




Town of Amherst Master Plan Update


RSA 674:1 Duties of the Planning Board

- ▶ I. It shall be the duty of every planning board established under RSA 673:1 to prepare and amend from time to time a master plan to guide the development of the municipality. A master plan may include consideration of any areas outside the boundaries of the municipality which in the judgment of the planning board bear a relation to or have an impact on the planning of the municipality. Every planning board shall from time to time update and amend the adopted master plan with funds appropriated for that purpose by the local legislative body. In preparing, amending, and updating the master plan:
 - ▶ (a) The planning board shall have responsibility for promoting interest in, and understanding of, the master plan in the municipality. In order to promote this interest and understanding, the planning board may publish and distribute copies of the master plan, or copies of any report relating to the master plan, and may employ such other means of publicity and education as it may deem advisable.
 - ▶ (b) The planning board shall also have authority to make any investigations, maps and reports, and recommendations which relate to the planning and development of the municipality.




RSA 674:2 Master Plan; Purpose and Description

- ▶ I. The purpose of the master plan is to set down as clearly and practically as possible the best and most appropriate future development of the area under the jurisdiction of the planning board, to aid the board in designing ordinances that result in preserving and enhancing the unique quality of life and culture of New Hampshire, and to guide the board in the performance of its other duties in a manner that achieves the principles of smart growth, sound planning, and wise resource protection.



RSA 674:2 Master Plan; Purpose and Description

- ▶ II. The master plan shall be a set of statements and land use and development principles for the municipality with such accompanying maps, diagrams, charts and descriptions as to give legal standing to the implementation ordinances and other measures of the planning board. Each section of the master plan shall be consistent with the others in its implementation of the vision section. The master plan shall be a public record subject to the provisions of RSA 91-A. The master plan shall include, at a minimum, the following required sections:
 - ▶ (a) A vision section that serves to direct the other sections of the plan. This section shall contain a set of statements which articulates the desires of the citizens affected by the master plan, not only for their locality but for the region and the whole state. It shall contain a set of guiding principles and priorities to implement that vision.
 - ▶ (b) A land use section upon which all the following sections shall be based. This section shall translate the vision statements into physical terms. Based on a study of population, economic activity, and natural, historic, and cultural resources, it shall show existing conditions and the proposed location, extent, and intensity of future land use.



RSA 674:2 Master Plan; Purpose and Description

- ▶ III. The master plan may also include the following sections:
 - ▶ (a) A transportation section...
 - ▶ (b) A community facilities section...
 - ▶ (c) An economic development section...
 - ▶ (d) A natural resources section...
 - ▶ (e) A natural hazards section...
 - ▶ (f) A recreation section...
 - ▶ (g) A utility and public service section...
 - ▶ (h) A section which identifies cultural, archeological, and historic resources...
 - ▶ (i) A regional concern section...
 - ▶ (j) A neighborhood plan section...
 - ▶ (k) A community design section...
 - ▶ (l) A housing section...
 - ▶ (m) An implementation section...
 - ▶ (n) An energy section...
 - ▶ (o) A coastal management section...



RSA 674:3 Master Plan Preparation

- ▶ I. In preparing, revising, or amending the master plan, the planning board may make surveys and studies, and may review data about the existing conditions, probable growth demands, and best design methods to prevent sprawl growth in the community and the region. The board may also consider the goals, policies, and guidelines of any regional or state plans, as well as those of abutting communities.
- ▶ II. Revisions to the plan are recommended every 5 to 10 years.
- ▶ III. During the preparation of the various sections of the master plan, the board shall inform the general public, the office of strategic initiatives, and regional planning commissions and solicit public comments regarding the future growth of the municipality in order to involve citizens in the preparation of the master plan in a way which is most appropriate for the municipality.



Recap of requirements

- ▶ The planning board has to (it shall be the duty of the planning board) prepare a master plan and amend it every once in a while. The plan can look at a wider region than the town. The board has to update and amend the plan from time to time with money voted by town meeting.
- ▶ The planning board is responsible for publicizing the master plan and helping the townspeople understand it.
- ▶ The planning board is authorized to study and investigate, make maps and present recommendations relative to planning and development of the town.

What is a Master Plan?

Town of Amherst Master Plan 2010 – 2030



Amherst Master Plan – 2010




Amherst Planning Board

Planning Consultants
Community Preservation Associates
Martha Lyon Landscape Architecture, LLC
AECOM, Engineers and Planners, and Taintor Associates, Land Use Planners
July 2010



What is a Master Plan?

- ▶ A guide to the future development of the town
 - ▶ A reference document
 - ▶ A guide to decision making
 - ▶ A source of information
 - ▶ A long-range, comprehensive plan for the physical form of the community
 - ▶ A statement of public policy
- 




What a Master Plan is not

- ▶ Legally binding
 - ▶ MP describes clearly and practically the best and most appropriate future development for the town, and aids the board in designing ordinances to preserve and enhance quality of life and culture in NH
- ▶ An ordinance or regulation
 - ▶ MP shall be a set of statements and land use and development principles for the town with maps, diagrams, charts and descriptions to give legal standing to the implementation ordinances and other measures of the planning board.
- ▶ A strategic plan
 - ▶ A Master Plan brings together all planning functions (housing, land use, transportation, physical environment, energy, community facilities, etc.), the entire geographical and political jurisdiction, a long-range timeframe (10 – 20 years) and offers general guidance for decision making. A strategic plan focuses on select issues, involves a limited geographical area or political jurisdiction, maintains a short-term timeframe (3 – 10 years) and includes an action plan with clearly defined timetables and responsibilities.

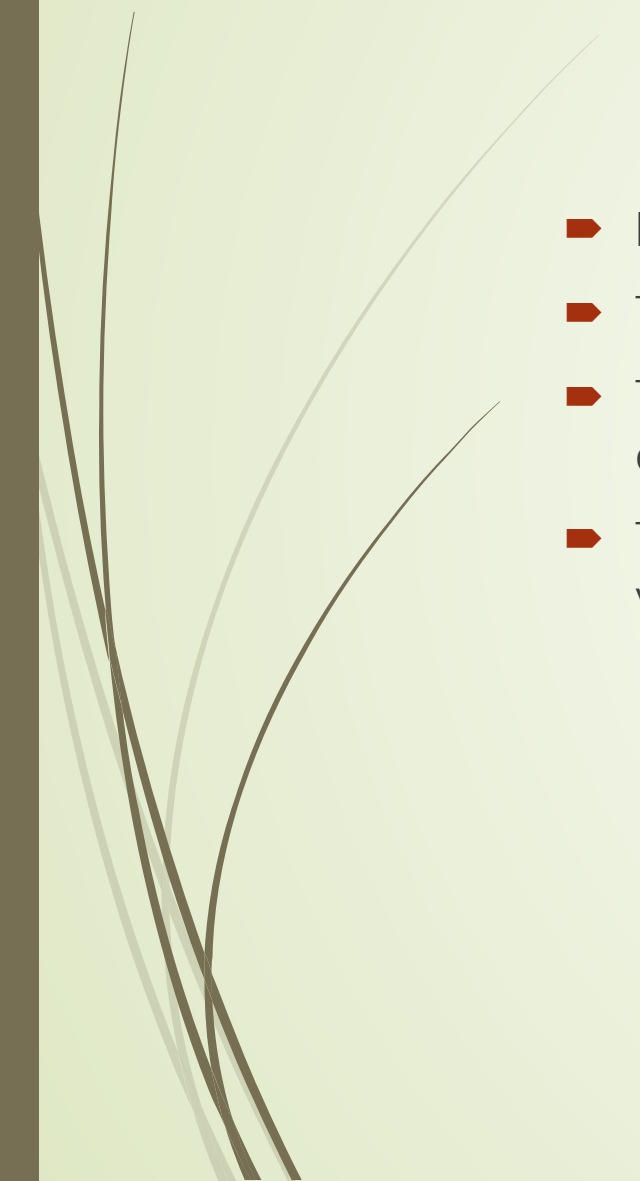


Master Plan as a prerequisite

- ▶ A town is required to have a Master Plan in order to adopt a Zoning Ordinance, an Historic District, a Capital Improvements Program and a Growth Management Ordinance.
 - ▶ The vision, selected development patterns, community facilities needs, and so on, from the Master Plan should inform these other documents and processes.
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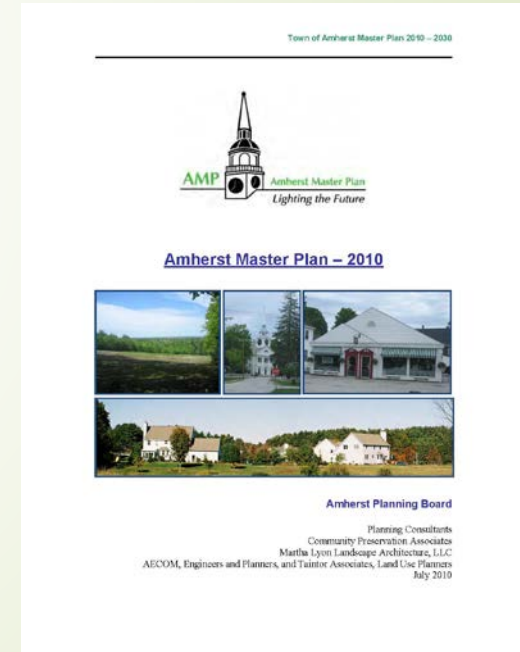


Why are we updating the Master Plan?

- ▶ Because it's been ten years since the last update
 - ▶ To find out the townspeople's vision for the future of the community
 - ▶ To guide development in appropriate ways to fulfill the townspeople's desires
 - ▶ To update the Zoning Ordinance and land use regulations to achieve the vision
- 

Who are the current users of the Master Plan?

- Office of Community Development
- Planning Board
- Surveyors/engineers/developers
- Others?





Who do we want the users to be?

- 
- ▶ Office of Community Development
 - ▶ Planning Board
 - ▶ Board of Selectmen
 - ▶ Other Town Boards, Commissions and Committees
 - ▶ Department Heads
 - ▶ School Boards
 - ▶ Town Employees
 - ▶ Property Owners
 - ▶ Business Owners
 - ▶ Potential Residents
 - ▶ Prospective business owners/entrepreneurs
 - ▶ Surveyors/engineers/developers
 - ▶ Surrounding Towns



What do we want them to do with the Master Plan?

- ▶ Read it!
- ▶ Research the community before buying a house
- ▶ Find out what the community wants before developing a subdivision or site plan
- ▶ Decide what there is about Amherst that makes it a good place for business
- ▶ Make Town government decisions based on the vision for the future
- ▶ Create regulations that implement the goals and objectives
- ▶ What else?

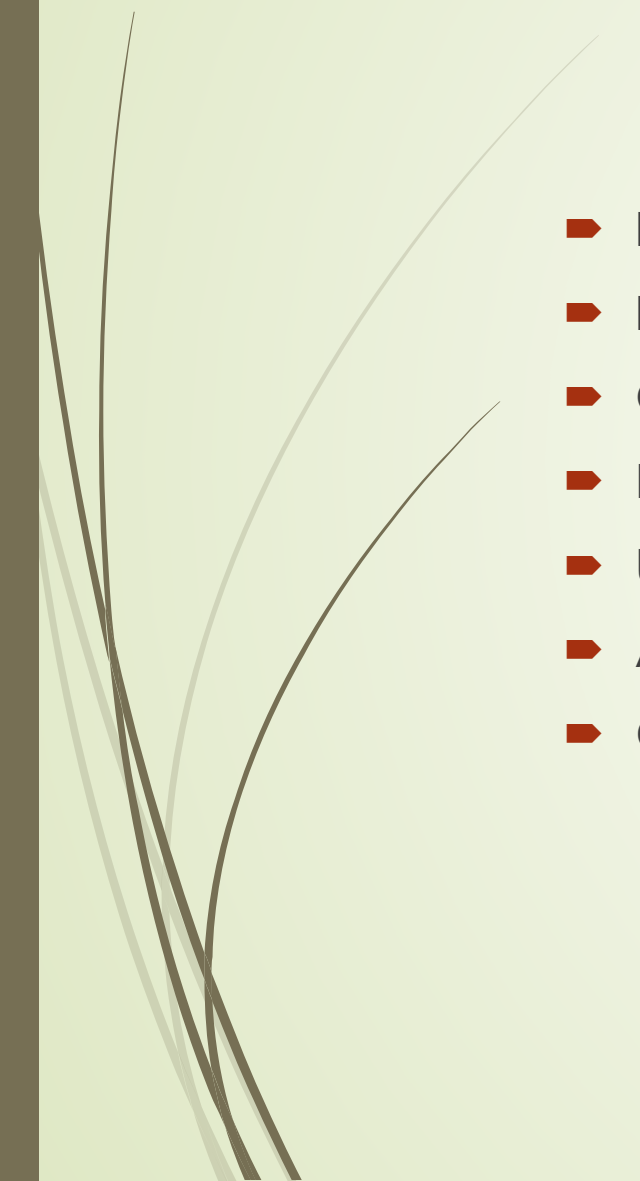


What information do people need from the Master Plan?

- ▶ Vision
- ▶ Existing land uses
- ▶ History
- ▶ Types of favored development
- ▶ Development scenarios that are not preferred
- ▶ Areas of natural constraints to development
- ▶ Demographics
- ▶ The story of Amherst
- ▶ Ideas
- ▶ Places of interest
- ▶ Actionable goals and objectives



How can the plan be more useful?

- ▶ Increase public awareness and understanding of what it is and what it's for
 - ▶ Interesting and usable information
 - ▶ Clarity and brevity
 - ▶ Relevance
 - ▶ Up-to-date material
 - ▶ Action items for implementation
 - ▶ Goals and objectives based on public input
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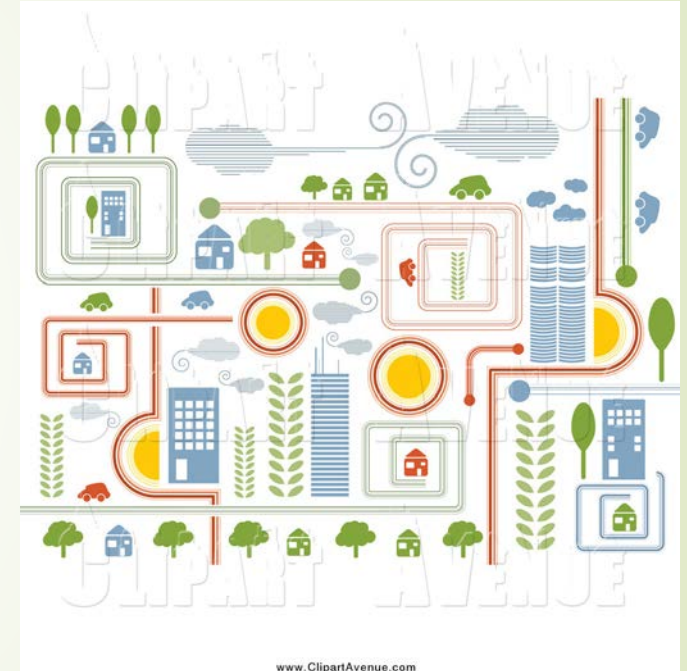
Managing the Master Plan update

- ▶ Planning Board
- ▶ Master Plan Steering Committee
- ▶ Consultants
- ▶ In-house
- ▶ Combination



The Master Plan

- Where are we today?
- Where do we want to go?
- How are we going to get there?
- Did we make it?





The Master Plan

RSA 674:2, II. The master plan shall be a set of statements and land use and development principles for the municipality with such accompanying maps, diagrams, charts and descriptions as to give legal standing to the implementation ordinances and other measures of the planning board. Each section of the master plan shall be consistent with the others in its implementation of the vision section.

The master plan shall include, at a minimum, the following required sections:

- (a) A vision section that serves to direct the other sections of the plan. This section shall contain a set of statements which articulates the desires of the citizens affected by the master plan, not only for their locality but for the region and the whole state. It shall contain a set of guiding principles and priorities to implement that vision.
- (b) A land use section upon which all the following sections shall be based. This section shall translate the vision statements into physical terms. Based on a study of population, economic activity, and natural, historic, and cultural resources, it shall show existing conditions and the proposed location, extent, and intensity of future land use.



The plan itself

- ▶ The Master Plan should be written to be used and should concentrate on relevant, real community issues, not just topics picked from a list.
- ▶ Rather than a traditional layout, the town could create a themed Master Plan based on the things important to Amherst.
- ▶ Suggested themes:
 - ▶ Rural Character and Quality of Life
 - ▶ History, Heritage and Culture
 - ▶ Growth, Development and Design
 - ▶ People and Community
 - ▶ Essential Facilities and Services

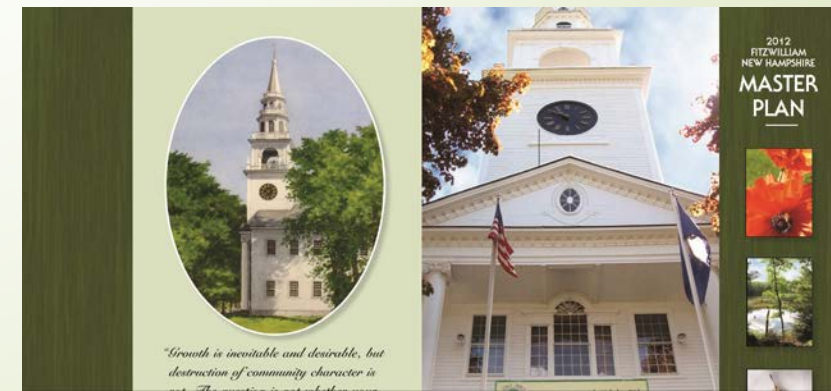
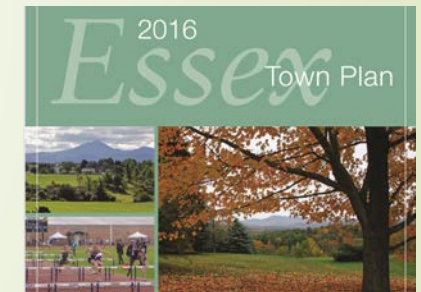
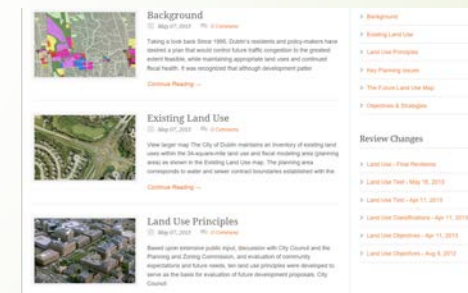
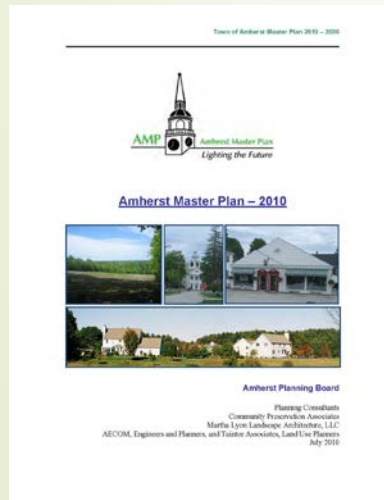


Associated documents

- ▶ Existing reports, studies, surveys, maps and other documents can be incorporated into, or adopted as part of, the Master Plan.
 - ▶ Conservation Plan
 - ▶ Multimodal Master Plan
 - ▶ Village strategic plan
 - ▶ Historic District Commission plans and surveys
 - ▶ Heritage Commission maps, surveys and documents
- ▶ “Dry” statistics and data can be adopted as appendices to keep the main body of the plan readable and usable.

Format of plan

- There is no requirement that the Master Plan be a traditional comb-bound, paper book.
- The themes and headlines from the plan could be made into a poster or brochure for distribution and display.
- More web-based presentations may be appropriate for some sections.





Public outreach and engagement

- ▶ RSA 674:1, I. (a) The planning board shall have responsibility for promoting interest in, and understanding of, the master plan in the municipality.
- ▶ RSA 674:2, II. (a) A vision section that serves to direct the other sections of the plan. This section shall contain a set of statements which articulate the desires of the citizens affected by the master plan, not only for their locality but for the region and the whole state.
- ▶ RSA 674:3, III. During the preparation of the various sections of the master plan, the board shall inform the general public, the office of strategic initiatives, and regional planning commissions and solicit public comments regarding the future growth of the municipality in order to involve citizens in the preparation of the master plan in a way that is most appropriate for the municipality.



Benefits of outreach and engagement

- ▶ Increases public understanding and support for an issue
- ▶ Local decisions reflect the interests of the community
- ▶ Allows different perspectives to be represented
- ▶ Builds accountability and trust
- ▶ Identifies shared community concerns, interests and goals
- ▶ Creates strong, healthy, vibrant places to live, work, learn and plan
- ▶ Allows for creative problem-solving
- ▶ Increases social capital
- ▶ Develops new community leaders
- ▶ Helps in the discovery of community assets, skills and resources

(From UNH Cooperative Extension)



Community Profile

- ▶ Contract with UNH Cooperative Extension to conduct a Community Profile in the fall of 2020.
- ▶ UNH has been conducting Community Profiles for over 30 years.
- ▶ It is a grassroots way of gathering input and opinion from the residents of the town. Establishing a steering committee to organize the event and then administer the logistics of the event makes it a hands-on effort.
- ▶ A two-day event with a six-month planning lead-time.
- ▶ Trained facilitators are used to help the group meet its objectives by guiding it through the Community Profile process. This allows the participants to focus on the issues they came to discuss. The facilitator is trained to provide neutral guidance and help the group arrive at decisions related to the topic discussed.

Friday night

- ▶ Following a meal – potluck or donated items - participants are assigned to groups to discuss ten components of a vibrant community.
- ▶ Brainstorming takes place to discuss the strengths, challenges and future of each of the topics for the community.
- ▶ Each group lists five key issues to be addressed by the community.



Saturday

- ▶ After breakfast, the five key issues from each assigned group are reviewed and the major themes decided upon.
- ▶ Participants choose which group to attend to further discuss the key themes.
- ▶ Problems or challenges within the chosen area are identified and solutions suggested.
- ▶ Proposed solutions are evaluated on a grid to determine their feasibility.
- ▶ Each group presents the top three projects/solutions or opportunities.
- ▶ Each participant chooses their top three projects across all the areas.
- ▶ Ultimate outcome is identification of priority projects or action items. Action groups are established for those interested to be able to work on bringing the top projects to fruition.





Follow up

- ▶ UNH Cooperative Extension recognized that some communities needed help to maintain momentum following the Profile event.
- ▶ Their process now includes six months or so after the Profile during which time they assist any action groups that were formed to get started with their projects.



Other public engagement/outreach tools

- ▶ Visual preference survey
- ▶ Attend meetings of existing boards, committees and commissions
- ▶ Identify traditionally under-represented groups
- ▶ Attend community events to promote and publicize Master Plan update
- ▶ Story map(s)
- ▶ Variety of methods of distributing information – digital, print, in person, social media, etc.
- ▶ Public forums and hearings
- ▶ Ask for photos/drawings/sketches for inclusion in Master Plan
- ▶ Community survey



Communication

- ▶ Commit to communicate constantly.
- ▶ Each aspect of the Master Plan update should be transparent and public.
- ▶ There will be the need for public forums as well as surveys and distribution of draft documents so that input is received every step of the way.



Data collection



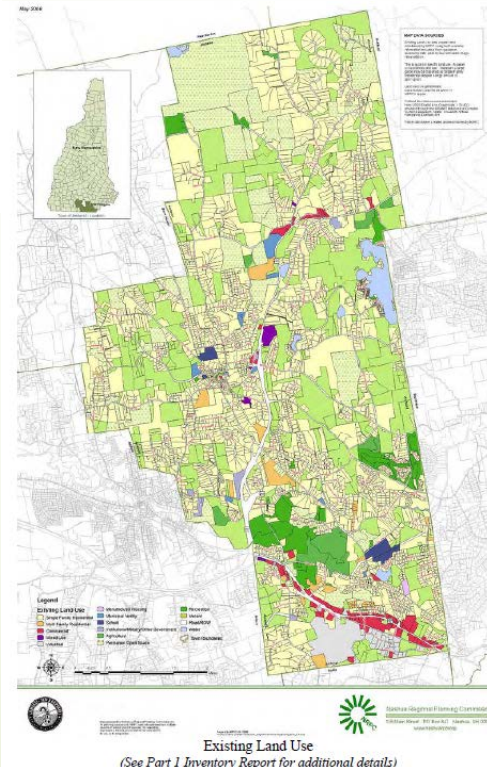
- ▶ RSA 674:2, II. (b) A land use section upon which all the following sections shall be based. This section shall translate the vision statements into physical terms. Based on a study of population, economic activity, and natural, historic, and cultural resources, it shall show existing conditions and the proposed location, extent, and intensity of future land use.
- ▶ A community assessment can gather these details along with characteristics of the community, infrastructure needs, potential to handle future growth, public health, recreation and activity opportunities, etc.
- ▶ Analysis of the data enables the Planning Board to identify the significant problems and opportunities, issues and concerns facing Amherst, and to engage the public in determining how to figure out the goals and objectives to move forward.

Data collection

**TABLE II-1
POPULATION CHANGE**

Year	Population	% Change	Numerical Change	Avg. Annual % Change
1880	1,225	NA	NA	NA
1890	1,053	14.0	-172	1.5
1900	1,231	16.9	178	1.6
1910	1,060	13.9	-171	1.5
1920	868	18.1	-192	2.0
1930	1,115	28.5	247	2.5
1940	1,174	5.3	59	0.5
1950	1,461	24.5	287	2.2
1960	2,051	40.4	590	3.5
1970	4,605	124.5	2,554	8.4
1980	8,243	79.0	3,638	6.0
1990	9,068	10.0	825	1.4
1996*	9,663	6.6	595	1.1

Source: US Census.
*1997 OSP Population Projection.



**TABLE V-4
MAXIMUM DAILY TRAFFIC FOR EACH LEVEL OF SERVICE BY ROADWAY TYPE
(Per Two-Way Single Lane Volume)**

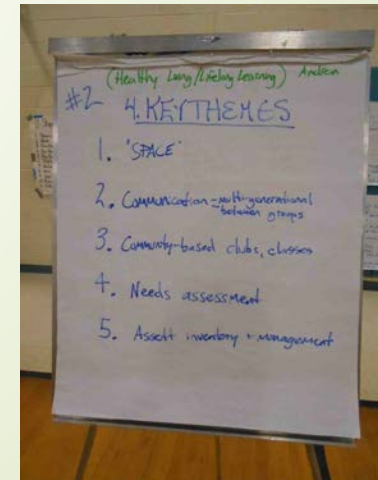
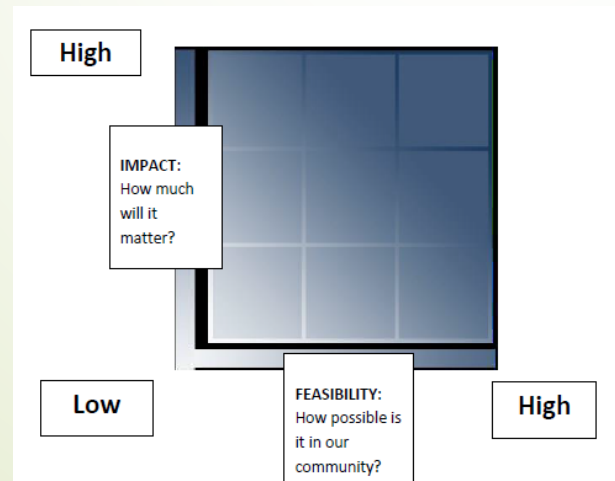
	LOS A	LOS B	LOS C	LOS D	LOS E
Expressway	10,000	19,000	27,000	32,000	38,000
At-grade Principal Arterial	4,200	7,500	12,000	18,000	28,000
Minor Arterial	4,000	7,000	11,500	17,000	26,500
Major Collector	3,600	6,300	10,400	15,300	23,800
Minor Collector	3,200	5,700	9,400	13,800	21,400
Local (Paved)	2,500	4,500	7,500	11,000	17,000


Source: Derived from procedures in the 1985 Highway Capacity Manual.



Vision data and input

- Following the Profile, UNH Cooperative Extension publishes a report of the weekend.
- The raw data obtained during the Community Profile event (flip charts, feasibility grids, etc.) are returned to the town to be used in crafting a vision statement that is then taken back to the public for comment and revision.
- Additional surveys, forums, meetings, may be needed to refine the vision.





Building the master plan and future land use map

- ▶ Following the data collection and evaluation of the data, the details can be combined with the visions created through the various public engagement processes. Various development scenarios can be created and discussed and the advantages and disadvantages of each reviewed and considered.
- ▶ A build out analysis may be needed.
- ▶ The future land use section/map/chapter can be devised.



Implementation, monitoring, amending/updating

- ▶ The Master Plan should be implementable. Vision, goals and objectives should be translatable into ordinance and regulation language to provide the framework for development that meets the vision.
- ▶ Master Plan should be monitored on a regular basis to make sure that goals and objectives are implemented.
- ▶ Updates and amendments should be made when statutorily recommended, if it is determined that the plan is not implementable as written or when the previous goals and objectives have been met

Proposed timeline (Start FY20 – End FY22)

Winter 2019	Start public relations campaign on Master Plan purpose and importance and the planning process for the update
Spring 2020	Begin Community Profile planning and community outreach and engagement activities
Spring 2020	Assemble existing plans, reports and data sources that can be incorporated into the update
Spring - Fall 2020	Begin data collection and community assessment activities
Fall 2020	Community Profile
Winter 2020	Vision update
Spring 2021	Continue data collection and begin data analyses, surveys as needed
Summer - Fall 2021	Evaluate future development scenarios
Spring 2022	Select preferred development scenarios and prepare Future Land Use Map/section
Summer - Fall 2022	Finalize, adopt and publish completed Master Plan



Proposed timeline (Start FY21 – End FY23)

(Delayed start to wait for census data)


2019 - 2020	Start public relations campaign on Master Plan purpose and importance and the planning process for the update
Spring 2021	Begin Community Profile planning and community outreach and engagement activities
Spring 2021	Assemble existing plans, reports and data sources that can be incorporated into the update
Spring - Fall 2021	Begin data collection and community assessment activities
Fall 2021	Community Profile
Winter 2021	Vision update
2022	Continue data collection and begin data analyses, surveys as needed Incorporate census data as available
Summer – Fall 2022	Evaluate future development scenarios
Winter 2022	Select preferred development scenarios and prepare Future Land Use Map/section
Spring 2023	Finalize, adopt and publish completed Master Plan



Budget FY21 (7/1/20 – 6/30/21)

- ▶ Community Profile \$ 3,000
- ▶ Postcards, postage and publicity for Community Profile \$ 2,000
- ▶ Consultant/NRPC - meeting facilitation, survey,
data analysis (*) \$20,000

(*) The need for outside assistance may come during the first half of 2021 and, as such, is too far out to easily establish in what form that assistance may be needed. The number for FY21 is an estimate.



Budget FY22 (7/1/21 – 6/30/22) TBD (**)

- ▶ Consultant
- ▶ NRPC for maps/charts/graphics
- ▶ Mailings, surveys, printing

(**) The numbers for these FY22 items will more appropriately be estimated and/or calculated during next year's budget preparation and will be informed by the work that will have already been completed on the Master Plan update at that point in time.



Planning Board Decisions

- ▶ Will the Planning Board conduct the update process or will there be a steering committee and use of consultants when needed?
- ▶ Initial discussion on the format which will be finalized later in the process.
- ▶ How much information to include in the updated plan - Vision and Land Use, all the more familiar chapters/sections, themes that combine several ideas in one?
- ▶ Is the Planning Board in favor of the Community Profile process?
- ▶ Is the Planning Board in favor of requesting money in the Office of Community Development Budget for FY21 for the potential use of consultants/data collection or analysis/map preparation?



Questions?