



Q & A: Malden's Visioning Project

Q: What is community "visioning"?

A: Visioning is a planning process that can help our community create a shared vision for our future. Malden's Visioning Project is part of on-going master planning activities being conducted by the Planning Board and Planning Department. The activities are being funded by the City's Community Development Block Grant, as authorized by the Mayor and City Council.

Q: Why should we undertake a visioning process?

A: Visioning allows our citizens and City officials to come together to discuss significant trends and issues affecting our community in a collaborative, proactive way. By focusing on the future, Malden community members can often find common ground for shared goals. Working "backward" from these goals, we can develop new ideas and approaches for addressing challenges and solving problems. Visioning does not replace traditional forms of planning and decision-making, but it can make these activities better informed, more strategic and effective.

Q: Why is the Planning Board initiating a visioning project? Why now?

A: State law gives the Planning Board the authority and responsibility for planning. With Malden's on-going consistent popularity as a place to live and do business and continuing development and redevelopment opportunities, there is no better time than now to formulate a statement of our vision and goals.

Q: What is a vision statement?

A: Malden's vision statement will be a forward-looking, concise statement, not limited by current constraints, describing our community's preferred "destination" over a 10 to 25-year period. It should also express our community's hopes and values. Our vision statement will serve as a useful decision-making tool and policy guide on the development and redevelopment issues that continually confront us as a City. Malden's vision statement will also focus and direct future community visioning and planning efforts.

Q: What will happen at the Visioning Workshop?

A: The Visioning Workshop is the first step toward creating a vision statement. All members of the community, including residents, business and property owners, civic organizations, local Boards and Commissions, and City officials, will be invited to attend the Workshop. The Workshop will provide an opportunity to engage in small group discussions about Malden's strengths, challenges and opportunities. These discussions will be guided by trained facilitators from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council. Workshop participants will help create a vision of what they want Malden to become.

Q: How will our vision statement be put into action?

A: Our vision statement will include an action plan, or the vision's "road map," to provide a detailed description of how the vision can be achieved. The action plan will provide a strategic guide to achieving Malden's vision in the near term (1-5 years) and long term (10-25 years). A

process for periodic review and update of our vision statement will also be established. The visioning and action planning will be undertaken as part of the same process.

Q: How will our vision statement be used?

A: Our vision statement and accompanying action plan will be used to cultivate a shared sense of direction for Malden; to better manage community growth and change; to guide local government planning and decision-making; and to inspire and motivate community involvement and action.

Q: Does visioning really make a difference? Does anything result from visioning?

A: The most successful visioning projects can foster major changes in a community; other projects may make a number of smaller but very meaningful differences. The process of visioning, bringing the Malden community together to create our own vision, may be as valuable as the vision itself.

Q: What will make our visioning process succeed?

A: Several key factors will help ensure the success of Malden's visioning project: (1) support from local leaders and local institutions; (2) clearly defined objectives and outcomes; (3) a design that addresses community needs and resources; (4) strong community awareness and participation; and (5) follow-through.

Q: Is a vision created by consensus, voting or both?

A: Creating a shared vision may be accomplished through a variety of means to promote community consensus. Voting can be a helpful tool in visioning, to get a sense of priorities, for example, but consensus plays a more central role. Our local government may end up voting on the adoption of the community's vision. If Malden's vision has been developed through an open, participatory process, such a vote will often affirm what the community has "decided" through consensus. Ward-level meetings in our neighborhoods will affirm the Malden vision and goals.

Q: What are the next steps after the Visioning Workshop?

A: During June, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council will continue working with the Malden Planning Board and Planning Department to create and conduct a City-wide survey addressing various planning-related issues and objectives. The survey will also provide information about how the Malden community views current conditions and gain insight into community values.

Beginning in September there will be neighborhood meetings in each of the City's eight Wards. Participants at these meetings will review and discuss information gathered from the City-wide visioning workshop and survey. These meetings will aim to create the vision's action plan while also serving as a "reality check" that will help prioritize actions. Participants will help identify and discuss potential barriers to achieving the preferred vision and goals and discuss available resources to address the barriers.

Q: What is the final outcome from this planning process?

A: Malden's visioning process will produce a final Vision Statement with related goals and action plan.

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