Interview Report
Town of Madison Strategic Plan
Interview Results
July 26, 2023

{Summary of Strategic Plan Interviews}
This is a summary of the personal interviews that were conducted with stakeholders, partners, and community members who were selected because of their unique relationship with Town of Madison.

This report focuses only on the personal interview results. The strategic plan process calls for numerous methods of community engagement, this portion of the data gathering stage was focused on confidential interviews over the phone and zoom. Additional data gathering was done through an online survey, focus group meetings, and a community visioning session. Additional outreach was done with postcards, surveys, social media, emails and multiple information channels.

The personal interviews summarized below provide perspectives from community members, internal and external partners, and stakeholders on the current and future state of the Town of Madison. They were asked to share their priorities and their thoughts on growth, development and how they perceive the County’s identity in the region along with anything else that the interviewee felt was important.

{Interview Questions}
For every strategic plan, it is helpful to get feedback from staff, community members, clients, and stakeholders of all ages, along with people who have had direct interaction with the Town of Madison, and others in the community. That broad range of thoughts and feedback can inform areas of the Strategic Plan such as the Goals, Outcomes and Priorities for the future.

The interviews were conducted by phone and through Zoom. The interview questions initially centered around how respondents felt about the Town of Madison’s current state (what is working well and what are the opportunities to improve). They were then offered an opportunity to provide input relevant to the strategic plan that went beyond the current state into the future.

There were a standard set of questions:

In your opinion....

1. What’s working well right now for the Madison community?

2. What’s not working as well for the Madison community?
3. What would you want to preserve about current state of the community, no matter what?

4. Looking ahead 3 – 5 years....
   a. What would you say are the most significant opportunities or trends that Madison can leverage to be successful?
   b. What do you see as our biggest obstacles?
   c. Where should the community focus our time and energy (what should our Priorities be)?

5. If you could run the town for a month, what would you do to make the biggest positive impact on the community?

6. What new or innovative ideas have you seen in other cities/beach communities that we should consider here?

7. With regard to growth, what is Madison lacking? (industrial, commercial, retail/restaurant, affordable housing)

8. As Madison grows, what would you like to see less of?

9. How would you know if we were successful? What would happen, what would you see, what would change?

10. Was there an instance in the recent past where Madison missed a great community-minded opportunity? What was it and how would it have impacted the community? (Or what can the Town of Madison do to resurrect the effort?)

11. What else would be good for us to know heading into this process? (Background information, history, and anything else is fair game here – whatever will make the process more productive, effective, and fun!)

Because the interviews are by nature conversations, each answer led to more in-depth conversations and questions. When information was offered, follow-up questions to gain more detail, suggestions and thoughts were asked.

This report focuses ONLY on the results from those interviews, which does mean that this is a very small segment of the overall information. However, it is also the most detailed and informative of all the feedback, since the interviews took place on the phone, email, and Zoom meeting, allowing for more in-depth conversations and follow up questions.
All the conversations were completely confidential, so the information in this report represents common themes expressed during the interviews, and often the language was adapted to have context and make more sense in the written form. These are NOT recommendations, nor are they suggestions. This is information that will lead to a better strategic plan and a more successful future. Because the report focuses on THEMES, not individual comments, it needs to be understood that many opinions were expressed, and only the most commonly recurring themes are noted below.

{Key Themes}
The interviewees were closely associated with the Town of Madison, comprised of a variety of elected officials, department heads, and a handful of non-profit and business leaders. The experience of the group ranged from those who are long-tenured residents/staff to fairly new residents of the town. While the perspectives of the interviewees were diverse and wide-ranging, a handful of common themes emerged.

Five specific themes have come from the entire breadth of the interviews, which are discussed in detail below, in no particular order of importance.

{Theme One: Housing}
A majority of respondents had concerns about many aspects of housing, mainly the availability of housing at all levels of pricing. Several respondents spoke of lack of affordable housing (as defined through an income-based criterion), but also a lack of housing at an entry level price point, in addition to low housing stock for all price points. Additionally, housing for seniors was often discussed. There is a lack of housing for retirees to “down-scale”, while still being able to remain in Madison. The consequences of this, as described by many, was that younger employees or families are not returning to county after college and employees of both the county and local business could not live and work in the county.

{Theme Two: Land Use}
Nearly all respondents spoke to development, growth, and land use issues, but overall the opinion on this topic was split: many saw that growth was an opportunity and inevitable while others felt that Madison should limit growth and remain as it is today. Nearly everyone liked that Madison’s commercial sector was more localized and no one recommended that national big box chains be recruited. Respondents did speak to the need for additional office and small-scale industrial (research and development) opportunities to provide more employment locally, but insisted that new non-residential development be small in scale and non-intrusive. Many also discussed the need for multi-family and attainable residential opportunities and did not see the development of large expensive homes favorably.
{Theme Three: Infrastructure}
During the interviews, especially when discussing growth and the downtown, infrastructure was brought up frequently. Improving and upgrading the sewer/septic downtown was deemed essential by many. This, according to respondents, would enable the attraction of new business, growth in current commercial opportunities, and retention of current small business. Additionally, improvements to sidewalks and bicycle transportation throughout Madison was discussed, specifically upgrades to pedestrian infrastructure to accommodate modern disability standards and meet ADA requirements.

{Theme Four: Environment/Shoreline}
Most of the respondents spoke to the asset that is the shoreline. Access to the shoreline, the adjacent state park, and the Surf Club were all seen positively. However, many people spoke to the need to address future resiliency with regard to climate change and rising shorelines. This was specifically discussed in preparing for a future emergency, moving the Surf Club building itself, or rebuilding to a more safe and resilient location.

{Theme Five: Structure of Government and Regionalism}
Through the outreach with Town of Madison residents, staff, elected officials, and leaders of municipalities, many spoke to addressing and modernizing the structure of government. Changing from a Selectmen/Town Hall form of government to a City Manager/Council form was mentioned as a means by which the Town could be governed more efficiently. As well, seeking opportunities to provide regional solutions with regard to sharing services and resources with neighboring communities in law enforcement, education, and other government services.

{Summary}
The interview process showed us that there is great pride among the residents and staff of Town of Madison. Many see that there is great opportunity for the Town in the future and there was much optimism that the issues outlined could be solved.

The five themes outlined above prevailed throughout the interviews and discussions with stakeholders, but do not capture additional talking points that may not be relevant to the strategic planning effort. Also, it should be noted that this is one part of many types of feedback and opinion gathering, and that interviews do offer far more in-depth opportunities to communicate than some other options. The information was offered confidentially to help Town of Madison improve strategically over the coming years.

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