

Envision Amherst 2035

A Master Plan for the Town of Amherst, NH

January 2023

Acknowledgments

The Town of Amherst would like to thank the Master Plan Steering Committee, Town Staff, especially Community Development Director Nic Strong, its consultant Resilience Planning and Design, and the public for participating in and directing the development of Amherst's Master Plan. The Master Plan Steering Committee members include:

- Tracie Adams: Chair, Planning Board Representative
- Dwight Brew: Chair through March 2022, Board of Selectmen Representative
- Tom Gauthier: Amherst School Board Representative
- Jared Hardner: Amherst Conservation Commission Representative
- Joe Ilsley: Citizen Representative through June 2022
- Tim Kachmar: Citizen Representative
- Will Ludt: Heritage Commission Representative
- Danielle Pray: Board of Selectmen Representative since April 2022
- Tom Quinn: Citizen Representative through March 2021
- Chris Yates: Planning Board Representative



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Introduction

Welcome to Envision Amherst 2035 the Town of Amherst's Master Plan.

This plan was developed under the guidance and direction of community members, local officials, and municipal staff. Now taking the place of the 2010 Master Plan, Envision Amherst 2035 presents a vision and critical implementation actions that will guide the community for more than a decade into the future.

Recognized for its heritage and cultural resources, location, natural resources, and quality schools and services, Amherst continues to be known as one of the most desirable places to live in New Hampshire. As a predominantly residential community near larger urban centers, Amherst has prioritized investments in land conservation, historic preservation, and outdoor recreation to maintain the distinct character of the community and overall quality of life that residents desire.

A survey administered by the Town during the Winter of 2020/21 received over 1800 responses calling for continued work on the preservation of the town's character through protection of Amherst's natural resources and open spaces, historic resources, and water resources. Respondents also expressed a strong desire to manage the cost of community services and property taxes, while indicating a commitment to maintaining or improving this infrastructure and the services provided including the schools.

In the Spring of 2021 the Master Plan Steering Committee, with support from Resilience Planning & Design, began preparing existing conditions profiles for the many topics typically explored during a comprehensive planning process. The Committee also developed an outreach and engagement plan to build on the findings of the Winter 2020/2021 survey, and to provide additional opportunities for the residents to inform and direct this planning process. A Buildout Analysis was also completed early in 2022 with assistance from the Nashua Regional Planning Commission. Each of these phases of this planning initiative contributed to the community vision and planning themes used to organize this document, and the resulting implementation action plan.

With all of the inventory data, analysis, and outreach results included in the Appendix, the main body of Envision Amherst 2035 is informed by this earlier work and organized around three broad themes:

1 Our Shared Resources

Amherst recognizes the significance of its natural and cultural resources in determining the character of the community, the resulting pattern and intensity of development, and the potential of these resources to guide how future land use changes will be accommodated.

2 A Connected and Resilient Community

Amherst is committed to planning for a diverse and integrated transportation network, quality municipal facilities and services, access to technology, and the recreation facilities and programs residents are seeking. This will all be accomplished while building a strong and caring community that can bounce back from internal and external challenges.

3 Looking Forward

Amherst's land use pattern, housing supply, and local economy will be guided over the decade ahead in order to strike a balance between resource protection and development, and to reach the vision for the future that is articulated in this Plan.

What is a Master Plan?

The State of New Hampshire directs municipalities to maintain and regularly update a Master Plan through RSA 674:1 with the intent to guide future growth, land use, and development. While the Master Plan is not a regulatory document, it does provide the legal basis for zoning and other land use regulations. It also provides the community a big-picture view of where things are today, and where the community wants to be in the future. As the primary tool for directing land use policy and decision-making in a community, the Master Plan also defines the policies, programs, and actions necessary to achieve the community's vision for the future and provides guidance for public and private investment, including capital improvements, and budget planning.

This plan is an overarching document that includes actions specific enough to provide clear direction, while also allowing some level of flexibility in how they are implemented in the future. In some cases, it identifies issues and opportunities that will require further analysis, study, and discussion that can be further informed by the master plan, but are too focused or detailed to have been resolved during this broader land use planning process.

WHAT IS LAND USE?

The use of land impacts the character and quality of life within the community. The rate, location, and type of growth, along with the preservation of unique features, together influence the evolution of a community's physical appearance and the need for public services and facilities. How a community decides to use its land area has a direct impact on natural resources, community character, transportation infrastructure, and on housing opportunities, the tax base, and the cost of providing services. There are many topics that relate to land use and quality of life that were analyzed in the development of this Plan. These include transportation, housing, public facilities, natural resources, economic development, and others. Appendix A includes a summary report with existing conditions profiles completed for each of these topics.

It will be up to Amherst's public, private, and community-based organizations to help implement this Plan by using it as a guiding framework to achieve the Town's vision of the future. As projects, policies, and programs are evaluated and created, Amherst should ensure that these initiatives are consistent with the vision and policies found in this planning document.

*The Master Plan provides the community a **big-picture view** of where things are today, and where the community wants to be in the future.*

Master Planning Process



Existing Conditions Analysis

A number of topics were inventoried and analyzed to inform the development of this Master Plan document. These include population and housing, transportation, public facilities and services, natural resources, heritage and culture, water resources, transportation, recreation, economic development, and land use and zoning.

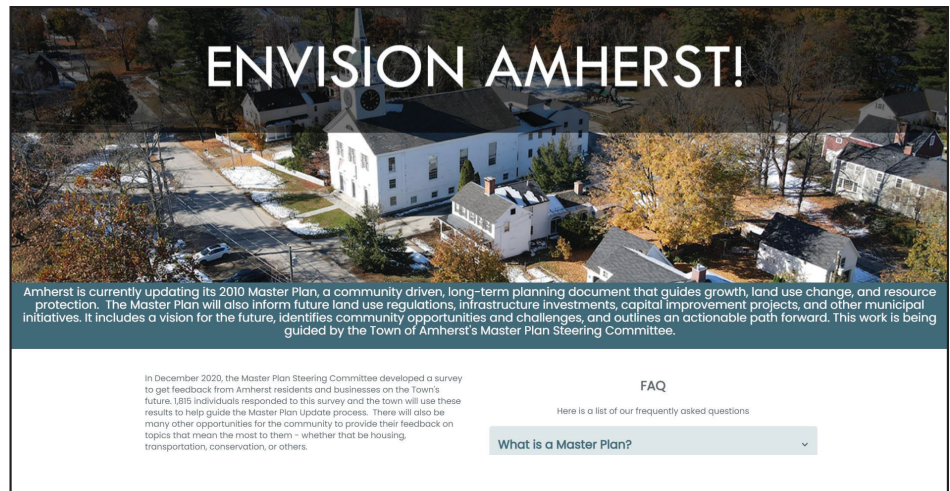
Data, current conditions, observable trends, and emerging issues were explored with the Master Plan Steering Committee during this analysis, and provide a foundation for how the Vision and actions included in this Plan were created. The Appendix includes existing conditions profiles for each of these topics, providing a deeper understanding of Amherst today and some of the issues and opportunities that need attention in the decade ahead.

Community Engagement

Along with the analysis of existing conditions, community desires and priorities should drive the development of a Master Plan. Following the successful survey effort completed during the Winter of 2020/21, the Town of Amherst completed additional public outreach and engagement activities to identify community issues that matter to residents and other community members, and to glean opportunities, challenges, and potential solutions from the public on important local issues. The summary of results obtained through these outreach efforts is included in Appendix B, but here is a summary of the outreach and engagement process overall.

The additional outreach mechanisms used to solicit public input for this master planning process included an in-person Community Forum and an alternative online survey tool. Both of these mechanisms provided participants with summary profiles and maps of the many topics being analyzed. Steps were taken to publicize both of these options and included:

- The creation of an Envision Amherst Project Website
- Master Plan Steering Committee and Staff communications with other municipal boards and committees
- Fliers and postcards
- Social Media posts
- Print Media Articles in the Union Leader, Amherst Citizen, and Milford Cabinet
- A short video explaining the project and how to participate



The information and data presented for both the in-person forum and online survey during the Fall of 2021 were identical. The questions posed were also the same. Because of this, the summary of results for both methods have been combined, and the results are organized by topic area and include the main takeaways for each of the questions the public was asked to consider. The findings of the outreach and engagement efforts have been included in Appendix B and the referenced 2021 Master Plan Survey results have been included in Appendix C.

2021 Master Plan Survey

The results of this community survey helped inform and guide the creation of this Master Plan. The survey respondents indicated strong support for future efforts to protect water resources, and preserving the rural character and feeling of Amherst. Additional priorities that were identified include preserving the historic character of the community while maintaining the recreational infrastructure, expanding trails, and improving roads and infrastructure. Preserving the educational quality of the schools was also identified as a priority for many residents.

When considering future needs a year-round farmers market was a high priority. Other popular needs related to a community center with meeting space, performing and visual art facilities, and additional services for seniors. Additional restaurants were also considered a future need in Amherst. There is a desire by respondents to limit the number of residential units allowed annually in favor of open space protection, aquifer protection, and increased buffers around surface waters. The vision and recommendations articulated in this Master Plan reflect these desires.

Buildout Analysis

“Buildout” is a hypothetical condition that exists in the future when all available and suitable land has been developed for residential and non-residential purposes. A buildout is a data-driven tool that uses mapping software to help local decision-makers to estimate the location and extent of future development based

on different scenarios. The software used considers existing natural constraints (surface waters, wetlands, steep slopes, etc.) and the existing land use and zoning regulations. Using this data the buildout that is produced shows the location, type, and amount of future growth the community is likely to experience over a long time horizon.

Amherst contracted with the Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) to conduct a buildout analysis to inform the updating of the Master Plan. This included a baseline calculation of future development following current regulations and growth rates, and the creation of an alternative scenario where floodplains, wellhead protection areas, and significant wildlife habitat were not developed. The complete Buildout Analysis report is located in Appendix E.

Amherst Today

Known for its historic village center, Amherst is a community that has been actively engaged in community planning for several decades.

This includes developing land use regulations, conserving open space for all to enjoy, protecting cultural resources, constructing trails and recreation facilities, and offering programs that encourage health and wellness. The community also has a history of advocating for housing options while providing quality municipal services and schools to all residents of Amherst. More recently residents of Amherst have started to re-think the land use pattern and transportation infrastructure that is emerging, and have begun to imagine what may be lost or gained as new development takes place in the years ahead. In order to address this the community is striving for balanced and coordinated land development and conservation efforts. The build-out analysis completed for this project will be a helpful resource to understand the potential impacts of future development pressure.



The legacy of land conservation in Amherst has created a greater awareness of the importance of natural resources and the many benefits they provide (clean air, water, habitat, beauty, etc.).

With continued development pressure being experienced in Amherst, this has drawn attention to the remaining water resources and how best to steward this limited resource while allowing its protection to guide the land use plan for Amherst. A land use plan and land use regulations (zoning, site plan regulations, and subdivision regulations) that consider these natural systems is the only way to ensure their protection, guide development activity to the most appropriate areas of the community, and help preserve the character of Amherst. Efforts are also already underway to re-imagine the existing transportation system, and the community is now actively advocating



for transportation infrastructure that safely accommodates bicycles and pedestrians. This is an effort to incorporate healthy and more equitable transportation options for the future.

Although the Town is situated in a rapidly growing region, the residents of Amherst have worked together to successfully maintain the distinct character of the community which is comprised of historic sites and buildings, fields and forests, and the quiet neighborhoods that surround the historic village center and established commercial areas.

As a result, Amherst continues to be a desirable place to live and work for people of all ages. Looking ahead the residents of Amherst are committed to maintaining this practice of working together and planning for the future, while also balancing future economic development opportunities, the demand for housing, and natural resource protection efforts.



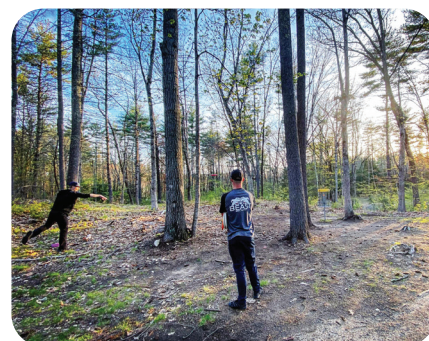
The Vision statement below has been written in the present tense to help readers of this Plan visualize what Amherst will be like in the year 2035. This Master Plan and the many actions identified in the implementation section will then provide the road map for achieving the Vision.

A VISION OF AMHERST IN 2035

The historic architecture, pedestrian friendly streets, and the common in Amherst's village continue to be the heart and civic center of the community, and a place where neighbors meet and build relationships. Radiating out from the village new pathways have been constructed to accommodate a range of transportation and recreation alternatives for people of all ages. These pathways blend in with the landscape and connect neighborhoods to parks, open spaces, heritage sites, and municipal and commercial services. Continued land conservation efforts have created greenways of connected open space that support habitat and recreation, and protect the significant surface and groundwater resources in the community.

Amherst's focus on land conservation and water resource protection has resulted in the creation of enhanced vegetative buffers that blend new residential and commercial development into the community without diminishing Amherst's notable character. The scenic quality and character of the Route 101 corridor has also been preserved as a gateway to the community through thoughtful planning and conservation efforts. Amherst is a town where people of all ages, backgrounds, and stages of life can enjoy the highest quality of living, while having access to housing options that meet their needs.

Amherst's municipal facilities have been updated and maintained to best serve the residents, while incorporating more sustainable design approaches that contribute to the community's overall resilience. These efforts have inspired private property owners to do the same and pursue energy conservation, renewable energy, and landscaping projects that are environmentally friendly and create wildlife habitat. Major infrastructure upgrades and the high level of cost-effective town services have been made possible through the creativity and cooperation of residents and local leaders who identified outside funding sources and public/private partnerships that brought many projects to reality.



Master Plan Themes

This vision is now a reality because of the many implementation efforts of residents, municipal volunteers, and municipal staff under the following themes and topic areas:

1 Our Shared Resources

Natural Resource Protection and Land Conservation

Water Resources

Heritage and Cultural Resources

2 A Connected and Resilient Community

Diverse and Integrated Transportation Network

Recreation Facilities and Services

Municipal Buildings, Facilities, and Services

Telecommunications

3 Looking Forward

Existing Land Use Pattern

Local Economy

Housing Supply

Future Land Use Plan






1

Our Shared Resources

AMHERST'S NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES



Amherst's land area is composed of many individual land uses that have evolved over time, and are woven into a landscape rich with natural and cultural resources. Together these buildings, forests, fields, and stone walls have created a distinct community character that residents appreciate and are striving to protect.

If any element of this ecosystem is lost the community will be forever changed. And yet, change is the only constant across this landscape. The focus of this Master Plan is on how to plan for and work with that change. To do so will require a continued commitment to land conservation, water resource protection, and the documentation and stewardship of the many historic and cultural resources and activities in Amherst.

This Plan also represents an opportunity to educate and engage residents in this important work of planning for the future. These efforts will require adopting some new regulatory tools and non-regulatory strategies that will guide the implementation of this section of the Plan in fulfillment of the community's Vision. This includes a continued commitment to the inventory and analysis of natural resources, and to land conservation initiatives.

Natural Resource Protection and Land Conservation

Balancing development pressures, available open space, and maintaining natural resources can be challenging at the municipal scale. Often, natural resource protection and development are seen as competing forces. This dynamic makes for challenging conversations and often leads to misinformed planning decisions. However, these land uses are being intentionally coordinated in this Master Plan in order to avoid such conflict, and to ensure Amherst implements its Vision of the future. Amherst's natural resources currently reflect the balance the town has struck between conservation and development, and the resulting pattern plays out differently in the town from south to north.

Amherst's natural resources also provide a variety of ecosystem services including clean air and water, space for recreation, wildlife habitat, and many other benefits. These resources extend into neighboring communities and are not contained neatly within the municipal boundaries. This means that there is great value in considering what is happening both within Amherst and beyond its boundaries into neighboring towns. Regional conversations and collaborations are extremely important for the preservation of Amherst's shared resources as they are all part of larger systems and stories.

The Town of Amherst has a total of 4,163 acres of conserved land, which equals 19% of the town's total land area. Relative to its surrounding towns, Amherst's total of 19% conserved land is the average amount. The nearby communities of Bedford and Hollis range from 11% conserved land in Bedford to 28% conserved in

NATURAL SYSTEMS AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

Natural systems provide many benefits to humans and other species which are often referred to as ecosystem services. These include:

- Clean water
- Clean air
- Wildlife habitat
- Pollination
- Food production
- Soil formation
- Photosynthesis
- Flood control
- Temperature regulation
- Carbon sequestration
- Cultural services including sense of place, aesthetic beauty, and others
- Recreational opportunities

Having an understanding of the many benefits provided by Amherst's natural areas is important and should inform both land conservation efforts and land use regulations. While many of Amherst's ecosystem services are provided by land still in its natural state, each property owner has the potential to protect and restore the provision of these services as well. The land use regulations could further emphasize the importance of resource protection and restored habitat connectivity. This can be accomplished through a combination of open space, landscaping, and living infrastructure requirements that will guide and inform future development activity.



Hollis. Conserved lands are defined by NH GRANIT at the University of New Hampshire as “acres that are mostly undeveloped and are protected from future development.” Based on input received through the 2021 Amherst Master Plan survey, it is clear that the Town and many residents place a high priority on land conservation and resource protection.

*Based on the 2021 Amherst Master Plan Survey, 91% of respondents agree or strongly agree that **Amherst needs to conserve natural areas to protect open space and natural aesthetics.***

Key Issues

In Amherst, 59% of the town’s land area is forested, and 24% of this forested area is conserved. Forest cover provides wildlife habitat, filters and improves air quality, and provides carbon sequestration that is essential to addressing climate change. Ecosystem types in Amherst includes common forest types such as Appalachian oak pine, and more rare habitat types including grasslands, shrub wetlands, peatlands, and temperate swamps. New Hampshire’s Fish and Game Department identifies and ranks habitat types that have the best ecological condition in the state. This ranking shows communities the distribution and location of these highly important



ecological communities so that they may invest in their protection. These habitats are distinct and are identified based on their biodiversity, the composition of habitat types on the landscape, and how undisturbed they are by human impact. Out of the ranked habitat that exists in Amherst, 31% is conserved. Ranked habitat is evaluated in even greater detail by the distinction of tiers. Tier 1 habitat is the highest ranked habitat in the state, and in Amherst nearly half (42%) of these critical resources are now conserved.

While Amherst is still fortunate to have significant natural land cover, the composition of these natural resource areas across the community has a distinct spatial pattern. There are more natural resources and conserved parcels identified in the northern part of Amherst, and development activity increases toward the southern portion of the community. There are still large unfragmented blocks of land in Amherst that have not been conserved and could potentially be developed. These are areas of the community that are 500-feet away from all existing roads and developed lands, and range in size from 100 acres to nearly 2,300 acres. The larger unfragmented blocks are often found to contain more common but still important habitat types, while the smaller unfragmented blocks often contain the rarer habitat types.

These unfragmented blocks of land are especially significant for a range of wildlife, water resource

protection, recreation, and other important ecosystem services. They also contribute to the overall character of the community that residents wish to preserve. When connected as greenways of conserved land, this open space network provides access for recreation close to where people live and work in Amherst and contributes to the high quality of life in the community.

Similar to the spatial distribution identified above, the larger unfragmented blocks of land area are generally found in the northern part of town and get progressively smaller in size toward the southern portion of Amherst. While all areas of the community have isolated parcels with significant resources worthy of protection, the southern area of the community is also over a large and important aquifer. This amazing groundwater resource is ranked as one of the highest value public water resources in the state and should not be further impacted. Connecting existing conservation lands with these remaining unfragmented blocks and other important natural resource areas is a priority for the town.

SUMMARY

Amherst has a variety of ecosystems and natural communities that exist in town, including forestland, grassland, shrub wetlands, and others. A significant portion of these lands is conserved, however, there is potential for unprotected habitat that is ranked high by the state to be pursued for permanent protection.

While northern Amherst has more natural resources, the southern part of town has more development activity. Managing development activity through low impact development and increasing open space protection throughout town may be a future priority.

There are still large unfragmented blocks of natural land that are not permanently protected from development. These could be a major priority for future conservation efforts.



Water Resources

While all of Amherst's natural resources are important to existing and future residents, the water resources in Amherst are especially significant, and are something the community can address through regulatory, non-regulatory, and voluntary actions. As a result, they are playing a significant role in informing this Master Plan, and will have a role in shaping the future land use pattern and resilience of the town in the future.

Currently, the majority of Amherst's drinking water is sourced within the community and, overall, is of excellent quality. This is not the case for all communities in southern New Hampshire, which highlights what an important asset clean water is in town. Communities that have not taken the necessary steps to understand existing and future threats to their water resources and have not invested in their protection are now experiencing both the environmental and financial impacts of that oversight.

Amherst's water resources contribute many benefits to community members and the natural environment of the town and region. High-quality

groundwater, surface water bodies (such as rivers, streams, lakes, and ponds), wetlands, and other water sources create healthy ecosystems and enhance the quality of life for all community members by providing drinking water, recreational opportunities, and contributing to the character of the community. The existing conditions profile completed for water resources (and included in Appendix A4) included an initial assessment of the condition of Amherst's water resources and an examination of the potential threats to water quality, habitat, flood storage capacity, and more. Some of the highlights from that analysis have been included in this section.

LIVING INFRASTRUCTURE

Living infrastructure refers to a range of low impact development techniques that incorporate soils and plants to provide natural processes within developed areas. These include native landscaping, bioretention systems, rain gardens and swales, green walls and roofs, street trees, and others. Amherst's intact natural resource areas and conservation lands are also critical living infrastructure. However, the developed portions of the community disrupt this network and introduce challenges like stormwater management, heat-island effect, and others that are best mitigated by the inclusion of natural elements. These natural elements break up and cool the impervious surfaces common in developments, soften the appearance, and provide other important ecosystem services.

Although the term has been popularized to describe natural stormwater management solutions, many policymakers and planners across the country are now recognizing that using the term more broadly provides an opportunity to increase the number of ecosystem services provided through each intervention or addition to the open space network. Similar to other nature-based solutions, living infrastructure (also called green infrastructure) land use regulations provide an opportunity to restore natural functions and mitigate climate change while accommodating some additional development activity over time.



Key Issues

Amherst sits at the lower elevations of the larger Souhegan River Watershed. Because of this geographic location, approximately 255 miles of upstream surface water flows into Amherst mostly from the west. Within Amherst, this flow of water is carried by 73 miles of streams of varying size and volume, with the largest being a section of the Souhegan River.

Many of these rivers and streams are also connected to wetland systems that store and filter this water, representing two of the many ecosystem services wetlands provide. In Amherst, 86% of these wetlands are also likely to be associated with vernal pools. This is significant because vernal pools are temporary bodies of water that provide unique, essential habitat for a variety of wildlife. For some species of amphibians and invertebrates, vernal pools are required for breeding, and others, such as Blanding's and spotted turtles, often use vernal pools for foraging or mating. This is a habitat type that is challenging to inventory and monitor and is being lost at an accelerating rate across New Hampshire due to development and land management changes.

Amherst is also home to a large, and highly productive stratified-drift aquifer that lies beneath 8% of the town. In an analysis of the highest yielding areas of Amherst's aquifers, it was determined that 45% of the land above them has already been developed and only 8% of this land has been conserved (see the Water Resources Map for the location of the town's aquifers and developed areas). The land use activities above this groundwater resource present a constant threat to the quality of this water. Future land uses and development activity in this area of the community could be further evaluated and potentially regulated to ensure long-term protection of this shared resource.

Other threats to Amherst's water resources and residents include stormwater flowing off roofs, parking lots, and other impervious surfaces and carrying with it pollutants such as fuel, salt, Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAs), and heavy metals. There are also many potential contamination sites in the larger Souhegan River Watershed. However, many of them enter the Souhegan River before entering Amherst and flow through the Town. A much smaller number of potential upstream sites threaten Amherst's other streams and waterbodies, which is important for better understanding Amherst's general water quality. Based on a New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services assessment, there are currently two impaired lakes, eight impaired streams, and two impaired beaches in Amherst.

In Amherst, 8% of the community also falls within the 100-year floodplain, and an additional 3% of the town is within the 500-year floodplain. Together, 11% of Amherst is prone to flooding, and with the realities of climate change this means that private properties and infrastructure are at risk of future events. These floodplain areas and the many natural resources mentioned earlier in this section also provide important flood storage for communities downstream.

Addressing water resource protection is a primary objective of this Master Plan. Actions that protect water resources in town and promote sound development practices that mitigate harm to water resource quality will provide many benefits to the community of Amherst. These benefits not only ensure access to clean drinking water in the future, but will also yield conserved lands, reinforce Amherst's community character, and will contribute to the rural beauty, quality habitat, recreation network, and air quality.

SUMMARY

Amherst has many water resources in town that are considered to be of very good quality. However, development, polluted stormwater runoff, and other human activities have the potential to threaten the quality of these resources unless sound land use practices, management, and regulations are put in place.

Some of Amherst's wetlands are associated with vernal pools, a unique wetland habitat ecosystem that appears seasonally. These areas are difficult to identify due to their seasonal appearance, and are at risk of being lost to development unless more are protected through conservation and regulation.

Amherst's aquifers represent an important drinking water source that should be protected for the future good of the community. There is an opportunity to conserve more land above the aquifer and to direct future land use activity to protect this water source.

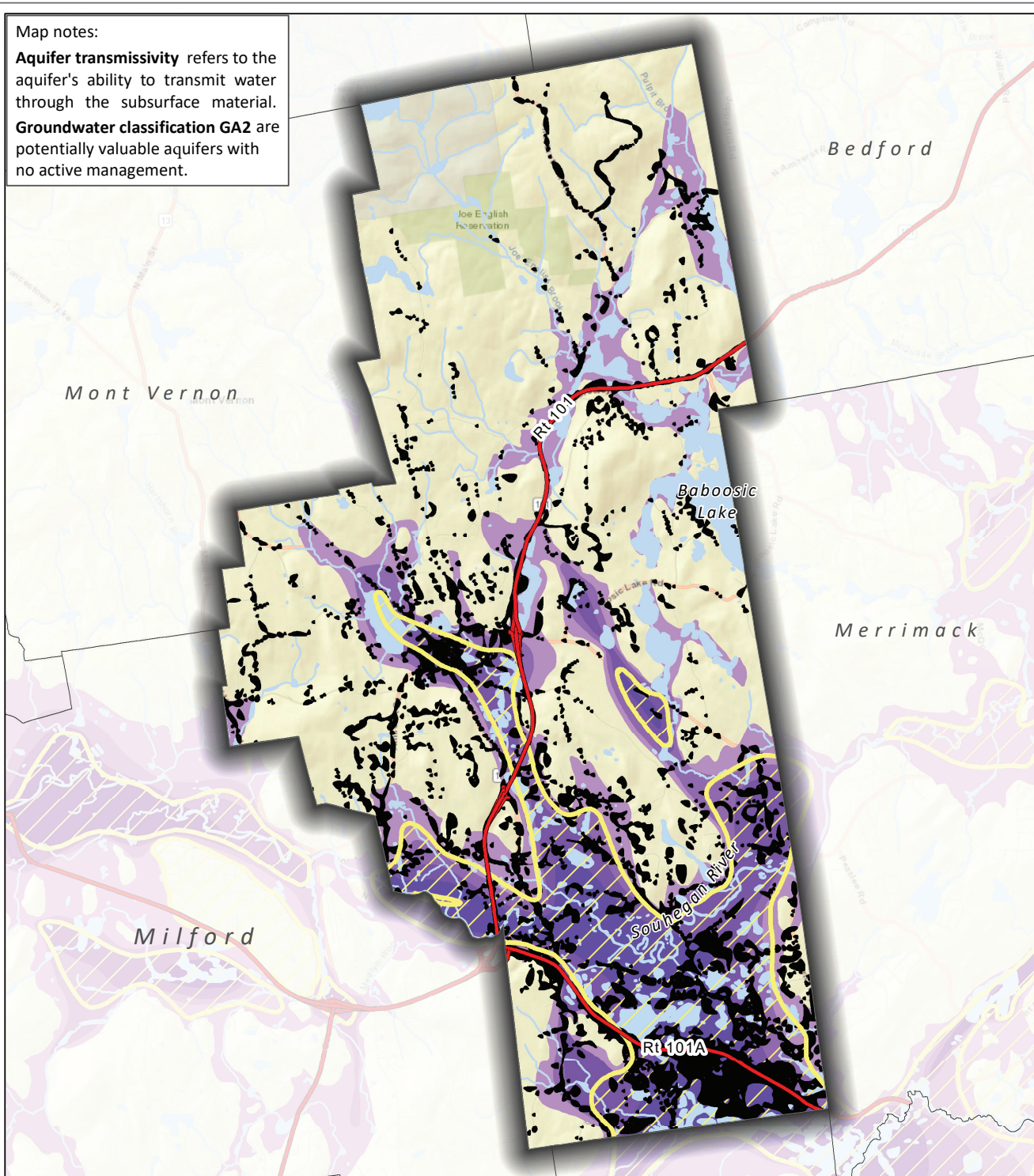
Stormwater runoff polluted by various human activities causes higher levels of contamination in water bodies. Reducing polluted stormwater runoff through regulatory and non-regulatory strategies is important to protect water quality.

More intense and frequent rainstorms associated with climate change represent the likely future for most communities in New Hampshire. Investing in resilient infrastructure and managing floodplain development will ensure Amherst is prepared for what the future holds.

Map notes:


Aquifer transmissivity refers to the aquifer's ability to transmit water through the subsurface material.

Groundwater classification GA2 are potentially valuable aquifers with no active management.



Town of Amherst, NH

Water Resources & Development

-  Town boundary
-  Stream
-  Waterbody
-  Developed area
-  Primary road
-  Aquifer productivity: Low
-  Aquifer productivity: Medium
-  Aquifer productivity: High
-  Aquifer productivity: Excellent
-  Groundwater classification: GA2

0 1 2 Miles



Prepared by Zak Brohinsky
Resilience Planning & Design
September 2022
Data sources: Town of Amherst,
GRANIT, NRPC, RP&D

Heritage and Culture

Amherst residents have long valued the history and cultural traditions of the community, and have worked hard to preserve, promote and enhance these resources. This includes physical resources such as landscape features, buildings, and archaeological sites, as well as non-physical resources which include organizations, clubs, programs, and traditions. Together this combination of places, items, and events contribute to the story of Amherst as a community (a story that is still being written today). They also contribute to sense of place in Amherst, the community character, and the overall quality of life in the community.

Amherst has a deep and well documented history that helps define the character and identity of the community. It also helps explain how the town has evolved into the place it is today. The existing conditions profile for Heritage and Culture lists the many groups still working to protect and share the historic and cultural resources in Amherst. These resources are well inventoried and stewarded through the efforts of many individuals and organizations. The Amherst Library is also an important resource supporting these efforts.

This work both reinforces the identity and character of the community, and serves to build relationships and strong social networks over time. The information and the process that is keeping it accessible could be leveraged further to inform the land use regulations and non-regulatory initiatives, and to guide future development activity both in terms of location and appearance. This information will also continue to be beneficial to engaging and informing residents, and building community connections.

Key Issues

*Based on the 2021 Amherst Master Plan Survey, 83% of respondents agree or strongly agree that **Amherst needs to preserve its historic and cultural resources.***



“Sense of place is a unique collection of qualities and characteristics – visual, cultural, social, and environmental – that provide meaning to a location. Sense of place is what makes one city or town different from another, but sense of place is also what makes our physical surroundings worth caring about.”
-Edward T. McMahon

Amherst's efforts to promote awareness, education, and support for the community's heritage also play an important role in maintaining the character and identity of the community. However, there is work left to do. Amherst's many stone walls are threatened by new development, and the stone wall map that includes data for Amherst is not a complete record of the walls that remain. This is a resource that can be improved with landowner and volunteer participation. Since the 1982 designation of the Historic District, sufficient time has passed to allow properties that were not yet 50 years old to now be considered as contributing. Raising awareness of this opportunity to property owners in the Historic District could result in the protection and careful restoration of some additional structures. The same could be done for Amherst's many historic barns as they reflect the town's agricultural past. However, these structures have not been fully documented, and measures have not been established to ensure their long-term protection.

Municipal infrastructure and telecommunications structures also have the potential to detract from the character of the community, and can be addressed through regulatory and non-regulatory approaches. In some portions of the community, such as the village, public utilities are diminishing the character of the community. Because of this, the town may decide to continue burying of the electrical and data wires where practical, and new developments could be required to do the same. The town could also develop a strategy for managing other telecommunications developments (such as cell towers) to ensure these developments are placed and constructed to be consistent with the character of the town while providing the services many residents desire.

The overall character of new development should also be considered with Amherst's history and culture in mind. It is clear that development along Route 101A does not complement the historic character of

CREATIVE PLACEMAKING

While land use planning has traditionally focused on the physical layout of a community, there is an emerging focus on how a community's physical spaces support and promote a town's sense of place and its community vitality. According to Projects for Public Spaces, placemaking refers to a hands-on, grassroots approach for improving our neighborhoods and communities. It inspires collective reimagination of community spaces, including parks, streetscapes, trails, and community centers, to stimulate activity in these spaces, build neighborly connections, and strengthen the connection between people and the places they share. Placemaking is a collaborative process that can facilitate creative patterns of use with particular focus on the cultural and social identity that define a place. A community's heritage and culture can serve as a vehicle for community placemaking initiatives and be reinforced in physical projects in public (and private) spaces throughout a community. These initiatives can inform design standards in land use regulations, but are more often utilized for non-regulatory efforts that reinforce and celebrate a community's identity and history.

Creative placemaking uses the arts, heritage, and culture of the community to build stronger visual and social connections. This also refers to placemaking centered around arts and cultural experiences, activities, projects, or installations. It can also be reflected in more tactical projects that are smaller in scale and test project ideas through temporary, low-cost initiatives. This will further enhance the other implementation efforts resulting from this Master Plan, and make the residents of Amherst more resilient as a connected human community.

Amherst. Future development in this area could also be required to consider water resource protection due to its location over the aquifer. There are also concerns that allowing further development or encouraging areas of higher density along Route 101 East may cause it to suffer the same fate. This is an opportunity to consider how to better regulate the density and design of development and redevelopment efforts along these corridors.

Amherst has numerous sites of archaeological interest, which have not yet been researched, documented, or protected. Protecting these areas from being lost or damaged by development activity is important to the preservation of Amherst's resources and their contribution to the town's story.

Establishing initiatives to research and document these sites, such as the historic corncrib, is one strategy that is needed. The adoption of a metal detecting policy and a demolition delay policy are additional regulatory strategies that could also provide some protection for Amherst's remaining undocumented and unprotected sites and structures.

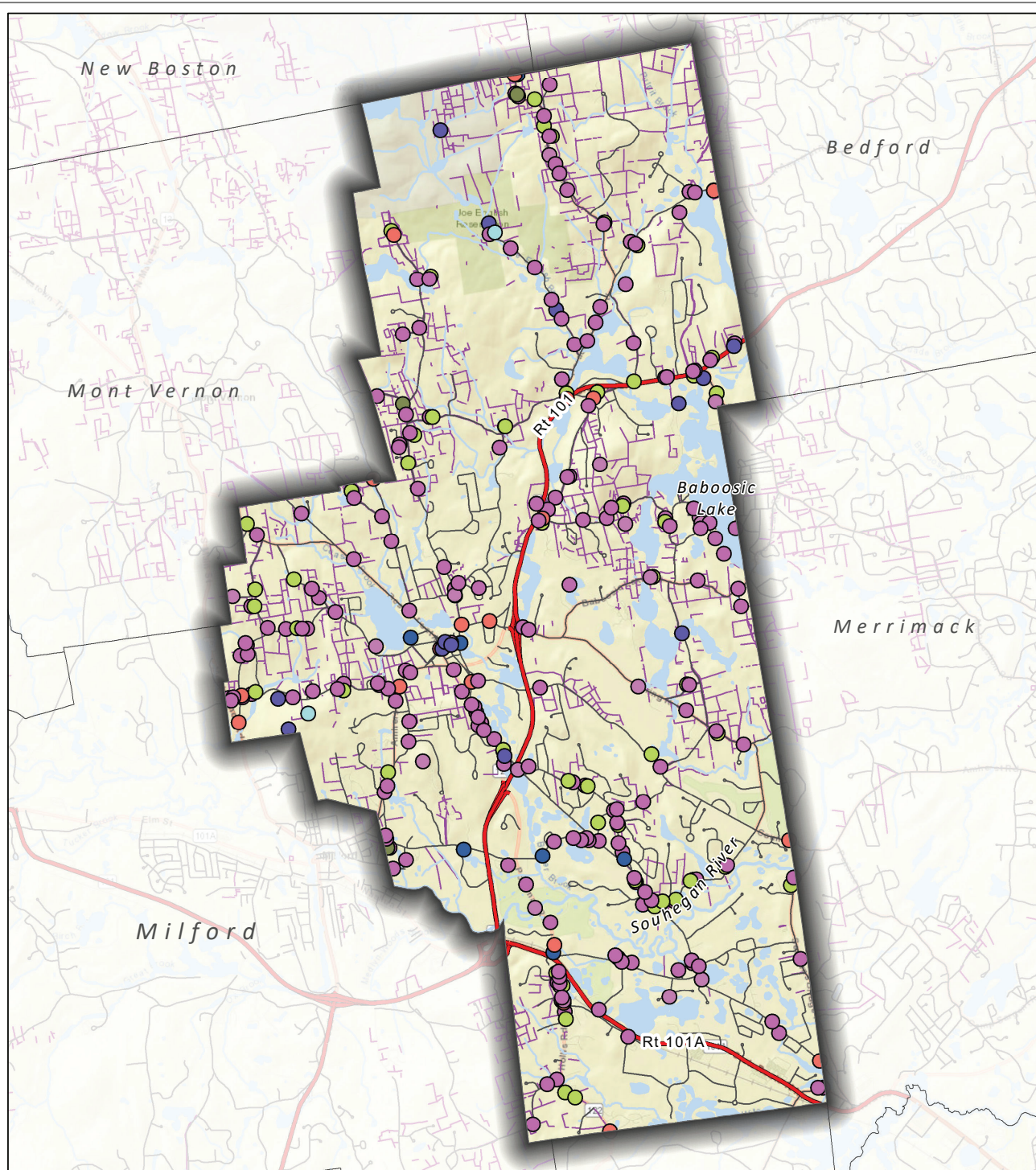
SUMMARY

While the town has documented and preserved many of the historic properties that exist in Amherst, more work is needed to inventory and catalog historically significant archaeological sites, barns, and stone walls.







Re-examining the boundaries and properties within the town's historic district to allow for newly eligible properties to be included may also further protect the historic character of this district.









Development has the potential, if not coordinated appropriately, to tarnish the character of a community by tearing down historic structures and building new development that does not align visually with the character of the community. Amherst should pay special attention to preserving the character of the village and guiding development on Route 101A and 101E to ensure it aligns with Amherst's existing character.

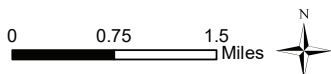
Creative placemaking celebrates a community's cultural and historic assets through community events, education, and public art. This enhances sense of place in a community and contributes to overall livability.



Town of Amherst, NH Heritage & Cultural Resources

-  Town boundary
-  Stream
-  Waterbody
-  Primary road
-  Primary road
-  Stone wall

-  Cemetery (7)
-  Distinctive Outbuilding (52)
-  Guidepost & Marker (20)
-  Historic Residence (193)
-  Quarry or Mill Site (3)
-  Schoolhouse (3)
-  Sight or Place of Interest (18)
-  Stone Structure (14)



Prepared by Zak Brohinsky
Resilience Planning & Design
September 2022
Data sources: Town of Amherst,
GRANIT, NRPC, RP&D



2

A Connected and Resilient Community

AMHERST'S INFRASTRUCTURE AND MUNICIPAL SERVICES

The network of infrastructure linking Amherst's homes, businesses, and municipal facilities connects community members to each other and the larger world beyond the town's boundaries. This infrastructure and the services provided facilitate travel, communication, access to education and recreation, and ensure the health, welfare, and safety of residents.

The quality of the supporting facilities, infrastructure, and many services provided by the town play a significant role in Amherst's reputation as a desirable community and support the local economy. However, attention should be given to planning for the capacity, configuration, and resilience of these systems. Over the coming decade Amherst may consider opportunities to make design and investment improvements in these facilities and related infrastructure to reinforce the Vision articulated in this Plan. This would provide an opportunity to also address energy consumption and production in an effort to make Amherst a more sustainable community.

The planning process that informed the creation of this Master Plan helped to identify how important new bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, high speed internet, recreation amenities and programs, quality schools, and municipal services are to residents. These priorities were also clearly identified in the results of the 2021 Master Plan Survey. Some of the work needed in the years to come can be addressed through policy changes and regulatory tools, but most of these efforts may be best served by non-regulatory approaches and infrastructure investments.

A Diverse and Integrated Transportation System

Amherst’s transportation network includes roadways, bridges and culverts, sidepaths, and trails. The existing roadway network is composed of 164 miles of state, municipal, and private roads. Both NH 101 and NH 101A serve as key corridors for economic development within the Town of Amherst, and function as important regional arterials.

Amherst’s location is in a rapidly growing region and its fairly dispersed development pattern has resulted in an automobile dominated transportation system. However, the majority of Amherst’s roads are municipally maintained which gives the town control over how they are designed and constructed. Given the fact that Amherst’s transportation system provides critical access to residents and businesses within and outside of the community, this system both impacts and is impacted by land use changes and development activity. The Town has made a commitment to plan for and construct a more multimodal transportation system that will better serve residents and visitors of all ages. This means that multi-use pathways and roadways designed to accommodate vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians are critical to Amherst’s future transportation network.

Key Issues

Based on the 2021 Amherst Master Plan Survey, 79% of respondents agree or strongly

COMPLETE STREETS AND VISION ZERO

Complete Streets are defined as roadways that are designed and constructed to accommodate all modes of transportation, including automobiles, buses, bicyclists, and pedestrians to the greatest extent possible. For too long, streets have been designed primarily for automobiles and this has had detrimental impacts on public safety, the environment, and our communities. Vision Zero is a strategy used to inform a complete streets policy to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries, while increasing safe, healthy, equitable mobility for all. The New Hampshire Department of Transportation and many other towns and cities have shifted their transportation planning practices to embrace Complete Street designs by creating infrastructure that are safe, convenient, and accessible for all users of the road.

In Amherst, the development of a Complete Streets network could be informed and guided by the 2019 Multimodal Master Plan. This Plan advocates for such an approach and recognizes that the design of Amherst’s transportation infrastructure could be linked to the volume of travelers and the context of the neighborhood. The adoption of a complete streets policy would codify the Town’s commitment to the philosophy of Vision Zero – to achieve zero transportation fatalities on our infrastructure. Smart Growth America and the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) have acknowledged that Complete Streets are also Green Streets, which are streets that integrate vegetation and stormwater management systems within the right-of-way. The addition of these natural elements softens the impact of this infrastructure, calms traffic, and provides a range of ecosystem services.

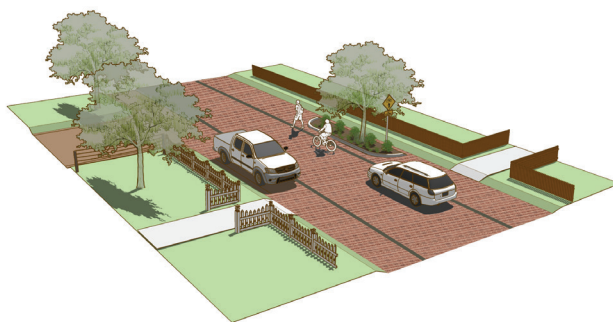
agree that **Amherst needs to improve its roads and infrastructure.**

To accomplish this, the development and improvement of a town-wide network of interconnected paths for all modes and all abilities could continue to be pursued. Such a network could provide alternative transportation infrastructure for our residents that can be consistent with local contexts. Whether through the forest or alongside roadways, these paths could utilize infrastructure treatments that conform to documented safety principles in an effort to employ physics-based protections for all users.

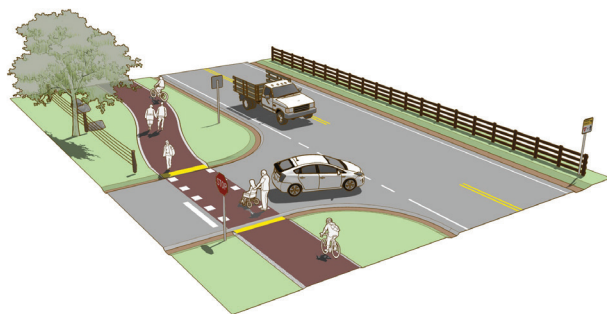
Future road improvements may be planned for by documenting them in the road improvement schedule and capital improvement planning process. This might also help address concerns related to scattered and premature developments in Amherst. These improvements could be designed and constructed to accommodate more modes of transportation (pedestrians, bicycles, etc.), and designed to fit the context of the roadway and neighborhood as identified in the 2019 Multimodal Master Plan. To further strengthen this commitment, the Town could evaluate the adoption of a complete streets policy or suitable best practices identified by the Federal Highway Administration, if this term is no longer used. Such a policy could reinforce the vision of the Amherst Multimodal Master Plan, guide its implementation, and, if adopted, it would be incorporated into the land use regulations.

The town-wide network could then be expanded in a gradual and cost-effective manner by adding new

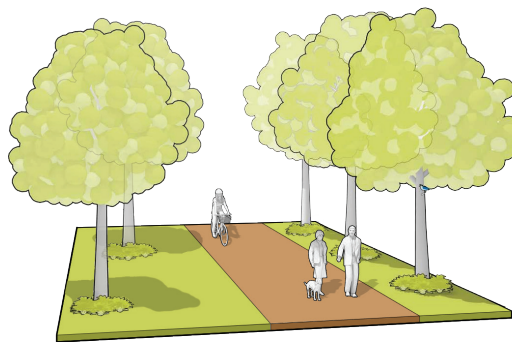
COMPLETE STREET EXAMPLES FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION RURAL DESIGN GUIDE



Above: Shared Street - Many neighborhood streets already operate informally as shared streets. By removing the formal distinctions between spaces dedicated to pedestrians, cyclists, and motorized vehicles, the street is shared by everyone, with each user becoming increasingly aware and respectful of the others. These treatments often use psychological and physical traffic calming techniques, such as interlocking pavers, to self-govern motor vehicle speeds and define the space from other types of roads.



Above: Sidepath - These facilities are the same as shared-use paths, just that they happen to be adjacent to roadways. Similar to sidewalks but wider, sidepaths are bidirectional facilities that can offer a high-quality experience for users of all ages and abilities as compared to on-roadway facilities, allow for reduced roadway crossing distances, and maintain rural and small town community character. This particular type of treatment is most appropriate alongside medium-to-higher volume roads.



Above: Shared Use Path - These facilities provide a travel area separate from motorized traffic for bicyclists, pedestrians, and other users. Often running along rail beds or through the woods, shared use paths can provide a low-stress experience for a variety of users using the network for transportation or recreation.

segments or retrofitting existing segments when scheduled improvements or developments occur. As roadway improvements or new roadways are designed and constructed it is important to ensure that the Town's road construction standards will include multimodal treatments for all users and apply context-sensitive facilities consistent with the need for natural resource protection and rural character. Adding such treatments at the time of road work offers a significant cost-savings opportunity, making the installation of such treatments more achievable. In keeping with the theme of striking a balance, a review of Amherst's Subdivision and Site Plan Review Regulations could be completed with an eye to reducing pavement widths where safe to do so, but with sufficient right-of-way to provide facilities for alternative transportation modes. This would help retain the natural topography and mature trees as much as possible, and while this may help retain the community's rural character it might also result in less impervious surfaces and the many impacts they introduce to a community. Additionally, the Hazard Mitigation Plan references the review of site plan regulations in Amherst to identify areas where new or amended regulations, such as preserving or increasing tree canopy, could help in alleviating impacts of the heat island effect (which refers to the elevated levels of heat that high amounts of impervious surface cause).

Access management planning and policies could be evaluated for Amherst's highest volume roadways to ensure that vehicle access points are coordinated and conflicts are minimized. This would help preserve the capacity of the roadway and improve the safety for all travelers. Such an effort is best informed by a corridor study that examines the existing land use pattern and zoning, and results in regulations that guide access management strategies when new developments are proposed. There was also interest from survey respondents in improving pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure in these areas in order to better access existing businesses without a vehicle. Business owners responding to the survey identified a preference for improved pedestrian and bicycle access (68%) over parking (12%).

Traffic calming is another transportation strategy that could be further evaluated for use in Amherst. It is considered a critical component of a complete street policy, and calls for the use of physical and psychological traffic calming tools, such as street trees and other design elements, to help regulate and self-enforce the speed of vehicles. This ensures that roadways are designed and constructed for the vehicle speeds desired in existing neighborhoods and proposed development areas. It also provides an opportunity to make the transportation infrastructure fit the context of the area rather than detract from its character and function.

Amherst's residents and businesses currently have good access to the regional transportation system, but limited access to public transit options. Over time, this could be addressed through expanded services if they become available. Such an expansion of services is typically tied to ridership and coordinated pickup locations. This requires long term coordination with land use planning and efforts to create mixed use nodes of development that are much more conducive to public transit solutions.

The impact of land use decisions on the transportation system should continue to be a focus of the development review process in order to identify and mitigate potential impacts, and ensure that new development activity contributes to the improvements in the transportation system the town desires.

This also presents an opportunity to create new non-motorized connections between popular destinations. This new infrastructure can also serve as critical recreation infrastructure, and can be coordinated with open space planning to reinforce Amherst's vision for the future.

The establishment of a town-wide network of paths is an initiative that will likely take decades to accomplish. In funding alternative transportation improvements, there are grants and other funding opportunities available that can offset costs to the Town. Thus, the prioritization of routes that could achieve a contiguous spine of such a network could be identified and emphasized. The Town of Amherst has identified four major projects that could represent such an opportunity and will continue the expansion of this multimodal transportation network. They include:

- **Baboosic Greenway**

A regional, 21-mile initiative to interconnect Amherst, Bedford, Brookline, Merrimack, and Milford with safe, separated multimodal infrastructure to enhance safety, accessibility, and mobility mostly along the former Manchester and Milford Branch and Brookline-Milford Branch rail beds.

- **Amherst Pedestrian Bikeway**

A project engineered in 2001 to establish two multimodal districts in town, the Amherst Village and the Southern School Campus, connected with a shared-use path.

- **NH 122 Systematic Safety and Multimodality Project**

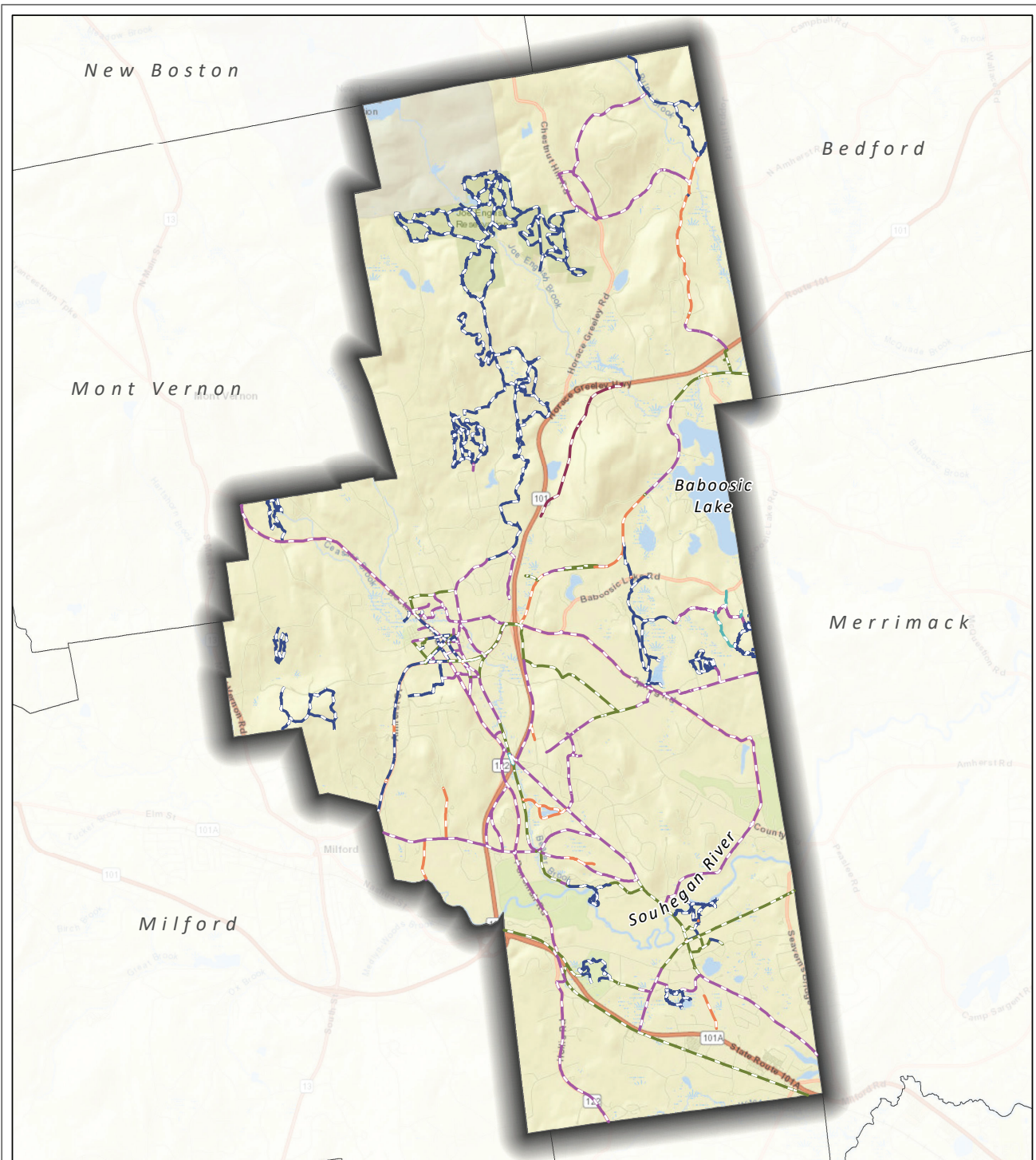
A regional project started in the New Hampshire State Senate in 2020 to connect Amherst with Hollis along New Hampshire Route 122, a state highway. This 12.6-mile project was proposed to be an example for how multimodal infrastructure could be implemented in a cost-effective manner, gradually over many years by retrofitting the roadway and crossings with a 10-ft shared-use path at the time of scheduled construction.

- **Souhegan Valley Rail Trail**

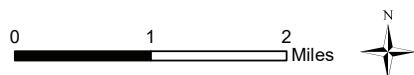
A regional initiative pioneered by the non-profit organization the Friends of the Souhegan Valley Rail Trail and sponsored by the Nashua Regional Planning Commission to explore a 16.36-mile rail-with-trail alongside the active Hillsborough Branch rail line to connect Amherst, Merrimack, Milford, Nashua, Hollis, and Wilton. This project could be a significant amenity and economic opportunity for the region as within just one mile of this route are: 150,000 residents; 63,400 jobs; and 3,000 zero-vehicle households.









- **Village Area Shared Streets Project**

A project to improve public safety, mobility, and comfort of all users of the Amherst Village by exploring the use of traffic calming and shared street designs to regulate motor vehicle speeds in a manner consistent with the context of the Amherst Village, a national historic district.



Town of Amherst, NH Multi-Modal Transportation



-  Town boundary
-  Existing project
-  Existing unimproved project
-  Project underway
-  Funded project
-  Potential project
-  Proposed project
-  Other



Prepared by Zak Brohinsky
Resilience Planning & Design
September 2022
Data sources: Town of Amherst,
GRANIT, NRPC, RP&D

Recreation Facilities and Services

Recreation opportunities in Amherst are provided through a variety of infrastructure and programming including sidewalks within the village, hiking and mountain biking trails, public beaches, multi-purpose athletic fields, game courts, and town-sponsored recreational programs.

Within Amherst, recreation facilities and programs have played an important role in resident's lives. This importance is highlighted in the 2021 Amherst Master Plan Survey where 73% of respondents identified recreational infrastructure as either a high priority or the highest priority when planning for the future. It was clear during the public outreach phase of this project that trails and access to natural areas, along with playing fields and more formal recreation opportunities are both something residents desire. It was also clear that the construction of multi-use pathways serving pedestrian and bicycle travel would provide health and wellness infrastructure, and could connect Amherst's many recreation destinations.

Key Issues

*Based on the 2021 Amherst Master Plan Survey, 63% of respondents agree or strongly agree that **Amherst needs to increase its number of recreational trails.***

The Amherst Parks and Recreation Department offers more than 40 programs for all ages at 16 different sites throughout town. These recreation sites are a combination of built structures, designed open spaces including athletic fields, and natural areas like Baboosic Lake. There are also 43 miles of trails in Amherst offering a diversity of recreational opportunities that include but are not limited to hiking/walking/

running, bicycling, skiing, and equestrian pursuits on over 16 unique trail systems. User data suggests high recreational usage also on many of Amherst's roads and trails throughout the year including Joe English Preserve and Buckmeadow trail systems. Also worth noting are Amherst's trail network connections to neighboring towns. This includes significant trail links to Milford and



Merrimack, and plans to connect to Bedford as well. The two canoe launches along the Souhegan River are also actively used, and provide an opportunity that neighboring towns currently do not. The Library also plays a role in offering programs to residents of all ages. These take place within the building and at other venues around town.

Amherst’s Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) is a sub-committee of the Board of Selectmen charged with improving/ expanding the network of multi-use paths in Amherst. Their mission is to facilitate a town-wide network to enhance and encourage safe, multi-use transportation for connectivity, recreation, and health through the development of strategic and actionable plans. Their work is guided by the 2019 Amherst Multimodal Transportation Plan, which will be used to inform the design of any proposed municipal, state, or private transportation projects to build out a network of multimodal pathways as efficiently as possible. Prior to this local effort the New Hampshire Department of Transportation identified 25.9 miles of recommended paved bicycle routes, and an additional 1.8 miles of recommended unpaved bicycle routes in Amherst.

The Town could consider investing in a study of recreation resources to analyze whether the existing facilities and programs are meeting the community needs. Additionally, this study could also determine whether existing funding for recreational facility maintenance is adequate, and how well formal recreation spaces and other open spaces in the community are coordinated and connected. An open space and recreation study such as this would then inform land conservation and recreation facility investments for years to come.

NATURE-BASED PLACEMAKING

Outdoor recreation assets, including trails, rivers, parks, forests, and more, can also reinforce community and economic development efforts, while improving the quality of life for residents. Nature-Based Placemaking is the interaction and integration of a community’s nature-based outdoor recreation assets, the quality of life associated with those assets, and the culture of the community towards both the assets and activities. The nature-based placemaking concept is not brand new, but this strategy provides an opportunity to blend a variety of needs into one thoughtful and practical approach. It is the next generation of an outdoor-based community development strategy, and builds on the many existing natural and cultural elements across the landscape.

The first step in creating a nature-based place is to recognize and embrace the natural and cultural assets as essential to the quality of life of residents, and possibly as generators for economic activity. This includes inventorying the trails, rivers, viewsheds, and protected lands across the community. The nature-based placemaking approach takes into consideration the demographic, socio-economic, and behavioral characteristics of both current residents and potential visitors. It also works to bring together the local leadership of the community with the various stakeholders of the business, land conservation, heritage, and recreation communities. This approach could be used to reinforce Amherst’s vision while guiding local business growth, transportation and recreation investments, and resource protection.

Municipal Buildings, Facilities, and Services

The municipal facilities and services within Amherst support the needs of residents, and are directly impacted by the pattern and intensity of development in the community. As the town continues to grow, municipal services will need to continue to change to reflect the needs of the community.

Amherst's municipal facilities and services include the Town Hall, Police Department, Public Safety Communications Center, Fire Rescue, Town Offices, Schools, Public Works, the Library, Parks and Recreation, and others.

Key Issues

Over time, aging or inadequate facilities may need to be upgraded or replaced, and staffing levels may need to be evaluated to match the demand for services. Existing town facilities and services may also need to be adjusted and adapted to meet applicable codes, changes in technology, and changes in available methods for increased efficiency. New services and facilities may also be needed to accommodate changes in the resident population, for instance, the increasing senior population.

All of these changes would impact the way in which services are provided, the buildings

which house them, as well as their capital needs, and therefore, the town budget. This is important because the 2021 Master Plan survey results indicated that Amherst residents value high-quality public facilities and services including schools, roads, and recreation spaces. Municipal departments will continue to assist with this by being proactive in tracking and performing maintenance on the town's buildings, infrastructure, facilities, and open spaces. Using the information gathered and analyzed by each department allows municipal staff to prioritize projects and report their performance. Over time, new asset management software could also be invested in to track facility and infrastructure maintenance efficiently, and to inform the town's planning for larger capital improvements. This is now an identified best practice for facilities management and has become the practice of other New Hampshire communities.

The restructuring of Public Safety buildings over the last few years (i.e. moving EMS from



the Police Station to the Fire Station), and the renovation of the Police Station has greatly improved and addressed public safety space needs. The Library is celebrated as a community resource and provides valuable programming for all residents throughout the year. However, there is an identified gap in senior services in Amherst which includes activity space, transportation, and diverse housing options. Some of this could be addressed by the town, but other partners may be needed to assist in addressing the transportation and housing needs for this segment of the population.

There is also an identified need for indoor recreation and activity space. The creation of a multi-purpose community and senior center could meet multiple goals in Amherst including improvements to aging in place, providing recreation for all ages, and enhancing social and meeting space that can serve everyone. Such a space would foster connections between residents and build a sense of community. These community connections and the bonds formed

between individuals are the best strategy for building community resilience. They create a caring community and prepare residents to work together to address any hardships the town may face in the future.

While the school system is the responsibility of the School Board and School Administration, it is certainly significant to Amherst residents and decision makers. The quality of Amherst's schools is an important factor that attracts many residents to the community, and the taxes generated by land use and development activity are necessary to support the facilities and educational services the schools provide. The efforts of the School Board are informed by their District vision and updated periodically. The vision for the school facilities is articulated by the Joint Facilities Advisory Committee and available at: www.SAU39.org.



Telecommunications

Telecommunications refers to communications systems that use electrical signals or electromagnetic waves including the telephone network, radio broadcasting system, computer networks, and the Internet.

Business class internet service is available to all commercial and industrial areas of town. However, continued improvements to this broadband service was identified as a need by business owners that responded to the 2021 Master Plan Survey.

Key Issues

This demand for better broadband and cellular service may be related to the fact that there have been areas of Amherst where home-based businesses are located that these services have been either unavailable or unsuited to the needs of the residents. The Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) has represented Amherst and other communities as part of the New Hampshire Broadband Mapping and Planning Program. This program seeks to better understand specifically where broadband, or

high-speed internet access, is currently available in New Hampshire and how it can be made more widely available in the future.

This program is also seeking ways to encourage increased levels of broadband adoption and usage. A telephone survey that was conducted by the University of New Hampshire for NRPC revealed that there are a few areas in the NRPC region that are underserved by high-speed internet and face broadband coverage gaps. The northeast corner of Amherst was identified as one such area. In 2022, the remaining areas of Amherst were provided access to broadband service. However, some areas of Amherst are still experiencing poor cellular coverage. Ongoing monitoring of the capacity and speed of both the cellular and broadband telecommunications infrastructure will still be important to ensure that residents and businesses are well served over the coming decade.

BROADBAND

Broadband is a term representing “high speed internet access” and it has become an integral component of the local economy. Access to high-speed internet is critical to the lives of residents as it supports their access to public safety, education, healthcare, employment, and impacts their overall quality of life. The state of New Hampshire is actively promoting expanded broadband access and adoption in order to remain competitive with neighboring states, and many communities are looking at this issue as an infrastructure priority. Since 2014 the Nashua Regional Planning Commission has been assessing broadband access and needs across member communities. The intent of this initiative has been to “provide reliable, affordable, high-speed internet access to all 13 member communities”.

3

Looking Forward

AMHERST'S LAND USES AND LOCAL ECONOMY

In Amherst, residential development represents the largest land use type and is generally found throughout the community.

Commercial and industrial development has been limited to certain areas of the community due to zoning requirements and the lack of available water and sewer infrastructure in the town.

Over time, the pattern of land uses that has evolved in Amherst has resulted in the creation of three distinct areas of the community: the northern portion, the village area, and the southern portion. While each of these areas has its own distinct character and mix of land uses, the entire community will need to play a role in addressing the need for both **conservation and development** in the years ahead. This may include finding innovative ways to accommodate development in locations that will not diminish the community's natural resource network and distinct character. This may also require that the vision and recommendations articulated in this Plan are used to evaluate the existing land use regulations so that new standards and tools can be identified and considered for adoption. All of this would aid the community in striking a balance between natural resource and water resource protection, new housing solutions, and supporting the local economy.

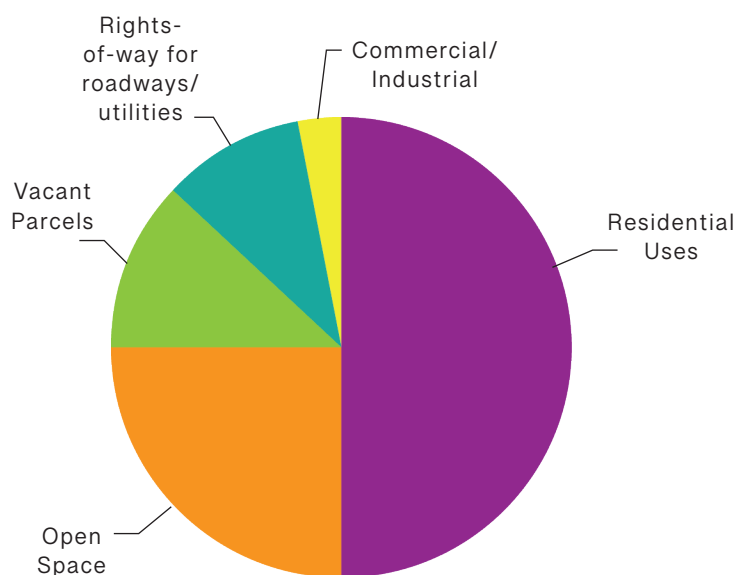
A baseline buildout analysis completed as part of this Master Plan was instrumental in providing an understanding of the potential impact that future development activity could have in Amherst under the current land use policies and anticipated growth rate. A second natural resource focused buildout scenario was then completed and illustrates the importance of directing development away from sensitive natural resources, and instead to areas that can better accommodate future housing units and businesses. The addition of open space, visual buffers, and other design and performance standards within the land use regulations would then ensure that new development is carefully integrated into the community. This would also require sensitivity to private property rights and collaborative action that will benefit the entire community.

Existing Land Use

The majority of land uses in Amherst are residential and open space related. Over 50% of the town's land area is currently identified as a residential use, and about 25% is identified as an open space or agriculture related use. Approximately 3% of the town's area is in a commercial or industrial use, and vacant parcels represent 12% of the town's area. The remaining land area is primarily dedicated to rights-of-way for roadways and utilities.

The pattern of development and mix of land uses in Amherst illustrates the significance of single-family residential properties across the community. Along with these residential uses, large areas of open space also exist throughout town and efforts are being made to connect these parcels to form greenway corridors. Single-family residential properties account for the majority of Amherst's residential land area, and the average size of each of these properties is 2.8 acres. For the purpose of this Master Plan, each of these parcels is labeled for its primary use even though only a portion of each lot is actually developed.

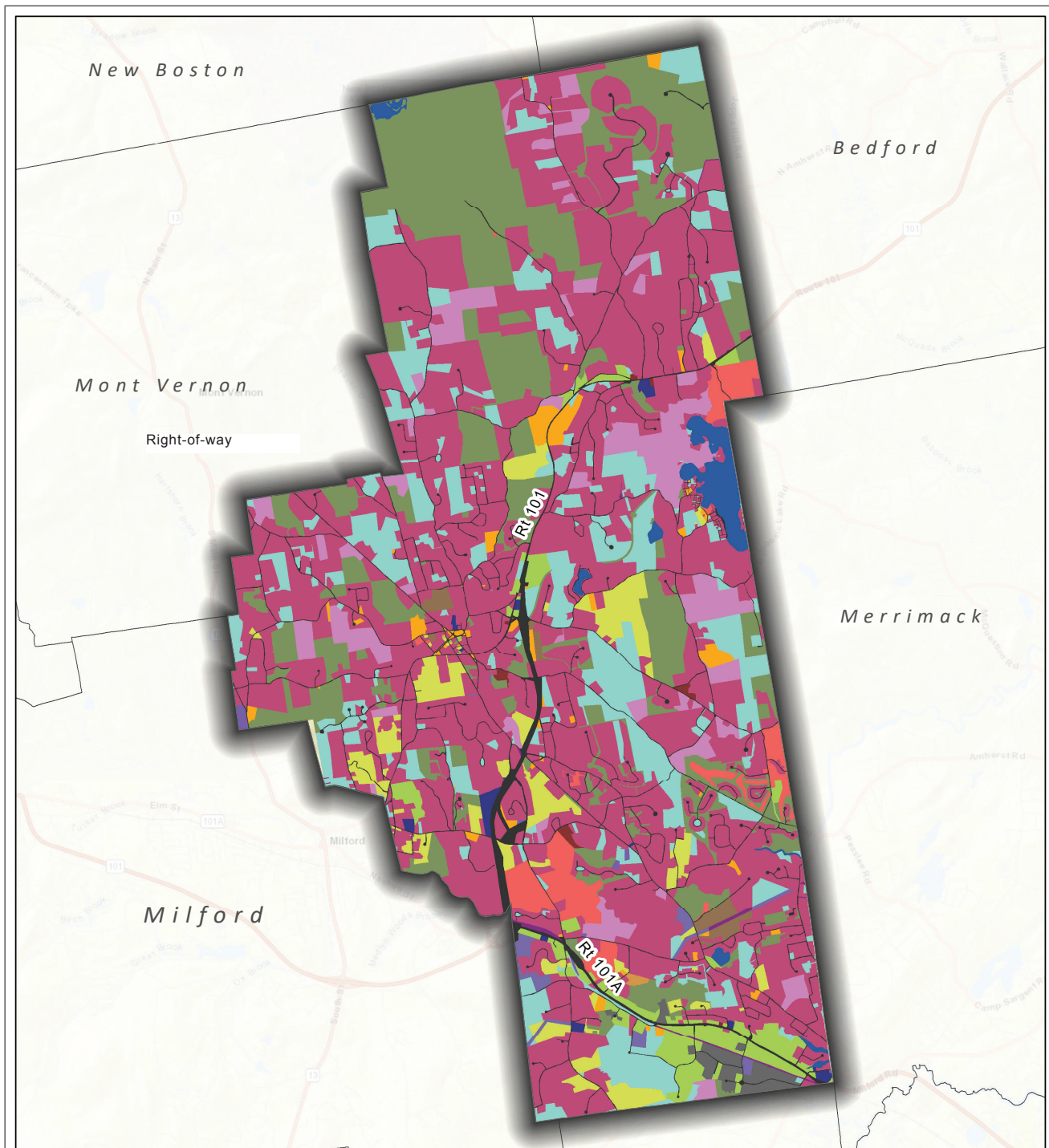
Multi-family residential parcels are generally scattered throughout the southern two-thirds of town which include the village area and southern portion of Amherst, and tend to be located within one mile of Routes 101 and 101A. These properties have an average lot size of 9.7 acres. Most commercial and industrial uses are found in the southern third of town, and many are located near Route 101A. Several smaller commercial parcels are also found along northern sections of Route 101. Examples include Salzburg Square, Labelle Winery, and the Patio Barn. Vacant parcels, currently undeveloped and not permanently protected, are scattered throughout the town with an average lot size of 6.9 acres. These undeveloped parcels currently account for 12% of Amherst's land area and could be further analyzed. This analysis could help determine which are



publicly or privately owned, and how they could best contribute to the town's vision.

Key Issues

With an understanding of the existing distribution of land uses in town, this master planning process provided an opportunity to better understand and evaluate the current pattern of development, residents' desires for the future of the community, and the variety of actions that may be needed to reach the identified Vision for Amherst in 2035. With the assistance of the buildout analysis, it was possible to visualize how the existing land use policies and practices are likely to guide future development, what the resulting development pattern will look like, and how it may impact the demand for future infrastructure and services.



Town of Amherst, NH

Existing Land Use

Agricultural	Municipal Facility	School
Commercial	Other Government	Residential: Single Family
Group Quarters	Permanent Open Space	Residential: Multi Family
Industrial	ROW	Utility
Institutional	Recreation	Vacant
Mixed Use	Road	Water



Prepared by Zak Brohinsky
Resilience Planning & Design
September 2022
Data sources: Town of Amherst,
GRANIT, NRPC, RP&D



0 1 2 Miles

Local Economy

Implementation of this Master Plan will guide future development and infrastructure investments in a way that will help the community realize its Vision for Amherst in the future. To do so, it is important to document and understand the existing business and economic activity in Amherst, and residents' desire for additional development over time. Together this information will help inform and guide the future land use planning for the community.

Currently, there are clearly defined commercial areas along Routes 101 and 101A, but limited infrastructure is available (no water or sewer service) so the density of future development will be somewhat limited. The existing land use regulations and transportation infrastructure are currently playing important roles in guiding and supporting the location and extent of non-residential development activity, and should continue to do so in the future.

Key Issues

*Based on the 2021 Amherst Master Plan Survey, 63% of respondents agree or strongly agree that **Amherst would benefit from business friendly regulations, permitting, and inspections.***

Amherst has no dedicated municipal staff to take the lead on economic development initiatives. Unless funding can be secured so that

a staff person can be added to the Community Development Department, it may be best to engage a group of knowledgeable residents and existing municipal board members as an Economic Development Commission. Such an effort could be established by the Board of Selectmen, supported by the Planning Board and Town staff, and over time could help coordinate needed infrastructure improvements through the Capital Improvement Plan process and through impact fee expenditures. A Commission could also coordinate direct outreach to businesses, and coordinate marketing and recruitment efforts on behalf of the community.

While residents have expressed some interest in additional non-residential development for the potential services they could provide, and to support the tax base of the community, where and how that development takes place is critically important to the future of Amherst. It was clear from the survey responses that residents feel that maintaining the rural character and overall feel of



Amherst is a high priority, but they also indicated that limiting commercial density within Amherst was less of a priority. This potential conflict could be addressed by the fact that the majority of respondents felt that promoting community design standards which reflect Amherst's natural and historic character was also an important priority.

While there was limited interest in additional commercial services, including professional services, there was interest in additional restaurants and a year-round farmer's market as well as locally grown products. Linked to this desire there was great interest in encouraging agri-business (community supported agriculture, small farms, etc.) and agri-tourism (vineyards, corn mazes, pumpkin picking, etc.). There was less interest from survey respondents in encouraging new light industrial development (assembly, manufacturing, etc.), new office development, or new retail development. However, another significant aspect of the local economy is represented by home businesses and remote workers. Currently this accounts for at least 20% of the resident labor force in Amherst, and supporting and accommodating this population of workers might be a priority for the community in the future. The majority of business owners responding to the survey also stated that they plan to continue their businesses as is or possibly expand their operations in coming years.

In 2012, the town worked with the State of New Hampshire to establish four economic revitalization zones (ERZs). The ERZs were established to stimulate economic redevelopment, expand commercial and industrial uses, create new jobs, reduce sprawl, and increase tax revenues by encouraging economic development in designated areas. This program, which is detailed in NH RSA 162-N, serves as an economic development and revitalization tool by offering individual businesses State Tax Credits towards their business profits and business enterprise taxes for improving infrastructure and creating jobs in designated areas of the municipality. Maps of Amherst's ERZ's can be found on pages 38-39.

The ERZs Amherst has identified for new development activity include an area located along the extent of Route 101A in the vicinity of the existing commercial and industrial development. The other three are located along Route 101 in the vicinity of The Meeting Place, Pine Road, and the Labelle Winery. In an effort to protect Amherst's shared natural resources and community character, these locations could be further evaluated for zoning changes and new site design standards. Key elements to consider for new regulatory standards in these areas include requirements for multi-story buildings that reflect the historic architecture of the community, site designs that reduce impervious surface area, and increased green space requirements. If any of these areas are found to no longer be suitable for development new locations could be identified for mixed use development at a scale, density, and with design standards that fit the context of the community.

Given the reality that public water and sewer infrastructure are not likely to be available, future development will continue to rely on private wells and septic systems. The desired location and type of business activity has implications for other municipal infrastructure investments, transportation choices, future housing opportunities, and may need to be further incorporated into the land use regulations (zoning, site plan review, and subdivision regulations) and adopted locally. To further inform this work corridor studies have been suggested for Route 101 and Route 101A. This type of analysis looks across the many parcels bordering the roadway to identify and coordinate areas best suited for development and areas with important natural and cultural resources better suited for conservation. It also provides an opportunity to coordinate transportation system access and improvements, and to identify ways to reduce

the visual impact of development while working to retain the community's distinct visual appeal and function.

One regulatory tool that could be further studied for the areas identified and zoned for future commercial or mixed-use development is a form-based code. It differs from traditional zoning by placing more emphasis on the size, positioning, and design of new buildings, and places less emphasis on the allowable uses. This type of land use regulation is also a more visual regulatory tool with an easy to understand and predictable set of design standards. Several communities in New Hampshire have adopted a form-based code for areas where revitalization or new development activity are prioritized, and community character is also a priority. Examples of communities with such regulations in place include Concord, Dover, Lancaster, Londonderry, and Portsmouth.

Once the location, mix of uses, and character of design are identified for future commercial and mixed-use development areas in Amherst additional economic development tools can be considered as well.

During the outreach for this Master Plan residents also expressed interest in ensuring business-friendly regulations, permitting, inspections, and understandable business requirements. There was also interest in greater collaboration between the Town and members of the local business community on marketing and identifying future business locations.

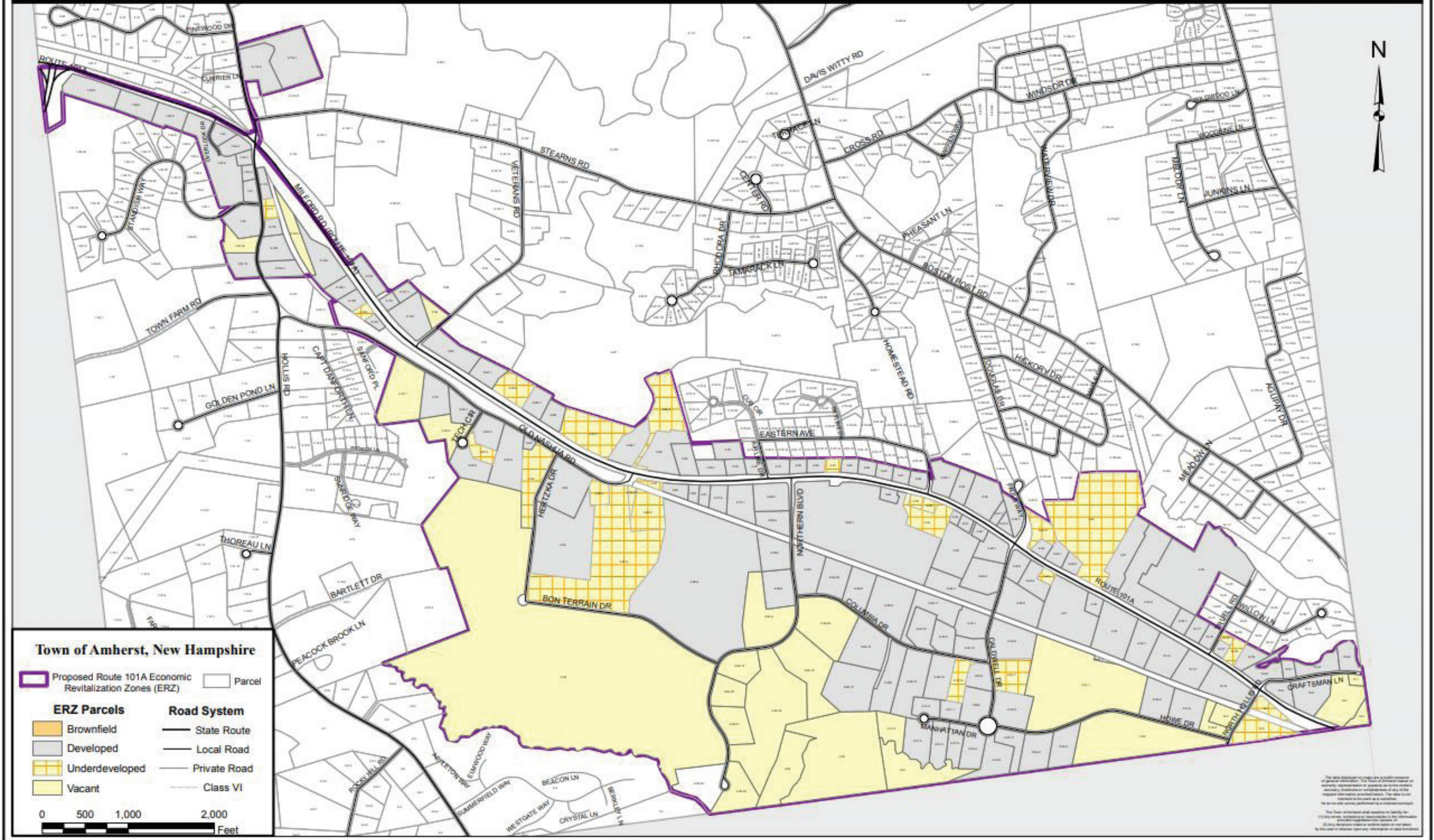
WHAT ARE TRANSITION AREAS? AND WHAT IS A TRANSITION ZONE?

Conceptually, transition areas are the intersections between zoning districts. In transition areas, the size and height of buildings generally get smaller as you move (or transition) away from commercial areas into neighborhood residential areas. Transition zones can simply be the zoning categories assigned to parcels or lots in a defined geographic transition area.

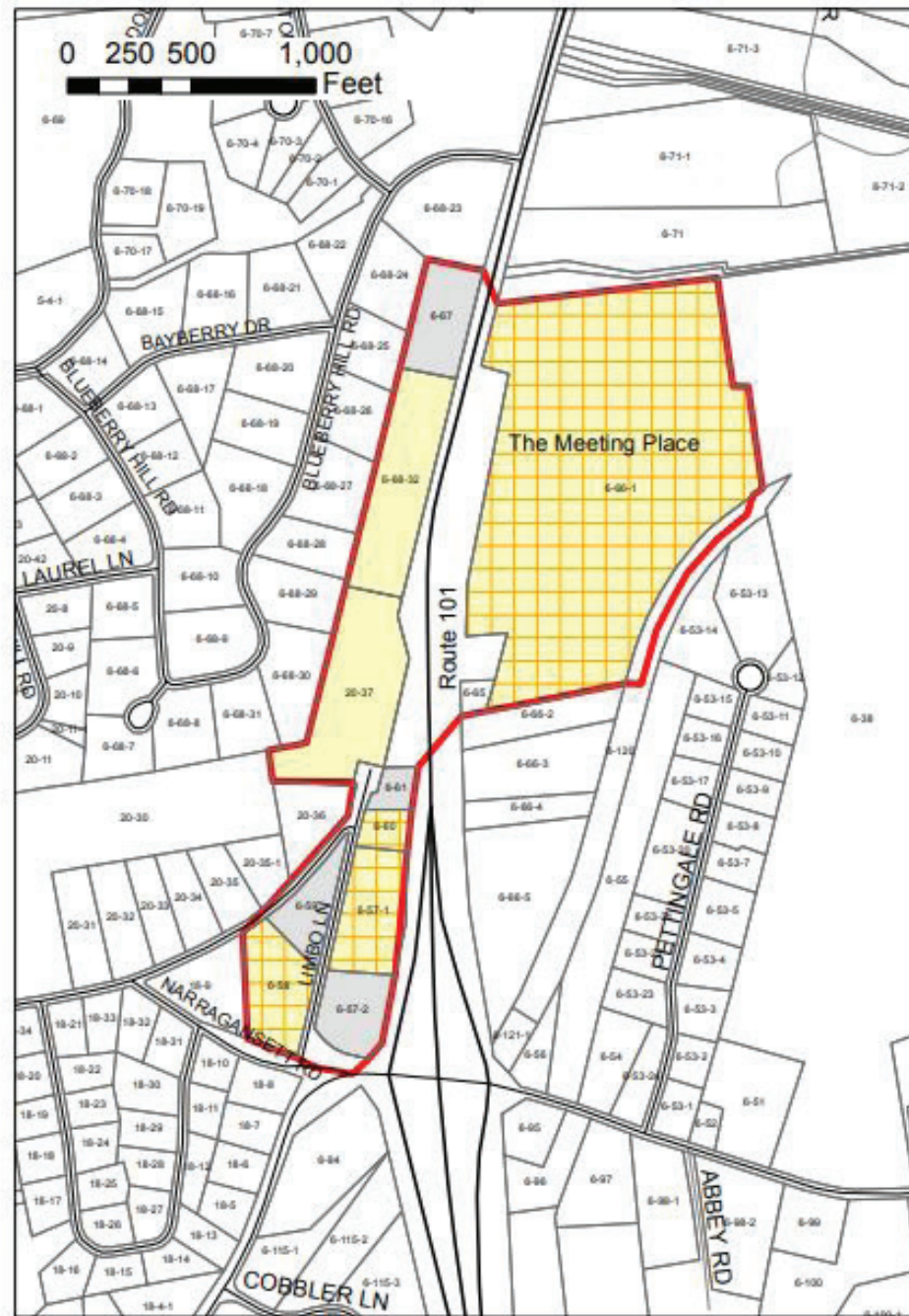
WHY ARE TRANSITION AREAS IMPORTANT?

Transition areas can help address housing supply and manage traffic congestion over time. They can provide a location for some additional housing options or lower traffic non-residential uses. Transition areas could be strategically located within a ten-minute walking distance to commercial goods and services, as well as major multimodal roadways (aka transportation corridors).

Proposed 101A Economic Revitalization Zones



Proposed 101 Economic Revitalization Zones



The Meeting Place ERZ



Town of Amherst, NH

Parcel

Proposed Economic Revitalization Zones (ERZ)

- The Meeting Place ERZ
- Route 101 ERZ
- LaBelle Winery ERZ

ERZ Parcels

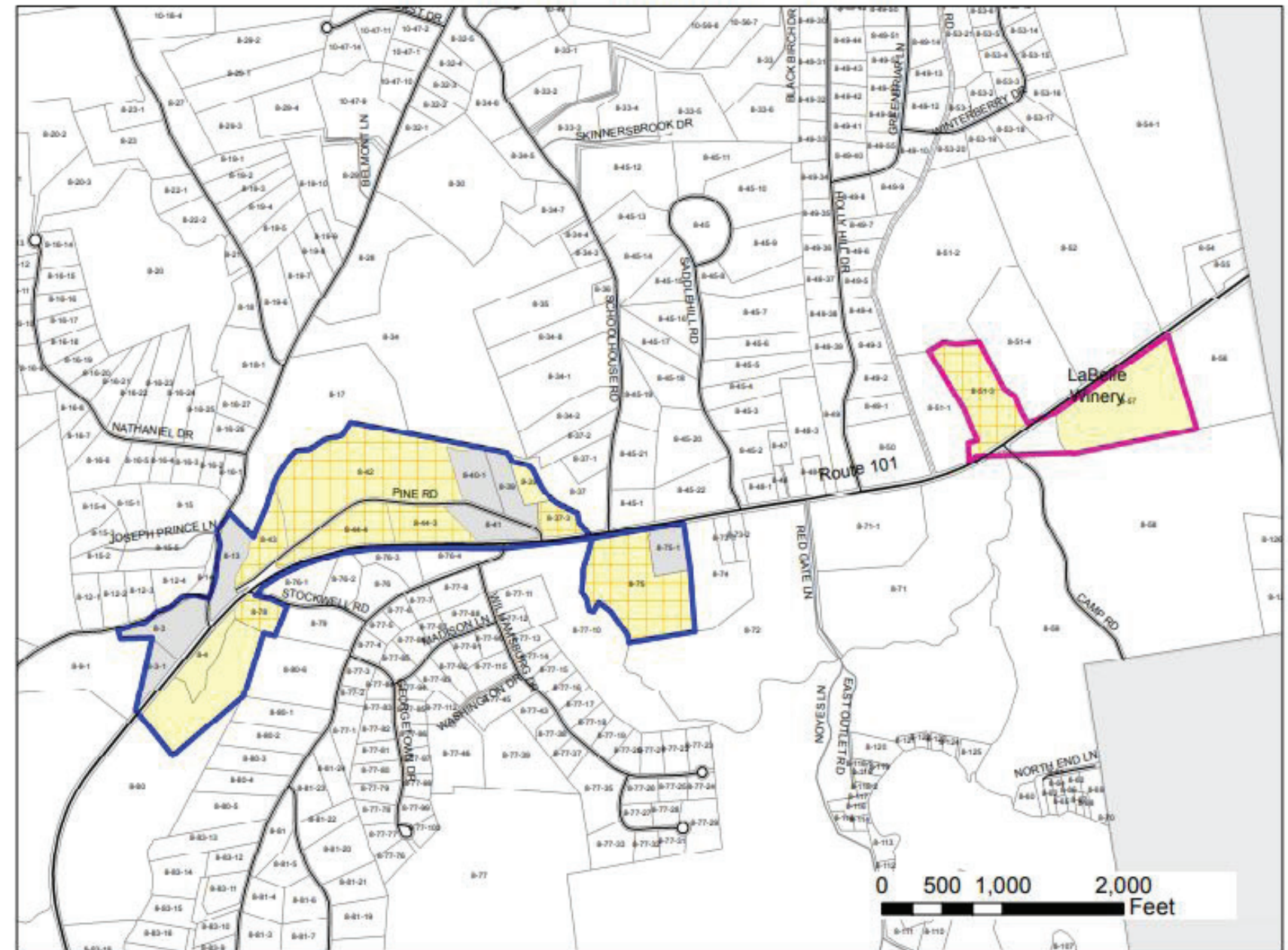
- Brownfield
- Developed
- Underdeveloped
- Vacant

Road System

- State Route
- Local Road
- Private Road
- Class VI



The Route 101 ERZ and the LaBelle Winery ERZ



Housing Supply

Amherst's demographic and housing realities reflect the evolution of the town's population over time in addition to local, state, and national policies and trends. These demographic and housing characteristics are intertwined: the available housing stock influences who can or is interested in living in the community, and the existing demographics and demographic trends will influence housing demand and the market response into the future. However, the housing situation in New Hampshire is changing and Amherst will need to decide what new housing opportunities the community can accommodate.

A June 2022 Housing Market Report released by NH Housing identified that New Hampshire's housing market is in a state of turmoil due to an inadequate number of available and affordable housing units. This is challenging both existing and potential residents to find housing that satisfies their households needs. In July of 2022, the State launched the InvestNH Program to incentivize the construction of additional housing units that will help address this demand. Through these initiatives, all New Hampshire communities are being asked to consider how and where they can best accommodate new housing units.

Key Issues

Based on the 2021 Amherst Master Plan Survey, 35% of respondents agree or strongly

*agree that **Amherst should encourage housing for all ages and income levels.***

The population in Amherst is fairly stable and has been increasing slower than it did prior to 2000. According to the American Community Survey (ACS) estimates for Amherst, the year-round population is 11,333 and is estimated to increase to nearly 12,000 residents by 2030. Amherst's resident population is well educated and has a higher median income than both the County and the State. The median age in Amherst is 45 years old. This is older than New Hampshire's median age of 43, and the median age in Hillsborough County which is only 40. While Amherst has a healthy distribution of residents across age groups. All age groups under 55 years old have decreased or remained stable since 2005. The number of households in Amherst has increased over the



last twenty years, and yet the number of residents in each household has decreased. School enrollment numbers have also been decreasing.

The existing housing supply in Amherst is primarily composed of owner-occupied single-family homes, and this owner-occupied housing stock is more expensive than other communities in the surrounding County. Compounding this issue is the fact that the number of housing units available for rent in Amherst has decreased since 2005, and the vacancy rate in Amherst and the surrounding region is extremely low. It is likely that the demographic diversity of the community is linked to this lack of existing housing unit diversity. If there is still interest in the community to address this issue, the location and type of new housing units could be further examined and accommodated in the land use regulations. While the rate of growth projected for Amherst over the coming decade is similar to recent decades (twenty to sixty units per year), there is an increased demand for new housing units (owner-occupied and rental) throughout New Hampshire. This increased demand and the State's recent commitments to addressing it means Amherst is likely to experience interest in creating additional housing units in the coming years.

Regardless of the types of units identified and the regulatory mechanisms suggested to direct or incentivize the creation of these units, all future housing units should be well integrated in the community's land use pattern with site design standards in order to minimize their impact on the community's visual character. These efforts could include promoting the construction of accessory dwelling units, identifying areas most appropriate for duplexes and other multi-family structures such as townhouses and cottage style developments, mixed-use projects that include residential units adjacent to and/or above commercial units, or other approaches. Amherst's land use regulations could then provide clear direction and any necessary incentives for the construction of affordable housing units. To accomplish this, the Master Plan and any changes to the land use regulations that follow could generate greater developer and land owner buy-in while being easy to understand and navigate.

This need for future housing opportunities in the community should be balanced with other efforts in the community to conserve natural and cultural resources. In order to accomplish both objectives, avoiding sprawl and minimizing infrastructure impacts may be a priority. Some of Amherst's future housing units could be directed to mixed use areas where some new commercial development may also be taking place. In the more rural areas of the community, where new residential developments may be proposed, modifications to the zoning may be investigated to ensure open space preservation. Other alternatives to consider include the use of a soil-based lot sizing provision, or the adoption of lot size averaging regulations.

Design standards can also be further developed for multi-family structures to ensure they resemble farmhouses and other buildings currently found in Amherst. This will help integrate these larger buildings into the community and make them more attractive to the residents living within them. As indicated in other areas of this Plan, the examination and updating of regulations related to housing could be addressed by a policy and regulatory audit. This would help to identify where the existing land use regulations are not aligned with the new Master Plan. If a regulatory audit is complete, it might be beneficial to also speak with developers about the realities of developing new housing units in the region, and to use these findings to draft new regulatory standards. Ultimately, it is through efforts like this that Amherst can best achieve its Vision and identify how to carefully integrate new housing units at a variety of densities, locations, and price points.

Future Land Use Plan

This Master Plan was developed to clarify a vision for Amherst that can both inspire and direct the implementation effort that will be necessary to put this policy document into action. The future land use pattern that will result from this work will represent a community that has woven together the need to balance land conservation efforts, natural and cultural resource protection, delivery of quality municipal facilities and services, and future development opportunities for both housing and economic development.

This work will require a sense of unity and community, and will be more successful if residents care about what is happening in all areas of the town and not just in their neighborhood. To further inform the creation of this future land use plan the Town contracted with the Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) to complete a buildout analysis. This collaboration with the NRPC included the development of a baseline buildout analysis which was calculated using the current land use regulations and recent growth rates.

With this data, the NRPC was able to forecast how development may continue across the community over the decades ahead. The analysis itself is not helpful in identifying the specific parcels that will be developed. Instead, the results of this analysis are helpful because they indicate development trends and patterns that are the likely outcome in various areas of the town if no regulatory changes are made. This baseline analysis helped illustrate how and where future development is likely to consume land in Amherst, how this land use change will further disperse development, and what impact this will have on the community over time. As a “business as usual” approach it appears that development would continue to spread out across the community, and this would result in greater fragmentation of remaining open space that would have negative impacts to natural resource areas. Given these changes, it might also

impact the visual character of the community as well.

A second buildout scenario was then completed with a greater focus on natural resource and water resource protection. To inform this alternate analysis no new development was allowed on properties in the 100 and 500-year floodplains. The wellhead protection areas were also removed from the potential developable land area, and the undeveloped parcels located in a significant wildlife habitat area according to New Hampshire’s Wildlife Action Plan were also set aside. This highlighted a possible need to address these areas through changes to the land use regulations, and through non-regulatory efforts to permanently protect these areas of the community. The results of this second analysis better aligned with feedback received from the public, and the findings of the existing conditions analysis. Future development sprawled out far less than in the baseline analysis, and fewer units were created overall. This was an indication that increased resource protection can be achieved while accommodating new development in ways that will not diminish the character and quality of life in Amherst.

To guide the implementation of this land use plan over the coming decade, a policy and regulatory audit could be completed. This type of analysis entails reviewing the new Master Plan against

the existing land use regulations to determine what regulatory changes may be needed and where there are disconnects between the Master Plan and the land use regulations. Regulation changes can then be drafted and presented to the public. This would provide an opportunity to address some of the issues identified during the master planning process such as reduced development within floodplains, over wellhead protection areas, and on lands with critical wildlife habitat. It could also include an investigation into the use of alternative types of zoning such as a form-based code for the mixed-use and non-residential development areas of the community.

The review and analysis process could also provide an opportunity to identify the site design standards needed to continue to preserve the community's character, and the shared natural and cultural resources. Updated site design standards could include a reduction in the area of impervious surface allowed over significant aquifers, requiring vegetated buffers along public roadways, architectural design requirements, and other standards. The result of these combined regulatory efforts would direct future residential and commercial development activity to identified areas where open space and natural resource impacts can be minimized. They would also inform and shape future developments so they reflect the distinct characteristics of Amherst's landscape and contribute to the unique identity of the community. This work would require publicizing planning and zoning efforts, and encouraging involvement and volunteerism on all boards and commissions. Engaging residents in the zoning amendment process would also help inform the new regulations well ahead of their adoption and any new development proposals that may follow.





Future Considerations

The section of this Master Plan includes a record of the major recommendations identified during this community informed planning process. Achieving Amherst's Vision of the future will likely require a combination of municipal regulations, non-regulatory municipal investments and initiatives, and the efforts of many volunteers and property owners. These are the three primary pathways New Hampshire communities use during the implementation of a master plan and are further explained below.

Regulatory Action: Includes the use of Amherst's land use regulations to guide and inform future development activity. Typically, this is done through the zoning ordinance, site plan review regulations, and subdivision regulations.

Non-Regulatory Action: Outside of the common regulatory pathways used to implement a Master Plan are the more flexible and equally important non-regulatory initiatives. These include municipal funding provided through the Capital Improvement Plan, topic specific studies, and board and committee outreach efforts.

Landowner/Volunteer Action: This master planning process has engaged a large segment of the community and highlighted their interest in the future of Amherst. While not everyone may want to sit on a municipal board or committee, every Amherst resident can play a role in bringing this plan to life through simple actions that contribute to the shared vision.

The implementation phase of this master planning initiative will ultimately require the collaborative effort of residents, volunteers, local organizations, and town staff over the next decade. To coordinate the implementation of this Master Plan, the following recommendations are provided:

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

#	Action	Priority	Responsible Parties	Potential Partners	Status of Action
Regulatory Actions					
1	Consider the completion of a policy and regulatory audit of Amherst's land use regulations against the new Master Plan to provide greater insight and direction on regulatory disconnects, barriers, and opportunities across all three planning themes.				
2	Consider drafting and adopting a revised aquifer protection overlay district that will guide future development and redevelopment activity while ensuring Amherst's drinking water resource is protected to the greatest extent possible. This could include a decrease in the allowable impervious surface area, and, if allowable, new standards for private wells that exceed the state standards to ensure all residents have access to safe drinking water.				
3	Review the existing economic revitalization zones in Amherst and identify regulatory changes that could be considered in these areas to accommodate future development while protecting the character and resources of the community.				
4	Review and identify land use regulations that could guide the creation of a variety of housing unit types that serve different housing needs.				
5	Consider the adoption of natural infrastructure focused development design standards in the site plan and subdivision regulations to ensure water quality protection and other benefits are incorporated in the design and construction of future developments.				
6	Continue to require open space set-aside requirements for new development to ensure that Amherst's natural resources and open space corridors are protected, and the community's character is preserved as land uses change. An increase in the existing requirement could also be evaluated.				

#	Action	Priority	Responsible Parties	Potential Partners	Status of Action
7	Consider the adoption of a demolition delay requirement for all public and private structures built prior to 1960 to aid in the preservation of Amherst's historic resources.				
8	Consider the adoption of a metal detecting policy for all municipal properties.				
9	Consider the adoption of a Complete Streets Policy to reinforce the vision of the Amherst Multimodal Master Plan, guide its implementation, and to ensure it is incorporated into the land use regulations.				
10	Consider researching and developing access management strategies and policies for Amherst's highest volume roadways to ensure that vehicle access points are coordinated and conflicts are minimized.				
11	Consider the completion of corridor studies along NH 101 and NH 101A to better understand the existing land use pattern, zoning, natural resources, and economic development opportunities. The findings of these studies could then be used to create regulations that will guide new, possibly mixed use, development activity in these areas while protecting the viewsheds and natural resources that contribute to the community's character.				
12	Investigate and consider the adoption of a form-based code for commercial and mixed-use zoning districts in the community.				
13	Consider updating the land use regulations to reference the Multimodal Master Plan and ensure that street right-of-way widths and other roadway design requirements are incorporated in future developments. Traffic calming is another transportation strategy that could receive greater design consideration and implementation in Amherst. It is a critical component of a Complete Street Policy, and could be addressed in the land use regulations to ensure street trees and other design elements are utilized to regulate vehicle speeds.				

Non-Regulatory Actions					
#	Action	Priority	Responsible Parties	Potential Partners	Status of Action
14	Consider updating the town's broad conservation strategy to guide continued land and habitat conservation efforts with an emphasis on aquifer protection, climate resilience, watershed protection, conservation of unfragmented blocks of land, agricultural lands, and critical habitat areas that provide greenways of connectivity across the community.				
15	Consider completing a study of all surface and ground water resources to inform the development of land use regulations and to guide future land conservation initiatives in the community.				
16	Consider the creation of a map and related analysis to identify areas with low or very low potential for septic absorption, and consider how this information may inform regulatory changes.				
17	Consider researching and identifying additional innovative strategies for stewardship of water resources and management of stormwater in Amherst (as required by the MS4 permit, Salt Reduction Plan, etc.). This will also require implementation and tracking that requires staff time to ensure results.				
18	Consider inventorying and analyzing the vacant parcels across the community to better understand their distribution, ownership status, and how they should be addressed during the implementation of this Master Plan.				
19	Consider the completion of additional studies and documentation of historic and archaeological sites throughout the community for their protection and enjoyment. This could include establishing priorities for research, documentation, and protection of sites; and steps to promote and share Amherst's heritage and its role in maintaining the rural character of the community.				
20	Given the time that has passed since the last Master Plan it would be beneficial to assess any possible parcel or boundary additions or changes to the Historic District.				

#	Action	Priority	Responsible Parties	Potential Partners	Status of Action
21	Consider developing a municipal strategy for managing technological developments (i.e., cell towers and broadband) and ensure these developments are implemented in a way that is consistent and harmonious with the character of Amherst.				
22	Research and evaluate the need for hiring of an economic development staff person, and/or consider the creation of an Economic Development Commission.				
23	Consider conducting a town-wide (including schools) fiscal impact analysis or cost of community services study, and keep this resource up to date. Such a resource could help to determine when the rate of growth is impacting the community negatively and should be addressed.				
24	Continue to use the capital improvement planning process to ensure municipal facilities and infrastructure improvements are scheduled to reduce the financial impact on taxpayers. Over time this may also include the use of impact fees or other strategies to fund improvements.				
25	Consider using the Capital Improvement Plan to construct a more multimodal transportation system over time that will better serve residents and visitors of all ages.				
26	Consider completing a study of the existing recreation facilities and programs to gauge how well they are meeting community needs. Additionally, this study could also determine whether existing funding for recreational facility maintenance is adequate, and how well formal recreation spaces and other open spaces in the community are coordinated and connected.				
27	Consider researching and evaluating the potential for a multi-purpose community and senior center that would meet multiple goals in Amherst including improvements to aging in place, providing recreation for all ages, and enhancing social and meeting space that can serve everyone.				

#	Action	Priority	Responsible Parties	Potential Partners	Status of Action
28	Consider researching and adopting a decision-making framework that can be utilized internally by municipal staff during the project development process to ensure all future municipal sites and facilities reflect energy conservation and sustainable design goals. This framework could include the use of an asset management program for informing capital investment planning.				
29	Consider using the Capital Improvement Plan to implement solar installations on municipal buildings and to install electric vehicle charging infrastructure.				
Landowner/Volunteer Related Actions					
30	Consider creating public outreach and education materials and initiatives related to land conservation, water resource protection, and the protection and enjoyment of heritage and cultural resources.				
31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider developing fact sheets to inspire action on private property including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to document and care for stonewalls and historic sites; Habitat regeneration and forest and grassland management activities; Stormwater management strategies (see Stormwater Coalition Resources); How and why to conserve your land and critical natural resources; Invasive species control. 				
32	Consider engaging volunteers in the preservation and digitizing of additional resource documents from the Town Vault for public enjoyment.				
33	Encourage the public to assist with and participate in the planning of cultural celebrations focusing on honoring Amherst's past.				
34	Considering creating an outreach and education campaign related to available open spaces and recreation resources with details on how and when to access them for a variety of recreational activities.				

#	Action	Priority	Responsible Parties	Potential Partners	Status of Action
35	Consider recruiting volunteer assistance on trail maintenance and beautification of municipally maintained properties.				
36	Consider creating demonstration sites on municipal properties to feature sustainable design strategies and technologies in municipal structures so that residents can visit and learn about changes they can make on their own properties. Fact sheets could further detail how to translate these projects to a residential scale.				
37	Consider broadening the communication strategies used in Amherst to ensure that all residents and businesses are regularly informed of municipal initiatives and related news.				



Appendix

A. Existing Conditions Profiles

The Appendix includes the following Existing Conditions sections which provide an overview of Amherst during the time of this Master Plan development.

1. Population and Housing
2. Heritage and Cultural Resources
3. Natural Resources
4. Water Resources
5. Transportation
6. Economic Development
7. Recreation
8. Public Facilities and Services
9. Land Use and Zoning

B. Outreach and Engagement Report

C. 2021 Master Plan Survey Results

D. Maps

E. Build-Out Analysis Report

