

## OUR VISION FOR TOMORROW

### Identifying a Vision

In 2013, the Town embarked on an extensive process to engage residents and other community stakeholders in planning for the future of Mansfield. As part of the Mansfield Tomorrow initiative, hundreds of residents contributed their thoughts and ideas on their vision for the future through workshops, surveys, personal vision statements, interviews and on-line interactive tools (see Appendix B for details). The following themes emerged through this process:

- **Preserve Community Character.** One of the most common values voiced by residents was a strong desire to preserve Mansfield's rural character, historic assets, and natural resources.
- **Strengthen Agriculture.** There is significant support for encouraging the growth of agricultural businesses, including agri-tourism and pick-your-own operations.
- **Address Impacts of University Expansion.** Residents expressed concerns about the impacts of the new Technology Park and the Next Generation Connecticut initiative on the community.
- **Support Neighborhoods.** The continued conversion of single-family homes into rental units, particularly in neighborhoods near University of Connecticut (UConn) and Eastern Connecticut State University (ECSU) where there are large student populations, is a significant concern for the long-term health of these neighborhoods.



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### What is “rural character?”

When asked to define rural character in the context of Mansfield, residents describe the rhythm of forests, farms, meadows, hills and waterways that provide scenic vistas and support the town's robust network of natural resources. They speak of Mansfield's living legacy of forests, farms and small villages. Throughout the planning process, community members emphasized the value they place on the town's rural character and the importance of preserving it over time.



- **Expand Housing Options.** As Mansfield’s population ages and housing preferences for young professionals and families reflect a desire for smaller living spaces in walkable neighborhoods close to services, residents expressed a desire for a wider variety of housing options that include both affordable and accessible units.
- **Strengthen and diversify the economy.** Residents are interested in growing the town’s economy in a manner that respects the community’s values and offsets the impact of declining state revenues.
- **Maintain High-Quality Community Services.** There is a strong desire for high-quality community facilities, including schools, outdoor recreation environments such as parks and trails, and community hubs like the Library and the Community Center, in spite of growing fiscal challenges within the Town.
- **Expand Transportation Options.** Residents are interested in a more robust network of safe walking and biking routes along major roads and near town destinations.
- **Focus on Sustainability.** Residents are interested in a comprehensive approach to town policies and decision-making that balances environmental and economic perspectives and increases the town’s resilience to the impacts of changing climate and economic conditions.
- **Make fiscal responsibility a priority.** In an era of declining state revenues, residents are concerned with the expansion of Town government, increasing expenditures and the resulting impacts on property taxes.

These broad themes were combined with more specific feedback to create a vision statement that articulates the community’s values, sense of identity, and aspirations. It serves as the “constitution” of the planning process and the Plan itself, telling the story of Mansfield’s ideal future.