

South Berwick's draft Comprehensive Plan Update to be presented during a Public Information Session

The South Berwick Comprehensive Plan Committee will host an open public information and feedback session for its draft Comprehensive Plan on April 11 from 6-7:30 at the Richard Gagnon Auditorium in the Town Hall. A presentation will highlight inventory findings, provide an overview of recommendations, and present the future land use plan for public feedback. More information regarding the committee, including minutes and draft materials, can be found [here](#).

The public session comes after two years of plan development, including drafting detailed chapters, conducting a successful survey with over 1100 resident responses, and hosting focus groups with topic experts. The Committee meetings are open to the public every 4th Monday of the month at 6 pm.

The South Berwick Town Council seated the Comprehensive Plan Committee in April 2022, charging them with updating the Town's 2008 Comprehensive Plan to align with Maine's Growth Management Act (30-A, M.R.S.A. §4301 et seq.). Plans consistent with this act enable municipalities to enact zoning regulations, impact fees, and growth rate ordinances, and can qualify them for preferred status with state grant programs. Updating a Comprehensive Plan is a meticulous process requiring numerous inputs.

"We're pleased to be presenting the draft to the public after 23 months of dedicated work," said Deb Ganster, a member of the Town's Comprehensive Plan Committee, "It's so important to us to hear folks' input and understand their perspective on the ideas."

The Comprehensive Plan Committee consists of 12 members, including residents, Town Council liaisons, the Town's Community and Economic Development Director, and representatives from the Southern Maine Planning & Development Commission (SMPDC), the Town's consultant for the plan update. The plan's 11 chapters were updated with current information using various data sets and resources throughout 2022.

The Committee issued a community survey to town residents in July and August 2022, receiving over 1100 responses, surpassing standard response rates of other communities. SMPDC assisted the Committee in analyzing the survey results in the fall of 2022 while the Committee continued updating the draft chapters, which now total nearly 100 pages.

In April 2023, the Committee planned and conducted four focus groups, focusing on Arts, Recreation & the Village, Conservation & Natural Resources, Land Use & Housing, and Economic Development. The goal was to gather additional information for the Committee to use in informing potential future policies and strategies. The public input process during the plan update has been multifaceted and options to provide feedback will continue as the draft plan is finalized.