



**Master Plan Implementation Committee
Report to Town Meeting
May 2019**

The Town's Master Plan was adopted almost ten years ago, and most of the tasks assigned in the plan to the various boards, commissions committees and individuals are either ongoing or completed. A few of the uncompleted tasks, such as a recreation plan for the whole community and mapping river access, are being carried out as part of the updates to the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) and the Master Plan itself. Meanwhile, staff, elected and appointed officials, and volunteers have been very busy with ongoing tasks. Some highlights from the past 12 months:

The Sustainability and Energy Commission is working towards certification of South Hadley as a green community.

The Redevelopment Authority is back on track with its plan for redevelopment in the Falls area and hopes to submit the plan shortly.

The Historic District Study Commission has submitted its request to have the North Main Street area designated a historic district.

The Conservation Commission, with the Bike/Walk Committee, has put up more signage on Town conservation areas and has uploaded a number of hiking trail maps for several of those areas to the Conservation web page.

SHELD is currently rolling out its new fiber optic network to the first and second neighborhoods.

The Planning Board was granted approval for a second 40 R (“smart growth”) neighborhood, Woodlawn Plaza. It is currently pursuing grants for infrastructure and is very busy with the OSRP and Master Plan updates.

However, the Historical Commission is not currently functioning. This is a concern because it has certain legally required tasks, such as addressing the impact of proposed changes on sites of historical or archaeological significance. While these are being handled informally, in the longer term this isn’t desirable. We urge the Selectboard to determine how to revive the Commission, or whether to assign its duties elsewhere.

Concerns about communications issues have often been raised in our annual reports: communications within town government and between town government and the public. We are pleased to see some real improvements this year, with more in the works. The Town web site is being overhauled, and there appears to be better use of messaging and social media. The Recreation Commission is well into planning a major expansion of communications about recreational activities.

Last year we commented on the numbers of boards and committees whose information on the Town web site was out of date or lacking. This had been addressed to a large degree, and most entities now have posted mission statements and up to date lists of members. But a significant number still aren’t posting their minutes in the document center, although some post on their own web sites. However, this does present a challenge to anyone looking for information quickly. Incidentally, we like the icon that shows that a meeting was televised, though the recording is not a legal substitute for written minutes.

Board chairs or their designates might find it useful to participate in an annual training session that would cover requirements for minutes and how to post them, how they can use their board’s web page, how they can publicize activities, and what to do when there are other boards or individuals that might be interested in, or need to be involved with, what the board is doing. In regard to this last topic, we are hopeful that the updated master plan will suggest ways of strengthening communications and relationships among entities especially in situations requiring entities to work collaboratively.

Better communication can lead to better participation, and also helps to recruit volunteers. We would like to encourage more entities to be proactive about publicizing what they’re doing, using the Town Reminder, the Town Facebook page and other social media.

For MPIC, our biggest area of activity this year has been the update process for the Open Space and Recreation Plan and the Master Plan. We participated in designing the Request for Proposal from consulting firms and have been working with the team from Harriman Associates since January. MPIC members are on both update advisory committees. In addition, because we are committed to robust community engagement in the planning process, we are arranging and leading at least four smaller gatherings after each of the public forums led by the consultants. During these sessions we take participants through the same visioning and planning exercises

that were used in the preceding forum and feed the results back to the consultants. In an effort to reach people who don't normally attend public meetings we are holding these gatherings in a wide variety of locations, including the Senior Center, Lathrop Village and Newton Manor, Riverboat Village, Loomis Village, Fire District 2 and the South Hadley Public Library. Meetings are held on various days and times of day, including evenings, depending on what seems to make the most sense for a particular population.

Although the OSRP will be completed and submitted by the end of June, work on the Master Plan will continue through the rest of 2019. There will be at least two more public forums in the fall, as the consultants develop the goals and tasks for the updated plan, and we anticipate continuing the smaller gatherings as well. In addition, we expect to visit each of the entities that are assigned tasks in the draft of the updated plan to ensure that they are comfortable with their assignments.

The current matrices, reflecting achievements in the last 12 months, are on line at <http://www.southhadleyma.gov/223/Master-Plan-Implementation-Committee>.

Many thanks, as always, to the elected and appointed officials, the staff, and the many volunteers who combine their efforts to make South Hadley a good place to be.

Respectfully Submitted,

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