

Town of Chester, NH CTAP Community Planning Road Map



**Prepared for the I-93
Community Technical Assistance Program**

**Adopted by Chester Planning Board
May 6, 2009**

Introduction

The development of this **Community Planning Road Map** is part of the I-93 Community Technical Assistance Program (CTAP). The CTAP program is a New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) **5 year** initiative to assist **26 communities** that will be affected by the rebuilding and expansion of Interstate 93. These 26 communities include: Allenstown, Atkinson, Auburn, Bedford, Bow, Candia, Chester, Concord, Danville, Deerfield, Derry, Dunbarton, Fremont, Goffstown, Hampstead, Hooksett, Hudson, Litchfield, Londonderry, Manchester, Pelham, Raymond, Salem, and Sandown (see following Attachment A, CTAP area map).

The purpose of CTAP is to promote beneficial patterns of growth among all 26 communities to minimize the negative effects of growth on community services, open space, school systems, traffic, environmental quality, and existing residential and commercial development. More information about the CTAP program is available at the NH DOT website at: www.nhctap.com and in the attached CTAP brochure.

CTAP is coordinated by NH DOT, four of the state's regional planning commissions (Central, Nashua, Rockingham and Southern New Hampshire), as well as a number of non-governmental organizations such as the Society for Protection of New Hampshire Forests as directed by a CTAP Steering Committee made up of representatives from each of these groups.

CTAP consists of three main planning stages:

1. **Community Planning Assessment**
A questionnaire designed to help communities determine where they are on the planning curve and where their current planning and zoning will take them in the future.
2. **Visioning and Planning**
The process in which a community pictures the future it wants and plans how to achieve it.
3. **Implementation**
Utilizing the community assessment and existing community plans actions are developed and implemented that move the community forward to its ultimate vision.

Currently, the CTAP program is moving into the Visioning and Planning and Implementation stages via the **CTAP Community Planning Road Map**. The CTAP Community Planning Road Map is designed to engage communities in evaluating how they can achieve their planning goals using the planning products, resources and services available to them through the CTAP program.

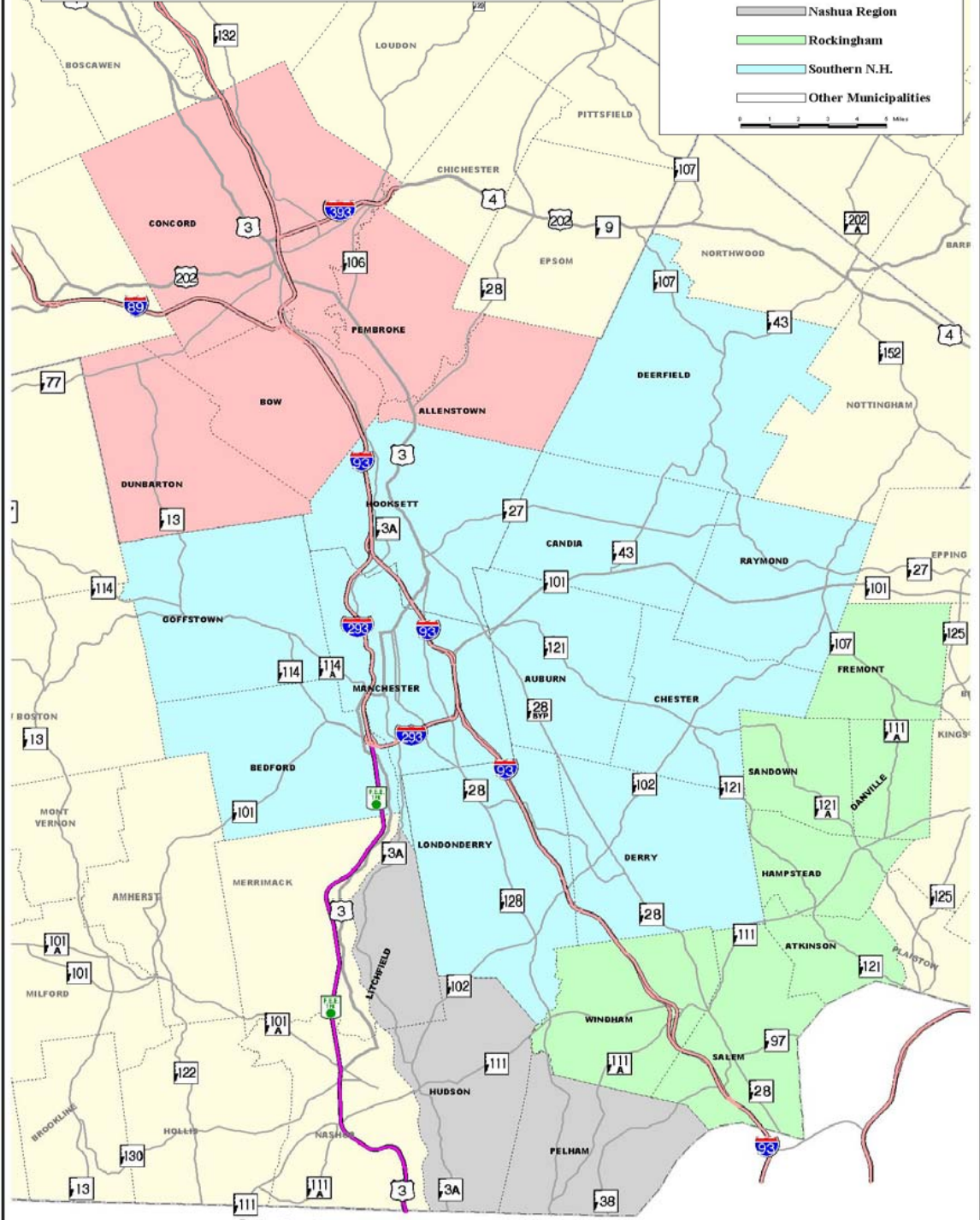
The Community Technical Assistance Program Dealing with Growth

New Hampshire DOT
 Department of Transportation

LEGEND
 Study Municipalities by Regional Planning Commissions

- Central N.H.
- Nashua Region
- Rockingham
- Southern N.H.
- Other Municipalities

0 1 2 3 4 5 Miles



MASSACHUSETTS i:\mapping\projects\specialty\maps\corridorstudy\ctap.apr

This **CTAP Community Planning Road Map** prepared for the Town of Chester identifies and sets forth recommendations and priority actions to guide the town's current and future participation in the CTAP program.

Because Year One of the CTAP program is nearing completion (Year 1 of the program officially ends as of April 2009), this Community Planning Road Map is designed to guide and help assist the Town of Chester in applying for future CTAP grant funds and utilizing future CTAP resources.

Road Map Planning Process

Development of the CTAP Community Planning Road Map consists of three simple steps:

1. Initial Community Engagement Meeting

This meeting is held in each community to: (1) reintroduce CTAP to community officials; (2) evaluate CTAP products that have been developed for each community to date; and (3) develop a prioritized action plan for the community.

2. Road Map Planning Process

Communities select either the "Plan A" or "Plan B" planning process:

- Plan A: Consists of a pre-meeting review and screening of the Community Planning Assessment; facilitating a public workshop to evaluate recommendations; and developing an action plan.
- Plan B: Consists of an internal review process in which town officials, planning board members, the regional planning commission, CTAP representatives and planning commissioners met to complete a Road Map Plan for the community.

3. Concluding Presentation

The purpose of the concluding presentation is to present the CTAP Community Road Map to the public at an all boards meeting and to describe what it consists of and how it can be implemented.

Chester's CTAP Community Planning Road Map

The Town of Chester's Community Planning Road Map is provided in the following chart. A summary of the Road Map and how it was developed follows.

TOWN OF CHESTER, NH COMMUNITY PLANNING ROADMAP

Assessment

Completed

- Community Planning Assessment
- Enhanced GIS-based Information
- Conservation Commission Institute
- Open Space Assessment
- Build Out Study

In Progress

- Land Use/Transportation Connection
- Open Space Plan
- Impact Fees (CTAP Discretionary Grant)

Future

- Economic Development Assessment
- Agricultural Commission/Audit

Visioning/Planning

Completed

- Community Master Plan Survey
- Community Profile/Visioning

In Progress

- Master Plan Update
- Source Water Protection Plan
- Wildlife Habitat Audit
- Workforce/Affordable Housing

Future

- Open Space Planning
- Economic Development Plan
- Energy Plan
- Transportation Plan

Implementation

Short Term (1-3 Years)

- Economic Development Plan (Collaborative CTAP Grant)
- Alternative Traffic Solutions for Downtown (Target CTAP Grant)
- Downtown Master Plan (Target CTAP Grant)
- Natural Resource Inventory
- Historic Preservation Plan
- Agricultural Audit/Prime Soils
- Housing Needs Assessment/Affordable Housing
- Stormwater Management Inventory

Tentative Schedule of Plans 3 - 5 Years

- Dark Sky Ordinance
- Overall Town-wide Traffic Impact Study
- Ongoing Open Space Committee
- Agricultural Commission
- Riparian Buffer Regulations

Note: Blue highlighted text indicates that these projects are currently being or will be addressed through CTAP program resources

Developing Chester's Community Planning Road Map

In developing Chester's CTAP Community Planning Road Map, town officials selected the "Plan B" road map planning process. The "Plan B" road map process consisted of a the SNHPC working with the Chester CTAP committee to review the Community Planning Assessment (see following Executive Summary and list of recommendations below as well as the following Impact/Feasibility Grid) to create the Road Map. This Road Map was then presented to the planning board and the public as part of a concluding presentation held on May 6, 2009, at which time the Chester Planning Board adopted the Road Map recognizing that it is a living document and subject to change.

The following Chester Planning Board members, town staff, Chester CTAP representative, and staff of the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission participated at the Road Map meeting held at the Chester Town Offices on March 11, 2009:

Cynthia Robinson, Town Planner
Brian Sullivan, Chairman of PB
Evan Sederquest, Vice Chairman PB
Andrew Hadik PB
Liz Richter PB
Chuck Myette, Conservation Commission
Charlotte Lister, Zoning Board of Adjustment
Jack Munn, SNHPC Chief Planner
Rachel Kelly, SNHPC Associate Planner

As a result of the workshop, the following important key recommendations for the Town of Chester were identified and discussed and included:

- Develop an Economic Development Plan
- Establish an Agricultural Commission; conduct an Agricultural Audit/Inventory; and develop farmland protection program/strategies.
- Seek grant funds to conduct an affordable housing study, including consideration of Inclusionary Housing Ordinance and other affordable housing strategies and regulations.
- Adopt Source Water Protection Plan and update Groundwater Aquifer Protection regulations.
- Develop zoning which would support village areas.
- Consider mixed use development on the same lot.
- Develop and implement impact fees.
- Update Open Space Plan
- Master plan update
- Dark Skies ordinance
- Energy Conservation Programs
- Natural resource inventory
- Elderly tax exemptions
- Traffic calming and road standards

Amongst these recommendations some projects were already nearing completion or were already well underway. After it was determined that certain projects did not need funding from CTAP, the remaining recommendations were categorized based on their feasibility and the impact they would have on the town.

A summary of all the CTAP work products completed for the Town of Chester to date, include the Community Planning Assessment; enhanced GIS-based information (land use and aerial photo mapping); build-out studies, Conservation Commission Institute workshops, and the recent open space planning assessment prepared by the Society for Protection of New Hampshire Forests (SPNHF). CTAP services to be provided to the town in the near future include a power point presentation on the connection between land use and transportation.

IMPACT: How much will it matter?	High	Integrate stormwater into subdivision regulations		
	Moderate	Zoning for village area/mixed use Develop an Economic Development Plan Prime wetlands/ natural resources inventory		
	Low	Update Open Space plan with wildlife inventory and zoning	Dark Skies ordinance	
		LOW	Moderate	High

FEASIBILITY: How possible is it in our community? 

Key Elements of Chester’s CTAP Community Planning Road Map

Chester’s CTAP Community Planning Road Map key recommendations have been sorted by their levels of impact on the town and feasibility. Each recommendation is discussed by the committee and given an estimated level of impact and feasibility by using the above grid. After each recommendation was ranked one recommendation project was chosen to be the focus and recipient of CTAP monies.

The Town of Chester plans to use the \$10,000 CTAP Collaborative Grant funds to create an economic development plan and the \$10,000 CTAP Target grant for downtown master plan and alternative traffic solutions for downtown. Available funding from the Town’s \$15,000 CTAP Grant will be used in the development of traffic and recreation impact fees for the town. A summary of currently available CTAP programs, services and resources is provided in the following insert.

COMMUNITY TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

CTAP: helping communities in the I-93 corridor to proactively plan for growth



The **Community Technical Assistance Program (CTAP)** provides resources and tools to help NH communities take a proactive role in achieving the future they desire. CTAP is designed to assist communities with the changes that will arise from the I-93 expansion as well as ongoing growth in the region. By taking a proactive approach to planning, CTAP helps communities to minimize the negative effects of growth on community services, remaining open space, schools, traffic patterns, environmental quality, and existing residential & commercial development.



The CTAP process follows three main stages, each with its own set of programs and resources. The first stage is **Assessment**, which helps communities to determine where they are and where their current planning and zoning will take them in the future. Once assessments have been made, communities can use this information to begin the second stage, **Visioning and Planning**. Visioning is the process in which a community pictures the future it wants and plans how to achieve it. The final stage of the CTAP process is **Implementation**. Implementation takes the assessments and plans that have been developed and turns them into actions that move the community towards its ultimate vision.

ASSESSMENT PROGRAMS

Assessment is the first stage in the CTAP process. It helps communities to determine where they are and where their current planning and zoning will take them in the future.

Community Planning Assessment ~ an expert analysis of your community's current planning status and a roadmap to help you make the best use of CTAP programs. Assessments review a wide range of information including existing zoning and regulations, capital improvement plans, open space plans, and master plans.

Economic Assets Profile ~ an inventory of local assets is key to a solid economic development plan. This program will inventory all assets in your community and incorporate additional data to provide a regional snapshot that will help formulate a long range strategic economic plan.

Community Build-out Analysis and Alternatives ~ using enhanced GIS, this program provides build-out views of your community based on current zoning regulations as well as alternative scenarios under different zoning options. These community analyses will be combined to show how the entire region will be affected by the I-93 expansion and local growth decisions.

Open Space Assessment ~ the Regional Planning Commissions and the Society for the Protection of NH Forests (SPNHF) will work with your community to identify and map land that should remain undeveloped and create ecologically, financially, and legally viable strategies for the protection of these lands.

Enhanced GIS-based Information ~ using the latest land use and conservation GIS data, this program will prepare an updated Natural Services Network for the CTAP region that identifies critical natural services such as water supply, flood control, forestry and agricultural soils, and wildlife habitat. Your community can then use this information to guide both development and conservation practices.



<flip over>

VISIONING & PLANNING PROGRAMS

Once assessments have been made, communities can use this information to begin Visioning and Planning. Visioning is the process in which a community pictures the future it wants and plans how to achieve it.

Transportation & Land Use Integration Planning ~ this program assists communities in developing a better way to integrate and deliver transportation and land-use planning in and across local and regional master plans.

Open Space & Conservation Planning ~ by identifying open space locations and recommending methods to preserve them, this program will assist your community in improving, enhancing, or creating an open space plan that fits seamlessly into your Master Plan.

High Priority Natural Resource Protection Plan ~ using zoning, regulatory, and voluntary techniques that have worked elsewhere, this program provides the most up-to-date methods to protect high-priority natural resources identified in your Open Space Plan. A public outreach and education component is available to help others see the value of future land use planning.

Agricultural Resources Assistance ~ training and startup technical assistance is available through CTAP for newly formed Local Agricultural Commissions, whose purpose is to promote, protect, and enhance local agriculture and agricultural resources. In addition, a mini-grant program can help your community to create an Agricultural Commission or develop and implement work plans for an established Commission.

Local Government Workshops ~ designed for 3-4 towns to identify and discuss common planning problems and solutions, including those that cross regional boundaries. Workshop topics can be geared to your specific needs.

Conservation Commission Institute ~ a year long series of regional training sessions for those serving on Conservation Commissions. Topics vary based on community needs, but may include land conservation, support for working landscapes, and preservation of local agriculture. A regional environmental protection roundtable will be established to encourage communication, education, and a regional approach to environmental issues.



IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS

The final stage of the CTAP process is Implementation. Implementation takes the assessments and plans that have been developed and turns them into actions that move the community towards its ultimate vision.

Innovative Training for Local Government Officials ~ this program provides your local government officials with customized training on topics that address the interests and needs of your community. Innovative delivery methods will be utilized, including discussion boards, post-training support, customized 1-on-1 training, and peer-to-peer training.

Discretionary/Targeted Local Funding ~ your community has access to upwards of \$10,000 for activities that are consistent with CTAP goals but not already covered by CTAP funding. Your local Regional Planning Commission will counsel you on how the funds may be spent.

Local CTAP Collaborative Grants ~ funding is available for two or more local governments to pursue a collaborative project that addresses an immediate concern to their communities and helps to achieve the broad goals of CTAP.

Grant Writing Assistance ~ a Grant Resources Guide, grant workshops, and grant consultation are available to help you prepare proposals for non-CTAP grants that support goals & objectives identified in the CTAP strategic planning process.

Affordable Housing Initiatives ~ the Inclusionary Zoning Implementation Program (IZIP) was created by the NH Housing Finance Authority to provide communities with direct technical assistance grants to address shortages in workforce housing by developing and adopting inclusionary zoning ordinances. CTAP funds will be used to leverage IZIP technical assistance for CTAP communities on a competitive basis.



Executive Summary

This report is a summary of the CTAP Community Planning Assessment and Community Planning Assessment Questionnaire. This questionnaire is attached at the end of the Executive Summary.

History and Purpose:

The Community Technical Assistance Program (CTAP) is in the second year of a five-year process. The New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NH DOT) initiated CTAP to provide support to communities projected to experience growth as a result of the Interstate 93 Expansion Project which stretches from Salem to Concord. The goal of the first phase of the program is to conduct Community Planning Assessments of those municipalities designated by the NH DOT as most likely to be affected by the expected increase in population. There are 26 CTAP-designated communities along the I93 corridor and a Community Planning Assessment has been conducted for each town. Eleven of these municipalities are located within the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission Region and include Auburn, Bedford, Candia, Chester, Deerfield, Derry, Goffstown, Hooksett, Londonderry, Manchester, and Raymond. The primary purpose of the Community Planning Assessment is to identify the policies and regulations these municipalities currently have in place to effectively prepare and manage growth.

Process:

The Community Planning Assessment consists of more than 100 questions. The survey is centered around the following four major planning themes:

- Theme A. – Community Infrastructure and Regional Cooperation
- Theme B. – Environmental Protection, Land Use, and Open Space
- Theme C. – Downtowns, Village Centers, and Community Vitality
- Theme D. - The Local Economy

The CTAP Steering Committee determined that the questions developed from these themes should address most of the growth concerns of municipalities affected by the Interstate 93 Expansion Project. The attached Community Planning Assessment for the Town of Chester, New Hampshire was completed through a review by Town officials, Planning Board members, and staff at the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission. The results are intended to provide community leaders and municipal officials with a basis to make decisions concerning the implementation of policies to address potential growth issues. These results are identified in this Executive Summary.

Findings:

The major planning needs and weaknesses identified by the Community Planning Assessment prepared for the Town of Chester, New Hampshire are listed as follows:

Key Recommendations:

- 1. Establish and implement traffic calming techniques where feasible.**
- 2. Assure that road standards reflect the character and topography of the community in terms of slope and sight distance.**
- 3. Consider creating a Village Master Plan.**
- 4. The town should create an Economic Development Plan**
- 5. The town should provide tax incentives for small business to locate in the community center.**

6. **Amend the zoning ordinance to protect lands appropriate for agriculture and forestry through lot size requirements.**
7. **Conduct an Agricultural Inventory and establish an Agricultural Commission.**

CTAP COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT REPORT

Part I

Introduction

The Community Technical Assistance Project (CTAP) was implemented in an attempt to help member communities grapple with potential growth issues due to the expansion of Interstate 93. The first phase of the five-year process was to conduct Community Planning Assessments of those municipalities most likely to experience growth due to the expansion of I-93. The ultimate goal of the Community Planning Assessment process is to determine whether communities have policies and regulations in place to manage potential growth effectively.

The I-93 expansion is projected to last until 2012. In an effort to minimize the effects of potential growth, the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NH DOT) identified 26 municipalities stretched out along the I-93 as areas most likely to be impacted.

Some of the potential growth impacts that the CTAP communities could experience include, increased population, traffic, and a greater demand for housing. Consequently, if growth does occur in some or all of these areas, increased demand in municipal services across the board will be expected. CTAP communities will have to plan accordingly.

More than 100 questions were developed by professional planners and municipal officials involved in the CTAP process in an effort to determine if CTAP communities have policies and regulations in place to adequately address potential growth issues. These assessment questions were answered by reviewing existing town web sites, ordinances, regulations and city policies. The assessment questions were also answered with assistance from the municipal planners and other officials in each community.

Many of the assessment questions provide insight as to the status of the community's growth policies and the vision of the CTAP community towards its future development. The questions deal with many different planning issues including land use and mixed-use policies, zoning, minimum-lot requirements, historical preservation, open space, environmental protection, housing, water quality, economic development, and transportation. Furthermore, the assessment is designed to gauge the level at which public participation is present in each of the communities.

Prior to the publication of this report, municipal officials and Planning Board members of the Town of Chester were asked to review the preliminary findings of the community planning assessment and any possible growth issues that may have come to light as a result of the survey. This was accomplished at a regular scheduled meeting of the Chester Planning Board. The assessment questions provided discussion venues where municipal officials and planning board members could voice concerns and ask questions.

In developing this report, the SNHPC considered the insights, concerns, and recommendations offered, as well as other communications provided throughout the process and has included these where appropriate. As a result, this report should be viewed as a starting point or as a guide for future planning activities and goals. A copy of the Community Planning Assessment prepared for Chester is attached.

Theme A

Community Infrastructure and Regional Cooperation

The purpose of this theme is to determine how CTAP communities have planned for the future in terms of the provision and funding for municipal services. This may include new facilities and other infrastructure improvements to help meet these needs. In addition, Theme A considers how effective CTAP communities have been, and will be, regarding regional cooperation with other local municipalities in an effort to better serve constituents. Special attention is given to communication strategies and cooperation initiatives between communities within the region.

Theme A generated 42 questions dealing with the funding and delivery of municipal services, regional cooperation among local governments, housing, and transportation.

The Steering Committee identified a number of broad goals that CTAP-designated communities should strive to accomplish. These goals are outlined below:

Goals

- Promote the establishment of consistent funding approaches to help pay for improved and expanding public infrastructure and services. Local governments should make certain that their funding strategies are adequate to meet the new level of service provision to meet projected growth needs.
- Evaluate the need for regional cooperation between local governments. Regional approaches can often embellish the delivery of public services and environmental quality, avoid the possible duplication of services, and better allocate financial resources.
- Plan for an adequate supply of housing. The housing stock should reflect local needs and priorities and include housing for a range of income levels.
- Implement strategies to promote safe and efficient multi-modal transportation systems.

Findings:

- **The Town of Chester regularly participates in mutual aid agreements for fire and police services.**
- **The last Capital Improvements Program (CIP) was adopted in 1996; the SNHPC is currently working on a new CIP for the Town of Chester.**
- **No TIF districts or CROP zones exist in the Town of Chester.**
- **The Town of Chester currently provides tax exemptions for the elderly.**
- **New amendments to zoning ordinance, (article 6) are being developed to addresses inclusionary and workforce housing.**
- **Chester's road standards do not reflect the character and topography of the community in terms of slope and sight distance.**
- **Roadway standards do not vary depending on anticipated traffic volumes.**

- **Chester’s town regulations and transportation planning practices do not encourage traffic calming techniques.**
- **No access management standards currently exist in the Town of Chester’s land use regulations.**

Recommendations:

The Town of Chester could benefit in the future by considering TIF districts or CROP zones to help fund needed infrastructure improvements within specific areas of the community. While industrial and commercial growth in Chester is only incremental and should be weighed against effects upon town character and aesthetics, planning for future infrastructure is vital. The Town’s Capital Improvements Program is out of date and needs to be updated. The Town of Chester should consider setting some roadway standards to correlate with anticipated traffic volumes. Designing and implementing specific traffic calming techniques for the town’s regulations could be a good way to mitigate certain aspects of potential future growth.

Theme B

Environmental Protection, Land Use, and Open Space

The purpose of this theme is to determine how CTAP communities have planned for the protection of land in a way that is consistent and compatible with future growth trends. To achieve these goals communities must focus on future land use strategies and determine how these would help to promote the preservation of natural resources, open space, and environmental protection.

Theme B generated 38 questions dealing with natural resources, green infrastructure, parks and recreational opportunities, rural character, and the preservation of agricultural lands and forests.

The Steering Committee identified a number of broad goals that CTAP-designated communities should strive to accomplish. These goals are outlined below:

Goals

- Promote the preservation and protection of natural resources when addressing the economic needs of the community and region.
- Protect natural resources and the environment including ground water, aquifers, wildlife, and wildlife corridors.
- Establish and conserve an interconnected green infrastructure and ensure public access to open space, parks, and other recreational opportunities.
- Maintain rural character whenever possible especially forests and farms.

Findings:

- **Chester’s zoning ordinance allows innovative land use techniques such as Cluster Zoning, Phasing, and Impact fees. Article six of the zoning ordinance also establishes minimum densities to promote efficient use of land.**

- **The Town of Chester’s land use plans do not encourage traditional neighborhood development.**
- **The zoning ordinance does not allow backlots.**
- **Chester provides property tax exemptions for alternative energy installations.**
- **The Town of Chester is lacking a stormwater management ordinance.**
- **Chester has a Wetlands Conservation District and prime wetlands have been mapped and inventoried, but no regulations protecting specific prime wetlands currently exist.**
- **The town’s land use regulations do not utilize LID performance standards.**
- **The Master Plan does not consider protection and preservation of wildlife habitats.**

Recommendations:

As a recent change to the zoning ordinance, the May 2007 Town Meeting passed article six, Open Space Subdivision to reduce sprawl and protect the natural resources and rural character of Chester. This change should help to protect wildlife habitats and resources as well as promote agricultural sustainability. The town of Chester may benefit from LID performance standards as a result to existing water resource management regulations. In addition to this, the Town of Chester should take steps such as creating and implementing a stormwater management ordinance to protect lands against erosion and harmful runoff. Traditional neighborhood development should be a focus of the town’s regulations to preserve the unique rural aesthetic that Chester’s residents enjoy.

Theme C

Downtown/Village Centers and Community Vitality

The purpose of this theme is to determine how the CTAP communities have planned for the development and preservation of vibrant community centers which would include an extensive array of cultural and recreational resources. The overall intent is to enhance public participation by establishing areas for community activities around the downtown or common community village center which would add rural character and promote a sense of vitality to the village center.

Theme C generated 16 questions dealing with the development of village center districts and the promotion of walkable downtown areas in an effort to maintain the small town New England community tradition. Special emphasis was given to the development of main streets, historic preservation, and landscaping.

The Steering Committee identified a number of broad goals that CTAP-designated communities should strive to accomplish. These goals are outlined below:

Goals

- Develop or enhance downtowns and village centers through the reuse of existing infrastructure and the rehabilitation of buildings with historic value.
- Promote the development of walkable downtown areas which are consistent with historic patterns.
- Enhance Main streets and promote a small, New England town atmosphere.

Findings:

- **The center of Chester is the town’s traditional village center.**
- **The Town’s zoning supports the town center in various ways, but there is no Village Master Plan.**
- **The town does not have a specific infill development policy; however the recently passed Article Six addresses many density issues and open space concerns.**
- **Residential uses and mixed uses are allowed in the central village.**
- **No design guidelines for new commercial or residential development.**
- **Article Six outlines as one of its goals, the preservation of stone walls.**

Recommendations:

The Town of Chester could benefit from a village district zone and village master plan to give its town center proper form and function and preserve the New England small town aesthetic. Design guidelines would benefit future possibilities for mixed use and infill policies. Citizen participation should be encouraged in all planning initiatives through advertisements in local papers, town website, mail notice, and local access television.

Theme D

Local Economy

The purpose of this theme is to determine if the CTAP community has enacted policies that promote economic viability, foster a prosperous business environment, and support agricultural development. The development of a strong local economy should result in increased local employment opportunities and livable wages.

Theme D generated 15 questions dealing with the development of economic development strategies, commercial and agricultural development, and tax incentives to attract new business development.

The Steering Committee identified a number of broad goals that CTAP-designated communities should strive to accomplish. These goals are outlined below:

Goals

- Support sustainable and balanced economic growth that reflects the current tax base.
- Strengthen local agriculture and forestry through the support of related infrastructure and economic systems.
- Support the development of new jobs and livable wages.

Findings:

- **There is currently no Economic Plan for the Town of Chester.**
- **Chester is not a Main Street Community.**
- **Chester does not offer tax incentives for business to locate in the community center.**
- **There is no regulatory relief for business to locate in the community center.**
- **The Town of Chester has a Right-To-Farm ordinance (section 4.8).**

- **Chester’s zoning ordinance does not protect lands appropriate for agriculture and forestry through minimum lot size requirements.**
- **The community lacks an Agricultural Inventory and an Agriculture Commission.**

Recommendations:

The Town of Chester’s industrial and commercial growth is very minimal, and that’s the way the residents like it. Although there is no current large scale expansion of industries occurring in town, it may be beneficial for the Town of Chester to consider the creation of an economic plan to help mitigate the potential effects of future growth. This plan should also merge with the creation of an agricultural inventory to further the conservation of prime agricultural lands and existing farms. Tax incentives could be explored for businesses to locate in the community center, however growth should be controlled.

Summary

Overall Findings:

Key Recommendations:

- 1. Chester could benefit from adopting Traffic Calming Techniques where feasible.**
- 2. The town’s road standards should reflect the character and topography of the community in terms of slope and sight distance.**
- 3. Chester should develop a Village Master Plan.**
- 4. The town should have an Economic Development Plan.**
- 5. The town should provide tax incentives for small business to locate in the community center.**
- 6. Amend the zoning ordinance to protect lands appropriate for agriculture and forestry through minimum lot size requirements.**
- 7. Conduct an Agricultural Inventory and establish an Agricultural Commission.**

Chester, New Hampshire Community Planning Assessment Template

Theme A: Municipal Services/Facilities & Regional Cooperation

High quality municipal and educational services and facilities and effective regional cooperation and communication

A-1 Funding and Delivering Municipal Services and Regional Cooperation

Goals

- Assist local governments in establishing stable, consistent funding approaches for public infrastructure and services.
- Ensure continuation of strong municipal services and schools so that they continue to provide quality services and meet projected growth.
- Develop and support new methods of regional cooperation that enhance local government delivery of public services while ensuring environmental quality.
- Allocate financial resources on a regional basis.

Specific Assessment Questions:

Is your community a member of an RPC?

Yes, SNHPC

Do you have appointed commissioners who regularly attend?

Yes, Jean Methot and Cynthia J. Robinson

Is your community a participant in any mutual aid agreements for police, fire, water and sewer, solid waste, etc?

Yes, Fire, Police

Does your community participate in any regional service agreements, including SAUs?

Yes, SAU #82

Does your community participate in other regional municipal cooperative efforts?

No

Do you have an existing procedure for incorporating regional impact into the plan review process?

No

Does your community have an updated Capital Improvements Program in place and if so, when was the CIP last adopted?

Yes. Adopted September 1996

Does your community use Tax Increment Financing, community development funds, or Community Reinvestment and Opportunity Program (CROP) zones to provide infrastructure improvements in specific areas?

No TIF districts in Chester. No CROP zones.

Does your community have impact fees and if so, for what type of facilities/services?

Yes, Fair Share Contribution Ordinance is authorized under NH RSA 674:21(I), (m) as an impact fee ordinance and is adopted in accord with the provisions of NH RSA 674:21, NH RSA 674:16, and NH RSA 675:1(II). As used in this Ordinance, the words fair share shall mean an impact fee. This Ordinance shall be administered by the planning Board for the town of Chester. 14.2

Does your community charge exactions (or off-site improvements) and if so, for what type of facilities/services?

Off-Site Improvements, this ordinance shall not limit the authority of the Planning Board to require the installation or construction of off-site improvements as a condition of either subdivision or site plan approval. This ordinance shall not affect the existing authority of the Planning Board over subdivision or site plan review. 14.7

Has your community planned for the provision of future utilities?

16.2 Groundwater Protections

Does your community require underground installation of utilities?

Optional

Does your community have an outdoor dark skies lighting ordinance? If so, what ordinance is it a part of?

Yes

Are streetlights required or encouraged in any areas?

No

What long-range plans has your community made for meeting its future water supply needs?

Zoning Ordinance Article 16, Groundwater Protection

What are your current arrangements for septage disposal—does your town have a specified site and corresponding contract?

None. This is handled by private haulers.

Has your community planned for its solid waste and recycling needs?

Mandatory recycling and Transfer station with drop off facility. For glass, paper, metal cans, phone books, scrap metal, motor oil, propane tanks, batteries, TV's, computers, tires, yard waste, etc.

A-2 Housing

Goal

- Ensure an adequate supply of affordable housing stock for a range of income levels that reflects regional and local needs and priorities.

Specific Assessment Questions:

How has your community planned for future housing needs?

By recognizing multi-family housing as affordable alternatives to growing region, adding additional housing units to the total to allow for vacant units, recognizing Chester housing prices are not affordable to children coming back from college and are young professionals, inclusionary zoning, adaptive re-use ordinances, developing non-conforming lots, incentives for affordable housing 7.9, Calculation of Fair Share Housing

Are the population and employment projections within your Master Plan consistent with regional and state projections?

Yes, the population projections in the master plan and RCP gradually increase in the future and both have population totals within a close amount to each other.

Does the community's Master Plan reference and/or make use of the regional housing needs assessment in evaluating the housing needs within the community?

Yes, Housing Supply, Pg 46, 47, 48

Where within your community is new residential growth occurring?

Haverhill Road, North Woods region, north of North Pond and west of Raymond Road, Derry Road, Wells Village Road, South of Exeter River in the Eastern corner of town. Pg 126 of Master Plan

Do the community's land use regulations provide for a wide range of housing types (single-family, duplexes, manufactured homes, apartments, etc.)?

Yes

Are accessory apartments permitted/allowed?

No

Does the community's land use regulations allow multi-family (> or = 2 units per dwelling) residences?

Yes, See Article 6

Does your community have an age-restricted housing ordinance? If so, it is limited to 55+ or 62+?

Yes

Do your community's regulations encourage energy conservation?

Yes, illuminating public areas/walkways and utilize energy efficient lights Zoning Ordinance Article 15, 15.3.3.

Do your community's regulations encourage housing that meets disabled and/or universal design standards?

Yes, town's current building codes reflect the minimum legal handicapped requirements as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Has your community taken any steps (such as tax relief programs) to help senior citizens remain within their own homes?

Yes, elderly exemption.

Do your Master Plan or land use regulations define affordable and workforce housing? If yes, how are these terms defined?

Affordable, rented dwelling unit with annual gross rent which does not exceed 30% of 40% of median area income for very low income households or 65% of median area income for lower income households. Zoning Ordinance Article 6

Does your community have an inclusionary housing ordinance or provide bonuses for affordable and workforce housing?

Yes, incentive system for low/mod income cluster housing is adopted under provisions of RSA 674:21 – 1 (k) as inclusionary zoning use of other innovative land use control measures provided for RSA 674:21 are here by authorized as needed to accomplish purpose of this ordinance. Zoning Ordinance Article 6

What steps has your community taken to provide and preserve affordable and workforce housing?

See article 6

A-3 Transportation

Goal

- Promote safe, efficient, accessible, and diverse multi-modal transportation solutions for services and goods.

Specific Assessment Questions:

Do the provisions of the master plan and zoning ordinance encourage a continuous street network? How is the connectivity of new streets ensured?

Yes

Are cul-de sacs addressed (in the context of the street network of the town) in your regulations? If so, what aspects are regulated?

Yes. Maximum road length, accessibility limited to number of lots of buildings that will benefit from absence of through traffic and reduced speed and noise. (Street Systems, 4.5.2.3, Subdivision Reg)

Does the Planning Board permit design waivers for reduced pavement width and the installation of Cape Cod curbs?

Yes

Are dead-end streets permitted and if so, what is the maximum street length allowed?

Yes. The town requires 1,800 feet because Fire Department only has 2,000 feet of hose.

Does the community's road standards reflect the character and topography of the existing area in terms of slope and sight distance?

No

Do road standards vary depending on anticipated traffic volumes?

No, roadways generally conform as classified by RSA 229:5.

What is the community's policy for issuing building permits on Class VI roads?

Building permits are not typically approved for properties whose access is via Class VI roadways

Has the community considered bicycle or pedestrian transportation on a town-wide scale in the Master Plan or other planning documents?

Yes, it has been addressed but not put into action but will be addressed in future planning of subdivisions.

Do the land use regulations require sidewalks or bicycle paths or other pedestrian paths *within* new residential or commercial development?

No

Are trails or other pedestrian connections required or considered *between* developments in the plan review process?

No.

Do parking requirements in the community vary by use classification or zoning district? If so, what are they?

Parking requirements vary by use classification. For dwelling or manufactured house – at least two spaces for each dwelling unit. For industrial and manufacturing establishments there shall be at least one and one-half (1.5) parking spaces provided for each employee on the major shift. For commercial

retail establishments there shall be a minimum of five parking spaces established plus one parking space for each 400 square feet of selling space. For office establishments there shall be a minimum of one parking space per employee plus an additional 10% of said space reserved for visitor parking. (Site Plan Regs. Section 7, 7.10)

Does the community permit/ encourage or require sub-compact parking spaces?

Sub-compact parking is not mentioned in the off street parking requirements section of the town ordinance (Site Plan Regs. Section 7, 7.10)

Does the community's parking regulations include maximum as well as minimum parking requirements, i.e., setting a limit on the amount of parking allowed?

The minimum number for a parking lot is ten or more spaces (Site Plan Regs. Section 7, 7.10)

Do the community's regulations and transportation planning practices encourage the implementation of traffic calming techniques?

No

Do the community's land use regulations require the submission of traffic impact studies or analyses for new and enlarged developments? If so, when is a study required?

Yes, starts and brought up at beginning at first public meeting or the conceptual review, right away

Does your community encourage alternative transportation? If so, is this accomplished through the land use regulations or other means?

It is being encouraged through CART, 5 year planning process

If transit or other transportation alternatives exist, does your community encourage or allow transit-oriented development?

At present time there are no forms of public transit operating within Chester and the town's land use regulations do not encourage or provide for TOD, other than CART.

Does the community have access management standards? Are they restricted to a specified area in the community or to specified uses?

No.

Does the community have a memorandum of understanding with the DOT regarding driveway access on state highways?

No.

Theme B: Environmental Protection, Land Use, and Open Space *Strengthened protection and expanded access to natural resources and open space*

Environmental Protection, Land Use, and Open Space Protection

Goals

- Protect natural resources in harmony with meeting economic needs of the community and the region.
- Protect natural resources and environmental health, including ground water and aquifers, wildlife, and wildlife corridors.
- Establish and conserve an interconnected green infrastructure.
- Ensure convenient and nearby public access to open space, parks, and recreational opportunities.
- Maintain unique and diverse rural character of the community and region by protecting and preserving farm and forestlands.

Specific Assessment Questions: *Land Use*

Does your Master Plan have a vision chapter and a land use chapter?

Yes for both “Vision and Goals” starting on Page 3 and “Land Use” starting on Page 125

Has your community updated your Master Plan within the last five years? If not, how old is your plan?

Yes. The town’s master plan was last updated and adopted in August 2006.

In what ways is your zoning ordinance consistent/or not consistent with the recommendations and projected land uses in the Master Plan?

No. Town needs assistance from SNHPC on this.

Does your community’s zoning ordinance allow innovative land use techniques as listed in RSA 674:21? If so, which ones?

Yes. Cluster development (Zoning Ordinance Flood Plain Conservation District, 5.6.2) Phasing Impact fees. See article 6 for additional information

Do the community’s land use plans and regulations establish minimum densities to promote efficient use of land?

Yes, article 6

Does the community have different land use plans for villages, town center districts, other neighborhoods, and open, less dense rural areas?

No

Do your community’s regulations provide for a range of lot sizes? If so, what are they?

Areas designated as having poorly drained soils may be used to fulfill 20 percent of the minimum lot size required by town ordinances and subdivision regulations, provided that each lot shall contain a contiguous non-wetland area, at least one(1) acre in size, with contiguous non-wetland may contain “D” and “E” slopes. No part of areas designated as having very poorly drained soils, or bodies of water and/or “D” and “E” slopes, as defined by the subdivision and individual sewage disposal systems design rules (NH), may be used to satisfy minimal lot size requirements. 5.7.4.2. Lot Size Determinations.

Does your Master Plan and land use regulations encourage higher density development where water, sewer, and other infrastructure currently exist?

No

Does the community’s Master Plan encourage, and the zoning ordinance provide, for at least one or more zoning districts that allow a mix of residential and commercial uses?

Yes

Do the community’s land use plans encourage traditional neighborhood development or the development of new villages?

No

Does your community’s zoning ordinance allow backlots?

No

Does your community’s zoning and/or development patterns locate nonresidential uses along major roadways or are those uses concentrated at intersections of major roads in a “village” or node?

Along major road way and Dump Road

Does your community have an historic resources inventory? Historic district(s)? Demolition delay bylaw?
Yes, Historical Society has prepared a map and list, but has yet to complete an actual inventory

Are there any brownfields are located in the community and does the community have any local plans to redevelop them?

No

Does the community provide a property tax exemption for alternative energy installations per RSA 72:61-74?

Yes, solar/wind

Specific Assessment Questions: Natural Resources

What strategies and actions is the community taking to protect natural areas?

Conservation Easement

Does the community have a Natural Resources Inventory? If yes, when was the last inventory conducted?

Yes, SPNHF 2002 detailed NRI maps

Are there any local boards or commissions active in environmental protection?

Yes, Conservation Commission and Planning Board

Does your community participate in the National Flood Insurance Program?

Yes as listed in Zoning Ordinance

Does the community's land use regulations prohibit development within the floodplain and if so, how?

Yes, Section 5.6 Flood Plain Conservation District

Do the community's land use regulations require best management practices in its drainage, sedimentation and erosion control measures and if so, what examples are included?

Yes, Section 4.8 Erosion and Sediment Control Plan

Do the regulations require the submittal of drainage calculations and stormwater management plans?

Yes, Section 4.8 Erosion and Sediment Control Plan

Does the community have regulations for erosion and sediment control during construction as well as post-construction?

Only during construction

What storm interval(s) are required for drainage analysis calculations?

10 and 50 years

Has the community adopted a stormwater management ordinance?

No

Does the community have regulations for gravel excavating operations?

Yes

Has the community adopted a Wetlands Conservation District?

Yes (Zoning Ordinance 5.7)

Does the community have wetland buffer or setback requirements and if so, what are they?

Yes, Zoning Ordinance Table 2

Have prime wetlands been inventoried and mapped within the community? Are there regulations in place protecting prime wetlands?

Yes, prime wetlands have been mapped and inventoried, but no regulation

Does the community have an Aquifer Protection Ordinance?

No, but the town has a groundwater resource ordinance

What mapping source is the basis of the district?

Need planning board to answer this question.

Has the community developed a Wellhead Protection Program and local regulations?

No, Chester was selected for a source water protection study to be conducted by SNHPC FY 2007/2008.

Does the community have land use regulations in place to protect surface water resources?

Yes, but only the wetland protection regulations and setback requirements.

Does the community have Shoreland or Riparian Buffer regulation in place?

No

Does the community's land use regulations utilize LID¹ performance standards and/or encourage use of environmentally-friendly techniques and materials, such as porous pavement?

No

Has the community adopted the recommendations found in the Land Conservation Plan for New Hampshire's Coastal Watersheds, the Wildlife Action Plan, or the Natural Services Network? If not, would the community like more information about these plans?

No to the 1st question. Yes to the 2nd question.

Has the community adopted regulations to protect wildlife or wildlife habitat?

No regulations

What actions, if any, has the community taken in cooperation with neighboring communities to protect wildlife or wildlife habitat at the regional scale?

None

¹ LID is "low-impact development", a series or network of stormwater techniques and performance standards that utilize the natural environment to reduce the impacts of development.

Specific Assessment Questions: Open Space Preservation

Does the community have an Open Space Plan? When was the plan last updated?

Yes, the Open Space plan was prepared by SNHPC in March 2006.

Does the community's Master Plan consider the protection and preservation of wildlife habitats?

No.

Do the community's zoning districts require a minimum amount of open space in each development?

No

Do the community's land use regulations require developers to connect open spaces to existing greenways and other open space destinations within the community?

No.

Do the community's land use regulations allow/require/or promote conservation subdivisions? Are conservation subdivisions mandatory in any zoning district within the community? If so, what is the acreage requirement? Is a density bonus offered?

No.

Does the community's land use regulations require new development to consider existing natural landscape features in the design of the site?

YES, there is an active strategic lands committee which is a subcommittee of the conservation commission. There are local active land trust within Chester.

What funding mechanisms has the community approved to acquire open space? (For example, bonds, the dedication of current use penalty taxes, capital reserve fund or conservation fund for land protection and acquisition, other mechanisms)?

Bonds, current use penalties, DRED farmland protection grants

If your community dedicates current use penalties for land protection and acquisition, what is the percentage?

100%

Does your community have an open space committee and/or an active local land trust?

Yes, there is an active Strategic Lands Protection Committee There is no local active land trust within Chester. Some land held by Rockingham County Conservation Commission

Theme C: Downtown/Village Centers and Community Vitality

Vital, diverse, safe, and participatory communities with rural character, vibrant community centers, and a wide range of cultural and recreational resources

C-1 Downtowns and Village Centers

Goals

- Target and support new development and redevelopment of existing downtowns and village centers, reusing built infrastructure, and rehabilitating buildings of historic value.
- Promote walkable downtowns and villages consistent with historic patterns within the community and region.
- Maintain small community New England “feel” with vibrant community centers and main streets, and historic preservation of buildings and landscape.

Specific Assessment Questions:

Does your community have an established traditional compact center or village area? If so, how many are there and what are they commonly named?

Yes, Chester Center.

Does your community’s zoning support these areas?

Yes

Does your community have in place a Village Master Plan or Village Plan Alternative Ordinance?

No

Does your community have a policy to locate new public buildings near the community center?

No

Are there public places that encourage community gathering such as parks, central plains/greens, or community centers?

Yes, School, Post Office, General Store, Wason Pond Recreational Area, Community Center, Library, Ball fields

Does your community have an infill development policy² or ordinance in place?

No

Are residential uses and mixed uses encouraged or allowed within the central village or traditional downtowns area?

Yes

Does your community have a sign ordinance? What are its dimensional/ and other key provisions?

4.4 Zoning Ordinance must not distract from overall rural character of the town safety and welfare, not exceed 6 square feet, not more than 8 feet from the ground.

Has your community designated scenic roads? If so, how many and what are they named?

Shattigee Road and Hanson Road

² Infill development is defined by EPA as “a strategy for accommodating growth and preventing sprawl through greater density and efficiency in land use development.” Examples include rear lot development, redevelopment in existing developed areas, etc.

Does your community have design guidelines for new commercial and residential development? If so, are these guidelines advisory or mandatory?

No

Is the maximum size and scale of new development as permitted in the community's zoning ordinance an appropriate scale for the community?

Determined in Article 5, Zoning Regulations and Table 1 "Dimensional and Area Requirements.

Does your community's ordinance require the installation of street trees and landscaping for new and enlarged developments, both along existing roads and on roads to be constructed?

4.10 Landscaping and Planting

Does your community's ordinance encourage the preservation of existing trees within the right-of-way of existing and proposed roadways?

4.10 Landscaping and Planting

Does your community's ordinances preserve and enhance stone walls, both along the rights-of-way of roadways and across the landscape? If so, what ordinances are used to accomplish this?

Yes, mentions bonus under article 6

C-2 Vibrant Communities

Goals

- Support and encourage safe and diverse communities with a wide range of cultural and recreational resources.
- Foster an atmosphere wherein community members are actively involved and participate in civic life in their communities.

Specific Assessment Questions:

Are the citizens within your community active in community planning and growth initiatives?

No

To what extent are community residents and business owners aware of your community's Master Plan?

The town's master plan was recently updated in August 2006.

How does your community encourage public involvement and recruit new board members?

Primarily by posting public notices at town offices and library and on town's webpage. New board members are typically recruited by word of mouth and through ads in the newsletters and newspapers.

Theme D: Local Economy

Strengthened economic, business, and agricultural development that provides local employment and livable wages

D-1 Economic Vitality and Business Development

Goals

- Support sustainable and balanced economic growth and tax base.
- Support broad-based business development that provides local employment and livable wages.

Specific Assessment Questions:

Does your community have an economic development plan?

No

Does your community participate in the Main Street program?

No

Where does your Master Plan anticipate or specify new nonresidential development to take place?

No

Where is most of your community's new commercial or industrial growth occurring?

*Channeled into already developed areas, town center. (Do not promote it)
Near transfer station and the Dump Road.*

Is residential development permitted in retail or commercial areas?

Yes. Zoning Ordinance 9.1, Version of Existing Dwellings. Zone 1

Does the community provide tax incentives for businesses to locate in the community center or other priority areas, e.g. RSA 79E tax relief for downtown improvements?

No

Does the community provide regulatory relief for businesses that locate in the community center?

No

Has the community identified anchors (such as a post office or municipal building) which could be used to spur economic activity within the community center?

Yes, this is common knowledge.

D-2 Agriculture and Rural Working Landscapes

Goals

- Strengthen local agriculture and forestry by supporting related infrastructure and economic systems.

Specific Assessment Questions:

What strategies for protecting farmland are in your Master Plan?

Open Space and conservation efforts. Conservation easements can be used for these types of properties much like they are used for forested lands. Natural resource conservation Service available to assist communities trying to preserve farm and agricultural land.

How does the community's Master Plan and zoning ordinance define agriculture?

Flat clear terrain, good soils. Right to Farm Ordinance, Section 4.8 (Zoning)

Does the zoning ordinance protect lands appropriate for agriculture and forestry with a substantial minimum lot size that discourages single-family tract housing and preserves large sites for forestry or agricultural uses?

No

Does the community map the location of farms and prime agricultural soils?

Yes, NRI Soils Map, Farmland

Do the ordinances require HISS³ mapping or county soils where on-site septic systems are required?

No

Does your community have an Agricultural Inventory?

No

Do your community's ordinances require the mapping of prime soils for agricultural in development proposals?

No.

Does your community have any districts that are restricted for agricultural uses only?

No, whole town is zoned agricultural.

Does your community have an agriculture commission?

No, but the town has a conservation commission.

Does your community reference the right-to-farm law in its zoning ordinance?

Yes. Section 4.8 in general Zoning.

Other possible questions to ask the audience during the presentation of results

How much do you know about CTAP? Would you like to know more?

No response provided.

What planning tools would be helpful to your community?

A planner

What did you think of this survey, and how do you think the town could use this information?

No response provided.

³ HISS stands for high intensity soils mapping, a site-specific requirements for soils analysis.