



COMMUNITY ISSUES IN WARREN

Overview

As part of updating the 2009 Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD), the Warren Planning and Zoning Commission conducted a public workshop meeting to help identify topics and issues that Warren residents felt were important to address in the Plan.

This booklet summarizes the workshop results and is intended to help the Commission as they update the 2009 POCD. The meeting format mirrored what was done for the 2009 POCD so the meeting results can be compared to see how community issues and concerns have changed over the past decade or so.

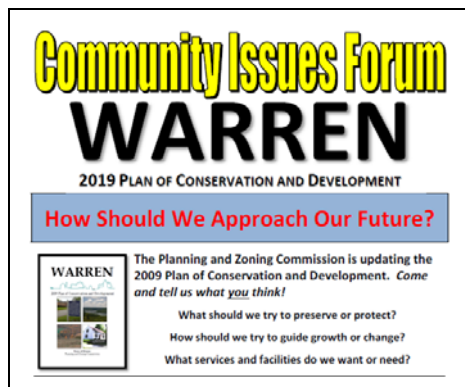
Meeting Arrangements

Warren residents were informed about the Saturday September 22 meeting and encouraged to attend through “save the date” notices, postcards, press releases, posters placed around Warren, word-of-mouth, internet postings, email, message board signs, and other means.

Over 60 Warren residents participated in a meeting at the Community Center on a Saturday evening in September. The meeting was designed to learn about issues important to the community. Attendance was similar to what was experienced as part of the 2009 POCD.

“There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about.”

Margaret Wheatley
Writer



Exercise 1 - Where People Live

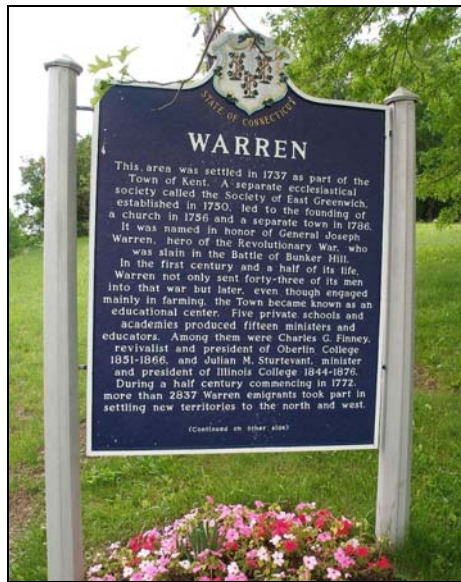
In the first exercise, residents attending the meeting were asked to place a “blue dot” on a map of Warren to illustrate where they live.

The distribution of dots indicated that residents came from different parts of Warren and the distribution of attendees was reasonably similar to the overall distribution of Warren residents. As a result, there did not seem to be a “geographic bias” which might have skewed the results of the meeting.

Map of Where Attendees Lived



Images of Warren



Summary Of Results

From a topical perspective, the following items were identified as “prouds”:

- Community Facilities (72)
- Community Character (57)
- Agriculture / Farms (21)
- Open Space (18)
- Town Center (7)
- Other (8)

In a similar meeting conducted as part of preparing the 2009 POCD, the following items were identified as “prouds” (note that the categorization of responses may be somewhat different):

- Community Facilities (82)
- Community Character (63)
- Open Space (52)
- Natural Resources (29)
- Town Center (14)
- Historic Resources (6)
- Roads / Cell service (4)

Exercise 2 – What People Are Proud Of

The second exercise involved asking residents to think of things about Warren they were proud of. Residents were asked to list these on a card (and submit the card at the meeting) and place a “green dot” on a map to represent it.

This exercise is intended to learn about ***the types of things that people might want to encourage in Warren***. The exercise can also reveal the types of things that attract people to Warren and contribute to the overall quality of life for residents.

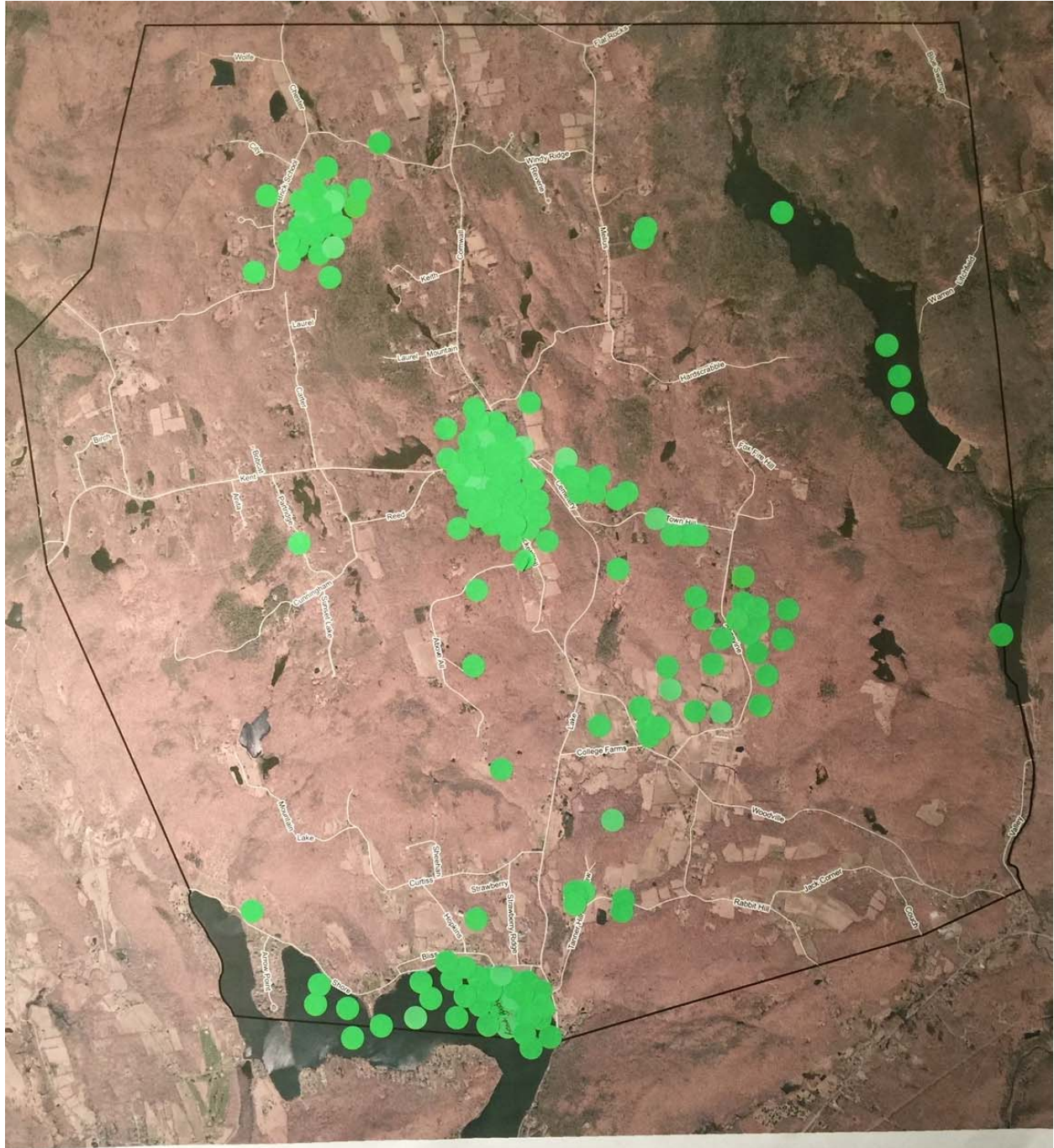
The themes which emerged from this exercise included:

- **Community Facilities** – participants indicated they were proud of the Town facilities and services which enhance their quality of life and meet community needs.
- **Community Character** – participants indicated they were proud of things that enhance the physical character of the community (Lake Waramaug, farms, rural character, etc.) and emotional / social things that made them feel they were part of a community (overall spirit, warmth, etc.) and contributed to their quality of life and sense of well-being).

Tabulation of Main Prouds

Community Facilities	72	School	20
		Town Beach	16
		Library	13
		Fire Department	11
		Town Hall	6
		Other	6
Community Character	57	Lake Waramaug	19
		People / Town Spirit / Community Feeling	11
		Physical Beauty / Rural Character / Landscape	8
		Shepaug Reservoir / River	5
		Other	14
Agriculture / Farms	21	Angevine Tree Farm	11
		Farms / Other Farms	10
Open Space	18	Warren Woods	14
		Open Space / Other	4

Map of Prouds



PROUDS

Think about things in your community that you are proud of or are happy about. Please place a green dot at that location and write it down on the card in your envelope.

Map prepared in September 2018 by Joanne Whelan

Summary Of Results

From a topical perspective, the following items were identified as “sorrys”:

- Lack of a Town Center / lack of businesses (35)
- Things that detract from character (31)
- Community services or facilities (10)
- Lack of affordable / senior housing (8)
- Lack of cell service (7)
- Weeds in ponds (5)
- Other (7)

In a similar meeting conducted as part of preparing the 2009 POCD, the following items were identified as “sorrys” (note that the categorization of responses may be somewhat different):

- Library / Other comm. facilities (34)
- Suburban subdivision (30)
- Lack of post office / zip code (27)
- Lack of a Town Center / lack of businesses (26)
- Physical detractors (12)
- Lack of cell service (8)
- Lack of affordable housing (7)
- Lack of trails (5)
- Other (15)

Exercise 3 – What People Are Sorry About

The third exercise involved residents identifying things in Warren they were sorry about. These were listed on the same card and identified by placing a “red dot” on a map to represent it.

This exercise is intended to learn about ***the types of things that people might want to discourage in Warren***. The exercise can also reveal the types of things in Warren that might irritate people or detract from the overall quality of life for residents.

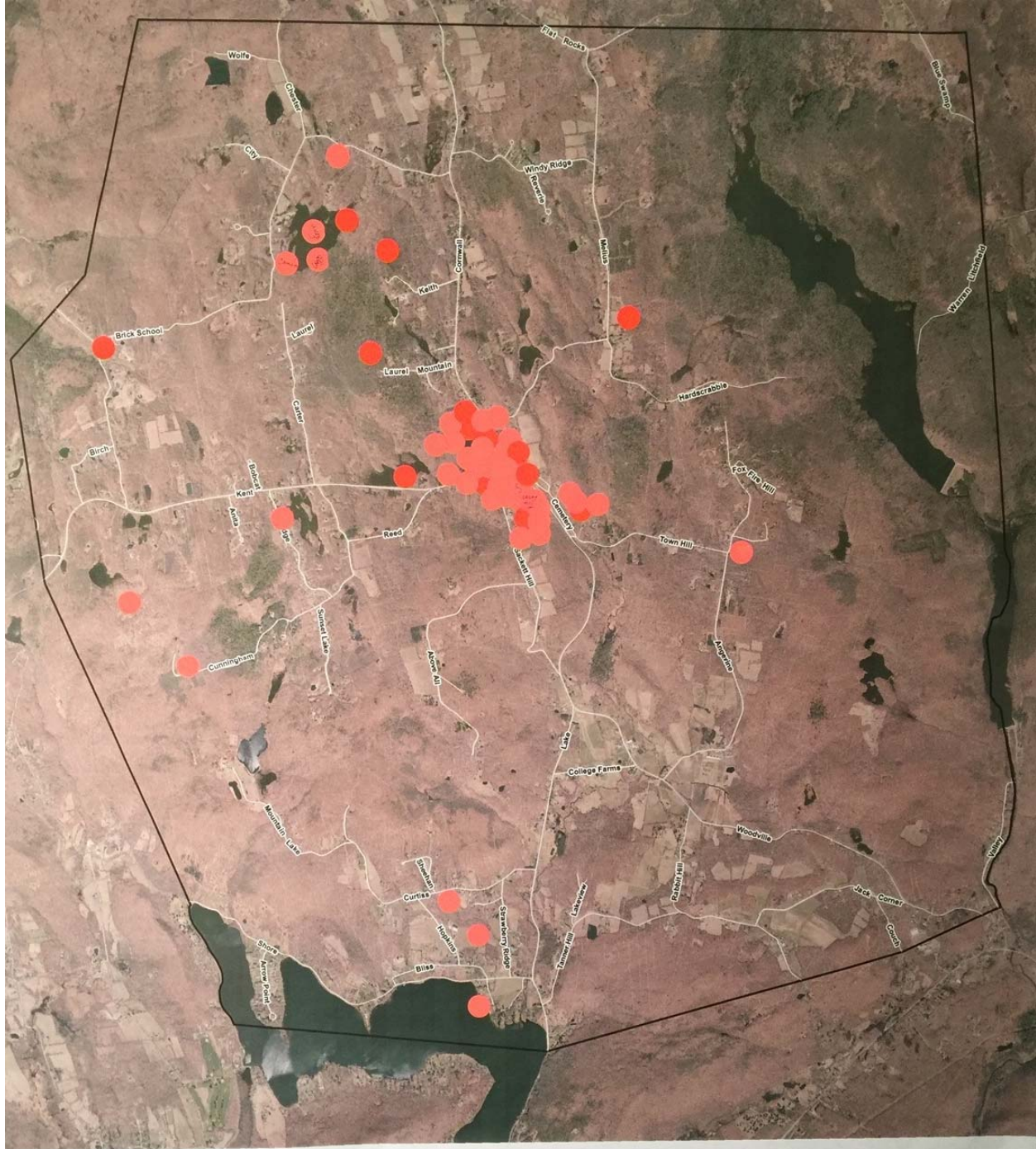
The themes which emerged from this exercise included:

- **Town Center / Business Development** – participants indicated they were sorry the Town Center area had been inactive for a while and that it was hard to support local businesses.
- **Community Character** – participants indicated they were sorry about things (such as the electronic sign board and other things) they felt detracted from the character of Warren.
- **Housing** – participants indicated they were sorry about the lack of affordable housing for young families and the lack of sufficient housing for seniors.
- **Community Facilities** – participants indicated they were sorry about the appearance or capacity of some facilities or services.

Tabulation of Main Sorrys

Town Center / Business Development	35	Empty Town Center	21
		Lack of businesses / jobs / overall	10
		Miscellaneous / Other	4
Community Character	31	Electronic Sign	13
		Miscellaneous / Other	18
Housing	10	Lack of affordable housing	4
		Too little senior housing	3
		Miscellaneous / Other	3
Community Facilities	10	Town Garage	3
		New Town Hall	2
		Library / Community Center	2
		Miscellaneous / Other	3
Other	20	Lack of cell phone coverage	7
		Weeds in ponds	5
		Anxiety over school / lack of young families	2
		Miscellaneous / Other	6

Map of Sorrys



SORRYS

Think about things in your community that you are very sorry about or not happy about. Please place a red dot at that location and write it down on the card in your envelope.

Map provided by Boulder Ave 2010 by Joanne Hunsicker 2010
Document Photo: © 2010 by Joanne Hunsicker 2010

Exercise 4 – Planning Points

The fourth exercise involved people identifying their values or priorities among the topics typically considered as part of a POCD.

People attending the meeting were given 5 vouchers representing 50 “planning points” (one @ 20 points, two @ 10 points each, and two @ 5 points each) to allocate among 12 boxes. Residents were asked to allocate the planning points in the boxes to reflect what they felt was important for the community to address as part of the planning process.

The boxes were organized around three themes that can be used to organize the planning process and a POCD:

- **Conservation Issues** – things the community may want to preserve or protect in the future
- **Development Issues** – how the community may want to address growth or change in the future
- **Infrastructure Issues** – services or facilities the community may want or need



Tabulation of Planning Points

	20 points	10 points	5 points	Total Points
Conservation Issues	440	590	280	1,310
Agriculture	120	200	85	405
Natural Resources	220	70	70	360
Open Space	80	180	90	350
Community Character	20	140	35	195

Development Issues	620	390	195	1,205
General (age make-up, village center)	300	110	65	475
Housing Diversity	120	130	35	285
Business Development	80	130	65	275
Residential Development	120	20	30	170

Infrastructure Issues	180	220	130	540
Community Facilities	100	140	75	315
Walking / Biking / Bus / Train	40	60	25	125
Water/ Sewer / Utilities	40	10	25	85
Traffic and Circulation	0	10	5	15

3,055

The five topics identified as being **most important** to participants at the meeting included:

- Age composition / Town Center (475 points)
- Agriculture / Farms (405 points)
- Natural Resources (360 points)
- Open Space (350 points)
- Community Facilities (315 points)

Comparison Of Results

In a similar meeting conducted as part of preparing the 2009 POCD, the planning points were allocated as follows:

	Total Points
Conservation Issues	1,740
Open Space	855
Natural Resources	415
Community Character	325
Other Resources	145

Development Issues	990
Village Enhancement	300
Residential Development	250
Business Development	230
Housing Needs	210

Infrastructure Issues	485
Community Facilities	365
Utilities / Cell Service	60
Traffic and Circulation	40
Walk / Biking / Bus	20

Totals	3,215
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Exercise 5 – Planning Discussion

These results of the planning points exercise were presented at the meeting and the remainder of the meeting was devoted to discussing the topics that got the most points.

GENERAL – AGE MAKE-UP

Development

- Warren is getting older
 - The average age in Warren is 45 years old
 - The average age for the Fire Department is 55 years old
 - 75% of voters are people over age 65
- We need children in the school system
 - The school could become inefficient to operate
 - What would we do then?
- How can we attract more people and families under age 45?
 - Can they afford to come here? Is housing here affordable to them?
 - Do young people want to own a home or land? Live in a rural area?
 - People need a place to work that pays a decent wage
 - There are jobs here and nearby
- Attracting people shouldn't be a difficult task / we can do this
 - Warren has about 1,400 residents
 - We only need about six families with a few kids
- People need to experience Warren / once they come, they will want to stay
 - Low taxes / excellent school system will help attract people
 - We could use the Town land behind Town Hall to build housing
 - We could do a lottery to generate interest and excitement
- Warren is a lifestyle
 - We do not need to try to attract everybody
 - Not everyone wants to rent or own / need options
- When older people sell, younger people/families may move here
- Older people make important contributions as well
 - Maybe we could do more to provide for their needs
 - Maybe have a wellness center rather than a community center
- We should try to avoid uncontrolled development
 - But Partridge Lane is a neighborhood and some people like that
 - Maybe a cluster development could be the best of both approaches

- The Town Center is changing!
 - There has been a change of ownership
 - We could get a general store and a deli with a pizza oven!
 - Looking at also getting a mail drop
- The general store will need community support
 - This could revive the social / economic aspects
 - Could become a social / economic focal point!
- There is a retail space in the building that has not been programmed yet
- Interest has been expressed in some of the second floor office space
- There could be shared office space in the old antique store



- Our rural character makes Warren special
 - Farmland does this better than other things
- How can we help preserve farms and farmers?
- We need to keep Warren rural!
 - Two-acre zoning may not do it / just spreads houses over the land
 - Should we up-zone to larger lots?
 - Cluster housing could help if it is done right / could preserve farmland
- How do we get young farmers into the business?
 - Could we lease out Town land to young farmers?
 - Warren Land Trust has land – could that help?
 - What is the Town’s plan for the 96 acres it owns?
 - Can we merge Wamogo Ag Program with land the Town owns with people who want to farm?
 - Grange can help also
- We need land-based support as well
- How can we help farms remain viable / prosper?
 - Agriculture is changing from what it used to be
 - Can we expand other activities?
 - Ag-tivities
 - Part time recreation
 - Community-supported agriculture shares (New Milford has 3-year waiting list)
 - People need to realize a profit
 - Need to have a niche that meets everyone’s needs
- Let’s not get distracted by what we have always done
 - Let’s try to reinvent ourselves
 - Let’s follow what other towns have done that has been successful
- We also need housing that is affordable
 - Should we allow for accessory apartments to bring young farmers in?

NATURAL RESOURCES / OPEN SPACE

Conservation

- We like open space and natural resources and we want to preserve them
- Participants at the meeting overwhelmingly felt that the term “open space” meant land that was preserved in some way (80%)
- It did not just refer to undeveloped land (20%)
- Steep Rock Association (in Washington) has done a good job managing open space
- Feels Warren is “on this”
 - The Planning and Zoning Commission is very sensitive to rural character
 - Warren Land Trust has done an exceptional job
 - Warren Land Trust uses conservation easements
 - Have been working on trails and mapping to increase public access
- Warren has spectacular groundwater resources

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Infrastructure

- The Community Center needs to be more affordable to rent
 - The facilities are cheaper than surrounding towns but it is still too much
 - Maybe we should have lower fees for in-town residents and higher fees for out-of-town residents
 - Can we provide some relief on insurance requirements for facility rental?
- Community facilities are meeting places and will help us maintain a sense of community
 - School
 - Beach
 - Warren Woods
 - Library
- We should open the community center on Sundays for basketball or open it for all residents, especially in the winter
- Maybe we could use an outdoor basketball court

OPEN DISCUSSION

- Will the Warren POCD consider what is going on in towns around us?
- We are part of the Region 6 School District – how will this continue to operate in the future?
 - All three towns have to agree to close a school or change the charter
 - So one town can prevent other towns from doing things
 - This is both good and bad
- Maybe we could attract people from other towns to enroll their children in Warren's School
 - Maybe they would then move here!
- Affordable housing is being promoted
 - At the October 2018 Town meeting, the Town is considering leasing land behind the Town Hall for housing for 10 families
 - This could be useful to attract younger people
- Could Warren support more than one commercial area?
- Is there a trend in terms of the number of weekender homes?
 - Is the percentage increasing?

Possible Strategic Directions

Compared to a similar meeting conducted in 2006 (as part of preparing the 2009 Plan of Conservation and Development), public opinions and desires have changed in Warren over the past decade or so.

Distribution of Planning Points

	Conservation Issues	Development Issues	Infrastructure Issues
2006 POCD Meeting	54%	31%	15%
2018 POCD Meeting	43%	39%	18%
Change	-11%	+8%	+3%

In 2006, the conservation of community character and resources was the predominant issue of concern in the community according to the way that planning points were allocated. Preserving open space and protecting natural resources were identified as key issues of concern. This result could have been a reflection of concerns at that time that development would continue (or accelerate) and change the character of Warren.

By 2018, development had risen in importance relative to conservation. The perceived threat of development did not materialize due, in large part, to the economic recession that began in 2007 or so. Development slowed significantly and changes in lending practices made it difficult for many people to finance home purchases. In Warren, this made it difficult for younger people and families to purchase home here and the average age of residents increased. During the same period, the hoped for revitalization of the Town Center had not occurred and this frustrated residents (although there is excitement about the pending opening of businesses and other activities in the Town Center).

People still love Warren and want to maintain the community facilities and services and protect its character but now, in 2018, it seems that residents also want to:

- Attract younger people and families to support the local school system and maintain an active and vibrant community,
- Celebrate what appears to be a revitalization of the village center with businesses (and a mail drop) that support the community,
- Support agriculture and farms,
- Provide housing options to attract younger people and families and support the changing housing needs of people already here.

