



## **TOWN OF CONCORD**

West Concord Advisory Committee  
c/o Department of Planning & Land Management  
141 Keyes Road - Concord, MA - 01742

October 6, 2017

To: Planning Board; Marcia Rasmussen, Director, Dept. of Planning and Land Management;  
Elizabeth Hughes, Town Planner

From: Members of the West Concord Advisory Committee

### **Re: Long-Range Planning**

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The West Concord Advisory Committee met on Wednesday, Oct. 4, to discuss its suggestions for the Comprehensive Long Range Plan Committee. For clarity, we have bulleted our comments below as they relate to predetermined categories of interest:

#### *Livable Built Environment:*

- We would like to see a unified and committed effort to install a bridge across the Assabet River, connecting the Baker Street businesses and the Village. The benefits to the people who work on Baker Avenue, and the local residents who frequent those businesses, is incalculable. This would also allow untold numbers of commuters to get out of their cars and take the train to the Village to access their jobs at local commercial and retail businesses. We also see this as a cross-over to the *Resilient Economy* category.
- We recommend establishing a formal town-wide Bike Committee that will not only encourage bike use for recreation and commuting, but will also look at infrastructure issues on topics that need attention such as a safe, non-motorized passage across Rte. 2, a bridge across the Assabet River in West Concord for both bike and pedestrian use, and general "safe routes" considerations to various points of interest including the schools and business corridors. This group, which would ideally report to a person or group with authority such as the town manager or Select Board, could also work on systemizing the town's offering for safe bike storage (racks, sheds) and even bike rentals in the future.
- We recommend creating a body that will look at smart growth and density as it affects long-range planning. We are seeing a number of high-density building projects in West Concord and believe there needs to be alert stewards who will look specifically at how to balance a desire for density around the train station with a strain on services in town such as schools.

#### *Harmony with Nature:*

- We would like to see a unified effort to bring people back to the river in West Concord. This is an important potential economic engine and also a recreational bonus that many people don't know how to access or take advantage of. Our committee has begun work on this issue in planning for a West Concord River Festival, but there is more to do. Part of this could and should be planning to take better care of the debris on Concord's rivers, so boaters could

use them. Also, we would like to see better signage alerting people to access points and parking at or near the river. We also see this as a cross-over with the *Resilient Economy* category, because of the destination potential of West Concord for boaters.

*Resilient Economy:*

- We would like to see the addition of food trucks and other affordable food options in town to handle the coming influx of people on the rail trail, as well as from employees at the Baker Avenue businesses who will eventually have easier access to the Village through the pedestrian bridge we hope to see installed.
- We would like to see an effort to incorporate the arts and arts-related interests as part of our resilient economy. That could be in the form of support for more arts spaces, such as development of “maker spaces” or artists’ studios, as well as a concerted effort to install more public art, which we see as a draw for more visitors and therefore a boon to our businesses.

*Interwoven Equity:*

- We would like to encourage more formal interaction with the Committee on Disabilities to ensure that accessibility to all of our amenities is always considered for people with disabilities.

*Healthy Community:*

- We would like to see fruition of the much-discussed new culvert reconstruction on Rte. 2 to help reduce truck traffic through the Village and thus reduce noise and pollution.
- We would like the town to consider installing outdoor exercise equipment in the form of a workout circuit along the back of Rideout Park.

*Responsible Regionalism:*

- We believe that no long-range plan can exist without accounting for changes with the MCI prison property. We have become aware that the state could close that facility within the next 20 years. That event would be a game changer for the Rte. 2 corridor and West Concord. We see it as an opportunity for an exploration of dynamic mixed uses, such as housing (including affordable units), retail and light industrial interests. This high-profile piece of property could satisfy many categories on this list, including *Resilient Economy* and *Livable Built Environment*, and we would be remiss not to take it under consideration sooner rather than later.

Our committee is at your disposal to talk more about these ideas, or to work with you to explore them.

Sincerely,

Jeff Collins (chair), Peter Baty (clerk), Tim Alexander, Peter DeRosa, Don Detweiler, Carlene Hempel, Steve Irza