

ENVI 402

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Envisioning Williamstown 2035
Comprehensive Plan Outreach

Land

Acknowledgement

It is with gratitude and humility that we acknowledge that we are working and gathering on the ancestral homelands of the Mohican people, who are the indigenous peoples of a region now called Williamstown.

Following tremendous hardship after being forced from their valued homelands, they continued as a sovereign tribal nation in Wisconsin, which is where they reside today and are known as the Stockbridge-Munsee Community.

We pay honor and respect to Mohican ancestors past and present as we commit to building a more inclusive and equitable space for all.

Adapted from the Stockbridge-Munsee Community.

Labor

Acknowledgement

We also recognize that the institutions we occupy, where we are privileged to learn and govern, have developed in places where indigenous and African people have been enslaved and rendered unfree in other ways. Given the labor extraction that is foundational to Williams College and Williamstown, we ask for and seek ways of making restitution that will constitute some forms of freedom.

Adapted from Christine DeLucia, Williams College (opening to "An Ontology of Betrayal")



Agenda

- I. Background and Scope
- II. Why Community Engagement?
- III. Methodology
- IV. Findings
- V. Recommendations
- VI. Need for Continued Outreach
- VII. Q and A

Background and Scope

THE COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS



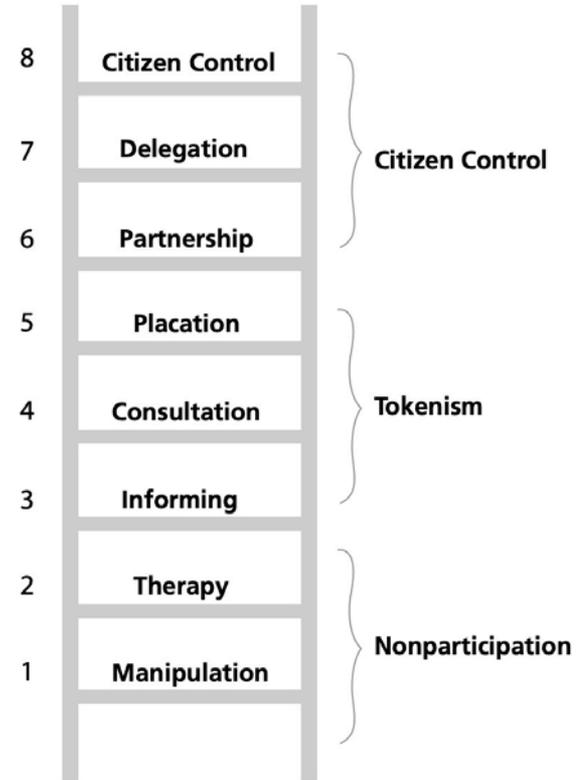
Outreach Scope

5 Groups

- A. Youth (K-12 population)
- B. Seniors
- C. Low-income residents
- D. People employed in Williamstown
- E. Williams College students

Why Community Engagement?

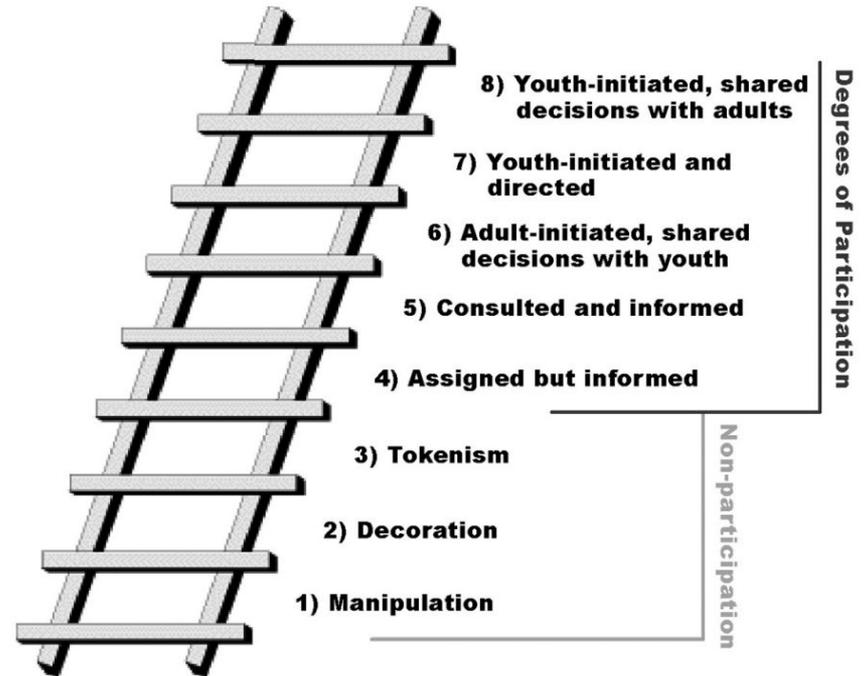
Robust community engagement is critical to planning, and indeed, to democracy.



Arnstein's Ladder (1969)
Degrees of Citizen Participation

Youth as Legitimate Partners

Roger A. Hart's (1987) "Ladder of Young People's Participation"



Methodology

Williamstown Elementary

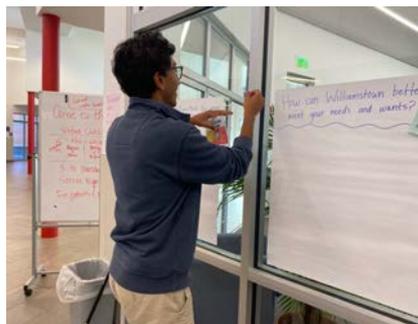
Recess Outreach (grades K-6)



- Sidewalk Chalking: Draw your dream playground
- Get in the game, meet kids where they are at!
- Day 1: like/dislike; Day 2: Tell me about your dream park; Day 3: sustainability and inclusivity
- Gender skew and self-selecting representation

Mt. Greylock

Focus Groups (grades 7-12)



- 7 focus group sessions (engaged approx. 100 students in-person)
- Random samples of every grade level
- Targeted outreach through focus group of Student Council and Multicultural Student Union
- Followed up with passive poster outreach and schoolwide online survey (61 responses)

Williams College

Paresky Planning Forum



- Sticky note poster outreach
 - How could Williamstown be more sustainable, equitable, and inclusive?
 - What do you like/dislike about Williamstown?
- approximately **25** students engaged in-person
- Followed up with online survey (**63** responses)

People who work in Williamstown



1) How satisfied are you with existing transportation options (buses, roadways, sidewalks, bike paths, etc.) on

1 2 3 4 5

Very dissatisfied Very satisfied

1a. How do you typically get to work?

- Personal Vehicle
- Carpool
- Public Transportation
- Bike
- Walk
- Other

1b. Which specific areas of the transportation network (roadways, sidewalks, pathways, etc.) need attention or future investment?

Your answer _____

- Online survey emailed to employees of the Clark Art Institute, Williams College, and the Chamber of Commerce ListServ
 - 49 responses

Harper Center, Food Pantry, and Subsidized Housing



Image Credit: Dietz & Company Architects

- 8 seniors spoken with at Harper Center focus group
- 2 responses to online and paper survey
 - flyers dropped off at doors and common areas at 330 Cole Ave; mailed to Church Corner and Spring Meadow
 - flyers given out to Williamstown residents at food pantry pre-Thanksgiving distribution

WILLIAMSTOWN PLANNING SURVEY



Williamstown is creating a Comprehensive Plan that will guide the development of the Town for the next twenty years. The plan will help inform town-wide policies, addressing everything from parks and green spaces to public transportation. A key part of the process is gathering input from as many community members as possible.

If you have opinions or ideas on how the town can be more inclusive and sustainable, create more transportation options, promote affordable housing alternatives, or better serve the community, we'd love to know! **Please fill out the short survey below to make your voice heard.**

The Planning Process

Analyze

What's going on in Williamstown? What do we like? What challenges do we see?

Create

How can we make a town that reflects our values and ideas?

Envision

What do we want to see in the future?



Have more questions or ideas?
Reach us at townplan@williamstownma.gov

Scan here to fill out the survey:



If you would like to be entered into a raffle to win a Visa gift card, please include your mailing address at the end of the survey.

WILLIAMSTOWN PLANNING!

WHAT IS TOWN PLANNING?

Making choices about how land will be used, which impacts how town residents live, work, and play



PLANNING INCLUDES:

- Houses
- Transportation
- Stores
- Schools
- Libraries
- Recycling and composting programs
- Parks and playgrounds
- Mountains and rivers
- Public lands
- Fire department and police stations
- Museums and movie theaters
- Restaurants and grocery stores

YOUR VOICE MATTERS!



Contributing to the town planning process gives you the chance to shape the future of our community. Let's work together to make Williamstown the best place it can be!

THE PLANNING PROCESS

1. Analyze: What's going on now in Williamstown? What do we like? What challenges do we see?
2. Envision: What do we want to see in the future?
3. Create: How can we make a town that reflects our values and ideas?

KEY IDEAS

Williamstown planners are prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion and sustainability and resilience.



PEOPLE & THE PLANET



- Equitable planning focuses on understanding challenges for all members of the community, with a specific focus on race, class, gender, religion, and other identities.
- Sustainable planning aims to meet social, environmental, and economics needs now and in the future in the context of climate change.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR IDEAS, REACH OUT TO
TOWNPLAN@WILLIAMSTOWNMA.GOV

Findings

Common Themes

- Businesses
- Housing
- Green Space and Sustainability
- Recreation
- Transportation
- Town Programming and Services

Comprehensive Plan Categories

- Housing
- Economic Development
- Transportation
- Public Facilities and Services
- Natural Resources
- Parks, Open Space, and Recreation
- Cultural and Historic Resources
- Land Use

Recommendations

After compiling our findings from all our outreach, we put together the following recommendations for our clients. The recommendations here are ideas that were expressed most frequently.

Housing

- More housing options for middle and lower income residents
- Denser multifamily zoning

Potential stakeholders/collaborators:

- Developers
- Residents
- Planning board
- Zoning board
- Affordable housing trust

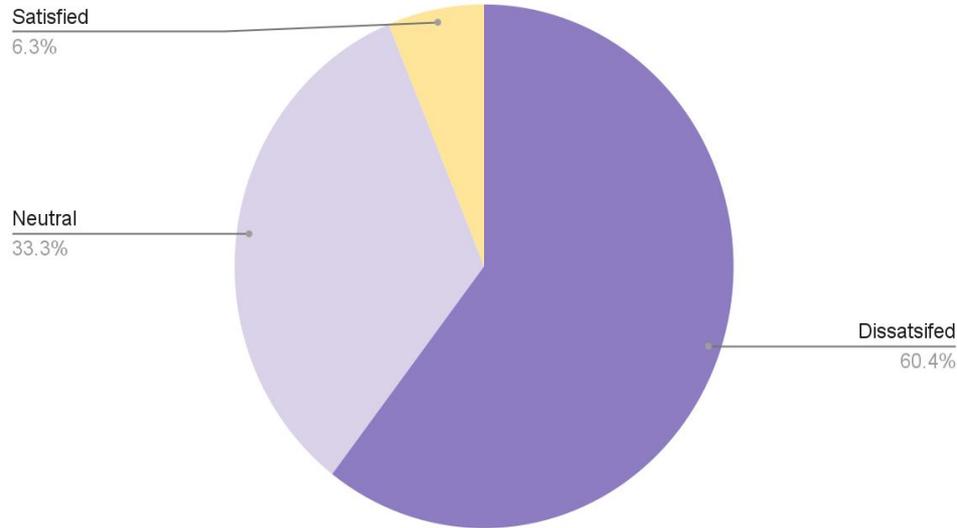
“I used to live in town. I loved it. I walked to work and I shopped local. I supported the community however I could. But **rising rent costs**, homes that were unaffordable for me and rising cost of living combined with my employer’s failure to keep up with those costs (even with my cost-saving measures) meant I had to leave. I cut back spending as much as I could, but [it] wasn’t enough. The cost of housing skyrocketed and **it was either become homeless or leave the town I loved.**”

– *Williamstown Employee, not Williamstown resident*

Q: How satisfied are you with the existing inventory of homes for sale or rent in Williamstown?

48 responses - Survey of People Employed in Williamstown

Housing satisfaction



6.3% of people who work in town report being satisfied or very satisfied with the existing inventory of homes for sale or rent.

60.4% are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

"I work in Williamstown and spend a lot of time here, but I have always had to rent in North Adams because most homes are unaffordable for my income bracket, and the majority of rentals are either astronomical, owned by the college, or owned by a very small number of landlords who do not maintain them well enough for the amount they charge." – Williamstown Employee, not Williamstown resident

Economic Development

- Cheaper food options
- Grocery store
- More stores that are not food, ex. Clothing
- Allergy friendly/vegetarian options at existing restaurants
- Later hours at restaurants/stores
- Teen night at restaurants/Images, etc
- Integration of Eph Points / College Dining services with restaurants
- Businesses geared towards middle class and seniors

Potential stakeholders/collaborators:

- Spring St. restaurants
- Williams College Dining
- Williamstown Chamber of Commerce
- Images Cinema

“Currently, going to a grocery store is only feasible if you have a car. As a student without a car, my only option is Spring Street Market, which is quite expensive. It would be great to have a grocery store on campus! I’m sure students would flock to it.”

– Williams College Student

Transportation

- Bike rental program
- Protected bike lanes
- More paved sidewalks
- Clearer bus schedules and more robust bus route (at least to Walmart)
- Middle/high school student bus discount
- More public transportation to Pittsfield, North Adams, Lanesborough, and Albany
- Rideshare/carpool program
- Transportation from the Harper Center to the College for events

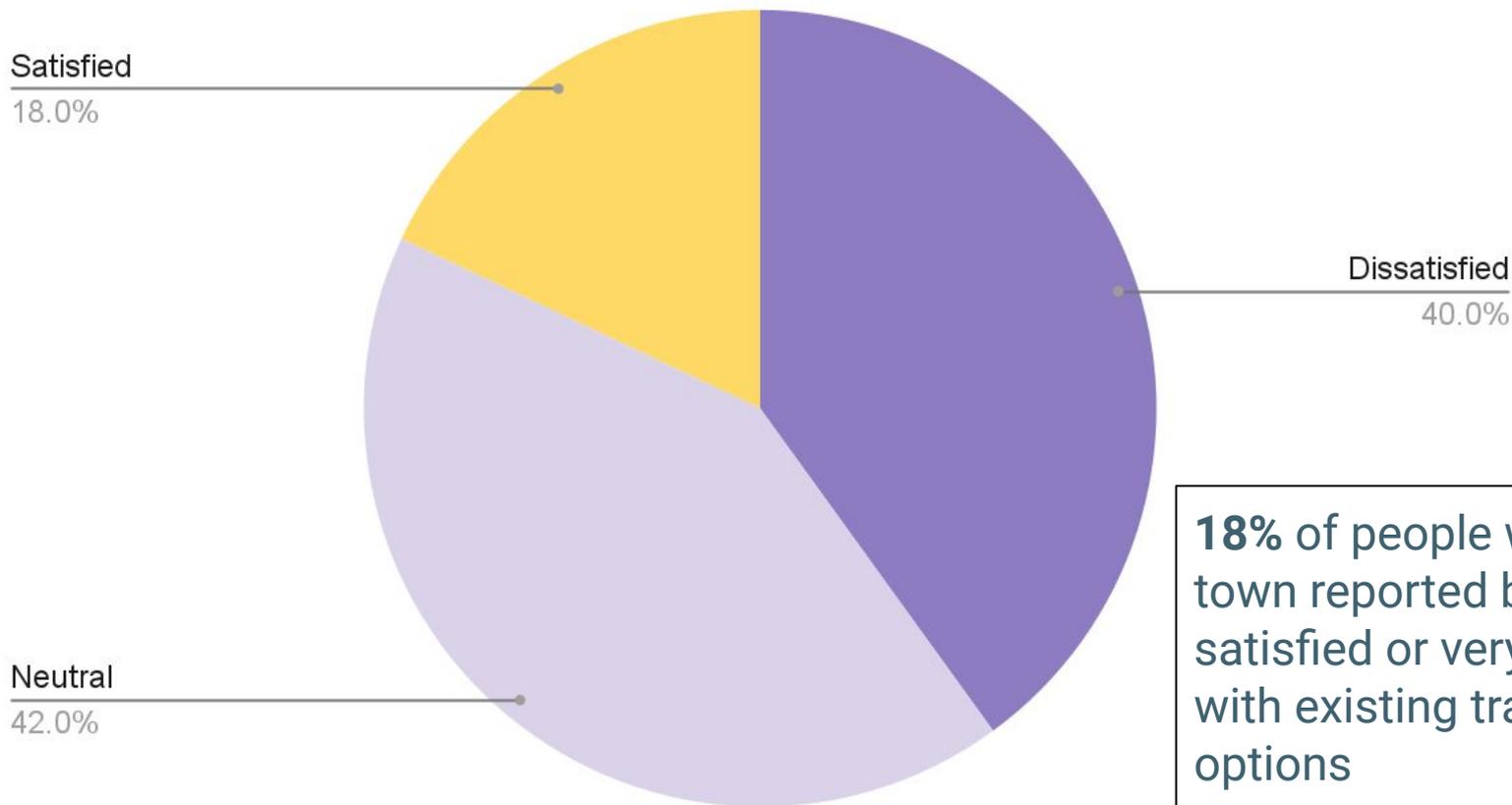
Potential stakeholders/collaborators:

- CLiA at Williams College
- Berkshire Regional Transit Authority

“My nana is getting older and needs some things she can only get by going to the North Adams Walmart.”
– *Elementary School Student*

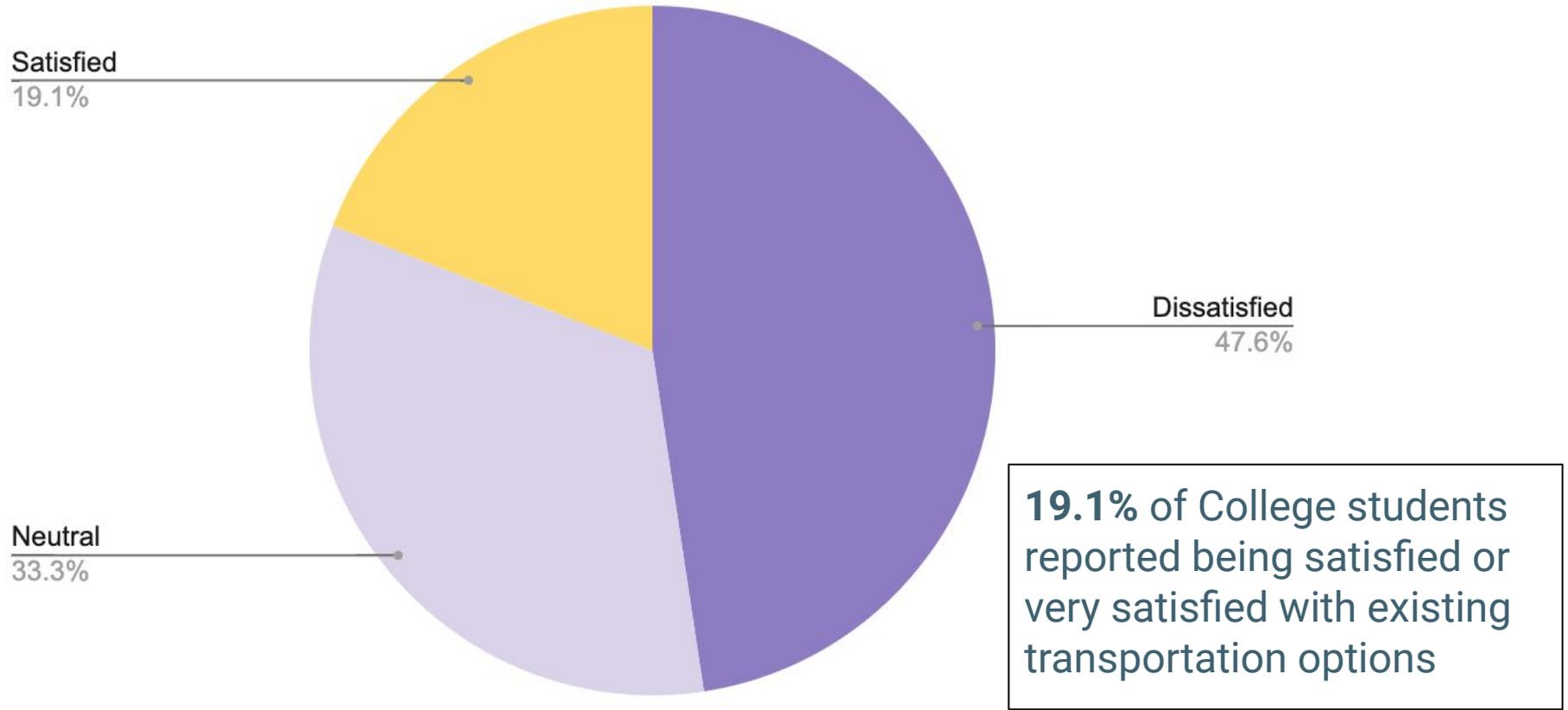
Q: How satisfied are you with existing transportation options (buses, roadways, sidewalks, bike paths, etc.)?

People who work in town



18% of people who work in town reported being satisfied or very satisfied with existing transportation options

Q: How satisfied are you with existing transportation options (buses, roadways, sidewalks, bike paths, etc.)?
Williams College Students



Public Facilities and Services

- Free community wifi
- Accessibility for people with disabilities
- Create a Youth Council
- New Senior Center with more space and better facilities
 - Boardroom, office rooms, new computer lab, private meeting rooms, kitchen, new entrance, health care room, exercise room, space for more than one event to be held simultaneously.
- Better childcare schedule coordination between Williams, WES, and daycare and more childcare capacity in existing facilities.
- Town newsletter with events and updates

Potential stakeholders/collaborators:

- Mount Greylock Regional School
- Williamstown Elementary School
- Williams College Athletic Dept.
- Williams Children's Center

Parks, Open Space, and Recreation

- More and improved public outdoor recreational facilities (improved basketball courts) for public/non-College use
- Increased access to indoor recreational facilities (owned by the College or otherwise) for colder months (climbing wall, indoor basketball courts)
- Benches/picnic tables in green spaces
- Teen center
 - Indoor space with seating
 - Trivia
 - Art - materials and classes
 - Skating

“There’s nothing to do around here. No mall, no activities, no nothing. If we had anywhere that's kind of private but can be social with comfortable seating and snacks, it'd be a hit.”
– *High School Student*

Potential stakeholders/collaborators:

- Williamstown Council on Aging
- Harper Center
- Williamstown Food Pantry
- Images Cinema
- Williamstown Farmers Market
- Department of Public Works
- Conservation Commission
- Williamstown Rural Lands
- Williams College

Key takeaways

Housing

- Affordable housing

Economic Development

- Cheaper food
- More hours

Parks, Open Space, and Recreation

- Benches
- tables in recreation parks,
- composting and recycling,
- Improved outdoor recreation facilities,
- access to indoor recreation

Transportation

- Bike/foot infrastructure (sidewalks, bike lanes, bike rental)
- More robust public bus routes and schedules

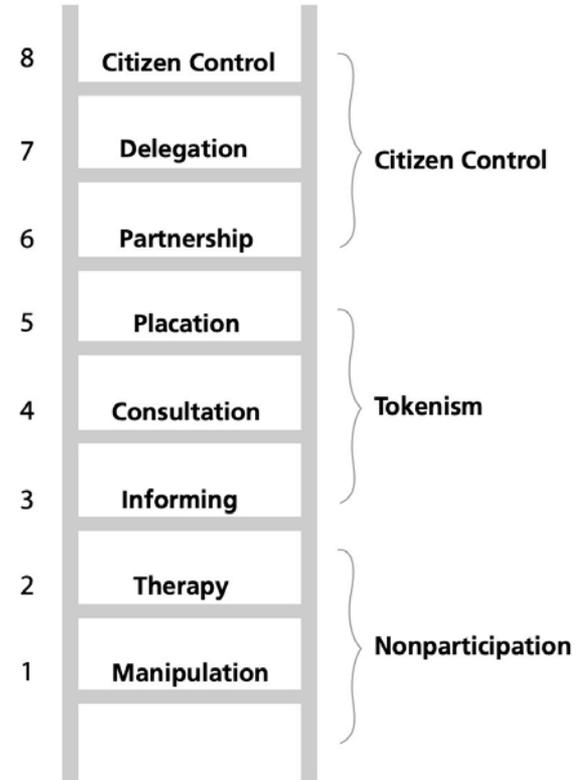
Public Facilities and Services

- Youth Council
- More community events
- New senior Center
- New teen center

Why Community Engagement?

Robust community engagement is critical to planning, and indeed, to democracy.

approximately **359** people engaged in the process either in-person or online.



Arnstein's Ladder (1969)
Degrees of Citizen Participation

Need for Continued

Community Outreach

General Limitations

- Academic timelines
- One-sided planning relationships
- Level of participation in focus groups

Shortcomings in Outreach to Low-Income Residents

- No in-person sessions
 - Proposed Pizza & Planning event
- Building familiarity with planning process
- Best practices on gathering input?
 - Our strategy: food pantry distribution and residents of Church Corner, Spring Meadow, and 330 Cole Ave.

We urge further in-person outreach before moving towards the writing phase.

Inclusive participatory planning must be a continually ongoing process of partnership and co-creation with all members of the community.

Towards Future Engagement

How we can make true partnership and collaboration happen as we move towards the writing phase

Follow up with each demographic to show how their voices are being included

- Greylock Talk Dec. 6
- Ask for continued input and collaboration

Commit to annual outreach to each demographic mentioned

- Use College resources: student projects, via course credit or funded (CES, CLiA)

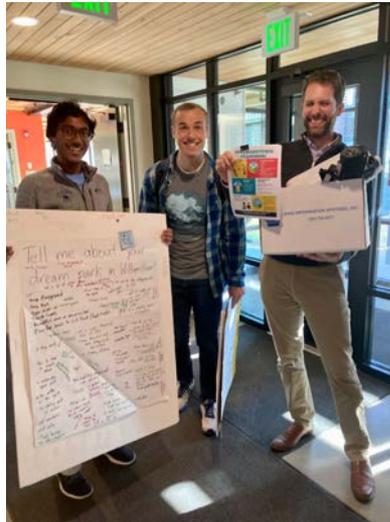
THE COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS



We are committed to this process of true community engagement. Please continue to reach out for further collaboration.



Community Outreach is FUN!



We can and must continue doing this work and engaging everyone in the planning process.



A Special Thanks to:



- Andrew Groff
- Steve Whitman and Liz Kelly at Resilience Planning & Design
- Professor Sarah Gardner
- Liza Barrett and Kaatje White at MGRS & the Williams Center at Mt. Greylock
- Cindy Sheehy, Jake Schutz, Joe Bergeron, and Jonathan Nopper
- Brian O'Grady at The Harper Center
- Carol and Carin DeMayo at the Williamstown Food Pantry
- Cat Bryars
- The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee
- Williams College Center for Environmental Studies
- ENVI 402 students

*And most importantly,
thanks to each and every
member of the
Williamstown community,
from our kindergartners to
our seniors, who joined us
in this process of
envisioning the future of
Williamstown!*



**Questions,
Comments,
Feedback?**

Thanks for listening!