

**TOWNSEND
MASTER PLAN
UPDATE**



JUNE 2001

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We owe a debt of gratitude to all Department Heads; Board, Committee and Commission Representatives; the Board of Selectmen; the North Middlesex Regional School District; Dr. John Mullin and the graduate students from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst Center for Economic Development; the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission; and particularly the unofficial and official Master Plan Committee members. Finally, we thank our fellow citizens who took the time to attend our sessions, respond to our surveys and questions, express their opinions, and share their concerns.

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HISTORY OF TOWNSEND

Townsend is located in north central Massachusetts, 42 miles northwest of Boston on the New Hampshire border. Two primary roadways that run through town, routes 119 and 13, filter community traffic from the surrounding towns and southern New Hampshire into the larger, urban areas of Fitchburg and Boston.

Townsend was settled in the late 1600s. The first meetinghouse in Townsend was built in 1730. Incorporation followed shortly thereafter in 1732 with the town taking its name from Charles Townshend, the British Secretary of State. The early economy, based on manufacturing, was jump-started with the 1733 construction of its first mill and a dam for the mill at Townsend Harbor. The dam sits on the Squannacook River, which runs through the town. It provided the majority of power necessary for the operation of this and other mills, such as saw and grist mills, a clothing mill, a machine shop and a large two-story cooperage materials factory. The success of such factories was further empowered by a canal constructed in 1790 on the Squannacook. In the 1800s, many factories were built, producing stockings, clothing, tubs and pails. In 1867, a factory built to develop coopering stock became the principal industry of the town. Despite the amount of product being exported to Boston and the success of these factories in the 18th and 19th centuries, few industries survived into the 20th century.

Three primary areas in Town hold much significance for the traditional views held by townspeople of Townsend's historic character--Townsend Harbor, Townsend Center and West Townsend. Residences and shops from the 1700s and 1800s, including the buildings housing the Grist Mill and Cooperage, have been preserved in these locations.

In addition to being recognized for its historic character, citizens appreciate the rural nature of the Town. This appreciation is based on a long history of agricultural activities by local families throughout the last 300 years, sometimes lasting within particular families for over eight generations. In recent years, some of the farms have been sold and the land divided, yet despite increased exponential growth in the 1970s and despite the increase in commercial presence along major roadways, Townsend maintains its rural image in the minds of the majority of residents.

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

This Master Plan is a guide to decision making for the Planning Board, Board of Selectmen, Town Meeting, and other boards, departments and committees. The plan is not a zoning ordinance or by-law, a subdivision regulation, a budget or a capital improvement program. It is the basis for the preparation of these documents.

Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 41, Section 81D requires each local planning board to prepare and periodically revise a master plan that “shall provide a basis for decision making regarding the long-term physical development of the municipality.”

This is Townsend’s third Master Plan, the first being in 1970, the second in 1988. This update was initiated in 1998 by the Planning Board, to respond to the need for a guide to Townsend’s future growth and development in a manner that reflects the residents’ wishes. The 1988 Master Plan, while officially adopted, was never fully utilized. The plan had been prepared with the assistance of IEP, Inc., a respected consulting firm based in Sandwich, MA. Many felt it was too “boiler plate”, a technical, wordy document difficult to read. It contained all the essential elements of a Master Plan with many sound recommendations. However, it lacked a methodology for a successful implementation and a strong action plan.

PROCESS

Responding to the difficulty utilizing the previous plan, an exploratory committee was formed by the Planning Board in the fall of 1998. This group made a number of early decisions that were subsequently adopted by the official Master Plan Committee commissioned in May 1999. The first decision made was to not enlist an outside consulting firm. Surrounding communities were spending up to \$50,000 for their Master Plan activities. While most of the members of the Master Plan Committee are not professional planners, the most important elements of this plan—to identify in simple terms the needs of the community and to create a living document—could be accomplished by citizens. Therefore, this document has been essentially prepared by volunteers who brought a wealth of community knowledge and experience, and most importantly, diverse views and a gamut of political persuasion to the project. The committee employed a number of ways to reach out to the community at large, to inform fellow citizens of their work, and even more importantly, to listen and learn. All decisions were achieved through a consensus-forming process.

TIME LINE

Fall 1998	Initial Exploratory Committee Meetings with Town Boards, Departments, Commissions and Committees Town Meeting vote for a formal Master Plan Committee Funding approved for UMass Graduate Student Studio
Spring 1999	Charette – Citizen Workshop Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats Analysis (SWOT) Student Report
Winter 1999/2000	Over-Arching Goals accepted at Town Meeting
Spring 2000	Ongoing review and priority setting Adoption of Goals, Policies, Proposals
Summer 2000	Writing the document
Fall 2000	Final public meeting Recommendation for acceptance
Spring 2001	Build-Out Analysis, Mapping - MRPC
Summer 2001	Final revisions, submission to Planning Board

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

One of the most commonly asked questions of the Master Plan Committee was “What is the town’s projected population?” The Tools for a Master Plan Update Townsend, Massachusetts was written by the Regional Planning Studio Team of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Center for Economic Development in May 1999. They performed a number of studies and concluded that by 2017 the population may reach 10,000 to 11,000.

Previous population projections of 19,000 to 21,000 were based on a specific growth surge in the 1970s that failed to materialize. The Montachusett Regional Planning Commission’s (MRPC) Build-Out Analysis presented to the town in May 2001 projects a maximum population of 19,332 but gives no timeline.

Population growth challenges everyone involved in town government, planning, and public education if the historic and rural character and quality of life of Townsend are to be maintained. A number of tools are available to calculate the financial impact of population growth. For each \$1,000 of tax revenue, residential properties cost \$1,100 in community services; business and industry cost \$450, and open space costs \$250. Balanced growth is necessary for fiscal stability and effective community planning.

BASIC ELEMENTS

The required elements for a comprehensive Master Plan, as delineated by MGL Chapter 41, Section 81D, are the Goals, and seven Essential Elements: Land Use, Housing,

Economic Development, Natural and Cultural Resources, Open Space and Recreation, Public Facilities, Transportation, and Implementation. In addition, we added one other element, Government, in an effort to call specific attention to improvements which would better meet the needs of the community.

Implementation of the Master Plan is considered to be a key element for its success. The establishment of the Strategic Planning Committee in May 2001 combines the capital planning function with a continual monitoring of the decision-making processes as they relate to the Master Plan. The Master Plan itself is structured to be a “living document” that requires continual updating of individual strategic plans, sets baseline criteria for continuous monitoring, and is fluid, not static.

IMPLEMENTATION

The “grassroots” approach in writing the third Townsend Master Plan was a deliberate choice in the hope that the Town will assume ownership of the plan and become actively involved in its on-going implementation. The Over-Arching Goals must be thought of as the “Vision”. Each individual section has Goals that are extensions of the Over-Arching Goals, capturing the essential elements of each section. These goals are timeless, and cannot be achieved by any single action.

With the updated Build-Out Analysis and GIS mapping, the Town is eligible to apply for up to \$30,000 in State Master Plan assistance. Further review and revision by appropriate town boards, committees, commissions, departments, and the Board of Selectmen must be ongoing.

We recommend formal acceptance and adoption of the Master Plan.

CONCLUSION

Master Planning is a way of stepping back from the immediate concerns of a town to look at the long range. We came together as a concerned group of citizens at the 1999 Charette to explore ways of meeting the future together, as a community. We attempted to catch sight of the vistas of possibility to make our corner of the world a little better. We managed to tease potential solutions to problems out of weaknesses, achieved insights out of threats, sought achievable goals out of nebulous opportunities, and built community on our collective strengths. This Master Plan is the culmination of our best attempts to date to crystallize this work in writing. But it means little if we do not use it as our continuing guide to community action.

Respectfully submitted,

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DEFINITIONS

GOALS:

The most basic community values that reflect the general agreement of the community. Goals can be considered as relatively permanent.

POLICIES:

General guidelines or principles that are the basic recommendations of the plan and are meant to be relatively permanent, changing only rarely over the years.

PROPOSALS:

Specific suggestions or actions to carry out policies. There are generally several alternative methods of implementing a policy. Proposals are, by intention, flexible and subject to modification. A particular proposal may fail or be rejected without compromising the policy.

OVER-ARCHING GOALS

- **ENHANCE** the Town's historic and rural character and preserve open space.

- **PROTECT** the natural resources and environmental quality with attention to the water supply, a sound solid waste program, and air and noise pollution.

- **IMPROVE** the quality and stability of Town government in order to promote economic health for the Town and its residents.

GOVERNMENT

Passage of Townsend's Charter reinforced the desire for a participatory form of government, one in which all voters are eligible to attend town meetings, debate issues, and vote on warrant articles. Open town meeting represents one of the oldest, most historic, and purest forms of government “of the people, by the people and for the people.” Along with this right to make decisions, residents have responsibilities to serve on various boards, commissions, and committees. Citizen activism in town government remains one of the top strengths of the community.

GOAL: Create a government which is responsive to citizens and in which citizens are involved

Policy:

*Establish accountability of departments, boards and commissions

Proposals:

- * Encourage and strengthen communication among town boards, committees, departments and agencies
- * Schedule quarterly, interactive government meetings
- * Develop departmental strategic plans and goals
- * Update departmental goals annually
- * Reinforce a positive, cooperative attitude among town staff and officials through such efforts as public relations training, motivational incentives, and educational seminars
- * Use professional staff to effectively meet the needs of the town

Policy:

* Improve citizen awareness

Proposals:

- *Establish objective criteria for functioning of committees and boards and their members, setting realistic expectations
- *Expand Internet access to town news and information through the Townsend Web site
- * Distribute town reports and warrant articles to every household

Policy:

*Evaluate the cost-effectiveness of all town facilities and services, exploring alternatives where appropriate

Proposal:

- * Inventory services provided by the town to assure a match between needs and services
- * Create a comprehensive grant-writing program

GOAL: Work cooperatively with area towns and organizations to solve common problems, while retaining Townsend's unique identity

Policy:

- * Promote regionalism and cooperation with neighboring towns in both Massachusetts and New Hampshire

Proposal:

- * Provide facilities and services on a regional basis, when appropriate and cost-effective

GOAL: Ensure the goals, policies, and proposals of the Master Plan are utilized in future decision making

Policy:

- * Establish the active role of the Strategic Planning Committee combining Capital Planning and Master Plan monitoring and implementation

Proposals:

- * Assist boards, committees, and departments in utilizing the Master Plan to achieve town wide goals
- * Review warrant articles and make recommendations based on current Master Plan Goals, Policies, and Proposals
- * Report annually to the town updating the status of the current Master Plan

Government is not meant to be static but fluid, changing to meet the needs of its citizens. Therefore, the primary objective in a "one person, one vote" government is to keep residents interested. Activism is essential for providing input for balanced debate and commitment to the common good.

LAND USE

Land use is a key element in the Town's master plan. The use of land is central to the function and character of the community. All other systems support the use of the land, including transportation, public facilities, environmental protection and regulatory controls. The community's future and economic well-being are directly related to the future use of the town's land.

GOAL: Encourage balanced land use consistent with New England character

Policy:

- *Balance cost of community services in land use planning

Proposals:

- *Calculate the actual cost of Townsend's community services by each property type (residential vs. open space vs. commercial)
- *Review the cost impact of each proposed development

Policy:

- *Establish conservation zoning for subdivisions with its four-step process of identifying resource areas for preservation, locating roadways and trail ways, placing houses, and lastly drawing house lots

Proposals:

- *Educate builders and developers to the benefits of conservation zoning
- *Revise Subdivision Rules and Regulations and Zoning Bylaws to require "outside of parcel" vision when subdivision is in the design phase so that open spaces are linked
- *Establish criteria and goals for recreational land to be set aside in each development

Policy:

- *Acknowledge natural wildlife corridors in zoning and approval of developments

Policy:

- *Review zoning districts every 5 years for suitability of purpose and recommend appropriate changes

Proposals:

- *Use buffer zones to transition between different zoning districts
- *Allow increased mixed uses in commercial zone

Policy:

- *Model a build-out analysis 30-50 years out with potential zoning changes

Proposal: Determine potential site for school buildings

Policy:

- *Preserve agricultural resources and the agricultural quality of Townsend

Proposals:

- *Inventory land in active agricultural use
- *Seek Agricultural Protection Restrictions for land currently in agricultural use
- *Create agricultural districts or overlays

GOAL: Promote business development consistent with protecting water supply and preserving town character

Policy:

- *Allow commercial and light industrial activities in the Aquifer Protection Overlay Districts if the applicant can demonstrate no impact to ground water or aquifer

Policy:

- *Increase commercial and industrial zoning districts where parcels are of a size and have the appropriate soils to support those uses

Proposal:

- *Adopt flexible zoning requirements for parking

GOAL: Protect water supply and infrastructure through careful and comprehensive land use planning

Policy:

- *Strengthen wellhead protections and Aquifer Protection Overlay Districts

Proposals:

- *Require best management practices for any commercial or industrial activity occurring in the wellhead protection district
- *Establish a monitoring program for compliance with best management practices

GOAL: Facilitate the development of housing that is affordable

Policy:

*Allow 2-family units in certain districts, when architecturally consistent with the neighborhood

Policy:

*Revise Subdivision Rules and Regulations and Zoning Bylaws to comply with minimum State mandates for affordable housing

Policy:

*Develop Village Zoning Bylaw to allow smaller lot size and neighborhood-consistent frontage and setbacks in older, village areas

Proposal:

*Downsize lot area, frontage and setback requirements in village areas to be consistent with the existing structures

Townsend's rural nature and qualities are threatened by residential sprawl. Through careful and comprehensive land use planning, Townsend will be able to best preserve its treasures while growing through the 21st century.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND FACILITIES

Infrastructure and facilities are at the heart of community life. They are the means by which we meet, communicate, protect and govern, move about through town, and dispose of our wastes. Town government and the local business community have continued to emphasize how imperative it is for Townsend to assess, address and make long-range plans for the infrastructure and capital needs of the town. Positive uses must be found for facilities and properties no longer suitable for their original purposes. Dependable and modern telecommunications are essential for all citizens, and are especially important for home businesses.

GOAL: Address critical capital needs within the shortest possible time frames

Policy:

- *Develop long term solid waste plan focusing on maximizing recycling

Policy:

- *Plan replacement of central fire station

Policy:

- *Repair or replace library

GOAL: Maintain and enhance the value of all properties owned by the town by keeping them in good repair and planning for their highest and best use

Policy:

- *Create and maintain an inventory of all town-owned buildings and real estate

Proposals:

- *Identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunity values of all buildings and real estate

- *Sell properties which do not fit with the anticipated long range needs of the town

- *Develop a policy for disposal of town property through the Town Properties Committee

Policy:

- *Inventory all capital equipment and facilitate sharing of unused or underutilized items among departments and committees

Policy:

- *Maintain roads according to established standards

GOAL: Develop and maintain strategic plans for capital improvement

Policy:

- *Develop and maintain a strategic plan for the acquisition of lands deemed critical for town government and tax stabilization

Proposals:

- *Identify potential acquisitions for a municipal complex, cemetery space, senior center, youth center and other recreational needs
- *Identify chapter 61, 61A, 61B properties for potential acquisition for open space, recreation or other purposes and encourage the offer of all such lands be brought to town meeting
- *Encourage private land owners to offer the town the opportunity to bid on land not under Chapter 61 protection

Policy:

- *Develop long term sewage disposal plan to protect the water supply

Proposals:

- *Require that municipal buildings maintain compliance with Title V and Townsend Board of Health regulations
- *Explore shared septic systems in the established villages

Policy:

- *Develop a town-wide Water Department growth plan, including provision for emergency extension of mains, under a betterment model

GOAL: Promote an enhanced infrastructure for business and tourism

Policy:

- *Create infrastructure which supports light industrial park areas

Policy:

- *Advocate for private utility investments to provide state-of-the-art telecommunications, gas and electric service at competitive cost

Policy:

- *Increase sidewalks and public parking for both municipal and business needs

Policy:

- *Improve traffic patterns where possible

Policy:

- *Visually improve center and outlying commercial and tourist areas

Proposals:

- *Incorporate street trees in road design
- *Improve facades, signage and landscaping of existing town buildings and encourage similar improvements of privately owned buildings
- *Seek funding to put utilities underground in historic districts

Policy:

- *Create local regulations and advocate for state regulations regarding road design which are sensitive to the environment and historic, rural, and community character

Policy:

- *Promote tourism

Proposals:

- *Actively participate in Freedom's Way tourist enhancement program
- *Improve signage for parks and passive recreation areas
- *Create rails to trails and other recreation paths which promote tourism
- *Create Harbor Park for both tourists and residents

Integrating anticipated replacements and improvements of facilities into a long-range plan will help to assure a stable tax rate. Planning and funding all necessary maintenance will economically lengthen the useful life of our facilities. Creative capital improvements will facilitate orderly growth while maintaining and improving the overall quality of life in Townsend. Leadership and advocacy will be required for Townsend to maintain its rural appeal while taking advantage of all the most modern technologies.

OPEN SPACE

Townsend is a rural town which values open space. Residents have overwhelmingly voiced their support for preservation and enhancement of open space and the rural character of the town. One of the reasons for this support is to protect our abundant, yet very precious and fragile, water resources. Another is to maintain rural quality and provide outdoor recreational opportunities. Forests and meadows, rich with wildlife, and rivers and streams provide diverse opportunities for enjoyment, recreation and learning.

GOAL: Establish water protection as the primary open space goal

Policy:

- *Make the Open Space Plan a living document

Proposals:

- *Form an Open Space Committee to:
 - create a long-term plan for acquiring and protecting open space;
 - survey and inventory available open space;
 - work with local land trusts and the Squannassit Regional Preserve Initiative;
 - explore swapping land with the State;
 - provide management of town open space
- *Continue updating the Open Space Plan annually
- *Inform the community about the Open Space Plan and its value, both financial and aesthetic
- *Educate residents about the dangers of fertilizer and pesticide use
- *Encourage the use of natural plants, trees and shrubs for wildlife food, cover and breeding

GOAL: Identify and preserve available open space

Policy:

- *Develop capital plan and incentives for protecting open space

Proposal:

- *Adopt the Community Preservation Act at Annual Town Meeting
- *Explore tax incentives for those who own open space to create conservation restrictions

Policy:

- *Seek grants to purchase land or conservation restrictions

GOAL: Preserve rural character through open space protection

Policy:

*Determine what percentage of land can be developed while maintaining small town, rural character

Policy:

*Protect open space by revising regulations on development

Proposal:

*Create recreational/agricultural zoning to include existing open space and farms

*Promote the use of conservation zoning or cluster-type development

*Strengthen wetland protection bylaws and regulations

*Support land use planning that maximizes contiguous open space to protect wildlife habitat

GOAL: Promote the recreational and educational opportunities of open space

Policy:

*Enhance enjoyment and passive recreational use of open space by residents and tourists

Proposal:

*Create and periodically update Townsend Open Space map that clearly delineates appropriate uses of trails and recreation areas

*Design, develop and maintain trails for varied recreational uses

*Promote eco-tourism in our open space by improving access points and parking for the Squannacook River, town conservation areas, and the State Forest

Policy:

*Enhance knowledge about open space in the community

Proposals:

*Participate in state biodiversity program

*Inventory and preserve scenic and historic landscapes and old growth tree sites

*Promote eco-educational programs in Townsend schools

*Encourage State Forest Stewardship training for land owners and students

By continuing to take an active role in preserving our open spaces, they will remain open and viable places for residents, tourists and wildlife.

WATER SUPPLY

Townsend derives all of its drinking water (public water supplies and private wells) from ground water drawn from two aquifers. The quality of the drinking water is considered excellent and is rated as one of the town's strengths. However, quality of water continues to be a very important concern. Contamination of water supply is considered one of the greatest threats to the community.

GOAL: Assure safe and adequate water supply for all residents and businesses

Policy:

- * Restrict development in areas of low water capacity

Proposals:

- * Establish criteria to estimate the impact of any new development to the aquifer and the aquifer recharge area
- * Issue permits only where impact is minimal

Policy:

- * Require developers within ½-mile of a water main to extend the main to the development

Policy:

- * Prohibit uses that deplete or contaminate the water supply

Proposals:

- * Determine the entire town water supply capacity
- * Ban chemicals and fertilizers known to be toxic
- * Establish a public awareness program regarding septic system maintenance and disposal of hazardous waste
- * Publish hazardous waste sites update in Town Annual Report

Policy:

- * Identify and purchase undeveloped areas critical for ground water recharge, utilizing state and federal grant programs when available

Proposal:

- * Identify and protect existing and future public well sites, including delineation of zones of contribution to those wells

Policy:

- * Strengthen the town's existing Wetlands Bylaw

Proposal:

- * Develop new rules and regulations, including performance standards for the protection of wetlands

GOAL: Monitor water quality and quantity on a regular basis

Policy:

- *Require developers to perform water quality and quantity assessments prior to permitting

Policy:

- *Establish periodic drinking water quality testing program

Proposals:

- * Perform water quality testing of public well and surface water, including Witches Brook
- * Perform water quality testing of private wells

GOAL: Ensure water rates continue to generate sufficient income to support operating and capital improvement expenses

Policy:

- *Update Water Department's strategic plan every 5 years

GOAL: Coordinate efforts between Townsend Water Department, public and private water districts and adjacent communities which share our aquifer

Policy:

- *Work with area towns in Massachusetts and New Hampshire to create a long-range regional water resource protection and supply plan

Proposal:

- *Collaborate with Lunenburg to protect mutual wellhead zones

There is a direct relationship between the quality of ponds, rivers, brooks and streams and the extent to which septic systems, lawn fertilizer, and road drainage seep into these

water systems. Nutrient and contaminant loading lead inevitably to some degree of deterioration of surface water quality. Control of land use can help prevent such water quality deterioration. Few would disagree that the protection of surface water quality is a priority of the Town of Townsend.

NATURAL RESOURCES AND RECREATION

Natural Resources

Townsend's abundant natural resources serve a variety of purposes. The aquifer supplies drinking water for townspeople. Wetland and floodplain areas work to protect the town from the effects of heavy rains and possible flooding. Our water and land resources provide habitat for wildlife and offer plentiful opportunities for both passive and active recreation, as well as visual enjoyment.

Primary Inventory of Natural Resources

- *Aquifer
- *Squannacook River and its tributaries
- *Harbor Pond
- *Vinton Pond
- *Bixby Reservoir
- *Ash Swamp, Dead Swamp, Wolf Swamp, Great Swamp (Meadow Road) and other swamps and bogs
- *Vernal pools and wetlands
- *Townsend State Forest
- *Pearl Hill Reservation
- *Howard Park
- *Old Meetinghouse Park
- *Townsend Conversation Land Trust properties
- *Conservation lands
- *Farmland
- *Meadowland
- *Old growth trees
- *Wildlife corridors
- *Scenic vistas
- *Night sky
- *Quiet

GOAL: Preserve, protect and enhance Townsend's natural resources

Policies:

- *Improve and preserve water quality of the Squannacook River and its tributaries, swamps and bogs

Proposals:

- *Improve legal protection of tributaries of the Squannacook River
- *Revitalize the biological health of the Harbor Pond
- *Save and protect Harbor Pond by dredging to remove siltation and address nitrogen loading

Policy:

- *Encourage the town's participation in biodiversity programs

Policy:

- *Perpetuate state forest protection

Proposal:

- *Revitalize Town Forest Committee

Policy:

- *Encourage the preservation and protection of natural resources

Proposals:

- *Adopt additional protective bylaws
- *Encourage land acquisition for open space and recreation
- *Identify and publish a detailed natural resource inventory (water, land, vistas, wildlife, plantlife)
- *Attain Tree City designation
- *Promote use of organic gardening and fertilizing and use of ecologically safe pest control methods

Recreation

Townsend's abundant natural resources provide many recreational opportunities. In addition, young people can participate in sports programs such as Little League, Youth Soccer and Pop Warner Football. The Townsend Recreation Commission sponsors a summer recreation program for school-aged children, trips to family-oriented destinations, and an ice skating rink in the winter.

GOAL: Provide recreational opportunities for varied age groups/interests.

Policy:

- *Encourage interrelationships among town boards, departments, committees and governmental entities regarding the use of open space and recreational areas

Proposals:

- *Prepare a detailed recreational inventory including natural resources inventory.
- *Create tourist/citizen maps of all recreational areas (combined with natural resources)
- *Establish cooperative relationship with State to create and improve trail system and linkages

- *Research and encourage acquisition of easements to provide public access for scenic vistas
- *Schedule resting period for maintenance of fields

Policy:

- *Determine appropriate location for and design specialized recreation areas

Proposals:

- *Create areas for:

skateboarding	cross country skiing
walking	snowmobiling
hunting	ice skating
non-motorized biking	horseback riding/carriage driving
picnicking	neighborhood parks
- *Build youth center on parcel of town-owned land
- *Explore development of Rails to Trails

Policy:

- *Encourage developers to set aside funds and/or land for recreation areas

Policy:

- *Ensure quality of surface water for recreational use

Proposal:

- *Coordinate cooperative efforts with Nashua River Watershed Association for monitoring surface water quality
- *Require developers to determine the impact a proposed development will have on surface water resources

Townsend has a wealth of natural resources and recreational opportunities. The Open Space Plan, Zoning By-Laws and Wetland By-Law provide a basis for protection of these assets. Pressures for development will require further cohesive efforts of town boards, government agencies and the townspeople themselves to ensure that these natural resources are preserved and protected. With increased access and maps of these resources, townspeople will be able to avail themselves of these areas. This also could have a positive economic impact for businesses in town as tourists also avail themselves of these recreational opportunities. Broadening the scope of recreational programs will help ensure that varied interests and age groups are given opportunities to utilize these natural resources and recreational opportunities.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

The rural character of Townsend has been viewed as one of its most treasured aspects for many years. The desire to maintain this continues to hold very high priority for government and townspeople alike. The town has three well-delineated historic districts which deserve protection and preservation, in addition to a significant number of environmental treasures, scenic vistas and roadways, state forest lands, and the eclectic town center. These historic, cultural, and environmental aspects of Townsend add a quality to our life which could not be duplicated in the modern day.

GOAL: Insure that cultural and learning opportunities exist for all residents of Townsend

Policy:

*Promote access to the town's historic, cultural, and educational resources

Proposal:

*Utilize public buildings for meetings and encourage participation in using educational resources

GOAL: Enhance signage in Townsend, especially in the established historic districts (Townsend Center, Townsend Harbor and West Townsend) and at Townsend's gateways

Policy:

*Welcome visitors to Townsend at each of its gateways

Proposal:

*Place welcome signs at the east and west ends of Route 119 and the north and south ends of Route 13

Policy:

*Mark points of historic significance, including dates, facts of interest and cultural associations, at specific sites and on historic buildings and homes

Proposals:

*Place and maintain, in a uniform fashion, historic markers on all historic monuments, buildings, statues, and other places of interest

*Initiate a grant-based program to replace signage in the historic districts to be more consistent and in keeping with the area

GOAL: Establish a program to preserve historic structures in Townsend and to maintain a sense of history for all residents and visitors to Townsend

Policy:

- *Maintain and promote the three established historic villages of Townsend

Proposals:

- *Create buffer zones in conjunction with the Townsend Historic District Commission around historic centers
- *Clarify Historic District designations and the responsibilities of property owners within these areas

Policy:

- * Promote Townsend's rich manufacturing and agricultural history through cooperative efforts of the Townsend Historical Society, schools and other town agencies

Proposals:

- *Inventory all historic sites and historic structures in Townsend
- *Create a tourist center as a source of information on all places of interest in Townsend

GOAL: Adopt an aggressive approach to enhancing the aesthetic aspects of our rural atmosphere

Policy:

- *Encourage business owners to present themselves as an integral part of Townsend

Proposal:

- *Establish a plan for commercial facade improvement to encourage better business relations and foster a sense of community among residents and businesses

Policy:

- *Designate specific areas of town as cultural sites

Proposals:

- *Establish Memorial Parks to honor all Veterans
- *Create and beautify our environment by developing town gardens and floral displays
- *Engender town spirit by creating neighborhood parks through community efforts
- *Establish a children's play area with statues and fountain, park benches, gardens

Policy:

- *Develop public areas for outdoor activities

Proposals:

- *Create a network of recreation paths to encourage safe walking and biking between the three historic villages
- *Designate a central parking area and tourist center to relieve traffic congestion and encourage pedestrian travel
- *Build sidewalks where feasible

Residents value the rural qualities of Townsend. It is important to retain these special features which make visitors and residents alike feel welcome. Working together we can retain the qualities of life which brought us here in the first place and continue to enrich our lives.

BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The economic health of Townsend depends in part on a thriving business community. Economic development has not kept pace with the growth of the town. Supporting and expanding existing community efforts to increase development of businesses that provide jobs, increase tax revenues and expand opportunities for existing businesses is crucial. It is important that the town create a business-friendly environment.

GOAL: Create a strong economic tax base that benefits both citizens and businesses

Policy:

- *Encourage new businesses or expansion of existing businesses

Proposals:

- *Create tax incentives for business owners
- *Increase business development over the next ten years

GOAL: Create a business-friendly environment

Policy:

- *Revise zoning by-laws and simplify town business regulations

Proposal:

- *Establish light industrial zoning in appropriate locations, with adequate infrastructure

Policy:

- *Establish a Business Development Commission

Proposals:

- *Encourage businesses that are compatible with adjacent land uses and resource protection concerns
- *Create a community outreach program to educate the public about:
 - what economic development is;
 - what the economic development and workforce needs of the area are;
 - why economic development is a good idea for the community; and
 - how it can fit into the unique environment of the town
- *Assess the needs of local and regional businesses based on projected expansion plans
- *Identify the types of businesses we want to encourage in Townsend
- *Encourage development of a farmer's market for residents and visitors

GOAL: Revitalize the town center

Policy:

*Promote tourism and create friendly environment for businesses and residents

Proposals:

*Create tax incentives for facade improvement

*Utilize grant resources

There has been a growing interest in not only revitalizing the town center, but also making it attractive to prospective businesses. It would also be in the town's best interest to promote tourism to give the town a healthy economic boost. Controlling traffic, particularly in the town center, may also be an issue with the increased businesses attracting tourists to Townsend. It is important to anticipate the direction and location of future development so that specific programs can be formed to address these issues.

HOUSING

Townsend continues to face important choices about housing. We need to actively encourage and promote affordable, diverse housing. It is important that the current residents, the elderly and entry-level buyers are able to remain part of the Townsend community.

GOAL: Increase affordable housing supply, while keeping the rural nature of the town

Policy:

*Promote affordable housing programs

Proposals:

*Research State and Federal funding for families, seniors and others

*Require affordable units in all new developments

Policy:

*Encourage mixed use development

Proposal:

* Revise Zoning Bylaws to allow mixed use, such as retail/office first floor with apartments above, in village areas

Policy:

*Allow two-family housing and accessory apartments in appropriately zoned areas

Proposals:

*Allow development of multifamily structures that are consistent in character with the existing housing stock

*Revise Zoning Bylaws relating to multifamily dwelling and accessory apartments

Policy:

*Require developers to propose affordable housing unit alternatives

Proposal:

*Revise Zoning Bylaws and Planning Board Rules and Regulations to allow alternative housing

GOAL: Ensure Townsend has an appropriate housing mix to meet the needs of the town

Policy:

*Reactivate Housing Authority as a viable town committee

Proposal:

*Track housing types, such as accessory apartments, senior housing and affordable housing, for grant purposes

*Explore town-sponsored development of affordable housing units

It is important that Townsend continue to be affordable to the residents living in Townsend now. This can be accomplished by encouraging a greater diversity of housing opportunities in Townsend to meet the needs of a changing and diversified population with respect to age groups, persons in a household and income.

TRANSPORTATION

As Townsend and other towns in the surrounding area have grown, so too has the amount of traffic. Townspeople would like to both preserve the Town's rural, small-town character and have less congestion. These two goals are not easily reconcilable. There is a need to ensure the safety not only of vehicles traversing our roads, but also residents, pedestrians, bicyclists and horses.

GOAL: Improve traffic circulation while maintaining the Town's small-town, rural character

Policy:

- *Ensure safe design of roads

Proposals:

- *Commission a study to monitor commuter and general traffic patterns and identify future parking needs
- *Establish a master plan and schedule for Town road maintenance, incorporating safe design and inventory of drainage issues
- *Identify and address dangerous intersections
- *Explore alternative traffic patterns to facilitate traffic flow

Policy:

- *Protect residential neighborhoods from commercial thru traffic and peak hour commuter traffic

Policy:

- *Ensure safety on those roads used for thru traffic

Proposal:

- *Enforce speed limits
- *Adopt safety measures
- *Explore traffic calming devices

Policy:

- *Improve pedestrian and non-motorized circulation

Proposals:

- *Set up a specific policy as to when and where the Town should install or rebuild sidewalks when resurfacing roads
- *Develop recreation path networks
- *Develop local transportation system

GOAL: Adopt a regional approach to transportation issues

Policy:

*Expand public transportation system as an alternative to commuter traffic

Proposal:

*Encourage taxi or bus services

*Preserve railroad right of way for future transportation needs

Policy:

*Assess the impact of regional development on traffic and the integrity of our infrastructure

Proposal:

*Coordinate actively and consistently with neighboring towns to seek solutions to common problems

Transportation issues are not confined to town boundaries as local traffic impacts are often the consequence of regional traffic or transit issues. Creating new housing, attracting new commercial and industrial development or expanding existing businesses requires planning for appropriate transportation infrastructure and services. Creative and alternative approaches will be required to ease congestion and ensure safety while still maintaining our rural character and quality of life.