

Why Should Georgetown Update its Comprehensive Plan?

Following the recommendation of the Exploratory Group that looked into the advisability of updating the Georgetown Comprehensive Plan, an article on the warrant of the Town Meeting asks the town to support the updating of the 1993 Comprehensive Plan and to allocate \$10,000 to hire a consultant to help with the process.

If nothing in Georgetown had changed since 1993, there would be little point in updating our Comprehensive Plan. But much has changed here in the last 24 years:

- Those in our economy dependent upon marine resources have seen a dramatic decline in shellfish and ground fish harvesting and are looking for ways to address that issue;
- Georgetown's senior population has grown from 17% to over 30% of the residents.
- Georgetown Central School's population has dropped from approximately 100 to 70 students.
- Affordable housing, a "severe" problem in the 1993 report, has escalated dramatically. Because of this, many who grew up here have limited means to stay within the Town.
- Services like a reliable DSL or broadband that did not exist in 1993 play an increasing role in the economy, as part of the culture, and for communication in emergencies;
- In 1993, the Town supported the idea of land preservation; since then over 2,500 acres have been placed in conserved or open-space land.
- *Many Georgetown-specific issues have been identified during the Exploratory Group's preliminary review process. These issues and others will be explored in detail to establish long-term strategies that support and reflect the entire community.*
 - *Aging in Place*
 - *Roads and Transportation*
 - *Marine Resources*
 - *Town Dock*
 - *Communications*
 - *Energy*
 - *Georgetown Central School*
 - *Future Land Use*

An updated Plan will help identify ongoing changes and plan for a future in which *Georgetown retains its character and chooses its own way forward*. An open and honest examination of our current and future priorities can lead to a shared vision for the Town.

Why follow the State model?

- The process ensures that *the generators of the plan are representative of **all** of Georgetown's residents*.
- The Exploratory Group is aware that the process of developing the 1993 Plan proved divisive. At that time, the State was mandating and overseeing Comprehensive Plans, which limited a town's ability to serve its own needs. The State was also engaged in implementing shoreland zoning policies that intruded upon Georgetown's planning process. The current State policy encourages each town to focus on its individual needs.

The state model provides a framework in which the community can develop consensus *and strategic policy for many Georgetown-specific issues*.

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Why hire a consultant?

A consultant would:

- Work with the committee on developing the public participation process to ensure that *everyone in the Georgetown community can provide input*;
- Provide an unbiased perspective to help enable planning participants to understand differing opinions;
- Assist in facilitating open meetings, keeping each meeting focused on policies and strategies;
- Work on gathering and generating information while the committee focuses on policies and addressing Georgetown-specific issues;
- Collect and distribute current demographic, geologic, geographic and marine data which will enable the community to stay focused on developing strategies and policies of greatest importance to Georgetown.
- Assemble data dependent sections of the Plan that would be reviewed by the committee. The consultant would also draft Georgetown-generated goals into “policy language.”
- Make it feasible to complete the Plan in time for Town approval at the 2019 Town Meeting.

The Exploratory Group itself included members from the Town-owned Property Management Board, the Planning Board, the Conservation Commission, and the Historical Society.