

# Section I-A

## Community Vision

A master plan is a document which serves several needs within the community. According to the New Hampshire State Statutes that address the requirements and guidelines for preparing such a document, the master plan's primary purpose is to serve as a tool of the Planning Board as a decision-making framework to guide development within the town. In order to fulfill the role as a planning tool, the master plan should be based on the collection and analysis of a wide range of social, economic, environmental and land use information. The master plan however, is not a static document. It should evolve over time to reflect the changing needs and circumstances of the town. Goffstown has periodically updated its plan with the last one having been completed in 1997.

However, a master plan should be more than just an objective litany of facts and figures. A master plan should also highlight the collective wishes, desires and aspirations of the members of the community about growth and development -- a Vision for the future. In order to provide this more lofty aspect of the document, State Statute<sup>1</sup> requires that the plan must contain as one of its chapters, a Vision Statement. While contents of the Vision Statement are determined by the local planning board, state statute notes that "...it shall include such topics as the objectives, principles, assumptions, policies and standards upon which the constituent proposals for the physical and socio-economic development of the municipality are based."<sup>2</sup>



Because much of the 1997 Goffstown Master Plan is still relevant, this latest Master Plan, even though reorganized, is more of an update rather than a new document. In preparing the Vision Statement for this Master Plan, efforts were made to obtain input from a broad range of Goffstown residents at a Visioning Meeting in the Spring 2004. The goal statements that follow in this Master Plan Update have been updated from the 1997 Plan but attempt to respect the community process that took almost two years to complete in a true "grass roots" effort. In June of 1995, the master plan steering committee be-

<sup>1</sup> Refer to New Hampshire Revised Statutes Annotated (RSA) 674:2, 1996-97

<sup>2</sup> RSA 674:2,I

gan the process of preparing an updated plan for the Town. Based on this committee's review of the 1987 Master Plan's goals and achievements, as well as a survey of other municipalities, the most appropriate approach for developing the 1997 plan for the Town was established. It was decided that residents *of* the community should prepare a plan *for* the community. Towards this end, the steering committee solicited the services of volunteers from the Town which brought a response from approximately 60 citizens. In March of 1996, these volunteers were organized into eight work groups and charged with the task of obtaining background information for their respective chapters, as well as formulating goals, objectives and action plans based on that information. Over an eight month period, these groups worked to assess the current and future needs of the Town based on real-world information and input provided from a number of public information meetings.

The results of this community participation are still reflected in the chapters of this master plan, particularly in their respective conclusions, recommendations and proposed action plans. In preparing this 2005 update, the Goffstown Planning Board conducted the Public Visioning session and held a series of workshops with its members. These sessions provided an update on the community's and its views on development, conservation, and transportation within the Town. The input from the public confirmed the general viewpoint of the 1997 Master Plan. The goals presented here represent a synthesis of the public and Planning Board process as updated by the latest input. These goals should be used to establish the direction in which the community proceeds with its planning activities.

### **Community Vision Statement**

- *The Town of Goffstown is an outstanding community in which to live, raise a family, work, own a business, visit, and recreate.*
- *The Town's residents enjoy a high quality of life and enjoy Goffstown's high environmental quality;*
- *The Town's children are active learners in quality schools;*
- *The Town's infrastructure and community facilities are maintained to a high standard and are managed to cost-effectively meet current and future needs;*
- *The Town's policies and programs pro-actively promote an expectation that future development will be of high quality, and hence, further enhance the community;*
- *The Town's business climate and policies promotes the attraction, retention and expansion of quality businesses and economic opportunity.*

The vision for Goffstown's future focuses on four issues:

- The preservation and enhancement of Goffstown's community character,
- The continued economic vitality of the community combined with diversification of the tax base,

- Improved levels of transportation safety and mobility for all transportation system users throughout the Town, and
- Appropriate future land uses and development in the Town.

An underlying assumption of the recommendations is that residential and commercial growth will continue to occur in Goffstown. The question is whether that growth will or will not occur in the locations and patterns that enhance the community and reduce the negative impacts that can be associated with unmanaged growth, such as disproportionate increases in traffic and taxes.

The main theme inherent in the recommendations is *connectedness*:

- The various elements of the Master Plan are connected to and mutually reinforce each other and, thus, the success of one element relates directly to the success of others – such as land use to economic development, transportation to land use, preservation to community character
- The quality of development is directly linked to the expectations and aspirations of a community as expressed through their land development policies and regulations. High quality development *can* occur without design guidelines, for instance, but it is left more to chance than an *expected* or *required* outcome of the development process. Policies and regulations that require high quality development do not have to be complex to administer or overly prescriptive to be effective.
- New land uses, development patterns, and transportation improvements need to be connected to the Community's history. Appropriate growth reflects and enhances a community's past and brings it successfully into the future.
- In terms of transportation, more, smaller connections are preferable to fewer, larger connections (except for commercial driveways where consolidated driveway access is generally preferred). This applies to street and pedestrian networks, connections between neighborhoods, and connections between adjacent developments.
- The community's economic initiatives (planning, capital investment program, business development programs, etc) need to be well coordinated, so that the Town as a whole can continue to have economic advancement to the benefit of all Goffstown residents.

The overall discussion of Goffstown's vision led to the recognition of a series of Goffstown Development Principles. These principles serve as the basis of the integrated set of goals, objectives and actions presented in this Master Plan Update.

The starting point for these Principles was the Route 114/114A Corridor Management Plan (2003). This Master Plan Update seeks to broaden the integrated approach to land use, economic development and transportation town-wide.

These growth and development principles are:

- Preserve and enhance community character and cultural and natural resources.
  - Reinforce/strengthen role of existing village centers and create new village centers and hamlets as the focal points of the community
  - Retain/regain important visual character and resources along Town roads and throughout the Town
  - Actions within one part of the Town should complement Town-wide Growth Management actions
- Promote economic development through pro-active business attraction, retention and expansion policies and programs
  - Diversify the property tax base, reducing the reliance on residential property taxes
  - Direct appropriate development to targeted areas in a prioritized fashion
  - The pattern, location, design and intensity of residential development should actively promote the economic vitality of the village centers
- Ensure a good return on public infrastructure improvements to promote economic development. This return on investment should not be measured only in dollar terms, but also in terms of improvements to residents' quality of life and vitality of the business climate.
- Improve the safety and mobility for all transportation system users: pedestrians, motorists, and bicyclists.
- Create new and strengthen existing residential neighborhoods and housing opportunities.
  - Provide a diversity of affordable housing types throughout the community
  - New residential development should be thought of in terms of forming cohesive neighborhoods, not as insular or standalone 'subdivisions' or 'complexes'.
- Provide the infrastructure that will assure the continued provision of a healthy and safe quality of life for Goffstown residents, while taking into account the unique qualities of the Town's natural setting and the preciousness of its natural resources.

A basic premise behind all of these principles is that a high quality of life and high quality of design is necessary, *but not sufficient by itself*, to attract investment/economic development to Goffstown.

The Land Use chapter's Recommendations, immediately following this chapter, are organized around the eight Smart Growth Principles developed by the Office of State Planning (now part of Office of Energy and Planning) in 2003. They have been adapted (with minor word changes and word additions), where needed, for local planning application in Goffstown.