



# TOWN OF LEVERETT

## Massachusetts 01054

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### 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 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.

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