

# SOUTHWICK COMMUNITY VISIONING MEETINGS

STRENGTHS - WEAKNESS - OPPORTUNITY - THREATS

## STRENGTHS

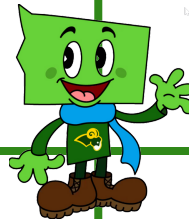
- 1 - Rural character
- 2 - Location
- 3 - Small town USA
- 4 - Lake
- 5 - Agriculture

Not in the "hub"  
Own aquifer  
Tourist attraction  
Recreation  
Soil  
Business friendly  
School system  
Air quality  
Multi-generational families  
Median income in average range  
Survey response  
Community engagement  
Town water - quality varies

## WEAKNESSES

- 1 - Lack of parking for rail trail
- 1 - Lack of healthcare - people and pets
- 2 - Town employment opportunities (lack of)
- 2 - Safety patrol on lake
- 3 - Town center
- 3 - Poor mix of retail/commercial/industrial
- 4 - Senior center utilized
- 5 - Road conditions
- 5 - Annual water restrictions
- 5 - College Highway business strip

Public transit  
EV charging station access  
Police shortage  
No town identity  
Lack of grocery store options



- 1 - Mixed use development
- 2 - Improve roads
- 3 - Smart growth/balance
- 4 - Acquire open space
- 5 - Cannabis growth/sales
- 5 - Community center for youth

Expand seasonal recreational activities  
Fiber optics  
Dog park  
Pool/spray park  
Control size of development  
Change tax rate  
Healthcare centers  
Affordable housing  
Improve senior center activities  
Town trash pickup

- 1 - Loss of farms
- 2 - Unfunded mandates
- 2 - Big box retail development
- 3 - Commercial development
- 3 - Illegal drugs
- 3 - Education system - curriculum
- 4 - Electricity/gas prices
- 4 - Climate change - storms, droughts, flooding
- 4 - Thoughts about "enough" suitable housing
- 5 - Aging population

Residential development  
Lake health  
Industrial restricted zone on aquifer  
Light pollution  
Viruses  
Air quality  
Declining school enrollment

## OPPORTUNITIES

## THREATS

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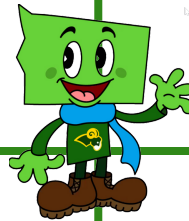
- 1 - Lakes
- 2 - Agriculture
- 3 - Rural character/charm/small town
- 4 - Recreational areas
- 5 - Local business

History of town  
Scenery/topography  
Schools  
People/community/vested-ness/loyalty  
Involvement/participation  
Town government/purest form of government  
Committed town officials

## WEAKNESSES

- 1 - Lack of cable/internet/options/utilities
- 2 - Unplanned growth
- 3 - Lack of downtown aesthetic cohesion/flow
- 4 - Lack of sidewalks
- 5 - Pioneer Dairy's current condition
- 5 - Political unrest

Roads/maintenance  
Large parcels of land for sale  
Unkempt business properties  
Telephone poles on sidewalks  
Aging population  
Ratio of residents who also work in town/  
don't work in town  
Lack of choices - groceries  
Other shopping  
Oversaturation of used car lots



- 1 - Opportunities for farmland
- 2 - Residential and business growth/development
- 2 - Lack of affordability for current and incoming residents
- 3 - Overcrowding of lakes
- 4 - Loss/overusage/pollution of land/natural resources
- 5 - Losing small town charm

Political discourse  
Housing costs  
Current zoning  
Lack of action plan/lack of implementation of Master Plan  
Loss of green space to development  
Not attracting young/new families  
Population decrease  
Residential tax increases  
Stale tax base  
Climate change  
Non-maintenance of lakes

- 1 - Loss of farmland and open space properties
- 2 - Invest in infrastructure
- 2 - Stay current with technology and options
- 3 - Save historic buildings
- 4 - Controlled growth
- 4 - Creating aesthetically-pleasing downtowns
- 5 - Incentivize green energy for business
- 5 - Resolving water shortage
- 5 - Sewer expansion

Bring new business opportunities  
Dog park  
Splash pad

## OPPORTUNITIES

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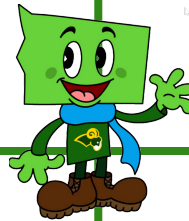
- 1 - Safe community
- 1 - Rural feel
- 2 - Small community
- 2 - Land conservation
- 3 - Recreation opportunities
- 4 - Lake
- 5 - Location
- 5 - Transfer station

Fresh farmstands  
Right to farm community  
Campus style school  
Recreation center – childcare/location  
Police/fire  
Library  
Senior Center  
Road conditions / snow removal  
Diverse wildlife

## WEAKNESSES

- 1 - Cost of development versus benefits
- 1 - No town common/center
- 2 - Lack of fiber optics
- 2 - Lack of small business/empty storefronts
- 3 - Stuck with Comcast
- 3 - No cohesive development
- 3 - Lack of infrastructure to support development
- 4 - Declining MCAS scores/academics
- 4 - Lack of transportation
- 5 - Depot Street/Powdermill intersection
- 5 - Lack of economic development for community
- 5 - Strip style development

Sidewalks  
Lack of community involvement  
Residential communications



- 1 - More land protection/funding
- 2 - Lease town land back to farms
- 2 - Retain independent farms
- 3 - Pickleball courts at old tennis courts
- 3 - Fiber optics/Whip City collaboration
- 3 - Support FFA/4H clubs growth
- 3 - Dog park
- 3 - Trader Joe's/food store alternative
- 4 - Town to support recreation center activities
- 4 - EV charging stations
- 4 - EV for town vehicles
- 4 - Clear rail trail for winter use
- 4 - Alternative farming options
- 5 - Awareness of farm safety-teach
- 5 - MX track promotion/use

Outreach for economic development (proactive vs. reactive)  
Town maintenance of public land  
Year round recreation  
Farm to table restaurant

- 1 - Distrust of town government
- 2 - Natural resource protection
- 2 - Aquifer protection
- 3 - Lack of transparency
- 3 - Large home development
- 4 - School safety measures
- 4 - Development related impacts (ie traffic school system)
- 4 - Gated community infrastructure failure (ie. Roads)
- 5 - Lack of engagement by the next generation

City people not respecting private property  
Global warming

## OPPORTUNITIES

## THREATS

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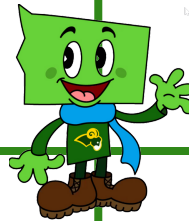
- 1 - Rural landscape
- 2 - Geographic location
- 3 - Small town feel and charm
- 4 - Lake
- 5 - Farms/agriculture/access to fresh food

Small, dedicated group of people who volunteer  
Residential spaces  
Wildlife management area  
School system  
Southwick Recreation Center services and projects  
Historical society  
Community commitment to environmental quality  
Green space  
Churches - good variety  
Quality, maintained sidewalks  
Mostly good restaurants  
Events/civic events  
Emergency services  
Winter road plowing  
Charity/food drive  
Library  
Growing number of involved citizens  
Access to retail; grocery store, gas, pharmacy

## WEAKNESSES

- 1 - Lack of diversity
- 2 - Lack of affordable housing
- 2 - Not a walkable community
- 2 - Resistance to change and growth
- 2 - Not enough retail/restaurants options
- 3 - Obtaining and maintaining more public recreational opportunities/facilities
- 3 - Lack of dog park
- 4 - Lack of multifamily housing/apartments
- 5 - Lack of public transportation
- 5 - Not enough sidewalks/inaccessible sidewalks

Lack of adoption of technology/teaching in school system  
Lack of tree belt  
Lack of sidewalk cleaning/snow removal  
Lack of recreational/exercising walking systems and cycling/bike lanes



- 1 - Increase town government communication with public
- 1 - Land acquisition for passive recreational, landscaped space (a la Stanley)
- 1 - High speed internet/town-based
- 2 - Create Central Downtown
- 3 - Improve sustainability solar, EV charging
- 4 - Resolve water access issues
- 4 - Centralizing town-wide communication
- 4 - Protect water resources
- 4 - More access to culture/arts
- 5 - School technology programs
- 5 - Higher quality retail/more diverse retail options
- 5 - Improve existing recreational areas

Increase promotion of recreational opportunities  
More sewage  
More diverse restaurants  
Improve walking options

- 1 - Unmanaged/unplanned development
- 2 - Lack of sustainable, resilient/hardened infrastructure
- 3 - Lack of easily accessible and clear municipal information
- 3 - Climate change
- 3 - Being unprepared for population growth and change
- 4 - Loss of farmland/loss of local food sources
- 4 - Lack of volunteerism and its culture
- 5 - Lack of affordable housing
- 5 - Lack of funding to improve community

Lake maintenance/lack of protections  
Lack of public access to lake  
Lack of safety enforcement across town and lakes  
Loss of forests/trees  
Lack of civic engagement of town residents  
Lack of enforcement of existing regulations  
Water quality and supply

## OPPORTUNITIES

## THREATS

# SOUTHWICK COMMUNITY VISIONING MEETINGS

STRENGTHS - WEAKNESS - OPPORTUNITY - THREATS

## STRENGTHS

### 1 - Farming land

*Should be able to grow many types of crops*

### 2 - Proximity to major cities and Turnpike

### 3 - Lake's natural resources

### 4 - Proximity to skiing

### 5 - Tax rate

Basic services – fire police schools library  
Infrastructure  
Rail Trail

## WEAKNESSES

### 1 - Drinking water quality issues

### 2 - What is keeping the next generation to stay in Southwick?

### 3 - Need to expand tax base beyond residential

*Need the right type of business*

### 4 - Infrastructures

*Need sewer, fiber, gas, etc. to promote growth*

### 5 - Road conditions

### 5 - Social services – mental health, drug addiction, elderly services not available

### Water restrictions

*More difficult to sell house*

Infrastructure – culvert failure leads to road closure

Need to preserve the lakes takes time and resources

Boat patrols

How to service electric boats?



### 1 - Expand recreation, arts, festivals, etc

### 2 - Put together a new business strategy

### 3 - Renewable energy in open space – i.e. solar

### 4 - Farming land

*Should be able to grow many types of crops*

### • Open space can attract different types of growth

### Electric vehicle service stations

*Can attract more people to move here*

### Automation is changing certain jobs

*Potential to bring in new businesses*

### Aging population

Need assisted living and/or more smaller, affordable homes

### 1 - Aging population

*Need more services not currently available  
Mass exodus when downsizing*

### 2 - Pollution of lake water

### 3 - Having a large enough tax base

### Automation changing certain jobs

*Losing businesses to other communities*

Need to watch what is being put onto lawns – chemicals and fertilizers lead to pollution

Climate change impacts to farming community

## OPPORTUNITIES

### What has not worked well in the past and why?

- 1997 Master Plan effort
- Appearance of Planning Board and Select Board process

### What has worked well in the past and why?

- Preserving land – i.e. North Pond
- Places to walk

### What in Town could be improved and how?

- Road conditions

## THREATS

### If you could change one thing, what would it be?

- Stronger business development strategy

### What is missing in Town?

- Entertainment and activities

## ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

VIRTUAL – OCTOBER 13, 2022

# SOUTHWICK COMMUNITY VISIONING MEETINGS

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## STRENGTHS

### 1 - Recreational community

(land, Rec Center, Rail Trail, Lakes)

### 2 - School campus

buildings are updated + track

### 3 - Charm

Agricultural history & Historical society

Police and fire departments work well with community

Town came together around galvanizing points

We're at the foothills of the Berkshires

Signage to support small business near town hall

Farms & farm stands for fresh food

## WEAKNESSES

### 1 - Town appeal & charm are slipping away from 6-10 years ago

(Neon lights at businesses, Downtown is not visually appealing, Not capitalizing on the town's charm, Traffic in center of town, Not walkable – lack cohesiveness)

### 2 - Recreation

(Not enough parking for Rail Trail access, Management of lake maintenance / cleanliness / trash, Rec Center needs assistance & buildings are in disarray due to lack of support)

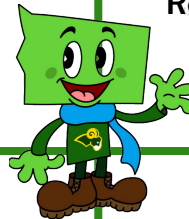
### 3 - Affordability for older and/or fixed income residents

All residents pay the same tax rates (fixed income pay the same as working age but don't have the same use of services), limited opportunities for multigenerational living

Dump/transfer station needs support for a better traffic & usability flow, road & culvert also needs work at entrance

School budget limitations

Road upkeep



### 1 - Getting a handle on the center of town – planned vision for its visual appeal, commercialized or not growth, traffic & walkability, attractiveness for visitors from out of town

Another light between Big Y & Southwick Inn to help slow down center of town traffic, Town can become a destination & not just a pass through (become basecamp to Berkshires), More sidewalks increase likelihood that people will stay in town & not pass through, Visitor friendly, walkable with shops & restaurants, Modeled after Simsbury, Appeal of town with organized development, especially in center of town (mixed use), Attractive looking town / curb appeal,

(More attractive & vibrant downtown area with visual guidelines/standards (no neon signs – swap in wood with incentives to business to make the change)

Blend history into future modernization Court sports: pickle, tennis

Keep 55+ community active & engaged in town (walkable matters) – extend sidewalks beyond center of town

Grants available for dump for swap shop & road upkeep

Promote & support small business more to help keep a mixed tax revenue base

Preserving land, creating land donation programs, especially in/near downtown area corridors

Allow flexible housing options (e.g. in law apartments, multigenerational living) Flexible or varied tax rates for graded resident vs business

## OPPORTUNITIES

### 1 - Not capitalizing on the center of town opportunity from above

(Too much commercialization especially without organized growth plan – starting to feel like Riverdale Rd, not containing industrialized areas to certain zones (but do recognize we need mixed growth), Lack off street parking to support us being a destination town, Losing our farm land / visual appeal especially in / near downtown areas, Not curbing degradation of town appeal)

Cut down on redundancy in mix of businesses (e.g. one dollar store; not two)

Ignoring land preservation

## THREATS

VIRTUAL – OCTOBER 15, 2022