

VISION

This Bradford Master Plan was created as a living document that articulates the vision, desires, and concerns of our community. It serves as a road map for the future of the town; it outlines what we are all about and where we want to go, as a community in central New Hampshire. The Plan describes us today, and forecasts our shared vision for the future. 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 Bradford.

The Plan provides recommendations on ways to maintain or improve the features of our community and aims to serve as a blueprint for all future activities of Bradford. This Plan can help support economic development efforts, amendments to land use regulations, environmental and historic preservation efforts, expansion of community facilities and services, and much more over the next several years.

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 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 to help shape a community by giving suggested 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.

BRADFORD'S MASTER PLAN HISTORY

THE 1986 MASTER PLAN

The Planning Board worked from 1981 to 1985 to prepare a Master Plan which was adopted in 1986. The following regulations were adopted as a result of the Master Plan recommendations:

- A Zoning Ordinance;
- Wetlands Ordinance;
- Floodplain Ordinance;
- Site Plan Regulations
- Sewage Sludge Regulation;
- Subdivision Regulations;
- The BOCA National Building Code

These Town Regulations have been in place, and amended as warranted, since their initial adoption.

THE 1996 MASTER PLAN

In 1995, the Planning Board appointed a Master Plan Update Committee and conducted a survey of town residents. The Planning Board held several public meetings and sought citizen input on the goals and objectives of the Master Plan. This Master Plan process resulted in a vision statement for the town:

“The vision for Bradford into the 21st century is to retain its small-town character with an active village area and an historic district connected to a rural landscape that is primarily fields and forests. Bradford will support diverse, small businesses that provide economic benefits to and employment opportunities in the community. Children will be provided a quality education at a reasonable cost. Community spirit will flourish.”

From the 1996 Master Plan, 6 main goals were identified:

- To maintain a small-town character and rural lifestyle;
- To improve the economic climate;
- To improve the village area;
- To examine the potential for economic improvement offered by the location of the access highways leading into and out of the village area;
- To preserve the rural landscape as a community resource;
- To promote community spirit and encourage citizen participation.

THE 2006 MASTER PLAN

In 2004, The Planning Board decided to update their Master Plan with assistance from the Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission. In an effort to gain public input, a community survey was mailed and a public information and vision session was held for residents and landowners. Following this effort, several public meetings were held with the Planning Board or with various subcommittees to develop each chapter of the Plan, taking into account the input gathered previously. Input was also sought from other town departments, boards, commissions, and committees. Through development, every effort was made to integrate the following three aspects that make up the community - conservation, community, and constructed.

- **Conservation** - This aspect encompasses the natural life support system of interconnected lands and waters upon which human life and economic activity, as well as all other forms of life depend. Conservation infrastructure includes conservation lands, recreation lands, water bodies, scenic areas, steep slopes, and forests.
- **Community** - This aspect encompasses the opportunities within a community for organized and informal social interaction. Community infrastructure includes cultural and civic organizations, community activities and events, methods of communication and outreach, and volunteerism in town.
- **Constructed** - This aspect includes the many built elements that transport and shelter people, goods, and information. Constructed infrastructure includes commercial and residential development, roads, and municipal facilities.

SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY INPUT

Throughout the development of the Master Plan, engaging residents and other community stakeholders was a key goal. The Visioning Session and the community survey gave the Planning Board important information on residents' opinions on many topics related to Bradford's land use, housing, transportation, natural resources, and many other priorities and concerns. The following describes some broad themes that are based on the public outreach and other stakeholder input.

Overall, residents have a high appreciation for Bradford’s rural and historic character, vast array of natural resources and outdoor recreation opportunities, and sense of community. Support was shown for an increase of commercial tax base in town, though many feared that too much commercial development would threaten Bradford’s rural character and small-town feel. Examples of commercial development supported by residents included agricultural-related businesses, restaurants, home-based businesses, retail, grocery stores, and arts and crafts galleries. Providing tax incentives and establishing a clear and predictable application process were suggested as well to attract new businesses into town, or encourage existing business to stay instead of moving elsewhere. Many also felt that certain utilities and amenities, such as improved broadband speeds, would be beneficial in attracting new commercial establishments to Bradford.

As previously mentioned, residents and landowners strongly value and support the preservation of Bradford’s natural beauty and resources, including open space, farmland, forested areas, aquifers, surface waters, and undeveloped tracks of land. Many frequently utilize the vast recreational opportunities in town, including trails and public lands, and strongly support the addition of more trails or public land in the future. Community survey results indicate support for the development of an Agricultural Commission as well.

Community survey results show that the majority feel that Bradford is growing at an appropriate rate. For new housing, support was given for housing that fits with the rural, small town atmosphere of Bradford, including single family and conservation subdivisions. A need for elderly housing and in-law apartment was expressed, so that Bradford can provide housing for residents of all ages and allow our seniors to age in place.

Like many other New Hampshire communities, Bradford residents expressed concern that the rural character often viewed as central to Bradford’s identity may be lost due to additional residential and commercial growth over the next few decades. There are many types of “rural character” images that shape Bradford - natural forests, open space, lakes, unpaved roads, and many historic building and sites. It’s often a “You know it when you see it or feel it” response which though may be unique to each individual, is the most common feedback receive during the public outreach process. 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.

OUR VISION...

“Bradford is a vibrant community that provides a high quality of life for residents of all ages through preserving its assets, maintaining financial stability, and providing opportunities to live, work, shop, and play.”

WHAT DO WE KNOW FROM TODAY? WHAT MAKES BRADFORD A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE?

- “Strong sense of stewardship, recreational opportunities, inventory of valuable natural resources, rural and historic 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, and preserving rural character- must be supported.
- We need to continue to be good stewards of our natural environments and historical assets. We will continue to work towards the preservation of our rural character and new development in connected networks.
- Infrastructure (roads, bridges, community facilities and services, and broadband) is vital to our community.
- We support the use of tools and methods to strengthen the Residential Business District.
- We support the development of a Zoning Ordinance Table of Uses and more specific special exception standards to protect residential properties throughout the Residential Rural District from the impacts of potentially intensive commercial and industrial uses.

HOW DO WE RESPOND TO THE CHALLENGE OF MAKING NEEDED CHANGES?

- We welcome an appropriate mix of residential and commercial development that align with our development patterns and rural character.
- We support housing choices for residents throughout their life cycle, from young adults, to families with children, to retirees.
- We look for opportunities to utilize available and appropriate economic development tools and will continue to be proactive with planning and zoning ideas.