

WELCOME TO



AMHERST, *NEW HAMPSHIRE*



September 2015

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FY 2017-2021 STRATEGIC PLAN

INTRODUCTION

✕ Community Development Office

+ Departments:

- ✕ Building
- ✕ Code Enforcement
- ✕ Planning
- ✕ Zoning
- ✕ Economic Development

+ Boards:

- ✕ Planning Board
- ✕ Zoning Board of Adjustment
- ✕ Historic District Commission
- ✕ Conservation Commission
- ✕ Heritage Commission
- ✕ Capital Improvement Plan Committee
- ✕ Stormwater Committee
- ✕ Other Special Committees as assigned

MISSION

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*

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
- ✗ Maintaining community character

WEAKNESSES

- ✗ Lack Economic Development Vision
- ✗ Loss of data
- ✗ Data accessibility
- ✗ 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

BUILDING PERMIT & BOARD ACTIVITY

✕ Total Building Permits

- + Processed 899 permits in 2014, on track to meet or exceed that number in 2015.
- + Increase in new residential construction starts
- + Commercial new construction and alterations remain flat.

✕ Board Activity

- + Planning and Zoning applications have declined since 2013
- + Increase in Historic District activity, repairs and maintenance.

FY 2015-2016 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- ✘ Workforce Housing Ordinance adopted at Town Meeting in March 2015.
- ✘ Integrated Innovative Housing Ordinance adopted at Town Meeting in March 2015.
- ✘ Ongoing development of architectural design guidelines and revised landscaping standards for commercial development.
- ✘ Ongoing development of revised road design standards.
- ✘ Continuing to streamline permit application and review process.

VISION FOR 2030

- ✘ 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.

STRATEGIC GOALS

✕ 5 Strategic Goals:

- + Goal 1: 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.
- + 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.
 - ✕ Measurable Outcome: Maintain the current residential property and Historic District valuation distribution through 2030.

STRATEGIC GOALS

- + Goal 3: Amherst will be known as a business-friendly community, with clearly established regulations and processes for land development.
 - × Measurable Outcome: Increase the Total Assessed Valuation of Commercial/Industrial property in Amherst to 20% by 2030 and maintain that percent through 2040.

- + 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.

STRATEGIC GOALS

- + 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 in 2030.

PROPOSED 2017 INITIATIVES

- + Provide Staff time and resources for proactive enforcement of all regulations and ordinances, including signage, water resource, and historic district ordinances; implementation of economic development vision and support of an economic development committee; reduction in consultant fees required for regulatory reviews and updates and staffing will allow for management of those special projects internally. Current Staff levels do not allow for proactive enforcement or support for additional boards and commissions. (Cost Est. \$85,000) This will provide support for all department goals and initiatives. (Goal #1, #2, #3, #4 & #5).
 - × 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
 - × Provide proactive enforcement for local water resource related ordinances including Wetlands, Watershed, Aquifer, Groundwater/Well-head, Floodplain, and Water Pollution Control Regulations
 - × Begin proactive enforcement of district and provide staff review and guidance on applications submitted for HDC approval
 - × Support grant applications, provide administrative support to Heritage Commission.

PROPOSED 2017 INITIATIVES

- + Revise Subdivision and NRSP regulations to encourage extension of utilities to new development (Cost Est.: \$5,000 support from consultant) (Goal #2)*
- + Complete a Sidewalk, Bike & Trails Master Plan (Cost Est.: \$20,000 with consultant) (Goal #2)*
- + Revise the Non-Residential Site Plan Regulations and Subdivision Regulations to align with the 2013 Regulatory Review suggestions. (Cost Est.: \$30,000) (Goal #3) *
- + Partner with neighboring communities (Merrimack, Milford and/or Nashua) to examine the feasibility of extending sewer infrastructure down Route 101A corridor. This study will provide order of magnitude cost estimates, capacity requirements, recommendations for implementation and potential funding mechanisms. (Goal #3) (Cost Est.: \$30,000)

*2017 initiatives that could be accomplished internally through the addition of a entry-mid level planner.

2018 AND BEYOND – GOAL #1 INITIATIVES

- ✘ Revise subdivision regulations & zoning ordinance 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. (FY2018) (Cost Est.: \$2,000)

2018 AND BEYOND – GOAL #2 INITIATIVES

- ✘ 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 2018-ongoing) (Cost Est.: \$2,000 – requires partnership with ACTV)
- ✘ Support the Heritage Commission in its role of protection and preservation on non-historic district community resources, and provide necessary updates in
 - + Improve education and communication through website and ACTV (FY 2018-ongoing) (Cost Est.: \$2,000 – requires partnership with ACTV)
- ✘ Update the 2010 Master Plan (as required by statute) in order to continue to develop and implement a vision for Amherst's future (FY 2018-2019) (Cost Est.: \$100,000 total, \$50,000 per year)

2018 AND BEYOND - GOAL #3 INITIATIVES

- ✖ Ensure the development and redevelopment of Commercial and Industrial properties aligns with the design standards articulated in the Economic Development Vision
 - + Revise the Sign Ordinance (FY 2018) (Cost Est.: \$30,000 with consultant)
- ✖ Encourage and provide infrastructure expansion (transportation, utilities, and workforce) to meet the needs of the businesses in the Commercial and Industrial Districts.
 - + Partner with NRPC through TTAC to ensure existing transportation infrastructure maintained and future connections are available as needed. (ongoing) (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. (ongoing) (No cost)

2018 AND BEYOND – GOAL #4 INITIATIVES

- ✘ With the recently completed overhaul of the Town's water protection ordinances, and with proactive enforcement proposed as a 2017 initiative, the Town will have taken great strides towards achieving this goal. Ongoing review and coordination with the Department of Public Works will take place and future initiatives may be proposed as needed to meet the requirements of the forthcoming EPA 2015 MS4 permit.

2018 AND BEYOND – GOAL #5 INITIATIVES

- ✖ Provide timely and accurate access to information and data stored within the department.
 - + 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 2018) (Cost Est.: 15,000)
 - + Provide public internet access to permits, data and files. (FY 2019) (Cost Est.: 5,000 to add customer portal into current Community Development software system)

2018 AND BEYOND – GOAL #5 INITIATIVES

✖ 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. (ongoing)
- + Ensure all construction meets or exceeds current code specifications.
 - ✖ Ensure inspections can be scheduled with 24-48 hour advance notice for inspection (ongoing)
 - ✖ 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. (ongoing)
 - ✖ Ensure all existing properties comply with relevant codes, regulations and ordinances via adopted Code Enforcement procedures (ongoing) (Currently 2-3 hours per week on complaints/enforcement.)

RELATED INITIATIVES FOR GOAL #5

✕ Fair and equal enforcement of regulations

- + Ensure compliance with Code enforcement policy and reasonable response times to written complaints. (ongoing)

BUDGET IMPACT SUMMARY

	FY 17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21
1.1 Revise Regulations – Open Space			\$25,000*		
1.2 Incorporate ALT & ACC Goals		\$2,000			
2.1a Revise Regulations – Utilities	\$5,000*				
2.1b Sidewalk Master Plan	\$20,000*				
2.2a Support Historic District - Outreach		\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
2.2b Support Historic District - Proactive	(see 5.3)				
2.3a Support Heritage - Outreach		\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
2.3b Support Heritage - Proactive	(see 5.3)				
2.4 Update 2010 Master Plan		\$50,000*	\$50,000*		
3.1 Implement Economic Vision	(see 5.3)				
3.2a Revise Regulations – Economic	\$30,000*				
3.2b Revise Regulations – Signs		\$30,000*			
3.3 Infrastructure – Sewer Study	\$30,000				
4.1 Proactive enforcement	(see 5.3)				
5.1 Access to data – paper files			\$15,000		
5.1b Access to data – online permitting			\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
5.3 Fair and Equal Enforcement	\$85,000	\$85,000	\$85,000	\$85,000	\$85,000
TOTAL	\$115,000*	\$131,000*	\$149,000*	\$94,000	\$94,000
Proposed Operating Budget	\$309,254	\$309,254	\$309,254	\$309,254	\$309,254
TOTAL PROPOSED	\$424,254	\$440,254	\$458,254	\$403,254	\$403,254

CONCLUSION

- ✘ 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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