

TOWN of BARNSTABLE  
TOWN COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN  
FISCAL YEARS 2021-2022

**MISSION STATEMENT**

Our mission is to protect the Town of Barnstable's quality of life and unique character, engage our citizens, and enact policies that respond to and anticipate the needs of our community.

**GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

We believe in our oath of office:

*I will perform my duties as a Town Councilor for the Town of Barnstable to the best of my ability, keeping uppermost in my mind the rules and laws that govern my office and my responsibility to the citizens of the Town of Barnstable.*

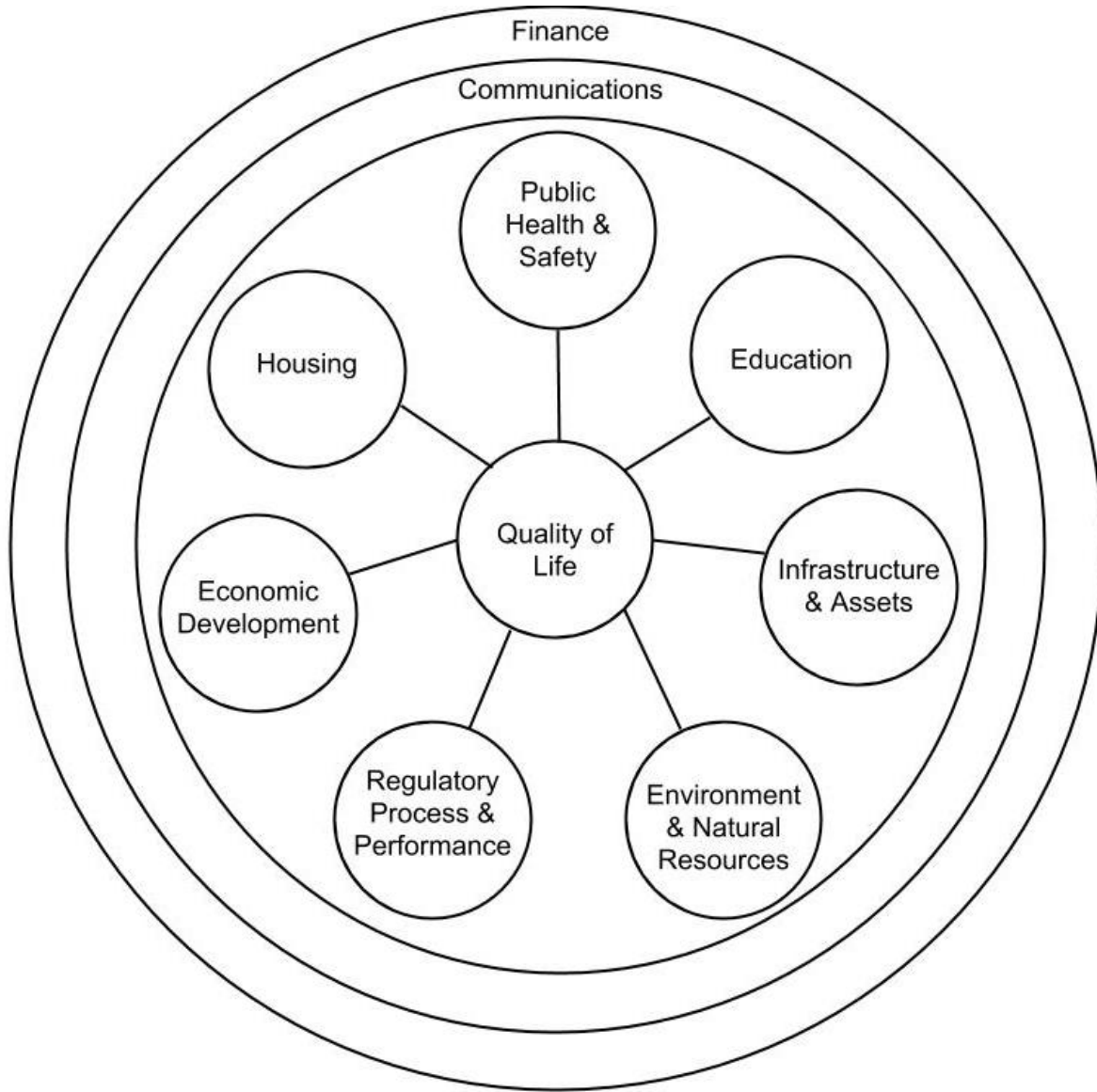
We also believe in:

- ✓ Involving residents in the decision-making process
- ✓ Modeling ethical behavior
- ✓ Protecting citizen rights
- ✓ Protecting the health and safety of citizens
- ✓ Being fiscally responsible
- ✓ Being accountable
- ✓ Being respectful of the people and the process
- ✓ Giving the highest priority to the rules and laws that govern the office of the Town Council
- ✓ Operating fairly, predictably and efficiently
- ✓ Providing a consistent process
- ✓ Operating creatively and with flexibility
- ✓ The manager's job to manage the staff
- ✓ Preserving the integrity of the Town of Barnstable
- ✓ Each council member's stake in the betterment of the community
- ✓ Listening and respecting each other's contributions
- ✓ The right to disagree
- ✓ Being accessible and keeping the process open
- ✓ Decisions being made in the best interest of the whole Town of Barnstable

**PRIORITY AREAS**

We have identified a single goal and several strategies in nine priority areas. For each, it is understood that the Town Council will formulate and enact policy, the Town Manager and staff will implement and manage programs to achieve the policy goals, and the Town Council and Town Manager will communicate frequently to ensure accountability to the residents of the Town of Barnstable.

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Shaped like a wheel, the strategic plan diagram shows *Quality of Life* at the hub, surrounded by seven priority areas: *Economic Development*, *Regulatory Process and Performance*, *Housing*, *Public Health and Safety*, *Environment and Natural Resources*, *Infrastructure*, and *Education*. These areas function like lug nuts, securing a high quality of life for Barnstable residents regardless of circumstances beyond their control (or “bumps in the road”). Finance and Communication support and protect the wheel like tires – if they deflate, any or all areas may be compromised.

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**Finance**

**Goal:** Provide a viable financial plan for meeting the operational and capital needs of the town with a balanced budget that includes ongoing cost reductions, maintaining reserves, and aggressively pursuing new growth dollars and revenue sources.

**Strategies:**

- Ensure adherence to a sound financial plan to meet short- and long-term priorities of the operating and capital needs of the town.
- Evaluate and assess, on an on-going basis, alternative methods to decrease the cost of services by exploring the financial benefits of regionalization, consolidation, privatization and collective bargaining.
- Explore and create new growth dollars and revenue sources (including grants) for the town and schools to alleviate strain on municipal and school budgets, continue to perform operational auditing to ensure that financial priorities are reflected, advance greater energy efficiency, and stimulate new growth.
- Support and promote more transparency in the Open Budget. Support and promote contactless financial transactions and the transition to digital information.

**Sept. 2020 Town Council Guidance on Finance**

- *Impacts of COVID-19:* The COVID-19 pandemic and its resulting economic contraction should lead to an examination of the Town's top financial priorities and motivate the Town to remain as affordable as possible by avoiding tax increases where possible. Despite the extraordinary circumstances, small local businesses stepped up during the pandemic, and the Town should consider exploring more incentives and supports for local businesses.
- *New Business Growth:* The Town should consider that future business growth may include a departure from traditional brick and mortar businesses, which could both open up an opportunity for more housing and increase the need for support for home businesses (zoning, permitting, etc.). Additionally, the Town should explore new growth opportunities from the redevelopment of underperforming parcels, PILOT opportunities, and the "grey" economy.
- *Auditing Best Practices:* The Town should hire independent organizations to evaluate spending and department operations; those audits should be available as a tool for Town decision-making.
- *Cost-Sharing:* The Town should explore cost-sharing opportunities between its schools and its municipal operations; operational audits could be used as a tool to surface potential opportunities.
- *Cost Savings:* The question was posed whether independent fire and water districts could be a place where cost savings could be pursued. If so, the Town should determine the correct forum to start this conversation.
- *Equitable Resource Allocation:* The Town should explore what an equitable allocation of resources should look like between villages.

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**Communications**

**Goal:** Improve communication between the Town Council and Town Manager and his staff; between Town Councilors; between the Town and its residents, boards, commissions, volunteers and visitors to foster participation and positive results that are geared toward meeting the needs of the community.

**Strategies:**

- Provide regular opportunities for Town Council members to receive briefings or updates on Town initiatives and other important topics from the Town Manager and department heads.
- Use the council liaison system to improve communication between Town committees and commissions.
- Utilize existing communication boards and partner media outlets to make public service announcements. Work with community groups to disseminate information to their members. Develop tactics to effectively solicit public input and promote active engagement.
- Communicate Town information to non-English speaking community members.
- Utilize the Town website, Facebook page & Twitter feed, Town newsletter, Citizen's Leadership Academy, Channel 18 (municipal television station), and local newspaper and radio stations as outlets to communicate with the public. Specifically:
  - Encourage all boards and commissions to record their proceedings so they can be viewed on Channel 18.
  - Reach out to citizens in all seven villages to increase resident involvement in Town government; improve citizen understanding of Town services and government structure, and improve public confidence in the Town.
  - Coordinate and consolidate information distribution with other town, county, and state officials and legislative delegations whenever possible.

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**Sept. 2020 Town Council Guidance on Communications**

**Desired Outcome:** The professional credibility of the Town's government should be well regarded by its residents and stakeholders. The Town's citizenry should be active, involved, and feel heard; Town decisions should be made with community buy-in.

- *New Town Government Positions:* The Town should explore creating a volunteer coordinator position as well as a grants coordinator position.
- *Role of Town Council:* The Town should consider developing guidance for what it means to serve in the role as Town Councilor. The Council itself should have clarity on its role versus the role of Town management, especially as it pertains to community engagement and communications.
- *Audience for Town Communications:* The Town should examine any gaps in the audiences it is currently reaching, such as generational gaps, and target its communications to reach those missing constituencies. Focus groups could be a tool to design tailored messages for missing audiences, as could partnerships with civic associations, the formation of a Community Engagement Committee, and/or the formation of a task force with residents on communications. The Town should also be cognizant of economic gaps among its residents that may increase barriers to online access and virtual participation for some households.
- *Additional Modes of Communication:* Some options for additional modes of communication the Town could capitalize on include a mailer about Town Council updates distributed through the schools, increased utilization of the popular Town Manager video updates, and posting recorded meetings and applications to Town RFPs online for public access. The Town's web presence more generally should be made more accessible and user-friendly. Additionally, the Annual Report could be an opportunity to provide residents with an overview of the Town's structure, roles, and goals and achievements. The Town Council could also use feel-good communication opportunities, like Channel 18 programs on volunteer opportunities, to highlight the strength of the Barnstable community.
- *Town Council Accessibility and Participation:* Holding special, issue-focused Town Council workshops and holding Town Council meetings on Saturday at least once per year could increase accessibility and participation. Promoting and accepting remote participation in Council proceedings could also help increase citizen involvement, and the Town should explore any legal or procedural barriers to allowing remote participation.

**Economic Development**

**Goal:** Town Council and Town Manager to support and grow a vibrant economy with a diversity of businesses, both for-profit and non-profit, and a strong labor force.

**Strategies:**

- Continue to support Zoning and Regulatory Committee to determine any zoning changes that may require legislative action, as well as the Economic Development Task Force to address economic resiliency
- Identify and encourage redevelopment of underutilized and/or blighted properties.

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- Town Manager to work proactively to retain and/or expand existing businesses and to attract new ones using innovative approaches, such as:
  - Provide economic incentives that increase business diversity in Barnstable and promote desirable economic activity, such as clean industries and smart growth.
  - Create marketing specifically to attract desirable new businesses to Barnstable.
  - Create or deepen connections between local educational institutions and businesses.
- Support efforts to grow the arts and culture sector to contribute to the Town's overall economic development.

**Sept. 2020 Town Council Guidance on Economic Development**

- *Economic Development Task Force:* As part of its disaster preparedness and economic resilience strategy, the Town should support the Economic Development Task Force and conduct scenario planning.
- *Support for Residents:* The Town should support its residents working from home – for example, through ensuring adequate broadband connection. Additionally, the Town should consider using Town money to subsidize early childcare for its residents.
- *Relationship with Community College:* The Town should leverage and improve its relationship with the Community College to increase local job opportunities.

**Environment and Natural Resources**

**Goal:** Conserve and protect areas in the town that are most significant as natural and historical resources for water supply, visual quality, outdoor recreation, public access, wildlife habitat and cultural history.

**Strategies:**

- Implement the comprehensive dredge plan.
- Investigate innovative, cost-effective techniques for invasive species control.
- Investigate innovative techniques and legislative options to address beach erosion and otherwise prepare for and adapt to extreme weather events.
- Support programs that emphasize environmental protection while ensuring economic development as articulated in the Regional Policy Plan.
- Raise awareness of conservation areas and Town-owned open space.
- Establish management and maintenance plans for conservation areas and Town-owned open space.
- Work in conjunction with federal, state, regional, and local agencies to protect critical environmental areas, including fragile coastlines, marine embayment areas, and all water bodies vulnerable to nitrogen loading.

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**Regulatory Process and Performance**

**Goal:** Work with Town Manager and staff to have an efficient, customer-friendly, predictable regulatory process.

**Strategies:**

- Re-evaluate the permitting process, including policies, rules and regulations, personnel, customer/citizen experience, and impact on economic growth. Identify necessary changes.

**Public Health and Safety**

**Goal:** Protect and promote the health, safety, and high quality of life of all town residents and visitors.

**Strategies:**

- Support collaborative action to protect and expand our drinking water supply, including (but not limited to) ongoing monitoring for existing and emerging contaminants.
- Develop and implement a substance use prevention plan in collaboration with key stakeholders.  
Focus on:
  - Prevention through educating youth in schools, working with YMCA Young Achievers, and leveraging recreation programs.
  - Collaboration among community stakeholders working on substance use from a range of perspectives.
  - Establishing appropriate oversight and support for programs and entities in Barnstable that offer treatment.
- Support village-based and community-oriented public safety agencies, and joint programs that police/school/youth/seniors/disabled/homeless and other vulnerable populations' programs.

**Housing**

**Goal:** Identify needs, and develop, promote, and monitor town-wide initiatives for income-equitable, affordable, workforce, senior, and rental housing to meet the needs of residents and increase the overall quality of housing in Barnstable.

**Strategies:**

- Review zoning issues identified by the Council and the Zoning Board of Appeals to determine how best to achieve housing goals through zoning and regulatory changes. Proactively engage stakeholders with influence over this issue. Review the Housing Production Plan to support this goal.

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- Work in partnership with developers so they can take advantage of the available resources, funding, and assets to initiate housing projects.
- Explore housing solutions, including regional collaboration and creative financing, to address homelessness, housing insecurity, and lack of available and affordable housing in Barnstable.
- Explore the possibility of using town assets to create affordable private housing opportunities.
  - Pursue innovative structures and formats, and use of town-owned land, to expand quality workforce housing.

**Sept. 2020 Town Council Guidance on Housing**

- *Representative Zoning Committee:* The Town should either explore forming a new committee to address zoning issues, with representatives from each of the 7 villages, or amend the membership of the existing committee.
- *Priority Housing Types:* The Town should prioritize quality, affordable workforce housing as well as single-room apartments. There may be incentives to consider through the property tax system to increase affordable housing. The Town should consider promoting home ownership through the prioritization of smaller housing over larger developments, but 2-acre zoning may be a regulatory barrier.
- *Creativity to Navigate Barriers:* Where the cost of land and labor can act as a barrier, the Town can eliminate the cost of land barrier by providing its assets, as demonstrated in Seattle with long-term leases with below market rate restrictions. There are opportunities for the Town to be creative with its assets (e.g., tiny homes with a community garden), and developer partners should be sought with creative solutions in mind. Moreover, the Town can explore reducing the cost of construction through streamlining regulations.
- *Alternative Wastewater Solutions:* There may be Town support for alternative wastewater processes in areas that will not be sewered in the near- or medium-term. The CWMP should address these needs and options.

**Town Infrastructure & Assets**

**Goal:** Maintain and improve existing infrastructure, capital assets, and aquatic resources, make improvements when necessary, and ensure town assets are managed, maintained, and disposed of to serve the highest and best uses moving forward.

**Strategies:**

- Facilitate comprehensive infrastructure improvement planning for municipal roads, buildings, facilities, sewers, transportation systems, communication systems, information infrastructure, water and wastewater systems, historical properties, and other capital assets, with an eye toward permit-ready and shovel-ready projects.



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- Support the exploration of traditional and non-traditional methods for comprehensive water management and monitoring of implementation efforts.
- Continue to inventory and evaluate the status of Town assets and dispose of or acquire assets as appropriate.
- Evaluate options for effective and economical development of renewable energy resources, energy conservation programs, and solid waste and recycling programs.
- Support efforts to build resiliency of the Town's natural and built resources.

**Sept. 2020 Town Council Guidance on Town Infrastructure & Assets**

Desired Outcome: The Town should have more infrastructure leading up to and on the water, and its deployment of energy resources should be consistent with state targets.

- Acknowledge climate change and the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by utilizing renewables in accordance with the Global Warming Solutions Act.

**Education**

**Goal:** Support the provision of a safe, high-quality public education for all students in an increasingly diverse student body, in partnership with local, state, and federal entities.

**Strategies:**

- Work cooperatively with the School Department to approve a budget that adheres to standard municipal accounting practices, is clear and understandable for all residents, and meets the short- and long-term operating and capital needs of the school system and the municipality.
- Work in conjunction with the School Department to deliver a substance use prevention model for grades PreK-12.
- Strive to reduce the impact of unfunded state and federal mandates in addition to the revised Chapter 70 funding and make public aware of impact of same.
- Support efforts to amend Chapter 70 Funding Formulas in order to provide more resources to the Town.
- Work cooperatively with school administration to develop plans for administrative and infrastructure consolidation. Conduct periodic assessments of consolidated services.
- Support initiatives to create a culturally-diverse educational environment for all public school students.