

KITCHEN TABLE CONVERSATIONS

Watertown Community Conversations
Summary of Recommendations

Over the summer of 2019, Watertown Community Conversations and the Town Council Committee on Media & Public Outreach convened 132 Watertown residents in 18 small groups to discuss:

What suggestions do you have for increased public engagement in Watertown?



Vision and Values

Since the Kitchen Table Conversations in 2019, significant progress has been made. Still, there is much more to do. We hope that this summary reinforces that progress, and reminds us of the concrete suggestions that would make Watertown an even better place to live.

Residents envision a Watertown where:

- Everyone experiences a welcoming environment, with increased engagement of all residents in Watertown affairs—newcomers & longtime residents, families & singles, and all ethnicities, races, economic, social, and cultural groups.
- There is regular, transparent, and effective communication between residents and Watertown leadership, and among residents.
- Our values and livability are preserved in the face of rapid development.





Create a Welcoming Environment

- Sponsor more public activities and events, with opportunities for younger and older residents to meet and connect
- Find ways to engage a wide range of residents (age, income, background), along with new residents, including people living in new condos and apartments
- Sponsor and support neighborhood groups
- Publicize volunteer opportunities, and make sure updated information is available
- Provide introductions for newcomers, including welcome packages with information

Many longtime residents want to engage newcomers, support vibrant neighborhoods, and build connections across divides.

Newcomers can find it hard to know about what is happening in Watertown and how to engage.

Communication from the Town



- Improve the Town website
- Publish a calendar with both town meetings and community events
- Engage a communications specialist and develop a communications strategy
- Educate residents about town issues
- Provide translations for non-English speakers
- Create a 311 system
- Improved use of social media
- Annual “State of Watertown” Report
- Create a single place to go for "All Things Watertown"
- Improve awareness of notification options
- Develop an interactive construction map and improve notice of road closures and construction

A wide range of communication tools and channels are available.

But many residents are unaware of the options or find them difficult to use.

Two-Way Engagement with Town Leaders

- Improve town government responses to inquiries, feedback and offers to volunteer
- Create opportunities for more face-time with town councilors on different days and times, and at events
- Organize walks and talks with elected officials
- Publish a Town Council newsletter
- Establish Town staff open office hours
- Designate a visible spokesperson to represent the Town
- Use neutral facilitators for public input meetings
- Increase use of community advisory groups



Many find it difficult to participate in available engagement opportunities, due to family responsibilities, inconvenient meeting times and places, language challenges, or lack of information on the issues.

Participants seek:

- More accessible opportunities for public input and dialogue
- Feedback on how public input is used
- Reporting on the results of policy decisions and their implementation