



# Hampstead Community Comprehensive Plan



## ***Chapter 12:*** **Community Involvement Goals**

### **❖ Goals**

- **To improve resident awareness of the comprehensive plans, community decisions, and the impacts of each**
- **To increase public participation in government processes**
- **To attract quality elected and appointed officials who promote projects that benefit the greater good of the community**

### **❖ Current Conditions**

The citizens of the Hampstead community are provided with many opportunities to participate in and have influence over both the Town's and the County's decision-making processes concerning their area. Along with conventional activities, such as voting and attending council meetings, committees, and workshops, other types of opportunities are also available as means for citizen involvement and participation.

#### *1 Town Government Service Opportunities*

##### **A ⇨ Mayor**

Both the Mayor and the five Town Council positions are voted on at large by the citizens of the Town of Hampstead. The Mayor is elected to serve a four-year term as the primary executive officer of the Town. Those seeking the office must be 25 years of age on election day, shall be a qualified voter of the Town, and have resided within town limits for a least one year.

##### **B ⇨ Town Council**

Members of the Town Council, with whom all legislative powers of the Town are vested, also serve four-year terms. These terms are staggered so that elections for town officials in Hampstead are actually held every other year. Two Town Council positions coincide with the election of the Mayor, with the remaining three positions being elected in between. Those seeking election to the Town Council must also meet the same demographic qualifications as the Mayor. Vacancies in either the Mayor's office or on the Town Council are filled by a qualified person selected and approved by a simple majority of the Town Council.

##### **C ⇨ Legislative Process**

The Mayor serves as the President of the Council and may take part in all discussions. Although he has no vote during Council meetings, the Mayor does retain passage and/or veto





# Hampstead Community Comprehensive Plan



power of any ordinance approved by the Town Council. The Mayor has six days (excluding Sunday) from the time of Council approval to either sign or veto an ordinance. If no action is taken within that time period, the ordinance automatically becomes law. In the case of a veto, members of the Town Council have thirty-five calendar days to override a veto with a four-fifths majority.

With the successful passage of an ordinance, citizens of the Town may call for a referendum by filing a petition containing the signatures of no less than 20 percent of the Town's qualified voters. These petitions must arrive at the Town Hall no later than twenty days after the passage of an ordinance. This referendum can occur at either the next general election or, at the Council's discretion, during a special election. No ordinance, upon receipt of such a petition, shall take effect until such matters are resolved through either the general or special election. A simple majority of voters may carry a referendum.

## **D ⇨ Appointed Commissions and Boards Required by Law**

Other agencies within the town government include the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Board of Zoning Appeals, and the Ethics Commission. Appointed by the Mayor and Town Council, the Planning and Zoning Commission consists of five members, including a member of the Town Council serving as an ex-officio, who serve five-year terms. The Board of Zoning Appeals and the Ethics Commission each consist of three members, also appointed by the Mayor and Town Council, serving three-year terms.

## **E ⇨ Town Staff**

Town office personnel currently consists of a Town Manager, who serves at the leisure of the Mayor, an Office Manager, Administrative Secretary, Administrative Secretary/Assistant Zoning Administrator, and a Clerk/Treasurer. The Town Police Department has a Chief of Police, also serving at the leisure of the Mayor, a Lieutenant, a Sergeant, and four Officers. The Town Public Works staff includes a Supervisor and five employees. Other positions include a Town Attorney and a Zoning Administrator, both of whom serve at the leisure of the Mayor and the Town Council.

## *2 Citizen Participation Opportunities*

The most obvious and common way for citizens to participate in the workings of their local government is by voting. Beyond voting, qualified citizens may also run for public office or be appointed to serve on any one of numerous committees and commissions. Town Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, and Police Advisory meetings, among others, are also open for general public attendance and participation.

## **A ⇨ Committees**

At the present time, the Town of Hampstead has several citizen commissions/committees on which to serve. Some of the Town's current commissions/committees are the Tree Commission and the Hampstead Train Station Restoration Committee. The membership of these





# Hampstead Community Comprehensive Plan



committees is made up of citizens of the Town, who are appointed by the Mayor and Town Council.

## **B ⇨ Public Meetings**

Numerous public community meeting opportunities are present and ongoing within the Town as well. The Town Council holds open meetings on the second Tuesday of each month. Likewise, the Town Planning and Zoning Commission also meets on a monthly basis holding their meetings during the last week of each month. Less frequent are the Police Advisory meetings, which occur on a quarterly basis. The Town's Board of Zoning Appeals and the Ethics Commission convene as issues arise.

## **C ⇨ Surveys and Workshops**

Opportunities for participation also develop as both the Town and County prepare various plans and projects for the Hampstead area. As part of the recent Main Street Revitalization Plan, a series of public workshops were conducted by a private consultant gathering information and citizen input in order to formulate an approach toward the aesthetic improvement of the MD 30 corridor. The County also conducted a series of citizen workshops in order to create a vision statement and goals for this Hampstead Community Comprehensive Plan. For those not able to attend the workshops, detailed surveys were sent to each and every household in the 8th Election District.

## **D ⇨ Private Associations**

Outside of the governmental realm, other associations and groups exist throughout Hampstead either bound by a common interest or by their own backyard. The Hampstead Business Association meets on a monthly basis, excluding the summer, and has an approximate membership of 160 people. Several private homeowners' associations also exist within various developments in the Hampstead area. The Hampstead Valley Garden Condo Association, Roberts Field Condo Association, Hampstead Valley Townhome Condo Association, Shiloh Run Homeowners Association, Small Crossings Homeowners Association, North Carroll Farms Homeowners Association, and Fields Homeowners Association are currently in existence, among others.

### *3 Citizen Information Sources*

## **A ⇨ Media**

In order to keep abreast of current events, the citizens of Hampstead have a variety of resources available to them. Several mediums of print are available, such as the *Carroll County Times* and the *Carroll County Sun*. Local audio and visual media is also available with WTTR (AM1470) and Cable Vision 3, both of Westminster. Channel 19 is also a county-wide cable access channel open to local programming.





# Hampstead Community Comprehensive Plan



## **B ⇨ Internet**

A rising source of information and communication within the latter half of the 1990's has been the Internet. The Town of Hampstead has an official web site located at <http://www.carr.org/hampstead> that includes extensive information about the Town's governmental structure, staff, major issues, and current events.

The County also has a website available. This site, which can be found at <http://ccgov.carr.org>, provides information related to Carroll County Government. A link to the Planning Department allows the viewer to access information regarding community comprehensive plans that are in the process of being updated.

## **C ⇨ Town Newsletter**

The citizens of Hampstead are also kept informed of the happenings of their local government through a quarterly newsletter mailed to households within Hampstead's corporate limits. Typical newsletters contain a general overview of recent happenings as well as any relevant upcoming events. Articles by the Mayor, Chief of Police, and Council Members, among others, also appear in each newsletter.

## **D ⇨ Comprehensive Plan Newsletter**

Since citizen participation is such an important component of the process of updating a comprehensive plan for a community, the distribution of newsletters to all property owners has been built into the process to help keep the community informed of the progress and proposals being made when a plan is updated. The first newsletter is sent at the beginning of the process, explaining the process and when community meetings will be held. The second newsletter goes out after the first set of community workshops is held. It informs people of the vision and goals drafted for the plan as a result of the previous input opportunities and background work. The last newsletter includes all of the potential recommendations to be considered to be included in the draft plan.

## **❖ Analysis of Community Needs**

Numerous opportunities already exist for the community to be involved in government-related issues. Opportunities for improvement, however, do exist. Many of the residents indicated in the community surveys that they receive information through the newspaper and the town newsletter. However, few attended any public meetings on government-related issues. Public meeting agendas are posted and often printed in the local newspapers. However, the local meetings are not broadcast on cable television for public viewing on a regular basis.

The biggest deterrent to citizen involvement may be that most people commute out of the county for work, leaving them with less time to spend attending community meetings. This is also apparent in the lack of individuals willing to serve on local boards and committees, such as the planning commission.





# Hampstead Community Comprehensive Plan



While many of these factors lead to a lack of citizen involvement, generally speaking most people will not participate in meetings or other public participation opportunities unless they feel directly and significantly impacted. Apathy, for whatever the reason, leaves the community unaware of the plans for the community or the issues within the community which need to be addressed.

## ❖ Recommended Actions

- ◆ *Form citizen committees to research and address key issues faced by the community*

To ensure the citizens have opportunity to provide input to the decisions of the elected and appointed officials, citizen committees can be formed to help research key issues and provide information and recommendations to decision makers. Having staff work with these committees provides an additional opportunity for public education and to be more productive.

- ◆ *Involve existing community organizations in addressing key issues faced by the community*

Sometimes it is difficult to identify people who are interested, willing, and able to serve on committees. Existing community organizations present an opportunity to involve a group of people who are already organized and may have a stake in the issue faced by the community.

- ◆ *Ensure local media is aware of upcoming meetings and events*

Citizens are not always aware of current events and issues in local government. Many do not have the ability to attend meetings. The newspaper media usually sends a representative to all meetings. However, if more of the meetings were televised, more of the public would have the opportunity to keep informed of the issues and decisions made by local officials. This would also allow citizens to hear exactly what was discussed and draw their own conclusions. For the media to provide coverage, they need to be informed of upcoming meetings and events that would be beneficial for the public to view.

## ❖ Anticipated CIP Projects

No CIP projects are anticipated as a result of the recommendations in this chapter.

