

## STOW COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

### OPEN HOUSE SUMMARY

*Prepared by JM Goldson LLC 2/29/2024*

#### Overview

On January 17, 2024, JM Goldson and the Town of Stow hosted an Open House for the Stow Comprehensive Plan update. The event took place at the Pompositticut Community Center from 6:00 to 8:00 pm and saw 36 attendees. This Open House marked the public kickoff of Phase II of the Stow Comprehensive planning process, which is dedicated to facilitating engagement around a community Vision and Goals to guide the Town for the next decade.

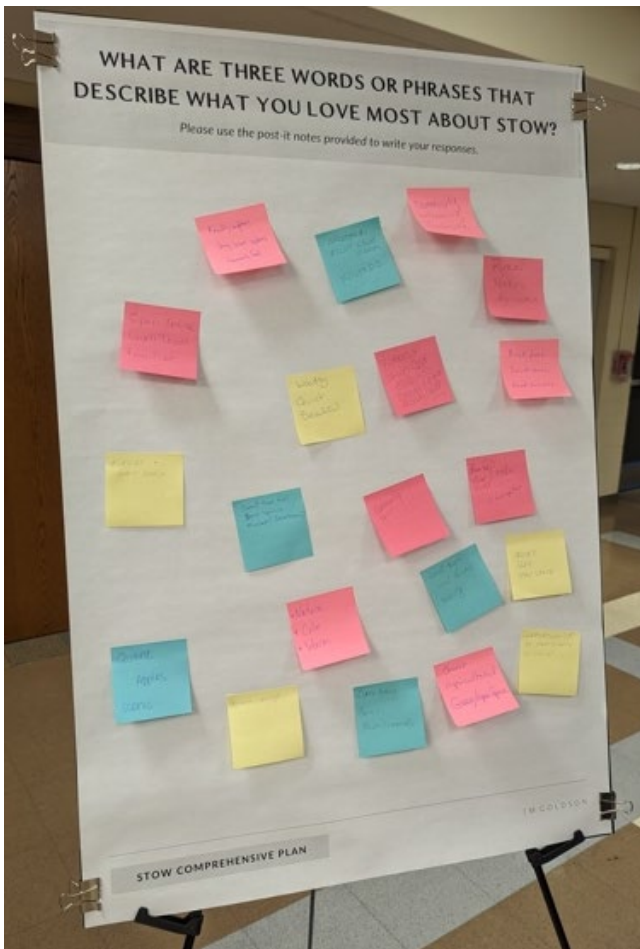
#### Key Findings

- When writing about what they loved most about Stow, participants described the abundance of nature, the strong sense of community, the rural setting and “small town” feel, and the quietude and serenity of the area. The most common phrase used to describe what attendees love most about Stow was *open space*.
- The top issue to which participants wanted to see effort devoted was housing affordability. Participants also mentioned they hoped that the comprehensive plan will promote walkability, create new gathering spaces, preserve green spaces, and address ways to help long-term residents stay in Stow. Additionally, desires to limit further development and to foster economic growth were each noted several times.
- When asked what questions they had about the comprehensive planning process, attendees asked what the approval process was for a Comprehensive Plan, when progress will be visible, and how success in implementation can be promoted.



## Participants

- The first activity board asked participants their age, their housing status, their connection to Stow, how long they have been affiliated with Stow, and if they had ever served on a Town board, committee, or commission.
- Participants were most likely to be homeowners over the age of 35, with a 20+ year affiliation with Stow.
- In total, 69% of attendees stated that they either actively or previously served on the Town Board, indicating very high levels of civic engagement among those attending the Open House.



## Open House Format

The Open House aimed to serve as an introduction to the project team and the comprehensive planning process. A focus was placed on hearing what community members view as the top issues in Stow, gaining insight on what people love most in Stow, and hearing what questions community members have about the planning process. The JM Goldson project team and members of the Comprehensive Plan Committee facilitated the Open House through engagement boards designed to either share or collect information. Informational boards gave an introductory explanation of the comprehensive planning process, shared statistics about how housing and demographics have changed in Stow since the 2010 Master Plan, and outlined the Phase II Engagement Roadmap for the ongoing comprehensive planning process. Interactive stations invited participants to share demographic information about themselves, what they thought were the top issues facing Stow, what they loved most about Stow, and what questions they had about

the planning process. Participants were provided either sticky dots or sticky notes and writing utensils to indicate their responses, depending on whether the question was open-response or quantitative.

## Most Loved Aspects of Stow

When asked “*What are three words or phrases that describe what you love most about Stow?*” participants highlighted the access to green space in Stow and the strength of the community. These comments were consolidated into themes, the count of which is shown on the right. The most common phrase used was *open space*.

Most Loved: Key Themes	Count <sup>1</sup>
Open/Green Space	20
Good Community	17
Rural	12
Quiet/Calm	6

## Stow’s Top Issues

When asked “*What are the top issues you hope this plan will help address in Stow?*” attendees referred to a diversity of issues. Outstanding was the need for affordable housing in Stow. Additionally, participants expressed a desire for economic development and an increase in businesses, while also highlighting the importance of environmental preservation and the hope to maintain green spaces.

Another key theme was walkability, with multiple suggestions for sidewalk construction and traffic safety. Lastly, desires for more public gathering spaces were expressed.

Top Issues: Key Themes	Count
Affordable Housing	14
More Business/Economic Dev.	11
Sustainability/Environmentalism	7
Walkability	6
Gathering Places	6

## Questions about the Planning Process

When asked “*What questions do you have about the comprehensive planning process?*” participants most often asked about how the comprehensive plan will be approved, and how it will be materialized. Other participants wondered what the timeline for the comprehensive plan looks like and ‘What’s next?’.

Finally, multiple people asked how a successful comprehensive plan can be ensured given the rural character of Stow and the diversity in financial circumstances of residents.

Questions: Key Themes	Count
Approval Process	7
Project Timeline	2
Successful Implementation	2

<sup>1</sup> This number totals more than the number of attendees because attendees were invited to list multiple words or phrases.

## APPENDIX

The following tables quantify responses from attendees for each question. Percentages are based on the number of responses to each question, which differ depending on the question. Where data were available, the Open House participants were compared to the population of Stow as a whole.

### What is your connection to Stow?

Connection	Participants	Percent
I live in Stow.	30	83%
I don't live in Stow, but I work here.	4	11%
I don't live in Stow, but I own property here.	1	3%
I have a different connection to Stow than those listed here.	1	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	

### How old are you?<sup>2</sup>

Age Group	Participants	Percent	Stow Population
Under 18	2	7%	25%
18-34	3	9%	18%
35-64	14	42%	40%
65+	14	42%	17%
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>		

### What is your housing status?

Housing Status	Participants	Percent	Stow Population <sup>3</sup>
I/my household owns the place we live.	29	91%	85%
I/my household rents the place we live.	2	6%	15%
I am currently experiencing housing instability.	1	3%	N/A <sup>4</sup>
Other	0	0%	N/A
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>		

<sup>2</sup> Age group data regarding the Stow population sourced from the 2018-2022 American Communities Survey 5-Year Estimates (B01001).

<sup>3</sup> Homeownership and Rental percentages represent housing unit data taken from the 2018-2022 American Communities Survey 5-Year Estimates (B25003).

<sup>4</sup> Housing insecurity is not compared due to the lack of a credible data source.

### How long have you been affiliated with Stow?

Years Affiliated	Participants	Percent
Less than five years	2	6%
5-10 years	6	19%
11-19 years	3	9%
20+ years	21	66%
<b>Total</b>	32	

### Do you serve on a Town Board, Committee, or Commission?

Participation	Participants	Percent
Currently	17	53%
Previously	5	16%
Not Yet	10	31%
<b>Total</b>	32	

### Most Loved Aspects about Stow

protected open space + trails	sense of community
open space	Gleasondale community
open space	small town
conservation lands	nature
rural quality	quiet
scenic	pilot grove farm
so beautiful	community feel
open space	calm
community	small-town feel
open space	small town feel
open space	nice people
rural character/small town feel	not much rentable housing
opportunity to participate in town	I feel safe here
swimming in lake boon	immediate neighbors willing to help out others
rural feel	quiet
rural	local food + farms
woodsy	familiar
orchards	knowing friends, parents, siblings + children
friendly neighbors	knowing friends, parents, siblings + children
nature	apples
has rural character	friendly
open space	great people
wildlife	community
community spirit	quiet

open space	good schools
rural	abundance of woodpeckers and blue heron
still fairly rural	beauty
refuge	community
community spirit + neighborhoods	beautiful
small town	friends
fields	strong school systems
elderly citizens	warm
narrow tree lined roads	minimal development
quaint	good schools
Butternut Farm	good volunteers on board
woods walks	good schools
farms	roots
agricultural	owls and coyotes

### Stow's Top Issues

Recognize that Stow is not and need not be a shopping/restaurant destination. Plenty of regional opportunities. Keep it small + appropriate.	limit large trucks on residential roads
affordable for seniors	sustainability
no new construction w/ fossil fuels	get middle/high school interested in Stow history
more businesses	connection/transit options
continue working on open space, emerald corridor for flora/fauna	heat (illegible) for everyone including affordable units
more recreation for kids + families	keep open space
keep taxes low	more clustered affordable housing w/ open public land; forget million-dollar houses
more sidewalks on 117	affordable housing
recognize that decisions made today effect the future	mount signs telling history
more affordable housing	gathering spaces of all types
small business	not let one business entity impact character of neighborhood
integrate Stow history w/ the community	move away from being fast "drive through"
more commercial opportunities in town	not much business to help w/ taxes
redesign business center to be more inviting + place to hangout	affordable housing
find some way to gain tax base to alleviate pressure on long-term or lifelong residents who can't compete with the apparent affluence here	minimize existing commercial space
plan for the future - protect character of neighborhoods	minimize vehicular dominance over pedestrian/bikes

control traffic - town-wide buy in to 25 mph on small, narrow, residential roads, max 30 mph on 117	gotta travel to shop
taxes kinda high	more playgrounds/play spaces
increase business in town	be mindful of impact on taxes
affordable housing for all	traffic intensity on 117
goal alignment of managing rising taxes with all the amenities people want	small schools where kids don't get lost in the shuffle
restaurants/pub - places to gather	affordable housing
more arts opportunities	affordable housing
small class sizes	public water
sustainability/environmental protection	diversity
environmental preservation	athletic fields
more diverse housing stock	support farming
walkability	increased small housing
don't let Stow become Sudbury	more bike lanes, running paths, etc. for safe outdoor recreation
affordable housing	economic development
open space	small business development + support
find new site for new library	conserve quiet
cultural development	more small businesses
more common social spaces to reinforce Stow's sense of community (enable new events, gathering for music, etc.)	economic development
affordable housing	we need skateboard park
create meeting area for teenagers to gather	invest in town businesses
affordable rental housing	town services
fix business + water in lower village	minimize development
housing diversity	keep elderly citizens in Stow
appropriate reuse of Bose	keep property tax stable
affordable moderate-income housing	where is a culture district in town?
sidewalks - walking can be dangerous	safety
maintain space	prioritize historic presentation
smaller houses - affordable units	big houses not healthy - need smaller houses, accessible
avoid growth that would require more from septic to town sewage	more sidewalks
potential charging station in every new home	

### Questions about the Planning Process

How will this affect property taxes?	When will we see progress?
Does a comp plan get approved at town meeting?	How confident are you (steering committee) that select people and boards will indeed pay attention to and be guided by the financial report?
What's next?	How specifically will it be used?
community input	Why do we need a plan?
In the rapidly changing atmosphere can such a plan be successful in a relatively rural town with so many demands and varied age and financial circumstances?	How will the plan be presented and approved?
What will the priorities be and how are they decided?	How does the comprehensive plan become actionable?
How will the plan be implemented?	How does it lead to zoning and policy changes?



## Engagement Boards

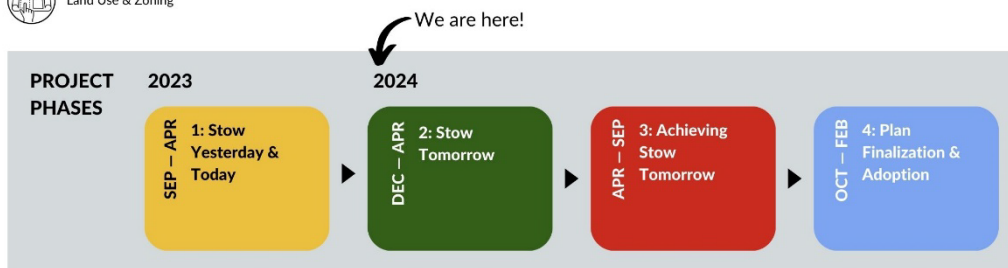
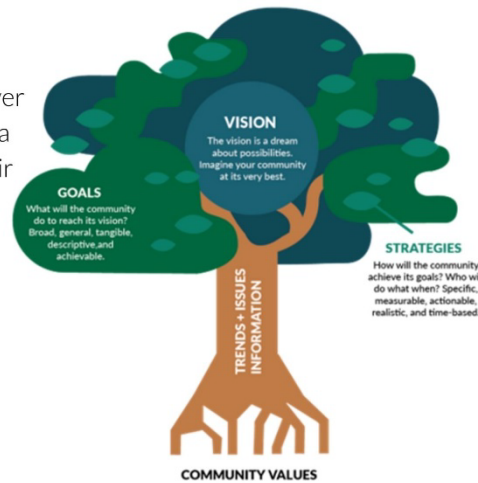
# STOW COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

**CAN YOU ENVISION THE FUTURE OF STOW?  
THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN WILL DO JUST THAT!**

### WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

A comprehensive plan is a policy document that helps local decision makers respond to change over time. Creating a comprehensive plan is a way for a community to identify a long-range vision for their town, primarily focused on physical evolution.

The Stow Comprehensive Plan will have seven elements:



### WHAT IS THE STEERING COMMITTEE?

The Stow Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee will collaborate with the Planning Department, Select Board, and the consultant team to facilitate engagement and prepare the Comprehensive Plan. The committee is meeting regularly throughout the planning process.

### HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

Project information and updates will be provided throughout the planning process on the dedicated project website. Tune in to the website for updates on the comprehensive planning process, engagement opportunities and results, and next steps.

Scan this code and submit your ideas for the official name of the Comprehensive Plan by the end of January!



Scan this code to submit your favorite photos of Stow to the photo competition!

[www.tinyurl.com/stowCP](http://www.tinyurl.com/stowCP)

Scan this code to visit the project website!



*Thank you for joining us today! Please use the stickers provided to answer the following questions and give us a sense of who you are.*

### 1: WHAT IS YOUR CONNECTION TO STOW?

I LIVE IN STOW	I DON'T LIVE IN STOW, BUT I WORK HERE	I DON'T LIVE IN STOW, BUT I OWN PROPERTY HERE	I HAVE A DIFFERENT CONNECTION TO STOW THAN THOSE LISTED HERE
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### 2: HOW OLD ARE YOU?

UNDER 18	18–34	35–64	65 OR OLDER
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### 3: WHAT IS YOUR HOUSING STATUS?

I/MY HOUSEHOLDS OWNS THE PLACE WE LIVE	I/MY HOUSEHOLD RENTS THE PLACE WE LIVE	I AM CURRENTLY EXPERIENCING HOUSING INSTABILITY	OTHER
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### 4: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN AFFILIATED WITH STOW?

LESS THAN FIVE YEARS	5–10 YEARS	11–19 YEARS	20+ YEARS
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### 5: DO YOU SERVE ON A TOWN BOARD, COMMITTEE, OR COMMISSION?

YES, I CURRENTLY SERVE	NO, BUT I HAVE PREVIOUSLY SERVED	NO, I HAVE NOT YET SERVED
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# STOW RESIDENTS THEN & NOW

Stow's last Comprehensive Plan was written in 2010. Read on to see how the community has changed since then!

## 2010

## 2020

POPULATION

**6,590**

**+8.9%**

POPULATION

**7,174**

RACIAL MAKEUP

**7.8%** PEOPLE OF THE  
GLOBAL MAJORITY

**+100%**

RACIAL MAKEUP

**14.3%** PEOPLE OF THE  
GLOBAL MAJORITY

ADULTS AGED 65+

**11.1%**

**+72.6%**

ADULT AGED 65+

**17.1%**

POPULATION DENSITY (PER SQUARE MILE)

**369.4 (PER MI)<sup>2</sup>**

**+11.9%**

POPULATION DENSITY (PER SQUARE MILE)

**413.3 (PER MI)<sup>2</sup>**

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

**\$117,440**

(\$139,815 in 2020 dollars as adjusted for inflation)

**+22.4%**

**+2.8%**

WITH INFLATION

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

**\$143,711**

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

**66.9% BACHELORS+**

**+22.6%**

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

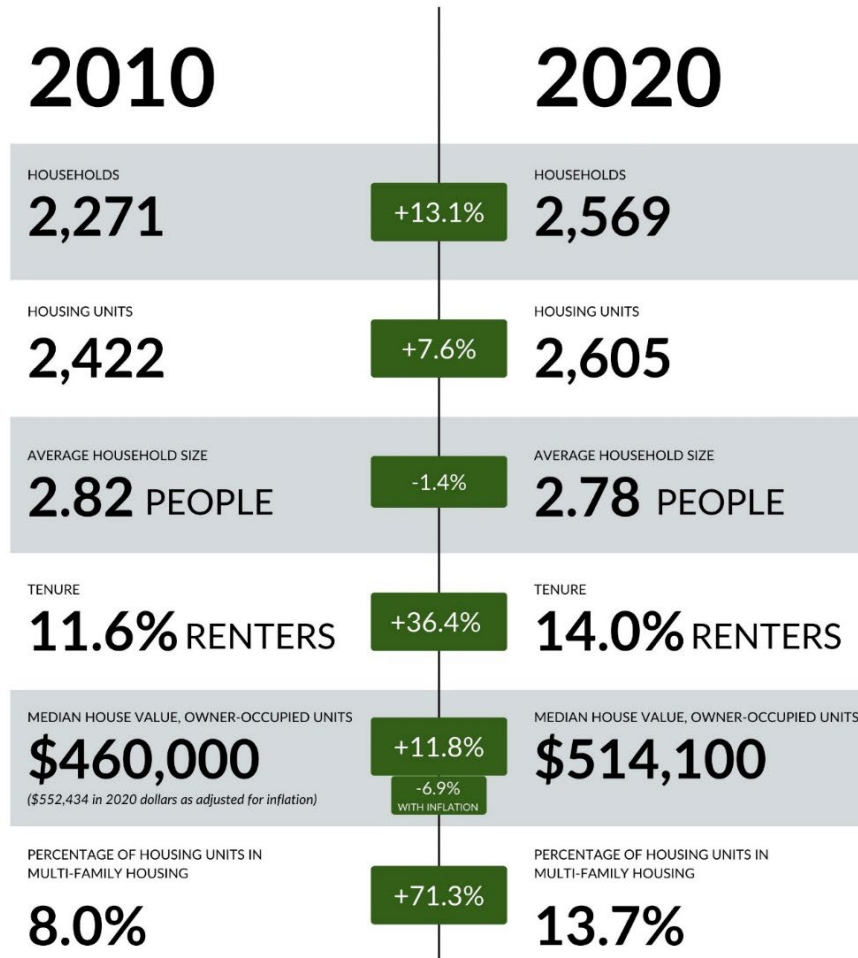
**75.0% BACHELORS+**

\*All statistics presented on this board were taken from the 2010 and 2020 Decennial Census, where available. For data not available in the Decennial Census, American Communities Survey Five-Year Estimates for 2006-2010 and 2016-2020 were used. Inflation calculations were made through the US Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index Inflation Calculator. Percentage change was calculated as the change in absolute numbers, rather than change in percentage of the population.



# STOW HOUSING THEN & NOW

Stow's last Comprehensive Plan was written in 2010. Read on to see how housing in Stow has changed since then!



\*All statistics presented on this board were taken from the 2010 and 2020 Decennial Census, where available. For data not available in the Decennial Census, American Communities Survey Five-Year Estimates for 2006-2010 and 2016-2020 were used. Inflation calculations were made through the US Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index Inflation Calculator. Percentage change was calculated as the change in absolute numbers, rather than change in percentage of the population.

STOW COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

J M GOLDSON

**Correction:** This informational board, "Stow Housing Then & Now," presented at the Open House, contains a data error. Under "Tenure," the data should reflect that 11.2 percent of the housing units in 2010<sup>5</sup> were renter-occupied, and 10.4 percent of the housing units in 2020<sup>6</sup> were renter-occupied. These numbers represent a growth in the number of renter-occupied housing units of three percent, from 271 to 279.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Census Bureau (2010). Table H16. Retrieved from <https://data.census.gov/>.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Census Bureau (2020). Table DP1. Retrieved from <https://data.census.gov/>.

## STOW COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

# PHASE II

## ENGAGEMENT ROADMAP



### CROWDSOURCE THE PLAN NAME AND PHOTO LIBRARY



Cast your vote for the official name for the Stow Comprehensive Plan. Submit before the end of January!

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/stowname>



Submit your favorite photos of Stow to be featured in Plan documents! All photos will be credited with sourcing.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/stowCP>



### COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE

The results of today's Open House will help us create engagement materials for Phase II.

Thank you for being here today! Be on the lookout for upcoming engagement opportunities.

Visit the project website for updates!  
[www.tinyurl.com/stowCP](http://www.tinyurl.com/stowCP)

### COMMUNITY SURVEY

We will be launching an online Community Survey to gain a better understanding of what the Stow community thinks about different topics.



### CROWDMAP

We will be launching an engagement tool called the "Crowdmap." This is an interactive mapping platform that allows community members to give place-based responses to different questions, providing insight into which places community members think are important to plan around.



### MEETING-IN-A-BOX

Our Meeting-in-a-Box (MIAB) tool is a facilitation guide that encourages community members to host informal discussions about the Town's future with their families, friends, and networks. Coming soon!



### DRAFT VISION, CORE THEMES, & GOALS

Using the results of early Phase II engagement tools, JM Goldson will facilitate two working sessions with the Comprehensive Plan committee to write the first draft of Stow's Community Vision, Core Themes, & Goals.



### COMMUNITY REVIEW PERIOD

JM Goldson will take the workshop results and polish the Community Vision, Core Themes, & Goals first draft. Community members will be invited to submit written feedback on these statements to help revise them. JM Goldson will make revisions and present final drafts at a public presentation to the Comprehensive Plan Committee, Planning Board, and Select Board.

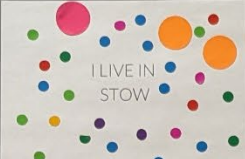


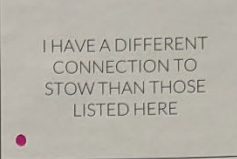
### STOW COMMUNITY VISION, CORE THEMES, & GOALS



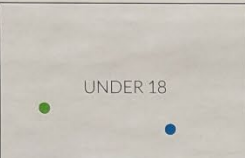
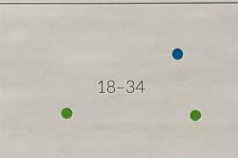
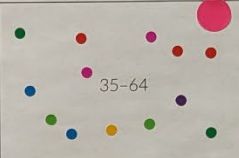



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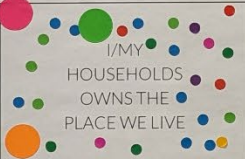
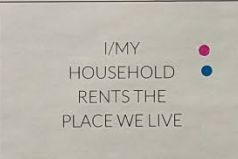
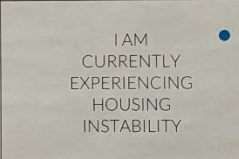

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 UNDER 18	 18-34	 35-64	 65 OR OLDER
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**3: WHAT IS YOUR HOUSING STATUS?**

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**5: DO YOU SERVE ON A TOWN BOARD, COMMITTEE, OR COMMISSION?**

 YES, I CURRENTLY SERVE	 NO, BUT I HAVE PREVIOUSLY SERVED	 NO, I HAVE NOT YET SERVED
--	--	--

WHAT ARE THE TOP ISSUES YOU HOPE  
THIS PLAN WILL HELP ADDRESS IN STOW?

Please use the post-it notes provided to write your responses.

- no new construction w/ fossil fuels -
- potential changing station in energy new home -
- heat pumps for everyone including affordable units

more business!  
more sidewalks!

Continue working  
on open space/  
emerald corridor  
for flicka/paura.  
"big" houses  
not healthy -  
wood smelter, trees  
removed 1980s

-more recreation  
for kids +  
seniors

KEEP TAXES LOW  
SAFETY  
KEEP OPEN STATE

recognise that decisions made today affect future -

- limit large trucks on residential roads
- more clustered development
- no open public land
- spirit buy million \$
- houses

- Small business
- Sustainability
- Affordable housing
- Strong school system

integrate slow history  
w/ the Canmanite.

- at middle/high school
- interested in slow history
- mount signs telling history
- slow history broke vehicle
- old native american trade
- w/ a original land measure
- for first stall land measure
- glensdale mill

more commercial opportunities in town  
Connecticut options  
gathering spaces of all  
types  
town identity connected  
to its history

REDESIGN  
BUSINESS CENTER  
(SHAW, ETC) TO BE  
MORE INVITING + HAVE  
"HANG OUT"

FIND SOME WAY TO  
GAIN TAX BASE TO  
ALLEVIATE PRESSURE  
ON LONG TERM OR  
LIFELONG RESIDENTS  
WHO CAN'T CONVERT  
WITHIN THE APPARENT  
RESPONSE HORIZ. (COW).

Plan for the future -  
protect character  
of neighborhoods  
- glass and  
- white pond  
- lake down  
not let one  
entirely

Control traffic -  
town wide buy-in  
to 35 mph on small  
narrow residential roads  
may 30 mph on 1st/62  
- move away from being  
fast "drive thru" -  
minimize vehicular  
dominance over  
pedestrians/bicyclists

- increase businesses in town
- affordable housing
- more playgrounds/Play spaces

Goal Alignment  
of managing  
rising taxes  
with all the  
amenities  
people want

RESTAURANTS ~~RUE~~  
16 RULES TO  
GAMER

MORE ARTS  
OPPORTUNITIES

---

TRAFFIC INTENSITY  
ON RJ: 117

---

MORE BIKE LANES,  
RUNNING PATHS, ETC  
FOR SAFE OUTDOOR RECREATION

- Sustainability / Environmental Protection
- Affordable Housing / Diversity
- Economic Development

Be mindful of  
impact on taxes

cultural  
development  
increased small  
housing  
economic  
development

MORE COMMON  
SOCIAL SPACES YES!  
(incl. OUTDOORS)  
TO REINFORCE STOW'S  
SENSE OF COMMUNITY  
(ENABLE NEW EVENTS,  
GATHERINGS FOR MUSIC,  
ETC.)

create meeting  
area for  
teenagers to  
gather  
\* we need  
skateboard park

- \* Environmental preservation
- \* Affordable Housing
- \* Small business development + support

- More diverse housing stock
- Public water!
- More businesses
- Conserve Quiet

-640  
 Sustainability  
 Diversity  
 More small  
 biz boutiques

FIND NEW  
SITE FOR  
NEW LIBRARY

needs

- Affordable Rental Housing

(NOT SUBSIDIZED Housing is not Actually Affordable)

- Fix businesses + water in lower village
- Invest in our town businesses

housing  
diversity  
town services!

AFFORDABLE  
 HOUSING  
 ATHLETIC  
 FIELDS

Open spec +  
support  
training

BUSINESS  
DEVELOPMENT

maintain space  
minimize development  
keep property tax  
stable

Smaller houses -  
affordable  
units -  
if built smaller,  
then will remain  
affordable.  
Xbox elderly citizen  
in Stuart

Where is a culture district in our town? → prioritize history commission



**WHAT ARE THREE WORDS OR PHRASES THAT DESCRIBE WHAT YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT STOW?**

Please use the post-it notes provided to write your responses.

Peak Load  
Open Space + Tanks  
Consistency  
Spot Disposal  
to pumpkins  
Local Food + Fatness

Friendly neighbors  
Strong school systems  
Community feel

ORCHARDS  
PILOT LIGHT  
FARM  
FRIENDS

Community  
Linking  
Inclusion

Rural  
Habitat  
Agriculture

Open Space  
Small Town  
Familiar

- Conservation lands
- elderly citizens
- layers of families in state
- knowing grand parents / siblings + children

- rural quality-
- narrow tree lined roads
- old antique homes
- history of slow

Quant  
Apples  
Scenic

Butterworth  
Twin Oaks  
Club  
Dinner & Entertainment  
Money

- OPEN SPACE
- WOODS WALKS
- GREAT ROCKS

SMALL-TOWN FEEL  
STILL HAS ITS  
RURAL  
CHARACTER

Small towns feel  
Open spaces  
movement/ development

Nice people  
Wild life  
Good School

Community

Open Space  
Forms  
People/Community

Series of Jimmy  
and his friends  
and his friends  
and his friends

- Two and three and
- Sweet's
- Diet
- Stimulant
- Ritz

Rural life  
Small town  
Good schools

Swimming in  
lake boon  
- geondale  
Community  
- abundance of  
pikes water  
+ live boon

*(Handwritten note on pink paper)*

QUIET  
SAFE  
OPEN SPACE

STILL PAUL!  
NORMAL  
IMMEDIATE DELIVERIES  
STILL WILKIN TO  
HELP OUT OTHERS  
FOOT 5

Community  
Spice

2018-2019  
2nd Floor  
Civics & History  
Unit 1: Civics & History  
Unit 2: Civics & History

- \* Nature
- \* Calm
- \* Warm

IM GOLDSON

STOW COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



# WHAT QUESTIONS DO YOU HAVE ABOUT THE COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS?

Please use the post-it notes provided to write your responses.

JM Goldson will post answers to these questions on the FAQ page of the Stow Comprehensive Plan project website after the event.

How will this affect property taxes?

-What will the priorities be? How are they decided?

How will the plan be implemented?

Why do we need a plan?

When will we see progress??

How will the plan be presented and approved?

Does a Comp Plan get approved at Town Meeting?

IN THE RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD OF TODAY, CAN SUCH A PLAN BE SUCCESSFUL IN A REARLY BUSY WORLD WITH SO MANY DEMANDS AND CHALLENGES?

HOW CONFIDENT ARE YOU (STEWARDS COMMITTEE) THAT SELECT PEOPLE AND BOARDS WILL INDEED PAY ATTENTION TO AND BE GUIDED BY THE FINAL REPORT?

-How will this affect taxes  
-Will this affect projects related to our school system

How does the Comprehensive plan become actionable?

How specifically will it be used

What's next?

How does it lead to zoning & policy changes?

-Community Impact