

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The Plymouth Master Plan is a collection of data, ideas and recommendations to help make decisions about future growth and development in Plymouth. The plan tells a story of Plymouth's past and present day experiences by describing the economic, demographic and social trends that continue to influence Plymouth today. It is a document that looks to the future by proposing policies that guide town actions.

The Plymouth Master Plan is a three-volume set that meets town policy needs as well as state planning requirements (RSA 674:2). Volume 1 is the policy document that provides the vision, a summary of the town's resources, the existing and future land use plan, and the implementation plan. Volume 2 is the data book that includes three chapters: Sense of Community, Sense of Place and Serving the Community. Within each chapter specific areas of interest are inventoried and analyzed, from housing and jobs, to natural and historic resources, to transportation, among other issues. Volume 3, available in the planning office at Town Hall, is a crate of resources. It provides most of the original documents from which Volumes 1 and 2 were derived.

This chapter articulates the purpose of Plymouth's master plan, Plymouth's vision for the future and the process used in developing this plan.

Purpose of the Plymouth Master Plan

Whether preparing for retirement, developing a new business, or buying seeds for the summer garden, planning is an essential part of our lives. Though not always a conscious act, the practice of looking ahead, identifying needs, setting goals, budgeting resources and attempting to achieve desired outcomes, are key elements of planning.



Our todays, their tomorrows.

Why should communities plan for their future? For the same reason that individuals, families, small businesses and large corporations do – looking ahead and anticipating change makes sense. Communities have found that, through planning, they can better protect community interests, better manage public investment and the allocation of scarce tax dollars, protect important natural and cultural resources, promote development in appropriate locations, and nurture the local institutions that define community life.

Through the preparation of a new master plan, Plymouth residents are acting to define a vision for the town and a means of achieving that vision. The shared vision is based on historical patterns of development; local and regional trends; and most importantly, input from Plymouth residents and property owners on how to accommodate future growth and development, while preserving those characteristics that make Plymouth a desirable place to live. The plan is designed to serve as the primary reference when making community decisions and provide guidance to local officials when setting public policy.



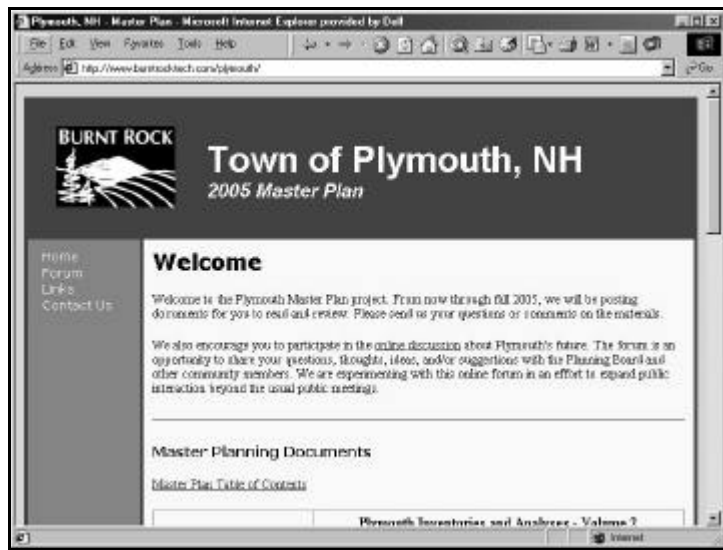
Land Use Forum in June 2005

Planning Process and the Public

Three years ago, during 2003, the Plymouth Planning Board began to discuss the need to update the 1998 Plymouth Master Plan. In the summer of 2004, the Planning Board mailed more than 1,040 14-page surveys to residents and property owners to solicit attitudes about Plymouth. This summer survey kicked-off the yearlong efforts to re-write the master plan with an emphasis on public involvement. Public participation opportunities during the master plan rewrite included:

- **Summer 2004 Community Attitude Survey:** There was a 26% response rate. Results were discussed at Planning Board work sessions and presented at the October 2004 Public Forum. The executive summary as well as the detailed counts and percentages for each question were posted at the Master Plan web site (see Volume 2 - Appendix).
- **October 25, 2004 - Community Forum:** More than 30 people attended the fall meeting to discuss their vision for Plymouth's future. Demographic data and survey results were presented and then the individuals were divided into three groups to describe what would make Plymouth the best town in NH in 2015. The Planning Board used the results to guide its research and to develop the "Vision for Plymouth's Future."
- **Monthly Planning Board Work Sessions:** From August 2004 through November 2005, the Planning Board met every 1st Thursday of the month for a few hours to review and discuss data, analyses, planning considerations and public comments.

- **Master Plan Project Web Site:** In January 2005, the Master Plan Project website came on line providing electronic access to all drafts, survey data, and maps. Electronic mail was encouraged and used to notify interested people of events.



- **Online Forum:** Taking advantage of the Internet, the Planning Board developed an online forum to offer the community an opportunity to comment on the Master Plan work without attending Thursday night work sessions nor public forums.
- **June 2 Community Land Use Forum:** Over 60 people met at the Plymouth Elementary School to discuss land use issues relating to neighborhoods, natural resource protection and commercial growth. More than 250 ideas were recorded on Post-It notes and stuck to aerial maps of the town. The results were compiled, posted on the web site and used to prepare the future land use plan as

well as the Implementation Plan (see Volume 2 - Appendix).

- **October 22 Open House:** The Planning Board hosted a Saturday morning open house at Pease Public Library to present the draft of the 2005 Master Plan. More than 60 individuals signed the registration sheet and it is estimated that another dozen or so attended. The Open House was recorded live on Channel 3. A work session was held from 10:00-12:30 in which the Proposed Future Land Use Plan was discussed. Participants reviewed the existing zoning map to determine where, if any, changes should be made to boundaries and drew in new zones.

Throughout the 14-month process, the Planning Board contacted individuals, local boards, town department heads, and organizations to solicit input on the plan. Electronic mail was used to notify interested citizens. Notice of public meetings and periodic updates on the Master Plan's progress, and notification of its meeting schedule, were posted and published in the Record Enterprise and other newspapers as well as the website.

Many of the work sessions and the forums were televised on the local cable network.

Information gathered from these outreach efforts was used to draft the following vision for Plymouth's Future, and to develop implementation goals and strategies found in Chapter 4.

A Vision for Plymouth's Future

Plymouth's vision statement is an integral part of its planning efforts. Through the support of local residents and an active planning program, the following characteristics define Plymouth for the future:

A vibrant *sense of community*, fostered by:

- a range of opportunities for citizens to share information and ideas;
- community activities and events that regularly celebrate Plymouth and its residents;
- cross-generational and institutional communication;
- local institutions and volunteer organizations that promote and expand Plymouth's cultural heritage (e.g., libraries, historic society, performance group); and
- shared respect for Plymouth's resources and traditions.

A strong *sense of place*, defined by:

- traditional settlement patterns, including a vibrant compact downtown; compact, walkable neighborhoods; compact four-season resort village; and concentrated commercial/industrial areas along Route 25 (TMH) surrounded by rural countryside;
- a landscape of meandering waterways, forests, natural areas and open fields;
- a respect for traditions including Plymouth's architectural heritage;
- new development, including housing to meet the needs of a growing region and business opportunities for local residents, which maintains a human scale and reinforces traditional settlement patterns; and
- access to the land for recreation and personal renewal.

The *economic well-being* of local residents, based upon:

- access to job opportunities within the community and region which pay a livable wage;
- opportunities for entrepreneurs to establish businesses within the downtown and in concentrated areas along TMH with appropriate safeguards, in association with private residences and environmentally sensitive areas;
- access to goods and services in a location and manner that reinforces Plymouth's sense of place and healthy environment; and
- recognition of local agriculture and forest product businesses in maintaining the town's economic diversity and rural character.

A *healthy environment*, characterized by:

- intact and protected natural systems that maintain clean water and air, and native wildlife populations;
- preserved scenic features and open spaces that in combination sustain Plymouth's rural character and ecological well-being; and
- sustainable use and stewardship of natural resources.

A *healthy population*, supported by:

- services to meet the health needs of all, including children, students and seniors;
- recreational and transportation opportunities to promote exercise and well being; and
- food supply supplemented by local agricultural products.

High standards for community services and facilities providing a balance between the demand for facilities and the burden of funding such facilities by ensuring that new development pays its proportionate share of such costs.

Regional Context

Plymouth is located in the center of New Hampshire, the south central area of Grafton County. It is about 200 miles from the major population centers of Montreal, Quebec and Boston, Massachusetts. Interstate 93, the north/south highway in NH, is the eastern boundary of town and three exits feed into the community.

Rumney, Groton and Hebron border Plymouth to its west. Campton is the town to the north and Holderness, Ashland and Bridgewater to the east. While Plymouth is unique, it shares many features with its neighbors. It's connected by a shared history, by natural features, by transportation and communication networks, and by development trends affecting the entire region. The Planning Board recognizes that Plymouth does not exist in isolation, but functions within a larger region that extends beyond Grafton County and across the state.

As part of the master plan update, adopted plans for neighboring communities and North Country Council's regional plan were reviewed and no inconsistencies in plan goals and strategies were noted. Plymouth participates in local and regional planning efforts through the North Country Council and other regional groups and will continue to do in the future.