

## Chapter I Introduction

A Master Plan is a living document that articulates the vision, desires, and concerns of a community, and provides recommendations on how to maintain or improve the features of a community. This plan is intended to serve as a blue-print for all future activities of Hopkinton, including future economic development efforts, amending of land use regulations, environmental and historic preservation efforts, as well as the development of affordable housing stock, the expansion of community facilities and services for the next five to ten years.

This Master Plan is Hopkinton's road map for the first quarter of the twenty-first century and beyond. It outlines what we are all about and where we as a community in central New Hampshire want to go. The Plan describes us today, and forecasts where we are heading. Most importantly, it defines what we will need to do over the next several years as we work together to shape the future of the Town of Hopkinton. What you now have in your hands is the result of the collective efforts of those who made generous contributions of time, energy, and ideas. The new "Master Plan of the Town of Hopkinton" is now a reality!

A Master Plan is intended to be the device that influences the making, interpretation, and implementation of laws and procedures that give shape and direction to the community. A Master Plan is required by law in the State of New Hampshire (RSA 674:2), but unlike other "master devices," it has no force of law and no way to generate the resources that may be required for implementation. The Master Plan can be a powerful tool that can be used to shape a community by giving direction to appointed and elected officials. However, the true power of the document is derived from the citizenry, as they will ultimately be the voice that approves the staffing, funding, regulatory alternatives and strategies identified by this Plan.

As this Master Plan was being written, it became evident that Hopkinton is at a crossroads in its history. As incremental growth creeps from southern portions of the State and the City of Concord continues to evolve and expand as a regional source of employment, Hopkinton will continue to grow and face new challenges and issues. Those who contributed to this plan did their best to plan for such changes and provide appropriate strategies that will accommodate reasonable growth while maintaining the rural atmosphere. It is the resolve of the Planning Board to faithfully and aggressively pursue the recommendations included in this document.

### **Plan Development Process**

The process for this Master Plan update began in the Fall of 1999 when the Town entered into an agreement with the Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission. Funding for the project was provided by the Town, as well as matching grants from the New Hampshire Office of State Planning (NHOSP) and the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT).

An abridged overview of the Master Plan process is as follows:

#### *October – December 1999*

- Planning Board and interested members of the public begin meeting to discuss the need for a Master Plan update. A contract is entered into with CNHRPC for assistance in updating the Master Plan.

- A Master Plan Steering Committee is formed to guide process of the update.

*January – February 2000*

- A community survey is developed. The survey is intended to gather detailed information regarding a variety of issues from residents.
- CNHRPC staff begins the process of gathering a variety of population, community facilities, economic, land use, and natural resources data.

*March 2000*

- An integral part of the process of updating the Town's Master Plan was to find out what Hopkinton residents and property owners' thought about important planning issues facing the community. The Planning Board, with the assistance of the Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission, prepared and mailed out 2,700 Community Survey forms to Hopkinton residents and property owners. A total of 973 surveys were completed and returned for an overall response rate of 36%. Response rates on individual questions vary since everyone completing and returning a survey did not answer all the questions or answered more than one response to a questions. Nevertheless, the results of the Community Survey have provided the Master Plan Steering Committee and Planning Board with valuable insight and feedback on key issues facing the community and have been incorporated as applicable throughout the Master Plan.

*March – May 2000*

- Community Survey results are compiled and analyzed by CNHRPC.

*May 2000 – June 2000*

- The Master Plan Steering Committee holds a community-visioning session with local officials and members of the public. Participants are divided into Working Groups to discuss various aspects of the Town, including Land Use, Population and Economics, Community and Recreation Facilities, and Natural and Cultural Resources. From these Working Groups, an inventory of community strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and concerns, as well as preliminary goals and objectives related to the issues discussed is created.
- CNHRPC publishes summary of visioning session and distributes throughout the Town.

*July 2000 – January 2001*

- Community Facilities Chapter and Conservation, Preservation, and Open Space Chapter Working Groups develop chapters and review language and maps prepared by CNHRPC.

*February 2001 – July 2001*

- CNHRPC gathers data in preparation of Transportation Chapter, Current and Future Land Use Chapter, and Historic and Cultural Resources Chapter. These Working Groups develop chapters and review language and maps generated by CNHRPC.
- Steering Committee reviews and approves the Transportation Chapter and Conservation, Preservation, and Open Space Chapter.

*August 2001 – December 2001*

- Contoocook Chapter, Population and Economic Chapter, and Housing Chapter Working Groups develops chapters and review language and maps prepared by CNHRPC.
- Steering Committee reviews and approves the Contoocook Chapter, Population and Economics Chapter, Community Facilities Chapter, Current and Future Land Use Chapter, and Historic and Cultural Resources Chapter.
- Planning Board approves the Transportation Chapter, Conservation, Preservation, and Open Space Chapter, Community Facilities Chapter, Contoocook Village Chapter, and Historic and Cultural Resources Chapter.

*January 2002-May 2002*

- Technology and Public Utilities Chapter, Introduction Chapter, and Appendix items are developed and language and maps are reviewed by CNHRPC.
- Steering Committee reviews and approves the Population and Economics Chapter, Introduction Chapter, Housing Chapter, and Technology and Public Utility Chapter.
- Planning Board approves the Population and Economic Chapter, Introduction Chapter, Housing Chapter, Current and Future Land Use Chapter, and the Technology and Public Utility Chapter.
- Master Plan is complete. Final document and maps are published.

Throughout the development of this Plan, conflicts and contradictions between opinions were expected and experienced. However, in every case, compromises were established in order to create a plan that would represent the various views and opinions of the entire community.

The extent to which one element of the Master Plan is interwoven with other elements of the Plan becomes evident in developing the Master Plan. For example, housing is a land use that can affect the transportation system, community facilities and services, and the cultural resources of the Town. Separating these components into Chapters of the Master Plan simply provides an organizational structure to address the various areas. The more one works with these areas, the more one recognizes the links between them. This interconnectedness is evident when looking at the Key Findings for each Chapter.

## **Key Findings**

What follows is the collective catalogue of our hopes and dreams for our town--what we want to achieve in a growing and vital town we call our own. These have been put down on paper for all to see and work towards. A chance to move and shape our little bit of the world and to make it a better place not only for us, but for our children and grandchildren, just as those who have gone before did for us. It is herein set forth as a living document. It will help us to focus on the important issues of our times.

Establishing a set of key findings or recommendations is an important task that requires considerable public input and debate. The key findings listed below are discussed in each specific Chapter of the Master Plan. These findings were created by analyzing the results of the Community Survey results (**Appendix A**) and reviewing input from the various Chapter Working Group participants.

*Historic and Cultural Resources Chapter*

- Establish a Heritage Commission to have the responsibility for implementing many of the recommendations proposed throughout this Chapter.
- Move town-owned historic information to a permanent location where it can be safely stored.
- Continue to map, inventory and inspect important historic sites in Hopkinton.
- Design and implement a program to increase the public awareness of historic and cultural resources located in Town.
- Protect historical and cultural resources other than buildings, such as stone walls, open spaces, landscapes, and scenic vistas.
- Create a management plan for all Town-owned historic buildings that includes scheduled maintenance and rehabilitation, proposed uses, and funding sources.

*Population and Economics Chapter*

- Hopkinton has a substantial economic base, a highly educated and industrious population, and is a prosperous community.
- Effectively manage the industrial, commercial, and business aspects of Hopkinton in order to maintain the rural character of the Town.
- Review and amend the zoning ordinance to assure the optimum use of land in the Industrial District and Commercial District.
- Review and revise, where necessary, zoning regulations for home occupations, home businesses, and telecommuting to encourage these economic development options within Town.
- Encourage new businesses to relocate and establish within existing facilities, where feasible and permissible, in order to create a thriving commercial base in areas of the community where similar businesses have been traditionally located.
- Monitor changes in the age of the population so that housing and social services meet the needs of the population.
- The Economic Development Committee should work as a liaison between the Town, Regional, and State economic development groups, and also between businesses interested in locating in Hopkinton and the Zoning Board of Adjustment, Planning Board, and Selectmen to strengthen the local economic base within Town.
- Prepare a user-friendly guide for businesses that explains local ordinances, development requirements, and contains clear application guidelines and approval procedures.

*Current and Future Land Use Chapter*

- The Town, in the site plan review regulations, should create specific architectural façade performance standards for multi-family and commercial/industrial structures to protect the scale and rural character of the community, as well as expand the taxable value of properties.
- The Planning Board should re-write the existing cluster subdivision ordinance so as to create real incentives for developers to use this approach or require them to use this approach, to better protect land, and create usable open space, as intended by this type of development.
- The Town should consider implementing environmentally-based zoning techniques to further protect key natural resources in the community and the rural character while providing reasonable opportunities for development.

- Contoocook Village and Hopkinton Village Precinct zoning issues should be reviewed and coordinated with the Town's goals to ensure that their historic nature and character are retained, while at the same time permitting reasonable and compatible development and growth.
- Develop and adopt a methodology for a formal impact fee schedule.
- Review the current R-4 and R-3 zoning districts, with regard to minimum lot size, road frontage, and set-backs, to ensure that the goals of such districts are being met.

#### *Housing Chapter*

- Review and update the current affordable housing and manufactured housing zoning ordinances to make sure that they meet their stated goals and objectives, and continue to encourage their development in town.
- Revise the zoning ordinance to include the provision for the development of market-rate elderly housing and affordable housing in Hopkinton.
- Formally adopt building codes and consider the creation of a professional Building Inspector position, and the adoption of a building code inspection fee schedule.

#### *Transportation Chapter*

- Utilize traffic count data to identify corridors that may become threatened in the future by development trends. In locations where traffic has increased significantly, land use trends, and access management policies should be closely examined and modified to best maintain and promote an efficient transportation network.
- Identify local residential roads that are not suited for heavy commuter traffic, and work to minimize "through-traffic" wherever viable alternatives can be provided.
- Review and consider the adoption of access management techniques into the Site Plan and Subdivision regulations.
- Identify and prioritize areas with existing pedestrian facilities for regular maintenance. Propose new areas for facilities that will extend and connect the existing infrastructure. Use innovative methods to increase pedestrian safety, which could include such things as raised cross-walks, striped or colored cross-walks, increased signage, or walking paths separated from the road by landscaping. Education of drivers to alert them to the location of sidewalks and cross-walks would also be beneficial.
- Investigate the use of traffic calming measures to discourage high speeds and to direct traffic around neighborhoods.
- Review and evaluate the Town's current road standards and develop new road construction standards that allow for and encourage a variety of road types that enhance the uniqueness of Hopkinton's current and future transportation infrastructure.
- The design and planning of residential streets should follow natural contours and preserve natural features whenever practical; minimize traffic speed, volume, noise, congestion, and hazards to pedestrians; and minimize the amount of paved area to reduce stormwater runoff, and thereby protecting water resources and reducing construction costs.
- Research the possibility of developing flexible length requirements for cul-de-sacs, in consultation with the Fire Chief and Superintendent of Public Works.
- Identify, with the help of the Conservation Commission, Class VI roads, railroad beds, existing paths, and areas along the various water bodies in Town that connect open space, forest, conservation, and/or agricultural land and would help create a greenway trail network.

- Continue to research the available options for increasing transportation access to industrial land while reducing vehicle traffic through Contoocook Village. Environmental impacts, economic benefits, and efficiency should be kept in mind.
- Continue working with NHDOT to improve the control of traffic at the intersection of Routes US202/NH9 and Route NH 103 in Hopkinton Village.
- Work with regional, State, and Federal agencies and programs to prepare a comprehensive transportation plan that includes funding availability for projects and programs.
- Investigate the need for alternatives to single occupancy vehicles, such as Concord Area Transit (CAT) and Park & Ride facilities.
- Class V gravel roads and Scenic Roads are important historic assets, provide excellent recreational opportunities, and foster a sense of community. Changes to these roads should not be made without considering their historic importance, recreational opportunities, and sense of community.
- Encourage the planning and development of an efficient, regional and local bicycle route system, in coordination with other groups and municipalities, and increase public awareness of bicycling as a viable mode of transportation.

#### *Public Utilities and Technology Chapter*

- The Town of Hopkinton is well suited to embrace new technology, due to a variety of factors such as location, demographics, and interest on the part of local residents.
- The Town of Hopkinton should be prepared to adjust its ordinances to encourage the location of small office/home office (SOHO) uses and small information age businesses throughout the community.
- Three-Phase electric service will need to be bolstered in the Burnham-Intervale area if additional industrial users locate there in the future.
- Telephone service is provided by three distinct companies; Verizon, MCT Telecom, and Granite State Telephone.
- Three wireless telecommunications towers are located in Hopkinton. It is expected that additional tower locations will be proposed in the future as wireless communications becomes more ubiquitous.
- AT&T Broadband currently provides Cable Television service to many Hopkinton residents. The franchise agreement between the Town and AT&T originally signed in 1985 and revised in 1992 should be revisited.
- Hopkinton residents have a wide choice in Internet providers, from dialup to DSL (digital subscriber lines) and cable modem broadband service. When compared with many other New Hampshire municipalities, Hopkinton is currently well connected to the Internet.
- The combination of the town's existing digital parcel mapping with digital mapping prepared for the Master Plan as well as the recent automation of the Town's appraisal system have placed the Town in a good position for the future establishment of a GIS (geographic information systems) program.
- The development of a Community Network could aid in the enhancement of participation in local governmental affairs.

#### *Community Facilities Chapter*

- The Contoocook Fire Station will need some sort of addition, a second floor or an extension out toward Park Avenue, to accommodate male and female sleeping quarters and extra storage space.

- The number of volunteer firefighters has declined significantly over the past ten years. While not dangerously low, the Fire Department should take measures to recruit and train more volunteers.
- The interior of the Town Hall must be reconstructed to address ADA and Life Safety Code specifications, maximize workable space and safety of the office staff, and improve acoustics for continued use of the Town Hall in its intended capacity.
- Parking around the library must be increased as more sports fields are constructed at Houston Field.
- The Town must provide incentives for recycling.
- Town business in the future may become more internet-based. The Town should make preparations to allow its residents to conduct business via electronic means.
- The Community Center Inc. must address safety issues with respect to Columbia Hall.
- The Town should coordinate communications and the computer networks across the Town and the School Department.

*Conservation, Preservation, and Open Space Chapter*

- All land use activities that have a direct impact on the soil should be performed in such a way as to minimize any negative impacts and be located on sites suitable for such activity.
- The Town should provide for comprehensive protection of the wetlands and shoreland through regulatory, educational, and voluntary efforts.
- The Town should identify critical habitats and lands, including large blocks of undeveloped land, travel corridors, agricultural lands, scenic views, and other areas of conservation, recreational, and ecological value and initiate efforts to protect those areas.
- Research the possibility of creating an Aquifer Protection District that would provide comprehensive protection for the aquifer resource based on scientific findings, while at the same time ensuring the provisions are reasonable and enforceable.
- Develop a conservation development approach for the design of subdivisions and developments, particularly within those areas identified as unfragmented in town. A conservation development approach will recognize the right and ability of a landowner to use his/her land, but minimize the fragmentation of the habitat.
- Expand and strengthen the Hopkinton greenway system through the acquisition of land or conservation easements that would link conservation parcels that the Town currently owns or has easements on. This acquisition should be through donations, purchase, or partnerships with public or private conservation groups. A conservation fund should be maintained to allow the Town to qualify for matching funds, as opportunities arise.

*Contoocook Village Chapter*

- The Contoocook River, covered bridge, and depot area are great assets, and the Village should make better use of these resources.
- Truck traffic is a problem downtown and is an important issue that should be addressed, especially in relation to pedestrian safety.
- Maintain parking, while promoting pedestrian access and design at the same time.
- Improve the aesthetics of downtown and attract visitors into downtown.
- Respect the existing structures and integrity of the downtown.
- Connect Contoocook's multiple activity centers.
- Establish a Historic District to ensure the historic nature and integrity of the Village remains intact and is encouraged to flourish.

While the key findings are considered to be the most important and immediate concerns from each Chapter, there are numerous recommendations made throughout each Chapter. These recommendations range from simple wording changes in the Zoning Ordinance to long-range policy changes. The key findings and recommendations outlined in the Master Plan all stem from the goal of ensuring that Hopkinton remains a rural community with protected and preserved natural, historical, and cultural resources; high quality educational, housing, and employment opportunities for residents; and an infrastructure that can accommodate growth and change. Accomplishing all of the recommendations will be a large task but the groundwork has been laid for success by all of those participating in the Hopkinton Master Plan process.

The Master Plan is basically a road map that outlines who we are and where we as a community in central New Hampshire want to go. It describes us today, forecasts where we are heading and defines what we need to do over the next several years.

Most importantly, it is the collective catalogue of our hopes and dreams for our town--what we can achieve, put down on paper for all to see and work towards. A chance to move and shape our little bit of the world and make it a better place not only for us, but for our children and grandchildren, just as those who have gone before did for us.

To achieve this, it will take the collective efforts of all of us. It is to be a living document helping us to focus on the important issues of our times. We need your help to make this a reality!