

Town of Grantham, NH

DRAFT

MASTER PLAN

Prepared by the
Master Plan Committee
for the
Grantham Planning Board

Submitted
June 2005

The Grantham Master Plan Committee was formed early in 2003 and has generally met monthly thereafter. The Committee is an ad hoc group organized to prepare and present a draft Master Plan to the Grantham Planning Board.

The Planning Board has the authority to revise the draft, to present a proposed Master Plan to the citizens of Grantham at a public hearing, to receive and consider public comment, and lastly to adopt the final Master Plan by vote of the board.

The Master Plan Committee continues in existence and remains of service to the Planning Board until final adoption of the Master Plan.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
<u>FORWARD</u>	<i>iii</i>
Geographical and Historical Perspective	<i>iii</i>
The Master Plan Process	<i>iv</i>
I. <u>VISION</u>	I-1
II. <u>DEMOGRAPHICS</u>	II-1
Population	II-1
Population Growth	II-3
Factors Affecting Population Growth	II-5
Education and Income Levels	II-7
III. <u>NATURAL RESOURCES</u>	III-1
Community Values	III-1
Existing Natural Resources	III-2
Goals	III-8
Recommendations	III-8
IV. <u>LAND USE</u>	IV-1
Existing Land Use	IV-1
Build-Out Analysis: Key Findings	IV-2
Community Values	IV-3
Land Use Regulation Policies	IV-3
Land Use Principles and Proposals	IV-4
Goals	IV-9
Recommendations	IV-9
V. <u>TRANSPORTATION</u>	V-1
Transportation Mode Overview	V-1
Demographic Impacts on Transportation	V-3
Transportation Issues	V-4
Goals	V-5
Recommendations	V-6

VI. <u>UTILITIES & PUBLIC SERVICES</u>	VI-1
Water	VI-1
Sewer	VI-1
Electric	VI-2
Telephone	VI-2
Cable Television	VI-4
Internet	VI-4
Goal	VI-5
Recommendations	VI-5
VII. <u>MUNICIPAL FACILITIES & SERVICES</u>	VII-1
Town Offices	VII-1
Police Department	VII-3
Fire Department	VII-4
Emergency Medical Services	VII-6
Joint Communication	VII-8
Homeland Security	VII-9
Public Works	VII-9
Dunbar Free Library	VII-11
Planning for Capital Improvements	VII-11
Goals	VII-12
Recommendations	VII-13
VIII. <u>SCHOOL FACILITIES & SERVICES</u>	VIII-1
Grantham School District	VIII-1
Goal	VIII-5
Recommendations	VIII-5
IX. <u>CULTURAL, HISTORIC, & RECREATIONAL RESOURCES</u>	IX-1
Cultural Resources	IX-1
Historic Resources	IX-2
Recreation	IX-2
Goals	IX-3
Recommendations	IX-4
X. <u>IMPLEMENTATION & ACTION PLAN</u>	X-1
For Action in Year One	X-1
For Action in Year Two	X-5
For Action in Year Three	X-6
For Action in Future Years	X-7
For Action Throughout All Years	X-8
<u>APPENDICES</u>	
A. Community Survey	
B. Build-Out Analysis	

FOREWORD

The Master Plan looks forward, but takes stock of the past, to see where we are at present and to lay out goals and recommendations for the future. Thus we begin with a perspective on the Town of Grantham, and provide brief remarks to explain how the Master Plan is created and contributes to shaping our future.

GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Located in the western New Hampshire highlands, Grantham lies 10 miles east of the rich floodplains of the Connecticut River and 5 miles south of the Mascoma River. The boundaries of Grantham are largely the height of land of Croydon Mountain (containing the highest point in Sullivan County) in the west, the Montcalm/Prospect Hills to the north, and the lowland confluences of the North Branch Sugar River with its many tributaries to the south and east. The land here is highly variable in terms of terrain: mixtures of lowlands, upland terraces, steep slopes, hills, and mountain summits. Grantham is nearly divided in half by the combined south-flowing drainages of Stony Brook, Rum Brook, and the North Branch Sugar River. The town makes up nearly the complete headwaters of these three watersheds.

Settled in 1767 (when George Washington was 35 years old), agriculture was the dominant activity in Grantham for the first hundred years. Hilltops and hillsides were widely cleared for farming. A pattern of dispersed, low density residential housing and related farm buildings was associated with this agriculture. The first settlement near Croydon Mountain was located at the intersection of the Croydon Turnpike and the road connecting Grantham east to Springfield and west to Plainfield. After 1870, much of the nation's agriculture moved westward toward more hospitable farmland. At this time, other forms of commerce became important here. Grantham's development began to focus in the valley, near the present village area, utilizing waterpower for mills to service its lumber industry. Large scale lumber operations were conducted until the 1920s in several areas, including the land now occupied by Eastman.

With increased residential development and the decline of the importance of agriculture to the local and regional economy, the amount of land in agricultural use has continued to decline. In 1870, the town had 9,445 acres under cultivation. By 1953, prior to the growth of recent decades, only 1,030 acres were in agricultural use. Currently, active farming is practically nonexistent and much of past farmland is inactive or reverting to woodlands.

Transportation corridors in the past were limited to Croydon Turnpike, the roads to Springfield, and what is the present NH Route 10. Because Grantham was not on a railroad or a navigable river, the town was slow in developing. This changed with the construction of Interstate 89 in the 1960s, providing easy access for residents to regional employment centers, easier access to the region in general from other parts of

the Northeast, and modest opportunities for commercial development. In particular, the aesthetic value and recreation opportunities provided by Grantham's hills, forests, and ponds continue to attract year-round and seasonal residential development today.

The advent of Interstate 89 (and I-91 in Vermont) led to a boom in the Hanover-Lebanon area, and in turn brought dramatic growth and change to Grantham. From 1970 to 1990, Grantham experienced more growth than in any other 20-year period in its prior history. During those years, 881 permanent residents were added to the 1970 population base of 366, and 1,145 housing units were added to the 144 existing in 1970. The proportion of the housing units that were seasonal increased from 14% in 1970 to 56% in 1990. From 1990 to 2000 (but concentrated in the latter part of the decade), another significant period of growth occurred. Permanent resident population grew from 1,247 to 2,167, while the number of housing units increased from 1,289 to an estimated 1,518. At the same time, the portion of seasonal dwelling units declined from 56% to 34%, as more people chose to make Grantham their home community. The trends of the late 1990s are vigorously continuing to the present.

THE MASTER PLAN PROCESS

(Adapted from *Master Planning*, Technical Bulletin 3, NH Office of Energy and Planning)

As stated in New Hampshire statutes, RSA 674:2, "The purpose of the Master Plan is to set down as clearly and practically as possible the best and most appropriate future development of the area under the jurisdiction of the Planning Board, to aid the board in designing ordinances that result in preserving and enhancing the unique quality of life and culture of New Hampshire, and to guide the board in the performance of its other duties in a manner that achieves the principles of smart growth, sound planning, and wise resource protection."

The preparation of the Master Plan is one of the the major responsibilities of the Planning Board (RSA 674:1), and it should serve as an aid to the Planning Board in the performance of its other duties (RSA 674:2). The board may elect to undertake the job itself, or it may engage professional or other assistance in completing some or all of the planning elements. In Grantham, the procedure that has been followed involved the creation a separate Master Plan Committee, responsible to the Planning Board, to carry out preparation of a draft Master Plan for the board's consideration. This committee is composed of volunteers and continues to be of service to the board until the Master Plan has been adopted.

The Master Plan is both a reference and policy document. It should contain appropriate text and supporting maps or charts to present the recommendations of the Planning Board, plus it should offer guidelines for other community decision makers, including Grantham's citizens convened as the town's legislative body at Town Meeting. The plan should be the most complete source of information about current conditions and trends within the town.

Content of the Master Plan

As set forth in RSA 674:2, "The Master Plan shall be a set of statements and land use and development principles for the municipality with such accompanying maps, diagrams, charts and descriptions as to give legal standing to the implementation ordinances and other measures of the Planning Board.... Each section of the Master Plan shall be consistent with the others in its implementation of the Vision section.... The Master Plan shall include, at a minimum, the following required sections: ... a Vision section ... (and) a Land Use section ..."

These required sections are present in this Master Plan as Chapters I and IV.

RSA 674:2 lists other sections that may be included in the Master Plan, including Natural Resources (Chapter III), Transportation (Chapter V), Utilities and Public Services (Chapter VI), Community Facilities (Chapters VII and VIII), Cultural, Historic, and Recreation Resources (Chapter XI), and Implementation (Chapter X). In addition, this Master Plan provides an early section entitled Demographics (Chapter II), since the makeup and growth trends of Grantham's population are key elements in arriving at the content of the Master Plan.

RSA 674:3-III calls for the Planning Board to solicit public comments regarding the future growth of the town, in order to involve Grantham's citizens in the preparation of the Master Plan in a way most appropriate for the town. This has been accomplished by means of the Community Survey (Appendix A).

RSA 674:3-I indicates that the Planning Board may call for surveys or studies, and may review data on existing conditions and probable growth demands. The Build-Out Analysis (Appendix B), conducted for Grantham by the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission, is the result of the Planning Board carrying out the study and review function cited in the statute. Grantham's Board of Selectmen gave strong endorsement of this contracted study.

Adoption of the Master Plan

The Master Plan is adopted or amended by a majority vote of the Planning Board, after one or more public hearings (RSA 674:4). (Note that the Master Plan is not adopted by the town's voters at large.) The Master Plan is required before a Capital Improvements Program can be authorized and formulated (RSA 674:5). Under RSA 674:18, Grantham is not permitted to adopt a Zoning Ordinance until after the Planning Board has adopted at least the Vision section and the Land Use section of the Master Plan. However, in Grantham's case, the Zoning Ordinance has existed since 1990 (enacted as a result of the 1985 Master Plan), and it is amended by vote at Town Meeting from time to time.

Copies of the adopted Master Plan must be filed with the Town Clerk (RSA 676:6, II) and with the NH Office of Energy and Planning (675:9). The frequency of

amending or updating the Master Plan is addressed in RSA 674:3, II, where revisions to the plan are "... recommended every 5 to 10 years."

Implementation

Without implementation, the Master Plan has no value. Thus the success of the Master Plan in shaping future growth patterns and in influencing public policy decisions depends on the degree to which the plan is actually carried out by those responsible for its implementation. The last section of the plan (Chapter X, *Implementation & Action Plan*) consists of recommendations considered necessary to assure that the plan is carried out. These recommendations include amendments to the Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Regulations, and Site Plan Review Regulations, plus the adoption of a Capital Improvements Program.

Amended codes and ordinances are not the only means available to implement the plan. Other actions (e.g., land acquisition, construction or improvement of roads and public facilities, controlling road access, provision of public water sources for fire protection, and protection of groundwater resources against the distant possibility of a public domestic water supply) play a part in bringing about the community envisioned in the Master Plan. Education related to these topics, and the vision of Grantham as a whole, are key components in implementing this Master Plan.