Community Issues (aka Future Initiatives)

Beyond the umbrella of goals to be accomplished, citizen input and the Plan Forum's discussion led to the identification of several specific issues that must be addressed to protect and enhance the character of the Town in the future. For several of these, the Town is in a position where lack of attention will inevitably lead to lost opportunities; however, immediate attention and commitment to addressing these issues will yield benefits for years to come. These issues address many of the preceding goals and are wide-reaching in their potential impacts on the community.

These Community Issues are:

1. The Urban Corridor Overlay District
2. Housing Diversity & Affordability
3. Settlement Communities
4. The Cultural Core
5. The Mount Pleasant Way
6. Financial Health/Resilience
7. **Open Space Network**

Open Space Network

The loss of "open space" was at the forefront of many citizens' minds when they responded to surveys during this planning process. Undeveloped open spaces can serve vital purposes within the Town – from purely aesthetic visual respites, to providing storm-water management benefits and protection of natural habitat. Instead of relying on as-yet-undeveloped private land to serve the Town's open space needs, the plan recommends that we should take a proactive stance to build upon our recreational

"green space network" to create a protected open space network designed intentionally to meet various public, environmental, and social needs in the community.

❖ *Green Space Network*

The "green space network" is an assemblage of the various properties in the suburban area that are maintained as recreation and/or natural open spaces. These may be publicly or privately-owned and are not necessarily designated for permanent open space protection. While these properties may not all be in pristine natural condition, they could serve as building blocks for a larger open space network designated by the Town.

Recommendations (Open Space)

1. Build the open space network upon the existing green network (defined in the Community Character section). It should consist of permanently protected open spaces used for passive recreational purposes, as well as natural open spaces which are essentially undisturbed.

2. Create a system of interconnected, protected open spaces to provide opportunities for residents and visitors to interact with nature, as well as to accommodate multi-use trails, wildlife corridors, and low-impact drainage strategies that enhance the natural hydrologic characteristics of the area.

3. Prepare a parks, recreation, and open space master plan to identify programing and maintenance of Town owned green spaces, as well as to identify areas to maintain as natural open spaces throughout Town, particularly in yet-to-be-developed areas.

Open Space – *Land areas retained for use as active or passive recreation areas, or for resource protection in an essentially undeveloped state. Open space areas should be contiguous or connected to each other by a pedestrian and bicycle path or sidewalk system. Open space areas intended for active or passive recreation use shall be of sufficient size so as to constitute meaningful and usable space.*

Open Space, Natural – *An essentially undisturbed area not occupied by any structure or impervious surface. Pervious pedestrian trails are permitted in natural open space areas.*

4. Enhance recreational opportunities throughout town, by connecting passive and active recreational facilities to create a larger, town-wide public network, referred to as the *Mount Pleasant Way*.

5. Pursue permanent protection of strategically located sites in order to address long-term open space needs.

6. Expand the green network to the local waterways through additional water access points and designated paddling trails.

7. Investigate opportunities to purchase repetitive loss properties for use as open space and to flood control issues.

Recommendations (Green Space Network)

1. Incorporate **green infrastructure** into public spaces along rights-of-ways to link existing spaces for people and wildlife.

2. Coordinate links in the green network with efforts on the *Mount Pleasant Way*.

3. Support creation of public open spaces and parks within subdivisions and redevelopment projects.

4. Expand the use of green infrastructure at all public facilities. Explore opportunities to create design guidelines for public facilities that incorporate green infrastructure features to mimic the natural water cycle on site.

5. Provide a balance of active and passive green spaces to maintain the character of the community while providing adequate facilities for the population.

Natural Roadside Buffer – a buffer on properties abutting specified roadways maintained in a close-to-natural vegetated state, where only select clearing of trees measuring less than 3 inches DBH is allowed

6. Use native plants in all streetscaping and landscaping of Town properties to the greatest extent possible, while avoiding invasive species.

7. Require site sensitive design through subdivisions and development to create usable open spaces that connect with the wider network.

8. Pursue permanent protection of local open spaces, natural areas (meadows, creeks, forests, and wetlands), and linkages between them to offer opportunities for passive recreation and significant protection of habitat for plants and animals.

9. Maintain natural roadside buffers to serve multiple functions, including creating opportunities for linear parks and wildlife habitats, screening development, improving water quality in roadway stormwater runoff, and connecting larger green spaces.

10. Make access to natural resources a priority through public easements along waterways/protected resources.

11. Create design standards for land development to preserve natural vistas and extending viewing corridors through better design and structure placement.

DRAFT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN REFERENCE: P. 43 (P. 3-21) AND P. 97 (P. 5-3)

https://www.tompsc.com/DocumentCenter/View/29786/TCDraftPlanReduced