

WELCOME TO



AMHERST, *NEW HAMPSHIRE*



October 2013

# COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FY 2015-2019 STRATEGIC PLAN

# INTRODUCTION

## ✕ Community Development Office

- + Departments: Building, Code Enforcement, Planning, Zoning, and Economic Development
- + Boards: Planning Board, Zoning Board of Adjustment, Historic District Commission, Conservation Commission, and Heritage Commission



# MISSION

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*The Office strives to effectively manage community change in accordance with the Master Plan and the Town's ordinances and regulations. We do this by providing professional advice and technical expertise in a consistent and fair manner to citizens, boards, commissions, departments, and regional agencies on the implementation of land use ordinances, regulations, and policies for both the short- and long-term physical, economic, and community development of the Town. The office provides a variety of services including:*

- Land development review.*
- Master planning/long-range planning.*
- Building permitting and inspections.*
- Health and safety.*
- Economic Development*

# STRATEGIC PLANNING

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- ✖ Focus: Align long-term goals with the FY 2015 budget
- ✖ The plan will be updated with in-depth discussion and engagement from Boards and Commissions over the next year

# VISION FOR 2030

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- ✘ Residential: Amherst will preserve and enhance its unique rural, historical, and small town character in residential areas.
- ✘ Commercial/ Industrial: Amherst will have an established vision for the development and redevelopment of its Commercial and Industrial zones that is reflected in daily operations and its image as a business-friendly community.

# BALANCING THEMES

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- ✘ Overarching themes: Quality of Life, Quality of Resources, & Economic Development
- ✘ Maintaining and attracting a strong commercial/industrial core along Route 101A will provide needed jobs and reduce the property tax burden on residents.
- ✘ Economic Development will only succeed if balanced with protecting natural and water resources ,and preserving the community's character.

# TOPICS

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- ✕ Historical perspective
- ✕ Environmental scan
- ✕ SWOT analysis
- ✕ Strategic goals
- ✕ Strategic initiatives
- ✕ Annual operating plans & budgets
- ✕ Conclusion

# 2010 MASTER PLAN

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- ✘ Ten Key Master Plan Recommendations That Can Shape Amherst's Future



- ✘ Summary: Quality of Life and Quality of Resources
- ✘ Strategic Plan addresses recommendations 1-7 & 10

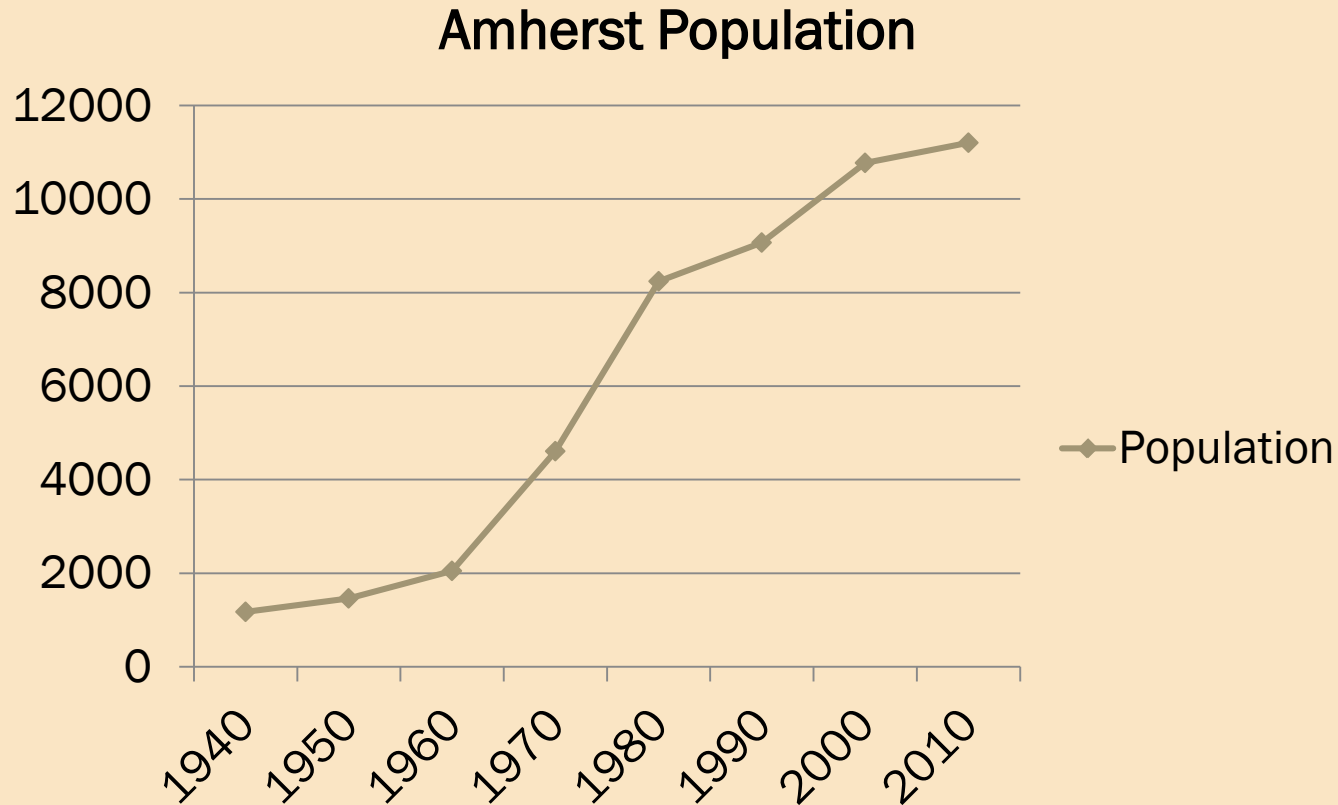


# HISTORICAL TRENDS

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- ✗ Population
- ✗ Income
- ✗ Assessed Property Valuation
- ✗ Permit & Applications
- ✗ Budgets

# HISTORICAL TRENDS - POPULATION



- ✗ Population growth has slowed since its peak in the 1970's and 1980's

# HISTORICAL TRENDS - INCOME

Total Household Income	2000 % of All Households*	2010 % of All Households
Less than \$99,999	55.92%	55.44%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	23.74%	12.21%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	10.98%	16.83%
\$200,000 or more	9.35%	15.51%

- ✗ Increase in % of higher income households
- ✗ No changes in % of lower income households

# HISTORICAL TRENDS – ASSESSED VALUATION

Year	Commercial/ Industrial	% Commercial/ Industrial	Residential	% Residential	Total
2000	\$76,607,200	9.79%	\$705,542,300	90.21%	\$782,149,500
2010	\$223,760,375	12.20%	\$1,610,306,725	87.80%	\$1,834,067,100
2012	\$204,315,825	13.26%	\$1,336,143,075	86.74%	\$1,540,458,900

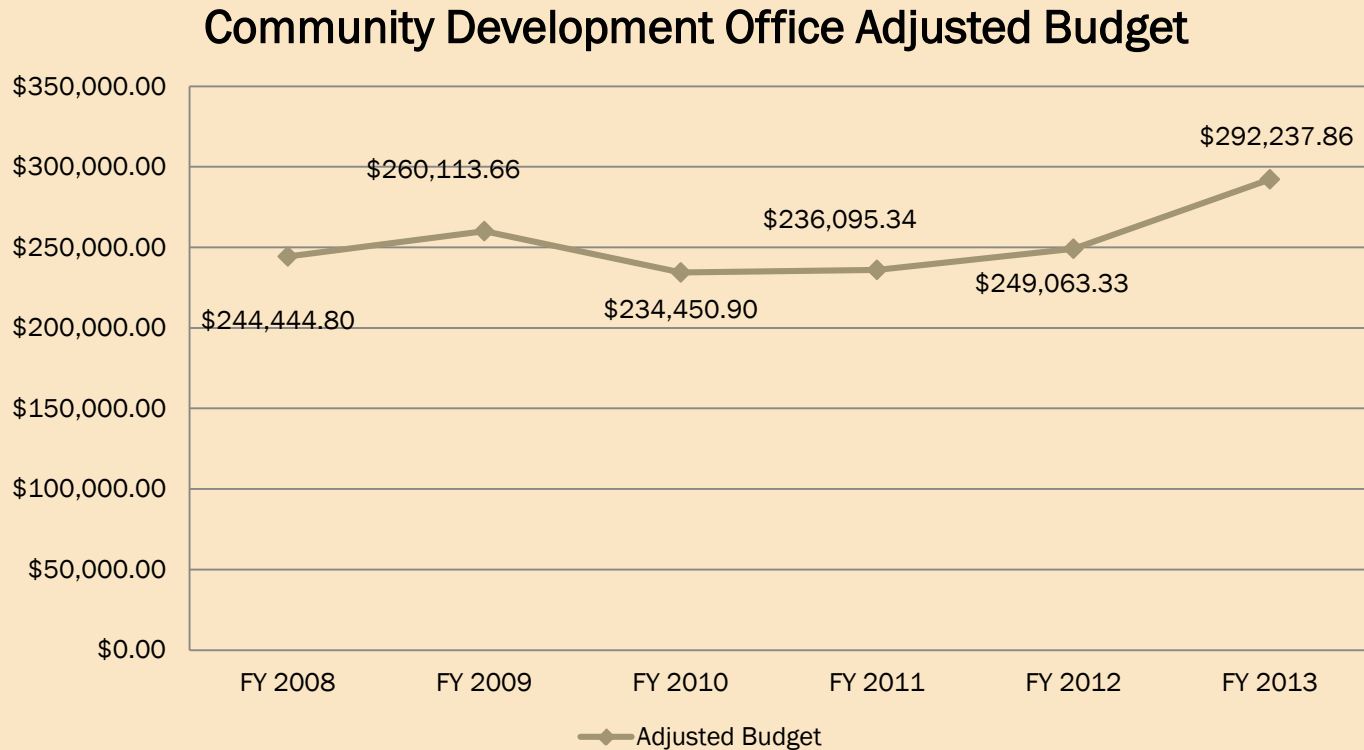
- ✗ Increasing trend in % of Commercial/Industrial
- ✗ Rising Commercial/Industrial tax base = lower burden on residential tax base

# HISTORICAL TRENDS – PERMITS

Building Permit Application History									
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013 (As of 9/30/13)
<b>New SF Residential (including Condos)</b>	64	51	30	26	10	14	8	34	5
<b>Condos only</b>	38	35	14	21	4	5	2	0	2
<b>Residential Additions/Alterations</b>	217	192	161	134	145	142	119	109	135
<b>Commercial/Industrial (new &amp; additions/alterations)</b>	20	40	181	35	19	15	14	15	1
<b>Commercial/Industrial new</b>	N/A	N/A	11	0	0	0	1	1	1
<b>Commercial/Industrial additions/alterations</b>	N/A	N/A	170	35	19	15	13	25	11
<b>Signs</b>	37	31	31	24	12	22	26	32	25
<b>Pools</b>	8	13	13	8	0	15	8	7	0
<b>Demolition</b>	5	5	14	20	19	24	16	12	10
<b>Septic Systems</b>	102	80	83	61	55	47	60	50	35
<b>Electrical</b>	36	77	60	59	101	112	103	146	187
<b>Plumbing</b>	N/A	N/A	49	14	6	20	7	5	66
<b>Mechanical</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	43	41	57	43	33	188
<b>Life Safety</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	6
<b>Earth Removal</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1
<b>Home Occupations</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	7	5	7	1	7	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>489</b>	<b>489</b>	<b>622</b>	<b>431</b>	<b>413</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>405</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>677</b>
<b>Building Inspections</b>	974	1163	N/A	N/A					732
<b>CO's Issued</b>	126	70	N/A	N/A					27

✗ Annual permits have risen from lowest level in 2009

# HISTORICAL TRENDS - BUDGETS



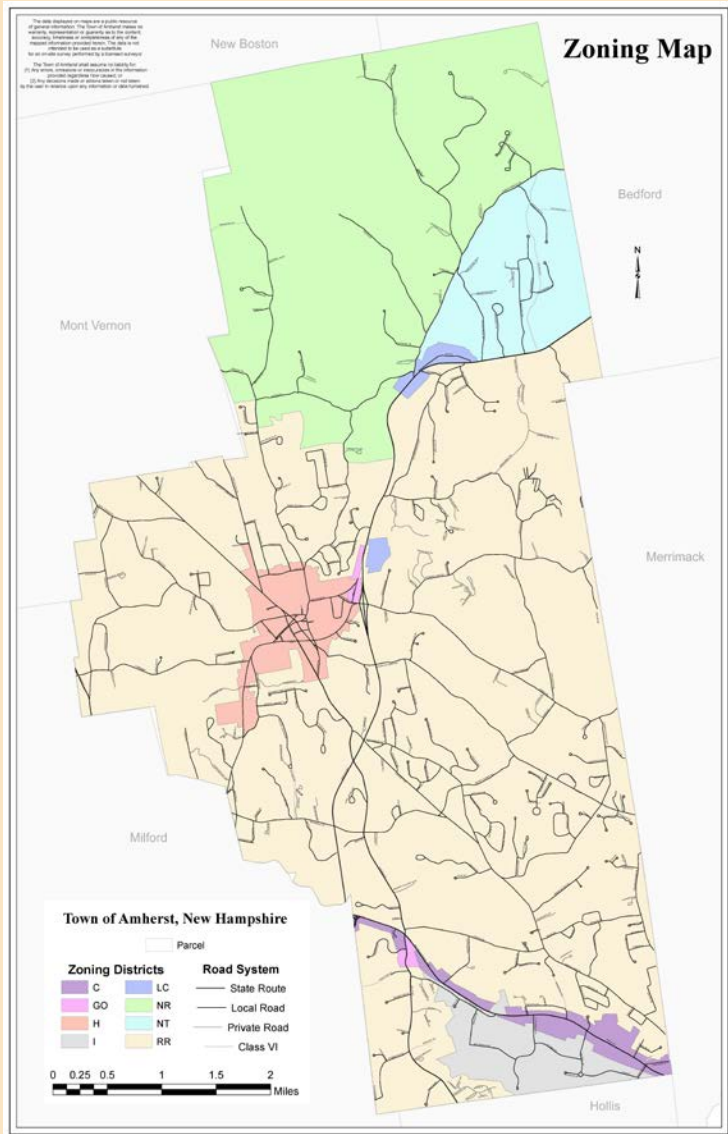
- ✗ Reflects growth in permits, reorganization, and technology improvements (hardware, software and data conversion)

# ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

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- ✗ Land Uses
- ✗ Water Resources
- ✗ Demographics
- ✗ Residential Property Values
- ✗ Employment
- ✗ Commuting Patterns
- ✗ Transportation
- ✗ Economic Development

# ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN – LAND USES

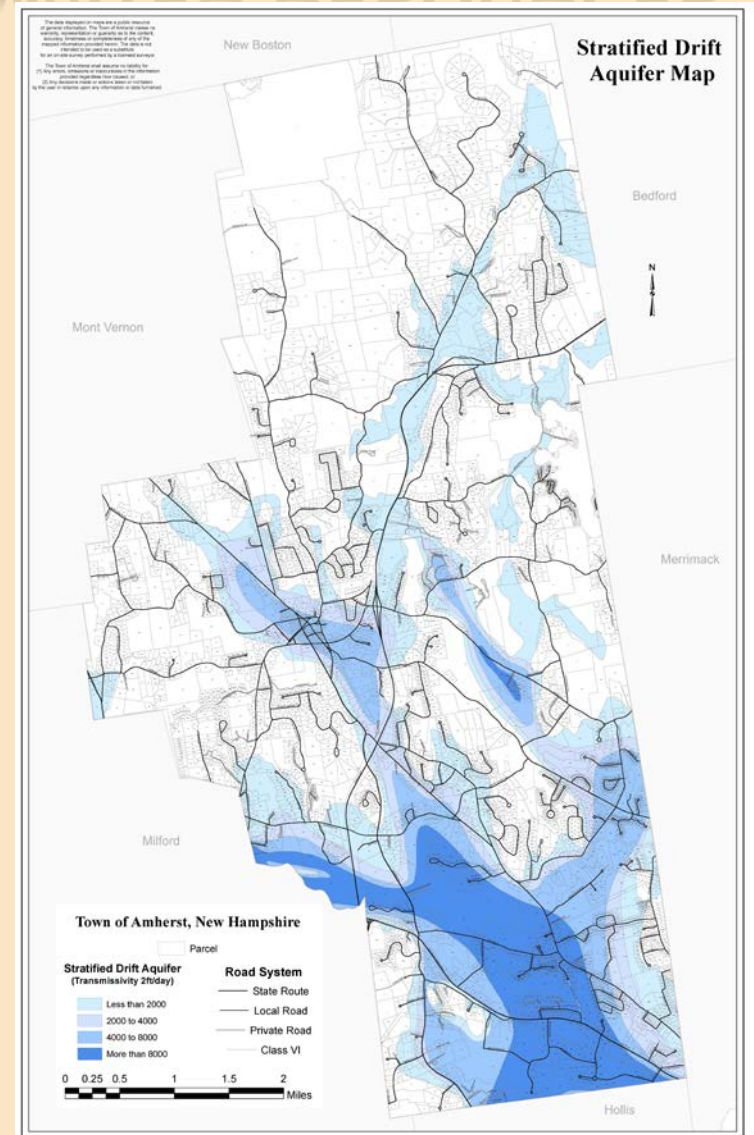


- ✗ Total acres 21,976
- ✗ 92.5% Residential
- ✗ 7% Commercial, Limited Commercial or General Office
- ✗ 2.5% Industrial
- ✗ 14.8% open space (3,255 acres )



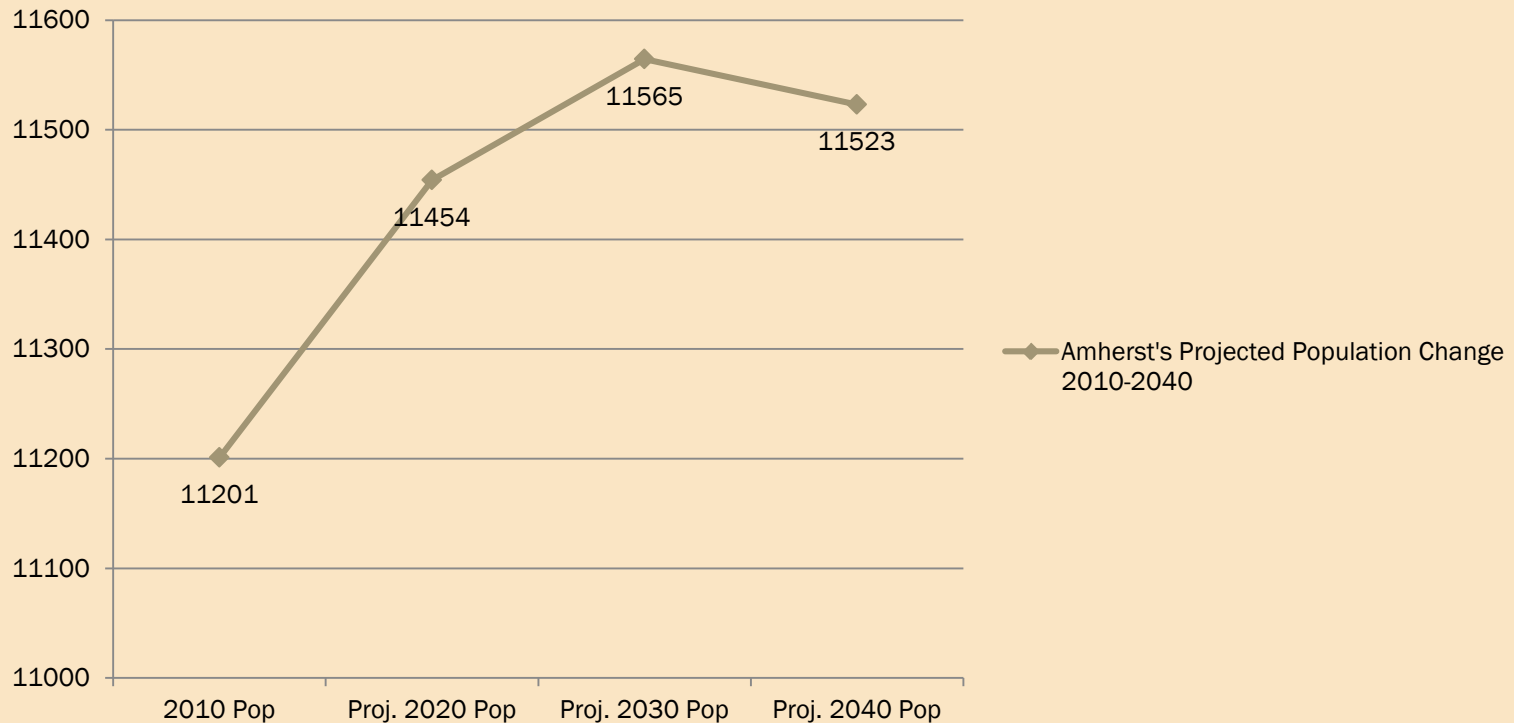
# ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN – WATER RESOURCES

- ✖ Regulations to protect its water resources: aquifer, wetlands, watershed, floodplain and septic system standards.
- ✖ Major future challenges: managing stormwater runoff and the lack of a sewer utility
- ✖ Pennichuck Water Works *Final Restoration Plan* and subsequent *Strategic Plan* (November, 2012)



# ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN - DEMOGRAPHICS

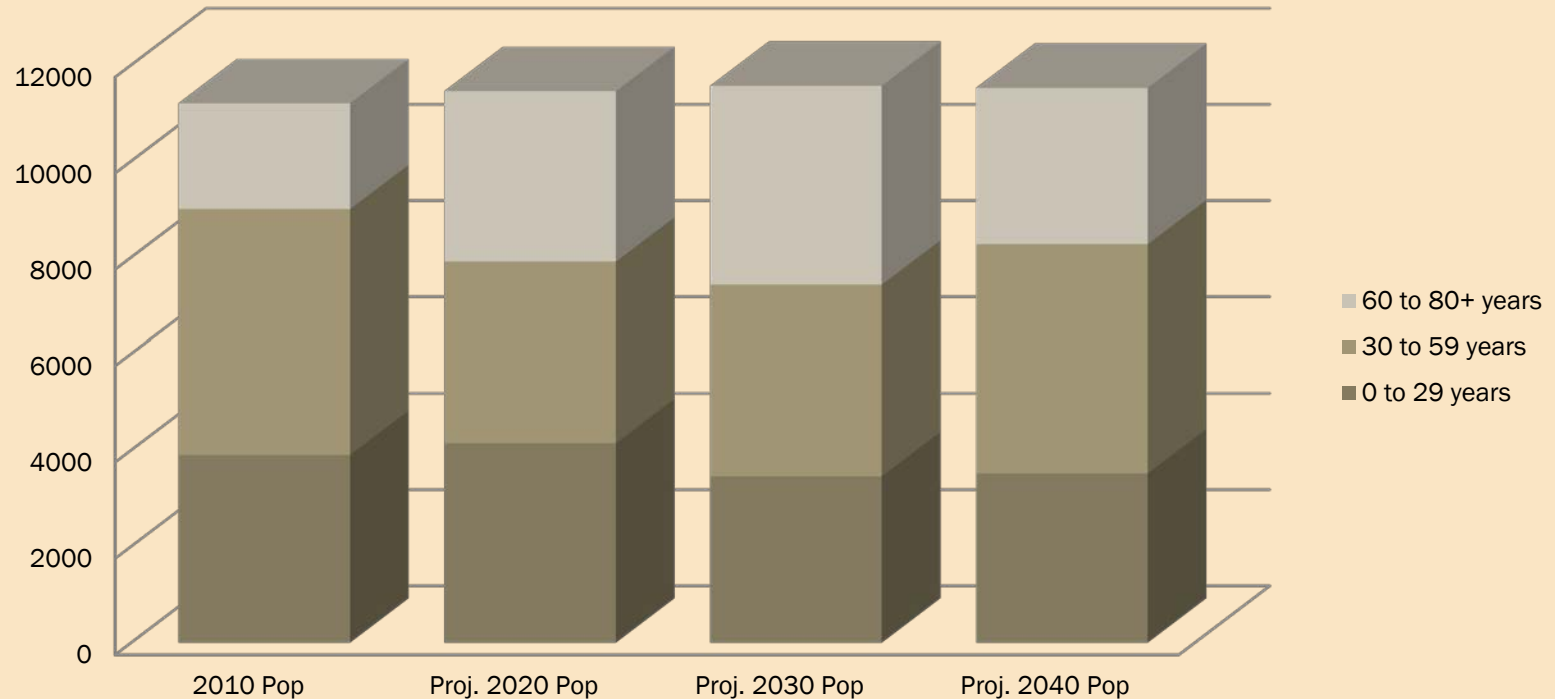
Amherst's Projected Total Population 2010-2040



- ✗ Amherst is predicted to have very slow growth and eventually decline in total population

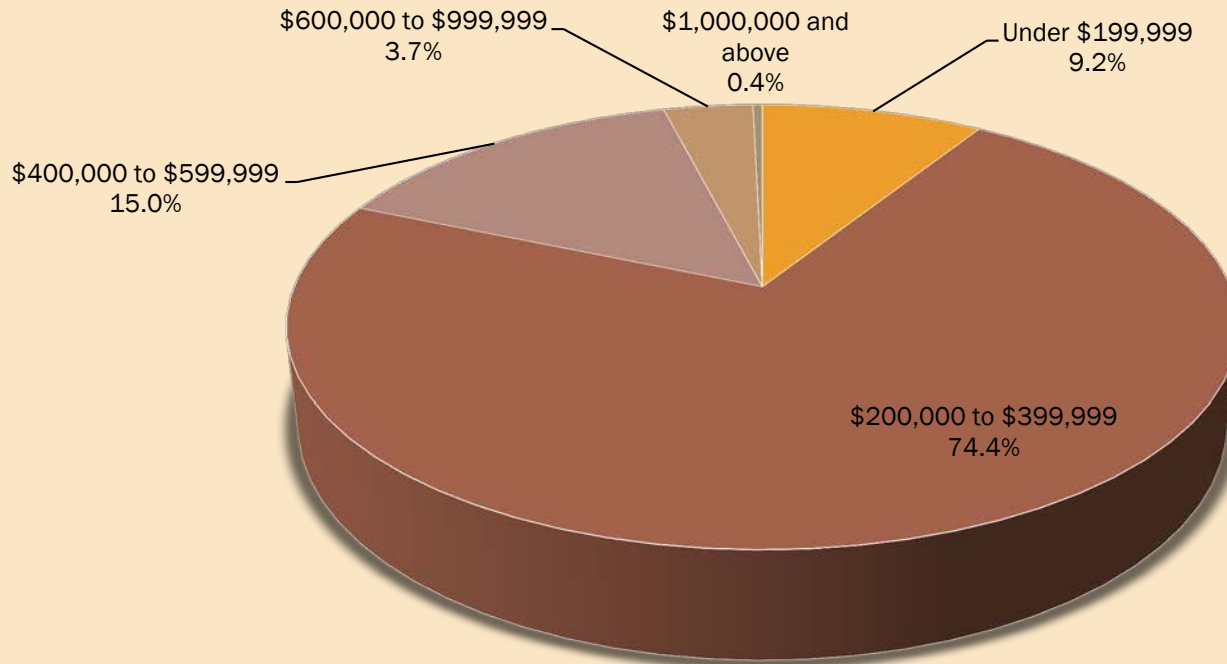
# ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN - DEMOGRAPHICS

Amherst Population Projections by Age Group



- ✗ Amherst's population will age, as the working age population shrinks

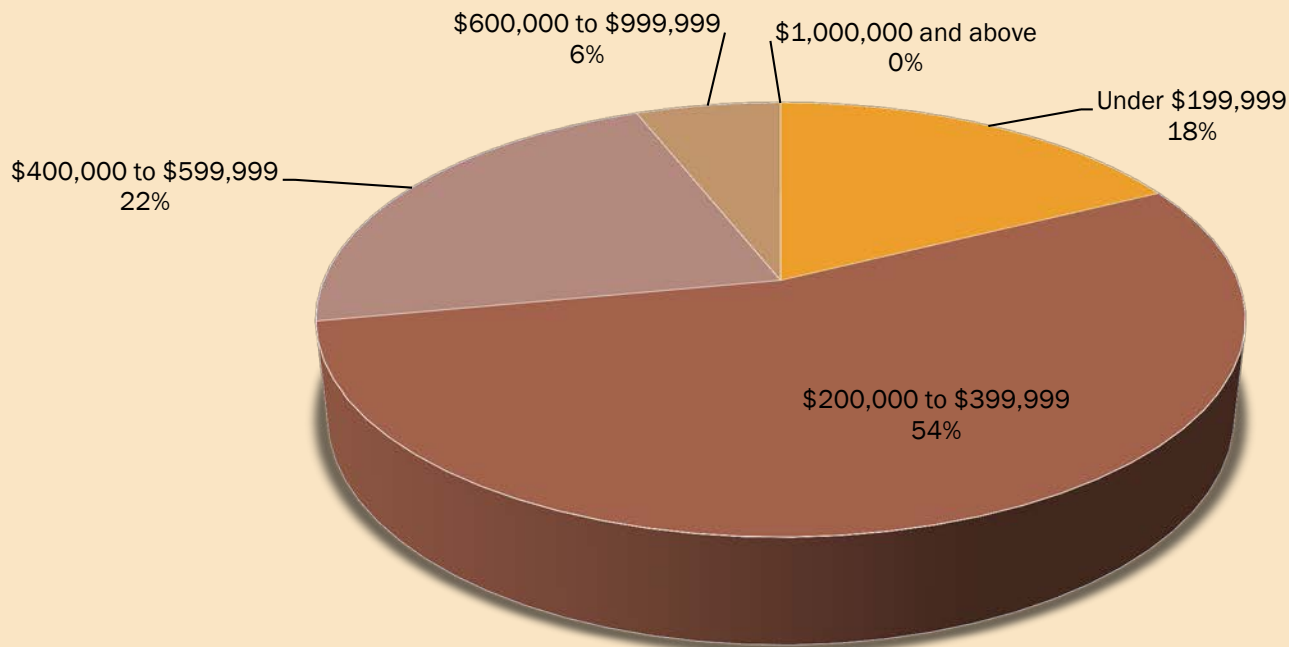
# ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN – RES. PROPERTY VALUE



Amherst, NH Appraised Value Distribution

- ✘ Majority of all properties valued \$200,000 to \$399,999
- ✘ Higher value properties outnumber lower value 2 to 1

# ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN – HISTORIC PROPERTY VALUE

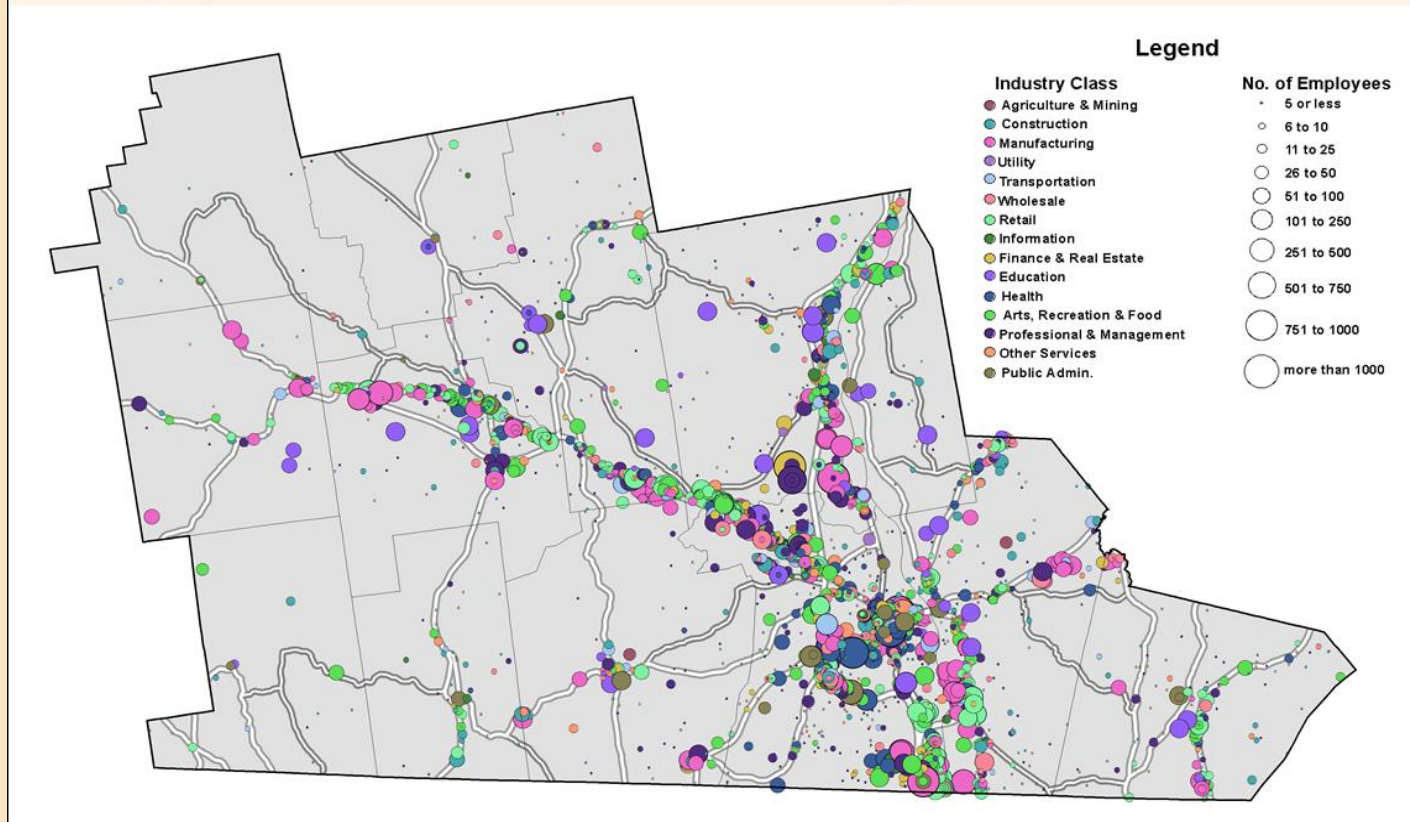


**Historic District Appraised Value Distribution**

- ✘ Majority of all properties valued \$200,000 to \$399,999
- ✘ Higher value properties outnumber lower value 2 to 1

# ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN - EMPLOYMENT

## Employment Distribution in the Nashua Region, 2010



- ✘ Significant employment opportunities – focused around Route 101A corridor and schools



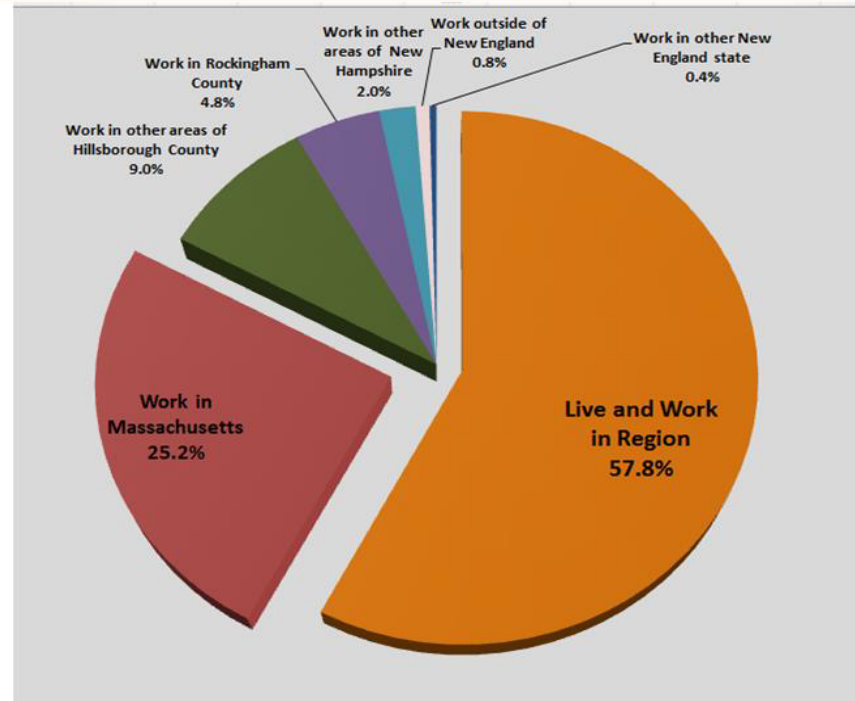
# ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN – COMMUTING PATTERN

## Regional Commuting Patterns, 2006-2010

### Commuting Destinations of Nashua Region residents

*Approximately 58 percent of Nashua Region residents work within the region. Of the remaining 42 percent of the region's workforce, 25 percent commute to Massachusetts, 9 percent commute to other areas of Hillsborough County, and nearly 5 percent commute to destinations in Rockingham County.*

*How can the region keep a larger share of its workforce employed here within the region?*



### Page Sources

*Commuter data: U.S. Census American Community Survey 2006-2010; Employment distribution: NH Department of Employment Security, 2010*

- ✘ 28% of Amherst's residents work in Amherst
- ✘ 66% of Amherst's residents work within Nashua region

# ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN - TRANSPORTATION

## ✕ Recent Public Survey:

- + Traffic along the Route 101A corridor (35,000+ cars per day)
- + Maintenance of infrastructure
- + Need for alternative transportation options
  - ✕ more sidewalks, walking, and biking trails within the community
  - ✕ Opportunities like Souhegan Valley Rides



# ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN – ECONOMIC DEV.

New England Rankings of the US Business Tax Climate - 2013			
Rank	State	Rank	State
7	<i>New Hampshire</i>	46	Rhode Island
22	Massachusetts	47	Vermont
30	Maine	50	New York
40	Connecticut	49	New Jersey

- ✗ State tax structure attract businesses
- ✗ Local tax benefit options include: Economic Revitalization Zones, Tax Increment Finance Districts and Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive Programs

# ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN – ECONOMIC DEV.

- ✗ Beyond tax incentives, the top five elements to maintaining and attracting new business to Amherst include:
  - + A clear, concise development process,
  - + Availability of utilities,
  - + Available and trained workforce,
  - + Transportation networks, and
  - + Maintaining the community's high quality of life

# SWOT ANALYSIS

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- ✖ Analysis of the Office's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats is to help the Office capitalize on its strengths and opportunities, and minimize threats and weaknesses.

# STRENGTHS

- ✗ Data collection and analysis
- ✗ Resource analysis
- ✗ Quality of Staff/Responsive Customer Service
- ✗ Technology
- ✗ Relationships with Town Departments, Boards and Commissions
- ✗ Professional networks
- ✗ Public Outreach
- ✗ Economic Development
- ✗ Maintaining community character

# WEAKNESSES

- ✗ Lack Economic Development Vision
- ✗ Loss of data
- ✗ Data accessibility
- ✗ Timeframe for permit approvals and inspections
- ✗ Misalignment of ordinances and regulations with Master Plan
- ✗ Engaging the public
- ✗ Proactive enforcement
- ✗ Physical space
- ✗ Increasing State & federal regulations

# OPPORTUNITIES

- ✘ Commercial/Industrial utility expansion
- ✘ Commercial/Industrial development and redevelopment
- ✘ Clear, concise, development requirements, standards and approval timeframes
- ✘ Transportation options
- ✘ Diversity of housing types
- ✘ Local employment opportunities
- ✘ Promoting a reputation of common sense, fair and equal treatment to all

# THREATS

- ✘ Lack of utilities for Commercial/Industrial
- ✘ Declining water quality
- ✘ Loss of community and historical character
- ✘ Lack of proactive enforcement
- ✘ Lengthy, unclear approval process for land development applications
- ✘ Litigation
- ✘ Aging population
- ✘ Lack of transportation options

# STRATEGIC GOALS

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- ✘ Balancing three themes: Quality of life, quality of resources and economic development
- ✘ Shift the tax burden from residential to commercial/industrial
- ✘ 5 Strategic Goals:
  - + Goal 1: Encourage development which maintains open space and rural landscapes.

# STRATEGIC GOALS

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- + Goal 2: Continue to allow for a variety of housing options and to be a leader in the State (and region) in maintaining and managing its Historic District and resources.
- + Goal 3: Amherst will be known as a business-friendly community, with clearly established regulations and processes for land development.
- + Goal 4: Amherst will maintain safe drinking water standards and protect water resources.
- + Goal 5: Amherst will have a reputation for ensuring quality construction, and fair and equal enforcement of the regulations.

# STRATEGIC GOAL #1

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Goal 1: Amherst will encourage development which maintains open space and rural landscapes.

Measurable Outcome: Dedicate a minimum of 20% of total land area to permanent open space by 2030, an increase from 14.8% in 2013.



# RELATED INITIATIVES FOR GOAL #1

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- ✘ Revise regulations & ordinances to protect open space, stonewalls and rural landscapes as detailed in 2013 Regulatory Review (FY 2019) (Cost Est.: \$25,000 with consultant)
- ✘ Work with ACC and ALT to incorporate visions, goals and initiatives for open space and natural resource preservation into the Town's Ordinances and Regulations. (FY2016) (Cost Est.: \$2,000)

# STRATEGIC GOAL #2

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Goal 2: Amherst will continue to allow for a variety of housing options and to be a leader in the State (and region) in maintaining and managing its Historic District and resources.

Measurable Outcome: Maintain the current residential and Historic District property valuation distribution through 2030.

# RELATED INITIATIVES FOR GOAL #2

- ✘ Continue to allow for a variety of housing options to attract and support all generations of Amherst residents from aging in place to families
  - + Revise regulations to encourage extension of utilities (FY 2016) (Cost Est.: \$5,000)
  - + Continue to support Affordable/Workforce Housing (FY 2014-ongoing) (Cost Est.: No cost)
  - + Complete a Sidewalk, Bike & Trails Master Plan (FY 2017) (Cost Est.: \$2,500 with iTRaC grant or \$15,000 w/o)

# RELATED INITIATIVES FOR GOAL #2

- ✕ Support the Historic District Commission (HDC) in its role as district regulator, and provide necessary updates in legislative changes and educational opportunities to its members.
  - + Improve education and communication through website and ACTV (FY 2014-ongoing) (Cost Est.: \$2,000 – requires partnership with ACTV)
  - + Begin proactive enforcement of district (FY 2017) (Cost Est.: See Goal 5.3)



Welcome to Historic  
Amherst Village



# RELATED INITIATIVES FOR GOAL #2

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- ✕ Support the Heritage Commission in its role of protection and preservation on non-historic district community resources, and provide necessary updates in legislative changes and educational opportunities to its members.
  - + Support grant applications to expand Historic Resource Study and require use of study in land development applications (FY 2015) (Cost Est.: Grant)
  - + Improve education and communication through website and ACTV (FY 2014-ongoing) (Cost Est.: \$2,000 – requires partnership with ACTV)

# STRATEGIC GOAL #3

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Goal 3: Amherst will be known as a business-friendly community, with clearly established regulations and processes for land development by 2030.

Measurable Outcome: Increase the Total Assessed Valuation of Commercial/Industrial property in Amherst to 20% by 2030 and maintain that percent through 2040, an increase from 13.26% in 2013, to shift some of the tax burden from residential to commercial.

# RELATED INITIATIVES FOR GOAL #3

- ✘ Define and implement a Board of Selectmen approved Town Vision for Economic Development
  - + Define a Economic Development vision (FY 2016) (Cost Est.: \$2,000)
  - + Appoint an Economic Development Committee to define and implement a work plan and communications strategy for Economic Development in partnership with the Community Development Office (FY 2016) (Cost Est.: \$70,000 (annually) to support an entry level Planner for daily, Planning/Zoning support while allowing Director to focus on EDAC. This would also reduce a majority of consulting needs for Ordinance and Regulation updates. Current Staffing cannot support another committee and budget allocations do not currently support growing this division of the Community Development department.)

# RELATED INITIATIVES FOR GOAL #3

- ✕ Ensure the development and redevelopment of Commercial and Industrial properties aligns with the design standards articulated in the Economic Development Vision
  - + Revise the, Non-Residential Site Plan Regulations and Subdivision Regulations to align with the 2013 Regulatory Review suggestions: (FY 2015) (Cost Est.: \$30,000 unless secure NRPC iTRaC project grant then cost would be closer to \$2,000)
  - + Revise the Sign Ordinance (FY 2016) (Cost Est.: \$30,000 with consultant)



# RELATED INITIATIVES FOR GOAL #3

- ✘ Encourage and provide infrastructure expansion (transportation, utilities, and workforce) to meet the needs of the businesses in the Commercial and Industrial Districts.
  - + Partner with Pennichuck, Liberty (gas), PSNH and Comcast to ensure infrastructure is maintained, future connections are available as needed and Town regulations reasonably encourage the extension of utilities (water, gas lines, broadband, cable, underground electric, etc.) to new development. (FY 2016) (See Goal 2.1) (Cost Est.: No cost)
  - + Partner with NRPC through TTAC to ensure existing transportation infrastructure maintained and future connections are available as needed. (FY 2014 – ongoing) (Cost Est.: No cost)
  - + Partner with local non-profits and community groups to ensure multi-modal transportation options as required by businesses and residents to support workforce. (FY 2015) (Cost Est.: No cost)

# RELATED INITIATIVES FOR GOAL #3

- ✕ Explore and implement a sewer utility to serve the Commercial/Industrial zones to protect water resources and encourage development.
  - + Partner with neighboring communities (Merrimack, Milford and/or Nashua) to examine the feasibility of extending sewer infrastructure down Route 101A corridor. (FY 2015) (Cost Est.: \$5,000 for Baseline feasibility study)
  - + Create and implement a Sewer Master Plan to build support for and outline the community's goals for the expansion of sewer (FY 2016) (Cost Est.: \$80,000).
  - + Implement partnership agreement with neighboring community to expand existing sewer system and build public-private partnership to share the cost (engineering and construction) (FY 2017-2020) (Cost Est.: \$20-40,000)
  - + Engineering of sewer expansion (FY 2019-2020) (Cost Est.: \$400,000 or \$200,000 per year)
  - + Project Construction (FY 2021-2024) (Cost Est.: \$40 million)

# STRATEGIC GOAL #4

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Goal 4: Amherst will maintain safe drinking water standards and protect water resources.

Measurable Outcome: Protect ground and surface water resources to maintain 100% of the Safe Drinking Water Act standards for drinking water supplies, and support Pennichuck in meeting its Strategic goal of a maximum phosphorous load in Pennichuck Brook Watershed of 30 ug/l.

# RELATED INITIATIVES FOR GOAL #4

- ✘ Revise Water Resource Regulations (Wetlands, Watershed, Aquifer, Floodplain, and Water Pollution Control Ordinances) to simplify and align with BMP's as defined in 2013 Regulatory Review
  - + Combine, simplify and update the Wetlands Protection District and Watershed Protection District (FY 2014) (Cost Est.: Grant)
  - + Update the Water Pollution Control Regulations to reflect current BMP's (FY 2014) (Cost Est.: Grant)
  - + Update the Aquifer Protection District to include Well-head/Ground Water Protection, current BMP's and supporting administrative processes (i.e. sampling requirements, design standards, etc.) (FY 2014) (Cost Est.: Grant)
  - + Work with the State DOT, DES and federal EPA to ensure Amherst meets Stormwater quality regulations. (FY 2014-ongoing) (Cost Est.: No cost)

# RELATED INITIATIVES FOR GOAL #4

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- ✘ Provide proactive enforcement for local water resource related ordinances including Wetlands, Watershed, Aquifer, Groundwater/Well-head, Floodplain, and Water Pollution Control Regulations (FY 2017) (See Goal 5, Initiative 3.b)

# STRATEGIC GOAL #5

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Goal 5: Amherst will have a reputation for ensuring quality construction, and fair and equal enforcement of the regulations.

Measurable Outcome: Continue recent improvements in enforcement to increase the Building Code Effectiveness Grading Schedule (BCEGS) ISO rating from a 4 issued in 2013 to a 3 by 2030.

# RELATED INITIATIVES FOR GOAL #5

- ✖ Provide timely and accurate access to information and data stored within the department.
  - + Create digital copies of archived data to be stored on Town server (FY 2014-2016) (Cost Est.: \$20,000 via FY13 encumbrance)
  - + Invest in and install a paper file management system which will accommodate all archives and foreseeable future documentation, in an organized, safe and efficient manner. (FY 2014-2017) (Cost Est.: \$15,000)
  - + Provide public internet access to permits, data and files. (FY 2017) (Cost Est.: \$5,000 to add customer portal into current Community Development software system)

# RELATED INITIATIVES FOR GOAL #5

## ✘ Ensure quality construction

- + Ensure all building permit applications meet current code specifications (2009 ICC Codes, as amended) and are processed within 7 to 14 days of complete information submission. (FY 2014 - ongoing)
- + Ensure all construction meets or exceeds current code specifications.
  - ✘ Ensure inspections can be scheduled with 24-48 hour advance notice for inspection (FY 2014 - ongoing) (Cost Est.: No Cost).
  - ✘ Utilize subcontracted, certified, Building Inspector on an as-needed basis to provide support during vacations, and keep inspection scheduling within 24-48 hour advance notice. (FY 2015 – ongoing) (Cost Est.: \$5,000 – 10,000 for FY 2015-2016 for subcontracted building inspector)
- + Ensure all existing properties comply with relevant codes, regulations and ordinances via adopted Code Enforcement procedures (FY 2014 - ongoing) (Currently 2-3 hours per week on complaints/enforcement.)



# RELATED INITIATIVES FOR GOAL #5

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## ✖ Fair and equal enforcement of regulations

- + Ensure compliance with Code enforcement policy and reasonable response times to written complaints. (FY 2014 – ongoing) (Cost Est.: No Cost)
- + Provide Staff time and resources for proactive enforcement (FY 2017) (Cost Est.: \$85,000, Current Staff levels do not allow for proactive enforcement. Current time allocation allows for approximately 2 hours per week on complaints.)

# BUDGET IMPACT SUMMARY

Community Development Office - 5 Year Budget Initiatives						
Goals and Initiatives - Budget Impact years	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20
Goal 1: Encourage development which maintains open space and rural landscapes						
1.1 revise regulations and ordinances	0	0	0	0	25,000	0
1.2 Incorporate ACC and ALT goals and initiatives into regulations	0	2,000	0	0	0	0
Goal 2: Variety of housing options and leader in maintaining and managing historic district and resources						
2.1 Continue to allow for variety of housing options	5,000	0	2,500	0	0	0
2.2 Support Historic District	0	0	0	2,000	0	0
2.3 Support Heritage Commission	0	0	0	2,000	0	0
Goal 3: Business friendly community with clear regulations and development processes						
3.1 Design and implement Economic Development Vision	0	72,000	70,000	70,000	70,000	70,000
3.2 Design standards for Commercial and Industrial	2,000	30,000	0	0	0	0
3.3 Infrastructure expansion	5,000	80,000	10,000	20,000	210,000	200,000
Goal 4: Maintain safe drinking water standards and protect water resources						
4.1 Revise water resource regulations	0	0	0	0	0	0
4.2 Proactive enforcement of water resource regulations	0	0	0	0	0	0
Goal 5: Ensuring quality construction and fair and equal enforcement of the regulations.						
5.1 Access to data and information	0	0	20,000	0	0	0
5.2 Ensure Quality Construction	5,000	5,000	0	0	0	0
5.3 Fair and equal enforcement	0	0	85,000	85,000	85,000	85,000
Totals	\$17,000	\$189,000	\$187,500	\$179,000	\$365,000	\$355,000
Proposed Operating Budgets						
	\$296,914	\$307,348	\$318,323	\$329,873	n/a	n/a
Total (Initiatives and Operating Budget)	\$313,914	\$496,348	\$505,823	\$508,873	\$365,000	\$355,000

# CONCLUSION

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- ✖ The three themes are translated into five strategic goals detailing a work plan for the Community Development Office to strive towards over the next five years and beyond.
- ✖ Ultimately the Community Development Office is tasked with assisting the community to find and maintain an acceptable balance between its quality of life, quality of resources and economic development in the hopes of achieving the community's long-term vision and reducing the tax burden on residential property owners.

# DISCUSSION

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WELCOME TO



AMHERST, *NEW HAMPSHIRE*



October 2013

# COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FY 2015-2019 STRATEGIC PLAN