



# COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN



## Community Heart & Soul

Community Heart & Soul is a resident-driven process that engages the entire population of a town in identifying what...



UNITY BUY LOCAL EAT HEALTHY CELEBRATE

heal. HEAL

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# Purpose of this Action Plan

## CONNECT

With residents from all segments of our population.

▪

## LISTEN

What are residents' hopes and concerns for Winchendon?

▪

## PRIORITIZE

The community prioritizes actions that come from the community. Where you'll end up with an action plan of resident ideas for Winchendon.

▪

## ACT

Use the hopes and concerns of residents to guide our planning as a town, apply for grants, implement projects, etc.

▪

## TRANSFORM

Power, trust, engagement, accountability. Consumer to Citizen



# Project Summary

We are a designated Community Heart & Soul® project through the **Orton Family Foundation**, whose partnership has provided our leadership team and volunteers with the training, materials, and resources necessary to conduct this proven method of community engagement.

The Winchendon Community Heart & Soul Project (WCHSP) is a limited-term project comprised of Winchendon residents who believe that residents' voices are the key to creating a Winchendon we can be proud to call home. Our mission is to encourage resident engagement and community pride by focusing on the themes in our community that unite us and highlighting them through a campaign of storytelling and resident-driven visioning.

The primary goal of this project was to complete a two-year, town-wide visioning survey and produce an action plan based on the stories of what residents love about Winchendon. The goal of drafting a resident-envisioned, community action plan that highlights the hopes, concerns, and ideas of the diverse voices within our community has begun with this document and will continue with the dedication of the Winchendon residents.

As a designated Community Heart & Soul® community project, WCHSP used the Orton Family Foundation's Community Heart & Soul® model for community engagement. Our partners and collaborators' training, resources, and assistance allowed us to meet our goal successfully. This action plan would not exist without the conversations and story gathering across all resident groups. Using the rich data these stories held, with the help of community volunteers, the project created our Heart & Soul Statements, and a template of possible community value statements centered on what residents value about Winchendon. The Heart and Soul Statements highlight what we agree makes Winchendon a special place to live, work, and play. They are hopeful by design, addressing how residents would like to see change come to the community and decisions made on their behalf in a way that honors what we love here.

This **Winchendon CHS Resident-Envisioned Community Action Plan** is the culmination of the project's work through Phases 1 through 3 of the Community Heart & Soul® model. This plan is intended to amplify resident hopes, concerns, ideas, and calls to action by empowering residents to act on their values, match resident ideas with area stakeholders, and seek the funding necessary to implement these projects. Additionally, we intend for this plan to gain consideration for adoption as a Winchendon-specific supplemental resource to the Winchendon Master Plan. We are proud to also be in the position to share all the data we gathered of resident Values, Hopes, Concerns, and Ideas publicly through a Google Sheets document that can aid in future research, decision-making, and implementation efforts.

We hope that the process of working toward has accomplished our secondary goals:

1. Encourages residents to re-engage and own our communities by taking part in the decision-making process.
2. Rebuild trust through activities meant to make residents feel heard, in hopes we see attendance increase at decision-maker meetings and increases in volunteer opportunities for all residents.
3. Encourages new voices to create and implement channels for change that highlight residents' values.

# Background

## A little bit about Heart & Soul

Community Heart and Soul is a resident-driven approach to community development and planning, founded on the belief that the best decisions are made when everyone has a voice and when the unique character of a town is taken into consideration. The initiative seeks to harness the power and passion of residents in determining the future of their communities.

## Philosophy

At its core, Community Heart and Soul is about:

- **Engaging Everyone:** Prioritizing inclusivity and ensuring that every voice, especially those often marginalized, is heard.
- **Discovering What Matters Most:** Through various engagement methods, the process determines the unique characteristics and values that define a community.
- **Making Decisions Informed by These Values:** Community planning and development decisions are guided by the discovered values, ensuring they resonate with what the community cherishes most.

## Methodology

Community Heart and Soul follows a structured method to community planning:

- **Lay the Groundwork:** Initiating the project, building the team, and preparing the community for engagement.
- **Explore the Community:** Gathering stories and insights from community members to understand shared values and aspirations.
- **Make Decisions:** Using the collected information to inform community planning and development decisions.
- **Take Action:** Implementing decisions to ensure they align with community values and are sustainable over the long term.
- **Impact:** Heart & Soul Statements are officially adopted by town and city councils, incorporated into comprehensive and other plans, and are used to guide future policies and decisions.

By championing resident-driven community development and planning, Community Heart and Soul reinforces the notion that the most resilient and vibrant communities are built on the collective dreams and values of their inhabitants.

# Community Heart & Soul

## Project Timeline

Start Date	Phase	Event
August 2021	Getting Started	Meet with the community to begin soliciting members to be part of the team and cast the vision for the Heart & Soul Project.
September 2021	Phase 1: Imagine	The Heart & Soul team is formed to build awareness, interest, and commitment in all segments of the community.
October 2021	Phase 2: Connect	Stories are gathered from residents, leading to the development of Heart & Soul Statements that identify what matters most and reflect what they love about their town.
August 2023	Phase 3: Plan	Residents develop action plans to guide future town planning based on their Heart & Soul Statements.
December 2023	Phase 4: Act	Heart & Soul Statements are officially adopted by town and city councils, incorporated into comprehensive and other plans, and are used to guide future policies and decisions.





Winchendon Community Heart & Soul  
[www.thehealcollaborative.org/communityheartandsoul](http://www.thehealcollaborative.org/communityheartandsoul)  
[info@TheHealCollaborative.org](mailto:info@TheHealCollaborative.org)

## Processes & Methods



Developed the community network analysis



Thick & Thin stories gathered



Data Consolidated & categorized.  
Then reviewed demographics



Surveyed the community about themes



Worked with CH&S team to develop the action plan

# Our Community's Data

Our Community Heart and Soul data very closely aligned with Winchendon's Demographics

TOTAL POPULATION: Winchendon's Demographics		10841	CHS Data
Category	Breakdown	number of residents total or %	Percentage
Household Income	Less than \$25K	24%	27%
	\$25K-\$49,999	23%	24%
	\$50K-\$74,999	11%	22%
	\$75K-\$99,999	13%	21%
	\$100K+	29%	6%
Age	Under 18	18%	14%
	18-34	25%	27%
	35-44	11%	14%
	45-64	28%	31%
	65 +	18%	14%
Gender	Female	55%	68%
	Non-Binary		5%
	Male	46%	27%
Residency	Renters	48%	0
	Homeowners	52%	0
Race and Ethnicity	Asian	2.60%	0.72%
	Black or African American	1%	1%
	Hispanic or Latina/o	3.20%	5%
	Native American or Alaska Native	0%	9%
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0%	0%
	More than one race	2.50%	4%
	White	93%	70%
	Other	1.00%	10%
OTHER	Veterans	10%	4%

# Community Impact Snapshot

- 401 – Number of residents engaged
- 1,175 – Lines of data gathered
- 76 – Meetings & community events

## *Testimonials from Residents*

"I appreciate the ambiance of small towns. They often provide a strong sense of community backing. Throughout high school, whether in sports, theater, or music, I always felt supported by an amazing community cheering me on."

"I witnessed a group in Winchendon deeply committed to enhancing the comfort and inclusivity for minority groups. The drive of these residents to instigate change reflects the broader sentiment of Winchendon's population. While the town has deeply rooted traditions that some adhere to closely, introducing progressive changes can be challenging."



# Heart & Soul Statements

In these Heart & Soul Statements, we emphasize the significance of them as the essence of what truly matters to our residents, articulated in clear and succinct terms. These statements are instrumental in helping our town set priorities and make informed decisions that not only preserve but also enhance the community's core values, fostering greater resilience. At the heart of the Community Heart & Soul methodology is the creation and application of these statements, which reflect our community's collective values and serve as the foundational principles guiding our actions and decisions. They encapsulate the shared values and unifying beliefs of Winchendon residents, providing a solid starting point for discussions on community development, action, and conservation. These Heart & Soul Statements, our community's Value Statements, are the non-negotiables that embody the spirit and aspirations of our people, ensuring that any decisions made on behalf of our residents are deeply rooted in the values we hold dear.

## Local Matters

Winchendon residents work towards a vibrant local economy that supports small businesses, provides employment, meets residents' essential needs, and contributes to the town's tax base.

## People Matter

We value the potential for a small-town feel where all residents can know, connect, and treat one another with kindness. We embrace our different backgrounds, identities, and perspectives, and work together. Through our local traditions, events, and time-honored institutions to ensure that Winchendon is a viable and good home for all.

## Youth Matters

We strive to provide safe, healthy environments throughout Winchendon where our youth feel welcomed, heard, and valued for who they are.

We work together to ensure our youth have access to activities, a quality and responsive education, integrated civic engagement, and leadership opportunities.

## Town Pride Matters

Winchendon residents value living in and contributing to a town that is well cared for. We are striving to provide safe, well-maintained roads, bike paths, parks, community spaces, neighborhoods, continued beautification of the downtown area, and the preservation of historic places. People appreciate the many town-wide events and support working towards providing an effective local communication system.

## Nature Matters

We cherish the quiet beauty of Winchendon's natural environment and all that it contributes to our lives, our health, and our sense of peace and well-being.

# The Action Plan

Before any further explanation of our process in creating this Community Action Plan and conducting the study of community values, let us take a moment to explain what a community action plan is, an action plan's purpose, and what this plan can accomplish.

## **What Is A Community Action Plan?**

A Community Action Plan serves as a strategic blueprint for enacting positive change within a community. It outlines the objectives the community aims to achieve, delineates the specific actions needed to reach these goals within a set timeframe, and identifies the resources — including funding, manpower, and materials — necessary for successful implementation. This plan is a comprehensive approach to addressing community needs, setting clear directions, and mobilizing resources to bring about desired outcomes.

## **What Is Its Purpose?**

- This plan identifies a list of action items envisioned by those who live, work, and play in Winchendon and proven to be community-supported.
- This plan shows action items necessary to create the kind of change that residents support while honoring our shared values and preserving or improving upon the assets within our town.
- This plan highlights resident ideas that can help execute the tasks outlined on the Winchendon Master Plan.
- This document will function as a valuable resource for Winchendon residents, enabling them to pursue additional grant opportunities that align with their aspirations and projects they are deeply passionate about.

## **What Can It Do?**

### **Inform Policy Development**

- Local Elected Officials can adopt to use the value statements as a framework to ensure their decision-making is in line with resident interests through formal Resolution

### **Assist Community Initiative Planning**

- Community Value Statements can be used as a tool that non-profit and local agencies can use to understand the resident sentiment.
- Story and Visioning Data collected can be used to supplement informational needs in strategic planning.
- Action Items could be integrated into programming.

### **Support Funding Opportunities**

- Action items included in this plan prove community backing – alleviating the need to conduct singular community-wide study/focus groups for specific community development grants funded through state and federal government agencies.

Story and Visioning data can be used to supplement informational needs in grant writing, business plan development, and loan application.

## Partners

We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to our partners for being an integral part of our Community Heart and Soul efforts. Your unwavering support, dedication, and commitment have been instrumental in bringing our vision to life, fostering a sense of community, and driving transformative change.

Your partnership is not merely about resources and collaborations; it's about shared values, mutual understanding, and a deep-rooted passion for bettering our community. Each effort you've put in resonates with the very essence of what the Heart and Soul initiative stands for.

As we continue this journey, it is partnerships like yours that bolster our confidence, reaffirm our commitment, and propel us to achieve even more for our community. Here's to more endeavors, shared successes, and a lasting partnership.

Thank you once again for being a pillar of support in our Community Heart and Soul journey.



# Thank you!

## A Huge Shoutout to Our Amazing Community!

We are overflowing with gratitude and want to extend a heartfelt THANK YOU to each and every one of you who has been a part of the Winchendon Heart & Soul journey. Whether you've volunteered your time, collaborated with us, or offered your unwavering support, your contributions have been invaluable.

Your dedication and generosity have truly made a difference in our community. It's the collective effort of individuals like you that keeps the heart of Winchendon beating strong and full of soul!

Let's continue to grow and make a positive impact together. Thank you for being the heartbeat of our community!



# CHS Alignment with Master Plan

[Full List of Aligning Goals HERE](#)

[Full Master Plan LINK HERE](#)

Community Heart and Soul Categories					
	People Matter	Town Pride Matters	Local Matters	Nature Matters	YOUTH Matter
MASTER PLAN CHAPTERS					
<a href="#"><u>Land Use</u></a>				Goal 3, Goal 5	
<a href="#"><u>Open Space</u></a>				Goal 2, Goal 3, Goal 4; Goal 5	
<a href="#"><u>Economic Development</u></a>		Goal 2, Goal 5	Goal 2, Goal 3, Goal 4, Goal 5	Goal 3	
<a href="#"><u>Housing</u></a>		Goal 1, Goal 2, Goal 4			
<a href="#"><u>Historic &amp; Cultural Resources</u></a>	Goal 2	<a href="#"><u>Goal 1</u></a>			
<a href="#"><u>Transportation &amp; Circulation</u></a>	Goal 1	Goal 1 Goal 2, Goal 4		Goal 3	
<a href="#"><u>Services &amp; Facilities</u></a>	Goal 3				
<a href="#"><u>Community Health &amp; Wellbeing</u></a>	Goal 2, Goal 4, Goal 5	Goal 2, Goal 3	Goal 1		
<a href="#"><u>Communication &amp; Engagement</u></a>	Goal 4	Goal 1, Goal 3			Goal 4

# Action Items Clarification Notes

Here's a breakdown of the Action items sections from the Winchendon Community Heart & Soul Project's document to help everyone understand the source and significance of the data presented:

## Number of Resident Responses

This figure represents the total responses we received from residents specifically addressing the topic in question. It reflects the community's level of engagement and interest in each particular action item discussed.

## Ranking among Statements & Ideas

This data is derived from two rounds of surveys:

1. **Initial Survey:** Gathered resident opinions on various topics relevant to life in Winchendon. This helped us identify key themes or 'matters' statements that were most significant to the community.
2. **Follow-Up Survey:** After refining the 'matters' statements based on initial feedback, we sought additional input to see how well these revised statements resonated with the community. The rankings indicate the level of response each statement received, helping prioritize issues based on community feedback.

## Subthemes from data in order of priority

This section ranks the importance of different subthemes related to each 'matters' statement based on how residents responded to them in the surveys. It shows which aspects are considered most crucial by the community and guides our focus in addressing these topics.

## Resident Ideas for Action

These are direct suggestions from community members about changes or improvements they desire in Winchendon. Each suggestion is prioritized based on how frequently it was mentioned by respondents, giving us a clear indication of the most popular or pressing ideas according to the community.

This structured approach ensures that the action plan is deeply rooted in actual community feedback and addresses the areas residents care about most. It's a direct reflection of the community's voice, turning resident input into actionable insights for the betterment of Winchendon.

# Action Items

## #1 People Matter

Number of Resident Responses: 473

We value the potential for a small-town feel where all residents can know, connect, and treat one another with kindness. We embrace our different backgrounds, identities, and perspectives, and work together. Through our local traditions, events, and time-honored institutions to ensure that Winchendon is a viable and good home for all.

### Ranking among Statements & Ideas

- #1 – 33.3% of the 1168 entries in the story/data gathering
- #4 – 18% of the 467 pick your top 5 ideas survey responses

### Subthemes from data in order of priority:

1. **Sense of Community**
  - a. Involvement; Inclusion; Growing Diversity; Working Together; Welcoming
  - b. Connections; Recognition; Caring; Building Bridges
2. **Events & Gatherings for Diverse Ages, Interests, Accessibility**
3. **Honoring & Sharing History**
4. **Rural, quiet**
5. **Health & Safety**

### RESIDENT IDEAS FOR ACTION:

What people liked and would want to see more of, in order of priority.

1. **Fostering Community Events**
  - a. Expand events like the 4th of July celebration, Chili Cookoff, and parades to strengthen community bonds.
  - b. Promote public art installations and live music performances to enrich cultural experiences.
  - c. Enhance holiday and seasonal decorations to create a festive atmosphere.
  - d. Support activities such as roller skating, which bring people together for fun and recreation.
  - e. Increase military recognition efforts through flags and events to honor service members.
  - f. Encourage the formation of clubs and crafting groups to facilitate connections among residents.
  - g. Organize trips and outings to explore new experiences as a community.
2. **Promoting Inclusion, Diversity, and Belonging**
  - a. Implement more LGBTQIA+ programs to ensure inclusivity and support for diverse identities.
  - b. Increase the visibility of BIPOC representation in town government to reflect the community's diversity and promote equitable decision-making.
3. **Enhancing Accessibility**
  - a. Ensure that activities and events are accessible for seniors and individuals with mobility or disability issues, as well as families with strollers.

- b. Provide accommodations such as ramps, designated parking, and accessible facilities to facilitate participation for all community members.

#### 4. Supporting Health and Well-being

- a. Establish healing and meditation areas along green walks and bike paths to promote mental and physical well-being in natural settings.
- b. Encourage community engagement in outdoor activities that contribute to overall health and happiness.

### Organizations with Ongoing Efforts

- Town Organizations
  - Garden Club
  - Winchendon CAC/Community Hub
  - HEAL Collaborative
  - Beals Memorial Library
- Town Government
  - Board of Selectmen
  - Town Manager
  - Planning & Development
  - Parks & Recreation
  - Cultural Council
  - Council on Aging/Senior Center
  - Historic Commission
- Regional Organizations -Civic, Social, Gov't
  - Churches: Cornerstone, Unitarian, Immaculate Heart, Congregational, etc.
  - GALA

### Why is this Important

The prioritized actions resonate deeply with the residents of Winchendon, aligning with both the town's aspirations and the Community Heart and Soul project's goals. These initiatives reflect the community's collective desire for a more vibrant, inclusive, and accessible town. By emphasizing the importance of community events, we nurture a stronger sense of unity and belonging. Prioritizing inclusion and diversity ensures every resident feels seen and appreciated, contributing to a richer community tapestry. Enhancing accessibility across all community facets guarantees that everyone, regardless of ability, can engage fully in Winchendon's life. Lastly, by focusing on health and well-being, we lay the foundation for a community that not only survives but thrives, ensuring a healthier, happier future for all its members.

## #2 Town Pride Matters

Number of Resident Responses: 470

Winchendon residents value living in and contributing to a town that is well cared for. We are striving to provide safe, well-maintained roads, bike paths, parks, community spaces, neighborhoods, continued beautification of the downtown area, and the preservation of historic places.

People appreciate the many town-wide events and support working towards providing an effective local communication system.

### Ranking among Statements & Ideas

#2 – 24.6% of the 1168 entries in the story/data gathering

#1 – 39.2% of the 467 pick your top 5 ideas survey responses

### Subthemes from data in order of priority:

1. **Infrastructure**
  - a. Roads, Sidewalks, Bike Paths
  - b. Abandoned Buildings
2. **Transportation/Mobility**
3. **Communication**
4. **Events**
  - a. Group Events & Clubs
5. **Housing**
6. **Beautification**
  - a. Public Art & Music
  - b. Less Litter
  - c. Less Vandalism
7. **Assets we have**
  - a. Clark Memorial, Library, Events, CAC, Senior Center, Veterans Affairs

### RESIDENT IDEAS FOR ACTION:

What people liked and would want to see more of, in order of priority.

1. **Infrastructure**
  - a. Redevelopment of vacant properties
  - b. Better roads
  - c. Public transportation for people without vehicles
2. **Communication**
  - a. Physical newspaper delivered to homes
  - b. Signage to publicize places and events

- c. Better managed/coordinated town-wide communication

### 3. Beautification

- a. Poop bags & trash cans on the rail trail
- b. Seasonal flags
- c. Flowers

### 4. Master Plan

- a. Complete projects on the Master Plan

### 5. Community

- a. Vibrant public library
- b. Places to sit in town
- c. Welcoming committee with information for new residents

## Organizations with Ongoing Efforts

- Town Organizations
  - Garden Club
  - Winchendon CAC/Community Hub
  - HEAL Collaborative
- Town Government
  - Town Manager
  - Winchendon Redevelopment Authority
  - Department of Public Works
  - Winchendon Housing Authority
  - Parks & Recreation
  - Planning & Development
  - Communication Committee
  - Master Plan Implementation Committee
- Regional Organizations -Civic, Social, Gov't
  - CHNA & MRPC (new transportation/mobility initiative)

## Why is this Important

The action priority items hold profound importance for the residents of Winchendon, as they are a blueprint for transforming our town into a beacon of heritage preservation, aesthetic beauty, and community vitality. These initiatives promise to enrich the lives of everyone in town by fostering a safer, more connected, and more engaging living environment. From the redevelopment of vacant properties to the beautification of public spaces and the enhancement of local infrastructure, these actions are designed to instill a sense of pride, belonging, and well-being among the residents. They aim to create a Winchendon where every individual feels valued and inspired, and where the community thrives together, bound by a shared vision for a prosperous future.

# #3 Local Matters

Number of Resident Responses: 365

Winchendon residents work towards a vibrant local economy that supports small businesses, provides employment, meets residents' essential needs, and contributes to the town's tax base.

## Ranking among Statements & Ideas

#3 – 23.4% of the 1168 entries in the story/data gathering

#2 – 19.7% of the 467 pick your top 5 ideas survey responses

## Subthemes from data in order of priority:

1. **Economic Development**
  - a. More Choices with Local Businesses
  - b. More Local Shopping/Buy Local
  - c. Affordable Food Access/Grocery Store
2. **Access to Job Opportunities**
  - a. Internships
  - b. Post-Secondary Education/Training
3. **Affordable Real Estate/Housing**
4. **Signage**
  - a. Improved Marketing/Communication
5. **Sustainable**
  - a. Viable Place to Live and Work or Visit
6. **Gathering Places**
  - a. Nightlife

## RESIDENT IDEAS FOR ACTION:

What people liked and would want to see more of, in order of priority.

1. **Gathering Places; Things to do**
  - a. Dog park
  - b. Bowling alley
  - c. Community trips to restaurants, ball games, theater
  - d. Movie theater
  - e. Nightlife
  - f. Things that attract residents and visitors
2. **Food access**
  - a. Grocery store.
  - b. Larger farmers' market.
  - c. Farm share

d. Community gardens

### 3. Housing

a. More apartments

## Organizations with Ongoing Efforts

- Town Organizations
  - Winchendon CAC/Community Hub
  - Local Makers
  - HEAL Collaborative
- Town Government
  - Board of Selectmen
  - Town Manager
  - Winchendon Redevelopment Authority
  - Planning & Development
  - Winchendon Housing Authority
  - Agricultural Commission
  - Cultural Council
- Regional Organizations – Civic, Social, Gov’t
  - Local Food Works
  - North County Chamber of Commerce
  - Mount Wachusett Community College

## Why is this Important

The chosen action priorities reflect the collective vision of Winchendon’s residents, targeting enhancements in communal engagement, food accessibility, and housing diversity. These steps are not just about infrastructural improvements; they’re about creating a town where every person feels connected, supported, and part of a vibrant community fabric. By focusing on developing gathering places, expanding food access, and providing more living options, we’re building a foundation for a more inclusive and livelier Winchendon. These initiatives promise to bring people together, foster a sense of belonging, and ensure that every resident enjoys a higher quality of life, contributing to a town that’s not just a place to live, but a place to thrive.

# #4 Nature Matters

Number of Resident Responses: 164

We cherish the quiet beauty of Winchendon's natural environment and all that it contributes to our lives, our health, and our sense of peace and well-being.

## Ranking among Statements & Ideas

#4 - 12.3% of the 1168 entries in the story/data gathering  
#5 --4.3 % of the 467 pick your top 5 ideas survey responses

## Subthemes from data in order of priority:

1. **Access to Water with sitting areas**
  - a. Walking trails
  - b. Fishing
  - c. Boating
  - d. Attraction for residents, visitors
2. **Access to Open Space**
  - a. Hikes
  - b. Trail Connections
  - c. Trail maps
3. **Beautification**
  - a. Plantings
4. **Preservation & Protection of Nature and Wildlife**
5. **Contribution to Social and Economic Health**

## RESIDENT IDEAS FOR ACTION:

What people liked and would want to see more of, in order of priority.

1. **Improved Access**
  - a. To Nature
  - b. To Water
  - c. To Open Spaces
  - d. To trails at Dennison
2. **Beautification**
  - a. Flowering plants
  - b. Sculptures
  - c. Sculpture park along trails or bike paths

## Organizations with Ongoing Efforts

- Town Organizations
  - Scouts
  - Garden Club
- Town Government
  - Parks & Recreation
  - Department of Public Works
  - Conservation Commission
  - Planning & Development
- Regional Organizations – Civic, Social, Gov/t
  - MA Department of Conservation & Recreation
  - Mount Grace
  - North County Land Trust
  - Mass Audubon
  - North Quabbin Trails Association

## Why is this Important

These prioritized actions capture the essence of what makes Winchendon special to its residents—their profound connection to the town’s serene landscapes and the shared commitment to safeguarding this natural heritage. By enhancing access to nature, beautifying communal spaces with art and flora, and ensuring the preservation of our trails and open spaces, we’re not just protecting the environment; we’re nurturing a community that values well-being, tranquility, and the health benefits that come from a close relationship with nature. These initiatives are vital, as they aim to make nature’s bounty universally accessible, foster a sense of community pride in our environmental stewardship, and enhance the overall quality of life in Winchendon, making it a healthier, more peaceful place to call home.

# #5 YOuth Matters

Number of Resident Responses: 158

We strive to provide safe, healthy environments through Winchendon where our youth feel welcomed, heard, and valued for who they are.

We work together to ensure our youth have access to activities, a quality and responsive education, integrated civic engagement, and leadership opportunities.

## Ranking among Statements & Ideas

#5 – 5.9% of the 1168 entries in the story/data gathering

#3 – 19% of the 467 pick your top 5 ideas survey responses

## Subthemes from data in order of priority:

### 1. Educational & Recreational Opportunities

- a. Accessible and Diverse Experiences – Arts, Music, Theater, Sports, Places to Gather, etc.
- b. Meaningful Volunteer Opportunities
- c. Playgroups
- d. Safe place to grow up and to gather

### 2. Having Voice; Being Heard

## RESIDENT IDEAS FOR ACTION:

What people liked and would want to see more of, in order of priority.

### 1. Places to Gather; Things to Do

- a. Low/no cost opportunities for engagement and entertainment
- b. Take care of what we have, i.e., swings at the YMCA
- c. Summer outdoor children's theater
- d. Skate park
- e. After-school study spaces at the Library
- f. Child-friendly Historical Cultural Center

### 2. Schools

- a. More funding and resources for arts, sports,
- b. Separate building for preschool

### 3. Volunteer Opportunities

- a. Youth program to assist the elderly with yard work and home upkeep

### 4. Daycare

- a. More options in town

## Organizations with Ongoing Efforts

- Town Organizations
  - Winchendon CAC/Community Hub
  - Youth Changemakers
  - HEAL Collaborative
  - Clark Memorial YMCA
  - Scouts
- Town Government
  - Winchendon Public Schools
  - Beals Memorial Library
- Regional Organizations – Civic, Social, Gov’t
  - United Way – Youth Ventures

## Why is this Important

These action priorities hold significant importance for the Winchendon community, as they are designed to cultivate a nurturing and supportive atmosphere that places a high value on the well-being and development of its younger residents. By focusing on creating safe, engaging spaces for youth to gather, enriching educational resources, and fostering opportunities for civic engagement and leadership, Winchendon is committing to a future where its youth not only feel recognized and respected for their unique identities but are also encouraged and equipped to pursue their dreams and contribute meaningfully to the community. This approach ensures that the town's young people have a solid foundation from which they can grow into well-rounded, responsible, and active citizens, thereby strengthening the fabric of the community as a whole.

# Connecting Master Plan Goals

## Land Use Goals:

LU 3: Preserve wildlife and plant habitats and natural resources, and protect environmentally sensitive areas (OSRP Goal #3)

LU 5: Enhance efforts for the acquisition, protection and maintenance of open space and recreation lands (OSRP Goal #7)

## Open Space Goals:

OS 2: Develop a linked system of open space and recreation facilities (OSRP Goal #5)

OS 3: Improve and expand the scope of recreational facilities and programs for all Winchendon residents and use recreation as a catalyst for economic development/arts (OSRP Goal #6)

OS 4: Enhance the recreational potential of the town's water resources (OSRP Goal #2)

OS 5: Preserve open space throughout the town which protects and enhances the visual quality and historic character of the town (OSRP Goal #4)

## Economic Development Goals:

ED 2: Rebuild downtown Winchendon as a business center and rebrand it in the image of a vital New England small town

ED 3: Use recreation and agriculture as new industries and a catalyst for economic development

ED 4: Increase the value potential of Winchendon's people; its labor force, business owners, and prospective entrepreneurs of all ages.

ED 5: Develop/Redevelop Winchendon's economic infrastructure

## Housing Goals

HO 1: Strive to achieve compliance with Chapter 40B, the affordable housing inventory

HO 2: Allow for a wider variety of housing opportunities

HO 4: Create neighborhoods that are connected to downtown Winchendon by a variety of transportation options

## Historic & Cultural Resources Goals:

HC 1: Preserve Winchendon's existing historic and cultural assets

HC 2: Promote Winchendon existing historic and cultural assets

## Transportation and Circulation Goals

TR 1: Continue to make Winchendon's commercial centers welcoming to multiple forms of non-automobile transportation

TR 2: Improve traffic safety in downtown Winchendon

TR 3: Expand the regional trail network

TR 4: Improve maintenance and repair of transportation infrastructure

## **Services and Facilities Goals**

SF 3: Ensure Winchendon's services and facilities are accessible for all

## **Health & Well-being Goals**

HW 1: Coordinate with community resources, groups, nonprofits, and businesses (including farmers/growers) to address the issues of food insecurity and food access

HW 2: Improve transportation options for all residents and particularly for those who require reliable access to food, medical care, work, or school/education

HW 3: Continue to pursue all means to improve the condition and assortment of housing options

HW 4: Promote opportunities for improved connections among Winchendon residents to know and support each other within and across demographics

HW 5: Ensure that all residents, across demographics, are aware of all programs and services available that can make a difference in their quality of life

## **Communication & Engagement Goals**

CE 1: Adopt new methods for keeping the community aware of and involved in Town government using technology where appropriate

CE 3: Make broadband available and affordable to all town residents

CE 4: Increase the level of citizen participation in Town government