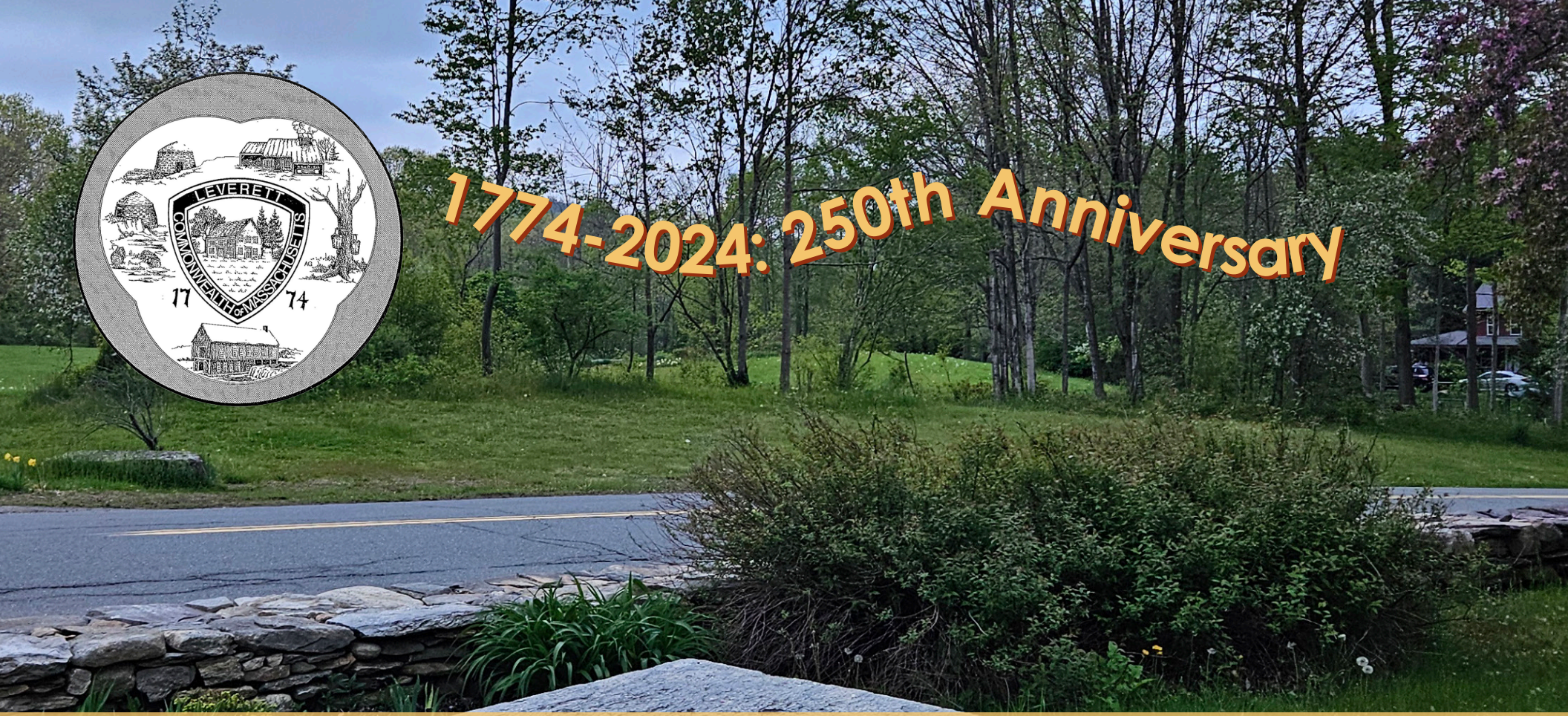
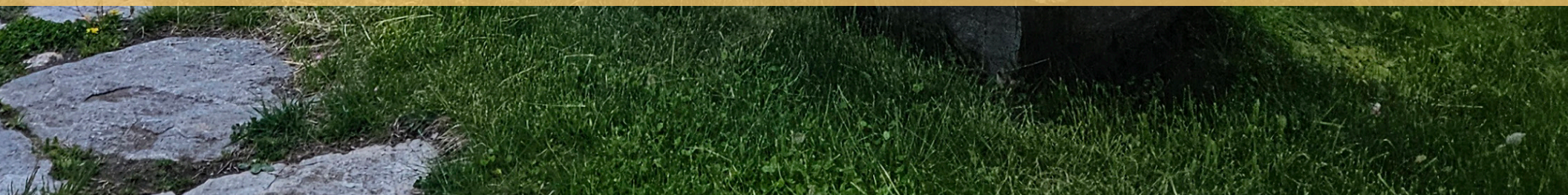


1774-2024: 250th Anniversary

Town of Leverett

Comprehensive Plan: Phase 2 (2023-2024)



What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A comprehensive plan is a document that **provides guidance to a municipality for its policies, actions, and investments over a defined period**, often ten years. In Massachusetts, comprehensive plans are enabled by **Section 81D.**

The **Planning Board** is responsible for **creating, adopting, and updating** the municipal master – or comprehensive – plan.

Town Departments, Boards and Committees are responsible for implementation. Specifically, the **Planning Board** is responsible for **proposing and reviewing zoning changes**; the **Select Board** is responsible for **directing policy and advocating for funding**; **Town staff** are responsible for **day-to-day actions**, and **Town Meeting** is responsible for **approving the budget and adopting zoning changes**.

The full §81D text is in the Phase 2 Report.

Section 81D requires nine elements. Of these, the Goals and Policies Statement (this is often called Vision and Goals) and the Implementation Plan are the most critical components in terms of defining the future policies, actions, and investments of the Town.

Comprehensive planning grew out of land use planning and the other seven elements reflect this. Those elements are as follows:

- Circulation (which originally referred to the roadways in a town and now includes transportation, transit, and mobility)
- Economic development
- Housing
- Natural and cultural resources (which include historic resources)
- Open Space and Recreation
- Services and facilities (which refer to Town services and facilities and include water, wastewater, and stormwater management)
- Land use plan (which brings together the land use recommendations of the plan)

Communities may also add other topics. Common topics include public health, climate resiliency, environmental and economic sustainability, and other topics of importance to that community.

What is in this document?

This 2024 Comprehensive Plan summarizes the planning process and provides the following information:

- Brief overview of comprehensive planning.
- Timeline of the 2023-2024 planning process.
- Recognition of the participants.
- A list of suggestions for immediate next steps.
- Chart of responsibilities and potential partners.
- Timeline of past planning efforts.
- Recommended action steps from those plans, organized by the Section 81D planning element.
- Seven key topics identified by the Steering Group at their meeting on January 15, 2024 and action steps for the Leverett community to consider.
- Financial resources.

This plan is accompanied by additional appendices that provide more background about the planning process:

A. Phase 2 Report, June 2024

B. Letters from Department Heads

C. Steering Group: Meetings

D. Steering Group: Small Group Summaries

E. Community Workshops: Summaries

F. Fall 2023 Community Survey

G. Spring 2024 Survey and Additional Public Comments

H. Planning Board: Consultant Presentations

I. Phase 1 Report, June 2022

Find these appendices on the town website:
https://leverett.ma.us/g/95/Comprehensive-Planning

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TOWN OF LEVERETT
Massachusetts 01054

Town of Leverett, Planning Board

November 15, 2024

Dear Leverett Community,

Over the past two years, the Town crafted its first-ever Comprehensive Plan.

Above all, the members of the Planning Board are grateful to the dozens of community volunteers who helped with this challenging and illuminating process. This would not have been possible without our community's dedication and hard work. The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to ask and answer important questions about our residents' priorities for the town of Leverett both now and in the future. The current Plan is a wealth of information about Leverett's past and present, demographics, land use, natural resources, housing, economy, and community-driven goals and values. This detailed landscape of key factors shaping Leverett offers guidance on important challenges for the Town to address. More than just a document, the Plan is a shared institutional process whereby community members can deliberate over these matters in open forum and private reflection.

The Planning Board is united in thinking of the Plan as a draft from which we will draw inspiration; however, we are not beholden to its contents. We intend for the Plan to be a living document evolving over time with Community input. Thanks to the community's response to surveys, open meetings, workshops, and other data collection events, this Plan has gathered the voices of at least 400 Leverett community members. During the planning process, the Steering Group sought to craft an inclusive and pluralistic interpretation of community data. They synthesized both similarity and difference of perspectives, values, and goals as a constructive multitude rather than distilling a singular vision that risks becoming exclusionary of minority perspective.

While this document provides a good foundation, the Planning Board also acknowledges that additional work needs to be done to refine and improve it over time – with the help of our community. There are a multitude of comments, thoughts and reflections that were not fully incorporated into the main document due to time limitations, but will live on as part of the document in a series of appendices. These appendices will likely inspire future improvements to the Plan.

Overseeing the maintenance and implementation of a comprehensive plan is the Planning Board's responsibility. Amending a plan at any time is an authority available to a Planning Board. Regarding this responsibility and authority, the Planning Board makes the following commitments to Leverett:

- We will continue to listen and build consensus before amending the Plan and before promoting recommended actions in the Plan.
- We will revisit the prioritization of recommended actions listed in the Plan and provide additional opportunities for community input. We heard, for example, from many residents who were dissatisfied with the context and clarity of information provided at in-person planning workshops. We understand that this caused confusion and prevented workshop participants from thoroughly examining and discussing the issues. As a result, the process created the risk that important perspectives and ideas were overlooked.
- We will continue to collect, study, debate, and communicate local and regional data, trend analysis, and scenario planning relevant to recommended actions in the Plan.
- We will continue to hear and respect community perspectives and new lines of argument that may challenge what we have learned from this Plan.
- We will hold fast to the community values and goals - described on pages 32-33 - in all plan implementation and amendment activities including the importance of preserving Leverett's natural resources and maintaining a climate resilient future of our Community;
- We will hold fast to the principle of incremental change in all decision-making to do with stewardship of our collective resources and how we will meet community needs.

Although responsibility and authority are with the Planning Board, this is the Town's Plan. It is a guiding star intended to serve the people of Leverett. The Plan does not determine Leverett's future; the people of Leverett determine the Plan. At any time, every community member is invited to challenge it, raise questions about it, and propose to change it. At any time, we are all empowered to use it to reinforce our positions, inform deliberation, resolve conflict, and organize the activities of citizen groups and municipal boards, committees, and departments. It is not law, and it creates no obligations. If this Plan motivates proposals to change the Town code or zoning bylaw, it will be up to the voters at Leverett Town Meeting to approve or reject the change.

Thank you again to the entire community, the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, Town Boards and Staff, and Innes Associates, for crafting this Plan.

Thank you,

Leverett Planning Board

Note: This final version of the letter approved by the Planning Board in November 2024 corrects the text of the letter on the following pages that was mistakenly printed. That version is from an earlier draft of the Planning Board cover letter.

cover letter

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Massachusetts 01054

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cover letter

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cover letter

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cover letter

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Thank you,

Leverett Planning Board

Greg Tuzzolo, Chair

Molly Daniell

Stephen Freedman

Swan Keyes

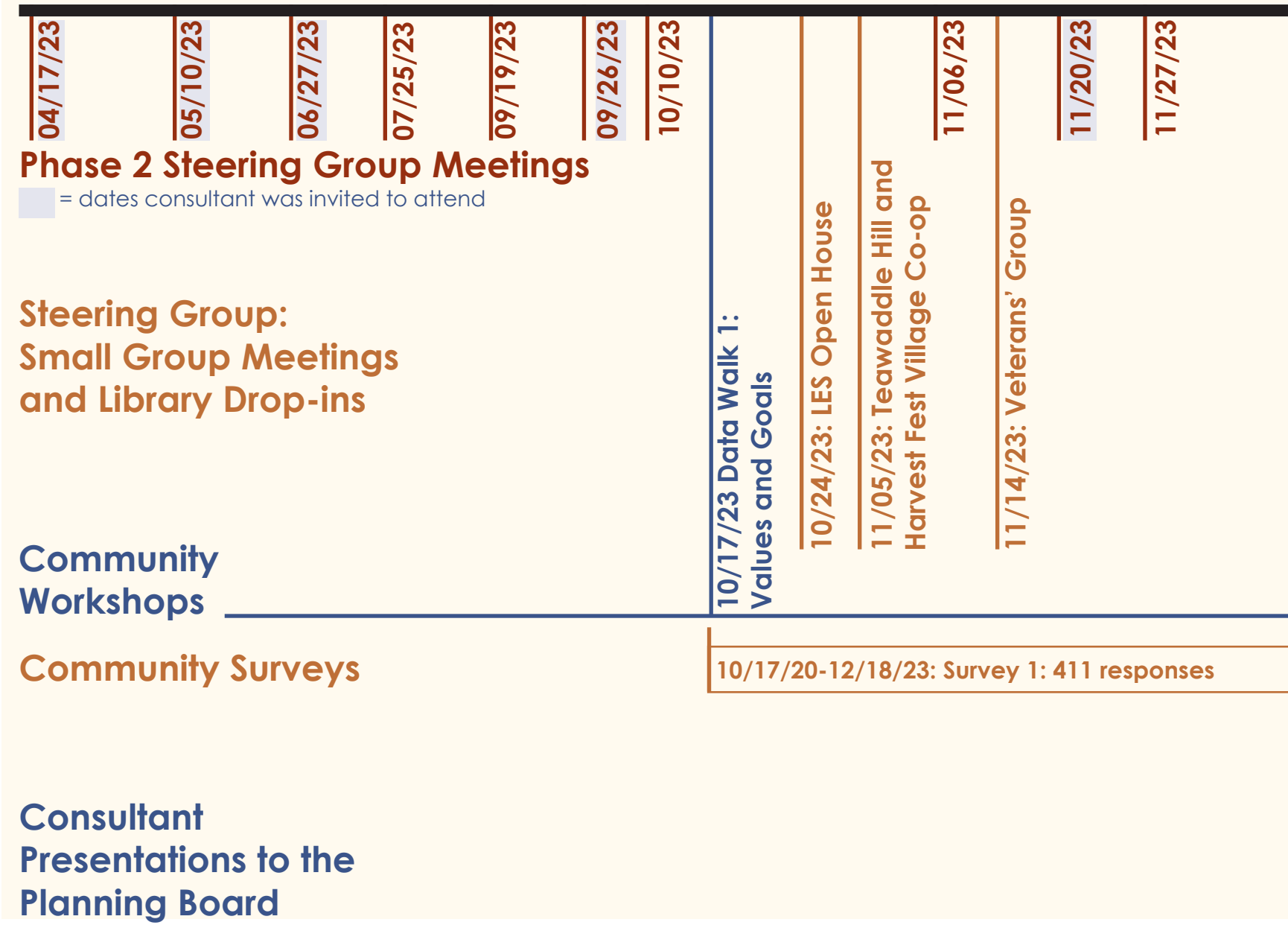
Richard Nathhorst

Tim Shores

Kimberly VanWagner

timeline

What was the Community Engagement timeline?



timeline

Meeting descriptions are in the Phase 2 Report.

12/06/23 Data Walk 2: Alternatives

12/10/23: Shutesbury Group

01/15/24

01/19/24: Council on Aging

01/31/24: Survey Results, Zoning, and Historic Development Patterns

02/05/24

02/12/23

02/28/24: Leverett 2040

03/11/24

04/17/24: Zoning and Comprehensive Planning

04/23/24

Saturdays at the Library
03/30/24 -06/08/24

05/08/24: Draft Plan Framework

05/14/24-06/10/24:
Survey 2: 23 responses

06/04/24

06/12/24: Comments on First Draft

participants

Who participated in the process?

thank you to elected officials and town staff

Select Board

- Patricia Duffy
- Jed Proujansky
- Tom Hankinson

Special Thanks to:
Marjorie McGinnis, Town Administrator
Lisa Stratford, Town Clerk

Planning Board

- Molly Daniel
- Steve Freedman
- Swan Keyes
- Richard Nathhorst
- Tim Shores
- Greg Tuzzolo, chair
- Kimberly VanWagner

Special Thanks to:
Tom Ewing
former Planning Board Chair

thank you to the volunteers

Phase 1 Working Group (2022)

- Lizzie Alwan
- Melissa Colbert
- Molly Daniell
- Arlyn Diamond
- Charles Bagley
- Silas Ball
- Stephen Ball
- Mike Fiscella
- Denzel 'Jamie' Hankinson
- David W Henion
- Miles Palmer
- Kathryn Stoddard
- Kimberly VanWagner

Phase 2 Steering Group (2023-2024)

- Silas Ball
- Matt Boucher
- Jenny Daniell
- Arlyn Diamond
- Jim Field
- Gary Gruber
- David Henion
- Isaiah Robison
- Kimberly Van Wagner
- Andrew Vlock
- Nicole Vajda
- Bob Weitzman

The 2023-2024 planning process was supported by Innes Associates, including the preparation of the June 2024 versions of this doucment and the accompanying volume 2 report and appendices. RKG Associates and Tighe & Bond contributed to the data collection process in 2023.

participants

thank you to the Leverett community

people who responded to survey one

105 out of 411 respondents shared their names.

Adam Bauer
Alice Feldman
Andrea Garvey
Ann Ferguson
Ann Jones
Ann Jones
Annaliese Bischoff
Anne-Elise Olsen
Apple Ahearn
Ashley Winn
Barbara Appel
Barbara Carulli
Becky Tew
Ben Goldburg
Bob Hopley
Bradley Woody
Brian Boyles
Brian J. Clifford
Camila Hwang-Carlos
Candice Novak
Carole Desanti
Charles Bagley
Charles Dana
Charles Paulin
Chris Nelson
Christine Di Stefano
Christopher Carlisle
Clarissa Lyons
Courtney Jane Brown
Craig Asche
Cynthia Baldwin
Dan Cooley
Daniel Emery
Daniel Warner
David Mcdannald
Diana H. Balmonte
Donna Rae Gould
Eliza A. Strickland
Ellen E. Drews
Eric Donnelly
George Drake
George Lockwood
Gillian M. Cook
Grant Firl
Hannah Blunt
Helene D. Lambert
J. Cheplick
Jacob Park
Jean Bergstrom
Jean Lukens
Jennifer Storey
Jernigan
Joan Godsey
Joan Snowdon
John Jernigan
Joseph Costello
Joseph Nowicki
Jude Wobst
Judi Fonsh
Judith Davidov
Judy (Aka Jr) Raphael
Jya Plavin
Kate Rice
Kathleen Winkworth
Ken Kahn
Kip Fonsh
Lauren Kaplan
Lauren Kendrick
Hannigan
Lia Raz
Linda Aubry Bullock
Linda Hoer
Lisa Vittori
Marielle Emond
Matt Lorenz
Michael Shick
Mike And Claudia Rhodes
Mike Bullock
Miriam Aylward
Noah S. Paessel
Patricia Duffy
Portia Weiskel
Rebecca Reid
Rebecca Reid
Rebecca Schwartz
Richard Nathhorst
Rick Pouliot
Robert Piotrowski
Roberta C. Bryant
Roy Kimmel
Sarah Bing-Owen
Sarah Manteiga
Sean Mahoney
Shannon R. Gamble
Shawn M. Flynn
Stacey Wenczel
Stephen Dydo
Steve Freedman
Susan Altabet
Susan Connell Biggs
Susan Walker
Suzanne Starling
Tara Pauliny
Thomas B. Daniels
Tony Dinsmore
Wes Goscenski

Survey two did not request respondents' names.

participants

attendees at the three community workshops

(this does not include attendees from the Planning Board or Steering Group)

workshop one
october 17, 2023
session 1

Ann Ferguson
Barbara Appel
Barbara Carulli
Bob Haply
Brian Cook, Fire Chief
Brooke Thomas
Cheryl Boucher
Chris Condit
Courtney Jane Brown
Cynthia Thomas
Daniel Warner
George Drake
George Lockland
Jean Bergstrom
Jill Palmer
Judith Davidov
Krista Gile
Lauren Kendrick Hannigan
Lizzie Alwan, BoH Chair
Marnie Genre
Martin Pittman
Mary Barnett
May Russo
Millie Thayer
Patricia Duffy, Select Board
Paul Boucher
Ray Kimmel
Sandra Susse
Sean Mahoney
Shirley Thomas
Steve Freedman
Susan Cornell Biggs
Thomas Masterton

workshop one
october 17, 2023
session 2

Bethany Seeger
Brieta Goodwin
Cameron Lownie
Carol Helm
Daniel Sargent
Don Robinson
Eva Gibavic
Frank Iglehart
Gillion Cook
Grant Firl
Hollie Kalkstein
Jacob Park
Janine Roberts
Joel Juniro
Julia Latady
Laune Miller
Lauren Kaplon
Lisa Stratford, Town Clerk
Maela Mae
Maureen Ippolito
Michael Dover
Peter Daniell
Philip Carter
Ray Basara
Rebecca Bing
Rebecca Reid
Sadie Graham
Sara Robinson
Sarah Bing-Owen
Skip Fournier
Stephen Dydo
Steve Ferrarone
Susan Mareneck
Susan Walker
Will Stratford

attendees at the three community workshops

(this does not include attendees from the Planning Board or Steering Group)

workshop two december 6, 2023*

Ann Watson
Apple Ahearn
Barbara Carulli
Barky Field
Bob Sieruta
Brian Cook, Fire Chief
Brooke Thomas
Carol Heim
Christina Barber
Craig Cohen
Cynthia Kimmel
David McDannald
Diane Bella
Eliza Strickland
Gene Stamell
George Drake
Gordon Kramer
Hollie Kalkstein
Jacob Park
Janice Telfer
Jim Staros, Board of Assessors

workshop two december 6, 2023*

Jim Watson
Joe Costello
Joe Nowicki
John Jernigan
Judith Davidov
Marilyn London Ewing
Mary Barnett
Matt Lorenz
Naudiwan Fuller
Patrick Jernigan
Peter Daniell
Philip Carter
Ray Kimmel
Rocky Adriance
Shirley Thomas
Susan Mareneck
Tara Pauliny
Thomas B. Daniels
Thomas Masterton
Tom Wolff, Council on Aging

Barbara Osborne
Benjamin Eddy
Clarissa Lyons
Cynthia Baldwin
Eric Donelly
George Lockwood
Jean Lukens
Laune Miller
Lisa Werner
Rich Karsten
Sam Black
Seth Hemingway
Steve Freedman
Will Stratford

* Although this session was planned and set up as two sessions, it was advertised as a single open house.

workshop three february 28, 2024 session 1

Ann Ferguson
Candice Pinault Novak
Carol Heim
Cindy Cormier
Courtney Jane Brown
Cynthia Baldwin
Diane Crowe
Fay Zipkowitz
Frank Iglehart
George Drake
George Lockwood
James Perkins
Joseph Nowick
Judith Davidov
Martha Field
Neal Woodard
Pat McGiffin
Robert Sieruta
Sam Black
Seth Hemingway
Stephen Dydo
Susan Walker

workshop three february 28, 2024 session 2

Anne-Elise Olsen
Barbara Carulli
Ben Goldberg
Brian Boyces
Chip Dana
Clarissa Lyons
Eric Donnelly
Hollie Kalkstein
Jacob Park
Jessica Rochelean
Jim Staros, Board of Assessors
Kristan Bakker
Pat Duffy, Select Board
Ruoqi Zhong
Shannon Gamble
Susan Mareneck
Tilman Wolf

thank you for sharing your time and thoughts

suggestions

What happens next?

The Town of Leverett should consider the following additional planning studies that would provide additional information for the seven topics below.

- **CONTINUE COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS.** Comments from members of the Steering Group and other participants in this process suggest that many people were unhappy that there were not more opportunities to discuss the topics identified during the planning process in more depth. At its meeting on June 12, 2024, the Planning Board discussed how to keep these conversations going beyond the June 30 ending to this phase 2 of the planning process. This document is intended to support those potential ongoing conversations by tying comments in the 2023 survey to the seven topics identified by the Steering group at their January 15, 2024 meeting.
- **UPDATE THE OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN.** The Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan expires in 2026. The Town should update this plan because protecting the environment is the major priority for residents. An outdated plan reduces the Town's ability to compete for grants. The Town can apply for a grant to update the plan. The Conservation Commission should reactivate the OSRP Update Committee to help develop a scope of work for the process, based on state requirements. See https://www.mass.gov/info-details/open-space-and-recreation-plans for more details.
- **APPLY FOR A GRANT FOR A HOUSING PRODUCTION PLAN.** Participants in the planning process expressed significant concerns about the need for affordable housing, especially to assist Leverett seniors in aging-in-place. The Town is also well below the 10% requirement for units on the Subsidized Housing Inventory. The Town can address both concerns by undertaking a planning study for the Housing Production Plan. Towns that have such a plan, and are making progress towards their goal, can achieve a safe harbor from a comprehensive permit (MGL Chapter 40B). The Affordable Housing Trust, with support from the Selectboard and the Planning Board, could take the lead on this project. See https://www.mass.gov/info-details/chapter-40b-housing-production-plan for more details.
- **STUDY POTENTIAL GATHERING SPACES AND OTHER ENHANCEMENTS IN THE TOWN CENTER.** Community members expressed a consistent need for more gathering spaces, but were divided on how to accommodate that need. Many people identified options around the Town Center for addressing the desire for enhanced community spaces; such spaces could be outdoor, re-purposed existing spaces, or additions to existing spaces. A study, which could be funded by one of the Community One-Stop grants, could delve further into the need and specific options to meet that need.

Responsibilities for Next Steps

Planning Board

The Planning Board is enabled by Section 81D of Chapter 41 of the Massachusetts General Laws to make a master plan of the town or part of the town. (Note that "comprehensive plan" is used interchangeably with "master plan.") Once the Planning Board accepts or adopts the plan (by majority vote), the Town should send it to the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities.

There is no penalty for not completing an action identified in a comprehensive plan. The plan is supposed to be a guide to the Town in allocating resources to meet the needs of the community. Comprehensive plans can be used to support grant applications, many of which are competitive.

Other Responsibilities

Although the Planning Board is responsible for the development and adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, addressing the recommendations of this plan is shared across all elected and appointed officials, town staff, and community volunteers. The Town of Leverett has a small staff, and is fortunate that many community members have stepped forward to participate in town government. Current town boards, committees, departments (BCD) and their roles in implementation are listed in the table below.

The other critical committees for future actions are the following:

- **SELECTBOARD.** Develop policies for implementation and direct resources, including staff time, towards policy implementation. Work with the Finance Committee and the Capital Planning Committee to direct operating and capital funds to support the policy direction.
- **FINANCE COMMITTEE.** Become familiar with the recommendations of this plan and support operating and capital budgets that assist with the implementation of those recommendations.
- **CAPITAL PLANNING COMMITTEE.** Become familiar with the recommendations of this plan and develop long-range capital budgets that assist with the implementation of those recommendations.
- **TOWN MEETING.** Become familiar with the recommendations of this plan and support budgets and zoning changes that assist with the implementation of those recommendations.

responsibilities

Boards, Committees, and Departments (BCD)

BCD/Role	BCD/Role	BCD/Role	BCD/Role
Council on Aging Continue to evaluate senior needs as aging population increases; partner on developing a community gathering space; and collect data on senior community to evaluate change in population and needs over time. (https://leverett.ma.us/g/37/Council-on-Aging-COA)	**Cultural Council** Continue to support local artists and arts in conjunction with the Massachusetts Cultural Council. Assist other town boards and committees with applications for cultural grants to support community initiatives.	**Historical Commission** Collaborate on strategies and actions in this plan related to the historical and cultural assets of the town, including conversations about community gathering places.	**Recreation Committee** This committee does have members, but does not appear to be active. The desire for more community activities and gathering spaces, and the opportunity to update the Open Space and Recreation Plan in 2026 may provide additional direction for the committee.
Leverett Library; Library Trustees The Library is a valued part of the Leverett community and provides event programming as part of its offerings. The Trustees should be partners with the Council on Aging and Leverett Elementary School in providing more opportunities for community-wide gatherings (both spaces and events).	**Affordable Housing Trust** Focus on funding and affordable housing creation; partner in a Housing Production Plan. **Kimball Trust** Continue to support children in need, as determined by the provisions of the trust.	**Scholarship Committee** Support development of the future workforce by continuing to provide access to education to community members who meet the requirements.	**Tax Relief Committee** Continue to assist vulnerable seniors and those with disabilities with tax rebates. Track the number of applications relative to the ability to support the need. Assist seniors with applications for the Senior Circuit Breaker Credit (https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massachusetts-senior-circuit-breaker-tax-credit).

BCD/Role	BCD/Role	BCD/Role	BCD/Role
Board of Health Evaluate potential pilot programs for wastewater management; address an anticipated increase need for health services to vulnerable seniors; track and evaluate impact on public health from climate change (e.g., heat events and flooding).	**Police Department** Continue to share data about the needs of vulnerable people within the community, especially as the population continues to age. Establish a list of vulnerable residents for which participation is voluntary. Police officers may be the first to interact with vulnerable residents, such as seniors living alone.	**Leverett-Wendall Police Services Oversight Committee** Members are split between Leverett and Wendall and, among other topics, review the joint police budget.	**Energy Committee** Continue to support the Leverett Community Choice Power Supply Program. Collaborate on energy-related strategies and actions in this plan, including the community solar study.
Highway Department Continue to address infrastructure repairs, maintenance, and capital projects, especially when addressing the negative impacts of climate change.		**Emergency Planning Board** Continue role in planning for hazard mitigation. **Fire Department** Continue to share data about the needs of vulnerable people within the community, especially as the population continues to age.	**Municipal Light Plant Department** **Leverett MLP Board** Continue to support community broadband and phone service. Participate in community conversations about connectivity, especially in emergency situations.
Conservation Commission Continue to fulfill statutory responsibilities. Reconstitute the Open Space and Recreation Committee to update the OSRP. Consider reconstituting the Trails Committee.	**OSRP Update Committee** The Open Space and Recreation Committee is a subcommittee of the Conservation Commission. It is not currently active, but the plan is due to be updated in 2026. The committee should be reconstituted and begin working on a scope of work and grant application for the planning process for that report.	**Trails Committee** This committee is sponsored by the Conservation Commission and the Rattlesnake Gutter Trust. The committee currently has no members and participants in the planning process identified a need to reconstitute this committee. This committee could have an important role in recommendations to address community desires for opening and maintaining trails.	**Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA)** The ZBA will continue to address applications for special permits, variances, appeals, and comprehensive permits. This role is an important contribution to land use and zoning decisions in the Town. Members should track the types of applications received as this information will indicate if zoning changes have the desired impact on land use.

responsibilities

BCD/Role	BCD/Role	BCD/Role	BCD/Role
Town Hall • **Town Administration** • **Town Administrator** • **Accounting** • **Animal Control Officer** • **Tax Collector** • **Town Clerk** • **Veterans** Continue to support community functions and needs, including those duties required under Massachusetts General Law. Advise Town Boards and Committees about any data that can easily be collected to support measurement of trends and progress against the values and goals identified in the comprehensive plan.	**Board of Assessors** Provide data for benchmarks to show change in development volume and valuation of asset classes. **Personnel Board** Review staff roles and support staffing needs with respect to these recommendations and any resulting policy changes from the Selectboard.	**Leverett Elementary School** **School Committee** School needs are not normally included in a comprehensive planning process as the budget and long-range planning are under the jurisdiction of the School Committee. However, schools are an important part of a community's culture. The School Committee could work with other members of the community to consider how school spaces could be used to support the expressed desire for more gathering spaces. Adult Education programs, community gardens on school property, and other shared uses on the weekends and evenings could include the entire community. While safety for the children is critical, as the Leverett population ages, shared use of the space could provide continued support for the school; a concern of many of the participants in the planning process.	

Potential Partners

Other potential partners in implementation include the following local organizations or community groups:

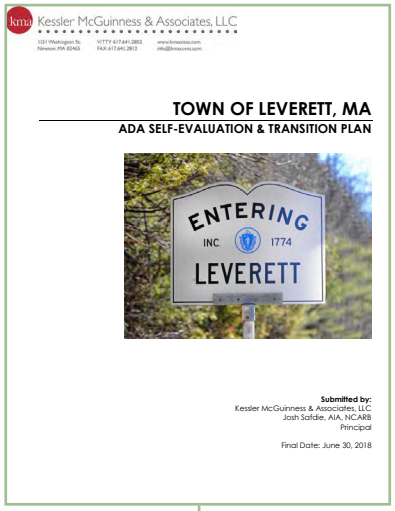
Partner Name	Website
First Congregational Church of Leverett	https://www.leverettcongregationalchurch.org/current-missions
Friends of Leverett Library	https://leverettlibrary.org/p/37/Friends
Friends of the North Leverett Sawmill	https://leverettsawmill.org/
Friends of Leverett Pond	https://friendsofleverettpond.org/
Kestrel Land Trust	https://www.kestreltrust.org/
Leverett Crafts & Arts	https://www.leverettcraftsandarts.org/
Leverett Educational Foundation	https://www.leveretteducationfoundation.org/
Leverett Firefighters Association	https://www.facebook.com/leverettfirefightersassociation/
Leverett Historical Society	https://leveretthistorical.org/
Leverett Together	https://www.leverett.ma.us/g/72/Board-of-Health
Life Path	https://lifepathma.org/about/
Moore's Corner Church	https://moorescornerchurch.com/
New England Peace Pagoda	https://newenglandpeacepagoda.org/
North Leverett Baptist Church	https://www.nlbcma.org/
Rattlesnake Gutter Trust	https://rattlesnakeguttertrust.org/
Village Neighbors	https://www.villageneighbors.org/

past plans

Data for Future Discussions

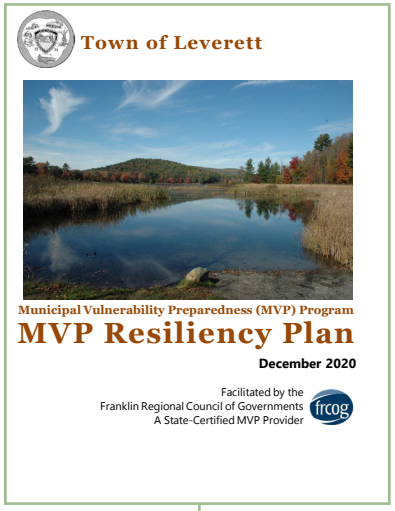
This timeline includes the planning process undertaken over the last ten years. These documents, unless dated 2023 or later, were summarized in the Phase 1 report. The Phase 1 report also includes summaries of older documents and plans that are of historical importance. The reports listed below, have recommendations that should be considered for implementation over the next ten years.

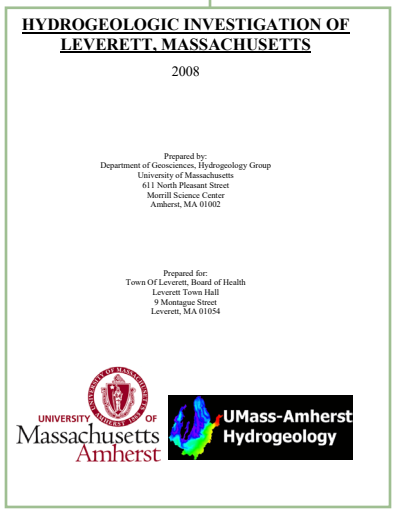
The 2008 Hydroecologic Plan is included because of the critical importance of this information to future planning efforts in Leverett.



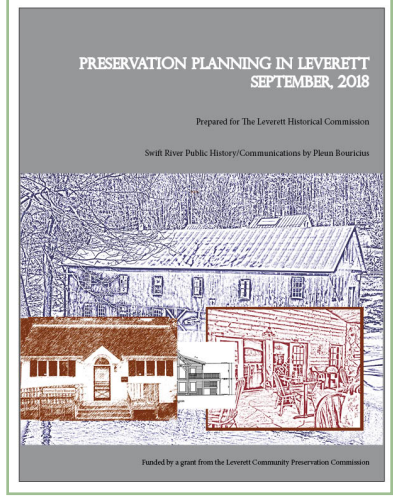
2018 Town of Leverett, MA ADA Self-Evaluation & Transition Plan (included as an appendix to the 2019 OSRP)

2020 Municipal Vulnerability Program (MVP) Resiliency Plan

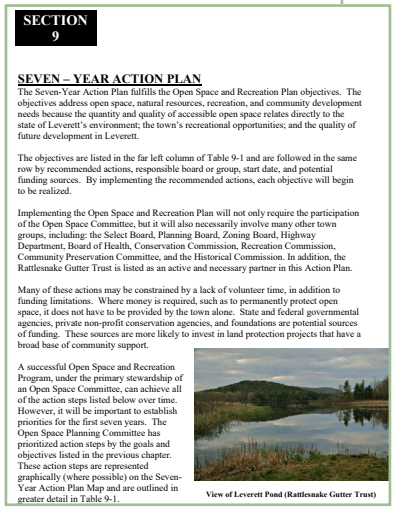




2008 Hydroecologic Investigations of Leverett, Massachusetts (2008)



2018 Preservation Planning in Leverett

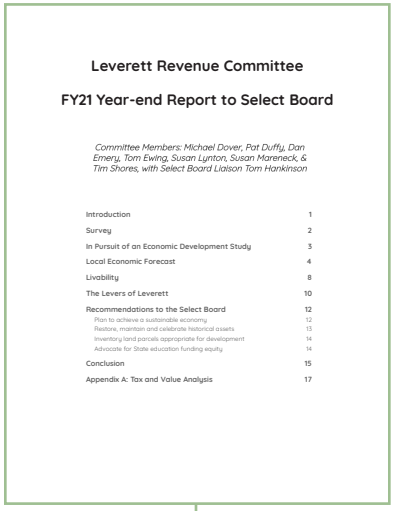


2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan (this will expire in 2026)

2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

past plans

2021 Report of the Revenue Committee (now the Sustainable Economy Committee)



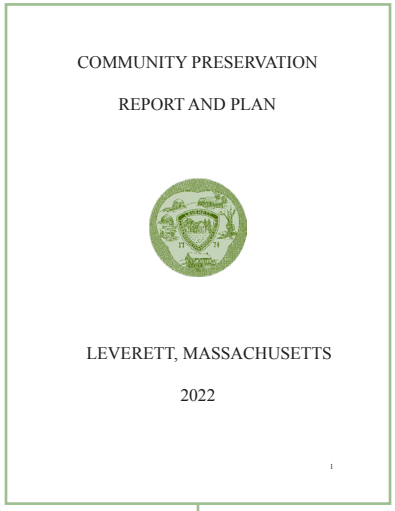
Leverett Revenue Committee

FY21 Year-end Report to Select Board

Committee Members: Michael Dover, Pat Duffy, Dan Emery, Tom Ewing, Susan Lynton, Susan Mareneck, & Tim Shores, with Select Board Liaison Tom Hankinson

Introduction 1
Survey 2
In Pursuit of an Economic Development Study 3
Local Economic Forecast 4
Livability 8
The Levers of Leverett 10
Recommendations to the Select Board 12
Plan to achieve a sustainable economy 12
Restore, maintain and celebrate historical assets 13
Inventory land parcels appropriate for development 14
Advocate for State education funding equity 14
Conclusion 15
Appendix A: Tax and Value Analysis 17

2022 Community Preservation Report and Plan



COMMUNITY PRESERVATION

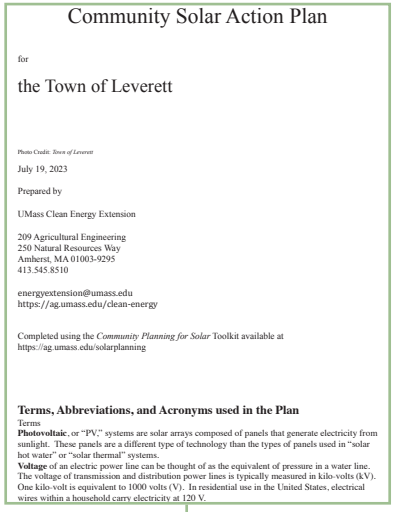
REPORT AND PLAN

LEVERETT, MASSACHUSETTS

2022

1

2023 Community Solar Action Plan for the Town of Leverett



Community Solar Action Plan

for

the Town of Leverett

Photo Credit: *Town of Leverett*

July 19, 2023

Prepared by

UMass Clean Energy Extension

209 Agricultural Engineering
250 Natural Resources Way
Amherst, MA 01003-9295
413.545.8510

energyextension@umass.edu
https://ag.umass.edu/clean-energy

Completed using the *Community Planning for Solar* Toolkit available at https://ag.umass.edu/solarplanning

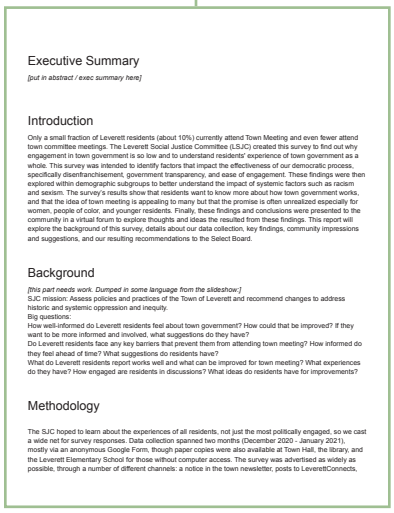
Terms, Abbreviations, and Acronyms used in the Plan

Terms

Photovoltaic, or "PV," systems are solar arrays composed of panels that generate electricity from sunlight. These panels are a different type of technology than the types of panels used in "solar hot water" or "solar thermal" systems.

Voltage of an electric power line can be thought of as the equivalent of pressure in a water line. The voltage of transmission and distribution power lines is typically measured in kilo-volts (kV). One kilo-volt is equivalent to 1000 volts (V). In residential use in the United States, electrical wires within a household carry electricity at 120 V.

2024 Phase 2 Report



Executive Summary

[put in abstract / exec summary here]

Introduction

Only a small fraction of Leverett residents (about 10%) currently attend Town Meeting and even fewer attend town committee meetings. The Leverett Social Justice Committee (LSJC) created this survey to find out why engagement in town government is so low and to understand residents' experience of town government as a whole. This survey was intended to identify factors that impact the effectiveness of our democratic process, specifically disenfranchisement, government transparency, and ease of engagement. These findings were then explored within demographic subgroups to better understand the impact of systemic factors such as racism and sexism. The survey's results show that residents want to know more about how town government works, and that the idea of town meeting is appealing to many but that the promise is often unrealized especially for women, people of color, and younger residents. Finally, these findings and conclusions were presented to the community in a virtual forum to explore thoughts and ideas the resulted from these findings. This report will explore the background of this survey, details about our data collection, key findings, community impressions and suggestions, and our resulting recommendations to the Select Board.

Background

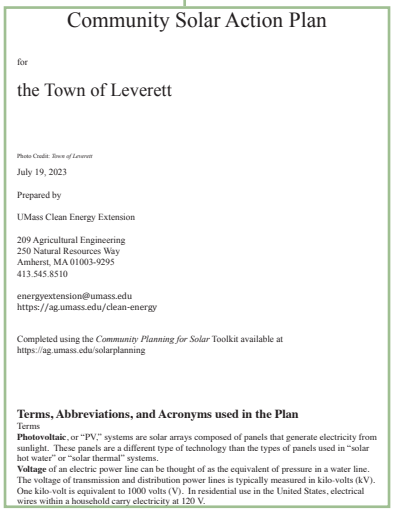
[this part needs work. Dumped in some language from the slideshow:]
SJC mission: Assess policies and practices of the Town of Leverett and recommend changes to address historic and systemic oppression and inequity.
Big questions:
How well-informed do Leverett residents feel about town government? How could that be improved? If they want to be more informed and involved, what suggestions do they have?
Do Leverett residents face any key barriers that prevent them from attending town meeting? How informed do they feel ahead of time? What suggestions do residents have?
What do Leverett residents report works well and what can be improved for town meeting? What experiences do they have? How engaged are residents in discussions? What ideas do residents have for improvements?

Methodology

The SJC hoped to learn about the experiences of all residents, not just the most politically engaged, so we cast a wide net for survey responses. Data collection spanned two months (December 2020 - January 2021), mostly via an anonymous Google Form, though paper copies were also available at Town Hall, the library, and the Leverett Elementary School for those without computer access. The survey was advertised as widely as possible, through a number of different channels: a notice in the town newsletter, posts to LeverettConnects,

2021 Social Justice Report (draft)

2022 Leverett Comprehensive Plan: Phase 1 Report



Community Solar Action Plan

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July 19, 2023

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Erving School Union #28 Operational Efficiency Study 2023

2024-2028 Leverett Age-Friendly Franklin County & North Quabbin Regional Action Plan

Recommendations from Existing Plans

The following actions are identified by the planning document in which they originated. The boards or committees identified as responsible for the actions may be different from those identified in the original documents. For the 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan, longer entries have been summarized to the primary action in each recommendation.

The actions have been grouped by the Section 81D planning elements. Significant gaps include housing (the Town does not have an active Housing Production Plan) and economic development. The recommendations are heavily weighted towards open space, recreation, and mitigating the impacts of natural hazards because the two most recent plans are based on state requirements for content and action plans.

Land Use/Zoning

Explore the use of agricultural zoning, cluster zoning, wetland protection bylaws, Low Impact Development (LID) bylaws, water supply protection bylaws, and floodplain management regulations.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Planning Board, Conservation Commission
- **SOURCE.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Explore zoning and other public levers that might be utilized to create a welcoming and encouraging environment for preservation — without lowering the tax base.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Historical Commission, Planning Board
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2018 Preservation Planning in Leverett

Review and amend existing land use regulations to reduce the risk of landslides (a list of options is provided in the plan).

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Building Inspector, Conservation Commission, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Review and update the Leverett bylaws to add requirements to ensure adequate support and anchoring systems are used for temporary mobile homes to reduce the risk to life and property from high winds.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Building Inspector, Planning Board
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Update and amend the zoning bylaw to include a Dam Safety Overlay district based on the maps produced under other action items.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Emergency Management Director
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Adopt a bylaw or amend existing regulations to address new driveway openings or "curb cuts" that include grade and design standards to reduce the risk to residents from roadway icing and snow build-up.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Planning Board, Highway Superintendent
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Work with a consultant to review zoning bylaws to encourage climate resiliency and incorporate findings from the MVP and Hazard Mitigation Planning processes into the zoning review. (Highest Priority)

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Planning Board
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 MVP Resiliency Plan

Continue to review and update land use regulations to include climate resiliency provisions (a list of options is provided in the plan).

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Planning Board, Conservation Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Review and amend the Required Improvements section of the Town's Subdivision Rules and Regulations to include the construction of an underground water tank(s) (10,000 gal. minimum) in new subdivisions for fire suppression purposes.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Fire Department, Planning Board
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Update the Vulnerability Assessment from the 2020 plan for properties located within the 100-year floodplain.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Planning Board, Assessors
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Circulation/Mobility

Participate in the MassDOT Complete Streets funding program.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Selectboard, Highway Department
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Hire a consultant to complete an assessment of all culverts in the town, including an evaluation of the condition and the GIS location of each.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Highway Department, Conservation Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Share FRCOG's River Corridor Toolkit and high-risk culverts/stormwater flooding inventory with all Town Boards and Committees.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Planning Board, Highway Department, Conservation Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Implement flood mitigation solutions on Teawaddle and East Leverett Road, Roaring Brook, Dolittle Brook, Route 63/ Depot Road and Long Plain Road at Depot Road where flooding is a problem using the prepared hydraulic analysis.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Conservation Commission, Board of Health, Highway Department
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Monitor the Sawmill River and Doolittle Brook and along Teawaddle and Cushman Roads for potential ice buildup and ice jams to reduce the risk of damage to infrastructure and homes from flooding.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Emergency Management Director, Fire Department, Highway Department
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Secure funding and hire a consultant to evaluate alternative designs, locations, or needs for the Mill Yard Road bridge.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Emergency Management Director, Fire Department, Highway Department
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Prepare a map of beaver dams in the town and neighboring towns (Montague) that have the potential to flood private property and town infrastructure if the dams were to fail.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Conservation Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Improve drainage on gravel roads throughout the town. (Highest Priority)

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Selectboard, Highway Department
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 MVP Resiliency Plan

Evaluate and implement nature based solutions to increase flood resiliency on Long Plain Road and Teewaddle Hill Road. (Highest Priority)

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Highway Department, Conservation Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 MVP Resiliency Plan

Inventory culverts, bridges, and roads and prioritize climate resilient solutions based on need. (Highest Priority)

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Highway Department
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 MVP Resiliency Plan

Economic Development

Support the use of Slarrow Mill (North Leverett Center) as a site for a small business.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Selectboard, Planning Board
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** FY2021 Report of the Sustainability Committee

Support adaptive reuse of the former Field Library, now the Field Family Museum in Leverett Center, and/or the Moore's Corner Schoolhouse Museum in North Leverett.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Selectboard, Planning Board
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** FY2021 Report of the Sustainability Committee

Inventory land parcels appropriate for development. Determine sites that could support housing, commercial development, or mixed use while conserving open space and maintaining environmental quality).

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Selectboard, Planning Board
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** FY2021 Report of the Sustainability Committee

Explore feasible partnership-based low impact commercial development in character with the town and possibly utilizing historical resources.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Historical Commission, Planning Board
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2018 Preservation Planning in Leverett

Housing

Create affordable housing through the reuse of existing buildings or construction of new buildings on previously developed sites.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Leverett Community Preservation Committee
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2022 Community Preservation Report and Plan

Apply for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding to support home rehabilitation work for low to moderate income households to bring existing homes up to code and better withstand high wind events.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Selectboard
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Natural and Cultural Resources

Enhance the open space, historic resources, community housing, and recreation opportunities of the town, consistent with the Community Development Plan of 2004, the Open Space and Recreation Plan of 2005-2010, Leverett Zoning Bylaws, and informed by the Heritage Landscape Inventory of 2009, by responding to proposals from the community that meet CPA Guidelines and the Decision Guidelines adopted by the CPC.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Leverett Community Preservation Committee
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2022 Community Preservation Report and Plan

Create a Tree Ordinance that provides guidance for the planting, caring for, and removal of trees within the public right-of way.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Planning Board, Highway Department, Conservation Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Investigate ways to mitigate the use of road salt in the winters.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Highway Department, Conservation Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Survey the archaeological resources and work towards National Historic Register status, whether independently or as part of existing historic districts.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Historical Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2018 Preservation Planning in Leverett

Start a dialogue about and planning for one or more local historic districts — in collaboration with the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Historical Commission, Planning Board
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2018 Preservation Planning in Leverett

recommendations

Start an educational program for residents — a "learn as you play" type program — that explores the various resources the town has.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Historical Commission, Leverett Public Library
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2018 Preservation Planning in Leverett

Assemble a focus or working group that represents a collaboration among local committees and organizations that own, maintain, or otherwise have an interest in historical resources.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Historical Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2018 Preservation Planning in Leverett

Learn more about public-private partnerships and other collaborations that bring in private funds.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Historical Commission, Selectboard
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2018 Preservation Planning in Leverett

Implement recommendations of the 2018 Leverett Veteran's Recognition Project Assessment Report, which examined the conditions of the cemeteries in Town.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Historical Commission, Community Preservation Committee
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Discuss the preservation of the flood storage capacity of undeveloped land to mitigate flooding impacts.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Emergency Management Director, Conservation Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Review forest cutting plans filed under Ch. 61 to ensure that forest stewardship practices produce more stable, successional forested landscapes and reduce the risk of landslide hazards.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Conservation Commission, Fire Department, Planning Board
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Create an inventory of Town trees that should be pruned and prioritize based on risk.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Highway Department
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Identify Town-owned forested areas that are at higher risk for wildfires and implement climate resilient forest management practices that reduce the risk of fire hazards.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Conservation Commission, Fire Department, Utility Companies
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Develop climate resilient forestry practices for Town-owned land and privately owned land. (Highest Priority)

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Selectboard, Conservation Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 MVP Resiliency Plan

Open Space and Recreation

Implement the recommendations of the 2018 Preservation Planning Report based on the 2017-18 Historical Assets Survey.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Historical Commission, Community Preservation Committee, Planning Board
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Use GIS tools (such as MAPPR from Mass Audubon) and field assessments to prioritize areas for protection.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Conservation Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Place Conservation Restrictions on Rattlesnake Gutter lands and town-owned Conservation Areas for permanent protection.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Rattlesnake Gutter Trust, Conservation Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Work with the Town, private landowners, and state agencies to protect parcels in the Stoddard Hill area to connect state-owned parcels and protect NHESP Priority Habitat of Rare Species

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Rattlesnake Gutter Trust, Conservation Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Explore the tax title process for the town to formally acquire lands to be protected.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Selectboard, Conservation Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Set aside protected lands for wildlife that limit or prohibit active and/or passive recreation.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Conservation Commission, Rattlesnake Gutter Trust, Trails Committee, Historical Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Install wayfinding signage, information kiosks, and other amenities at trailheads, parking lots, and other facilities. Create parking facilities at trailheads, when feasible.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Selectboard, Conservation Commission, Rattlesnake Gutter Trust, Trails Committee, Historical Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Create GIS-based maps for existing recreational resources (hiking, skiing, fishing, etc.) within town to be published in print and/or online.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Conservation Commission, Rattlesnake Gutter Trust, Trails Committee, Historical Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Work with [library staff] to create an informational space and supply educational materials about recreation, open space, historical resources in Leverett. Post information on town website.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Conservation Commission, Historical Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

recommendations

Make resources available to landowners about the benefits and options of private stewardship of land (ex. information about landowner liability for trail usage, tax options, etc.).

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Conservation Commission, Rattlesnake Gutter Trust
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Distribute informational resources about ecological land stewardship to residents.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Conservation Commission, Rattlesnake Gutter Trust
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Create themed hikes throughout the year on trails in town.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Conservation Commission, Rattlesnake Gutter Trust, Friends of Leverett Pond, Trail Committee
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Continue to implement Nuisance Aquatic Plant Management Plan.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Conservation Commission, Friends of Leverett Pond
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Make kayaks available for public use at Leverett Pond.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Recreation Committee, Friends of Leverett Pond
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Continue to explore the possibility of creating a trail around Leverett Pond and to increase the accessibility to [Leverett] Pond.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Conservation Commission, Friends of Leverett Pond, Trails Commission, Historical Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Work with willing private landowners to establish trails to connect public conservation areas and historic resources.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Conservation Commission, Rattlesnake Gutter Trust, Historical Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Create an ADA accessible public trail that all residents could use, either at the [Leverett] Elementary School or in other locations.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Conservation Commission, Trails Commission, Recreation Committee
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Improve accessibility to existing resources by implementing recommendations of the 2018 ADA Self-Evaluation & Transition Plan.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Conservation Commission, Trails Commission, Recreation Committee, Selectboard
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Services and Facilities

Require that all public board and committee meetings are accessible remotely. Record and post the meetings for later viewing.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Select-board, Town Clerk
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2021 Social Justice Report

Use LeverettConnects to provide weekly updates on board and committee postings and other important information.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Select-board
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2021 Social Justice Report

Improve navigation on the Town's website and regularly update the information provided.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Select-board, Town Clerk
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2021 Social Justice Report

Budget for and provide childcare at Town Meeting.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Select-board
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2021 Social Justice Report

Provide supplemental information on warrant articles. Possibilities include a pre-Town Meeting public forum and a summary of articles with pro/con analysis.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Select-board, Town Clerk
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2021 Social Justice Report

Adopt the Town Ballot Act to separate voting for elected positions from Town Meeting.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Select-board, Town Clerk
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2021 Social Justice Report

Consider ways to allow a private vote at Town Meeting.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Select-board, Town Clerk
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2021 Social Justice Report

Conduct a town-wide drinking water study to map groundwater sources and potential vulnerabilities, including septic systems.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Select-board, Conservation Commission, Board of Health
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Become a MVP certified community and implement recommendations from the MVP planning process.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Select-board, Board of Health, Conservation Commission, Highway Department
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Continue to participate in the Franklin County Regional Emergency Planning Committee (REPC) on the flood debris management plan.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Highway Department, Franklin County REPC
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Promote the installation of communication towers for emergency response.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Select-board, Planning Board
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

recommendations

Gather information about the current condition and status of small dams that are on private property.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Planning Board, Conservation Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Prepare a map of significant hazard dams, low hazard dams, and their potential inundation areas.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Emergency Management Director, Planning Board, Conservation Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Distribute information to dam owners in town on the Dam and Seawall Repair and Removal Fund.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Selectboard
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Adopt a standardized system for departments, property owners and business owners to record costs and property damage from natural hazard events.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Emergency Management Director, Highway Superintendent, Fire Chief
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Seek funding and technical assistance to hire a consultant to evaluate the town's critical facilities and infrastructure to determine if they are particularly vulnerable to earthquake damage and determine appropriate retrofitting measures to reduce the risk of damage from earthquakes.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Building Inspector, Fire Department, Police Department
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Provide information to residents to assist with emergency preparedness.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Emergency Management Director, Volunteers
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Develop an energy resiliency plan, including a feasibility assessment of microgrids and/or three phase power, to address current vulnerabilities of the electrical grid to storms.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Energy Committee, Planning Board
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Seek funding and technical assistance and convene a team to develop a beaver management strategy to reduce the risk to infrastructure, private property and residents from flooding associated with beavers.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Conservation Commission, Board of Health, Highway Department
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Educate homeowners about the risk of wildfires and brushfires and how to reduce the risk by adopting general fire safety techniques.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Fire Department
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Assess dry hydrants located near old Coke Kiln Bridge, Leverett Pond, and on Cave Hill Road and Shutesbury Road for wildfire fighting capabilities.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Fire Department
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Develop a plan to address the recommendations of the 2018 Town of Leverett, MA ADA Self-Evaluation

& Transition Plan for recommended policies.

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Select-board, Town departments
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Develop an energy resiliency plan for Leverett, which could include a feasibility study for a microgrid. (Highest Priority)

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Select-board, Town departments
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 MVP Resiliency Plan

Develop a potable water resiliency plan. (Highest Priority)

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Emergency Management Director, Highway Department
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 MVP Resiliency Plan

Create a communications plan for the Town. A plan should be made for infrastructural improvements and a village level plan to ensure residents have a way to communicate with one another during emergencies. Continue to enroll residents in the Town-wide emergency contact system. (Highest Priority)

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Emergency Management Director, Highway Superintendent, Fire Chief
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 MVP Resiliency Plan

Review existing sheltering plan and update to include warming and cooling shelters. Investigate private/public agreements with businesses and community members. (Highest Priority)

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Select-board, Emergency Management Director
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 MVP Resiliency Plan

Inventory current beaver activity and develop a comprehensive management plan. (Highest Priority)

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Highway Department
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 MVP Resiliency Plan

Join the regional Mosquito District. (Moderate Priority)

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Board of Health
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 MVP Resiliency Plan

Install additional cell towers and Wi-Fi boosters to increase access for all residents. (Moderate Priority)

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** South Hadley Electric Light Department (SHELD)
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 MVP Resiliency Plan

Routinely remove aquatic species from Leverett Pond. (Lower Priority)

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Conservation Commission
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 MVP Resiliency Plan

Develop a public education program that covers insect borne diseases. (Lower Priority)

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Board of Health
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 MVP Resiliency Plan

Periodically clear the dry hydrants in Town in order to ensure they are usable during an emergency event. (Lower Priority)

- **RESPONSIBILITY.** Fire Department, Highway Department
- **ORIGINAL PLAN.** 2020 MVP Resiliency Plan

Community Values and Goals

Many communities try to develop a single vision statement for the comprehensive plan that is supported by a series of goals, strategies, and actions. The Steering Group decided on a different path that members felt was more responsive to Leverett and the wide ranges of opinions, experiences, and hopes for the future that community members had expressed over time.

The Steering Group sought to identify shared values and goals that could be used to evaluate different paths to enhancing livability in Leverett for all over the next 10-15 years. They tested a list of values and goals at the first community workshop and in the first community survey. The top ten values and goals from the community survey were shared with participants at the third community workshop and are provided on page 9.

At their January 15, 2024 meeting, Steering Group members identified seven key topics for future discussions:

- Environmental Stewardship
- Climate Resilience
- Affordable Housing
- Zoning
- Aging in Leverett
- Rural Character
- Recreation

For the purposes of this plan, Recreation is included with Rural Character, leaving the remaining six topics as the organizing structure for the data, comments, and recommended strategies in the remainder of this document.

Leverett Indigenous History, Culture and Land Acknowledgment

We acknowledge the Town of Leverett is located on or near the ancestral lands of the Pocumtuck, Nonotuck, and Nipmuc people. Leverett is located in the Kwinitekw (Kwin-eh-tek-wuh) (Connecticut River) Valley, a crossroads of multiple Native nations.

This is still their homeland. Their voices are in the air we breathe. They are still here.

We give thanks and acknowledge that we are standing on land that Indigenous peoples stewarded for generations. The colonization of this area led to the displacement of these Native peoples.

We need to learn and relearn to listen to Native voices as they teach us, guide us, and remind us how to live in balance and reciprocity. This is the critical part of building relationships.

We have been taught by Indigenous elders that we should be grateful and thankful for all that we have been given - the land, the waters, and all creations. We have been given all these things, we do not need to ask for anything. What will we do with what we have been given?

Acknowledgment is not enough. It is a first step in community and self-education. This is just a beginning.

This is now – what will we do now?

Adopted at the 2023 Annual Town Meeting (Article 30) and adapted, with appreciation, from the work of David Brule, the President of the Board of Directors of the Nolumbeka Project: https://nolumbekaproject.org/

#	Top Ten Values	Rank from Survey Respondents* %	#	Top Ten Goals	Rank from Survey Respondents* %	#
1	Nature and conservation are important.	92.20%	331	Protect drinking water	95.57%	345
2	Acceptance of others is important.	87.57%	310	Protect forests and nature.	90.70%	322
3	Planning for climate change is important.	83.24%	298	Protect soil health.	88.20%	314
4	Maintaining rural character is important.	82.45%	296	Protect farmland.	81.02%	286
5	Peaceful serenity and quiet living are important.	81.07%	287	Promote energy conservation and efficiency.	80.95%	289
6	Social justice, promoting equity, and including everyone is important.	76.26%	273	Support improvement of Leverett Library.	64.66%	225
7	Hazard planning is important.	72.88%	258	Support improvement of Leverett Elementary School.	64.20%	226
8	Strong community ties are important.	72.07%	258	Make housing more affordable.	59.83%	210
9	Affordable housing is important.	61.73%	221	Improve or maintain town infrastructure and Town Hall.	56.90%	198
10	Historic preservation is important.	51.43%	180	Foster arts and culture.	55.30%	193

*362 respondents answered Question 5 (Values). 361 respondents answered Question 4 (Goals).

The Steering Group identified a key problem with this Phase 2, which was the lack of time to have in-depth community conversations. The grant that funded this planning process required the completion of the work by June 2024. In June 2024, the Planning Board began considering possible future outreach and community discussions on the topics in this plan.

This document is designed to identify the questions or areas of disagreement that still need to be discussed by the Leverett community. The discussion of individual topics in this document is intended to support those future community conversations by providing resources and potential talking points for the next steps.

topic one

Environmental Stewardship

Town Actions

In addition updating the Open Space and Recreation Plan (page 10), and the relevant recommendations on pages 14 to 21, the Town should consider the following actions:

- Establish a Conservation Corps of volunteers to assist with identifying and removing invasive plants along roadsides. Invasive plants spread through disturbed land, so a focus on the edge of roads can help prevent the plant from spreading into the woods.
- Consider leasing Town land for agricultural production, such as hay, orchards, or other crops.
- Work with landowners to connect and preserve wildlife corridors for the free movement of animals.
- Measure wetland migration as precipitation events increase in number and intensity.
- Publicize the Town's 2020 Forestry Plan and the status of the recommendations of that plan.

Community Actions

Most actions for environmental stewardship are the responsibility of the landowner. Here are some actions than can be small- or large-scale, depending on the property.

- Maintain home septic systems. Failing systems are contributors to poor water quality from contamination of water resources. Systems may be inundated by rising water tables from increased precipitation or by beavers creating dams and flooding land. See https://www.clf.org/blog/climate-change-risks-septic-systems/ and https://www.clf.org/publication/avoiding-septic-shock/ for more information.
- Learn about invasive pests and report sightings to the UMass Center for Agriculture, Food and the Environment: https://ag.umass.edu/landscape/news/need-to-report-invasive-insect.
- Manage invasive plants. Do not plant species that are invasive in Massachusetts (https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massachusetts-prohibited-plant-list) and remove them where possible. MassAudubon has a resource for identification: https://www.massaudubon.org/nature-wildlife/invasive-plants-in-massachusetts.
- Design your property to be fire- and tick-resistant. Two good resources to consider are https://readyforwildfire.org/prepare-for-wildfire/defensible-space/and https://www.mass.gov/info-details/tick-management-around-the-home.
- Plant gardens that provide food for birds, pollinators and wildlife.
- Remove sources of standing water to prevent mosquitoes and mosquito-borne diseases.

Resources
2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan https://leverett.ma.us/files/Final_Leverett_2020_HMP.pdf
2020 MVP Resiliency Plan https://leverett.ma.us/f/0/89/Emergency-Planning
2020 Forestry Plan https://leverett.ma.us/meetings/3301/BillRivers-BirdStew-2020.pdf
2019 Harvard, MA MVP Report: Agricultural Supplement https://www.mass.gov/doc/harvard-agriculture-supplemental-report/download
2023 Farmland Action Report https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massachusetts-farmland-action-plan
Cornell Small Farms Program https://smallfarms.cornell.edu/
UMass Center for Agriculture, Food, and the Environment https://ag.umass.edu/
MassWoods https://masswoods.org/sites/masswoods.net/files/Ch61-v2.pdf
Teawaddle Hill Farm https://www.kestreltrust.org/places/teawaddle-hill-farm/
Paul C. Jones Working Forest https://www.kestreltrust.org/places/paul-c-jones-working-forest/

Community Discussion

Input from the 2023 Survey

In Question 1, the Steering Group asked about factors that contribute to livability in Leverett, including "Preservation and use of nature and forests" (shortened to "Preservation," below) and "Availability of clean water" ("Water," below).

	Yes	Total
Q1: Preservation	90.10% or 364	404
Q1: Water	82.18% or 332	404

The Steering Group used Question 4 to ask about potential goals. Those related to environmental stewardship were "Pave dirt roads and clear edges of roads to prevent run-off and erosion" (Pave); "Promote energy conservation and efficiency" (Energy); Protect farmland" (Farmland); "Protect drinking water" (Water); Protect soil health" (Soil) and "Protect forests and nature" (Forests). Question 5 asked about the importance of specific values: "Nature and conservation are important." Question 8 asked about the importance of specific concerns: "Loss of wildlife habitat due to development" (Loss) and "Contamination of the water supply. (Water)"

The table below shows the responses to these questions:

	Unimportant	Neither unimportant or important	Important	Total
Q4 "Pave"	37.64% or 131	35.06% or 122	27.30% or 95	348
Q4 "Energy"	4.20% or 15	14.85% or 53	80.95% or 289	357
Q4 "Farmland"	3.40% or 12	15.58% or 55	81.02% or 286	353
Q4 "Water"	1.11% or 4	3.32% or 12	95.57% or 345	361
Q4 "Soil"	2.81% or 10	8.99% or 32	88.20% or 314	356
Q4 "Forests"	1.97% or 7	7.32% or 26	90.70% or 322	355
Q5	1.39% or 5	6.41% or 23	92.20% or 331	359
Q8 "Loss"	3.70% or 13	15.96% or 56	80.34% or 282	351
Q8"Water"	4% or 14	14.57% or 51	81.43% or 285	350

topic two

Climate Resilience

Town Actions

Actions the Town can take to prepare for and adapt to the impacts of climate change are well-detailed in the 2020 HMP and the 2020 MVP Resiliency Plan. These recommendations are included on pages 14-21.

The Town should continue to work on the Community Solar Project which would contribute to climate resiliency. Agrivoltaics, which is the combination of solar farms and agriculture, may be of interest.

Relevant Town staff and officials should publicize these two plans and hold regular conversations with community members about the hazards, recommendations, and implementation status. Some of the comments from the survey and at the community workshops indicate that some members of the Leverett community are not aware of these two documents.

Elected Town officials will need to incorporate any action steps that have budgetary implications into the Town's operating and capital budgets, and be able to support those requests with references to the plans. The state and federal governments continue to support grant programs that can help address some of the actions, especially those that are related to vulnerable infrastructure.

Climate change has implications for **Topic 1. Environmental Stewardship**, **Topic 3. Affordable Housing**, and **Topic 4. Aging in Leverett**.

Community Actions

The 2020 MVP Resiliency Plan celebrates the strength of the community spirit in Leverett. Community members should be familiar with the projected hazards and the actions the Town is responsible for. At Town Meeting, the Town may ask community members to support actions, including funding and zoning changes, to address the impacts described in both reports. Community actions could include the following:

- Create a phone, email, or text tree to check on vulnerable neighbors during an emergency.
- Set up volunteer neighborhood cooling and warming stations for those who have inadequate cooling or heating in their homes. Seniors and the very young are particularly vulnerable to heat. Distributed volunteer shelters would also help if roads are blocked by fallen trees during a storm.
- Create a set of shared neighborhood resources to provide services (such as snow-shoveling or fallen tree removal) to people who are isolated by storms or fallen trees.
- Participate in community conversations about climate change and potential town-wide measures to address the impacts, such as repairs to roads, culverts, bridges, and necessary tree-trimming or cutting along roads for public safety.
- Advocate for development standards that can be incorporated into zoning so that new buildings can be energy-efficient and climate resilient.

What other data is available?

A second source of information is https://resilient.mass.gov/ which provides detailed resources, including climate resilience design standards, maps, funding sources, and reports from other communities.

MVP toolkits, funding opportunities, plans from other communities, and implementation actions are available here: https://resilient.mass.gov/mvp/. The maps are here: https://resilientma.org/datagrapher/?c=Temp/state/maxt/ANN/MA/

The state's plan for climate resilience: Massachusetts Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2025 and 2030: https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massachusetts-clean-energy-and-climate-plan-for-2025-and-2030

Agrivoltaics:https://www.climatehubs.usda.gov/hubs/northeast/topic/agrivoltaics-coming-soon-farm-near-you.

General information about climate resiliency: https://www.rand.org/topics/community-resilience.html

Community Discussion

Input from the 2023 Survey

The Steering Group posed one question in the survey related specifically to climate change. Survey Question 5 asked whether certain values were important to respondents as members of the Leverett Community. "Planning for climate change is important" was one of the values. The table below shows the responses:

	Unimportant	Neither unimportant or important	Important	Total
Q5	5.87% or 21	10.89% or 39	83.24% or 298	358

This was the third highest concern in this block of questions. The Steering group also called this out as a concern after the survey closed. Workshop 3 had a major focus on climate change as a future condition because of its impact on people and the environment.

topic: two

topic three

Affordable Housing

Town Actions

Town government has a few actions it can take to promote affordable housing. Actions for affordable housing will also help seniors aging in place.

These actions are as follows:

- Undertake a Housing Production Plan to assess the need for affordable housing and available resources. See page 10.
- Buy land or vacant buildings and work with a developer to build affordable or mixed income hosing.
- Use funds from the Community Preservation Act to support the creation of housing. The Town has an Affordable Housing Trust that can manage these funds.
- The Town has a homeownership assistance program, although the site has not been updated since 2017, so the program may need to be reactivated. (See https://www.leverett.ma.us/n/2/The-Leverett-Home-Ownership-Assistance-Program).
- Leverett does not have a Housing Authority. Many towns use them to provide housing for seniors, people with disabilities or other special needs, and households with low incomes. Housing Authorities are governed by Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 121B.
- Explore changing zoning to allow for different types of housing in Leverett which would include smaller units or multiple units on a lot (which could include three or four units).
- Evaluate the proposed state legislation for ADUs and, if it passes, consider appropriate controls for Leverett.
- Consider facilitating the creation of a Community Development Corporation (see resources).

Community Actions

Members of the community can also help to address the need for affordable housing in the town. Actions include the following:

- Hold community conversations about the need for affordable housing and the different ways of achieving both income-based housing and housing that is affordable by design.
- Learn about the different types of housing for people with a wide variety of needs. Understand the income requirements for subsidized affordable housing; the thresholds are generally higher than many people realize and the lack of housing has an impact on who can stay in the community.
- Continue conversations about smaller housing types (for example, two duplexes on a lot) that would create additional density without changing the appearance of the town.
- Work with community members to support initiatives for affordable housing within the community, including at Town Meeting.

Resources
Housing Production Plan https://www.mass.gov/info-details/chapter-40b-housing-production-plan
Community Preservation Act https://www.communitypreservation.org/housing-trusts-conservation-funds
Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) https://www.mass.gov/orgs/executive-office-of-housing-and-livable-communities
Massachusetts Housing Partnership https://www.mhp.net/
Mass Housing https://www.masshousing.com/
Citizens Guide to State Services: Housing https://www.sec.state.ma.us/divisions/cis/guide/housing.htm
Hilltown Community Development Corporation https://www.hilltowncdc.org/housing
Net-Zero Cluster Housing in Northampton https://www.pvhabitat.org/about/homes/northampton/
National Low Income Housing Coalition https://nlihc.org/housing-needs-by-state/massachusetts

Community Discussion

Input from the 2023 Survey

Question 2 asked which amenities would improve the quality of life in Leverett. "More quality affordable/low cost housing" was one of the options.

Question 4 asked respondents to rank the possible goals for the process by level of importance to them: Increase housing stock" (Increase); "Improve housing stock" (Improve); "Make housing more affordable" (Affordable); and "Provide additional options for public transportation" (Transit).

Survey Question 5 asked whether certain values were important to respondents as members of the Leverett Community. "Affordable housing is important" was one of the values. Survey Question 8 asked whether certain topics were of concern to the community. "Lack of affordable housing" was one option.

The table below shows the responses:

	Unimportant	Neither unimportant or important	Important	Total
Q2	18.58% or 73	28.75% or 113	52.67% or 207	393
Q4 "Increase"	27.86% or 95	38.71% or 132	33.43% or 114	341
Q4 "Improve"	23.51% or 79	47.02% or 158	29.46% or 99	336
Q4 "Affordable"	15.10% or 53	25.07% or 88	59.83% or 210	351
Q4 "Transit"	18.87% or 67	31.27% or 111	49.86% or 177	355
Q5	10.61% or 38	27.65% or 99	61.73% or 221	358
Q8	14.61% or 51	29.23% or 102	56.16% or 196	349

topic four

Aging in Leverett

Town Actions

In addition to actions for **Topic 2. Climate Resiliency** and **Topic 3. Affordable Housing**, the Town should consider the following actions:

- Seek to improve the AARP's Livability Score for Leverett which is 51. Leverett joined the AARP Age-Friendly Network in 2021.
- Continue to engage with regional partners to implement the North Quabbin Regional Action Plan for age and dementia friendly communities.
- Evaluate joining the Franklin Regional Transit Authority to increase access opportunities for residents. The FRTA currently serves 41 towns in the region and connects to the JWO transit center in Greenfield for access to Greyhound bus service and the Valley Flyer and Vermonter Amtrak routes. FRTA also operates medical and demand service in member communities. Annual assessments are charged based on the utilization and service levels provided to the Town.
- Consider zoning changes to allow housing types that would promote one-level living in smaller units, perhaps in small cluster developments. This action would provide options within Leverett to downsize so that seniors with strong ties to the community would not have to leave.
- Add additional medical clinics to those that the Council on Aging already provides to support preventive care within the community. Partner with regional medical care providers.

Community Actions

The Steering Group tested "self-sufficiency" as a value and 46.76% (or 166/355) agreed that value was important. However, self-sufficiency becomes more difficult as people age. Many of the recommendations for neighbor-to-neighbor actions under **Topic 2. Climate Change** would also help for aging-in-place.

- Become familiar with the Franklin County and North Quabbin Regional Action Plan.
- Volunteer with existing organizations to assist seniors with certain tasks. Village Neighbors (see page 10) provides transportation and handyman services. The Council on Aging and Lifepath (see page 10) also provide services, including medical. Additional needs that could be met by volunteers include yard-work and snow clearing.
- Explore partnerships between the local religious institutions (see page 15) and local volunteer organizations to coordinate an understanding of the needs of the senior community; particularly of older seniors who may be more vulnerable.

topic four

Resources
AARP Age-Friendly Network https://livablemap.aarp.org/member/leverett-ma)
North Quabbin Regional Action Plan https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/livable-communities/age-friendly-network/2023/action-plans/ma-franklin-county-and-north-quabbin-action-plan-2023.pdf
Massachusetts Aging Services Network https://www.mass.gov/info-details/aging-services-network

Community Discussion

Input from the 2023 Survey

In Question 8, the Steering Group asked about the importance of specific concerns, including "Meeting the needs of an aging population" (Aging); "Opportunities to connect with others" (Connect); Links between poverty and public health" (Health); and "Demographic changes" (Change). The table below shows the responses to the this question:

	Unimportant	Neither unimportant or important	Important	Total
Q8 "Aging"	5.34% or 19	21.35% or 76	73.31% or 261	356
Q8 "Connect"	13.79% or 48	37.07% or 130	49.14% or 171	348
Q8 "Health"	12.14% or 42	37.57% or 130	50.29% or 174	346
Q8 "Change"	20.35% or 69	47.49% or 161	32.15% or 109	339

"Aging" was the third highest concern in this block of questions. This concern is reflected in the other comments provided by respondents to the survey. Poverty and its impact on health are also linked to the needs of more vulnerable seniors; social isolation is also a critical factor in health outcomes and a particular problem for seniors, especially older seniors. Because of these responses, Workshop 3 had a major focus on the aging of the Leverett community.

topic five

Recreation

Town Actions

In addition to the relevant recommendations on pages 14 to 21, the Town should consider the following actions:

- Reactivate the Recreation Committee and the Trails Committee.
- Update the Open Space and Recreation Plan before it expires in 2026.
- Undertake a community conversation about gathering spaces. Thoughts on this ranged from a desire for a permanent senior center, expansion of the Leverett Library, and use of the Leverett Elementary School after the school day ends or on the weekends. Consider an inter-generational community center.
- Consider expanding small-scale commercial opportunities, such as a café, within the Town Center to promote the area as a central spot for neighborhood residents. If a permanent home for the Council on Aging were provided elsewhere in the Town Center, then the ground floor of Town Hall could be a café.
- Explore partnerships among the LCA (see page 15), the Historical Society, a reconstituted Recreation Committee, the Leverett Elementary School, and others to provide recreation opportunities, including life-long learning, for all ages in Leverett. The partnership may include space and programming.
- Hold community conversations around tensions about hunting and ATV use. See also **Topic Six. Rural Character**. These tensions were expressed in the survey responses and at the workshops.

Community Actions

The biggest community action would be to volunteer for the Recreation Committee or the Trails Committee so that they can become more active. Members of the organizations listed in the sixth bullet to the left could initiate the joint conversations around partnerships.

While the Town could set up a place for conversations around hunting and ATV use, members of the Leverett community who engage in those uses or are concerned by them should sit down and talk about those issues. Other partners in this conversation could include the Rattlesnake Gutter Trust and the Kestrel Land Trust (see page 15) and the Department of Conservation. Either the Conservation Commission or the reconstituted Trails Committee could sponsor the conversation; a non-Town facilitator is recommended.

Resources
Town of Lenox Community Center https://www.townoflenox.com/community-center
Massachusetts Hunting Regulations https://www.mass.gov/hunting-regulations
Massachusetts Rules for Off-Road Vehicles https://www.mass.gov/off-road-vehicles

Community Discussion

Input from the 2023 Survey

In Question 1, the Steering Group asked about factors that contribute to livability in Leverett, including "Active recreation activities" (Active); "Passive recreation activities" (Passive); "Accessibility of recreation options" (Access); and "Arts and culture" (Arts).

	Yes	Total
Active	36.63%	148
Passive	79.70%	322
Access	32.18%	130
Arts	41.58%	168

The Steering Group used Question 2 to ask about factors related to quality of life. For recreation, these were as follows: "More community gathering spaces" (Gathering); "Improving recreational spaces" (Improve); "Increased public access to Leverett Pond" (Pond); and "More town-wide community events" (Events).

Question 4 asked about potential goals: "Foster Arts and Culture."

	Unimportant	Neither unimportant or important	Important	Total
Q2 "Gathering"	18.78% of 74	41.37% or 163	39.85% or 157	394
Q2 "Improve"	15.50% or 60	49.35% or 191	35.14% or 136	387
Q2 "Pond"	26.03% or 101	48.45% or 188	25.52% or 99	388
Q2 "Events"	17.66% or 68	43.09% or 169	38.44% or 148	385
Q4 "Foster"	8.31% or 29	36.39% or 127	55.30% or 193	349

topic six

Rural Character

Overview

Responses to the community survey and from participants in the workshops indicate the members of the Leverett community have different ideas about what rural character means. For some, it is the balance of the historic development patterns and the natural setting. Actions to reinforce that character include those discussed earlier, particularly **Topic One. Environmental Stewardship** and **Topic Two. Climate Resiliency**.

For others, rural character may be more about the lifestyle and economy. Comments received during the process indicate a division of opinion: some value a sense of community in a smaller town, while others see Leverett not as a rural community, but as a suburb, and not as their primary source of community interaction.

Two other factors enter into this split in perception: the first is the tension around hunting and off-road vehicle use mentioned in **Topic Five. Recreation**. Both are considered to be rural activities, and the concern about these activities expressed in the survey may also reflect the differing definitions of "rural" in the community.

The second factor is the low prevalence of traditional rural economic activities within Leverett. Forestry, conservation, and agriculture are traditional components of a rural economy, but few people are employed in these sectors. Most people in Leverett who work (the town has a high percentage of retired people) are employed outside the town. No data was available on the number of people who work from home, but few Leverett businesses are registered with the Town Clerk. Even accounting for the lack of registration, the community appears to have a low level of entrepreneurial activity within the town's borders. The Phase 2 report collected the available information about economic activity within Leverett.

Town Actions

The conversation about rural character may be the first discussion in the proposed continued community conversations (see page 10). Understanding what rural character means to the Leverett community has implications for Town and community actions in the other six topics.

The Town should consider reinstating its Agricultural Commission (the state identifies Leverett as having one; Leverett is also a Right-to-Farm community), but the Town website does not list this commission. An Agricultural Commission could also sponsor conversations about supporting a rural economy in Leverett.

Community Actions

Participate in ongoing community conversations about rural character and the implications that definition has on the other topics, particularly **Topic 3. Affordable Housing**, **Topic 4. Aging in Leverett**, **Topic 5. Recreation**, and **Topic 7. Zoning**.

Consider volunteering to serve on a reconstituted Agricultural Commission.

topic six

Resources
FRCOG Rural Policy Plan https://frcog.org/publications/ma-rural-policy-plan/
Strong Towns https://www.strongtowns.org/
USDA Rural Development https://www.rd.usda.gov/
Massachusetts State Office of Rural Health https://www.mass.gov/info-details/state-office-of-rural-health-rural-definition
Massachusetts Association of Agricultural Commissions https://www.massagcom.org/AboutMAAC.php
Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources https://www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-department-of-agricultural-resources

Community Discussion

Input from the 2023 Survey

In Question 1, the Steering Group asked about factors that contribute to livability in Leverett, including "Preservation of and access to historic and cultural resources" (Historic); "Rural character and rural way of life" (Rural); and "Sense of community and strong social ties" (Social).

	Yes	Total
Q1 Historic	39.85%	161
Q1 Rural	78.47%	317
Q1 Social	62.87%	254

The Steering Group used Question 2 to ask about factors related to quality of life. For rural character, these included "Better cellphone coverage or wi-fi" (Wi-fi) and "Traffic calming measures" (Traffic).

Question 4 asked about potential goals: "Preserve historic buildings" (Preserve) and "Adapt historic buildings for new purposes" (Adapt). Question 5 asked about the importance of specific values: "Maintaining rural character" (Maintain); Historic Preservation" (Historic); and "Peaceful serenity and quiet living" (Peace).

	Unimportant	Neither unimportant or important	Important	Total
Q2 "Wi-fi"	11.14% or 44	21.77% or 86	67.09% or 265	395
Q2 "Traffic"	27.86% or 107	35.94% or 138	36.20% or 139	384
Q4 "Preserve"	12.22% or 43	40.34% or 142	47.44% or 167	352
Q4 "Adapt"	8.76% or 31	40.96% or 145	50.28% or 178	354
Q5 "Maintain"	5.29% or 19	12.26% or 44	82.45% or 296	359
Q5 "Historic"	10.29% or 36	38.29% or 134	51.43% or180	350
Q5 "Peace"	2.26% or 8	16.67% or 59	81.07% or 287	354

topic seven

Zoning

Town Actions

The Town should consider the following actions:

Recommendations from April 17, 2024 Review with the Planning Board

- Review the lot size and frontage restrictions in 4300 Aquifer Protection District.
- Update 4400 Flood Hazard District to refer to the new maps; compare to the model Floodplain Overlay District.
- Evaluate the incentive to use 4800 Flexible Development; it does not appear to work as intended and has not been used to the knowledge of the Board.
- Review 4880 Residential Subdivision Development for clarity of intent.
- Compare 4970 Ground-Mounted Solar Electric to the model bylaw.

Land Use Recommendations from the 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan Explore the use of [the following]:

- Agricultural zoning.
- Cluster zoning.
- Wetland protection bylaws.
- Low Impact Development (LID) bylaws.
- Water supply protection bylaws.
- Floodplain management regulations.

Land Use Recommendations from the Draft 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

- Continue to review and update land use regulations to include **climate resiliency provisions**.
  - Best Management Practices for River Corridor areas (FRCOG's River Corridor Toolkit), further restricting or limiting new development within the 100-year floodplain and River Corridor.
  - Low Impact Development (LID) stormwater practices, etc.
  - Amend the Subdivision Rules and Regulations to require temporary and permanent erosion control measures for streams and surface water bodies.
  - Update the review criteria in the Special Permit process to include topographic change, removal of cover vegetation, risk of erosion or siltation and increased stormwater runoff.
- Review and amend existing land use regulations to **reduce the risk of landslides**.
  - Direct new development to stable slopes and soils.
  - Set limits on land clearing to maintain stable slopes to reduce the risk of landslides.
  - Protect existing development from potential landslides by ensuring that surface water and groundwater are properly managed.
- Review and update the Leverett bylaws to add requirements that ensure **adequate support and anchoring systems are used for temporary mobile homes** to reduce the risk to life and property from high winds.
- Update and amend the zoning bylaw to **include a Dam Safety Overlay district** based on the maps produced under other action items.
- Adopt a bylaw or amend existing regulations to address new driveway openings or "curb cuts" that **include grade and design standards to reduce the risk to residents** from roadway icing and snow build-up.

- Review and amend the Required Improvements section of the Town's Subdivision Rules and Regulations to include the construction of an underground water tank(s) (10,000 gal. minimum) in new subdivisions for **fire suppression purposes**.

Suggestions from Workshop 3 to consider for future zoning efforts:

- Evaluate progress of ADU zoning currnetly (2024) in front of the legislature.
- Modify the zoning to allow smaller lot sizes, and/or multiple units, on existing lots (e.g. one or two duplexes on a lot).
- Create zoning to encourage senior-friendly housing.
- Update land use regulations to encourage climate resiliency.
- Allow for the development of multi-family units at lower scale (4-20 units).
- Modify the Town zoning to permit low-scale activity for economic resiliency: home-based businesses, twenty-first century rural businesses, and small scale options for retail or services.

Community Discussion

Input from the 2023 Survey

In Question 4, the Steering Group offered a list of goals for respondents to rank. Zoning was not listed but three development-related goals were: "Limit development" (Limit); "Prevent development sprawl by focusing growth near town center" (Prevent); and "Encourage economic development in town" (Encourage).

The Steering Group asked about the importance of values in Question 5, including "Less restrictive zoning is important."

In Question 8, the Steering Group asked about the importance of specific concerns, including "Inability to build/improve on own property due to zoning restrictions and Town oversight" (Inability); "Too much buildable land going into conservation easement" (Buildable); and "Lack of economic development opportunities" (Lack).

The table below shows the responses to the three questions:

	Unimportant	Neither unimportant or important	Important	Total
Q4 "Limit"	23.05% or 80	31.70% or 110	45.24% or 157	344
Q4 "Prevent"	15.99% or 55	38.66% or 133	45.35% or 156	344
Q4 "Encourage"	22.57% or 79	33.71% or 118	43.71% or 153	350
Q5	31.32% or 109	42.53% or 148	26.15% or 91	348
Q8 "Inability"	25.21% or 88	33.81% or 118	40.97% or 143	349
Q8 "Buildable"	53.91% or 186	28.99% or 100	17.10% or 59	345
Q8 "Lack"	22.31% or 77	44.25% or 154	33.62% or 117	348

financial

Financial Resources

A town has four major sources of funding for implementation:

- Operating funds (Town meeting approves).
- Capital funds (Town meeting approves).
- Grant programs (state and federal, sometimes private).
- Partnering with local groups who can raise funds.

The following programs can assist the Town of Leverett with recommended actions. Many of these programs are competitive and may require more than one funding cycle to achieve the funding. Some may also require matching grants from the Town.

Local resources

Local Taxes

Communities in Massachusetts have the option to adopt additional local taxes:

- **Local Option Meals Excise.** Towns who adopt this tax may collect an additional 0.75% of the vendor's gross receipts from restaurant meal sales.
- **Local Option Room Occupancy Excise.** Towns may collect an additional tax on room rentals of up to 6% for 90 days or less.
- **Marijuana tax rate.** The maximum local tax rate on marijuana sales is 3%.

The Community Preservation Act

The Community Preservation Act (CPA) is a tool to help municipalities preserve open space and historic sites, create affordable housing, and develop outdoor recreational facilities.

The Town of Leverett adopted the CPA and has a Community Preservation Committee (CPC) to administer the funds. According to their 2022 report, the CPC has invested $1.8 million as follows:

- $681,500 (38%) for historic preservation;
- $551,040 (31%) for open space;
- $81,911 (4%) for recreation; and
- $487,570 (27%) for community housing (in trust).

Given the significant desire for affordable housing and more community gathering space, the CPC should work with other Town officials to target its funds towards meeting these needs. As of 2022, the CPC had $1.3 million available of which $900,000 was undesignated.

State Resources

The State Legislature is considering (in 2024) several major bond bills that may provide funding and other resources for the recommendations in this plan. The Town should monitor the status of those bills.

Community One Stop for Growth

In 2021, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts rolled the application process for ten grant programs into a single process. Programs that may be relevant include the following:

- MassWorks
- Massachusetts Downtown Initiative
- Community Planning Grants
- Underutilized Properties

More information can be found here: https://www.mass.gov/guides/community-one-stop-for-growth

MassWorks Infrastructure Program

Administered by the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (EOHED); this is a competitive grant program for public infrastructure projects and is part of the Community One Stop for Growth program. Priority is given to those projects that support multi-family housing in walkable mixed-use districts; immediate job creation; and/or economic development in weak or distressed areas. MassWorks grants may be used for streetscape improvements, bridge repairs, and other such improvements. Municipalities must demonstrate that the application is consistent with the Commonwealth's Sustainability Principles and meets the programs investment goals.

More information is available here: https://www.mass.gov/service-details/massworks-infrastructure-grants

Massachusetts Downtown Initiative

The focus of this grant is downtown or town center revitalization. The Technical Assistance program provides a consultant and funding for that consultant's work to communities who need help with specific problems. This grant is part of the Community One Stop for Growth program.

More information can be found here: https://www.mass.gov/service-details/massachusetts-downtown-initiative-mdi

Community Planning Grants

This program provides funding for planning projects at a larger scale than the MDI program. Project recommendations for which this grant would be appropriate might include zoning changes, particularly those that support housing and multimodal connections, or other similar planning processes. This grant is part of the Community One Stop for Growth program.

More information can be found here: https://www.mass.gov/how-to/community-planning-grant-program

Other Grant Programs

District Local Technical Assistance Grant (DLTA)

Funds for this program are allocated to the regional planning agencies. These funds may be used for planning projects. Each Regional Planning Agency (RPA) has a different focus on how these funds may be used to meet the state's funding goals. All municipalities are eligible to apply directly to their RPA. The RPA will work with the municipality on the program; a separate consultant is not usually required. FRCOG is Leverett's Regional Planning Agency.

Mass Cultural Council

The Mass Cultural Council has one-year project grants for specific public programming. Mass Cultural Council defines public programming as activities that engage with the public. The municipality's own Local Cultural Council may have additional grants to support local arts and culture.

https://massculturalcouncil.org/organizations/cultural-investment-portfolio/projects/

financial

MA DEP s319 and 604(b) Grant Programs

These address water quality, including nonpoint source pollution, management planning, and stormwater management. More information can be found here: https://www.mass.gov/info-details/grants-financial-assistance-watersheds-water-quality

MassDevelopment Commonwealth Places

This program supports placemaking projects.

More information can be found here: https://www.massdevelopment.com/what-we-offer/real-estate-services/commonwealth-places/

MassDOT/Chapter 90

Chapter 90 refers to the highway funds in the annual state funding packages provided to municipalities throughout Massachusetts.

Mass EEA: Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) Grant Program

This grant can be used by municipalities to acquire parkland, build a new park, or to renovate an existing park. More information can be found here: https://www.mass.gov/service-details/parkland-acquisitions-and-renovations-for-communities-parc-grant-program.

EEA MVP Program Action Grant

These grants help communities implement infrastructure improvements to address the impacts of climate change. The program prefers those strategies that are nature-based. More information about the criteria to apply can be found here: https://www.mass.gov/service-details/mvp-action-grant-eligibility-criteria

Massachusetts Historical Commission, Survey and Planning Grant Program

This grant is a 50/50 matching program that supports planning activities that help preserve significant historic resources. For communities whose target area contains significant resources,this source may help fund design guidelines that include specific requirements for the preservation of significant historic resources. Interested communities are encouraged to reach out to the Massachusetts Historic Commission directly about this grant; it may be tied to the creation of a local historic district.

https://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/mhchpp/surveyandplanning.htm

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program

The Commonwealth provides funding for hazard mitigation plans. More information can be found here: https://www.mass.gov/hazard-mitigation-assistance-grant-programs

Information on this page also includes the Flood Mitigation Assistance Grant; and the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant.

Massachusetts Department of Transportation, Complete Streets Funding Program

This program provides funds to municipalities who have adopted a Complete Streets Policy and created a Prioritization Plan. Any street infrastructure recommended in this report should be added to the Prioritization Plan. This grant program can help address recommended improvements for pedestrian and bicyclist mobility, safety, and comfort.

This grant can also assist with design guidelines; these do not have to be limited to the private realm. Creating consistency in a downtown, village, or corridor is an important part of defining its identity both within and beyond the community. As part of a Complete Streets Project, a municipality should identify the specific materials, street furniture, trees, and public signage (including wayfinding) that will be used in the target area. These choices can be incorporated into the overall design guidelines to address both public and private realms.

This program could leverage the municipality's funding under Chapter 90 to ensure that multimodal infrastructure is connected, over time, throughout the community.

https://www.mass.gov/complete-streets-funding-program

Massachusetts Department of Transportation, Shared Streets and Spaces

This program provides funds to support the improvement of "plazas, sidewalks, curbs, streets, bus stops, parking areas, and other public spaces." The focus is on public health, safe mobility, and renewed commerce.

https://www.mass.gov/shared-streets-and-spaces-grant-program

financial

amendments

Living Draft Addenda and Plan Amendments

As an evolving, non-binding policy blueprint, the Leverett Comprehensive Plan serves as a living document. The authority to amend or append this plan is implicit in the Comprehensive Plan Cover Letter, which establishes its active draft status and commits to evaluating new community perspectives, upholding town values, and practicing incremental change in resource stewardship.

Key commitments from the Cover Letter include:

> *"We will continue to hear and respect community perspectives and new lines of argument that may challenge what we have learned from this Plan."*

> *"We will hold fast to the community values and goals—described on pages 28-29—in all plan implementation and amendment activities including the importance of preserving Leverett's natural resources and maintaining a climate resilient future of our Community."*

> *"We will hold fast to the principle of incremental change in all decision-making to do with stewardship of our collective resources and how we will meet community needs."*

Draft Revision Log

Addendum No.	Effective Date	Topic / Focus	Status / Board Action
Addendum #1	October 21, 2026	Support for Mass Cultural Council Cultural District	Voted unanimously by Planning Board to amend

ADDENDUM #1: Support for the Establishment of the Leverett Cultural District(s) to Foster Arts, Culture, & Economic Development

Context and Purpose

This policy note records Leverett's strategic intent to support the local creative economy. Following community engagement sessions hosted by the Selectboard, this text establishes the framework for town-level backing of a state-designated cultural district.

A. Statement of Support

On September 9, 2026, the Town of Leverett Planning Board voted unanimously to support the application by the Town of Leverett for a designation by the Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC) Cultural District by adding this provision to the Draft 2024 Comprehensive Plan.

B. Alignment with Comprehensive Plan Elements

Establishing a cultural district directly advances Leverett's core community identity by intertwining historic assets, conservation spaces, individual artists, authors, and local cultural institutions (such as Leverett Crafts & Arts). This initiative fulfills specific directives cited across the plan:

- Economic Development Element: Fulfills the task to encourage "small-scale, sustainable economic development to increase services for residents while managing the property tax rate" by connecting local studios and galleries to drive low-impact, sustainable economic activity.

- Natural and Cultural Resources Element: Acts as a mechanism to protect and leverage the town's unique historic character and landscape. It bridges physical landmarks and "villages" with the active creative economy, directly advancing the town's goal to preserve community identity and build community ties.

C. Direct Plan Citations & Justification

The proposed district explicitly addresses and activates multiple recommendations, goals, and livability metrics identified during the town's planning process:

- Strategy 5.2.18 (Economic Resiliency): Directly responds to the plan's noted opportunity: "The arts community is a source of cultural and economic development that was not fully explored during this planning process." It supports community conversations about other ways to promote economic development, including small business clusters and home-based businesses.
- Section 5.3 (Recommendations from Existing Plans): Connects directly to the Economic Development, Natural and Cultural Resources, and Open Space and Recreation sections of the 2018 Preservation Planning in Leverett framework.
- Table 6 (Top Ten Goals): Directly advances Goal #10: Foster arts and culture.
- Table 7 (Top Contributors to Livability): Synthesizes core town strengths:
  - #8 Arts and Culture
  - #9 Preservation of and access to historic and cultural resources
  - #10 Support for local business
- Table 8 (Top Needs for Livability): Resolves documented community deficits:
  - #6 More community gathering spaces
  - #7 More town-wide community events
  - #9 More access to Town information

D. Implementation Directives

The Planning Board recommends that Town staff, committees, and cultural stakeholders collaborate to establish optimal district boundaries, finalize application benchmarks, and secure formal authorization from the Selectboard to finalize the designation. This designation will serve as a tool to expand public programming, build vibrant community spaces, encourage formal partnerships among local cultural workers, and unlock eligibility for annual state grant funding to support municipal arts and tourism.

amendments

Town of Leverett

Comprehensive Plan: Phase 2 (2023-2024)