Change trash routes so that busy streets are not during morning/ Eve commute time

More handicap parking in lot close to Farmer's market for seniors

land encroachment in open space & trails

Transportation for elderly - we are not part of the "Ride"

More decent public transportation. More often.

Town common area have coffee shop affordable to local area

Likes red dress + yoga set up - need more of a draw - no bank

Senior Center

Connect rail trails

An interesting request: many seniors don't drive at night. They are requesting a daytime forum after Oct.27. Best with food.

How can we have input into size of the buildings going up on the Valentine estate??

Downtown Area. If police /fire move? What will be there?

Park Place- Tear down and rebuild w/ highend restaurant stores. Keep Hsg in one area.

pat/med

Quarry

Better town web site. Pot move reporting spot.

Water ponding and quarry entrance Safety issue-> Aggregate plan+ Future downtown common area

Wauasharum well online when comes online
Spring st. well status
Traffic on Rte 135
Sewerage issues
Downtown trail from train area + more bike path
Warren Woods
Algonguin Trail
Townwide composting- Framingham has own.

Lightning Poll Questions

Over the course of six weeks, a different question was posted on the Town's website. This type of survey was termed a "Lightning Poll".

Lightning Poll Question #1: What do we want from commerce in town?

Paper Comments

- Create a more livable town with a well-balanced mix of business, residential & public areas that are well-laid out, maneuverable & that draw excellent people and business to us .partly because of our thoughtful, intuitive commercial development planning, zoning, etc.
- Support tax revenue, but not at the expense of a livable downtown, Don't destroy what heritage we have left.

Facebook Comments

- Yes 100%,it might get the state house to look into towns commercial budget gettings, hope that makes sense, mark [when asked for clarification, Commenter wrote the following:] rte.126 is a state road right? Maybe state commerce dept. could in improving land off it, hope that help

Website Comments

- Elect suitable commerce that will provide good tax revenue
- Think outside the box of attracting retail businesses, restaurants, etc. We need to be thinking about what will drive 'commerce' in the future, i.e. climate change, drought in agrusiness regions. Ashland should be looking to set it's sights on establishing wind and solar farms, and sell energy we generate back to the grid; double down on protecting natural resources and investing in food production, and the like.
- Support small businesses!
- I think we need more commercial development to increase our commercial tax base, but we cannot compromise the character of the community to do it.
- Ashland's downtown area and choices for dining, shopping, etc, pale in comparison to other surrounding communities. It also does not reflect the charm and quaintness found in these neighboring towns.
- Consider what it takes to make ashland center a destination ... culture, community, connection. Once we get people to come into town, make it possible for them to extend their time spent here by creating a cluster of interesting (and locally-owned) businesses, food/drink/coffee shops, and cultural centers. There are so many small businesses, home-based businesses, artisans and artists yet there is no place for people to come together

here. No galleries. No creative spaces except The Red Dress (and it would benefit from company)

- I think all of the above in balance. Not one above the other.
- keep the commercial development along the 126 corridor
- it's got to be a joint proposition.
- Low water use.
- upgrade the school system and provide a better town feel with an aesthetically appealing town and business district to attract higher income families
- Given that we are surrounded by a mecca of commerce (i.e. Framingham/Natick, and Framingham being the largest town in the USA), it's wise to look at challenges to our lives and economy 10-20 years from now. Where to shop and dine, is not as big a problem as strategically planning for clean water, energy and food. How do we develop these?
- Provide more places to shop and dine that are NOT like the places we already have.
- Provide tax and be a good Ashland citizen
- create a vibrancy and purpose besides a bedroom community and drive through community.

Lightning Poll Question #2: Does Ashland have adequate biking and walking facilities?

Paper Comments

- Need to create bike path like Milford. Unsafe to have bikes on roads
- Based on?
- Not very safe at this time. Not enough sidewalks & the sidewalks that we have are falling apart.
- We desperately need more sidewalks throughout Ashland. The neighborhoods are too segmented now
- More sidewalks needed
- I don't know enough existing biking trails to determine if they are adequate
- Need more sidewalks. I am concerned about bikers on narrow road when I drive.
- Lot of streets don't have proper sidewalks
- Finish the rail trail. Have a dedicated biking paths, not share the road.
- Need some place else for the bikers. Own lane
- More bike lanes, friendlier car drivers.
- Sidewalks along Route 135 would be helpful for safer, useful walking
- Sidewalks are beneficial for kids & other people. Oak Street always has accidents.
- Reduce vehicle miles traveled + necessity for the car. Balance of needs in town - work, shop recreate less auto dependence
- Sidewalks; could use.
- no sidewalks
- Depends where you are. Would like more sidewalks.
- Could use more biking. Especially safe biking places.
- Would love to do more biking around here, but its too dangerous.
- Jogging is dangerous.

Facebook Comments

- I am so sorry I missed tonight's forum. I would love to put my vote in for more sidewalks. We live on Cross Street cars tear down the street as if they were in the indy 500 it would be great to have a sidewalk so we can enjoy the lovely wooded street and feel safe
- Would LOVE to see more sidewalks. It's so frustrating that my kids can't safely walk to the rec center because there aren't sidewalks on both sides of the road.
- Rte.135 across from senior center needs sidewalk plus a crosswalk with a crosswalk yield light, biking should be only in off road areas like town forest, state park, stone park, municipal parking lots, east union street after cedar street needs sidewalks to Ashland, Framingham town line.

Lightning Poll Question #3: What are your thoughts on the Downtown?

Online comments

- more parking
- the current restaurants are great, but more diversity (indian, thai, french, tapas, etc) would be nice. new small stores are great - gift shop type places that encourage foot travel would compliment the farmers market crowd nicely
- Shops and restaurants would be fine, but should be balanced. For example, we lost Basket Case in favor of a real estate office. How does that help downtown? More charm. Move the ugly digital sign someplace else. More art and creativity. Accentuate the beauty in our town -- our town hall, post office, and other historic buildings. Downtown should make you feel cozy and welcoming.
- Shops and restaurants would be fine, but should be balanced. For example, we lost Basket Case in favor of a real estate office. How does that help downtown? More charm. Move the ugly digital sign someplace else. More art and creativity. Accentuate the beauty in our town -- our town hall, post office, and other historic buildings. Downtown should make you feel cozy and welcoming.
- downtown town to be more like a center
- A CAFE. Nice, easy and comfortable place for people to meet, work, grab a great cup of coffee in Ashland Center.
- Improve the RR crossing
- like more nice benches to sit on (see Natick), some flowers along main street (see seasonal Holliston)
- Holliston or Hopkinton!!!
- We need a new more easily accessible post office with drive-up mail boxes. Downtown could use a face lift.
- More stores utilizing existing structures. Rehab, don't tear down and build new.
- Landscaping and hedges to screen rail tracks and beautify downtown.
- Bakery cafe where people can gather
- Bakery cafe - ice cream shop - cultural center - gift shop to display farmers market artisans products
- Recruit more white collar professional services to upgrade the town
- Public transport to the Downtown area
- Starbucks

- Post Office Parking
- Local business- ice cream, bakery shop, toy store
- Art gallery, book stores
- I think downtown should be a destination spot for the town. It should be vibrant such as other local towns that have great foot traffic. For example Holliston has great foot traffic and Westwood has fabulous foot traffics.
- Anything to make the area more attractive. I don't know of any other new england town that is as unattractive as ours .
- Boutiques, gift shops, no chains restaurants or stores or mini markets.
- Starbucks, Peets Coffee or other hi end coffee/tea shop.
- More light, walking area, park
- No more apartments, etc.
- Many people, young and old, express the need to have a more vibrant downtown. We have to look at economic realities and our proximity to much larger towns. We should invest in a building, ideally the firestation when a central facility is built, that offers affordable rent to food and crafts vendors, has a safe pleasant environment for citizens to meet, etc. Also, yes, we need a town green and the farmer's market area is ideal.
- More charm, like Holliston
- Performance/artist studios space, more of the Ashland Farmer's Martket, perhaps a covered area for that to be a permanent, all season event.

Paper Comments

- Mixed use development, bakery /café- where residents can get together
- keep it small
- mixed use property
- restaurant in firehouse when it moves
- parking - would love old town feel
- Replace playground structure at Warren School that was taken down and playground structure at mindess.
- less fast food restaurants
- green grocery - not a convenience store

Facebook Comments

- green grocery - not a convenience store
- Would love some more small family-type businesses. Something like Basket Case (remember that lil jem) or how about a place where families can go and do pottery/painting
- I am so sorry I missed tonights forum. I would love to put my vote in for more sidewalks. We live on Cross Street cars tear down the street as if they were in the indy 500 it would be great to have a sidewalk so we can enjoy the lovely woded street and feel safe
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park,municipal parking lots,east union street after cedar street needs sidewalks to ashland,framingham town line.

Lightning Poll Question #4: Balance between Property Taxes and Services

Paper Comments

- Increased only if it goes to improving infrastructure and schools

Online Comments

- Increased only if it goes to improving infrastructure and schools
- It depends on what it's for.
- A surplus of money seems to have gone into education, allowing Ashland's schools to catch up to their neighbors. We don't want to lessen that funding now that we're competitive. But the downtown area is in dire need of a facelift and there needs to be a bigger draw to attract new dining and shops on the western part of the town (ie, not Pond Street).
- what are the other services? need to upgrade the town to attract more white collar families and businesses
- Develop a strong commercial base to help ease the 'tax payer' burden. Re-evaluate the 'tax' buckets to assure an equitable distribution of existing taxes to all municipal services.
- Need further information on the current spending
- Would pay more for an RDF like Wellesley
- Increase but for schools only
- I would like them to stay the same but if more info was provided as to why an increase/decrease my answer may change. Would like a breakdown of where they are going.
- Depends on which services are needed.
- Our property taxes are high relative to other, non-Rte 9 towns for the services we receive. Our town government admin. is also too big relative to other similar sized towns - we have more administrative overhead than most towns our size or larger. Why do we have a Town Manager and an Asst. Town Mgr? Also, why aren't we subsidizing schools by have solar panels? Ashland has not done a good job of looking outside the box defined by town admin from pre-2000. We need to create a new town management paradigm.
- A balanced and transparent approach to tax spending is required.
- Is there any way to figure out what % of the collected tax is allocated to each service?
- property taxes need to be coming from an increase in Commercial/Industrial development.

Facebook Comments

- Services first more for our fire department, now that i know who on this plan ashland group, is this group really an Ashland growth for out of town business to be built my example is the Needham bank there are some in this groupfor one should you include yourself for them to be a business get sign by-law updated, I could go on but i won't get more services i agree with some of commenters comments,only disagreement is we don't need residential growth
- Ashland needs to keep taxes from getting any higher with a thoughtful balance of mixed use development, new industrial and office space, an emphasis on innovation and

carefully planned residential development so that the services for new development do not cost more than tax revenue.

- No new development for a while -- that would be a good start. We have vacancies and abandoned houses and half-developed sites that look like open sores. Do something with those sites, first, please.

Lightning Poll Question #5: Question: What kind(s) of new development would you like to see in Ashland? Please check all that apply.

Online Comments

- Retail and office along major highways and downtown development
- Independent elder housing (all on one floor) at reasonable cost.
- The poll only allows for one response (not all that apply). Given our available space, I believe the focus should be on single-family residential, new development/redevelopment of downtown, retail and office along 126 and, to a lesser degree, 135, and small scale commercial around the train station. I do not believe Ashland is well situated for major office developments nor do we have the land (to my knowledge) for meaningful industrial development.
- Unable to select more than one - answer: all of the above except single and multi family dwellings.
- Utilization (re-use) of existing structures without compromising town character
- Mixed use developments
- No more housing, condos or apartment complexes. Solicit 'local' retailers and provide services to residents so they don't have to travel to a very congested Rt. 9
- Restaurants, bakery
- preserve old historic buildings - for every new house permit make it mandatory for the builder to restore a historic building, no more tearing down of what little history the town still has.
- Please - no more condos, and large housing developments. We are too congested already!
- High-Tech development. Hopkinton got EMC2 and Perkins, Framingham has Genzyme, Natick MathWorks and Boston Scientific, while Marlborough just got Quest Diagnostics
- There seems to be little thought given to balancing quality of life for the many residents living along Rt. 126 with your desire to bring in any commercial development. I think that we shouldn't be the dumping ground for all things business. If it continues, the value of the condos will depreciate and you will lose significant revenue in taxes. You will also have an eyesore on your hands if you have a mass exodus from the condos because of poor choices made about businesses abutting our homes. We shouldn't be the dumping ground for the town and I'm tired of hearing there's little you can do because of zoning laws. If necessary, adjust zoning so smart decisions can be made that take into account this is a dense residential area.
- Please no more condos!!! Especially cheap, poorly constructed properties by Fafford.
- Eliminate ALL BACKLIT SIGNAGE!
- More open areas for people gathering, walking, small cafe, fountains, nice lighting, music, etc.
- Major highway = Rte 126 entire & Rte 135 only where it now exists & possibly from East Union st. to Framingham line.

- I'd like to see us thinking more strategically in terms of preparing for the future, which may see water and food, as precious commodities that are protected and cultivated locally, because of the problems that are currently mounting with water shortages, industrial pollution, deterioration of Nation's food growth and delivery system. We should start thinking of partnering strategically with other towns in the region to foster economic development that brings sustainability NOT just shopping and restaurant options, these are too short sighted. Plenty of restaurants don't have enough business to sustain themselves - we need to think bigger than this.
- None
- More restaurants and shopping!
- HIGH TECHNOLOGY
- Possibly allowing for housing if a development was 50% or better commercial/industrial taxable.
- More housing or affordable housing if it was done at 50% or better commercial/industrial

Facebook Comments

- More housing or affordable housing if it was done at 50% or better commercial/industrial tax base.
- Technical start ups, medical walk in clinics, my top two

Lightning Poll Question #6: How much change in Downtown Ashland?

Website comments

- Before re-using existing or developing vacant parcels, I think we should solve/resolve the traffic and water problems that exist. Fixing things up, that don't require a lot of money is a good first step. Solving the larger issues should take place in parallel. Then we can decide on usage and development. BTW, the use of the existing bank building, for bank purposes will bring needed tax dollars into Ashland.
- stores and restaurants, coffee shop, something like Hopkinton Drug,
- Provide sufficient parking near businesses.
- Not sure what you mean by low-value buildings.
- Free and open community meeting space to be used by community groups without charge
- Our options for dining and shopping are practically non-existent compared to surrounding towns (Natick, Westborough, Framingham). I am not saying we need to become a retail shopping center but we need more attractive options for dining and shopping within our own town so we don't have to travel elsewhere. Enough with the dunkin donuts and honey due donuts! How about a star bucks or other locally owned coffee shop? Or a dine in option that is not a chain or a tenth pizza option? What we do not need is any type of large apartment or housing complex. You have that intertwined in the above responses but housing should be completely separate from commercial/dining/retail use of space.
- I don't think we should change the character of downtown Ashland. Just spruce it up. We need parking for businesses to thrive, but we need it to be pedestrian-friendly too. But I don't think anyone wants to see it become something "different" from what they remember. Let's think in terms of "grooming", and I think that will go a long way to setting the right expectations. We still want it to look like home, right?
- No more than two stories

- No more than 2 stories high for multistory buildings
- Add a cultural center (Fire station)
- Also a meeting place and cultural center.
- Bookstore -- coffee shop -- how about a barbecue place or something where Burnam's Supper Club is, by the trains?
- Pedestrian-friendly spaces, renovations, businesses, etc. No more heavy-traffic sites.

Facebook comments

- Coffee shop, small bookstore.
- I would love a movie theater like this in town!
<https://www.facebook.com/FineArtsTheatrePlace?fref=nf>
- Mixed office\residential building-walk in medical clinics,needed for commercial ideas

Coffee Katch

November 5, 2014

What will be Ashland's Identity: Next 10 Years

- What will we be known for?
- Will we have the best farmers market in the area?
- How will we provide a decentralized sustainable resident water system?
- How will we maintain high ranking schools?
- What kinds of industry?
- Will be a healthy place to live?
- Will we have options for public transit?
- What will downtown look like?
- What needs to be done to support a bicycle infrastructure?
- How will we be a part of the Charles River Rail trail?
- How will we work with surrounding towns?
- How will we develop/plan a community organic farm?
- How will we decrease dependence on fossil fuels?
- How will we work with ecosystem to solve town problems?
- How will we address bilingual needs?
- How will we achieve a variety of housing options?
- How can zoning give us a variety of housing options?
- How will we have a well-lit side walk network supporting the town?
- How will we encourage culture/arts?
- How can we encourage organizations and businesses to support arts?
- How will we encourage businesses and living engagement coops?
- How will town buildings reflect sustainability priorities (water, electric, solar, etc.)?
- How can we provide fresh produce to the needy in town?
- How can Ashland become a destination?
- What does a sustainable town/community look like?
- What will downtown look like?
- Will there be a railroad through downtown?

- What will the railroad look like downtown?
- Will there be full-day kindergarten paid for by town?
- How will the funding for the schools change?
- What will be the growth in town?
- Will the Gaynor property be developed?
- What will the Gaynor property be?
- Will the town be more walkable and bike-friendly and how?
- Will the town attract young families?
- Will the elders be able to stay in town?
- How will further development of open space impact the town and its identity?
- Will there be co-housing (cross between communal and condos) communities?
- What varieties of housing options will be available?
- What will the traffic be like on Route 135?
- Will we have more commercial property?
- What will the commercial property landscape look like?
- Will we have more public transit?
- How will public transit evolve?
- Will there be a winter farmer's market and how will it grow?
- Will the Warren Center remain undeveloped?
- What will happen with the Warren Center?
- Will there be a trail connection Ashland and Hopkinton State Park?
- Will we have more connectivity in our trail systems?
- Will Route 126 have gotten well into the new phase?
- How will Route 126 evolve?
- Will we have a community coffee shop?
- Will we have more community shops/establishments?
- Are we built out on condos?
- Will more schools need to be built?
- Will downtown have a more bustling night life?
- Will there be more cultural/arts offered in the community?
- Will we have a green town?
- Will there be a gathering spot downtown?