

## **Chapter I Introduction and Goals**

*“Change is everywhere and yet there is no change. The streams still flow, the rose-colored clouds still drift in the blue sky, white mists rise from the meadows. All is as it was. Old names of families who settled the town remain as if no generations had intervened.*

*New names are coming in, replenishing where the old have disappeared. Fresh streams of energy and purpose pour in. People from distant cities settle here for their own vigorous or tranquil work. New homes are started upon the old. The torch passes from one to another. And so is justified at the end of a century and a half the vision of Sutton’s fathers who amid hardships and all of Nature’s opposition, incorporated this town.”*

*A Narrative History of Sutton, 1934*

### **MASTER PLAN PURPOSE**

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 Sutton. 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 Sutton’s road map for the first quarter of the twenty-first century and beyond. 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 Sutton.

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.

As this Master Plan was being written, it became evident that Sutton is at a crossroads. As incremental growth creeps from southern portions of the State and the City of Concord continues to evolve and expand as a regional source of employment, Sutton will continue to grow and face new challenges and issues. Those who contributed to this plan did their best to plan for such

changes and to provide appropriate strategies that will accommodate reasonable growth while maintaining the rural atmosphere. The Planning Board should carefully consider the recommendations included in the Plan and take appropriate measures to implement them.

### **SUTTON MASTER PLAN PROCESS**

The Sutton Master Plan is a Planning Board document, which is where the process originated. In 1999, the Sutton Planning Board decided it was time to update their Master Plan, which had not been done since 1988. In June 1999, a Master Plan Community Survey was mailed out to approximately 600 property owners. 195 surveys were returned for a 32% response rate. See **Appendix A** for the Community Survey results.

Once the survey results were compiled and analyzed, the Planning Board embarked on three year data gathering, mapping, and research effort for the various Chapters in the Master Plan.

In 2003, the Planning Board contracted with the Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission (CNHRPC) to assist them in completing the 2005 Sutton Master Plan. The Planning Board and CNHRPC drafted a schedule and a budget for the Master Plan creation, which was partially funded in 2003 with the majority of the project being approved at the March 2004 Town Meeting.

On July 27, 2004 the Sutton Planning Board hosted a public information 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 and complete a survey. Over 140 people attended the session and 50% of those in attendance completed the survey, the results of which can be found in **Appendix B**.

Each Chapter of the Master Plan was created by a Subcommittee, meetings of which were open to any resident, landowner, or business owner in Sutton. Once the Subcommittees were finished with their Chapters, the Chapters were submitted to the Planning Board.

The Planning Board, once they received the Chapter, would hold a publicly noticed hearing on the Chapter and receive comments and feedback from those in attendance. Once the public hearing was closed, the Planning Board would then make their own comments, recommendations, and changes before preliminarily adopting the Chapter.

Once all the Chapters were completed and preliminarily adopted, the Planning Board held a final public hearing on March 25, 2005 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.

## **CHAPTER GOALS**

What follows is the collective list of goals for Sutton--what the residents of Sutton 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, except for the Population and Economics Chapter, the Current Land Use Chapter, and the Implementation Chapter, which do not contain goals. Goals are general statements of ideal conditions and are intended to provide a policy framework and direction to the plan.

### **Historic and Cultural Resources Chapter**

- To obtain national and state recognition of important historical and cultural sites in Sutton through National and State Register listings.
- To obtain state and local recognition of important historical sites in Sutton through State and Local Marker placements.
- To protect and preserve historic structures of importance in Sutton.

- To ensure the proper maintenance, preservation, and protection of historic cemeteries.
- To support events, programs, and organizations that promote cultural events for Sutton residents.

### **Community Facilities Chapter**

- To meet the needs of town residents in an efficient and effective manner.
- To ensure that Town staff and users of the Town offices are conducting business in a safe, secure, and efficient building that meets their needs.
- To ensure that the Fire Department facility and equipment can meet the needs of the Department and community through long-range budgeting and planning.
- To ensure that development proposals address fire safety issues.
- Provide a high level of service to meet the needs of Sutton residents.
- To ensure that the Police Department facility and equipment can meet the needs of the Department and community through long-range budgeting and planning.
- To ensure that development proposals address safety issues.
- To ensure that the Highway Department facility and equipment can meet the needs of the Department and community through long-range budgeting and planning.
- To ensure that the Library building and equipment meets the needs of the community
- To provide services and resources that residents of Sutton are interested in.
- To ensure that the Transfer Station facility and equipment meet the needs of the Department and community through long-range budgeting and planning.
- To increase public awareness on the transfer station operations.
- To ensure on-going preservation and up-keep of the Town-owned cemeteries.
- To ensure the future burial needs of Sutton residents/families will be met.
- To proactively plan for school facilities in a timely manner.
- To use school facilities in an efficient and effective manner.

### **Natural Resources Chapter**

- To ensure that the soil resources in Sutton are taken into consideration when development proposals are reviewed.
- To effectively utilize spent excavation sites for conservation and recreation activities, where appropriate.
- To ensure that all activities taking place at an active or inactive excavation site is appropriate and follows all state and local regulations.
- To ensure that the water resources in Sutton are protected through voluntary and regulatory efforts.
- Provide for the protection of wetlands during land development activities.
- To meet the federal requirements for Sutton's participation in the National Flood Insurance Program.
- To ensure clean, safe, and available drinking and surface water for the residents of the Town.
- To ensure that land with steep slopes is developed in a way to minimize negative environmental impacts.
- To preserve scenic views from development that will negatively impact their scenic attributes.

- To promote the conservation and development of land in a manner that supports wildlife habitat.
- To protect those Species of Special Concern that may exist in Sutton.
- To ensure proper protections from the introduction and spreading of invasive plant species in Sutton.
- To ensure that Town-owned forest land is managed properly and is available for resident use.
- To promote good forest management throughout the Town.
- To have the Town identify, acquire, and maintain conservation land/easements in Sutton.
- Provide incentives for landowners to maintain their property as open space or conservation land.
- To encourage and promote the development and usage of trails within Sutton.
- To encourage the access to and development of recreational opportunities.

### **Housing Chapter**

- To encourage the development of accessory apartments that will diversify housing stock while retaining the town's rural character.
- To encourage the development of duplexes in order to diversify the housing choices in Sutton.
- To guide the development of multi-family housing within Sutton.
- To allow for the development of manufactured housing in Sutton.
- To allow for the development of housing for elderly persons within Sutton.
- Create a goal of reaching the future planning figure (87) to meet the regional share of affordable housing stock (190 total units).
- To encourage housing developments that protect and preserve open space and natural areas, support denser development, and adhere to the principals of traditional neighborhood design.

### **Transportation Chapter**

- Utilize traffic count data to identify areas that may become impacted in the future by development.
- To reduce the number of accidents in Town that may be caused by unsafe road conditions or the current transportation infrastructure.
- To ensure a safe, reliable, and efficient system of bridges that will meet the present and future transportation needs of the Town.
- To ensure the quality of all roads within the Town of Sutton, regardless of whether they are public or private.
- Protect and preserve the existing Class V gravel roads within Town.
- Preserve roads in Town designated as Scenic Roads.
- To encourage, support, and expand the Towns trail network.
- Discourage "scattered and premature" development along Class VI roads.
- To reduce the travel speed, as well as the volume, of motor vehicles on residential neighborhood and village roads within Town while increasing safety for pedestrians.
- To have adequate and safe parking areas in key locations in Town to encourage economic activity and ease of use and access to facilities and buildings.
- To ensure that transportation options and services are available to all residents of Sutton.

- Encourage the planning and development of a safe, accessible, and efficient regional and local bicycle route system for commuting and recreational purposes.
- To have town road construction standards that enhance the uniqueness of Sutton's current and future transportation infrastructure.
- Sutton should have a formal, comprehensive, and up-to-date road management plan.

### **Future Land Use Chapter**

- To partner with neighboring communities and local groups to enable Sutton to improve the quality of life for its residents and be better able to respond to issues which affect the Town.
- To become involved with state or regional groups, organizations, and agencies to form relationships and to take advantage of free or low cost services and information.
- To develop Zoning Districts that meet the interests of the public and protect the natural features and characteristics of the land.
- To develop Overlay Zoning Districts to provide protection to Sutton's natural resources.
- To ensure that proposed land development activities positively benefit the Town.
- To have signage that complements the historical and aesthetic look of Sutton.
- Encourage parking that will enhance economic vitality, personal mobility, and convenience while reducing costs, inconvenience, and environmental degradation.
- To preserve and enhance the desirable qualities of the community by establishing landscaping and screening design standards, which would be proportionate to the intensity of the proposed land use(s) and not diminish property values and the visual character of the neighborhood.
- Protect the aesthetic character of the community and to improve the quality of new developments constructed within Town.
- Consider enacting specific performance standards regarding lighting for non-residential sites that will meet the needs of the sites while protecting visual, environmental, and aesthetic goals.
- Ensure that all proposed non-residential development meets environmental performance standards.
- To identify potential concerns with land subdivision applications early in the process.
- To improve the land subdivision process.
- To improve the current Subdivision Regulations.
- To ensure that the most accurate data is available prior to making land use regulation changes.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Master Plan is an advisory document that outlines the kind of town Sutton 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. We need each and every community member's efforts to bring life to this document, to make this a reality!