

Note: During the April 9th, 2009, Master Plan Update discussion, part of the discussion focused on modifying the Philosophy chapter of the 2001 Master Plan to meet the requirements of the Vision Statement. Attendees requested that the existing Philosophy chapter be posted on the Town's website. In response to that request, that chapter is presented below.

TOWN OF WAKEFIELD MASTER PLAN

4 October 2001

This revision of the Wakefield Master Plan is based upon the Town-wide survey conducted in 2000, extensive public hearings, comments from many citizens, input from many private, public and commercial organizations, the collective experience of the Wakefield Planning Board, and extensive input from the Strafford Regional Planning Commission.

I. PHILOSOPHY

1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a conceptual framework for the Master Plan. The chapter outlines the principles, purposes, and philosophy of the Master Plan, and it is based upon the 2000 town survey, input from many town organizations, comments from many citizens, and the collective experience of the Planning Board. Accordingly, the Planning Board believes that this chapter reflects, as much as possible, the collective consciousness of the town. This is how we feel about our town, what we love about it now, and our hopes for its future. The following chapters are much more specific, addressing the town's demographics, facilities, land use, and public works, as well as future goals and objectives.

It is the goal of the Planning Board to completely revise the Master Plan during the year 2001, and to revise one of the following chapters each year thereafter. In this way, the Master Plan will be continually revised, and no chapter will ever be more than five years old. This chapter, however, is the foundation of the plan and is less likely to change. It is expected that this chapter will only be changed every decade or so, and even

then only after a Town-wide survey, and extensive input from the citizens, organizations, and enterprises that comprise Wakefield.

Based on the revised Master Plan, the Board will propose changes to the Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Regulations, and Site Plan Regulations, to make them consistent with each other and the new Master Plan, and will hold public hearings to that end. The Board is also preparing an extensive revision of the Town's Capital Improvement Plan, which will provide a good foundation as the Board considers various growth management programs.

2. Description of the Master Plan

The Master Plan is the foundational policy document that supports the Zoning Ordinance, the Subdivision Regulations, and the Site Plan Regulations. It provides an overview of the town, describes the philosophy and character of the townspeople, and points the way to the future. Figure 1 shows the Master Plan's relationship to other town documents. It is the responsibility of the Planning Board to prepare and revise the Master Plan, based on public hearings, surveys, organizational comments, its own collective experience, and any other inputs it deems applicable.

The Planning Board comprises five members, four of whom are elected to staggered terms of three years; the fifth member is a Selectman Representative. The Board also appoints five alternate members, who sit in the absence of elected members. Only a Selectman can sit in the absence of the Selectman Representative. The Board elects its own chairperson, and all sitting members have an equal vote. Although the Planning Board must comply with state laws and regulations, it establishes its own guidelines and working philosophy, and these continue to evolve as new members join and as the town faces new challenges and issues. For example, the current (2001) Planning Board strives to:

- preserve the rural character of the town;
- work closely with home occupations and small businesses to help them get started and to comply with land use regulations;
- work closely with the Wakefield Economic Resource Committee to develop various means of encouraging new businesses and industries that are consistent with the town's rural character;
- establish the requirements for subdivision and site plan submittals based on their potential impacts on the community (for example, projects with heavy impacts often require extensive traffic, environmental, economic or other studies);
- encourage major subdivisions to add features that improve aesthetics, safety, green space, and other characteristics that enhance the neighborhood, village and

the town;

- encourage boundary line adjustments which make lots larger and less non-conforming; and;
- manage the town's growth in a manner that promotes economic and social prosperity while preserving open space and our small town rural character, and that minimizes sprawl while sustaining our community quality of life.

While this list is not exhaustive, it does give an indication of the character and spirit of the Planning Board.

3. Overview of Our Community

Wakefield borders Maine in the popular Lakes Region of New Hampshire, and its boundaries enclose or border seven glacier-carved lakes. The Town of Wakefield includes the seven villages of Sanbornville, Woodman, Union, Wakefield Corner, North Wakefield, South Wakefield, and East Wakefield. The villages are small and pleasant rural communities, nestled in forested valleys in the foothills of the White Mountains. The picturesque village of Wakefield Corner is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and the residents carefully maintain their homes to preserve the historic appearance.

Wakefield is adjacent to Route 16, the primary north-south artery in eastern New Hampshire, and is centrally located about one hour's drive from Portland, Kennebunkport, and Kittery, Maine, as well as Portsmouth, Concord, and North Conway, New Hampshire. Boston is a two-hour drive to the south.

Wakefield was first settled in the mid-eighteenth century, and was incorporated in 1774, two years before the beginning of the American Revolution. The town has a permanent population of approximately 4,300 spread throughout its seven villages. Wakefield's many lakes attract a large number of seasonal residents, swelling the seasonal population to more than 8,000. Summer is the busiest season, followed by the Fall foliage and hunting seasons, and the Winter sports season. Since the lake shorefronts are mostly developed, the seasonal population is not expected to increase significantly. However, the pleasant quality of life attracts new permanent residents and prompts an increasing number of seasonal residents to become permanent, so the permanent population is projected to grow. Much of the recent growth has been "re-development" of existing lakefront property, wherein small seasonal camps are replaced by permanent, often luxurious, residences.

New Hampshire is currently growing at an unprecedented rate. Much of this growth is attributed to new industry (mostly electronics) in the communities at the southern end of Route 16, and to the phenomenon of "telecommuting". Many

telecommuters apparently prefer rural New Hampshire's lifestyle to the urban and suburban areas where their employers are located. Additionally, lack of available land and high housing costs in the communities to the south add to Wakefield's attractiveness. In 2001, our population of approximately 4,300 represents a growth of more than 30% in the last five years, and Wakefield is projected to have one of the highest growth rates in the state for the next 10 years. This rapid growth has already had an impact on our school and it will no doubt continue to impact our community and our lives.

There is no large industry in Wakefield, and the town subsists mostly on small businesses, tourism, and cottage industries. Nonetheless, the Wakefield Economic Resource Committee (WERC) is working diligently to attract environmentally and aesthetically friendly new businesses and industries. WERC has worked with the Planning Board to identify potential additional Commercial and Industrial zones where businesses that are consistent with the town's rural character could flourish. The town has one "clean" manufacturing facility in its industrial zone, but the commercial and industrial tax base is still quite low, and the town would no doubt benefit from both the jobs and the additional tax revenue that new businesses would bring.

Town Meeting and elected Board of Selectmen govern the town. The townspeople are a mix of natives with a long local family history, a generous spattering of retirees who come from all walks of life and choose the lakes and hills of Wakefield as their home, and commuters who settle here for the wonderful quality of life. Three-quarters of Wakefield's workforce is employed outside of Wakefield, mostly in the larger communities to the south. The median income is lower than those in the seacoast and metropolitan areas to the south, but low property taxes, reasonable property and building costs, and the absence of both state income and sales taxes contribute to a low cost of living. Although lakefront housing can be quite expensive, this is a rural area and off-lake housing costs are very reasonable, especially in comparison to urban and suburban areas.

The Town Public Safety Department includes a police force of approximately nine professional police officers and a Chief, as well as a dedicated group of trained volunteers who serve on the fire and ambulance squads. Sanbornville, the largest of Wakefield's villages, is served by a municipal water supply and wastewater sewers. Wakefield has three public libraries, one each in the villages of Sanbornville and Union, and one in an historic building in Wakefield Corner. The libraries share holdings and offer public access to the Internet. They sponsor various programs throughout the year and work closely with the elementary and high schools, day cares and pre-schools, as well as the Town Parks and Recreation Department and the Wakefield Arts Council.

There are two medical clinics in town, staffed by a medical doctor, as well as physician's assistants, nurse practitioners and registered nurses. For more extensive treatment, there are three hospitals within a thirty-mile radius. Some elderly housing is available at Wakefield Acres and Branch River Commons.

Childcare is available at three day care centers and several home-care facilities, and there are three pre-schools in town. Children attend kindergarten at the Union School or the Paul School in Sanbornville, and attend grades 1 - 8 at the Paul School. Secondary students travel to either Rochester or Wolfeboro for high school. The School Board is currently in the planning stages of building an additional school at the elementary level, and is considering a local high school in the not too distant future. There are also several fine private schools within commuting distance.

Children may choose from the usual clubs and organizations such as Scouts and 4-H. The Town Parks and Recreation Department manages the town beaches and sponsors summer activities, including youth and adult basketball, baseball and softball. The Parks and Recreation Department also sponsors winter sports such as ice fishing, ice golfing, and ice-skating. A "rails to trails" walking/biking/snowshoeing/snowmobiling/skiing trail between Wakefield and Wolfeboro is also partially complete.

There are also many activities sponsored by private groups in town, including the annual Pride Day, the Wakefield Follies, the Fall Festival, poetry and prose readings, and several events sponsored by the Historical Society. One of the favorite events is the annual Sanbornville Citizens for the Advancement of Musical Productions (SCAMP) musical performance at the town Opera House (upstairs in the town hall). The actors are drawn from local junior and senior high school students, and virtually every performance is sold out.

The seven churches scattered throughout the villages are testimony to the sense of morality and spirituality that pervades the lives of many of Wakefield's citizens. Many of the town's children enjoy the inter-denominational Vacation Bible School held every summer. Honesty, character, and courage are more than mere words here; they are a way of life handed down through the generations.

The Lakes Region of New Hampshire is widely known for its natural attractions. Seasonal residents and tourists escape to the region each summer to enjoy the beautiful lakes and pleasant climate, where water sports, fresh water fishing, hiking trails, white water rafting, tumbling streams, golf, and beautiful scenery abound.

In the fall, boats and fishing poles are stored and residents enjoy the spectacular foliage and excellent small and large game hunting. As cold weather arrives, it is time for skating, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, and ice fishing, not to mention downhill skiing at the many resorts in the nearby White Mountains. The seemingly endless opportunities for outdoor activities naturally lead to an active, yet relaxing lifestyle - we are truly blessed and life is good.

4. Natural Resources Inventory

Recognizing the growth expected in Wakefield in the coming years, and the obvious relationship between natural resources and the rural character and setting of the

town, the Board has requested the town Conservation Commission to undertake a comprehensive Natural Resources Inventory (NRI), which shall be appended to this Master Plan. Natural resources are broadly defined to include: water resources such as rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, wetlands, aquifers, and flood plains, as well as forests, prime farmland, historic resources, archeological resources, scenic vistas, plants and wildlife.

The NRI will be supported by the Town's GIS system, and will form part of the foundation upon which future land use planning will be based. The NRI will also support voluntary land protection techniques such as fee simple purchases, purchases of development rights and conservation easements, etc. The NRI will also support public and non-profit programs such as current use, land and water conservation funds, county conservation districts, and the Society for the Protection of NH Forests, etc.

5. Capital Improvement Plan

Recognizing that the recent and projected growth "boom" will place a great strain on Town facilities and services, not to mention quality of life issues, the Planning Board has undertaken a major revision to its Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The primary goal of this revision is to ensure that adequate funds are set aside for future capital improvements (buildings, schools, vehicles, recreational facilities, etc.). Additionally, the revised CIP will aid the Board and other Town agencies to develop growth management plans and strategies and to otherwise deal with the burgeoning growth.

6. Town Philosophy

In the Town survey, public hearings, conversations among citizens, newspaper editorials, organizational goals, and every other venue, the vast majority of Wakefield's citizens profess a strong desire to preserve the rural character of the town. Like any town, we also wish to promote economic and social prosperity in our town, and thus continually strive to balance rural quality of life issues with prosperity. To that end, we believe the following considerations are critical:

- that any development should be harmonious, and aesthetically pleasing, as well as consistent with the character and rural setting of the town;
- that we welcome commercial and industrial development which is environmentally safe and compatible in architectural scale and style with existing structures, terrain and landscape;
- that new businesses should be consistent with Wakefield's history of traditional family values and wholesome entertainment;
- that, because we greatly value the business and commercial enterprises that are

the heart of our villages, we encourage commercial growth to take place in the existing village commercial districts, and we specifically wish to avoid any extensive commercial development along Route 16 which might threaten the viability of the existing commercial districts;

- that aesthetic features such as view sheds are as important as physical features such as hills and lakes;
- that we must vigilantly keep our air, groundwater, lakes and other surface waters, and woods clean and safe;
- that we must retain the natural beauty of the town, including its village atmosphere; and
- that the phrase “rural character and setting” means more than small villages and low population densities - the phrase also refers to less definitive concepts such as sit-down restaurants with home cooked meals, full service gas stations, lots of woodland and green space, farms and farm stands, cottage industries and home occupations, family oriented businesses, community activities, wholesome entertainment, safe streets, clean air and drinking water, peace and quiet, and neighborly support.

It seems clear that this Town philosophy is well defined, and it is therefore also the governing philosophy of this Master Plan.