



MARBLEHEAD  
MASTER PLAN  
MMP 2037

# Marblehead Master Plan FAQs

## Community Input Planning Process 2025-2027

This FAQ briefly outlines the community master planning process happening throughout fall 2025 through early 2027. It outlines how community input will be gathered — from a survey and public workshops to brainstorming sessions with planning consultants and an informal advisory group. The goal is to build a shared understanding of community needs and identify priorities the Town may pursue over the next decade. The final master plan report is expected to reflect both public input and professional planning best practices through the development of recommendations and implementable strategies for the Town. It may also include different ideas for different parts of Marblehead, from areas to preserve to those that could benefit from future improvement.

### What is a Master Plan?

A **Master Plan** is a long-term guide that outlines a community's shared goals, identifies key issues, and recommends actions the Town can take to shape its future. It helps local officials, boards, and residents make thoughtful decisions about **zoning, housing, infrastructure, natural resources, economic development, and more.**

It's built by assessing current conditions, listening to public input, and envisioning what kind of place Marblehead wants to be — what to grow, preserve, improve, or potentially reexplore.

#### Key Benefits of a Master Plan:

- Documents the community's shared long-term vision
- Provides clear, actionable recommendations
- Serves as a roadmap for zoning, investments, and planning
- Encourages livability, sustainability, and equity
- Guides where and how the Town could grow or preserve
- Creates clarity and predictability for residents, businesses, and developers
- Leaves a legacy for future generations

Master Plans are supported by **Massachusetts General Law Chapter 41, Section 81D.**

### What can the Marblehead Comprehensive Master Plan do?

Marblehead's Master Plan 2037 (**MMP 2037**) is a **non-binding, big-picture roadmap** for how the town could grow and evolve through **2037**. It will guide local decisions about land use, housing, transportation, historic preservation, and more.

It does **not create new laws**, but it gives direction and coordination across town departments, boards, and committees. It helps answer questions like:

- Where should new housing go?
- How can we prepare for climate change?
- How can we preserve historic areas?
- What public investments are most needed?



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## What will the final draft Plan in 2027 include?

Massachusetts law specifies seven conventional planning topic areas, and Marblehead's plan will address each — to address community ideas and issues for each of them. The seven topics and two important plan components include:

- **Housing** – Options for all stages of life
- **Transportation** – Safer streets, mobility, and access
- **Open Space & Recreation** – Parks, trails, and natural areas
- **Economic Development** – Jobs, businesses, and downtown vitality
- **Land Use** – What gets built where, and why
- **Natural & Cultural Resources** – Protecting what makes Marblehead unique
- **Services & Facilities** – Public buildings, infrastructure, and services
- **Goals & Policies** – Community values and priorities
- **Implementation** – How to make it all happen

The plan also weaves in **climate resilience, sustainability, and equity** across all areas.

## How is it different from other types of plans?

This plan brings everything together at a high level. Unlike technical studies that focus on just one subject (like open space or housing), the Master Plan connects all the dots.

It shows how different priorities relate — like how multimodal transportation can work with housing solutions, or how economic development can occur with sustainability solutions. That “big picture” approach helps the Town **set priorities and make tradeoffs** when needed. It does not provide the final decisions or more detailed solutions for sites, facilities and issues that single topic technical studies might.

It can provide boards, committees and the community at large with greater confidence in knowing where overall consensus goals and priorities are for when future decisions for proposals or investments need to be made.

## Who is leading the planning?

It's a team effort:

- **Planning Board** – Approves the final plan
- **Town Staff** – Town Planner and others provide local knowledge
- **MAPC (Metropolitan Area Planning Council)** – Regional planning agency public consultants managing the budgeted process, research and analyses
- **Comprehensive Plan Advisory Group** – A group of approximately 25 town staff, board liaisons and residents offering input
- **Community Members – You!** Residents, workers, business owners, and visitors all help shape the vision



## What is the Comprehensive Master Plan Advisory Group?

The **Comprehensive Master Plan Advisory Group** (AG) is a working group of residents, town staff, board members, and community partners. They help:

- Provide input on content — to help MAPC further synthesize input and discern consensus ideas iteratively throughout the process
- Help with community engagement
- Represent diverse voices from across Marblehead
- Help turn public input into meaningful priorities
- The AG itself is a vital and ongoing form of community input. Many members are Marblehead residents, and the group participates in brainstorming sessions, public forums, and the online survey.

They'll meet about **nine times** between 2025 and 2027.

## How Can I Get Involved?

We want to hear from everyone — longtime residents, newcomers, business owners, youth, and more. All voices matter in shaping Marblehead's future.

Key ways to participate include:

- **Online Survey** – One survey available to all community members
- **Community Forums** – Three open house-style events with posters and interactive input opportunities
- **Ongoing Online Engagement** – Through the Town's website and social media
- **Final Public Hearing** – Before the plan is adopted by the Planning Board

### Timeline:

Start – Fall 2025

Finish – March 2027

## What will the final Master Plan look like?

The final deliverables will be:

- A **clear vision** for Marblehead in 2037
- Goals, priorities, and ideas for where to grow, preserve, or improve
- A **non-binding implementation roadmap**
- A **user-friendly, digital report** (plus an Executive Summary and technical appendix)



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After adoption, the Town could consider forming an **Implementation Committee** to track progress, coordinate departments, and recommend next steps over time.

## Why does this matter to me?

Because the Master Plan will shape the future of everyday life in Marblehead.

It can help influence:

- Traffic, parking, and safe streets
- Housing options and affordability
- Local business and job opportunities
- Access to parks, trails, and open space
- Historic preservation and sustainability
- Town services, water, sewer, and infrastructure investments

And it's built around one central idea: **The plan works best with community input through the survey and participation at three public open house forums.**

## What's the difference between a Comprehensive Plan and a Master Plan?

- Under **Massachusetts General Law (MGL) Chapter 41, Section 81D**, the official term is *Comprehensive Plan* — a long-term guide that covers key topics like land use, housing, transportation, and more to shape a town's future.
- However, most towns, including Marblehead, use the term *Master Plan* in practice. While the two are often used interchangeably, *Comprehensive Plan* is the correct legal term in Massachusetts.
- Nationwide, there's a growing shift away from the term *Master Plan* due to its hierarchical and exclusionary roots — similar to how “master bedroom” is now often called “primary bedroom.” Some communities now prefer terms like *Community Plan* or *Vision Plan*, though the meaning remains largely the same.

## How Are Comprehensive Master Plans Created?

Understanding Roles, Responsibilities & Collaboration

- **Most towns work with planning consultants, like MAPC**, to supplement limited local staff capacity. Consultants bring experience managing research, engagement, and coordination within a finite, budgeted timeline.
- **Consultants support — not replace — local leadership.** They help structure meetings, analyze input, and prepare materials that reflect community feedback and best practices.



- **The process is iterative.** Content is presented at each meeting and forum to build on previous input — refining ideas, testing possibilities, and helping to tease out emerging consensus.
- **The Planning Board retains final authority** to adopt the plan. All decisions remain local.
- **Town staff are essential partners**, contributing local knowledge, coordinating logistics, and engaging departments and boards.
- **An advisory group of about 25 members** — including residents, board/committee members, and stakeholders — provides feedback during discussions and individual written input exercises, and prioritization input on emerging ideas.
- **The plan sets shared direction, not every detail.** Future implementation decisions are made locally, using the plan as a guide.

**Success depends on collaboration.** The process works best when all participants share input, build trust, and work together across roles.

## Let's build the future of Marblehead — together.

Visit the town website for updates and engagement opportunities, or contact the Town Planner to get involved.