

MISSION STATEMENT

The Town of Ashland is dedicated to providing excellent municipal services that enhance the quality of life in our diverse community.

VISION STATEMENT

The Town of Ashland will be a prosperous and fiscally sound, family-oriented community with a full range of housing, business, cultural, educational, and recreational opportunities in a safe and attractive environment for residents and visitors.

5 YEAR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Have quality retail and light industrial development.
2. Have a sustainable water supply and policy.
3. Maintain a reliable infrastructure.
4. Have a “real” downtown (one that is walkable, attractive, and functions as a community gathering place, while preserving the historical character of the village and the town as a whole.)
5. Have adequate recreational facilities (including sports facilities, parks, and open space areas that accommodate both active and passive recreation.)
6. Provide for a safe community.
7. Provide for competitive schools.
8. Design a strategic plan that accommodates growth in a fiscally responsible manner.
9. Define our Green Community status in a holistic and sustainable way.
10. Encourage the development a cultural economy including the various arts.
11. Provide for community programs for our seniors as well as for safe and affordable housing.

CORE VALUES

The Town of Ashland values:

1. Fiscal responsibility

2. Ethical behavior
3. Accountability
4. Innovation
5. Honesty and Integrity
6. Respect
7. Teamwork

STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF VISION STATEMENT GOALS

1. COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The ISSUE: Driven initially by its proximity to river ways and rail service, Ashland evolved as a predominantly industrial town housing businesses such as Lombard Governor, Fenwal, Warren Telechron, and several other large companies. As transportation shifted to roadways and away from rail and water, the community began to lose its industrial base.

The SOLUTION: Through collaborations with public and private entities, as well as with state agencies, Ashland should identify commercial and light industrial corridors and develop a plan to work with land owners and business owners in an effort to fully support the creation of new businesses through re-development, while encouraging reinvestment in existing businesses. This could be initiated by a combination of zoning changes, economic incentives, and public/private partnerships.

The BENEFITS of identifying commercial and light industrial corridors such as: the Telechron Building (Ashland Technology Center), Route 126, Pleasant Street, the Rail Transit District, Upper Main Street, Megunko Road, and others would allow for planned routes of accessibility as well as connectivity to other commercial areas while attempting to not encroach unduly on residential areas. This could provide needed revenue to the town and provide local jobs. A traffic plan may also help reduce street congestion. This may require the reorganization of staff and/or resources in order to make this a priority.

PROGRESS SEQUENCE:

2. CREATE A SUSTAINABLE WATER POLICY

The ISSUE: Rapid commercial growth, changing water use patterns, and climate change has created both water quality and water availability concerns for Ashland and

many surrounding communities. Several years of drought and depleted water sources has underscored the need to create a sustainable water policy.

The SOLUTION should include: the creation of water use policies that take into account commercial and residential growth, locating alternate available sources, investment in infrastructure, a determination of a fair and equitable cost for users, as well as educating the public concerning water issues.

The BENEFITS to sustainable water policies are numerous. By adopting and enforcing responsible water use policies the town potentially decreases the demand for new sources of water, thereby retaining control of the resource as well as the cost. By investing in infrastructure the town also retains more water resource, thereby also reducing demand. The creation of an equitable payment structure would promote conservation and responsible water use habits. Finally, by identifying alternative sources, the town protects itself from emergency shortages.

PROGRESS SEQUENCE:

3. MAINTAIN A RELIABLE INFRASTRUCTURE

The ISSUE: Residential growth (a population that has doubled in twenty (20) years) has stressed both the natural and the built environment in Ashland. Utilities (water, sewer, etc.) as well as buildings, roads, sidewalks and bridges have been left in various states of neglect due in part to lack of adequate funding to support these projects.

The SOLUTION would include a comprehensive infrastructure investment plan funded collaboratively through capital funds, state grants, public/private partnerships, and possible debt exclusions.

The BENEFIT would be a community with adequate means for transportation, reliable and adequate utilities, appropriate accommodations for all school and town staff, and a safe and prosperous place to live and do business.

Creating this environment would go a long way to attracting the types of businesses needed to support a community that has become predominantly residential.

PROGRESS SEQUENCE:

4. REVITALIZATION OF DOWNTOWN

The ISSUE: Changing traffic patterns, geographical challenges (due in part to the railroad corridor), neglect, and lack of proper planning has resulted in a downtown area that is not a destination zone and that no longer serves as a public gathering place on a regular basis.

The SOLUTION would be to re-invest in a planned village area, and by doing so, encourage private investors to do the same. Some of the pieces are already in place: Town Hall, Ashland Public Library, Stone's Public House, the Federated Church, Sunnyside Cafe, several banks, Kelly's Restaurant, the Masonic Building, the Farmer's Market, and several other historic buildings which serve as both residential and commercial properties.

The public infrastructure of downtown needs re-investment. This includes: roadways, sidewalks, islands, squares, parking areas, fencing, crosswalks, and parking. A plan for the re-use or demolition of the fire and police stations would also enhance the area along Main Street.

A final determination of the use of the property at 125 Front Street would enhance that area when not being used by the Farmer's Market.

Many of the streets leading into the center of town (Summer Street, Front Street, Homer Avenue, Pleasant Street and Main Street) are occupied by stately old homes, some in various states of disrepair. Perhaps incentives such as "in lieu of taxes" agreements could be negotiated to encourage the restoration and painting of many of these buildings.

The addition of more restaurants, shops and retail may also allow the opportunity to connect the village with the train station on Pleasant Street to the west, and the Ashland Technology Center (Telechron) along Homer Avenue to the east.

The lack of a town green is exacerbated by the railroad corridor. However, enhancing the connection between downtown and Stone Park would offer a unique opportunity to allow for the enjoyment of the park as well as the amenities of a renovated downtown.

The BENEFITS to a revitalized downtown would be aesthetic, economic, psychological, and could play a role in truly defining the community of Ashland by re-establishing its village.

PROGRESS SEQUENCE:

5. ADEQUATE RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE

The ISSUE is the fact that parks and other open areas increase property values, enhance the quality of life, reduce congestion, and provide for the natural habitat to function in a sustainable manner.

The SOLUTION is to enhance and maintain the open space and recreational areas that currently exist by prioritizing what other possible lands may be available for creation of future parks and other open space areas.

Ashland has a wealth of athletic venues including the school fields, Stone Park, the Community Center, and Gryncel Park. Town open space areas include the Town Forest, Warren Woods, and Ashland and Hopkinton State Parks. There are, however, other properties that could possibly enhance this inventory through the creation of new fields and parks, or by protecting town resources from encroachment from development. These properties include: the Warren Center, 466 Chestnut Street, the Valentine Estate, the Briasco Field, Cadillac Paint, and other properties surrounding the Town Forest.

The BENEFITS include a reduction in town services mandated as a result of residential development, an increase in property values, the provision of recreational opportunities at a local level, and a general increase in the quality of life.

PROGRESS SEQUENCE:

6. PROVIDE FOR A SAFE COMMUNITY

The ISSUE is that a safe community is also a vibrant community.

The SOLUTION is not only to maintain adequate police and fire departments, but to implement policies across the spectrum of municipal agencies (Board of Health, Planning Board, School Department, Building Department, Conservation Commission, etc.) that promote a general sense of well-being.

The BENEFIT is that updated and pro-active policies, combined with adequate staffing provides for a healthier and safer community, which in turn promotes self-confidence, allowing for a deeper sense of responsibility to community.

PROGRESS SEQUENCE:

7. MAINTAIN COMPETITIVE SCHOOLS

The ISSUE is that competitive schools produce productive students who become an important part of the community. Good schools also boost property values, enhance community awareness, and help develop friendship and family bonds. Population growth, unfunded mandates, and changes in education policies have put a burden on communities to find creative ways to fund their schools.

The SOLUTION is to pursue all possible sources of funding that would allow for Ashland's schools to remain competitive. This would include contributions from the state as well as from private donors and organizations. It may also include restructuring of schools and an ongoing review of programs in order to promote the most efficient use of space and to avoid overlap of resources.

The BENEFIT is that well funded and well managed schools produce good students who are an important asset to the community.

PROGRESS SEQUENCE:

8. GROWTH IN A FISCALLY RESPONSIBLE MANNER

The ISSUE is that 25 years of unbridled residential development has created a demand on town services that the town cannot sustain.

The SOLUTION is to create a short term solution that will allow for at least level funding, while creating a long term strategic plan that promotes a balance of commercial and residential growth while also creating options to provide for other quality of life endeavors which will enhance the community economically, culturally, and ecologically. A model for developmental impact would assist in the town's decision making process and provide quantitative choices for the community.

The BENEFIT is a strategic growth plan allows the town to anticipate needs and act in a pro-active manner to avert a fiscal crisis.

PROGRESS SEQUENCE:

9. DEFINE OUR GREEN COMMUNITY STATUS (WHAT IS A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY?)

The ISSUE: Ashland has attained Green Community status which is defined through the Massachusetts Green Communities Act. But what does it mean for Ashland to be sustainable community?

The SOLUTION is to expand the application of “sustainability” to a broader definition. This may extend beyond energy to include, sustainable water use practices, sustainable neighborhoods, sustainable land stewardship practices, sustainable transportation, economy, etc.

The BENEFIT: By applying sustainable practices in a more holistic manner, it makes Ashland a more livable community.

PROGRESS SEQUENCE:

10. ENCOURAGE CULTURAL ECONOMY INCLUDING ARTS

The ISSUE is that multi cultural arts and activities contribute economically, psychologically, socially, and spiritually to the development of community. Ashland has historically produced a number of talented artists, has attracted varied cultures from outside the area, and continues to have a number of artistic endeavors throughout the community. It would benefit the community to have organized municipal support in supporting a cultural economy.

The SOLUTION is to create a master plan for organizing and promoting the arts community-wide. It would also be beneficial to create a series of venues and shops that could host various events, and serve as the beacon for art community.

The BENEFIT is that it builds community, plays a role in building a sustainable lifestyle that offers many lifestyle options in a short distance, and creates an artistic and cultural identity for the community.

PROGRESS SEQUENCE:

11. MAINTAIN SENIOR PROGRAMS AND SENIOR COMMUNITY AWARENESS

The ISSUE is seniors should play an active role in the direction of the community. Many have lived their lives here, and they should continue to be active, feel appreciated, and to

feel safe in their community. They should also be encouraged to spend their senior years without the worry of affordability of housing.

The SOLUTION is for Ashland to maintain and enhance its senior programs, and to address the growing demographic of residents nearing retirement age by creating affordable housing options in appropriate areas convenient for senior needs.

The BENEFIT is that it allows Ashland residents to remain in their homes, stay in the community should they sell their homes, and play a vital role in defining the future of the town by sharing its past.

PROGRESS SEQUENCE: