

# SALISBURY TOMORROW

## Our Vision

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Salisbury is committed to supporting a high quality of life and sense of community for all residents. These commitments need to be reflected in our community programs, services and facilities alike. Salisbury residents value rural and historic character and the array of natural resources and protected lands located throughout Town. Residents want to ensure these characteristics and assets are preserved for future generations in the years to come. Salisbury's vision of the future builds on what the Master Plan Committee heard from residents, the demographic trends and development patterns described in this Master Plan, and the story conveyed by history, community values and the present-day environment.

### FROM SALISBURY TODAY TO SALISBURY TOMORROW...

Throughout the development of the Master Plan, engaging residents and other community stakeholders was a key goal. A 30-question community survey was available to residents during the outreach process and a visioning session invited people to a discussion forum to tell the Town what was important to them. The visioning session and the community survey gave the Planning Board important information on resident opinions on many topics related to Salisbury's land use, housing, transportation, natural resources, community facilities and regulations as well as other

thoughts on priorities and concerns. Broad themes have been based on the public outreach and other stakeholder input, themes which often overlap one another in their identification of important ideas in Town.

Unpolluted natural environment (81.4%), uncrowded and quiet living conditions (79.8%), and small Town/rural atmosphere (77.4%) were rated in the community survey as the most important characteristics that makes Salisbury a desirable place to live. Also highly ranked were the conservation of natural resources (64.3%), natural resources themselves (57.1%), and people and community spirit (57.1%). Support was expressed for home businesses (90.7%), farms (85.7%), and river and water access (74.6%) to be established, while strong interest was shown in seeing agriculture and forestry maintained as economically viable land uses in Salisbury (84.4%).

Equally split opinions of survey participants provided interesting results to revisit later as the Towns works on implementing the Master Plan. People were 40.7% in favor of development along Class VI roads, while 40.7% were not in favor. Another split occurred between those who were in favor of a commercial zoning district and those who were not (43.1% for both yes and no).

Over 85% of respondents were in support of the development of a trail system available for recreational uses. For housing, more single

family homes, accessory dwelling units, and elderly housing were considered as necessary in Salisbury.

Like many other small New Hampshire communities, Salisbury residents expressed concern that the rural character often viewed as central to Salisbury's identity may be lost due to additional residential growth over the next few decades. There are many types of "rural character" images that shape Salisbury - traditional buildings, agricultural fields, protected lands, stone walls, natural forests, and many treasured scenic views. Often, it is the mix of landscapes that contributes to the concept of rural character, including current development patterns and the scenic vistas of hills, rivers, open space and forests. In Salisbury, small-scale agriculture is a land use to highly encourage and support in the future to contribute to a strong local identity.

Respondents were asked, "What would you prefer Salisbury to be like in ten years' time?" Responses were oriented toward retaining existing citizenry and ruralness while accommodating appropriate small businesses to provide convenient goods and services and to help alleviate the residential tax burden. Shown below is a snapshot of representative responses.

## WHAT IS RURAL CHARACTER

When asked what residents like about their community, "rural character" is no doubt one of the most popular responses. While there is no book definition for rural character, it is clear there are some shared images that come to mind: farmlands, forested hills, historic buildings, ponds, unpaved roads, waterways, stone walls, etc.

However, rural character also refers to Salisbury's social structure, demonstrated by community spirit and the "help your neighbor" qualities identified by residents. Salisbury's rural character could also be defined by the easy access all residents have to Town Boards. Rural character is a "small town" feel.

Open space is another component of rural character and is reflected in settlement patterns. **Preserving** open space has been a common thread of the past twenty years of Master Plan public outreach events. While nearly every New Hampshire community identifies rural character as a value to preserve, it is important to identify what specific elements about a Town need preserving.

WHAT WOULD YOU PREFER SALISBURY TO BE LIKE IN TEN YEARS' TIME?

*"Pretty much the same as it is now. That is why we choose to live here."*

*"I would like to see more small businesses in Salisbury. This Town needs businesses to help with the tax base and it will also provide additional jobs."*

*"I hope we can retain our "small Town" way of life. We must contain development while providing services to an aging population."*

*"More open farmland, more local food production."*

*"Rural and scenic."*

*"I would like to see more small businesses near the intersection of Routes 4 and 127, such as an antique shop, a coffee shop, craft shop, and a farmers' marketplace."*

*"Continue to stay a "small" family oriented Town with a little more grow-family or small businesses."*

*"A rural/residential Town with a certain logical area for business but many recreational opportunities and open land."*

*"Agricultural/farming rural community."*

## CONNECTIVITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Common threads emerged from a close examination of the public outreach efforts throughout the Master Plan's development. Community values, ruralness and access to natural resources were repeated, time-honored strengths identified by residents. The themes of connection and sustainability of what the Town already "has" are important to retain as the Master Plan reflects the community vision for the future. To support positive steps forward, recommendations are provided to accomplish many difficult and rewarding tasks which will enhance Salisbury's preferences for the future. The identified following themes are carried forward throughout this Master Plan.

### *Improving connections.*

Residents identified the need for improved connections- including woodland, trail, river, bicycling and walking to the Village (US 4/ NH 127)- and access for recreational activities like nature observation, hiking, snow shoeing, fishing, and canoeing and kayaking from various areas in Town.

### *Continuing preservation, protection and enhancement of open spaces, recreational trails, and water resources.*

Striving to improve management of water resources and improve access to recreational resources are all important priorities as Salisbury continues to look for opportunities to support these activities through partnerships and grant opportunities.

### *Responding to population changes and demographic shifts by addressing any emerging issues in housing, broadband internet availability, economic development and transportation.*

Salisbury should continue to invest in transportation improvements, broadband availability and economic development as a way to

attract new opportunities and be a participant in a more visible and vibrant economy for the different Central NH, Kearsarge and Blackwater River regions of which Salisbury is a part. Recognizing the need to accommodate an aging population throughout Salisbury and all of New Hampshire is an important factor for the future planning of housing, infrastructure, and transportation needs.

### *Keeping Salisbury's rural character while addressing the challenge of meeting the needs of residents.*

This value, rural character, continues to have strong appeal to residents. One of the most common desires voiced by residents was a strong interest in preserving Salisbury's rural character and its associated historical sites, agricultural fields, open spaces and other natural resources. Residents value the protected lands in Kearsarge State Park and the federally owned land underlying the Blackwater River.

### *Keeping fiscal responsibility a priority.*

There is concern about increasing expenditures and resulting impacts on property taxes. While residents generally supported a wide variety of objectives and recommendations as described in the other Master Plan chapters, there are also challenges regarding taxes and any potential new burdens. As municipal government makes public investments in infrastructure, land protection, new programs and initiatives, consider the "bottom line".

Each resident has the ability to weigh in on the Town's planning and land use activities by serving on a municipal board or committee, and attending public hearings on new or proposed revisions to Planning Board regulations, zoning ordinances, or proposed developments. The support and participation of Salisbury residents

is vital to ensure that the right path is chosen and the shared future is clearly understood.

## SALISBURY IN A REGION

From a broader perspective, Salisbury is a component of several geographic, recreational, watershed and political regions, sharing characteristics and vision aspects with the Kearsarge area, Central NH region, Merrimack County, Currier and Ives Scenic Byway towns, its own close cluster of abutting communities, the Blackwater River network, and more regions. In most cases within this Master Plan, Salisbury is treated as a singularity when considering feedback, regulations, data, recommendations, and more.

However, no community can exist by itself without affecting others. Partnerships enable for greater support and capacity of a project. The Town should contemplate the regional perspective and invite others outside Salisbury to participate when making decisions that could have an impact on a wider area. As a single cog turning multiple, diverse wheels, the Town of Salisbury experiences both regional needs and opportunities alike, and should look to participate where available to further the Town's goals and vision.

## REGIONAL CONCERNS

Watershed management, population and housing growth, transportation improvements, and natural resource protection are all areas where working as part of a regional effort can have many benefits for a community like Salisbury. Partnership opportunities with different organizations or neighboring communities are important to cultivate as they lead to addressing issues where working together can create momentum for various projects or protection efforts that benefit the Town as well as the surrounding region.

Specific opportunities where Salisbury could become involved in regional projects or efforts to protect resources were identified through public outreach efforts and discussions with the Planning Board. The emphasis is on being proactive in communicating and collaborating with other partners to address these issues. Some recommendations that are discussed in further detail throughout this Master Plan include the establishment of an annual Household Hazardous Waste collection day that is coordinated with neighboring communities or development of a regional collection site to keep such wastes out of the Town's municipal waste stream.

Natural resource protection often benefits from a regional focus. Wildlife corridors, habitat ecosystems and trail systems don't stop at municipal borders and need a broader approach to be successful in protection efforts. The [2015 NH Wildlife Action Plan](#) (WAP) mapped wildlife habitat areas in Salisbury, with much of the western area of Town included in the State's highest ranked habitat for conservation. Stewardship of natural resources is successful only when efforts reach out to other groups and communities as well as individual residents. The WAP can be used as an informational tool to inform local efforts to identify wildlife habitats and educate residents on the importance of wildlife habitat and diversity.

There are other Chapters in this Master Plan that discuss regional issues, including Transportation, Energy and Housing, all with the overarching vision that collaborating regionally has the potential to achieve many important synergies and shared benefits.

## A VISION BY CHAPTER

The Master Plan Chapters, with their data analysis, community survey consideration, and recommendations for Town-wide implementation, support the future vision of Salisbury within their pages.

### **SALISBURY TODAY**

Know the Town by examining demographic trends, patterns of employment and development, and feedback from community outreach to build a profile for Salisbury.

### **NATURAL FEATURES**

Preserve the quality of life and the rural character of the Town by conserving open space, protecting important natural resources, habitat, and wildlife corridors, and enhancing natural recreational resources.

### **HOUSING**

Encourage a mix of housing types to respond to changing demographic needs and economic trends, and ensure housing development is compatible with both Salisbury's existing rural character and its Village character, including historic preservation and architectural standards.

### **EXISTING AND FUTURE LAND USE**

Maintain the high quality of the natural environment in Salisbury and ensure the rural agrarian character of the Town is not jeopardized by future growth and development.

### **TRANSPORTATION**

Promote the improvement of public roads, encourage a cost-effective but well-maintained and efficient transportation system to

meet the mobility needs of all local residents, maintain a commitment to the rural and historic character of the community by ensuring access management and regulation of proper development along roads, and develop a bicycle and pedestrian trails system that utilizes Class VI roads, US 4 and NH 127, and the open spaces and forests of the community for dual recreational and transportation use.

### **COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

Provide reliable, efficient, cost-effective Town services to the residents of Salisbury while honoring community spirit and history.

### **ENERGY**

Develop energy policies that support and preserve rural character and increase the community's vitality and long term sustainability while looking for opportunities to reduce municipal expenditures, and promote energy efficient transportation, economic development and land use development patterns.

## OUR VISION...

*Salisbury fosters a high quality of life through preservation and enhancement of its rural character, historic heritage, and natural environment while meeting future service and infrastructure needs of its residents.*

### What do we know from Today? What makes Salisbury a great place to live?

- “Healthy and diverse environments, protected lands, Blackwater River, rural character and a sense of community.” These are the values to be kept in mind as we plan for and accommodate the necessary growth important for maintaining the quality of life and services that residents need and expect.

### What do we value as important amenities?

- Our quality of life (leisure, recreation, employment, and preserving rural character) must be supported.
- We need to continue to be good stewards of our cultural heritage and natural environments. We will continue to work towards the preservation of open space and watersheds in connected networks. Our historic homes, the Village area, and scenic views should be preserved as part of the Town’s heritage.
- Infrastructure (roads, bridges, community facilities and services, and broadband) is vital to our community.

### How do we respond to the challenge of making needed changes?

- An aging population brings into focus new challenges as many retirees are remaining in rural areas to remain close to family or to enjoy the scenic and recreation amenities available in a community like Salisbury. How we address the potential demands for smaller houses for downsizing families is important as we adapt to an aging population.
- We welcome businesses that align with our development patterns and rural character while supporting economic growth.
- We support housing choices for residents throughout their life cycle, from young adults, to families with children, to retirees.
- We look for opportunities to work with other communities on issues of regional concern and will continue to be proactive with planning and zoning ideas.

### How do we allocate limited resources to maintain and enhance the rural character and quality of life that residents value?

- We must maintain fiscal responsibility, ensuring today’s decisions do not create hardship for future generations.
- We invest in our community through an open, transparent process prior to any decision-making.