



## MANCHESTER MASTER PLAN

A Stronger Manchester Starts With Us



# Manchester-by-the-Sea Visioning for the Master Plan

November 2016





# MANCHESTER MASTER PLAN

---

A Stronger Manchester Starts With Us

# Acknowledgments

Manchester-by-the-Sea Visioning for the Master Plan was developed by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) in partnership with the Town of Manchester-by-the-Sea, Massachusetts. Funding for this project was provided by a District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) grant through the Metropolitan Area Planning Council.

## Metropolitan Area Planning Council

Sam Cleaves, Principal Regional Planner, Project Manager  
Emma Schnur, Regional Land Use Planner  
Emily Torres-Cullinane, Community Engagement Manager  
Carlos Montanez, Senior Regional Planner

## Town of Manchester-by-the-Sea

### Town Administrator

Gary Federspiel

### Town Planner

Sue Brown

### Master Plan Committee

Susan Beckmann, Co-Chair  
Gary Russell, Co-Chair  
Jay Bothwick  
Sarah Hammond Creighton  
Josh Crosby  
Gary Gilbert  
Susan Baker Leavitt  
Axel Magnuson  
Regina Villa  
Laura Winn

### Planning Board Liaisons

Andrea Fish  
Frank Marangell



# Table of Contents

<b>3</b>	A Letter from the Master Plan Steering Committee
<b>4</b>	A Vision for Manchester-by-the-Sea
<b>5</b>	Project Timeline
<b>6</b>	Manchester-by-the-Sea at a Glance
<b>7</b>	Community Visioning Survey
<b>8</b>	Creating a Vision, Engaging the Community
<b>10</b>	Vision Open House
<b>14</b>	What We Heard
<b>18</b>	Next Steps



# **A Letter from the Master Plan Steering Committee**

# A Vision for Manchester-by-the-Sea



# Project Timeline





# Manchester-by-the-Sea at a Glance

## Who Lives in Town?

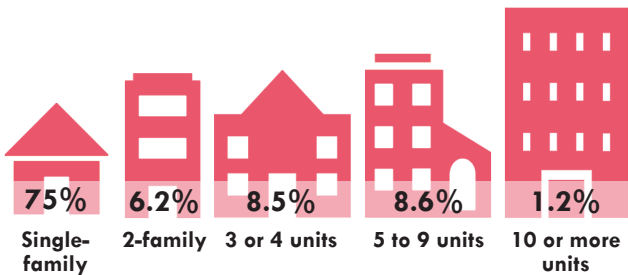
According to the 2010 U.S. Census, Manchester-by-the-Sea's total population is 5,136 people, though a 2014 Town Survey estimated the population at closer to 5,800. Manchester-by-the-Sea's population is older than that of Massachusetts and Essex County; about 20% of residents are 65 and older, compared to 14% of residents in the state and the county.

As of the 2010 Census, there are 2,147 households in Manchester-by-the-Sea. The number of households in town is expected to increase 9.5% by 2030, with the biggest growth in households with householders over 60. Householders in general are getting older: the median age of householders increased from 43.7 to 47.6 between 2000 and 2010. With the increase in households over the next few decades, but stagnant or declining population, it is expected that household sizes will decrease.

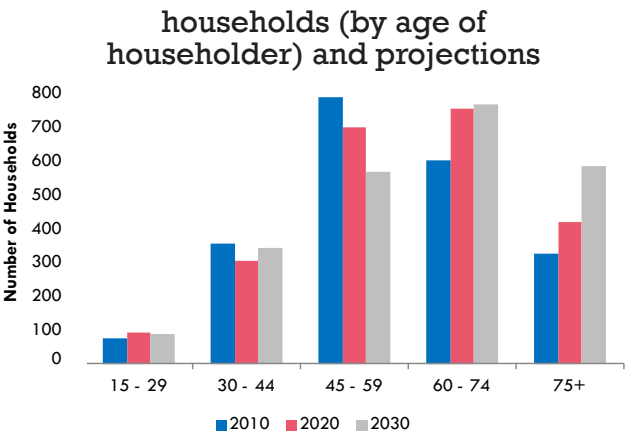
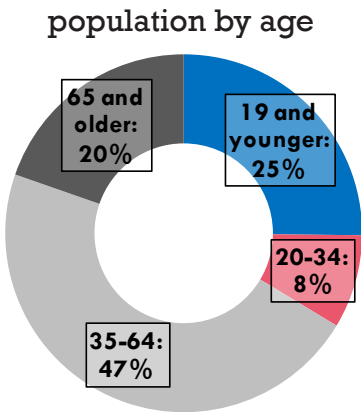
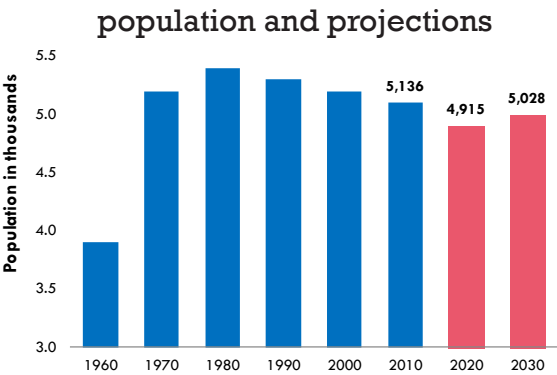
The median household income for Manchester-by-the-Sea is \$89,313, compared to \$67,846 for Massachusetts and \$68,776 for Essex County. About a quarter of households make more than \$200,000 a year, though over 20% of households make less than \$35,000 a year. The town has a very low poverty rate (6.6%) compared to the county (10.7%) and the state (11.6%).

The vast majority of Manchester-by-the-Sea residents live in single-family homes; this housing type makes up three-quarters of the housing stock in town. Two-thirds of residents own their homes while the other third rents.

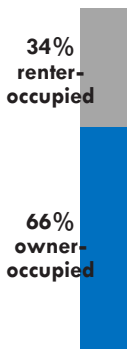
### housing units by type



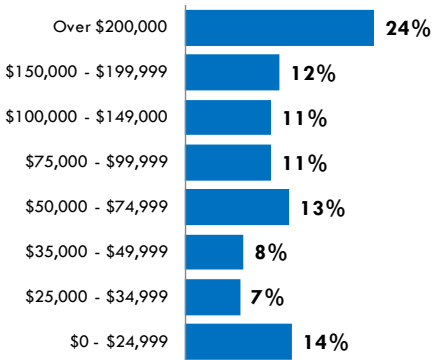
Sources: U.S. Census 2010, ACS 2014 5-Year Estimates, MAPC Stronger Region Projections, Manchester-by-the-Sea Town Census



### housing tenure



### annual household income



# Community Visioning Survey

## Who Took the Survey?

**549** people responded to the online visioning survey.

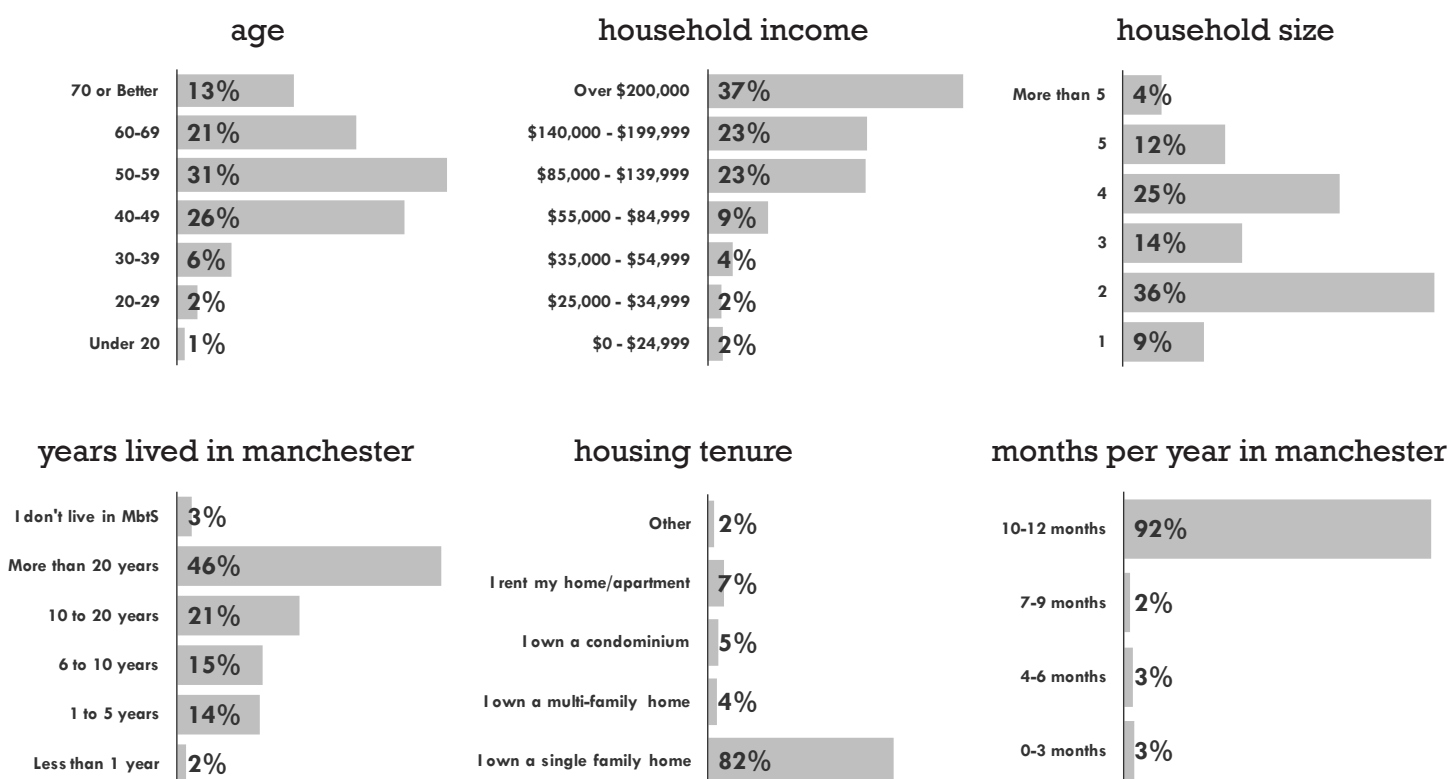
Critical to the community visioning process was the online survey, which was completed by hundreds of people between its launch on August 1 and its closing on October 3. Not only was the survey a great way to spread the word about the Manchester Master Plan process, but it also captured critical data from respondents such as what community values are most important to them, what they see as Manchester-by-the-Sea's greatest assets and challenges, and how much they support solutions to address challenges in the community. Most importantly, it allowed respondents to voice what their vision is for the future of Manchester-by-the-Sea.

For the most part, respondents to the online visioning survey matched the population of Manchester-by-

the-Sea as a whole, though some differences stood out. For example, **the younger demographic was largely missed by this survey**. While 33% of town residents are under 35 years old, only 3% of survey respondents were less than 30 years old.

Like Manchester-by-the-Sea's residents, **survey respondents also have high incomes, though they are even higher than that of all residents**; 37% of survey respondents have a household income of over \$200,000 a year, compared to 24% of town residents. Perhaps more significant is the fact that while 21% of residents make less than \$35,000 a year, only 4% of survey respondents do.

Lastly, **fewer survey respondents rent their homes than the overall town population**: only 7% of respondents rent their home or apartment, compared to 34% of all residents. The gaps identified in this survey will provide targeted outreach communities for the Manchester Master Plan process.



# Creating a Vision, Engaging the Community

## Focus Groups

### Business Focus Group

On August 9, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), with the assistance of the Town's Master Plan Steering Committee and Town Planner, held a focus group with members of the local business community at the Manchester Community Center. Almost 20 attendees gathered to share the strengths, challenges, and opportunities they face doing business in Manchester-by-the-Sea. Participants included retail and restaurant owners, in addition to owners of other local service businesses.

Focus group attendees agreed that, from a business perspective, Manchester-by-the-Sea has a great deal to offer in terms of a beautiful and walkable downtown, a strong community network, and a cooperative Town government. However, there are challenges to doing business in the town, specifically regarding a lack of parking, foot traffic, and community events that bring people downtown. Participants offered opportunities for improving business, such as organizing a farmer's market and other outdoor festivals downtown that can generate increased foot traffic in the area.

### Natural Resources Focus Group

MAPC, with the assistance of the Master Plan Steering Committee and Town Planner, held a second focus group to discuss the strengths and opportunities regarding Manchester-by-the-Sea's open spaces, including the harbor and beaches, as well as the vulnerabilities and challenges these resources are facing. About 16 attendees gathered on Tuesday, September 13, to weigh in on these topics, and they represented a number of nonprofit conservation organizations, Town committees and advisory groups, local maritime businesses, and more.

There was common consensus that, between the Harbor,



beaches, woodlands, and wetlands, Manchester-by-the-Sea has incredible natural resources that must remain and be further protected. However, there are serious concerns regarding natural hazards (like flooding, sea level rise, drought, invasive species, and more) and human disturbances (ranging from capacity issues in the Harbor to overall growth and development). Focus group participants offered an array of potential opportunities for combating these challenges such as encouraging better collaboration amongst the many environmental groups and Town officials, implementing green infrastructure to duplicate natural processes, and finding ways to integrate natural resource education into the local public schools.

Participants also discussed the fact that tensions exist between 1) protecting and managing resources and finding funding to sustain these efforts, 2) protecting land and resources and allowing controlled growth, 3) limiting and accommodating access to non-residents and 4) limiting and accommodating change to downtown, neighborhoods and the harbor.



## Tabling Events

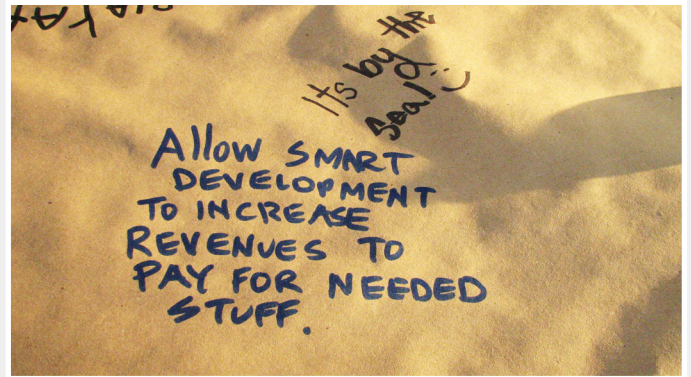
### Music at Masconomo Park

MAPC joined Manchester-by-the-Sea residents for Music in Masconomo Park on August 9. With assistance from the Town's Master Plan Steering Committee and the Town Planner, MAPC created a Manchester Master Plan Visioning Booth to engage attendees of the event – and to provide them with free Italian ice!

The highlight of the booth was an activity that included buckets which represented community values; participants could allocate six poker chips amongst the community values most important to them. The community value that received the most votes was *open space and natural resources including the harbor, beaches, water resources, and conservation areas*; followed by a *high quality school system*; and then *well maintained public infrastructure (water, sewer, stormwater, roads and sidewalks)*. At the booth, visitors could also browse data posters about Manchester-by-the-Sea, offer their comments on a large sheet of paper, and use iPads to fill out the Master Plan Visioning Survey.

### School Open Houses

In addition, over the course of three nights, members of the Master Plan Committee greeted parents at open houses at the elementary, middle, and high schools in town and shared information about the master planning process, the Visioning Survey, and the upcoming Open House. Over 400 survey and Open House reminder cards were distributed.





# Vision Open House

## Open House Overview

After months of planning and outreach, the Manchester Master Plan Vision Open House was held during the evening of September 26 at Manchester-Essex Regional High School. Over 70 people gathered to learn about the Master Plan visioning process, discover current conditions within Manchester-by-the-Sea, and provide their input and suggestions for the town going forward.

When attendees first arrived, they had the opportunity to grab food, mingle, and browse the open house stations. They were then welcomed by Sue Beckmann, Co-Chair of the Master Plan Committee (MPC), who introduced the rest of the committee and the Town Planner, Sue Brown.

Next, Sam Cleaves, Principal Regional Planner from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), gave a brief presentation which described what a master plan is and the process involved, who had taken the online visioning survey and what they said, and the next steps in regard to the Manchester Master Plan.

After the presentation, attendees had the opportunity to spend at time at each of the five open house stations and participate in the activities at each of them. MAPC staff and MPC members were available to answer questions and guide attendees through the stations.

## Stations

### Manchester-by-the-Sea at a Glance

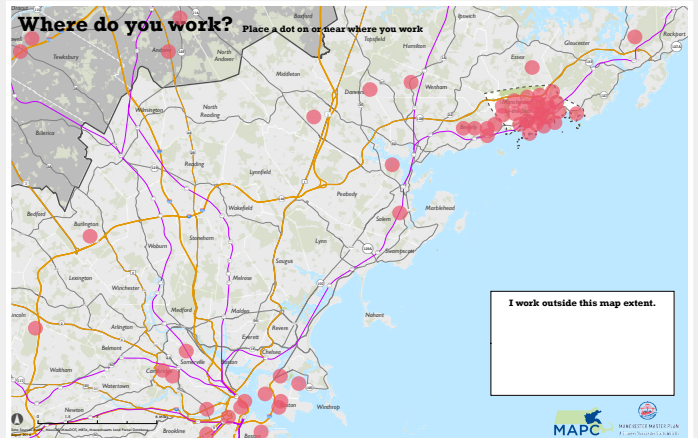
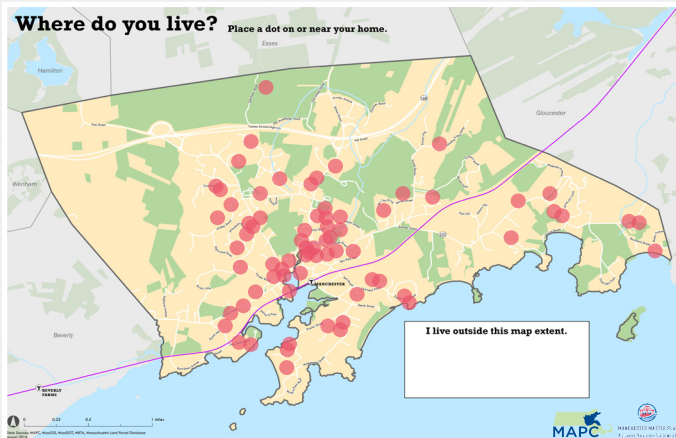
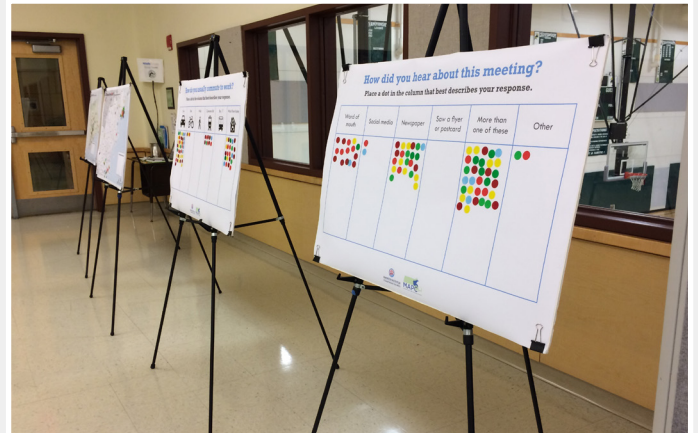
At this station, attendees could browse a number of boards and maps about current conditions in Manchester-by-the-Sea, pertaining to demographics, housing, economic development, transportation, land use and zoning, open space, and resiliency.

After reading through the boards and examining the maps, attendees then had the opportunity to answer the questions, “What about this data surprises you? What concerns you about this data?” on brown paper. They also offered suggestions on how to improve the data representation and indicators used.



## Dot Exercises

When attendees signed-in for the event, they were given four sticky dots to use at this station in order to visually capture where participants live, where they work, how they heard about the meeting, and how they usually commute to work. Event participants live all over Manchester-by-the-Sea and they mainly work in town. Most people commute by car to work, though many work from home. Multiple sources informed attendees of the Open House event, with local newspapers reaching the most people.



### How do you usually commute to work?

Place a dot in the column that best describes your response.

Drive	Bike	Walk	Commuter Rail	Bus / T	Work from home

### How did you hear about this meeting?

Place a dot in the column that best describes your response.

Word of mouth	Social media	Newspaper	Saw a flyer or postcard	More than one of these	Other

## What We've Heard So Far

This station recapped the community engagement that had occurred leading up to the Vision Open House. Attendees could learn about the two focus groups help by MAPC and the MPC, the tabling events, and, most importantly, see the online survey results.

At that point, about 450 people had responded to the survey. Attendees who had not yet filled out the survey were encouraged to do so, and almost 100 people completed the survey in the week following the event!

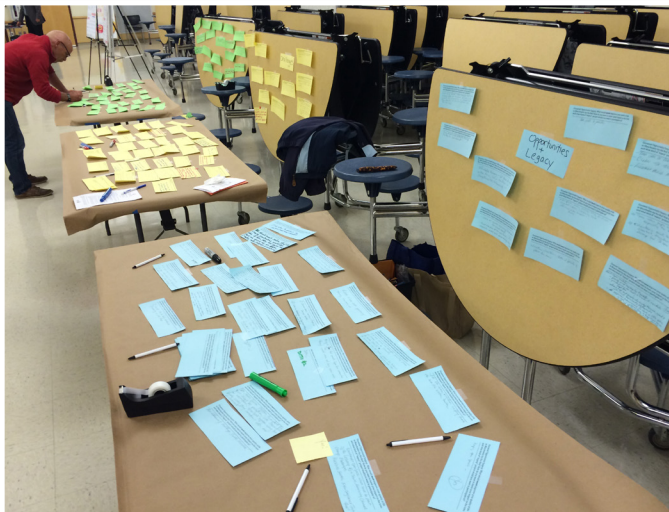




## Assets, Challenges, Opportunities/Legacy

This station provided the opportunity for attendees to voice what they like best about Manchester-by-the-Sea (greatest assets), what they think is missing in the community (greatest challenges), and what they think would most improve quality of life in town (greatest opportunities).

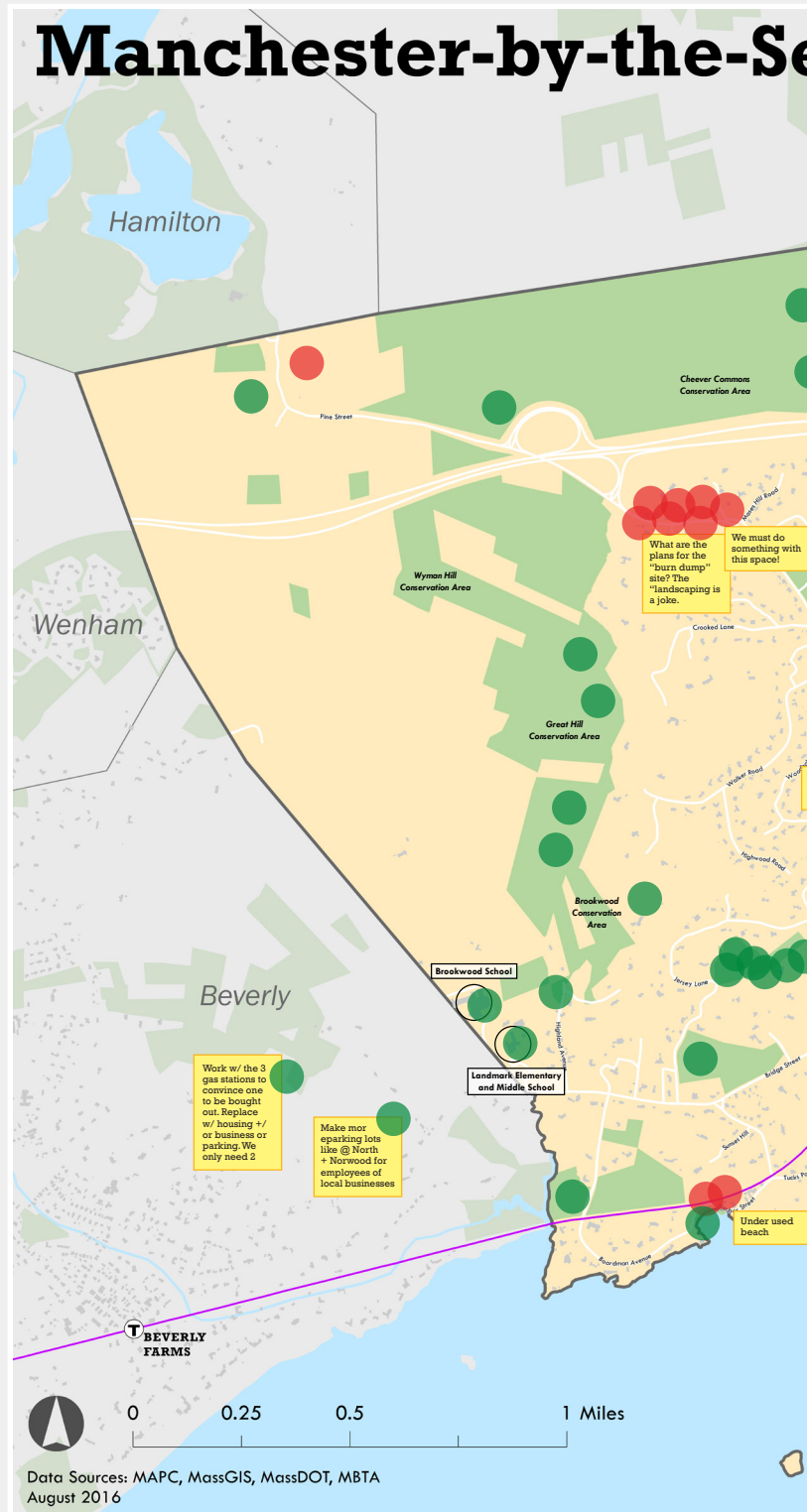
The last prompt specifically sought to encourage attendees to think about ways to leave a legacy in and for Manchester-by-the-Sea. Many voiced that a legacy “project” could simply be protecting what they have for future generations and making sure those to come can enjoy the town as much as those who currently live here. Others offered more specific recommendations such as building a senior center, constructing a bike path that could run through Cape Ann communities, and creating affordable housing for future generations.

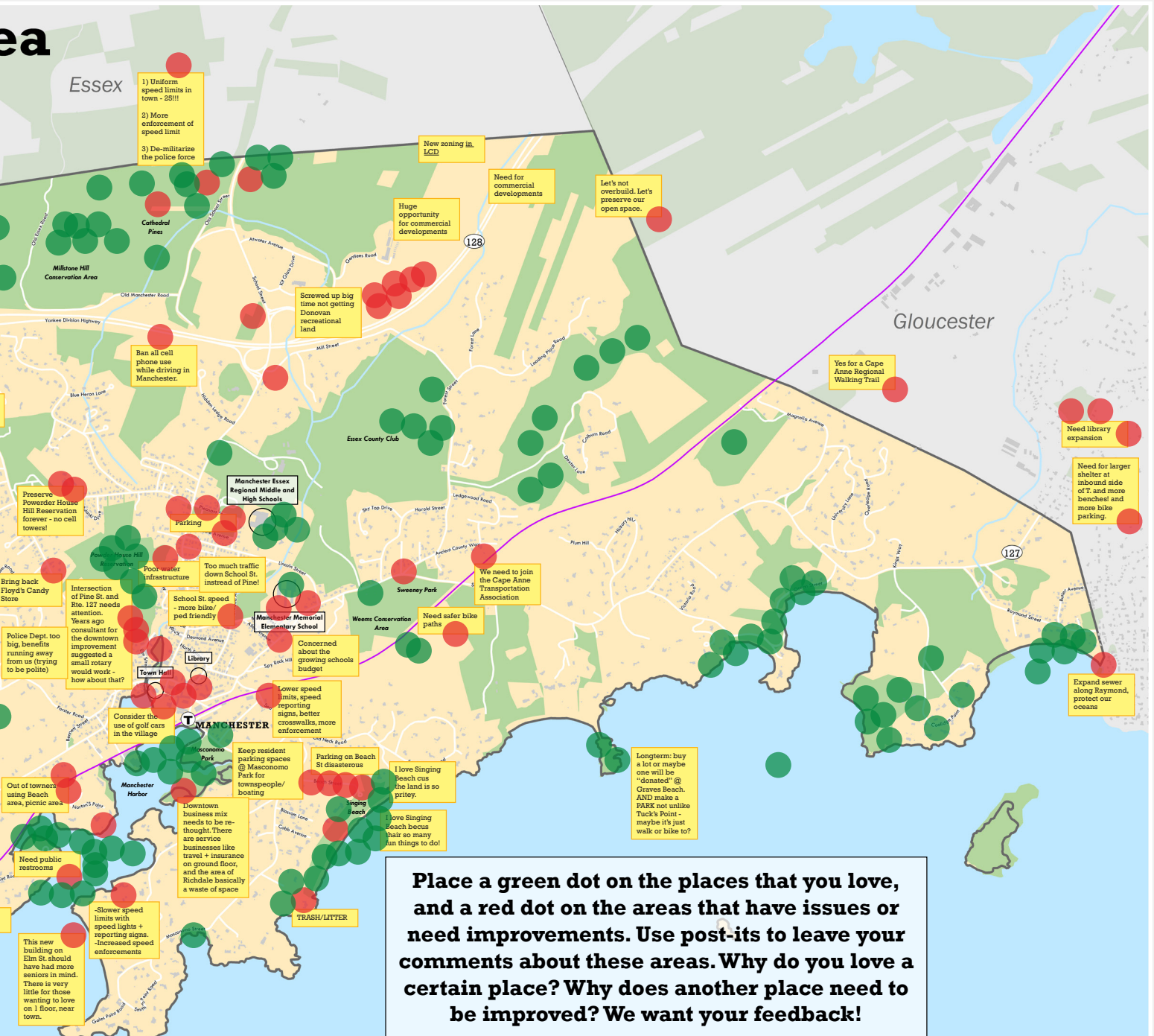


## Mark the Map

On a large map, attendees could use green sticky dots to indicate places they love and red dots to indicate areas that have issues or need improvements. They could also leave comments on post-its about these areas - check out what people had to say!

Content below is as written by attendees, and does not represent the views of the Town of Manchester-by-the-Sea or the Metropolitan Area Planning Council.





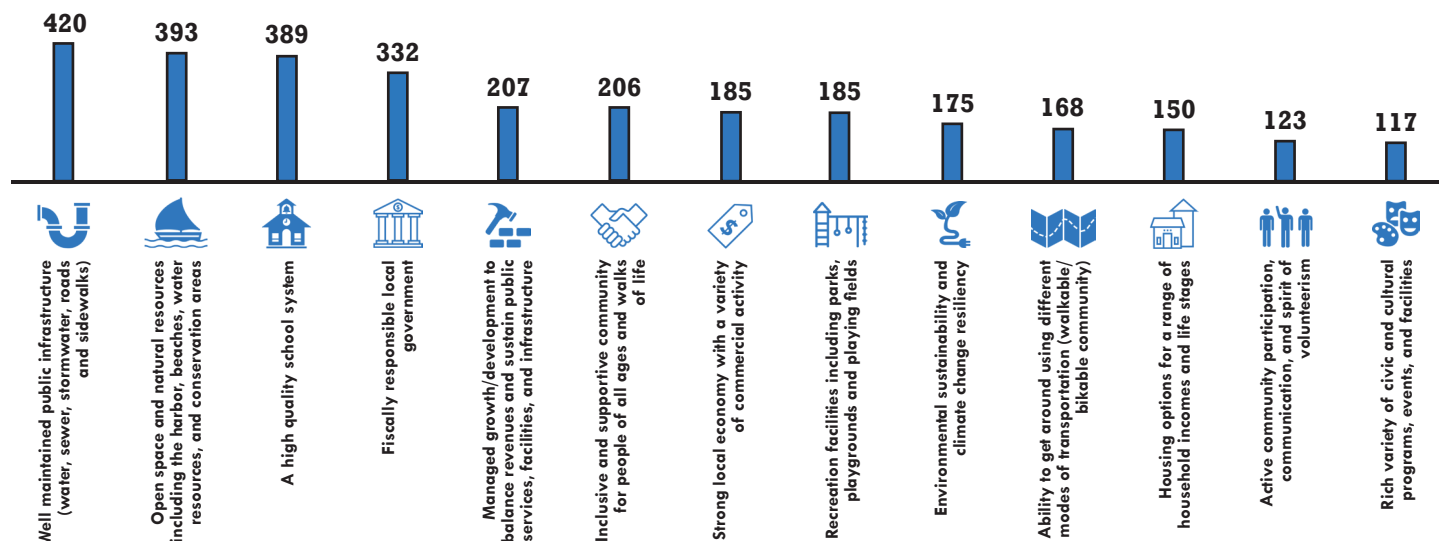


# What We Heard

At the beginning of this process, Manchester-by-the-Sea's Master Plan Committee identified a number of reoccurring themes that emerging in town. These six themes either fell into the category of "Strong Community" or "Good Governance." Within each theme, questions were created to frame discussions about how the town will stay the same in some ways and change/evolve in other ways.

Strong Community	Good Governance
<b>Natural</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do we preserve and manage our open space, harbor, water resources, habitat, and community character?</li> <li>How do we address climate change?</li> </ul>	<b>Facilities and Infrastructure</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What facilities and infrastructure are critical?</li> <li>How do we prioritize improvements (public buildings, water, sewer, and roads)?</li> <li>How do we fund needed improvements?</li> </ul>
<b>Built</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do we want to create/strengthen local economy, downtown, and other economic development?</li> <li>What housing options, community support facilities, and infrastructure do we support?</li> <li>How do we adjust our zoning to meet these goals?</li> </ul>	<b>Financial Management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do we increase understanding of revenue sources and how we can or cannot impact them?</li> <li>Do we intend to grow revenue or limit spending and how?</li> <li>How do these decisions impact land use, services, quality of life, and the character of town?</li> </ul>
<b>Social</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where do we stand on diversity (generational, social, cultural, etc.) support seniors and young families, affordable/community housing, recreational facilities, and public services?</li> </ul>	<b>Working Together</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do we engage more community members, communicate, cooperate, make decisions, create transparency, and sustain interest?</li> </ul>

The conversations and the input received during this visioning process also aligned well with these themes, and each is discussed in detail in this section. Specifically, MAPC asked residents to identify which community values are most important to them as well as identify what the town's greatest assets and challenges may be. Their answers are detailed here.





## Natural

The value of “open space and natural resources, including the harbor, beaches, water resources and conservation areas” was the second highest value identified on the survey, with 72% of respondents making it one of their top choices. The value of “environmental sustainability and climate change resiliency” was chosen by 32% of the respondents. Combined, these two values reflect a very high concern for natural resource protection and a growing concern for encouraging sustainability and climate resiliency within the town.

The aggregate grouping of natural resource categories—beaches, harbor, and natural landscapes/views—received the highest number of votes as the town’s greatest assets, with a very high cumulative ratio of these areas seen as assets (85%) versus being voted for as challenges. Beaches had the highest approval rating at 88% while the harbor was the lowest of the three categories and finished with a favorable ratio of 82%.

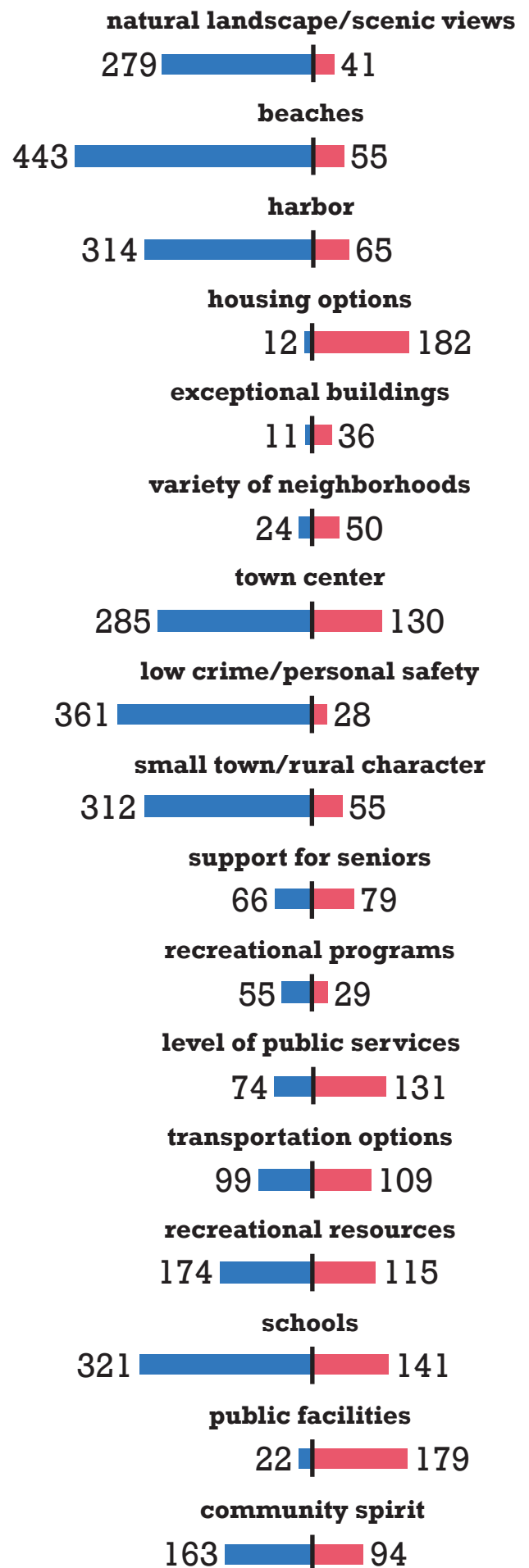
When residents described their vision for Manchester-by-the-Sea in the survey, the preservation and protection of natural resources was mentioned by 122 people. Within the comments regarding the beaches, harbor, and open space, inherent tensions emerged. Some comments noted that the beaches have become overcrowded and too welcoming to non-residents. Others said the harbor has too many moorings, though there was wide support for dredging. Finally, other comments supported the possibility of exploring limited commercial development north of Route 128 to help expand the town’s tax base while others advocated for keeping this land for water resource protection, open space, and recreation.

### What did residents have to say?

*“Better access to harbor for all users: resident and non-resident.”*

*“Keep open space open - stop building everywhere there is a bit of space.”*

*“...we also need a vision of how we adjust to future sustainability needs around energy, environment, water and climate change.”*



## Built

In regard to Manchester-by-the-Sea's built environment, over a third of survey respondents voted for the community values of "managed growth and development to balance revenues and sustain public services, facilities, and infrastructure" (38%) and "strong local economy with a variety of commercial activity" (34%). "Providing housing options for a wider range of household incomes and life stages" found support amongst 28% of survey takers.

Community character in the form of Manchester's rural feel and low crime were seen as highly favorable assets, with an asset to challenge approval rate of 85% for small town/rural character and a 93% rate for low crime/personal safety. The town center was also seen as quite favorable amongst respondents. This stood in contrast to the more negative ratings for the town's variety of neighborhood types and exceptional buildings. At the most negative end of the spectrum, public facilities received 22 asset votes compared to 179 challenge votes, and housing options had only 12 asset votes compared to 182 challenge votes.

148 survey respondents mentioned the built environment within their visions for the town and they highlighted points that are common to once small, rural communities like Manchester that have evolved into outlying suburban bedroom communities within a growing metro region. Many people highly value the town's safety and abundant open space and coastal amenities but, with a limited commercial tax base, the Town is challenged to meet the need for additional public services, facilities, and housing options. This is because it must rely heavily on its residential property tax receipts to fund nearly all of its needs. Several comments reflected the desire to keep the town as it is or for how some remember it in the past, while others see the need to augment the town's tax base and diversify the town's economy, improve services, pay for needed water and sewer infrastructure repairs, and increase housing options, particularly for seniors and working people in town.

### What did residents have to say?

*"Limit the large homes being built, tearing down small homes and making McMansions, changing the balance of our community. Young people who have lived here all their lives cannot continue to live here*

*or come back."*

*"I have lived here for 23 years and the best thing about Manchester is that it has not changed. It is stuck in time and that is a good thing."*

*"We need a wider variety of shops, especially restaurants that cater to families."*

## Social

Social values overlap with Built and Natural values as the themes are integrated with one another. Providing a "rich of variety of civic and cultural programs, events, and facilities" appeared within the top values of 21% of survey takers, while 38% rated highly providing an "inclusive and supportive community for people of all ages and walks of life." A third of residents selected "high quality recreational facilities including parks, playgrounds, and playing fields."

Recreational resources were viewed somewhat positively with a 60% asset to challenge approval rating. Recreational programs were rated similarly, with 55 respondents seeing them as an asset and 29 as a challenge. Public facilities, the level of public services offered by the Town, support for seniors, and the variety of neighborhoods and housing options offered were all seen as having room for improvement.

217 people mentioned Manchester-by-the-Sea's social realm in their vision for the town's future, making it the most highly mentioned theme. As with the Built theme, there is a core of Manchester residents who feel that keeping the town the same is integral to maintaining a high quality of life in Manchester. These results may also reflect somewhat that the majority of survey takers tended to be higher income homeowners who have lived in the town for some time. Renters in town represent 34% percent of the population but the survey was only able to capture 7% of those who identified themselves as such. While some survey respondents indicated that they felt constrained in being limited to selecting their top choice values and felt that all the values offered were important, others clearly indicated their preference for small town government to stick to the basics and avoid providing costly additional services.

It is important to note that many residents surveyed mentioned the importance of making sure that Manchester is a place where all people, no matter

their age, income, race, or ethnicity can afford to live and thrive. As such, many indicated that the town is becoming way too expensive for anyone without a high income. Services are missing, specifically for seniors, that could contribute to a higher quality of life, such as a senior center or bus service in town.

**What did residents have to say?**

*“I would like to live in a town with good schools and a socio-economic mix of residents. I would like to make sure that there is affordable housing and support for the non-wealthy. Manchester runs the risk of becoming overly gentrified and squeezing out its most valuable resource: its mix of people who support each other and the communities and neighborhoods.”*

*A safe, fun community with activities for all ages! ... I would just like to see more community fun for kids without competitiveness.”*

**Facilities & Infrastructure**

**Financial Management**

**Working Together**

Having the “ability to get around using different modes of transportation other than a car,” such as by establishing strong walk and bike first community culture, was ranked highly by 31% of survey respondents. Other community infrastructure such as increasing the ability to get around using different modes of transportation such as walking and biking gathered support from 30 percent of survey



■ Very informed   ■ Somewhat informed   ■ Neutral   ■ Somewhat uninformed   ■ Very uninformed

	REGULARLY	OCCASIONALLY	NEVER
walk in town?	70%	26%	70%
bicycle in town?	22%	34%	43%
go to a local beach?	62%	36%	2%
get out on the harbor?	37%	39%	24%
shop or dine in town?	67%	32%	1%
attend town meeting?	43%	34%	23%
attend board or committee meetings?	13%	47%	40%



# Next Steps