

Town of Chester Plan of Conservation and Development and Strategic Plan March 2018 Community Workshops-- Exercise Results

On March 1 and 3, 2018, identical community workshops were held to obtain input on the community's vision and values, and to identify key areas for further evaluation and strategy development. Between 50 and 60 participants attended the workshops.



Attendees participated in the following exercises, with results provided in writing, selection of preferences, and comments recorded by exercise facilitators. The attached documents provide details on the input received. The following sections summarize the key themes from each exercise, with attempts to quantify the comments based on their respective context.

Postcards from the Future

Participants were asked to imagine they had left Chester and returned in 2028, and describe what they saw and felt about the community they returned to. While intended to be a visioning exercise, the following areas received comments from five or more participants.

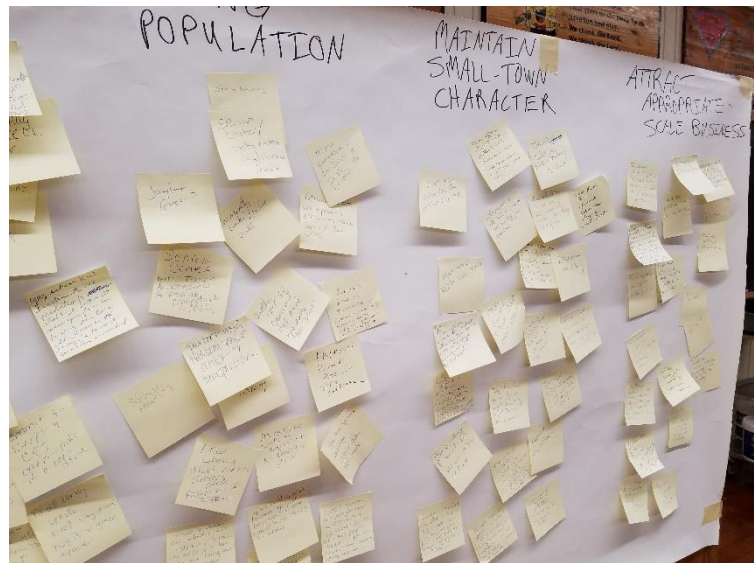
- Keep Chester's small-town character, with growth and enhancements accommodated through (re)investments in what currently exists (15 comments)
- Enhancements to sidewalks and trails (10 and 9 comments, respectively)
- Affordable housing options (9 comments)
- Improvements to North Quarter Park (8 comments)



- Note: comments were quantified separately from those related to trail connections from the Park to the Village Center, which are included above.
- Improvements to Cedar Lake (7 comments)
- Business expansion (7 comments)
 - Note: these were general comments; mentions of specific areas (i.e. Village, Rt. 154 or the river front) were recorded separately
- River Access (7 comments)
- Community Center (including activities for teens and seniors) (7 comments)
 - Note: comments did not reference the Library as a related topic, which was quantified separately
- Vitality of the Village Center (6 comments)
- Family oriented community (5 comments)
- Library expansion(5 comments)
 - Note: comments were separated from those specifically indicating renovation of the existing facility (4 comments), due to these comments also noting ties to additional space/programming desired within the context.

What is your “To-do” List for Chester?

Frequently mentioned concerns identified from the Community Survey were listed, and participants were asked to share thoughts on potential actions to address them. Given the topics were pre-designated, the results were not quantified, but will be reviewed as part of strategy development. Comments are listed on the attached documents.



Community Investments

Participants were asked for input on two questions. The first listed potential capital projects, and participants were asked to rate them in terms of worth with respect to costs. The following table summarizes the responses.

Potential Capital Improvement Project	Worthy Project, Regardless of Cost	Worthy Project, Provided Minimal Impact to Tax Levy (<3% avg. increase due to project)	Worthy Project, Provided No Taxpayer Impact	Not a Worthy Project, Regardless of Cost
Main Street Improvements	7	22	4	0
Village Center Parking	8	10	6	6
Library	17	7	6	11

Potential Capital Improvement Project	Worthy Project, Regardless of Cost	Worthy Project, Provided Minimal Impact to Tax Levy (<3% avg. increase due to project)	Worthy Project, Provided No Taxpayer Impact	Not a Worthy Project, Regardless of Cost
Community and/or Senior Center	12	12	7	0
Pedestrian Connections from CT River to Village	15	8	7	0
Pedestrian Connections in Other Areas (please list)	9	14	7	0
North Quarter Park Improvements	22	8	1	0
Cedar Lake Parking Lot Improvements	0	7	17	7
Property Acquisition For Preservation or Public Use	1	20	12	1
Property Acquisition For Expanding Commercial/ Industrial Development; e.g. Inspiration Lane	2	19	8	0
Property Acquisition for Redevelopment of Underperforming Property/ Brownfields	3	13	13	2

Others:

- See spreadsheets for comments

The second question asked how the Town should raise revenue or ensure funding for potential community investments; participants noted their top 2 preferences. The following table summarizes the responses; other suggestions were noted by participants during the exercise.

Do Nothing	Better Manage Current Resources	Grow the Grand List	Bond	Other
0	20	41	14	See below

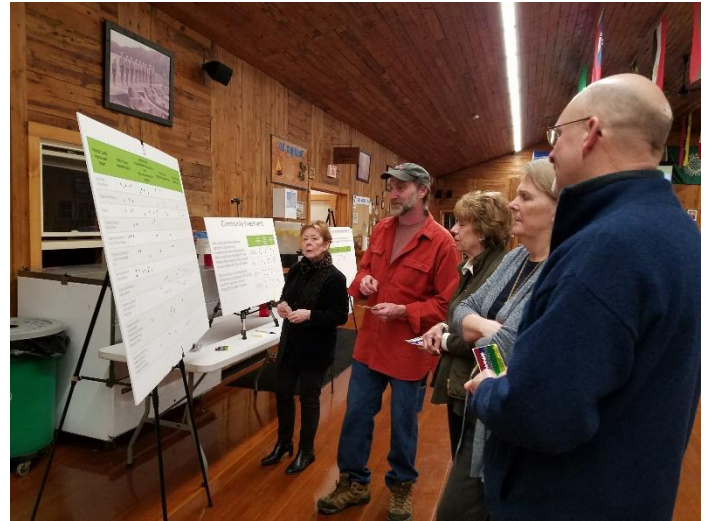
Others:

- Seek state authorization for local sales tax
- Growing residences does not lower mill rate or taxes. Growing businesses does help. Perhaps rezoning is required. (received 2 votes)
- Grants for specific projects (received 5 votes)
- Rezone some areas to attract new businesses.

How Should Chester Grow its Grand List?

Participants were asked what types of development would be appropriate if Chester decided to grow its grand list, and what locations would be suitable for development of commercial/ industrial uses and housing options to meet needs for households such as seniors, single-people or families with moderate incomes.

Attempts were made to quantify the comments received to correspond with themes of the other exercises, as some of the participants noted similar issues throughout (such as the need for sidewalks or public spaces). The following summarizes those comments received as related to economic development/growth in certain areas of town.



- Village Center (10 comments, various topics)
- Reuse of the Brooks Manufacturing site (6 comments)
- Infill along Rt. 154 for mixed use (7 comments)
- General Economic Development suggestions (12 comments):
 - Expand Industrial (5 comments)
 - Infill on Inspiration Lane (1 comment)
 - Provide incentives (4 comments)
 - Acquire underutilized property (2 comments)
- Zoning suggestions (10 comments):
 - Expansion of existing districts (4 comments)
 - Streamline approvals (1 comment)
 - Residential infill at Cedar Lake, Castle View (2 comments)
 - Allow conversion of single family to condos (1 comment)
 - Cluster senior housing (2 comments)
- Expand uses permitted at CT River (5 comments)
 - Commercial uses only; comments about access or open space were tabulated separately

Ideas/Insights and Barriers—Village Center and Connectivity

Participants were asked to identify areas on maps and note suggestions for ideas for improvements, issues that should be considered, and barriers to overcome for implementation. Two separate maps were used, one for the Village Center and the other related to overall connectivity in Chester.



The following summarizes areas mentioned in five or more comments. It is noted that some comments overlap or cross-over between both maps, with many comments pertaining to the Village Center reflected on the Connectivity map; key areas, when reviewing the combined comments, are also listed below.

Village Center

- Sidewalks/Trail/Bike Lanes (15 comments)
 - Trail connection along Chester Creek, between North Quarter Park, Laurel Hill Cemetery and the Village Center (5 similar comments)
- Parking (10 similar comments)
 - Maple Street Lot improvements (6 similar comments)

Connectivity

- Sidewalks/Trails/Bike Lanes (33 comments)
 - Trail connection along Chester Creek, between North Quarter Park, Laurel Hill Cemetery and the Village Center (12 similar comments)
 - Rt. 148, west of the Village (9 comments)
 - Water Street to the River (6 comments)
- Village Center Parking (9 comments)
 - Maple Street Lot improvements (6 comments)
- Trails and access along CT River (11 comments)

Comments from Both Maps Combined (areas with total comments of 5 or more)

- Sidewalks/Trails/Bike Lanes (48 comments)
 - Rt. 148 West of Village (12 comments)
 - Water Street to River (6 comments)
 - North Main Street/Meeting House/CES (9 comments)
 - Trail connection along Chester Creek, between North Quarter Park, Laurel Hill Cemetery and the Village Center (17 similar comments)
- Village Center Parking
 - General Parking Issues (7 comments)
 - Maple Street Lot Improvements (12 comments)
- Infrastructure needs (7 comments)
 - Drainage areas (3 comments)
 - Retaining wall repairs along West Main Street (4 comments)
- CT River access/open space areas (8 comments)
- Business uses on the River (5 comments)