

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND COMMUNITY VISION

PURPOSE OF A MASTER PLAN

A Master Plan is a living document that articulates the vision, desires, and concerns of a community. The Plan provides recommendations on ways to maintain or improve the features of a community. This Plan is intended to serve as a blueprint for all future activities of Bradford. This includes future economic development efforts; amendments to land use regulations; environmental and historic preservation efforts; the expansion of community facilities and services for the next five to ten years.

This Master Plan is Bradford's road map for the future of the Town. It outlines what we are all about and where we want to go, as a community in central New Hampshire. The Plan describes us today, and forecasts our shared vision for the future. Most importantly, it defines what we will need to do over the next several years as we work together to shape the future of the Town of Bradford.

A Master Plan is intended to be the device that influences the making, interpretation, and implementation of laws and procedures that give shape and direction to the community. A Master Plan is required by law in the State of New Hampshire (RSA 674:2); but unlike other "master devices," it has no force of law and no way to generate the resources that may be required for implementation. The Master Plan can be a powerful tool to help shape a community by giving suggested direction to appointed and elected officials. However, the true power of the document is derived from the citizenry, as they will ultimately be the voice that approves the staffing, funding, regulatory alternatives and strategies identified by this Plan.

BRADFORD'S MASTER PLAN HISTORY

A Master Plan should be a guide to what citizens want their Town to be like in the future, as well as a guide for the townspeople and Town Officials to determine which measures should be taken to accomplish goals outlined within these Chapters. Development of land and the Town's population will both expand over the coming years in order to meet increasing demands. To protect at the same time the character of a small, rural town as preferred by the majority of townspeople requires the ability to plan and regulate these demands before such uncontrolled changes have occurred.

The 1986 Master Plan

The Planning Board worked from 1981 to 1985 to prepare a Master Plan which was adopted in 1986. The following regulations were adopted as a result of the Master Plan recommendations:

- A Zoning Ordinance;
- Wetlands Ordinance;
- Floodplain Ordinance;
- Site Plan Regulations
- Sewage Sludge Regulation;

- Subdivision Regulations;
- The BOCA National Building Code

These Town Regulations have been in place, and amended as warranted, since their initial adoption.

The 1996 Master Plan

In 1995, the Planning Board appointed a Master Plan Update Committee and conducted a survey of Town residents. The Planning Board held several public meetings and sought citizen input on the goals and objectives of the Master Plan. This Master Plan process resulted in a vision statement for the Town:

“The vision for Bradford into the 21st century is to retain its small-town character with an active village area and an historic district connected to a rural landscape that is primarily fields and forests. Bradford will support diverse small; businesses that provide economic benefits to and employment opportunities in the community. Children will be provided a quality education at a reasonable cost. Community spirit will flourish.”

From the 1996 Master Plan, 6 main goals were identified:

- To maintain a small-town character and rural lifestyle;
- To improve the economic climate;
- To improve the village area;
- To examine the potential for economic improvement offered by the location of the access highways leading into and out of the village area;
- To preserve the rural landscape as a community resource;
- To promote community spirit and encourage citizen participation.

BRADFORD MASTER PLAN PROCESS

In 2004, the Planning Board decided to update their Master Plan, which had not been revised since 1996. The Board contracted with the Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission (CNHRPC) to assist completing the Master Plan.

In February 2004, a Community Survey was mailed out to approximately 1,424 property owners. 330 surveys were returned for a 23% response rate. See Appendix A for full Community Survey results. Once the survey results were compiled and analyzed, the Planning Board began the process of data gathering, mapping and research for the various Chapters of the Master Plan.

On May 15, 2004, the Bradford Planning Board hosted a public information and visioning session for residents and land owners to learn more about the Master Plan and provide feedback. The information session provided background on the Master Plan itself and the process, an update on what work had been done to-date, and an opportunity for those attending to give suggestions on each of the Master Plan chapters. Approximately 30 people attended the session.

Each chapter of the Master Plan was created by either a Subcommittee or the Bradford Planning Board. Meetings were open to any resident, landowner or business owner in Bradford. Chapters prepared by Subcommittees were submitted to the Planning Board for their review.

The Planning Board held publicly noticed meetings on each Chapter and received comments and feedback from those in attendance. The Planning Board made their own comments, recommendations and changes, and also sought input from other Town Departments, such as the Conservation Commission, Police Department, Fire Department and Zoning Board of Adjustment.

In November 2005, a Public Information Session and Potluck Dinner was held so that community members had the opportunity to read the draft plan and offer comments and suggestions. The well-attended session provided a forum for discussion on the Master Plan components and the beginning of an implementation strategy for the Plan.

Once all the Chapters were completed and preliminarily adopted, the Planning Board held a final public hearing on April 22, 2006 on the draft Master Plan in its entirety for any last input from the public before they adopted the entire Master Plan.

MASTER PLAN GOALS

If the Master Plan is to be a useful tool for the community for the next ten years, it needs to integrate the three aspects that make up a community – conservation, community, and constructed.

Conservation - This aspect encompasses the natural life support system of interconnected lands and waters upon which human life and economic activity, as well as all other forms of life depend. Conservation infrastructure includes conservation lands, recreation lands, water bodies, scenic areas, steep slopes, and forests.

Community – This aspect encompasses the opportunities within a community for organized and informal social interaction. Community infrastructure includes cultural and civic organizations, community activities and events, methods of communication and outreach, and volunteerism in town.

Constructed – This aspect includes the many built elements that transport and shelter people, goods, and information. Constructed infrastructure includes commercial and residential development, roads, and municipal facilities.

Every effort was made to integrate these three aspects throughout the Master Plan, in the general text and in the recommendations. By doing so it greatly enhances the benefits of each system by reducing potential conflicts and minimizing competition for resources.

COMMUNITY VISION

At the 2004 Community Visioning session, 30 members of the community spent the morning discussing issues facing the Town. Topics covered included transportation, natural features,

community facilities, housing, population and economics, history and culture, and land use, and many of the discussions brought about concerns and ideas which were incorporated into this Master Plan.

CHAPTER GOALS

What follows is the collective list of goals for Bradford--what the residents of Bradford want to achieve in our growing and vital town. These ideas have been laid out for all to see and work towards. Just as those who have gone before us, we can seize this opportunity to move and shape our little bit of the world and to make it a better place for us, our children and grandchildren. Herein lies a living document, one which will help us focus on the important issues of our times.

Establishing a set of goals is an important task that requires considerable public input and debate. The goals listed below are discussed in each Chapter of the Master Plan. Goals are general statements of ideal conditions and are intended to provide a policy framework and direction to the plan.

Population and Economics

- To use a scientific approach to identify future growth areas.

Historic and Cultural Resources Chapter

- To appropriately guide future Town development by identifying historic sites and resources that are integral to the community and character of Bradford.
- To develop measures for retaining the visual quality and character of the landscape of Bradford.
- To raise awareness of the historic resources in the community.

Natural Resources Chapter

- To preserve the rural character of the Town by protecting scenic vistas and open spaces, including limiting or mitigating lights, noise and odor emission.
- To educate the citizens of the Town of Bradford regarding Bradford's natural resources and instill the value of the natural environment in the youth of the Town.
- To protect valuable resources; including water, agricultural, forestry and geologic resources.
- To preserve valuable wildlife habitat in Town.
- To preserve and enhance natural recreational resources.

Community Facilities Chapter

- To continue with plans to renovate or build a new Town Hall and Police Department complex.
- To renovate or build a new Highway Department Garage
- To pursue the use of Town owned properties in the downtown area.
- To educate people about existing community facilities
- To increase the number of Fire Department and EMT volunteers
- To pursue the development of walking trails and bike paths.

Transportation Chapter

- To plan the future of Bradford's transportation system.
- Gather data to enhance Bradford's transportation network.
- To plan for future pedestrian, bicycle and transit systems

Housing Chapter

- To strive to maintain the diversity of housing types in Town.
- To ensure that Bradford residents will be able to continue to live in the Town if they so choose.
- To improve the effectiveness of open-space residential development regulations in the Town.
- Explore methods to encourage energy efficient housing construction.

CONCLUSION

The Master Plan is an advisory document that outlines the kind of town Bradford is now and the kind of town the residents would like it to be, keeping in mind its importance as a community in central New Hampshire. It describes us today, forecasts our shared vision, and defines what we need to do over the next several years.

Most importantly, we can see what we can achieve and, by committing it to paper for the world to see, what our plan is for the future. It is to be a living document helping us to focus on the important issues of our times.

MAPS

One map accompanies this chapter, the Base Map.