

Paxton Master Plan
- Community Visioning Forum -
November 2, 2006
Paxton Center School

Public Forum Comments

All told, there were 45-55 participants throughout the course of the evening. After a brief overview of the master planning process, the audience was broken up into four groups. Each group was instructed to develop a list of Paxton's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. At the end of the breakout sessions, the participants were reconvened together and a speaker from each group went through their comments. At the end, each participant was given four red dots and instructed to place a dot on what they considered to be Paxton's greatest strength, weakness opportunity and threat. The results of this effort are listed below.

Group 1

Strengths:

Rural beauty
Public services and their accessibility
Excellent schools
More public involvement
Safety
Great library
Moore State Park
Expanded recreation – road race
Town cemetery
Tranquility
Locally grown products
Anna Maria College
Good town services
Good youth programs
Nice neighbors
Open and responsive town government
Well-attended churches
Educated populace
Senior programs
Scenic roads
Golf course

Weaknesses:

Lack of personal involvement
Lack of public transportation
No restaurant or gas station
Lack of adequate town buildings
One tax rate
No ambulance services
Lack of commercial space
Lack of regional planning
Revision of zoning bylaws
Route 122 traffic
Lack of adequate sidewalks
Poor soil conditions
Lack of affordable housing
No town pool
No broadcasting of public meetings
High water table
No preservation of open space
Lack of town water
Lack of public meeting space

Opportunities:

To protect watershed
Scenic byways
Our open space plan
Opportunity to acquire open spaces
Retention of agriculture
Opportunity to expand commercial property
Regionalization of recreation
Regionalization of town services
More off-street parking in the center of town
Town post office
Alternative energy

Threats:

Big mouth beavers
Coyotes
Water system infrastructure
Lack of control of regional growth
Lack of adequate water supply
Aging energy contract

Lack of traffic control
Narrow road at Worcester/Paxton town line
Amount of school budget
Tax burden
Emergency Preparedness

Group 2

Strengths:

Rich historic heritage
Town recreation facilities
Small town character
Responsive municipal services
Churches
Library
No crime
Location – benefits of being close to Worcester while still being rural
Good schools
No hazardous environmental problems
Single-family bedroom community
Beautiful state park
Small town accessible government
Good caliber of town officials
Highly educated population

Weaknesses:

Under-funded recreational facilities (no pool)
No gas station
No pharmacy
No post office
No restaurant (fine dining)
Traffic heavy heading to/from Worcester
Lack of volunteers for town jobs/committees
No health clinic
Limited tax base
No ambulance
Need controlled economic development
Need limited day care and after school programs
Need senior affordable housing
Inadequate sidewalks on major streets
Preservation and upgrading of municipal buildings
Lack of sewers limits affordable housing

Opportunities:

Take advantage of traffic flow – small commercial opportunities
Need traffic lights
Better monitor speed of traffic
Tout facilities like library and recreation
Scenic byway developed
Historic district
Community Preservation Act
Develop trails, etc.
Preserve Paxton “as is”
Cooperating/partnering with Anna Maria College
Preserve open space
Preserve undeveloped green space
Elderly housing
Expand recreation
Traffic bypass

Threats:

Hazardous waste
Trash (roadways trash)
Water resources/supply (legal issues)
Creeping commercialism
Diocese may sell St. C (?)
Long-term capital expenses
Uncontrolled development
Declining school enrollment
Increased traffic
State influence in local government
Lack of interested involvement in local issues
Taxes related to the CPA (long-term)
Power re: town preservation
Electrical supply – increased demand
Water system infrastructure
Growth pressures re: Central Massachusetts
Location of highways
Increased crime – proximity to Worcester

Group 3

Strengths:

Senior citizens (experience and history)
Rural character of the town
Town services (quality)
Not much traffic
Quality of volunteers
Schools
Low crime rate
Water quality (municipal and well)
Responsible citizenry
Sense of community (community spirit)
Moore State Park
Emergency Response
Recreation and open space
Scenic views and vistas
Historic character
Upper middle-class population
Churches
Good library
Quality infrastructure – roads
Nice town center
Lack of commercial development
Vocational high school

Weaknesses:

Town Hall building
Water distribution system
No restaurants
No gas/service stations
Cost of water
Low number of volunteers
Lack of commercial development
Poor soil drainage
Lack of sewer system
Cost of electricity
Ambulance response time
Regional school system
Wild animal control

Opportunities:

Wind farm
Hiking/cross-country tracks
Bike trails
Water sources
Scenic Byway (Route 122)
Moore State Park usage
Activities for youths
“Smart” growth
Attract small high-tech businesses or professional offices
Protect remaining open spaces
Municipal center (town offices/police/fire/DPW/electric)
Build more senior housing
Reduce the tax rate
Community Preservation Act
Extend Worcester Regional Transit Authority into Paxton
General store

Threats:

Possible failure of water distribution
Severe weather
Terrorism
Uncontrolled Development (residential and commercial)
Higher taxes
Increased traffic
Groundwater contamination
Arsenic in Paxton’s groundwater
Loss of agricultural land
Loss of town history due to loss of records/structures
Loss of open space
Loss of volunteers

Group 4

Strengths:

Open space
Public safety – police and fire
Location – Central Massachusetts/Worcester
No public transportation
Town administrator

Limited development
No industry
Moore State Park
Small town atmosphere

Weaknesses:

Limited citizen involvement
Lack of sidewalks/crosswalks
Crosswalks needed at major intersections
Absence of landscaping
Traffic speed, congestion and noise
Absence of affordable housing
No pub/restaurant
No adult recreation
Lack of commercial opportunity
Lack of gas station
Absence of swimming pool

Opportunities:

Moore State Park as a destination
Education at Anna Maria College
Business opportunity
Scenic byway
Wentworth property
Community Preservation Act
Undeveloped property
Connections to the Mid-State Trail
Rail Trail

Threats:

McMansions
Zoning frontage requirement – too large
Traffic threat
Join septic systems
Decrease in school and state aid
Absence of young people involvement
Transient population
Smallest town in the Wachusett regional school district

Top Three Strengths

Rural beauty –character/small town character – atmosphere (22 votes)

Tranquility of Paxton (5 votes)

Moore State Park (4 votes)

Top Three Weaknesses

Limited citizen involvement – personal involvement/lack of volunteers (13 votes)

Limited tax base/lack of commerce (8 votes)

No restaurants (6 votes)

Top Three Opportunities

Opportunity to acquire open space (9 votes)

Preserve Paxton “as is” (5 votes)

Retain agriculture (3 votes)

Hike/bike/cross-country trails (3 votes)

Alternative energy (3 votes)

Regionalization of town services (3 votes)

Top Three Threats

Uncontrolled development (11 votes)

Tax base (10 votes)

Loss of open space (7 votes)

Planner’s Commentary: The top strengths all revolve around the Town’s rural character, open space and tranquility. What threatens Paxton’s rural tranquility? Uncontrolled development that would eat up the Town’s remaining open spaces. The top three opportunities revolve around protecting the Town’s rural landscape and keeping things the way they are. The Town’s primary weakness is lack of citizen involvement/volunteers. This indicates that Paxton residents realize full well that the Town’s future is in their hands.