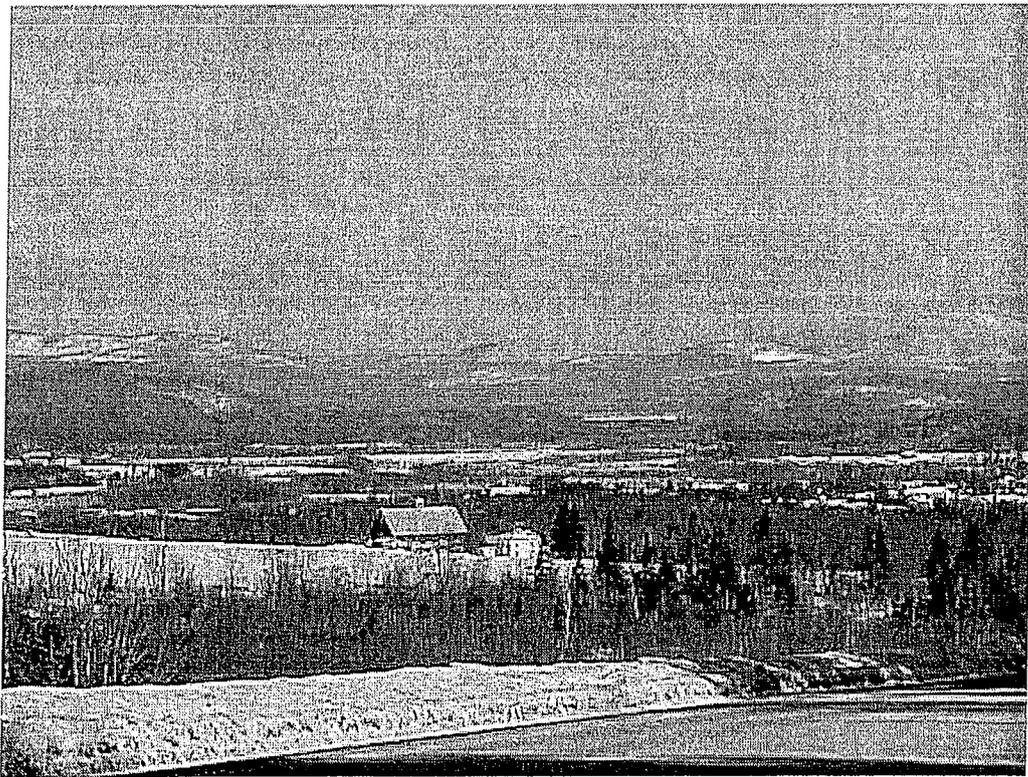
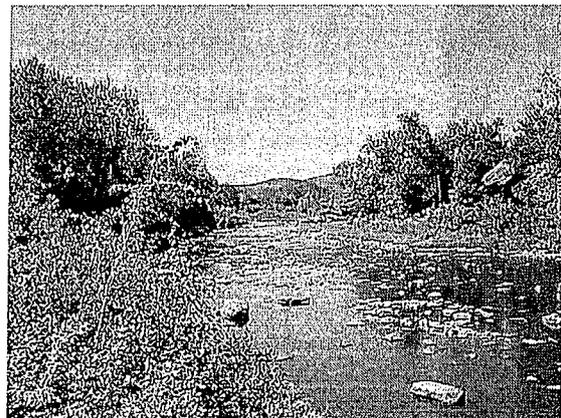


Town of Lancaster, NH



2011 Master Plan

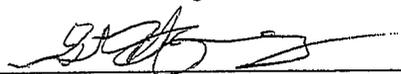


Lancaster Master Plan 2011
Adoption

Date adopted: 04-13-2011

Under New Hampshire statute RSA 674:1, the Lancaster Planning Board is responsible for producing a Master Plan to guide the orderly development of the community. The following Master Plan has been adopted by the Planning Board according to RSA 675:6 with the understanding that the plan should be updated at least every five years.

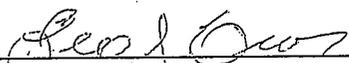
Lancaster Planning Board



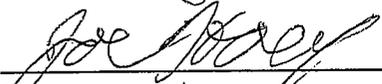
Steven Young, Chairman



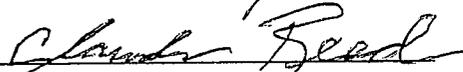
Justin Carter, Vice Chairman



Leo Enos, Board of Selectmen



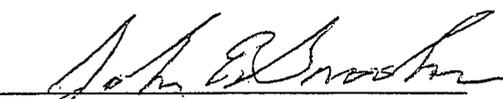
Joe Hoey, Member



Claude Reed, Member



David Rexford, Member

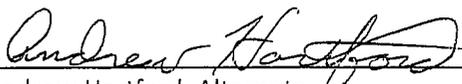


John Brooks, Member

Les Hilton, Alternate



Mark St. Pierre, Alternate



Andrew Hartford, Alternate

Allen Bouthillier, Alternate

The Lancaster Planning Board would like to thank the numerous Lancaster citizens and employees who have contributed to this plan. Particular thanks go to the members of the Lancaster Master Plan Committee, who worked diligently over many months to complete this document.

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Preamble/Vision Statement A Call for Planned Action

A Master Plan is a dynamic document that seeks to understand where we as a community are today ... and where we hope to be tomorrow. It is a document based on an evaluation of our town's assets, recognition of its problems (challenges); and more importantly, a proposal for possible solutions (opportunities).

A Master Plan must be properly understood in its role as a "guidepost" for defining the future and recognize that it is ---

- Not a legally binding document (like a regulation);
- Not a 'straight jacket' that prescribes a rigid and specific formula for achieving reforms;
- Not a zoning ordinance or map; and
- Not a panacea that will magically correct town problems

A Master Plan is a tool, designed to guide the town's officials, administration, zoning and planning boards, and the community-at-large, in its preparation and planning for the future.

The Master Plan is the result of many hours of effort. The committee members gave of their talents and time in making this document an effective tool for the future. Beyond their efforts involving research, analysis, and design (and lots and lots of healthy discussion), the committee members 'grounded' their recommendations in the following assumptions, which they believe are reflected in *Lancaster Master Plan 2011*:

The plan seeks to maintain and/or improve ...

- the 'quality of life' for the residents of Lancaster.
- the quality of drinking water supplies and aquifers.
- the economic foundation of the town.
- the 'rural character' of the town.
- the 'sense of community' among its residents.
- the 'uncrowded living conditions' and 'aesthetics' unique to the town.
- the 'peace and quiet' of the town.
- the 'natural and reasonable growth' of the town ... and
- the 'preservation of Main Street' and its historic nature.

The Master Plan cannot become a document that 'sits on the shelf'. Rather, in the deliberations of town officials, administration, and town committees, reference to the Master Plan should be commonplace. Every initiative put forth by the town should be reviewed in light of the Master Plan.

CHAPTER 1: SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RESOURCES

Challenges and Opportunities

1.1 The 2010 Master Plan Community Survey shows lack of industry and jobs is of greatest concern to the residents of Lancaster. The "sense of community" and "small town feel" in Lancaster was ranked very high of things residents like about their town.

1.2 Economic development is more than creating jobs and improving incomes. It involves recognizing new development opportunities while at the same time protecting Lancaster's quality of life. When compared to the rest of the North Country, Lancaster has proportionally larger employment in the health care, education, insurance, real estate and manufacturing than most of the region. Weeks Medical Center is by far the largest employer in Lancaster, followed by Country Village Health Care and the Lancaster School. Although the manufacturing industry is still a significant employer in town, in according to the State of NH's "Towns and Cities" website, in 2009 local manufacturers, combined, employed more than eighty; which is a twenty percent decrease from ten years before. According to the NH Economic Labor Market Information Bureau's website, the unemployment rate for Lancaster was 5.0% as of November, 2010 as compared to 8.4% for Coos County as of the same date. Retail trade in Lancaster has traditionally lagged behind the region, confirmed by the 2010 Master Plan Community Survey which noted a lack of competitive retail shopping facilities, especially for groceries.

1.3 Lancaster is well-placed to provide the infrastructure needed to attract new industry. There are many areas throughout Town that are suitable for commercial and industrial development. Most of these locations have the necessary infrastructure located on the lots or within an appropriate distance.

1.4 Reviewing the 1999 and 2009 "Town of Lancaster Annual Report" the net value of all property in Lancaster more than doubled from \$130,818,539.00 to \$284,336,840.00 between 1999 and 2009. The value of commercial/industrial buildings also increased 128% or \$26,153,090.00 in that time. Lancaster is well-poised to benefit from two areas of employment which are national growth industries in many areas: one is tourism, both ecologically and culturally-based, and the other is opportunities created by the ever-evolving telecommunications and renewable energies economy. Lancaster residents strongly support the expansion of home-based business, which has seen a huge increase nationally due to the revolution in communications technology. With the improvement of regional telecommunications infrastructure, these businesses should provide opportunities for Lancaster residents to enjoy a rural lifestyle while also enjoying the economic benefits technology provides. Realizing these opportunities will require continual regional improvements including cooperation in technical workforce education, improved transportation, and telecommunications infrastructure. White Mountains Regional High School and White Mountains Community College in Berlin continue to strengthen their ability to provide technical workforce eco-tourism education.

1.5 Lancaster's population is historically stable at around 3,500, but has seen consistent decreases over the last 20 years with 2009 population demographics of 3,264 as estimated on the US Census Bureau's "American FactFinder" website. The aging population and the exodus of residents after high school graduation pose significant challenges to the community. In 2009 38% of the population was older than forty-four; only 12.8% were between the post high school/college years of 20 and 34 yet 33.1% of the Town's population is listed as 19 and under. The largest age category was individuals between 35 and 44 (16.2%). Remaining age categories in descending order are age 60 and over (15.5%), 45-54 (14.9%), 9 and under (13.3%), 15-19 (10.5%), 10-14 (8.8%), 55-59 (7.6%), 25-34 (7.3%), and 20-24

(5.5%). The citizens of Lancaster are working to sustain the social and economic diversity of Lancaster and to promote positive changes to strengthen the economy.

Goal 1.1: To promote Lancaster as a favorable place to live and to preserve those characteristics that appeal to present residents.

Objectives:

- 1) Use 2010 U.S. Census data, when available, to determine demographic trends in age, income and employment so that citizens' needs may be better met.
- 2) Plan the orderly development and redevelopment of Main Street so that its beauty and historic character are balanced with the need for downtown economic development.
- 3) Promote and implement new planning techniques through zoning and site plan review that foster creative and attractive development and which are fairly and consistently applied by town boards. For example, encouraging rear parking on Main Street and maintaining the historical facade.
- 4) Develop a method for ensuring that all commercial properties are properly maintained and meet all life safety and health codes.

Goal 1.2: To provide quality employment opportunities for Lancaster's workforce that allows our citizens to remain in Lancaster while providing for their families.

Objectives:

- 1) Citizen volunteers and officials should continue to take every opportunity to participate in regional economic development, transportation enhancement and workforce education initiatives as they arise.
- 2) Strategies to attract new retail establishments to Lancaster should be developed with the help of local and regional economic development agencies.
- 3) Strengthen coordination of promotional efforts with the Coos Economic Development Corporation, other regional development agencies and regional chambers of commerce.
- 4) Work to attract non-polluting industries of appropriate size and scale to the industrial park and commercial/industrial zoned areas on Route 3 North.
- 5) Encourage the growth of existing businesses and the establishment of compatible new businesses in Lancaster.
- 6) Encourage local and regional economic development agencies to work together and share resources to maximize recruitment and expansion of business in Town.
- 7) Encourage Town boards to work with counterparts in area towns for economic development that benefits the region.

CHAPTER 2: HOUSING

Challenges and Opportunities

2.1 Lancaster is a community with a rich architectural heritage that distinguishes both its commercial and residential structures. However, the lack of available, adequate housing for all income groups and family sizes directly impacts the quality of life in Lancaster. The town should encourage policies that protect and enhance the present and future value of Lancaster's housing stock and maintain a fair balance of housing alternatives for all of our citizens.

2.2 The rental housing supply for the elderly and larger families is of particular concern to respondents to the 2010 Master Plan Community Survey. The condition of existing multi-family dwellings is also a concern. There is a need for more attractive, well-maintained multi-bedroom units, as well as for communal elderly housing. The current market rent does not support the provision of new, high quality rental housing. Entrepreneurial investment in rental housing is high risk, and management of rental housing is difficult.

2.3 Manufactured housing is permitted on individual lots in designated areas in all zoning districts. Manufactured housing subdivisions, considered to be an affordable alternative to conventional housing developments, are currently permitted in all zoning districts but the commercial/industrial district where it is available by special exception. In order to be an asset to the community, these manufactured housing subdivisions must have a pleasing design and a layout that is attractive for residents.

2.4 In the current agricultural district where large lot sizes and frontage requirements may cause the loss of productive land, clustered housing development is an option as a way of preserving prime agriculture soils and rural atmosphere. Under these zoning and subdivision provisions, extra building density may be offered where individual houses are grouped on smaller individual lots with the bulk of the parcel protected as common open space.

2.5 Compiled from NH's Office of Energy and Planning and listed on Lancaster's page of the State of NH Towns and Cities website, housing stock in Lancaster increased by about 4% from 1,553 housing units to 1,620 housing units between 1999 and 2008. Between 1999 and 2008 the Office of Energy and Planning estimates that the population of Lancaster was essentially stable. Multi-family units decreased by twenty-nine units during that time. Although the population is stable, the affordability and adequacy of multi-family housing stock is still identified in the 2010 Master Plan Community Survey to be inadequate to meet local needs. The need for elderly housing was identified as one of the greatest needs by the 2010 Master Plan Community Survey. There also was identified a need for more rental units, possibly due to the current economy and individuals' inability to afford their own homes.

Goal 2.1: Promote zoning regulations and town policies which offer incentives for residential development which compliments town character in the village and preserves open space in the rest of the town.

Objectives:

- 1) Offer incentives such as extra units when a developer will provide multi-bedroom units in village residential zones.

- 2) Offer incentives such as extra units for housing development which preserves open space in rural residential areas, including manufactured housing subdivisions.
- 3) Create an overlay zoning district with reduced frontage requirements and maximum lot sizes no greater than the minimum required for the provision of on-site sewer and water for all areas with prime agricultural soils.
- 4) Promote the sensitive rehabilitation of substandard and historic housing in residential zones by providing information regarding grants, technical assistance and private incentives to homeowners and landlords.
- 5) Develop specific design standards for Manufactured Housing Subdivisions which promote pleasing design and an attractive layout for residents.
- 6) Encourage utilization of available, in-town property for residential development.

Goal 2.2: Promote housing opportunities for the diverse needs of the population.

Objectives:

- 1) Use 2010 U.S. Census data to determine the number and range of household sizes in relation to the number of bedrooms in rental units. This will reveal what housing needs are.
- 2) Take steps to encourage the development of adequate rental opportunities for all income levels and family sizes through zoning bylaw revisions and by providing information about funding programs.
- 3) Offer density bonuses for new housing developments if the added units are for elderly housing and located in town.
- 4) Work with area providers of services to the elderly to determine the need for additional group residential units for the elderly and work to identify funding opportunities for such housing.

CHAPTER 3: TRANSPORTATION

Challenges and Opportunities

3.1 Roads: Lancaster's transportation network both ties the community together and links it to the outside world. Local streets and roads should provide safe, reliable access to work, schools, shopping, and residences. The location and quality of the local street system has a great impact on where development will occur, and transportation links with the outside world greatly influence the potential for economic growth. A safe and efficient road network is essential to the smooth functioning of the community.

3.2 Lancaster is fortunate to lie at the intersection of US Route 2 (east-west) and US Route 3 (north-south), two important transportation corridors in the North Country. Route 2 represents a major transportation route for not only Northern New Hampshire but Northern New England, while at the same time functioning as Main Street in Lancaster. It is a road that is used as much by local traffic as commercial. It incorporates residential, agricultural, tourism, forestry and commercial uses as it passes through Lancaster. Residents agree that traffic congestion and safety on North Main Street at the Bridge Street intersection is a problem at certain times of the day and year due to delays and difficulty entering Main Street from side streets. While these routes bring potential for economic growth, they also bring challenges of pedestrian safety, noise and traffic circulation problems on Main Street. Inappropriate development along scenic entrances to town, particularly Route 3 south and Route 2 east, are also concerns of many citizens. Results from a Road Safety Audit in October 2010, sponsored by North Country Council, identified a need for improvements to the North and South junctions of Routes 2 & 3.

3.3 Bridges: Eleven Town-owned bridges are inspected by the State Department of Transportation at least every two years with copies of reports forwarded to the Town. Two of the bridges (McGary Hill Road and Mt Orne Covered Bridge) are red-listed due to deficiencies. Both are part of the State Bridge-Aid program allowing for State funding along with Town matching funds to repair and replace. A third (Mechanic Street Covered Bridge) is red-listed due to height and weight limits.

3.4 Air Transportation: The Mount Washington Regional Airport is a fully authorized airport owned and operated year-round by the Mount Washington Regional Airport Commission. The airport could be a huge economic development asset in the region. The Town should work with the Airport Commission to help maintain and expand its current services in hopes of attracting new and expanded businesses and industries.

3.5 Bus Service: Currently there is local public bus service serving Lancaster. Most notably the Tri-Town Trolley bus service which provides transportation between the towns of Lancaster, Whitefield and Littleton and is managed by North Country Transportation, a program of Tri-County CAP. North Country Transportation also provides transportation to elderly and disabled citizens in the region. The current bus service is felt to be a needed asset to the Town and the region and every opportunity to expand it and make it a more profitable and sustainable business should be encouraged and supported.

3.6 Rail service: Ownership of the branch rail line which runs through Lancaster has now passed to the state of New Hampshire. The nearest freight rail service is in Groveton, connecting Montreal, Canada and Portland, Maine.

Goal 3.1: To provide a safe and efficient transportation system on both state and local roads within the community.

Objectives:

- 1) Future commercial and residential development should be planned so that Lancaster remains a walkable community, with attractive sidewalks in good repair.
- 2) State bridge inspection reports should be used to develop a regular maintenance schedule for each bridge with appropriate funds being made available to carry out any necessary repairs. The Town should also take advantage of any funding made available by the State of NH for bridge maintenance and/or replacement.
- 3) Local officials will work closely with NH DOT to come up with a plan for future improvements at the Route 2 and 3 intersections.
- 4) Encourage downtown employers to secure parking off Main Street for their employees during business hours.
- 5) Town officials should work with new and existing businesses to improve the efficiency and traffic flow both within and in the entryway to their parking lots and encourage shared driveway entrances on Main Street.
- 6) Make sure that Lancaster is kept informed of any proposed changes to sections of Routes 2 & 3 that pass through Town, especially the North and South junctions, and has an opportunity to present their own recommendations.

CHAPTER 4: REGIONAL COMMUNITY HEALTH

Challenges and Opportunities

4.1 It is difficult to discuss Lancaster's health care needs and concerns without recognizing its relationship to Weeks Medical Center and the numerous resources it brings to addressing the town's health care. Furthermore, Lancaster is central in developing a "regional health community" that encompasses the nine surrounding towns. These towns supply almost 90% of the patients to Weeks Medical Center and consist of Groveton, Maidstone, Whitefield, North Stratford, Dalton, Jefferson, Lunenburg, Guildhall and Gilman. The "Lancaster Regional Health Community" has a population of 13,000+ and covers approximately 375 square miles in both Vermont and New Hampshire.

4.2 The most recent analysis of the regional health care needs of the community was completed by the Weeks Community Needs Assessment Committee in 2007 (an updated survey is scheduled for 2011). Survey results were compiled and evaluated to identify information useful in understanding both the 'current health' of people living in our ten (10) communities and the risks to 'future health'. The evaluation of the survey results revealed the following:

- Alcohol & drug addiction, obesity in youths & adults and lack of physical activity are issues on community members' minds and although they are serious health problems, their cause can be societal in nature.
- The rise of incidents of cancer, heart disease and diabetes in the area is cause for concern and the availability and convenience of treating them locally is an issue on the mind of the community. Local treatment has been addressed with expansion of the WMC oncology department, the hiring of a cardiologist and focused care for diabetic patients.
- In 2007, retaining primary care physicians and mid-level providers was identified as a concern. This problem caused difficulty in scheduling timely appointments as well as receiving consistent care. In 2010, WMC has hired a full staff of primary care providers and implemented a same-day appointment program.
- Limited access to dental care and mental health services were identified and showed a strong need for improvement.
- Only one town in the regional health community has a pharmacy (Lancaster) and this makes it difficult for patients to receive their much needed prescription drugs.

4.3 On the positive side, the survey results showed ---

- Many of the health issues can be addressed through education and outreach (obesity, and addiction).
- The severe health issues can also be treated with some additional education and outreach in combination with medical treatment (heart disease and diabetes).

- Some organizational changes could alleviate other deficiencies in the region (access to prescriptions through hospital pharmacy and additional hours at clinic for primary care physicians).

Goal 4.1: To strengthen the acute and emergency care resources by promoting expanded collaborative ventures between the town and Weeks Medical Center - Acute Care, Emergency and Rehabilitation Outpatient Services.

Objectives:

- 1) Offer consultation and support in the modernization of the Weeks Medical Center facilities.
- 2) Promote educational opportunities for ambulance personnel to become certified paramedics.
- 3) Promote and support easier and safer access to the hospital's main entrance.
- 4) Provide for expanded and improved communication linkages in the development of high tech healthcare services.

Goal 4.2: To acknowledge the need for adequate health care professionals to serve all members of our community, particularly family practice and children/family specialists.

Objectives:

- 1) Assist in the recruitment and retention of health care professionals by promoting the town as a worthy and safe place of residence and a healthy setting for the rearing of children.
- 2) Support collaboratives which can enlist healthcare specialists to serve both the town and the region.
- 3) Address the shortage of health care professionals by supporting opportunities for training and activities which encourage residents to seek health and human service careers.

Goal 4.3: To support the need to address specific diseases and social issues which are dominant in the regional health community.

Objectives: Collaborate with area health and human service providers, so as to ---

- 1) Explore means to implement a responsive, local transportation system to meet local and regional medical care needs (e.g. taxi service).
- 2) Acknowledge the need for expanded mental health services and substance abuse prevention programs.
- 3) Address the need to reduce teen pregnancies through education and commit resources to strengthening the family unit.
- 4) Reduce the number of new smokers, particularly children, and sponsor smoking cessation programs.

- 5) Support programs that address the needs of residents with diabetes, asthma, emphysema, congestive heart failure and obesity.
- 6) Support programs that reduce the incidents of domestic violence and sexual abuse.
- 7) Support programs that address the high incidence of cancer and assist residents needing hospice and end-of-life care.

Goal 4.4: To develop pro-active prevention programs which foster healthy lifestyles.

Objectives:

- 1) Build on the excellent recreational program offered by Colonel Town by strengthening its health maintenance programs for all age groups.
- 2) Acknowledge the need for increased senior services, including a senior center and congregate meal site.
- 3) Support the development of recreational and multi-use paths within and surrounding the town.
- 4) Strengthen and support the school-based clinic programs by acknowledging that "healthy children are better students."

CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Lancaster provides a variety of resources to the community. These facilities and services contribute to the quality of life of our residents. Maintenance and improvement in personnel and infrastructure are essential to the quality of the town.

5.1: Administrative Facility and Personnel

Goal 5.1: To provide sufficient resources and personnel for the town to conduct business effectively.

Objectives:

- 1) Evaluate and upgrade the adequacy of the present administrative space and municipal facilities - update and renovate.
- 2) Develop a plan for all facilities and infrastructure, i.e. roads and buildings.
- 3) Develop a methodology to evaluate all town officials, boards, and programs.
- 4) Develop a cross-training program for all departments and personnel.

5.2: Police Department

Goal 5.2: To provide for a wide range of enforcement service to serve Lancaster's present and future needs.

Objectives:

- 1) Periodically review the need for additional officers.
- 2) Examine and develop programs to maintain and improve proper salary levels.
- 3) Encourage and require certification and advanced training.
- 4) Maintain equipment and update technology.
- 5) Evaluate future needs and upgrades to police facilities.
- 6) Evaluate and upgrade as needed the dispatching of all emergency personnel (fire, police, and ambulance).

5.3: Waste Disposal

Goal 5.3.1: To continue the most environmentally sound and cost effective solid waste disposal program.

Goal 5.3.2: To work with the Northeast Resource and Recovery Administration to increase income for recycling.

Objectives:

- 1) Develop an engineering plan for complete closure of old dump site.
- 2) Continue the present "Pay As You Throw" program to encourage recycling.
- 3) Encourage training and state certification of personnel.
- 4) Investigate alternative ways to handle burn pit and demolition materials.

5.4: Sanitation

Goal 5.4: To institute the most environmentally sound sanitation and sewer system.

Objectives:

- 1) Encourage training and state certification of personnel.
- 2) Upgrade Grange system.
- 3) Investigate new technology for sanitation system, i.e. treatment.
- 4) Continue the separation of sanitation waste from surface run off.
- 5) Assess the adequacy of municipal sewer system and treatment facilities to plan for future needs.
- 6) Develop sewer system ordinance with proper enforcement.
- 7) Record keeping of sewer line and manholes, i.e. GIS.

5.5: Education

Goal 5.5: To actively support the educational systems to ensure the quality of education for its citizens.

Objectives:

- 1) Promote high educational standards for the school system.
- 2) Increase citizen awareness of the funding issues of the school system.
- 3) Develop and encourage advanced education program - through the University of New Hampshire, College of Lifelong Learning, Plymouth State University, White Mountains Community College, and Lyndon State College - for economic development.

5.6: Library

Goal 5.6: Provide quality service to the citizens of Lancaster.

Objectives:

- 1) Continue to promote greater interfacing between library and school.
- 2) Encourage training and certification of all personnel.
- 3) Continue the development of the library as a community resource.
- 4) Maintain the technology plan of the library.
- 5) Investigate extending library hours.
- 6) Periodically investigate staffing needs.

5.7: Recreation

Goal 5.7.1: To maintain and upgrade community recreation program and facilities.

Goal 5.7.2: To continue to support other community recreational activities.

Objectives:

- 1) Encourage continued management of trust funds to ensure growth in principal.
- 2) Maintain and upgrade present facilities, i.e. grounds.
- 3) Secure and preserve the town's historical items at the Colonel Town building and in its library, including a comprehensive inventory.
- 4) Encourage and strengthen volunteer program.
- 5) Coordinate town recreational trail system in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service, the State of New Hampshire, the Snowdrifters, the Heritage Trail Committee, and other private trail groups.
- 6) Assess the viability of establishing formal ties with the Fairgrounds Association for expanded and cooperative facilities.
- 7) Promote recreational use of the Connecticut River.

5.8: Fire Department

Goal 5.8: To provide a high level of community service for the provision of adequate education, inspections, and protection from inherent danger of fire.

Objectives:

- 1) Promote a sound fiscal policy to expand present facilities to accommodate new equipment.

- 2) Ensure continued volunteer program.
- 3) Periodically investigate staffing needs.
- 4) Promote improved insurance rating through improved equipment and water system.
- 5) Maintain and encourage training and state certification of all volunteers and other personnel.

5.9: Highway Department

Goal 5.9: Maintain safe public roadways and upgrade town road network.

Objectives:

- 1) Maintain and replace essential equipment.
- 2) Develop a maintenance and replacement program for all roads, culverts, bridges, sidewalks, and signs.
- 3) Ensure proper maintenance of town parks.
- 4) Develop a program for repair and maintenance of facilities, i.e. salt shed and Town Garage.

5.10: Water Department

Goal 5.10: To ensure an adequate supply of safe and reasonably priced water for the present and future needs of the town.

Objectives:

- 1) Protect the present surface water supply of Garland Brook.
- 2) Complete new lines from treatment plant to new line at C. Alden area.
- 3) Complete new line under N.H. Railroad on Middle Street.
- 4) Assess on a regular basis the adequacy of the municipal water system to meet prevailing demands and its ability to satisfy future needs.
- 5) Continue upgrade of identified low pressure areas.
- 6) Maintain and encourage additional training and certification of personnel.
- 7) Develop a plan to replace old and problem water lines in Town, such as Causeway Street.
- 8) Improve record keeping of water lines and shutoffs with technology such as GIS (Geographic Information System).

5.11: Cemeteries

Goal 5.11: To provide adequate burial plots for Lancaster residents.

Objectives:

- 1) Assess the capacity of present facilities and identify land for possible expansion.
- 2) Acquire land for additional cemeteries.
- 3) Continue to financially support town cemeteries to maintain proper care.

5.12: Planning and Zoning Boards and Conservation Commission

Goal 5.12: To develop and monitor growth through land use recommendation.

Objectives:

- 1) Review and develop annual goals and objectives for orderly development.
- 2) Maintain and finance a qualified planner and legal advisor for each committee.
- 3) Establish proper enforcement procedures for ordinances.
- 4) Strongly encourage education programs for members.
- 5) Encourage that life safety codes are enforced on every new and renovated structure.

5.13: Ambulance

Goal 5.13: Provide emergency medical service of the highest quality to meet community needs.

Objectives:

- 1) Continue funding of emergency medical service.
- 2) Recognize the importance of updated equipment and personnel.
- 3) Expand training for all staff and volunteers.
- 4) Ensure proper facilities for equipment and personnel.
- 5) Continue to encourage and recognize the volunteer system.
- 6) Maintain education for billing of all insurance policies.

5.14: All-Hazards Mitigation Planning

The Town of Lancaster currently has a Multi-Hazard Mitigation and Community Wildfire Protection Plan recently updated in 2010. The primary objective of the Multi-Hazard Mitigation and Community Wildfire Protection Plan is to help make Lancaster a Disaster Resistant Community. The plan was created with the help of key community officials who formed Lancaster's Hazards Mitigation Committee. The plan identified all natural and man-made hazards that could potentially have an adverse affect on the lives and property of citizens. An example of the natural hazards included in Lancaster's Plan are flood, drought, wildfire, extreme heat, geologic, severe wind, and winter weather. Once the hazards were identified, mitigation measures were suggested to help reduce risks associated with each hazard. The final report contains a five-year plan for completion of mitigation measures. The plan will be reviewed annually or after an emergency event and thoroughly updated every five years.

Goal 5.14 Ensure that Lancaster is a Disaster Resistant Community

Objectives:

- 1) Identify all man-made and natural hazards in the community.
- 2) Develop and implement a hazard mitigation plan and review annually.

CHAPTER 6: NATURAL RESOURCES

Challenges and Opportunities

6.1 Lancaster's mountains, hillsides, ponds, wetlands, rivers, scenic views and special resource areas contribute greatly to the economic well-being and quality of life in the North Country. The preservation of rural character and open space are high priorities in Lancaster, from the undeveloped shoreline of Martin Meadow Pond, the Killkenny Mountain Range and the Israel River Valley to the scenic ridgeline connecting the summits of Mt. Orne and Mt. Pleasant. In order to preserve these resources, Lancaster should promote the sustainable use and stewardship of land through policies and regulations which support the co-existence of the man-made and natural environments. For example, the location of roads, sewer, water and other infrastructure, as well as where new buildings are sited, impacts the natural environment and can have unintended consequences.

6.2 Though only one large dairy operation survives in Lancaster, the town retains the feel of an agricultural community. Unique in New Hampshire, there is a working farm on Main Street. There are a host of active smaller agricultural uses throughout the town, from greenhouses and orchards to hobby farms, retail farm stands and maple sugar orchards. Sweeping floodplain meadows and cornfields along the Connecticut River greet the visitor from the west, and the hillsides to the east of the village are studded with scenic hill farms where pasture is slowly growing back to woods. Knowing that when agricultural lands are built upon or paved over they are lost forever, Lancaster's residents strongly support maintaining traditional agricultural uses in the town.

6.3 Limiting development to agriculture, forestry and recreational uses near undeveloped shoreline, steep slopes, wetlands, floodplains, prime agricultural lands and large tracts of forest land serves many purposes: ecological, economic and scenic. Residents strongly favor the establishment of a watershed overlay district to regulate activity in the Garland Brook watershed, the source of the town's drinking water supply. As a first step to protecting natural resources, the community must identify and inventory them. Much of this information is available from state and federal agencies and Community Survey respondents identified a host of scenic resources they wish to see protected. The acquisition of land or easements is an option to protect some resources such as prime agricultural lands. However, scenic resources, surface and ground water resources, and undeveloped watersheds may be more realistically protected through land use regulations.

6.4 While Lancaster's residents support the preservation of open space and scenic resources, they are concerned that increased posting of private land and state and national forest management plans may limit their access to these lands for recreation and timber harvesting.

Goal 6.1: To identify, preserve and protect the natural resources and environment of Lancaster, maintaining access to both public and private land for recreation.

Objectives:

- 1) Recognize the Town's natural and scenic resources including prime agricultural lands, important wetlands, large forest tracts, undeveloped shoreline and scenic vistas.
- 2) Planning and Zoning Boards will encourage land protection and conservation measures on the part of individual landowners and encourage public access.

- 3) Review permitted and special exception uses, lot sizes and frontage requirements in the Agricultural District to foster large and small farming operations, to maintain the productivity of prime agricultural lands and to retain open space.

Goal 6.2: Protect Lancaster's water resources.

Objectives:

- 1) Continue to protect the Garland Brook watershed by acquiring land or easements on critical privately-held land in the watershed.

CHAPTER 7: HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Challenges and Opportunities

7.1 As the first town settled north of Haverhill, Lancaster is rich in historic and cultural resources. There are an abundance of historic homes and buildings both on Main Street and on side streets. Too many of these have become shabby and others have had their appearance dramatically altered as they have been put to new uses. The preservation of these resources is of great importance to the people of Lancaster, not only because they are very attractive, but also because they are a silent and eloquent testimony to the history of Lancaster. Recent redevelopment along the northern end of Main Street has heightened concern that the historic character of this grand street is threatened by development incompatible with older structures.

7.2 Outside the village, there is support for preserving scenic vistas and the man-made rural landscape which has such great historical and cultural significance in Lancaster. This can be achieved by scenic road designations and road design standards which promote safety but maintain rural scale. Gravel roads maintain rural character and may be more appropriate than paved roads. Thoughtful landscaping at intersections may reduce the impact of a curb cut while not interfering with sight lines. Roadside grading and treatment of pavement and shoulders should be in keeping with the rural atmosphere.

7.3 The entrances to Lancaster from Route 2 east, Route 3 south and Route 135 are largely undeveloped and offer dramatic scenic vistas of river and mountain. Residents feel strongly that these gateways to the community should be preserved as powerful first impressions of our community. Routes 2 west and 3 north have experienced commercial development. Of particular concern are traffic congestion and the proliferation of curb cuts and gas station/convenience stores whose design is incompatible with historic community character.

7.4 The Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) was created by the state legislature in 2000. It is designed to assist communities like Lancaster to protect their natural, cultural and historic resources through a matching grant program.

Goal 7.1: To protect the historic character and cultural richness of Lancaster and make conscious efforts to blend new development into the traditional village setting.

Objectives:

- 1) Assemble and update if necessary, the existing historic and cultural inventories of Lancaster.
- 2) Encourage the improvement of Main Street's aesthetic appearance through public support for facade improvements and incentives for the protection and preservation of historic structures, sites and other cultural resources.
- 3) Explore opportunities for local preservation projects under the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program.
- 4) Examine town road standards to ensure they do not require over-building or paving where gravel would be more in keeping with rural atmosphere.

- 5) The Planning Board should consider designating additional scenic roads under the state's enabling laws in order to protect stonewalls and shade trees in the right-of-way.
- 6) Consider adopting an overlay district to guide development upon significant scenic ridgelines, mountaintops, and scenic vistas.

Goal 7.2: Protect the historic character of the Main Street commercial district while planning for compatible and orderly commercial development.

Objective:

- 1) Explore the benefits of designating portions of Main Street as a Historic District and educate residents about this issue.
- 2) Amend the zoning and site plan review regulations to allow for more creative buffering and screening.
- 3) Review current parking space requirements for various commercial uses in the Site Plan Review regulations and amend if necessary.
- 4) Favor side or rear parking when feasible for new commercial development.
- 5) Develop a shared driveway provision or require interior streets as a method of limiting curb cuts and strip development in Lancaster's Commercial District.

Goal 7.3: Protect the natural beauty of the scenic gateways to Lancaster.

Objective:

- 1) Examine a scenic overlay district to guide development in these areas.

CHAPTER 8: ENERGY

Challenges and Opportunities

- 8.1 Current energy costs are very volatile and dependent on not only supply and demand but international relation among others.
- 8.2 Our most widely used energy sources are non-renewable resources (oil, coal, natural gas).
- 8.3 There is no extensive public transportation system in place in the area to bring people to work, appointments, and to run errands.
- 8.4 We have cold winters which require large amounts of energy to be used to heat buildings.
- 8.5 We are located away from main fuel distribution centers which relate to higher transportation costs to get energy sources to our area and translates to higher prices for that energy.
- 8.6 We are located in an area with many opportunities to develop renewable energy sources (wood, wind, solar, hydroelectric, and geothermal).
- 8.7 The Town of Lancaster has an established Energy Committee.

Goal 8.1: Encourage energy efficiency and conservation to reduce demand for energy.

Objectives:

- 1) Continue to support and work with organizations and private enterprises in developing and expanding public transportation initiatives such as the Tri-Town Trolley and North Country Ride-Share.
- 2) Develop programs such as Property Assesses Clean Energy (PACE) Districts to make energy efficiency upgrades in older homes affordable.

Goal 8.2: Decrease energy usage in municipal buildings.

Objectives:

- 1) Conduct energy audits in all municipal buildings to identify deficiencies and help prepare Capital Improvement Plans to address them.
- 2) Incorporate energy efficiency measures in municipal building renovations.
- 3) Investigate the possibility of adding renewable energy sources to municipal buildings.

CHAPTER 9: PRESENT AND FUTURE LAND USE

Challenges and Opportunities

9.1 Lancaster's development is characteristic of traditional New England town settlement. The earliest residential and commercial development occurred in the village center. This was followed by industrial development along the Israel River in the 19th century. The outlying areas were hillside farms which traditionally met most of the village dwellers' needs. Agricultural uses were also concentrated along the fertile flood plains of the Connecticut River. Early roads connected Lancaster with the neighboring settlements of Dalton, Gilman, Jefferson, Lunenburg, Northumberland, and Whitefield.

9.2 Much of this traditional character is still evident in Lancaster. The village center is still surrounded by broad farm fields and forestland. Two major road corridors intersect on Lancaster's Main Street posing challenges for the community. One is the congestion caused by through truck traffic. Another is maintaining village character while providing high quality services for increasing numbers of visitors to the North Country. As development has crept away from the village along Routes 2 and 3, the distinction between village and outlying areas has been blurred.

9.3 The predominant land use in Lancaster is forestland. The Town of Lancaster's 2010 MS-1 form shows more than sixty percent (19,405.55 acres) of Lancaster's land mass is forested, most of this is privately owned. This represents an increase of over 350 acres since 1999. Forestland is disbursed throughout the town but is predominately located in the southwest corner between Routes 3 and 135, Mount Pleasant, Page Hill, Indian Brook, Tug Mountain and the Kilkenny areas. Much of this forestland has shallow soils and continued timber production is the best use of this acreage.

9.4 There are about 4,321 acres listed in Lancaster's 2010 MS-1 form described as farmland in Lancaster and an additional 404 acres categorized in the current use program as "unproductive". This represents 14% of Lancaster's total acreage. Most of the acreage in active agricultural use is along the Connecticut River, Caleb Brook, Redman Brook, Whipple Brook and much of North Road. Significant farmland along North Road and in east Lancaster has been converted to residential use. Consideration should be given to preserving scenic and productive agricultural land through conservation easements and a zoning overlay district for prime agricultural soils.

9.5 Comparing the Town of Lancaster's MS-1 form from 1999 and 2010 you see Lancaster's residential acreage decreased from 3,416 acres in 1999 to 3,084 acres in 2010, representing 10% of Lancaster's total acreage in 2010. This acreage is divided into 1,415 parcels. Single-family units are disbursed most widely, occurring in both the downtown and rural areas. Multi-family units have typically resulted from the conversion of large, older single-family homes. Manufactured housing occurs in two multi-unit parks and on individual housing lots. Seasonal homes are concentrated on Martin Meadow Pond and in east Lancaster. New housing in Lancaster is most often developed by the subdivision of parcels into 3-5 lots for single family homes in areas without municipal sewer or water.

9.6 The Town's MS-1 form shows Commercial and Industrial uses total 601 acres on 179 parcels (over 1% of Lancaster's land mass). This land use category has increased more than 100 acres since 1999. Commercial and industrial uses are concentrated in the downtown area and along Route 2 west and Route 3 north. There is a desire among some to restrict commercial uses on Route 2 east and Route 3 south due to the scenic nature of these approaches to Lancaster.

9.7 There are several hundred acres of wetlands in Lancaster. In their natural condition wetlands perform a number of valuable functions. They store floodwaters and retain nutrients, thus preventing their addition to downstream lakes, and they are prime habitat for many types of wildlife. Two significant wetland areas on both sides of Route 3 create a large, nearly continuous area of protected wetlands between Lancaster and Northumberland. Other significant wetlands are found on Lost Nation Road, Indian Brook and Tug Mountain. There are small wetlands scattered to the southwest portion of town. These wetland areas are unsuitable for development because of the high water table and poor drainage.

9.8 One way to guide future land use in natural resource areas such as wetlands, shoreline areas, steep slopes, and the watershed which contains Lancaster's water supply is to adopt "overlay zones" in the zoning ordinance. An overlay zone is placed on top of the underlying base zone in areas with sensitive natural resources. Development in the overlay zone is subject to the requirements of both zones.

9.9 A primary goal for future development in Lancaster should be to further promote the traditional New England settlement pattern of densely developed mixed uses in the commercial and residential districts surrounded by sparsely populated open fields and forestland. If carefully adhered to, Lancaster's subdivision ordinance, which is based on soil suitability for development, is a powerful tool for guiding future development. Another powerful tool is the judicious and timely extension of municipal water and sewer into areas where development is most appropriate. Existing infrastructure should be fully utilized before any extensions are contemplated.

Goal 9.1: To promote future development in Lancaster which maintains the traditional New England settlement pattern.

Objectives:

- 1) The Planning and Zoning Boards should consistently refer to this Master Plan when amending ordinances and acting on land use applications.
- 2) Amend Lancaster's Land Use Ordinances so that they promote the full development of existing residential and commercial areas by not scattering new development throughout the Agricultural District.
- 3) Carefully consider the impacts of sewer and water extensions on development patterns and encourage maximum utilization of existing infrastructure.
- 4) If prime agricultural soils are to be developed, recommend that development maximize open space.

Goal 9.2: Bring Lancaster's Land Use Ordinances into compliance with state planning guidelines and current state law.

Objectives:

- 1) Review all permitted and special exception uses in the Agricultural District and amend as necessary. Consider existing road frontage requirements in this district and the impact of these on development patterns.

- 2) Address the use of Rights of Way in place of road frontage to access "back lots" in the Agricultural District.
- 3) Review all permitted and special exception uses presently allowed in all zoning districts. Amend these uses as necessary.
- 4) Revise and expand the definition sections of all ordinances.
- 5) Refer to guidance material prepared by the Society of Soil Scientists of Northern New England and located on the State's Office of Energy and Planning's website when updating and creating land use regulations and ordinances.
- 6) Review parking requirements in Site Plan Review Ordinance for adequacy and amend if necessary, for example, to make provisions for snow removal.

Goal 9.3: Preserve the high quality of local water resources.

Objectives:

- 1) Ensure that new construction near water bodies complies with state and federal (FEMA) standards.
- 2) Encourage cooperation between the Conservation Commission and the Planning Board in the review and processing of dredge and fill permits.

Town of Lancaster Incorporated 1763

