



**Master Plan Implementation Committee
Report to Town Meeting
May 2018**

Nine years after the Master Plan was adopted, we continue to see progress towards its goals, though the rate of progress appears to have slowed quite a bit. Many tasks are either completed or ongoing and the Planning Board in its 2016 review of the task matrices eliminated others. Some tasks are now seen as no longer relevant or out of date, though others remain to be addressed. Overall, as the task matrices demonstrate, many people – elected, appointed, volunteers and paid staff – have been working hard and successfully towards the goals of the Plan.

What follows are some general comments, and a discussion of issues surrounding the professionalization of Town government, communications, and the upcoming process of updating the Open Space and Recreation Plan and the Master Plan itself.

General Comments:

The Master Plan Implementation Committee monitors the tasks assigned in the Plan to the various Boards, Commissions, Committees, departments and individuals referenced in the Plan, as they are designed to achieve or make progress towards the Plan's goals. From the Master Plan:

Long Term Goals

- Maintain our recreational resources, open space vistas, and lands for our children and their children to enjoy
- Develop the regulatory structures, partnerships, and investments needed to develop housing that genuinely reflects and supports the needs of all generations, economic levels, and employers
- Support current businesses while helping prospective businesses become established
- Foster cultural resources and events to help residents experience the richness of our community and its heritage

Engage a greater part of the community at various levels of town governance

Core Plan Principles

Manage toward our shared vision
Communications
Sustainability
Lead by example

Core Initiatives

Revitalize South Hadley Falls
Invest in the Route 116/Route 33 Commercial Focus Area as a mixed-use center
Connect South Hadley's Centers
Secure open space in the range, river and rural areas
Update the regulatory infrastructure to support the community's desired outcomes

Attached is a table showing each entity with the number of tasks assigned to it in its original task matrix, the number assigned in the revised matrix, and the status of the tasks in the revised matrix. The complete Master Plan task matrices (revised), including the status of each individual task, may be found by going to the MPIC web page on the Town web site: <https://www.southhadley.org/223/Master-Plan-Implementation-Committee>.

We see many positive signs:

- *The Sustainability and Energy Commission is up and active.
- *SHELD is making progress towards a town-wide fiber optic network.
- *The Conservation Commission has been reorganized, and two of its Master Plan tasks will be accomplished through the update of the Open Space and Recreation Plan.
- *More people are getting involved in Town government; compared to the past few years there are more contested elective offices, and projects such as the proposed Dog Park appeal to increasing numbers of volunteers.
- *Bike/Walk and Recreation Commission activities draw a significant number of participants.
- *The Tree Committee is becoming increasingly active.
- *More sidewalks and roads have been improved.
- *The Planning Board is submitting the so-called “smart growth” ordinance to Town Meeting; if adopted, this should encourage both increased economic development and greater availability of entry-level housing units.
- *Although it is disappointing that funding for the Tiger Trolley was discontinued, the Selectboard and other entities are discussing possible alternatives for local transportation.

We are also pleased to see efforts on the part of various government bodies to reach out and engage with each other and with the broader community. For example:

- *The Sustainability and Energy Commission has been working with a variety of entities and individuals in the effort to build a greener South Hadley.
- *The Cultural Council has been seeking input from individuals and organizations about what new arts and cultural activities people might like,
- *SHELD has been making significant efforts to build relationships with Town government and to support various community activities.

Specific Areas of Interest: Professionalization and Communications

Over the last several years we have observed the growing professionalization of town government. Employees increasingly handle work that used to be carried out by volunteers and elected or appointed officials.

- *The Town Administrator now handles many of the tasks that used to be carried out by members of the Selectboard. This enables the Selectboard, while overseeing the Town Administrator, to focus on other tasks, such as setting direction with citizen input.
- *A new Assistant Town Planner works not only with the Conservation Commission but with the Redevelopment Authority as well.

Efficiency has also increased.

- *Town Hall employees continue to be cross trained to handle multiple tasks as needed
- *As more forms and activities are available on line, the Treasurer's Office has been able to reduce the number of hours of operation, thus saving tax dollars.
- *The Town Administrator's office and the Planning Department have both been engaged in succession planning.
- *The Agricultural and Open Space Committees have been disbanded. GROSouthHadley has assumed many of the agricultural functions, and the OSRP update process will target some of the tasks previously undertaken by Open Space.

In our opinion, it makes sense to use qualified town employees to do what requires professional expertise while maintaining citizen oversight, and we see good progress in the overall functioning of Town government. However, there are some rough spots. This isn't unusual, or unique to South Hadley. It is systemic and can be addressed. What often happens is that as professionalization increases, some citizens can disengage. Others may perceive themselves as losing control. At the same time, professionals can feel disconnected from the citizens.

What is needed is a balance between professional expertise and citizen oversight, and the key to this is good communication in all directions: board to board, staff to staff, board to staff and vice versa, and town government to citizens and back. Transparency and

inclusiveness are crucial. Communications must be a priority, not an add-on, and we should devote resources of time, money and personnel to making sure people inside and outside town government are informed and engaged. As we have noted before, this is especially important in regard to projects that should or must involve multiple entities. We are hopeful that the updated Master Plan can build in some mechanisms that help foster the necessary interactions.

Over the past several years communications between Town government and residents has improved. However, the upgraded Town web site is not being used as fully as possible. For the last couple of years any updates of board and commission web pages have been left to the entities themselves, with mixed results. Many of the web pages don't have up to date lists of board members and their terms. Many entities aren't posting their minutes, and some aren't posting agendas. Page layouts and content are inconsistent, and some entities lack any sort of contact information. All of this makes a negative impression.

Quick fix communications suggestions

For collaborative projects: the Chair of the Selectboard and the Town Administrator could convene a quarterly meeting of all board and committee chairs and department heads, at which each person presents a brief list of issues being addressed by the entity she or he represents. This would allow other entities to recognize a role they could or should play in regard to the issues.

In regard to contact information, it's understandable that a committee chair might not want to post his or her email address or phone number. Is it possible for each entity to have an email address like the one that the Cultural Council has (culturalcouncil@shadleyma.org)?

To ensure up-to-date information on committee members: Supply each board chair with a cover sheet for that entity's annual report. The cover sheet should ask for a list of current board members and their terms.

Use paid staff to update and maintain the web pages, and possibly to post agendas and minutes.

All entities should use the new logo. This probably requires a style sheet and directions for use to be sent to each entity, with back-up assistance as needed.

Next: Updating the Open Space and Recreation Plan and the Master Plan

Over the next couple of years the Town will be updating both the Open Space and Recreation Plan and the Master Plan itself, which will encompass much of the work of the OSRP. As of this writing, the Request for Qualifications is still being drafted, but we will be looking for a consultant that can work with the Planning Board and MPIC on both plans.

The RFQ will address issues of process as well as content.

We want the update process to be broadly inclusive, to allow us to hear from as many voices as possible, not just the loudest ones. This is important, first, to help ensure that the plans reflect the needs of as many residents as possible. Second, inclusion in the planning process is likely to lead to more buy-in in pursuing the plans' goals. Very soon after the current Master Plan was adopted we began hearing comments like "I/my group wasn't asked for input, tasks were just assigned to us." This is certainly the case with some of the uncompleted tasks, notably but not only a few of those assigned to the Recreation Commission. Objectively, there may have been lots of opportunities to provide input, but there's a perception that opportunities were lacking, and we want to avoid that in this update process. MPIC is currently meeting with all boards and commissions, including those without tasks assigned in the original Master Plan, as well as other groups, to alert them to the upcoming update process and urge them to participate.

In regard to content, we will be looking for mechanisms to foster cross-collaboration (projects that require participation by multiple entities), as mentioned above, and communication mechanisms to ensure that everyone knows what they need to know. Additionally, we will be looking for a set of evaluation metrics to help us measure progress towards the goals of the Master Plan. Currently we can check off tasks completed, which of course we will continue to do, but how do we know that the tasks are really enhancing the quality of life in South Hadley? We try to find out with occasional surveys and word of mouth, but there are actually good tools out there that draw on quantitative data as well as individual perceptions.

We think that the update process is quite likely to identify other planning needs, and should help identify the entities that should be involved in the plans. MPIC is also hopeful that the update process for the OSRP will take over developing the "vision for town-wide recreation " that was assigned to the Recreation Commission.

While there is always more work to be done, we think things are going well in Town, and that we're making good progress towards the goals of the Master Plan. And we are very grateful, as always, to the members of the community – elected and appointed officials, staff and volunteers - who give their time in so many ways to help make South Hadley a good place for all of us.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Gooch Dobosh, Chair
Ann Eaton, Secretary
Margaret Jodoin
John Martins
Nate Therien
Michelle Wolfe

Attachment: Tasks List

TASK LIST

Entity	Original matrix tasks	Revised matrix tasks	Comments 2017	Comments 2018
Agricultural Commission	7	2	Inactive; may be disbanded	disbanded
Bike/Walk Committee	1, part of Sustainability & Energy Comm.	0	Ongoing	Ongoing
Board of Health	9	2	1 complete 1 ongoing	2 complete
Capital Planning	2	2	Both ongoing	1 done 1 ongoing
Community and Economic Development	57	0	Assigned to Redevelopment Authority	
Conservation	29	5	2 ongoing 3 on hold	same
Cultural Council	5	2	1 completed 1 ongoing	same
Dep't of Public Works	16	6	1 complete 5 ongoing	same
Fair Housing/Housing Trust	6	0	Assigned to Redevelopment Authority	same
Golf	2	2	Both ongoing	No longer monitoring
Historical Commission	10	1	1 In process	same
Open Space	24	8	Now inactive, may be disbanded 4 no action 4 completed	Disbanded (some tasks to be part of OSRP)
Planning Board	112	67	12 completed 22 partly completed 9 ongoing 10 in process 14 minimal or no action	same

Entity	Original matrix tasks	Revised matrix tasks	Comments 2017	Comments 2018
Redevelopment Authority	0	1 from CEDC 3 from Fair Housing	1 complete 2 in process 1 no action	3 in process
Selectboard	50	21	10 complete 7 ongoing 3 in process 1 eliminate	9 complete 10 ongoing 1 in process 1 eliminate
Schools	5	2	Both complete	No longer monitoring
Solid Waste	Part of DPW	0	Complete – landfill now closed	No longer monitoring
SHELD	1	1	In process	In process
SH Public Library	1	0	Complete	No longer monitoring
Sustainability & Energy	27	5	Inactive except Bike/Walk	Reconstituted. 2 complete 1 no further action 2 in process
Town Administrator	49	49	All ongoing	18 Done 5 Eliminate 16 Ongoing 7 In process 4 No further action
Tree Committee	3	3	1 complete 2 ongoing	2 complete 1 ongoing
Zoning Board of Appeals	1	1	Ongoing as needed	same

Please note: The Planning Board revised the original matrices and distributed the revisions in October 2016. Many of the tasks on the original matrices have been completed, thus reducing the absolute number of tasks. Others were carried over as “ongoing”. To see the full matrices with listed tasks please go to
<https://www.southhadley.org/DocumentCenter/Index/434>