



## Summary of Public Comments and Changes Made to Phase I after Public Review

Phase I of *Vision of Tomorrow: Wrentham's 2030 Master Plan* was posted for public review from July 7 to August 6, 2021. To review all public comments received, please see [here](#). The key comments and changes to the Master Plan made in response are summarized below.

### Summary of changes to Master Plan:

- Edited the Economic Development Quick Facts by removing the annual income of Retail employees (as some of the employees may be part-time) and added explanation that about half of people who work in retail in Wrentham are over the age of 30
- Edited Economic Development Goal #3 by removing the word "commercial" to be more inclusive and include office development
- Edited Economic Development Goal #3, Strategy #1 to reference higher-paying jobs, including in life sciences and biopharmaceutical industries
- Edited the Housing Key Themes bullet to explain where current housing would be illegal to build today due to Wrentham zoning bylaw's lot size requirements
- Edited Housing Goal #2 to focus on protecting land with valuable natural resources
- Edited background to Housing Goal #2 to clarify the relationship between protecting open space and meeting housing need
- Edited the background to Housing Goal #4 to clarify the income restrictions for Affordable Housing
- Corrected typo's and made small edits

**Comment: The Master Plan should address other topics including infrastructure, public services, and sidewalks.**

Vision of Tomorrow is being completed in phases due to budget limitations. Phase I includes a Vision Statement, as well as the Housing and Economic Development chapters. Phase II, starting in Fall 2021 will include the Transportation, Open Space & Recreation chapters and start the Implementation chapter. Phase III, which is pending State funding, will include the following additional chapters, which will cover additional topics including infrastructure needs:

- Land Use and Zoning
- Natural and Cultural Resources
- Town Resources, Services and Capital facilities
- Energy and Sustainability (including Climate Change and Adaptation)
- Implementation

**Comment: The Economic Development Goals and Strategies should prioritize attracting higher-paying jobs to Wrentham.**

This was the intention of Economic Development Goal #3 and is consistent with what we have heard throughout the planning process. The Master Plan has been edited to better reflect this intention:

Economic Development Goal #3 in the Public Review draft read: “Make Wrentham more business-friendly and attract context-appropriate commercial development that diversifies employment options and the tax base and adds value to the community.” The word “commercial” was removed to include office development. Goal #3 now reads: “Make Wrentham more business-friendly and attract context-appropriate development that diversifies employment options and the tax base and adds value to the community.”

In addition, language was added to Economic Development Goal #3, Strategy #1 to reference high-paying jobs, including in the life sciences and biopharmaceutical industries.

**Comment: Most people who work in retail are high school students, therefore analysis of their income is misleading.**

The perception that most people who work in retail in Wrentham are in high school is inaccurate. Data on the people who work in Wrentham is limited, as employers do not readily release this information. However, based on US Census Bureau data, approximately half of the people who work in the retail industry in Wrentham are 30 years of age or older.

In addition, regardless of the demographics of workers, most jobs in Wrentham are in the retail industry, and the Town’s budget is greatly impacted by the success of the Premium Outlets. Therefore, consideration of retail employees is an important factor in the Town’s future.

**Comment: The Master Plan should not change the two-acre zoning in Sheldonville and other areas in western Wrentham.**

The Master Plan does not include any Strategies to reduce the minimum lot size in the R-87 zoning district.

**Comment: Any changes to the zoning should be reviewed by the public first.**

The Master Plan provides guidance and recommendations on how to update the zoning bylaw. Full implementation of the Master Plan would require amendments to the zoning bylaw. However, the Master Plan does not directly impact Wrentham’s zoning. In accordance with State law (M.G.L. Ch. 40A, S. 5), any changes to Wrentham’s zoning must be approved by Town Meeting. Language was added to Housing Goal #3 background to clarify that any proposed zoning changes should include an inclusive public process before vote at Town Meeting.

**Comment: The Town cannot influence housing prices.**

The Town has a set of tools in its toolbox, and zoning is one of those tools. Requiring more land per home adds cost to developing each home, and the developer passes that cost on to the homebuyer. In some cases, it is appropriate for the Town to allow more homes per acre of land, which would reduce the cost of building those homes and allow developers to reduce the price of the home. The Town cannot mandate that a developer sells each home for a certain price, nor would it want to--the

developer will sell each home at a price that a buyer will pay. However, the Town can adjust the market conditions through amendments to the zoning that create more diversity in the housing stock, which in turn can result in housing choices being offered at a variety of price points.

**Comment: The data points in the existing conditions assessment are arbitrary.**

The existing conditions assessment is a thorough review of available data, similar to the analysis performed in other master plans. The data sources can be found below each the various graphs and tables within the plan.

**Comment: The Master Plan references State grant funding—how is that funding allocated? Will schools be reimbursed for new students? Will infrastructure be addressed with the funding?**

The background on Housing Goal #1 Strategy #3 explains that the State legislature recently passed legislation that requires municipalities, including Wrentham, to amend their zoning to allow 15 units per acre in walkable areas or near transit, in order to be eligible for funding, including MassWorks and Housing Choice Capital Grants. The average MassWorks grant is approximately \$2.5 million to pay for infrastructure. The average Housing Choice grant is much less at approximately \$250,000. To stay eligible for these grants, Wrentham must amend its zoning.

One way to meet these new requirements would be to amend the Village Center zoning to allow for slightly higher-density, walkable housing development in the Town Center. If the zoning were written as a “Smart Growth Zoning Overlay District” consistent with MA Chapter 40R, then the State will reimburse any costs incurred from the new housing to educate new students (see the response below regarding research on housing production and school enrollment).

The State funding can be used for infrastructure. In addition, more compact housing is often much less expensive to service than low density housing. For example, more compact housing requires fewer road lane miles and is located closer to fire and safety services than more spread-out housing.

**Comment: The Housing chapter should discourage “apartment-style” rental properties because they 1) encourage residents who have more children which adds to the cost of educating new students, and 2) do not encourage residents who “have a drive to improve our community.”**

No change was made to the Master Plan.

Youth are a protected class under fair housing laws--it is illegal to discriminate against new development based on the age of residents. Furthermore, there is no reason to believe residents who rent their homes have more children than residents who own their homes. In fact, rental opportunities are often smaller in size than homeownership opportunities, and therefore attract smaller households. Additionally, [research](#) has found that housing production and school enrollment are not meaningfully correlated. Other factors, such as broad demographic trends and parental preferences are more accurate predictors of enrollment growth or decline. Finally, housing and schools are different issues that should be addressed with different policies. Concerns about school capacity will be addressed through planning for educational facilities, not housing policy.

Increasing options for homeownership helps create wealth-building opportunities, and that is one reason why the Master Plan supports zoning changes to encourage lower-cost, market-rate homes to serve first-time homebuyers and smaller households. Ownership options are also an important facet of a

balanced Affordable Housing stock and can be part of Wrentham's approach to promoting deed-restricted Affordable Housing per Housing Goal #4. However, the idea that there is a difference in how much a resident cares about their community based on whether they own or rent their home is a myth.