

**A Summary of the Findings of the Planning Charrette  
Carver, Massachusetts  
November 2005**

## **Introduction**

Approximately 140 citizens shared thoughts and ideas on the future of planning in Carver at the Visioning Workshop held on November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2005. Participants worked in small groups and discussed strengths and weaknesses of the community and then focused on short and long term goals. This report represents a summary of these discussions.

## ***Discussion on Strengths, Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats***

The first half of the discussion revolved around the assets and liabilities of the community. The following represents points raised by the participants. Each small group had the same charge and had to identify their top strengths and weaknesses. These are presented in order of importance.

## **Strengths**

- Small Town of Carver/ Rural Character (14 responses)
  - Quietness
  - Defined villages
- Good location (9 responses)
  - 1 hour from Boston/Providence RI, 15 minutes from beaches, malls
  - King Richard's Faire
  - Edaville
- Good fire, EMT, DPW (8 responses)
- Good schools (7 responses)
- Open space (6 responses)
- Residents/Caring Community (5 responses)
- Agriculture (5 responses)
- Good library (4 Responses)
- Potential for Population Growth and/or business (4 responses)
- Water supply/quality/aquifer (3 responses)
- Quality Town Leadership (3 responses)
  - Proactive
  - Great vision
  - Open town government
- Great place to raise kids (2 responses)
- Great family/home town (2 responses)
- Growing community
- Rich town history
- Solid infrastructure
- Good ball fields
- Active COA
- Affordable compared to other communities
- Scenic views
- Cranberry industry
- Roadway layout
- Innovation

- Low crime rate
- Highway accessibility
- Community – belonging
  - Blending of generations
- Current population size
- Diversity
- Quaintness of historic district/ South Carver
- Center Carver Improvements
- Natural Resources

### **Weaknesses**

- Lack of public/town water (13 responses)
- High residential taxes - bill/rate (9 responses)
- No sidewalks (6 responses)
- No trash pick up/dump (6 responses)
- no activities/lack of recreational fields/playgrounds (6 responses)
  - Safe places for kids
  - Summer program
- Low Commercial/industrial tax base (4 responses)
- Sewer (4 responses)
- need more funding for schools (4 responses)
  - Grades 7-12 pay for buses
- Lack of business (3 responses)
  - Large companies
  - Diversification
- Public transportation (3 responses)
- Traffic (3 responses)
  - Tough intersections
  - No family restaurants (2 responses)
  - No animal shelter (2 responses)
  - Lack of high speed internet access (2 responses)
- Inability/unwillingness of town government to negotiate (2 responses)
- Schools (2 responses)
- Empty commercial property (2 responses)
  - Lots of empty strip malls
- Employment opportunities (2 responses)
- Community participation in town government (2 responses)
- Sign restrictions for business (2 responses)
- Continued external pressure on cranberry industry (2 responses)
  - Potential loss of open space due to pressure
- Hazardous waste being dumped on the North Carver landfill
- Excessive wetlands
- Export sand
- Bike trails

- Status quo
  - Resistance/ Resentment to Change
- Hydrants
- Too many land fills
- Rte 44
  - Lack of planning
- Space in schools
- Lack of town-owned land
- Police presence to slow traffic
- Too dependent on State Revenue
- Reactive to saving open space
- Lack of communication
- Growth control – population planning
- Lack of local history/appreciation/pride from youth
- Local business support
- Lack of affordable housing
- Strain of resources due to population growth
- Poor planning of commercial development
- Lack of services
- Lack of commercial business
- Lack of lighting
- Lack of vision for past and future
- Lack of leadership/training
- Polarization/minority view becomes policy
- Commerce
- Restrictions on building
- Failed to capitalize on agriculture
- Lack of recycling

### **Opportunities**

- Rte 44 (8 responses)
- Water, aquifer (6 responses)
  - Water development plan
- Controlled growth (5 responses)
  - Commercial
  - Residential
  - Industrial
- Business growth (5 responses)
  - Create jobs
  - Community programs
  - Define standards for future growth
  - Appropriate areas
- Land area (2 responses)

- Zoning laws (2 responses)
  - Industrial development zones
  - Develop progressive zoning articles
- Revitalizing existing buildings (2 responses)
- Improve schools (2 responses)
  - Greater commitment to education
  - Higher education extension
- Preservation of agriculture (2 responses)
- Rte 495 (2 responses)
- Keeping industrial development where it makes sense (2 responses)
- Change laws for growth and Business
- Town Hall communications
- Old Shaw's Plaza
- Whitworth property
- Bus Service
- Trash Pick up
- Planned land use
- Open space
- Recreational land
- Demographics
- More family-style restaurants
- Clean Industry
- Revenue
  - Speeding tickets
- Animal Shelter
- Use Ben Ellis school
- Adopt Community Preservation Act
- To maintain existing character of the town
- Preservation of natural resources
- Preservation of rural character
- Tourism/Recreation
- Seasonal recreation
  - Farmer's market
  - Circus
  - Flea market
  - Drive-in
- Developing affordable housing
- Bike/hiking trails
- Improving quality of life
- Recycling
- Developing space
- North Carver development
- Carver is in the early opportunity stages
- Manage the future

- Maintain Volunteer Fire Department
- Every weakness is an opportunity
- Develop a comprehensive overlay district for the entire length of Rte 58
- Work with development and let development work with Town
- Rte 44 for business development
- Common tax rate for agriculture and residential
- Sensible water development plan
- Keep town rural by maintaining the historical character
- Develop sewer

### **Threats**

- Development issues (12 responses)
  - Unplanned
  - No management/careless planning, lack of control
  - Pollution from big trucks
  - Overdevelopment
- Water (7 responses)
  - Quality
  - Lack of viable water
- Taxes (5 responses)
  - Residential tax growth
- Loss of agriculture/land/open space (4 responses)
  - Pushing wild life out
- Too much growth too fast (3 responses)
- Traffic threats (3 responses)
  - Speeding
  - Controls/patterns
- Unreasonable growth (2 responses)
- Earth removal (2 responses)
- Not passing Community Preservation Act (2 responses)
- Rte 44 (2 responses)
  - 1 lane
- Empty buildings (2 responses)
- Rising home costs (2 responses)
- Declining cranberry business (2 responses)
- Existing services not keeping pace with growth
- The wrong type of commercial business
- Loss of rural character/quality of life
- State aids
- Fiscal respect
- Sewer treatment plant
- Disappearing Edaville
- Teacher retirement
- Loss of a call fire department

- Remaining reactive as a community
- Residential overpopulation
- Waste of funds
- Allowing surrounding towns to capitalize on opportunities
- Culture of spending
- Lack of checks and balances
- Lack of affordable housing
- Misplaced growth
- Overgrowth
- Developers cloud of negativity
- Too many pizza shops, junk yards
- Personal agendas in leadership
- Lack of small business support
- Loss of agricultural land due to value
- Crash of cranberry industry
- Missing reasonable industrial growth opportunities

### **Community Actions**

Once the participants discussed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the community, they were asked to concentrate on preliminary goals. What follows is a summary of that discussion.

- Protect the aquifer
  - Take control
- Create a more open business environment
- Water system/development
- Preserve rural character
  - Buy open land
  - Zoning
- Plan Rte 44 development carefully
  - A community effort with the town and developers working together
- Take care of small businesses (mom and pop)
- Pass Community Preservation Act
- Commitment of business to stay/not relocate
- Encourage small businesses
- Limit water access to create defined areas
- Control growth
- Establish agricultural zoning
- Sell water from aquifer

### **Consultant Observations and Recommendations**

- The Town is quite proud of its historic, rural character but is worried that it is eroding
- The Town is concerned about the southerly spread of growth out of Boston. Perception is that the Town is growing too rapidly.
- The Town is concerned about the cranberry industry. Long an essential mainstay of the local economy, it is in an economic slump and some of the cranberry lands could be prey to residential development
- The Town is quite concerned over the tax burden. It does not see the value of a heavier tax burden than that found in surrounding towns
- The presence of the Town-wide aquifer will require careful protection: If carefully controlled it can be a great economic asset and add positive value to the quality of life in Town
- The Town recognizes that different areas have changing land use and density characteristics. It wishes to strengthen and maintain these characteristics.
- The Town perceives the Route 44 Corridor as having great economic potential but wishes to carefully plan it.
- The needs to create a workable Master Plan, followed by a review of Zoning and a funded Capital Improvements Plan.
- The Town needs to reevaluate the local viability of the Community Preservation Act.
- The Town must become an active player at the regional level: Its problems cannot be resolved by looking inwards
- Develop a Town-wide communications campaign that would explain where taxes are going and how Carver compares to peer communities
- Carefully expand water infrastructure along the Route 144 Corridor
- Carefully explore rezoning the North Carver area with the intent of increasing densities and providing higher densities along the Route 144 Corridor
- Create a Master Planning Committee that would begin to create a meaningful Comprehensive Plan and make zoning and capital improvements related recommendations. The committee would also define the community character and identify problem areas.
- Make certain that the Town's conservation and open space maps are up-to-date and capable of being integrated into the Comprehensive Plan.
- Create a Community Preservation Act study committee to research and demonstrate objective information of the potential outcomes of the tool.
- Call quarterly "all boards" meetings that would focus on planning related topics. The host board would set the agenda.
- Develop a Cost of Community Services model such that impacts of growth on Carver can be ascertained
- Request the Regional Planning Agency to undertake a study of the future of the Cranberry industry and its impacts on Carver and the region.