

NORTH HAMPTON MASTER PLAN

2014

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INTRODUCTION

North Hampton's Setting

The Town of North Hampton is located in Rockingham County, New Hampshire, and is one of six communities with direct coastal access on the southeast corner of the State. North Hampton is comprised of 13.9 square miles and has 1.7 mile of coast along the Atlantic Ocean. Rockingham County is one of the fastest growing counties in the State of New Hampshire.

North Hampton is bordered by Greenland and Rye to the North; Stratham to the west; Hampton to the south and the Atlantic Ocean to the east. New Hampshire's three largest cities, Nashua, Manchester and Portsmouth are within a one hour drive of North Hampton. Boston, Massachusetts is located 50 miles to the south of Town.

North Hampton is bisected from north to south by both the Boston and Maine Railroad and Interstate 95, although no access from North Hampton exists. Route 1, also running north/south, is the most heavily traveled road in North Hampton.

The Master Plan

A Master Plan is the fundamental development plan and land use policy for a community. Although "the sole purpose and effect of [the master plan] shall be to aid the planning board in the performance of its duties," NHRSA §674:2, it can and should be much more. In addition to encouraging wise land use, it forms the necessary basis for explaining and supporting the community's land use regulations and decisions of local land use boards.

A Master Plan is required by New Hampshire Statutes for any town which has zoning and other land use regulations. Under NHRSA §674:18, the Town may adopt zoning after "the Planning Board has adopted the general statement of objectives and the land use section of the Master Plan" The Master Plan establishes the goals and policies on which land use regulations are to be based. The existence and quality of the master plan determines, to a large extent, the legal soundness and enforceability of local zoning.



It is the duty of every planning board to prepare "a master plan to guide the development of the municipality." (RSA 674:1) North Hampton's first master plan was prepared by Hans Klunder Associates, Inc. in 1967 and was updated by the same

consultant in 1981. The master plan was last updated in 1989 by the Rockingham Planning Commission.

The 1999 Update

During the winter of 1997-98, the Planning Board decided that the time had come to update North Hampton's Master Plan. The Rockingham Planning Commission was contracted to assist in the preparation of the master plan. After meetings with the Planning Board and the Selectmen's Representative, it was decided that the Planning Board would oversee the construction of the *draft* Master Plan, after which it would hold several meetings to obtain public comment. The Planning Board began the work on the master plan in March of 1998, targeting 1999 for completion.

At the same time that the Planning Board was undertaking the Master Plan update, the Board of Selectmen received funding (1998 Town Meeting) to study the Little River Watershed. This study was cooperative effort between the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service and the Town of North Hampton, which, when complete, provided information which may be used in revising this Master Plan. While the Planning Board had discussed delaying the revision of the Master Plan until the Little River Watershed Study was completed, the Board ultimately decided that the Master Plan was too dated to delay the revision. Further, the Committee overseeing the completion of the Little River Watershed Study had not determined a specific date of completion; although they tentatively expected the Study to be completed in the fall of 1999.

This most recent update to the Master Plan strives to incorporate the history of prior planning efforts in North Hampton, along with current data, philosophy and citizen opinion. A new format has been introduced with the hopes that from this update forward the Plan itself becomes a usable "living document" that is both easy to comprehend, utilize, and update. Individually, the chapters stand alone for comprehensive treatment of particular issues and for ease of updating; together they form a more complete and in-depth picture of the current status of the Town of North Hampton and a more tangible and direct vision of specific issues and solutions for North Hampton's future.

First, there are larger margins. These margins are provided to allow people using this document to keep notes and maintain a constant "file" of data with the Plan itself, for when updates are necessary or when decisions and interpretations are made that enhance the usability and understandability of the document. Second, the document itself is presented in a three-ring binder format to allow for individualized updating when needed. Rather than viewing the document only as a comprehensive

independent statement, this choice reinforces the concept that the Master Plan is a compilation of statements of a variety of issues and that each chapter presents its own unique policy. This format eases individualized updating and permits the involvement of numerous town boards and commissions in the process. Furthermore, changes in the status of public facilities or policy shifts regarding public services can be reflected in an update to that chapter without having to reproduce the entire plan. Chapters can be easily discarded, making way for the new, and the Plan will thrive as the living changing document it is meant to be.

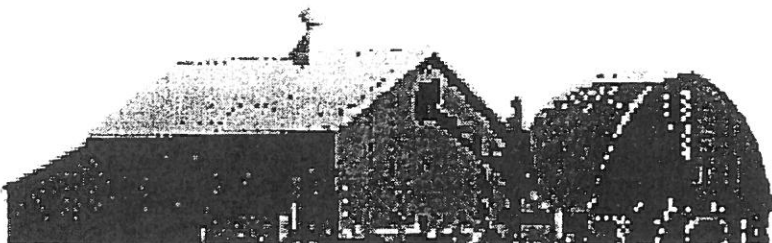
Each Chapter is individually numbered and provided with its own date of revision. Furthermore, with each revision a sheet at the front of the Plan will include the latest update for each chapter. Recommendations will appear both at the end of each individual chapter, as well as within a separate recommendations section which can be more easily reviewed.

In preparation for the writing of this Master Plan, the Planning Board conducted a citizens' survey, the goal of which was to ascertain how North Hampton residents feel about their community, what they feel are the Town's strengths and weaknesses, what is special about North Hampton and how they would like to see their community develop in the future. The results of this survey have influenced the production of this Master Plan, and appear as an appendix to this Plan.

The purpose of a Master Plan is to serve as a base upon which to build more detailed land use regulations and town operating procedures. It provides the basic data and rationale and expresses the broad principles which serve as guidelines to the Planning Board, Selectmen, and other town bodies as they conduct daily business and plan for the future.

Communities are sometimes inclined, under pressure from special interest groups, to ignore the effect of proposed actions on the achievement of commonly-held long term goals. It is hoped that each town official will use this Master Plan to measure

such proposals
and as a tool for
d e c i d i n g
whether they are
desirable in the
light of these
goals.



The Planning Board is authorized under the provisions of NHRSA §674 et seq. to develop a strategy, in the form of a Master Plan, to guide the future growth of the community. This document is that plan. It replaces the existing plan and brings it up to date with respect to the changing needs of the community.

The Plan serves many purposes. It brings together an analysis of the social, economic and physical characteristics of the community, the distribution of population, income statistics, where people work, the capacity of public facilities, and the amounts of open space, forest, farmland and playgrounds. The Master Plan also provides a means to coordinate land development with Town facilities, including schools, recreation, police, and fire, as well as other services provided by the Town. The Plan serves as a guide in the making of daily decisions regarding development and the use of land in terms of their long-range consequences.

Today more than ever, planners must become ever more involved with environmental concerns. The conflict between growth and preservation of natural and cultural resources becomes more and more apparent as the amount of open, developable land diminishes. The balance between property rights, and regulation becomes more focused as governments struggle to preserve disappearing resources that are an integral part of community identity, health, and well-being. The Master Plan must provide a statement concerning the objectives for the protection of wetlands, streams, forests and floodplains. The tenets of historic preservation strive to keep important the buildings that are a part of the permanent environment. Through these actions our future generations and current citizens will be able to connect with and learn the lessons of our past, while looking toward the future.

We serve all the people of North Hampton; not just the people who vote at today's election, but our ancestors, and most importantly our children who stand to inherit the results of our decisions and actions. It is they who will benefit from the solid, and well-reasoned decisions we make today; conversely, they will be forced to suffer the consequences of our mistakes. This Master Plan must reflect these interests and priorities. The programs that are implemented must help the community survive and maintain the desired quality of life which is a critical aspect of North Hampton's identity as a town. At the same time, we must be aware that some people have become more sophisticated in pursuing special interests. These people are better informed, understand the laws and procedures, have greater political skills, and are more persistent. They have learned that planning brings order to change, and therefore, seek to influence the process of planning. The challenge of planners is to balance the demands of competing interests into a dynamic community consensus sufficient to enhance their decisions.

In the future, planners will continue to work under conditions of scarce economic resources and will increasingly be faced with the competing priorities of residents, neighborhoods, interest groups, and both resident and non-resident developers. The delivery of adequate public services will pose serious problems for the foreseeable future. As the Town continues to grow, it will undergo recurring adjustments. It is the task of the planners to minimize the adverse impacts these cycles of change have on the town's residents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As noted in the Introduction Chapter of this Master Plan, the recommendations made in each individual chapter have been replicated and consolidated in this chapter to assist those Town Officials responsible for the implementation of this Master Plan. The recommendations are listed under their respective chapter headings, and are consecutively numbered. It was the goal of the Planning Board to develop a format for the Master Plan which would promote and ease continual updating of the document. To this end, as recommendations are implemented, or are deemed unnecessary, or as new recommendations are developed, this Chapter can be easily amended.

Community Goals:

1. The Planning Board should establish the necessary committee(s) to ensure that the recommendations made in this Master Plan are properly implemented.

Community Services and Facilities:

2. A thorough facility assessment of the fire, police and highway departments should be undertaken.
3. An assessment of the second floor of the Police Station for use as new Town Offices should be undertaken.
4. The use of the present Town Office (former library) should be reviewed.
5. A central repository should be developed to hold all Town files and records.
6. Evaluate the need to purchase an additional police cruiser to the fleet if the department grows to ten full-time personnel.
7. Investigate the need, and associated costs (training, annual updates, software and associated hardware) of providing laptop computers in each police cruiser.
8. Conduct a preschool census every two to three years;
9. Conduct yearly school enrollment projections;

10. Continue working with the town committees to better plan and prepare for the future.
11. The Selectmen and the Town Administrator should convene a Municipal Records Committee in accordance with NHRSA §33-A:3 and provide members of the Committee with Mur 300 and Table 300-1, the State's Retention Schedule for Municipal Records. Committee should be charged with implementation of Records Retention Schedule.
12. Municipal Records Committee should create: (a) filing manual for paper and electronic records, and (b) database for the management of current, non-current, and permanent records.
13. The Selectmen and the Fire Chief should develop, in cooperation with the Municipal Records Committee, a Disaster Preparedness Plan for Town Records to supplement the town's Emergency plan.
14. Prior to any construction work over the Police Station, non-current records be moved there to be stored, reboxed in uniform, standard containers, that the necessary data be entered on the records center data base; at an estimated cost \approx \$10,000.
15. Permanent records should be properly "housed". Loose papers should be foldered in acid-free folders (pH 8.5 +/-; lignin-free; CaCO_3 - buffered; or equivalent), and boxed in standard sized containers with the same specifications. Boxes and bound volumes should be stored on metal shelving, preferably 15" deep x 42" wide. Bound volumes should be stored flat, no more than 2 high. Even plats and maps should be stored flat, each set (or site) individual labeled, foldered, and stored in map cabinets; estimated cost \approx \$300 annually.
16. The Town should plan to provide proper storage for both non-current and permanent by constructing (a) vault for permanent records, and (b) central, safe, secure storage for scheduled non-current records; estimated cost \approx \$113,000.
17. Town employees should backup their work routinely and they should prepare and maintain the metadata information about how and from what sources the data has been gathered, and how it has been manipulated.

18. The Town should consider appointment of a part time individual (permanent or project basis) to serve as "clerk" for Planning, Conservation, and Zoning Boards; estimated cost ≈ \$12 to \$14 hour.
19. If the Town Offices are relocated to the 2nd floor of the Police Station, plans should include a very public reference area, within view of staff. and equipped with fiche/film reader/printer, copies of ordinances & bylaws, Board minutes, etc.
20. The Town should consider replacing current filing cabinets with more space-efficient laterals.

Recreation:

21. Continue adding to the Town's inventory of recreation and conservation lands.

Environmental Conservation and Preservation:

22. Complete the Little River watershed study by the fall of 1999, and consider adopting regulatory measures as appropriate.
23. Continue to coordinate and cooperate with outside agencies to preserve and restore the Little River Salt Marsh.
24. Study Bass Beach Marsh and Philbrick Pond and its tributaries in 1999.
25. Create a plan to improve the Winnicut waterway by the year 2000.
26. Develop a conservation acquisition plan in 1998.
27. Consider the creation of specific overlays by 1999 - e.g. aquifers, wetlands, buildable property.
28. Continue adding to the town's inventory of open spaces.
29. Create a forest management plan by 1999.
30. Consider increasing the tidal and non-tidal wetland setbacks to 100'.

Housing:

31. Given the relatively low percentage of multi-family dwellings in North Hampton (as compared to neighboring towns and to the state), North Hampton should examine its zoning ordinance to determine whether changes are necessary to encourage additional multi-family dwellings or another suitable alternative, especially in light of the data concerning the need for affordable housing, or whether the market is responsible for driving this statistical anomaly.
32. The North Hampton Planning Board should continually review the need to provide the regulatory framework necessary to facilitate the development of elderly housing, presently non-existent in North Hampton.

Transportation:

33. The North Hampton transportation planning process should complement the development patterns and principles set forth in the Master Plan.
34. Town road projects should be designed and constructed in a manner that minimizes impacts on water quality and sensitive environmental areas and considers aesthetics.
35. New development should occur only where existing transportation facilities are adequate or where necessary improvements will be made as part of the development project.
36. The Planning Board should increase their involvement with NHDOT District 6, relative to the issuance of State Driveway Permits. The NHDOT has recently agreed to work cooperatively in this role with municipalities, however, the Planning Board needs to make a concerted effort to ensure that the Town's interests are appropriately considered, through a Memorandum of Understanding between the Town and NHDOT.
37. The Planning Board and the Board of Selectmen should work cooperatively to ensure that when, and if, the Hampton Branch Rail Line is reactivated, that the Town is well prepared. The potential locations of rail stations in North Hampton should also be reviewed jointly.

38. Serious and potentially serious intersections identified in the Kimball/Chase 1991 study should be upgraded utilizing the intersection recommendations put forth herein. Additionally, those intersections mentioned in the Seacoast MPO Long Range Transportation projects should be endorsed by the Planning Board and the Board of Selectmen and funding sources should be identified.
39. The Seacoast MPO COAST Route 7 expansion project should be reviewed, and funding sources should be identified by the Planning Board and the Board of Selectmen in an effort to assist the town's elderly and poor population with their transportation needs.
40. New development should be required to incorporate the Design Principles, Traffic Calming Measures, and Best Transportation Practices into construction standards.
41. Where a traffic impact study reveals new development will provide an unacceptable level of service for a transportation network Traffic Calming Measures, Design Principles and Best Transportation Practices mentioned herein should be required.
42. North Hampton should establish a Capital Improvement Program for Town road maintenance and improvements that fully considers financing options available for such improvements. This Program should prescribe a methodology for prioritizing projects, using as a basis a Road Surface Management System (which can be completed by UNH) which emphasizes the importance of maintaining the existing roadway system as well as intersection upgrades.
43. Any Capital Improvement Plan for Town roadway maintenance and improvement should consider consistency with the Master Plan as an element of project prioritization.
44. Any Capital Improvement Program for Town roadway maintenance should consider funding for alternative transportation mode projects including facilities for bicycles and transit.
45. The Planning Board should review the Access Management tools available and incorporate those that would improve, mitigate or prevent traffic congestion on all roads, where appropriate.

46. The Police and the Board of Selectmen should consider the purchase, or cooperative purchase with adjoining towns, of portable scales to enable enforcement of truck load limits throughout Town.

Utilities/Public Services:

47. Monitor the effect of the three new wells in North Hampton and one in Stratham on the wells of those residents identified in the Well Owners Response Plan, as well as on the water level of the Winnicutt River;
48. Reduce the percentage of impervious surfaces permitted on commercial properties in an effort to reduce the potential of surface water contamination;
49. Encourage bio-engineered solutions to water drainage design to increase the cleaning function of such facilities;
50. Search for new methods and techniques to protect the quality and quantity of our water supplies;
51. Require the pumping and inspection of the septic system of each property upon sale.
52. Begin to plan for the construction of a new Public Works facility.
53. Plan to construct a transfer station.
54. Implement mandatory recycling.

Water Resource Management:

55. North Hampton should adopt a Shoreland Protection Ordinance to insure the proper protection of shorelands and associated water bodies. This ordinance would establish a minimum setback for specific uses from the mean water mark of the Town's primary rivers and streams. The establishment of a minimum standard will promote the following objectives:
 - 1) Provide a safety zone to avoid flood damage;
 - 2) Protect public waters from pollution;
 - 3) Prevent erosion;
 - 4) Conserve and protect aquatic and terrestrial habitat associated with riparian areas; and
 - 5) Preserve and enhance those aesthetic values associated with natural shoreland areas.

56. Amend the Zoning Ordinance to include a maximum coverage percentage for commercial and industrial lots. This would provide for surface runoff water to infiltrate into the ground and recharge local groundwater supplies.
57. The town of North Hampton should work with the Rockingham Planning Commission to update all the maps in this chapter.

Construction Materials:

58. Review and revise, as needed, the excavation regulations of the Town of North Hampton in accordance with amendments to NHRSA §155-E.
59. Review and take action to insure that existing and/or abandoned excavation areas are in compliance with NHRSA §155-E and/or applicable local regulations and that these facilities minimize environmental impacts to the surrounding properties.
60. Given the established development pattern in North Hampton, the Planning Board should give consideration to establishing areas or overlay districts in which excavation activities would not be permitted.

Existing Land Use:

61. Upon completion of the Little River Watershed Study (a cooperative study funded by the Town and the USDA Forest Service), the Land Use Classification depicted on ELU-5 should be recalculated using digital data. Future land use plans should use the same data sources for purposes of consistency.
62. The Planning Board should carefully consider increasing structural setbacks from the present requirements.
63. The Planning Board should carefully consider increasing minimum lot frontage requirements from the present requirements throughout the entire Town.
64. The Planning Board should resist any future attempts at re-zoning any portion of Route 1-A for commercial purposes. Additionally, the Town should carefully limit the expansion of non-conforming uses along Route 1-A.

65. The Planning Board should consider the adoption of an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance that regulates all facets of adult oriented businesses.

Future Land Use:

66. The Planning Board should carefully consider the effect of enlarging or establishing new zoning districts, and ensure that any zoning amendments are supported by this Master Plan.
67. The Town should encourage, and where necessary purchase, conservation and agricultural easements, in order to preserve its agricultural heritage.
68. North Hampton should continue participating in the National Flood Insurance Program to insure that future development will not be subject to flood hazards and to protect existing development.
69. The Conservation Commission should increase their efforts to acquire additional open space Town-wide.
70. The Planning Board should undertake the completion of a comprehensive build-out analysis in order to more accurately determine the acreage of undeveloped lands. The results of the build-out analysis should be evaluated by the Planning Board to determine the adequacy of North Hampton's land-use regulatory scheme.

Growth Management:

71. Consider the preparation a long range comprehensive growth plan that addresses and nurtures the future of North Hampton into the 21st Century. Through the combined recommendations of this Master Plan, such a comprehensive growth plan should help the Town of North Hampton grow; sensibly, into the future.
72. The Planning Board should prepare a Capital Improvement Program and update it on an annual basis to continue to keep a focus on fiscal demands as they arise.
73. After the 2000 census data is made available, the town should update the demographic data in this Master Plan.

74. The Planning Board should update the Building Permit data when OSP data becomes available.

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