STOW **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:** Public Engagement & Outreach Plan

PREPARED BY: JMGOLDSON

DECEMBER 2023



The Public Engagement & Outreach Plan (PEOP) is intended to detail the Comprehensive Plan engagement processes and provide best practices for reaching the greatest and most representative participation. Thank you to members of the Town staff and Comprehensive Plan Committee members who contributed their time and local knowledge to this plan.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Cortni Frecha Hector Constantzos Lori Clark Marcia Rising Charles Hartford Laurie Burnett

STOW TOWN STAFF

Valerie Oorthuys, Planning Director Michael Slagle, Land Use Planner and GIS Administrator

PLANNING CONSULTANT TEAM

JM Goldson

Jennifer Goldson, AICP, Project Manager Kadineyse Paz, Assistant Project Manager Flavio Vila Skrzypek, MCP, Community Planner II Noah Harper, MCRP, Community Planner II Brenna Trollinger, MUP, Community Planner I Austin Smith, Community Planner I

Cover: Camp Stow Stow Recreation Department Facebook Page

KEY DEFINITIONS & ACRONYMS

TOWN TEAM

The Town Team will refer to the Town Staff and Steering Committee members collectively.

CONSULTANT TEAM

The Consultant Team will refer to the entire Planning Consultant Team as indicated on the previous page unless otherwise specified.

COST-BURDENED (HOUSING)

A household is considered to be cost-burdened when it is spending more than 30 percent of its monthly income on housing-related expenses (i.e., rent & utilities, mortgage payments). A household is considered to be severely cost-burdened when it is spending more than 50 percent of its monthly income on housing-related expenses.

ENGAGEMENT

Engagement, for the purposes of the PEOP, will refer specifically to the action of utilizing consultantdesigned tools to receive feedback as it pertains to the Stow Comprehensive Plan.

GAP COMMUNITIES

Gap communities refer specifically to communities the Town Team does not have an established relationship or connection to, as identified by the Network Mapping Assessment.

OUTREACH

Outreach, for the purposes of the PEOP, will refer specifically to the marketing and advertising process for different engagement opportunities and tools.

PARTICIPATION POINTS

Participation points refer to the total number of submissions for engagement tools, rather than the number of people who participated.

PROJECT TEAM

The Project Team will refer to everyone working on the Stow Comprehensive Plan including Town staff, consultants, and Comprehensive Plan Committee members.

ACRONYMS

- ACES Aggregated Community Engagement Summary
- BIPOC Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color
- CHAS HUD's Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy, specifically referring to the data set.
- SCP Stow Comprehensive Plan
- HUD United States Department of Housing and Urban Development
- MIAB Meeting-in-a-Box
- CPC Comprehensive Plan Committee
- PEOP Public Engagement & Outreach Plan

ENGAGEMENT & OUTREACH FRAMEWORK

Stow's Comprehensive Plan Public Engagement & Outreach Plan, hereafter referred to as "SCP PEOP" or "this document", is a Plan outlining the process for encouraging input and feedback from Stow community members through the local comprehensive planning process.

SCP PEOP is a living document, developed collaboratively between all project team members and may be amended at any point in the process. Specifics outlined in this Plan, particularly any dates or timeframes, are subject to change. This document serves as a guide for encouraging broad community participation, including long-time residents, newcomers, traditionally hard-to-reach communities, and historically marginalized groups to build a plan reflective of the entire community's needs.

The SCP project team understands that the most effective and successful comprehensive plan will be built collaboratively with the community it serves and intends to maximize engagement opportunities to ensure the whole Stow community has the ability to participate.

During engagement periods, JM Goldson will provide weekly engagement updates to Town staff, including total participation points and a demographic comparison showing how representative results are of the Stow community at large. Using demographic comparison results, JM Goldson will make recommendations for targeted outreach approaches to reach underrepresented groups.

All members of the Town Team were asked to complete a Network Mapping Assessment provided by JM Goldson. This assessment determined which groups and organizations the Town Team was already connected to at the start of this project as well as other formal and/or informal Stow communities they are aware of but perhaps not connected to – thus identifying community groups/organizations that may slip through the cracks. Engagement tools outlined in this Plan are designed with these "gap communities" and common barriers to participation in mind to ensure as many ideas and feedback are included, representing the most diverse community perspectives as possible.

JM Goldson will be responsible for creating marketing materials for the Town staff to distribute. Outreach will be conducted by the Town Team utilizing their existing relationships and networks. The JM Goldson Team will assist with intentional relationship-building with gap communities to allow for a broader outreach approach and will train the Town Team in intentional outreach strategies. Suggestions for outreach methods are included in this Plan.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Town of Stow is working in partnership with its residents to update the Town's Comprehensive Plan, last revised in 2010. The new comprehensive plan will guide the Stow community in deciding what is important for the coming decade. It will guide the Town's land use and zoning policies and long-term planning, but will also serve as an important resource in capital improvements planning, budgeting, and in the consideration of key policy changes in Stow. It will provide a shared community vision and will cover, at minimum, seven key elements: 1) Land Use, 2) Demographics & Housing, 3) Economic Development, 4) Open Space & Recreation, 5) Historic & Cultural, 6) Transportation & Mobility, and 7) Municipal Facilities & Services.

More information on this project can be found at the Comprehensive Plan project website: tinyurl. com/StowCP

VISION The vision is a dream about possibilities . magine your community at its very best. GOALS What will the community do to reach its vision? Broad, general, tangible, descriptive, and **STRATEGIES** achievable How will the community **TRENDS + ISSUES** achieve its goals? Who will **INFORMATION** do what when? Specific. measurable, actionable, realistic, and time-based.

COMMUNITY VALUES

PROJECT TIMELINE



PHASE I: STOW YESTERDAY & TODAY

September 2023 - April 2024

Laying the foundation for the SCP by reviewing local planning documents and gathering insight to understand current issues and opportunities to develop the Existing Conditions Profile.

(3)

PHASE III: ACHIEVING STOW TOMORROW

April 2024 - September 2024

Thinking critically about how best to achieve the future conditions outlined in the Community's Vision, Core Theme, & Goals by establishing policy recommendations (strategies).

PHASE II: BUILDING STOW TOMORROW

December 2023 - April 2024

Encouraging the community to think aspirationally and envision what the ideal future could be for the Town to co-create the Community Vision, Core Themes, & Goals.



PHASE IV: BECOMING STOW TOMORROW

October 2024 - February 2025

Refining strategies and the path to implementation to finalize and formally adopt the SCP.

OUTREACH GOALS

- 1. Gather input from the community to inform the vision and goals statements in the Comprehensive Plan.
- 2. Ensure community outreach is broad and reaches a representational portion of Stow's community, including historically marginalized and excluded groups.
- 3. Ensure that all voices are welcomed, including residents, business owners, people who work but don't live in Stow, and other community members, and perspectives are authentically represented in the results of the process.
- 4. The process will be committed to ongoing transparency and information-sharing regarding what is happening and what is coming next.

You Stow
You

*Based on 2020 U.S. Census.

OUTREACH TIMELINE

PHASE 1

Engagement Opportunities: Photo Submission Process Project Naming Contest Pop-Up Tabling

Deliverable: Existing Conditions Profiles Aggregated Phase I Engagement Summary

PHASE 3

Engagement Opportunities: Technical Working Sessions/Road Shows Pop-Up Tabling Public Comments

Deliverable: Updated Aggregated Community Engagement Summary (ACES) Strategy Shortlist Future Land Use Map

PHASE 2

Engagement Opportunities:

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Community Open House Community Survey Crowdmap Meeting-in-a-Box Pop-Up Tabling Public Comments

Deliverable:

Aggregated Community Engagement Summary (ACES) Community written Vision, Core Theme, and Goals Statements

PHASE 4

Engagement Opportunities: Public Comments

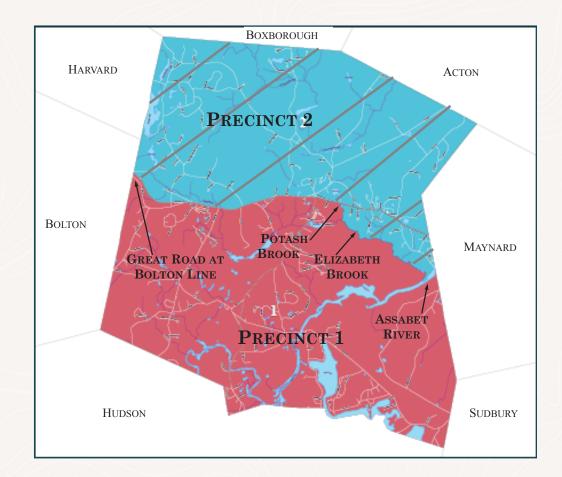
Deliverable: Stow Comprehensive Plan & Implementation Strategy

PROJECT AREA

PRECINCT MAP

Stow is a Town in Middlesex County, Massachusetts. The Town is in the Metrowest Region of Massachusetts. It is bordered by Boxborough to the north, Harvard and Bolton to the west, Hudson to the south, and Sudbury, Maynard, and Acton to the east.

The Town is divided into two voting precincts which are shown on the map to the right.



CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The following data points are derived from Town Clerk voter turnout data for 2012-2023 elections.

1 in 5 registered voters

participate in local elections



2 in 5 registered voters participates in state elections



3 in 5 registered voters participate in federal elections

TOWN DEMOGRAPHICS

The 2020 U.S. Census reported 7,174 residents living in Stow. This page highlights how traditionally marginalized communities are represented in the Town, based on the 2020 Census as well as the ACS 5-Year Estimates for 2017-2021 and the Department of Housing and HUD CHAS data for 2016-2020. The American Community Survey releases annual estimates to help local officials, community leaders, and businesses understand the changes taking place in their communities. The 2020 Census estimated that the Town's population was 7,174 which was used as a baseline for the below calculations. HUD CHAS data lists 2,750 total households as their baseline.



8.2% of residents speak a language other than English in their home (ACS)

6% of residents have one or more disabilities (ACS)

2% of residents are living below the federal poverty level (ACS)

ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

JM Goldson, in collaboration with the Town Team, will develop a variety of engagement tools aimed at receiving input from the greatest number of Stow community members, representing as diverse perspectives and identities as possible. JM Goldson will generate marketing materials at the beginning of each phase, detailing all public engagement opportunities for that phase. Once marketing materials have been finalized, the Town Team will be responsible for connecting the Stow community to engagement opportunities.

This section of the PEOP outlines engagement tools that will be utilized for the duration of this project as well as suggested outreach strategies for each. It should be noted that while all tools outlined in this Plan are aimed at receiving community input, not every opportunity is open to the public, as some engagement tools are designed for specific populations and will be noted as such.

Each tool will be explained in the following format:

ENGAGEMENT TOOL NAME

General description of the engagement tool . . .



PHOTO SUBMISSION PROCESS

Phase I will include a Photo Submission process that allows community members to submit photos of their favorite places in the Town to be used in the Existing Conditions Profiles and other future SCP documents and marketing materials. Community members will be able to submit photos through an online form or by emailing the Assistant Project Manager throughout the project process.



COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE

JM Goldson will design and facilitate a Community Open House which will be an opportunity for the Consultant Team to introduce the project to the community and explain the process. There will be a variety of interactive stations for community members to learn about key findings from Phase I and learn more about the community's vision for the Town's future. Stations will be run by members of the Consultant Team, Town staff, and Steering Committee members. Community members will have the opportunity to meet the project team, ask questions, and weigh in on a myriad of topics.



PROJECT NAMING CONTEST

Phase I will include a naming contest where community members can submit and vote on names for the Stow Comprehensive Plan. Community members will be able to submit name ideas through an online form or by emailing the Assistant Project Manager.



POP-UP TABLING

Pop-up tabling is an opportunity to meet people where they are, by hosting an information table at community events or in high-traffic locations across the Town. JM Goldson will provide interactive tabling materials that encourage participation. The Town Team will compile a list of community events and locations in which tabling may be feasible; members of the Town Team to sign up for at least two tabling slots. The intention of tabling is to capitalize on well-attended events and high-trafficked locations, introduce community members to SCP, increase participation, and receive input from folks who might be less likely to attend a public meeting and those who are typically left out of the public conversation. JM Goldson will host a calendar of tabling events on the project website to let the public know where they can find you.



COMMUNITY SURVEY

JM Goldson will create a Community Survey, hosted on Survey Monkey, to understand the key issues Stow community members hope the SCP will address. The survey will be open to all members of the broader Stow community and analyze how different affiliations view Stow (i.e., how new residents vs. long term residents vs. non-resident Town employees, etc. view the issues). Survey content will be co-generated by Steering Committee members and Town staff through activities conducted by JM Goldson. Ideally. the survey is open for eight or more weeks and distributed widely through various community channels to encourage participation.



CROWDMAP

The Crowdmap is an interactive mapping tool that will be hosted on the Project Website. This tool will use a map to ask a series of location-based questions and instruct community members to document their responses by virtually dropping pins on a map of Stow. This tool allows participants to make comments and recommendations to the CPC for specific locations and will assist the Consultant Team in developing place-based strategies for the SCP as well as facilitate a better understanding of the community's priorities.



MEETING-IN-A-BOX (MIAB)

MIAB is a facilitation guide, created by JM Goldson, that invites community members to organize and host their own conversations to collect feedback on different elements of the SCP. MIAB is designed to allow the public to give honest feedback in the comfort of their networks and reduce the fear of backlash typically associated with speaking in more formal settings, such as public meetings. The MIAB facilitation guide will be posted on the Project Website and should be available as a paper copy in high-traffic locations around the Town (e.g., libraries, schools, recreation spaces, etc.). Steering Committee members should plan to host at least one MIAB within their networks and help identify and encourage other community leaders to participate. Town staff should plan to work strategically with department heads to reach gap populations (e.g., Council on Aging, Housing Authority, students, etc.).



TECHNICAL WORKING SESSIONS

Technical Working Sessions are an engagement tool which invites local subject matter experts to share their insight and knowledge with the consultant team and weigh in on preliminary strategies ideas. This is an opportunity to receive feedback from local experts on topics and areas that are most relevant to their skillset. The Consultant Team will generate the materials for facilitating these sessions and will also work with the Town team to facilitate the sessions. *Either the Technical Working Sessions, the Road Shows or both of these tools will be used during Phase III at the Committee's discretion.



ROAD SHOWS

Road shows are an engagement tool in which the Town Team will get on the agenda of Town Boards and Committees to get their feedback, particularly on items that impact the purview of each group. The Consultant Team will generate materials to assist with facilitating these sessions. This is an opportunity to get feedback from local experts on topics that most concern them.The Town Team will run Road Shows to workshop the draft strategy list in Phase III. Boards and committees should plan to also accept public comment during these sessions. *Either the Technical Working Sessions, the Road Shows or both of these tools will be used during Phase III at the Committee's discretion.



PROJECT WEBSITE

JM Goldson will maintain a project website to provide digital access to the planning process. This website will serve as a central location for project information such as upcoming events, links to engagement opportunities, plan documents, and more. Public comment will be accepted on the project website throughout the SCP project through a general form. Periodically, JM Goldson will create additional comment forms to respond to specific deliverables.



STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Consultant Team will attend 18 Comprehensive Plan Committee meetings (four in Phase I, six in Phase II, four in Phase III, and four in Phase IV). Here, the Consultant Team will provide project updates and facilitate working sessions with the CPC. At times, the Steering Committee may choose to accept public comment or participation, which will be noticed accordingly.



OUTREACH STRATEGIES

Outreach is perhaps the most vital step in receiving public opinion; for if community members are unaware of engagement tools and opportunities, they will have no way of participating and providing feedback. For this reason, there is truly no such thing as over-marketing an engagement event or tool.

The Town Team will be responsible for outreaching the Stow community and alerting community members to engagement opportunities. Outreach materials should be structured to include all upcoming engagement opportunities in an effort to condense marketing materials and avoid overwhelming the broader community.

JM Goldson will create marketing content including social media graphics, flyers, email newsletter inserts, and press releases. Using these materials, the Town Team will spread the word about engagement opportunities.

Outreach should begin no later than 4-6 weeks prior to an engagement event or tool submission deadline, with additional pointed outreach within 1-2 weeks of an event or deadline.

The recommendations below are a list of places to either post marketing materials and/or physically table in Stow to invite community members to participate. This list is non-exhaustive nor is it meant to serve as a checklist, rather the list is meant to provide ideas for outreach locations.

This list is informed by the Network Mapping Assessment and created in such a way as to reach diverse perspectives. It should be noted that there is no one thing a municipality can do to reach every member of a specific demographic or community. Groups are not monolithic and therefore the suggestions below for outreach aim to target a wide array of community members. The Town Team should plan to utilize as many different outreach techniques as possible to reach the largest and most representative group of people.

OUTREACH IDEAS

- Add a banner to the Town Website to advertise specific engagement opportunities
- Add engagement events to the Town Website calendar, Council on Aging Activity Calendars, and the Town Facebooks Pages
- Submit press releases for engagement events to the Stow Independent weekly newspaper
- Send outreach materials to the Chair of each Town Board/ Committee and ask them to share the materials at their next meeting
- Work with municipal offices to include outreach materials in all Town related mailings such as property tax bills
- Work with municipal offices to include outreach materials in their newsletters (e.g., Randall Library Newsletter, Council on Aging Senior Scoop)
- Connect with Middle and High School teachers of relevant classes (e.g., civics, social studies) or who serve as advisors for relevant extracurriculars (e.g., Student Council, Debate, Model UN) to encourage youth participation
- Work with the Abbaset Valley Chamber of Commerce to disseminate outreach materials to their contacts and ask businesses to advertise in their spaces

- Post outreach materials at entrance of all municipal buildings and spaces
- Post outreach materials and//or table at public recreation and community spaces including the Pompositticut Community Center, Town Center Park, Stow Community Park, Randall Library, Pine Bluff, and Memorial Field.
- Connect with local gas stations, corner stores, grocery stores, laundromats, coffee shops, and breweries to post outreach materials and hold tabling events
- Work with landlords/property management offices to post outreach materials in multi-unit buildings to circulate information to tenants
- Connect with community leaders (including neighborhood groups and religious leaders) to attend community events and share outreach materials with their networks
- Share outreach digitally in local community Facebook groups, and across Town social media platforms
- Work with the MART to post outreach materials on buses

NETWORK MAPPING ASSESSMENT

Members of the Town Team were sent a Network Mapping Assessment to gain a better understanding of what formal and informal communities existing within Stow and which of those communities the Town Team is already connected to. Team members were asked to identify their primary, secondary, and tertiary networks as well as community outside their networks that should be engaged in the process. Team members were instructed only to identify communities in their primary, secondary, and tertiary networks they feel comfortable reaching out to for the purposes of engagement with the Comprehensive Plan.

TERTIARY NETWORK:

Physical and virtual spaces one frequents but are not directly connected to.

SECONDARY NETWORK

Communities one may know one or a few people in but they do not belong to the community themselves.

PRIMARY NETWORK

Communities one regularly interacts with (typically one or more times per month).

TERTIARY NETWORK

SECONDARY NETWORK



HOWDUAL TEAM MEMBER

PROJECT TEAM

GAP COMMUNITIES:

Communities that exist within your municipality but no project team members are connected to.



NETWORK MAPPING ASSESSMENT

This page serves to identify the project team's primary, secondary, and tertiary networks. Networks that were identified by multiple team members will be listed in the lowest level (i.e., if something was named by one team member in their primary network and another in their secondary network, it will be listed in the primary level).

PRIMARY NETWORK:

First Parish Church of Stow & Acton, Stow Board of Health, Stow Conservation Trust, Acton Congregational Church, Meeting House of Stow, Minute Man Airfield Pilot Group, Nashoba Area Social Justice Alliance, Nashoba Regional School District DIEB, Stow Elementary Schools, Stow Middle Schools, Open Space Committee, Stow Walking Trails, Stow Town Building, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Stow Acres Climate Resilience Master Plan Working Group, Neighborhood dog walkers (Bradley Ln/Lanes End+), Bose Corporation Employees

SECONDARY NETWORK:

Emerson Hospital volunteer, Board of Health Elected Members, Nashoba Boards of Health executive committee, Council on Aging, Boy Scouts, Warm Hearts of Stow, Stow Town Cleanup, Sounds of Stow, Board of Assesor, Town of Stow (Unofficial) Facebook page, Stow Town Information Facebook page, Green Advisory Committee, Community Preservation Committee, Stow Parents Facebook Group, Stow Economic Council, Marlboro Road Neighborhood, Stow Library, Stow Soccer Club, Nashoba Regional High School, Green Advisory, Committee, Shaw's, Stow Recreation Department Youth Programming, Local art and music community in Stow

TERTIARY NETWORK:

Market Basket Grocery Store, Stow Community Center, WECO hospitality / meal provider, Hudson Light & Power, Global Fitness, NextDoor, Nan's Rustic Kitchen & Market, Aubuchon Hardware, Minute Man, Fourth & Field, Hudson Rd. Automotive, Local walking Trails, Russel's Convenience Store, Stow Acres Country Club, Stow Independent newspaper, Pompositticut Community Center, Official Stow Facebook Page, Gulf Gas Station, Pine Bluff Recreation Area, Honey Pot Hill Orchard, Carver Hill Orchard, Shelburne Farm, Randall Library, Derby Ridge Farm

6 TOWN TEAM MEMBERS

18 PRIMARY CONNECTIONS

23 SECONDARY CONNECTIONS



NETWORK MAPPING ASSESSMENT GAP COMMUNITIES AND OTHER OUTREACH IDEAS

Team members were also asked to identify gap communities, traditionally underserved or excluded communities they feel an extra effort should be made to connect to the Comprehensive Plan project, and any additional outreach ideas they might have. The purpose of this exercise was to understand what formal and informal communities the Town Team will need to take a more intentional approach in outreaching. Communities and groups identified by one member as a gap community that were also identified in by another team member as a part of their primary, secondary, or tertiary network will be listed on the previous page as they are not considered gap communities for the purposes of this project.

GAP COMMUNITIES:

Stow Acres Country Club & Golf Course, American Heritage Museum in Stow, Stow, Plantation Apartments, St. Isidore Catholic Church, Stow Area Family Network Group, Nashoba Regional School District

ADDITIONAL OUTREACH IDEAS:

I would like to hear some input from the surrounding towns (Acton, Bolton, Boxborough, Harvard, Hudson, Maynard, Sudbury). While not part of Stow, we are interconnected with them, Stow SpringFest Stow Bike or run for the woods events, Apple orchards in the fall (timing may not work)

TRADITIONALLY UNDERSERVED OR EXCLUDED COMMUNITIES:

Nashoba Area Social Justice Alliance, Pilot Grove Apartments, Renters, Non-seniors who do not have children in the school system, Religious groups outside of Christianity, People of Color, Native/Indigenous, Young Adults (20s and early 30s), Teens, English as Second Language, Employees in Stow but not residents of Stow, New Residents, People who do not work typical office hours, Local business owners, People with a disability (all kinds), Victims of domestic violence, Families who have members with significant mental health needs



Above: "Apple Picking at Honey-Pot Hill Orchards, Stow MA", Chris Devers on Flickr