Dear Topsham Resident,

The following citizen guide summarizes the comprehensive plan, and allows the reader to quickly reference sections of the comprehensive plan that may be of interest. This guide is not a substitute for the comprehensive plan, and it should be read in conjunction with the plan.

The approach with this comprehensive plan update focused heavily on providing an intensive community engagement process that emphasized gathering as neighbors to discuss our shared future. These discussions have produced a plan that has identified where we desire to maintain existing community character, where community character enhancements may be appropriate, and how in accomplishing these we achieve the desire to create a more socially connected community.

INTRODUCTION TO YOUR PLAN

Big Ideas
The Big Ideas section is entirely based on the feedback received during public engagement processes, such as the five-day public design charrette. Residents of all ages were prompted to imagine Topsham in 30 years and identify what aspects they would like to see in that future vision. This feedback informed the nine sections currently forming the Big Ideas section of the Plan.

Plan Your Topsham
A mapping exercise that residents participated in alerted us to the lack of neighborhood centers, specifically parks, in Topsham. This section of the plan illustrates theoretical new growth and development strategies for a variety of potential catalyst sites, such as the Crooker District, the Topsham Fair Mall, Upper Village, and Lower Village. Creating examples with a range of town fabrics and uses highlights the potential for accessible and connected neighborhood centers throughout Topsham.

Regulatory Framework
This framework considers the future management and application of the new Comprehensive Plan. This section includes a look at future development with the aid of the Conservation, Preservation and Growth map and summarizes Character Districts that encompass expressed goals for preserving community character.
A Closer Look at a Catalyst Site - Upper Village

The area surrounding Topsham’s municipal complex has an opportunity to transform, over time, into a true village center with walkable streets that support shopping, outdoor dining, cultural programming and social connectivity. Currently there is an opportunity for a large commercial property on Main Street to redevelop and continue to set the pace for redevelopment that the new Town Hall has accomplished.

This re-imagining of the Upper Village is an example of the form that development could take. The Comprehensive Plan includes a number of catalyst sites. These illustrative concepts inform the Regulatory Framework discussion, and are only actionable at such time that a landowner brings forward a plan to the Town, and the planning board approves it in a public hearing process.

The implementation of a Comprehensive Plan takes the work of many people, sometimes working collaboratively, sometimes independently. The heavy lifting of implementation is a shared opportunity amongst the entire Topsham community including elected leaders, staff, local businesses, volunteer committees for profit and non-profit organizations and citizens. The very first official action of the Select Board will be to bring the plan forward for adoption at Town Meeting.

Topsham is in the position to affect positive community change. By taking deliberate steps to adopt new zoning and invest in community infrastructure, Topsham will be demonstrating to potential private investors that it is a community willing to create the Topsham it wants, rather than end up with a future haphazardly shaped by outside forces. Staff and the Implementation Committee can play an important role as spokespersons for this plan in the business community and at community events. Finally, the Implementation Committee should honor the participatory process that lead to this plan by boosting communications, inviting participation in discrete implementation tasks, hosting plan check-ins and celebrating success.
BIG IDEAS

Streets for People
Safe streets were raised as the single most expressed issue by the community during the charrette affecting quality of life in Topsham.

Local and Regional Mobility
Transit not only supports a diverse population more equitably, but it can also attract employees needed to support businesses within town.

Access to Nature and Open Spaces
An opportunity exists to better manage and protect the resources that are a regular part of the community’s life and identity.

Foster Social Connection
During the Plan Your Topsham process, the people of Topsham expressed a deep desire and need for a greater sense of community.

Support Knowledge Economy
As a bedroom community where only 10% of the workforce stays in Topsham each day for work, Topsham is well positioned to support the knowledge economy and home-based businesses by improving access to highspeed internet and making strategic quality of life enhancements that attract more people to town.

Be Deliberate About Growth
As the town continues to grow, the impacts of this growth should be managed, measured and often revisited through community-driven processes to ensure residents are getting the kinds of outcomes they want.

Housing Diversity
Through the public process, a variety of housing needs have been identified, including additional senior housing, units with two or more bedrooms, and housing for single occupants.

Open Governance
Steps could be taken to further align leadership with the sentiments of larger community, through still more improvements in communication.

A More Sustainable Future
Work should continue to lessen the town’s impacts on the environment by improving energy efficiency, promoting recycling, and conserving resources when cost effective.
The Conservation, Preservation and Growth map begins to structure a framework for future zoning policy amendments to activate the community’s visions. The map is organized by sectors, grouped to indicate three intended land use outcomes:

1) Conservation and preservation (No Growth sector);
   This sector comprises all parcels of land that have been permanently protected for conservation, recreation and open space, agricultural or forestry purposes. This sector is represented on the map as Conservation and Preservation.

2) Enhancement of existing developed areas and intentional patterns of new development (Limited Growth sector);
   This sector includes land that is prioritized in order to strengthen working farms, forests and rural-based business economies, and to preserve rural character. This sector still allows for growth and change based on current zoning regulations, but performance standards should be evaluated as part of future zoning amendments to ensure protection of natural resources, and compatibility with working farms and existing residential neighborhoods. This sector is represented on the map as Rural - Suburban Lands.

3) Intentional neighborhood preservation, enhancement or altogether transformation of the existing land use pattern of an area (Intentional Growth sector).
   The catalyst site drawings prepared during the charrette demonstrate that land within the Intentional Growth sector has the capacity to support a significant volume of new growth and development. Focusing development and investments in the Intentional Growth sector strengthens the ability to have a deliberately rural Topsham. This sector is represented on the map as Neighborhood Preservation, Enhancement, and Transformation.

**WHAT’S NEXT?...**

- Approval at public hearing
- Vote at town meeting
- Be involved with implementation

**Priority First Step:** Adopt the plan. Assign a standing Implementation Committee to:
- continue the momentum of community engagement
- champion the plan
- frame the roles and responsibilities for moving actions forward.

**Get Involved!** Volunteer on a town board or committee

Visit our website at: https://www.topshammaine.com/compplan
Hard copies of the Comprehensive Plan Update will be placed at the Library and Town Hall for review.