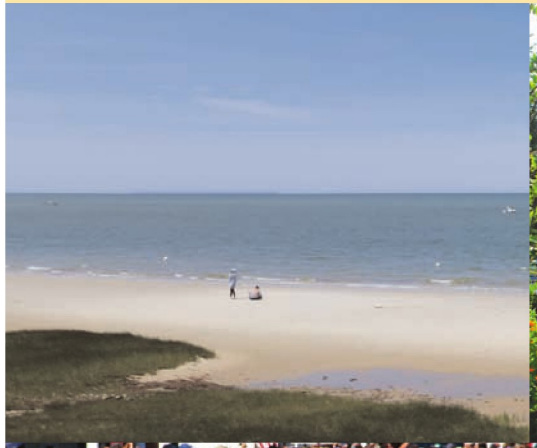
Town of Brewster Vision Plan • 2018



Introduction

Purpose: The Brewster Vision Plan expresses the community's preferences for how it intends to evolve socially, physically, and economically. As such, the Plan will guide town decisions and serve as a framework for other future plans, such as a comprehensive plan.

Overview of the Process

The Vision Plan results from a series of activities designed to bring out community values, identify the key issues confronting Brewster now and into the future, and build consensus around priority actions to achieve the goals set by the process. The planning process included four principal steps:

1. Community workshops in June 2017 in which participants indicated what they value about Brewster, the challenges and opportunities facing the community, and their vision for the future. From this, the Brewster Vision Advisory Group (BVAG) was able to identify the key issues facing the town – the building blocks for the future vision with goals for each of the building blocks.

2. Community workshops in October 2017 in which participants identified actions to achieve the goals under each of the building blocks. From this, the BVAG drew up a list of actions for which there was the greatest amount of public support.

3. A public survey in February 2018 in which participants were asked to indicate how important they felt each of the actions was in achieving the goals for the building blocks.

4. Community workshops in May 2018 in which participants identified how the community and Town government could most effectively implement the Vision Plan.

The Results

From this process of public engagement, the Vision Plan is constructed on eight building blocks: community character, open space, housing, local economy, coastal management, water resources, governance, and community infrastructure. The survey results confirmed the consensus on the importance of these issues and the actions which are proposed under each of the building block goals. At the same time each of the building blocks cannot be treated as a separate, stove-pipe issue and actions. They are indeed interrelated: action on one will help advance the goals of other building blocks.

Thanks

The development of this plan was the result of the active participation, thinking, and efforts of many people. We would like to thank the hundreds of people who participated in community workshops and the 1,275 people who took the survey. We would like to thank the facilitators and recorders whose skills made the workshops succeed. Thanks to Tonna-Marie Surgeon-Rogers without whom the survey would not have been possible. Thanks to the Brewster Planning Department whose support was critical to the fruitful outcome of each step. And lastly, thanks to Cheryl Doble of Tisbury who guided us through the planning process.

The Brewster Vision Advisory Group

Brewster's Vision

Brewster is a welcoming and inclusive community that celebrates its diversity and special character.

We preserve our historical setting and seek to protect its contribution to our town's character. We work to preserve the rural, small town feel of Brewster created by low density development and open space, which contributes to protecting water resources and providing scenic areas for recreation and contemplation. In the context of coastal change, we protect our bayside coastline, which defines our sense of place and provides special recreational and economic opportunities.

We honor our history as a working community and partner with Brewster businesses that support residents and visitors by providing unique, high-quality products, services, and experiences built on our character and environment.

We support growth that is appropriately scaled and sited. We seek to offer housing that is affordable to residents of all ages and economic standing.

We strive to provide the infrastructure necessary to ensure that all citizens - particularly elders and families with children - are safe, healthy and supported, so they can work, learn, participate, and give back to the community.

The methods and practices that we set in place encourage and promote public discourse and collaboration. We look to successful models in other communities and organizations as examples to manage and guide our approach to change in our Town.

We are committed as we move forward, through careful planning and coordination, to improve our community and protect what we value about Brewster.

Community Character

Goal: Sustain and foster Brewster's historic setting, rural nature, small-town feel, and socially inclusive spirit.

Purpose 1

Provide social opportunities and services for all

1. Provide a Community Center for all ages for social and recreational activities and include meeting rooms.

2. Create social gathering activities (town suppers, meet and greet) for all ages; expand recreational activities for all and communicate to all via town website and social media.

3. Provide services and infrastructure for an "age friendly" community including transportation especially for the elderly and those living alone.

Purpose 2

Maintain the Town's historic heritage and style

1. Review, strengthen and enforce zoning for 6A to ensure historic preservation and standards; define "appropriate development" with input by all.

2. Create more opportunities (historic markers, walking trails, Brewster history app) for current and new residents and tourists to learn about the history of Brewster.

3. Explore ways to maintain and improve the appearance of properties along Route 6A.

Purpose 3

Maintain the Town's small-town feel and scale through appropriate development

1. Create a "town center" including housing (for example, apartments above businesses), businesses and recreational outdoor space.

2. Allow for the building of intergenerational co-housing that includes social activities.

Examples of stakeholders

- Old King's Highway Historic District, Historical Commission, Brewster Historical Society
- Building Department, Zoning Board of Appeals, Planning Department and Planning Board
- Chamber of Commerce
- Cape Cod Museum of Natural History
- Council on Aging, Friends of Brewster Elders, Churches
- Brewster Ladies Library
- Business and community group leaders (hospitality, arts, retail, aqua and agriculture, Brewster Ponds Coalition, Coastal Committee)
- Brewster Conservation Trust, Conservation Department
- Recreation Department, School Department

Water Resources

GOAL: Protect Brewster's fresh water system to preserve high quality drinking water and maintain or improve the health of our ponds and marine watersheds.

PURPOSE 1

Protect town wellfields by expanding open space acquisition and other measures

1. Identify and purchase more open space in critical areas around town wellfields and pursue other land preservation actions, such as promoting conservation restrictions and tax incentives for individual property owners and placing conservation restriction protections on town-owned land such as the golf course, to protect groundwater.

2. Develop and/or expand public education and outreach by the town and by individual town boards and committees regarding threats to drinking water supplies, such as hazardous materials, "contaminants of emerging concern" and other pollutants.

3. Pursue improvements to residential and industrial zoning/regulations in Zone II areas that will strengthen groundwater protection.

4. Examine and, where needed, improve coordination between town committees on water quality protection issues and actions.

Examples of stakeholders

- Water Department and Board of Health
- Conservation Commission and Department of Natural Resources
- Department of Public Works
- Planning Department and Town Planner
- Brewster Ponds Coalition
- Pleasant Bay Alliance
- Brewster Conservation Trust
- Barnstable County Health Dept. and Cooperative Extension
- Neighborhood Associations
- Brewster Assoc. of Part Time Residents
- Protect Our Cape Cod Aquifer

PURPOSE 2

Improve pond water quality through public education, regulation, and mitigation activities

1. Encourage and promote a comprehensive public education program targeting homeowners, schoolchildren and visitors. This pond protection program would address issues such as fertilizer use, landscaping best practices, septic systems, storm water management and contaminants of emerging concern.

2. Implement existing town stormwater management requirements and up-date the stormwater management program to mandated standards to eliminate road runoff to ponds.

3. Consider adopting more effective septic regulations around ponds. Explore funding options for individual property owners for more restrictive and costly regulatory requirements for septic treatment/placement due to their proximity to ponds.

PURPOSE 3

Protect the water quality of the town's marine watersheds

1. Expand requirements for advanced wastewater treatment systems for commercial and residential development in sensitive marine watersheds; the town should set an example by proactively upgrading all municipally-owned structures/properties to include advanced wastewater treatment systems.

2. Identify and preserve land within marine watersheds as well as protect/restore beneficial coastal resource areas such as salt marshes in order to protect marine water resources.

3. Study possible improvements to existing regulations, such as stormwater regulations, and adopt and enforce stricter regulations on coastal development that will help reduce impacts to marine water quality.

Open Space

Goal: Maintain and expand open space assets to provide public recreation, protect fragile natural habitat, and protect water resources

Purpose 1

Improve public access to and expand the use of recreational areas

1. Work in collaboration with the state's Division of Conservation and Recreation to develop better public access to state-owned beach property.

2. Look at existing town properties to create recreational opportunities such as walking trails, bike paths and a dog park, and encourage expanded utilization of Drummer Boy Park for recreational uses, including the possible development of a walkway to Wing Island.

3. Pursue land acquisition opportunities for additional recreational areas.

Purpose 2

Prioritize environmentally sensitive areas for preservation

1. Use available mapping technology and town/outside collaborations to identify and protect priority parcels in sensitive natural resource areas, particularly in designated Zone II drinking water supply areas.

2. Ensure that existing funding continues and additional funding sources are made available to acquire priority open space parcels.

3. Properly manage existing open space assets and ensure that adequate funding is available to maintain their protection.

Purpose 3

Maintain open space through density and development standards

1. Utilize zoning and other regulatory options as alternatives to land purchases in order to protect open space in environmentally sensitive areas, including improved use of cluster development and natural resource protection zoning.

2. Zone strategically to direct growth away from natural resource areas while at the same time change zoning elsewhere to accommodate greater density in areas where it is appropriate.

3. Build public awareness about regulatory (zoning) methods to protect open space.

Examples of stakeholders

• Open Space Committee • Department of Natural Resources
• Brewster Conservation Trust • Conservation Commission
• Cape Cod Commission • Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts
• Association to Preserve Cape Cod
• Abutters/Neighboring Communities to Open Space (potential/existing)
• Planning Department • Brewster Ponds Coalition

Housing

GOAL: Provide more affordable, safe, and accessible rental and ownership housing options at different price points, particularly for single people, young families, and our older population. Achieve the state's 10% affordable goal by 2025.

PURPOSE 1

Promote housing choices to allow families to live, work, and prosper

1. Review current zoning with key emphasis on Accessory Dwelling unit bylaw which would allow an additional smaller unit to be built on an existing home lot; consider multifamily zoning and housing above existing businesses.

2. Review current housing stock and town owned land, identify needs, promote existing programs and create innovative new programs.

3. Create a Municipal Housing Trust which will allow the Town to develop more flexible programs such as Buy Down assistance for homeowners, rental vouchers, rehabilitation and acquisition of land for Town-led, friendly 40B affordable development.

4. Research and develop creative public and private sources of funding and partnerships for housing.

5. Educate the public about affordable housing by holding educational forums and creating a marketing/awareness campaign about the need for affordable and community housing options.

PURPOSE 2

Provide opportunities to address the varied housing needs of Brewster's aging population

1. Create more ways for seniors to age in place through zoning changes, tax incentives, home sharing programs and elderly support services.

2. Develop more elderly housing options that are focused on inclusion, not isolation, and that are near public transportation routes.

PURPOSE 3

Address the housing needs of the Town's year-round and seasonal workforce

1. Develop relationships between businesses, homeowners and Town to identify and locate rooms for seasonal workers in safe and well managed locations, preferably near transportation centers. Review zoning that would allow more housing units to be built above existing businesses.

2. Develop more year round work force affordable rental stock and affordable first time home-ownership opportunities through, for example, smaller lot sizes and non-traditional housing designs.

Examples of stakeholders

- Low/Middle Income Residents (Young Families, Older Fixed Income Families & Seasonal Workforce)
- Brewster Housing Coordinator • Brewster Housing Trust • Housing Partnerships (Brewster & MA)
- Brewster Housing Authority • Chambers of Commerce (Cape and Brewster)
- Local Builders Associations, Contractors, MA Architects
- Community Development Partnership • Housing Assistance Corporation • Lenders/Financing

Coastal Management

Goal: In the context of coastal change, preserve and protect Brewster's coastal resources and expand public access

Purpose 1

Protect coastal resources in ways that preserve coastal ecosystems and habitats and the character of the town and coastal neighborhoods

1. Develop a town-wide Coastal Resource Management Plan based on science and best practices, with a focus on soft solutions, protecting habitat, and managing stormwater run-off.

2. Consider best practices for minimally invasive infrastructure such as boardwalks, parking set back from sensitive areas, and the use of permeable materials for parking areas.

3. Implement the Brewster Coastal Adaptation Strategy for the Town's public beaches and landings, including engaging citizens before coming up with specific plans.

Purpose 2

Maintain and expand public access for all through public consensus and explore alternate modes of transport and access points

1. Explore alternate transport methods including shuttles or trolleys from remote parking areas, and additional bike and walking paths.

2. Expand beach access to new areas such as Wing Island and the state beach between Linnell and Crosby landings. Investigate purchasing or developing agreements to use other areas.

Purpose 3

Adapt to climate change projections and advance adaptation and resiliency techniques that are financially and environmentally sustainable

1. Identify techniques such as living shorelines, nourishment from dredged material, and land acquisition for retreat locations to adapt to coastal change.

2. Provide outreach and education (signs, field trips, publications) to build awareness of citizens and decision makers about the nature of coastal change.

Examples of stakeholders

- Conservation Commission
- Coastal Committee
- Department of Natural Resources, Department of Public Works
- Coastal property owners, Brewster Assoc. of Part-Time Residents
- Town Planner, Planning Board
- Police, Fire Departments
- Business leaders, Chamber of Commerce, Aquaculture grant holders
- Other Cape and coastal towns
- State and Federal agencies: Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Environmental Protection
- Cape Cod Museum of Natural History

Local Economy

Goal: Promote a sustainable economy that builds on Brewster's natural and human assets, addresses the needs of small businesses, and provides year-round employment for Brewster's young families.

Purpose 1

Build a "green" economy based on the Town's natural beauty and resources

1. Develop a brand and market Brewster as a green community.

2. Provide incentives for "green" businesses to locate and grow in Brewster.

3. Sponsor/support outreach activities (forums, walks, festivals) that celebrate the Town's natural resources and green businesses.

Examples of stakeholders

- Town Planner, Planning Board, Housing Coordinator
- Chambers of Commerce (Cape and Brewster)
- Small and large business leaders
- Old King's Highway Historic District • Historical Commission
- Department of Natural Resources
- Conservation Department
- Brewster Conservation Trust
- Building Department, Zoning Board of Appeals, Health Department
- Consumers
- Select Board, Board of Health, Finance Committee

Purpose 2

Foster small businesses compatible with the Town's character and promote year-round employment

1. Develop a community consensus regarding the types of businesses and design standards that are appropriate for Brewster.

2. Modify zoning to make it less restrictive and to streamline the permitting process, especially for small businesses, and revise the use table to allow businesses, including home occupations that are compatible with town character.

3. Modify zoning to encourage a small downtown area of mixed uses that is walking- and biking-friendly.

4. Make the town more business-friendly by actions such as providing a liaison in Town Hall, supporting a mentoring program, and creating an innovation center for start-up businesses.

Governance

Goal: Create a more open and inclusive town government that encourages participation by all citizens by improving two-way communication, expanding volunteer opportunities, and encouraging customer friendly service.

Purpose 1

Expand and improve communication to citizens about Town plans and activities

1. Improve the Town web site both to add more timely and complete content and to make that content easily searchable and accessible.

2. Improve the town meeting process to reach a wider community audience through, for example, changing the day of the week, the time of day, or the manner in which citizens participate.

3. Expand Town email to a larger audience. Offer email sign-up more widely for example at voter registration, the library, and the Council on Aging. Consider opt out rather than opt in sign-up.

4. Strengthen and expand the Town's social media presence. Use platforms that reach younger citizens like Instagram.

5. Share more information on warrant articles prior to Town Meeting through groups like Brewster Community Network, homeowner associations, special interest groups and the Chamber of Commerce. Mail the warrant to every household.

6. Improve the working relationship between town government and citizens: expand opportunities for governing bodies to hear citizens' concerns, establish Select Board open office hours and other opportunities for dialog, expand opportunities for input from part-time residents, create a "What's Happening in Town Hall" newsletter or similar communication, and provide information in tax bills about how taxes are spent.

Purpose 2

Expand the volunteer base to increase the use of citizen expertise and build diversity in decision-making

1. Create a volunteer clearinghouse to identify opportunities, reach newcomers and partner with diverse groups like retirees and young people. Establish a volunteer coordinator and/or a citizen advisory board. Survey available skills and match to needs.

2. Create shorter term, more flexible, task force opportunities to use vital citizen expertise. Establish term limits for boards and committees to encourage new ideas and new committee members. Establish a regular (annual or semi-annual) open house during which town departments and boards can share what they do and what qualifications are needed to participate. Invite citizen involvement.

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Governance
continued

Purpose 3

Strengthen the customer service approach to Town services

1. Create a welcome packet for new citizens and business owners with complete and easy to follow instructions on how to get things done.

2. Make customer service a priority by providing employee training and assessing employee performance using customer service as a criterion.

3. Establish an ombudsman and greeter in Town Hall to facilitate citizen interaction with town departments and get things done simply and quickly.

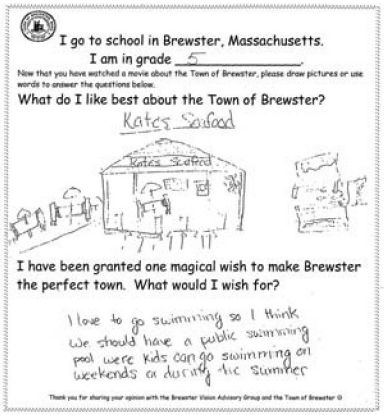
4. Consolidate and simplify the permitting processes for businesses and homeowners; create administrative approvals for simple requests.

Examples of stakeholders

- Select Board and Town Administration
- Citizens and Town Meeting
- Town Employees
- Town Planner and Planning Board
- Information Technology Department
- Public Relations
- Zoning Board of Appeals
- Council on Aging
- Schools and school organizations
- Local Homeowners associations, clubs, groups and committees

Community Infrastructure

Goal: Maintain and expand town infrastructure in ways that expand opportunities for community interaction, support the development of a "green" economy, expand recreation opportunities, and promote public safety.


I go to school in Brewster, Massachusetts.
I am in grade 5.
Now that you have watched a movie about the Town of Brewster, please draw pictures or use words to answer the questions below.
What do I like best about the Town of Brewster?
Kates Seafood

I have been granted one magical wish to make Brewster the perfect town. What would I wish for?
I love to go swimming so I think we should have a public swimming pool were kids can go swimming on weekends or during the summer
Thank you for sharing your opinion with the Brewster Vision Advisory Group and the Town of Brewster ☺

Purpose 1

Create a community center to house activities and interaction for people of all ages

1. Form a committee to facilitate the process and hold public meetings for community input.
2. Conduct a feasibility/location study to identify the best location for a community center.
3. Repurpose an existing facility (such as Eddy School). Utilize neighboring town experience (such as Harwich) as a model.
4. Develop uses and programming, with activities for all ages, for the proposed facility.

Purpose 2

Expand the bike and pedestrian trails and paths for recreation and transportation throughout town

1. Develop a town wide plan that includes all existing trails and sidewalks, potential areas for expansion, trail connections and links to key recreation areas, bay beaches and west Brewster.
2. Identify areas of improvement for existing trails and sidewalks such as signage, safety, and lighting and provide more bicycle safety information.
3. Make the town more bicycle/pedestrian friendly by providing information on the trail system.
4. Review and modify existing policies and development guidelines to require (where possible) sidewalks and bike lanes on new roads and re-pavement projects.

Purpose 3

Provide active recreation opportunities and facilities including those for youth

1. Survey the community (all ages) to identify desired activities and programming.
2. Inventory existing facilities and identify potential locations for new facilities such as a community pool, pickleball, volleyball and basketball courts.
3. Expand and promote existing and future active recreational (seasonal and year-round) programs.
4. Research potential ways to provide transportation to recreation areas.

Examples of stakeholders

- Planning Department, Planners, Architects
- Building Department, Department of Public Works
- Water Dept., Recreation Dept., School Dept.
- Historical Commission
- Cape Cod Regional Transit Authority
- School Committee, parents and students
- All Citizens Access Committee
- Bikeways Committee, Bike Shops
- Mass. Department of Conservation and Recreation
- Brewster Ladies Library, Churches, Council on Aging

Taking Action Turning the Plan into action

The Vision Plan is intended to be a living document, guiding the near- and long-term decisions on which our community's future is built. Therefore, it is imperative that the goals guide actions of Town government and community organizations and that the relevant stakeholders play their part in implementing the actions presented in the Plan. Implementation will involve figuring out the details and making the actions work in the context of town capacity, financial and fiscal constraints, and the legal framework for town action. Overall, the Select Board, Town Boards and Committees, and citizens through Town Meeting will oversee turning the Plan into action. Implementation will be most effective if there is a true partnership between town government and the community to assure that the goals laid out in the Plan are reached.

What the community can do to promote the implementation of the Vision Plan.

Town Government

- ✔ Adopt the Vision Plan as a formal action of the Select Board and assign responsibility for implementation.
- ✔ Communicate the Vision Plan, including important milestones and progress towards implementation through a variety of traditional and innovative vehicles.
- ✔ Make the Vision Plan a guide for policymaking and town decisions (budgeting, town warrant articles, town mission statement).
- ✔ Engage Town department heads and town staff to take ownership of the Vision Plan and integrate it into their daily work and future plans; restructure and reorganize staffing as needed.
- ✔ Create a Vision Implementation Committee to shepherd and oversee implementation and to keep the Vision Plan in the forefront of Town priorities, including ongoing stakeholder involvement.

Community Organizations

- ✔ Embrace the Vision Plan, organize meetings and other communications to build awareness and understanding about the Vision Plan.
- ✔ Use the Vision Plan to guide organizational plans, take on Vision Plan projects related to organizational mission for implementation or collaboration with Town.
- ✔ Help foster two-way communication with the Town, organize meetings and other forms of communication to educate people about issues and provide feedback.

Citizens

- ✔ Work together to create a culture of engagement, talk with friends and neighbors, make a difference.
- ✔ Act, vote, attend meetings.
- ✔ Get involved in a Vision Plan issue, volunteer.

A Publication of the Town of Brewster, Massachusetts
June 2018