

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

A. INTRODUCTION

The 2002 Master Plan update is the product of many months of data collection, analysis, review and public input. This chapter provides an overview of the plan and a series of goals and objectives for each plan topic. The goals and objectives were developed by the Planning Board from the previous Master Plan and careful analysis of the strengths, limitations and goals of the community. The Master Plan is designed to guide growth and development in Litchfield over the next ten to twenty year period. However, changing conditions will require an update of the Plan's basic components at five year intervals.

1. Purpose



Prepared in accordance with New Hampshire RSA 674:1 through 674:4, the 2002 Litchfield Master Plan is a policy statement for guiding local land use regulation, transportation improvements, environmental protection and capital improvements for the 2002 to 2020 period. The Plan is also a resource for Litchfield citizens, private business and for state and regional officials. The chapter topics include: 1) Population and Housing; 2) Natural Resources; 3) Community Facilities; 4) Transportation; 5) Economic Development; 6) Historic Resources and 7) Land Use. Each chapter contains data and analysis, information from a variety of sources presented in tables, illustrations or maps, and specific policy recommendations.

As a political entity, the Town of Litchfield does not exist in isolation, and must therefore consider the external forces, which influence the community. Wherever possible, the information presented for Litchfield in the document is done so within the context of the Nashua Regional Planning Commission region, Hillsborough County, the State of New Hampshire and other areas or regions as appropriate. The Master Plan represents a consensus of the community in addressing the issues and concerns, which confront Litchfield today and are anticipated to do so in the future. This document is intended to guide Litchfield in logical and thoughtful growth with respect for and preservation of it's past while providing the necessary vision and planning for future growth and prosperity. The 2002 Master Plan represents the final result of the Town's ongoing long-term planning efforts.

B. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The current Litchfield Planning Board would like extend their appreciation to the current and former Board members who contributed both significant time and knowledge in developing this Plan. The Board's appreciation also goes to Nashua Regional Planning Commission for their guidance and experience in the development of this Master Plan update. Finally, our appreciation to our elected officials and citizens of Litchfield that participated both directly and indirectly on the 2002 Master Plan.

C. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Overall Goals

1. Promote sustainable community development by undertaking a comprehensive effort to balance current and future economic, social and environmental needs.
2. Conserve the Town's rural-agricultural community character.
3. Foster and enhance a sense of community spirit in Litchfield.
4. Provide a coordinated approach to community development that benefits all residents.
5. Identify, protect and enhance the principal natural and man-made features of the Town which, collectively, define Litchfield's physical character and cultural heritage, and which constitute the basis for future planning actions.
6. Direct change and promote development consistent with community goals and within the constraints of natural and built environment.
7. Strive to balance environmental protection and economic development in local planning.
8. Develop a shared vision for the future of the community among the citizens of Litchfield.
9. Balance local needs and interests with those of the larger region, particularly with respect to water resource management and protection.
10. Manage growth so that the growth is not excessive and the Town of Litchfield is able to provide adequate services and facilities for all residents.
11. Continue to seek innovative land uses to minimize impact on the natural environment while providing adequate housing for a diverse population and preserving greenways and open space for wildlife, agricultural, recreation and conservation.
12. Deliver an education consistent with State guidelines for existing and future residents of the community so that these individuals are likely to become active and productive members of society. (I had another version) Provide an education that meets local expectations and state guidelines .for existing and future residents of the community so that these individuals are likely to become active and productive members of society.
13. Encourage capital investments that will result in long term savings for the municipality.

2. Population & Housing

1. Encourage high quality residential development, which does not detract from existing community character.
2. Promote the development of housing that encourages stability and the health and safety of residents and which at the same time fosters a high quality of life and enhances people's enjoyment of the community.
3. Promote housing opportunities for people of all income ranges.
4. Provide for a moderate rate of growth, in keeping with the Town's intent to expand public facilities and improve the range of governmental public service offerings based on careful strategic planning.

5. Help provide for the changing and diverse housing needs of Litchfield's and the region's population, including older persons, people with disabilities, non-traditional households, persons and families with low incomes, and single parent families.
6. Accommodate a reasonable or fair share of the region's population growth.
7. High quality housing design that is in character with the rural-agricultural heritage of Litchfield.
8. Insure that future residential development that does not detract from the fiscal stability of the community.
9. Manage the rate of growth to minimize the impact on the Town's infrastructure.
10. Maintain Litchfield as a town of predominantly single-family houses, while accommodating a fair share of the region's needs for diverse housing stock.

3. *Natural Resources*

1. Promote a holistic, systematic approach to natural resource management and protection, recognizing that natural resources form the basis of community environmental health and well-being.
2. Strive to maintain an environment free of air, water, visual, noise and light pollution in order to provide a safe and attractive community for future residents.
3. Since the natural environment is fragile, apply a resource-based planning approach to promote appropriate land use patterns that are compatible with the development potential of each area.
4. Identify and preserve prominent natural and cultural features, (i.e. Agricultural), within the Town of Litchfield.
5. Promote awareness and understanding of the long-range benefits and returns of promoting sustainable community practices.
6. Protect the quality and quantity of the area's water resources through conservation, education and appropriate regulation of uses within productive aquifer zones to insure adequate recharge rates and environmental protection.
7. Preserve unaltered natural habitat and mature trees within new development whenever feasible.
8. Preserve tracts of agricultural land as agricultural uses and for the benefit of future generations and promote maintaining agricultural soils.
9. Promote open space development and compact land uses that are not resource intensive.
10. Foster the application of environmental practices that are compatible with resource protection, and which will contribute to enhanced community and regional livability.
11. Land uses that negatively impact natural resources should be discouraged and appropriate technology and proper mitigation required.
12. Establish benchmarks regarding the state of the natural environment and track these for change.
13. Cooperate with adjacent communities on natural resource and environmental protection.

4. Community Facilities Goals

1. Maintain high levels of quality in all town services.
2. Provide for fiscal stability of the community by attempting to avoid adverse fiscal impacts from new development where reasonably feasible.
3. Provide cost effective community facilities and services (including, but not limited to, schools, recreation, fire, police, library services, solid waste disposal) for Town residents and businesses, consistent with both demand and the Town's ability to pay.
4. Provide community services that are equal to or better than acceptable minimum level of services and accepted minimum standards.
5. Require new developments to pay a proportional share of public facility and road improvement costs made necessary by that particular development.
6. Expand the Town's parks and recreational facilities to meet or exceed accepted minimum
7. Encourage the extension of sewer and gas lines within Litchfield non-residential zones.
8. Consider in all planning actions the property tax ramifications to the residents of the Town, keeping in mind that high property taxes result in less economic diversity and a disproportional burden on the Town's lower income and elderly residents, and negate many of the goals contained in this plan.
9. Provide for public access use, and the enjoyment of the Merrimack River through enhanced buffers, trails development, protection of existing and future public access for watercraft.

5. Transportation Goals

1. Promote the development of a safe, efficient and effective transportation system within the Town that does not detract from community character and sustainability.
2. Collaborate with the State to maintain and improve the highway network and other transportation systems as these affect Litchfield.
3. Promote preservation of rural character in the 3A corridor -- the historic core of the community.
4. Encourage the development of transportation that promotes safety and the effective flow of traffic.
5. Carefully preserve road capacity by coordinating transportation and land use, thereby minimizing unnecessary traffic interference without compromising the ability of people to move within and through the community.
6. Encourage the development of a hierarchy of streets and roads to service local residential use, non-residential development and through traffic.
7. Encourage land use patterns that make transportation alternatives viable.
8. Minimize the negative effects that sometimes accompany the development of roads and driveways, while still enabling future transportation system development.
9. Promote the development of transportation systems consistent with the preservation of viewsheds and the scenic character of the community.

10. Expand on the bicycle/pedestrian trail network on both new and existing roadways and aggressively seek protection of historic transportation right-of-ways for future use when connections can be made.
11. Develop partnerships with surrounding communities to effectively address traffic hazards and facilitate the smooth flow of traffic.

6. *Economic Development Goals*

1. Promote well-managed development that can help Litchfield determine its own economic destiny and create a sustainable community and economy.
2. Broaden and increase the job and tax base by fostering the growth and development of appropriate non-residential uses.
3. Discourage strip-style development through design standards that support the desired types of commercial site development.
4. Promote open space development and preserve rural-agricultural community character.
5. Take a forward thinking approach on the relationship between land use and community development and apply innovation and technology in future economic development
6. Define key resources, opportunities and constraints concerning Litchfield and regional economic development.
7. Encourage industrial and commercial development to locate within well-planned sites where they will not create a potential for land use or traffic conflicts.
8. Evaluate the social and fiscal impacts of different land development proposals.

7. *Historic Resources*

1. Promote awareness of Litchfield's extensive cultural history, including ways to preserve sensitive cultural and historical resources, to foster continued understanding and enjoyment by future generations
2. Preserve, protect and enhance historic buildings, structures, sites and land uses, such as trails and historic right-of-ways.
3. Promote awareness and understanding of the various techniques available to achieve historic resource preservation at the private, local, state and federal levels to insure that Litchfield retains historic assets.
4. Identify and preserve key archeological sites with local and a regional significance.

8. *Land Use Goals*

1. Promote well-balanced land use patterns capable of meeting present and future community development needs in an efficient, environmentally sound, economical, equitable and aesthetically pleasing manner.
2. Encourage open space preservation and conservation zoning.
3. Protect, enhance and promote public spaces, including commons, trail networks and parks.
4. Promote land use patterns based on prominent natural features and man-made facilities within the community.

5. Encourage preservation of large tracts of land, forest blocks and wetland (riparian) corridors through innovative land use controls.
6. Encourage development that is in keeping with local character.
7. Pursue proactive commercial site plan design standards in advance of proposed major highway projects being completed
8. Provide for a transition or buffer between incompatible land uses.
9. Encourage that easements to backlots be enlarged from 50 to 75 feet, if it is feasible, and the private parties are amenable to such an arrangement.
10. Encourage the preservation of agricultural lands, utilizing both traditional and innovative strategies.
11. Discourage "strip development" and scattered or premature development.
12. Continued strategic land acquisitions and protective easements by the Town.

9. *Master Plan Implementation*

1. Develop implementation and monitoring strategies for achieving the goals and recommendations articulated in this plan.
2. Promote community-wide knowledge, understanding, support and approval for this plan.
3. Promote collaboration among people to bring about meaningful change in the community.
4. Define benchmarks of community conditions that may be tracked over time to define how conditions within the community are changing.
5. Encourage desirable development by designing land use programs that rely on traditional and innovative land use controls to promote fair and reasonable development, which benefits landowners and the public interest.
6. Consider the region as well as the Town of Litchfield in developing regulations and planning strategies.
7. Continuously monitor and assess progress in achieving the goals and objectives outlined in this Master Plan.