



Wethersfield Connecticut

Strategic Plan 2023-2033

Letter from the Town Council

To the Wethersfield Community,

Over the last several months we have embarked on a journey to develop this Strategic Plan. The process for this plan creation involved research and review of historical documents and plans, community outreach, and collaboration with staff, Town Council, candidates for Town Council and community members.

The process for creating the Strategic Plan has been collaborative and community-driven. We are thankful for all the participation in the community survey and interviews that gave us a view of where you think the community is today, and where it should go in the future.

This is intended to be a living document, flexible and adaptable as necessary to meet community needs. We will use the priorities in the plan to guide our budget and policy decisions. We always welcome feedback as we work to accomplish the goals of this plan and improve the services the Town provides.

Thank you to everyone who helped with this important project, the Wethersfield Town Council, the Town staff, community partners and the members of the community who engaged with us to make this all possible.

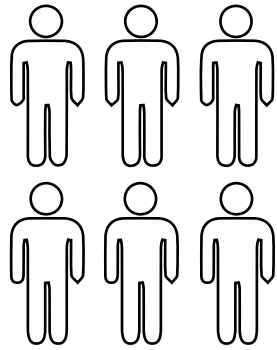
Sincerely,

The Wethersfield Town Council
October, 2023

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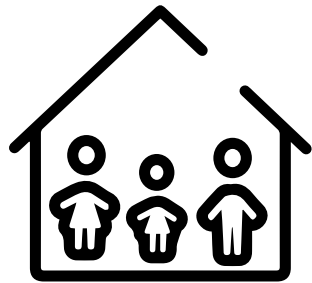
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About Wethersfield



Current Population

27,162 (2021)



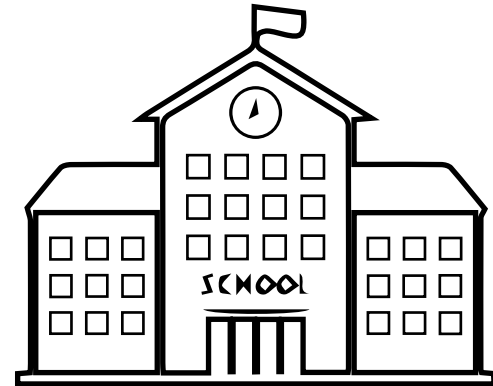
Median Household Income

\$108,251

Largest Historical and Cultural District in Connecticut

Named one of the "Best Places to Live" in 2022

<https://www.niche.com>



Award Winning Schools

https://wps.wethersfield.me/schools/wethersfield-high-school#h.p_evtEGVhC5PnT

Moody's Rating

Aa2

This bond rating is indicative of the strong financial health of the Town

#25 of the "Best Things to Do This Summer," 2023

<https://travelling.com/best-things-to-do-in-usa-2023/>

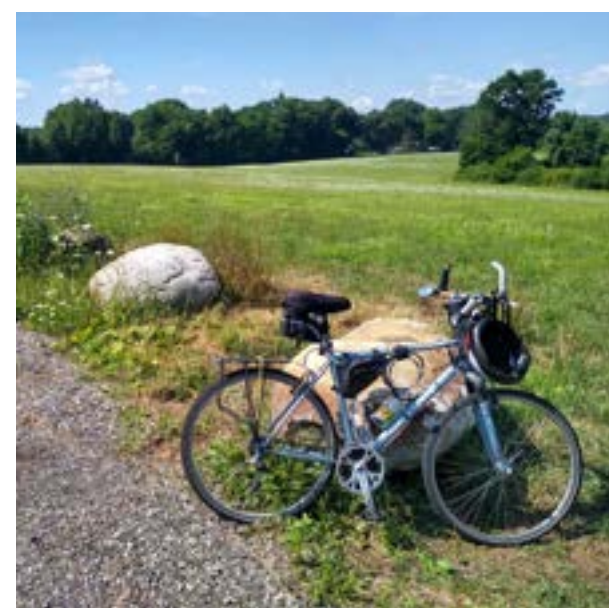
Town Government

The Town of Wethersfield operates under a Council/Manager form of government, with the Town Council comprising nine candidates receiving the most votes who then serve two-year terms on a non-staggered basis. Council Members are elected on a partisan basis, with the current Council composed of five Republicans and four Democrats and the Mayor and Deputy Mayor selected by a majority vote of the nine Council Members following a general election.

The Town Council sets policy and programs for the community and appoints a Town Manager who is responsible for implementing the policies set by the Council.

The Town provides a full range of municipal services, with approximately 185 full-time, 20 part-time and roughly 150 seasonal employees. Most employees are represented by seven unions administered under their respective collective bargaining agreements.

Residents are supported by an approximately 50 member Volunteer Fire Department. It is important to note that the Volunteer Fire Department was formally established in 1803, but actually dates back to 1690, when a fire company was approved through the state legislature. The Wethersfield Volunteer Fire Department is considered the oldest volunteer company in continuous existence in Connecticut, and the oldest in New England.



The Wethersfield Police Department has 51 sworn officer positions, 15 civilians and 29 school crossing guards. The Department is dual accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) and the State Accreditation Standards for Local Police Agencies Program, as administered by the Connecticut Police Officer Standards and Training (POST) Council.

Water supply, water pollution control, mapping and household hazardous waste collection are provided on a regional basis to Wethersfield and seven other municipalities by the Metropolitan District (MDC), a non-profit municipal corporation chartered by the Connecticut General Assembly.

The FY24 Annual Budget is approximately \$118 million, including \$61.8 million for the Wethersfield Board of Education Annual Budget (which is approved by the Town Council). The primary revenue source for the Town's budget is ad valorem taxes on real and personal property, and automobiles at 40.15 mills, with a current millage rate of 40.67 for the General Fund and .52 mills dedicated for capital and nonrecurring roads. Moody's issued an update to Wethersfield's credit rating in May of 2021 and concluded its Aa2 rating is slightly higher than the US cities median of Aa3. Notable credit factors include a strong wealth and income profile, a healthy tax base, affordable debt and pension liabilities and a solid yet below average financial position.



History of Wethersfield

Wethersfield, Connecticut is ideally situated four miles south of downtown Hartford and conveniently located on Interstate 91, one of New England's key interstate highways. Its 27,162 residents enjoy easy access to Interstate 84 and Routes 2 and 9, along with quick travel to locations east of the river, western communities, and points south, including the Connecticut shoreline. The town covers 12 square miles and is located in Hartford County, which has a population of 891,720. Residents appreciate its small-town charm and convenient access to major metropolitan areas such as Boston and New York City, all within a two-hour drive of Wethersfield.

Founded in 1633-34, the town is known as the oldest in Connecticut and boasts the largest approved historic district in the state. The early 1800s were a fertile time for the establishment of new municipalities in Connecticut. As one of the state's first communities, Wethersfield was the parent of several other towns (Rocky Hill, Newington and Glastonbury). Long an agricultural community, Wethersfield became a suburban community in the early 20th century due to its proximity to Hartford and the quality of life it offered.

Today, Wethersfield is a mature "inner-ring" suburb whose attributes include its proximity to Hartford, easy access to the highway system, jobs in surrounding areas, diverse housing stock, recreational and educational amenities, community character, recognized "brand image" and overall quality of life. More than 150 of the town's historic, beautiful and distinctive colonial homes stand as a symbol of the rich heritage that has been Wethersfield's since the early days of its founding almost 400 years ago. The authentic New England village charm of Old Wethersfield, which is the largest historic and cultural district in Connecticut, draws thousands of visitors each year. Whether it is a quiet stroll on a nature trail, participating in a program, playing softball under the lights or hosting a family event at the historic 1774 Solomon Welles House, Wethersfield has something to offer everyone. The town's 644 acres of parkland, with unique areas such as Wintergreen Woods, Wethersfield Cove and the 1860 Reservoir, and with open space, wooded areas and natural ponds, make Wethersfield a beautiful, special place to live.

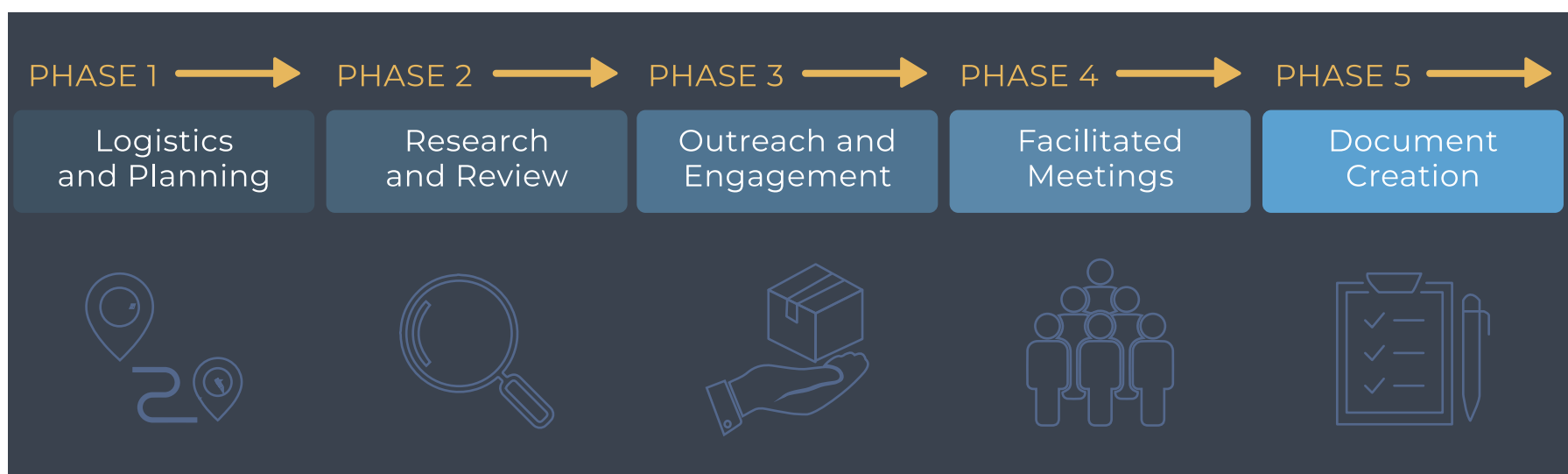


The Strategic Plan Process

FOUNDATION OF THE PLAN

The foundation for the strategic plan is based on a three main components: **Community Input, Other Town Plans and Documents** and **Collaboration of Town Council, Town Council Candidates and Staff**. The four main questions answered during the creation of the strategic plan were: **Where Are We Now? Where Do We Want To Be? How Will We Get There?** and **How Will We Know We Are Successful?**

PHASES OF THE PROCESS



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH

30 Confidential Interviews

860 Community Survey Responses

96 Staff Survey Responses

38 Retreat Attendees

Vision

We are a vibrant, diverse, inclusive and thriving community that welcomes families, businesses and visitors with our authentic small town charm.

Mission

Our mission is to provide exceptional services that will respect our historic heritage, enhance our quality of life and purposefully plan for the future.

Guiding Principles

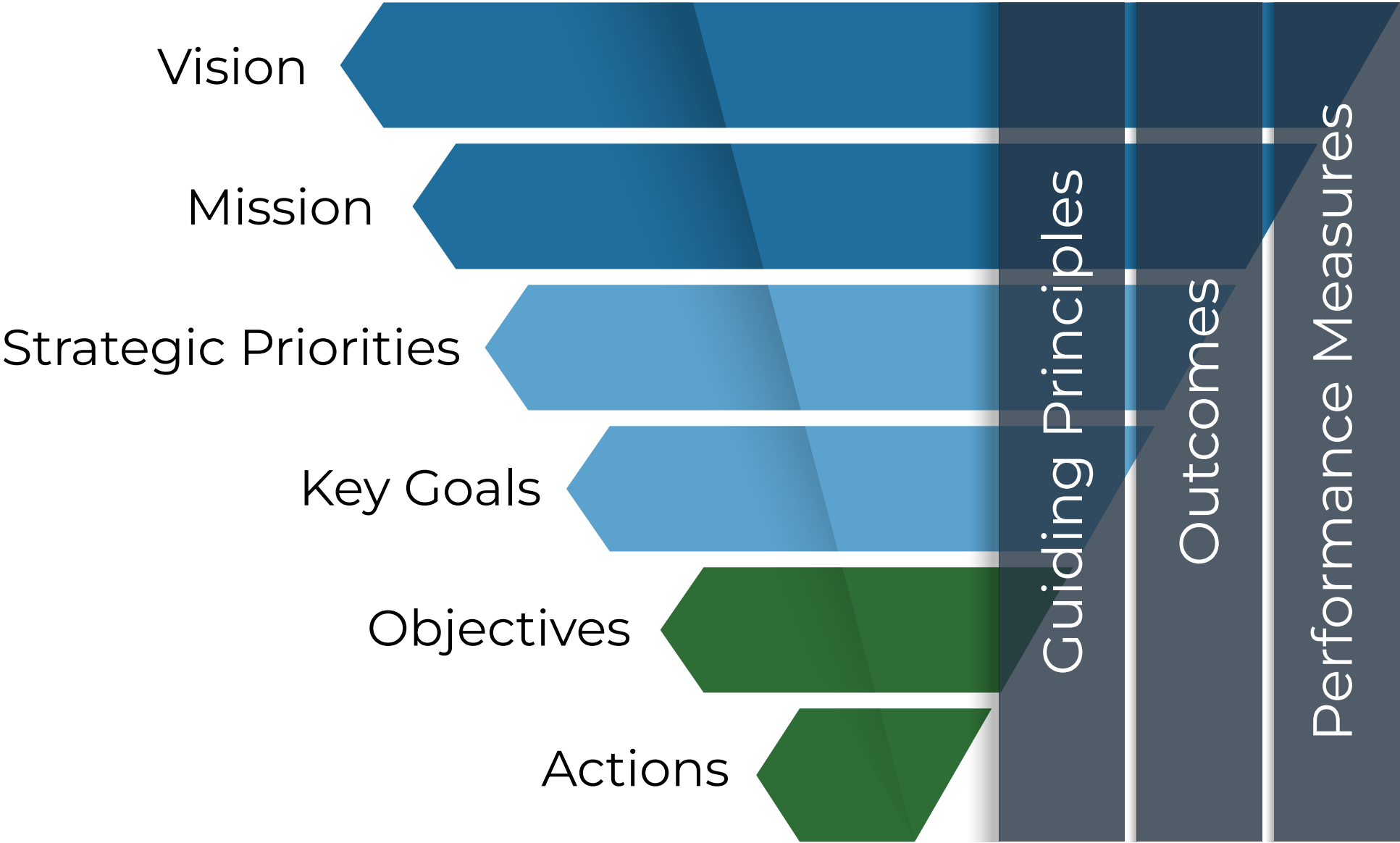
Honor Our Historic and Cultural Heritage
Preserve Our Unique Community Charm
Value Our Sustainable Environment and Open Spaces
Ensure Educational Excellence
Support Financially Sustainable Future
Champion Strong Public Safety
Promote Efficient, Effective Local Government

Strategic Plan Framework

Priorities are the most important issues, opportunities or trends facing the Town over the next ten years. They are usually broad areas of service that will have the most positive impact on the community. Strategic Priorities only change after all of the Outcomes have been accomplished.

Outcomes are the results of focusing on the Strategic Goals and describe what will be different or enhanced in the future as a result of focused strategic planning.

Strategic Goals are broad and complex areas that will make the largest impact and biggest difference in achieving the Outcomes for each Priority Area.



Strategic Priorities



Community Cohesion and Vibrancy:

Wethersfield embodies a collaborative, high-energy setting where a welcoming, engaged and friendly community actively celebrates successes, fostering a sense of unity and well-being for all.



Public Facilities and Infrastructure:

Wethersfield will create better and safer infrastructure that is designed for current needs, adaptable for future operations, accessible for all, inclusive of bike/pedestrian needs and meets the requirements of both staff and the community.



Public Safety:

Wethersfield aims to deliver effective and prompt public safety services by improving internal processes and fostering informed partnerships and community support.



Sustainable Public Revenue and Economic Development:

To strengthen its economic foundation, the community aims to prioritize funding through optimized revenue streams, offset property tax burdens and communicate redevelopment opportunities, while actively fostering a business-friendly environment through aggressive recruitment efforts.



High Performing Government:

Wethersfield will continually strive for strong leadership and excellence in delivering public services while adapting to changing needs and challenges. The Town will maintain open and effective communication with its citizens, allocate resources wisely, and proactively address issues to ensure the well-being and satisfaction of the community.



Quality Education:

Wethersfield is committed to enhancing academic outcomes for our community by providing inclusive learning opportunities, attracting and retaining talented educators and enhancing the safety and quality of our school facilities.

Community Cohesion and Vibrancy

Outcomes:

- The community is united, embracing the history and amenities of Old Wethersfield while embodying the benefits and opportunities of New Wethersfield.
- Wethersfield celebrates its diversity, history, culture, success and community through active acknowledgement and organized events.
- Residents are actively involved in various aspects of community life, from civic participation to social activities, demonstrating a strong sense of belonging and commitment.

Goals

Goal 1: Improve town communication with the community and market the town.

Goal 2: Improve community connections.

Goal 3: Diversify and expand events throughout the community.

Goal 4: Increase volunteerism.

Public Facilities and Infrastructure

Outcomes:

- Better maintained and modern infrastructure results in enhanced safety, functionality and aesthetics within the community.
- Design infrastructure to withstand environmental challenges, which contribute to long-term sustainability and resilience.
- Adequate funding ensures that maintenance needs are met, infrastructure remains functional and the community's investment in infrastructure is protected.
- Infrastructure designed for current standards and purposes, while remaining adaptable for future needs, leads to more efficient operations and reduced future costs.

Goals

Goal 1: Be proactive when addressing maintenance.

Goal 2: Improve accessibility and usability.

Goal 3: Modernize both facilities and technology.

Goal 4: Facilitate shared infrastructure possibilities with other towns.

Public Safety

Outcomes:

- Low Crime: Reduction in crime rates, ensuring the safety of residents and property.
- Effective Emergency Response: Timely and coordinated responses by Police, Fire and Public Works during emergencies and disasters.
- Improved Quality of Life: Enhancing the overall quality of life for residents through various initiatives, such as community programs and services.
- Safe Public Buildings and Schools: Ensuring that public buildings and schools are secure and conducive to learning, fostering a safe educational environment.

Goals

Goal 1: Educate the community and Town Council on best practices for public safety.

Goal 2: Enhance partnerships within organizations, within the community and at the state capitol.

Sustainable Public Revenue and Economic Development

Outcomes:

- Prioritize funding opportunities that reduce the burden on Town taxpayers.
- Small businesses are supported and an environment for business recruitment has been created.
- Grow intergovernmental partnerships between the Town and the State to forward the goals of economic development.

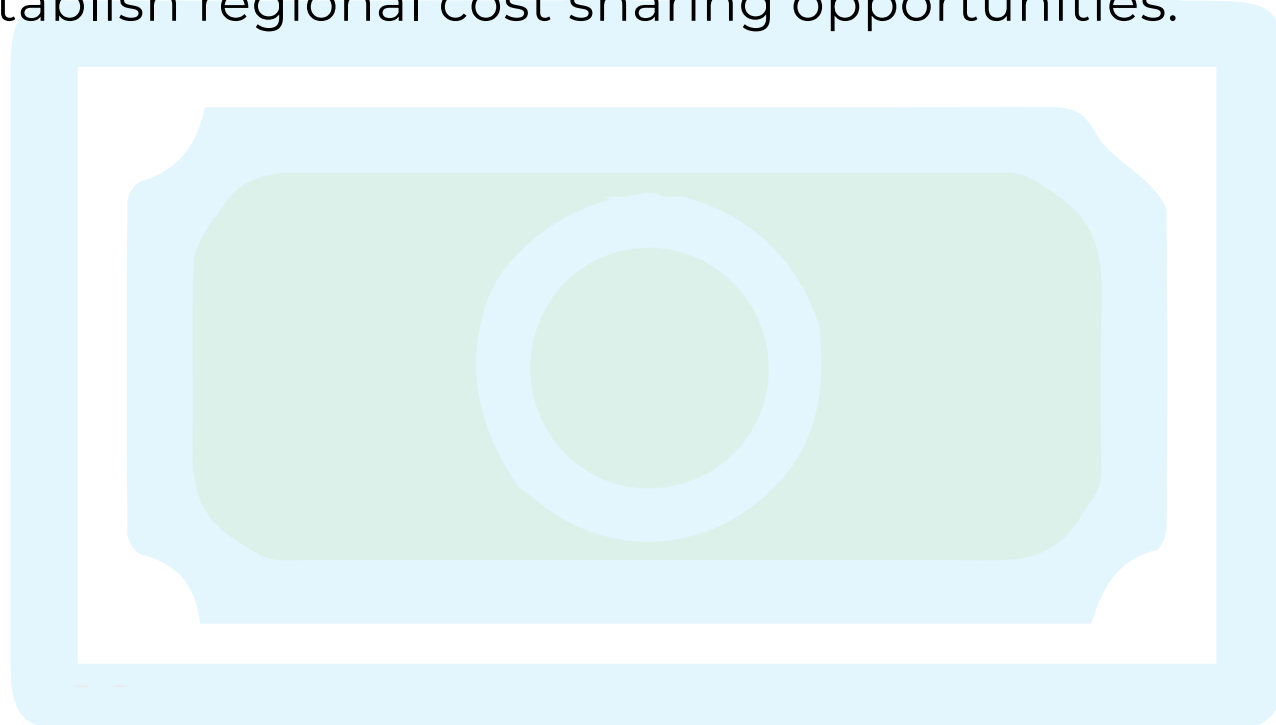
Goals

Goal 1: Prioritize economic development programs.

Goal 2: Maximize land use to sustain economic development.

Goal 3: Balance current needs with future bonding and risk.

Goal 4: Establish regional cost sharing opportunities.



High Performing Government

Outcomes:

- Streamlined processes, cost savings, and optimized resource allocation.
- Increased community engagement through improved public awareness, effective communication, accountability and transparency.
- Adequately funded for essential services and infrastructure with the ability to meet future challenges without severe budgetary constraints.

Goals

Goal 1: Implement best practices to utilize available resources.

Goal 2: Improve organizational structure.

Goal 3: Achieve better dialog with the community.

Quality Education

Outcomes:

- Education is funded to provide a supportive environment for staff and students.
- School facilities safely serve the needs of students and staff through greater collaboration and communication.
- Combined collaboration and partnerships with the Town and the Board of Education greatly contribute to Wethersfield being a desired community.

Goals

Goal 1: Promote lifelong learning.

Goal 2: Appropriately fund education needs.

Goal 3: Establish collaboration between Board of Education and Town Council.



The Path Forward

A strategic plan should never collect dust or sit on a shelf – it is a living document. Our plan will need to be adjusted based on community feedback, changes in the economy or unforeseen circumstances, and is designed to be flexible and adaptable. The Town will use guidance and vision from this strategic plan to make decisions about policies, programs and services.

Through various paths, such as the budget and daily activities, this plan will come to life and be continuously updated and improved. A key part of that will be the implementation plan, as well as a regular reporting process to the Town Council. As we move into the future, we look forward to achieving our vision of “a vibrant, diverse, inclusive and thriving community that welcomes families, businesses and visitors with our authentic small town charm.”

Annual Schedule

The Strategic Plan is a living document which will be fully integrated into the operations, tactics and daily work for the Town of Wethersfield. As a part of that integration, updating the plan on an annual basis is an important process. Below is a graphic that shows the most important steps in creating a culture of strategic planning in Wethersfield. From the Town Council to department heads to every staff member in the Town, the strategic plan will be part of daily work through the implementation plan and department-specific plans that tie tactics to strategy.



Process for Applying and Using the Plan

There will often be an opportunity to consider whether a specific project, budget request, grant opportunity or community idea should be added to the strategic plan as a Goal or an Objective. The flowchart below outlines the process, question and criteria that will be applied to those requests moving forward.



Acknowledgements



Town Council and Candidates

- Michael Rell, Mayor
- Tom Mazarella, Deputy Mayor
- Shelley Carbone, Councilor
- Cindy Clancy, Councilor
- Matthew Forrest, Councilor
- Kevin Hill, Councilor
- Ken Lesser, Councilor
- Patrick Pentalow, Councilor
- Daniel O'Connor, Councilor
- Richard Bailey, Council Candidate
- Michael Bourassa, Council Candidate
- Amanda Drew, Council Candidate
- Miki Duric, Council Candidate
- Brianna Timbro, Council Candidate
- Emily Zambrello, Council Candidate

Town Staff

- Fred Presley, Town Manager
- Kathy Bagley, Director of Parks and Recreation
- Brook Berry, Library Director
- Marlene Desjardins, Tax Collector
- Anthony Dignoti, Fire Marshal and Emergency Management Director
- Derrick Gregor, Town Engineer
- Ellen Harzewski, Public Services Manager, Library
- Sally Katz, Director of Physical Services
- Steve Lattarulo, Chief Building Official
- Rafael Medina III, Chief of Police
- Charles Morrison, Zoning and Property Maintenance Officer
- Michael O'Neil, Finance Director
- Cheryl Pearce, Executive Secretary
- Erica Robertson, Human Resources Manager
- Sue Schroeder, Town Clerk
- Brian Schroll, Fire Department Chief
- Vlada Shelkova, Capital Improvements Project Administrator
- Derrick Solla, Information Specialist III
- Walter Topliff, Assessor
- Gioia Zack, Director of Economic Development

Definitions

Strategic Plan

A strategic plan is a working, living document that reflects the policy direction from the elected body, sets the Vision for the organization and drives and informs an Implementation Plan, which the staff will create to ensure progress and measurable results. The strategic plan will be updated regularly by the team, and reported on quarterly by the town staff.

Mission

A Mission Statement is a practical, tangible tool you can use to make decisions about priorities, actions and responsibilities. A mission describes the purpose of your organization - the reason why it exists. It converts your broad dreams and visions into more specific, action-oriented terms. A mission can explain your goals in a clear and easy to understand manner. It creates focus for your work and accountability to stay on track. Because a Mission Statement is the purpose of the organization (why the organization exists), there should not be much change over the years.

Vision

A vision statement is your dream of the future. It is a clear, aspirational statement that inspires long term change. The vision leads your organization - it guides your Strategic Goals, Outcomes, Adaptive Strategies and Work Plans.

Strategic Priorities

Priorities are the most important issues, opportunities or trends facing your organization over the next 5 – 10 years. They are usually broad areas of service that will have the most positive impact on your community. Traditionally, they don't change over the course of several years.

Big Picture Outcomes (for each Priority Area)

The Outcomes are bigger picture and longer term – what is the organization trying to achieve by focusing on the Priorities? What is the end result if we are successful? The Outcomes are usually explained without specific numbers or data because they are explained in terms of what the organization wants or needs to achieve. An outcome is the change/difference that happens as a result of implementing your strategic plan.

Definitions

Key Goals

Key Goals are the larger, broader, often intangible concepts that will need to be accomplished to address the Priorities and be successful in the coming years. Key Goals are typically longer term (3 – 5 years) in nature and have milestones along the way to measure success. Goals are big, broad statements that, when accomplished, significantly move the needle on your Priorities. If you are successful at achieving your Goals, you will achieve your Priorities and realize your Vision.

SMART Objectives

SMART Objectives are milestones along the road to achieving your bigger picture Strategic Goals. They are accomplishments that can be defined in quantifiable and measurable terms. SMART means Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic and Timebound. Objectives are specific, actionable targets that need to be achieved within a smaller time frame to accomplish your Strategic Goals. SMART Objectives typically take between 1 – 3 years to complete.

Action Steps

Action Steps are very specific tasks that need to be completed to achieve the SMART Objectives and Strategic Goals. They are very short term (no longer than 90 – 180 days to complete).

Adaptive Strategies

Strategies are methods or overarching concepts used to accomplish a goal. They can be thought of as a broader tool or technique that will allow your organization to have success more quickly or efficiently. More than one strategy may be used concurrently, but too many different strategies all at once would probably be confusing. As a result, we recommend that a strategic plan identify just a few (4 - 6) strategies to work on at any one time. Think of strategies as the high-level tools or techniques needed to accomplish the outcomes, factored into the everyday work of the city.

Key Performance Indicators (KPI's)

Key Performance Indicators are measurable values that demonstrate how effectively the organization is achieving Strategic Goals and Outcomes. KPIs are used to evaluate success at reaching target metrics in budget, strategic planning, master plans and more. A great KPI measures not just numbers – it measures what is most important. A short example: if your desired Outcome is to increase community engagement, don't measure the number of people that attend meetings. Instead, measure how engaged they are.

Definitions

Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan is a spreadsheet or tracking document for the strategic plan that is based on the Priorities, Strategic Goals and Outcomes. The Implementation Plan tracks several key issues: the SMART Objectives to accomplish the Goal, the Action Steps that will accomplish the SMART Objective, and the KPI's that will measure success for the Outcomes. Included will be who is responsible, specific timelines and any resources needed to accomplish the work.

Diversity

It means any element or dimension that differentiates an individual or group from another. For an organization to be diverse, it should have people from different caste, sex, religion, ethnicity, nationality, age, education, marital status, disability, socioeconomic status, etc., working for them. Workplace diversity implies accepting these differences and treating each individual equally and fairly.

Equity

In lay terms, equity means "to be fair." In the workplace, equity means treating all employees equally and providing them equal opportunities to learn and grow. Equity is about ensuring that the organization's processes and programs are impartial and it offers equal possible results for all employees.

Inclusion

It is the practice of making people with different identities feel welcomed in an organization. Inclusion is all about the sense of belonging, encouraging equal participation from everyone, and providing them with an equitable opportunity to contribute to the company and advance their skillsets. Inclusion means diverse people can be themselves at work and still feel respected and valued.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON YOUR STRATEGIC PLAN,
PLEASE VISIT: [HTTPS://WETHERSFIELDCT.GOV/STRATEGICPLAN](https://wethersfieldct.gov/strategicplan)

TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD

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