

## CHAPTER I VISION, GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION

### A. VISION

Litchfield's rural and agricultural history continues today, despite being located in close proximity to the state's two largest cities, Manchester and Nashua. This presents a challenge as Litchfield works to protect and preserve its character. Today's decisions go beyond local, regional and state boundaries. Vision, innovative planning, protection of the land, environment and encouraging feedback from residents are important in realizing the vision and goals of the master plan.

The Overall VISION for the Town balances the need for preservation, conservation and opportunity for growth. To do so, the vision calls for the Town to:

1. 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.
2. Direct change and promote development consistent with community goals and within the constraints of natural and built environment.
3. Foster and enhance a sense of community spirit in Litchfield.
4. Preserve the true character of Litchfield while delicately balancing added business opportunity along with the consistency of the small town feel.
5. Continue the expansion of town resources to make them more readily available throughout the town.

Expressing a town's vision through the voting process and citizen interaction with the planning board has been an ongoing process in the Town of Litchfield. During 2012 and 2013 the board conducted two online surveys (192 and 125 responses respectively), hosted a listening session focused on the community's future land use vision, and attended other events to collect input on residents' vision for the future. Although consensus is difficult to achieve, the following statements further expound upon the Town's vision and help capture a sense of residents' vision for Litchfield and some of the natural dualities or conflicts that arise:

1. Maintain balance in community development of residential, agricultural and commercial land. This includes protection of structures and lands of historical importance.
2. Preserve forest blocks, fields, farmland, drinking water quality and provide opportunity for a variety of passive and active conservation and recreational uses.
3. Maintain, enhance and encourage traditional small town development that protects agricultural and historic character and encourages new building to occur within existing developed areas in order to promote a village center pattern.
4. Provide adequate protection of individual property rights, while creating the necessary regulation to protect our environment and small town atmosphere, protect citizens from harm and provide the necessary infrastructure to maintain the desired quality of life for Litchfield's 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 with the citizens of Litchfield for the future of the town. .
9. Balance local needs and interests with those of the larger region, particularly with respect to water resource management and protection.
10. Monitor 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. Provide an education that meets local expectations and state guidelines for existing and future residents children of the community, and continuing education, 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**

(2017 Update)

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 and access to amenities.
3. Promote housing opportunities for people of all income ranges and housing preferences.
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, single parent families, and young adults.
6. Encourage high quality housing design that is in character with the rural-agricultural heritage of Litchfield.
7. Ensure future developments do not pose undue strains upon the fiscal stability of the community.
8. Maintain Litchfield as a town of predominantly single-family houses, while accommodating a mix of housing types including smaller homes, multi-family options such as townhomes, and accessory dwelling units.

### **3. Natural Resources**

(Adopted in 2002)

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 through the purchase of conservation easements and/or development rights.
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**

(Adopted in 2002)

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 water, sewer and gas lines within Litchfield.
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**

(Adopted in 2002)

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. Manage road capacity requirements by coordinating transportation and land use, with the goal of minimizing unnecessary traffic without compromising the ability of people to move within and through the community.
6. Encourage the continued 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**

(Adopted in 2002)

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**

(Adopted in 2002)

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, list, and preserve key archeological sites with local and a regional significance.

## **8. Land Use**

(2017 Update)

1. Promote well-balanced land use patterns capable of meeting present and future community development needs in an efficient, environmentally sound, and economical manner.
2. Require new development and redevelopment of existing structures that is consistent in character, design and scale with Litchfield's small town agricultural character.
3. Encourage the preservation of agricultural lands, utilizing both traditional and innovative strategies.
4. Promote land use patterns that protect the environment and prominent natural features, and increases open space preservation and conservation of large tracts of land, forest blocks and wetland (riparian) corridors through innovative land use controls .
5. Protect, enhance and promote public spaces, including commons, trail networks, parks, and river access.
6. Provide for a transition or buffer between incompatible land uses.
7. 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.

8. Continued strategic land acquisitions and protective easements by the Town.

## **C. MASTER PLAN IMPLEMENTATION**

The following actions were identified in 2002 and reviewed and updated in 2017. Each of the following are intended to lay out a road map for the community to implement and achieve the vision and many goals of the Master Plan as articulated above.

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.
8. Organize a committee to come up with new ideas to achieve sustainable community development.
9. Encourage communication between town committees and the residents of Litchfield.
10. Improve communication between town boards and committees.
11. Work with State and regional boards to keep everyone up to date.
12. Update the Capital Improvement Plan Annually.